

REACHING MEN, ENDING AIDS

THE MENHT NEWSLETTER, ISSUE NO. 2

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Welcome to the second issue of Reaching Men, Ending AIDS, brought to you by the Men & HIV Technical (MENHT) Working Group!

As you know, MENHT is a standing body of stakeholders and partners who seek to support global and country-level engagement and galvanize action to mitigate the gap in reaching men with HIV services established three years ago in March 2021.

Men have been on our radar as an under-reached group within the HIV response for some years now. While we have seen significant progress in recent years, men living with HIV remain less likely than women to know their HIV status, less likely to start treatment, less likely to remain engaged in care, less likely to be virally suppressed, and more likely to die from HIV-related causes.



Why have we not yet closed these gaps?

In the past, we have been hindered by an inadequate understanding of men's barriers and needs in relation to HIV services. Many programs and strategies relied on assumptions and stereotypes about men, often judgmental and moralistic in nature, and the resulting interventions were predictably ineffective.

But in recent years there have been numerous studies and pilots focused on generating better insights about men and designing and testing interventions grounded in those insights. We now have a much better understanding of what the barriers are and what is needed to overcome them.

In fact, much of the existing knowledge was recently synthesized led by the World Health Organization into [Men and HIV: Evidence-based approaches and interventions \(A framework for person-centred health services\)](#), published in November 2023. We are now working on an implementation guide that makes the content of the framework even more practical and actionable.

While there may still be value in further research, what we need most in the current moment is to implement and scale the solutions that we already have available.

We know what works, and in many places we have begun to act —now let's take it up a notch!

Do you have a good practice to share?

Do you have exiting lessons and work to share on reaching men with HIV services? If yes, please send an email to Wole Ameyan (ameyanw@who.int) and Lycias Zembe (zembel@unaids.org). We will then follow up to know more about your work. Once accepted, we shall be happy to include your experience in this newsletter and invite you to our webinars.

Warm regards from the MENHT co-chairs,

- Wole Ameyan (WHO)
- Anna Grimsrud (IAS)
- Shawn Malone (PSI)
- Afsar Syed Mohammad (ILO)
- Busi Msimanga (WHO)
- Lycias Zembe (UNAIDS)

This issue of the newsletter provides highlights from the International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA 2023) as well as from our first webinar of 2024 which focused on insights and lessons on reaching adolescent boys and young men. We also include new resources that may be useful in your work.

Highlights from ICASA, 2023

A satellite session was organized on Men and HIV, titled 'Men and HIV: Breaking Barriers, Empowering Change'. The session was an opportunity to launch the Men and HIV framework, and witnessed interactive presentations on lessons from South Africa on expanding from Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision (VMMC) to wider strategies for men and boys' health. The session also addressed multi-sectoral approaches to men's health with insights from the Buganda Kingdom, Ministry of Youth, Sports and Arts to explore the impact of multi-sectoral, including cultural and traditional, approaches on men's health issues in relation to HIV.

A full video of the session can be found here: [Men and HIV: Breaking Barriers, Empowering Change - ICASA23](#)

Webinar recap: Insights and lessons on reaching adolescent boys and young men

The webinar on "Insights and lessons on reaching adolescent boys and young men with HIV services" provided a comprehensive overview of the unique challenges faced by adolescent boys and young men (ABYM) in accessing HIV services. Key themes highlighted the persistent gaps in testing, treatment initiation, and adherence among this demographic, exacerbated by societal stigma, insufficient targeted outreach, and rigid healthcare systems. Innovative strategies discussed included evidence-based interventions, such as gender-specific programs and community-based approaches, aimed at improving service delivery and health outcomes. The webinar emphasized the need for tailored, person-centered care to effectively address these barriers and enhance HIV prevention and treatment for ABYM.

If we've piqued your interest, please access MENHT webinar episode 8, including the full set of presentations and webinar recordings here: [MENHT Webinar Episode 8](#)

New resources

1 A call to action for voluntary medical male circumcision: The Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision (VMMC) Call to Action is a strategic initiative aimed at accelerating the scale-up of VMMC as a critical HIV prevention measure. The campaign emphasizes the urgency of increasing VMMC uptake in high-prevalence regions to significantly reduce new HIV infections. It calls for robust political commitment, sustainable funding, and integrated health services to support the widespread implementation of VMMC. The document also advocates for community engagement and education to address misconceptions and enhance the acceptability of VMMC, ultimately contributing to the global effort to end the HIV epidemic.

2 Men and HIV framework: evidence-based approaches and interventions: The framework summarizes barriers to health services experienced by men and overarching strategies to address barriers and improve health service outcomes for men across 3 core pillars of person-centered care – access to care, quality services and supportive services.

3 The WHO recently launched a new [Health Equality Data Repository](#) with datasets covering diverse topics and dimensions of inequality (including gender), from a variety of publicly available data sources. Aiming to make disaggregated data more accessible and navigable, it could prove to be a useful tool for researchers in the field of men's health (and the intersection of health and gender more broadly).



Recent publications and commentaries

Health policies must consider gender, including men [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(23\)00428-X](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(23)00428-X)

Longitudinal population-level HIV epidemiologic and genomic surveillance highlights growing gender disparity of HIV transmission in Uganda <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41564-023-01530-8>

The path towards an HIV-free generation: Engaging adolescent boys and young men (ABYM) in sub-Saharan Africa from lessons learned and future directions <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540121.2024.2307391>

"Emotional stress is more detrimental than the virus itself": A qualitative study to understand HIV testing and pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) use among internal migrant men in South Africa <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/jia2.26225>

Linkage to HIV care and early retention in HIV care among men in the 'among men and-treat' era in a high HIV-burdened district, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa <https://bmchealthservs.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12913-024-10736-3>



DID YOU KNOW:

In 2022, 54% of new HIV infections globally were among men and boys. Also, while women and girls accounted for 63% of all new HIV infections in sub-Saharan Africa, in all other geographical regions, over 70% of new HIV infections in 2022 occurred among men and boys.

We need your ideas and suggestions!

If you are currently doing interesting and innovative work on men and HIV, or know of someone who is, please let us know! We are always looking for topics and presenters for future webinars.

For any comments or questions on the above, please contact us at:

zembel@unaids.org and ameyanw@who.int