



UN SUPPORT TO THE NATIONAL RESPONSE ON AIDS IN BULGARIA

With the support of UN agencies Bulgaria has been able to significantly mobilize an effective multisectoral response to AIDS and strengthen the existing HIV related bodies and systems in the country.

Over the last 10 years the UN Country Team in Bulgaria supported the national response on HIV through providing technical and financial support for scaling up effective HIV prevention, treatment, care and support programs in Bulgaria in the areas of:

1. Strategic planning and policy formulation
2. Advocacy and lobbying
3. National and local capacity building for quality service provision for HIV prevention, treatment, care and support
4. Partnership and community participation in addressing specific target groups
5. Prevention activities among Most-at-risk populations
6. Monitoring and evaluation

Total UN funding in support of national response on AIDS for the period 2001-2006 amounted at 2,7 million USD and the planned financial support for 2007-2009 is 1,2 million USD.

1. Strategic planning and policy formulation

National Situation and Response Analysis and National HIV/AIDS/STI Strategy and National HIV/AIDS/STI Programme (2001-2007) developed and adopted by the Government in February 2001 (UNAIDS) and their subsequent implementation supported (UNAIDS and UNICEF).

National multi-sectoral coordination mechanism on HIV/AIDS strengthened (UNAIDS and UNICEF).

Development of country proposal for GFATM funding and subsequent implementation of the "Prevention and control program" funded by the GFATM at the amount of 15.7 million USD for 5 year period supported (UNAIDS).

National UNGASS, national MDG and youth MDG reports preparation supported jointly by UN family.

Brief country epidemiological situation

✓ Bulgaria is still a low HIV prevalence country located in one of the regions with most rapidly growing rates of the epidemics.

✓ By the end of 2006, Bulgaria had reported a cumulative total of 689 HIV cases. The annual number of newly reported HIV in 2006 was 91, reaching the highest reported annual incidence since the beginning of reporting.

✓ Distribution by sex shows that 67% of Bulgaria's reported HIV cases are male. 25% of all HIV registered fall in the age range of 15-24 years and 73% are over 25 years.

✓ An initial round of second-generation sentinel surveillance surveys conducted in five major cities in the country in 2004 and 2005 among three groups at high risk - IDUs, commercial sex workers (CSWs) and the Roma people - indicated that HIV prevalence among these groups is still low (0.59% among IDUs and 0.73% among CSW), but their vulnerability appears to be high.

✓ Surveillance data showed that 63.9% of IDUs are seropositive for Hepatitis C, and the syphilis prevalence among CSWs was 21.5%

✓ At the end of 2006, 201 people were on HAART in Bulgaria. Provision of antiretroviral therapy is covered by the budget of the Ministry of Health and is provided free-of-charge for all patients, who meet the criteria of the European treatment guidelines.

Blood safety policy development, haemovigilance unit establishment and standard operating procedures introduction and training of blood-transfusion staff supported (WHO)

Analysis on the major obstacles to, steps and interventions required to ensure Universal Access (UA) to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services for all who need it by 2010 supported (UNAIDS).

Draft national strategy and plan of action on youth friendly health services developed by MoH (UNICEF)

Briefing note

Comprehensive National Population Strategy (2006-2020) developed and adopted by the Government (UNFPA)

Local community mobilized, local strategic planning on HIV prevention completed in 10 municipalities (UNAIDS, UNICEF, UNDP)

Civil society partnership and cooperation for HIV prevention strengthened through National Anti AIDS coalition establishment (UNAIDS, UNFPA and UNICEF). Coalition members became the main implementing partners of the "Prevention and control Program on HIV/AIDS" funded by the GFATM

Strategic partnership with media to ensure constant, appropriate and targeted messages on HIV/AIDS in the public domain established (UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF)

National integrated plan for the implementation of the rights of children 2006-2009 adopted by the Council of Ministers in 2006 (UNICEF)

Harm reduction guidelines developed (WHO)

2. Advocacy and lobbying

Powerful national and local communication campaigns implemented on:

- Young people safe behavior
 - Stigma and discrimination
 - General awareness
 - Use of VCT services
- (UNICEF, UNAIDS, UNFPA, WHO, UNRC, UNDP)

3. National and local capacity building in the field of service provision for HIV prevention, treatment, care and support

- Capacity of teachers on sexual and reproductive health education and introduction of LSBHE and school health policy (SHP) on HIV prevention in selected regions in Bulgaria supported (UNFPA and UNICEF)
- Peer education on HIV/AIDS programs implemented (UNFPA, UNICEF)
- School based Life-skills educational package on SRH "Alphabet for you and for me" developed (UNFPA)
- Introduction of voluntary counselling and testing for HIV and the establishment and operation of a network of ten VCT sites supported (WHO and UNAIDS).
- Assessment of quality of services on SRH for young people conducted (WHO and UNFPA)
- Capacity of General Practitioners, OB/GYNs, school health providers, local public health structures strengthened (UNFPA)
- Donation of 10 million condoms to Ministry of Health (UNFPA)

- Development, establishment, costing and scaling-up of a model of integrated health services on municipal level (UNICEF)
- Advocacy and educational materials distributed (UNICEF, UNAIDS, UNFPA, WHO)

4. Partnership and community participation in addressing specific target groups

- Capacity building and greater involvement of People living with HIV (PLH) in the design, implementation and evaluation of HIV/AIDS national policies and programs (UNAIDS).
- Youth-Adult partnership in youth programming strengthened (UNFPA)

5. Prevention activities among Most-at-risk populations

- HIV/AIDS prevention in the community of men who have sex with men in Sofia (UNAIDS).
- Qualitative study on the profile of most-at-risk adolescents (MARA) conducted (UNICEF)
- HIV prevention among adolescents in specialized institutions (UNICEF)
- Assessment of HIV prevention programs in prisons and piloting of VCT services in prisons (UNICEF)

6. Monitoring and evaluation

Establishment and strengthening of the national Monitoring and Evaluation System for the national response on HIV/AIDS (UNTG on AIDS)

Support to Second Generation Surveillance (UNICEF)

Future plans for UN support to the National response on HIV

- ✓ Support the target setting for achieving the universal access (UA) to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services for 2010 for all those who need them (UNAIDS).
- ✓ Development of new multi-sector National AIDS Strategy and National AIDS Strategic Plan that will support the achievement of targets for UA (UN Country Team on AIDS)
- ✓ Raising demand for reproductive health services incl. HIV/AIDS and improving quality of services for sexual and reproductive health incl. HIV/AIDS (UNFPA)
- ✓ Advocacy for the establishment of effective monitoring and evaluation system on national level, with relevant indicators as part of those for social inclusion (UNICEF)
- ✓ Advocacy for evaluation of models of youth-friendly health services and national scale-up (UNICEF)
- ✓ Lobbying for additional allocations on municipal level for youth health services, after careful review of public expenditures and levels of decentralization (UNICEF).
- ✓ Implementation of behaviour change campaigns for MARA on municipal level (UNICEF).
- ✓ Capacity building for police and social service providers to support HIV prevention among IDUs (UNODC).