

COVID-19 and HIV: Weekly Digest

26 June 2020

The Children and AIDS Learning Collaborative's COVID-19 and HIV digest compiles recent knowledge and updates related to the COVID-19 pandemic of interest to those working on HIV among children, adolescents, and pregnant women. The selections below represent views of the authors and do not reflect UNICEF positions.

COVID-19: IMPACT ON HIV AND HIV SERVICE DELIVERY

<p>Global Fund COVID-19 Report: Deaths from HIV, TB and Malaria Could Almost Double in 12 Months Unless Urgent Action is Taken 24 June 2020, <i>Global Fund</i></p> <p>A new report by the Global Fund estimates that countries affected by HIV, tuberculosis and malaria need US \$28.5 billion to protect progress achieved in the fight against HIV, TB and malaria in the past two decades. Estimates suggest deaths from HIV, TB and malaria could as much as double with overwhelmed systems, disrupted programmes and diverted resources. <i>See also: The Telegraph</i></p>	<p>ICAP in Nigeria Supports People Living with HIV During National COVID Lockdowns 22 June 2020, <i>ICAP</i></p> <p>ICAP at Columbia University features its work in Nigeria to maintain stable supply lines for ART during the lockdown for COVID-19. This included setting up ART pickup locations closer to patients, mobilizing community health workers for in-person and virtual HIV support services at home, and facilitating the delivery of bulk quantities of HIV medications.</p>	<p>COVID-19 Could Affect the Availability and Cost of Antiretroviral Medicines, but the Risks can be Mitigated 22 June 2020, <i>UNAIDS</i></p> <p>An analysis of generic antiretroviral medicines in low- and middle-income countries signals disruptions due to COVID-19. Barriers to the value chain and the economic impact of the pandemic could hinder adequate stocks of HIV medicines in the next few months. UNAIDS presented recommendations for countries and manufacturers to maintain production and distribution of generic antiretroviral drugs.</p>
<p>Survey Shows That Many People Lack Multimonth HIV Treatment in Latin America 22 June 2020, <i>UNAIDS</i></p> <p>In a recent survey, 5 out of 10 respondents from Latin America and the Caribbean reported difficulties in obtaining ART. Less than 2 out of 10 people had medications delivered to their homes. The survey included 2300 people from 28 countries.</p>	<p>We Must Not Forget Our Mission to End AIDS in Children, Mothers, and Families 22 June 2020, <i>EGPAF</i></p> <p>The Kenya country director of the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation discusses how HIV programmes and service provision in the country have adapted to the new constraints set by the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>	<p>SA 'Can't Afford' to Default on Three-in-One HIV Pill 22 June 2020, <i>Health-E News</i></p> <p>The South African National Aids Council's (SANAC) Civil Society Forum highlighted the importance of ensure ART access is maintained during the national lockdown. The organization and its partners are working to ensure individuals living with HIV continue to access treatment.</p>

GLOBAL IMPACT OF COVID-19

<p>African Countries Unite to Create 'One Stop Shop' to Lower Cost of COVID-19 Tests And PPE 22 June 2020, <i>The Guardian</i></p> <p>Countries in Africa united to create the Africa Medical Supplies Platform, which is a one-stop shop to acquire COVID-19 test kits, protective equipment and vaccines when they are ready for use across the continent.</p>	<p>Women, babies at risk as COVID-19 disrupts health services, World Bank warns 24 June 2020, <i>Reuters</i></p> <p>The World Bank's Global Financing Facility highlighted pandemic-related disruptions in health services for women and children, including for neonatal and maternity care, reproductive health and immunizations.</p>	<p>Shifting Front Lines in West Africa 17 June 2020, <i>Think Global Health</i></p> <p>Community health promoters are key in protecting vulnerable populations during the COVID-19 response in Nigeria. The frontline health workers also played a critical role in community response during the Ebola outbreak in 2014.</p>	<p>With over 250,000 Cases, Misinformation Is Compromising Africa's COVID-19 Response 22 June 2020, <i>Quartz Africa</i></p> <p>Health workers in many countries increasingly have to combat misinformation on COVID-19. In a survey, around three-quarters of respondents in Kenya and South Africa reported being unable to detect fake news on the internet.</p>
<p>Key Health Services in Africa Disrupted by Pandemic: WHO chief 24 June 2020, <i>France 24</i></p> <p>Speaking at a virtual conference hosted by the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, WHO's Tedros Adhanom</p>	<p>8 Hospitals in 15 Hours: A pregnant woman's crisis in the pandemic 21 June 2020, <i>New York Times</i></p> <p>As India reports increasing numbers of new infections, the country's strained and underfunded health care</p>	<p>Latin America and Caribbean Pass 100,000 COVID-19 Deaths 24 June 2020, <i>Al Jazeera</i></p> <p>In Latin America and the Caribbean, more than 100,000 people died of COVID-19 by Tuesday; more than half of deaths</p>	<p>Coronavirus Infections Pick Up Speed Across Africa 22 June 2020, <i>The Telegraph</i></p> <p>The African region passed 300,000 cases and 8,000 deaths last Sunday. While the numbers are still low, experts note that the pace</p>

Ghebreyesus noted that COVID-19 is affecting key health services including for malaria and HIV, and threatens progress made.	system is struggling. A database of recent deaths reveals that many people have died after being denied critical care.	were in Brazil. There are now 2.1 million cases in the region, mostly in Brazil, Mexico, Peru and Chile. See also: BBC	of spread is accelerating in many parts of the continent.
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COVID-19 AND INEQUALITY

[In Conflict-Hit Countries, Coronavirus Testing May Not Reach Women](#)

24 June 2020, Thomson Reuters Foundation

Analysis from the International Rescue Committee suggests that women are accessing COVID-19 testing and care at lower rates than men, especially in conflict-hit areas. The WHO also noted that fewer than half of COVID-19 cases reported from around the world include sex and age disaggregation.

[Racism Drives Inequities in COVID-19, House Panel Told](#)

22 June 2020, MedPage Today

Public health experts speaking at a panel in the US House of Representatives highlighted the role of systemic racism in the disproportionately high rates of COVID-19 among Black Americans. Their worse outcomes may be driven by differences in access to health services, implicit biases within the health system, limited participation in clinical trials, and differences in the social determinants of health.

[Policing of European Covid-19 Lockdowns Shows Racial Bias – Report](#)

24 June 2020, The Guardian

An Amnesty International report examining physical distancing measures for COVID-19 in 12 European countries showed that minority ethnic groups are facing harsher enforcements. It concludes that the pandemic is contributing to increased “marginalisation, stigmatisation and violence”.

NOVEL CORONAVIRUS AND CHILDREN

Updates on the multisystem inflammatory syndrome affecting children related to SARS-CoV-2 infection include:

- [COVID-19 Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Three Teenagers with Confirmed SARS-CoV-2 Infection](#) (*Journal of Medical Virology*)
- [ACR Unveils Guidance for Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children with COVID-19](#) (*Healio*)

A [study](#) in *The Lancet* measuring antibodies to estimate infection rates in Geneva, Switzerland suggests that children and older adults are less likely to show evidence of past SARS-CoV-2 infection. Compared to positive tests in 10 per cent of adults aged 20-49 years in the study, less than one per cent of children aged 5-9 and just over four per cent of adults aged over 65 participants tested positive for antibodies.

UNICEF released a new report that highlights the impact of COVID-19 on children in South Asia. According to ‘[Lives upended: How COVID-19 threatens the futures of 600 million South Asian children](#)’, the pandemic is unraveling progress made in health and education for children in the region. An additional 120 million children in South Asia could be pushed into poverty due to the continuing spread of coronavirus. See summaries in: [NPR](#), [CNN](#)

Across the world, COVID-19 is exacerbating barriers to education for vulnerable children, according to a [new report](#) by UNESCO. Even before the pandemic, an estimated 258 million children globally were excluded from education; the rates of out-of-school primary and secondary school-age children may now be increasing.

Experts have [noted](#) that the pandemic is increasing the risks of violence against children in conflict zones, especially for girls who also face sexual health concerns. According to [data](#) from Save the Children, children as well as women in Venezuela are suffering from a spike in physical, sexual or emotional violence at home during the pandemic.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Updates on Vaccine Development

South Africa [began](#) a SARS-CoV-2 vaccine trial this week with a candidate developed by University of Oxford and AstraZeneca. This is the first coronavirus trial in Africa and [includes people living with HIV](#).

Sanofi Pasteur [announced](#) accelerated clinical trials for its vaccine candidate and a new US \$425 million deal on a new partnership for vaccine development.

The WHO [set out](#) an allocation plan for COVID-19 vaccines when developed. The [framework](#) presented to member states outlines three groups for priority vaccination: health workers, adults older than 65 and adults with comorbidities such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, and obesity.

Treatment Updates: Dexamethasone, Hydroxychloroquine, Remdesivir

Following promising results with the use of dexamethasone in patients hospitalized with COVID-19, the WHO [encouraged](#) adequate production of the drug in a media briefing this week. The WHO noted that dexamethasone should only be used under clinical supervision for patients with severe or critical disease; there is no evidence of effectiveness for mild cases or for preventive use. In fact, experts [warned](#) that the drug may be harmful for mild cases. See also: ‘[Dexamethasone and the Recovery Trial’s High-Speed Science](#)’

After new evidence showing no additional benefit and the WHO’s announcement ending its hydroxychloroquine trial last week, the National Institutes of Health [stopped](#) a trial of hydroxychloroquine to treat symptomatic COVID-19.

Gilead Sciences is [beginning trials](#) of an inhalable version of remdesivir, an antiviral drug that is currently given intravenously and thus limited to use in hospital settings. The inhalable version, administered through a nebulizer, could help support the treatment to be used at various stages of SARS-CoV-2 infection. Meanwhile, industry watchdogs are [discussing fair pricing](#) for the drug.

HIV experts [emphasized](#) that claims about the effectiveness of antiretroviral drugs for COVID-19 treatment have a poor evidence base. Rigorous clinical trials and peer review remain essential despite the urgency of coronavirus R&D.

EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

Messaging During COVID-19: What can we learn from previous crises of infectious disease

24 June 2020, *Maverick Citizen*

Ensuring good and consistent public health communication has been important for the responses to HIV, TB, Ebola, malaria and influenza. Key lessons from these experiences include centering trust, providing context and combatting stigma.

Opinion: 'Silent discriminator' — the women global data is leaving behind

19 June 2020, *Devex*

Experts from the University of Global Health Equity advocate for more sex disaggregated data to understand and address the impact of COVID-19 on women and prevent aggravating preexisting inequities.

Opinion: NGOs are withdrawing from Africa when surge capacity is needed most

23 June 2020, *Devex*

Action Against Hunger's Regional Director Hajir Maalim urges nongovernmental organizations and the humanitarian sector at large to expand its capacity and investment in addressing COVID-19 and its broader impacts in Africa.

Challenges and Similarities in HIV, COVID-19 Crises: A Q&A with Anthony Fauci, MD

16 June 2020, *AJMC*

Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Anthony Fauci discusses parallels between the HIV epidemic and COVID-19.

Africa: In the fight against COVID-19, an unsung continent

20 June 2020, *Gates Foundation*

Almost all 55 countries in Africa acted swiftly at the beginning of the pandemic. The authors note that they did so despite the greater economic risks of lockdowns and restrictions in the continent, and with more limited resources than the United States and Europe.

Uganda's COVID-19 Neglect of Minorities Is Bad for Everyone

22 June 2020, *African Arguments*

The author notes that the Ugandan government's pandemic response has systematically excluded religious minorities, which is not only a threat to their rights but also harms epidemic control broadly.

AROUND THE UNITED NATIONS

- In a media briefing, the WHO [predicted](#) the number of global SARS-CoV-2 cases will surpass 10 million in the next week, with 900,000 new cases expected in the coming days.
- The UN [marked](#) Public Service Day by paying tribute to frontline public sector workers for their service.
- The World Food Programme [highlighted](#) a large funding gap that is threatening the continuation of its aid flights that is providing relief during the pandemic.

RECENT RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS

Coinfection with HIV and SARS-Cov-2 In Wuhan, China: A 12-Person Case Series

12 June 2020, *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes*

The researchers conducted a survey about COVID-19 with individuals living with HIV in Wuhan, China. Of 12 respondents, ten were on ART; nine of these had mild COVID-19 symptoms with quick recovery while one died early in the outbreak. Two were not on ART until being hospitalized with severe COVID-19 symptoms.

Outcomes Among HIV-positive Patients Hospitalized with COVID-19

12 June 2020, *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes*

This retrospective matched cohort study from New York compared outcomes among those living with HIV hospitalized for SARS-CoV-2 infection and those without HIV hospitalized with the infection. The sample included 21 patients with HIV. No significant differences in presentation, hospital course and outcomes were seen.

New resources for global, regional and country level practitioners working on HIV during the COVID-19 pandemic are presented below. To find additional documents and join the discussion, visit: www.childrenandaids.org/covid19

RESOURCES

Considerations for HIVST in the Context of COVID-19

23 June 2020

This technical guide from Unitaids's STAR/ATLAS includes case studies from South Africa, Eswatini and Kenya and presents best practices on leveraging HIV self-testing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Updated Government Guidance on 22 June – Advice from the British HIV Association (BHIVA) and the Terrence Higgins Trust (THT)

22 June 2020

BHIVA updated guidance for people living with HIV on social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Community-led Responses in the Time of COVID – UNAIDS Global Survey

24 June 2020

UNAIDS is conducting a [global survey](#) of community-led organizations and networks who work in HIV about the impact of COVID-19 on HIV programming and new efforts adapting to COVID-19.

Scientific Brief: Breastfeeding and COVID-19

23 June 2020

WHO released a scientific brief with recommendations for mothers with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 on breastfeeding and postnatal care.

DSD and CQUIN – Updates from the WHO and Global Perspectives

WEBINAR 23 June 2020

Representatives of the WHO, CQUIN, DSD Initiative and the International Treatment Preparedness Coalition presented global updates on differentiated service delivery during COVID-19 in this webinar hosted by ICAP at Columbia University and DSD.

PEPFAR Technical Guidance in Context of COVID-19 Pandemic

UPDATED 19 June 2020

Updates to the guidance were made to reflect re-opening in some settings and the need for continued attention for other conditions. New online resources were also added.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- 29 Jun 2020: UNICEF's Children and AIDS Learning Collaborative presents a third webinar on what paediatric HIV programmes need to know about COVID-19. 9am ET / 3pm SAST >> [More](#)
- 30 Jun 2020: PSI hosts a webinar on adapting HIV self-testing to the COVID-19 pandemic with case studies from Vietnam, Ukraine, Zambia and West Africa. 9 am ET / 3pm SAST >> [More](#)

To submit feedback or content for inclusion in our weekly digests, please email Rikke Le Kirkegaard at rlkirkegaard@unicef.org.