

Summary of 2019 Joint UCPOC Communications Activities: Achievements, Lesson Learned, and Priorities for 2020

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I. Overview of Achievements

To enable successful scale up of Point-of-Care Early Infant Diagnosis (POC EID) and transition financial support to national governments and long-term funders, the 2019 communication strategy was primarily focused on increasing endorsement of and investment in POC diagnostics within optimized laboratory networks, thereby increasing access to POC testing services and promoting the development of a healthy POC market.

Leveraging our collective strengths and growing body of evidence, EGPAF, CHAI, ASLM, and UNICEF continued to advocate for a broader endorsement and uptake of POC EID as a cost-effective approach to accelerate progress towards the fast track targets for children set out in the Start Free – Stay Free – AIDS Free Framework (see the [2019 Report](#)).

It is important to note that the EGPAF and CHAI/ASLM/UNICEF projects reached different stages in the life cycle of their grants in 2019. EGPAF closed the project in the nine countries where it was implemented, published an evaluation of POC EID service delivery and clinical outcomes based on an observational [study](#) in eight POC diagnostics project countries (also mentioned under ‘Publications during the reporting period’ below), and contributed with a ‘Lessons Learned’ module that will be integrated into the revised and expanded [POC Diagnostics toolkit](#). The toolkit was translated into [French](#) to increase access to Francophone countries in West and Central Africa introducing POC diagnostics into their national health programs.

At the same time, CHAI/ASLM/UNICEF were engaged in developing transition plans for POC EID and strengthening the evidence base for targeted POC Viral Load (VL) testing in priority populations, promoting integrated multi-disease POC testing within the broader context of laboratory network optimization, and developing a strategy and resource pack to promote civil society engagement aimed at increasing demand for POC testing.

Collectively, these resources and the capacity built through civil society engagement will provide long-term value, ongoing advocacy and technical materials that will remain accessible as Unitaid funding is phased out and POC EID is introduced in new locations and by new partners.

Output 2 - Routine POC EID and VL testing established

Activity 2.2: Disseminate best practices and facilitate partner coordination to accelerate POC implementation through the efficient use of resources

EGPAF, CHAI, ASLM, and UNICEF worked closely in the joint production and dissemination of POC knowledge products and communication assets as detailed in the joint 2019 Communication Framework. Consultation and coordination with WHO on the development of assets and events particularly with reference to integrated testing was also prioritized.

EGPAF produced ‘Competency Assessment Guide and Forms’ ([English](#) and [French](#)) to support regular assessments of the competency of POC EID device operators. As this activity is crucial for ensuring the quality of the testing procedure at an individual level and can also serve as a key component of a POC EID quality assurance (QA) scheme, these materials are available at the [POC Toolkit](#). As mentioned above, EGPAF also contributed with a ‘Lessons Learned’ module from introducing POC technologies for EID of HIV into the national laboratory systems of nine Sub-Saharan African Countries. The lessons learned module is designed for use by current and future POC EID implementers, including national program managers and international implementing partners and it will add even more value to the toolkit, with tools and references that can be used to introduce or scale-up POC EID in a country-wide context – to be released in the first quarter of 2020.

CHAI supported the Integrated Diagnostics Consortium (IDC), including support for Unitaid in its secretariat role for IDC. In this role, CHAI led the development of an advocacy [2-pager](#) for the IDC, which detailed the IDC’s background, principles, workstreams, achievements and ongoing efforts, which was distributed to relevant stakeholders. In addition, CHAI coordinated and prepared reports for IDC calls in April and June 2019 that included updates on each of the five IDC workstreams. The outputs from all work-streams with IDC throughout the year was reviewed in September 2019, during the IDC meeting convened at the OGAC Office, in Washington DC. The meeting objectives were to: define a consensus position by the consortium, where necessary; determine the best approach to leverage the consortium for manufacturer negotiations; and, refine priorities and draw up a plan of action for the next 12 months. The [presentations](#) covered key topics such as all-inclusive pricing, updates on PEPFAR RFP, data

systems, key performance indicators (KPIs), waste management, laboratory network optimization, and diagnostics integration, among other topics.

CHAI included diagnostics forecasts in their Annual HIV Market Report about the state of HIV treatment, testing, and prevention in low- and middle-income countries, showing that growing support for integrated testing may help POC EID (and VL) growth. It also led the development of three technical briefs during the reporting period:

- 1. GeneXpert HIV/TB Integration case study co-led with UNICEF:** This case study reviews the potential benefits of integrated testing on the GeneXpert platform, shares key considerations for implementing integrated testing and presents results from a pilot conducted in Zimbabwe in 2017/2018. The pilot successfully demonstrated that TB services are not negatively impacted by the addition of HIV testing (EID and/or VL) on shared GeneXpert instruments, even as utilization increases. This pilot showed that through integration, increased access to POC testing for EID and VL significantly reduced result turnaround time and time to clinical action – again demonstrating the remarkable patient impact of POC testing. The content for the brief was finalized at the end of June 2019, although it was agreed to wait until UNAIDS data was released in mid-July before moving to the design phase. The brief was disseminated in both [English](#) and [French](#) in August 2019.
- 2. Accelerating access to POC VL for pregnant and breastfeeding women living with HIV:** CHAI led the development of this brief which lays out the rationale for how POC VL could be a transformative technology in the strategy to eliminate vertical transmission and is a valuable resource in our advocacy efforts around POC VL for these populations. UNICEF supported the design of the brief, which was distributed both [English](#) and [French](#) in September 2019 through the UNICEF Children and AIDS website and email list.
- 3. Systematic review and meta-analysis on EID programs:** This review, which focus in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), synthesizes data on losses and time delays across the EID cascade, from sample collection through ART initiation, for studies published between January 2000-March 2018. It was published as an [article](#) in a peer-reviewed journal (also mentioned under ‘Publications during the reporting period’, below). Overall conclusions were that significant gaps in laboratory-based EID programs persist. Long test turnaround times are compounded by further delays in ART provision to HIV-positive infants, ultimately translating into substantial loss and mortality amongst HIV-positive infants.

ASLM led the production of a POC testing [special issue](#) of the ASLM LabCulture (Issue No. 21) which was published in July 2019. The special issue featured key topics including the game changing effect of POC for HIV EID, initial lessons learned from integrated GeneXpert HIV-tuberculosis testing programmes, optimising national laboratory networks for effective disease control, lessons learned from CD4 POC testing, as well as QA in POC testing. The LabCulture is distributed to a listserv of up to 20,000 members, as well as via other digital and social media outlets for ASLM, Unitaid and UNICEF. Hard copies and soft

copies were distributed to over 100 participants (“Laboratory Systems Strengthening Community of Practice – LabCoP” country teams, and key stakeholders) at the ASLM LabCoP face to face meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in October 2019, as well as at the [ICASA2019](#) conference in Kigali, Rwanda in December 2019.

ASLM co-hosted the first consultative [meeting](#) of the Africa Collaborative to Advance Diagnostics for Universal Health Coverage and Africa’s Health Security, held in September 2019. The meeting [agenda and speakers](#) set the stage for discussions on accelerating access and uptake of diagnostics in Africa in terms of expediting the evaluation, what it takes to assemble or manufacture in Africa, as well as the financing options and mechanisms for advancing diagnostics in Africa. The Africa HIV Viral Load Movement was launched in the presence of over 200 participants. Key presentations from ASLM ([advancing access to diagnostics to meet Agenda 2063, UHC, and Health Security](#)), WHO ([accelerated registration of diagnostics](#)), CHAI ([feasibility of local production of diagnostics](#)) and Unitaid ([optimising global investments in diagnostics](#)) set the tone for in-depth discussion in respective sessions. The meeting generated first drafts of the standard evaluation protocol on diagnostics for regular programme and disease outbreaks as well as the selection criteria, role of Africa CDC, and processes and procedures for engagement in evaluation were developed.

ASLM scheduled the dissemination of POC EID implementation guidelines at the LabCoP, which is a [platform](#) that aims to share best practices on viral load and EID implementation among countries in Africa. Members of the LabCoP include heads of national diagnostic departments and national laboratories, laboratory technicians, and technical and implementing partners. The ASLM Lab Community of Practice ECHO session on Practical Considerations for Implementing POC Testing for HIV EID, was presented by Jeff Lemaire (Diagnostic Advisor, EGPAF) in March 2019. More than 100 (from 93 unique connections) participants across 11 countries in sub-Saharan Africa participated. The [recording](#) of the session, was posted on YouTube (110 subscribers on the ASLM channel) and widely disseminated on ASLM’s listserv of up to 20,000 members.

ASLM, the LabCoP, and other partners, held nine training ECHO sessions dedicated to waste management, from March 2019 to January 2020. Each session covers a set of key topics and are led by different speakers. All sessions are available at ASLM YouTube channel – this series is listed [here](#).

ASLM continued to populate a Resource Centre presenting the [implementation status](#) of POC EID and related [POC resources](#). Relevant POC topics also became subjects of discussion on the ASLM LabCoP [WhatsApp group](#), a 24/7 platform of knowledge sharing and interaction of multidisciplinary cadres. Key resources on such topics as [site selection](#) criteria and the Zimbabwe and Malawi [integrated multi-disease testing pilots](#) were shared on this platform. All the [issue briefs](#) that had been developed in the UCPOC grant to date were included in the USB drive of the aforementioned LabCulture [special issue](#) distributed at the LabCoP meeting and [ICASA2019](#).

UNICEF played a leading role in coordinating Unitaid POC grantees (ASLM, CHAI, EGPAF) in executing the Joint Communication Framework to advance shared communication and advocacy objectives, including

coordinating the development of key briefings part of the Communication Framework. Importantly, the [POC Toolkit](#) was revised with an additional [module](#) on POC EID Training materials (mostly CHAI materials), being released in September 2019 (the [French](#) one was released in October 2019). Dissemination was done through UNICEF Children and AIDS [website](#) and email list.

A collaboration between DNDi and UNICEF Uganda was aimed at raising awareness of two important innovations in paediatric HIV – POC EID technologies and improved paediatric formulations – and their interconnected importance for accelerating results and improving treatment outcomes for children living with HIV. The video ([English](#) and [French](#)) is presented at UNICEF's [blog](#) 'Field lessons: Impact the whole person, not just a part' and accompanies a [photo essay](#) 'Treating HIV-positive children with speed and skill' on innovations in rapid testing and child-friendly medicines are saving lives in Uganda in UNICEF's public site – both released in November 2019. The video was also widely disseminated during [ICASA2019](#) in December 2019 and World AIDS Day through UNICEF's global channels on Facebook LinkedIn, and IGTV as well as through a [microsite](#) developed by DNDi.

UNICEF has posted other POC related features on Facebook, see [Africa](#) and [Ghana](#)¹, highlighting that UNICEF and its partners are scaling up the POC EID in 10 countries for 68,000 HIV-exposed infants to receive an HIV test within the first 2 months of life and access lifesaving treatment by 2021. Hashtags "#EndAIDS and #WorldAIDSday were used.

Output 6 - Procurement and implementation support of POC and conventional testing responsibly transitioned

Activity 6.3: Raise awareness for POC testing and diagnostics more broadly, and mobilize alternative sources of funding globally and in-country

A multi-pronged approach was utilized to raise awareness for POC testing which leverages the strengths of each partner (CHAI, ASLM, and UNICEF). CHAI is primarily responsible for generating the scientific evidence and technical documentation and coordinating the Diagnostics Community Advisory Board (Dx CAB). ASLM is primarily responsible for leveraging its platforms and leadership role in the laboratory/diagnostics space in Africa to share information, promote discussion and exchange of ideas on HIV diagnostics. UNICEF is primarily responsible for synthesizing the evidence into communications assets, including human interest stories to reach broad audiences, and convening national stakeholder meetings and coordinating with the Global Network of People Living with HIV (GNP+).

ASLM has created an [interactive map](#) with the distribution by type and numbers of POC Nucleic Acid Testing (NAT) for HIV, EID and VL technologies (Alere, Samba, GeneXpert, etc.) being used by some countries in Africa. The number of types of technologies formally registered per country has been used as a proxy indicator for uptake of this relatively new market of POC NAT diagnostics. Users can view the

¹ Facebook links only work when user is logged in.

number of registered technology types and the actual numbers of instruments per particular type of technology and the type of tests conducted, in each country of interest.

It is relevant to highlight that in the LabCoP ECHO [session](#) of December 2019, ASLM hosted Eileen Burke, Laboratory Specialist, and Franziska Fuerst, Senior Specialist, Resilient and Sustainable Health Systems (RSSH/PSM) at the Global Fund. Franziska focused on providing guidance for country teams about the Global Fund 2020-2022 funding cycle opportunities for laboratory strengthening, including waste management. ASLM is available to help participating country teams designing activities and targets that aligns with the Global Fund priorities and the country needs, and Anafi Mataka (key staff in the UCPOC project), facilitated the session and is one of the primary contacts for this initiative. ASLM shared a [summary of COP20 priority areas](#) for the laboratory– including role of POC for EID, pregnant and breastfeeding mothers and in unsuppressed recipients of care on ART.

UNICEF Supply Division produced another updated product profiles for HIV POC diagnostic supplies in the form of a [technical bulletin](#): 'Point-of-care (POC)/Near POC virological technologies for HIV Early Infant Diagnosis (EID) & Viral Load (VL) monitoring', in October 2019. The document was disseminated and is available at UNICEF's public site. A new update, 'HIV Early Infant Diagnosis and Viral Load Point of Care Diagnostics Market and Supply Note' is going to be released during the first quarter of 2020.

UNICEF country offices continued to advocate for POC testing and diagnostics at the national level through active engagement in various stakeholder forums, including through the 2019 PEPFAR COPs processes. In many countries PEPFAR and/or Global Fund have committed funding support for POC EID as Unitaid funding transitions out (e.g., Cameroon, DRC, Uganda, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Senegal, etc.), although in some cases not at the levels requested by government.

In Cameroon, UNICEF and CHAI held a satellite session at the 2nd PMTCT and paediatric and adolescents care [National Forum](#) attended by more than 800 participants. In total, 10 POC abstracts were published in the Forum Book of Abstracts; 10 oral communications were presented during the session and presented the experience of each site. A flyer, a booklet of all presentation and roll-up were also produced and shared. Ninety out of a total 217 participants who attended the POC satellite session received a copy of the POC Key Consideration Document, from 2018 ([English](#) and [French](#)). POC was included in the Yaounde II Declaration of commitment as one of the game changers to accelerate the 90-90-90 objectives.

In Tanzania, the Ministry of Health (MoH) advised to change EID communications from print material to live radio programs at national level to be conducted by MoH Managers together with other technical experts. Six live radio sessions were planned with the Tanzania Broadcasting Corporation (TBC) Radio scheduled to take place from mid-December 2019 to early-January 2020. These sessions covered key priority issues identified from the summary and EID National Stakeholders Workshop which was held in November 2019.

Malawi UNICEF convened a meeting with GNP+, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and key stakeholders to leverage support for demand creation for POC EID/HIV testing. The concept of Undetectable = Untransmissible was promoted. The goal was to increase capacity for the communities to demand viral load and EID services at the community, district and national levels.

UNICEF Zimbabwe collaborated with partners and contributed significantly to the development of the case study on integrated testing for TB and HIV using GeneXpert® devices ([English](#) and [French](#)). Likewise, UNICEF Uganda led the development of a video showcasing both CHAI/UNICEF POC work and new paediatric formulations work by DNDi ([English](#) and [French](#)).

UNICEF also disseminated and amplified POC-related content through UNICEF Children and AIDS Community of practice and HIV/AIDS Twitter feed; and profiled Unitaid-funded POC diagnostics work in UNICEF's Global Annual Results [Report](#) 2018, Goal Area 1 (cf. POC diagnostics case study on page 135), published in June 2019.

Engagement with CSOs to promote demand creation

CHAI, ASLM, and UNICEF worked together at the global level to ensure complementarity of efforts to strengthen the civil society engagement for POC diagnostics, and they worked more closely with CSOs in 2019 to raise awareness and increase demand for POC HIV diagnostics. CHAI launched the Diagnostics Community Advisory Board (Dx CAB) and UNICEF coordinated with GNP+. While not engaging directly with CSOs, ASLM promoted discussions and exchange of ideas on HIV diagnostics through the “Laboratory Systems Strengthening Community of Practice – LabCoP” which includes CSOs’ members as part of the multi-disciplinary country teams.

Under the Unitaid-funded Optimal ARV grant, CHAI, in partnership with Unitaid and AfroCAB, established the Optimal ARV Community Advisory Board (CAB) to engage civil society, promote treatment literacy and increase demand for new HIV medicines. The UCPOC grant began planning during 2018 to leverage the existing CAB structure to promote diagnostics literacy and demand generation around EID and VL monitoring. During the reporting period, the Dx CAB was established in coordination with AfroCAB, including representatives from seven UCPOC focal countries.²

A three-day kickoff meeting was held in March 2019, which included technical onboarding for the representatives on EID/POC EID, VL monitoring, advanced HIV disease, and laboratory systems. Following the kickoff meeting, a second meeting was held in October 2019, which focused on sharing experiences from activities conducted to date and reviewing additional technical information about diagnostics and POC testing to support advocacy activities. A key takeaway from the meeting was encouragement for the representatives to aim high with their advocacy through meeting with and influencing PEPFAR COP and Global Fund decision makers to include POC EID/VL. All Dx CAB representatives created workplans and

² Countries with Dx CAB representatives as of June 30, 2019: Cameroon, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Senegal, Uganda, Zimbabwe.

budgets to cover their first six months of activities. Initial activities conducted by the representatives during the reporting period included in-country onboarding with CHAI counterparts and orientation meetings at Ministries of Health. Activities planned for the next reporting period include trainings with lay workers, development of IEC materials, community consultations, and advocacy events with networks of PLHIV.

ASLM's LabCoP brings together multi-disciplinary teams from at least 11 countries, with members from CSOs from seven countries represented in the sessions, namely:

#	COUNTRY	TEAM
1	Ethiopia	NEP+
2	Sierra Leone	Network of HIV Positives in Sierra Leone
3	Uganda	National Forum of PHA Networks in Uganda
4	DRC	Union Congolaise des Organisations des Personnes vivant avec le VIH
5	Kenya	National Empowerment Network of PLHAs in Kenya
6	Malawi	Network of Religious Leaders living with or personally affected by HIV and AIDS
7	Zimbabwe	National Network for People Living with HIV (ZNPP+)

Members of these groups are actively engaged in the subjects of demand creation and results utilization through the virtual platforms (webinars, WhatsApp groups, slack) and physical, face to face meetings as well. The session focused on VL testing demand creation and the role of civil society engagement, happened in June 2019. In this session, Moses Nsubuga, a popular community peer educator commonly from Uganda, known as 'Super Charger', asked networks of people living with HIV/AIDS to take the leading role in VL testing promotion, and requested all partners to mobilize funding for community VL education and awareness.

At the global level, UNICEF is working with GNP+ to jointly develop a strategic framework and resource pack to promote civil society engagement and community demand creation for POC EID (to be released in the first quarter of 2020). As part of this process, GNP+ is also developing a project brief to advocate for POC HIV diagnostics through the Communities Delegations to Unitaid and the Global Fund (also to be released in the first quarter of 2020). This work will extend from May 2019 to March 2020. During the reporting period, the partnership agreement was finalized, and an advisory group was established to guide the work which includes: representatives from civil society (GNP+, ITPC, and ICW), UNAIDS, and UNICEF Programme Division including Communication for Development (C4D) colleagues.

A [rapid assessment](#) (which includes a desk review and online survey sent to civil society and implementing partners in the 10 CHAI/ASLM/UNICEF project countries) was completed to guide development of a strategic framework and resource package for demand creation. UNICEF Malawi and Senegal coordinated GNP+ country missions and convened meetings with national stakeholders, including CSOs, implementing partners, and government officials, to provide inputs into the process. The strategic framework has undergone several rounds of revision and is expected to be finalized by the end of Q1 2020. Development

of a resource pack and dissemination strategy to promote CSOs engagement and community demand creation for EID/POC EID is under way. This work is being coordinated with the Diagnostics Community Advisory Board (Dx CAB) led by CHAI.

Meetings and conferences during the reporting period

DATE / EVENT / PLACE	DETAILS
<p>March 2019 Expert meeting on POC QA, Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo</p>	<p>Objective of the meeting: the meeting was organized to review, in consultation with a core group of experts, the WHO drafted guidance for monitoring and assuring the quality of testing using POC platforms that are applicable to all levels of the laboratory network.</p> <p>Summary: The ASLM Senior Scientist, Anafi Mataka, participated in the Expert Meeting to Develop an Integrated Approach for a Comprehensive QA Guidance for POC Testing. The meeting was convened by WHO.</p> <p>Number of participants: 16</p> <p>Outcomes: A consensus table and meeting notes documenting the agreed level of details, the appraisal score and the suggested recommendation for each section of the draft guide, namely, “Funding and Quality Assurance (cross-cutting), Policy, Governance, Integration, Resources and M&E Framework”. The participants stressed the importance of a practical guide, tailored to the need of different levels of the health care system and settings of the POC testing.</p>
<p>March 2019 Dx CAB kickoff Meeting, Pretoria, South Africa</p>	<p>Objective of the meeting: To onboard the seven Dx CAB representatives and plan for the first 6-month project cycle.</p> <p>Summary: The meeting served as a technical onboarding for the Dx CAB representatives on EID/POC EID, VL monitoring, advanced HIV disease, and laboratory systems.</p> <p>Number of Participants: 40</p> <p>Outcomes: The representatives were advised on how to create workplans and budgets to cover their first 6 months of activities.</p>
<p>July 2019 10th IAS Conference on HIV Science Mexico City, Mexico (link)</p>	<p>Summary: ASLM worked with WHO to host two satellite sessions.</p> <p>Session 1: Strategies towards integrating POC testing quality assurance into existing QA programs: the session focused on integration of POC quality assurance into National QA programs, as well as novel innovations to increase access to viral load (programme and presentations).</p> <p>Number of participants: 150</p> <p>Outcomes: created awareness and outlined key elements to consider for the integration of POC testing such as those using automated closed systems into national QA programs.</p>

DATE / EVENT / PLACE	DETAILS
	<p>Session 2: What's new in diagnostics: Novel HIV molecular interventions to support expansion of viral load access (programme and presentations).</p> <p>Number of participants: 200</p> <p>Outcomes Presented new and tried concepts for scaling up HIV viral load testing across settings, which are detailed in the HIV Molecular Diagnostics Toolkit to improve access to viral load testing and infant diagnosis, which was launched in the same session.</p>
<p>July 2019 Global Integration Meeting Geneva, Switzerland</p>	<p>Objective of the meeting: To convene key countries and diagnostic stakeholders to discuss current pilots and national scale-up experiences, best practices, policy frameworks, and challenges in integrating diagnostic services to inform the development of best practices guidance to support public health policy change and accelerate uptake in countries.</p> <p>Summary: During the two-day 'Molecular Diagnostics Integration Global Meeting', hosted by ASLM and the WHO, diagnostics experts and leaders convened to deliberate and forge a way forward to improve and increase access to integrated multiplex technologies, and determine how they can be translated into public health policy and impact patients globally.</p> <p>Number of participants: 77</p> <p>Outcomes: Several country pilots of diagnostic integration were provided, including from Cameroon (HIV/TB), India, Malawi (HIV/TB), Nigeria (HCV/TB) and Zimbabwe (HIV/TB). Brazil, the Caribbean, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Malaysia provided additional best practices considering several different combinations of assays and integration in poster format. The components and structure of a diagnostic integration/multiplex toolkit developed to support uptake and scale-up. The deliberations generated strong key messages calling all stakeholders to work towards diagnostic integration which are being synthesised into a draft of a white paper.</p>
<p>September 2019 1st Africa Collaborative to Advance Diagnostics (AFCAD) Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (link)</p>	<p>Objective of the meeting: To advance Diagnostics for Universal Health Coverage and Africa's Health Security, and specifically to: develop an expedited process of accessing and updating diagnostics; Discuss enabling conditions for local production of diagnostics in Africa; Develop private sector partnerships for financial pathways to increase diagnostics uptake in Africa; and Launch an HIV viral load movement to meet targets in Africa as per the Heads of State and Government decision to establish AIDS Watch Africa.</p> <p>Summary: ASLM Co-Hosted the AFCAD which brought together African Union member states, implementing partners, donors, and captains of industry to this First Consultative Meeting since the launch of the AFCAD.</p> <p>Number of participants: 200</p>

DATE / EVENT / PLACE	DETAILS
	<p>Outcomes: The meeting discussed accelerating access and uptake of diagnostics in Africa in terms of expediting the evaluation, what it takes to assemble or manufacture in Africa, as well as the financing options and mechanisms for advancing diagnostics in Africa. The Africa HIV Viral Load Movement was launched in the presence of over 200 participants. First drafts listed below were developed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i) Standard evaluation protocol on diagnostics for regular programme and disease outbreaks and the selection criteria, role of Africa CDC, and processes and procedures for engagement in evaluation; ii) Terms of reference (TOR) for the Africa CDC Diagnostics Advisory Committee (DAC); and, iii) Defined selection criteria, role of Africa CDC, processes and procedures for engagement in an evaluation of the centers of excellence for evaluation of diagnostics in Africa. <p>Links: Presentations for Session 1, session 2, Special viral load session, session 3, and session 4.</p>
<p>October 2019 Waste Management Workshop at the ASLM LabCoP Addis Ababa, Ethiopia</p>	<p>Summary: ASLM worked with the Global Fund to convene key countries, waste management experts, donors and diagnostic stakeholders to discuss current field experiences, best practices, policy frameworks, challenges, and to map a concrete way forward in implementing safer, practical, and sustainable methods/technologies for the disposal of waste generated by VL/EID and related co-infections (TB, Hepatitis, HPV) testing (Meeting report - Page 26-36).</p> <p>Number of participants: 80</p> <p>Outcomes: Countries discussed best practices in waste management, common challenges faced and prioritized actions for interventions in 2020 and beyond. Manufacturers requested a framework in which they could channel their support for waste management with member countries.</p>
<p>October 2019 Dx CAB Meeting Kampala, Uganda</p>	<p>Objective of the meeting: Share experiences from first 6-month cycle and plan for the coming 12-months through the remainder of the grant.</p> <p>Summary: The second meeting of the Dx CAB focused on sharing experiences from activities conducted to date and reviewing additional technical information about diagnostics and POC testing to support advocacy activities. The meeting also provided an opportunity to develop workplans and budgets for the final 12-months of the grant.</p> <p>Number of participants: 30</p> <p>Outcomes: Dx CAB representatives shared key successes and challenges from their work over the previous 6 months and took away guidance on how to develop workplans and budgets through</p>

DATE / EVENT / PLACE	DETAILS
	September 2020. Key priorities for the next 12 months include higher level advocacy work aiming to influence inclusion of POC EID/VL as part of PEPFAR COP and Global Fund planning.
<p>December 2019 The International Conference on AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections in Africa (ICASA) Kigali, Rwanda (link)</p>	<p>Objective of the meeting: The conference theme was "AIDS FREE AFRICA - Innovation, Community, and Political Leadership" and engaged the whole continent and all stakeholders in the Post-SDG Framework, where sustainability of the response in reaching 90, 90, 90 UNAIDS will not be possible if human rights are not key priority for leadership in the context of strengthening the application of science based evidence.</p> <p>Summary: ASLM, CHAI, EGPAF, UNICEF and Unitaid hosted a satellite session on Women-Centered Diagnostics: 'A Vision for getting to universal coverage for HIV, TB and co-infections services.'</p> <p>Number of participants: 200</p> <p>Outcomes: Shared lessons learned from programmatic experiences to inform the effective and efficient implementation of current innovations in diagnostics and linkage to treatment and care for women.</p> <p>Links: The presentations from the session are available at the ASLM Resource Centre.</p>

Publications during the reporting period

Seven articles were published in peer-reviewed journals and one special issue was published:

- March 2019 – Article published at The Lancet:** [Frank, S. C. et al.](#) *Clinical effect and cost-effectiveness of incorporation of point-of-care assays into early infant HIV diagnosis programmes in Zimbabwe: a modelling study.* The Lancet HIV 6 (3): Pe182-e190, March 01, 2019. [\(link\)](#)
- May 2019 – Article published at PLoS ONE:** [Vojnov, L. et al.](#) *Performance of non-laboratory staff for diagnostic testing and specimen collection in HIV programs: A systematic review and meta-analysis.* PLoS ONE 14(5): e0216277. [\(link\)](#)
- June 2019 – Article published at The Lancet:** [Bianchi, F. et al.](#) *Evaluation of a routine point-of-care intervention for early infant diagnosis of HIV: an observational study in eight African countries.* The Lancet HIV 6(6): Pe373-e381, June 01, 2019. [\(link\)](#)
- July 2019 – Article published at PLoS ONE:** [Lamp, K. et al.](#) *Point-of-care CD4 technology invalid result rates in public health care settings across five countries.* PLoS ONE 14(7): e0219021. [\(link\)](#)

- **August 2019 –LabCulture Magazine Special Issue (ASLM):** The development of articles for the special issue of the ASLM LabCulture magazine focused on POC EID in order to close this knowledge gap with current information, perspectives, best practices and experiences. This issue was distributed among biomedical scientists, clinicians, public health officials, community and policy makers across Africa. Articles covered topics ranging from integration of diagnostics for HIV and tuberculosis to optimization of laboratory networks, as well as a Frequently Asked Questions for POC piece. Through its dissemination, and in addition to closing information gap, this publication also acts as an advocacy tool for the introduction and scale up of POC EID technologies in the continent. ([link](#))
- **October 2019 – Article published at AIDS (Wolters Kluwer Health):** *Sacks, J. A. et al. Performance of cepheid Xpert HIV-1 viral load plasma assay to accurately detect treatment failure. AIDS 33 (12): 1881-1889.* ([link](#))
- **January 2020 – Article published in Journal of the International AIDS Society:** *Vubil, Adolfo et al. Viral load assay performs comparably to early infant diagnosis assay to diagnose infants with HIV in Mozambique: a prospective observational study. Journal of the International AIDS Society 23: e25422.* ([link](#))
- **January 2020 – Article published in PLOS One:** *Lamp, K et al. Proportions of CD4test results indicating advanced HIV disease remain consistently high at primary health care facilities across four high HIV burden countries. PLoS ONE 15(1): e0226987.* ([link](#))

Three manuscripts accepted and presented at the [ICASA2019 event](#) are also worth highlighting:

- **December 2019 –Poster presentation:** *Bianchi F. et al. Comparing demand for laboratory-based and point-of-care early infant HIV diagnosis across different health care settings in Eswatini, Kenya and Zimbabwe.*
- **December 2019 –Poster presentation:** *Bianchi F. et al. Introducing routine point-of-care early infant diagnosis in eight African countries: Outcomes from interviews with clinical and laboratory personnel* (poster presentation).
- **December 2019 –Poster presentation:** *Khumalo P. et al. Routine point-of-care HIV testing at birth: results from the pilot in Eswatini. Poster presentation* (poster presentation).

Other communications/social media activities or deliverables

ASLM continued with the dissemination of advocacy, evidence and implementation materials in social media posts with links to POC news and resources. 19 e-blasts were sent to the ASLM community (up to

20,000 members). Blasts included the dissemination of a monthly POC news digest which highlights key POC resources and developments. The table below presents a summary of ASLM POC e-Blasts in 2019.

DATE	TYPE OF e-BLAST	CONTENT
Jan 2019	1) Highlights of the of UPOC Project work at ASLM 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satellite session - Integrated testing Poster presentations Oral presentations
Feb 2019	2) POC News Digest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoted Innovative Solutions to Waste Management West and Central African countries step up plans to increase access to POC EID
Mar 2019	3) POC News Digest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoted Waste Management Country case studies: Malawi, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe
	4) Highlights from March LabCoP ECHO session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covered practical considerations for implementing POC EID of HIV
Apr 2019	5) POC News Digest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waste Management policy, legal and regulatory frameworks – South Africa example
May 2019	6) POC News Digest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> POC VL testing improves HIV Viral Load suppression and Retention of Care – CROI Presentation Evaluation of routine POC intervention for EID OF HIV: an observation study in Eight African Countries Potential HIV POC Drug resistance
June 2019	7) POC News Digest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Save the Date promotions of two IAS 2019 satellite sessions
	8) ASLM Monthly Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Included links to POC activities
July 2019	9) ASLM Monthly Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Included links to POC activities
	10) Save-the-Date IAS 2019 sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoted two satellite sessions that focused on POC and novel innovations in molecular diagnostics that ASLM and WHO would be co-hosting at the 10th IAS Conference on HIV Science (IAS 2019) to be held in Mexico City, Mexico from 21-24 July 2019 Promoted the Launch HIV Molecular Diagnostics Toolkit to Improve Access to Viral Load Testing and Infant Diagnosis at IAS2019
Aug 2019	11) Announcing the LabCulture, Issue 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> POC Technologies
	12) Highlights from ‘Molecular Diagnostics Integration Global Meeting’, held 10-12 July 2019 in Geneva and hosted by ASLM and the WHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diagnostics experts and leaders convened to deliberate and forge a way forward to improve and increase access to integrated multiplex technologies and determine how they can be translated into public health policy and impact patients globally. Highlights of the key elements in the integration white paper in development
Sep 2019	13) POC News Digest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoted the newly published issue briefs on POC viral load (VL) and integrated testing Promoted discussions as well as resources from satellite sessions held at the 10th IAS Conference on HIV Science (IAS 2019) in Mexico City, Mexico, from 21-24 July 2019.
Oct 2019	14) ASLM Monthly Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Included links to POC activities

DATE	TYPE OF e-BLAST	CONTENT
Nov 2019	15) POC News Digest - now Advancing Diagnostics in Africa (ADA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoted select updates from the first consultation of the Africa Collaborative to Advance Diagnostics (AFCAD) to meet the continent's health agenda, held 21-24 September 2019 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Including the Piloting the Collaborative Registration Procedure for In-Vitro Diagnostics (IVDs) in Africa
	16) ASLM Monthly Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Included links to POC activities
	17) Save the date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoted the session on Women-Centered Diagnostics on to be held on the 2nd December at ICASA2019 in Kigali, Rwanda
Dec 2019	18) ASLM Monthly Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Included links to POC activities
Jan 2020	19) Highlights from the December 2019 LabCoP ECHO session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Global Fund 2020-2022 Funding Cycle Opportunities for Laboratory Strengthening, Including Waste Management

II. Strengthening Buy-in and Relationships with Key Stakeholders

By means of our joint advocacy efforts and sharing of evidence and communication materials, we have sought to strengthen stakeholder investment in and endorsement of POC diagnostics. Although there is still work to be done in terms of strengthening buy-in from some stakeholders (e.g., Global Fund), we have had important successes this past year, most notably with manufacturers, PEPFAR, and the laboratory community. The table below includes the primary stakeholders that were targeted in 2019 as well as the nature and impact of our engagement with them.

STAKEHOLDER	NATURE OF ENGAGEMENT AND IMPACT	EXAMPLES OF IMPACT
Manufacturers	CHAI and EGPAF played leading roles supporting the implementation of the Rome Action Plan during engagements with manufacturers and with the Global Diagnostics Forecasting Group, such as the AMDS forecasting meeting. They also negotiated with manufacturers successfully refining platforms and improving commitments towards higher affordability and viable presence in the POC market.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cepheid GeneXpert: \$14.90 (EXW) for HIV VL, EID, HCV, HBV, HPV with surcharge in select countries Abbott conventional: <\$12 all-inclusive (DAP) for HIV VL and EID in select countries; \$5 (EXW) for HPV or \$7.99 all-inclusive (DAP) for HPV for select countries Roche: <\$12 all-inclusive (DAP) for HIV VL and EID* in select countries; \$8.90 (CPT) for HCV, HBV, HPV; \$6.90 (FCA) for HPV in select countries Hologic: \$12 all-inclusive (DAP) across assays; <\$11 all-inclusive (DAP) all-inclusive for HIV VL and EID in select countries; \$9 all-inclusive (DAP) all-inclusive for HPV in select countries
PEPFAR Global	UNICEF, CHAI, and ASLM sustained engagement with OGAC, CDC, and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> POC diagnostics (for support VL testing among pregnant and breastfeeding women and

STAKEHOLDER	NATURE OF ENGAGEMENT AND IMPACT	EXAMPLES OF IMPACT
	<p>USAID through regular meetings throughout the year to increase endorsement and investment in POC EID/POC diagnostics at the Global level. CHAI has also convened in Integrated Diagnostics Consortium meetings to analyze markets and supply-side strategies, including required investments and timeline for market stabilization.</p>	<p>infants and for virologically non-suppressed patients was included in COP 2020 guidance document</p>
<p>Global Fund</p>	<p>Using advocacy and evidence packages, face-to-face meetings in Geneva were targeted to nurture and raise financial support in POC EID diagnostics, forecast commodities, and guide the use of budgeting tools.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to support POC EID and viral load in selected countries
<p>WHO/CDC (Global)</p>	<p>Globally, CHAI and EGPAF continue to produce evidence summaries, advocacy briefs, and peer reviewed publications by means of synergies and integrated testing meetings. Also, they publish and/or share findings from operational research with WHO guidelines committee to inform updates of normative guidance on POC EID. In this context, additional evidence on POC EID/POC diagnostics was indeed shared with WHO.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seven articles were published in peer-reviewed journals (listed above, in specific item of this report – “Publications during the reporting period”)
<p>WHO/CDC (AFRO)</p>	<p>In Africa, engagement to support roll out of POC EID, was intensified, as well as advocacy activities in collaboration with WHO and CDC, making use of implementation guidance and the toolkit. Additionally, another important engagement is WCA Laboratory Systems and POC Diagnostics training of trainers. In this context, POC EID/POC diagnostics was endorsed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • POC EID undergoing introduction/scaled-up through UNICEF in Chad, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon
<p>Laboratory Community</p>	<p>ASLM has led comprehensive digital dissemination of advocacy, evidence and implementation materials, workshops, and virtual trainings, using evidence summaries, and advocacy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • POC EID introduced and/or scaled-up in 5 non-project countries (POC leads/teams from 10 West and Central Africa countries in UNICEF POC project in WCA attend ASLM webinars. A total of 6 non-project countries (Brazil,

STAKEHOLDER	NATURE OF ENGAGEMENT AND IMPACT	EXAMPLES OF IMPACT
	<p>briefs. They also champion the implementation guidance and the toolkit, including QA tools. Moreover, ASLM Lab Cop ECHO sessions (ASLM webinars), their website, and e-blasts with POC updates and information complement their endorsement on POC EID/POC diagnostics.</p>	<p>Georgia, India, Malaysia, Moldova, Peru, Ukraine), joined 8 project countries at the Geneva Global integration Meeting in July 2019 and outlined next steps for implementing diagnostic integration in their countries.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9 Countries developed individual Waste Management strategies at the LabCoP (Meeting report - Page 33-36)
<p>Civil Society</p>	<p>UNICEF established a partnership with GNP+ to move forward with civil society engagement and demand generation activities for POC EID. By creating a strategic framework, a resource pack, and its dissemination, and by means of advocacy briefs and human-interest stories, this engagement will increase the demand and commitment for POC EID/POC diagnostics.</p> <p>By means of advocacy and diagnostics literacy materials CHAI actively participated on Community Advisory Board (CAB) meetings (following the development of its concept in 2018). This type of engagement increased the demand for POC diagnostics.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two meetings for the Diagnostics Community Advisory Board (CAB) held (in March and October 2019)

III. Challenges and Solutions

Some of the key challenges we encountered and proposed solutions for doing things differently in 2020 are presented in the table below.

ISSUE	CHALLENGES	PROPOSED SOLUTIONS
<p>Global Fund</p>	<p>Global Fund engagement could have been much stronger and better coordinated</p>	<p>Improve partner coordination with Unitaid leadership</p>
<p>Partner coordination</p>	<p>Inefficiencies due to staff turnover: gaps in the POC teams, causing loss of institutional knowledge and changing focal points for communications work, as well as some delays with assets</p>	<p>Better planning during transition phases of offboarding and onboarding new staff, and developing a stronger Digital Workplace for the collaborative work to take place, aiming for better business continuity</p>

ISSUE	CHALLENGES	PROPOSED SOLUTIONS
Conference planning	Our chosen theme overlapped with other key partners such as DNDi, and we had to rework the focus of ICASA2019	Timely consult with other grantees in similar work, to look for areas of synergies at International conferences
3 rd party transfers	Delays in reaching an agreement on the 5 th amendment affected implementation of communication activities at the country level supported by UNICEF from 2018 to Q2 2019	Activities were accelerated on the second half of the year

IV. Priorities for 2020

It is important to note that UCPOC has entered its final year and is expected to formally close in September 2020. Thus, expectations, objectives and activities in 2020 in the joint communication framework must be adjusted to account for project transition and grant closure.

To take stock of the many challenges faced, solutions proposed, and lessons learned during project implementation, documentation will be jointly generated and widely disseminated through different channels.

To improve sustainability of POC diagnostics, engagement of CSOs, will be a priority in 2020. These engagements will seek to increase demand for POC EID and VL testing by increasing diagnostic literacy among beneficiaries and supporting advocacy efforts for increased access to POC diagnostics. The strategic framework and resource pack to promote civil society engagement and community demand creation for POC EID being developed through a partnership with GNP+ will be finalized, disseminated and piloted in Malawi and Senegal before broader dissemination, particularly to Francophone countries in west and central Africa in partnership with UNAIDS. This work will be coordinated with Dx CAB led by CHAI.

CHAI will also be leading the development and submission of a case study, commentary and multiple manuscripts in 2020, to include:

- EID Alternative Entry Point Testing (AEPT) in Uganda
- Multi-disease testing pilots in Malawi and Zimbabwe
- POC VL feasibility from Life Study in Mozambique
- POC VL in pregnant women in Zimbabwe
- POC EID and VL M&E
- POC EID scale up and transition
- POC EID, paediatric case finding, or integrated testing (topic to be confirmed)

CHAI will also continue to support the operations of the IDC and its meetings, including developing and facilitating IDC meeting agendas and discussions, facilitating and developing reports for IDC calls and meetings, and other related activities. Additionally, CHAI will develop and implement advocacy materials and activities that build support for IDC amongst key existing and new partners potential IDC members with the aim of increasing the profile and support for the IDC.

Reaching the ultimate goal of financial savings from speedy clinical decision-making requires increased access to high quality diagnostics that can be achieved from an optimised national diagnostic laboratory network. Specifically, in 2020, ASLM will aggressively conduct communication and advocacy activities in 5 focus areas:

1. Diagnostic laboratory network optimization
 - a. Laboratories mapping of testing and referral sites
 - b. Diagnostic integration and expanded menus on multiplex platforms
 - c. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Data Systems
 - d. All-Inclusive Pricing
2. POC and near POC testing - EID and Viral Load
3. Waste management
4. Collaborative registration procedure for diagnostics
5. Advanced HIV disease diagnostics (AHD)

UNICEF will continue to coordinate communication efforts throughout this final year and the primary goal will be to jointly communicate as much as possible about the UCPOC work and to continue the introduction/scale-up of POC EID and viral load in Western and Central Africa:

- As mentioned above, a significant focus will be to continue the engagement of CSOs through partnerships with GNP+, starting with guiding participants to Health GAP webinars on the PEPFAR COP process to broader audiences to add POC and avoid redundancy, and the release of the strategic framework to inform and guide action to support POC EID among them, which will be then deployed in two pilot countries (Malawi and Senegal).
- A case study about DNO, which is becoming a standard requirement by long-term donors like Global Fund and PEPFAR to approve additional funding for diagnostics (conventional and POC) will also be developed. This case study will be a multi-country product about DNO process and the impact of its implementation, aiming at donors, leadership in the countries/MoH (to recognize the value of doing this), and end-users in the laboratories (for resource optimization). The importance of this product will be to manage expectations, because there is still a lot of misunderstanding about the amount of effort required, and what can be accomplished. This case study will also be an inclusive piece, with other stakeholders working on the same work stream, highlighting the nature of the national level and collaborative work required to implement it.

- A video about Malawi's integrated testing, to be released in time for the World Health Assembly (17th-21st May 2020). The video will aim to demonstrate the impact of multiplexing (testing for various diseases) using POC devices. They are being tested for HIV, TB and, more recently, HPV, which aligns well with the relevant efforts from WHO to eliminate cervical cancer.
- Produce a technical piece in writing, focusing on lessons learned for other countries implementing POC EID, with emphasis on challenges and solutions, aiming to set the stage for others.
- Continue to introduce/scale-up POC EID and viral load in Western and Central Africa: Chad, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon. Importantly, this work to expand access to POC infant testing and treatment is intended to be catalytic. UNICEF is simultaneously exploring synergies and partnerships to take this innovation to scale in the region.
- Finally, produce a 'wrap-up' piece, for a more lay audience, with stories of how this project has succeeded, highlighting the impact of the project.