



Summary of 2020 (Q1 & Q2) Joint UCPOC Communications Activities

August 14th, 2020

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I. Overview of Achievements

The catalytic investment in POC EID and VL technologies by the UCPOC Project has shown significant results over the years, which have been carefully detailed in our semi-and annual reports. The yearly and thoughtful planning of Joint Communications Frameworks, agreed by all partners, enabled us to commit time and effort to leverage our collective strengths and build a growing body of evidence in the diagnostics space, and communicate broadly about it. Moreover, we were able to sustain engagement with key stakeholders and align them with our goals.

In 2020, CHAI, ASLM, and UNICEF continued to advocate POC EID and VL technologies with global and local key stakeholders for a broader endorsement and uptake in every opportunity we had. Our goal was to ensure integration of POC diagnostics within optimized diagnostics networks, to improve transition to national governments and long-term funders, enable sustainability of POC diagnostics where it was already implemented, and, to catalyze implementation in new countries.

However, we must acknowledge the impact and disruption of our plans caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and its response during Q1 and Q2 of 2020. On one hand., our organizations had to adapt and change to the new reality, which caused delays, loss of efficiencies, and cancellation of planned deliverables. But on the other hand, our expertise in public health, (multi-) disease diagnostics, and diagnostics network optimization was vital to guide our organizations response and support to Governments and other partners, during this challenging period. The focal points of this project in all offices have relevant

experience which is currently in high demand: alongside evidence-based public health measures, therapeutics and vaccines, innovative diagnostics were and still are very much needed, in record time, at record scale, and broad access to save millions of lives and directly support the world in its path to recovery. In this context, much of our work shifted focus considerably, although valuable and still connected to the principles of the UCPOC Project.

It is also important to note that UNICEF, CHAI and ASLM reached different stages in the life cycle of their grants in 2020. UNICEF and ASLM are about to close the project in the ten countries where it supported implementation, and the communication assets and activities to be delivered/already delivered are well aligned to their end of the grant status.

Even with all the changes we have experienced, resources produced this year will still provide long-term value, as important advocacy and technical materials were published and presented, as detailed below.

A) 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

CHAI, ASLM, and UNICEF worked closely with Unitaid in the joint production and dissemination of POC knowledge products and communication assets as detailed in our Joint 2020 Communication Framework.

During this period, CHAI continued to develop manuscripts as planned (list presented below). The manuscripts on the impact of POC EID and VL have been drafted and shared with WHO for initial feedback, and the final updated manuscript will be again shared with WHO to feed into the GDG process later this year.

CHAI also supported Unitaid and OGAC to convene the Integrated Diagnostics Consortium (IDC). IDC's Diagnostics Network Optimization (DNO) Taskforce was convened in February 2020 to coordinate DNO efforts across key partners. The DNO Taskforce call resulted in partners involved in DNO sharing their DNO plans both on the call and using the DNO Tracker, which is an Excel based tool that tracks DNO status and scope of activities by partner. While IDC meetings were de-prioritized as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the IDC did meet again in July 2020 to resume coordination efforts across stakeholders, including updates on Cepheid GeneXpert, Abbott mPima, DNO, the PEPFAR RFP, and the impact of COVID-19 on HIV/HPV/TB testing.

Additionally, while face-to-face meetings were limited during Q2, Healthcare Worker ('HCW') trainings were able to shift to online trainings in some cases, and MoH communications were able to continue, though constrained by travel and meeting restrictions. The Diagnostics Community Advisory Board ('Dx CAB') also was initially limited in meeting as well but continued via shifting to a virtual platform.

During this period, ASLM scheduled the dissemination and promotion of implementation POC EID/Viral load, Advance HIV Disease Diagnostics, multi-disease diagnostics among other key project areas at the "ASLM Lab Community of Practice – LabCoP", which is an online platform that aims to share best practices

on POC EID and VL implementation, application of multi disease diagnostics and network optimization among countries in Africa. Below is a list of sessions held in 2020, so far:

MONTH	TITLE AND SUMMARY	PRESENTER INSTITUTION
Jan	<p>PEPFAR Country Operational Plan (COP) 2020: laboratory systems strengthening priorities</p> <p>Encouraged countries to include key project areas into PEPFAR COP to ensure transition of UCPOC activities beyond the project such as Improve access to VL testing via use of dry blood specimens and point-of-care testing to support VL testing among pregnant and breastfeeding women and infants and for virologically non-suppressed patients. Also, to increase access to testing for HIV and tuberculosis through Diagnostic Network Optimization and multiplex use of platforms to increase instrument utilization rate and produce better outcomes for both diseases.</p>	PEPFAR
Feb	<p>Scaling up Advanced HIV Disease screening and patient management</p> <p>Emphasised that both laboratory-based and POC-based CD4 reflexive testing, coupled with provider-initiated requests for serum cryptococcal antigen and urine tuberculosis lipoarabinomannan tests should be performed for all patients with CD4 cell counts >200cells/ul.</p>	MSF
Apr	<p>Maintaining HIV & TB Testing in the Context of the COVID-19 (deck 1, deck2, Q&A)</p> <p>Promoted integration of diagnostics on multiplex instruments, in order to maintain essential HIV /TB testing services during the COVID-19 Pandemic</p>	WHO & PEPFAR
	<p>Implementing Fast Turn-Around Lab Testing for Control of COVID-19</p> <p>Covered testing strategies, scale-up, the three stages of testing, supply chain considerations, and the most effective ways to reach patients at risk with the available limited testing resources.</p>	CHAI
May	<p>Key Considerations for Expanding COVID-19 PCR Diagnostic Capacity to the Subnational Level: Ethiopian Experience</p> <p>Promoted integration of diagnostics on multiplex instruments, the role networks, and of existing investments such as POC/near POC in the context of the pandemic.</p>	ASLM, Ethiopia MoH

ASLM also continued to host the Waste Management community of practice to disseminate best practices for POC EID and VL and Health Care Waste Management in general. Below is a list of the Waste Management ECHO sessions held in 2020, so far:

MONTH	TITLE	PRESENTER INSTITUTION
Jan	Roche Diagnostics Int. Best Practices for Waste Handling	Roche Molecular Diagnostics
Feb	The Assessment of WM Practices in VL & EID Labs in Kenya	Kenya MoH
Mar	Hologic - Best Practices for Waste Handling	Hologic
May	SARS-CoV-2 laboratory biosafety guidance	US CDC
Jun	Technical Brief on Sustainable Health Care Waste Management	Global Fund

ASLM continues to populate a Resource Centre presenting the [latest resources](#) of POC EID. Relevant POC topics continue to be relevant and debated on the ASLM LabCoP [WhatsApp group](#), a 24/7 platform of

knowledge sharing and interaction of multidisciplinary cadres. Key resources were added throughout the year, on such topics as: [Systematic Review of the Accuracy of Plasma Preparation Tubes \(PPTs\) for HIV Viral Load Testing](#) which evaluated the accuracy of PPTs for HIV VL testing, [Waste Management Training Sessions](#), the [GeneXpert Integration Cost Savings Tool](#) developed by CHAI to assess the financial benefits of integrating tuberculosis (TB), HIV, and HCV testing on the GeneXpert machine, and [Mozambique's Excel-based tool](#) as a country example of a comprehensive diagnostic network optimization or mapping tool. With a listserv of up to 20,000 members, the platform is a very effective outlet to disseminate up-to-date and curated POC EID and VL information. As for the anticipated promotion by ASLM of the new WHO QA guide for Quality Assurance for POC testing did not happen as WHO is still yet to release the new guideline.

Another set of resources, the POC Toolkit ([English](#), [French](#)) continues to be disseminated, being housed at the UNICEF Children and AIDS [website](#). It has been particularly useful to the work being developed with CSOs (more detail below), and to the work UNICEF is leading with catalytic investment to introduce and scale up POC HIV EID in ten countries in Western and Central Africa (Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Ghana, Mali, and Nigeria).

UNICEF played a leading role in coordinating the development of a video ([English](#), [French](#)) about diagnostics integration of TB, HIV EID and VL, and HPV. The video had the participation of UNICEF NYHQ, UNICEF Malawi Country Office, Malawi's Ministry of Health, patients' testimonies, and Unitaid. Accessing diagnostic services has been a challenge in Malawi for a long time, and the video aimed at presenting UCPOC Project focal points' experience and best practices using the evolution of multiplex technologies to provide faster diagnostics services for different diseases by using the same instruments and by coordinating joint efforts of different disease programmes at the Ministry of Health level. By working together, they have demonstrated that each programme can benefit and co-exist without negative impacts if these platforms are shared. This material was presented at the AIDS 2020 Virtual conference (more details below).

It is important to note that EGPAF, a former partner in this Project which has closed in 2019, has been contributing with 'Lessons Learned' modules on their website ("[Lessons Learned from Integrating Point-of-Care testing Technologies for Early Infant Diagnosis of HIV into National Diagnostic Networks](#)"), from introducing POC technologies for EID of HIV into the national laboratory systems of nine Sub-Saharan African Countries. They have released three modules in 2020 (other three modules are coming soon), capturing key knowledge that can be used by national program managers, international implementing partners, and others to introduce or scale up point-of-care early infant diagnosis for HIV POC EID. Each module suggests good practices, activities, and approaches for a specific input area and includes links to guidance documents, tools, and references that can be used to support key activities described in the module.

B) 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

UNICEF procures and supplies POC tests for HIV EID and VL testing, focusing its support on pregnant women, mothers, infants, children, and adolescents. UNICEF Supply Division produced a new update, "[HIV early infant diagnosis and viral load point of care diagnostics: market and supply update - A market and supply updated on point-of-care \(POC\) tests for HIV early infant diagnosis \(EID\) and viral load \(VL\) testing](#)" released in March 2020.

This note provides market and supply information on these products. UNICEF's procurement of POC tests for HIV EID and VL testing has grown substantially since 2015 to reach 445,342 tests by 2019, of which approximately sixty per cent were for HIV EID POC tests. UNICEF continually encourages manufacturers to increase affordability to facilitate growth in demand and support countries to scale up their use of innovative POC technologies for HIV EID and VL testing.

Engagement with CSOs to promote demand creation

CHAI, ASLM, and UNICEF continue to work together at the global level to ensure complementarity of efforts to strengthen the civil society engagement for POC diagnostics, to raise awareness and increase demand for POC HIV diagnostics.

The Diagnostics Community Advisory Board ('Dx CAB') introduced by CHAI continued to be functional during the first half of 2020, though each community representative had to adjust their activities in light of COVID-19. All in-country activities were modified to adhere to national guidelines for the COVID-19 response. For example, many previously planned in-person meetings and trainings had to be canceled/postponed initially, but others were moved to a virtual platform to continue to meet. One such shift to a virtual platform was the creation of a virtual community consultation forum focused on diagnostics, which was held in June 2020, in collaboration with Treatment CAB. The Dx CAB also assessed COVID-19 impacts on POC testing as country data became available in Q2. While, at present, it is projected to be unlikely that the Dx CAB will conduct an in-person wrap up meeting at the end of 2020, the meeting may shift to a virtual platform.

UNICEF has a partnership Programme Agreement with the Global Networks of People Living with HIV (GNP+) who bring specific expertise to the collaboration, representing the experiences, priorities and voices of parents/caregivers of children living with HIV. GNP+ has an established relationship with MANET+ in Malawi and RNP+ in Senegal, the two networks of people living with HIV, which helped developing the Strategic Framework and Resource Pack materials produced under this agreement (see table below, with links to the resources in English and in French). GNP+ works with networks of PLHIV across the globe and has a database of over 140 networks where the Strategic Framework and Resource Pack were shared – this is the unique reach to the target audience for these materials that only GNP+ actively maintains and engages.

RESOURCE	ENGLISH	FRENCH
Strategic Framework	Link	Link
Advocates FAQ	Link	Link
Caregivers FAQ	Link	Link
Job Aid for Peer Supporters	Link	Link
Guidance for Policy Makers	Link	Link
Caregivers Poster	Link	Link
Advocates Brief (PEPFAR Process)	Link	-

The Strategic Framework, entitled “NO TIME TO WAIT! Action to support Point-of-Care Early Infant Diagnosis for community-based organizations” was finalized in March 2020 and GNP+, with UNICEF, held a successful webinar on June 17th 2020, to promote the Strategic Framework and Resource Pack ([slide deck](#), meeting recording [link](#) and access password: 2W+o*8H\$). 116 people registered for the webinar and 47 attended. The webinar recording was shared to all those that registered as well as the GNP+ mailing list, and UNICEF’s POC focal points. GNP+ has received positive feedback on the framework and several community-based organizations have asked for support in implementing it. The Strategic Framework and Resource Pack have been shared on all GNP+ social media platforms, Facebook (reaching 6,606 members), Twitter (reaching 5,212 members) and Instagram (reaching 360 members). The resources have also been showcased at the UNAIDS-led Health Innovation Exchange (HIEx) on 1st - 2nd July 2020 (reaching 2,000 participants). During the HIEx, GNP+ presented a short but very instructive [animation video](#), summarizing the resources available in an engaging and relatable way.

UNICEF Country Offices continued to advocate for POC testing and diagnostics at the national level through active engagement with the Government and supporting the transition of the funding to the Government and other long-term funders. In many countries, as reported previously, PEPFAR and/or Global Fund have committed funding support for POC EID as Unitaid funding transitions out (e.g., Cameroon, DRC, Malawi, Senegal, Uganda, Zimbabwe). However, in 2020, we have added support to these activities from GNP+, as they have shared the [advocates brief](#) (also listed above) with advocates during civil society pre-meetings, via social media and in person during the first PEPFAR CoP meeting, on February 17th - 21st 2020, in Johannesburg (Group 1: Nigeria, Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Ukraine, DRC, Western Africa Region). Importantly, this brief was endorsed by ASLM, Y+, ICW, Aidsfonds and HealthGap, too.

One impressive result from these efforts was that during the opening of the CoP meeting on February 17th 2020, Ambassador Deborah Birx’s messaging was aligned to our brief (see her [slides](#), for instance: “Essential role of peers and CSOs in providing insights and services and importance of qualitative data” – slide 49; and “Once you know who you are missing you have to match your testing strategy to those missing; Optimizing Testing to Efficiently Find the Remaining Positives” – slide 49), as well as the slides of the Civil Society Representative Amanda Banda, which presented advocacy and information about POC EID, directly drawing from our brief (see the fifth slide of her [presentation](#)).

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. Importantly, GNP+ and ASLM

held a successful webinar on July 29th 2020, also to promote the Strategic Framework and Resource Pack (meeting recording [link](#) and [slide deck](#)), and 242 people attended the webinar.

Lastly, although it hasn't happened yet, it's relevant to highlight that on August 18th, GNP+ will lead the only session focusing on children and HIV to be presented during the "[HIV2020 Online Conference – Community Reclaiming The Global Response](#)". The session is called "[Time is running out for Children Living with HIV!](#)". It will open a space to discuss the fact that the world is failing children with HIV, that progress on preventing vertical transmission has stalled and, in some countries, regressed significantly. Importantly, it will bring attention to Early Infant Diagnosis, as well as treatment enrolment, which have flatlined at low levels, leaving the needs of those aged 0-14 ignored. This session will draw on lived experiences that highlight the central importance of community-led solutions to address the urgent priorities for children living with HIV, from prevention, testing, treatment and care including addressing support needs for parents and caregivers. The session is supported by ICW, Y+, Aidsfonds, ITPC, PATA, HealthGap, Coalition of Children affected by HIV, and UNICEF.

The role of communities in the success of POC diagnostics implementation and demand creation is vital. Moving forward, we intend to continue to strengthen informed engagement of communities and introduce them as an integral part, with the support of GNP+, including women and young people living with HIV. More of this work is presented below, under the 'Priorities for Q3 and Q4 in 2020' item of this Report.

Meetings and conferences during the reporting period

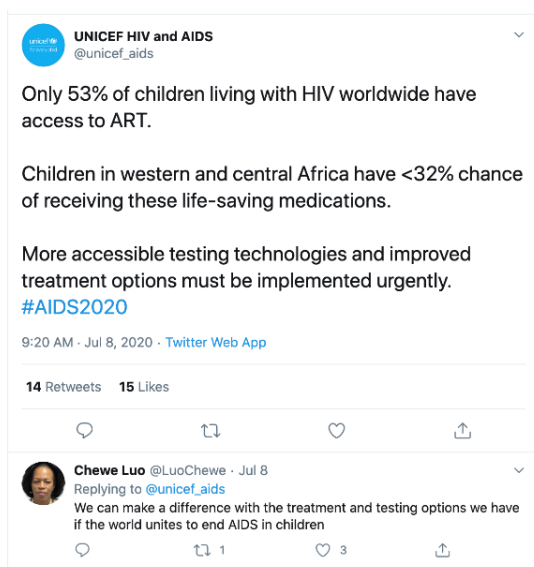
DATE / EVENT / LEAD	DETAILS
<p>July 6th, 2020</p> <p>AIDS2020 Virtual/23rd International AIDS Conference</p> <p>Satellite Session - UNICEF</p>	<p>"Business Unusual: Catalytic innovations to accelerate HIV results for pregnant women, children and adolescents" (link)</p> <p>Objective of the meeting: Not only AIDS 2020: Virtual showcased the latest developments in HIV research, the conference presented brand-new data on COVID-19 and HIV, showcasing how HIV informs and intersects with the COVID-19 pandemic. The conference gave an innovative and interactive global platform to influence discussions on HIV science, research and policy, bringing delegates from around the world together, connecting virtually to advance the HIV response.</p> <p>Speakers: Henrietta Fore, United States, UNICEF NYHQ; Alex Costa, United States, UNICEF NYHQ; Aaron Mdolo, Malawi, UNICEF Malawi Country Office; Brown Chiwandira, Malawi, Malawi Ministry of Health; Kuzani Mbendera, Malawi, Malawi Ministry of Health; Smiljka de Lussigny, Switzerland, Unitaid; Nande Putta, United States, UNICEF NYHQ; Stephen Ayisi-Addo, Programme Manager, National AIDS/STI Control Programme; Ghana; Sudha Balakrishnan, United States, UNICEF NYHQ; Kouame Konan Blaise, Côte d'Ivoire, Ministry of Health and Public Hygiene, Government of Côte d'Ivoire; Joseph Crispell, UK, Data Science Hub- Glasgow, DfID/Office for National Statistics; Alex Hutchison, UK, Data for Children</p>

DATE / EVENT / LEAD	DETAILS
	<p>Collaborative with UNICEF, Edinburgh; Albert King, UK, The Scottish Government.</p> <p>Satellite Session Summary: AIDS 2020 celebrates the resilience of people who overcome barriers, who achieve great personal and professional goals, and who advocate for rights in the fight against HIV. Much in the same way, health and community systems must be resilient by increasing their capacity to change, adapt, and continue to develop in response to ever changing needs. Every day almost 1,000 adolescent girls and young women acquire HIV, approximately half of the children living with HIV have access to ART, and, in much of the world, only about half of the pregnant women living with HIV receive ARVs to prevent HIV transmission to their child. Responding to these gaps is complex. And much in the same way that a community response is more resilient than an isolated individual – our response to these continued gaps requires integration of innovations at multiple points in health and community systems. Innovations in data, operational analysis, and diagnostics present opportunities to strengthen the resilience of health systems that are currently struggling to meet the needs of mothers, children, and adolescents. The following presenters shared exciting innovations that use technologies to catalyze diagnostics for multiple diseases, improve data to inform decision makers about geographic and population prioritization, and identify solutions for programmatic gaps and barriers for paediatric service delivery.</p> <p>Number of participants: 684 (number of views of on-demand content: 91; number of views during the scheduled satellite session: 469; number of views of replay: 124).</p>
<p>July 9th, 2020</p> <p>AIDS2020 Virtual/23rd International AIDS Conference</p> <p>Satellite Session - ASLM</p>	<p>“Optimized diagnostic networks key to responding the COVID-19 - Doing more with less” (link)</p> <p>Objective of the meeting: Not only AIDS 2020: Virtual showcased the latest developments in HIV research, the conference presented brand-new data on COVID-19 and HIV, showcasing how HIV informs and intersects with the COVID-19 pandemic. The conference gave an innovative and interactive global platform to influence discussions on HIV science, research and policy, bringing delegates from around the world together, connecting virtually to advance the HIV response.</p> <p>Speakers: George Alemmji, Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator and Health Diplomacy; Nqobile Ndlovu, Chief Executive Officer, ASLM; Smiljka de Lussigny, Project Manager, Unitaid, Switzerland; Charles Atem, Programme Manager, CHAI, Cameroon; Raiva Simbi, Ministry of Health, Zimbabwe; Kingston Omo-Emmanuel, USAID, Nigeria; Lara Vojnov, WHO</p> <p>Summary: Optimized national diagnostic networks are key to increasing access to high-quality diagnostics. With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, some Sub-Saharan African countries have leveraged more than a decade of investments in strengthening and</p>

DATE / EVENT / LEAD	DETAILS
	<p>optimizing their diagnostics networks, particularly for HIV and TB, to quickly adopt and integrate SARS-2/COVID-19 testing across existing conventional and point-of-care (POC) platforms. This session focuses on the impact of optimized diagnostics networks in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, and how diagnostic capacity mapping, data management, sample transport, and waste management have helped drive uptake of SARS-2/COVID-19 testing.</p> <p>Number of participants: 362 (number of views of on-demand content: 246; number of views during the scheduled satellite session: 116).</p>

A significant accomplishment of the Satellite Session led by ASLM is that its presentations were mentioned in the [Lancet's feature summary](#) of the AIDS 2020 Virtual: *"Expertise gained in dealing with HIV have also been turned to the COVID-19 response. Charles Atem (Clinton Health Access Initiative, Cameroon), Omo-Emmanuel Ughweroghene Kingston (USAID, Nigeria), and Raiva Simbi (Ministry of Health, Zimbabwe) discussed experiences of optimising diagnostics networks for HIV and tuberculosis and adaptation of these to SARS-CoV-2"*.

Also during the AIDS 2020 Virtual conference, UNICEF made sure to be present via social media and some of the tweets related to HIV testing (on Jul 7th and on Jul 10th) are presented below:



Publications during the reporting period

Six articles were submitted and/or published in peer-reviewed journals:

- **January 2020 – Article published at the Journal of the International AIDS Society.** [Vubil, A. et al. Viral load assay performs comparably to early infant diagnosis assay to diagnose infants with](#)

HIV in Mozambique: a prospective observational study. J. Int. AIDS Soc. 23 (1): e25422. doi:10.1002/jia2.25422, 08 January, 2020 ([link](#)).

- **April 2020 – Article published at Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes.** Moyo, Faith, et al. *Characterizing Viral Load Burden Among HIV-Infected Women Around the Time of Delivery.* JAIDS 83 (4): 390–396, April 1, 2020 ([link](#)).
- **August 2020 – Draft submission** (undergoing internal institutional reviews). Wang, M. et al. *Integrating TB and HIV testing using GeneXpert in Malawi and Zimbabwe: Feasibility and impact of providing multi-disease, near-point-of-care services.*
- **August 2020 – Draft submission** (undergoing internal institutional reviews). Boeke, C. et al. *Point-of-care testing can achieve same-day infant HIV testing results and rapid ART initiation: Results from government programs across six African countries.*
- **August 2020 – Draft submission** (undergoing internal institutional reviews). Boeke, C. et al. *Evaluation of near point-of-care viral load implementation in public health facilities across seven countries in sub-Saharan Africa.*
- **August 2020 – Draft submission** (but undergoing internal institutional reviews). Odhiambo, C. O.¹; Ondoa, P.¹; Mataka, A.¹; Martin, M.²; Bressler, D.²; Lecher, S.². *Recent efforts to address HIV viral load and early infant diagnosis waste management in sub-Saharan Africa.*

Other Publications:

- **Lab Culture Article** – A waste management article focussing on Molecular testing for COVID-19, HIV and TB is in progress and will be featured in a special issue for COVID-19 Diagnostics.
- **LabCoP Recipe** – A draft on best practices (known as LabCoP recipes) is near final and will be available in by September.

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. Seven e-blasts were sent to the ASLM community (with a listserv of 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 and social media presence in 2020, so far.

¹ African Society for Laboratory Medicine, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

² International Laboratory Branch, US Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, Georgia, United States of America

DATE	TYPE	CONTENT
Jan	e-Blast	<p>ASLM's Advancing Diagnostics in Africa January 2020</p> <p>Updates from the 2019 International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA) held 1-7 Dec 2019 in Kigali, Rwanda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women centered Diagnostics joint session • Session on Preventing Deaths from Advanced HIV Disease • Viral Load (VL) scale-up resources recently added to ASLM's website database • Scaling up HIV Viral Load Monitoring in Manicaland, Zimbabwe: challenges and opportunities from the field • Practical Resources for the Implementation and Use of Viral Load: lessons from the OPP-ERA Project
	Social Media	<p>ASLM's Advancing Diagnostics in Africa January 2020</p>
Feb	e-Blast	<p>ASLM's Advancing Diagnostics in Africa February 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point-of-care HPV Molecular Diagnostics for a Test-and-Treat Model in High-Risk HIV Populations • POC Urine Lipoarabinomannan Tests for Tuberculosis Diagnosis: A Status Update • Rapid Communication: Molecular Assays as Initial Tests for the Diagnosis of Tuberculosis and Rifampicin Resistance • Global Fund and PEPFAR Global Priorities for Laboratory Systems Strengthening • The updated list of WHO prequalified in vitro diagnostic products can be found here
	e-Blast	<p>ASLM Monthly Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included link to Jan issue of Advancing Diagnostics in Africa Newsletter • Link to new resources: • Considerations for Developing a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Viral Load Scale-Up and Implementation • Presentations from the Women-Centered Diagnostics Session at ICASA2019
	Social Media	<p>ASLM's Advancing Diagnostics in Africa February 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SOCIALAB aims to improve maternal and child health in low- and middle-income countries - Twitter • SOCIALAB aims to improve maternal and child health in low- and middle-income countries - FB • When infants living with HIV are untreated • Urgent action needed on point-of-care early infant diagnosis - Twitter • Urgent action needed on point-of-care early infant diagnosis - FB

DATE	TYPE	CONTENT
Mar	e-Blast	<p>ASLM Monthly Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included link to Feb issue of Advancing Diagnostics in Africa Newsletter • Link to new resources: • Performance of Cepheid Xpert HIV-1 Viral Load Plasma Assay to Accurately Detect Treatment Failure • Point-of-Care CD4 Technology Invalid Result Rates in Public Health Care Settings Across Five Countries
	Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNICEF's new update on HIV early infant diagnosis - FB • UNICEF's new update on HIV early infant diagnosis - Twitter • UNICEF released its market information on critical products - FB • UNICEF released its market information on critical products - Twitter • ASLM Monthly Update - FB • ASLM Monthly Update - Twitter
Apr	e-Blast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASLM Monthly Update • Included link to past Jan issue of Advancing Diagnostics in Africa Newsletter • Link to new resources: • Reliability of Plasma HIV Viral Load Testing Beyond 24 hours: Insights gained from a study in a routine diagnostic laboratory • Systematic Review of the Accuracy of Plasma Preparation Tubes for HIV Viral Load Testing • Performance of Non-laboratory Staff for Diagnostic Testing and Specimen Collection in HIV Programs: A systematic review and meta-analysis
	Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASLM Monthly Update
May	Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIV Mid-Year Market Memo 2020 – CHAI • COVID-19 and HIV weekly digest – Children and AIDS
Jun	e-Blast	<p>ASLM's Advancing Diagnostics in Africa April-May 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previewed the recently published Global Molecular Diagnostic Meeting Report, an innovative VISITECT® Advanced Disease Early Market Access Vehicle, and a recent publication on harnessing innovative HIV point-of-care testing for health systems strengthening.
	e-Blast	<p>ASLM Monthly Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included link to April-May issue of Advancing Diagnostics in Africa Newsletter
	Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Time To Wait! - Twitter • No Time To Wait! - FB • ASLM's Advancing Diagnostics in Africa April-May 2020 • ASLM Monthly Update • AIDS2020 Satellite Session

C) Other Activities for POC HIV EID and VL Strengthening

Through participation in technical working groups and direct engagement, UNICEF Country Offices continued their work supporting planning, developing, and executing system strengthening activities. UNICEF also supported demand creation advocating at the community and policy-making level to increase uptake and to create demand for POC diagnostics. Some of these activities in Cameroon, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Tanzania are highlighted below.

For example, in Cameroon, in the last quarter of 2019 and mid-2020, UNICEF also financially supported the MoH to organize missions for social mobilization intended to increase demand for the use of point of care by HIV+ pregnant/lactating women, exposed infants and adolescents in the regions of Ebolowa, East, West, Adamawa and the Far-North. The missions involved MoH's DLMEP, Division for Family Health (DSF), NACC, Regional Delegations of Health, and District Management Officers. The aim was to empower these social mobilizers to sensitize the communities on EID, trace defaulters and link them to care. It was reported that up to 162 care providers, community health workers, religious and traditional leaders were reached during these activities.

In Ethiopia, training of trainers took place in January and February of 2020 for HIV positive women peer support groups (mother support groups) on PMTCT and EID and in June 17th 2020, a piece presenting the relevance of this work was published at UNICEF's site: "[State-of-the-art HIV testing equipment reduces waiting times for mothers living with HIV - Oromia Region, Ethiopia](#)".

In Uganda, the development of the M&E Framework and the Waste Management Policy and SOPs were meant to be incorporated into the POC Policy and implementation, but the process was delayed and deferred to 2020. In this context, virtual workshops were initiated by the MoH in June 2020. Funds were also reprogrammed toward on-site national POC-EID support supervision and mentorship for the 33 POC pilot facilities to ensure continuity of EID testing during the COVID-19 outbreak period. From 2018 through 2020, UNICEF's Uganda Country Office, in collaboration with MoH and partners, has supported the active identification of missed appointments for pregnant women LHIV as well as breastfeeding mothers and their HIV exposed infants. These are conducted by mentor mothers and trained community peers for a total of 27 focus districts. Unfortunately, the planned facility-based assessments were not conducted due to the delay mentioned above and ultimately the outbreak of COVID-19 which cause subsequent country-wide lockdown. But, this context informed reprogramming of funds toward continuity of essential HIV services, particularly the active line listing of weekly missed appointments by the midwives and mentor mothers, followed by ARV delivery, EID sample collection and VL sample collection for eligible HEIs and their mothers at community and household levels.

In Tanzania, during February to March 2020, UNICEF supported the assessment to determine proportion of facilities providing quality comprehensive pediatric ART services. National HIV Program report reveals that of all 3,059 HIV Care and Treatment Centers (CTCs) in the country also provide comprehensive pediatric HIV care, however, challenges exist including suboptimal quality of services provided to children. This assessment collected information through a questionnaire completed by Regional AIDS Coordinators (RACs) as well as field visits to HIV care facilities. Regional AIDS Coordinators from 25 out of 26 regions (96%) completed the questionnaire and field visits to three high HIV burden regions were conducted by

pediatric HIV clinical mentors to assess the quality of services provided to children living with HIV. Field visits to other regions were withheld due to the COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020. During the same period, live TV and Radio sessions for EID awareness and demand generation in Tanzania were conducted. The initial plan was to develop EID communication/IEC materials for awareness and demand generation as a follow up on activity after EID formative study. However, the Ministry of Health through PMTCT program advised to revise this activity and conduct live TV and Radio sessions at the national level for the same purpose. Live sessions were scheduled with the Tanzania Broadcasting Corporation (TBC) Television and Radio. Two live TV sessions and two live Radio sessions (total of four sessions) were conducted by a pair of Ministry of Health Programme Managers who are also experts on these topics. The panelist discussed issues identified from the EID formative study and the national EID workshop. From the formative study, a qualitative enquiry revealed that, communication messages and materials are very useful, however, the available communication messages and materials show weaknesses in terms of focus on EID. While there are several messages and materials on HIV prevention in general, very few carry specific messages to promote uptake of EID. Deliberations during the national EID stakeholders workshop produced key actions to address both supply side and demand side weaknesses. The focus groups also pointed out that use of local FM radios is one of the most important methods of delivering health information to the communities. Themes discussed during the live TV and Radio sessions included availability and access to EID services in the country, benefits of EID, effects of late or not testing, ongoing strategies and opportunities to improve EID service uptake. These sessions reached a wider audience while benefitting intended ones. All live TV and Radio sessions were recorded and will further be disseminated through local radios for wider use. During June and July 2020, UNICEF Tanzania supported the printing of the “Nurse Initiated Management of ART (NIMART”) guidelines and conduct refresher training of trainers. Nurses are critical human resources especially in lower level health facilities. Nurse initiated HIV treatment through task sharing significantly helps in addressing existing shortages of skilled human resources. Dissemination of the updated NIMART guidelines was conducted through a refresher training to 40 regional trainers from eight high HIV burden regions of Tanzania. The NIMART regional trainers are resourceful persons to support training and mentoring of nurses and midwives working in HIV care and treatment (CTC) and PMTCT sites. Task sharing in HIV care is supporting implementation of revised national COVID-19 response plan now, while promoting continuation of essential health and HIV services during COVID-19 outbreak and during the recovery period.

II. Challenges and Solutions

Some of the key challenges we encountered during 2020, so far, are presented on the table below.

ISSUE	CHALLENGES	PROPOSED SOLUTIONS/MITIGATION
COVID-19 pandemic consequences and restrictions	Focus of all our organizations has significantly shifted to deal with the new demands of COVID-19 response, causing us to understandably have less time to devote to the UCPOC Project planned activities	Proposed list of communication assets was constantly revised to adjust or reduce scope especially when travelling was needed. Delivery dates were postponed compensating time used to focus on COVID-19 response, and manage expectations by prioritizing materials which would make the biggest impact.

ISSUE	CHALLENGES	PROPOSED SOLUTIONS/MITIGATION
		Planned meetings and activities with key stakeholders were constantly revised to adjust or reduce scope, too, especially when travelling was needed, and many of them had to be moved to virtual meetings, whenever it was possible.
	Grant implementers were allowed to use funds from current Unitaid project budgets only to buy masks and hand sanitizing gels, as well as any protective equipment reasonably required for staff supporting Unitaid grant activities in project countries ³	Grantees were required to inform Unitaid of any key project activities that are being delayed (or likely to be delayed) due to COVID-19 and requested to prepare and share periodic situation reports that describe at a minimum A) current/anticipated programmatic and financial impacts of the pandemic and B) current/planned mitigation strategies.
	(Necessarily) Physical meetings could not occur. The CRP work meetings were initially postponed but later had to be cancelled - this was also compounded by protracted discussion with WHO, which could not start	Virtual communication efforts related to CRP and performance evaluation for the remainder of the grant took place.
	Some of the communication efforts for the grant had to compete for space with the COVID-19 related work. As a result, the regular ADA news e-blast scaled down in April and May	Effort to focus on communication of activities that were relevant to both COVID-19 and the UCPOC Project activities was prioritized (for example, the integration of diagnostic testing on molecular platforms).

III. Strengthening Buy-in and Relationships with Key Stakeholders

As stated above, by means of our joint advocacy efforts and sharing of evidence and communication materials, we have sought to ensure integration of POC diagnostics within optimized diagnostics networks, to improve transition to national governments and long-term funders, enable sustainability of POC diagnostics where it was already implemented, and, to catalyze implementation in new countries.

Although there was significant effect of the COVID-19 pandemic in the planned work with our list of 25 different audiences/key stakeholders, the diagnostics space took a global front and center place and multiple inter-organizational partnerships have been created and strengthened ([ACT-A, Partners Platform & Supply Portal](#), [Partnership to Accelerate COVID-19 Testing \(PACT\) in Africa](#), [Tech Access Partnership](#)), and the laboratory community has been highly involved in all developments.

The table below includes several primary stakeholders that were targeted for 2020 as well as the planned nature and impact caused from our engagement with them.

³ Guidance to Unitaid grant implementers during the COVID-19 Pandemic ([link](#))

STAKEHOLDER	NATURE OF ENGAGEMENT AND IMPACT	EXAMPLES OF IMPACT
Manufacturers	CHAI continued to negotiate with manufacturers to refine platforms and improve commitments towards higher affordability and viable presence in the POC market. While CHAI planned to engage with manufacturers and with the Global Diagnostics Forecasting Group, however, meetings have been re-directed to the COVID-19 response.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hologic expanded its Global Access Initiative to include pricing for lower volume tiers. • Abbott revised its “all-inclusive” pricing to include tiered pricing based on different volumes for existing and newly placed instruments.
PEPFAR Global	UNICEF, CHAI, and ASLM sustained engagement with OGAC, CDC, and USAID to achieve endorsement and investment in POC EID and VL diagnostics at the Global level. CHAI also supported Unitaid and OGAC to convene the Integrated Diagnostics Consortium (IDC) in January 2020 to coordinate diagnostic network optimization (DNO) efforts across key partners and a virtual meeting was held in July 2020 to review partner efforts for Cepheid GeneXpert, Abbott mPima, DNO, the PEPFAR RFP, and the impact of COVID-19 on HIV/HPV/TB testing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • POC diagnostics are included in COP2020 guidance⁴.
Global Fund	Meetings have been re-directed to the COVID-19 response. However, also due to work in Country Offices, GF has committed funding support for POC EID as Unitaid funding transitions out.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to support POC EID and viral load in selected countries (e.g. Cameroon, DRC, Malawi, Senegal, Uganda, Zimbabwe).
WHO/CDC (Global)	Globally, CHAI continues to produce peer reviewed publications. CHAI also planned to conduct analyses to support the guidelines process. New guidelines were coming in Jul 2020 and analyses would be shared with WHO GDG. However, the GDG timeline and the timeline for analyses have been delayed to September 2020 in light of COVID-19 pandemic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six articles were published/submitted in peer-reviewed journals (listed above, in the specific item of this Report – “Publications during the reporting period”).
Other global stakeholders and non-	UNICEF has an active project scaling up POC diagnostics in 10 non-UCPOC Project countries in Western and Central Africa (‘Innovation for Scale –	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The POC Diagnostics work in Western and Central Africa (Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Ghana, Mali, and

⁴ [PEPFAR 2020 Country Operational Plan Guidance for all PEPFAR Countries](#)

STAKEHOLDER	NATURE OF ENGAGEMENT AND IMPACT	EXAMPLES OF IMPACT
project countries	Expansion of POC HIV EID in 10 Countries in WCA Project'), which has also caused the increase of the dissemination of the POC toolkit in French. Importantly, UNICEF's Supply Division has updated and disseminated product profiles of the marketed HIV POC diagnostic supplies available through UNICEF procurement arrangements.	Nigeria) is also ongoing. This information is provided on a voluntary basis only, and we are still working on the effect of COVID-19 so, it is unclear if/how the work will be specifically delayed - needs and opportunities related to COVID-19 are being weekly discussed.
WHO/CDC (AFRICA)	Meetings have been re-directed to the COVID-19 response.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is unclear how countries will be impacted in their process transitioning to long-term partners and the government. This situation is yet to be better defined and thus reported during a future opportunity.
Laboratory Community	ASLM has led comprehensive digital dissemination of advocacy, evidence and implementation materials, workshops, and virtual trainings, championing the COVID-19 response for the laboratory Community. They continue with their timely and relevant Lab Cop ECHO sessions (ASLM webinars), their website, and e-blasts with POC updates and information complement their endorsement on POC EID/POC diagnostics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The majority of activities are delayed at least for 3 months due to the shift in focus caused by the COVID-19 response. Countries are in different stages of their DNO process, waste management and testing integration. This situation is yet to be better defined and thus reported during a future opportunity. UNICEF's POC leads/teams (specially from the 10 Western and Central Africa countries mentioned above) continue to be invited and attend ASLM webinars. The Viral Load Waste Management Tool developed in partnership with the IDC, was used to assess baseline status in Kenya and presented in an Echo Session in February 2020.
Civil Society	UNICEF continues the partnership with GNP+, moving forward with civil society engagement and demand generation activities for POC EID. The dissemination of the Strategic Framework and Resource Pack are ongoing and a pilot in Malawi and Senegal are planned for Q3-Q4 2020. It is expected that this engagement will increase the demand and commitment for POC EID/POC diagnostics in these countries and by any other country choosing to apply the structure presented in the newly created materials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As presented above, the Strategic Framework and Resource Pack for civil society engagement and demand creation were created (the volume of POC EID tests increased in countries will be analyzed after the pilots). GNP+ is has reach in non-project countries, which are also targeted for dissemination. One meeting for the Diagnostics Community Advisory Board (CAB) held (in June 2020).

STAKEHOLDER	NATURE OF ENGAGEMENT AND IMPACT	EXAMPLES OF IMPACT
	By means of advocacy and diagnostics literacy materials CHAI actively participated on Community Advisory Board (CAB) meetings. This type of engagement increased the demand for POC diagnostics, assessed COVID-19 impacts on POC test consumption, and provided recommendations to WHO.	

IV. Priorities for Q3 and Q4 of 2020

As mentioned in the Overview item of this Report, it is important to note that the UCPOC Project has entered its final year for ASLM and UNICEF, as their grant will formally close in September 2020. In this context, activities listed in the Joint Communication Framework for 2020 are being delivered, ending both ASLM's and UNICEF's contribution to the project. There are still a few deliverables scheduled for Q3 and Q4 of 2020.

As for CHAI, the manuscripts will be published in August 2020, and Dx CAB will continue to function remotely with an expected transition in Q4 2020. The IDC is expected to continue to meet, now that the remote meetings were re-initiated, as of July. Manufacturer, MoH, Technical Working Group (TWG), and the Global Diagnostics Forecasting Group meetings are targeted to resume, but dependent on the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this final phase, ASLM prioritizes completing the outstanding communication products (Waste Management Recipe and an Advocacy Brief), continue with the e-blasts and digital dissemination of project materials. Webinars on integration of testing diagnostics within optimized diagnostics networks, data management will be prioritized too. ASLM will continue to engage virtually with country teams to promote the key identified UCPOC related activities in LabCoP Work-plans developed at the beginning of the year.

UNICEF's focal points in all offices identified and reflected about the learning points of the UCPOC Project based on their experiences and results achieved during implementation. The aim was to capture a full set of successes and of the aspects which needed improvement or simply did not work. We are compiling this material to highlight the lessons learned, detect correlated programmatic implications and even offer tips for any other project in the POC Diagnostics space to consider and perform even better than we did. It is relevant to point out that the creation of this document aimed at avoiding redundancies of important materials already produced in the UCPOC Project: in 2018, the "Key Considerations for Introducing New HIV Point-of-Care Diagnostic Technologies in National Health Systems" ([English](#), [French](#)), and in 2019/2020, as mentioned above, EGPAF's "[Lessons Learned from Integrating Point-of-Care testing Technologies for Early Infant Diagnosis of HIV into National Diagnostic Networks](#)". In this context, this document, to be delivered in September 2020, will build on these other relevant resources and add nuances from UNICEF's point-of-view.

As mentioned above, UNICEF's focus will continue with the engagement of CSOs by means of the partnership with GNP+. Aiming to improve sustainability of POC diagnostics, our work will continue to seek to increase demand for POC HIV EID and VL testing in a more applied way. The Strategic Framework and Resource Pack (listed above) will be piloted in Malawi and Senegal during late-August and September, and we will increase diagnostics literacy among beneficiaries and support advocacy efforts for increased access to POC Diagnostics, working directly with the CSOs. We will then analyze the lessons learned and evaluate gaps or needed changes on the materials throughout October and November this year. If needed, design adjustments to the final versions of the materials will be made and a final report with briefs about the pilots will conclude this work in December 2020.

Finally, UNICEF is working to produce a 'wrap-up' video piece, for a more lay audience, with stories of how the UCPOC Project has succeeded, highlighting the impact of the project – we will finalize this piece by December 2020.