

# Transition Monitoring:

*Assessing the fulfillment of government commitments to sustainability of the HIV response among KAPs in N. Macedonia, in the context of transition from Global Fund's support*



eurasian harm reduction association

Elizabeta Bozhinoska

Andrej Senih

29.11.2021

The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of green, ranging from light lime to dark forest green. These shapes are primarily located on the left and right sides of the page, framing the central text. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern.

# Findings and recommendations

# Results, impact and outcomes

| Indicator  | Target<br>(target year) | Result in 2020       | Last available<br>result (year) |
|--|-------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Percentage of MSM who are living with HIV                                      | <2.5%<br>(2020)         | No data<br>available | <b>5.4%</b><br>(2018)           |
| Percentage of PWID who are living with HIV                                     | <1%<br>(2020)           | No data<br>available | <b>0%</b><br>(2017)             |
| Percentage of SWs who are living with HIV as well<br>as convicts and detainees | <1%<br>(2020)           | No data<br>available | <b>0%</b><br>(2017)             |
| Percentage of inmates who are living with HIV                                  | <1%<br>(2020)           | No data<br>available | No data<br>available            |
| Percentage of PLHIV aware of their HIV status                                  | 90%<br>(2020)           | No data<br>available | <b>65%</b><br>(2018)            |
| Percentage of PLHIV receiving ART  | 81%<br>(2020)           | No data<br>available | <b>57%</b><br>(2018)            |
| Percentage of PLHIV that achieve viral<br>suppression                          | 73%<br>(2020)           | No data<br>available | <b>48%</b><br>(2018)            |

# Analyzed commitments by health system domains: Financing

| Commitment   | Programmatic area                | Indicator        | Target (MKD)   |                |                | Actual allocation (MKD)*   |                           |                           | Score |
|--|----------------------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------|
|  |                                  |                  | 2018           | 2019           | 2020           | 2018                       | 2019                      | 2020                      |       |
| Ensure natl. funding to sustain HIV prevention programs for KAPs | HIV Prevention<br>MSM, SWs, PWID | Budget allocated | 60,000,00<br>0 | 60,000,00<br>0 | 60,000,00<br>0 | 47,949,26<br>0<br>(79.9%)  | 49,100,00<br>0<br>(81.8%) | 46,720,00<br>0<br>(77.9%) | 80%   |
| Ensure adequate funding for HIV treatment                        | Treatment                        | Budget allocated | 43,000,00<br>0 | 51,600,00<br>0 | 60,200,00<br>0 | 43,055,04<br>0<br>(100.1%) | 39,420,00<br>0<br>(76.4%) | 39,420,00<br>0<br>(65.5%) | 79%   |

\*Sourced from the National HIV Program for 2018, 2019 and 2020, Government of North Macedonia

# Analyzed commitments by health system domains: Drug, supplies and equipment

| Commitment   | Programmatic area | Indicator  | Target (target year) | Achievement | Score |
|--|-------------------|--|----------------------|-------------|-------|
| Budget ARVs under the National Health Insurance Fund and include the essential ARVs in the positive reimbursement list | Treatment         | Number of ARVs included into the positive reimbursement list | 12 (2018)            | 0           | 0%    |

# Analyzed commitments by health system domains: Service provision for MSM

| Commitment  | Indicator   | Achievement     |                 |                 |                 | Score      |
|---|---|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------|
|   |   | 2017            | 2018            | 2019            | 2020            |            |
| Increase coverage of MSM with basic HIV prevention services | Number of MSM covered with the basic package for prevention of HIV/STI (condom, lubricant, educational materials) | 3597<br>(71.9%) | 4807<br>(80.1%) | 4916<br>(70.2%) | 3590<br>(44.9%) | <b>65%</b> |
| Increase coverage of MSM with HIV testing services          | Number of MSM who received VCT services and are aware of the test result  | 1194<br>(47.5%) | 1614<br>(58.4%) | 1097<br>(36%)   | 1010<br>(30.1%) | <b>42%</b> |
| Increase coverage of MSM with STI services                  | Number of MSM who received services regarding STIs (SRH)  | 206<br>(51.5%)  | 93<br>(18.6%)   | 90<br>(15.0%)   | 264<br>(37.7%)  | <b>30%</b> |

Sourced from the annual reports on the implementation of the National HIV Program for 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020, published by Institute for Public Health.

# Analyzed commitments by health system domains: Service provision for MSM

| Commitment   | Indicator  | Baseline (Year) | Target (Target year)     | Achievement    | Score      |
|--|--|-----------------|--------------------------|----------------|------------|
| Maintain, expand and open new facility-based and outreach services for MSM | Include new organizations which work on prevention of HIV among MSM, which will increase the coverage of this key population | 1               | 2 <sup>1</sup><br>(2018) | 2 <sup>2</sup> | <b>33%</b> |
| Introduce PrEP for MSM   | Number of MSM receiving PrEP   | 0<br>(2019)     | 300<br>(2020)            | 0              | <b>0%</b>  |

<sup>1</sup>This target was not identified in the NSP – it was assumed by the reviewers in consultation with the reference group as the lowest realistic target for this commitment.

<sup>2</sup>Community-based services for MSM were introduced in one additional organization, but the scope of the activities and the coverage remained comparatively low – therefore a progress score of only 33% was assigned by the reviewers.

# Analyzed commitments by health system domains: Service provision for SWs

| Commitment  | Indicator   | Achievement*    |                 |                 |                 | Score      |
|---|---|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------|
|   |   | 2017            | 2018            | 2019            | 2020            |            |
| Maintain high coverage and quality of basic HIV and STI prevention services for sex workers | Number of SWs covered with the basic package for prevention of HIV/STIs     | 1713<br>(97.9%) | 1825<br>(98.6%) | 1912<br>(98.1%) | 1659<br>(80.9%) | <b>94%</b> |
| Maintain high coverage and quality of HIV testing services for sex workers                  | Number of SW who received VCT services and are aware of the HIV test result | 496<br>(49.6%)  | 664<br>(60.4%)  | 610<br>(50.8%)  | 539<br>(41.5%)  | <b>50%</b> |
| Maintain high coverage and quality of STI services for sex workers                          | Number of SW who received services regarding STIs (SRH)                     | 572<br>(81.7%)  | 424<br>(55.1%)  | 569<br>(65.4%)  | 462<br>(47.6%)  | <b>61%</b> |

\*Sourced from the annual reports on the implementation of the National HIV Program for 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020, published by Institute for Public Health.



# Analyzed commitments by health system domains: Service provision for SWs

| Commitment   | Indicator  | Source                    | Target (Target year) | Achievement | Score     |
|--|--|---------------------------|----------------------|-------------|-----------|
| Strengthen capacities to engage male and transgender SWs | A new program for male and transgender SWs established | National HIV Program 2019 | 100% (2019)          | 0%          | <b>0%</b> |

# Analyzed commitments by health system domains: Service provision for PWID

| Commitment  | Indicator   | Achievement <sup>1</sup> |                  |                 |                 | Score       |
|---|---|--------------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------|
|   |   | 2017                     | 2018             | 2019            | 2020            |             |
| Maintain coverage and quality of harm-reduction services                                      | Number of PWID covered with the basic package for prevention of HIV/STI       | 4409<br>(98%)            | 4450<br>(93.7%)  | 4167<br>(83.3%) | 3848<br>(73.3%) | <b>87%</b>  |
| Maintain coverage of PWID with HIV testing services   | Number of PWID who received VCT services and are aware of the HIV test result | 803<br>(65.3%)           | 984<br>(72.9%)   | 761<br>(50.7%)  | 574<br>(34.8%)  | <b>54%</b>  |
| Maintain coverage of PWID treated for addiction with drug substitution treatment <sup>2</sup> | Number of PWID who are on drug substitution treatment (methadone)             | 2050<br>(117.1%)         | 2050<br>(109.6%) | 2500<br>(125%)  | 2860<br>(133%)  | <b>122%</b> |
| Ensure cont. psychosocial and peer support for people on OAT                                  | Number of persons on OAT covered with community support services              | N/A                      | 418<br>(139.3%)  | 391<br>(130.3%) | 547<br>(182.3%) | <b>151%</b> |

<sup>1</sup>Data on coverage collected from the annual reports on the implementation of the Natl. HIV Program for 2017 – 2020, by IPH.

<sup>2</sup>Data collected from key informants from relevant institutions and organizations due to lack of official reports on the number of clients in OAT programs.

# Analyzed commitments by health system domains: Service provision for PWID

| Commitment                                   | Indicator                         | Source                 | Target (Target year) | Achievement | Score |
|--|-----------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------|
| Expand access to opioid addiction treatment* | Number of established OAT centres | National Drug Strategy | 4 (2020)             | 0           | 0%    |

\*The data on this indicator was collected from key informant from CSO HOPS that have been involved in evaluation of National Drug Strategy 2015-2020.

# Analyzed commitments by health system domains: Service provision for people in detention facilities

| Commitment  | Indicator  | Achievement    |               |           |           | Score      |
|---|--|----------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
|   |  | 2017           | 2018          | 2019      | 2020      |            |
| Improve the coverage and quality of HIV prevention in prisons | Number of inmates who received HIV testing and are aware of the result of their HIV test | 143<br>(59.6%) | 92<br>(36.8%) | 0<br>(0%) | 0<br>(0%) | <b>24%</b> |

The data on the indicators on coverage of inmates with service provision was collected from Annual Reports on implementation of HIV program for 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020, published by Institute for Public Health.

# Analyzed commitments by health system domains: Service provision for people in living with HIV

| Commitment  | Indicator   | Achievement |                    |                    |               | Score       |
|---|---|-------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------|-------------|
|   |   | 2017        | 2018               | 2019               | 2020          |             |
| Ensure continuous psychosocial and peer support for PLHIV | Number of PLHIV covered with positive prevention and support services | N/A         | 82<br>(102.5<br>%) | 95<br>(118.8<br>%) | 124<br>(155%) | <b>125%</b> |

The data on this indicator was collected from Annual Reports on implementation of HIV program for 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020, published by Institute for Public Health.

# Analyzed commitments by health system domains: Governance

| Commitment   | Programmatic area                   | Indicator  | Source  | Target year | Achievement (Year) | Score |
|--|-------------------------------------|--|---|-------------|--------------------|-------|
| Determine and adopt criteria for contracting CSOs as implementers of National HIV Program that will guarantee transparent process of selection of CSOs with experience and expertise in service-delivery for HIV prevention, care and support* | HIV Prevention among MSM, SWs, PWID | Adopted criteria                                     | Conclusions, Public Hearing in Parliamentary Commission on Health, 11 December 2015 | 2016        | 100% (2016)        | 100%  |
| Amend legislation to enable screening for HIV and STIs, SRH services and needle and syringe exchange within CSOs   | HIV Prevention among MSM, SWs, PWID | Developed and adopted proposals for legal amendments | NSP   | 2018        | 30% (2019)         | 30%   |

\*Data collected from decision of MoH for adoption of criteria for contracting CSOs as implementers of National HIV Program in 2016, and public call for implementers of National HIV Program from 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020.

# Analyzed commitments by health system domains: Governance

| Commitment   | Programmatic area                   | Indicator  | Source   | Target year | Achievement (Year) | Score |
|--|-------------------------------------|--|--|-------------|--------------------|-------|
| Develop proposals for amendments to the relevant laws and by-laws or for new by-laws and procedures related to the establishment of a functional and long-term funding mechanism for HIV activities' | HIV Prevention among MSM, SWs, PWID | Developed proposals for legislative framework    | AP, Gov. Strategy for Cooperation with and Development of Civil Society Sector 2018 – 2020 | 2018        | 30% (2019)         | 30%   |
| Develop standards for HIV prevention and support services among KAPs delivered by CSOs'  | HIV Prevention among MSM, SWs, PWID | Developed and adopted standards for HIV services | AP, Gov. Strategy for Cooperation with and Development of Civil Society Sector 2018 – 2020 | 2018        | 0% (2020)          | 0%    |

# Analyzed commitments by health system domains: Governance

| Commitment   | Programmatic area                   | Indicator   | Source                 | Target year | Achievement (Year) | Score      |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|------------------------|-------------|--------------------|------------|
| Introduce biomedical prevention (PEP and PrEP) in line with WHO recommendations with a primary focus on MSM' | HIV Prevention among MSM, SWs, PWID | Developed national guidelines for PEP and PrEP are approved | NSP                    | 2019        | 50% (2020)         | <b>50%</b> |
| Introduce lay provider HIV testing   | HIV Prevention among MSM, SWs, PWID | Protocol on lay-provider testing adopted                    | Natl. HIV Program 2019 | 2019        | 50% (2020)         | <b>50%</b> |



# Analyzed commitments by health system domains: Data and information

| Commitment  | Programmatic area                   | Indicator   | Target (Target year) | Achievement | Score |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|----------------------|-------------|-------|
| Carry out epidemiological BBS among KAPs in order to collect data on prevalence of HIV and STIs, knowledge, risk factors and estimate the size of these populations | HIV Prevention among MSM, SWs, PWID | Bio-behavioral surveys carried out among MSM, PWID, SWs, and persons serving prison sentences | 8 (2020)             | 4           | 50%   |
| Conduct annual assessments of the number of individuals living with HIV by using relevant modelling tools (ECDC, UNAIDS, etc.).                                     | Treatment                           | Assessment carried out and report developed   | 4 (2020)             | 2           | 50%   |

# Analyzed commitments by health system domains: Data and information

| Commitment  | Programmatic area                   | Indicator  | Target (Target year) | Achievement | Score       |
|---|-------------------------------------|--|----------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Collect data on the coverage with activities for HIV prevention within KAPs (VCT, minimal service package)      | HIV Prevention among MSM, SWs, PWID | Developed reports on activities implementation and coverage    | 20 (2020)            | 20          | <b>100%</b> |
| Develop a national monitoring and evaluation plan containing reporting forms and standard operating procedures. | HIV Prevention among MSM, SWs, PWID | National plan for strategy monitoring and evaluation developed | 100% (2018)          | 50%         | <b>50%</b>  |

# Analyzed commitments by health system domains: Human resources

| Commitment  | Programmatic area                   | Indicator   | Achievement |      |      |      | Score |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|-------------|------|------|------|-------|
|   |                                     |   | 2017        | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |       |
| Establish unit for coordination and management of the national response to HIV within the Ministry of Health beyond the Global Fund support | HIV Prevention among MSM, SWs, PWID | Established unit within MoH   |             | 25%  |      |      | 25%   |
| Establish a national centre for monitoring and evaluation of HIV prevention activities in the Republic of Macedonia                         | HIV Prevention among MSM, SWs, PWID | Established Natl. centre for M&E, staffed with epidemiologist, IT expert and a person for M&E |             | 66%  | 66%  | 33%  | 55%   |
| Ensure long-term institutional sustainability of psychosocial support for PLHIV within Clinic for Infectious Diseases                       | Treatment                           | Employed psychologist and social worker   |             | 100% |      |      | 100%  |

# Progress by programmatic areas: Prevention - MSM, SWs, PWID

Number of analyzed commitments by programmatic area

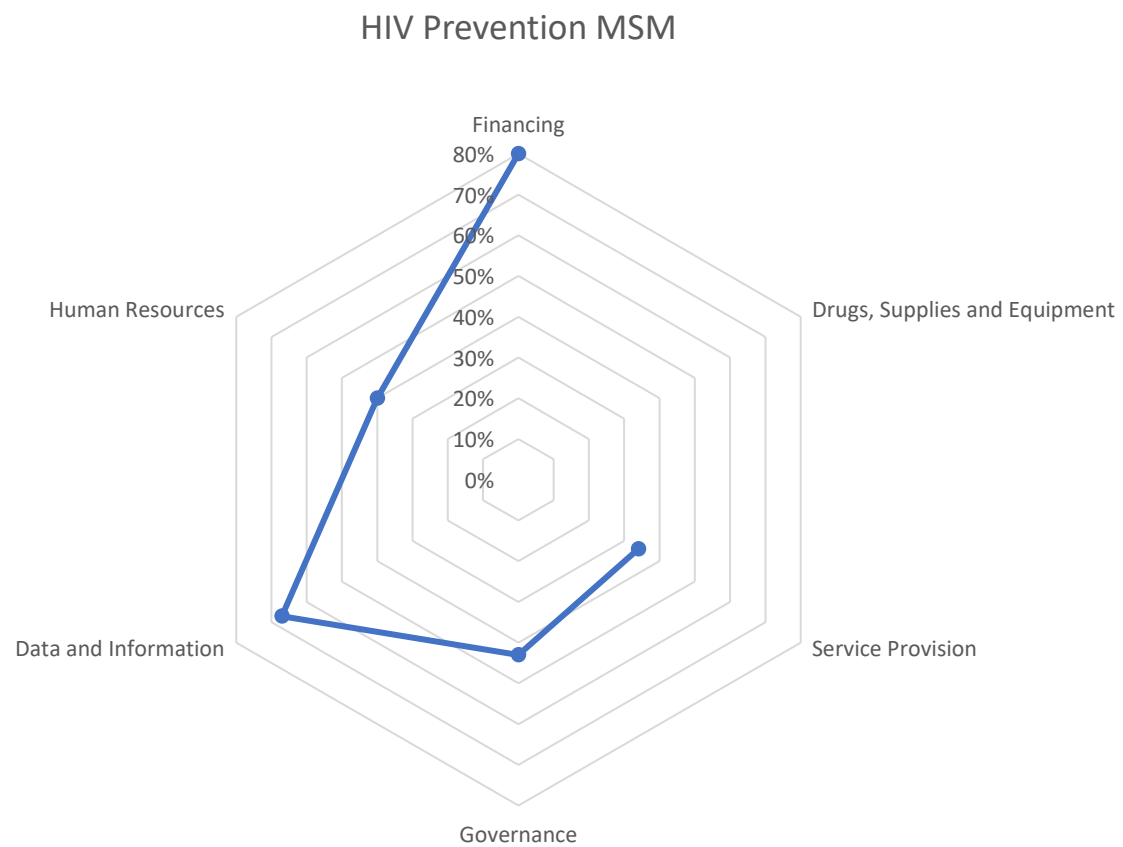
|      | Financing | Drugs,<br>Supplies and<br>Equipment | Service<br>Provision | Governance | Data and<br>Information | Human<br>Resources |
|------|-----------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| MSM  | 1         | 0                                   | 5                    | 6          | 3                       | 2                  |
| SWs  | 1         | 0                                   | 4                    | 6          | 3                       | 2                  |
| PWID | 1         | 0                                   | 4                    | 6          | 3                       | 2                  |

# Progress by programmatic areas: Prevention - MSM, SWs, PWID

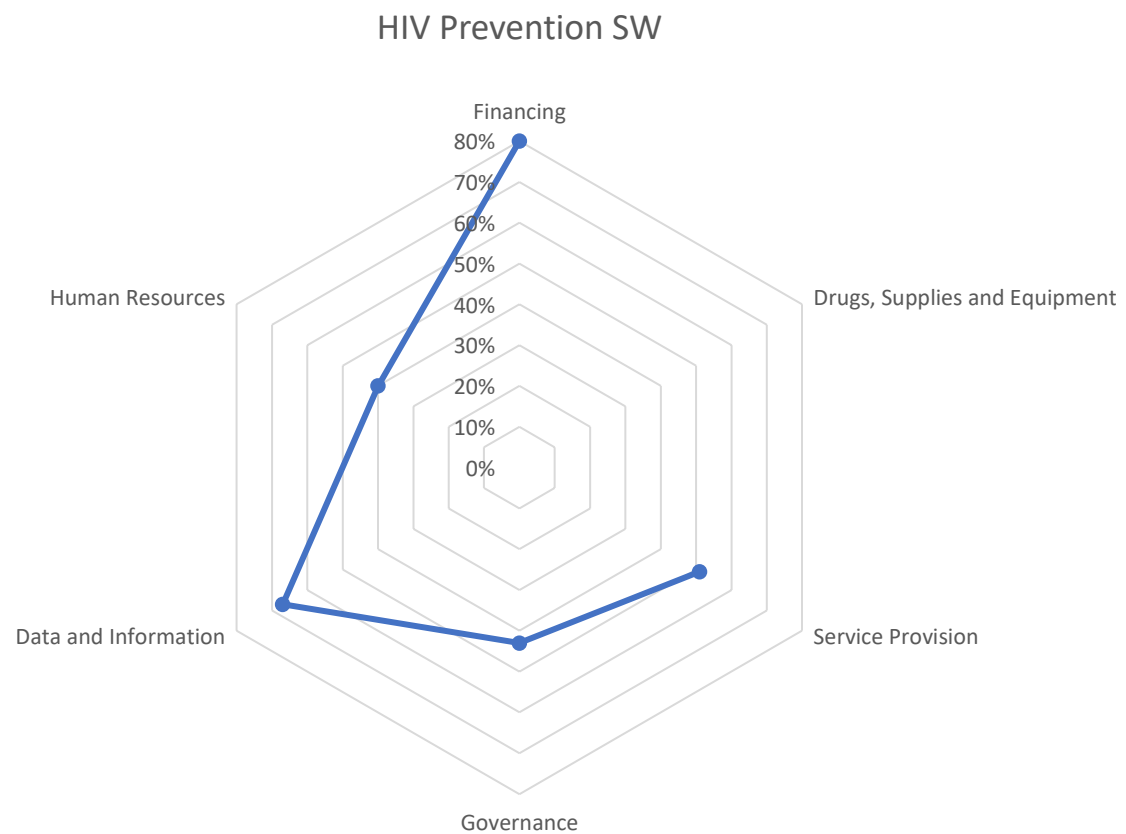
Overall score by programmatic areas within health system domains

|      | Financing | Drugs,<br>Supplies and<br>Equipment | Service<br>Provision | Governance | Data and<br>Information | Human<br>Resources |
|------|-----------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| MSM  | 80%       | N/A                                 | 34%                  | 43%        | 63%                     | 40%                |
| SWs  | 80%       | N/A                                 | 51%                  | 43%        | 63%                     | 40%                |
| PWID | 80%       | N/A                                 | 83%                  | 42%        | 63%                     | 40%                |

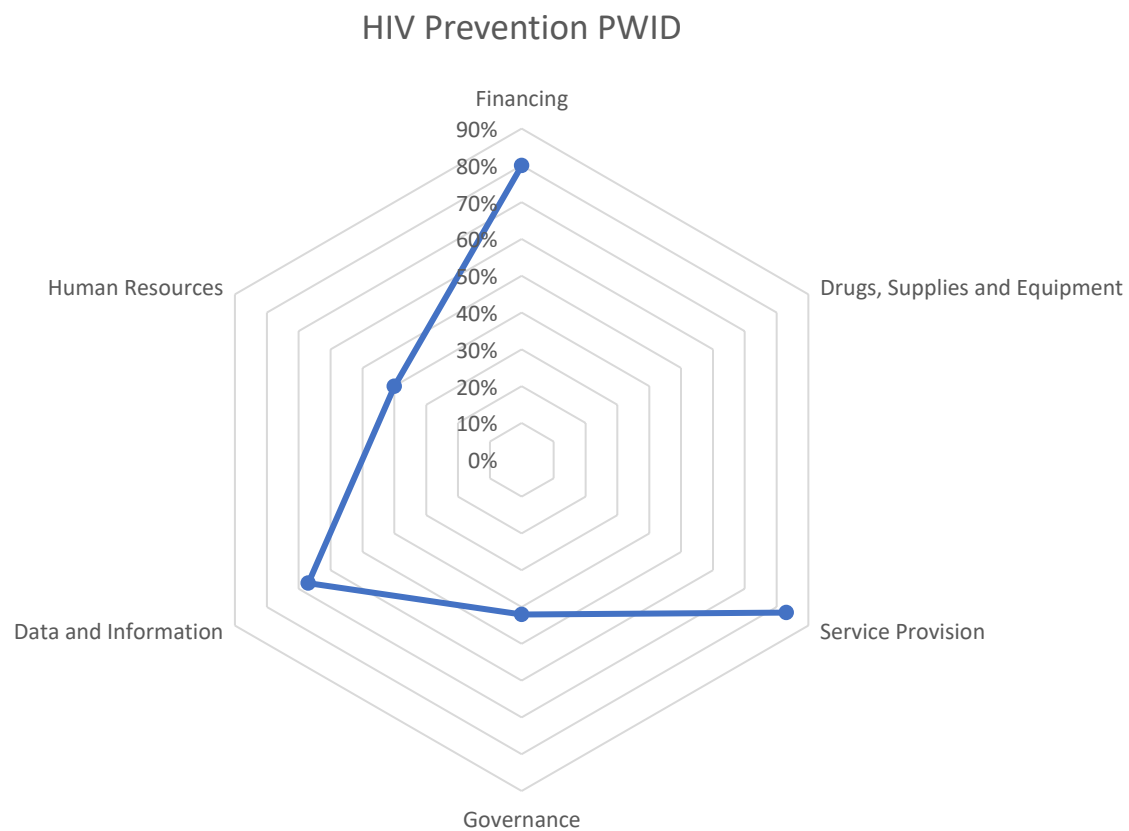
# Progress by programmatic areas: Prevention - MSM



# Progress by programmatic areas: Prevention - SWs



# Progress by programmatic areas: Prevention - PWID

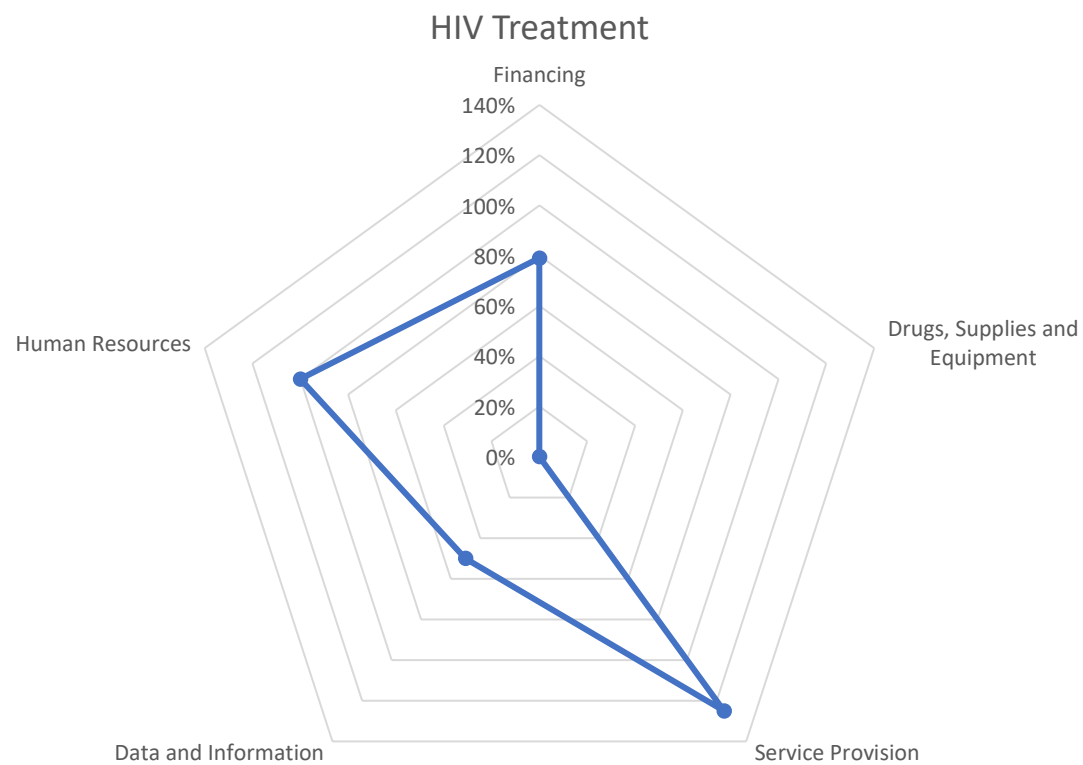




# Progress by programmatic areas: Treatment

| Health System Domain     | Financing | Drugs, Supplies and Equipment | Service Provision | Governance | Data and Information | Human Resources |
|--------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------|-------------------|------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| Number of commitments    | 1         | 1                             | 1                 | 0          | 1                    | 1               |
| Progress score by domain | 79%       | 0%                            | 125%              | N/A        | 50%                  | 100%            |

# Progress by programmatic areas: Treatment



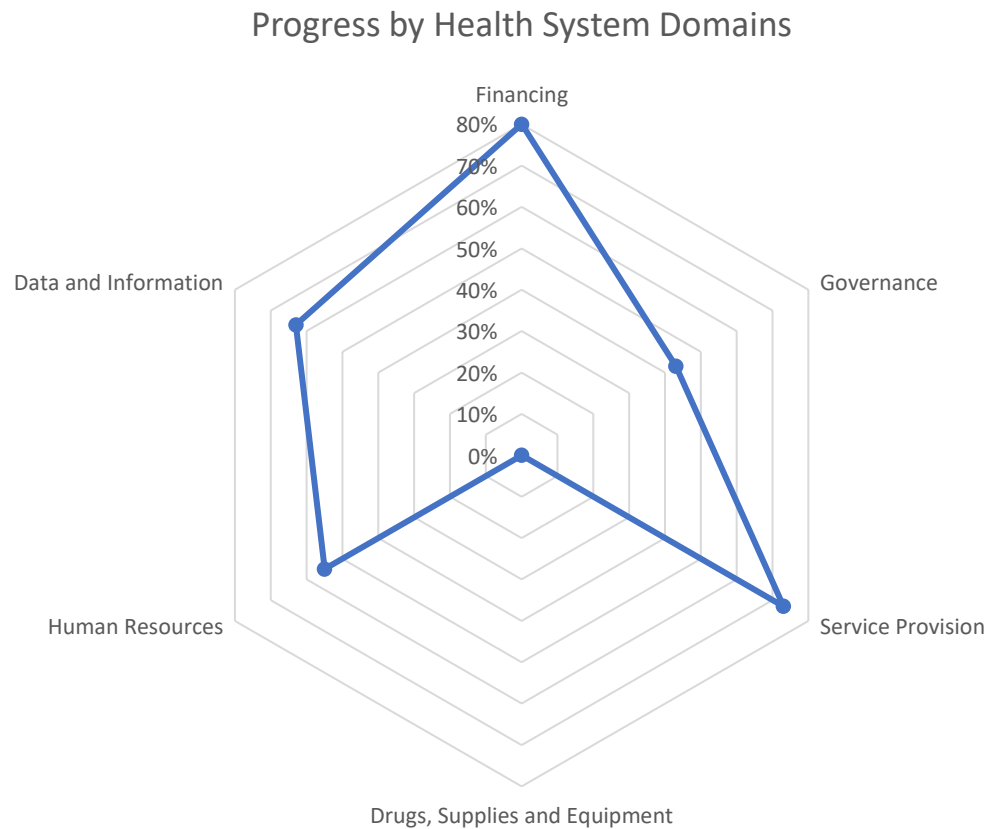
# Comparison of overall progress between programmatic areas

| Programmatic area         |                     | Overall progress in fulfillment of commitments by programmatic areas |
|---------------------------|---------------------|--|
| HIV Prevention among KAPs | HIV Prevention MSM  | 53%  |
|                           | HIV Prevention SWs  | 56%  |
|                           | HIV Prevention PWID | 62%  |
| HIV Treatment             |                     | 71%  |

# Overall progress in fulfillment of prioritized commitments by health system domains

| Health System Domain          | Progress |
|-------------------------------|----------|
| Financing                     | 80%      |
| Governance                    | 43%      |
| Service Provision             | 73%      |
| Drugs, Supplies and Equipment | 0%       |
| Human Resources               | 55%      |
| Data and Information          | 63%      |

# Overall progress in fulfillment of prioritized commitments by health system domains



# Key observations

- ▶ Transition progress in **prevention** can be classified as average: 53% for MSM, 56% SWs and 62% for PWID
- ▶ **Service provision** - differing progress scores: from 38% for MSM to 55% for SWs and 85% for PWID.
- ▶ Funding commitments did not correspond to the increasing coverage targets, nor to key needs in other domains, e.g. *human resources* and *data and information*

# Key observations

- ▶ Funding for treatment remained at the same level during the last three years (2018-2020), despite increase in number of patients by 50%.
- ▶ The fixed budgets for both prevention and treatment reveal an inert and inflexible historical budgeting practice which is not based on evidence.
- ▶ Progress in fulfillment of the selected transition-related commitments has been lowest in *governance*.
- ▶ Donor support contributed to some of the commitments, in particular in *data and information, service delivery*, as well as to advocacy.

# Key observations

- ▶ Prevention among MSM: N. Macedonia has not properly addressed the most important area of interest in terms of containing the epidemic.
- ▶ The national response to HIV must be improved and optimized: scaling up programs for MSM, incl. new community-led programs with innovative approaches; PEP and PrEP; as well as programs for male and transgender sex workers.
- ▶ Programs for SWs and PWID must be continuously improved to maintain control of the epidemic, as well as for other social and public health benefits.



# Recommendations

- ▶ **HIV prevention programs for KAPs** in North Macedonia need to be **scaled up**, in particular among **MSM**, where evidence shows a rising epidemic.
- ▶ MoH should ensure that coverage targets for prevention programs are evidence-based and budgeting is adequate to achieve those targets.
- ▶ MoH should also ensure evidence-based budgeting for treatment, along with implementing strategies to reduce the overall costs for ARVs.
- ▶ MoH should urgently plan for conducting integrated bio-behavioural studies among KAPs in order to assess epidemic trends, as well as the impact of the on-going interventions.

# Recommendations

- ▶ MoH should strengthen the programmatic management of interventions among KAPs, monitoring and evaluation, AND - invest in human resources at different levels - from service delivery to data management.
- ▶ The Government should process existing proposals for establishing an adequate legal framework for service delivery by civil society organizations.
- ▶ The upcoming national strategic planning process should take care to define concrete commitments and targets in the domains of human resources and drugs, supplies and equipment.
- ▶ International donors should consider further targeted support to the national response to HIV in North Macedonia to sustain the achieved progress and ensure a lasting impact on the epidemic among KAPs in North Macedonia.