

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MATERNAL AND CHILD SERVICES AND EMTCT PROGRAMS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

A 2020 modelling study quantified the extent to which such disruptions in services for HIV in high burden and low- and middle-income countries. The greatest impact on HIV appeared to be from interruption of ARV, that could also impact the risk of HIV MTCT. Reproductive and sexual health campaigns as well as prenatal care services have been negatively impacted, making it more difficult to prevent vertical transmission of HIV. To track and better understand the extent of the disruptions to essential health services caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in the Region of the Americas, PAHO/WHO has been supporting the implementation of national surveys on the continuity of essential health services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The impact of COVID-19 is evident in the set of interventions linked to reproductive health, pregnant women, newborns, and children. On average, of the 29 countries in the Americas that responded to the survey, 41% reported disruptions in the delivery of reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health services during the third quarter of 2020. On average, 55% of 23 countries in the Americas reported disruptions in vaccination services. Disruption has been also reported in HIV prevention services (59% of the 17 responding countries), HIV testing services (50%, n=18) and initiation of new antiretroviral treatment (33%, n=18), as well as viral hepatitis diagnosis and treatment (56%, n=18). On average, of

the 21 countries providing information about the provision of services for neglected tropical diseases, including Chagas disease among them, 47% reported disruptions. Countries were able to adapt and evolve resilient health systems in response to the pandemic, nonetheless the disruption on services was consistent during the period. By the third quarter of 2022, disruption was still reported in HIV testing services (56%, among 16 responding countries), HIV prevention services (50%, n=14), initiation of antiretroviral (43%, n=15) and viral hepatitis services (43%, n=14).

National health systems historically underfunded in the Region of the Americas were overwhelmed by COVID-19, revealing important gaps, reiterating the need for increasing domestic investment in health, and highlighting the need for innovative and cost-effective models of service delivery. Novel approaches based on transversal, integrated, and equitable access to care will help countries to resume and accelerate progress towards the achievement of the EMTCT Plus goals, under Universal Health principles. PAHO Disease Elimination Initiative, positions the EMTCT Plus as part of wider endeavor to eliminate communicable diseases in the Region, and provides a flexible framework for countries to pursue multi-disease elimination aligning public health principles, local context, existing infrastructure.

