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| **C:\Users\Caitlin\Downloads\WHO-EN-C-H.jpg** | **Global HIV, Hepatitis and STIs Programme (HHS)** |

**Global Validation Advisory Committee retreat on addressing human rights, gender equality and community engagement in validation of elimination of vertical transmission of HIV, syphilis and hepatitis B virus**

Geneva, Switzerland | 13-15 March 2023

**CONCEPT NOTE**

**Background**

The global community has committed to the triple elimination of mother-to-child transmission (EMTCT), also referred to as vertical transmission, of HIV, syphilis and hepatitis B virus (HBV) as a public health priority. The purpose of the elimination goal is to ensure the availability of quality reproductive and maternal and child health (MCH) services to reduce and control the perinatal transmission of HIV, syphilis and HBV, and to provide the best available treatment to the mother, such that incidence is reduced to a very low level and ceases to be a public health concern.

In 2014, WHO first published guidance on the standardized criteria and processes for EMTCT validation. This approach consists of country assessment of foundational requirements for validation in the areas of (i) data, (ii) laboratory, (iii) programme, and (iv) human rights, gender equality and community engagement (HR GE CE). The landmark inclusion of HR GE CE in the assessment process was a result of collaboration with diverse stakeholders and community to ensure that the metrics for validation are met in a manner commensurate with international standards of human rights, gender equality and community engagement, and to promote an enabling environment for women seeking antenatal care services.

The important foundational requirement of HR, GE and CE has served to strengthen the validation assessment. This element, an innovative feature for a disease elimination validation process, has brought rewards and progress as well as challenges and opportunities for countries to formally assess and address the contexts of care. A subset of Global Validation Advisory Committee (GVAC) members with expertise in HR GE and CE requested a retreat to build on this progress, better understand the context of beneficiaries, strengthen understanding and application of HR GE and CE criteria and address any challenges experienced by countries in the validation process. It is therefore proposed that a retreat be convened to support the GVAC in undertaking their advisory responsibilities and to improve support to countries to assess HR GE CE within the validation process.

**Overview of activities**

At this retreat in Geneva planned for March 2023, participants will engage in the following sessions and activities:

* Discussion on key issues surrounding the role of HR GE CE within validation of elimination of vertical transmission of HIV, syphilis and hepatitis B virus, including current strengths, challenges, opportunities and ways to strengthen and standardize the process of assessment and forming recommendations within country contexts
* Discussion and finalization of Web Annexes G & H (the HR GE CE assessment tools)
* Planning of capacity building training on HR GE CE issues for the Global Validation Advisory Committee (GVAC), including strengthening understanding and implementation of the validation assessment tool
* Introduction of WHO SRH department support and resources for the global validation process related to HR GE CE

**Objectives**

* Appreciate and energise the human rights, gender and community experts within GVAC for contributing their expertise and supporting countries to progress towards eliminating vertical transmission of HIV, syphilis and HBV.
* Update and design an effective and accessible tool for national stakeholders to assess the state of human rights, gender equality and community engagement within programmes to prevent vertical transmission.
* Generate ideas and agree on ways to motivate and strengthen the GVAC’s contribution towards promoting human rights, gender equality and community engagement as part of the validation process.

**Expected Participants**

* 11 GVAC members with expertise in HR GE and CE, including the GVAC chair and co-chair
* Representatives from the WHO global validation secretariat
* Civil society observers
* Global level representatives from United Nations agencies supporting the Global Validation Secretariat (UNAIDS, UNICEF, UNFPA)

**Outcomes**

1. Meeting report consisting of summary notes from each session topic and action steps
2. Agenda, session topics and clear objectives, and final presentation for virtual capacity building training for the GVAC on HR GE CE
3. Finalized validation assessment tools for HR GE CE (Web Annexes G & H)

**Meeting Secretariat**

This meeting is convened by WHO in collaboration with UNAIDS, ICW and GNP+. The secretariat consists of the WHO Global Programme on HIV, Hepatitis and STIs, and WHO colleagues in the regional offices, as well as relevant counterparts in UN partner agencies. WHO headquarters will coordinate planning for the meeting and collaborate with colleagues to prepare the background documents.