

Fact Sheet

Key Populations: A Definition

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Key populations in the context of HIV, TB and malaria are those that experience a high epidemiological impact from one of the diseases combined with reduced access to services and/or being criminalized or otherwise marginalized. Definitions of key populations for the three diseases are provided in the breakout box.

Key populations in the HIV response:

Gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men; women, men and transgender people who inject drugs, and/or who are sex workers; as well as all transgender people are socially marginalized, often criminalized and face a range of human rights abuses that increase their vulnerability to HIV.

Key Populations in the Tuberculosis Response:

Prisoners and incarcerated populations, people living with HIV, migrants, refugees and indigenous populations are all groups that are highly vulnerable to TB, as well as experiencing significant marginalization, decreased access to quality services, and human rights violations.

Key Populations in the Malaria Response:

The concept of “key populations” in the context of malaria is relatively new and not yet as well defined as for HIV and TB. However, there are populations that meet the criteria outlined above. Refugees, migrants, internally displaced people and indigenous populations in malaria-endemic areas are often at greater risk of transmission, usually have decreased access to care and services, and are also often marginalized.

People living with the three diseases: All people living with HIV, and who currently have, or have survived, TB, fall within this definition of “key populations”. Given that in some countries, a substantial proportion of the population has malaria, and the impact is not linked to systematic marginalization or criminalization, people who have had malaria are not included in this definition. Stigma and discrimination toward people living with HIV is a major impediment to improving health outcomes. Such stigma particularly affects sex workers, drug users, transgender people and men who have sex with men who are living with HIV and/or TB.

The Global Fund also recognizes vulnerable populations - those who have increased vulnerabilities in a particular context, i.e. adolescent/women and girls, miners and people with disabilities.