

Fact sheet

06

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Asia

Overview

- An estimated 8.6 million people were living with HIV in Asia in 2006 and some 960 000 people became newly infected with the virus. Approximately 630 000 people died from AIDS-related illnesses in 2006.
- The number of people receiving antiretroviral therapy has increased more than three-fold since 2003, and reached an estimated 235 000 by June 2006. This represents about 16% of the total number of people in need of antiretroviral treatment in Asia.
- Only Thailand has succeeded in providing treatment to at least 50% of those in need.

Country developments

- In **China** an estimated 650 000 people were living with HIV at the end of 2005. Nearly half (44%) of the people living with HIV in China are believed to have been infected while injecting drugs. Sexual risk-taking among people who inject drugs compounds the likelihood of HIV spreading among and beyond those who inject drugs.
- Overall, it is estimated that half of new HIV infections in **China** in 2005 occurred during unprotected sex. This indicates that HIV is spreading gradually from people at higher risk of exposure to the general population, and subsequently the number of women becoming infected with HIV is growing.
- **India's** HIV epidemic appears to be stable or diminishing in some parts while growing at a modest rate in others. Approximately 5.7 million people were living with HIV in 2005. The bulk of HIV infections in **India** are occurring during unprotected heterosexual intercourse. Consequently, women account for a growing proportion of people living with HIV (some 38% in 2005), particularly in rural areas.
- **Viet Nam's** epidemic continues to increase, with HIV having been detected in all 64 provinces and all cities. The number of people living with HIV has doubled since 2000, and reached an estimated 260 000 in 2005. Some 40 000 people are being infected with HIV each year, the vast majority being people who inject drugs or who buy or sell sex.
- **Cambodia's** epidemic appears to be stabilizing, having diminished since the late 1990s. There is strong evidence that behaviour change efforts introduced by the state and nongovernmental organizations have been effective, particularly in the sex industry.
- In **Thailand**, an estimated 580 000 adults and children were living with HIV at the end of 2005. The number of new annual HIV infections continues to drop—the estimated 18 000 new infections in 2005 were 10% less than in 2004. However, a large percentage of new HIV infections are occurring in people considered to be at low-risk of infection. Approximately one third of new infections in 2005 were in married women who were probably infected by their spouses.
- Men who have sex with men in **Thailand** remain at high risk of HIV infection. In Bangkok, HIV prevalence has risen steeply among men who have sex with men—from

17% in 2003 to 28% in 2005. Among people aged 22 years or younger, prevalence rose from 13% to 22% in the same period.

- Injecting drug use also continues to be a risk factor for infection in **Thailand's** epidemic. An estimated 45% of people who inject drugs attending treatment clinics have been found to be HIV-positive, and between 3%-10% of people who inject drugs in Thailand are estimated to be newly infected with HIV each year. This is due chiefly to the large proportion of people who inject drugs who use non-sterile injecting equipment (some 35%, according to one recent study).
- In **Myanmar** there are early indications that the epidemic might be diminishing. HIV infection levels have declined among pregnant women (1.3% in 2005, down from 2.2% in 2000) and among men seeking treatment for other sexually transmitted infections (from 8% in 2001 to 4% in 2005). Nevertheless, the country is experiencing a serious epidemic, with an estimated 360 000 people living with HIV at the end of 2005 and national adult HIV prevalence of approximately 1.3%. HIV prevalence of 2.2% among young people (15-24 years of age) in 2005 is a cause for serious concern. Also, some 43% of people who inject drugs and nearly one in three (32%) sex workers countrywide were living with HIV in 2005.
- In **Pakistan**, high HIV infection levels among people who inject drugs could cross-over into other populations, including male and female sex workers.
- There is evidence that HIV is present in **Afghanistan**, where conditions favour the rapid spread of HIV. Afghanistan's emerging epidemic is likely to hinge on a combination of injecting drug use and unsafe paid sex.
- The high HIV infection levels found among the estimated 145 000-170 000 people who inject drugs in **Indonesia** heralds possible wider HIV outbreaks in the country. Some 170 000 adults were living with HIV in 2005.
- In **Papua**, HIV is now well-established in the general population. Almost 1% of adults in several villages have been found to be living with HIV. The chief contributing factor in this localized epidemic appears to be unsafe paid sex in a culture in which as many as 10%-15% of young men (15-24 years) buy sex.
- An estimated 69 000 people were living with HIV in 2005 in **Malaysia**, where the most common risk factor for HIV infection was exposure to contaminated drug injecting equipment (which accounted for three in four HIV infections in 2002, most of them in men, aged 20-40 years).
- In the **Philippines**, where HIV is being transmitted primarily during unprotected sex, national adult HIV prevalence remains well under 0.1%. About one third of HIV infections diagnosed since 1984 have been in returning overseas Filipino workers (mostly in seafarers and domestic workers). Efforts to screen and treat sex workers for sexually transmitted infections, along with other prevention efforts initiated since the early 1990s have possibly helped contain the spread of the virus during paid sex. Less than 1% of sex workers are infected with HIV.
- Approximately 17 000 adults and children were living with HIV in **Japan** in 2005. An increasing number of HIV infections are being found in men who have sex with men, who account for at least 60% of annual reported HIV cases.

Contact

Yasmine Topor | UNAIDS Geneva | tel. +41 22 791 3501 | topory@unaids.org

Sophie Barton-Knott | UNAIDS Geneva | tel. +41 22 791 1697 | bartonknotts@unaids.org