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List of abbreviations and acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency syndrome
ARV	Antiretroviral
CBO	Community-based organization
CBM	Community-based monitoring
CLM	Community-led monitoring
CSO	Civil society organization
CSE	Comprehensive sexuality education
DSD	Differentiated service delivery
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex
KP	Key population
MNC	Multi-national corporation
MSM	Men who have sex with men
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PLHIV	People living with HIV
PPE	Personal protective equipment
PrEP	Pre-exposure prophylaxis
ROP	Regional operational plan
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprises
SRHR	Sexual and reproductive health and rights
TasP	Treatment as prevention
STI	Sexually transmitted infection
TB	Tuberculosis
TG	Transgender
U=U	Undetectable=Untransmittable
VCT	Voluntary counseling and testing

1

Executive Summary

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the APCOM Community Summit 2020 brought together delegates, speakers, community members and participants from across the Asia-Pacific Region for the first-ever hybrid conference, convened using a combination of face-to-face and virtual conferencing. The impact of COVID-19 on people living with HIV and key populations, has been felt across the region, revealing glaring inequalities and amplifying the need for better co-ordination among the community. However, despite the challenges of the past year, the community response to the pandemic has been inspirational, demonstrating the vital role of community-based organizations as lifelines for people living with HIV and key populations, as well as the wider community.

Discussions during the APCOM Community Summit highlighted that unfortunately, lack of political will and commitment to prioritize HIV programmes remains an issue for many countries throughout Asia and the Pacific. Despite concentrated (and growing) epidemics among key population groups in the region - of which MSM are disproportionately affected - HIV prevention efforts lag far behind treatment options.

The discussions held during this year's summit highlighted an urgent need to re-energize political commitment and for stakeholders in the region to scale-up investment in HIV prevention methods, such as PrEP and Treatment as Prevention (TasP), for a response which matches the commitment to HIV treatment. APCOM will continue to support countries in the implementation and scale-up of PrEP, through the co-ordination of South-South co-operation activities between countries in the region who have successfully rolled out PrEP and countries in earlier stages of implementation.

Evidence from this region during the COVID-19 pandemic has also underscored the essential role of differentiated service delivery (DSD) to expand and increase access to HIV services for key population members and people living with HIV. The pandemic has showcased the impressive role of the community as innovators in the HIV response and highlighted the importance of Key Population-Led Health Services (KPLHS) for meeting the diverse needs of key populations. As communities continue developing and expanding alternative HIV service delivery programs, it's important that we reflect on the lessons learned from the pandemic, to consider which aspects of "the new normal" are sustainable for HIV programmes looking forwards. It is however clear, that further advocacy is needed to ensure that future governmental crisis responses are inclusive of key populations and people living with HIV.



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CON2020
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23 - 25
November
2020

Thailand
LGBTQI+
Biz 2020
---apcom

26 - 27
November
2020

HIV | EQUALITY | RIGHTS
HERO
AWARDS 2020
---apcom

27
November
2020



In terms of diversity and inclusion, exclusion based on SOGIESC remains a pressing concern for the LGBTQI+ community across Asia and the Pacific, and is entrenched in all layers of society, from the workplace to family life. The LGBTQI+ Biz Forum highlighted that workplace exclusion is experienced in all stages of employment, from recruitment through to maintaining employment. Furthermore, despite many multi-national corporations having diversity and inclusion policies in place, actual country-level implementation in the workplace falls short across the region. The systemic stigma and discrimination faced by LGBTQI+ people in employment, further reinforces societal exclusion and the denial of basic human rights, especially for transgender populations. This underscores the need for more meaningful collaboration between community-based organizations and the private sector, through the development of a roadmap which outlines how mutually beneficial alliances can be forged between the community and private corporations. To hold the private sector to account, delegates also advocated for using data and existing diversity and inclusion indicator frameworks to ensure corporations stay on track. Timely and representative data that can be disaggregated by key population group also has the potential to shape public policy around diversity and inclusion, however, data of this kind is lacking in Asia and the Pacific, as well as globally. This presents an opportunity to develop and implement a strategic plan for the collection, analysis and dissemination of disaggregated data by key population group, in order to strengthen evidence-based advocacy work and guide the strategic direction of APCOM's programmes

On the subject of community monitoring and evaluation processes, the summit emphasized the positive impact of Global Fund investment in community-led monitoring in strengthening local, data-driven decision-making, which has led to subsequent improvements in program quality, equity and impact throughout Asia and the Pacific. The increasing demand for community-led monitoring in many countries throughout the region also represents an opportunity for APCOM to support community-based organizations by coordinating capacity building and establishing knowledge sharing spaces for countries to discuss lessons learned from community-led monitoring processes. Mobilizing sustainable, multi-year funding has also become more challenging in Asia and the Pacific, highlighting a need for increased community-led and community-owned funding mechanisms to continue working on LGBTQI+ issues and HIV.

Whilst celebrating the progress and successes of APCOM's engagement in improving the health and rights of key populations across Asia and the Pacific, the community summit highlighted that much work remains to be done.

2

Background and Context

2.1 Introduction

Following a successful [RRRAP Summit in 2017](#), the APCOM Community Summit 2020 was organized to provide a regional platform for key populations and the LGBTQI+ community to discuss and share important innovations, updates and lessons learned on HIV and human rights. Building upon the previous RRRAP Summit, the 2020 summit also saw the launch of the first ever LGBTQI+ Biz Forum. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the APCOM Community Summit 2020 was convened in a hybrid format, utilizing both offline and online platforms to create a combination of face-to-face and virtual conferencing. This online streaming platform was developed in partnership with the independent online streaming platform 'SoldOut' to ensure accessibility of and participation in sessions for those attending virtually, and ultimately making sure that despite the challenging circumstances of the pandemic, everybody's voice was still heard. Delegates from Thailand who convened offline for the summit, observed and practiced COVID-19 safety protocols in line with the recommended guidelines from the WHO and the Thai Government. The end of the summit was marked by the esteemed APCOM HERO Awards, an annual gala event to acknowledge the outstanding work of HIV and LGBTQI+ advocates and allies from across Asia and the Pacific. All offline proceedings were held at the Pullman King Power Hotel in Bangkok, Thailand.

2.2 Pre-conference sessions (23 November, 2020)

The pre-conference sessions of the RRRAP Summit which were convened entirely online, featured a series of sessions for community-based organizations on the topic of fundraising and engagement with the private sector. A special session on the progress of PrEP rollout in the region also provided an overview of the implementation status of PrEP and country-level information sharing on experiences of implementation and scale-up. The RRRAP Summit was officially launched with a virtual opening ceremony with distinguished guest speakers Mr. Eamonn Murphy (UNAIDS Director, Regional Support Team for Asia and the Pacific), Professor Emeritus Vitit Muntharbon (Chulalongkorn University), Dr. Adeebea Kamarulzaman (International AIDS Society/ APCOM Ambassador) and Dr. Ronivin Garcia Pagtakhan (Founder and Executive Director, LoveYourself Philippines).



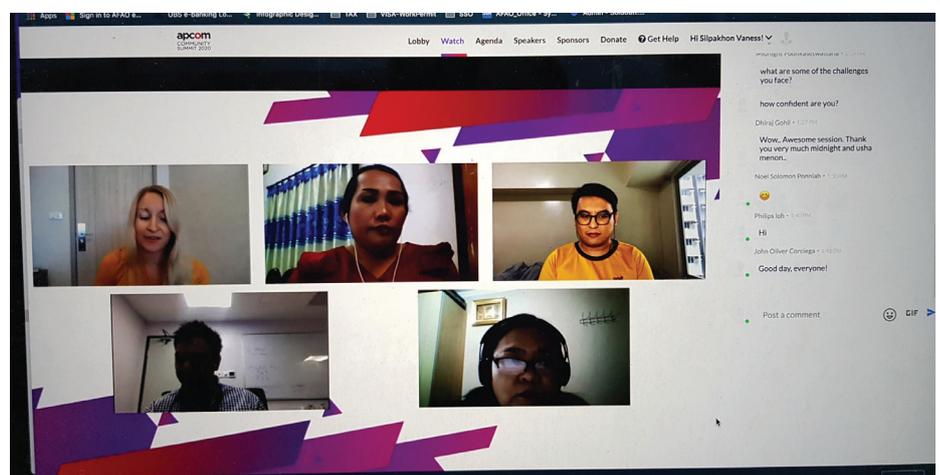
2.3 Rights, Resources and Resilience in Asia-Pacific (RRRAP) Conference 2020 (24 - 25 November, 2020)

The RRRAP Con 2020 follows the RRRAP Summit in 2017 which celebrated APCOM's 10th anniversary. The RRRAP Summit in 2017 covered a broad range of issues, from the HIV response, health and rights of vulnerable communities and investments into the community. Unfortunately, the lack of political commitment in Asia-Pacific continues to undermine the human rights situation, with punitive legal environments still in place and insufficient investment into the community. The RRRAP Con 2020 discussed these issues, building upon the community-led discussions organized by APCOM during the Pre-Conference Sessions of the [International AIDS Conference 2020](#) in July.

RRRAP Con 2020 Objectives

1. The RRRAP Conference 2020, aims to provide a regional platform for key populations and LGBTQI+ community to discuss and share important innovations, updates and lessons learned on HIV and human rights work.
2. To enable community partners to effectively engage with national programs, as well as scaling-up the roles they play in advocacy, design, implementation and monitoring.
3. Opportunity to discuss possible innovations in stakeholder engagement for LGBTQI+ inclusion.

Sessions during the RRRAP Conference were organized around three thematic areas. The first thematic area focused on HIV Programming and HIV Services for Key Populations, covering topics such as differentiated service delivery, community-led/ community-based monitoring, principles of U=U and community-led demand generation. Diversity and Inclusion comprised the second thematic area with a mix of panel discussions tackling topics such as human rights and business frameworks for LGBTQI+ inclusion and LGBTQI+ inclusion in the private sector. This thematic area was also complemented by sessions in the LGBTQI+ Biz Forum, which provided a more focused perspective of inclusion and diversity in the context of Thailand. The third and final thematic area of the RRRAP Conference was COVID-19 and HIV, in which discussions centered around the impact of COVID-19 on HIV programming and adaptations to differentiated service delivery due to the pandemic.



2.4 Thailand LGBTQI+ Business Forum 2020 (26 – 27 November, 2020)

The first ever LGBTQI+ Biz Forum was launched as part of the APCOM Community Summit 2020 with panel discussions focused around the themes of business, diversity and inclusion. Exhibition booths from companies, SMEs and LGBTQI+ organizations were also showcased at the Thai LGBTQI+ Trade Fair which took place in the Infinity Ballroom at Pullman Bangkok King Power Hotel. The forum culminated in the official launch of APCOMMU, a digital content channel developed by APCOM for the LGBTQI+ community.

LGBTQI+ Biz Forum 2020 Objectives

1. Be a venue for diversity and inclusion learning across private sectors and LGBTQI+ organizations.
2. Be a bridge to support relevant issues among LGBTQI+ community sectors in Thailand and in the region.
3. Promote “APCOMMU”, an online channel platform advocating LGBTQI+ issues developed by APCOM.

2.5 Hero Awards

Standing for HIV, Equality and Rights, the HERO Awards is an annual gala event in Bangkok which acknowledges outstanding HIV and LGBTQI+ advocates and allies from across Asia and the Pacific. The HERO Awards also raises money for the HIV prevention and human rights work of APCOM and is generously supported by a range of community, corporate, and diplomatic partners. The HERO Awards is produced by APCOM and the first HERO Awards took place in 2017 to mark the 10th anniversary commemorations of APCOM. Through the Hero Awards, APCOM pays tribute every year to the extraordinary contributions of individuals and organizations who have improved the lives of LGBTQI+ people and people affected by HIV throughout the Asia Pacific region.

During the 2020 Hero Awards event, a diverse and inspirational mix of 300 people and organizations from across Asia and the Pacific were honored by APCOM with an award for each category;

- Shivananda Khan Award: *Professor Emeritus Vitit Muntarbhorn (Thailand)*,
- Covid-19 Hero: *Jaringan Indonesia Positif*,
- Social Justice: *Kittinun Daramadhaj (Thailand)*,
- Health & Well-being: *Lionel Rogers (Fiji)*,
- Community Ally: *Jyoti Dhawale (India)*,
- Community Organization: *Tonga Leitis' Association*,
- Young Achiever: *Aung Phyu Htut (Myanmar)*,
- Transgender Hero: *Nayyab Ali (Pakistan)*,
- HIV Hero: *Sriyal Nilanka (Sri Lanka)*,
- Community Hero: *Hiker Chiu (Taiwan)*, and
- Business Ally: *KMPG India*.

2.6 Report Structure

This report details the APCOM Community Summit 2020 proceedings and summarizes the key messages and recommendations that emerged from the five-day event, highlighting next steps and action points for paving the way forwards.



3

Summit Proceedings

The APCOM Community Summit 2020 consisted of 3 programmatic events running over the course of five days. The RRRAP Conference which ran from the 23rd to the 25th November, commenced with an initial day of online pre-conference sessions, followed by two days of hybrid conference sessions where participants from across Asia and the Pacific joined both online and offline at the Pullman King Power Hotel, Bangkok. The first ever LGBTQI+ Business Forum organised by APCOM was held from the 26th to the 27th November, in which live panel sessions were hosted, focusing on business, diversity and inclusion in Thailand, also complemented by exhibition booths from local companies and LGBTQI organisations. The APCOM 2020 Community Summit was officially closed with the Hero Awards in which community members paid tribute to and celebrated the extraordinary contributions of individuals and organisations who have improve the lives of LGBTQI+ people and people affected by HIV across Asia and the Pacific.



Summit Proceedings

3.1.1 Rights, Resources, Resilience in Asia-Pacific (RRRAP) Conference

3.1.1

Day 1 Online Pre-Conference Sessions, 23rd November

[3.1.1.1 Engaging the Private Sector for Funding: What you need to know](#)

The session of the pre-conference proceedings focused on mobilising funding for NGOs and CBOs working on LGBTQI+ issues and HIV, specifically, how to engage with the private sector to secure funding. Laurindo Garcia, the founder of Be Inclusive joined the first online session of the day to share his experiences of successfully pitching to private sectors across Southeast Asia and the United States, and to share valuable advice for community organizations seeking alternative sources of funding. Laurindo provided tips for approaching and networking with large corporations and small and medium size enterprises (SMEs), as well as providing guidance on how to prepare an effective proposal. It was highlighted that although multinational corporations (MNCs) often have a global commitment to diversity, that these commitments may not have been implemented on the ground at country-level, which opens up a window of opportunity for community organizations approaching MNCs for funding.

[3.1.1.2 Fundraising 101 for NGOs working on LGBTQI and HIV](#)

During the second session, management consultant, Usha Menon spoke about the principles of fundraising, the different modalities of fundraising and how to mobilize the community. One of the key messages arising from this session was the importance of approaching fundraising as a way of giving people the opportunity to make a difference with their money and the power of using personal stories to convey the importance of a cause. A diverse range of successful fundraising campaigns for LGBTQI+ organisations were presented, from digital crowd funding to special events or campaigns endorsed by celebrity influencers. Furthermore, it was emphasized that fundraising should not only focus on the initial acquisition of funds, but more importantly on retention, in terms of maintaining relationships with donors. Ultimately, despite the challenge of dwindling funding in Asia-Pacific from more traditional sources such as grant agencies, the advantages of fundraising through community mobilization were championed, as ways in which to provide communities with the opportunity to hold and guide the narrative. This session concluded with a statement expressing that the scope of fundraising can also go beyond money; to the equally important request of asking for time, voice, influence or networking.



3.1.1.3 PrEP Progress 2020

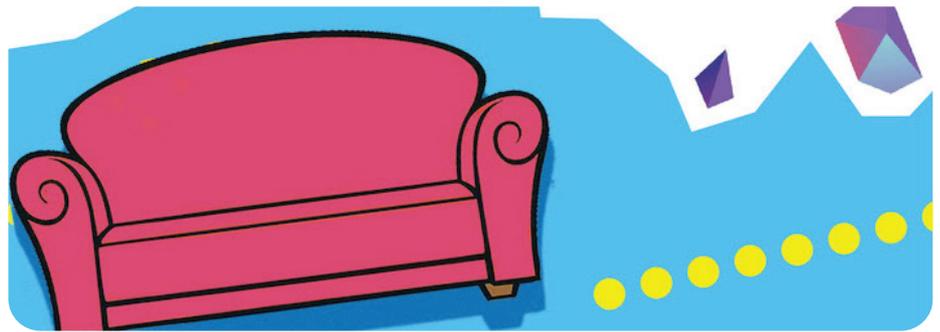
The third session of the day presented an overview of Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) implementation in Asia, with key population community members sharing country-level experiences of PrEP implementation from Malaysia, The Philippines, Lao PDR and Mongolia. During this session, panellists discussed the challenges, barriers and examples of good practice for PrEP implementation, as well as considering the way forwards in light of HIV financing reductions and the availability of long-acting injectable PrEP. UNAIDS Regional Advisor on PrEP, Dr. Heather-Marie Schmidt, introduced the session, explaining that although PrEP uptake is slow globally, Asia and the Pacific lags behind other regions. A lack of funding for HIV prevention services from national Ministries of Health was noted as a significant challenge among panellists, with HIV treatment services being prioritised over prevention. It was noted that increasing conservatism in some countries such as Malaysia, has fuelled misconceptions and stigma around PrEP, even among health professionals and policy makers who sometimes hold the belief that increased access to PrEP may lead to riskier sexual behaviours such as condomless sex. This has also influenced the creation and use of messaging around PrEP which panellists agreed should be culturally sensitive, noting that campaigns which work in some countries in the region may not be suitable for others. The procurement, cost and registration of PrEP drugs was also noted as an additional barrier for national HIV prevention programmes, leading to increases in out-of-pocket expenses and lack of supply.

Panellists highlighted the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach, including ministerial commitment and the development of national guidelines for PrEP implementation, to ensure universal access and smooth roll-out. This included discussion on the importance of presenting the results of formative assessments and successful demand generation activities to the respective Ministries of Health to encourage governmental buy-in for PrEP. In terms of demand generation activities, panellists shared examples of successful campaigns to disseminate key messaging around PrEP, such as the Men of PrEP campaign from the Philippines, designed for the MSM population and the newly launched Queens of PrEP campaign aimed at the transgender population. In Malaysia, where the messaging around PrEP is more culturally sensitive, PrEP has been advertised as a means to be proactive about an individual's sexual health. Rapid initiation to PrEP was highlighted as vital for increasing uptake and advocated for same day initiation to PrEP after receiving a negative HIV test result, which was also supported by LoveYourself Philippines, who shared their lessons learned from implementing rapid initiation to PrEP through Project PrEPY. With the exciting prospect of long-acting injectable PrEP on the horizon, panellists agreed that this could help overcome some of the main barriers to effective uptake of PrEP, especially for those in harder to reach locations and for people with poor health seeking behaviours.

Moreover, this session highlighted the pivotal role of community engagement in ensuring efficient implementation and rapid scale-up of PrEP throughout Asia and the Pacific. For example, in Lao PDR, where PrEP is due to be piloted this year, community leaders are preparing online and offline demand generation activities among the community, as well as engagement with government. In the Philippines, the utilisation of a peer-driven approach to PrEP implementation by LoveYourself, involving task-sharing among community volunteers (PrEPY peers) to deliver PrEP and provide specialised PrEP services, underscores the importance of community-based approaches for making PrEP accessible and acceptable among key populations.

COVID-19 SNAPSHOT

- Community-led COVID-19 responses across the region have involved advocating for multi-month dispensing of HIV medications (up to 6 months), providing a window of opportunity for the de-medicalization of PrEP.



3.1.1.4 APCOMMUNITY COUCH: Live virtual opening

During the RRRAP Community Conference official virtual opening session - the final session of the day - conference participants heard from four esteemed keynote speakers. UNAIDS Asia Pacific Regional Director, Eamonn Murphy provided an overview of the HIV epidemic in the region, highlighting an urgent need for re-energizing work around the concentrated epidemics among key populations, in which MSM populations are disproportionately affected, constituting 44% of new infections in the region¹. He also emphasized the need to re-politicize the HIV response and to push for governments to prioritize investment in HIV prevention services which lag far behind treatment. Professor Vitit Muntharborn, human rights expert and professor of law at Chulalongkorn University, spoke of the importance of holding the private sector to account when it comes to inclusion and diversity, providing examples of indexes that can be used to ensure due diligence and commitment to diversity and inclusion. Professor Vitit also expressed concern over the pathologization of gender identity and/or gender expression which occurs in many countries throughout the region, denying transgender people of basic human rights, such as the right to gender recognition and gender affirming healthcare. Dr. Adeeba Kamarulzaman, APCOM Ambassador and President of the International AIDS Society, spoke about the important role of research in showing the impact that a lack of human rights can have on people living with HIV (PLHIV) and key populations. Most of the research conducted on stigma and discrimination in the context of HIV has been conducted thus far in high-income countries, underscoring the need for increased research on this topic from countries in Asia and the Pacific to inform effective interventions that are suitable for individual cultural contexts. Dr. Ronivin Garcia Pagtakhan, Founder and Executive Director of LoveYourself in the Philippines, emphasized the vital role of the community as innovators in the HIV response, which has been especially evident during the pandemic era with the scale-up of community-led services and the development of online support systems and safe spaces.

Despite shrinking civil society space, community engagement has been key to addressing some of the challenges faced by key populations and people living with HIV in Asia and the Pacific. The solidarity and resilience of community-based organizations in leading innovative service delivery and amplifying the impact of COVID-19 has become especially evident over the past year.

All speakers acknowledged the importance of this conference for not only celebrating the success of regional programmes, but also to share the failures and setbacks, and to highlight the innovations that have occurred in response to COVID-19, helping to inspire other community organizations in the region. The critical role of the community in the HIV response was a sentiment echoed by all panellists, to maintain the momentum and re-ignite the political commitment to ending HIV and AIDS in Asia and the Pacific.

COVID-19 SNAPSHOT

- There was a reduction in enrollment to treatment in the first half of 2020 due to disruptions to drug supplies, causing HIV prevention programmes to be equally affected.
- COVID-19 has exacerbated stigma discrimination experienced by the LGBTQI+ community and reinforced criminalization based on SOGIESC, throughout countries in Asia-Pacific region.
- Research in the form of cost-effectiveness studies has an essential role to play in convincing governments for the essential continuation of community-based services and innovations that have been initiated as a result of COVID-19.

1. UNAIDS 2020 AIDInfo (<https://aidsinfo.unaids.org/>)

DAY 1 HIGHLIGHTS

PRE-CONFERENCE SESSIONS, 23 NOVEMBER 2020

Challenges

- Mobilizing funding from traditional grant agencies has become more challenging for community-based organizations in Asia and the Pacific.
- Whilst it is gaining traction, uptake of PrEP in Asia and the Pacific has been relatively slow compared to other regions. Lack of ministerial funding for HIV prevention services and increasing conservatism in some countries pose significant barriers to PrEP implementation and scale-up.

Opportunities

- Many multinational corporations (MNCs) which have a global commitment to diversity and inclusion, have not implemented these commitments on a country-level scale, opening a window of opportunity for community organizations to approach MNCs for funding.
- Fundraising through community mobilization gives people and organizations the opportunity to make a difference with their money. It also provides communities with the opportunity to hold and guide the narrative.
- The prospect of long-acting injectable PrEP offers an exciting outlook for HIV prevention programmes in the region where injectables are the preferable over oral medications.



3.1.2

Day 2 RRRAP Conference (Hybrid), 24th November

Following the online pre-conference sessions, day two and three of the RRRAP Conference were held in a hybrid format, with three concurrent sessions at the Pullman King Power Hotel, which were also livestreamed for participants joining remotely.

3.1.2.1 Community-led and Community-based Monitoring

The first session on the topic of community-led monitoring (CLM) involved programmatic discussions on regional operational plans and country-level implementation of community-based monitoring and the role of international funding agencies such as The Global Fund and PEPFAR. Panelists shared the challenges and barriers experienced when engaging community representatives in regional and country-level consultation processes. The discussions highlighted that these planning processes, often leave behind younger key populations and marginalized populations due to barriers such as language, geographical location or sometimes due to the lack of financial remuneration (for example, the costs associated with connecting to a virtual call from a location without Wi-Fi connectivity). Panelists also emphasized that meaningful participation from the community should continue through to the planning and implementation phases, as more often than not, community members are involved in initial consultation processes, but then excluded from the ensuing implementation processes where community engagement is paramount. The importance of technical capacity building for key populations was also discussed as a critical stepping-stone for nurturing meaningful community engagement and panelists advocated for international organizations and funding agencies to move towards a localization of planning, implementation and monitoring by shifting tasks to the community, whilst providing technical support. This was noted as being essential for promoting the capacity of the community to implement Regional Operational Plans (ROPs) and for the longer-term sustainability of community-based approaches to HIV responses.

The second session in this series provided an overview of the context of community-led monitoring in the region with speakers from The Global Fund, UNAIDS, Family Planning Association of Sri Lanka and Save the Children (Bhutan). Panelists discussed the importance of scaling-up and strengthening community-based monitoring and data systems, and linking them to national data systems, in order to improve access and quality of services. The differences between CBM and CLM were noted as these terms are often used interchangeably, but ultimately community-based monitoring provides the basis for community-led monitoring. The lessons learned from Global Fund investments in CLM were also shared, with results demonstrating that CLM has supported local data-driven decision-making and led to subsequent improvements in program quality, equity and impact. It was noted that many challenges still remain for CLM implementation, such as concern over the accuracy of data collected through CLM, disconnects between formal health systems and community responses which often results in increasing marginalization of CLM and lack of sustainable multi-year funding for routine CLM.



The theme of community-led monitoring was carried through to the final session of the day, in which representatives from CBOs in the region discussed the challenges they have encountered in implementing CLM and the support needed for continuing these efforts and ensuring sustainability. Panelists reflected on the importance of demand generation for CLM at the community-level, to influence government commitment and buy-in from community-based organizations. It was noted that although there is demand for CBM, it is a very new process for some countries in Asia and the Pacific, such as Lao PDR and organizations express a need for technical support and capacity building from the international community. From the Mongolian perspective, it was noted that retaining outreach workers to collect data from the community was a significant challenge, as well as providing training on the CBM tool to new outreach workers. Panelists reflected on the importance of sharing lessons learned among other SKPA² countries, to share knowledge and experience of using the CBM tool. It was acknowledged that an essential aspect of CBM systems strengthening is incorporating external monitoring processes, to ensure that data collection at the community level is accurate and reliable. Panelists voiced their appreciation of regional community networks such as APCOM and APTN, and called for funding to maintain these regional networks that provide a vital lifeline for many community-based organizations throughout the region.

*“At last our own voices will be heard and we are in control.
Ownership and evidence-based complaints are now in our hands”*
Key population communities on CBM, Papua New Guinea

3.1.2.2 No Time for Excuses: U=U (Undetectable=Untransmittable) in Asia-Pacific

APCOM, through EpiC Project, and in partnership with Prevention Access Campaign (PAC), has organized a series of webinars about the principles and key messaging of “Undetectable=Untransmittable (U=U)” for communities in Asia-Pacific. With the theme of “Understand. Communicate. Integrate”, this series of webinars have aimed to build a common understanding in the region about U=U, to learn how to communicate the key messages of U=U, and identify ways to integrate key messaging of U=U into national strategic plans, to increase uptake of ART. In partnership with Prevention Access Campaign (PAC) and with the support of the International AIDS Society (IAS) Educational Fund, the U=U session during the RRRAP Conference synthesized the series of webinars by drafting strategies of integrating “U=U” into national HIV programming. This session highlighted the importance of putting PLHIV into treatment as early as possible regardless of CD4 count, with the goal of suppressing the virus to prevent its further spread.

The first in this series of sessions supported by IAS, introduced the scientific evidence supporting U=U with a presentation from Dr. Alison Rodger (Professor of Infectious Diseases) from University College London. Dr. Alison Rodger’s presentation emphasized the overwhelming body of clinical evidence that has confirmed the validity of U=U. This comprehensive body of evidence constitutes a range of observational studies, large prospective cohort studies and a randomized control trial (HPTN 052); including data on both men who have sex with men and for heterosexual couples. This increasing body of evidence from the last 20 years has overwhelmingly supported the science that there is zero HIV transmission when viral loads are suppressed. Despite the concerns over the evidence, there hasn’t been a single case of transmission in the studies so far. Dr. Alison Rodger highlighted that although the science for U=U is indisputable, there is a pressing need to communicate and disperse this message to international and national policy makers, to encourage initiation and continuation of treatment.

2. The Sustainability of HIV Services for Key Populations in Asia (SKPA) Program is a Global Fund funded multi-country grant program being implemented in eight countries: Bhutan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste.

Dr. Bruce Richman provided valuable advice on how to talk about U=U, by using the four C's:

- **CLEAR:**
Zero risk; 100% effective; cannot transmit; prevents HIV.
- **CONFIDENT:**
Do say: Condoms or PrEP are not clinically necessary to prevent HIV with U=U.
- **CONSISTENT:**
We need to break through the cognitive dissonance that arises when people feel discomfort about a new way of thinking. Use targeted channels including social media, outreach activities, public events, having conversations.
- **CONSCIOUS:**
Viral load does not equal value. Not everyone can achieve and maintain an undetectable load as structural, social and emotional barriers make it challenging for people to start and stay on treatment. Use the public health argument of U=U to increase access and remove barriers to information, treatment, care and diagnostics.

Dr. Bruce Richman, the founder and Executive director of Prevention Access Campaign, shared some of his experiences being at the forefront of the global U=U movement. He emphasized the transformative capacity of U=U to liberate the lives of people living with HIV, and its potential to improve well-being, social, sexual and reproductive lives. Furthermore, Dr. Richman discussed the third 'U' of the U=U campaign which pushes for universal access to treatment, care and diagnostics.

The U=U campaign is vital for bringing the science to not only the general public and health practitioners, but also to people living with HIV who may not have been informed about U=U, especially those who are already marginalized by healthcare systems. From a human rights perspective, the campaign advocates for the rights of PLHIV to have access to accurate information about their social, sexual and reproductive health. Dr. Richman emphasized that HIV stigma is a public health emergency and U=U is an immediate and public health solution that can propagate the dismantling of this stigma and discrimination. For countries where U=U is not being advocated for, Dr. Richman advised communities to access the Prevention Access Campaign website to identify other organizations in the country or region who have already joined the campaign. Secondly, the importance of finding a public health champion in the respective Ministry of Health and showing them that the WHO and UNAIDS are supportive of this movement, and communicating the success of other countries in joining this campaign.

The second in the series of sessions on U=U showcased selected country experiences of U=U implementation and its key messaging, including examples of campaigns, the role of different sectors, the challenges and lessons learned. Country experiences reflected that unfortunately, misinformation and lack of awareness about U=U still prevails. In some countries in Asia-Pacific with more conservative societies, high levels of stigma and discrimination pose a significant barrier to treatment initiation for people living with HIV, even when ART treatment is provided free of charge. During this session, speakers also drew attention to the fact that "Undetectable=Untransmittable" may not directly translate to other languages, stressing the importance of thinking about the way in which this campaign is translated and ensuring that it is context-specific and culturally sensitive. However, examples of good practice demonstrated that early government endorsement through policy and action are key drivers to the success of U=U campaigns, such as in Vietnam where the Ministry of Health and community leaders have embraced and propelled U=U as pivotal to the HIV prevention response. Furthermore, campaigns which have also focused heavily on reducing stigma and discrimination associated with HIV by challenging misconceptions and communicating the key messages of U=U to PLHIV, young men who have sex with men and health professionals have also proven very effective. U=U as a strategy for litigation and law amendment was also highlighted as being central to movements in Taiwan and South Korea, to support advocacy for HIV decriminalization laws. Panelists called for scaling-up U=U campaigns which focus on dismantling the stigma and discrimination associated with HIV, and also highlighted the importance of including U=U as a core component of HIV prevention interventions in national strategic plans. For countries such as Vietnam where the U=U campaign has been such a success, the next steps focus on providing status-neutral services such as treatment as prevention for PLHIV or PrEP, for those at risk of HIV.



3.1.2.3 Differentiated Service Delivery

The COVID-19 pandemic and resultant restrictions caused significant interruptions in service delivery and at the same time, created barriers to key population's access to essential HIV services including ART. Community-based organizations (CBOs) in Asia-Pacific implemented innovative approaches to ensure the continuous delivery of services to the community. The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the need for Differentiated Service Delivery (DSD) to expand and increase access to HIV services, especially ART, to key population members and PLHIV. This series of sessions supported by the IAS, aimed to establish a precedent on the need for DSD in Asia-Pacific and increase understanding of DSD among CBOs. This series of sessions were designed to facilitate the identification of existing community models that can be adapted in other countries, to enable CBOs to define their roles in relation to HIV service delivery. The first two of these sessions on Tuesday 24th November focused on increasing understanding of DSD and showcasing models of good practice for DSD, and the final two sessions of the day focused on demand generation of HIV service delivery, as countries in the region adapt to "the new normal".

The first session commenced with a presentation by Dr. Anna Grimsud from the DSD Program of the IAS who explained the ways in which DSD had been adapted for the HIV response during COVID-19. Increased eligibility for DSD, extended ART refills and integrated ART dispensing along with other preventive and chronic medications, as well as the use of new out-of-facility and community-based models for HIV service delivery have been four significant DSD adaptations employed throughout the pandemic response in this region. Dr. Grimsud provided an overview of the four models of DSD for HIV treatment and emphasized that DSD is about more than just providing longer ART refills, but needs to also focus on the need for community-based and community-led models.

"In the rush to return to normal, use this time to consider which parts of normal are worth rushing back to",

Dr. Anna Grimsud, APCOM RRRAP Conference 2020

PATH Global Director for HIV and TB, Kimberly Green discussed differentiated PrEP service delivery in Vietnam both before and during COVID-19. The evolution of key population, community-led HIV services in Vietnam which began in 2015, involved creative campaigns, diversified outreach models, direct HIV service delivery and continuous quality improvement efforts, which culminated in the first key population-led one-stop shop clinic model in 2016. The critical role that community engagement and leadership played across the HIV service continuum in Vietnam was highlighted, as well as the importance of government leadership for generating a leading vision for PrEP service delivery, national guideline development, drug supply management, workforce training, quality assurance and reporting. It was emphasized that for building back better and for the future of PrEP in Vietnam, there is a need to optimize convenience, choice, community engagement and a diversity of communication options.

The second in the series of sessions focused on ways to enable communities to define their roles in DSD models and the opportunities that COVID-19 has instigated. Clarice Pinto from the WHO DSD Programme, began the session by providing an overview of key considerations for key populations in terms of DSD. The importance of structural interventions were highlighted, to ensure a comprehensive public health approach that is not limited to providing only HIV services, but instead focusing on an enabling health environment, through supportive legislation, policy and funding, stigma and discrimination reduction and key population engagement. Although DSD has become more commonplace in African regions, it was stressed that uptake by governments in Asia has been relatively slow but is starting to increase. Caroline Francis from FHI360 Indonesia, the second speaker in this session, discussed the implementation of home-based ARV treatment delivery platforms to ensure sustained and safe access to treatment for PLHIV during COVID-19 in Indonesia. Lessons learned from the HIV response during COVID-19, have influenced the Jakarta Provincial Health Office to agree to incorporate home-based delivery mechanisms into technical guidance and formal policy. However, it was stressed that more rigorous monitoring is required, to assess the relative costs of home dispensing and to identify potential longer-term benefits such as retention in care and achievement of viral suppression. Both speakers in this session emphasized the importance of identifying which aspects of DSD are working, sustainable and are essential to retain as we advance towards the new normal.

During the penultimate session of the day, country examples of demand generation for HIV service delivery in the context of the new normal were showcased by community-based organizations working in the region. Speakers representing Dareecha Health Society (Pakistan), GWL- INA (Indonesia) and LoveYourself (Philippines) provided insights on how innovative approaches and techniques were adapted in HIV service delivery as a response to the pandemic and subsequent demand generation activities. Online awareness campaigns which shifted messaging to focus on combination prevention strategies and self-care during COVID-19 were highlighted as effective demand generation activities, placing a larger emphasis on overall well-being for not only for PLHIV, but also for marginalized community. Speakers also outlined the barriers associated with these outreach activities such as challenges related to geographical location and language, as well as reaching those without internet connection. In a similar vein, during the final session of the day, three panellists were invited to showcase and share valuable insights on harness online digital platforms as powerful change maker tools for CBOs. Speakers in this session included Monrawee Ampolpittayanant from Twitter Asia Pacific, Acep Gates, winner of the 2019 HERO Awards 2019 and PLHIV YouTuber, and Purvi Shah from FHI360. Monrawee from Twitter Asia Pacific shared information about Twitter's commitment to being the most inclusive tech company globally and provided some examples of recent campaigns such as the #AlwaysProud campaign. During Pride 2020, Twitter also provided training sessions to the LGBTQI+ NGOs and the community in Asia on optimal use of Twitter as a demand generation tool. Purvi Shah from FHI360 shared how the organization have been employing online platforms and other technology to develop person-centred HIV services, moving beyond a one-size-fits all approach and opening up self-care pathways for HIV service delivery.

COVID-19 SNAPSHOT

- Since COVID-19, a new element of the PrEP delivery model in Vietnam has involved providing blood-based HIV self-testing kits, along with PrEP promotional materials and PPE.



Although FHI360 began re-inventing their HIV programmes to expand their reach in 2010, COVID-19 has really bolstered the transformation of health services. An online reservation app (ORA) was showcased which helps scale, modernize and simplify online HIV service delivery which facilitates appointment booking, tracked referrals, pre-appointment COVID screening and also allows for clinic-led monitoring and a tool for sending SMS messages to cohorts of clients. Acep Gates, an HIV activist from Indonesia and popular YouTuber with over 72,900 subscribers, shared his experiences of creating content for his channel which shares his personal story as a young person living with HIV and being openly gay in Indonesia. Acep demonstrated the importance of sharing personal stories through online content, in order to relate and reach out to other young key population members who may be feeling alone or those who have just been diagnosed with HIV. His YouTube channel also features a program called 'Cerita Netizen' (People's Story), in which he provides a platform for his audience to share their personal story. This session demonstrated that digital online interventions provide powerful tools for demand generation and differentiated service delivery, however, this comes with the important caveat that internet access is not universal across Asia Pacific. Bearing this digital divide in mind, it's important that special consideration is given to ensuring that HIV services and associated demand generation activities also reach those in marginalized communities or hard-to-reach areas, leaving nobody behind.

DAY 2 HIGHLIGHTS

RRRAP CONFERENCE, 24 NOVEMBER 2020

Challenges

- Lack of sustainable multi-year funding threatens the sustainability of routine community-led monitoring.
- Misinformation about U=U persists among healthcare providers throughout the region and awareness among people living with HIV and the general public remains quite low.
- Although differentiated service delivery (DSD) models have advanced significantly across the region during the pandemic, many structural and operational issues which hinder implementation still need to be addressed.

Opportunities

- There is need for technical support and capacity building from the international community for community-led monitoring e.g. a knowledge sharing platform where SKPA counties can share their knowledge and experience of using the community-based monitoring tool.
- U=U can be used as an advocacy tool to push for greater investment in rapid viral load diagnostics. Further research and open dialogue is also needed around U=U in the context of Chemsex.
- Continue supporting community-based research, including cost-effectiveness studies which can be used to convince governments of the initiation or continuation of much-needed, community-based services. To this end, capacity building and technical assistance in data collection and research methods, is essential for strengthening community-based research.

3.1.3

Day 3 RRRAP Conference (Hybrid), 25th November

Day three of the RRRAP Conference took the same format of the second day with three concurrent sessions, two of which were held at the Pullman King Power Hotel and the third session was held entirely online.

3.1.3.1 Diversity and Inclusion of LGBTQI+ in the Private Sector

In series of sessions focused on diversity and LGBTQI+ inclusion in the private sector, several themes were discussed related to human rights and business frameworks, the benefits of LGBTQI+ inclusion for businesses, as well as challenges and opportunities of LGBTQI+ inclusion in the private sector. Experiences from the Asia Pacific region were showcased, with a particular spotlight on Thailand. Engaging a variety of notable speakers from across the region, as well as the participation of businesses and LGBTQI+ organizations, these sessions were envisioned to contribute to the identification of entry points and strategies for increased LGBTQI+ inclusion in the private sector.



Deputy Head of the Economic and Political affairs for The Netherlands Embassy in Bangkok, Kenza Tarqaat introduced the first session on behalf of the Ambassador of The Netherlands, by providing an overview of strategies that can be implemented to promote an inclusive working environment. Findings of a research project conducted by APCOM were also shared by Claire de Leon, Executive Director of Babaylanes, Inc. who highlighted that although LGBTQI+ exclusion is still mainly driven by pre-existing stereotypes which that these experiences also varied across the region by sector. Furthermore, it was noted that exclusion is experienced in all stages of employment, from recruitment to maintaining employment and promotions. Olam Rasaphonh, Program Manager of CHIAs in Laos highlighted that exclusion based on SOGIESC status is not only limited to employment, but is also entrenched in all layers of society, including within the family and community sphere, where LGBTQI+ people are discriminated against and are consequently denied of educational opportunities. Assistant Professor of Gender Studies at the University of Hong Kong, Suen Yiu Tung, emphasized the importance of looking through an intersectional lens when considering LGBTQI+ experiences in the workplace, stressing that the experiences of LGBTQI+ people are not uniform. It was noted that even within LGBTQI+ friendly workplaces, one of the biggest challenges faced by LGBTQI+ people is the fear of coming out and for this to become known to family and friends who may otherwise be unaware.

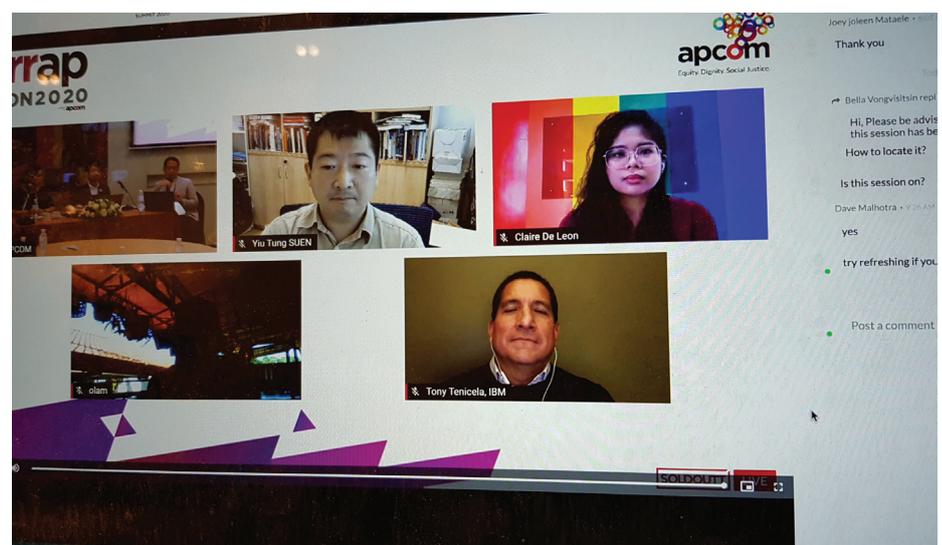
COVID-19 SNAPSHOT

- Although home has become a safe space for many during the COVID-19 pandemic, working from home has presented different challenges for LGBTQI+ people whose home environment may represent a place of danger or isolation.

Professor Tung called for more engagement between civil society and the business sector which goes beyond financial support, to provide legal and/or technical support and strengthen management skills leading to inclusive leadership. In order for these strategic partnerships between the private sector and civil society to be established, it was highlighted that the private sector also has a responsibility to actively reach out to civil society as the private sector can seem intimidating and out of reach.

Tony Tenicela, Global Leader for Marketplace Diversity and Workforce Engagement Services at IBM called for meaningful collaboration between community organizations and businesses, to create mutually beneficial partnerships which encourage cohesion and inclusivity, not just sponsorship for the sake of building an inclusive corporate façade. The important role of allyship within an organization and providing the right education for leaders was also highlighted as key to fostering an inclusive and respectful workplace. Tony highlighted that although there is still much more work to do in the region, diversity and inclusion within multinational corporations has improved over the past decade, as some workplaces have started to acknowledge and respect employee's identities, as well as ensure that they feel valued and inspired. The workforce within multinational corporations has also undergone a generational shift, characterised by a younger and more diverse generation of employees who don't feel the need for the labels. A cohesive workforce where there is employee solidarity and unity has also proven to boost employee morale, as opposed to previous more siloed communities within the workplace.

Throughout the region there are also several organizations and campaigns advocating for more dynamic, diverse and inclusive workplaces for LGBTQI+ people, such as Out & Equal (India and China), Open For Business (Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines) and Pride At Work (Thailand).



The second in this series of sessions on LGBTQI+ inclusion in the private sector, focused on the frameworks that can be employed to anchor diversity and inclusion, as well as discussions around the interlinkages between human rights and businesses. Professor of Economics at the University of Massachusetts, Lee Badgett, called for a transformation of the way in which inclusion is approached, stressing that inclusion is not only positive for LGBTQI+ populations, but is also desirable for society as a whole, both socially and economically. She stressed that by constraining people's resources, it results in constraining our economies. Professor Emeritus at Chulalongkorn University, Vitit Munthaborn, discussed the various frameworks, treaties and conventions that can be used to hold the private sector to account whilst also calling for an increased focus on inclusion within small and medium-sized enterprises which may be more pertinent for making a difference in this region. Panelists also encouraged using successful examples of inclusive businesses to add leverage and provide a competitive beacon for companies to follow if they want to achieve the same success in terms of inclusivity and diversity for LGBTQI+ people. Paul Thompson, Chairman of LGBT Capital stressed the importance of ensuring that LGBTQI+ inclusion does not simply become a box ticking exercise, and that genuine inclusion should run through every vein of a business from senior leadership to fellow colleagues, if it is to be truly inclusive.

During this session, reference was made to the fact that Thailand promotes itself as an LGBTQI+ friendly travel destination, yet basic human rights for Thai people such as same-sex marriage and legal gender recognition bills are still under discussion and are yet to be approved. In this respect, Professor Vitit also expressed the need for further research that focuses on how LGBTQI+ friendly multi-national corporations operate within the sixty countries that incriminate LGBTQI+ people. Finally, all panellists called for data to be used as a tool for change, to use existing indicator frameworks and available data to hold the private sector to account.

The third session of the day on the theme of diversity and inclusion in the private sector, explored experiences of implementing LGBTQI+ inclusive workplaces in three companies and organizations located in India, The Philippines and Hong Kong. The session was introduced with the launch of [APCOM's video about LGBTQI+ diversity and inclusion in the workplace](#), which reports the experiences of three people who have experienced discrimination in the workplace in Thailand. Discussions which followed, centred around the barriers to achieving diversity and inclusion in the workplace, as well as examples of good practices. Discrimination against LGBTQI+ people is still a pervasive social issue throughout Asia Pacific and lack of clear governmental support through SOGIESC-based policies, further reinforces this discrimination. In many countries, religious groups that condemn the LGBTQI+ community often hold significant political influence; creating a balancing act for politicians seeking electoral support. Ronn Astillas, Chair of the Philippine LGBT Chamber of Commerce advocated for diversity and inclusion strategies that incorporate sensitivity, openness and applicability:

“Whatever action we do, the rainbow gets bigger. In everything we do, there will always be a trickle-down effect and the rainbow colours will radiate everywhere”,

Ronn Astillas, APCOM RRRAP Conference 2020



Panelists discussed the initiatives that have been implemented by their organizations or companies to promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Providing an insight from the corporate sector, Zainnab Javid Patel, Director of Inclusion and Diversity at KPMG India, highlighted the value of investing in a talent pool which actually reflects the diversity of their clients, reflecting on KPMG's approach to LGBTQI+ inclusion: seed, spread embed. Chair of the Philippine LGBT Chamber of Commerce, Ronn Astillas, discussed The Philippine Corporate SOGIE Diversity and Inclusive Index 2018, which was the first-of-its-kind research on LGBTQI+ inclusiveness in the Philippine workplace. Based on the survey of 56 companies in the Philippines, the findings revealed that none of them had policies against discrimination based on sexuality or gender identity or expression (SOGIE), nor did they indicate any intention to change these policies over the following five year period. This led to the subsequent launch of the #ZEROTO100PH campaign, which aims to see 100 companies pledge their commitment to ensuring their companies are LGBTQI+ inclusive. Participants in this session also heard from Dirk Dalichau, Managing Director of the Eaton Workshop in Hong Kong, about the innovative hotel space which provides an LGBTQI+ friendly safe space and community. Matt Cameron, Global Managing Director of LGBT Great, called for taking the momentum forwards from COVID-19, to reimagine the workplace and continue to place a greater emphasis on people's mental health and overall well-being.

The final session of the day on the theme of diversity and inclusion, focused on challenges and ways forward for LGBTQI+ in the private sector, with a spotlight on industries such as finance, tourism and media. Speakers highlighted that although multinational corporations often have diversity and inclusion policies in place, actual country-level implementation is lacking across the region. Similarly, in countries which have recently legalized same-sex marriage, marriage equality does not necessarily follow suit due to several caveats to same-sex marriage laws, for example, in Taiwan where foreigners can only marry their Taiwanese partner if they are from a jurisdiction where marriage equality exists. Panelist's discussions also centred around the potential for tourism industries in the region to harness the power of 'pink dollars', but also taking care to ensure that destinations are genuinely LGBTQI+ friendly.



3.1.3.2 No Time for Excuses: U=U (Undetectable=Untransmittable) in Asia-Pacific, continued

In a continuation of the previous day's session on U=U (Undetectable=Untransmittable), the new U=U guidelines for healthcare providers, issued by The Australasian Society for HIV Medicine (ASHM) were discussed by Brent Allan. The updated 2020 guidelines build on those first issued in 2018, drawing on the latest evidence from the Positive Perspectives 2 study, to inform healthcare professionals about U=U and provide recommendations for speaking about U=U to all patients, including those newly diagnosed with HIV. It was noted that the key changes in this third edition of the guidance include a removal of any ambiguity around the messaging that patients maintaining a durable viral suppression eliminates the risk of sexual transmission of HIV. Secondly, this new edition strengthens the support for prioritizing getting PLHIV on to effective treatment as soon as possible after diagnosis, to ensure improved health outcomes, as well as highlighting emerging evidence that shows the positive impact of healthcare providers talking to PLHIV about U=U has on their self-reported mental, sexual and overall health. Brent encouraged participants to access the U=U infographic from the AHSM website, where other helpful resources are also available such as posters which can be displayed in clinical spaces, as well as resources in other languages. U=U has also had additional positive outcomes which were also highlighted during this session such as greater investments in rapid viral load diagnostics and increased STI testing frequency. Despite the successes of the U=U campaign, it was emphasised that there is still a need for more convenient viral load testing, with the optimal mode being home rapid viral tests and further research is required on U=U and Chemsex.

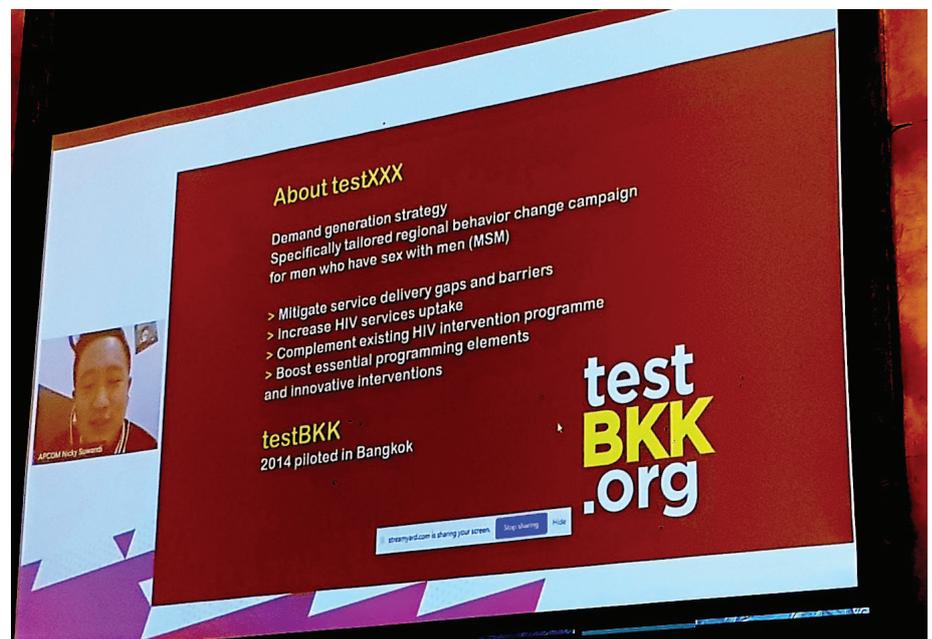
Following the presentation of the updated ASHM guidelines on U=U, APCOM presented the results of their online survey on the perceptions of U=U among people living with HIV and people working for the community. With 1200 MSM respondents, the survey highlighted that although most respondents knew about U=U, significant challenges exist in terms of access due to the stigma and discrimination from health services providers. Respondents also expressed other challenges related to remembering to take ART daily. The results underscored the need to continue working with local organizations to provide reliable and accurate information on U=U, in addition to advocating for U=U to be included in national health guidelines.

The series of panel discussions on U=U concluded with a session focusing on integration of U=U into national health programmes. During this session, the speakers called for strategic commitment from national governments to include U=U in national health programming, to ensure that people living with HIV are not left behind, which is often the case when governments direct all their resources to tackling new HIV infections.



3.1.3.3 Connecting the Dots: Bridging Service Delivery Gaps with Demand Generation

During this session, panelists representing a diversity of community-based organizations from the region shared lessons learned from implementing social marketing and online digital campaigns for demand generation for HIV service uptake. Featured panelists included Nicky Suwandi (APCOM), Tono Permana (Saya Berani Campaign, Indonesia), John Oliver Corceiga and Raybert Domingo (LoveYourself, Philippines), Parker Franck Hou (Burnet Institute) and Lattavanh Sengdala (CHias). Discussions focused on the benefits of harnessing digital campaigns to disseminate comprehensive information about HIV and where to access testing and treatment services, as well as stigma reduction strategies. The importance of conducting formative research among the target key population group was highlighted as an important precursor to demand generation activities, which helps tailor the messages of campaigns to the audience and to identify which modes of outreach are most effective. Excellent examples of online demand generation activities in the region included the use of gay dating apps to share HIV testing campaigns, information hotlines, illustrated messages shared through social media and the dissemination of key messages through social media influencers and ambassadors. Interactive methods of engaging with key populations were also discussed as effective ways of generating demand for HIV services, such as competitions or an online movie night. The session concluded with the key message that demand generation should be sensitive, open and versatile.



3.1.3.4 COVID-19, HIV and the community in Asia Pacific

This online session addressed the impact of COVID-19 on socioeconomic status, mental health, HIV and STI treatment services for key populations in Asia and the Pacific, including a discussion on the innovative responses implemented by communities to overcome the associated challenges. Panelists highlighted the broad spectrum of challenges faced by key populations and people living with HIV during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting that these issues extend beyond physical health, to basic needs such as food, shelter and protection from harm. National lockdowns and periods of restricted movement have placed significant economic strain on the community in Asia and the Pacific. Surveys conducted in several countries throughout the region have shown that key populations and people living with HIV have been disproportionately affected by unemployment, yet the economic support provided by governments has been insufficient to cover basic monthly expenses. Panelists discussed the community response to the pandemic, with examples from organisations such as SWING (represented by Ms. Surang Janyam, Executive Director) who established a fund for sex workers in Thailand, to provide food, shelter, psychosocial support and PPE. Providing insight of the Philippines context, Rodenie A. Olete, Director of Program and Research at Gabay sa Pulang Laso Inc., spoke of the 'Oasis Initiative' which supported residentially displaced people living with HIV, providing temporary shelter, psychosocial support and a skills development program to get people back on their feet again. Chompoonut Nakornthap from the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, Thailand, discussed the ministry's plan to examine the state of HIV and other sexual health services during the pandemic, to ensure that the government is better equipped to serve the needs of key populations during any future national crisis periods. Matcha Pornin, Founder of Sangsan Anakot Yawachon, spoke about the many barriers to healthcare experienced by indigenous populations in Thailand, which was exacerbated during the pandemic causing many people living with HIV to face additional challenges in accessing treatment services.

COVID-19 SNAPSHOT

- Community leaders reported that transgender people were being blamed for COVID-19 in some countries in the region, which exacerbated discrimination towards the transgender community.
- Furthermore, transgender people in the region have faced additional challenges in accessing government welfare support due to the non-recognition of their gender identity in official documentation.

In terms of the impact of COVID-19 on HIV services, panelists discussed the disruptions to HIV testing, prevention and treatment services, including difficulties in accessing clinics, reduced services and ARV stockouts. Due to the ministerial and organisational re-allocation of funds in response to COVID-19, funding to maintain routine STI and HIV testing services became limited, in addition to insufficient funds to be able to conduct COVID-19 tests which in many countries throughout the region has required significant out-of-pocket expenses. In response to reduced HIV services, community-based organizations in the region utilised decentralised service delivery models such as mobile clinics or ARV/PrEP home delivery services to ensure people living with or at risk of HIV had continuous access to prevention and treatment.

"I think we're doing very well so far. The challenges we're facing are rooted in the fact that most of our initiatives are donation-based. To go further, we need concrete long-term sustainable financial support for these programmes that provide social-economic support. This is vital for achieving the 90-90-90 goals."
Rodenie A. Olete, APCOM RRRAP Conference 2020



3.1.3.5 Frankly Speaking: An honest talk with Asia Pacific LGBTQI+ Leaders

In order to build trust and a sense of fellowship amongst LGBTQI+ activists and advocates in Asia and the Pacific, this session sought to share the challenges that the LGBTQI+ community has experienced, as well as sharing tips, advice and wisdom on personal and community leadership, to help grow the regional and international movement. Panelists spoke of shared feelings of exhaustion due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has also taken its toll on community leaders and activists who have been at the forefront of the response in the region. It was agreed that as a leader, it is vital to prioritize your own health, in order to be able to better support others, especially when it comes to mental health.

During this session, the fundamental role that regional networks such as APCOM play in guiding a co-ordinated approach to LGBTQI+ activism and supporting smaller community-based organizations was championed. Panelists also highlighted the importance of being able to recognise your own strengths and weaknesses as a leader, and to know when somebody else's skillset may be a better fit for a task or position. It was also emphasized that LGBTQI+ activism should be tailored to every unique context, for example, Singapore's Pink Dot event which is an alternative to the global pride event, designed to steer away from any association to protests or other forms of direct action which have been criminalised in Singapore since 2009.

Whilst LGBTQI+ activism has increasingly turned to the online domain, especially in the midst of COVID-19, panelists noted that due consideration should also be given for those across Asia and the Pacific who may not be computer literate and those without internet connection. It's important that during this "new normal", people are not left behind at a time when so many essential support services have shifted online.



3.1.3.6 Understanding the Science of COVID-19 and HIV

This session provided a scientific overview of COVID-19 and its implications for people living with HIV from medical experts. Peter Revill from the Molecular Virology Group at Doherty Institute, presented some background information on the epidemiology of viruses and a detailed COVID-19 pandemic timeline, as well as discussing the science behind the different types of vaccine under development. Nicholas Medland from ASHM discussed the potential interactions between COVID-19 and HIV, explaining that so far there has been no clinical evidence to suggest that people living with HIV who are on effective treatment are at higher risk of being infected by COVID-19. However, he noted that this isn't to say that there aren't indirect, socioeconomic factors that may make key populations and people living with HIV more vulnerable to being infected due to their employment, housing and financial situation which may make social distancing challenging. In terms of the severity of COVID-19 for people living with HIV, Nicholas highlighted that the evidence so far has been mixed, with studies in Europe and the United States reporting no increased risk of death, as opposed to a large study conducted in South Africa which showed a two-fold higher death rate in people living with HIV. However, it was noted that of almost all the people with HIV who died from coronavirus in South Africa's Western Cape also had other comorbidities in addition to HIV, with undiagnosed TB being a significant risk factor. Aside from the clinical risks of COVID-19 for people living with HIV, it was also stressed that discrimination by healthcare providers has also had the potential to cause increased harm for PLHIV who are sometimes not prioritised for intensive care admission. In terms of the long-awaited vaccine, it was noted that whilst PLHIV have not been included in the vaccine trials, that vaccines are generally safe for PHLIV and that the community should be prepared to advocate for equal distribution of the vaccine for PLHIV and key populations. The session concluded with an overview of the impact of COVID-19 on people living with HIV in Asia by Harry Prabowo from APN+ who highlighted some of the long-term impacts which may persist into the future. One of the main issues for people living with HIV in this region has been access to ARVs, as health centres reduced their services during national lockdowns and people were restricted from leaving certain areas, in addition to stockouts of ARVs due to disruptions in the supply chain. Furthermore, the discrimination, marginalization and financial insecurity experienced by people living with HIV has placed them at heightened risk during this time of employment instability. Harry also spoke of the community response to COVID-19 in this region, which has involved significant advocacy work to demand for the continuation of HIV programs, for the implementation of multi-month dispensing of ARVs and for guidance notes to be developed for people who are engaged in the HIV response.



3.1.3.7 Chemsex Session through the Asia Chemsex Platform

During this session, the challenges associated with Chemsex were discussed along with potential HIV prevention strategies such as PrEP. Dr. Heather-Marie Schmidt, UNAIDS Regional Advisor on PrEP introduced the session with an overview of the science behind PrEP, emphasizing that PrEP is part of a larger package, which should be taken in combination with other preventative measures such as condoms, regular HIV testing and comprehensive support (e.g. adherence counselling). Dr. Heather-Marie discussed the challenges associated with HIV prevention during Chemsex and highlighted the ways in which PrEP can be a useful HIV prevention option for Chemsex. For example, PrEP can be taken prior to a party, it does not interact with recreational drugs or alcohol, it is discrete, and finally it is empowering as nobody else is relied on to use a condom. The crucial role of community-based organizations in promoting PrEP as an additional HIV prevention option was also underscored, as mainstream health services are often unfamiliar with Chemsex and there may not be a culture of acceptance or tolerance. Bright Thisanut Kaewnukul, Campaigns Officer for APCOM spoke about the success of the TestBKK campaign which is a digital marketing campaign designed to ensure young men who have sex with men in Bangkok know their status. Providing a perspective of the Chemsex culture in Indonesia, Wawa Reswana from GWL, Indonesia discussed the results of a mixed methods study on the use of drugs or substances in sexual settings among MSM in Indonesia. The results of this study suggested that among young MSM respondents (18-24 years) engaging in Chemsex, nearly 30% did not use a condom at last sex in the past 30 days and at all ages, transmission of STIs was significantly higher among Chemsex users, compared to non-Chemsex respondents. Raza Haider Tirmizi from Dostana Male Health Society, discussed the worsening Chemsex situation in Pakistan which is impacting MSM, transgender and sex worker populations as mental health issues start to rise. It was noted that an upcoming PrEP pilot was planned for Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi and that this would hopefully provide more data on the use of PrEP among populations engaged with Chemsex. Panelists agreed that further research is needed on PrEP and Chemsex, as data driven advocacy strengthens the arguments for increased governmental commitment to PrEP implementation. The session concluded with a discussion about the forthcoming long-lasting injectable PrEP which is in the final stages of clinical trials and will offer a superior alternative to oral PrEP.



DAY 3 HIGHLIGHTS

RRRAP CONFERENCE, 25 NOVEMBER 2020

Challenges

- LGBTQI+ exclusion in the workplace is still mainly driven by pre-existing stereotypes and these experiences vary across the region by sector. Exclusion is also experienced in all stages of employment, from recruitment to maintaining employment and promotions.
- The challenges faced by key populations and people living with HIV during COVID-19 has extended beyond physical health, to the basic needs for food, shelter and protection from harm. However, in Asia and the Pacific, some national pandemic responses and support packages have excluded marginalized populations.
- COVID-19 has also taken its toll on community leaders and activists who have been at the forefront of the response in the region, with shared feelings of exhaustion and negative impacts to mental health.
- Chemsex is increasing in some countries in the region, yet many mainstream health services are often unfamiliar with Chemsex, which when coupled with a lack of acceptance and tolerance, prevents people at risk of HIV from seeking prevention services.

Opportunities

- There needs to be a transformation in the framing of inclusion, emphasizing not only the positives for LGBTQI+ populations, but also conveying the benefits for society as a whole and the economic advantages for the private sector.
- A knowledge gap in current research presents an opportunity for research that examines how LGBTQI+ friendly multi-national corporations operate within countries that incriminate LGBTQI+ people.
- There is significant potential in this region for harnessing digital campaigns for demand generation activities and to disseminate comprehensive information and about HIV and testing and treatment services, as well as stigma reduction strategies.
- Continue developing and expanding alternative HIV service delivery programmes that have been initiated as a result of COVID-19 to provide continuous treatment options for PLHIV e.g. online reservation applications, home delivery and decentralized community distribution.
- Further research is needed on PrEP and Chemsex, as data driven advocacy strengthens the arguments for increased governmental commitment to PrEP implementation.
- Future crisis response interventions should go beyond biomedical interventions, to improve programmes on the intersectionality of mental well-being, sexual health and socioeconomic status.



3.2

Summit Proceedings LGBTQI+ Biz Forum 2020

This year saw the launch of the first ever LGBTQI+ Biz Forum, the second event of the APCOM Community Summit 2020, held from the 26th to the 27th November. Exhibition booths from companies, SMEs and LGBTQI+ organizations were also exhibited in the forum to promote their business, products and services to LGBTQI+ consumers. The sessions and shows during the LGBTQI+ Biz Forum were performed on the main stage at the Pullman King Power Hotel and panel sessions were based on the pillars of APCOMMU: business, health, lifestyle and trends and self-development.

3.2.1

Day 4 LGBTQI+ Biz Forum, 26th November

The LGBTQI+ Biz Forum was launched with a panel discussion about the LGBTQI+ situation in Thailand, in terms of inclusion in the private sector. Chomphoonuth Nakornthap from the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security reflected on how LGBTQI+ people have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 crisis, facing increased discrimination and higher risks of unemployment. Chomphoonuth also discussed the fact traditional gender roles and stereotypes that exist in the workplace in Thailand, as jobs are usually assigned based on gender. Nada Chaipayit from UNDP Thailand discussed the findings from the UNDP survey entitled “Tolerance but not Inclusion: A national survey on the experiences of discrimination and social attitudes towards LGBT people in Thailand” which involved 2,210 participants from across the country, including 1,349 LGBT people. This survey revealed that not only are employment opportunities limited for LGBT people, but those in employment also face significant formal and informal discrimination in the workplace. Formal discrimination defines discrimination based on the terms of employment such as wages, benefits and recruitment processes and informal discrimination describes the attitudes and treatment of LGBT people by colleagues and supervisors. It was emphasised that not only are LGBTQI+ people discriminated against during hiring processes, but they also face challenges when it comes to retention in employment due to stigma and discrimination. Panelists agreed that there is a concerning narrative circulating within the private sector that businesses have the power and the right to choose the most ‘suitable’ employees for their organization, which ultimately leads to discrimination.

*“It should not be the case [in recruitment] that you are only selected because you are LGBTQI+....it should be because you are as good as the next person”,
Chomphoonuth Nakornthap, LGBTQI+ Biz Forum 2020*



When it comes to laws and policies to promote diversity and inclusion, the Gender Equality Act of Thailand was discussed, which was enacted in 2015 but still faces many challenges in its implementation as companies in the private sector fail to respect this law. Nada also provided examples of private sector companies in Thailand that have announced policies to ensure the inclusion of LGBTQI+ people in the workplace. Renaud Meyer, Resident Representative of UNDP Thailand, discussed the contradiction with Thailand being promoted as an LGBTQI+ paradise when the basic human rights of Thai LGBTQI+ citizens are still not upheld. In terms of employment opportunities for LGBTQI+ people, Renaud called for the professionalization of the work environment for LGBTQI+ people whose employment is often confined to the entertainment industry; an image which is often portrayed by the media in Thailand.

“It is almost institutionalized that LGBTQI+ people are limited to certain industries”,

Renaud Meyer, LGBTQI+ Biz Forum 2020

Renaud Meyer also noted the hesitancy that organizations may have about working with the private sector, with the commonly held perception that they only care about profit. However, he stressed that companies and businesses are slowly recognizing that unless they align themselves with the values that drive society, their success and profitability ultimately diminishes. It was noted that moving beyond the UN Global Compact, Thailand launched the Thailand Responsible Business Network in 2019, providing a partnership between public and private sectors which aims to drive the country’s economy, whilst also ensuring commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. It was agreed amongst all panelists that when it comes to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), the private sector has responded well with issues related to the environment and climate, but have not been so successful when it comes to social issues such as equality in the workplace based on SOGIESC.



The first session was followed by a concise training session for participants by Facebook on how to effectively use Facebook online advertising for promoting an organization or a cause and how to successfully engage with an audience.

The second panel discussion was focused sharing experiences and ideas about how businesses can be made more LGBTQI+ inclusive with Rachaya Kulanapong, Head of Sustainability at DTAC and Poomipan Aiumporames, world class hospitality industry specialist. It was noted that DTAC have introduced a marriage equality policy, whereby same-sex couples are now entitled to the same marriage and family benefits as heterosexual couples, provided there is some proof of the relationship status. Poomipan described some of his personal experiences related to social acceptance and self-confidence in pursuing his career aspirations, highlighting the importance of freedom of expression. Poomipan also reflected on the tourism industry in Thailand, emphasising the issues related to LGBTQI+ tokenism and the corporatisation of LGBTQI+ inclusion whereby businesses assume that flying the rainbow flag equates to being LGBTQI+ friendly. It was stressed that in order for businesses in the tourism sector to become truly LGBTQI+ friendly, they must create an atmosphere that will attract LGBTQI+ people, from ensuring that staff use the right pronouns in hotels, to providing knowledge of the local gay scene.

“If you want to attract and win over the LGBTQI+ community, it’s not enough to try and attract people by putting up the rainbow flag..... it doesn’t mean you welcome us”,

Poomipan Aiumporames, LGBTQI+ Biz Forum 2020



The final panel discussion of the day focused on the tourism industry in Thailand post-pandemic and how the hospitality industry can be harnessed as an opportunity for LGBTQI+ inclusion. Building on the day’s earlier sessions, panelists also highlighted that the LGBTQI+ community demand sincerity when it comes to making places LGBTQI+ friendly and they should not only be viewed as a market to make profit. Discussions during this session underscored the importance of tackling internal bias within businesses by ensuring that all employees receive adequate training on inclusivity, in order to make hospitality welcoming for the LGBTQI+ community. It was noted that this could take the form of an HR-conducted training session or peer-led training by LGBTQI+ employees for fellow colleagues. Nareeluc Pairchaiyapoom from the Ministry of Justice discussed the national action plan for business and human rights which intends to address human rights violations by the business sector. She outlined that this national action plan also includes non-discrimination policies for LGBTQI+ people in employment. It was noted that laws on civil partnership and gender recognition are still under discussion by the government, but that these dialogues are a good starting point for meaningful change.

DAY 4 HIGHLIGHTS

LGBTQI+ BIZ FORUM, 26 NOVEMBER 2020

Challenges

- Employment opportunities are limited for LGBTQI+ people in Thailand, and those in employment also face significant formal and informal discrimination in the workplace.
- Concerning narrative within the private sector that businesses have the power and the right to choose the most 'suitable' candidates for their organization, which ultimately leads to discrimination.

Opportunities

- Development of a roadmap which outlines how to forge alliances between the private sector and the community, so that diversity and inclusion policies can be translated into action and in doing so, the private sector is held to account.
- It may be beneficial to establish peer-to-peer or company-to-company co-operation programmes, to encourage a mutually beneficial learning process with practical examples of companies who have effectively fostered an inclusive workplace.
- Develop and implement a strategic plan for the collection, analysis and dissemination of disaggregated data by key population. Accurate and representative data on LGBTQI+ and other key population groups are needed to serve as an evidence-base for advocacy materials and for guiding the strategic direction of the organization's programmes.



3.2.2

Day 5 LGBTQI+ Biz Forum, 27th November

The final day of the LGBTQI+ Biz Forum opened with a panel discussion about health and well-being with speakers from a variety of backgrounds, including a yoga instructor, a mental health specialist and a speaker representing the LGBTQI+ experience. Panelists spoke of the daily challenges faced by LGBTQI+ people, from family rejection and isolation to discrimination within the wider society, including the workplace, as well as the ways in which to overcome some of these challenges. Lack of legal gender recognition was highlighted as one of the main challenges faced by the transgender community in Thailand, which causes additional barriers in accessing healthcare, financial support and gaining employment. Panelists agreed that in addition to laws which should protect transgender people and recognise the gender identity individuals, there is also a pressing need to educate society about inclusion and diversity, which should be taught as part of the national school curriculum.

“We have to recognize our own value, it is not our fault and it is not our responsibility. We have to manage our own feelings. The people around you also need to take part in this”,

Poolwanat Tanwattanakul, LGBTQI+ Biz Forum 2020





The second session of the day provided an update on LGBTQI+ inclusivity in the beauty and fashion industry. Panelists representing the transgender community emphasised the urgent need for confirmation and recognition of gender identity under Thai law, stressing that an inclusive society should not leave anybody behind. It was noted that the fashion industry tends to focus less on gender markers and is focused more on what each individual brings to the table in terms of capability, creativity and potential, making it a more inclusive industry. Panelists also called for the reform of national education curriculum, to include diversity and inclusion as a package of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE).

“When we reveal out identities, I’m really overjoyed because society accepts the value of us. However, the Thai law doesn’t accept us as women.... we might be accepted in the social context, but there is one main obstacle which is gender marker”,

Puncharat ‘Candy’ Talert, LGBTQI+ Biz Forum 2020

In a session focused on self-development, panelists discussed the importance of changing stereotypes among the general public in order to make real changes to the lived realities of LGBTQI+ people, which should begin by putting pressure on the media to promote positive images of the LGBTQI+ community. Panelists also called for increased connectivity and networking between LGBTQI+ businesses, to share lessons learned and strengthen the LGBTQI+ business community.

The final day of the LGBTQI+ Biz Forum closed with the launch of APCOMMU, APCOM’s online platform for sharing the latest information about LGBTQI+ health and well-being, arts and culture, as well as social movements and education. The APCOMMU content editors spoke about the types of content that the platform will share, highlighting that the content will also be upbeat, as well as focusing on more serious issues affecting LGBTQI+ people such as HIV and human rights. It was noted that the main goal of APCOMMU is to communicate facts and information in an accessible way that is relevant for the LGBTQI+ community.



DAY 5 HIGHLIGHTS

LGBTQI+ BIZ FORUM, 27 NOVEMBER 2020

Challenges

- The pathologization of gender identity and/or gender expression poses a significant challenges for the LGBTQI+ community in many countries throughout Asia and the Pacific, denying basic human rights of transgender people to seek gender recognition and gender affirming healthcare.
- Despite changes in laws which legalize same-sex marriage, this does not necessarily translate into marriage equality.

Opportunities

- Scale-up advocacy work around legal gender recognition, by instigating open dialogues and communicating the benefits not only for transgender people but for society as a whole, in order to influence societal and governmental buy-in.
- Advocate for the reform of national education curriculums, to integrate diversity and inclusion as a package of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE).



4 Paving the way forwards

This chapter is organised around the three thematic areas of the RRRAP Conference 2020 and summarizes the key lessons learned, challenges faced and recommendations for taking these discussions forwards and turning them into action.



Paving the way forwards

HIV Programming and HIV services for Key Populations

4.1.1 What's working?

Differentiated Service Delivery (DSD)

- One stop shop clinics which offer integrated HIV, STI, HBV, TB and mental health services have proven effective service delivery models for key populations in Asia and the Pacific.
- Evidence from Vietnam has shown that the Key Population-Led Health Services (KPLHS) model has been very successful at improving uptake of HIV services such as PrEP, especially among transgender women, among whom PrEP uptake increased by more than five times when gender-affirming services were offered by specific clinics.
- Providing transgender-competent care in community-based organizations is an effective intervention for increasing uptake of PrEP. This includes providing information on PrEP and hormone use, as well as hormone testing and counselling.
- COVID-19 has instigated many innovative adaptations to differentiated service delivery, including decentralized service distribution, home delivery of HIV medications and online peer-based support services which respond to the unique needs of key populations.

HIV Prevention Services and PrEP

- The results of formative assessments and pilot studies are key to influencing ministerial commitment and funding for PrEP implementation.
- Evidence from Philippines has shown that rapid same-day initiation to PrEP after receiving a negative HIV test result is vital for increasing uptake.
- Multi-month dispensing of PrEP (up to six months) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Malaysia, has led to a form of de-medicalization of PrEP, which offers a potential advantage for uptake and adherence to PrEP.

Undetectable=Untransmittable (U=U)

- U=U is being effectively used as a lobbying tool for HIV decriminalization laws in both South Korea and Taiwan.
- Sex positive messaging has been successful for promoting U=U in countries such as Vietnam and South Korea, but this may not be appropriate for other country contexts where messaging should be more culturally-sensitive.
- National leadership in a collaborative cross-sectoral response, is essential to rollout U=U, to increase understanding and to counter the stigma and discrimination associated with HIV.
- HIV activism at the community level which is centred around supporting and uplifting the voices of people living with HIV is essential for reducing the stigma around HIV and disseminating the messages about alternatives to condom-led prevention efforts such as U=U.
- U=U is also having a positive impact on STI testing frequency which is an additional positive outcome.

Community-led mechanisms and community-based monitoring

- Lessons learned from Global Fund investments in community-led monitoring have demonstrated a strengthening of local, data-driven decision-making, leading to subsequent improvements in program quality, equity and impact.
- An essential aspect of community-based monitoring systems strengthening is the incorporation of external monitoring processes, to ensure that data collection at the community level is accurate and reliable.
- Regional networks such as APCOM and APTN provide a vital lifeline for many community-based organizations throughout the region, who provide continuous support for establishing and strengthening community-based monitoring systems .
- Community-based monitoring provides a sense of ownership for communities and ensures that activities are responsive to the needs of the community.

Community-led generation demand

- The #MenOfPrEP and #QueensOfPrEP campaign campaigns developed by LoveYourself Philippines are excellent examples of successful demand generation campaigns.
- Digital campaigns have been successfully harnessed to disseminate comprehensive information about HIV and generate demand for testing and treatment services. Excellent examples of online demand generation activities in the region include:
 - The use of gay dating apps to share HIV testing campaigns;
 - Information hotlines
 - Illustrated social media messages
 - Endorsement from celebrities or influencers
- Interactive methods of engaging with key populations have also proven effective at generating demand for HIV services in the region, such as competitions or online movie nights.
- Formative research among the target key population group has proven an important precursor for tailoring the messages of demand generation activities and identifying the most effective modes of outreach.
- Sharing personal stories in outreach campaigns can facilitate a more open dialogue around HIV, which dismantles stigma and is also vital for sharing the lived realities of LGBTQI+ people.





4.1.2 Challenges

Differentiated Service Delivery (DSD)

- Uptake of multi-month dispensing has not been equal across different country contexts and in particular, South-East Asia has been slower to adopt policies for 6-month ART dispensing.
- Although differentiated service delivery models have advanced significantly across the region during the pandemic, many structural and operational issues which hinder implementation still need to be addressed.

HIV Prevention Services and PrEP

- Increasing conservatism in some countries in Asia and the Pacific, is hindering the rollout of HIV prevention efforts such as PrEP. Stigmatizing views and misinformation among health professionals and national policy makers prevails, with some holding the belief that PrEP may lead to increasing condomless sex.
- Lack of government commitment to ensuring universal access to HIV prevention services such as PrEP, poses a significant barrier for the procurement of such drugs. This not only presents a considerable cost for CBOs offering such services, but is also associated with higher individual out-of-pocket expenses in countries where services such as PrEP are only available through private clinics and services.
- Procurement at the organisation or national level, individual out-of-pocket expenses and long waiting times for enrolment present significant barriers for the uptake of PrEP.

Undetectable=Untransmittable (U=U)

- High levels of stigma and discrimination present many challenges for initiation onto treatment.
- Misinformation about U=U is still being communicated by healthcare providers throughout the region and awareness among people living with HIV and the general public remains quite low.
- National HIV treatment programs are often neglected, as governments direct their resources to tackling new HIV infections.

Community-led mechanisms and community-based monitoring

- Younger key population members and marginalized populations are often excluded from the planning and consultation processes of international funding agencies, due to barriers which prevent their engagement. These barriers include, but are not limited to:
 - Language barriers
 - Geographical location
 - Lack of financial remuneration for participation (e.g. the costs associated with connecting to a virtual call from a location without Wi-Fi connectivity)
- Although international organizations tend to engage communities in initial planning phases of projects, implementation activities are usually led by international organizations with little involvement of community organizations, who actually have the power to help ensure the longevity and sustainability of projects.
- Considerable concern still remains over the accuracy of data collected through CLM.
- Disconnects between formal health systems and community response which often results in increasing marginalization of CLM.
- Lack of sustainable multi-year funding threatens the sustainability of routine CLM.

Community-led generation demand

- In an increasingly online world, the digital divide in Asia and the Pacific means that people without internet connectivity are often left behind from digital outreach activities.
- Community-led demand generation activities are more challenging to implement in more conservative societies where the messaging should be tailored to ensure it is culturally sensitive.



4.1.3 Key Messages and Recommendations

Differentiated Service Delivery (DSD)

- Key Population-Led Health Services (KPLHS) model which meet the diverse needs of key populations, are essential for providing needs-based, demand-driven and client-centred HIV services, bridging the gap between governmental health services and key populations that often exists in countries across the Asia and the Pacific.
- The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the need for Differentiated Service Delivery (DSD) to expand and increase access to HIV services, especially ART, to key population members and PLHIV.
- Continue developing and expanding alternative testing, prevention and treatment distribution programmes that were initiated during COVID-19, to provide continuous treatment options to people living with HIV and those at risk, beyond the pandemic e.g. home delivery, decentralized community distribution, pharmacies.
- For effective differentiated service delivery, community engagement and leadership is critical across the service continuum, from demand generation to HIV counselling and testing to PrEP risk screening, referral, adherence support and follow-up.
- A more holistic approach to support PLHIV, ensuring that HIV is not viewed in isolation of other aspects of well-being such as mental health, SRHR and nutrition.
- More rigorous monitoring of DSD adaptations is required, in order to assess not only the sustainability of service delivery, but also to identify the potential longer-term benefits such as retention in care and achievement of viral suppression.

HIV Prevention Services and PrEP

- For effective PrEP uptake, services should optimize convenience and choice.
- There is an urgent need for stakeholders in the region to scale-up investment and commitment to HIV prevention methods such as PrEP, for a response which matches the commitment to HIV treatment.
- A multi-stakeholder approach to PrEP implementation which includes ministerial commitment is vital for the development of national guidelines for PrEP rollout and ensuring universal access. Findings from formative assessments conducted in countries across Asia and the Pacific and successful demand generation activities by community-based organizations are effective ways of encouraging governmental buy-in for PrEP.
- Government leadership is key to generating a leading vision for PrEP service delivery, for national guideline development, drug procurement and supply management, workforce training, quality assurance and reporting.
- HIV prevention is following the same journey as contraception, and as a result, the key to PrEP success is by increasing the number of options that people can choose from.
- PrEP can be a useful HIV prevention option for Chemsex, for example it can be taken prior to a party, it does not interact with recreational drugs or alcohol and it is discrete.

Undetectable=Untransmittable (U=U)

- U=U has the transformative capacity to liberate the lives of people living with HIV, and has the potential to improve well-being, social, sexual and reproductive lives.
- Greater advocacy around the third 'U' of the U=U campaign is needed, which pushes for universal access to treatment, care and diagnostics.
- Evidence from community-leaders in some countries throughout the region suggest that the messaging of undetectable=untransmittable does not directly translate into other languages, stressing the importance of thinking about the way in which campaigns are translated and ensuring that they are context-specific and culturally sensitive.
- For U=U implementation programmes to be effective, efforts to reduce HIV stigma should also run concurrently.
- U=U can be used as an advocacy tool to push for greater investment in rapid viral load diagnostics

Community-led mechanisms and community-based monitoring

- Mobilizing funds from grant agencies has become more challenging in Asia and the Pacific, which underscores the shift to community fundraising in the region.
- Ensure that key population communities are supported with technical assistance for data collection, analysis and assurance, to ensure the quality of community-based monitoring systems.
- Demand generation for community-led monitoring at the community level is essential for influencing government commitment and buy-in from community-based organizations.
- Although there is demand for community-led monitoring in many countries throughout Asia and the Pacific, it remains a very new process for some countries which represents a need for technical support and capacity building from the international community.

Community-led generation demand

- Demand generation activities should be sensitive, open and versatile.
- Ensure that the transformation of HIV services is conducted as an iterative process, incorporating feedback from the community to enable continuous improvement of service delivery which matches demand.



4.1.4 Opportunities and Next Steps

Differentiated Service Delivery (DSD)

- Continue supporting community-based research, including cost-effectiveness studies which can be used to convince governments of the initiation or continuation of much-needed, community-based services. To this end, capacity building and technical assistance in data collection and research methods, is essential for strengthening community-based research.
- Develop additional guidance and provide technical assistance to support community-based organizations in establishing differentiated HIV services that are responsive to the unique needs of key populations and people living with HIV.

HIV Prevention Services and PrEP

- Advocate for same-day initiation to PrEP after receiving a negative HIV test result.
- Co-ordinate South-South cooperation activities with countries in the region who have already successfully rolled out PrEP to support countries in earlier stages of implementation.
- Organise information sharing platforms for partners to exchange knowledge and guidance on implementing PrEP for people who inject drugs and its use as an effective prevention method in the context of Chemsex. This may involve capacity building for health service providers to improve knowledge of PrEP, to be able to advise clients accordingly.
- With the prospect of long-lasting injectable PrEP being on the horizon, begin discussions and planning for procurement and rollout.

Undetectable=Untransmittable (U=U)

- Support dissemination of the updated AHSM U=U guidelines and infographics which can also be translated into different languages (AHSM can be contacted to initiate this).
- Encourage further dialogue around U=U and Chemsex by facilitating an exchange of information with partners and research institutions, in order to strengthen the evidence base and develop guidance around U=U in the context of Chemsex.

Community-led mechanisms and community-based monitoring

- Establish clear sets of criteria for community representation, to ensure that all voices are heard equally.
- Conduct technical capacity building for key populations, to strengthen meaningful community engagement and encourage movement towards a localization of planning, implementation and monitoring by shifting tasks to the community, whilst providing technical support
- Community-leaders call for action to ensure that Global Fund Budgets reflect the current times and the 'new normal'. Current allocations of money are insufficient to cover the costs of PPE and COVID-19 resources as programming and priorities are shifting so regularly.
- Advocate for budget approval processes for reprogramming within the Global Fund to be fast-tracked if organizations are to be able to implement activities within the expected timelines.
- Community-leaders call for APCOM to organize knowledge sharing sessions with SKPA countries, as a space to share lessons learned in community-based monitoring and use of the community-based monitoring tool.
- Platforms should be established where CBOs can access emergency funding for the community during times of crisis.
- Advocate for funding to maintain regional networks that provide a vital lifeline for many community-based organizations throughout the region.



Paving the way forwards

Diversity and Inclusion

4.2.1 What's working?

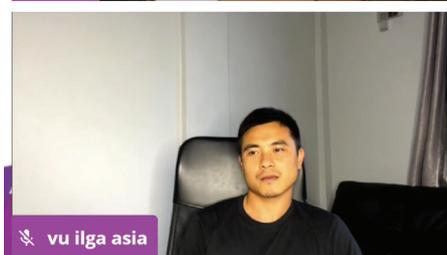
- Successful examples show that genuine inclusion should run through every vein of a business or organization, from senior leadership to fellow colleagues, also highlighting the important role of allyship within the workplace for fostering an inclusive and respectful workplace.
- Successful examples of inclusive businesses are being utilised to add leverage and provide a competitive beacon for other businesses to follow if they want to achieve the same success in terms of inclusivity and diversity for LGBTQI+ people.
- Formal inclusion policies have been successfully instated in some companies in Thailand, for example, marriage equality policies for same-sex couples.
- Government sectors had started some advocacy initiatives in Thailand for LGBTI inclusion in the workplace.

4.2.2 Challenges

- The pathologization of gender identity and/or gender expression poses a significant challenge for the LGBTQI+ community in many countries throughout Asia and the Pacific, denying basic human rights of transgender people to seek gender recognition and gender affirming healthcare.
- Exclusion based on SOGIESC is not only limited to employment, but is also entrenched in all layers of society in countries throughout Asia Pacific, including within the family and community sphere, education and health.
- Exclusion in the workplace is experienced at all stages of employment, from recruitment to maintaining employment and progressing within a company (i.e. promotions). Those in employment also face significant formal and informal discrimination in the workplace.
- Diversity and inclusion often becomes a box ticking exercise. Although many multi-national corporations have diversity and inclusion policies in place, actual country-level implementation is lacking across the region.
- Concerning narrative within the private sector that businesses have the power and right to choose the most 'suitable' candidates for their organization, which ultimately leads to discrimination.
- Despite changes in laws which legalize same-sex marriage, this does not necessarily translate into marriage equality. Moreover, the process of time since this issue was put into the Lower House parliament seems taking long, as there are a lot of controversies to be discussed for the further step.
- LGBTQI+ tokenism and corporatisation of LGBTQI+ inclusion is an issue for the tourism industry in Thailand and potentially other countries in the region.

4.2.3 Key Messages and Recommendations

- There is a need for programmes and interventions that decrease stigma, eliminate stereotypes and increase knowledge of the consequences of stigma and discrimination towards LGBTQI+ people.
- More attention needs to be paid to retaining LGBTQI+ people in employment, with diversity policies that go beyond the initial recruitment phase.
- With the advent of the Gender Equality Act in Thailand, it's important to ensure that these laws are being enacted and companies are respecting these laws, by pushing the private sector to sign MOUs.
- Put pressure on broadcasting companies to move away from stereotypical representations of LGBTQI+ people on screen.
- Continue advocating for legal gender recognition by instigating open dialogues and communicating the benefits not only for transgender people but for society as a whole, to influence societal and governmental buy-in.
- Advocate for the reform of national education curriculums, to include diversity and inclusion as a package of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE).
- Encourage research which looks through an intersectional lens when considering LGBTQI+ experiences as the experiences and stigma experienced by LGBTQI+ people is not uniform.
- There is a need for meaningful collaboration between community-based organizations and the private sector, to create mutually beneficial partnerships.
- Advocate for a transformation of the way in which inclusion is approached, viewing it as being not only positive for LGBTQI+ populations, but also something which is desirable for society as a whole, both socially and economically.
- Advocate for data to be used as a tool for change, using existing indicator frameworks and available data to hold the private sector to account.



4.2.4 Opportunities and Next Steps

- Utilise results of the Universal Periodic Review under the United Nations Human Rights Council, to highlight LGBTQI+ issues and hold governments to account in implementing and acting upon inclusion laws/policies.
- There is a need for further discussions and the development of a roadmap outlining how to forge alliances between the private sector and the community, for meaningful engagement which benefits the community but also holds the private sector to account on its commitment to diversity and inclusion
- Develop case studies of business and organisations who have successfully established inclusive workplaces: businesses may not know how to develop and implement diversity and inclusion policies. It may be beneficial to provide practical examples of companies who are willing to talk about what they did and organise peer-to-peer or company-to-company co-operation programmes to encourage mutually beneficial learning processes.
- Develop and implement a strategic plan for the collection, analysis and dissemination of disaggregated data by key population. Accurate and representative data on LGBTQI+ and other key populations groups are needed to serve as an evidence-base for advocacy materials and for guiding the strategic direction of the organization's programmes.
- A knowledge gap in current research presents an opportunity for research that examines how LGBTQI+ friendly multi-national corporations operate within countries that incriminate LGBTQI+ people.
- Strengthen the research capacity of organisations working on LGBTQI+ issues, so that they are able to meaningfully design, implement, evaluate and participate in qualitative and quantitative research projects on LGBTQI+ related issues.
- Develop advocacy materials for social media that shine a spotlight on businesses and organisations in the region that are setting a good example for inclusion within the workplace.
- Advocate for and provide technical support for integrating SOGIESC topics into educational curriculums to raise awareness of diversity, inclusion and equality, to foster more inclusive societies.



Paving the way forwards
**COVID-19, HIV
and the LGBTQI+
community:
Recover Better
Together**

It is without a doubt that COVID-19 has had multiple implications for people living with HIV throughout the region. Whilst clinical evidence so far suggests that people living with HIV on effective treatment are not at increased risk of being infected by the virus, the indirect effects of the pandemic have been multifaceted. The pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated many of the challenges and barriers experienced by people living with HIV across Asia-Pacific as shifting priorities at international, national and local levels have brought to the forefront pressing health, socioeconomic and mental health concerns among key population groups.

One of the main challenges experienced by people living with HIV in this region has been in accessing HIV treatment services, as health centres reduced their services during national lockdowns, restricted movement prevented people from moving around and disruptions to in the supply chain caused ARV stockouts in some countries. However, there has been a momentous community response to COVID-19 in this region which has involved significant advocacy work to demand for the continuation of HIV programs, for the implementation of multi-month dispensing of ARVS and for guidance notes to be developed for people engaged in the HIV response. The community peer-led response has also demonstrated the resilience and resourcefulness of the community, with the creation of innovative ARV distribution programmes including home delivery, the development of online support services and the diversification of services to ensure people's most basic needs are also met such as food and shelter.

The precarious socioeconomic situation of key populations and people living with HIV across Asia-Pacific has intensified with the COVID-19 pandemic due to loss of incomes, lack of social engagement with peers, unequal access to social protection and discriminatory employment laws. Furthermore, reported increases in stigma and discrimination faced by the LGBTQI+ community not only from the general public, but also health providers, has further exacerbated the already existing societal disenfranchisement. This further highlights the importance of ensuring that HIV is not viewed in isolation of other aspects of well-being, especially mental health, as well as considering how the community response can support the socioeconomic situation of people living with HIV. Lessons learned from COVID-19 have proven that peer support services (e.g. mental health hotlines and counselling) can be effectively delivered through online channels with the potential to reach more young people that could be achieved before with more traditional outreach models. However, with the rush to increasingly turn to online channels, it is important that those in marginalized communities who may not be connected online, are not left behind.



Many LGBTQI+ representatives during the APCOM Community Summit spoke of the diminished employment opportunities due to COVID-19 and loss of income. LGBTQI+ persons who are often already confined by society to employment in the informal sector such as hospitality and entertainment industries in many Asia-Pacific countries, have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic as these businesses closed during nationwide lockdowns. Within the private sector, many companies also made the decision to reduce or cease operations during the height of the pandemic, with evidence suggesting that LGBTQI+ employees were often the first to be let go with no financial remuneration. Despite policies being in place which do not allow hiring or dismissal on the grounds of SOGIESC status, the experiences discussed by speakers during the LGBTQI+ Biz Forum highlighted that there is a massive gap between what is in the law/policy and what is actually practiced. Furthermore, increases in sexual and gender-based violence toward the LGBTQI+ community were also reported in many countries in the region, especially among the transgender community.

As we move forwards towards the “new normal”, it’s important that we maintain the momentum of the past year as we take the time to consider which aspects of normal are worth rushing back to, which innovations should stay and how to ensure that even those in the most marginalized communities of Asia-Pacific are not left behind.



4.3.1 Key Messages and Recommendations

- COVID-19 has propagated the common misconception that people are more connected now than ever, but it is worth bearing in mind that this is not the case for many people living in marginalized communities and remote areas throughout the region. With outreach and demand generation activities happening increasingly online now and for the foreseeable future, it is important that those experiencing a digital divide are not being left behind.
- The COVID-19 vaccines will likely be safe for PLHIV. However, the community should be prepared to advocate for equal distribution of the vaccine for PLHIV and key populations.
- The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the need for Differentiated Service Delivery (DSD) to expand and increase access to HIV services, especially ART, to key population members and PLHIV. It is important to use this time to identify which aspects of DSD are working, sustainable and are essential to retain as we work towards the new normal.
- COVID-19 assistance has been very focused on the distribution of PPE when one of the most pressing needs among key populations and people living with HIV, has been the need for food and financial assistance. Further advocacy is needed to ensure that governmental crisis responses provide equal access for everybody, including key populations by removing known barriers related to legal identification. Future assistance should also ensure that HIV is not viewed in isolation of other aspects of well-being, including the need for socioeconomic support.
- Continue developing and expanding alternative HIV service delivery programs that have been initiated as a result of COVID-19 to provide continuous treatment options for PLHIV e.g. online reservation applications, home delivery, decentralized community distribution.
- In response to the situation during the pandemic in which transgender persons did not qualify for governmental hardship, advocate for laws to be put in place for future crisis responses that guarantee protection and governmental welfare support for transgender persons.
- Continue to facilitate advocacy meetings between CBOs and health care providers to integrate mental health services into the existing health intervention programme.
- Advocate to allocate/reserve funds to meet MSM and Transgender communities needs during an emergency crisis (For Example, COVID 19 pandemic)
- Advocate with stakeholders for additional support to create a sustainable HIV intervention programme to ensure uninterrupted services for MSM and transgender communities during the emergency. (For example, COVID 19 pandemic)
- Continue providing institutional support to MSM and transgender-led organizations to strengthen their capacity to advocate and respond to gender and human rights.



5

Conclusion

During this unprecedented time of a global pandemic, the APCOM Community Summit 2020, provided a safe and inclusive regional platform where speakers, delegates and participants alike were brought together both virtually and offline for a productive week of discussions and information sharing on HIV and human rights work. The RRRAP Conference covered a diverse array of topics under the three thematic areas of HIV Programming, Diversity and Inclusion and the impact of COVID-19 on the HIV response. This year also saw the launch of the first ever LGBTQI+ Biz Forum, a Thailand-based event which provided a venue for diversity and inclusion learning across the private sector, bridging relevant issues for LGBTQI+ community sectors in Thailand.

It is clear that there is much more work to be done in the region if SDG goal 3.3 is to be achieved by 2030, as concentrated and growing HIV epidemics among key populations throughout Asia-Pacific threatens the progress made thus far. The discussions held during this year's summit highlighted an urgent need to re-energize political commitment for HIV programmes and for stakeholders in the region to scale-up investment in HIV prevention methods, such as PrEP and Treatment as Prevention (TasP), for a response which matches the commitment to HIV treatment. In this regard, this year's conference called for using the third 90 of the UNAIDS 90-90-90 targets to push for increased multi-stakeholder commitment for U=U (Undetectable=Untransmittable) to achieve viral suppression, and advocate for Treatment as Prevention (TasP). The promise of long-lasting injectable PrEP on the horizon, also provides an exciting prospect for HIV prevention programmes, although further research is needed around the use of PrEP in the context of Chemsex.

The APCOM Community Summit 2020 also shone a spotlight on diversity and inclusion, highlighting that exclusion based on SOGIESC remains a pressing concern for the LGBTQI+ community across Asia and the Pacific, and is entrenched in all layers of society, from the workplace to family life. Stigma and discrimination which further reinforces societal exclusion and the denial of basic human rights for transgender populations, emphasizes the importance of advocacy work, as speakers during the conference urged community leaders to keep up the momentum in pushing for equity, dignity and social justice. Timely and disaggregated data by key population group is crucial for responsive, data-driven and human-rights based advocacy work which highlights the lived realities for LGBTQI+ people in the region and for guiding national strategic programmes that recognize the intersectionalities and diversity of LGBTQI+ populations.



Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly amplified pre-existing inequities for people living with HIV and key populations throughout Asia and the Pacific, including accessing healthcare, financial assistance and barriers to basic needs such as food and shelter. However, the impressive community response in the region has highlighted the resilience and resourcefulness of the community, as new innovations in HIV service delivery models and online peer-led support services have expanded across the region, cementing the role of community-based organizations as vital lifelines for the populations they serve. It's important that as we look towards the future and plan for the "new normal" that we identify which aspects of differentiated service delivery models are working, sustainable and are essential to retain for the future. Moreover, with an ever-present digital divide in many pockets of Asia and the Pacific, it's important that those in marginalized communities are not excluded from adapted service delivery models and outreach projects, as organizational activities increasingly utilize online platforms.

The APCOM Community Summit 2020 celebrated the many successes of the regional community, as well as highlighting the challenges that still exist for HIV programming and the barriers to building an inclusive society which reflects the intersectionalities of the LGBTQI+ community.





We are united in advocating for issues around HIV and those that advance the rights, health and well being of people of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics.

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APCOM Secretariat | 48 Soi Udomsuk 13,
Bangna Bangkok 10260 Thailand
+66 2399 1145 / +66 2399 1146
www.apcom.org | apcom@apcom.org

