

## Asia

### Overview

- Latest estimates show that some 8.3 million people were living with HIV in Asia at the end of 2005—more than two-thirds of them in one country, India.
- Over a quarter of the total number of people living with HIV in Asia were adult women – 2.4 million. An estimated 180,000 children were living with HIV.
- Approximately 930,000 people were newly infected with HIV in 2005, while AIDS claimed an estimated 600,000 lives.
- The number of people receiving antiretroviral therapy rose from 70,000 in 2003 to 180,000 at the end of 2005. About one in six people (16%) in need of antiretroviral treatment in Asia are now receiving it.
- HIV prevalence has been declining in four states in **India**, in **Cambodia** and in **Thailand**. However, HIV prevalence is increasing in some countries including **China**, **Indonesia** and **Viet Nam**, and there are signs of HIV outbreaks in Bangladesh and Pakistan.

### Country developments

- In **India**, the world's second most populous country, an estimated 5.7 million adults and children were living with HIV in 2005 and adult national prevalence stood at 0.9%. HIV prevalence tends to be higher in the industrialized peninsular states.
- HIV prevalence for 15–24-year-old pregnant women in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, declined from 1.7% in 2000 to 1.1% in 2004. The latter two states were among the earliest in **India** to respond to the epidemic, and current trends reflect their sustained HIV prevention efforts over the past several years.
- Most HIV infections in **India** (more than 80% of reported AIDS cases) are due to unprotected heterosexual intercourse. Injecting drug use is the main driver of the HIV epidemics in the north-east, and there is a substantial overlap between injecting drug use and paid sex in some parts of the country. In Tamil Nadu, HIV prevalence of 50% has been found among some sex workers. In 2005, well below 10% of people needing antiretroviral treatment were receiving it in **India** (which has more than 70% of the region's total treatment needs).
- Around 650,000 people in **China** were living with HIV in 2005. Injecting drug users account for almost half (44%) of people living with HIV. Almost one-half of China's injecting drug users share needles and syringes, and one in ten also engage in high-risk sexual behaviour.
- As HIV spreads from drug users, sex workers and their clients to **China's** general population, the proportion of HIV infections in women has been increasing. In 2004, women constituted 39% of reported HIV cases compared with 25% just two years earlier. In parts of Yunnan, Henan and Xinjiang provinces, HIV prevalence already exceeds 1% among pregnant women and those receiving premarital and clinical HIV testing.

- **China's** 'Four Frees and One Care' programme, which offers free antiretroviral drugs, free drugs to prevent mother-to-child transmission, free schooling for orphaned children and care and economic assistance to affected households, may provide a model for other nations in supporting families and societies affected by AIDS. In 2005, around 25% of those in need of antiretroviral drugs in **China** were receiving them.
- At 1.6%, adult national HIV prevalence in **Cambodia** was one-third lower in 2005 than in the late 1990s—due mainly to a combination of rising mortality rates and HIV prevention efforts that helped reduce unprotected paid sex. However, the country is still burdened with one of the worst epidemics in Asia with women constituting a growing share of people living with HIV – an estimated 47% in 2003, compared with 37% in 1998.
- In **Thailand**, national adult HIV prevalence was estimated at 1.4% in 2005. Prevention efforts have resulted in declining levels of HIV since the late 1990s as fewer men bought sex and condom use rates rose. However, recent studies show that premarital sex has become more commonplace among young Thais and more than one-third of HIV infections in 2005 were among women who had been infected by their long-term partners.
- Official figures indicate that an estimated 80,000 HIV-positive **Thais** had received antiretroviral treatment by end 2005. The roll-out of antiretroviral treatment in recent years has coincided with a drastic drop in the number of officially reported AIDS-related deaths—from 5,020 in 2004 to 1,640 in 2005.
- **Myanmar** has one of the most serious epidemics in the region. In 2005 an estimated 360,000 people were living with HIV and national adult HIV prevalence stood at 1.3%. However, recently efforts have been stepped up and have resulted in a decline in national HIV prevalence in pregnant women from 2.2% in 2000 to 1.8% in 2004.
- In **Viet Nam**, HIV has spread to all 59 provinces and all cities. Around 260,000 people were living with HIV in 2005, more than double the number in 2000. National adult HIV prevalence was an estimated 0.5% in 2005. Official estimates are that almost 40,000 people are being infected with HIV each year. Injecting drug users and sex work are the main factors driving the epidemic. HIV prevalence among injecting drug users increased from 9% in 1996 to 29% in 2002 and 32% in 2003, and HIV infection levels as high as 40% have been found in some cities.
- In **Pakistan**, around 85,000 people were living with HIV in 2005. The country will need to improve its prevention efforts if it is to avoid serious HIV outbreaks. Almost one in four injecting drug users tested in Karachi was HIV-positive in 2004; less than one year earlier the same community yielded only one HIV-positive case.
- In **Indonesia**, a serious HIV epidemic is underway in **Papua** where HIV has spread beyond sex workers and their clients and almost 1% of adults in five villages tested HIV-positive. HIV prevalence as high as 48% has been found in injecting drug users at rehabilitation centres in Jakarta and even higher infection levels have been reported in Pontianak on the island of **Borneo**.
- In **Bangladesh**, national adult HIV prevalence is still very low at under 0.1%, partly due to focused prevention efforts, which have helped keep HIV prevalence below 1% among men who have sex with men and among female sex workers.
- The **Philippines** and **Lao People's Democratic Republic** are experiencing very limited epidemics with prevalence at under 0.1% in both countries.

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