

Singapore

Overview:

Health and HIV situation

At the end of 2007, the cumulative number of known HIV-positive Singaporeans was 3,224, up from 2,075 in 2003.¹⁷⁵ In 2006, 357 newly diagnosed HIV infection cases were recorded compared to 317 in 2005.¹⁷⁶ The prevalence of known HIV cases in the resident population (aged 15 and above) was 0.07% and for pregnant women 0.05%.¹⁷⁷ The male population is most affected by the virus.

Out of the above-quoted 3,224 cumulative HIV cases, 89% were among men, 69% acquired HIV through heterosexual transmission, and 24% contracted HIV through homosexual or bisexual contact.¹⁷⁸ In the same period, only 2% of all HIV infection cases occurred through injecting drug use.¹⁷⁹

In the first six months of 2007, 76% off all diagnosed HIV cases were detected during medical care and 12% through voluntary HIV screening.¹⁸⁰

At-risk groups mainly include female sex workers and men having unprotected sex with multiple partners,

including men who have sex with men.

National HIV programme and response

The Singapore *National AIDS Control Programme* includes a broad range of strategies to address HIV: public education; legislation; blood supply screening; counseling and care for people living with HIV/AIDS; contact tracing and tracking; surveillance among high-risk behaviour groups; and training of medical personnel. Both government and non-government stakeholders are engaged in the HIV response, including the Ministry of Health, a multi-sectoral National HIV/AIDS Policy Committee, civil society groups such as Action For AIDS (AFA) and the Association for Women and Action (AWARE), and the private sector.

Education is provided to both the general population and to those at high risk of HIV infection. Special education programmes are carried out for sex workers to educate them on STIs, particularly HIV, and their modes of

transmission, and to strongly promote condom use. Educational messages on STIs, including the use of condoms, also target men who have sex with men and high-risk heterosexual men.¹⁸¹

The Health Promotion Board of Singapore (a Statutory Board under the Ministry of Health) carries out various prevention and education activities to promote HIV/AIDS awareness among migrant workers. These include distributing information materials in various languages to foreign workers and holding group discussions and Q&A sessions. In addition, the AIDS business Alliance of Singapore has launched the *Rallying Employers to Support the Prevention, Education and Control of STI and HIV/AIDS (RESPECT)* in 2006 to raise awareness on HIV issues among workers and to fight discrimination against HIV-positive people in the workplace.¹⁸²

In 2000, the Ministry of Health issued a new directive making mandatory HIV testing part of the health examination for prospective migrants applying for

a work permit who have obtained in-principle approval for employment.¹⁸³ Those tested HIV-positive are not granted employment passes and if identified HIV-positive in Singapore they are repatriated.

Migration patterns

Singapore is a destination country for migrant workers from South-East and South Asia, including Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Thailand, Pakistan and the Philippines. While Singapore attracts highly-skilled workers, the country also employs many domestic workers, especially from the Philippines, and construction workers. In 2006, the estimated number of foreign workers (non-resident workforce) reached 613,000.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁵ Ministry of Health data

¹⁷⁶ UNGASS, *Country Progress Report: Singapore, Reporting Period January 2006-December 2007*, March 2008, p. 1

¹⁷⁷ Ministry of Health data

¹⁷⁸ UNGASS, p. 1

While cases of trafficking to Singapore for sexual exploitation have been reported, Singapore's investigation has substantiated very few of these cases.¹⁸⁵

HIV response for migrant populations: Gaps and opportunities

Singapore's policies and interventions do not specifically target migrant and mobile populations. Migrants have access to the same HIV prevention programmes, VCT and treatment services that are available to the general population. There are also HIV prevention and education programmes that reach out to migrants, with plans to continue their expansion.

Strengthening HIV data collection

mechanisms and surveillance systems with gender-based approaches and increasing access to referral services in Singapore remain an important condition to strategically address HIV risks and vulnerabilities among migrant workers.

¹⁷⁹ Idem

¹⁸⁰ Idem, p. 2

¹⁸¹ Singapore Ministry of Health

¹⁸² UNGASS, p. 3

¹⁸³ Ministry of Health, Singapore, *Medical Examination For Successful Applicants Of Employment Pass, Long-Term*

Immigration Pass And Permanent Residence, News, Press Releases, 17 February 2000

¹⁸⁴ Ministry of Transport 2007

¹⁸⁵ The US Department of State *Trafficking in Persons*

Report 2007 reports that women and girls from Thailand, the Philippines, China and Indonesia are supposedly trafficked to Singapore for sexual exploitation (p. 182)