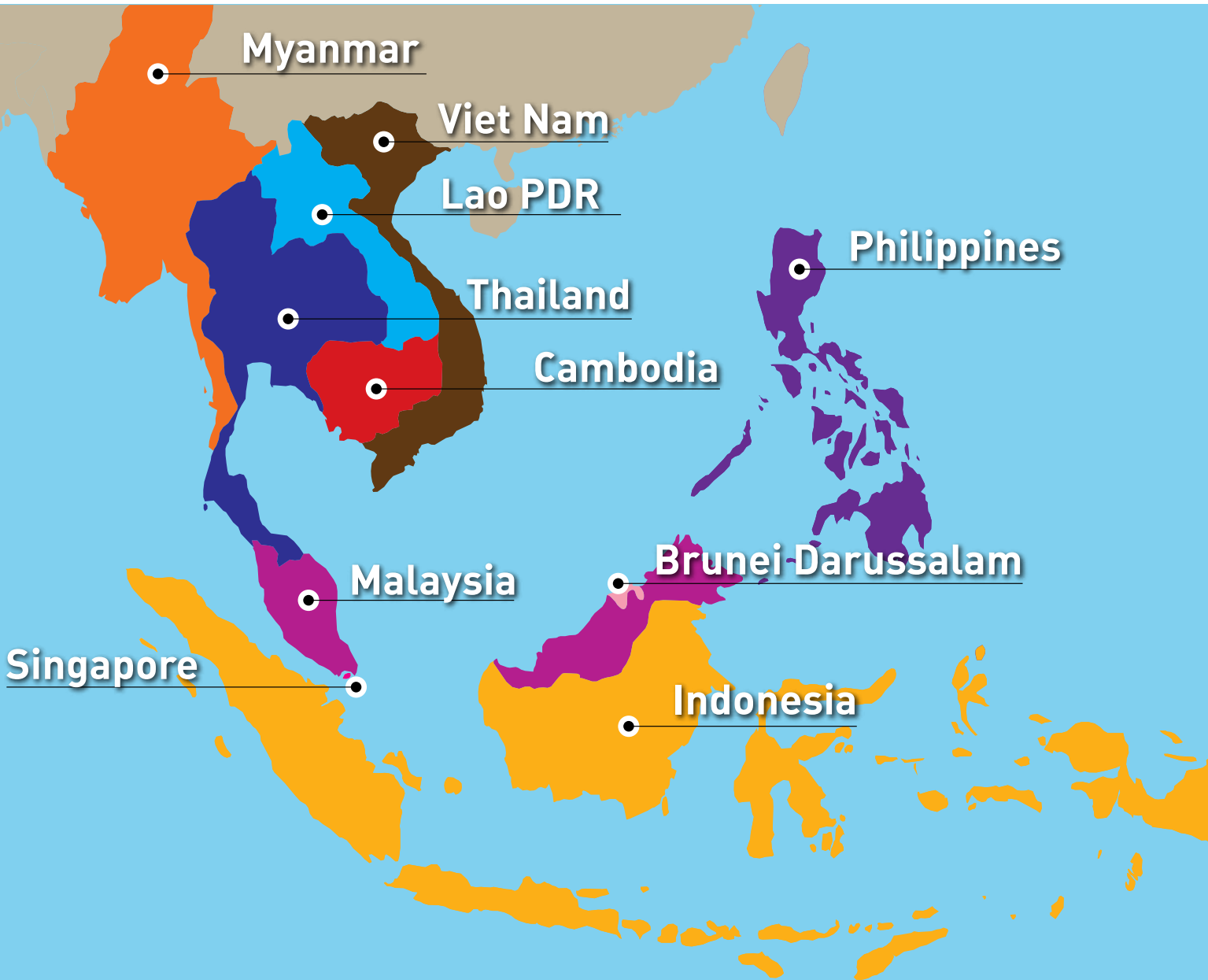


Country Briefs on HIV and Key Affected Women and Girls in ASEAN



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- *The UNAIDS Action Framework: Addressing Women, Girls, Gender Equality and HIV notes that HIV programmes must be evidence-informed and adapted to the relevant epidemiological, economic, social and cultural contexts in which they are implemented. This means knowing the specifics of each country's epidemic as it relates to the impact on women and girls and men and boys differently. In concentrated epidemics, it also means paying particular attention to the needs and rights of key affected women and girls.*
- **Description:** The briefs are intended as a resource for policymakers in Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), as well as planners, programme managers, health professionals, service providers, civil society organizations, including key population networks, women's rights organizations, and others who are advocating for the needs and rights of key affected women and girls. It is hoped that key affected women and girls in each country will be able to use the country briefs to advocate on their own behalf, as well as in partnership with women's rights groups, key population networks and human rights advocates for the information and services to which they are entitled under international health and human rights standards. This includes those rights enshrined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as well as the commitments set out in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the recent 2011 UN General Assembly Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS, and the 2011 ASEAN Declaration of Commitment: Getting to Zero New HIV Infections, Zero Discrimination, Zero AIDS-Related Deaths, all of which have been endorsed by ASEAN Member States.
- A consistent approach has been applied in order to produce an off-the-shelf analysis of HIV and key affected women and girls which synthesizes information from disparate national sources. While multiple data sources have been used to compile each brief, country progress reporting on HIV and AIDS is widely cited. Each of the briefs includes an overview of the following as it specifically relates to key affected women and girls in the context of the national AIDS response:

- Epidemiology
- Modes of transmission
- Social and economic vulnerabilities
- Access to information
- Access to services
- Legal and policy environment
- Current international and regional policy guidelines
- Information gaps
- Recommendations

➤ **Purpose:** These country briefs synthesize some of the current available data and evidence on key affected women and girls into one, easy-to-read report. For the first time, available data and research on national AIDS responses as it specifically relates to key affected women and girls were collated and carefully reviewed together, to improve understanding of women and girls most at risk of, and most affected by, HIV in the region. In doing so, the aim of the briefs is to increase understanding of the specific needs of key affected women and girls in ASEAN Member States and to support national efforts to ensure prioritized and tailored national AIDS responses that protect and promote the rights of women and girls, in all their diversity. The briefs were developed in response to requests from partners at the regional and national level to assist them in prioritizing which women and girls to comprehensively target in national AIDS responses.

➤ **Intended Users:** Intended users include policymakers, as well as planners, programme managers, health professionals, service providers, women's rights organizations, key population networks, and others who are advocating for the needs and rights of key affected women and girls at the national and regional level. In particular, groups and networks that already champion the needs and rights of key affected women and girls but could benefit from additional resources to make the case for these groups may find these briefs of value. Additionally, organizations and advocates who are working in the field of women's rights, sexual and reproductive health and rights, ending violence against women and girls, women's economic empowerment, access to justice and human rights will also find these briefs of interest.

HIV and Key Affected Women and Girls in the ASEAN Region

Responding to the needs and rights of women and girls in a concentrated HIV epidemic

- At the UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting on AIDS in June 2011, governments committed to a number of time-bound targets, including halving sexual transmission of HIV by 2015; eliminating gender inequalities and gender-based abuse and violence; and increasing the capacity of women and girls to protect themselves from HIV by 2015.
- In the Asia-Pacific region, the call for renewed commitment was supported by, among others, two ESCAP resolutions: (a) resolution 66/10, regional call for action to achieve universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support in Asia and the Pacific and (b) resolution 67/9, Asia-Pacific regional review of the progress achieved in realizing the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the 2011 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS. ASEAN Member States reaffirmed their commitment to these goals in the ASEAN Declaration of Commitment: Getting to Zero New HIV Infections, Zero Discrimination, Zero AIDS-Related Deaths in November 2011.

Ensure that national prevention strategies comprehensively target populations at higher risk, such as people who use drugs, sex workers, and men having sex with men, including transgender people, and that systems of data collection and analysis about these populations are strengthened.

2011 ASEAN Declaration of Commitment: Getting to Zero New HIV Infections, Zero Discrimination, Zero AIDS-Related Deaths (para. 17)

- Many ASEAN Member States are experiencing concentrated HIV epidemics with key populations identified as most-at-risk. While the 2011 UN Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS notes that “each country should define the specific populations that are key to its epidemic and response based on the epidemiological and national context”, the Declaration also draws attention to the need to “focus on populations that epidemiological evidence shows are at higher risk, specifically men who have sex with men, people who inject drugs and sex workers”.

Even in a concentrated epidemic setting, where it is crucial to focus on key populations, national HIV responses still need to be accountable to women and girls. Protecting and promoting the rights of women and girls, in all their diversity, is essential if they are to protect themselves from HIV infection, overcome stigma, discrimination and violence, and gain greater access to treatment, care and support.

Defining key affected women and girls in concentrated HIV epidemics

- Efforts to address the needs and rights of women and girls in concentrated epidemics have been hindered in the region by a lack of common understanding on what populations constitute key affected women and girls. That is to say, which women and girls are most at risk of and most affected by HIV.

Pledge to eliminate gender inequalities and gender-based abuse and violence especially by protecting and promoting the rights of women and adolescent girls, strengthening national social and child protection systems, empowering women and young people to protect themselves from HIV and have access to health services, including, inter alia, sexual and reproductive health as well as full access to comprehensive information and education.

2011 ASEAN Declaration of Commitment: Getting to Zero New HIV Infections, Zero Discrimination, Zero AIDS-Related Deaths (para.19)

- The UNAIDS Guidance for Partnerships with Civil Society, including people living with HIV and Key Populations (2011) provides an implied definition of key affected women and girls. It notes that within key populations, “it will be especially important to recognize the needs of women and girls who work as sex workers, use drugs and/or are transgendered. In a number of settings women and girls, as well as adolescents and young people, experience substantial and in some cases disproportional, impacts of the epidemic and may be considered key populations.”
- At a Regional Consultation on HIV and Key Affected Women and Girls held in Lao PDR in September 2012, representatives of the ASEAN Task Force on AIDS, the ASEAN Committee on Women, civil society organizations including the UNZIP the Lips platform, UN agencies and the ASEAN Secretariat jointly recommended that key affected women and girls include: women and girls living with HIV, female sex workers, women and girls who use drugs, transgender women and girls, mobile and immigrant women, female prisoners, women with disabilities, women in serodiscordant relationships as well as intimate female partners of men who engage in behaviours that put them at a higher risk of HIV infection.

Protecting and promoting the needs and rights of key affected women and girls in ASEAN

- ASEAN Member States have committed to comprehensively target populations at higher risk in national HIV prevention strategies and to ensure that services are accessible to them. Many national frameworks, policies and work plans also recognize that gender equality is a critical enabler for an effective HIV response. However, the specific needs and rights of key affected women and girls are often neglected, and punitive laws, policies and practices as well as stigma, discrimination and violence continue to increase their vulnerabilities to HIV and block their access to sexual and reproductive health services.
- Efforts to eliminate stigma, discrimination and violence, including intimate partner violence, urgently need scaling up in the ASEAN region to reduce the barriers to uptake of HIV services, especially among women and girls, and to ensure that they are able to protect themselves from HIV, including in the context of their intimate partnerships. To this end, protecting and promoting the rights of key affected women and girls, as set out in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), is integral to achieving the commitments and targets set out in the 2011 UN Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS and the 2011 ASEAN Declaration of Commitment.¹
- Across the region, evidence indicates that a significant proportion of women are being infected by HIV not because of their own risk behaviours but because their intimate partners engage in high-risk behaviours.² The 2008 Commission on AIDS in Asia Report noted with concern that “at present, there is no effective strategy to protect women within marriage or steady relationships on a large scale”. Since the Commission, several national frameworks and policies in the region now recognize the importance of intimate partner transmission of HIV within their prevention-related activities.

Concerned that women and girls account for a high proportion of new infections, recall our commitment to the declarations and the outcomes of conferences on women and children such as the UN General Assembly Resolution 48/104, 1993 on the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women; the Beijing Declaration on the Fourth Conference on Women; the Beijing Plus Five; and, the Hanoi Call to Action for Children and HIV/AIDS in East Asia and Pacific Region, 2006, that aimed to undertake further responses.

2011 ASEAN Declaration of Commitment: Getting to Zero New HIV Infections, Zero Discrimination, Zero AIDS-Related Deaths (para. 15)

- In recent years Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam have developed strategies and programmes to address intimate partner transmission of HIV, acknowledging that such efforts are key to achieving the ASEAN goal of reducing sexual transmission of HIV by 50 per cent by 2015. These strategies include ensuring an enabling legal environment relating to sex work, consensual same sex practices and harm reduction, decriminalization of HIV transmission, protecting the right to confidential testing, counselling and treatment, and ensuring that appropriate legal literacy, services and remedies are available to key populations and their intimate partners, including key affected women and girls. Recent research has indicated that reducing intimate partner transmission of HIV in the region relies on being able to reach and retain key populations and their intimate sexual partners and clients in a comprehensive service response that links HIV prevention, treatment, care and support programmes.

UNZIP the Lips platform

- UNZIP the Lips is a platform of individuals and organizations working for the rights and meaningful participation of key affected women and girls in the context of HIV and its intersections with other gender issues in the Asia-Pacific region. Unzip the Lips is intended to offer a safe and inclusive space for dialogue for multiple stakeholders. In this space, UNZIP the Lips aims to engage and mobilize support from other organizations and individuals committed to making the voices of women and girls, particularly those most at risk and most affected by HIV, heard in national and regional AIDS responses. To find out more about the UNZIP the Lips platform, visit www.unzipthelips.org.
- **Recommendations for users:** Specific uses for these country briefs include:
 - Developing comprehensive advocacy strategies and action plans within organizations or advocacy coalitions to protect and promote the rights of key affected women and girls within a variety of national frameworks and policies. This includes not only National Strategic Plans on HIV/AIDS but also National Strategic Plans on Sexual and Reproductive Health and National Action Plans on Violence Against Women, where these exist;
 - Promoting dialogue among a broad range of national and community leaders on the health, social, and economic benefits of addressing the needs of key affected women and girls;
 - Working with policymakers and programme planners to promote understanding of the needs and rights of key affected women and girls;
 - Building partnerships and alliances between communities of key affected women and girls, key population networks and with human rights organisations, and mobilizing around common issues such as access to information, access to services including sexual and reproductive health services, and access to justice when human rights violations occur.

- **Advantages:** The country briefs can assist advocates to help them design more effective, evidence-based advocacy strategies and messages on women and girls for policymakers and those who influence policymakers that are tailored to the country's epidemic profile.
- **Limitations:** The briefs are a synthesis of publicly available data and are intended to provide a general overview of the current situation and issues related to key affected women and girls in ASEAN Member States. The data presented in the country briefs should therefore be regarded as illustrative rather than exhaustive and should be seen as "snapshots" that were current at the time they were developed; it is expected that certain facts and figures presented may become dated quickly as the epidemic in each of the countries evolves.
- The findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed in the country briefs are those of the publications cited and do not necessarily reflect the view of the Asia-Pacific Interagency Task Team on Women, Girls, Gender Equality and HIV. Whilst every care has been taken in developing these briefs, the Asia-Pacific Interagency Task Team on Women, Girls, Gender Equality and HIV cannot guarantee the accuracy, correctness or currency of the information contained therein. It is expected that individual country briefs will be updated in an iterative process over time based on additional research and feedback received through the Evidence to Action HIV & AIDS Data Hub (www.aidsdatahub.org). For more information, and to suggest modifications to individual country briefs, please visit the webpage on Key Affected Women and Girls at www.aidsdatahub.org.

REFERENCES

- 1 All ASEAN Member States have ratified or acceded to CEDAW, and all have constitutional foundations for fostering gender equality.
- 2 Examples include: United Nations Viet Nam, HIV Transmission from Men to Women in Intimate Partner Relationships in Viet Nam: A Discussion Paper, 2010; UNAIDS/UNIFEM, Preventing Spousal Transmission of HIV in Cambodia: A Rapid Assessment and Recommendations for Action, 2009.

WHO ARE “KEY AFFECTED WOMEN AND GIRLS” IN ASEAN?

Depending on the circumstance and country, the following groups have been identified as key affected women and girls in ASEAN:

- Women and girls living with HIV
- Female sex workers
- Women and girls who use drugs
- Transgender women and girls
- Mobile and migrant women
- Female prisoners
- Women with disabilities
- Women in serodiscordant relationships
- Female intimate partners of men who engage in behaviours that put them at a higher risk of HIV infection
- Women and girls in HIV-affected households

The Country Briefs on HIV and Key Affected Women and Girls in ASEAN were developed by the Asia-Pacific Interagency Task Team on Women, Girls, Gender Equality and HIV with support from the HIV and AIDS Data Hub for Asia Pacific.

The Country Briefs are available to download at www.aidsdatahub.org and www.genderandaids.org.

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