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Powwow with Thai HIV and LGBTI community: Virtual meeting to discuss the effects of COVID-19

30 April 2020
15:00 – 16:30

co-hosted by:

THE POZ
apcom.org
Agenda

1. 16:00 - Background to this virtual meeting (10 mins)
2. Summary of initial community virtual meeting (20 mins)
   a. Overall
   b. Specific groups
   c. Gaps
3. Facilitated discussion (30 mins)
4. Moving forward (30 mins)
   a. From the community group
   b. Commitments from stakeholders
5. 17:30 - Close
Thai HIV, and LGBTI community discussion on the effects of COVID-19 to their work and communities

Tuesday 21 April 2020
12:00 – 14:00
Zoom Meeting
Co-hosted by The Poz Home Center and APCOM

Special Thank You to the following representatives, and there are those that are not able to join:

Andaman Power, Phuket
APCOM, Bangkok
B Visible Asia, Bangkok
CAREMAT, Chiang Mai
HON HOUSE, Pattaya
Issarachon, Bangkok
Network of Youth Living with HIV, Bangkok
Ozone, Bangkok
Payoon Sri Trang Group, Trang
Pink Monkey, Lop Buri
Sairoong Ratchaburi Group, Ratchaburi
SISTERS, Pattaya
SWING, Bangkok
TEA, Bangkok
TEAK, Bangkok
Thai TGA, Bangkok
The Poz Home Center, Bangkok
Meeting objectives

1. To brainstorm ideas regarding various problems that occurred in the LGBT, and people living with HIV community in Thailand during the COVID-19 situation

2. To share, coordinate and cooperate in solutions for the LGBT, and people living with HIV community in Thailand
Overall problems and obstacles (all groups)

- How to survive in this situation especially with regards to loss of reliable income, and loss of livelihood
- Social welfare access. Costs for necessities such food, rent, mortgage, water bills, electricity charges, telephone charges and other necessities
- Access to health services now more limited.. It is reported that during this time, patients have reduced their rights to use the NHSO welfare and social security.
- If these lockdown measures are prolonged more social issues will definitely be on the rise
- Regarding COVID-19 insurance, it has conditions and prevents people living with HIV to apply.
- For LGBT couples, as our partnership is not recognised we cannot be a beneficiary.
- Lack of personal protection equipment or there is not enough, such as masks, hand washing alcohol, gloves, both for personnel at work, and our communities on the ground.
Sex Workers

- Sex Workers that are still providing services cannot negotiate condom use with customers like before. There is a risk of getting STIs but necessary because there is no choice. Due to the fall in the number of customers and also to need to make a living.

- Many sex workers lack income due to closed establishments and chose to return home without income to support themselves and their families. Their hope is to wait for help from the government but it is not always the case.

- Some sex workers don’t self-quarantine for 7 - 14 days as advised as they are afraid that they would be fired. Some are afraid to go and see the doctor during this time as they may have to answer about their HIV status.

- Many from our community are unemployment due to closure of establishments and there is no compensation.

- Some has adjustment to do work on-line in the form of cyber sex but this is not enough to sustain and not everyone has the means to adapt to this new technology.
Transgender lack sources of regular hormones because the place is closed during the pandemic.

- Transgender don't have the means to buy hormones, as they no longer have regular income.

Some transgender are ill but didn't dare to go to the hospital as they are worried they are at risk of being infected or may be sent to the male general ward.
- Many drug users who need to receive Methadone substitutes still have to travel to the facility to receive treatment as there are no relief measures in this regard.
Youth group

- Youth are not part of the key group for government compensation. They do not receive any support.

- Youth living with HIV: Many are still studying. Before they had part-time work, but now there is a lack of income.
Women

– Gender-based violence. The house is not a safe area for everyone. During the period of staying in the house some people are not able to get along with their own family. This can lead to non-acceptance, and depression.
- As there is no where else to go to, this can lead to high stress and resulting in more domestic violence.

- There are 23 cases in which there is a need to be removed from the living space, but this is stuck due to the Emergency Decree, therefore need to find a way to coordinate with government agencies. Of the 23 cases have cases, one is living with HIV, and there is a case that use drugs (There has not been a follow-up on whether all 23 have been helped or not.)
Migrant and Refugees groups

- In the current situation, many refugees face greater compounding effect and overlapping issues; less chance of meeting people, budget support may be reduced. The situation is very uncertain.
Homeless and undocumented Thai people without rights

- Thai people without rights don’t have ID card so are unable to access the service system from the hospitals. We have to find ways to help with ARV on a case-by-case basis. But not sure how we can support to access for the rest of their lives.

- Homeless people, of course have no residences, no houses, no ID cards therefore do not receive any rights or benefits from government agencies
- The Ministry of Social Development and Human Security can provide shelter but can not choose where, and also they are congested
Barriers for LGBTQI Workers

- Drop-In Centers: Some organizations have to stop some services in some areas, such as blood testing centers (that require hospital staff to conduct). But during this time the hospital workload has increased.
- Some NGOs do not dare to ask for help from others, as they are so used to helping others. They fear it may affect the image of the organization.
- We NGO workers may over our own needs and just concentrate on our communities. We might be denying what are other things that we personally face.
- Many NGOs do not have good welfare and benefits for staff, in this situation we also don’t have good safety net.
People living with HIV/AIDS

- In most cases, the hospital directly delivers antiretroviral drugs to patients for patients who do not need to see a doctor, no need to draw blood, check CD4 or load virus. We found that our friends who have not disclosed their status to family/relatives/friends will refuse to receive medication package sent from the hospital.

- Patients in other provinces that need to see a doctor in Bangkok are unable to travel due to the Emergency Decree. Some also have fever and are concerned about being in quarantine
- Tracking patients is an issue for adherence. Our friends may not have money to travel, for phone calls.
Other barriers that have not been discussed in details

- LGBTQI who are imprisoned
- Depression within LGBTQI group that may affect self-harm
- LGBTQI within ethnic and indigenous groups
Other support measures done by NGOs

- Many organizations did not wait to see measures from the government because it is an urgent emergency. We are at the frontline to support our community as best we can.

- Organizations to provide assistance such as giving away food boxes, and providing visibility to our people. However, there was a case with sex workers where the media came and cover the news, and afterwards resulting in sex workers being arrested.

Some organizations produce food to send to hospital staff.

- Some organizations make donations such as masks.

Some organizations donate food and dried goods, including necessities for daily living. There is a trend of asking about women’s necessities (such as sanitary napkins)

- Many organizations started to raise funds to help and heal their target groups using social media
- We will share information, and forward any cases to each other according to our strengths.

- Join together for a joint funding application to respond to the needs of our community, for example around data collection, and especially for costs that are currently neglected or not allowable under projects. COVID-19 will have a longer effect to our community and our work so we need to be able to respond to their needs as things change.

- APCOM Foundation will help coordinate with international organizations, and coordinate on-line meetings as necessary (English language stakeholders, and Thai language stakeholders) to profile the voice of the community

- Growing our network to include other groups with regular group updates
Thank you to the Thai community representatives

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SWING, Bangkok
TEA, Bangkok
TEAK, Bangkok
Thai TGA, Bangkok
The Poz Home Center, Bangkok
Young Pride Club, Chiang Mai
THANK YOU!
for joining this discussion=)