



Rocky road ahead?

APCOM's AIDS 2022 Engagements

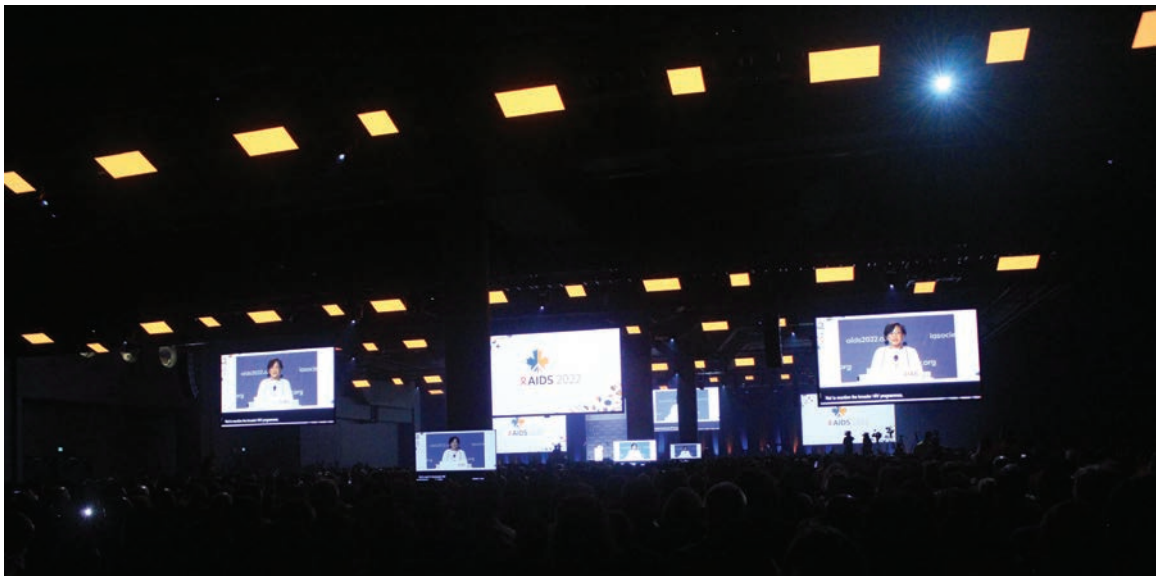
Underscoring community leadership and representation



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Abbreviations

To guide your reading, below is a list of abbreviations that can guide you!

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ART	Antiretroviral Therapy
CAB-LA	Long acting Cabotegravir
CDC	Centers for Disease Control
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HIVST	HIV Self-Testing
IAC	International AIDS Conference
IAS	International AIDS Society
MSM	Men who are having sex with men
PEPFAR	U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
PrEP	Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis
U=U	Undetectable = Untransmittable
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
WHO	World Health Organization

About APCOM


We are a not-for-profit regional organisation based in Bangkok, Thailand, representing and working with a network of individuals and community-based organisations across 38 countries in Asia and the Pacific.

We work to improve the health and rights of gay men, other men who have sex with men and SOGIESC people across Asia and the Pacific.

We have a primary focus on HIV because it is a key health issue for gay men and other men who have sex with men in the region. APCOM also address other related health issues for our communities such as sexual health, mental health and drug use.

We also focus on improving relevant human and legal rights across the region as discrimination, stigma, criminalization and exclusion impact on the health outcomes of the communities we serve.



27 JUL WED.			28 JUL THU.		29 JUL FRI.		30 JUL		31 JUL SUN.		01 AUG MON.																		
<div><div><div><div>AIDS 2022</div><div>29 July – 2 August</div><div>24th International AIDS Conference, Montreal, Canada</div></div></div><div><div>APCOM</div><div>Engagements</div></div></div>												<div><div>15.15 - 16.15</div><div>Pre-Conference</div><div>Getting to the Heart of Stigma</div></div>		<div><div>15.15 – 16:15</div><div>U=U Pre-Conference</div><div>By: ASHM, APCOM, PAC</div><div>Addressing stigma is not enough</div></div>		<div><div>14.45</div><div>Satellite Session</div><div>By: WHO</div><div>Launching the new WHO Guidelines for key populations: Focus for impact</div></div>		<div><div>18.45-20.45</div><div>Satellite Session</div><div>By: PATH</div><div>Integration of Viral Hepatitis and HIV</div></div>		<div><div>08.00-09.00</div><div>Satellite Session</div><div>(Rm 517B)</div><div>By: UNAIDS / Global HIV Prevention Secretariat</div><div>A New Global Road Map for Combination HIV Prevention; Intensified actions towards achieving UNAIDS 2025 targets'</div></div>		<div><div>10.30-12.00</div><div>Satellite Session</div><div>By: International AIDS Society</div><div>Our next shot: Effectively delivering injectable cabotegravir for PrEP"</div></div>		<div><div>10.30 - 11.30</div><div>Satellite Session</div><div>(Rm 517 D)</div><div>Quest to Reach HIV Epidemic Control</div></div>		<div><div>15.30-16:15</div><div>Poster Exhibition</div><div>By: IAS</div><div>Abstract Poster Title: A pandemic over an epidemic: surveying LGBTQI+ situation during COVID-19 pandemic in Thailand</div></div>		<div><div>18.00 - 21.00</div><div>Reception</div><div>By: APCOM</div><div>APCOM celebrates the 15th ANNIVERSARY and Launch of INNOVATIONSMAP. ASIA</div></div>	

The International AIDS Conference

The International AIDS Conferences, which is organised every 2 years, brings together key populations, community networks, HIV activists, researchers, technical support providers, funders, UN Agencies and government leaders from around the world to update progress in our fight against AIDS as well as defining roadmap to strengthen the response against HIV. After the emergence of HIV and AIDS, concerned scientists created the IAS to bring together experts from across the world and disciplines to promote a concerted HIV response.

International AIDS Conference present new sciences, innovations and good practices in the fight against HIV, hence, it plays significant role in HIV programming. It is also a space where key population communities and their organisations convene to establish networks and share lessons learned, hence, it also strengthens community-led advocacy.

1. THE 24TH INTERNATIONAL AIDS CONFERENCE (AIDS 2022)

The AIDS 2022, which took place on 29 July to 02 August 2022 in Montreal, Canada, called on the world to come together to re-engage the science. With the theme, “Re-engage and follow the science”, The conference was set to define future research agendas, shift latest evidence to action, and chart a new consensus on overcoming the HIV as a threat to public health and individual well-being.

The COVID-19 pandemic is playing a role in HIV science and program implementation. Learning from the challenges of the recent pandemic, the conference theme follows with the objective of presenting evidence from latest scientific researches, addressing evidence and implementation gaps, moving towards implementation and supporting the next generation of programming.

2. MISSING REPRESENTATION FROM THE KEY POPULATION

The community-focused International AIDS Conference is organized every two years where thousands of delegates from over the world are expected to participate. Looking from various perspectives, the AIDS 2022 is one of the significant global conferences for many reasons. Its significance has increased after the COVID-19 pandemic. For some, the relevance of the conference is its ability to provide a platform for the sharing of best practices and research findings among public health experts from different regions of the world. For others, its significance is the fact that it will provide a platform for health agencies and other stakeholders from around the world to share resources and information, and collaborate on issues relating to HIV. Especially during the post-COVID-19 era, the conference serves as a platform to establish new partnerships and strengthen existing partnerships between various global health organisations.

This conference is a key event in the fight against AIDS and provides a platform for researchers and community leaders to share their expertise on the current state of the epidemic and how we can best prevent further transmission of the virus. However, at this event, the attendance of key populations, especially those coming from Africa and Asia, has been restricted due to reasons concerning Visa applications.



APCOM Staff and their thoughts about AIDS2022



Inad Quinones Rendon

My participation in the AIDS 2022 is a privilege. Many from my key population and PLHIV community were denied entry to Canada and were not able to participate. But I was there in person despite COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing humanitarian crises. Every time I was on stage and holding a microphone, I was always reminded that these times demand for greater inclusivity. We aim for holistic approach to health, and so we must answer the call to speak for the bigger community to include other key populations and to highlight issues from other Regions including Middle East and North Africa, and Latin America.



Nicky Suwandi

It's awe-inspiring to see so many passionate people gather together under one roof. Also, the in-person connection I made with friends - both old and new - during the conference is really amazing. Not only was it my first-ever AIDS Conference, it was also my debut to speak in such a high profile event at global level. Priceless moments.



Thisanut Keawnukul (Bright)

This is so exciting for me as it is my first time to attend the International AIDS Conference. I have the opportunity to meet with people who work for our community and friends, and learn from our community about what's happening in their countries



Chartlada Sangakij (JJ)

The vibe here is just amazing, not only in the part of information exchange but also how people connect with each other. I joined APCOM and got through the 2nd lockdown in Bangkok so its good to see people I connected with face to face and see things move and move along with that.



Kasintorn Honglawan (Takumi)

It is a great opportunity to physically connect with people that I met online in the past 2 years, and what an exciting space to experiencing people from all different background and expertise across the globe.



Our voices through our engagements

Through APCOM's work, ranging from capacity building to community research to regional advocacy, we have gathered significant amount of findings from program implementation from various countries. These findings can influence the communities in setting their priorities in their respective HIV responses.

However, with a number of key population and their communities from Asia not being able to participate in the AIDS 2022 conference, some crucial issues at the country-level may not be raised. Few organisations including APCOM took our session engagements as opportunities to voice out other issues of key populations and communities.

Throughout the conference, APCOM voiced community perspectives in the sessions listed below.

PRE-CONFERENCE – 27 JULY 2022

Getting to the Heart of Stigma – Role of partnerships in funding comprehensive responses to stigma and discrimination

Organized by the International AIDS Society (IAS), this thought-leadership symposium presented and discussed various states of evidence for HIV-related stigma. Few next steps were also discussed including global financial, strategic and programmatic efforts to contextualize and implement stigma reduction interventions. To shed light on the effectivity of these recommendations, a symposium featured current policy guidelines, global and country-level research and political documents to guide progress on stigma reduction and mitigation around the world.

However, addressing the stigma in clinic settings is not enough. Frameworks must be put in place within the broader programmatic approaches to create friendly environment to key population. On a global scale, the commitments by Member States embodied in the 2021 Political Declaration is a positive note.



PRE-CONFERENCE – 28 JULY 2022

U=U Global Summit 2022



This is the first global convening which gives specific focus to the landmark finding of 'Undetectable=Untransmittable'. The messages based on U=U was first introduced during the International AIDS Conference 2018 in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. PLHIV must have access to life-saving antiretroviral therapy (ART) to achieve an undetectable viral load, and thus cannot transmit the virus to sexual partners. Since then, this scientific finding has been adopted by several institutions like the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO).

Through this pre-conference, APCOM provided lessons learned and recommendations in ending health inequalities and removing social and structural barriers to HIV through the lens of U=U messaging. Using the experiences in implementing multi-country project on U=U, we shared our and our community partners' examples in advocating to integrate the messages of U=U into national policies.

In the later part of the pre-conference, APCOM shared how a project on U=U in Asia-Pacific look like. Through community consultations with PLHIV networks, we contextualized the messages of U=U using the differing settings of Asian countries. From our implementation, we found that contextualizing the messages based on U=U is effective in guiding the PLHIV networks as they develop their respective advocacies.



INTERNATIONAL AIDS CONFERENCE 2022 29 JULY TO 02 AUGUST 2023

PrEP-ing for 2030: Why optimization and scale-up of the PrEP service and product mix is critical to addressing unmet PrEP need and supporting effective use towards 2030 HIV prevention goals

Satellite Session

APCOM's Executive Director, Midnight Poonkasetwattana, took part in this roundtable discussion organized by PATH, AVAC and IAS. The discussion focused around making key population's access to PrEP more convenient and responsive to their needs. Despite COVID-19, PrEP uptake increased significantly in 2021 through the continued push to differentiate, simplify, demedicalize, and integrate PrEP services as part of person-centered care. However, there remains gaps that needs to be addressed. This includes continued diversification of PrEP service models - leveraging community-led, mobile, tele-health, pharmacy, primary health care platforms.

APCOM highlighted that it is crucial for PrEP demand generation activities to be led by communities. Community-led messaging are effective in addressing the questions of target-users who identify as key population. The diversification of PrEP service models must also include community-led distribution of PrEP.



Launching the new WHO Guidelines for key populations: Focus for impact Satellite Session

The WHO launched the updated WHO consolidated guidelines on HIV, hepatitis and STIs prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and care for key populations. This updated guideline was a result of a series of focus group discussions and key informant interviews led and participated by key population and their networks across the globe. This version gives spotlight on the human rights and legal barriers barring key populations their access to HIV services.



APCOM, with the support from global key population networks, spoke on behalf of the key population during the launch. A call was made to the governments to follow the guidelines and to ensure that national HIV programs include initiatives that will promote enabling environments for the key populations at the country level. APCOM also expressed frustration on the limited key population representation during a session that is about and for them. It is recalled that a number of community delegates were unable to participate in the conference due to issues on visa applications.

Self-testing to enhance HIV, Hepatitis C and Covid-19 diagnosis and integrated, differentiated service delivery Satellite Session



This moderated discussion on HIVST was organized by Unitaid and Population Services International (PSI). Self-testing has shifted the paradigm for HIV testing, the first step in the care continuum. We are now witnessing large scale HIVST use around the world since WHO normative guidance for HIVST was released in 2016. Scale up of HIVST is also driving a movement towards differentiated service delivery and acceleration of prevention access, increasing health system resilience against COVID-19 and decreases cost and complexity of services. HIVST provided a foundation from which other self-testing and self-care approaches can now be more readily realized, including sexually transmitted infections, Hepatitis and COVID-19.

Through this discussion, APCOM shared the factors for effective HIVST implementation using the lens of key population and communities at the country level. APCOM shared important factors to consider in increasing the awareness and demand for HIVST, especially among MSM and MSM who engage in chemsex. In addition, there was a call that HIVST must be delivered by the community-led service providers.



HIV and Viral Hepatitis: integrating programmes and financing to accelerate achievement of twin goals to eliminate HIV and viral hepatitis by 2030

Satellite Session

Organized by PATH and Medicines Patent Pool

Reducing inequalities, advancing equity: What it will take to achieve sustained epidemic control of HIV

Satellite Session

Organized by U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), this session discussed ways to reduce inequalities in the HIV response. The COVID-19 pandemic aggravated the existing challenges the key population face in accessing HIV services such as discriminatory practices, restriction to movements based on criminalization, and insufficient income. To reach people who are most vulnerable and to achieve sustained epidemic control of HIV it is imperative to apply an equity lens across the global HIV response. This session will showcase innovative, impactful, and people-centered efforts to break down barriers, bridge gaps, and accelerate progress toward reaching the UN Sustainable Development Goal target of ending the AIDS epidemic as a public health threat by 2030.

APCOM presented the challenges that the key populations in Asia-Pacific still face in accessing HIV services.

A New Global Road Map for Combination HIV Prevention; Intensified actions towards achieving UNAIDS 2025 targets'

Satellite Session

This session, co-hosted by UNAIDS and UNFPA, presented the Roadmap which outlines a people-centered and precisely focused approach to combination prevention for and with key populations. To make global HIV targets operational, the Global Prevention Coalition has elaborated a new 2025 HIV Prevention Roadmap. The Roadmap outlines ten transformative actions to ensure country success were defined and require collaboration among governments, communities and implementers in building stronger HIV interventions.



Our next shot: Effectively delivering injectable cabotegravir for PrEP Satellite Session

In December 2021, the FDA approved injectable cabotegravir as PrEP (CAB PrEP; brand name Apretude). As the first injectable form of HIV PrEP, CAB PrEP is a much-needed addition to an expanding array of prevention options. To ensure that this option transforms into real choice, stakeholders must have a good understanding of barriers to roll out, solutions to overcome them and strategies to address and avoid pitfalls associated with early introduction of oral PrEP. This workshop will explore what is needed to ensure that introductory research and programmes are strategically designed, user-centred and appropriately resourced to support successful roll out of CAB PrEP. The workshop will be co-convened by MOSAIC and WHO in partnership with EpiC, RISE, CASPR and BioPIC.



Quest to Reach HIV Epidemic Control Satellite Session

UNAIDS, through their Global AIDS Strategy, set targets to increase knowledge of HIV status among key populations, to be on sustainable antiretroviral therapy (ART) and to be virally suppressed has the potential to prevent onward HIV transmission and reduce annual HIV incidence to less than 1%. These targets were benchmarked to be achieved by the year 2020 to end AIDS as a public health threat by the year 2030. But the low uptake of HIV testing resulted in low uptake of antiretroviral therapy at the country level. PLHIV's access to ART are also paved with various challenges which discourage or prevent their adherence.

Through this session, APCOM highlighted the criminalization of key population and/or their behaviors serves as a big roadblock to achieve epidemic control. Several countries in Asia remain to enact laws that criminalize homosexual behaviors, drug use and sex work. The quest to reach epidemic control must also equate to the quest in eliminating these legal and structural barriers.





Sex, Drugs & HIV in the Age of Biomedical Prevention Global Village and Youth Programme

Honoring the ground-breaking work and legacy of David Stuart and the 56 Dean Street Clinic in London, UK, the interactive session showcased diverse community-driven and peer-led responses on sexualized drug use (PnP/Chemsex/High Fun). Led by ACON (Australia), and also featuring Lighthouse Social Enterprise (Vietnam), the session prompted discussions about how responses to sexualized drug use may promote harm reduction and HIV prevention across distinct geographic, social, legal, healthcare, and political contexts.

APCOM, represented by Nicky Suwandi, highlighted the successful implementation of the 'Party Pack' initiative, which introduced in the last few years through the organization's flagship MSM-specific online digital campaign testBKK and currently under development to be replicated in Cambodia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines. Other APCOM's publications related to issues of sexualized drug use were also highlighted, especially the [qualitative scoping review among MSM and transgender women in Asia](#), and the [chemsex-specific guide for program planners in Southeast Asia](#).

Ending HIV Epidemic for Everyone, Everywhere Offsite Networking Event

In this 2 hour session, co-organized by Gilead and International AIDS Society, in partnership with APCOM, gathered representatives from community-based organisations from around Asia. The discussions revolved around ways to further advocate for stigma-free care services in the fight against HIV epidemic. This was also a platform for Gilead Sciences to showcase the "2022 Champions of Me and My Healthcare Provider" program who shared how their respective efforts address stigma by working with medical healthcare professionals.

APCOM's years of community work experience and expertise in advocacy became instrumental in encouraging and inspiring participants to share their experience, learning and ideas on what more can be done to break down stigma in HIV clinical setting.



APCOM LAUNCHES



innovationsmap.asia is an online repository about PrEP, HIVST, and U=U in Asia-Pacific. Bearing the name 'innovations', the online resource hub presents information on Pre-Exposure Prophylaxes (PrEP), HIV self-testing (HIVST), and differentiated HIV service delivery or community-models of HIV services. This will help community-based organizations and service delivery providers to gain more knowledge to implement tailored approaches and client-centered services for HIV prevention tools and COVID-19 related services. The online resource hub will establish a common knowledge within the communities in Asia-Pacific about PrEP, HIVST, U=U.





APCOM previous AIDS Conference engagements

[AIDS 2020. Virtual](#)

International AIDS Conference 2020
APCOM Engagements



[AIDS 2018. Amsterdam, the Netherlands](#)

Breaking Barriers, Building Bridges
APCOM's Engagement in the 22nd
International AIDS Conference
(AIDS 2018), Amsterdam, The Netherlands



[AIDS 2016. Durban, South Africa](#)

Stepping Up the Pace:
APCOM's Engagement in the 21st
International AIDS Conference
(AIDS 2016), Durban, South Africa



[AIDS 2014. Melbourne, Australia](#)

Stepping Up the Pace:
APCOM's Engagement in the 20th
International AIDS Conference
(AIDS 2014), Melbourne, Australia



[AIDS 2012. Washington, D.C., USA](#)

Getting to Know APCOM:
Engagement at XIX International AIDS
Conference (AIDS 2012), Washington, D.C.,
USA



[AIDS 2010. Vienna, Austria](#)

18th International AIDS Conference (AIDS
2010) Vienna, Austria, launch of Legal
environments, human rights and HIV
responses among men who have sex with
men and transgender people in Asia and the
Pacific: An agenda for action



Equity. Dignity. Social Justice.



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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