

IAS Educational Fund and LoveYourself Inc. Symposium

U matter: Inspiring a client-centred HIV response in the Philippines and South East Asia Meeting report

This report was developed in collaboration with LoveYourself Inc. The views expressed in the report do not necessarily reflect the views of IAS – the International AIDS Society.

IAS – the International AIDS Society – organized an IAS Educational Fund virtual symposium in collaboration with LoveYourself Inc. on 3 and 4 June 2021 with the theme, ***U matter: Inspiring a client-centred HIV response in the Philippines and South East Asia***. The aim of the symposium was to address the key topics below as regional issues:

- PrEP and PEP
- Stigma around HIV, PrEP and U=U
- Treatment as prevention
- Same-day ART
- U=U and self-testing

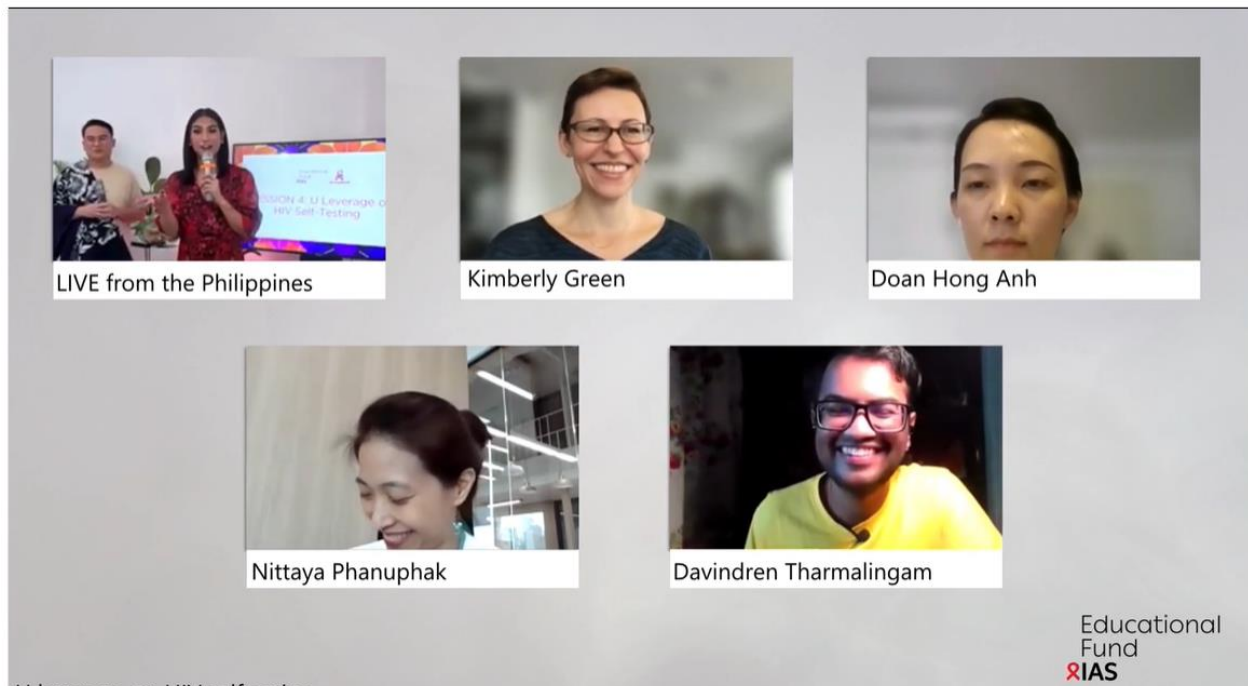
Invited speakers and meeting participants offered solutions to these challenges and discussed areas to explore next steps to address these different challenges across South East Asia. The symposium comprised of four sessions was hosted by Mela Habijan (Miss Trans Global 2020, Philippines). The first session on PrEP and PEP was chaired by Adeeba Kamarulzaman (IAS; Infectious Diseases University of Malaya, Malaysia) and Ronivin Pagtakhan (LoveYourself Inc., Philippines). The second session on stigma was chaired by Raja Iskandar (The Centre of Excellence for Research in AIDS [CERiA], Malaysia). The third session on treatment as prevention was chaired by Danvic Rosadiño (LoveYourself Inc., Philippines). Lastly, the fourth session on self-testing was chaired by Nittaya Phanuphak (IAS; Institute of HIV Research and Innovation [IHRI], Thailand). The

programme of the symposium is available in Appendix 1.

LoveYourself hosted a similar virtual symposium last December 2020 entitled, ***#SaferNowPH Summit 2020***, where the organization gathered key stakeholders and ambassadors to talk about topics based on its core values: DARE, CARE, and SHARE. Prime movers in HIV science from different regions discussed topics that affect the advancement of HIV-related services in the region. The topics selected were the science of PrEP, PEP and updates on its implementation and rollout in the region. The IAS Educational Fund symposium, especially the first session on PrEP and PEP, was a great link and continuation to these earlier discussions, demonstrating a timely integration of the topic with June as Pride Month in the Philippines.

The first day of the symposium covered the lingering topic of stigma and discrimination of people living with HIV. The innovations on testing and treatment, emphasis on treatment as prevention, and the importance of same-day ART initiation and the U=U concept were also an important part of the programme. Self-testing is a relatively new concept in the region. Experiences on its implementation per region were also discussed in detail by the implementers and its effect on the

Session 4 - U leverage on HIV self-testing



LIVE from the Philippines

Kimberly Green

Doan Hong Anh

Nittaya Phanuphak

Davindren Tharmalingam

Educational Fund
IAS

U leverage on HIV selftesting

Darvic Rosadiño (LoveYourself Inc., Philippines) and Mela Habijan (Miss Trans Global 2020, Philippines) entertaining questions from live viewers during the Session 4 Q&A live discussion with invited speakers Kimberly Green (PATH, Vietnam), Doan Hong Anh (PATH, Vietnam), Nittaya Phanuphak (IAS; IHRI, Thailand) and Davindren Tharmalingam (Malaysian AIDS Council, Malaysia), 4 June 2021

advancement of HIV-related services and policymaking in their regions. Data on key populations emphasized that the progress of South East Asia and the Pacific region has been lagging behind the global target in terms of HIV response and service delivery. It showed a need for a focused response on HIV to the affected key populations, specifically among young men who have sex with men. Discussions around self-testing were raised at government-level following this symposium. Barriers to accessing testing were identified as the age of consent to accessing HIV tests, stigma and discrimination emphasizing the need to implement innovations testing and self-testing.

Using digital platforms in raising awareness about PrEP has been used by different countries to further strengthen the linkage between PrEP and testing. Collaborating with civil society networks was also essential in accelerating the implementation of PrEP and other preventive measures. The transgender community was especially encouraged to take control of their sexual health to overcome the challenge of

reaching out to their partners when they test positive for HIV. Having clearer guidelines on HIV testing, especially index testing would be a big leap in reaching this population and bridge the gap in HIV prevention. The importance of awareness regarding PrEP, not just in the transgender community, is essential as this would open doors to innovations like cabotegravir. Increased PrEP access has given people a choice in protecting themselves, empowering them to enjoy and find more pleasure in being intimate with their partners. It gave them control of their sexual health by being able to choose to use a condom and PrEP to protect themselves against HIV. However, barriers to access PrEP exist in the region, at times even from health care providers.

The majority of young men who have sex with men expressed fear of stigma and discrimination from health care settings, where a percentage reported actual experiences from health facilities.

The second day of the symposium focused on treatment and testing and its role to further improve the preventive methods in the region. The role of practitioners, community-based workers and policymakers is essential in reaching the UNAIDS 90-90-90 goal for 2030 in Asia and the Pacific region. Strengthening community-based and key-population-led testing could be instrumental in bridging the gap to the population who do not know their status and could resolve the issue of late presentation. Self-testing could potentially overcome the barriers to testing by allowing tests to be conducted in private and in full confidentiality. Lastly, the de-stigmatization of HIV testing and HIV as a whole would greatly help in the South East Asia region. A paradigm change in the approach to HIV programmes, by

doing a status-neutral approach is important. Coordination between hospitals and community-based organizations (CBOs) to fast-track ART initiation is needed. Retention to care was included as an important factor in the care continuum where it can be achieved, by ensuring the providers play an active role in their clients' care and the use of a regimen that is effective, with fewer side effects, and convenient for the person to use or follow. INSTI-based regimens with high potency for rapid viral suppression and immune recovery, a good safety profile with fewer drug-drug interactions, and a higher genetic barrier to resistance could also help in lowering the cost for wider distribution in the South East Asia region.

Key conclusions and outcomes

- Implementation on a large scale of PrEP programmes and inclusion in national programmes to be subsidized by the Government could improve the scaling up of PrEP use to reach higher coverage.
- Sexual health services should be accessible to all and the role of key populations-led services where stigmatized minors can go, is crucial.
- Cultural and religious influences play a big role in the attitude towards sex in the region, which further adds to stigma in accessing health services.

Key recommendations

- Being open and talking about the available prevention and treatment packages freely, even on social media, could help in educating youth and prevent not only the risk of sexually transmitted infections, but also teenage pregnancies.
- It must be emphasized that the U=U message goes beyond unprotected sex and the public should be made aware through stronger local and regional campaigns.
- Self-testing should be implemented and encouraged for wider use.

Testimonials

"As part of the government sector, I will utilize the skills and knowledge gained during the meeting by sharing it with our partners through future trainings and seminars."

Healthcare worker for Government.

"I will make a concrete plan on HIVST implementation following good examples from the region."

Community health worker for an NGO.

"I will intergrate my learnings on our communication plan and strategy."

Activist for a community-based organization.

"Since the patients in our training are mostly transgender, I can help them educate about awareness of HIV and show that there are people who are willing to help them."

Healthcare worker for a hospital/clinic.

"As a facilitator in doing outreach programmes to the community, the meeting provided me added information and awareness that can be shared."

Project coordinator for an NGO.

Appendix 1: Programme

SESSION 1: Upscale PrEP and PEP Interventions

PHST GMT+8

1:00-1:10PM	Welcoming Remarks: <i>Adeeba Kamarulzaman</i> (IAS 2021 International Co-Chair, President International AIDS Society, Professor of Infectious Diseases University of Malaya, Malaysia); <i>Ronivin Pagtakhan</i> (Executive Director, LoveYourself)
1:10-1:20PM	Keynote, presentation: Latest scientific updates on treatment as prevention, self-testing and stigma: <i>Taufik Bakkali</i> (Senior Regional Strategic Information Adviser, UNAIDS)
1:20-1:30PM	Q&A
1:30-1:35PM	Break
1:35-1:45PM	PrEP and PEP in Southeast Asia: <i>Heather-Marie Schmidt</i> (Regional advisor for HIV PrEP, WHO, UNAIDS Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific)
1:45-2:00PM	Panel discussion: Successful PrEP rollout: <i>Rosanna Ditangco</i> (Head of AIDS Research Group of the Health Department's Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM), Health Department, PH), <i>Andrew Grulich</i> (Theme Director, Populations and Prevention Head, HIV Epidemiology and Prevention Program, The Kirby Institute, UNSW Sydney Australia, Governing Council Member, Asia and the Pacific Islands, International AIDS Society)
2:00-2:20PM	Open discussion with the audience
2:20-2:25PM	Concluding Remarks: <i>Ronivin Pagtakhan</i> (Executive Director, LoveYourself)

SESSION 2: Understanding and unity against HIV

PHST GMT+8

3:00-3:10PM	Welcoming Remarks: <i>Raja Iskandar</i> (Assistant Professor, CERiA, University of Malaya Medical Centre, Malaysia)
3:10-4:00PM	Talk Show: Stigma around HIV, PrEP and U=U: <i>Kritima Samitpol</i> [<i>Jemma</i>] (<i>Tangerine Clinic, Thailand</i>), <i>Ben Bavinton</i> (<i>The Kirby Institute, UNSW Sydney, Australia</i>), <i>Vic Arthur Masliyan</i> (<i>Youth Core Group President, FPOP Baguio, Philippines</i>), <i>Ayu Oktariani</i> (<i>Activist, Indonesia</i>), <i>Marvin Natural</i> (<i>LoveYourself, Philippines</i>), <i>Pia Wurtzbach</i> (<i>Miss Universe 2015, Philippines</i>), <i>Louie Ocampo</i> (<i>Country Director, UNAIDS Philippines</i>)
4:00-4:10PM	Concluding Remarks: <i>Raja Iskandar</i> (Assistant Professor, CERiA, University of Malaya Medical Centre, Malaysia)

SESSION 3: U live healthier with treatment

PHST GMT+8

1:00-1:10PM	Welcoming Remarks: <i>Danvic Rosadiño</i> (Director for Operations and Research, LoveYourself)
1:10-1:18PM	Updates on testing and treatment
1:18-1:26PM	Q&A
1:26-1:34PM	Treatment as prevention in Southeast Asia: <i>Anwar Parvez on behalf of Bharat Rewari</i> (Scientist, HIV, Hepatitis, and STI Unit, WHO – Regional Office for Southeast Asia)
1:34-1:42PM	Q&A
1:42-1:50PM	Same-day ART initiation and U=U: <i>Nittaya Phanuphak</i> (Executive Director, IHRI, Thailand, Governing Council Member, Asia and the Pacific Islands, International AIDS Society)
1:50-1:58PM	Q&A
1:58-2:06PM	Best practice model sharing: Community-based model of offering HIV treatment in the Philippines: <i>Roberto Figuracion</i> (HIV Program Coordinator, Rajah Community Center, Family Planning Organization of the Philippines – Iloilo Chapter)
2:06-2:14PM	Q&A
2:14-2:20PM	Concluding Remarks: <i>Danvic Rosadiño</i> (Director for Operations and Research, LoveYourself)

SESSION 4: U leverage on HIV self-testing

PHST GMT+8

3:00-3:10PM	Welcoming Remarks: <i>Nittaya Phanuphak</i> (Executive Director, IHRI, Thailand, Governing Council Member, Asia and the Pacific Islands, International AIDS Society)
3:10-3:20PM	Self-testing in the Philippines: <i>Danvic Rosadiño</i> (Director for Operations and Research, LoveYourself)
3:20-3:30PM	Online self-testing: Case study from Malaysia: <i>Davindren Tharmalingam</i> (Program Coordinator, Malaysian AIDS Council, Malaysia)
3:30-3:45PM	Updates on self-testing from Vietnam: <i>Kimberly Green</i> (Global Program Director, Primary Health Care, PATH Vietnam), <i>Doan Hong Anh</i> (Senior Program Officer, USAID/PATH Health Markets, PATH, VIETNAM)
3:45-4:05PM	Q&A
4:05-4:15PM	Concluding Remarks: <i>Nittaya Phanuphak</i> (Executive Director, IHRI, Thailand, Governing Council Member, Asia and the Pacific Islands, International AIDS Society), <i>Ronivin Pagtakhan</i> (Executive Director, LoveYourself)

Appendix 2: Photos



Session 1: Taoufik Bakkali on Keynote, presentation: Latest scientific updates updates on treatment as prevention



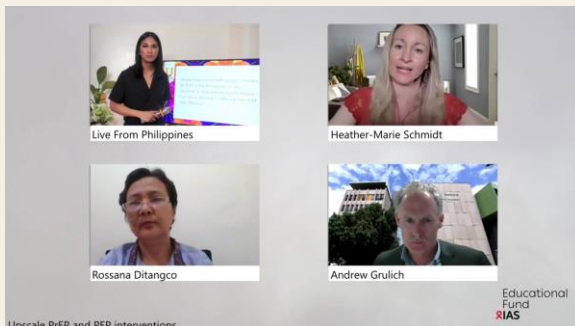
Understanding and unity against HIV
Session 2: Talk Show: Stigma around HIV, PrEP and U=U with Kritima Samitpol, Ben Bavinton, Vic Arthur Masliyan, Ayu Oktariani, Marvin Natural, Pia Wurtzbach and Louie Ocampo



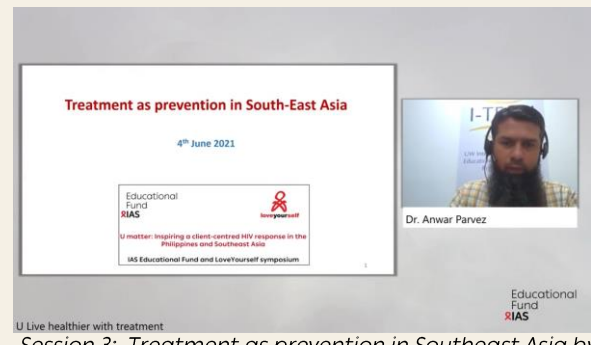
Session 1: Heather-Marie Schmidt on PrEP and PEP on Southeast Asia



Session 3: Updates on testing and treatment facilitated by Wong Chen Seong



Upscale PrEP and PEP interventions
Session 1: Panel Discussion on Successful PrEP rollout by Rosanna Ditangco with Heather-Marie Schimdt and Andrew Grulich



U Live healthier with treatment
Session 3: Treatment as prevention in Southeast Asia by Anwar Parvez



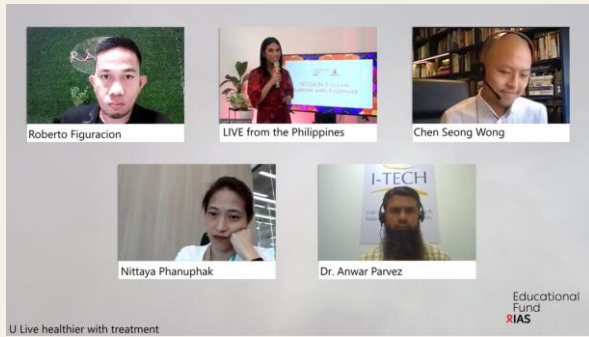
Understanding and unity against HIV
Session 2: Welcoming remarks by Raja Iskandar



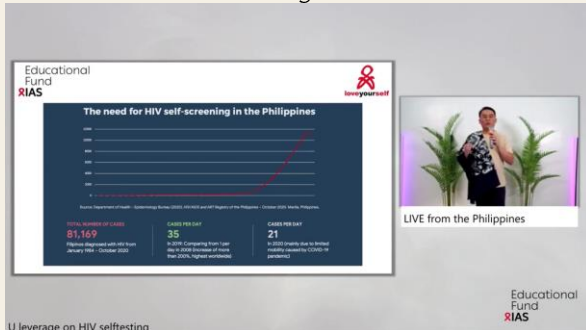
Session 3: Same-day ART initiation and U=U by Nittaya Phanuphak



Session 3: Best practice model sharing: Community-based model of offering HIV treatment in the Philippines: Robert Figuracion



Session 4: Q&A with Day 2 speakers; Roberto Figuracion, Wong Chen Seong, Nittaya Phanuphak and Anwar Parvez



Session 4: Self testing in the Philippines by Danvic Rosadiño



Session 4: Final Closing Remarks by Ronivin Pagtakan



Session 4: Online self-testing: Case study from Malaysia by Davindren Tharmalingam

About the host:

LoveYourself Inc.
715-A Shaw Blvd, Mandaluyong, Metro Manila
Philippines
www.loveyourself.ph

Links:

Presentation:

Before & after: an update on PrEP and PEP in Asia & Pacific

<https://educationalfund.iasociety.org/media-48-before--after-an-update-on-prep--pep-in-asia--the-pacific>

Session recordings:

<https://educationalfund.iasociety.org/liste-philippines--southeast-asia?&tri=DD&c=38>



Session 4: Updates on self-testing from Vietnam by Kimberly Green and Doan Hong Anh