

# ONLINE AIDS 2022 AFFILIATED INDEPENDENT EVENT

## CARAM ASIA'S ONLINE WORKSHOP ON MIGRANT WORKER'S VULNERABILITIES TO HIV&AIDS AND BARRIERS IN ACCESSING HEALTH CARE SERVICES

### About the Event

In collaboration with the International AIDS Society, CARAM Asia will conduct an AIDS 2022 Affiliated Independent Event. It is a virtual workshop titled 'Online Workshop on Migrant Worker's Vulnerabilities' to HIV&AIDS and Barriers in Accessing Health Care Services.' This event aims to engage the global HIV response and discuss issues related to migrant's HIV related health rights.

Despite migrant workers' contributions, their health needs are not given adequate attention or consideration. Therefore, the organizers would like to use this platform to spotlight migrants' vulnerabilities and the insufficiency of government budget allocation for HIV and SRHR interventions, policies and outcomes for migrant workers. They also wish to recognize the remaining obstacles in the protection of migrants' health rights, specifically towards migrants who are living with HIV.

### Experts will present on:

Migrant workers' vulnerabilities to HIV & AIDS

01

Barriers to accessing health services for migrant workers in sending and receiving countries

02

Budget allocations by governments for migrant workers' health rights

03

Each presentation will be followed by questions and answers from participants.

Q&A

### Target Audience:

All delegates will benefit by attending this event



# MESSAGE

*"For decades, migrants have been left behind in the efforts to end AIDS. A number of destination countries which are heavily reliant on migrant labor from Asia, either impose HIV related immigration restrictions which resort to deportation of migrants with HIV, or neglect them in the national HIV response.*

## *What can be done?*

*First and foremost, laws and policies need to respect migrants' full human rights without discrimination, especially access to health services. Then, governments of both sending and receiving countries need to utilize sufficient funds to provide comprehensive and targeted HIV prevention and treatment to their migrant workers, including those who may have multiple, intersecting vulnerabilities, such as being MSM".*

## **Brahm Press**

Chairperson Board of Directors  
CARAM Asia



**DIRECTOR MIGRANTS  
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM  
(MAP FOUNDATION), THAILAND**





# MIGRANT WORKERS - A VULNERABLE COMMUNITY TO HIV&AIDS



There are many factors that contribute to high risks of migrant workers to being infected with HIV&AIDS, the main factors include:

## **Lack of Awareness**

- ✓ Lack of availability of HIV&AIDS preventive information in migrant workers' language.
- ✓ Lack of HIV&AIDS prevention education at pre-departure stage for outgoing migrants.
- ✓ Stigma of being HIV&AIDS positive.

## **Limited Access to Health Information on HIV&AIDS and STIs'**

- ✓ No specific access to medical testing for sexual health and related issues.
- ✓ Limited access to sexual and reproductive health protective measure.
- ✓ Irregular working hours and conditions limit access to health information.

## **Vulnerability to Exploitation**

- ✓ Abusive and restrictive working conditions and employer who do not allow migrant workers basic health rights such as visiting doctors and do not give migrant worker's their passport, thus risking arrest.
- ✓ Unable to miss work due to a cut in daily wage and high cost of travel in receiving country deter migrant workers from seeking medical aid.

## **Restrictive Laws and Policies**

- ✓ Harsh state policies such as: Single Entry Policy & Immigration restriction on marriage; that view migrants as commodities rather than human beings with basic human needs and rights.
- ✓ Undocumented migrant workers fear of being arrested and deported
- ✓ As a result of mandatory health testing of migrants, law enforcement authorities come to know about their HIV positive status which causes immediate arrest, detention and deportation without disclosing the reason of arrest and any referral to health services in sending countries. This situation increases the spreading of infection to their spouses as well.

# STATISTICS – HIV POSITIVE MIGRANT WORKERS BY COUNTRY

## PHILIPPINES

In Philippines, overseas Filipino workers (OFW) who diagnosed with HIV positive are total of 7604 in Oct 2020. As year passes, the trend has keep rising from 0 number of migrants in 1984 to 7604 cases, currently.

## BANGLADESH

Migrant workers who diagnosed with HIV positive in Bangladesh was total of 2335 in 2011.

## JORDAN

In 2018, Jordan deported 267 Migrants because they were diagnosed with HIV&AIDS, TB or Hepatitis C. 67 of these workers had HIV.

## SRI LANKA

In Sri Lanka, 85 new cases have recorded in 2016 and 54 in 2018 among migrant workers. A steady rise in HIV cases has been observed among males and females who had a history of external migration during past few years with 40% of HIV infections having a history of external migration.

## THAILAND

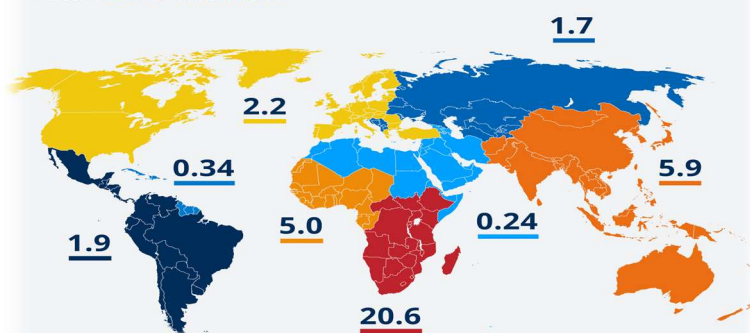
In 2018-19, there were around 268 cases directly found by testing under the Global Fund. Total numbers tested (16,304), this is around 1.6% prevalence. There were 3.1 million migrants registered, plus another amount undocumented in 2019. If extrapolate, that would be tens of thousands possibly infected with HIV.

**Note: Only a little amount of data on HIV&AIDS were acquired due to several limitations**



### People estimated to be living with HIV In millions

Total: **37.9 million**



Source: UNAIDS | 2018

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## NEPAL

Statistic shows that the number of migrants who suffered with HIV positive in Nepal was recorded with 2465 in 2016. Thus, now the nature of HIV epidemic has gradually evolved from being 'low-prevalence' to 'concentrated' epidemic.

## PAKISTAN

According to the Global AIDS Response Progress Report (GARPR) 2015, 51000 deported migrant who originated from Pakistan was infected with HIV at Gulf countries in the end of 2014.

# MAJOR CONCERNS AND ISSUES REGARDING MIGRANT WORKERS AND HIV&AIDS



Remittances by migrant workers constitute a significant chunk of countries' gross domestic product and contribute greatly to foreign reserves. When a sending country goes through an economic slump, foreign remittances play a crucial role in adding to the economy. Similarly, migrant workers contribute to the economy of receiving countries through cheap labour and overcoming labour shortages. However, migrant workers face many challenges when they are living abroad due to loneliness and homesickness, they become susceptible to behaviours and activities that could expose them to health risks. These behaviours, lack or limited knowledge and awareness of STIs and limited access to prevention services contribute to vulnerability to acquiring and possibly transmitting HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Migrant workers' are subjected to the stigma of being HIV&AIDS positive and the lack of recognition and access to health of information and services have put them at a higher risk of HIV&AIDS and other STIs'. Statistics indicate that migrant workers lack awareness about HIV&AIDS, STIs and healthy sexual health practices. This leads to migrant workers, who are unable and reluctant to seek medical aid to treat the disease, learn preventative methods to keep them safe, receive support in the form of therapy and a community. Being migrant workers they are left out of government policies and are treated as 'commodities' and 'exports' thus their rights and needs are discriminated against and not prioritised.