



Annual Report 2009

**Asia Pacific Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (APN+)
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FOREWORD

2009 marked the 15th anniversary of APN+, an important milestone as the expansion and capacity of the networks and the Secretariat evolves.

Our combined efforts have seen an ongoing pledge of financial and technical support from AusAID and UNAIDS. We also thank Ford Foundation, PACT, the Global Network of Positive People (GNP+), HIV/AIDS Alliance, the International Treatment Preparedness Coalition (ITPC), the Levi Strauss Foundation, the Tides Foundation, Technical Support Facility (TSF) South East Asia, UNDP, UNIFEM and USAID for their continual commitment to supporting the growth and capacity of the networks. These supports provide an important foundation from which the networks are able to sustain and expand their position and ensure that the voice and experience of PLHIV is operating at both regional and country-level capacity.

In 2009, APN+ released findings of the multi-country, community-based research project about barriers to treatment access for HIV-positive women, injecting drug users (IDU), men who have sex with men (MSM) and Transgender (TG) in the region. Key results confirmed that PLHIV, including those who are likely to be more informed and linked to available HIV treatment, continue to face significant challenges to accessing essential health services. This finding also brings to light the plight of many other PLHIV who do not have links to PLHIV support mechanisms. This research paves the way for an important community led advocacy path in the region that can work as a monitoring mechanism to ensure funding resources reach the right people and in the absence of this, act as a watchdog where this is not happening.

A significant number of development training opportunities were provided throughout 2009 to national networks and leading PLHIV organizations in countries such as Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Laos (PDR), Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. As the network capacity grows, so does the platform they have to influence and advocate on behalf of PLHIV. This is particularly the case in relation to understanding country and global level monitoring systems and access to funding. 2009 also welcomed the establishment of Estrela+ in Timor Leste, who also participated in development training opportunities which coupled as good occasions to meet and develop working relationships with other network members. In addition we were able to connect with the positive community in Bhutan which has brought another country to join the APN+ family.

APN+ continues to work in partnership with the networks to engage and push the PLHIV advocacy agenda, particularly around drug supplies in the region, raising awareness about the impact of drug patent monopolies, and complexities associated with HIV/Hepatitis C co-infection. Establishing greater partnerships at the national, regional and global level is essential to this process and particularly at a time when the global attention to HIV/AIDS enters a new era of economic constraints.

Whilst challenging these constraints, APN+ finds itself in a position of reinforced support that has enabled the Secretariat office to grow. Additional staff members have been recruited to the position of assistant director as well as a project assistant to the working group coordinators.

When reading this report, we hope that you join us in celebrating our achievements throughout 2009. We thank all of our courageous positive friends for their consistent and inspirational efforts to speak out loud and clear and we look forward to strengthening our efforts in the coming year. On behalf of the APN+ Steering Committee

Ms. Naoko Kawana and Mr. Do Dang Dong
APN+ Co-chairs

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2009 was a progressive and eventful year for the Asia Pacific Network of People Living with HIV (APN+).

In moving forward with its advocacy agenda throughout 2009, APN+ seized all opportunity to advocate for greater attention to affordable treatment and greater understanding about living with HIV and Hepatitis C Co-infection, particularly during ICAAPIX, in Bali, Indonesia. In addition, advocacy efforts led by the working groups continue to push the agenda for access to treatment and mitigating any of the obstacles that continue to prevent access, including treatment literacy and reducing stigma and discrimination.

Building capacity and organizing training activities and workshops has been a key agenda item in 2009. Working together with the collaborative fund of ITPC, APN+ supported many community groups to increase the capacity and knowledge on treatment literacy and advocacy. Nineteen community groups from Southeast Asia have received funding this year, making it over 100 community organizations who have received support from the Collaborative Fund over the last four years. In partnership with 7 Sisters coalition members, a series of workshops were held for the networks to provide a forum to build up understanding about the Global Fund and its funding mechanisms and ways in which to access this funding. Developing partnerships and collaborating across organizations has also been an essential component to ensure that treatment education efforts are working at saturation level, in that the same information is being delivered across organizations. Disseminating the results of the treatment access study at both regional and country level has helped the network members to understand key challenges faced by positive people while accessing HIV related care. Training workshops were also organized to build the capacity of network members on TRIPS and Trade related issues and its implication on access to life saving drugs.

The publication of *Diamonds and HiStory*, are community representations of the lived experiences of PLHIV in the Asia Pacific Region. They have been very well regarded and received, including significant attention from International NGOs, supporting the increased profile and credibility of APN+. These publications were developed to share the positive stories of people living with HIV, and as a vehicle to demonstrate the diversity of experience in the region. A regional treatment summit was also organized to deliver results of the APN+ research which investigated obstacles that prevent access to treatment in the region. The summit was participated by many of the key positive community leaders, allowing for greater expansion and cooperation toward corresponding tactics and techniques to move forward collectively. Finally, a tool was developed to generate greater awareness and practical mechanisms to improve understanding about sexual and reproductive health rights and income generating schemes for HIV positive women in the region.

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APN+ maintains a collective stance toward moving the advocacy agenda of PLHIV in the Asia Pacific region. In 2009, the strengthening of the networks and their national and regional level advocacy efforts has been possible due to the efforts of all our positive representatives and their relentless work toward achieving access to treatment and a better quality of life for their communities. APN+ will continue to advocate for the national, regional and global HIV/AIDS agenda to ensure the perspective and experience of PLHIV is upheld and their human rights are protected.

I. APN+ MISSION STATEMENT

WHO WE ARE

APN+ is a collective voice of People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV) in the Asia Pacific region. We are a network of PLHIV for PLHIV. We represent the diversity of experiences of PLHIV in a large and diverse region.

As PLHIV we have unique knowledge about the challenges of living with HIV and AIDS, and through our own diverse lived experiences are able to understand the views and needs of PLHIV. We use this knowledge to effectively represent PLHIV on the world stage by sharing information and knowledge, through building alliances and partnerships, capacity building, by conducting training workshops, and undertaking research.

WHAT WE DO

As a network, we conduct our work by advocating for access to prevention, treatment, care and support (Universal Access) and campaigning to reduce stigma and discrimination experienced by PLHIV through public speaking and advocating for prevention interventions.

As a network we aim to empower our members through setting our own priorities. We work to build the skills of PLHIV in ways that aim to improve their quality of life, so communities can develop sustainable ways of living with HIV and AIDS in non discriminatory, transparent and accountable ways. We aim to coordinate the regional PLHIV response and encourage good practice models. We support our members to mobilize their resources for achieving greater impact in their work including addressing the crucial issue of fundraising in order to continue to carry out network activities in the future. We help them engage in network development, advocacy, knowledge sharing and capacity building in their own right.

WHY WE DO IT

The values of equity, the meaningful involvement of PLHIV (GIPA) and the universal human rights perspective guide our work.

We campaign so that PLHIV can live in a world free of self-stigma and self-denial of HIV/AIDS. We campaign for all organizations to embrace PLHIV supportive policies. We acknowledge that many PLHIV in the region live in poverty and lack access to adequate health services. We are committed to working in partnership with key stakeholders and our friends to address this issue. We want an environment in which all PLHIV have access to appropriate services and treatment, and through self care are able to manage living with HIV and AIDS and contribute to prevention efforts. The network structure devotes particular attention to the needs of women living with HIV and AIDS.

As the regional PLHIV network, we strive for closer co-operation with PLHIV country networks. Through a partnership approach our aim is to support members of APN+ to be seen as the leading authorities and representatives of PLHIV in their own countries.

Through regional networking, we aim to mitigate the impact of HIV on our communities by addressing the imbalances that adversely affect marginalized and at risk populations as we work to make our vision of a better world for PLHIV a reality.

II. STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND OBJECTIVES OF APN+

The 2006-2010 APN+ Strategic Plan outlines four strategic focus areas of *Advocacy, Capacity Development, Knowledge Sharing and Network Development* for the networks. The Strategic Plan also includes the capacity development of the APN+ Secretariat and its Steering Committee. The work of APN+ is guided by the following strategic objectives:

- To provide leadership by actively advocating from the regional level for the equal rights of all PLHIV as well as ensuring full participation and representation of PLHIV in the response to HIV/AIDS.
- To further develop the capacity of APN+ member networks in the areas of skills, knowledge and attitudes responding to identified needs and using a range of internal and external resources that will enable organizations and individuals to grow and sustain their networks.
- To strengthen the exchange of knowledge and information amongst PLHIV, their networks and other key stakeholders through undertaking research; developing publications; providing training and securing adequate resources for the purpose of responding effectively to the needs of PLHIV in the region.
- To build and strengthen PLHIV organizations at regional, sub-regional and national levels in meaningful partnership with governments, donors and civil society as a way of advancing the APN+ positive agenda.
- To develop the capacity of the APN+ Secretariat and its Steering Committee in core leadership and management areas in ways designed to efficiently and effectively support network members in achieving their own country missions and objectives.

III. SCALING UP ADVOCACY AT THE REGIONAL AND COUNTRY LEVEL

1. APN+ Positive MSM Working Group Annual Regional Planning Meeting:

The Positive MSM Working Group (WG) of APN+ held its annual regional face to face meeting in Bangkok on the 12th and 13th of June 2009. The two day meeting was attended by over 25 participants from 12 countries across the Asia Pacific. The aim of the meeting was to share information and develop a work plan for the WG as well as follow up activities around issues of advocacy at the national and regional level. The two day agenda covered updates since the previous meeting; one and a half years worth of activities, to provide strategic direction for future activities, restructuring of the working group and updates about upcoming activities.

2. Workshop: *To Review the World Health Organization (WHO) HIV Treatment Guidelines and Positive Health (formerly known as Positive Prevention)*

During the international conference on AIDS in Bali, August 2009 APN+ facilitated a review workshop of the WHO HIV treatment guidelines. Questionnaires were conducted among positive individuals from the region in partnership with ITPC. Feedback from the workshop and questionnaires will be incorporated into the new revised HIV treatment guideline book published by WHO. A session to provide input toward the development of Positive Health guidelines was also organized during the conference.

3. Publication *Research Highlights: Access to HIV-Related Health Services in Positive Women, Men who have sex with Men (MSM), Transgender and Injecting Drug Users (IDU)*

Highlights of research findings were published and disseminated to key stakeholders working on HIV in the region. The multi-country studies were conducted to identify challenges and difficulties faced by HIV positive women, Men who have sex with men (MSM), Transgender, and Injecting drug users (IDU) while accessing HIV related treatment. The publication was also well received during the International Conference on HIV in Bali (ICAAP). Reports are available on www.apnplus.org. Country specific findings of the research were also disseminated in countries where the studies were carried out.

4. WAPN+ Working Group Annual Planning Meeting

In November 2009, WAPN+ working core group members met to finalize the work plan for the coming year. Key priority areas and activities identified include; HIV treatment literacy training among HIV positive women, the provision of technical support to develop HIV positive women's capacity to run support groups and establishing a small scale health fund for positive women. Current core group members come from Japan, Indonesia, India & Papua New Guinea.

5. Global Criminalization Scan

In partnership with GNP+, APN+ coordinated the Global Criminalization Scan project in the region. The project documents laws, judicial practices and case studies around the criminalization of HIV transmission. The Global Criminalization Scan is the only active collection and documentation of this data operating on a world wide scale. The Global Criminalization Scan is an initiative of GNP+ and partner organizations with the aim to collect and keep up to date information on national or state level laws criminalizing the transmission of or exposure to HIV transmission. It will provide an easily accessible 'clearing-house' of resources, research, and initiatives on the subject and provide a platform for advocacy initiatives.

IV. CAPACITY BUILDING OF PLHIV IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

1. Collaborative Fund Proposal Review Meeting

The Collaborative Fund of Southeast Asia held a 4th round proposal grant review meeting in Bangkok on the 5-7th March 2009. The meeting was attended by members of the Southeast Asia Community Review Panel (CRP) Thailand, Indonesia, Cambodia, Philippines and Vietnam. The Collaborative Fund is a program that provides small grants which support HIV treatment education activities in the community to improve the wellbeing of HIV positive people. In South East Asia, APN+ provides a coordination support role in collaboration with the Community Review Panel. The fund also supports network development among national, provincial and local grass root community organizations. For additional information about the Collaborative Fund please visit <http://www.itpcglobal.org> and www.apnplus.org

2. Pre-Implementation Workshop of the Collaborative Fund

A three day pre-implementation workshop of the Collaborative Fund program in Southeast Asia was held in Bangkok from the 5-7th May 2009. Twenty nine participants from Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam attended the workshop. Discussions included project implementation, timelines, reporting periods and technical assistance required by the staff to implement the project effectively. In addition participants went through activities to be implemented as part of the treatment education project. Other project related documents such as report formatting and the financial reporting system were also discussed in detail.

3. Partnership with International Treatment Preparedness Coalition (ITPC), 7 Sisters and ANPUD

APN+ provides logistical and administrative support to ITPC Global Secretariat and 7 Sisters secretariat office. This partnership has increased community led HIV treatment education among affected populations. It has also provided an opportunity to provide skills and knowledge in key areas such as Global Fund and barriers/ issues around treatment access. In addition, financial management and other logistical supports were provided for the development of the Asian Network of People who Use Drugs (ANPUD). Today ANPUD is a registered regional network of people who use drugs in Asia and they are represented in many important forums such as UNRTF and Response Beyond Borders consultations.

4. Workshop: Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria

Two network capacity building workshops were organized in September and December 2009 in partnership with the 7 Sisters network members. 7 Sisters is a coalition of community based organizations in Asia that deal with HIV prevention and care. The workshop aimed to improve the knowledge of vulnerable populations in order for them to be able to increase their capacity to access the fund to support their HIV treatment and prevention programs.

6. Workshop: Capacity Building with Positive Networks

In order to increase rapport with local HIV positive groups, APN+ held a series of meetings with members of many national networks. Key discussions during the meetings included fund raising to carry out more activities that support the wellbeing of HIV positive people, planning for future activities etc. APN+ shared views about tackling the HIV epidemic from a multi-sectoral approach, and the importance of joint efforts with other positive networks, government and bi-lateral agencies. Meetings with the positive network members enabled a good opportunity to learn and share experiences between local positive people and regional networks. Through the consortium project, capacity building training for positive people in Myanmar and Vietnam were conducted.

7. Workshop: Treatment Research Dissemination with Positive Networks

APN+ co-organized workshops in partnership with local positive groups in China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, and Vietnam to disseminate the results of country specific research findings. Key discussion topics during the workshops included obstacles around accessing Hepatitis C treatment, HIV second line treatment, income generation among positive women, stigma among health care providers and low level HIV treatment literacy among positive people.

V. KNOWLEDGE SHARING

1. Regional Treatment Summit

A three-day Regional Treatment Summit was organized to disseminate the findings from the APN+ access to HIV treatment and other related services research. The research explored barriers and challenges faced by HIV positive men who have sex with men (MSM)/transgender, women and injecting drug users (IDU) in accessing HIV treatment and other services in 10 selected Asian countries. More than 80 key positive and community leaders attended the Summit from 12 countries. The summit was supported by UNAIDS, UNDP, PACT, Ford Foundation and Levi Strauss

2. Publication: Stories of HIV Positive Women and MSM

A DVD and book entitled "Diamonds" was published in August 2009 and launched at ICAAPIX, Bali, Indonesia. Another DVD entitled "HiStory" was also produced. The book and DVDs contain the stories of HIV positive women and MSM and their struggles in life as persons living with HIV. The DVD and books have been distributed during international conferences and also among local stakeholders. The Diamonds publication is available on www.apnplus.org and DVDs can be collected from APN+ offices.

3. Publication: Sexual Reproductive Health Information and Income Generation

A guideline was produced to provide information about sexual and reproductive health rights to HIV positive women in the region. The guideline includes a focus on women's right to confidential counseling in relation to HIV diagnosis, contraceptive choices and pregnancy options, women's right to anti-retroviral therapy and prevention of vertical HIV transmission. APN+ also produced a guideline on small income generation programs. The guideline draws attention to the challenges that HIV positive women face in addition to highlighting the critical need to provide income generation, small business development and micro-financing options for HIV positive women. PDF versions of the book will be available on www.apnplus.org

VI. ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GOVERNANCE

1. APN+ Steering Committee Meetings

The APN+ Steering Committee met in Bangkok in April and November 2009. The committee is comprised of five committee members elected by the APN+ Board during its Annual General Meeting (AGM). The steering committee provides an important role in the provision of supervision to the secretariat office and setting the direction of the APN+ regional advocacy agenda. Meeting discussions included planning for the upcoming AGM, developing a workplace agreement policy, staff contracts, APN+ working group structures and activities and future funding. The committee members are network representatives from Japan, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Vietnam and Singapore.

2. APN+ Annual General Meeting (AGM)

The APN+ Annual General Meeting was held in June 2009. Over 20 country national network representative members of APN+ attended the meeting in Bangkok. During the AGM, a new Steering committee was elected through a democratic and transparent election process. The elected steering committee members for the year are from Japan, Nepal, PNG, Vietnam and Singapore. Members were also selected to represent APN+ on different forums and committees such as UNRTF on Mobility and 7 sisters. GNP+ board members were also elected for the year 2009. Updates on the progress of projects and working groups were also presented at the AGM.

3. APN+ Foundation Board Meeting

APN+ is a registered Foundation in Thailand and its board meets twice a year to assess its overall development and the programs and projects implemented in the region. The last meeting was held in January 2010. In addition the board provides ongoing support to the secretariat office while ensuring the regular and timely submission of financial auditing and other annual reports to the Thai government. Joint meetings for the APN+ steering committee and the foundation board are also organized.

VII. ESTABLISHMENT OF NATIONAL PLHIV NETWORKS

1. Establishment of National Networks of PLHIV

APN+ provided support to positive people in Timor Leste to establish a national network of positive people. The network is now known as Estrela+. Continuous support is provided to assist with building the network capacity of Estrela+. Regular communication to explore possible support mechanisms and increase information sharing with the new networks such as Lhak-Sam in Bhutan is underway. Ongoing support is provided through the consortium project to build the capacity of positive networks in Indonesia, China, Laos and Timor Leste.

VIII. DEVELOPMENT OF APN+ SECRETARIAT

1. Recruitment of new APN+ Staff

Three new staff members have been recruited to the APN+ secretariat. A Deputy Director, Coordinator for WAPN and a project assistant were hired during this performance period. The employment of additional staff has allowed APN+ to expand its scope of work and improve delivery and response efforts in response to the demands of network members. Through the Collaborative Fund, additional funding was also made available to community grass-root organizations to support their capacity development and efforts around treatment literacy and advocacy

IX. CONFERENCES AND OTHER EVENTS

1. 9th International Congress on AIDS in Asia & the Pacific, Bali

APN+ was actively involved in the 9th ICAAP in Bali, Indonesia. A workshop to gather input and feedback about the concept of positive health (formerly known as Positive Prevention) and HIV prevention among vulnerable populations was also organized during the conference. In addition a satellite session on health, stigma and prevention of HIV among positive MSM was conducted during the conference. Advocacy and knowledge sharing sessions on Hepatitis C co-infection were also organized during ICAAP. Diamonds and History DVDs were launched during the conference in addition to disseminating the results of the multi country treatment research. Many APN+ members were actively participating during PLHIV and community forums and other sessions during the conference. A demonstration to demand affordable treatment for Hep C was also organized during the plenary.

WAY FORWARD

APN+ continues to push the Universal Access agenda with growing evidence and support to back up this agenda in an effort to increase and improve treatment access in the region.

2009 has seen a concentrated and collaborative effort toward building the country-level capacity of the networks. 2010 will strive to extend these efforts and partnerships to a level that supports the development of an empowered pool of national PLHIV networks who are able to identify and mobilize resources that can support the community based perspective and agenda.

The Regional Treatment Summit in June 2009 was a successful forum that indeed provided the necessary platform to exchange information and develop both country and regional level specific advocacy and program activities. 2010 will see an expansion of these collaborative efforts in that it will aim to support national and regional level advocacy that identifies gaps in funding, and solutions to this funding shortfall.

The silent epidemic of HIV/HCV co-infection and TB will continue to be a prioritized advocacy agenda item. APN+ will push to ensure the rights of people living with HIV/HCV are maintained by advocating for access to affordable treatment and greater understanding about complexities related to co-infection, including the impact of drug interactions and toxicity which have significant potential to compromise the quality of life of PLHIV. APN+ will work in partnership with other organizations to agitate for these issues to be addressed in the region.

The issue of patent drugs and pharmaceutical monopolies is a further issue that continues to hinder and potentially unwind any progress made so far in relation to ART. APN+ holds extensive concern for PLHIV in the region particularly since any interruption to treatment has significant consequences. Furthermore, the matter of access to first line treatment for those in the Asia Pacific region continues to distinguish itself as a human rights issue that must be responded to without further delay.

Finally, 2010 will see a review of APN+'s strategic plan and future direction. The strategy will form the foundation of APN+'s continued support to PLHIV networks through engagement and greater community involvement and partnership as we continue to strengthen efforts towards Universal Access, equality and human rights for PLHIV.

