

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Economic Progress not enough to change the future course of the epidemic: AIDS in Asia needs bold policy changes**

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Six Asian countries now experiencing rapid transition have yet to prioritize HIV prevention resources for high-impact programmes. Radical political changes will be needed to increase resources for services to sex workers and their clients, injecting drug users and men who have sex with men.

This was the key finding of a study focusing on China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam, carried out under the auspices of the aids2031 initiative.

The study, *Asian Economies in Rapid Transition: HIV Now and Through 2031*, is launched today at the 9th International Congress on AIDS in Asia-Pacific. It is the first report to be launched by aids2031, an international think tank which generates new thinking on what must be done now to better manage HIV/AIDS by the year 2031, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of when aids was first reported.

The six countries are expected to increase GDP per capita by between 3 and 10 percent per annum over the next 25 years, leading to higher public revenues and health spending. By 2031, each of these countries will need less than a quarter of a percentage point of GDP to pay for universal access to HIV prevention, care, and treatment. Funding for AIDS programmes will need less than one percent of the public health budget, except for Indonesia.

New trends in these six countries are changing the future scenario of the HIV epidemic. The boom in information and communication technologies, heavy migration and population mobility, rising spending power, and the growing use of recreational drugs may lead to an increase in sexual risk behaviors. The impact of these emerging trends on young people, a growing segment of the population in these six countries, is a particular concern.

Policy support and financial resources for interventions targeting marginalized populations must go hand in hand to implement innovative outreach programmes. At the same time, a human rights perspective is needed to contain the social prejudice and stigma that may prevent these services to reach the most vulnerable groups.

‘If the AIDS epidemic is to be curbed,’ says Prof. Myung-Hwan Cho, the Co-chair of the Working Group, “the governments in these countries will need to commit their growing resources and summon the political will to adapt policies and develop sound programmatic approaches that address inequalities, stigma and discriminatory practices”.

**For more information:**

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