

ANNUAL REPORT

2020



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President's Message

2020 was an incredibly challenging and difficult year for all of us, an experience none of us could ever have imagined. We are in the midst of a once-in-a-century pandemic that has killed over 3 million and sickened over 155 million people across the globe. The economy has had a major hit, businesses, organisations and livelihoods are in jeopardy. AfA has not been spared, our offices and workplaces were closed for months, upending our programmes, and impacting our bottom line.

However optimism is needed. We have learned new ways of meeting and staying in touch with one another. We have adapted our programmes in order to continue providing clinical, education and prevention services. Thankfully, the roll-out of COVID-19 vaccines have given us hope that the COVID-19 pandemic will be brought under control, that illness and death can be prevented, that spread of the infection can be minimised, and that our lives can return to some semblance of normality.

COVID-19-related curbs on socialising and tightly enforced social distancing regulations have reduced access to HIV/STI testing, provision of services including condoms, ART, and PrEP. The numbers of HIV and STI tests done, clinic attendances and notifications all dropped in 2020. There was a 20% drop in total HIV notifications from 2019 to 2020, 32% in heterosexual males, 17% in MSM. The number of notifiable STI fell by 19% over the same period. These declining numbers may be because of COVID-19 on testing and sexual activity. It may also be the continuation of the decreasing numbers of HIV infections that were noted since 2018, which in turn were the result of educational efforts, PrEP uptake, and U=U (or Treatment as Prevention).

It was against this backdrop that we co-organised the 12th Singapore AIDS Conference (virtual) on 28 November and 5 December 2020. The theme *HIV and STI in the Time of COVID-19* was chosen to highlight the impact that COVID-19 has had on HIV and STI programmes, and how our plans to prevent and end HIV have been changed as a result. The SAC



PROFESSOR ROY CHAN
President, AfA Singapore

also highlighted the highly interconnected HIV and STI epidemics and programmes. Almost all HIV infections are sexually-transmitted, STIs increase transmission of HIV, and HIV alters the clinical manifestations and management of STIs. Prevention programmes for STI will impact on HIV, and vice versa. The relationship is further exemplified by the effect PrEP can have on the incidence of other STIs, and the opportunity for enhanced STI control that PrEP provides.

Sustaining the HIV response will be critical when funding may be reduced as other priorities take hold e.g., COVID-19 and other global crises like climate change, it is therefore becoming much harder for the HIV community to be clearly heard. COVID-19 has made these challenges more acute, and we need to re-evaluate our programmes and review our funding sources and requirements.

What can 40 years of HIV response teach us about how we should respond to COVID-19? A few principles come to mind:

- ♦ Keep human rights at the centre of the response,
- ♦ Fight stigma and discrimination of infected persons and those at increased risk,
- ♦ Ensure the poor and needy are provided treatment and vaccines,
- ♦ Take care of marginalised communities,
- ♦ Allow patent waivers and compulsory licensing that will make medications and vaccines affordable and accessible.

Finally, I would like to thank staff and volunteers who have worked tirelessly to keep our workplaces safe, adapted to the new circumstances and kept our programmes running.

Let us hope 2021 will be a much brighter year! ■



Executive Director's Message

2020 will go down in history as the beginning of another global pandemic, COVID-19. Many comparisons have been made with the HIV epidemic and there are many lessons to be learnt from it - on the importance of prevention, equitable access, and most importantly community mobilization through a people-centred approach. As elsewhere, with the outbreak of COVID-19 in Singapore, there were major disruptions to many community-based services including the HIV response, which also impacted upon our programmes to end HIV in Singapore by 2030. With the pandemic continuing to fuel, it has also become clear that to stay relevant and continue to propel our mission, we need to rethink, innovate, and find newer ways of reaching out to our target audiences with information and services.



Ms. SUMITA BANERJEE
Executive Director, AfA Singapore

Despite the disruptions caused by COVID-19 and the restrictions on movement, AfA was fortunate to be designated an essential service and continued to provide its services though much below its capacity during normal times.

Due to the lockdown and with restrictions on gatherings and movement, most of AfA's venue-based outreach work targeting at risk individuals came to a halt during the Circuit Breaker and in Phase 1. However, AfA remained resilient and continued to deliver many of its programmes online during these difficult days, and when the situation improved, we ramped up our on-site outreach efforts in phase 2, keeping within government guidelines and ensuring the safety of our staff, volunteers, and clients. For the heterosexual outreach programme (HSO) that targets high risk heterosexual men with multiple partners, the programme focus shifted from clubs to coffeeshops. A total of 90,850 high risk heterosexual males (HSM) were reached with information and collaterals as compared to 12,400 in 2019 (due to a strategic shift in the programme thrust) and 83,400 in 2018. However, there was a more than 50% drop in the number of HSM that were tested for HIV both at AfA's Anonymous Testing Site (ATS) and Mobile Testing Site (MTS).

The other key population that AfA serves is the MSM community. Over the years AfA has expanded and strengthened its service offerings to the community. Following the launch of the blueprint, AfA was looking forward to rolling out new strategies targeting higher risk MSM. Unfortunately, AfA's plans were derailed due to the outbreak of the pandemic. With clubs and saunas shut down, the MSM team had to re-strategize on ways to continue engaging with their target population in an educating yet entertaining manner. The MSM or Gayhealth.sg programme, extended its social media presence and launched the Queen Sized Kiki campaign featuring renowned drag personalities as Gayhealth.sg ambassadors to bring safer sex messages to the MSM community in the form of short edutainment videos. Topics covered included HIV transmission and testing, PrEP and PEP, HIV stigma, among others. Alongside the online campaign, the programme also brought its capacity building workshops online and delivered these as 7 webinars covering a myriad of sexual health topics of interest to the community. Another critical intervention provided by the programme is a bespoke service at the ATS, called the Pink Carpet Service which provides counselling and testing services to MSM in a safe environment with service providers being from the community themselves. In 2020, the programme saw 1880 MSM clients as opposed to 3031 in the previous year. Overall, the programme saw big drop in numbers with only 26958 MSM that were reached with prevention information in 2020 as opposed to 48362 individuals in 2019. Further, distribution of condoms fell from 57900 in 2019 to 27170 in 2020.

Nevertheless, in 2020, the MSM programme initiated a pilot testing programme to introduce Gonorrhoea and Chlamydia testing at the ATS. A total of 335 tests were completed as part of the pilot. Based on the assessed need, ATS will be introducing Gonorrhoea and Chlamydia tests in addition to HIV and syphilis in a move to provide more comprehensive sexual health services to the community.

Aligned to its prevention outreach work, are AfA's testing services. To end HIV, it is critical for high-risk persons to know their HIV status. HIV testing is a gateway for both prevention and treatment and is critical for the control of HIV infection. While AfA prides itself on running the oldest and largest anonymous HIV testing service in Singapore, voluntary testing rates continue to be low in Singapore and more efforts and stakeholders need to be mobilized to bolster these numbers by fast tracking the introduction of self-testing. Due to COVID-19, the testing numbers dipped further in 2020. This was also partly due to a decline in risk taking behaviours. In 2020, the ATS saw a total of 3055 clients, a 48% drop from the previous year. There were 16 positive cases out of which 12 did a confirmatory test; 11 of whom were linked to care. There was also a drop in clients seen by the MTS from 1673 in 2019 to 1078 in 2020 and was mainly due to the COVID-19 Circuit Breaker when the service had to be halted. 6 clients tested positive of whom 83% were successfully linked to care.

Despite COVID-19, AfA launched and successfully completed two new projects in 2020. These were a Youth Sexual Health programme aimed at empowering young persons to take control of their sexual health and a programme addressing Stigma and Discrimination at healthcare settings; both programmes were supported by corporate partners and run online. Due to COVID-19, AfA also delivered its biennial Singapore AIDS Conference virtually. The theme of the conference was *HIV and STIs in the Time of COVID-19*. There were four international plenary speakers, each framing an informative panel session followed by vibrant discussions. Held over two afternoons on November 28 and December 5, the conference was attended by 252 persons on Day 1 and 276 persons on day 2. Subsequently, the sessions were made available online and have had over 5000 views as of 31st May 2021.

In addition to all the programmes that we offer, AfA remains deeply aware of the many barriers that PLHIVs face in accessing treatment. One of the huge gains in 2020 was the announcement by the Ministry of Health regarding subsidizing of HIV medications which will allow many more PLHIVs to link and adhere to treatment. Nonetheless, financial challenges continue to remain a key factor in managing HIV as a chronic condition. To offset some of the costs associated with living with HIV, AfA dispensed a total of \$39,550 in financial assistance to PLHIVs. AfA also continued to run Revive, its empowerment programme for newly diagnosed persons to provide emotional support and other relevant information as they come to terms with their diagnosis and by linking them to a support network.

Though the last year was a challenging one, it has pushed us to think of new ways to deliver our programmes. Towards this, AfA has embarked on digitalizing some of its offerings to make our programmes more resilient and COVID-19-proof. Further, given that the HIV landscape is changing, and new priorities are emerging, AfA will expand its sexual health offerings to include STI testing at the ATS and additionally bolster its psychosocial support and counselling to include mental health and well-being for its beneficiaries and clients.

I finally want to thank all AfA staff and volunteers for their hard work and commitment during a particularly difficult period to ensure AfA remains steadfast in its goals and mission of ending HIV, and to the Board of Directors for their strategic guidance. ■

About Action for Aids



Who We Are

Formed in 1988, in response to the global and local spread of HIV infection, AfA is Singapore's leading independent organisation of HIV experts.



Our Vision

Zero new infections
Zero deaths due to HIV/AIDS-related illnesses
Zero discrimination and stigma



Our Mission

Prevent HIV transmission through promotion of behavioural and biomedical strategies;

Reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS on individuals by working towards universal access to treatment and care;

Advocate for implementation of policies and programmes that will reduce HIV-related stigma and discrimination in Singapore.

Vision and Mission



How We Work

- Apply expertise and deliver results
- Engage communities
- Leverage convening and networking capacity
- Harness information technology
- Synergise local efforts
- Strengthen partnerships
- Drive change and innovation
- Be accountable



Our Values

- Integrity
- Caring
- Embrace Diversity
- Collaboration and Partnership
- Equality and Shared Responsibilities



Our Foundations

Reflecting the core strengths and assets of AfA:

- **Foundation 1:**
Programmes and policies are evidence-based
- **Foundation 2:**
Programmes and policies are rights-based
- **Foundation 3:**
Programmes are efficient and effective
- **Foundation 4:**
Organisation is responsive and innovative

Getting to Zero



Zero New Infections Through Education

Education is an important pillar of our mission, and these programmes help to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS through targeted outreach activities to at-risk communities:

- **HSO** – Heterosexual Outreach Programme
- **MSM** – Men Who Have Sex with Men Outreach Programme

Zero Deaths Through Care and Support

Anonymous HIV-testing enables early detection and treatment. Financial assistance provides help for those in need. Support groups and counselling help infected and affected individuals cope with HIV infection and close the gap between diagnosis and care.

- **ATS** – Anonymous Testing Service
- **MTS** – Mobile Testing Service
- **Coordinated Care**

Zero Stigma and Discrimination Through Advocacy

Since its inception, AfA has been a visible advocate for the fair treatment of persons living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV). Today, we continue our efforts to advocate access to affordable treatment for all PLHIV.

- **SAC** – Singapore AIDS Conference
- **LOVE** – Fundraising Gala
- **SACM** – Singapore AIDS Candlelight Memorial
- **Advocacy and partnerships**

Our Committees

Executive Committee

President

Prof. Roy Chan

Vice President

A/Prof. David Lye

Honorary Treasurer

Ms. Cheryl Yeo

Assistant Honorary Secretary

Mr. Thomas Ng

Honorary Treasurer

Mr. Terence Ng

Committee Members

Dr. Wong Chen Seong

Dr. Benson Yeo

Prof. Paul Ananth Tambyah

Ms. Dawn Mok

A/Prof. Lee Cheng Chuan

Mr. Benedict Thambiah

Mr. Saxone Woon

Auditors

Unity Assurance PAC

Board of Trustees

Mr. Nicholas Chan

Mrs. E-len Fu

Mr. Goh Eck Meng

Mr. David Heng

Ms. Jacqui Khoo

Mr. Lee Yang Soon

Mr. Howie Leong

Sub-Committees

Programmes

Prof. Roy Chan (Chair)

Prof. Paul Ananth Tambyah

Ms. Sumita Banerjee

Mr. Terry Lim

Mr. Chronos Kwok

Fundraising

Prof. Roy Chan (Chair)

Mr. Saxone Woon

Mr. Anwar Hashim

Communications and Digital Engagement

Mr. Saxone Woon (Chair)

Mr. Benedict Thambiah

Ms. Dawn Mok

Ms. Sumita Banerjee

Human Resources

A/Prof. Lee Cheng Chuan

Ms. Dawn Mok

Mr. Benedict Thambiah

Dr. Wong Chen Seong

Ms. Sumita Banerjee

Finance and Audit

Mr. Terence Ng (Chair of Finance)

A/Prof. David Lye (Chair of Audit)

Ms. Cheryl Yeo

Mr. Thomas Ng

Dr. Benson Yeo

Mailing and Contact Information

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Social Media

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instagram.com/afa.singapore

twitter.com/afa_singapore

Name of Organisation

Action For AIDS (Singapore)

UEN: S88SS0126A

IPC No: HEF0006/G

Date of Charity Registration:

7 October 1994

Declarations

Executive Committee members do not receive remuneration for their board services.

Executive Committee is a voluntary board. Out of our top three highest paid staff, only one staff received more than \$100,000 in total annual remuneration.

Members, staff and volunteers are expected to avoid actual and perceived conflicts of interest. Where individuals have personal interest in business transactions or contracts that AFA may enter into, or have vested interest in other organisations that AFA has dealings with or is considering to enter into joint ventures with, they are expected to declare such interests and the conflict of interest form is to be signed each year by members of the exco and staff as soon as possible and abstain from discussion and decision-making on the matter. Where such conflicts exist, the Board will evaluate whether any potential conflicts of interest will affect the continuing independence and whether it is appropriate for the individual to continue to remain with the organisation.

Our Team



Sumita Banerjee

Executive Director

Terry Lim

Senior Divisional Manager,
HIV Outreach: Education and Testing

Thomas Nah

Senior Coordinator,
Heterosexual Outreach (HSO) Programme

Chronos Kwok

Senior Manager,
Men Who Have Sex With Men (MSM)
Outreach Programme

Calvin Tan

Senior Coordinator,
Men Who Have Sex With Men (MSM)
Outreach Programme

Adrian Tyler

Pink Carpet Youth (PCY) Coordinator,
Young Men Who Have Sex With Men (MSM)
Outreach Programme

Anwar Hashim

Senior Manager,
Coordinated Care, Volunteer
and Donor Management

Ben Leong

Senior Coordinator,
Coordinated Care, Volunteer
and Donor Management

Melvin Tan

Senior Executive,
Partnerships and Communications

Lokman Hakeem Mohdar

Manager,
Clinical Services

Jing Lin

Senior Executive,
Anonymous Testing Service (ATS)

Ong Hui Min

Executive,
Mobile Testing Service (MTS)



EDUCATE

An important pillar of our mission, these programmes help raise awareness of HIV/AIDS through direct and provocative outreach activities to communities at risk.

Behavioural change is only possible through integrative programming and support by venue owners, volunteers and coordinators.

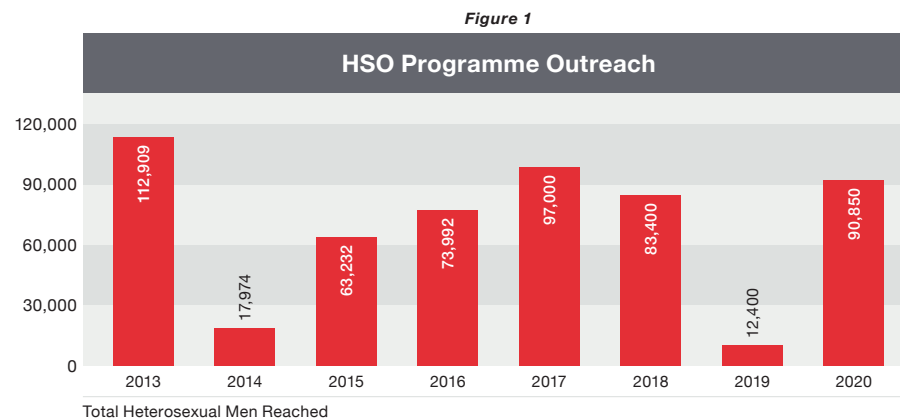
Heterosexual Outreach Programme

By Terry Lim and Thomas Nah

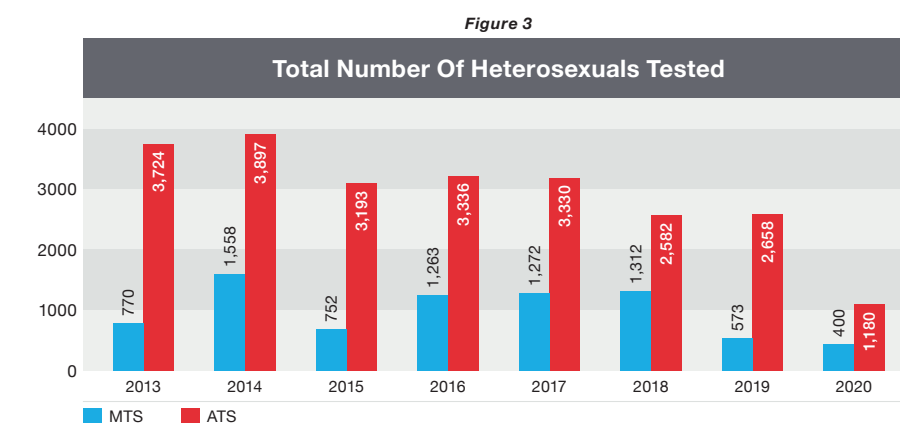
2020 will always be remembered as the year of COVID-19. As a matter of fact, it reminded us of what it was like for HIV in the 1980s.

Back then, there was little if any knowledge about the virus, how it was transmitted, and when prevention, medication and health care were all at the trial-and-error phase, there was a lot of fear about the unknown. Fast forward 2020 and this is what we witnessed for COVID-19.

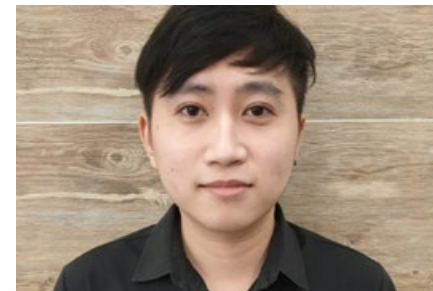
Fig. 1 and 2 shows the comparison by reach over the years and by programme.



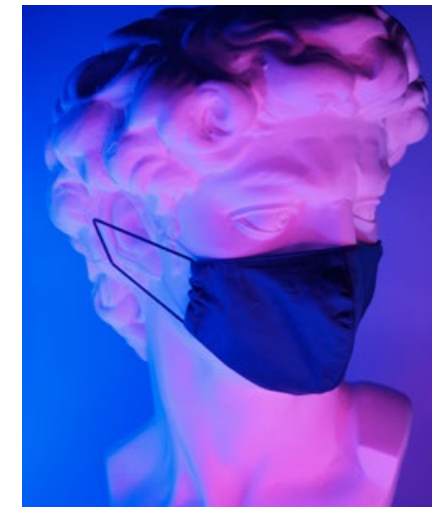
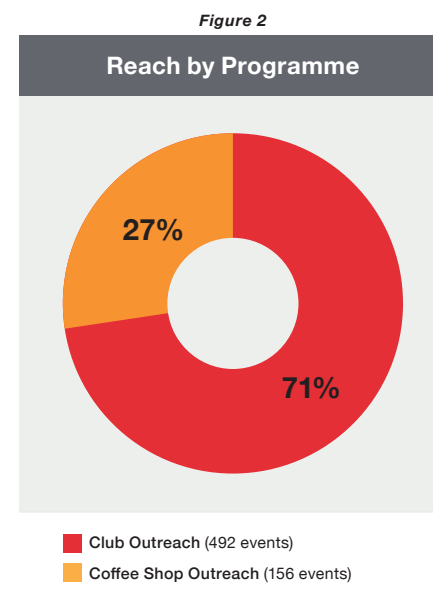
In 2020, 90,850 high-risk men were reached through 585 outreach events. A total of 1,580 heterosexual men tested at ATS and MTS.



TERRY LIM
Senior Divisional Manager,
HIV Outreach: Education and Testing



THOMAS NAH
Senior Coordinator,
HSO Outreach Programme



HSO Post Survey at Selegie

With Phase 2 and entertainment establishments closed, most of our target audience headed to coffeeshops as dine-in services were resumed.

During this period, we had to be fluid, innovative and adaptable in view of the extenuating circumstances. We got all our area ICs to focus on coffeeshops and expanded our outreach areas and frequency during this period.

As we progressed into Phase 3, many entertainment establishments pivoted to operate food and beverage outlets including some clubs which went underground to stay afloat. We also had to pivot all our outreach efforts accordingly to include these locations as there was no Getai, ferry outreach or Safe Sex Shows for the whole of 2020.

We also took the opportunity to increase awareness of not only the importance of safe sex but also the danger of COVID-19.

In summary, 2020 presented totally new challenges and new behavioural patterns. Also, due to the constantly changing circumstances, we did not have a very clear picture of what would happen next and hence this challenged us in the planning of our programmes. But we would like to thank our area in-charge(s) and volunteers who worked with us closely to deal with the changes creatively to constantly help our clients even in this "new normal". ■

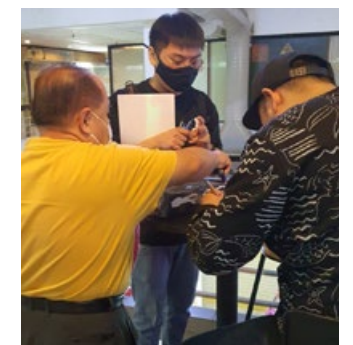


AFA volunteer engaging during coffeeshop outreach



Amid all this with the Circuit Breaker and shutdowns, our HSO programmes were also understandably affected.

We had to stop all operations during the Circuit Breaker and in Phase 1. All HSO programmes had to be suspended during this time and, only a limited number of services/activities were offered.



HSO Post survey

Men Who Have Sex With Men Outreach Programme

By Chronos Kwok, Calvin Tan and Adrian Tyler

The Men-who-have-sex-with-Men (MSM) community continues to disproportionately contribute a significant percentage of new HIV infections. Out of the 323 new infections in 2019, 57% came from the MSM community. While numbers in the past two years seem to indicate a possible downward trend, the MSM programme remains one of the major areas of focus in our bid to end HIV in Singapore by 2030. After the launch of the Community Blueprint at the end of 2019, the programme team geared up to run a series of outreach programmes in 2020 aimed at increasing knowledge and awareness for HIV and encouraging regular voluntary testing amongst the MSM community. However, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, all our plans were derailed.

Due to the Circuit Breaker measures and other COVID restrictions, we were immediately challenged to rethink our usual outreach programmes that relied heavily on face-to-face engagement at clubs and other entertainment venues. Fortunately, we were able to pivot and move some of our outreach and education efforts online. We worked with various community partners and tried out new ways to produce content for social media. We also organised online events like webinars to keep our engagement with the MSM community going. Lastly, we redirected our resources and conducted the Gayhealth.sg 2020 community study to gain insights into changing trends for sexual health among MSM in Singapore. We hope that this will guide us to develop programmes that can better suit the needs of the community.



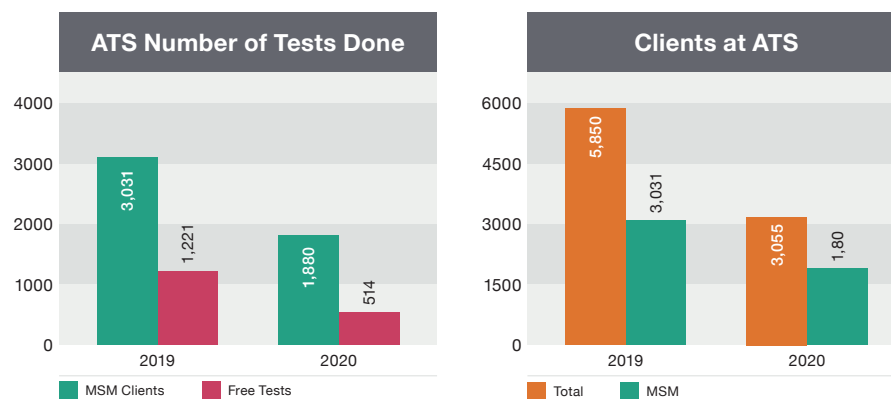
CHRONOS KWOK
Senior Manager,
MSM Outreach Programme



CALVIN TAN
Senior Coordinator,
MSM Outreach Programme



ADRIAN TYLER
Coordinator,
Pink Carpet Youth,
MSM Outreach Programme



MSM Clients by Age Group			
Age	<20-29	30-39	40+
Total MSM clients	980	638	263
Reactive cases (HIV) *100% linkage to care	8	4	2

"It's always been the greatest honour to work with an organisation that builds strength and trust in the community. Always looking forward to working with Afa & Gayhealth again!"

Noristar,
Queen Sized Kiki Ambassador



Queen Sized Kiki ambassador,
NORIStar

"It's such a pleasure working with the MSM team at Afa. My team and I appreciate how constructive they are in terms of what they are going for. All hands were on deck on filming day and it goes to show how dedicated they are to the cause. I'll gladly offer to work on the next one!"

Sam Nai,
Queen Sized Kiki Campaign
Video Director



MSM Team

Towards the end of the year when restrictions eased, we saw the number of clients climbing back up. We hope that client numbers will jump back to pre-COVID-19 levels as the community gets used to the new normal. Moving forward, with more options for testing like self-testing kits, we hope to further normalize testing amongst the MSM community.

Between March to July, as part of a pilot project, we worked with DSC to provide free Chlamydia & Gonorrhea PCR (Throat) and/or (Rectal) tests to MSM clients who presented at the ATS. A total of 335 tests were conducted and we found that there is both a need and demand for such STI testing services at the community level. Hence in 2021, on top of anonymous HIV and Syphilis tests, we will be adding Chlamydia & Gonorrhea tests to the range of services that we can offer to MSM clients.

Online Engagement and Social Media

Due to the closure of clubs and entertainment venues, all our engagement efforts were moved to online platforms like Facebook and Instagram. We also explored new methods of reaching out to audiences online through "Live" broadcasts and webinars.

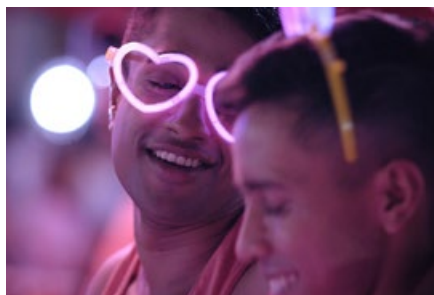
At the beginning of the year, we launched our Queen Sized Kiki campaign featuring renowned drag personalities as Gayhealth.sg ambassadors. We worked with them to bring safer sex messages to the MSM community in the form of short edutainment videos. Topics covered included HIV transmission and Testing, PrEP and PEP, HIV Stigma and many more. In total, we worked with 5 ambassadors and produced 11 videos which we promoted on various social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. As part of the campaigns, we also hosted Instagram "Live" sessions where we invited the drag personalities for a chat on their experiences being safe sex ambassadors. Overall, we were able to reach 24,890 MSM through our online engagement efforts. In addition, the People Like Us Series, boosted by its Emmy nomination, continue to help us reach out to new audiences raking in 740,024 viewers in 2020.

To continue our engagement with the MSM community despite COVID-19 restrictions, we replaced our face-to-face workshops with webinars. In 2020, we held 7 webinars and topics covered included:

- ♦ Common STIs affecting GBQ men and PrEP use
- ♦ Body Image and the Community
- ♦ U=me: Tackling HIV Stigma and Discrimination
- ♦ Substance use and chemsex in the community
- ♦ I, YOU, WE - Navigating relationships in the community
- ♦ Being Healthy as we advance in age
- ♦ New Year, New You – Setting goals for the year



Queen Sized Kiki production team.



People Like Us Series continue to help us reach out to new audiences

“I was extremely glad to have the opportunity to connect with the community of MSM and allies on how body image concerns impact the community at large. Beyond increasing awareness and facilitating discussions about these issues, having a series of online activities (yay gayhealth/AfA!) during the Circuit Breaker helps to remind the community that connection can still take place beyond physical spaces.”



Daniel Ho,
Webinar Speaker

“COVID-19 created a sudden and urgent need for organisations to change the way they operate. This led to a sense of isolation from community partners we usually work closely with, as we focused on meeting unprecedented challenges. The webinar was a priceless opportunity for us to check in with each other. It helped us feel a part of something greater than ourselves or our organisations — to understand that we are all working toward the same goal, together.”

Alaric Tan,
Webinar Speaker

“The webinar allows the participants from the community to stay connected and informed albeit the physical restrictions.”

Faliqh,
Webinar Participant



“PCY has really provided me a safe environment where I can grow as a young bi/gay man. I have PCY to thank for some awesome experiences, befriending inspirational people and gifting me with the support I need to navigate the (at times, daunting) world. I truly do appreciate workshops on mental health, sexual health/awareness and not to mention the complimentary sexual testing provided, no questions asked.

As an admittedly hot-blooded youth myself, I only feel empowered knowing my status. Knowledge is definitely Power. And even amidst a global pandemic, PCY’s care and consideration is unwavering, seen through online check-ins with the youth.

In Singapore, we unfortunately are limited in these kinds of spaces. However, one can look at it differently - PCY is then truly special and precious. I say this with the purest feelings: PCY has helped sculpt me as a person and no matter what, that quaint little room with those creaky chairs, will always have a special place in my heart.”

HL,
PCY Participant

Pink Carpet Y

In 2020, Pink Carpet Y free testing was incorporated under the Youth Outreach Programme. Due to COVID-19, we were not able to conduct drop-in sessions. However, we continued to stay connected with young MSM through Zoom meetings and Telegram group chat. When restrictions were slightly eased, the drop-in sessions resumed in October, and we were able to physically connect with PCY members face to face. More importantly, throughout the year we continued to provide those vulnerable, high risk young MSM with free HIV tests. In 2021, we will put together a recruitment plan to reach out to more young MSM and develop a comprehensive programme for PCY.



Gayhealth.sg 2020 Community Study

With the suspension of our club outreach programmes, we channelled our resources to running the Gayhealth.sg 2020 community study. We hoped that the study can provide insights into the changing trends in sexual health among MSM in Singapore. The survey focused on several key areas of sexual health, including behavioural surveillance on condom use behaviours, channels to access sexual partners, HIV and other STI testing, knowledge and attitudes towards HIV prevention technologies (e.g. pre-exposure and post-exposure prophylaxis) and the impact of COVID-19 on sexual health.



Reaching out to audiences through social media and online platforms

Conducted between September to November, the mixed method study was made up of an extensive questionnaire completed by 408 participants and 6 focus group discussions of 40 participants. Results of the study will inform the design and development of the MSM programme in the coming years. ■

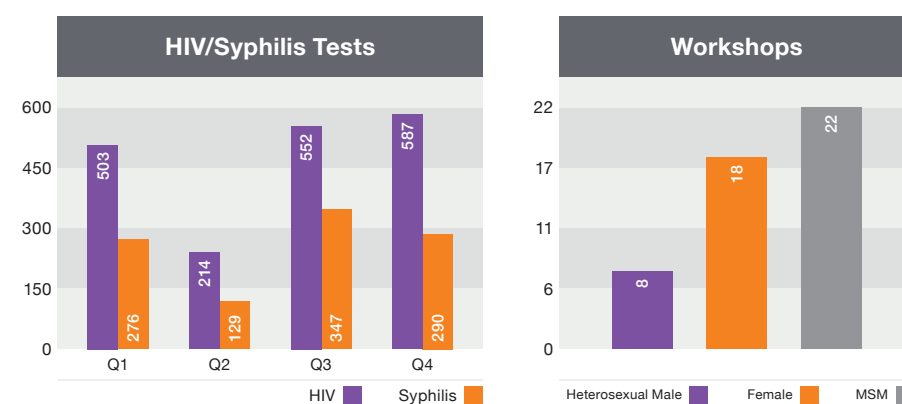
Youth Sexual Health Empowerment Project

By Adrian Tyler and Jing Lin

In their formative years, adolescents and young adults explore their roles, values, and their sexuality. In HIV prevention, research has shown that life skills training is an effective strategy to empower youth and change risk behaviours.

Action for AIDS Singapore's (AfA) Youth Sexual Health Empowerment project is a series of workshops targeted at local youth aged 18 to 30 years. A comprehensive sexuality education manual and curriculum was developed to deliver the workshops. The workshops aimed to equip young people with the knowledge and skills needed to build healthy relationships, effective communication and responsible decision making that will protect themselves from HIV/STI infection.

The workshop content was tailored to three distinct groups of youth to whom different sexual health issues may be more pertinent. These three groups include young women; young heterosexual men; and young gay, bisexual, and queer (GBQ) men. A total of 22 GBQ men, 18 women and eight heterosexual men have attended the workshops. Based on the pre-post survey results, participants rated significantly higher on the sexual self-efficacy scale after attending the 2-hour workshop.



Testing for Youth

In 2020, AfA provided 1856 HIV and 1042 Syphilis free tests under the Youth Outreach Programme for youths below 29. Despite COVID-19 restrictions, we managed to provide free testing for NUS students outside of the campus in October. A total of 51 youths came forward to get tested via our Mobile Testing Service. ■

Anonymous Testing Service

By Lokman Hakeem Mohdar and Jing Lin

SUPPORT AND CARE

Anonymous HIV-testing promotes wider community awareness and well-being.

The organisation also provides financial assistance, leads specific support groups and other empowerment workshops to close the gap between diagnosis and care.



LOKMAN HAKEEM MOHDAR
Manager,
Anonymous Testing Service



JING LIN
Senior Executive,
Anonymous Testing Service

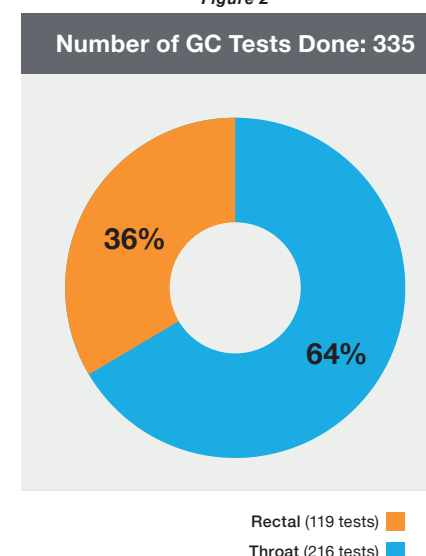
HIV Testing During the COVID-19 Pandemic

2020 was a challenging year with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, ATS was designated an essential service and counselling and testing continued to be provided during the circuit breaker and beyond albeit with several limitations including restrictions on total number of clients seen on each day of operation and a requirement for prior appointments. From the outset of the pandemic, the Anonymous Test Service (ATS) focused on protecting staff, volunteers and clients while maintaining operational and service continuity. We took the time to review procedures and kept up to date with the Ministry of Health's guidelines. We implemented safety measures such as compulsory temperature taking, site cleaning and restricting the flow of clients. The testing site has been operating at a much-reduced capacity in 2020, especially during the Circuit Breaker period, to comply with safe management measures.

Gonorrhoea and Chlamydia Test Program

Many Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) are closely linked to HIV infection. Over the last few years, Singapore is seeing an increase in some such infections, especially among young people. To address this, a pilot Gonorrhoea and Chlamydia test program was introduced in 2020 at the ATS. A total of 355 swab tests were conducted among MSM clients, of which 55% were testing for Gonorrhoea and Chlamydia for the first time. The overall positivity rate was 11.6% with a high concentration of rectal Chlamydia (43%), followed by throat Gonorrhoea (33%). Given the good response and aligned to the ATS's goal of broadening the ambit of screening services offered, GC/CT testing will be rolled out at the ATS in 2021.

Figure 2



Summary of GC Test Results			
Total Number of Tests	335		
Total Number of Clients	217		
		HIV Reactive	Syphilis Reactive
GC Rectal Positive	4	1	
GC Throat Positive	13		1
CT Rectal Positive	17		
CT Throat Positive	5		

- 1 client tested positive for GC throat and CT rectal samples
- 1 client tested positive for both GC and CT from the rectal sample
- 2 clients tested positive for CT from both rectal and throat samples

Fully Digitalized Operation

ATS has migrated its operational procedures into a digital platform. Registration can now be done online and is completely paperless. This new platform enables us to improve turnaround time at the clinic and to ensure that any data collected is accurate and secured. We are constantly striving to better our services to remain current in the ever-evolving times. We are also looking into the use of programmes to support online pre-counselling and result management to continue to make our services more accessible to our clients.

Key Statistics

In 2020, ATS saw a total number of 3,055 clients, which marked a drop of 48% compared to 2019's attendance of 5,850 (Fig. 1 and 2). A total of 16 clients tested positive in 2020, accounting for 0.52% of all HIV tests done (Fig. 6). In comparison, the HIV reactivity rate at ATS was 0.63% in 2019. 13 out of 1524 clients tested positive for syphilis (Fig. 5). Among clients who visited, 93% of clients were male and the remaining were female and transgender. By sexual orientation, 61% of clients identified as Men who have sex with men (MSM). The proportion of MSM clients increased by 9% in 2020.

Out of the 16 newly diagnosed cases, 12 went for the Western Blot test to confirm their serostatus. 11 persons were referred to local hospitals for further treatment via Afa. The remaining clients were either referred to treatment centres overseas or made their own treatment arrangements. (Fig. 9).

Figure 1

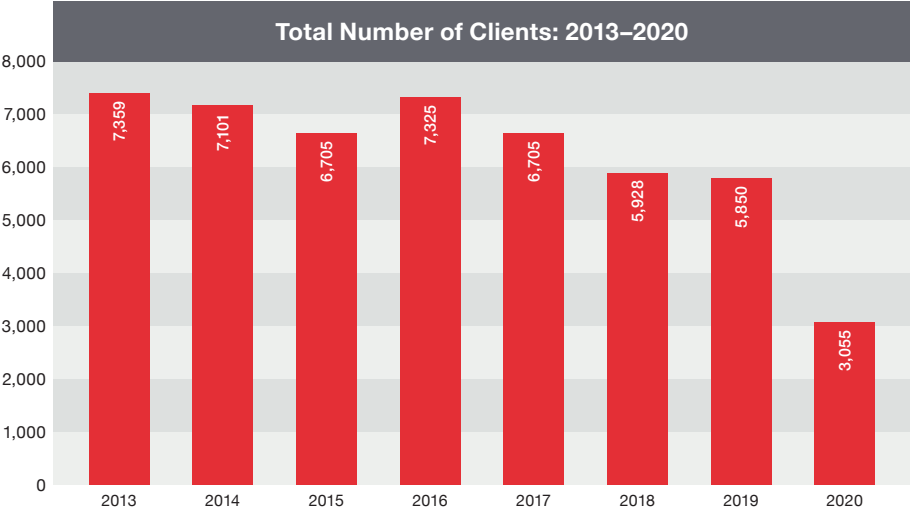


Figure 2

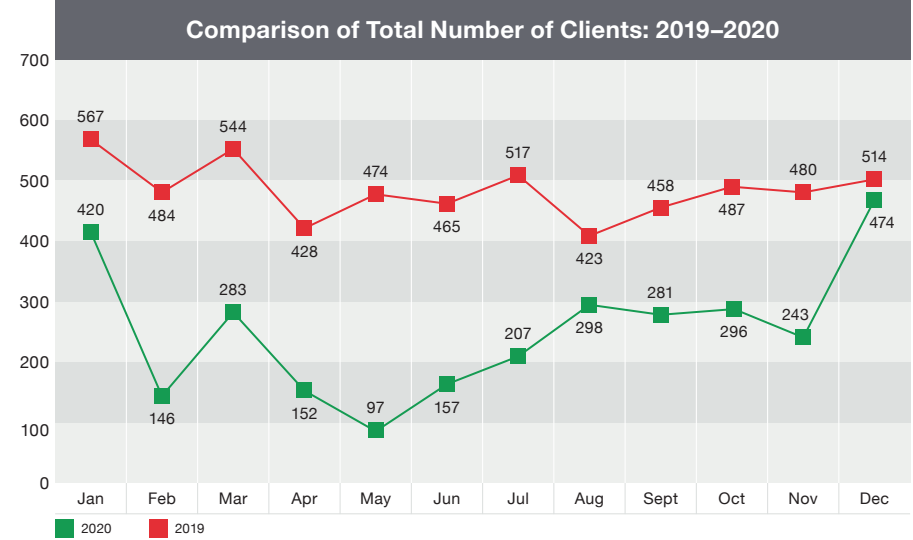


Figure 3

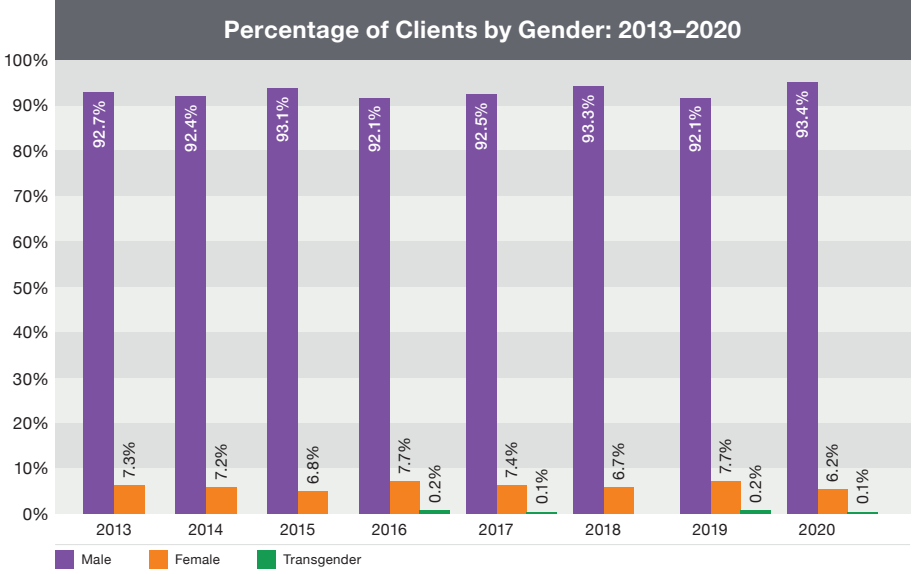


Figure 4

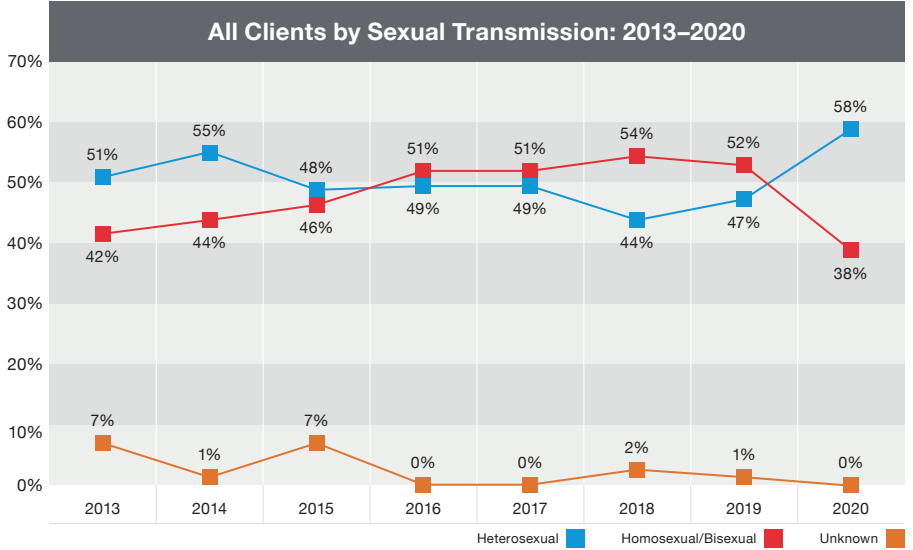
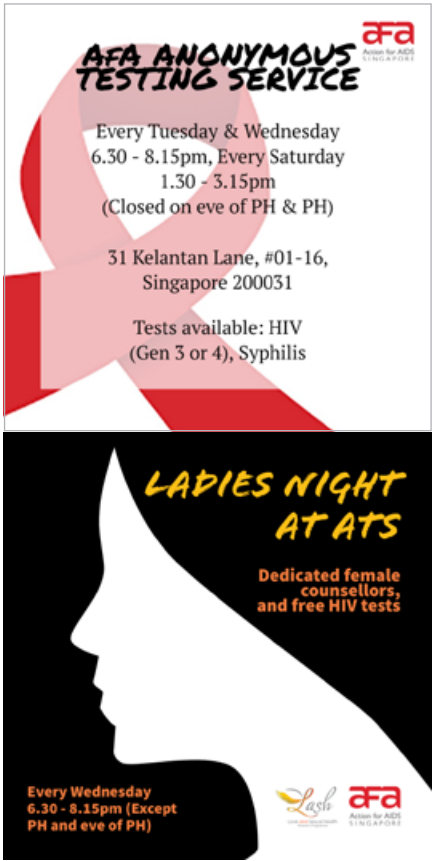
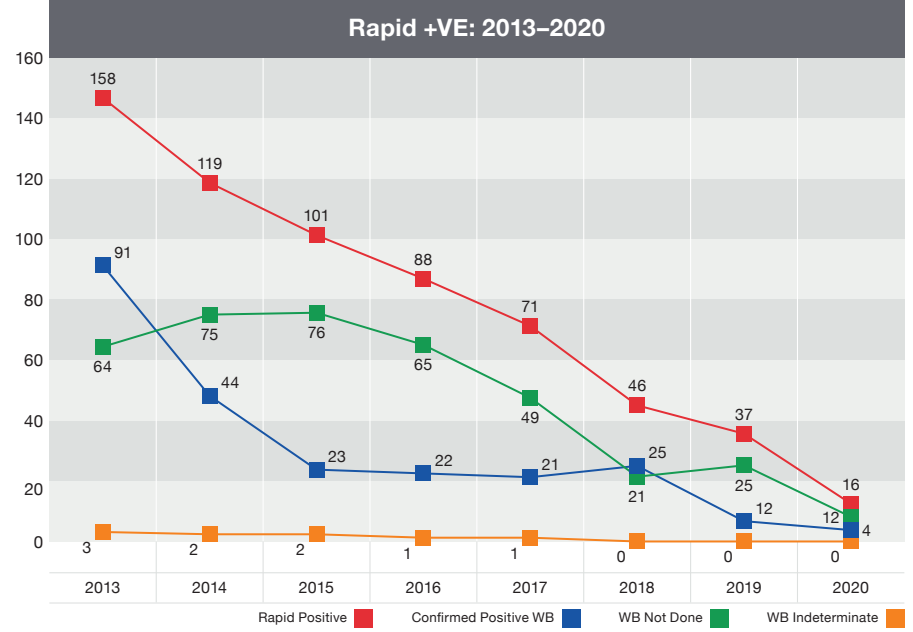


Figure 5

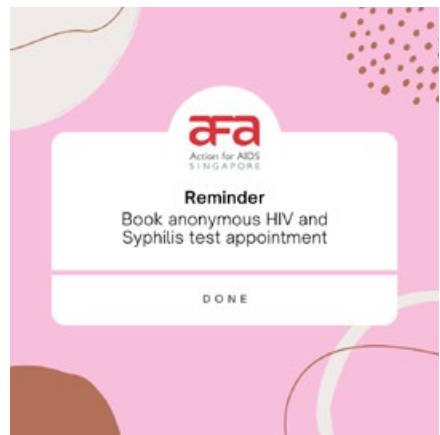
Syphilis Rapid Test Results: 2013–2020								
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
# of Syphilis Tests Done	1789	1923	2266	2615	2663	3087	2998	1524
Rapid Syphilis +ve	11	6	23	56	37	52	56	13
Rapid Syphilis +ve and Rapid HIV +ve	1	2	4	7	3	2	5	1
Positivity (Syphilis)	0.6	0.3	1.0	2.1	1.39	1.68	1.87	0.85

*Syphilis test was introduced in 2006

Figure 6



An essential part of post-test counselling is to address the concerns of newly diagnosed Singaporeans regarding receiving treatment at a local hospital, including clarifying common misconceptions about the implications of their diagnoses on their jobs. The pandemic has strengthened the practicality of being treated locally as travel restrictions and disrupted logistics pose barriers to treatment overseas.



Moving Forward

The pandemic has not only expedited our digitalization plans but has allowed us to re-assess our support for people living with HIV beyond testing and linkage to treatment. We recognize the gaps in our current services especially in relation to follow-up and aftercare for newly diagnosed patients. Towards this, we plan to extend our counselling service to people who have started ART treatment and aim to help them navigate complex issues related to their diagnoses.

Given the critical importance of HIV testing for both HIV prevention and treatment, we remain committed to promoting testing. Being on the frontlines of the HIV response during a pandemic we believe that rapid home testing can be a powerful tool for diagnosis during the pandemic and post-pandemic, especially among people who are not currently reached by existing testing services. We look forward to advocating and working towards making self-testing a reality in Singapore. ■

Figure 7

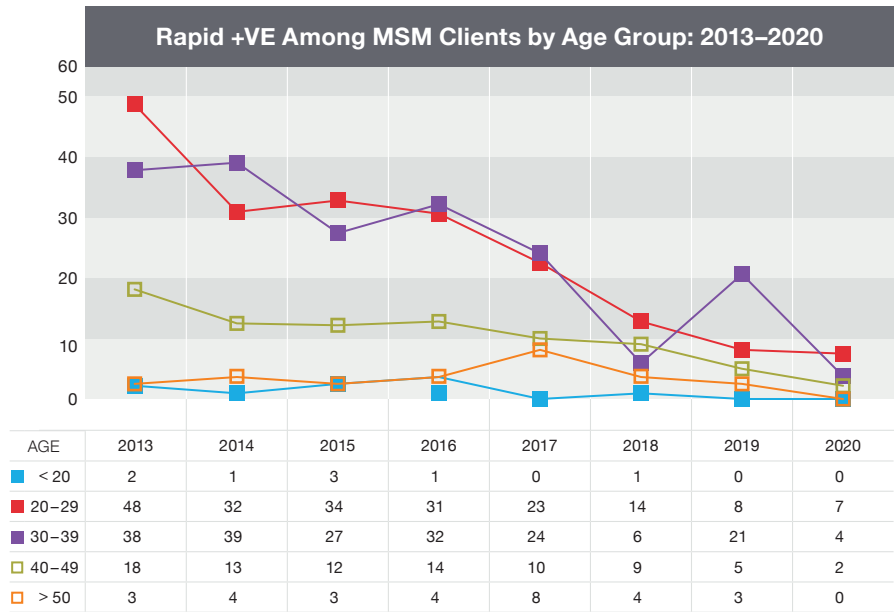


Figure 8

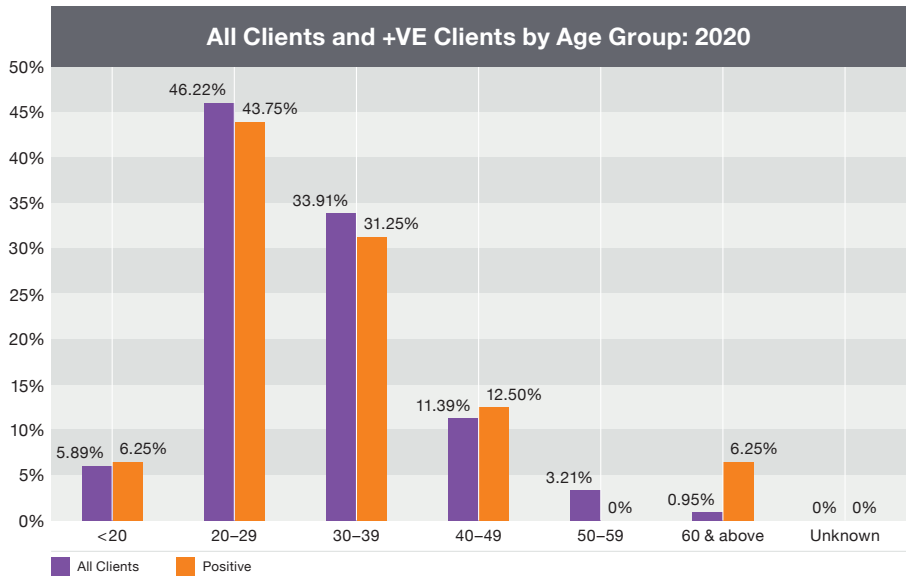


Figure 9

Linkage to Care Referrals: 2013–2020								
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
HIV Rapid Test +VE	158	119	101	88	71	46	37	16
Western Blot Positive	64	73	76	65	49	23	25	12
Linkage to care via AFA	47	43	40	49	37	16	12	11
Linkage to Care via Self-arrangement	5	3	12	12	1	1	5	0
Linkage to Care Overseas	12	21	14	2	8	6	8	1
Successful Linkage to Care	82.8%	91.7%	86.8%	97%	93.9%	100%	100%	100%

Mobile Testing Service

By Ong Hui Min



ONG HUIMIN
Executive,
Mobile Testing Service

The Mobile Testing Service (MTS) received 1058 clients in 2020, as compared to 1673 in 2019 (Fig. 1 and 1A). The decrease in the number of clients was due to the COVID-19 pandemic as we temporarily had to halt the service during the Circuit Breaker. Given the situation and due to the suspension of service, it took some time for the number of clients to return to normal. Several changes were made to ensure that the service adhered to safe management principles outlined by the government. These included safe distancing measures through a queue number system, among others. Outreach activities such as sex workers outreach and university outreach were conducted as well. Nevertheless, every case client, volunteer and staff safety were prioritised ensuring all regulations and precautions were followed.

Figure 1

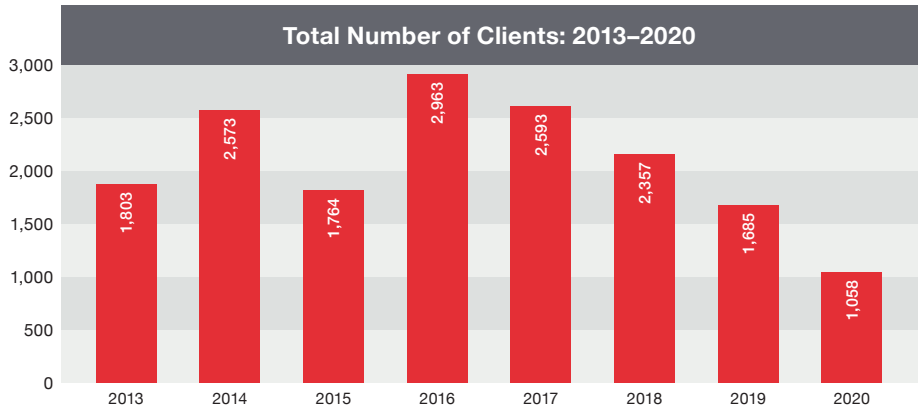
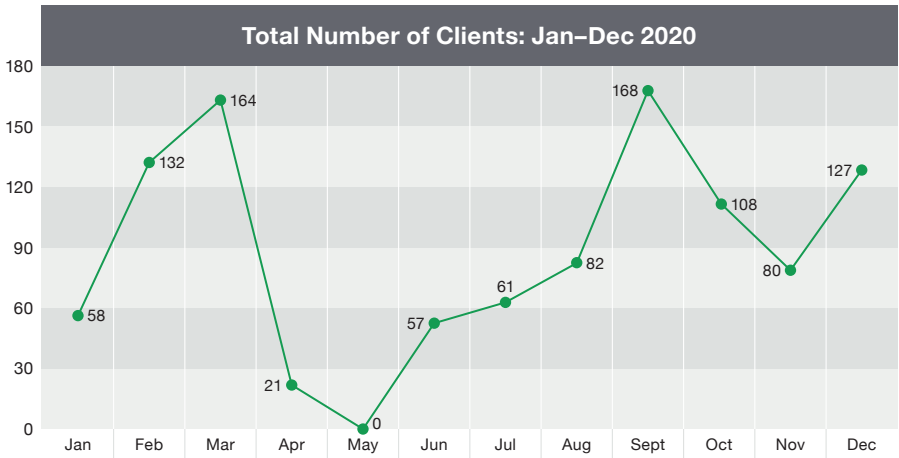


Figure 1A

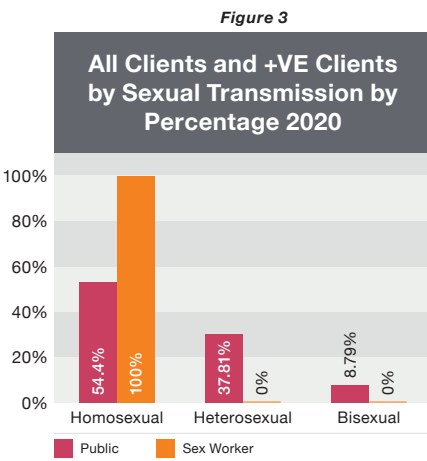
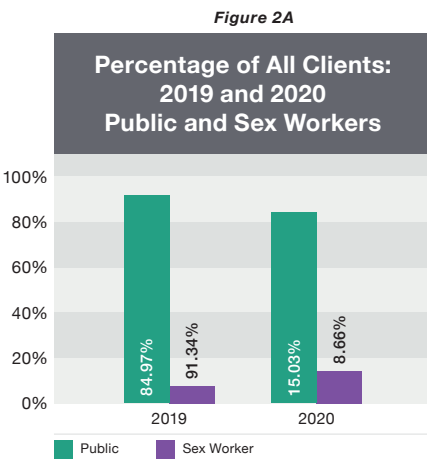
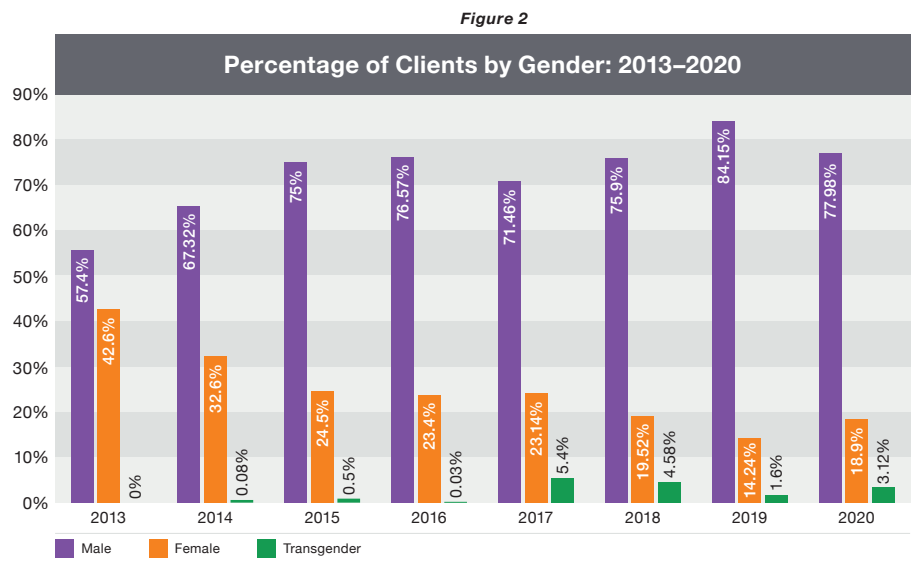


The number of male clients testing continued to outnumber female clients as in previous years with 77.98% being male clients and 18.90% being female clients (Fig. 2). To address this issue, MTS will look at ways to make testing more accessible to women and encourage them to do testing, by having female counsellors on site. A point to note regarding the low rate of female clients is the fact that female clients feel more inclined to test at the ATS due to the Ladies' Night scheme every Wednesday—where there are dedicated female counsellors on duty.

53.4% of the clients that tested self-identified as homosexual, 37.8% as heterosexual, and 8.79% as bisexual clients. This shows that most of the clients coming to get tested are still homosexual clients. However, the percentage of heterosexual clients coming to get tested is increasing gradually from last year, likely due to the HSO outreach as well as the provision of free testing for heterosexual clients.

The number of Syphilis tests done at MTS has consistently increased each year, indicating that the effort of encouraging Syphilis testing is showing progress. In 2020, the Syphilis testing increased by 11.58% compared to 2019.

As in previous years, in 2020 MTS was invited to do anonymous HIV testing in Yale-NUS. A total of 158 young adults tested for HIV. However, we were only able to do the outreach in October, in contrast to the usual months of March and October. In 2020, we failed to do outreach in SMU due to the COVID-19 restrictions on campus. We hope that despite COVID-19, such collaborations can be continued in the future regularly by taking proper precautions.



MTS continued the collaboration with Project X to provide free HIV and Syphilis testing for sex workers in 2020. We reached out to 159 sex workers, compared to 146 in 2019 (Fig. 2A). We hope to continue reaching out to more sex workers due to their higher risk of HIV and Syphilis.

HIV-positivity Statistics

In 2020, there were 6 reactive results as compared to 7 in 2019. The number of reactive results continued to decrease. However, substantially fewer tests were done in 2020 compared to 2019 as highlighted above. 83% of the cases were successfully linked to treatment. All the 6 reactive cases, self-identified as MSM (Fig. 3). Majority were in the age range of 20–29 years with 1 case being 50–59 years (Fig. 4). All of those who tested positive identified as MSM making it imperative to reach out to this group with HIV information and services (Fig. 5). A total of 758 Singapore/PR came for testing in 2020, comprising 71.64% of all clients (Fig. 6).

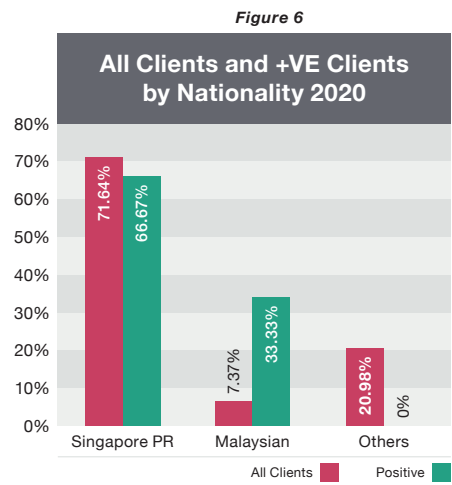
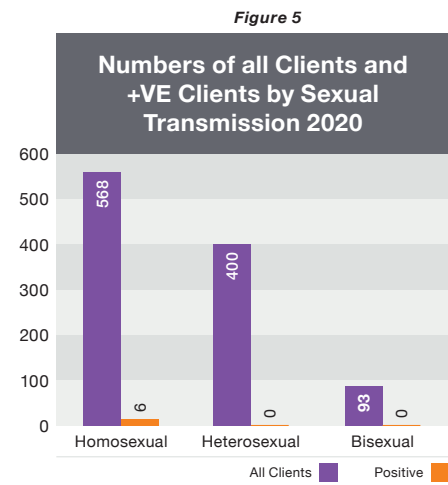
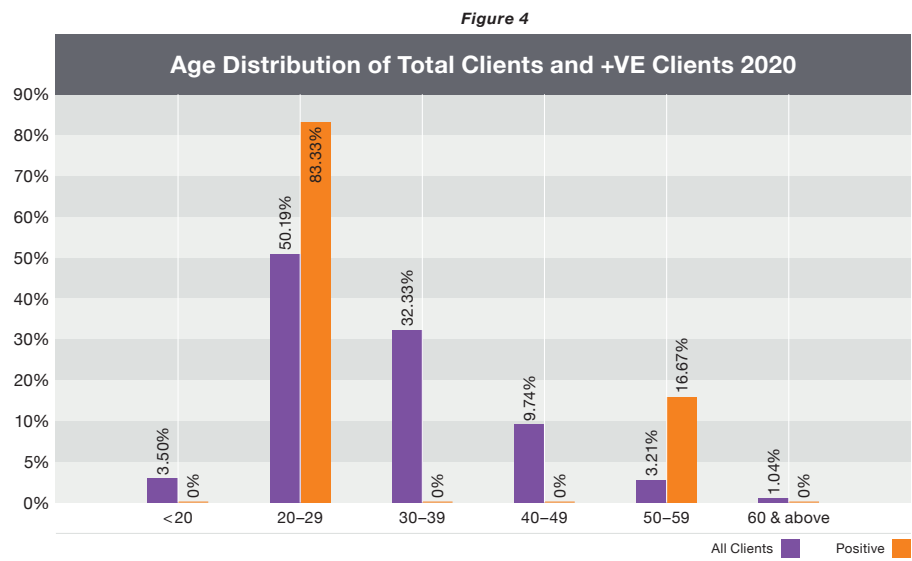


Figure 8

Syphilis Rapid Test Results: 2013–2020								
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number of Syphilis Test Done	0	422	367	613	337	374	596	665
Rapid Syphilis +VE	0	14	14	24	4	5	3	14
Positivity (Syphilis)	0	3.3	3.8	3.9	1.19	1.34	0.50	2.11

Figure 9

MTS Linkage to Care: 2013–2020								
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
HIV Rapid Test +VE	14	22	15	19	20*	8	7	6
Western Blot Positive	13	10	14	10	9	2	6	4
Linkage to care via AFA	2	6	9	8	5	1	5	3
Linkage to Care via Self-arrangement	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	2
Linkage to Care Overseas	7	3	4	1	11	4	1	0
Successful Linkage to Care	64.28%	40.91%	86.67%	47.37%	85%	87.5%	85.71%	83.33%



Syphilis Testing

There was an 11.58% increase in Syphilis testing in 2020 compared to 2019 with the number of tests that were done increasing from 596 to 665 clients. This shows that our outreach efforts promoting information and testing for STIs has been successful and must continue. There is also an increase in positivity for Syphilis, from 0.50% to 2.11% (Fig. 8).

Figure 7

Tests Results 2020		
	HIV	Syphilis
Total	1048	665
Positive	6	14
%	0.375%	2.105%

Mobile Testing Service Sites

All MTS sites are based on client feedback and are in an accessible area close to an MRT station where the van is deployed to facilitate HIV testing on a regular basis. However, it is also important to think of clients who prefer secluded locations, hence there are locations like Jurong Central Park and Bukit Gombak. MTS is still open to new suggestions of new sites to provide clients with a convenient and discreet service. The MTS van will continue to break the barriers to testing and be available on-site where feasible to promote the uptake of HIV testing especially among high-risk persons. ■

Coordinated Care

By Anwar Hashim and Ben Leong

2020 was a very challenging year globally due to COVID-19. Nevertheless, a total amount of \$39,550 of direct financial assistance was dispensed to assist 73 Persons living with HIV (PLHIV) and their family members to offset the cost of financing their medication.

The bulk of the assistance was dispensed under the Care for Family Fund which continued to receive applications from PLHIV and family members, and dispensed a total of \$20,800 to 24 applicants. There was no application for the HIV+ Pregnant Mothers programme.

The Paddy Chew Patient Welfare Fund continued to remain active, with a total of \$15,150 being given to applicants from support groups. Eligibility for the fund hinges on the commitment of members to participate in HIV prevention and support activities. A total of 609 Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV (GIPA) hours were clocked by members through support group participation as well as outreach activities.

In 2020, a total of \$3,600 was dispensed to 18 persons under the Linkage to Care subsidy to subsidise the initial cost of treatment at local hospitals for those newly diagnosed with HIV.

Figure 1

Amount Dispensed						
Funds Type	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Paddy Chew Patient Welfare	\$43,200	\$46,950	\$20,861.35	\$16,938.10	\$21,400	\$15,150
Prison Medication	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
HIV+ Pregnant Mothers	\$1,700	\$775	\$0	\$0	\$450.00	\$0
Care for Family	\$10,600	\$19,600	\$14,800	\$29,600	\$32,500	\$20,800
Linkage to Care	\$8,172.16	\$12,348.32	\$10,480.21	\$6,834.90	\$5,805.56	\$3,600
Total	\$63,672.16	\$79,673.32	\$46,141.56	\$53,373	\$60,155.56	\$39,550

Revive Empowerment Programme

In 2020, 18 participants attended REVIVE, an empowerment programme that aims to provide emotional and other support to PLHIVs as they come to terms with issues related to their HIV status by connecting them to a peer network. The sessions are conducted over 4 weeks and 12 months of support are extended to them through a closed group chat. 2 of the participants were referred through Afa's testing sites while 15 were from referrals from medical social workers and walk-ins.



ANWAR HASHIM
Senior Manager,
Coordinated Care, Volunteer
and Donor Management



BEN LEONG
Senior Coordinator,
Coordinated Care, Volunteer
and Donor Management

Figure 2

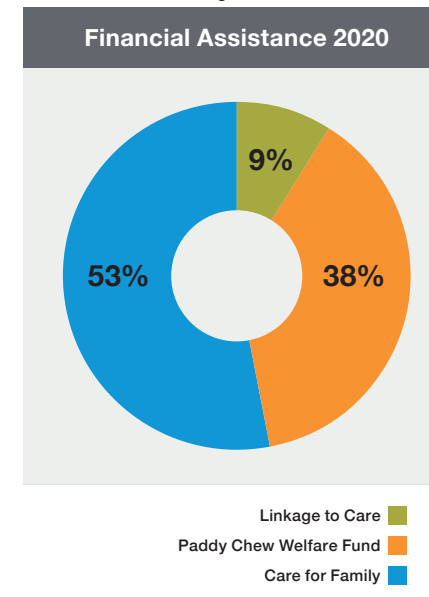
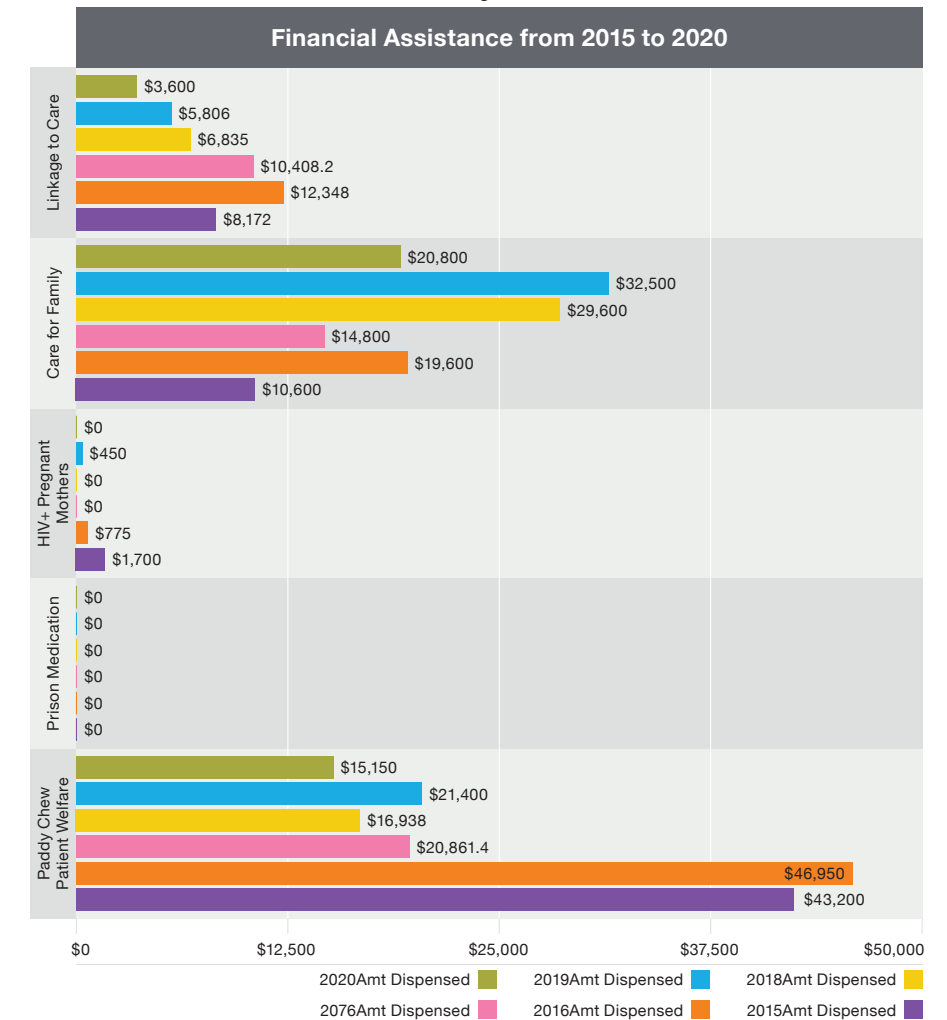


Figure 3



What Is GIPA?

The Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV (GIPA) is a guiding principle that was formally adopted at the Paris AIDS Summit in 1994. It aims to realize the rights and responsibilities of people living with HIV, including their right to self-determination and participation in decision-making processes that affect their lives. In these efforts, GIPA also aims to enhance the quality and effectiveness of the AIDS response and is critical to progress and sustainability. (UNAIDS, 2007). ■



ADVOCATE

Since its inception, AfA has been a visible advocate for the fair treatment of persons living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV).

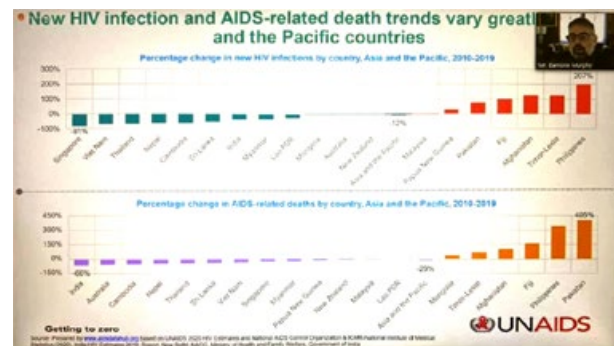
Today, we continue our efforts to seek access to affordable treatment for all PLHIV, and sit on the National HIV/AIDS committee as a Civil Society Organisation (CSO) representative.

Singapore AIDS Conference 2020

By Sumita Banerjee

A biennial meeting dedicated to all aspects of HIV; the Singapore AIDS Conference (SAC) celebrated its 12th year in 2020. The conference provides a platform where health care professionals, researchers, public health officials, community partners, policy makers, PLHIV, key populations and affected communities can come together to take stock of the situation and share new knowledge and information that can stop the spread of HIV, address HIV-related stigma and discrimination, and improve care and support for PLHIV.

The 12th SAC aimed to build on the momentum of the previous conference to invigorate and energise our programmes to end HIV in Singapore. The theme of the conference was *HIV and STIs in the Time of COVID-19* and aimed to highlight the enormous impact that COVID-19 has had on HIV and STIs, and how our plans to prevent and end HIV may have changed as a result.



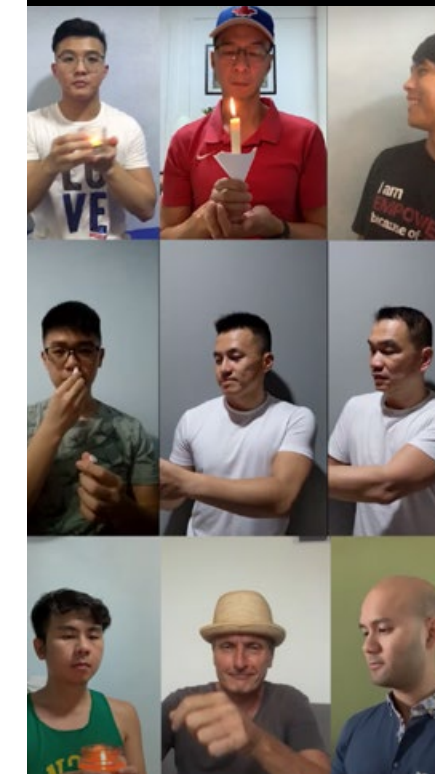
For the first time this year, the conference was held virtually by Zoom over two Saturday afternoons on 28th November and 5th December and used a single-track format with 4 distinguished plenary speakers. The first plenary speaker on Day 1 was Mr Eamon Murphy, Regional Director, Asia Pacific for UNAIDS who presented on *‘Overcoming the impact of COVID-19 on HIV and STI programmes in Asia and the Pacific’*. The plenary talk was followed by a session on Overcoming the Impact of HIV and STI in Singapore with presentations from various national stakeholders followed by a round of Q&A. The second plenary speaker was A/Prof Jason Ong, from the Melbourne Sexual Health Centre who spoke on the *‘Progress in Ending HIV in the Asia Pacific’* which was followed by panel presentations on *‘Can We End HIV in Singapore?—Update and Progress on The Community Blueprint to End HIV in Singapore’*.

Day 2 of the conference began with a plenary talk by Prof. Andrew Grulich from the Kirby Institute, UNSW Sydney on *‘PrEP Implementation and Scale up in Australia’*, followed by panel presentations on PrEP implementation and scale up in Singapore with an additional presentation from Ms. Rena Janamnuysook from the Thai Red Cross who shared the experience in PrEP scale up and testing for transgender women in Thailand. The final plenary speaker was Prof Sharon Lewin from the Doherty Institute, Australia who spoke on *Towards a cure for HIV: Advances and Pathways to the clinic*. Her talk was followed by panel presentations on HIV treatment and access to care in Singapore.

The conference was attended by 252 persons on Day 1 and 276 persons on Day 2. A video is available online, and has attracted over 5000 views as of 31st May 2021:
<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8Ej-EUJ4MRn4N3nKYjQGN4raHuhFjgPe>

The 12th SAC also recognized the contributions of 3 individuals who were awarded the Red Ribbon Award for their dedication and commitment to the HIV response in Singapore. These include 2 longtime staff members of AfA, namely Mr. Terry Lim and Mr. Anwar Hashim, and Prof. Paul Tambyah, Senior Consultant at the National University Hospital, Singapore and AfA Board member. ■

Singapore AIDS Candlelight Memorial



2020 was the fourth year that we celebrated the AIDS Candlelight Memorial digitally. The Candlelight memorial continues to be the world's oldest and largest grassroots mobilization campaign for International HIV awareness in the world, since 1983. The International AIDS Candlelight Memorial takes place every third Sunday in May and is led by a coalition of some 1,200 community organizations in 115 countries.

With the advances in HIV management and treatment over the last decade, its purpose has evolved. Today, the memorial serves as an important event to remind people that HIV is still a serious issue and the fight against HIV and AIDS must continue.

The Singapore AIDS Candlelight Memorial provides opportunities such as:

- ♦ To commemorate loved ones who have lost their lives to HIV
- ♦ To show solidarity with people living with HIV
- ♦ To raise awareness of HIV within society
- ♦ To reduce HIV-related stigma and discrimination
- ♦ To reduce stigma and discrimination against key populations, including men who have sex with men, people who use drugs, sex workers and young people.

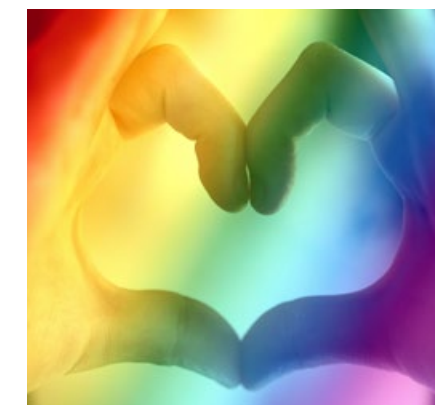
This year's theme was "Love, Hope and Perseverance".

We have been marking this event since 1988 where the memorial continues to be a place where loved ones find closure for those who have passed away due to HIV or related illnesses.

Today, the memorial is also about those who continue to live, and it is important that we continue to support People Living with HIV. Unfortunately, HIV related stigma remains pervasive, and it strongly affects the quality of life that all PLHIVs must have access to. To address this, AfA along with its volunteers, staff and supporters launched a video marking hope and love.

The video has gained 718 views to date, and can be found here:
<https://youtu.be/l4POhbDXYNw>

Special thanks to Andra Day for her song, Rise Up that accompanies the video. ■



Addressing HIV Related Stigma and Discrimination

Following the 2019 data leak, AfA outlined strategies to end stigma and discrimination in the *HIV Community Blueprint Towards Ending HIV and AIDS in Singapore by 2030*. Stigma and discrimination is recognised as key barriers to accessing HIV services.

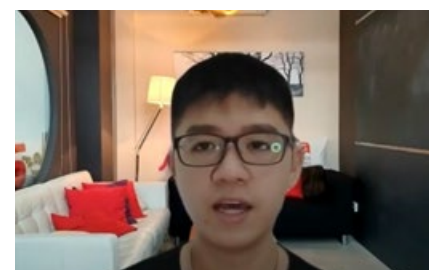
In 2020, AfA had planned to implement some of these strategies and activities. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, these activities were either put on hold or had to be brought online. Nevertheless, AfA with support from a corporate partner, successfully developed the content for a portal on Living well with HIV, debunking some common myths associated with persons living with HIV and providing guidance on improving the quality of life for PLHIVs. The portal is hosted on the AfA website and is a living piece of work where information will continue to be expanded.

Given that healthcare providers may not have the necessary training or understanding of HIV related stigma, AfA planned to conduct a series of trainings for different segments of healthcare providers offering HIV testing and/or treatment. However, due to COVID-19, many healthcare providers were unable to commit their time to attend the workshops. Due to the poor response, AfA combined the planned workshops into a single webinar. The webinar included first-hand experiences of a PLHIV, understanding and recognizing HIV related stigma and the ensuing discrimination and addressing stigma and discrimination in the healthcare setting. Dr Wong Chen Seong from the National Centre of Infectious Diseases was the invited external speaker and spoke on the impact of S&D on accessing treatment and adherence and what healthcare providers can do to minimize stigma within healthcare settings. Though 56 healthcare providers had registered for the webinar, it was attended by 28 participants.

Additionally, two AfA staff who are openly living with HIV gave 14 online and face to face talks on living with HIV, stigma and discrimination and its impact on quality of life as well as the importance of testing early and normalizing HIV. These included talks at the National University of Singapore and a webinar for Singapore Medical Students Association. ■



World AIDS Day



Like every year, AfA commemorated World AIDS Day on 1 December 2020 by raising awareness on HIV infection and AIDS and remembering those who have passed on due to the disease. This year it was particularly poignant as our remembrance and celebration of the biomedical advances in HIV was brought online in the face of another global pandemic.

AfA staff along with its volunteers developed a short video which was posted on all its social media platforms to break the stigma and silence surrounding HIV and to promote empathy and support for persons living with HIV.



The video clip can be viewed through this link: <https://youtu.be/g5ulsymOY98>

On World AIDS Day, Prime Magazine invited AfA to contribute an article on the history of HIV globally and in Singapore. The

article highlighted the advocacy achievements made through advocates and persons living with HIV as well as the tremendous biomedical advances that need to be celebrated. It also highlighted that there has never been a more opportune time to end HIV and with all the tools that are available ending HIV is now within our reach; but it will require effort, collaboration and commitment from multiple stakeholders.

The article can be read here: <https://afa.org.sg/portfolio-item/a-momentous-time-to-end-hiv-recounting-the-progress-in-managing-hiv-and-aids-on-world-aids-day/>

Further, AfA collaborated with various corporate partners by giving talks to their staff and raising awareness on HIV and debunking myths regarding the condition and its transmission. These included a talk for employees of Standard Chartered Bank at their 'Commemorating World Aids Day Virtual Presentation' event. AfA presented an overview of HIV trends in Singapore and addressed how HIV stigma and discrimination continue to be a problem in our fight to end HIV and the community blueprint to end HIV by 2030.

To commemorate World Aids Day 2020, Durex condoms ran a "Buy 1, Donate 1" campaign for the month of December where they promised to donate 1 condom for every condom sold in Singapore. Through the campaign, Durex donated 10,000 condoms to AfA which were distributed at AfA's anonymous and mobile testing services. ■

Fundraising Efforts

By Anwar Hashim and Ben Leong

In 2020 our highly anticipated 2020 LOVE gala dinner was postponed, delayed, and finally cancelled due to the COVID-19 situation. Originally scheduled for 6 March 2020, it was first postponed to 28 August 2020, then again to the following year on 6 March 2021. Finally, during February 2021, after considering the ongoing pandemic situation, the event's organising committee made the decision to cancel the gala dinner altogether.

Nevertheless, our sponsors remained supportive of our mission throughout the multiple event changes and cancellation. A total of \$435,300 was raised for the event. To show our gratitude for their support, sponsored items originally intended as the event's door gifts were personally hand-delivered to the attendees of the gala dinner. Volunteers and staff gathered to hand-pack the items into gift boxes and send them out to their recipients. 380 boxes were packed and delivered to over 55 addresses. While it is regrettable that we could not hold the gala dinner as planned, we are immensely grateful for the generosity and understanding of our donors. We also would like to thank our very helpful volunteers for their tireless effort to pack and deliver the door gifts, truly it was a labour of love.



top:
Prof. Roy Chan with
Mr. Howie Leong

bottom:
Mr. Wei Tan with
Prof. Roy Chan

Prof. Roy Chan with
Ms. Deanna Wong

Prof. Roy Chan with
Mr. Nicholas Koh

Just like for many other programmes, the COVID-19 outbreak made 2020 a challenging year for fundraising, with restrictions in place preventing the organising of mass gatherings or fundraising events. Fortunately, we were able to continue our fundraising efforts through online donation portals. With the resumption of our clinical services, donation boxes returned to the testing venues. People generously contributed by donating online or through the purchase of red ribbons to commemorate World AIDS Day. Through these means, financial contributions from the public were able to continue amidst the pandemic situation.

In a challenging year with unprecedented disruptions to programmes and fundraising activities, the steadfast support of generous contributors helped keep AfA on track with the mission to achieve zero new infections, zero deaths, and zero stigma and discrimination.

AfA Honours Long-term Supporters - Red Ribbon Awards 2021

Red Ribbon Awards (RRA) were presented at private events on the 24 and 26 of March 2021 to honour and acknowledge the dedication of long-term supporters of AfA.

Trustees of the AfA Endowment Fund (EF) are responsible for managing the EF that was set up in 2003. They have been active in raising funds for the EF as well as for AfA. In recognition of their extraordinary service and dedication to our ideals RRA were presented to -

- ♦ Mr. Nicholas Chan (18 years on the Board of Trustees)
- ♦ Mrs. E-len Fu (10 years on the Board of Trustees)
- ♦ Ms. Jacqui Khoo (18 years on the Board of Trustees)
- ♦ Mr. Howie Leong (18 years on the Board of Trustees)
- ♦ Mr. Goh Eck Meng (18 years on the Board of Trustees)

Fund-raising requires a dedicated team of experienced and well-connected individuals, and we are very fortunate to have such a team.

In recognition of their generous commitment of time, support, and inspiration, RRA were presented to:

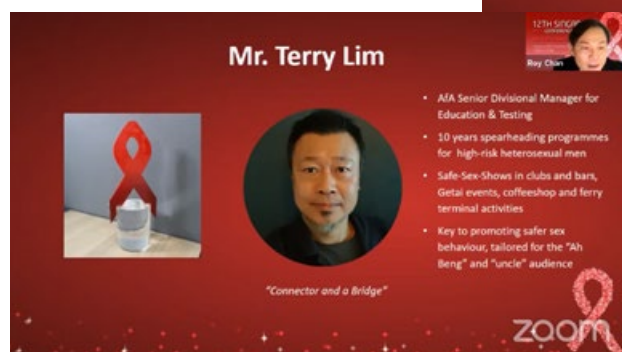
- ♦ Ms. Deanna Wong (more than 20 years)
- ♦ Mr. Wei Tan (12 years)
- ♦ Mr. Nicholas Koh (12 years)



top:
Prof. Roy Chan with
Mrs. E-len Fu

left:
Mr. Nicholas Chan with
Prof. Roy Chan

right:
Prof. Roy Chan with
Ms. Jacqui Khoo



The Red Ribbon Awards are presented to individuals, groups and organisations who have over the years made significant contributions our efforts to prevent the spread of HIV, improve care and support, combat stigma and discrimination and advocate for equitable treatment of PLHIV.

Volunteering With AfA

By Anwar Hashim and Ben Leong

Like many other social service agencies across Singapore, the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020 presented challenges to AfA's volunteer services. As the pandemic unfolded, nation-wide restrictions on mass gatherings took place, causing our usual on-site volunteer training events to be put on hold. It became clear that to maintain continuity of volunteer recruitment, we had to make adjustments to our programmes.

In response, we adapted our training sessions and conducted them online. From the safety of their homes, volunteers were introduced to AfA and underwent volunteer training. Through our adapted training arrangement, consisting of 10 Online Volunteer Induction Programmes and 6 Sexual Health 101 Online Workshops, we were able to maintain a steady flow of trainees, with a total of 284 volunteers attending our training sessions.

Through our online induction sessions, 155 participants were introduced to the mission, objectives, history, and volunteer opportunities at AfA. To cultivate relevant skills, they also engaged in interactive activities and discussions with other attendees. 129 participants attended the follow-up Sexual Health 101 Online Workshops, where experts provided them with information on HIV/AIDS, STDs, counselling, and other topics relevant to our mission. After training, new volunteers could specify roles that they were interested in and to undergo further training in those areas.

Even when going digital, AfA continued to conduct the induction programme every 10 weeks to yield a steady influx of new volunteers. This helps to ensure that we have at least 20% of our volunteer pool actively volunteering over 12 months.

In the face of COVID-19 challenges, our volunteers kept their spirits up and their community spirit did not waver. Although clinical services and volunteer programs had to be heavily reduced in 2020, our volunteers continued to enthusiastically offer their support, time, skills, and commitment. Through initiatives such as Singapore AIDS Candlelight Memorial and World AIDS Day, new methods of volunteering through digital means were also explored. In 2019, they clocked a total of 1,008 manhours through their various activities.

The unwavering support from old and new volunteers alike were steady pillars of strength, allowing us to stay anchored through whatever storms and challenges that came. It was their dedication that kept us steadfast in our mission, breathing life into all our programmes and undertakings. ■

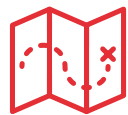
In 2020...



155
new volunteers



3,204
man-hours



Induction every
6 weeks



Governance

The AfA Board's role is to provide strategic direction and oversight of AfA's programmes and objectives and to steer it towards fulfilling its vision and mission through good governance.

As part of its role, the following matters require Board's approval

- ♦ Approve budget for the financial year and monitor expenditure against budget.
- ♦ Review and approve quarterly financial statements.
- ♦ Regularly monitor the progress of the charity's programmes.

Term Limit of Board

The following Board members have served more than 10 consecutive years:

Name	Reason
Prof. Roy Chan	He has significant local and international experience, extensive technical knowledge and extensive connections with stakeholders, policy makers and funders.
Prof. Paul Ananth Tambyah	He is a senior ID physician in NUH. He brings to the Exco his invaluable experience in HIV care as well as advocacy and governance.
A/Prof. Lee Cheng Chuan	He brings to the Exco his knowledge as an ID physician at TTSH with many years of experience in HIV care programmes including overseeing the Patient Care Centre.
Mr. Thomas Ng	He is a lawyer with long-standing experience in laws and policies that affect persons living with HIV. It is critical to have someone with that knowledge who can support and provide legal advice to our beneficiaries, as well as legal advice to AfA.
Ms. Dawn Mok	Dawn Mok is a champion of staff welfare and well-being. She is a valuable member of the HR committee as she knows and understands staff very well. She plays an important role in interpersonal relations.

BOARD MEETINGS AND ATTENDANCE: A total of four Board meetings and one AGM were held during the financial year. The following sets out the individual Board member’s attendance at the meetings:

Name	Position On Board	ATTENDANCE (TOTAL 4 Board Meeting + AGM)
ROY CHAN	President	4/4 + AGM
DAVID LYE	Vice President	2/4+ AGM
TERENCE NG	Treasurer	3/4+ AGM
CHERLY YEO	Hon. Secretary	4/4 + AGM
THOMAS NG	Hon. Asst. Secretary	4/4 + AGM
LEE CHENG CHUAN	Member	3/4 + AGM
DAWN MOK	Member	2/4+ AGM
PAUL ANANTH TAMBYAH	Member	4/4+ AGM
BENEDICT THAMBIAH	Member	3/4 + AGM
WONG CHEN SEONG	Member	4/4+ AGM
BENSON YEO	Member	4/4+ AGM
SAXONE WOON	Member	4/4+ AGM

DISCLOSURE OF REMUNERATION AND BENEFITS RECEIVED BY BOARD MEMBERS: No Board members were remunerated for their Board services in the financial year.

DISCLOSURE OF REMUNERATION OF PAID STAFF: Only one staff was paid over \$100,000 in FY20. None of the staff (including the above) serve in the Board of the charity. The charity has no paid staff, who are close members of the family of the Executive Head or Board members.

Conflict of Interest Policy

All Board members and staff are required to comply with AfA’s conflict of interest policy. The Board has put in place documented procedures for Board members and staff to declare actual or potential conflicts of interests on a regular and need-to basis. Board members also abstain and do not participate in decision-making on matters where they have a conflict of interest.

Whistle Blowing Policy

AfA has in place, a whistle-blowing policy to address concerns about possible wrongdoing or improprieties in financial or other matters within the charity.

Reserves Policy

See Audited Financial Statements Section ■

Help Us Reach More



Become an Advocate

Volunteers are one of the most important resources for our organisation. They come from all walks of life and are of diverse nationalities.

To learn more about volunteering or to sign up, please visit our website at: www.afa.org.sg/getinvolved

You are our best answer to slow down the spread of HIV.



Donate

Only with your wholehearted support, we are able to continue our aim of achieving the three Zeros.

Donation via Credit/Debit card or SGGives: please visit our website at www.afa.org.sg/donate

Cheque donations: Kindly issue a crossed cheque payable to "Action for AIDS Singapore" and mail to our address.

Cash donations: If you would like to make a cash donation, please drop by our office.

All donations above \$50 are tax deductible. Please include your NRIC/ FIN/RVB, mobile number, company, or your full name when making a donation.



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instagram.com/afa.singapore
twitter.com/afa_singapore
Name of Organisation
Action For AIDS (Singapore)
UEN: S88SS0126A
IPC No: HEF0006/G
Date of Charity Registration:
7 October 1994

LOVE
is our raison d'être

ACTION
makes things happen

CHANGE
will realise our vision to see
the end of HIV in Singapore

afa
Action for AIDS
SINGAPORE