

Welcome to the Apr/May 2007 Issue of the Voice!

The Voice is spotting a new look! From Apr/May 2007 onwards, James Foong our MSM Programme Coordinator will be taking over the work for 'The Voice'. We will be sending the newsletter directly to your email box every two months.

Please feel free to give us your feedback on any issue related to Action for AIDS, HIV/AIDS in Singapore or if there is something you would like to get off your chest. Please email us @ info@afa.org.sg We would like to extend our gratitude to all those who have responded enthusiastically with your suggestions and 'feedback'. Please keep them coming.



New Action for AIDS Website (<http://www.afa.org.sg>)

Action for AIDS (AfA), Singapore is moving ahead with many exciting changes in place. First visible change is our website.

On the 17th of March, our President – A/Prof Roy Chan with the Midas touch of his finger, officially launched the new [website](http://www.afa.org.sg). With the 'facelift' and added new features on the website, we hope we can help raise the awareness of HIV/AIDS & STDs further and serve all friends and member of public better. We would also like to thank our web designer volunteer - Donovan – who has put in tremendous hours and hard work to complete the website.

Surf on to our new website and... Yes, feedbacks are welcome!

Candlelight Memorial 2007 - Leading the World Without Aids

This is an annual international event held to remember those who have died from AIDS. The Memorial provides an opportunity to come to terms with death and AIDS. It has become a powerful symbol of the presence of AIDS in Singapore, and a timely reminder for the community & Singaporeans at large to renew its commitment to fight AIDS discrimination. Your presence at this important event will definitely lend us the much needed weight in the fight against AIDS discrimination & to remember those who pass on.



- **Event Theme: "Leading The Way To A World Without AIDS"**
- **Venue: SMU Conference Hall, Level 2, School of Accountancy, School of Law, 60 Stamford Road, Singapore 178900 (Building next to Fort Canning Tunnel)**
- **Date: 20 May 2007, Sunday**
- **Time: 7:00pm**

Club-Genesis – a leap ahead in positive prevention



[Club Genesis \(CG\)](#) recently assisted Health Promotion Board (HPB) to produce a HIV prevention video for youths. HIV positive members of CG gave heart warming interviews of their infection and challenges being HIV positive along with a prevention message for youth in Singapore today. This coordinated effort between HIV positive individuals and HPB is a positive step to include HIV positive people in prevention efforts.



New Youth Programme Coordinator onboard!

We would like to welcome Ms Indulekshmi onboard as our new youth coordinator. Just a short intro about her, Indu is a out-and-about queer activist in her spare time, having founded [Sayoni](#) and helped found [Plume](#).

She volunteers at AFA to make a difference and support an otherwise socially-stigmatised cause. She hopes to change the way people perceive and deal with sex and sexuality, when it comes to the youth. Currently, she has recruited more than 20 youths for her programme and we look forward to seeing more of her work during this year.

Additionally, the YOP Blog is up with a funky new look and image! Please visit the newly launched Youth Blog @ AFA: www.hivyouthprog.wordpress.com

Volunteers – We Need You!

We need volunteers to join us! We need volunteers to help us fill in gaps for The Buddies Program, MSM Outreach Program, High Risk Heterosexual Male Outreach Program. If you know someone who is keen to volunteer, please get them to get in touch with us at 62540212 or log-on to our website www.afa.org.sg

Regional News & Beyond

Speech By Mr Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister, At The World Health Day, 2 April 2007, 3.00 Pm At Suntec Convention Centre (Excerpt)

Introduction

1. I am happy to join you this afternoon as we celebrate the World Health Day here in Singapore.
2. Let me first congratulate Dr Margaret Chan on her election as the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO). Dr Chan has long ties with Singapore, having done her postgraduate studies here. Under her leadership, I have every confidence that the WHO will continue to play a pivotal role in the global health arena.

Changing Global Health Landscape And Public Health Challenges

3. The theme of this year’s World Health Day, “International Health Security”, could not have been more apt given the changing global health landscape confronting us today. Traditionally, the focus of public healthcare has been domestic, involving issues such as maternal and child health, sanitation, and diseases like tuberculosis, malaria and polio. These issues remain important in many developing countries.
4. However, public healthcare has also taken on a trans-national perspective. The advent of affordable air-travel has made national borders very permeable, and enabled outbreaks of disease to spread quickly from country to country with crippling effects. Responses to such outbreaks have also taken on a global dimension. Even as countries struggle domestically to contain a disease outbreak, they have found it essential to cooperate with one another, sharing information on ground situations and research efforts, and providing urgent assistance, equipment or technical expertise to those in need.
5. The SARS outbreak in 2003 was a stark reflection of this. We in Singapore experienced it firsthand. Not only was the public healthcare system put to the test, but our economy and society as a whole were confronted with one of their most severe challenges in recent years. Lives were unfortunately lost. International travellers, both tourists and businessmen, stayed away from Singapore. Even Singaporeans stayed home, avoiding crowded places for fear of contracting the virus. Business was badly affected and many Singaporeans found their livelihoods threatened.

6. Fortunately, the government, employers and Singaporeans rallied behind our team of courageous and dedicated healthcare professionals, and together we brought the outbreak under control. We realised early on that we could not solve the problem by ourselves. We worked closely with our regional partners on critical areas including border screening, surveillance and early notification of new suspected cases. Internationally, we were assisted by the World Health Organization and the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which despatched experts to Singapore to help us deal with the problem. We are deeply grateful to the WHO and the CDC for their help.

7. While the SARS scourge turned out to be transient, we continue to face other global health challenges.

HIV/AIDS

8. HIV/AIDS is a major concern affecting the whole world. The problem is particularly acute in Sub-Saharan Africa, where in some countries more than one-quarter of the adult population carry the HIV virus. The situation in Asia is less grave, but there is a real risk of it deteriorating if countries do not tackle the problem well. The region is already emerging as the new epicentre of the HIV epidemic. An estimated 8.6 million people are living with HIV in Asia, and there is an alarming trend of rising HIV infections in China and India, the world's two most populous countries. Within Asia, the prevalence of HIV is highest in Southeast Asia, fuelled by unprotected sex and unsafe drug injections. Beyond a certain threshold, the HIV epidemic will explode. We are not there yet, but we must act now to control and prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS before it is too late.

9. There are no quick solutions for the HIV/AIDS epidemic. It is a complex and long-term problem. We must work on multiple fronts and across regional boundaries to address it. Until a cure or vaccine is found, the key to controlling the virus is prevention and public education. We need to actively engage many segments in society, reduce the social stigma and discrimination, raise awareness of HIV/AIDS and provide care for the afflicted.

10. Singapore will occupy the Chair of the ASEAN Task Force for AIDS later this year. We will do our part to coordinate efforts in the region, and work closely with the WHO and the international community to tackle this "silent pandemic"

(Source: <http://app.sprinter.gov.sg/data/pr/20070402995.htm>)

APN+ first MSM working groups

[APN+](#) held its first MSM working group to identify and explore issues related to msm who are living with HIV in the region and develop strategic interventions on the 3-4th March. [APN+](#) held its AGM on the 6th March at Rembrant Hotel, Bangkok whereby over 40 board members elected their steering committee and treasurer from the various Asia Pacific country representatives. A 5 day toolkit test workshop was also conducted by [Aids Alliance](#) with the help of the advisors of [APN+](#) to facilitate the workshop.

Access to Kaletra

The Thai Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS ([TNP+](#)) in solidarity with: AIDS ACCESS Foundation//Thai Foundation for consumers//Thai Rural Doctors society//Thai Chronic Renal Failure Network//Thai Alternative Agriculture Network//Thai Parents Network//Thai Rural Pharmacist Society//Thai NGOs Coalition on AIDS//FTA Watch and with HIV/AIDS activists around the world call for a global day of action on Thursday, April 26th, 2007, to demand that Abbott Laboratories stop denying people affordable access to its lifesaving drugs.

On the following day, Friday April 27, activists will protest at the Abbott's Annual General Meeting for shareholders, held in Abbott Park, Illinois.

BACKGROUND: *Abbott has, for several years, refused to make its life-saving AIDS drug available and affordable to people living in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. Abbott charges several times the annual income of many for a year's supply and has dragged its feet on even registering the drug for sale in countries where profit is not high.

Now, Abbott has made a callous decision to withdrawal all of its current medications awaiting registration in addition to refusing to register any new pharmaceutical products in Thailand. This extreme decision is in response to the recent granting of a compulsory license for the Abbott manufactured, lopinavir+ritonavir (Kaletra) by the Thai government. Thailand's decision to grant compulsory licenses for lopinavir+ritonavir, clopidogrel bisulfate (Plavix, an anti-clotting agent), and efavirenz (another antiretroviral) is completely legal and in accordance with Thai national law and the WTO TRIPS agreement. It was a brave and necessary step by the Thai government to ensure access to quality care and treatment for all people living with HIV/AIDS. It will allow Thailand to import

the ARV, Kaletra from India at a cost of less than 4000 baht (US\$113) per person per month in contrast to Abbott's current price of 8900 baht (US\$250) per person per month or 11,580 (US\$325) per person per month when selling to NGOs. This price is unacceptable and unaffordable to the Thai government and in time will threaten the Thai government's ability to fulfill its promise of providing ARV treatment to all Thais who need it.

Abbott's decision also denies Thai people living with HIV/AIDS access to the new heat-stable formula Kaletra, which is of vital importance to a tropical country like as Thailand. This action by Abbott is unprecedented by a pharmaceutical company and a comprehensive and intensive global campaign is needed to ensure that this never happens again and to register our disgust and condemnation for their precedence of profit over people.

Global AIDS Week of Action 20-26 May, 2007

One week. One voice

Do you think the world is doing enough to stop AIDS?

Join a groundswell of civil society voices from across the world during the week of 20-26 May to demand a stronger response, greater accountability and more resources in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

WHY: Last year, activists from 30 countries took coordinated action during the first ever Global AIDS Week of Action. It was the defining mobilisation before world leaders reported back to the UN on the progress they had made to meet their 2001 commitment on HIV/AIDS. So while in New York our governments boasted of the small gains made, in cities from Abuja to Phnom Penh and Delhi to Lilongwe citizens reminded them of the big losses.

The losses are stark: AIDS kills 8000 people each day and 3 out of 4 HIV positive people still lack access to treatment. While women make up almost 50% of those living with HIV, current AIDS responses do not tackle the violation of women's rights – a key driver of the pandemic.

In 2005 the world leaders made another landmark promise to “developing and implementing a package for HIV prevention, treatment and care with the aim of coming as close as possible to the goal of universal access to treatment by 2010 for all those who need it”.

The world needs to honour this ambitious promise to stop the needless deaths of women, men and children. Our governments have to set and meet ambitious targets for access to treatment as well as evidence-based prevention. Multinational drug companies must stop putting profits before people. Rich nations such as the G8 must back their warm words on AIDS with real funds.

WHEN: The Global AIDS Week of Action from 20-26th May 2007 is an opportunity for activists around the world to stand together, generate political pressure and demand action from our leaders. The week starts with the International AIDS Candlelight Memorial Day on 20 May – a Sunday when the world recognizes and remembers those who have died of AIDS. The week of action is also just days before the club of rich nations (G8) meet in Germany and discuss the universal access goal – let them know that the world is watching to see if they put money where their mouth is.

HOW: Between now and the end of May, it's time for action. You bring together fellow activists in your country to plan what action, how and where. And if you come up with bright ideas that work, share them with friends and colleagues in other countries. Communication of your ideas and plans is the glue that will bind our actions together

Abbott To Reduce Cost of Kaletra in Thailand, Other Developing Countries

Abbott Laboratories on (4/10) Tuesday said that it plans to reduce the cost of its antiretroviral drug Kaletra in Thailand and more than 40 low- and low-middle-income.

Australian PM criticised over HIV immigration comments

Howard, who has tightened immigration rules since taking office more than a decade ago, said he would like more advice on the matter but his initial response was that such applicants should be refused. His comments follow questions about the rigour of HIV testing among migrants.

"There may be some humanitarian considerations that could temper that in certain cases, but, prima facie -- no."

Australia ran successful HIV/AIDS education campaigns in the 1980s which have kept the disease in check here, but the disease is spreading rapidly in neighbouring Pacific countries such as Papua New Guinea.

Howard said people infected with another illness, tuberculosis, were already prevented from coming to Australia.

Official figures showed the number of people living with HIV moving to Victoria state had quadrupled in the past two years and that some of these people were migrants. The prime minister said he would consider changing the law to prevent people infected with the virus settling in Australia.

"I think we should have the most stringent possible conditions in relation to that nationwide and I know the health minister is concerned about that and is examining ways of tightening things up," he said.

Vietnam - Vietnam Expands Protection for People with HIV

Vietnam is embarking on a campaign to end discrimination against people with AIDS and HIV. A new law will give new rights and protections to people with HIV, and the country is expanding the number of people getting treatment for AIDS

The next issue of 'The Voice' will be Jun/Jul 2007.

Formed in 1988, Action for AIDS (AfA) is a voluntary community based organization and a registered charity. Our objectives are to provide support and assistance to persons living with HIV and AIDS (PWAs); to increase awareness, education and understanding of AIDS and HIV infection; to combat discrimination and stigmatisation of (PWAs) and their loved ones; and to encourage AIDS-related research activities in Singapore.

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