

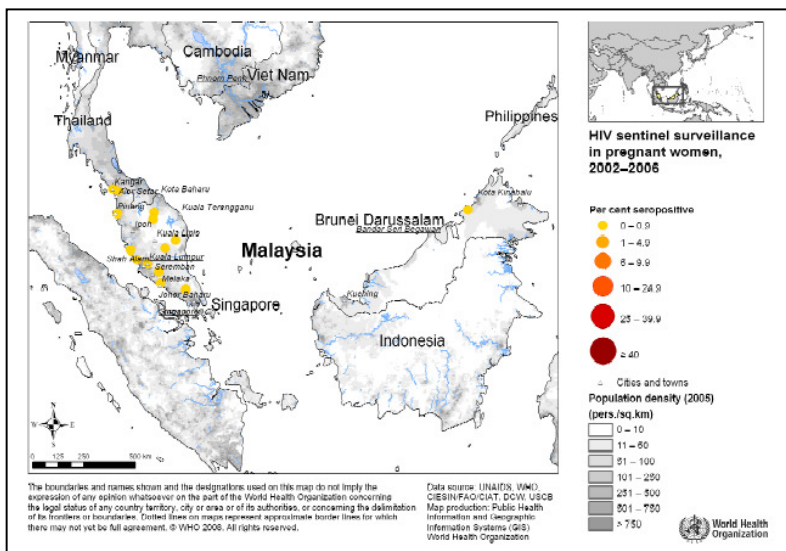
United Nations Regional Task Force on Injecting Drug Use and HIV/AIDS for Asia and the Pacific

Malaysia Country Advocacy Brief Injecting Drug Use and HIV

Key actions to be supported

- Rapid expansion of the methadone maintenance therapy (MMT), needle and syringe programme (NSP) and antiretroviral treatment (ART) programme to reach a much larger number of people who inject drugs will save lives. Close monitoring of the scale up progress will help in this process
- Building capacity of service providers including health practitioners and the NGOs, law enforcement and policy makers is key to ensuring successful and sustainable scale up of programs
- A legal and policy review, and subsequent amendment of relevant laws and policies where necessary, would help to overcome barriers to scaling up.
- Improve understanding of the extent of amphetamine type stimulant (ATS) and poly drug use, especially benzodiazepine use, including extent of injecting of ATS
- Involvement of men and women who inject drugs and other key community members at all stages of the HIV prevention, treatment and care programme will result in a stronger national programme
- Introduction of HIV sentinel surveillance; behavioural surveillance, and consolidation of monitoring and evaluation data in this population will help to inform the design, quality of and monitoring of the national HIV response in this population
- Overcoming social stigma and discrimination associated with HIV and injecting drug use would help to increase utilisation of services by the most marginalised.

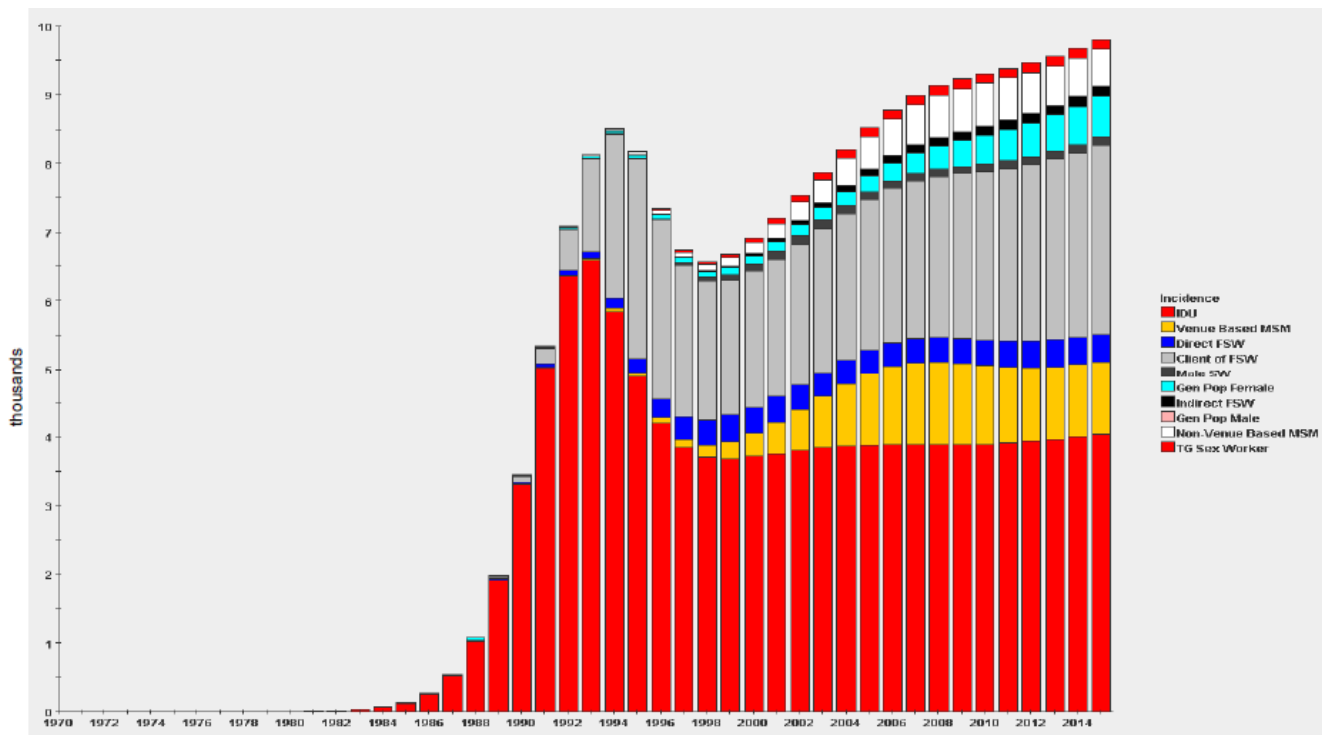
- Easy availability of heroin was documented as early as in 1980, when findings of a survey of 16,166 secondary school students found that 11% of students reported drug use.¹ One in four of those who had used drugs reported experimentation with four or more drugs and progression to heroin by many was anticipated.



- The prevalence of injecting drug use in Malaysia, 1.33 percent in the population aged 15-64, is among highest in the world.² An estimated 170,000 persons inject drugs in Malaysia.³ The majority (98%) of drug users are men.⁴

- The national HIV prevalence rate among people who inject drugs is estimated to be 22.1%⁵. A study in 2002 found 16.8% prevalence (range: 8-41%) among inmates in the 28 drug rehabilitation centres⁶, and 4.0% of prisoners have been diagnosed with HIV.⁷ In 2008, HIV prevalence of 21.5% has been reported among methadone maintenance therapy (MMT) clients⁸.
- The annual prevalence of opiates, cannabis, amphetamines and ecstasy use among the population aged 15-64 is 0.2, 1.6, 0.6 and 0.4 percent, respectively.⁹ Use of amphetamine type stimulants (ATS) is also reported to be on the increase.¹⁰ Methamphetamine is available in crystalline and tablet form. The potential for further spread of HIV may occur should injecting of ATS emerge and become prevalent.
- There were 87,710 reported HIV infections in Malaysia as of December 2009¹¹ and more than two in three HIV infections have been associated with injecting drug use.¹² Currently, 70.6 % of the cumulative reported cases of HIV have been traced back to injecting drug use and each day six out of nine persons newly diagnosed with HIV acquired it through injecting drug use.¹³ In 2009, 1,699 new cases of HIV amongst were diagnosed among IDUs, bringing the cumulative total number of IDUs living with HIV to 61,947.
- As can be seen in Figure 2. below, according to national estimations and projections, the number of new HIV cases each year is estimated to continue to experience a gradual increase between 2008 and 2015. The projections also indicate the role of injecting drug use as an early driver of the Malaysian HIV epidemic is clearly demonstrated with the initial peak observed in the number of new HIV cases detected among IDUs before 1995. Since 1995, HIV among IDUs appears to have stabilised at 3,000 new infections per year.¹⁴ The estimated number of new HIV infections among IDUs appears to be plateauing since 2008.

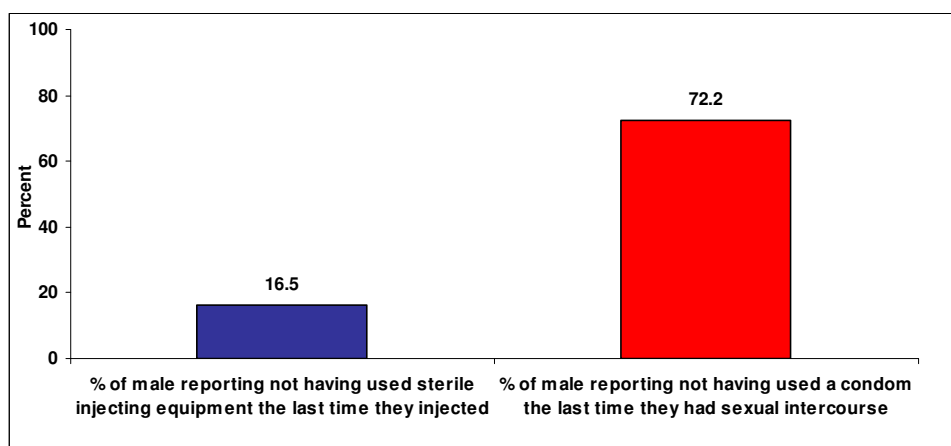
Figure 2. Distribution of new HIV cases, by sub-populations (1985-2015)¹⁵



- Programme monitoring of people in the 28 drug rehabilitation centres (DRC) in 2009 found an HIV prevalence of 7.9%, with 365 people living with HIV, including 349 men and 16 women.¹⁶

- Though 49.7% of people who inject drugs both correctly identify ways of preventing the sexual transmission of HIV and who correctly reject major misconceptions¹⁷, only 27.8% reported having used a condom at last sexual intercourse¹⁸ indicating high level of sexual risk behaviour in this population.

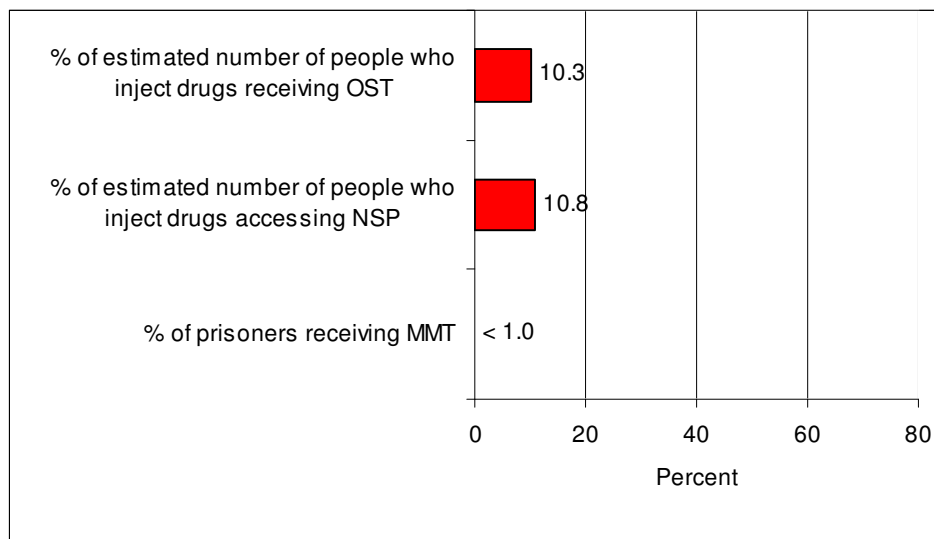
Figure 3. HIV risk and vulnerability of people who inject drugs¹⁹



- Overlap between injecting drug use and sex work, is of concern, with drug users reporting buying and selling sex, and sex workers engaging in drug use. In 2006, 15% of sexually active men who inject drugs reported having bought or sold sex in the month prior to being interviewed and among a sample of female respondents 100% reported having either sold or bought sex.²⁰
- In another survey of female sex workers, 20%, of whom 16% injected, reported drug use in 2004.²¹ In 2007, sharing of injecting equipment was reported among female sex workers.²² In 2009, 5.6% of sex workers who participated in the Integrated Bio-Behavioural Surveillance (IBBS) survey reported having injected drugs in the past year and a one in five had sexual partners who injected drugs.²³ Among transgendered persons, or transsexuals, 3.1% had injected drugs in the previous year.
- The overlap between injecting drug use and sex work can have a significant impact on the course of the HIV epidemic in the country. Once HIV epidemic is firmly established in injecting drug use and sex work populations, transmission to female sexual partners of men who inject drugs is bound to occur. Though nine out of ten HIV infections are among men, the proportion of new infections among women continues to grow. The chain of infection is followed by transmission from mother to child.
- At present, data on HIV risk and vulnerability, such as sexual and injecting behaviours, of female sexual partners of men who inject drugs is scarce.
- Malaysia is among the few countries in the world that demonstrated political leadership and commitment by adopting a national harm reduction approach in 2005, ahead of the majority of countries in the Asia region. Additionally funding for harm reduction programs is almost exclusively from the government in contrast to many other countries in the region.
- The number of MMT sites has increased from the initial three pilot sites in 2006 to 162 by 2009.²⁴ The number of NSP sites has doubled from the initial three pilot sites in 2006 to six by the end of 2007²⁵, and 21 by 2009.²⁶

- The government of Malaysia has also made a visionary move to approve MMT in prisons in 2006 and the pilot MMT project, benefiting 50 prisoners, was introduced in Pengkalan Chepa Prison in April 2008.²⁷
- Available data allow for calculation of the coverage of people in need of opioid substitution treatment and needle and syringe programme. Approximately 17,455 people are currently benefiting from OST, including 7,455 active MMT clients attending government facilities²⁸ and some 10,000 people attending private clinics.²⁹ Overall, assuming 170,000 IDUs in the country, the coverage of OST was 10.3% as of December 2010. By the end of 2009, 18,377, or 10.8% of the estimated 170,000 IDUs, were enrolled in the NSP programme.³⁰

Figure 4. Coverage of people who inject drugs with OST and NSP programme³¹



- Though progress has been made in expanding availability of services, it is critical to reach a much larger proportion of men and women who inject drugs with OST, NSP and other essential HIV prevention, treatment and care services in Malaysia to avert new infections among and from people who inject drugs.

ANNEX

Socio demographics and disease prevalence

		Date	Source
Total population (thousands) in 2007	26,752	2007	UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, March 2008 ¹⁰
Adult (15-49) HIV prevalence (%)	0.5	2010	Ministry of Health, 2010 ³²
Estimated number of people living with HIV	80,000	2007	Ibid.
Reported number of people who inject drugs living with HIV	61,947	2009	Ministry of Health, 2010 ³³
Estimated population of people who inject drugs	170,000	2009	MoH, 2010 ³⁴
Prevalence of injecting drug use among 15-64 year olds (%)	1.33	2002	Mathers et al., 2008 ³⁵
% female among people who inject drugs (%)	10.0	2009	MoH and WHO, 2009 ³⁶
% of women who inject drugs who report having sold sex (in the previous year)	100.0	2008	UNGASS Country Progress Report 2008 ³⁷
Median age (range) of people who inject drugs	25-34	2008	Abdul Wahab, Z, 2003 ³⁸
Reported HIV cases	87,710	Dec 2009	MoH, 2010 ³⁹
% of cumulative reported HIV infections associated with injecting drug use	70.6	2010	MoH, 2010 ⁴⁰
% of new HIV infections in due to injecting drug use	57.0	2008	Kamarulzaman, A. 2009 ⁴¹
% of AIDS cases associated with injecting drug use	55.2	2008	MoH, 2009 ⁴²
AIDS deaths associated with IDU	Not known		
% people who inject drugs who are HIV positive	11.0 - 40.0		Kamarulzaman, A. 2009 ⁴³
% of prisoners who are HIV positive	4.0		Wan Mohamad Nazarie Wan Mahmood, 2008 ⁴⁴
% of methamphetamine users who are HIV positive	Not known		
Adult HCV prevalence among people who inject drugs	Not known		IHRA, 2008 ⁴⁵
TB & HIV co-infection among people who inject drugs	Not known		
Active Syphilis among people who inject drugs	Not known		

Intervention coverage

		Date	Source
Number of opioid substitution therapy (OST) sites	162	2009	MoH, 2010 ⁴⁶
Number of people who inject drugs accessing MMT			
Through government facilities			
Registered clients (cumulative)	10,730	2009	MoH, 2010
Active clients	7,455	2009	MoH, 2010
Through private clinics	10,000	2009	Kamarulzaman, A., 2009 ⁴⁷
Number of prisoners accessing MMT	App 200	2009	Kamarulzaman, A.,
% of people who inject drugs accessing OST	10.3	2009	
Number of substitution treatment sites per 1,000 IDU	1.0	2009	
Number of needle and syringe programme sites	240	2009	MoH, 2010
Number of people who inject drugs accessing NSP	18,377	End 2009	MoH, 2010 ⁴⁸
Number of NSP sites per 1,000 IDU	1.4	2009	
% of people who inject drugs accessing NSP	10.8	2009	
Number of people who inject drugs received peer education / outreach	Not known		
% of people who inject drugs received peer education / outreach	Not known		
Number of drop-in centres in the country	16	2009	MoH, WHO and UNICEF Joint Report, 2009
Number of people who inject drugs accessed drop-in centres	11,059	2009	MoH and WHO report, 2009

% of people who inject drugs accessed drop-in centres	5.4	2009	MoH and WHO report, 2009
Number of VCT sites in the country	1,095	2009	MoH, WHO and UNICEF Joint Report, 2009
% of people who inject drugs who have received an HIV test in the last 12 months and know their test result (UNGASS Core Indicator)	33.0	2009	MoH, 2010 ⁴⁹
Reported number of people living with HIV on ART	9,962	Dec 2009	MoH, 2010
Number of people who inject drugs in need of ARV	Not known		
Number of people who inject drugs on ARV (Kuala Lumpur)	2% of 315 PLHIV	2002	Kamarulzaman, A, 2003 ⁵⁰
% of people injecting drugs in need of ARV receiving ARV	Not known		
People who inject drugs on ARVs as a proportion of all PLHIV receiving ARVs	28.7	2006	Kumar, S. 2006 ⁵¹
% of people who inject drugs reached with HIV prevention programmes (UNGASS Core Indicator)	7.5	2009	MoH, 2010
Estimated prison population	36,937		Wan Mohamad Nazarie Wan Mahmood, 2008
Number of drug rehabilitation centres	28		UNGASS Country Progress Report, 2008
Number of people in drug rehabilitation centres	6,570	2009	National Anti-Drugs Agency ⁵²
Clients accessing services in prisons: VCT NSP OST Condoms Peer education Primary health care Post release follow up	Not known Not known 50 Not known Not known Not known Not known	Apr 2008	Wan Mohamad Nazarie Wan Mahmood, 2008
Coverage of people who use drugs living in closed settings reached with one or more services	Not known		

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This document is not an official document of UNAIDS and UNODC. The document has not been approved by the Government and it does not necessarily represent the views of government, UNAIDS or UNODC. All efforts have been made to avoid possible errors.

The document has been developed with the purpose of guiding advocacy actions by the United Nations Regional Task Force on Injecting Drug Use and HIV/AIDS for Asia and the Pacific (UN RTF) and partners supporting scaling-up of prevention, treatment and care for men and women who inject drugs.

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