

Although the first cases of AIDS in Asia were reported in 1984 and 1985, the more extensive spread of HIV began late compared with the rest of the world, occurring in Cambodia, India, Myanmar and Thailand in the early 1990s (Ruxrungtham *et al.*, 2004). But by 2010, 4.8 million people in the region were living with HIV/AIDS, with about half of these in India. In this year alone, there were 360 000 new infections and 310 000 deaths (WHO, UNAIDS and UNICEF, 2011).

Asia is second only to sub-Saharan Africa as the location with the greatest number of people with HIV. Most of Asia's epidemics occur among sex workers and their clients, men who have sex with men, transgender persons and injecting drug users. In Asia, men who have sex with men face odds of nearly one in five of being infected with HIV during their lifetime. However, HIV is also spreading through transmission to the sexual partners of those at risk. In India, about 90% of people newly infected with HIV acquired the disease through unprotected sex.

About 0.1% of the adult population in the Asia/Pacific region had HIV infection in 2009. Prevalence in Pacific countries is generally very low, although Papua New Guinea is an exception at 0.5% of the population (Figure 1.9.1). Thailand is the only Asia/Pacific country where adult HIV prevalence exceeds 0.5%. Cambodia and Myanmar have comparatively high rates, greater than 400 per 100 000 population. This is in contrast to a number of countries where rates are less than one-tenth of that figure – Bangladesh, Japan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Mongolia and the Republic of Korea – all at less than 40 per 100 000 population.

Although the prevalence of HIV is low, the absolute number of HIV infections is high, because of Asia's large population. More than 2.3 million people in India were living with HIV in 2009, a number similar to all OECD countries combined (Figure 1.9.1). China (730 000), Thailand (520 000), Indonesia (300 000), Viet Nam and Myanmar (each more than 200 000) face significant disease burdens.

The majority of people in Asia and the Pacific are not aware of their HIV status, and infected persons can remain untreated and transmit HIV unknowingly. It is estimated that fewer than one in three people living with HIV in China has been diagnosed. HIV prevalence is increasing in some parts of the region, including Bangladesh, Pakistan and

Papua New Guinea. Women are also increasingly likely to be affected, rising from 19% of those living with HIV in 2000, to 35% in 2010 (WHO, UNAIDS and UNICEF, 2011).

Expanded access to antiretroviral therapy (ART) has increased the survival rates of people living with HIV. Around one third of persons needing ART in Asia receive it, although this figure varies markedly across countries. Among people with advanced HIV infection, less than 20% in Pakistan and Nepal receive treatment (Figure 1.9.2). Cambodia is the only Asian country that has reached the universal access target for antiretroviral therapy, according to WHO guidelines. In India, the country with the greatest disease burden, only one third of people living with advanced HIV infection receive ART. The HIV epidemic continues to outpace the response, with nearly two new HIV infections for every person who starts ART (UNAIDS, 2011).

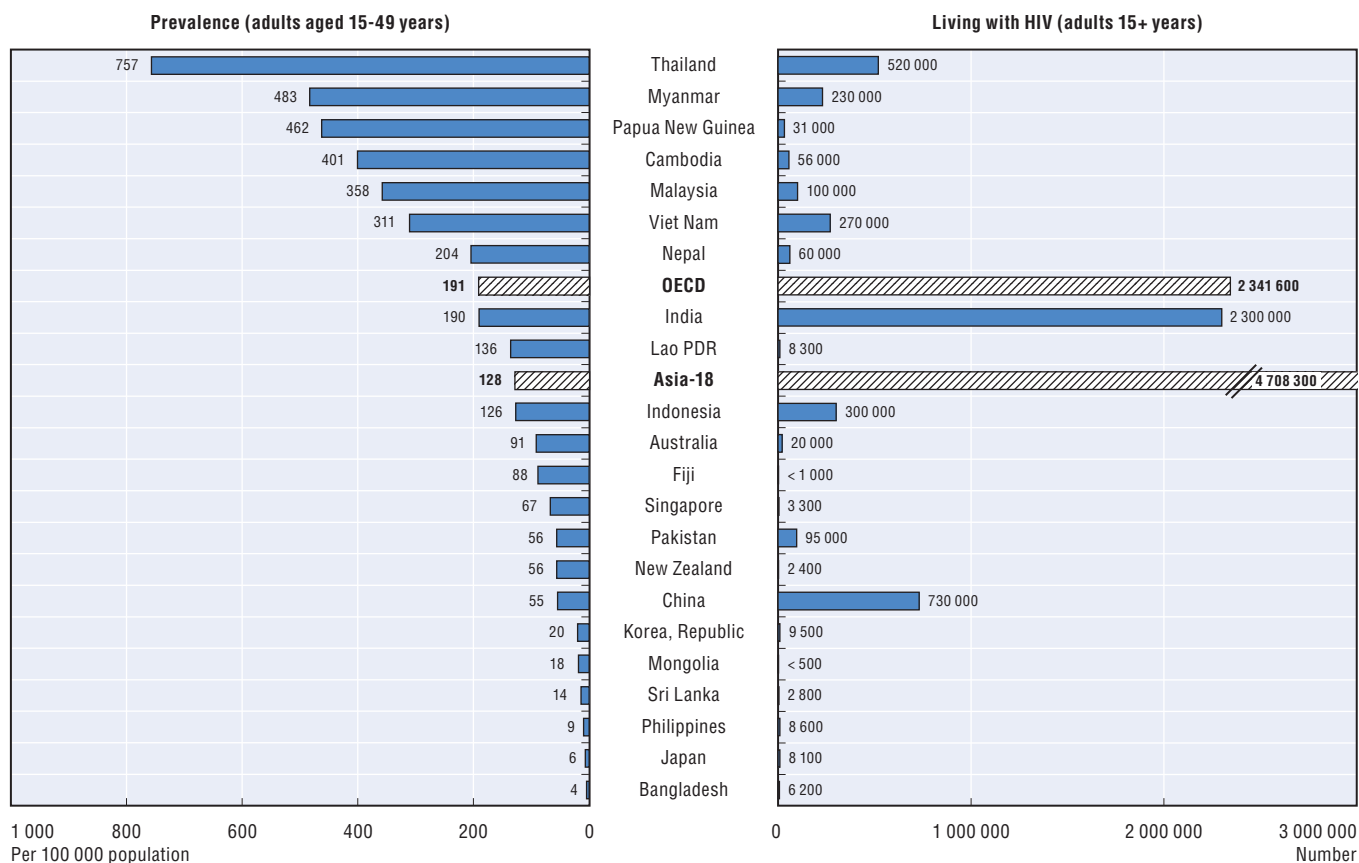
Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Pakistan and China fund the bulk of their HIV response from domestic resources. In contrast, the Lao PDR, Viet Nam, Nepal, Myanmar and Papua New Guinea rely heavily on foreign funding, particularly for ART provision (Figure 1.9.3). The USD 1.1 billion spent on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific at the end of 2009 represented around one third of the estimated funding needed to achieve universal access to HIV services (UNAIDS, 2011).

### Definition and comparability

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a retrovirus that destroys or impairs the cells of the immune system. As HIV infection progresses, persons become more susceptible to infections. The most advanced stage of HIV infection is acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). It can take 10-15 years for an HIV-infected person to develop AIDS, although antiretroviral drugs can slow down the process.

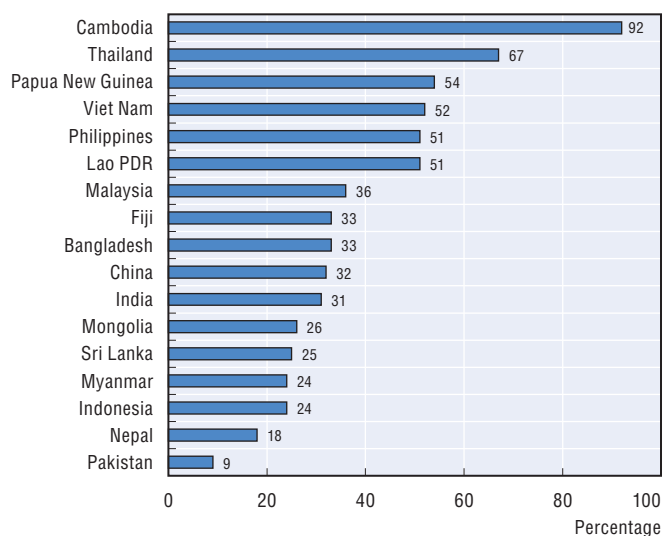
HIV prevalence is the total number of persons aged 15-49 years living with the disease at a particular time, per 100 000 population.

### 1.9.1. Estimated persons living with HIV, 2009



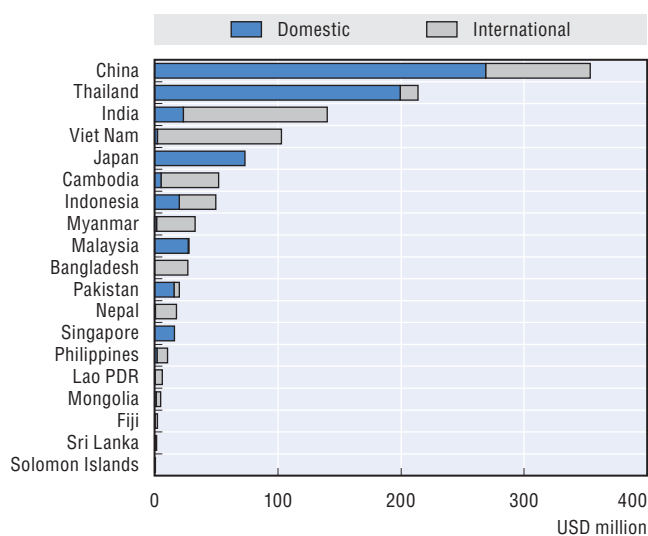
Source: UNAIDS (2010).

### 1.9.2. Estimated antiretroviral therapy coverage among people with advanced HIV infection, 2010



Source: WHO, UNAIDS and UNICEF (2011).

### 1.9.3. AIDS spending, by financing source, 2009 or nearest available year



Source: UNAIDS (2010).

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