

PHILIPPINES

Summary

The Philippines remains a low HIV prevalence country. Since the first cases of HIV/AIDS were reported in 1984, 1259 HIV infections including 404 AIDS cases and 199 HIV/AIDS-related deaths had been reported as of July 1999. An estimated 29 000 people were believed to be living with HIV in 1998 (prevalence <0.1% in people aged 15 to 49 years). The estimated reporting rate of HIV infection is low (5%). HIV in the Philippines is predominantly sexually transmitted (90%). The number of HIV/AIDS cases is not expected to increase substantially over the next few years.

There is a high prevalence of STI among SWs, with the prevalence rate of selected STI reaching more than 40% (predominantly chlamydial infections). Prevalence rate of STI among women attending antenatal clinics was <1% for STI other than chlamydia (5.6%). Gonococcal resistance to penicillin, tetracycline, and ciprofloxacin is high. Nearly all gonorrhoea isolates (95%) were resistant to penicillin in 1997 and 63% were resistant to quinolones in 1998. Behavioural surveillance data in 1997 and 1998 indicated high prevalence of HIV/STI risk behaviour. Sharing of needles was reported by 77% of IDUs and unprotected sex was reported by 92% of MSM and 96% of IDUs.

Surveillance Structure

- The CDC AIDS case definition (1993) is used.
- All HIV and AIDS cases are notifiable to the Department of Health.
- Information on notifiable STI is only partial.
- HIV sentinel surveillance is carried out in 10 major cities. Populations surveyed include registered and freelance FSWs, MSM, IDUs, and men who attend STI clinics.
- Surveillance of STI and HIV risk behaviour has been conducted since 1997.

HIV/AIDS

Reported HIV/AIDS cases as of July 1999 The first cases of HIV and AIDS were reported in 1984. By the end of July 1999, a cumulative total of 1259 HIV infections had been reported; this included 404 AIDS cases and 198 HIV/AIDS related deaths. Reported HIV/AIDS cases have been slowly increasing each year (Table 1).

Table 1: Reported cases of HIV/AIDS by year of diagnosis in the Philippines as of July 1999

	<1989	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	Total
AIDS	53	19	13	19	36	56	52	51	23	41	41	404
HIV/AIDS	153	68	79	69	100	119	117	156	117	190	91	1259

The majority (59%) of reported HIV infections have occurred in men (Table 2) and have been primarily sexually transmitted (80%). Heterosexual contact was reported in more than half of cases (58%). The proportion of HIV among IDUs remains small (Table 2).

Table 2: Distribution of cumulative reported HIV/AIDS cases by sex and mode of transmission in the Philippines as of July 1999

	HIV (%)	AIDS (%)
Sex		
Male	59	63
Female	40	37
Unknown	1	0
Mode of transmission		
Homo-/bisexual	22	35
IDU	<1	<1
Heterosexual	58	55
Blood products	1	2
Mother to infant	1	2
Other/unknown	17	5

Active HIV/AIDS surveillance

HIV serological surveys have been performed in 10 sentinel sites throughout the country since 1993; data were collected every 6 months until 1997 and annually since 1998. Only sporadic cases of HIV (<0.3%) have been detected among registered FSWs, IDUs, MSM, and men who attend STI clinics. There has been no evidence of a significant increase in HIV seroprevalence over time and no significant differences in population groups studied in 1998. In 1998, only 3 of 2075 registered FSWs, 1 of 2068 freelance FSWs, none of 532 MSM and none of 120 IDUs tested HIV-positive.

HIV prevalence data from testing and counseling services showed no significant increase in prevalence between 1991 and 1998. HIV testing and counseling services increased the number of HIV tests from 350 959 (prevalence of 0.002%) in 1991 to 687 150 in 1997 (prevalence of 0.002%).

Estimates and Projections for HIV/AIDS

In order to develop estimates and projections for HIV/AIDS in the Philippines, a consensus meeting of national and international experts was convened in 1998. These experts adapted earlier estimates of HIV and AIDS from a consensus meeting that had been held in 1996. The sentinel serosurveillance data showed that HIV prevalence remains low in the country, and revising the 1996 estimates and projections was deemed unwarranted.

Table 3: Estimates for HIV/AIDS in the Philippines, 1998

		1998
	Population (15-49) (thousands)	36 501
HIV	Prevalence	29 000
	Prevalence rate in adults (15-49)	<0.1%
AIDS	Prevalence	650
	Prevalence rate in adults (15-49)	<0.1%

There were an estimated 29 000 persons living with HIV in the Philippines in 1998 (prevalence, rate of <0.1%, adults aged 15-49 years) (Table 3). The reporting rate for HIV infections is believed to be low (Table 4). An estimated 90% of HIV infections are sexually transmitted.

Table 4: Selected epidemiological features of HIV/AIDS in the Philippines (1998 estimates)

HIV	Prevalence	29 000
	Prevalence rate in adults (15-49)	<0.1%
	Women among HIV infected population	30%
HIV Infection by mode of transmission	Sexual contact	90%
	Injecting drug use	<5%
	Others	5%
	Estimated reporting rate for HIV	5%
	Estimated reporting rate for AIDS	40%

STI other than HIV

Reported cases There are 128 Social Hygiene Clinics (SHC) which regularly screen registered SWs for STI every one to four weeks. The number of STI cases detected by SHCs in 1993-1997 ranged from 30 000 to 51 000; cases included syphilis, gonorrhoea and non-gonococcal urethritis. The prevalence of syphilis was between 0.4% and 1.66%, and of gonorrhoea between 5% and 17%.

Active STI surveillance Syphilis seroprevalence was added to national HIV surveillance in 1994. Prevalence was higher among MSM (3% to 7%), freelance FSWs (4% to 6%). Lower prevalence rates were observed among male STI patients (2% to 4%) registered FSWs (1% to 4%), and male SWs (1% to 3%). High prevalence rates have been reported among FSWs in Cebu (22.2% for gonorrhoea, 22.7% for chlamydia, 6.7% for syphilis, 30.9% for trichomoniasis) and Manila (10.6% for gonorrhoea, 17.3% for chlamydia, 2.8% for syphilis, 6.7% for trichomoniasis). Prevalence rates among women attending antenatal clinics were 1% for gonorrhoea, 5.6% for chlamydia, 0.5% for syphilis, and 1% for trichomoniasis.

In a study of FSWs in Manila currently being completed in 1999, a third of registered FSWs without self-identified STI symptoms have been found to have an STI (primarily chlamydia, gonorrhoea, or both infections).

Table 5: Estimated prevalence of selected STI in the Philippines, 1998

	Gonorrhoea	Syphilis	Chlamydia	Trichomoniasis
Prevalence	428 000	214 000	2 560 000	428000
Prevalence rate in adults (15-49)	1%	<1%	6%	1%

* Population 15 and above

Estimates for STI Estimated prevalence rates for selected STI in the general adult population were extrapolated based on various point prevalence estimates (Table 5). Chlamydia is the most prevalent STI.

Gonococcal antimicrobial resistance Gonococcal resistance for most drugs has been found to be high in the past few years (penicillin, 69 to 100%; tetracycline, 45%; ciprofloxacin, 82%, quinolones, 50 to 95%).

STI and HIV Risk Behaviour Surveillance

The first behavioural sentinel surveillance survey (1997) found a high prevalence of sharing needles among IDUs (77%). Condom use among all population groups studied was low (IDUs, 4%; MSM, 23%; FSW, 28%; RSW, 48%), as was condom use at last sexual contact with non-regular partner (IDUs, 34%; MSM, 41%; FSW, 55%; RSW, 72%). More than half of all persons in high-risk groups reported knowledge of at least three ways to prevent HIV transmission. Knowledge was lowest among IDUs (50%) and highest among MSM (68%). Self-perception of their own personal risk of AIDS was low (IDUs 27%; MSM 20%; FSW 25%; RSW 30%).