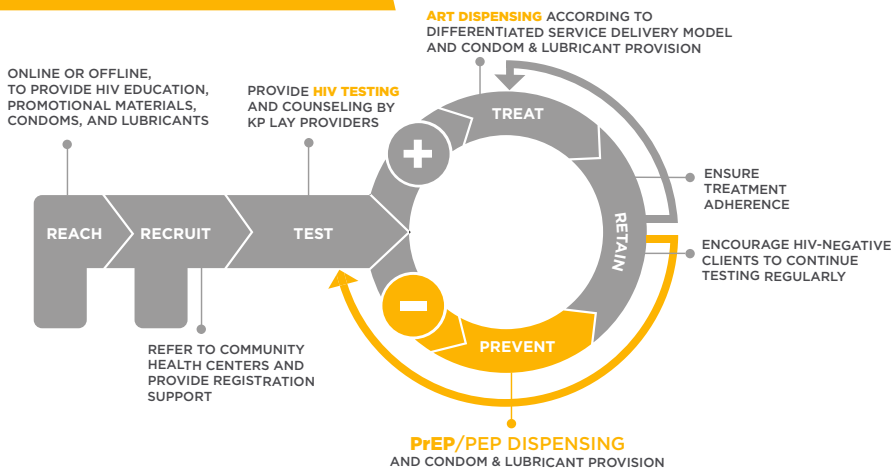




Photo: Mplus Foundation

Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) Dispensing to Key Populations (KPs) by KP Lay Providers

KEY POPULATION-LED PrEP SERVICES

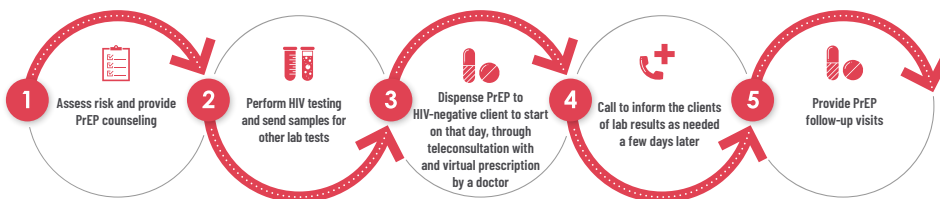


Background

Since 2016, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) dispensing has been carried out by trained key population (KP) lay providers who are members of KP-led clinics and are not health professionals. Through these KP-led PrEP services, KP lay providers are trained to provide PrEP services to KPs, focusing on men who have sex with men, transgender women, male and transgender women sex workers. The program is led by the Institute of HIV Research and Innovation (IHRI) under the USAID EpiC Project.

The KP-led PrEP services are part of the Key Population-Led Health Services (KPLHS) model. This model includes a defined set of HIV and health-related services, designed and co-delivered by members of KPs, focusing on specific KPs who face elevated infection risks. The services are delivered by lay providers in KP-led clinics in partnership with the public health sector. They are KP-friendly, non-judgmental, and accessible to KPs through their geographic locations in hot-spots and their flexible service hours.

ROLES OF KP LAY PROVIDERS IN PrEP DISPENSING



Sustaining PrEP

Services led by KP lay providers contribute to around half of all Thai PrEP users. Consequently, Thailand has included PrEP service in the country's Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in October 2019, becoming the first country in Asia to scale up PrEP service at large.

In 2020, the National Health Security Office (NHSO) launched their PrEP pilot phase, through which PrEP counseling, laboratory, and medication costs were included under UHC for 2,000 new clients. Through their partnership with IHRI, KP-led clinics run by the Service Workers in Group Foundation (SWING) and the Rainbow Sky Association of Thailand (RSAT) were able to fill their allocated slots of new PrEP users within just three months of the project implementation. From October 2021 onwards, there is no cap for free PrEP UHC.

Toward the end of the project, IHRI successfully advocated for KP-led clinics in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Ubon Ratchathani, Chonburi, and Songkhla to be registered as NHSO nodes in order to provide PrEP services, and reimburse PrEP supplies and related services from NHSO through their partnered hospitals. Given the clinics' proven strength in reaching and recruiting KPs who are most at-risk, in 2021 alone approximately 25% of NHSO PrEP services and 57% of overall Thailand's PrEP services were provided by these KP-led clinics.

The effort of PrEP scale up isn't limited to only Thai citizens. The Global Fund has agreed to support PrEP supplies for non-Thai and Thai nationals who are ineligible for UHC benefits, to ensure that we leave no one behind.

Our KP-led PrEP project has successfully transitioned to be part of Thailand's UHC PrEP program. The KP-led PrEP model continues to serve the majority of PrEP users and is still the service delivery model most suitable to scale-up PrEP in Thailand. IHRI ensures KP-led PrEP service quality is maintained through its capacity strengthening role, providing ongoing technical support to these KP-led clinics. To ensure the sustainability of the model, IHRI continues its advocacy efforts, with the aim of achieving full reimbursement of PrEP service costs from NHSO directly to KP-led clinics.

