

# UNGASS COUNTRY PROGRESS REPORT

Republic of KOREA

DECEMBER 2007

## I . Overview of HIV/AIDS Policy in the Republic of Korea

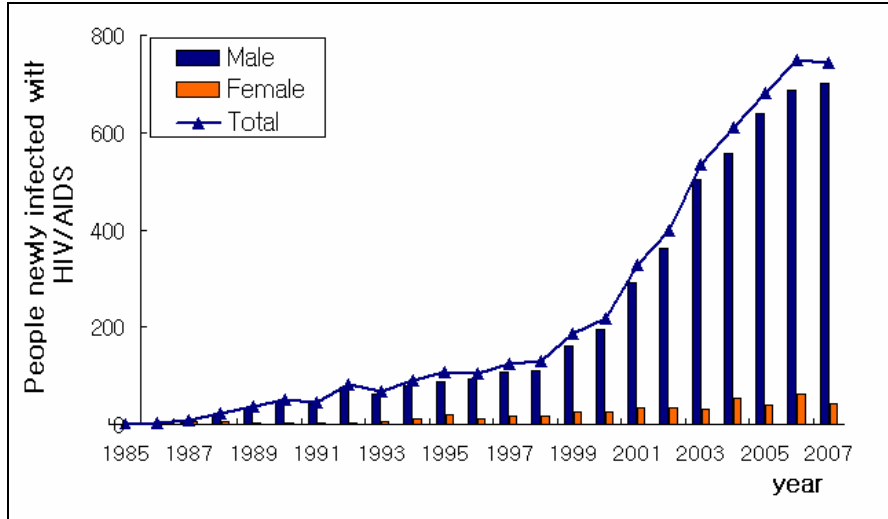
The main aims of HIV/AIDS prevention programs in Korea are as follows:

- 1) Develop and implement national management policy for HIV/AIDS prevention
- 2) Prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS
- 3) Protect and promote rights of PLWHA
- 4) Provide care, treatment and support for PLWHA

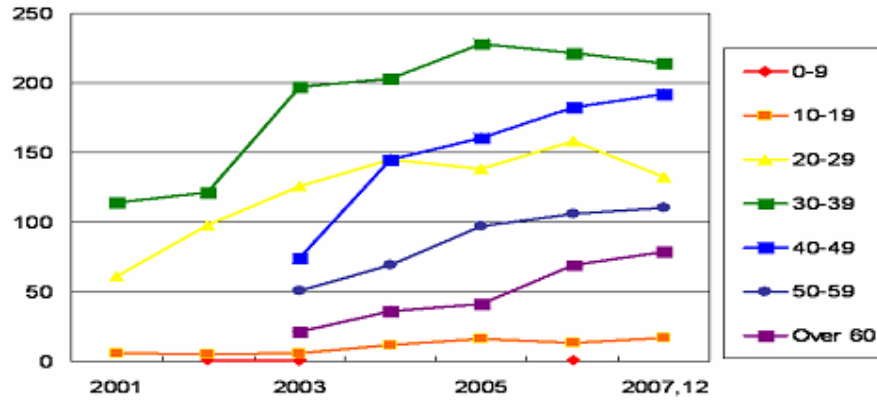
Korea enacted the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome Prevention Act on November 28, 1987 to prevent HIV/AIDS and provide care, treatment and support for PLWHA. The Government conducts education program targeted at highly vulnerable populations and information campaigns through mass media to minimize adverse impacts of HIV/AIDS on society. It promotes HIV testing and counseling to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and supports medical expenses for PLWHA/AIDS patients to receive appropriate medical care service.

## II . Current Status of HIV/AIDS

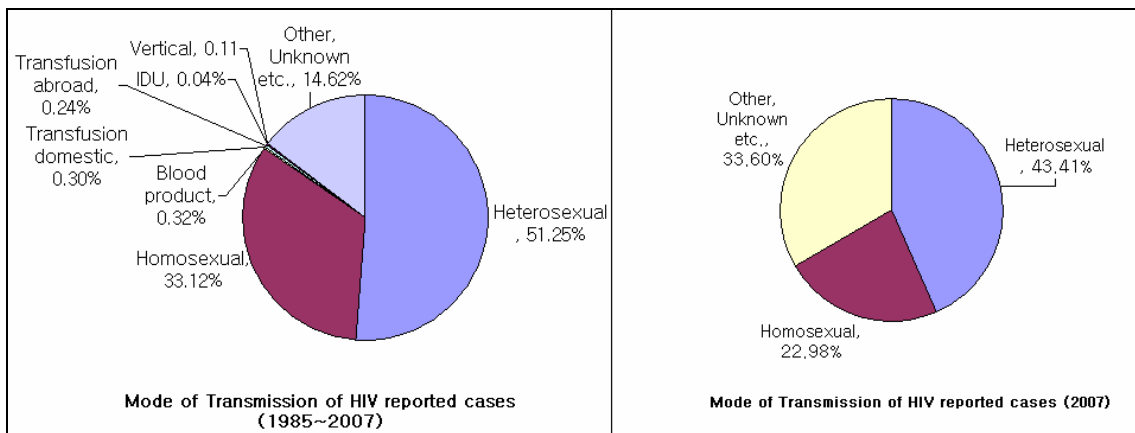
Korea has a relatively lower rate of HIV/AIDS prevalence, which is less than 0.1%, in comparison to that of other countries. Since the first case in 1985, the cumulative total number of reports of HIV-infected persons among the general population is 5,323. The number of new HIV case has been steadily increasing since 1985. 980 infected people have already died, and 4,343 people are currently living with HIV as of December 2007. By gender, 4,861(91.3%) of HIV patients are male and 462 people (8.7%) are female (see fig.1), with the ratio of ten to one. In terms of age group, those aged 30-39 years represent the highest number of cases of infection (1,761 persons, 33.1%), followed by those aged 20-29 years (1,247 persons, 23.4%) and those aged 40-49 years (1,218 persons, 22.9%) (see fig 2). The main route of infection for both HIV-infected persons and AIDS patients is sexual contact (see fig. 3).



**Fig1. Reported Number of People Living with HIV/AIDS by Year**



**Fig2. Annual Trend of HIV-infected Persons by Age**



**Fig3. Mode of Transmission for HIV-reported Cases**

The number of newly reported HIV cases in 2007 is 744. Among 744, the number of HIV-positive cases is 701(94.2%) and 43(5.8%) in male and female respectively, representing a ratio of 16:1. By age group, those in their 30s have the highest number of infection cases (241 people, 28.7%), followed by those in their 40s (192 people, 25.8%) and those in their 20s (132 people, 17.8%). The main route of infection is sexual contact.

### **III. National HIV/AIDS Prevention Program**

#### **1. Education and campaign programs to reduce stigma and discrimination against HIV/AIDS**

The Korean government conducts education and campaign programs to raise awareness for HIV/AIDS, in close collaboration with NGOs, civil society, local public health centers and relevant organizations.

TV drama (Title: "Standing on the road") was broadcasted under the theme of reducing stigma and discrimination against HIV/AIDS. Under the same theme, a TV public service ad (titled "My friend") was made and aired. Information campaigns targeting the general population has been conducted on a continual basis.

In particular, the press can help the general public have proper understanding and resolve misunderstanding on HIV/AIDS by providing accurate information in the media reports related to HIV/AIDS. For this, the Government produced and distributed "HIV/AIDS guidelines for journalists" to the press and other relevant organizations in 2006.

The Government also implements target group-oriented education and awareness programs for STD checkup population, MSM, military personnel, young adults, and university students to boost their condom use, as well as other prevention programs such as distributing condom for free, street campaigns, and public ads at subway stations or on websites.

As HIV/AIDS prevention activities targeted at MSM, free condoms as well as telephone and on-line counseling services are offered at gay bars.

Information on HIV/AIDS, telephone and on-line counseling services are provided through homepages and VCTCs (Voluntary counseling and testing centers). Education training programs are conducted to foster professional counseling staffs, volunteers, and expert instructors.

The Government annually sponsors advertisement contest targeting university students under the theme of reducing stigma and discrimination against PLWHA and preventing HIV/AIDS to raise awareness and find new ideas. On World AIDS Day, Korea conducts various events (street campaigns, awards presentation) to give correct information on HIV/AIDS to the general population and support and promote human rights of PLWHA.

#### **2. Promoting HIV testing and counseling**

Since 1989, we have conducted free, voluntary and anonymous HIV tests at public health centers (251 as of 2007) nationwide for people who avoid receiving HIV testing for fear of revealing their identities. To promote universal HIV/AIDS counseling and voluntary HIV testings, there are counseling centers for the general public (11, VCT 4), for MSM (2, VCT 2) as well as for foreign nationals (2, VCT 2).

The Government makes and distributes HIV/AIDS prevention manuals to medical centers (dermatology, gynecology, and urology clinics) and encourages medical workers to recommend HIV testing for patient with the consent of the person concerned.

Since 1987, we have been implementing screening test for all donated blood for HIV (mandatory HIV testing of all blood and blood products) and health questionnaire for blood donors to ensure safe blood supply. With the introduction of nucleic acid amplifying testing (NAT) in 2005, we are further strengthening the blood safety.

### **3. Care and Support for PLWHA**

HIV/AIDS personnel at public health centers in the area of residence inform people of their HIV status in a strictly confidential manner and support those diagnosed as HIV-positive by providing regular counseling service, CD4 test and education.

In addition, PHC officers assist PLWHA by linking with specialized hospitals to ensure that they receive appropriate medical care and treatment.

Since 2005, professional counseling and medical treatment services have been offered to PLWHA at HIV-special clinics to improve their adherence to treatment and address various problems PLWHA face in their lives. Currently, there are 8 medical facilities where HIV/AIDS nurses are located and conduct counseling service programs to prevent the epidemic.

The Government offers financial assistance to PLWHA to reduce their burden of medical costs. All expenses related to treatment of HIV infection that are paid by PLWHA are subsidized by the Government. If the people living with HIV/AIDS are financially unstable, they will be placed in the Basic Livelihood Security recipient program to enable financial assistance.

The Korean government runs shelters for PLWHA living alone from their family to offer room and board, medical treatment, health education and counseling services. Shelters also serve as a refuge for AIDS patients, particularly those who experience discrimination and stigma. NGOs runs hospice for terminal patients, but the operating expenses are funded by the National Health Promotion Fund.

The Government operates supporting centers for PLWHA where health education and counseling, home-based care, nursing and self-support services are provided. We also have HIV/AIDS prevention centers for foreigners to improve their access to HIV/AIDS and health information, education and treatment.

As a way of providing the opportunity to become economically independent as well as to contribute to the society, healthy people infected with HIV are educated and trained to participate in various service programs (peer education) and help others in a similar situation, by becoming nurses, counselors, or operators answering AIDS Hotline.

In addition, the Government developed a standard clinical guideline for diagnosis and treatment of

HIV/AIDS and training program led by NGOs for improving capabilities of infectious disease specialists and physicians nationwide.

The Government runs an advisory committee on HIV/AIDS Programme, which deliberates on important issues relating to HIV/AIDS prevention, care and support for PLWHA. This Committee is comprised of 4 subcommittees in which pending problems on AIDS prevention, care and treatment of PLWHA are discussed.