

Expanding PrEP coverage in Burma via Community PrEP Distribution Points

HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is recommended as a safe and highly effective strategy to prevent HIV acquisition among individuals at risk. It has only recently been introduced in Burma as part of a pilot project under the guidance of the national HIV program. PrEP availability in the country is limited to men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgender populations and is only offered by three clinical providers in Yangon. Clients interested in PrEP must meet rigid eligibility screening criteria. This includes being approved centrally by the national program to initiate PrEP, which can contribute to delays in PrEP initiation. Crisis-related disruptions in clinical services resulting from the military coup in 2021 and COVID-19 have further challenged efforts to scale up PrEP services to maximize impact.

To help overcome these challenges, the PEPFAR/USAID-supported Meeting Targets and Maintaining Epidemic Control (EpiC) project has introduced community PrEP distribution through a variety of channels as a differentiated service delivery solution. EpiC, in collaboration with the USAID HIV/AIDS Flagship (UHF) project, set up the Community PrEP Distribution Points (CPDP) model in early 2022. Through this collaboration, USAID provides support through EpiC to local partners to set up and manage the CPDPs. EpiC staff provide technical oversight of the partners and sites, while UHF provides PrEP and HIV testing commodities. The CPDP model aims to bring PrEP services closer to key population (KP) communities in Yangon, and to empower community-based organizations (CBOs) to take a leadership role in delivering PrEP services. The model has three major components:

- **KP-led CBOs:** Leveraging the network and trust established with KP communities for more than a decade, three KP-led CBOs (Aye Nyein Metta, Lotus, and Myanmar MSM and TG Network) conduct outreach to KP individuals in the community with information on PrEP and other HIV services; conduct risk assessments; offer counselling to clients about PrEP; assist clients to get tested for HIV and go through screening for PrEP eligibility; assist eligible clients to receive PrEP; provide support for adherence to daily PrEP; and help clients with follow-up visits and PrEP refills.
- **Clinical service providers:** Lan Pya Kyel (LPK) and Medical Action Myanmar (MAM)—clinics with extensive experience providing KP-friendly PrEP services—manage the clinical aspects of PrEP services including clinical counselling; biomedical screening and baseline measurements; PrEP initiation (following the centralized approval process); and follow-up visits. Clients reached at the CPDPs who are interested in starting PrEP are linked to LPK and MAM for PrEP-related clinical care.

- Online reservation platform:** To enhance clients' experience in accessing services and to ensure effective case management, EpiC launched a Burmese version of QuickRes, an online appointment booking platform. This platform allows clients to conveniently conduct self-risk assessments, choose from listed service centers, and reserve appointments. Currently, the platform lists seven KP-friendly HIV service outlets in Yangon and two in Mandalay.

The first three CPDPs, linked with LPK, started operating in February 2022. Three more CPDPs, linked with MAM, started in May 2022. As of June 2022, the six CPDPs have collectively screened 956 clients, determined 420 to be eligible for PrEP, and enrolled 276 on PrEP. As illustrated in *Figure 1*, the start-up of the CPDPs has contributed to substantial increases in the overall number of clients screened and initiated on PrEP. While screening clients for PrEP eligibility, the CPDPs have also identified five additional individuals who tested positive for HIV and helped them initiate treatment.

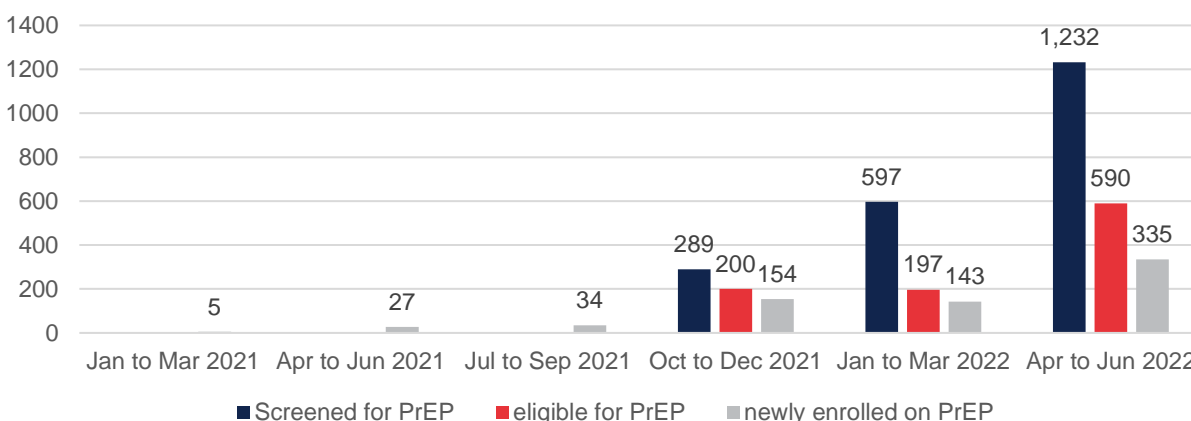


Figure 1. PrEP service achievements by quarter (EpiC-supported clinic and CPDP data combined); the first three CPDPs started in Feb 2022 and an additional three in May 2022. Screening and eligibility data were not recorded before Oct 2021.

The CPDP model has expanded geographic reach. While the CPDPs are in six townships in Yangon, CPDP clients come from at least ten townships. These include townships which were not otherwise covered by LPK and MAM with their existing PrEP clinics in only two locations.

In line with the national program's plans to expand PrEP access to other KP groups and geographic areas, EpiC Burma anticipates opportunities to scale up the CPDP model.

This report is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). The contents are the responsibility of FHI 360 and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID, PEPFAR, or the United States Government.