



Third Consultation Meeting on

Law Enforcement and the Rights of People Living with and Affected by HIV

Final Statement
"Beirut Declaration"
December 2019



At the invitation of the Middle East and North Africa Harm Reduction Association (MENAHRRA), and in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the International Development Law Organization (IDLO), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Law Enforcement and HIV Network (LEAHN); the third Consultative Meeting on “Law Enforcement and the Rights of People Living with and affected by HIV” was held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Beirut between 2 and 4 October 2019.

The meeting was attended by 28 people representing law enforcement agencies and civil society organizations in eight Arab countries: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Sudan, Egypt, Jordan, Bahrain and Lebanon, in addition to representatives from UNDP, UNAIDS & IDLO. The objective of the meeting was to promote the positive engagement of law enforcement agents in the HIV response in selected countries in the region, and to create a common understanding and agreement between partners and participants on strategic human rights-based HIV programming and a roadmap to improve the legal environment in the region.



The meeting discussed the following topics:

- A Human Rights Programming Approach to ensure access to HIV health services within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- The current realities of Drugs Harm Reduction in the MENA and the relevant strategies.
- A Refresher on the suggestions/recommendations of the second consultation meeting
- The Challenges of Sustainable partnership between Law enforcement and civil society and service providers
- Successful initiatives from the field
- Creating an enabling legal environment for a better HIV response
- Awareness and legal/health education and advocacy
- Building the needed capacities within Law enforcement agencies and CSOs in championing the HIV response in MENA
- A Networking Exercise
- The Structure and Dialogue mechanisms that can lead to sustainable partnerships. Legal Environment Assessment (LEA): a model of Partnership and collaboration.
- Establishing a senior regional group of policy experts/advisers in MENA.



The meeting also sought to achieve the following results:

- Increased Law Enforcement officers' involvement in HIV response in the MENA region.
- Promote dialogue and partnership between civil society and national AIDS and law enforcement programs to prevent HIV.

The participants stressed the importance of adopting a human rights approach in the preparation of HIV programs and called for the detection of human rights violations (human rights violations should not be tolerated), especially the rights of people living with HIV and the most vulnerable groups. They also stressed that building and institutionalizing a sustainable partnership between law enforcement agencies and civil society organizations is an essential element in enhancing access to information and services for people living with HIV and vulnerable groups. Thus, safeguarding their rights in light of the economic, political and social changes that the region is going through and its negative impact on people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS. The meeting also expressed the urgent need for a consultative group of policy experts to serve as a reference group to support those responding to HIV/AIDS. They also stressed the impact of the legal and procedural environment on human rights, public health, HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment.

At the conclusion of the deliberations, the participants reached a set of suggestions that they will take with them to the institutions they represent for implementation.



These suggestions are:

- 1. In the field of building an enabling legal environment:**
 - a. Building a database on HIV/AIDS laws, procedures and policies
 - b. Encourage the implementation of the legal environment assessment (LEA) in the participating countries through the use of the UNDP tool and seek to amend and/or ensure the proper implementation of legislation, procedures and policies
 - c. Benefit from successful regional and international experiences in the field of amendment and development of legislations and policies.
 - d. Give more attention to research in legal centers and services as it might contribute to political decision-making and strategic planning.
- 2. Capacity-building of law enforcement agencies and civil society organizations:**
 - a. Collaborate in designing training activities on the rights of PLWHIV and Key Populations (KPs) monitor law enforcement agencies' violations against them; and in producing appropriate training materials.
 - b. Organize training courses for CSOs on policy evaluation and formulation so that they can cope with the development of legislation and policies.
 - c. Organize regular meetings between civil society organizations and law enforcement agencies in which common issues and challenges are raised and that contribute to fostering a culture of participation.
- 3. In the field of health and legal education and awareness:**
 - a. Document and disseminate widely correct good and updated scientific and medical data in the field of HIV transmission, as well as the effectiveness & efficacy of treatments and medicines, so that law practitioners can take them into consideration in the process of amending and developing criminal laws.
 - b. Exchange the awareness materials and publications that have been produced by some countries with the participating countries to be used by them after adapting them to suit the national contexts.
- 4. Set up a regional expert group (REG) of policy and rights experts to provide support at the national and regional levels, and commission the MENAHRA network to prepare the TOR and send it to the participants within one month for feedback and comments.**



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