

10 January 2013

Dear Colleague

I am writing to introduce you to the Law Enforcement and HIV Network (LEAHN), and to let you know about our most recent initiative, a Statement of Support by police for harm reduction policing.

LEAHN is an initiative of a group of serving and former police and other law enforcement officers, whose goal is to support police globally in working with communities at risk of HIV infection, and with those health and welfare agencies who work with them in HIV prevention.

LEAHN runs a website where news, resources and discussion about working with these communities and in partnership with such agencies are posted. The website is in English at <http://www.leahn.org/> and in Russian at <http://www.leahn.ru/>. We invite you to check out the website and its wealth of resources, and to sign up to begin receiving updates and news and participating in LEAHN activities.

I am the Chair of the LEAHN International Police Advisory Group. Like all other members of this Group, I am a senior career police officer; I am now retired. LEAHN has begun developing Country Focal Points, national Law Enforcement and HIV Networks, and country webpages in national languages in a range of countries. We hope to eventually have the world covered in this way.

LEAHN has recently produced a Statement of Support by Law Enforcement Agents for Harm Reduction and Related Policies for HIV Prevention; this is attached below and is available on the LEAHN website. You will soon be able to sign up to the Statement the LEAHN website (leahn.org). In the interim, please send a signed copy of statement in an email to Nicole Turner, LEAHN Co-ordinator, at nicole@leahn.org. A Russian version of the Statement is available on the Russian language site (leahn.ru), and you can contact the LEAHN Russian co-ordinator, Alex Zelitchenko, at zelitchenko@yahoo.com. Nicole and Alex are both police officers.

If you are at all interested in the issues of HIV prevention among marginalized communities, and in policing among those communities, please visit the LEAHN website and sign on.

If you are a law enforcement officer, serving or retired, and you wish to sign on to the Statement of Support, please do so through the website.

And if you have questions, comments, ideas or suggestions, please do not hesitate to contact me, Nicole or Alex. We feel that the engagement of police and other law enforcement officials is a critical imperative in the effective response to the HIV epidemic – an element that has for too long been neglected. LEAHN is here to promote that engagement.

All the best



Frank Hansen (Superintendent, NSW Police, retired)

Chair

International Police Advisory Group, LEAHN

LEAHN is housed with and supported by the Nossal Institute for Global Health at the University of Melbourne, and the Central Asia Drug Action Programme.

**The International Police Advisory Group (IPAG)
of the Law Enforcement and HIV Network (LEAHN)**

**Statement of Support by Law Enforcement Agents
for Harm Reduction and Related Policies for HIV Prevention**

This Statement of Support is signed by serving and former law enforcement agents in support of policies and practices for effective policing of communities for controlling the epidemic of HIV among key populations and the broader community, ameliorating harmful impacts of the inappropriate application of criminal and administrative laws, stigmatization and discrimination to which key populations are exposed.

The Role of law enforcement agencies in relation to HIV

1. Historically, law enforcement agencies have always played an essential role in the protection and maintenance of public health. Currently, preventing the spread of HIV is a major public health challenge in which law enforcement plays a critical role. As part of the response, harm reduction policies and practices are pragmatic and comprehensive, evidence-based approaches which have proven successful in reducing the spread of HIV throughout the world (see Appendix 3).
2. The prevention and reduction of crime and enhanced community safety are important goals and benefits of harm reduction programs. Even where behaviours are unlawful, law enforcement agencies can have a significant impact in creating an environment enabling key populations to protect both themselves and the community from harm, including HIV.
3. Law enforcement agencies as key partners in implementation of these programs are in a position to facilitate access to HIV prevention and treatment services. Law enforcement agencies (particularly the police and prison services) can make a significant contribution to improving public health by actively participating in and supporting these programs.
4. Law enforcement and health sectors should work in partnership to develop and support legislation, policy and practice that facilitate the common goals of HIV prevention through enhancing community safety and crime reduction. Directly and through more appropriate allocation of law enforcement and health resources they enhance the ability of law enforcement agencies to achieve their goals of crime prevention, crime reduction and community safety.

Key principles of support

The undersigned believe the following principles are critical to policing key populations:

1. Support for interventions for HIV prevention among and from people who use drugs, sex workers, men who have sex with men and other key populations.
2. Support for all services oriented at reducing the harms associated with illicit drug use (e.g. prevention of drug overdose deaths).
3. Support for a health and rights-based approach to sex work, and all services oriented at reducing the harms experienced by sex workers (e.g. violence and the transmission of sexually transmitted infections).
4. Support for the appropriate use of administrative or criminal laws in ways which do not undermine HIV prevention programs among key populations.
5. Facilitate access to HIV/drug/sexually transmitted infection prevention, treatment and care services, including by adult and juvenile referral mechanisms.
6. Identification and application of alternatives to arrest and prosecution in appropriate cases, reducing costs to their own and other criminal justice agencies, reducing incarceration rates and divert vulnerable individuals from other unintended harmful consequences of the criminal justice system.
7. Support for comprehensive law enforcement training and education strategies, policy development and realistic performance indicators to ensure all individuals have access to essential HIV services.

Name:

Rank/Position:

Affiliation/agency (optional):

Signed : _____ **Date:** ____/____/____

Appendix

1. Harm reduction

“Harm reduction” broadly means Laws, policies, programmes and practices that aim primarily to reduce the adverse health, social and economic harms experienced by people who use drugs, sex workers, and other key populations, their families and the communities in which they live.

2. Key populations

Key populations include (to varying degrees depending on geography) persons who inject drug, sex workers and their clients, transgender persons, men who have sex with men, refugees, populations of humanitarian concern and those who are or have been incarcerated.

3. Comprehensive, evidence-based approaches in HIV prevention

- a. Comprehensive Package for HIV prevention among and from people who inject drugs. Source: WHO, UNODC, UNAIDS Technical Guide for Countries to Set Targets for Universal Access to HIV Prevention, Treatment and Care for Injecting Drug Users (World Health Organization, Geneva, 2009), http://data.unaids.org/UNA-docs/cco_idupolicy_en.pdf, http://www.unodc.org/documents/hiv-aids/idu_target_setting_guide.pdf
- b. Prevention and Treatment of HIV and other STI amongst MSM and Transgender People (Recommendations for a public health approach) (WHO/UNDP/MSMGF/UNAIDS/GIZ) 2011. http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/44619/1/9789241501750_eng.pdf
- c. Prevention and treatment of HIV and other STI for sex workers in low and middle income countries (UNFPA, WHO, UNAIDS, to be published 2012)