

Press statement

UNAIDS STATEMENT ON ACCESS TO HIV TREATMENT, PREVENTION AND CARE IN PRISON SETTINGS

Geneva, 21 August 2006 – HIV is a serious health threat for prison populations in many countries and presents significant challenges for prison and public health authorities and national governments.

Worldwide, the levels of HIV infection among prison populations tend to be much higher than in the population outside prisons. This situation is often accompanied and exacerbated by high rates of other infectious diseases such as hepatitis and tuberculosis. The generally accepted principle that prisons and prisoners remain part of the broader community means that the health threat of HIV within prisons, and the health threat outside of prisons, are inextricably linked.

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) underlines that HIV treatment, prevention and care should be accessible for all who need it, including those in prison settings.

At the XVI International Conference on AIDS held in Toronto, Canada from 13-18 August, UNAIDS and its cosponsors the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the World Health Organization published a framework for mounting a national response to AIDS in prisons entitled 'HIV/AIDS Prevention, Care, Treatment and Support in Prison Settings: A Framework for an Effective National Response'. This framework has been designed to meet international health and human rights standards, prioritize public health, is grounded in best practice, and supports the management of custodial institutions.

The Framework sets out a series of 11 principles and 100 actions for the treatment of prisoners and the management of prisons with the objectives of

- Providing prisoners with HIV prevention, care, treatment that is equivalent to that available to people in the community outside of prison.
- Preventing the spread of HIV (and other infections) among prisoners, to prison staff, and to the broader community;
- Promoting an integrated approach to healthcare within prisons to tackle wider public health issues, both through improvements in health care in general and through improvements in general prison conditions and management.

Like all people, prisoners are entitled to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health. This right is guaranteed under international law in Article 25 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. States therefore have an obligation to implement legislation, policies, and programmes consistent with international human rights norms, and to ensure that prisoners are provided a standard of health care equivalent to that available in the outside community. The Framework provides clear guidance to governments to assist them in meeting this obligation.

Within the Framework, UNAIDS, WHO and UNODC recommend specifically that all necessary health care is provided to prisoners free of charge and without discrimination at a level equivalent to that in the community, including referral and access to community health services when necessary. This should include HIV preventative measures, voluntary HIV testing and counseling, drug treatment services, HIV and AIDS treatment – including antiretroviral treatments – and care, mental health services, palliative care interventions and measures to prevent mother to child transmission of HIV.

Read the Framework in full at: http://data.unaids.org/pub/Report/2006/20060701_HIV-AIDS_prisons_en.pdf

Contact

Beth Magne-Watts | UNAIDS Geneva | +41 22 791 5074 | magnewatts@unaids.org