12 Key Points From a Global Meeting to Combat HIV Crime Laws

Over 150 advocates attended “Beyond Blame 2018.” Read the results—and watch the entire meeting here. [VIDEO]

October 12, 2018 By Trent Straube

If you were unable to attend the global meeting “Beyond Blame 2018: Challenging HIV Criminalization” this summer, don’t worry. You can get updated on all the takeaways and observations in a new report on the event. Plus, you can watch a video of the entire two-hour meeting online (we’ve posted it above).

Written by Sally Cameron of the HIV Justice Network on behalf of HIV Justice Worldwide, the free 54-page report can be downloaded here.

Cover of the 2018 reportCourtesy of HIVJustice.net

Over 150 advocates from 30 countries attended the meeting, which was held this summer in Amsterdam immediately before the 22nd International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2018). “Beyond Blame” included presentations, panel discussions and intimate workshops designed to share knowledge and coordinate efforts to end unjust HIV crime laws.

An announcement from HIV Justice Network about the report included numerous key points. Below are a dozen of those takeaways:

- The consequences of prosecution for alleged HIV nondisclosure prior to sex are enormous and may include being ostracized, dealing with trauma and ongoing mental health issues, loss of social standing, financial instability, multiple barriers to participation in society and sex offender registration.

- Survivors of the experience shared a sense of solidarity with others who had been through the system and were determined to use their voices to create change so that others do not have to go through similar experiences.

- Becoming an advocate against HIV criminalization is empowering and helps to make sense of individuals’ experiences.

- It is critical to frame advocacy against HIV criminalization around justice, effective public health strategy and science rather than relying on science alone, as this more comprehensive framing is both more strategic and will help prevent injustices that may result from a reliance on science alone.

- Improving courts’ understanding that effective treatment radically reduces HIV transmission risk (galvanized in the grassroots “U=U” movement) has the potential to dramatically decrease the number of prosecutions and convictions associated with HIV criminalization and could lead to a modernization of HIV-related laws.

- For many women, HIV disclosure is not a safe option.

- More work is needed to increase legal literacy and support for local women to develop and lead HIV criminalization advocacy based on their local context.

- When women affected by HIV have had the opportunity to consider the way that “protective” HIV laws are likely to be applied, they have often concluded that those laws will be used against them and have taken action to advocate against the use of those laws.

- As well as stigma, there are multiple structural barriers in place enabling HIV criminalization, including lags in getting modern science into courtrooms and incentives for police to bring cases for prosecution.

- Community mobilization is vital to successful advocacy. That work requires funding, education and dialogue among those most affected to develop local agendas for change.

- HIV criminalization plays out in social contexts, with patriarchal social structures and gender discrimination intersecting with race, class, sexuality and other factors to exacerbate existing social inequalities.

- Criminalization is complex and more work is required to build legal literacy of local communities.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/12-key-points-global-meeting-combat-hiv-crime-laws