VIENNA, 1 December (UN Information Service) - Millions of people suffering from HIV have for decades seen their needs ignored. Life-saving prevention and treatment that should reach everyone is often non-existent, arbitrary, or dependent on geography, gender, age or background.

"Closing the gap" is the theme of this year's World AIDS Day and it focuses on reducing the disparities in service provision that create these powerful inequities.

The UNAIDS campaign calls on everyone to empower and enable people everywhere to receive the evidence-based prevention and treatment they need. This means a level playing field for everyone by closing the testing, treatment and prevention access gaps.

UNODC assists people who use drugs, and people in prisons. Countries can help stem the epidemic among these populations, and by doing so, lend their support to the global target of ending AIDS by 2030.

But these gaps cannot be overcome without confronting the stigma, discrimination, and human rights breaches. No one facing HIV should be left behind or ignored. Laws and policies need to be reviewed to ensure drug users and prisoners have access to the necessary services, including harm reduction.

HIV services for prisoners, which form a fundamental element of their right to health, should be the equivalent of those offered in the community. HIV programmes in prisons also need to be tailored to meet the specific vulnerabilities of women.

As part of this critical work, UNODC is helping Member States prepare for the UN General Assembly Special Session on Drugs in 2016, which is linked to discussions on the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the UNGA High Level Meeting on AIDS in 2016.

On World AIDS Day, UNODC joins with its partners in UNAIDS to encourage everyone to confront the spread of HIV by "Closing the gap", especially among people who use drugs and people in prison, and by helping end AIDS by 2030.

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