

Invitation to join the Campaign

“Nobody Left Behind”

Dear Friends,

The world has witnessed truly extraordinary responses to the global HIV epidemic over the past three decades – ten million people provided with ARV treatment, HIV deaths reduced by 700,000 in seven years, and steadily declining rates of new HIV infections. But these advances bring up new barriers in the fight against the epidemic and breaking them down calls for an even stronger response than before. As Co-Chairs of the IAS Advisory Group on Key Affected Populations (KAPs), we invite you to join the Nobody Left Behind campaign, which calls on us to tackle the persisting obstacles that increase the burden of HIV among KAPs. Through this campaign, we hope to bring about a “turning point” in the global response to HIV/AIDS. We have defined these most marginalized and most vulnerable groups as people who inject drugs, transgender people, sex workers, and men who have sex with men (MSM).

Except in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), KAPs comprise the majority of those affected by HIV/AIDS, and they comprise an increasing proportion of new infections in urban settings throughout the world. In China, MSM account for one third of new infections. According to current projections, this group could make up more than half of all new infections in Asia by 2020. Growing rates of urbanization among marginalized groups seeking to explore their sexuality, as well as increased freedom of cultural and sexual expression is having an impact on HIV rates. In low- and middle-income countries, MSM and female sex workers are 19 and 13 times more likely to have HIV, respectively, than the rest of the population. KAPs are distanced from the support and services they need for many reasons, including economic and social inequalities, recurring stigma and discrimination, and political obstacles. Many repressive government policies advocate for criminalization of behaviors instead of comprehensive public health policies aimed at key populations most at-risk of HIV infection. There is a clear failure and unwillingness on the part of many governments to base health policy on the scientific evidence before them.

Cost is no longer the primary obstacle to providing access to HIV drugs. Today, ARV treatment is cheaper and more easily accessible than ever before, and there exist ample examples of successful, evidence-based interventions. There is a pressing need to re-evaluate our global HIV/AIDS response so that technological and scientific advances can benefit the most vulnerable and marginalized populations. Without urgent action, the end of the AIDS epidemic will remain unattainable in the foreseeable future. The IAS is launching its **Nobody Left Behind** campaign to address the lack of access to HIV treatment, prevention, and care services faced by many Key Affected Populations, with the urgency it deserves. We appeal for your active engagement in this campaign, and hope that you will contribute your thoughts, experiences, and advocacy efforts to make a lasting difference in the lives of the most marginalized communities.

Professor Chris Beyrer

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