



## Press Statement

### UNAIDS CONCERNED OVER ARRESTS OF MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN IN INDIA

**New Delhi, 10 January 2006** - The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) expresses concern at the recent arrest of a number of men who have sex with men in Lucknow, India and warns that the criminalization of people most at risk of HIV infection may increase stigma and discrimination, ultimately fuelling the AIDS epidemic.

UNAIDS underlines that in India, as in other countries where sex between men is criminalized by law, fear of prosecution often prevents men who have sex with men from accessing information and services they need to protect themselves from HIV infection.

UNAIDS also stresses that reaching out to men who have sex with men is key to strengthening the national AIDS response. Non-governmental organizations that help provide information, prevention tools (including access to condoms) and care need to be able to operate without fear.

UNAIDS commends the Government of India, under the leadership of the National AIDS Control Organization, for appointing officers in each state to work with people at most risk of HIV infection such as men who have sex with men, injecting drug users and sex workers. Building on this, UNAIDS encourages national police authorities to work closely with organizations that support communities vulnerable to HIV infection to further strengthen HIV prevention efforts in the country.

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