

STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2027

# Rights Within Reach

CHALLENGING WRONGS. ADVANCING RIGHTS. TRANSFORMING LIVES.



The HIV Legal Network promotes the human rights of people living with HIV or AIDS and other populations disproportionately affected by HIV and criminalization, in Canada and internationally. Now in our fourth decade, we remain steadfast in our commitment to people living with HIV and to those who experience criminalization, and we rededicate ourselves to this work to see their human rights respected, protected, and fulfilled.

## Reaching out to those most affected

*“The HIV Legal Network encompasses diverse communities and understands how to work with marginalized populations because it listens to its community and responds to the needs that people express.”*

As we work to address ongoing injustices and health inequities, we must recognize that many of these harms are the result of the history of colonization and its ongoing impacts, including practices and institutions that must be dismantled and reshaped to respect Indigenous People and Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

It is also critical that we acknowledge the legacy of anti-Black racism and its relationship to criminalization and punitive laws and practices, including regarding the issues on which we work. We recommit together to repairing harms and working towards a more just future.

While we know that human rights for all are within reach, we must also acknowledge that the greater involvement and meaningful engagement of people living with HIV is central to any successes in the fight against HIV. **It is to the millions of people with HIV, both those living and those who have gone before us, that we are indebted, some forty years into this epidemic.**

## How we got here

In 2021, we undertook a planning process that would shape the strategic goals and priorities for the organization’s next five years (2022-2027). To do this, we sought the input of a broad range of stakeholders, from partner organizations to people living with and affected by HIV and criminalization, to staff. All identified areas of potential growth for the Legal Network and ways to reshape our work to ensure that we move ever closer to our goal of fulfilling human rights for all.

The result of this process is an ambitious plan that continues the Legal Network’s momentum in several important policy areas. In addition, the plan outlines ways in which the Legal Network will forge new partnerships and deepen existing ones to further its commitment to reconciliation and centering Indigenous perspectives, combating anti-Black and other forms of racism, and employing an intersectional feminist lens throughout its work. Finally, it considers how the Legal Network must prioritize organizational development to meet its audacious — but reachable — goals.



# Vision

We envision a world in which the human rights and dignity of all people, including people living with HIV or AIDS and other populations disproportionately affected by HIV and criminalization, are respected, protected, and fulfilled; where all people understand and can exercise their human rights; and where laws and policies facilitate access to prevention, care, treatment, and support.

# Mission

The HIV Legal Network promotes the human rights of people living with HIV or AIDS and other populations disproportionately affected by HIV, punitive laws and policies, and criminalization, in Canada and internationally. We do this through research and analysis, litigation and other advocacy, public education, and community mobilization.

# Values

- The centrality of human rights in the response to HIV and other health concerns;
- A focus on the rights of populations disproportionately affected by HIV, punitive laws and policies, and criminalization;
- A commitment to partnership and ensuring the equitable and meaningful participation of people with lived and living experience in our work and in defining and implementing policies and programs;
- Ensuring the equitable and meaningful engagement of both francophones and anglophones in our work, and ensuring that our resources on domestic issues are accessible in both of Canada's official languages;
- A commitment to action and activism to make concrete political and social change;
- A commitment to employing an intersectional feminist lens in our work and on all of our issues;
- A commitment to confronting and drawing attention to anti-Black racism and other forms of racism in our work and on all of our issues;
- A commitment to reconciliation and to centering Indigenous perspectives in our work and on all of our issues, including the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls;
- Accountability to the communities we serve and to donors, including transparent reporting and effective use of resources;
- A commitment to global responsibility and engagement, to stand in solidarity with people living with HIV and affected populations internationally and to expand the reach of our human rights work; and
- A commitment to excellence in all areas of our work.



## Priorities for the future

***“Their radar is always on! The Legal Network is consistently ahead of the curve on the issues.”***

When we developed our previous Strategic Plan — *Respect, Protect, Fulfill: A Human Rights Response to HIV* — we could not have known to prepare for a world-altering pandemic. While COVID has changed how we do our work — and had an outsized impact on many populations who are already made vulnerable by socio-economic conditions and marginalized by punitive laws and policies — it has also reinforced our commitment to the human rights and health of people disproportionately affected by HIV and criminalization.

In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, we anticipate that a number of other challenges will continue or develop over the duration of this current plan: the situation in Eastern Europe, and in particular in Russia, poses enormous difficulties for the Legal Network’s unique work and important commitment to communities in the region. Further, rising threats to democracy and increasing expressions of hate and intolerance towards communities of focus for the Legal Network make our work more important, but also more dangerous, in some places.

As identified by our key stakeholders, the HIV Legal Network possesses the strengths needed to rise to the known and unknown challenges ahead: its integrity, accountability, strong leadership, highly skilled staff, and diverse partnerships have put the Legal Network in a position to achieve its goals over the next five years.



## Reaching for rights: How we'll get there

**For 2022-2027, our primary goals are to:**

1. Challenge criminal and other punitive laws and policies, and work towards protective laws and policies, both in Canada and abroad
2. Support specific populations using an intersectional lens
3. Prioritize organizational development

# Measuring success: Priority outcomes for each goal

**Challenge criminal and other punitive laws and policies, and work towards protective laws and policies, both in Canada and abroad**

***“Their legal expertise is unparalleled.”***

- People who use drugs are no longer criminalized for simple drug possession and necessity trafficking; low-barrier, culturally appropriate, and gender-sensitive harm reduction is widely available (including in prison); and people who use drugs have access to a safe, regulated supply.
- Sex work-specific criminal offences are repealed, and sex workers are no longer subject to punitive campaigns that target their work and workplaces.
- Fewer people are charged, convicted, or incarcerated for HIV non-disclosure, exposure, or transmission.
- 2SLGBTQIA+ people are no longer criminalized for consensual, same-sex intimacy.

**Support specific populations using an intersectional lens**

***“The HIV Legal Network knows that people don’t lead single issue lives.”***

- People living with HIV and/or HCV and affected populations in Canada and other countries in which we work are empowered to exercise their rights in the context of HIV and related infections and to advance human rights-based approaches and programs in the context of HIV and related infections, including through educational activities, resources, and legal information and technical support.
- The Legal Network increases its understanding of how Indigenous communities are disproportionately affected by HIV, punitive laws and policies, and criminalization (in all its forms) and develops resources to honour the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.
- The Legal Network increases its understanding of how Black and other racialized communities are disproportionately affected by HIV, punitive laws and policies, and criminalization (in all its forms) and develops resources with these communities to increase their ability to exercise their rights in the context of HIV.
- The Legal Network increases its understanding of how women and gender-diverse people are affected by HIV, punitive laws and policies, and criminalization (in all its forms) and develops resources with these communities to increase their ability to exercise their rights in the context of HIV.



## Prioritize organizational development

***“With so much to be done, the HIV Legal Network must be strategic in how it does its work.”***

- The Legal Network will work towards diverse, sustainable, and flexible sources of funding.
- The Legal Network will grow staff complement, support existing staff and growth, and provide leadership that builds on past successes and considers lessons learned.
- The Legal Network will develop and refine current communications tools to better serve key audiences.



# Human rights **ARE** within reach

While our mission has evolved since we began 30 years ago, the HIV Legal Network's core values and goal have remained steadfast — to ensure the human rights of people living with HIV and all affected populations, both in Canada and around the world. Our strategic planning process shows that we are supported in this work by our partner organizations, who view us as a collaborative leader in the field. This role will only grow as we reaffirm our commitment to working with the community, to building our connections with community-based Indigenous and Black organizations, and to increasing our staff complement. Success will depend on our ability to influence government appetite for legislative change and on diversifying sources of funding, enabling us to broaden our reach. While there will be challenges from the political climate in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we are also confident in our ability to weather both storms and emerge stronger on the other side. **Our resolve is unwavering, as is our commitment to people living with HIV or AIDS and other populations disproportionately affected by HIV and criminalization. We will continue to challenge wrongs, advance rights, and transform lives the world over.**



## We are a registered charity.

Please consider supporting our work with a donation.  
For more information: [www.hivlegalnetwork.ca/donate](http://www.hivlegalnetwork.ca/donate)

## Why not become a member?

Membership is open to any organization or individual that supports our goals and activities.  
For more information: [www.hivlegalnetwork.ca/joinus](http://www.hivlegalnetwork.ca/joinus)

## Follow us!

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**Visit [www.hivlegalnetwork.ca](http://www.hivlegalnetwork.ca) to learn more about our work.**

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