

POSITIVE LIVING IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

The harms caused by the war on drugs can no longer be ignored.

It's time to leave behind harmful politics, ideology and prejudice.



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This edition of the newsletter is dedicated to people who use drugs and are living with HIV.

WHAT WE ARE HEARING FROM PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS

CHECK THIS OUT!

Check out LANPUD's infographics on [COVID-19 and Harm reduction](#); and read a [series of articles and recommendations](#).

Watch SANPUD's [videos on COVID-19 safety](#), including during [harm reduction outreach](#); and also check out their resources on [Drugs in the time of CORONA](#)

Watch INPUD and the Global Commission on Drug Policy's Dialogue series on [COVID-19 and Empowerment of People Who Use Drugs](#).

Check out the [Joint Letter to the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health](#) on protecting and promoting the health of people who use drugs, by INPUD, IDPC, HRI, and others.

Check out the [GDS Corona Conversations](#) to hear from global experts how COVID-19 is affecting people who use drugs.

Check out UNODC's [tips for clients and service providers](#).

Take a look at INPUD: [COVID-19 specific harm reduction recommendations](#) for people who use drugs.

Harm reduction efforts compromised

- There are **many parts of the world** where OST and naloxone remains unavailable, regardless of COVID-19. Some countries/cities have changed policies or relaxed guidelines on the amount of take-home and unsupervised doses available to people on OST. There are reports from other locations that these services are less available now due to closure of mainstream services.
- In **India, Nepal, and Bangladesh**, enrolment in OST programmes has stopped due to lockdown. And while activists in **India** have successfully lobbied for take-home dose programmes, these are not being uniformly implemented across the country.

"Multiple overdoses in the park. Less services mean more people at risk."
- The United States of America

Criminalisation and violence

- People who use drugs especially those who are homeless are more likely to be stopped by police including in **Australia, India, Mauritius, United States, Italy, Paraguay, and Ukraine**.
- Women who use drugs are reporting increased intimate partner violence during lockdown. Some female sex workers who use drugs are experiencing increased threats of violence and coercion during COVID.

"Only the newly opened one shelter for homeless drug users. Nothing else and sadly nothing for women. Nothing provided for abused women who use drugs."

- Greece

Reduced access to health and support services

- In many countries, including **Greece, Mexico, and Belarus**, government services have shut down leaving NGO and peer-run services as the only services operating in some areas.
- In **South Africa**, many street-based people who use drugs have been forced into temporary shelters without sufficient medication to assist with withdrawal or medications for HIV and TB. While many shelters were serving as safe spaces, there were also reports of some people being restrained in them.
- From **India to United States**, people who use drugs are unable to access social protection as many of them do not have official identity papers.
- In INPUD's **global** survey of people who use drugs, between 40 - 50% of respondents reported feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and social isolation.

"We have rather been the main target of police and gendarmeries since the crisis started since there are many homeless drug users and no consumption room existing."

- Cameroon

Above data sources were obtained courtesy of INPUD's **Global Survey on the Health & Rights of People Who Use Drugs in a COVID-19 Environment** - see [first report just launched!](#)

INPUD are continuing to collect info on the impact of COVID-19 on communities of people who use drugs. To complete the open COVID-19 survey [visit their page](#).

Visit our [COVID-19 webpage](#) to find past editions of the newsletter and other resources.

HOW OUR COMMUNITY IS RESPONDING

“COVID-19 has been a pathway for us to advocate against the incarceration of people who use drugs, with several countries like Thailand, Myanmar and Philippines releasing inmates in a bid to reduce overcrowding and enforce social distancing norms in prisons.”

- Yatie Jonet, Drug Policy Reform Activist, Malaysia

OST ADVOCACY

In country after country, activists are using the opportunity to change policies and improve access to take-home doses of OST. **Alliance India**, **Indian Drug Users Forum** and **State Drug Users Forums** have successfully lobbied the government to provide take-home doses of Buprenorphine for those on OST programmes. **Recovering Nepal** has developed a take-home dose protocol with the Ministry of Health, to meet the medical needs of people who use drugs during lockdown. **GeNPUD**, **Georgia**, with others, also successfully advocated for a take-away regimen for thousands of beneficiaries of OST programmes.

Acción Técnica Social, Colombia is providing toiletries, PPE kits and food to homeless people including care for their pet animals. They are also running sessions on supervised drug consumption rooms and providing information on COVID-19.



KeNPUD, Kenya has been linking people who use drugs with social services, SRHR and nutrition support. Working in partnership with **VOCAL**, they have been sensitising senior law enforcers to have more supportive policies toward people who live on the streets and reduce arbitrary arrests.

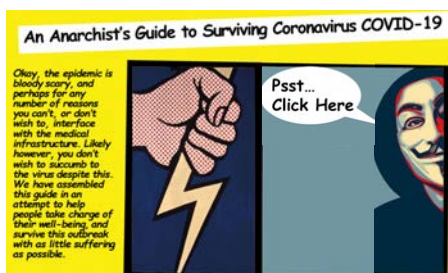


SANPUD, South Africa have negotiated with donors to reallocate funds to support women who use drugs with essential health and hygiene supplies. They are also buying medication for opiate withdrawal and supplying these to the shelters for street-based people who use drugs. Another group, **COSUP**, Pretoria are working in a more supporting environment and their teams are able to provide OST and NSP services.

Right of Everyone, Russia, near the border with Kazakhstan identified families living with HIV, mostly people who use drugs, who had not been reached by humanitarian aid. Outreach workers raised funds from local communities and supported 36 families including 42 kids with packages of food and medication.



Globally, **INPUD** and regionally, **LANPUD**, **ENPUD** and **ANPUD** have been conducting surveys among people who use drugs, raising funds for emergency support, providing accessible and accurate information on harm reduction during COVID-19 and continuing their advocacy for drug policy reform.



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU AND WANT TO SALUTE YOU – LIKE HEALTH CARE WORKERS YOU ARE ALSO ON THE FRONTLINE.