

## HEALTH CARE PROGRAM FOR INCARCERATED PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS (PWUD) IN PRISON SETTINGS- SINDH & KHYBER PAKHTUNKHA PRISONS

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Nai Zindagi

**Background:** Nai Zindagi provides comprehensive HIV prevention and harm reduction to approximately 45,000 people who inject drugs (PWID) across Pakistan. However, incarcerated individuals in prisons did not have access to any regular service despite the vulnerable living conditions caused by overcrowding in these settings.

**Description:** Recognizing the barrier imprisonment poses to accessing healthcare, Nai Zindagi launched a prison program in September 2021, offering HIV related services in all 25 prisons of Sindh province. The services include testing, counseling, treatment and legal services to cater to the specialized need of incarcerated people who use drugs (PWUD).

**Lessons learned:** Between September 2021-2024, distinct 20264 prison inmates were tested, with 539 HIV-positive cases identified. Of these, 460 were linked for regular ARVs provision through public sector ART Centre. The program also expanded Hepatitis C (HCV) services, conducting 5232 tests, which identified 529 positive cases and 40 co-infections. The program's success has led to its expansion to Central Prison Peshawar in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The services provided within prisons are integrated with NZ's district-level prevention programs to ensure continuity, both before arrest and after release, tailored to specific needs. Additionally, the spouses of imprisoned PWUD are reached at home by female staff, ensuring differentiated services based on circumstances. Additionally, Nai Zindagi addresses the legal needs of incarcerated. From February 2023 to August 2024, 196 cases were referred, with 100% inmate interviews conducted and 191 legal representations filed. These efforts resulted in 42% of prisoners securing bail and 61.1% of cases leading to acquittals. The legal cases span a range of offenses, including narcotics-related crimes and theft.

**Conclusions/Next steps:** This integrated approach of providing health and legal services addresses gaps in care for incarcerated PWID, improving HIV and HCV outcomes while ensuring legal representation. NZ's model offers a scalable solution for addressing the challenges faced by this vulnerable population in prisons.