

SUGGESTED ENDING WITH A STRONG STATEMENT ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUITY FOR PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS IN AFRICA

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AfricaNPUD is a drug user led network operating across the continent to promote effective harm reduction interventions for people who use drugs [PWUD] and PLHIV, Hepatitis, TB or other relevant health issues. As a community directly affected by decisions on health services, we believe our voice and input is essential to ensuring the health needs of people who use drugs are met by the global community. Across Africa, health services continue to fall short of meeting the needs of PWUDs. Despite recommendations by UN agencies such as UNAIDS, UNDP and WHO, prohibition remains the central component of drug policies. This approach stands in opposition to the evidence-based program which acknowledge that upholding structural barriers such as criminalization, and societal barriers such as stigmatization, prevent both access and implementation of practices which are proven to be effective at reducing drug related deaths and the transmission of HIV, HCV, TB and other diseases. The lack of funding opportunities for community-led organizations providing essential services also prevent meaningful involvement of PWUDs in the decision making process, prohibiting those who are both affected by, and have the solutions to, these issues from sharing their intimate knowledge. This disproportionately affects low income countries as the equity of funding decisions is not balanced enough to meet the needs of the most marginalized. Without effective health program designed and led by people who use drugs the global community will continue to fall short of achieving Sustainable Development Goal #3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. Countries which continue to criminalize people who use drugs rather than implement evidence-based health services stand in opposition to this goal, as they are not operating under a principle of inclusivity and ignoring proven interventions which help save lives.