

THE GLOBAL DRUG POLICY INDEX: LEVERAGING THE POWER OF DATA TO ADVOCATE FOR DRUG POLICY REFORM

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Background:

Globally, over half of the estimated 585,000 drug use-related deaths are associated with hepatitis C. The lack of access to harm reduction and repressive drug policies are major drivers of the hepatitis C epidemic among people who use drugs. The Global Drug Policy Index is the first ever composite index that documents, measures and compares national drug policies, providing each country with a score to facilitate cross-national comparison.

Methods:

The 'Harm Reduction Consortium' is a coalition of NGOs led by IDPC. Partnering with Swansea University, the Harm Reduction Consortium has used a participatory approach - collecting inputs from civil society, academia, experts in indices, and UN officials - to develop the Index methodology. The tool comprises 60+ indicators across four dimensions: criminal justice responses, health and harm reduction, the availability of controlled medicines, and development. The Index looks both at policies and their implementation. This pilot project evaluates 31 countries from all regions of the world selected based on data availability, the presence of civil society working on drug policy, and country relevance for drug policy. Data collection includes desk-based research and a civil society survey.

Results:

At the time of writing this abstract, the Index is still in the data collection phase ahead of its launch in October 2021. The INHSU Conference will be the first presentation of the data and rankings – with an exploration of lessons learned for drug policy reform.

Conclusion:

The Index is a tool for national advocacy, leveraging the 'soft power' of indices of this kind to exert pressure for policy change. The Index has been developed through close partnership with local NGOs. Its launch will include capacity building workshops, communications/media outreach support, and local advocacy actions planned and implemented by local partners – with a focus on decriminalisation and harm reduction.

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