

Human Rights Programming: Easing Access to Justice for People who Use Drugs

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Background:

People who use drugs in South Africa often face significant human rights violations, which can exacerbate their vulnerabilities and hinder harm reduction efforts. NACOSA manages the implementation of the People who Use Drugs programme in 8 Cities in South Africa under the Global Fund grant, with particular human rights interventions mainstreamed within its programme.

Description of model of care/intervention:

Interventions implemented were human rights violation (HRV) monitoring, sensitization of high-level stakeholders, community dialogues and legal literacy sessions with key populations to capacitate them to assert their rights.

Effectiveness:

Saw a significant increase of HRVs reported from 863 reported in December 2023 to 2365 HRVs reported in December 2024. Confiscation of needles by Law enforcement and communities is the main HRV reported (138 875 needles confiscated from 1 April 2022 to 31 August 2024). During this period, NACOSA piloted the provision of paralegal services to support implementers to refer and case manage HRVs reported which contributed to 90% successful outcomes of HRV cases referred. Paralegals have strengthened referral pathways to pro bono legal service providers, with an increase of PWUD accessing legal support from 69 in December 2023 to 380 in December 2024.

Conclusion and next steps:

Legal literacy amongst key populations and decentralizing HRV monitoring and response at a community level is key to addressing stigma and discrimination as is consistent sensitization of government and community stakeholders. However, formalized interventions to support access to justice such as placement of paralegals and firm referral pathways to sensitized legal support services should be resourced and expanded.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: *See example below:*

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