



**Future Directions and Research Priorities : The  
challenges facing  
innovation and harm reduction strategy  
implementation and regulation  
by  
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# HARM REDUCTION

Refers to “policies, programmes and practices that aim primarily to reduce the adverse health, social and economic consequences of the use of legal and illegal psychoactive drugs without necessarily reducing drug consumption.”

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Harm Reduction in our daily life

- Crash Helmets
- Protective Gears
- Pen

# Current Innovations in Implementation of Harm Reduction

1. Comprehensive One-Stop Center (DiC)
2. Integration of HTS, hepC treatment, mental health care, and SRH
3. Technological Innovations:
  - Mobile Van Dispensing Model
  - ACASI ( Audio Computer Assisted self Interview)
  - Telemedicine: Virtual consultations on harm reduction services, especially in remote areas
  - Take home doses for buprenorphine drugs
4. Integrating Harm Reduction with Social Services
  - Empowered PWUD initiative for social economic transformation model (EPIT)

# Innovations in harm reduction

## 5. Legal and Policy Reforms

We have not yet reached far in term of legal reform innovations. The law still criminalizes possession and use of illicit drug.

However our advocacy has led to;

- Creation of champions within the law enforcement and policy makers
- Campaigns for decriminalization of small possession are on going

## 6. Community-Led Approaches

- **Harm reduction peer-led Programs:**  
Programs designed and led by people with lived experience of substance use

## 7. Global partnerships and funding

- **Increased international collaboration:**  
Organizations like UNAIDS, UNODC, Global Fund, NIH, local and international universities.

# Innovations in harm reduction



**ACASI  
( Audio  
Computer  
Assisted  
self  
Interview)**



# Challenges that affect implemen tation of our innovation s

- **Stigma and Discrimination:** stigma from communities, healthcare providers, and policymakers towards people who use drugs.
- **Criminalization of drug use** and punitive legal frameworks make it difficult to establish or scale up harm reduction interventions like NSP or opioid substitution therapy.
- **Resource Limitations:** limited funding for harm reduction innovation in Uganda
- **Limited Data and Research:** no national size estimation for people who are addicted to illicit drugs in Uganda.
- **Cultural Barriers:** cultural perceptions about drug use that hinder acceptance of harm reduction interventions.

# Challenges that affect implemen tation of our innovation S

- **Balancing innovation with human rights:**  
Some innovations, like biometric tracking for program users, raise privacy and ethical concerns.
- **Accessibility barriers** for MAT and NSP services are attributed to centralized dispensing, long distances, and high transport fares.
- **Policymakers are hesitant to endorse harm reduction** due to political pressures, fear of public backlash, or conflicting priorities
- **Low-threshold social support mechanisms** for recovering clients on MAT, i.e., livelihood skills enhancement, nutrition support, temporary shelter, and IGA



**Challenges  
that affect  
implemen  
tation of  
our  
innovation  
s**

- **Weak health systems** and the failure to integrate harm reduction with primary healthcare services limit the sustainability of programs
- **Arrests and harassment of PWUD** fuelled by AHA and NDPSA 2023

A stylized map of Uganda is shown on the left side of the slide, with a light blue background and a yellow border. The map is partially obscured by the title text.

## Future Directions for Harm Reduction in Uganda

- **Sustainable Funding Models:** advocate for public-private partnerships, international collaborations, and government support to sustain harm reduction initiatives.
- **Community Education and Sensitization:** we recommend culturally sensitive campaigns to reduce stigma and educate the public.
- **Capacity Building:** we recommend training healthcare providers, social workers, and law enforcement on harm reduction principles.
- **Policy and Legal Reform:** repeal restrictive policies such as narcotics drugs and psychotropic substances Control Act.

# Future Directions for Harm Reduction in Uganda

- **Strengthening data and research.** Generate more evidence to guide harm reduction policy and practice.
- **Empower the People who are addicted to drug use** and other substances to voice up their needs and priorities issues
- **Addressing stigma and discrimination**
- **Scale up harm reduction services /** harm reduction innovations
- Nutrition support and livelihood enhancement interventions for PWUD in care
- **Advancing policy advocacy**
- **Building partnerships and networks**

## Research Priorities

- **Behavioral Studies:** Explore research on drug use behaviors, focusing on barriers to and facilitators of treatment compliance.
- **Health Outcomes Monitoring:** longitudinal studies on the health impact of harm reduction interventions
- **Impact of Legal Reform:** Studies on how changes in drug policies impact harm reduction service accessibility and outcomes.
- **Cost-effectiveness Analyses:** Conduct analyses to support the case for funding by demonstrating the cost-effectiveness of harm reduction.

**Support.**  
**DON'T**  
**PUNISH.**

