

Introduction to Harm Reduction

SSDP Africa Leaders Training
November 2020

ssdp Students for
Sensible
Drug Policy

Start making sense™

Harm reduction is a set of practical strategies and ideas aimed at reducing negative consequences associated with drug use. Harm Reduction is also a movement for social justice built on a belief in, and respect for, the rights of people who use drugs.

Harm reduction is a compassionate and pragmatic approach to helping people resolve their problems with drugs.

Principles of Harm Reduction

1. Accepting drug use, illegal or otherwise, is part of our society. Choosing to minimize the harmful effects rather than condemning or ignoring drug use

Principles of Harm Reduction

2. Understanding drug use is a complicated thing, that includes a wide range of behaviours from high usage to total abstinence, and recognising that some ways of using drugs are safer than others.

Principles of Harm Reduction

3. Considers quality of individual and community life and well-being — not necessarily stopping drug use — as the criteria for success

Principles of Harm Reduction

4. Calls for the non-judgmental, non-coercive provision of services and resources to people who use drugs and the communities in which they live in order to assist them in reducing harm

Principles of Harm Reduction

5. Ensuring that people who use drugs and those with a history of drug use have their voice centred in the creation of programs and policies designed to serve them

Principles of Harm Reduction

6. Emphasizes that people who use drugs (PWUD) themselves are the best way of reducing the harms of their drug use and seeks to empower PWUD to share information and support each other in strategies which meet their actual conditions of use

Principles of Harm Reduction

7. Recognizes that the realities of poverty, class, racism, social isolation, past trauma, sex-based discrimination, and other social inequalities affect both people's vulnerability to and capacity for effectively dealing with drug-related harm

Principles of Harm Reduction

8. Does not attempt to minimize or ignore the real and tragic harm and danger that can be associated with illicit drug use

In 2018, there was an estimated 2.3 million People Who Inject Drugs in Sub Saharan Africa. 546,000 of them are living with HIV - United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, World Drug Report 2018

Examples of Harm Reduction



Obayemi Babasola

*Programs Officer at the Youth
Development and Health Initiative*

Working on harm reduction (HIV/AIDS, needle and syringe programs, wound treatment and behavioural change communication) for Injecting Drug Users in Nigeria.



Adebisi Yusuff Adebayo

*Director for Research at Global Health Focus
& Director for Research and Innovation at the
African Young Leaders for Health*

He is a global health advocate and budding health systems researcher with a special interest in global public health issues affecting the global South and beyond. He is committed to advancing global health through research, innovation and advocacy.

Readings & Resources

- [Regional Review: Sub-Saharan Africa - Harm Reduction International](#)
- [Declaration of Dakar on Harm Reduction among People Who Inject Drugs in West Africa](#)
- [Perceptions Surrounding Persons Who Use Drugs - YouthRISE Nigeria](#)
- Join the facebook group [SSDP Harm Reduction](#) to ask questions and learn about resources
- [A Cultural Approach to HIV/AIDS Harm Reduction in Muslim Countries](#) - Harm Reduction Journal
- [Invisible Victims: Drugs, State and Youth in Liberia & Sierra Leone - Open Society Initiative West Africa](#)
- [Model Drug Law for West Africa: A Tool for Policy Makers - West African Drug Policy Network](#)
- [Not Just in Transit: Drugs, State and Society in West Africa - West African Commission on Drugs](#)
- [Drug Laws in West Africa: A Review and Summary - International Drug Policy Network](#)