



HARM REDUCTION
INTERNATIONAL

Strategic Plan 2018-2020

VISION

Our vision is a world in which individuals and communities benefit from drug policies, practices and laws that promote health, dignity and human rights.



MISSION

Harm Reduction International works to reduce drug-related harms by promoting evidence-based public health policy and practices, and human rights-based approaches to harm reduction through an integrated programme of research, analysis, advocacy and partnerships.

We define harm reduction as referring to the 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. Harm reduction benefits people who use drugs, their families and the community.

Since the development of the 2014-2017 Harm Reduction International strategy, significant social and political changes have taken place across the globe: populism is on the rise, organisations designed to foster international cooperation face growing hostility and a resurgent ‘war on drugs’ has seen brutal policies legitimised in many countries. Simultaneously, we note steps towards decriminalisation of drugs for personal use at national and subnational level; we achieved the strongest ever endorsement of harm reduction interventions at the 2016 UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on Drugs; and, following a period of stagnation, we now see new countries implementing harm reduction interventions (predominantly in Africa). This complex combination of progress and regressive trends shape our work, and the vision we seek to achieve.

More immediate to our work, austerity and donor withdrawal continue to impede harm reduction programming at a time when need is acute. The ‘war on drugs’ has left people and communities extremely vulnerable to human rights violations, as demonstrated by the wave of extra-judicial killings in the Philippines, the mass arrests and round-ups of drug users in East Africa and the soaring HIV and hepatitis C rates among marginalised groups in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Together with notable shifts in the ways people are using drugs, new psychoactive substances on the market, and the shocking spike in drug-related overdose in countries such as the US, Canada and UK, these factors make for a complex environment in which to advocate for harm reduction and human rights.

Despite this increasingly challenging landscape, Harm Reduction International has enjoyed a number of notable recent successes. Our advocacy in the lead-up to the UNGASS on Drugs and the 2016 High-Level Meeting on Ending AIDS contributed to the adoption of new language incorporating human rights and supporting efforts to minimise the negative health and social consequences of drug use. Our research and advocacy for the abolition of the death penalty for drugs remains a groundbreaking example of our efforts to challenge the application of drug control policy in contravention of international human rights law. And, our call for the redirection of funds from law enforcement to harm reduction under the 10 by 20 campaign has gained traction, with the message of appropriate allocation of resources for harm reduction being echoed at national and international level.

In 2017, we convened more than a thousand health professionals, activists, academics, human rights advocates and government representatives at the 25th Harm Reduction International Conference to boost solidarity, learning and exchange within the sector. We also built upon our work with the Harm Reduction Champions Network – a Harm Reduction International platform facilitating exchange and advocacy for governments, donors and civil society committed to harm reduction.

Harm Reduction International recognises that the negative health and social impact of drug use and drug markets falls disproportionately upon populations that already experience racial, economic, gender-based or class-based discrimination or human rights abuses. For this reason, we see our role as being an active player in broader struggles for global justice and health. Our expertise and convening power enable us to build the evidence base, build the field and build influence – by connecting international level research, analysis and advocacy with initiatives at regional and local level.

In pursuit of our overarching mission, our strategic objectives for the 2018-2020 period are:

- ▶ **To build and share the evidence-base for harm reduction policies, practices and laws.**
- ▶ **To strengthen constituencies and build new allies to advocate for harm reduction and human rights.**
- ▶ **To increase political will to protect, respect and fulfil the human rights of vulnerable individuals and communities, by funding and implementing harm reduction.**

Details of activities under each of these strategic objectives are covered in our work plan. In developing this strategic plan, we drew upon learning from the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan; convened strategy days (involving both the Board of Directors and the staff) and considered how the political, social and economic environment has shifted. We incorporated feedback from external consultation, then worked to present this strategy in a coherent, succinct manner.

VISION

A world in which individuals and communities benefit from drug policies, laws and practices that promote health, dignity and human rights

PRE-CONDITIONS FOR CHANGE

A strong evidence base that demonstrates the effectiveness of a harm reduction approach underpinned by public health and human rights principles

A strong constituency of organisations and individuals committed to harm reduction and human rights

The political will among governments and donors to allocate appropriate resources to harm reduction

KEY ASSUMPTIONS

Governments and other decision makers can be influenced by evidence rather than stigma and preconceptions

Diverse constituencies are able to find a shared agenda and work together to promote harm reduction and human rights

Sufficient resources are available at the local, national, regional and international level to fund quality harm reduction programmes

MISSION

Harm Reduction International works to reduce drug-related harms by promoting evidence-based public health policy and practices, and human rights-based approaches to harm reduction through an integrated programme of research, analysis, advocacy and partnerships

MISSION

Harm Reduction International works to reduce drug-related harms by promoting evidence-based public health policy and practices, and human rights-based approaches to harm reduction through an integrated programme of research, analysis, advocacy and partnerships

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

To build and share the evidence base for harm reduction policies, practices and laws

To strengthen constituencies and build new alliances to advocate for harm reduction and human rights

To increase political will to protect, respect and fulfil the human rights of vulnerable individuals and communities, by funding and implementing harm reduction

KEY OUTCOMES BY 2020

BUILDING THE EVIDENCE BASE

- Strengthened evidence base for harm reduction, and for sustainable investment in harm reduction.

- Strengthened case for the application of international human rights standards to drug-related laws, policies and practice.

- Demonstrated HRI capacity to track and contribute to knowledge on changing drug use, drug policy trends and innovative harm reduction interventions.

STRENGTHENING THE FIELD

- Increased uptake of evidence and tools by the harm reduction practitioners and advocates in order to monitor availability and access to harm reduction; and track investment in harm reduction.

- Increased emphasis on the rights of people who use drugs in harm reduction policy and practice.

- Greater collaboration and exchange between harm reduction practitioners and advocates leading to strengthened solidarity and greater capacity to communicate about harm reduction in a compelling manner.

INCREASING POLITICAL COMMITMENT

- Increased support for harm reduction by government actors at national, regional and international level.

- Increased application of human rights standards by governments in the context of drug policy; as well as broader recognition of the intersections between drug-related harm, gender, race, social, economic and political factors and human rights.

- New allies from across civil society; and greater connections between harm reduction, human rights and broader health movements.

ORGANISATIONAL OBJECTIVES

To maintain strong financial management practices, and to diversify our fund base

To motivate and support staff and management, and to be guided by strategic planning and learning

To ensure our work is supported by good governance and effective oversight mechanisms