

India Country Advocacy Brief Injecting Drug Use and HIV

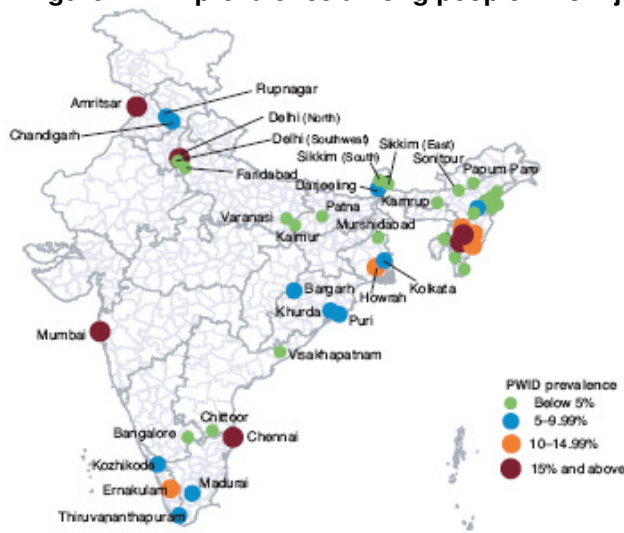
Key actions to be supported

- Formulation of legislation and policy that enables access to harm reduction interventions by people who inject drugs
- Endorsement of the harm reduction approach specified in the National AIDS Prevention and Control Policy (2002)
- High level dialogue between Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Ministry of Finance and the Narcotics Control Board to coordinate national efforts towards universal access for people who inject drugs
- A balanced national drug policy, consisting of supply, demand and harm reduction
- Expansion of the opioid substitution therapy (OST) programme to cover at least 40% of people who are dependent on opiates and provision of choice of OST, including both buprenorphine and methadone
- Expansion of the needle and syringe programme to cover at least additional 50-60% of the target population, particularly in areas with new and / or emerging HIV epidemics
- Recognition of hepatitis C diagnostics and treatment, diagnosis and treatment of tuberculosis, as critical components of the comprehensive package of interventions recommended by WHO, UNODC and UNAIDS
- Increasing access to ART for those who need it and ensure availability of second line drugs
- Strengthening of the national network of people who use or who inject drugs and advocacy for inclusion or and involvement of people who use/inject drugs in the policy and programme formulation processes
- Discussion and consensus on the merits of a national multi-agency working group / task force on drugs and HIV
- All interventions for drug users to include their sexual partners
- Better data-collection and management information system which enables informed policy formulation and programme planning and management.

Situation of drug use and HIV

- HIV prevalence among people who inject drugs was first reported in Manipur, northeast India, where prevalence increased from zero per cent to 50% in 1989.¹ By the 1990s, prevalence among men who inject drugs was 80% and by 1996 45% of antenatal women in Manipur were reported with HIV.²

Figure 1. HIV prevalence among people who inject drugs (2008)³



- An estimated 186,000 men and women inject drugs in India⁴ and the prevalence of HIV in this population has been reported to range from 1.3% to 68.4% across the country.⁵
- The overall HIV prevalence among IDUs as per the 2008-2009 sentinel surveillance data was approximately nine per cent.⁶
- The most frequently injected drugs are heroin, buprenorphine and pharmaceutical drugs, and the use of amphetamine type stimulants (ATS) is reportedly on the increase.⁷

- In the northeast India, injecting of dextropropoxyphene, meant for oral consumption, has been reported.
- While sexual transmission continues to be the main mode of HIV transmission, injecting drug use is emerging as an important mode of transmission in several new parts of the country, including Punjab, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Kerala and Maharashtra.⁸
- It has been estimated that in 2008, there were 2.27 million people between the ages 15-49 years living with HIV in India.⁹

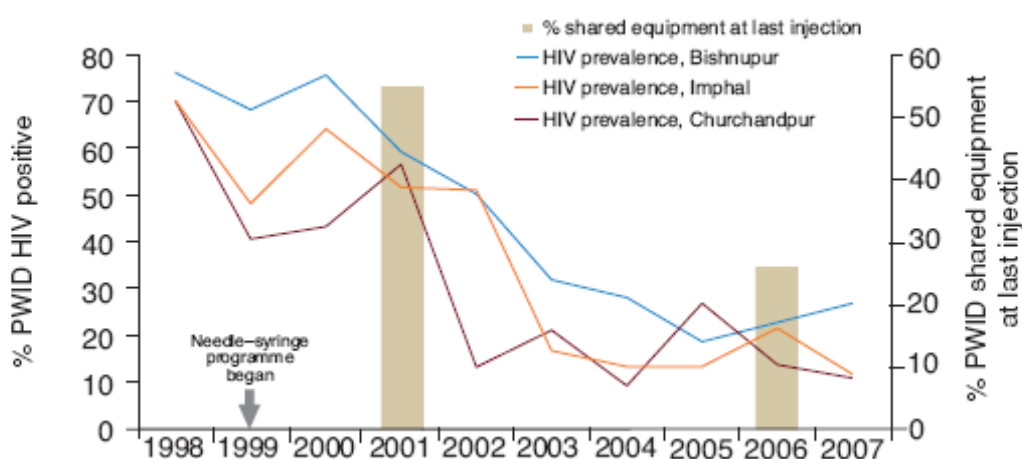
Legal and policy context and the national HIV response

- Under The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (1985) drug users may be arrested and prosecuted on charges of possession of and / or consumption of a small quantity of classified drugs. The offense is punishable with imprisonment for 6-12 months, depending on the quantity and type of drug.¹⁰ Those convicted for possession and/or consumption of a small quantity may be diverted into treatment under certain conditions and drug users undergoing treatment may seek immunity from prosecution.¹¹
- While possession of injecting equipment per se is not illegal, provision of sterile injecting equipment for drug users may amount to “aiding and abetting offence of unlawful consumption of drugs”.¹²
- Opioid substitution therapy is administered in accordance with the Standard Operating Procedure for Oral Substitution Therapy with Buprenorphine (2008) and Practice Guidelines on Substitution Therapy with Buprenorphine for Opioid Injecting Drug Users (2008).
- The national harm reduction response is guided by the Strategy and Implementation Plan and Operational Guidelines for Targeted Interventions under the National AIDS Control Programme Phase III, 2007-2012.
- Absence of a single harmonized national policy to address drugs, including supply, demand and harm reduction, remains a major gap in the national policy.

HIV risk and vulnerability

- There has been encouraging reports of a decline in sharing of injecting equipment at last injection, from 55% in 2001 to 26% in 2006 in Manipur, north-east India.¹³ Decline in sharing of equipment is supported by a decline in HIV prevalence, from almost 52% in 2002 to just over 13% in 2007.¹⁴ Also, prevalence, a “proxy” of HIV incidence, among young people who inject drugs, has decreased from 11% in 2003 to 3.2% in 2007.¹⁵ Thus, it appears that harm reduction intervention in the north east have led to declines in unsafe injecting practices, and ultimately, reduction in HIV prevalence in this population.

Figure 2. Reported sharing of equipment and HIV prevalence¹⁶

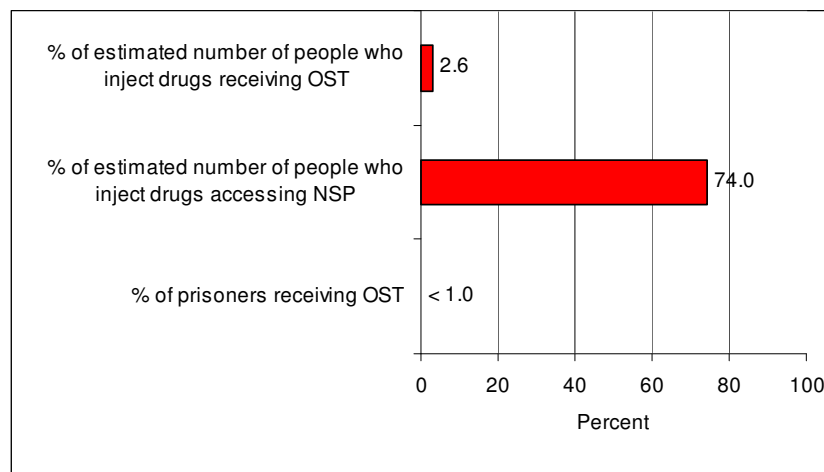


- However, despite reported decline in sharing of injecting equipment in some parts of the country, reported sharing of injecting equipment at last injection is high in other areas, such as 58% reporting sharing of equipment in Delhi.¹⁷
- Self-reported level of condom use ranges from 44-100% across locations where Behavioural Surveillance Survey was undertaken in 2006¹⁸ and Integrated Behavioural and Biologic Assessments (IBBAs) found high prevalence, ranging from 7% to 20%, of active syphilis.¹⁹
- Overlap between sex work and injecting drug use is of great concern given the reports that prevalence among women who inject drugs and are engaged in sex work is higher than among non-drug using sex workers. For example, in Manipur, prevalence of HIV among sex workers who injected drugs was 57% compared with 20% among sex workers who did not report injecting drug use.²⁰
- Co-infection with hepatitis C virus (HCV) is also of concern. A number of research reports of prevalence of HCV among people who inject drugs indicate high prevalence of HCV among them ranging from 62% in Chennai²¹ to 98% in Churachandpur, Manipur.²²

Intervention coverage

- As of January 2010, a total of 230 “target intervention” (TI) sites provide access to clean needles and syringes for those who need them. Approximately 74% of the estimated 186,000 people who inject drugs were being reached through the TI sites in 2009.²³
- Currently 53 sites are providing locally produced buprenorphine for limited periods. As of February 2010, 4,840 people, or some three per cent of the estimated number of people who inject drugs, were receiving sub-lingual buprenorphine. Recently, methadone was approved for domestic marketing to treat opioid dependence. In addition, UNODC in partnership with AIIMS will be conducting an efficacy and feasibility study on methadone through 5 hospital based settings in India in 2010.

Figure 3. Coverage of people who inject drugs with OST and NSP programme²⁴



- Currently only accredited agencies are approved to provide OST to a limited number (20% at a point in time) of “eligible” IDUs for six to nine months under direct observation of medical personnel.²⁵ Provision of OST to prisoners who need it has recently been initiated with UNODC support in Tihar prison in New Delhi.²⁶
- Consequently, men and women who inject drugs in other areas where HIV prevalence in this population has increased to 10-15% have limited or no access to life-saving services, in particular OST which reaches far too few drug users. Priority must be given to expansion of geographic access to a comprehensive package of services to reach not only men but also women who inject drugs, whose specific service needs have been overlooked in the response. Special focus must be given to reach the most vulnerable, sex workers who also inject drugs.

Socio demographics and disease prevalence

		Date	Source
Total population (millions)	1,198.0	2009	UNFPA, 2009 ²⁷
Estimated number of people living with HIV	2,270,000	2008	NACO, 2010 ²⁸
Estimated population of people who inject drugs	186,000	2008	NACO, 2010 ²⁹
Prevalence of injecting drug use among 15-64 year olds	0.02	2006	Mathers et al., 2008
Female among people who inject drugs	10,055 – 33,392	2006	Expert Group Size Estimation, 2006
% of women who inject drugs who sold sex in the previous one year	Not available		
% of men who have sex with men who inject drugs	0 - 30 across survey locations	2006	NACO BSS, 2006 ³⁰
% of men who inject drugs who had sex in the previous 12 months with a commercial/non-regular/regular partner	7.0 – 55.6 across survey locations	2006	NACO BSS, 2006 ³¹
Median age (range) of people who inject drugs	25-38 across survey locations	2006	NACO BSS, 2006 ³²
Education level of people who inject drugs % illiterate	2.2 to 43.3 across survey locations	2006	NACO BSS, 2006 ³³
Employment status of people who inject drugs % Unemployed / not working / retired	3.0-49.2 across survey locations	2006	NACO BSS, 2006 ³⁴
Marital status of people who inject drugs % ever married	23.2 - 68.6 across survey locations	2006	NACO BSS, 2006 ³⁵
Reported HIV cases			
Cumulative reported HIV infections among people who inject drugs	Not available		
% of HIV cases associated with injecting drug use	1.6	2009	NACO, 2008 ³⁶
% people who inject drugs who are HIV positive	9.2	2008-2009	NACO, 2010 ³⁷
% of prisoners who are HIV positive	Female prisoners: 1-14%; Male prisoners: 0-7%		IHRA, 2008 ³⁸
HCV prevalence among people who inject drugs (%) Churachandpur, Manipur Manipur Darjeeling District, West Bengal Chennai Mumbai/Thane and Manipur	98% 47.7% 62.1% 92% > 50%	2004 2004/5	Eicher et al., 2000 ³⁹ Saha et al., 2000 ⁴⁰ Sarkar et al., 2006 ⁴¹ Solomon et al. 2008 ⁴² Mahanta et al., 2008 ⁴³
TB & HIV co-infection among people who inject drugs			
Active Syphilis among people who inject drugs	7-20%		Sharma et al., 2009 ⁴⁴

HIV risk and vulnerability

		Date	Source
% people who inject drugs who both correctly identify ways of preventing the sexual transmission of HIV and who reject major misconceptions about HIV	14 - 77 across survey locations	2006	BSS 2006, In UNGASS Country Progress Report, 2010
% people who inject drugs reporting the use of a condom the last time they had sexual intercourse	44 - 100 across survey locations	2006	BSS 2006, In UNGASS Country Progress Report 2010
% of people who inject drugs reporting sharing needles and syringes the last time they injected drugs	11.7 - 71.4 across survey locations	2006	NACO BSS, 2006 ⁴⁵
% of people who inject drugs reporting the use of sterile injecting equipment the last time they injected	29 - 88 across survey locations	2006	BSS 2006, In UNGASS Country Progress Report 2010
% people who inject drugs who have received an HIV test in the last 12 months and who know their HIV test result	3 - 70 across survey locations	2006	BSS 2006, In UNGASS Country Progress Report 2010

Intervention coverage

		Date	Source
Number of opioid substitution therapy (OST) sites	53	2010	NACO, 2010
Number of people who inject drugs accessing OST	4,840	Feb 2010	AIMS, 2010
Number of prisoners accessing OST	App. 100	Sept 2009	UNODC ROSA, 2009
Number of substitution treatment sites per 1,000 IDU	0.3	2010	
Number of needle and syringe programme sites (in Targeted Intervention sites)	230	Jan 2010	NACO, 2010
Number of people who inject drugs accessing NSP through drop-in-centres	137,000	2010	NACO, 2010
% of people who inject drugs in need of NSP accessing NSP	74.0	2010	NACO, 2010
Number of NSP sites per 1,000 IDU	1.2	2010	
Number of new contacts by outreach worker with people who inject drugs	41,076	Apr 2008-Mar 2009	NACO, CMIS, April 2008-March 2009 ⁴⁶
% of people who inject drugs reached by outreach programme			
% of people who inject drugs accessing VCT			
Reported number of people living with HIV receiving ART	234,581	Dec 2008	WHO, UNAIDS, UNICEF, 2009 ⁴⁷
Number of people who inject drugs in need of ARV	Not available		
Number of people who inject drugs on ARV	400		IHRA, 2008
% of people injecting drugs in need of ARV receiving ARV	Not available		
People who inject drugs on ARVs as a proportion of all PLHIV receiving ARVs	Not available		
% of people who inject drugs reached with HIV prevention programmes (core UNGASS indicator)			
Overall	10-83%	2006	NACO, 2010 ⁴⁸
Manipur	14.8%	2009	BSS in Manipur in 2009, NACO, 2010
Estimated prison population	373,271	Dec 2006	King's College London International Centre for Prison Studies ⁴⁹
Number of drug rehabilitation / treatment centres			
Number of drug users in drug rehabilitation / treatment centres	App. 113,523	Nov 2009	MSJE, November 2009
Prisoners accessing services:			
Needle and syringe programmes	Unknown		
Opioid substitution treatment	App. 100 in Tihar prison		
HIV testing and counseling	Unknown		
Antiretroviral therapy	Unknown		
Prevention and treatment of STIs	Unknown		
Condom programmes	Unknown		
IEC	Unknown		
Primary health care (including treatment of tuberculosis)	Unknown		
Diagnosis, treatment and vaccination for viral hepatitis	Unknown		
Prevention, diagnosis and treatment of tuberculosis	Unknown		
Peer education programmes	Unknown		
Post-release follow-up	Unknown		UN RTF, 2010 ⁵⁰
Coverage of people who use drugs living in closed settings reached with one or more services			

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Disclaimer

This document is not an official document of UNAIDS and UNODC. The document has not been approved by the Government and it does not necessarily represent the views of government, UNAIDS or UNODC. All efforts have been made to avoid possible errors. The document has been developed with the purpose of guiding advocacy actions by the United Nations Regional Task Force on Injecting Drug Use and HIV/AIDS for Asia and the Pacific (UN RTF) and partners supporting scaling-up of prevention, treatment and care for men and women who inject drugs.

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