

Making History Together

The 1st Eastern Africa Harm Reduction
Conference- Convening to share evidence and experience on People
Who Use Drugs



The 1st Eastern Africa Harm Reduction Conference

The 1st Eastern Africa Harm Reduction Conference took place in Nairobi on 26th February to 1st March 2018. This first conference of its kind themed '**Leadership and innovation in Harm reduction for Africa**' was aimed at stirring and promoting the harm reduction dialogue in the region and together come up with sustainable solutions. The conference also sought to discuss the health and policy environment, where the criminal justice approach to drug use and drug users has often been a barrier to accessing health care. The conference hosted by KANCO and the Ministry of Health in Kenya, brought the regional HIV and harm reduction project implementing partners from Burundi, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Zanzibar, Ethiopia, Seychelles and Mauritius together as well as participants from other parts of the globe. A key focus of the conference was to showcase what partners in these countries are doing in relation to harm reduction implementation and policy, and also to create a sharing and learning platform for other countries and regions in Africa and globally.

During the opening ceremony of the conference, the chair of the scientific committee, Professor Walter Jaoko, thanked all the stakeholders present as well as the host KANCO, stating the conference would discuss evidence and lessons learnt from each other aimed at making history together. The Executive Director KANCO, in his opening remarks, thanked stakeholders acknowledging that the drug problem is not just a Kenya problem rather an African continent problem. He further noted that Kenya had taken leadership within the Eastern Africa region including Indian Ocean Countries, further citing the need for African countries to learn from each other which was the thinking behind the conference. He further attributed the strides made to the support of the stakeholders including galvanizing communities to steer the response.



Cabinet Secretary Health Sicily Kariuki (Centre), Director of medical services Dr. Jackson Kioko, Head of preventive and promotive services (NAS COP)-Dr. Peter Cherutich, Executive Director KANCO, Mr. Allan Ragi Delegates from the Eastern Africa UNODC, Ministry of Health and other stakeholders pose for a photo during the opening ceremony of the conference

The conference was officially opened by the Cabinet Secretary Health Kenya, Sicily Kariuki, who acknowledged efforts put in by stakeholders including KANCO in addressing the drug problem, stating that every first merits recognition and this was a first. She reaffirmed the government's commitment to implement harm reduction interventions within the Universal Health coverage (UHC) framework as part of the big four government strategy saying "Addiction is an illness that needs to be treated. It is not a crime that needs to be punished"

She added that the conference is defining, coming hardly a week after Heads of State for the region adopted a list of priorities for health in region. Recognising that countries are at different stages of implementing harm reduction intervention packages, she noted that Kenya is currently implementing all the nine interventions recommended by WHO, UNODC and UNAIDS, with the most recent addition to the interventions being treatment for Hepatitis C. She added that the ministry would continue to provide resources for methadone procurement, staffing and other resources related to improving the health of people who use drugs

The Eastern Africa Harm Reduction Network (EAHRN) chairperson, Mr. Twaibu Wamala reiterated these sentiments saying it was the unrelenting support and commitment of harm reduction stakeholders in the region that led to the realization of the regional network. Dr. Katende from the East African Community (EAC) Secretariat also stated that the EAC is committed towards supporting the harm reduction agenda and is working towards a regional policy for harm reduction People using drugs for the region.

As a highlight to the event, following the call from the EAHRN chair Mr. Twaibu Wamala for the CS to be a champion of the East African policy on Harm Reduction, the CS offered herself as a policy champion stating 'I have just become a champion for the policy. As a policy maker it is in my space to take up the challenge for us to gain speed towards the Universal Health Coverage targets'.

The first day also saw the launch of the Eastern Africa Harm Reduction Network officiated by the Cabinet Secretary for Health. The network, hosted in Uganda and part of the establishment of the HIV and Harm reduction project championed by KANCO and supported by Global Fund, is now a registered entity and movement for the Eastern African region. The network seeks advocate for the existence of a society free from HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C and other related diseases. It further aims to provide leadership, promote collaboration and enhance capacity among communities of people who use drugs the region.



The Chairperson Eastern Africa Harm Reduction Network, Mr. Twaibu Wamala displays the certificate of registration for the Network

In the true spirit of working with the communities and ensuring a community-led response, the conference also held a community village and exhibition booth, where the chief guest and other dignitaries visited to understand first hand experiences from people from the community of people using drugs.



From the top Health Cabinet Secretary Kenya Sicily Kariuki and Hon. AbdulSwamad - Member of Parliament Kenya interact with the community during at the community village and Harm reduction partner's exhibition site during the conference and bottom respectively

Launching the Community Village



Hon. Abdulsamad, MP Mvita Kenya looks at one of the materials drugs users in recovery are making as way of sustainable livelihoods during the official opening of the Community Village

Honorable Abdulsamad, Member of Parliament Mvita constituency Kenya, officially opened the community village. In his remarks, he reiterated on the need to move from rhetoric and mere talk to action to ensure that we walk the talk in harm reduction. He stated his commitment to the cause saying” I commend the stakeholders present here today and as a legislator reiterates my commitment to ensure that we change laws and policies that are regressive to harm reduction efforts”



Rita Nyaguthii, a recovering drug user and also one of the volunteers at the conference, shares her experiences with the Chief Guest, Hon Abdulsamad and other dignitaries during the opening of the community village. She reiterated on the need to give special consideration to women who use drugs as they face a greater burden of drug use related problems.

Rita Nyaguthii, a recovering drug user giving her remarks during the Opening of the community village at the conference

Leadership and Evidence in Harm Reduction

In a session on leadership and evidence plenary discussion led by Professor Walter Jaoko, Key Population Program Manager, Ms. Helgar Musyoki from the National AIDS and STI's Control Program (NASCOP)-Kenya, walked participants through the journey that the key population program, including the evolution of harm reduction in Kenya. She addressed the need for creation of responsive policies providing legislation for harm reduction for Key Populations to create an enabling environment to access health services.

From a regional perspective, Dr. Saade Abdallah from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Kenya spoke on the history and trajectory of harm reduction in Eastern Africa: Epidemiology, intervention and gaps. Focusing on the gaps in harm reduction response, Dr. Saade highlighted the high HIV prevalence among People who inject drugs in Eastern Africa. Donor dependency, low government support and the translation of existing legal frameworks for adoption of the responses were some of the factors she highlighted as gaps in the implementation of harm reduction.

Professor Peter Vickerman from Bristol University spoke on modeling for impact in harm reduction in Eastern Africa. He talked about a current modeling exercise that was being carried out in Kenya and Tanzania. For Kenya, he pointed out preliminary results from the modeling showed that with optimum coverage of needles and syringe programs (NSP), access to antiretroviral treatment (ART) and medically assisted therapy (MAT), HIV incidence and prevalence among people injecting drugs would significantly reduce. In the current model, NSP was shown to have had the greatest impact so far in the reduction of HIV incidence. In his closing remarks, he recommended for interventions that will prevent infection among the females in the East African region. The table below shows potential impact of 5 key interventions as they are currently (2018) and intervention scale up by 2030.

Scenario	Needle and Syringe Program (NSP)	Opioid Substitution Treatment (OST)	Antiretroviral Treatment (ART) coverage	Percentage viral suppressed	Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) treatment
1.Existing provision (2018)	About 60%	5-9%	74%	27%	Very low (61 in 2016-17)
2.Intervention scale-up (2030)	75%	50%	81%	90%	1000 over 5 years

The second session of the conference focused on Leadership, Powering Policy and Community Voices and was led by Dr. Sobbie Mulindi from the University of Nairobi. During her talk, Maria-Goretti Anne Long'lo, International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC), highlighted the global drug policies and their revolution from punitive nature to cater for the rights of people who use drugs in the Eastern African region. In her presentation, she highlighted the African Union (AU) regional plan of action for harm reduction and encouraged continuous support for the people who use drugs.

Moustapha Mbodj from the Senegalese drug user organization (RAFASUD), spoke on the challenges of persons using drugs in Senegal while adopting francophone programs for harm reduction. In his remarks, he urged the adoption of a more French-African drug policies for the Senegalese persons.



In a new evidence in harm reduction in Eastern Africa cross country sharing of information session, Led by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical medicine (LSHTM), Dr. Lucy Platt, and Ag. Assistant Director, Non-Communicable Diseases, Mental Health and Substance Abuse (MoHCDGEC, Tanzania) Dr. Saraha Maongezi. The session informed the delegates about the country research evidence under the Global Fund grant and the evidence that will be published in the seven countries. While Ethiopia, Uganda and Burundi focused on population estimates for People Who Inject Drugs in Addis, Bujumbura mayor ship, and Kampala city Zanzibar, Kenya and Mauritius focused on qualitative studies on population of people who inject drugs and women who used drugs and access to healthcare services. This results will be available in publication and shared with partners. KANCO and the International HIV AIDS Alliance also led the team in sharing of cross country knowledge and information on harm reduction in Eastern Africa

Leadership and Innovation

During the session on leadership and innovation chaired by Sylvie Bertrand from United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Dr. Bartilol Kigen the head National AIDS and STI's Control Program (NASCOP)-Kenya, talked about the government's role in implementation of harm reduction efforts in Kenya. He discussed how Kenya had shown leadership and innovation by embracing and contextualizing the recommended harm reduction interventions to work for the community of drug users in the country. He pointed out that the government was providing resources for methadone procurement as well as human resources to support implementation of the program. The government had also taken a lead in the development of guidelines to support harm reduction.

Commissioner Zarugaba Tinka from Uganda talking in the same session discussed how law enforcement officers in Uganda had come to the realization that more efforts were needed to understand the drug policies in the country following the arrest of nurses who were prescribing palliative medicine which was at the time allowed by law, though the anti-narcotics officers were not aware of the existence of the provision. He relayed how thereafter he had come to understand harm reduction and its importance through interaction with the civil society, which had turned him into a champion for harm reduction.

The Director Commission for National Coordination and Drug Control, Madam Kheriyangu Khamis shared on implementation of medically assisted treatment in Zanzibar, highlighting the gains that had been made in the program. She attributed the successes gained in the MAT program so far to collaborative efforts of stakeholders. She however states that sustainability of the program was an issue of concern, noting that high level advocacy was needed for government commitment.



While talking about the community approach to service delivery in harm reduction in Kenya, Mr. Taib Abdulrahman from the Kenya Harm Reduction Network (KHRN), reiterated on the need for expansion of evidence informed services and the provision of integrated services in a simple, coordinated and friendly fashion.

The second day of the conference culminated in the launch of the Directory of Organizations Providing Services to the People who use Drugs in Kenya. The Chief Executive Officer, National Authority for the Campaign Against Drug Abuse (NACADA), Mr. Victor Okioma, spoke of the need for partnership and collaboration in preventive interventions. He addressed the challenge of coordination of the structures put up in government and emphasized on the effectiveness of the balanced responses.

Leadership and Financing



Dr. Michael Katende, Principle HIV&AIDS officer EAC Secretariat, making remarks during the leadership and financing session

The third day of the conference focused on discussing the future of harm reduction in the Eastern Africa region. During the plenary session, chaired by Dr. Michael Katende from the East Africa Secretariat, the deputy director Harm Reduction International, Ms. Naomi Burke-Shyne, talked about the current state of harm reduction globally, highlighting that one on five people in prisons globally had been incarcerated as a result of drugs. The highlight of her discussion focused on the 10 by 20 campaign. She noted how governments globally were spending 100 billion dollars on drug control annually, while only 160 million dollars was available from donors for funding harm reduction which has been proven to be effective and efficient.



Sharing perspectives from the African union on the roadmap on sustainable financing for harm reduction, Dr. Jane Marie Ong'olo, the programs manager AU emphasized on the need to move from policy to action through political commitment continentally and nationally. She reiterated on the need for evidence emphasizing on need for investment in research. Current evidence had already pointed that investment in treatment and harm reduction can lead to economic and social benefits far in excess of resources invested. Citing some of the challenges faced by people who use drugs, she pointed out that drug dependence treatment is limited, where one out of eighteen drug users access treatment as opposed to one out of six globally.

While discussing on sustainable financing and harm reduction in Kenya, Ms. Regina A. Ombam, Deputy Director, HIV Investments at the National AIDS Control Council (NACC)-Kenya, recommended the need for increased domestic financing, need to undertake costing studies for harm reduction and evaluation of resources and needs required for harm reduction. She emphasized on the need for a multi-stakeholder approach to harm reduction as well as innovative domestic financing mechanisms. She noted that presently, most interventions are presently donor supported, calling on governments to own and support harm reduction programs.

DRUG POLICY DEBATE IN EASTERN AFRICA



Representatives from Global commission on Drug Policy, Barbra Goedde, West Africa drug Commission Adeolu Ogunrombi, Open Society Initiative for Eastern Africa (OSIEA)-Aggrey Aluso, the East Africa Community secretariat, ENACT and KANCO made presentations on the current situation of drug policies in the region and the impact it has had on drug users and families in the region. EAC secretariat made a presentation on the draft regional harm reduction policy and the role of civil society in policy formulation in Eastern Africa. The research finding by ENACT, further brought the evidence on the connection between drug trafficking, crime and harm reduction and the need for partnership. This session was attended by drug Authority representatives from the Eight countries.

Recommendations to explore the possibilities of an Eastern Africa commission on Drug Policies under the leadership of OSIEA and KANCO was made Similar to the West Africa Commission on Drugs, the proposed Eastern Africa Commission on Drugs would lead the region in research and advocacy in the drug related harms.

Abstract Driven Discussions

Delegates attending the conference had an array of abstract led sessions to choose from and learn during the conference. research and practice was displayed in the various break away discussions that focused on epidemiology, community strengthening, human rights, social approaches, health systems and clinical evidence treatment and care.

#EAHRConference

CONCOMITANT HEROIN USE AMONG RECEIPIENTS OF MEDICALLY ASSISTED THERAPY ENROLLED IN MALINDI SUB-COUNTY HOSPITAL

Azraa M. Ahmed, Elise M. van der Elst, C Oduor, A Guise, B Kombo, A Mongi, S Abdallah, O Abdullahi, E Sanders

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Exploring Access and Utilisation of Needles & Syringes by Young People (18-24 yrs) in Mauritius

Innovations in Rapid Assessment Methodology



Gareth White
Collectif Urgence Toxida

#EAHRConference

SENSITIZING THE POLICE TO CREATE A CONDUCIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR HARM REDUCTION
A collaboration with Police Aids Control Unit - Nairobi, Kenya

Médecins du Monde – Doctors of the World
Wangari Kimemia



#EAHRConference

Exploring the Structural Vulnerability Factors that affect Utilization of Integrated Sexual Reproductive Health and HIV Services among PWIDs in Zanzibar

Presenting Author(s)
Kimwaga Ali (Public Health Specialist); and Shaaban Haji (M&E Enthusiast)

Co-authors
Dr. Mohammed JU Dahoma (MD); Mahmoud Ibrahim; Asma Hamid and Kheriyangu Khamis

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Sharing Universal Challenges in Harm Reduction Implementation in Francophone Countries

NDI NDUKONG Titus, Cameroun.




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1st Eastern Africa Harm Reduction Conference

Improving and strengthening health care services for PWUD in Temeke Tanzania

Nairobi Kenya

26 Feb -1st March 2018
Mlau AD – Clinician

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Closing Ceremony



Executive Director KANCO, Mr. Allan Ragi, making conference closing remarks during the closing ceremony

The closing ceremony, chaired by the KANCO Executive Director, Mr. Allan Ragi, summarized the conference as a great step and as a show of leadership in harm reduction in the region. He expressed his pride in the Kenya government's leadership in harm reduction, including hosting the conference in Nairobi, saying, "I am very proud of my government for supporting harm reduction and I am confident that the first East Africa Harm Reduction Conference has given us an opportunity to create networks that will help us carry these conversations forward. He emphasized on the importance of the community, stating that it was them that interventions were being designed for, and it would be futile to do so without their involvement.

The East Africa Harm Reduction Network Chair, Mr. Taib Wamwala attributed the strides made in Harm Reduction in the region to the efforts of stakeholders, calling on them now more than ever to continue supporting harm reduction to not only sustain the gains made but also facilitate scale up especially as the Regional Global Fund grant comes to an end.

In a preliminary conference outcomes sharing, the chief rapporteur stated that the discussions emerging from the conference indicated that despite harm reduction having had a difficult beginning, it is slowly gaining momentum. He added that there is a growing acknowledgment on the need to support harm reduction through policy reforms, easing access to health services and research for more effective programming. The rapporteur further observed that the governments' support to harm reduction is seen as critical in the sustainable funding for harm reduction interventions. The rapporteur concluded with the observation that the multi-stakeholder collaboration with the community of people who use drugs was placed at the center of the response in the conference discussions.

The apex of the closing ceremony was the reading of *The Nairobi Declaration on Harm Reduction during the 1st Eastern Africa Harm Reduction Conference*

The Nairobi Declaration on Harm Reduction



Policy Advisor KANCO. Mr. Jack Ndegwa reading out the declaration during the conference closing ceremony

A declaration by the civil society, academia, human rights organizations, and organizations of PWUD, activists and PWID attending the first Eastern Africa Harm Reduction Conference committed to support investment for Harm Reduction programs and a healthy future for all people in the East African region was read.

The declaration dubbed “*The Nairobi Declaration on Harm Reduction*” recognized the advances in place to improve the health of the youths and the PWUDs like: East African Government’s acknowledgements that access to harm reduction services would support access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support and the 90:90:90 UNAIDS Strategy; working to overcome the legal gaps (East Africa Harm Reduction policy) through the leadership of the East African Community and the Ministries of Health in the region acknowledgement of the people who use drugs as a key population group that needs HIV interventions.

It referenced the Sustainable Development Goal target of Universal Health Coverage, that states that health is fundamental to social and economic development and that the HIV epidemics is fueled by the criminalization of people who use drugs and prohibitions on the provision of harm reduction services (needle and opioid substitution treatment). The declaration further acknowledged that harm reduction is effective in reducing the transmission of infectious diseases and aims to improve the quality of life, human rights and the dignity of the people who use drugs, citing other endorsements for harm reduction by UN General Assembly and the Political Declaration on AIDS in 2006.

The declaration called on the East African governments and international organizations to undertake review of the effectiveness of the current drug policies, end the criminalization of people who use drugs and the punitive legal frameworks that fuel HIV transmission, overdose, and mass incarceration and human rights violations. It also called on the endorsement of scale up funding for the implementation of harm reduction interventions spelled out by WHO and ensuring meaningful involvement of communities of people who use drugs in developing, monitoring and implementing harm reduction services and policies. The declarations further called on the promotion and support of the work of partnerships between law enforcement agencies, PWUDs, organizations supporting PWUDs to address the widespread inappropriate use of criminal sanctions against PWUDs and other key affected populations, and to ensure that such partnerships are facilitated, supported and enabled to undertake their work successfully.

It culminates to a call to stakeholders renewed commitment and action towards the goal of universal access to comprehensive Harm Reduction services for people who inject drugs through the financing, implementation and scale-up of evidence-based harm reduction interventions. It urged for commitment to removing legal and policy barriers to achieving the aims above, particularly a reorientation of drug policies toward public health and human rights-based approaches.

Conference Pictorials



Health Cabinet Secretary Sicily Kariuki received by regional dignitaries and KANCO staff on arrival to officially open the 1st East Africa Harm Reduction Conference



Launch of the Eastern Africa Harm reduction Network and the Directory of Organizations serving drug users in Kenya by NACADA respectively



From left, Hon Abdulswamad, launching the community village and meeting different member of the community of people who use drugs. Right Hon. Abdulswama poses for a photo with harm reduction stakeholders from the region



Delegates following discussions during the conference opening ceremony



Kenya PITCH project partners pose for photo during the conference



The Seychelles delegation to the conference pose for photo



KANCO Nutrition Project manager. Ms. Rita Wanjiru and policy advisor Mr. Jack Ndegwa pose for photo during a poster presentation at the conference

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