

INTRODUCTION

This report provides a summary of the INHSU Africa Reconvening Roundtable that was held on 1 July 2020. This roundtable was organised for INHSU Africa delegates and invited guests to reflect on current priorities and identify project activities for Kenya and South Africa.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

This Roundtable followed a regional meeting held in Cape Town South Africa in February 2020 (INHSU Africa 2020). The Regional meeting was held to provide a platform for people who use drugs, policymakers, political decision-makers, advocates and clinicians working in the African region to come together to reflect on current work to respond to the issues of HIV and Hepatitis C and the impacts on people who use drugs. At the meeting, there was a commitment for ongoing work. INHSU was supported by the Open Societies Foundation to facilitate work in two focal countries – South Africa and Kenya. While work commenced soon after the regional meeting, the emergence of the global COVID-19 pandemic shortly after necessitated the pausing of this work until lockdowns were eased in both countries. In late May the project restarted and efforts were made to re-engage delegates regarding current priorities and how to support ongoing projects.

ROUNDTABLE OBJECTIVES

The meeting had a number of objectives including:

- Collectively assessing the impact of COVID-19 in relation to HIV and viral hepatitis prevention, treatment and support work
- Assessing any re-prioritisation of advocacy efforts that were previously identified
- Identifying new challenges and opportunities that have emerged over this period
- Identifying advocacy activities that can be progressed through this project with available resources and during 2020

The desired outcome of the Roundtable was to develop a shared program of work around advocacy activities for the next six months in Kenya and South Africa. We hoped to obtain commitments from delegates to work together to progress this work.

ROUNDTABLE PREPARATION, FORMAT AND PARTICIPATION

A two hour virtual session was organised on the Zoom meeting platform. All South African and Kenyan delegates from INHSU Africa 2020, as well as other invited attendees who were not able to attend the February meeting were invited to attend. At point of registration they were asked to complete a registration survey that canvassed views regarding priority issues in the current context, activities that were identified as being most likely to have success in progressing and the capacity of participants to take a role in progressing work. These responses assisted in identifying key topics for discussion groups at the Roundtable.

37 attendees participated in the Roundtable. The Roundtable was hosted by partners INHSU, TB HIV Care, the South African Network of People who Use Drugs (SANPUD) and the Kenyan Network of People who Use Drugs (KENPUD). Charity Monareng from TB HIV Care chaired the event and we were assisted with discussion group facilitation by Charity Monareng and Angela McBride (SANPUD), Kunal Naik (PILS), Taha Brahni (ALCS) and Catherine Mwangi (INHSU Africa consultant).

The agenda is provided as Attachment A. Key sessions held included:

- [Summary of key outcomes from INHSU Africa 2020](#) (presented by KENPUD)
- Presentations from [SANPUD](#) and [KENPUD](#) regarding current status of accessing prevention, treatment and care services for people who use drugs in the context of COVID-19
- Discussion Groups focusing on the development of policy briefs to support advocacy activities, the challenges around enhancing access to Medical Assisted Treatment/ Opioid Substitution Therapy, Law and Policy Reform priorities, and work to support advocacy events
- Report back on key discussion points by SANPUD

ROUNDTABLE OUTCOMES

The Roundtable was well attended, and the format facilitated significant participation and engagement from attendees.

The meeting identified a number of priorities for ongoing work. These include:

- Joint work to develop country-specific policy briefs to articulate the key issues facing people who use drugs in relation to hepatitis C and HIV infection, evidence about what works, identification of barriers to access effective treatments, evidence around cost benefits of scaling up treatment and re-iteration of the calls for action made at INHSU Africa 2020;
- Ongoing work around law and policy reform, particularly focusing on the impacts of COVID-19 for people who use drugs in relation to access to prevention, treatment and care, and what needs to occur moving forward in this area. This will include a focus on increasing access to medication-assisted treatment/ opioid substitution therapy;
- Support for advocacy activities, including the upskilling of people who use drugs in innovative ways of documenting experiences.

PLANNED FUTURE ACTIVITIES AND NEXT STEPS

At the meeting a number of people identified interest in being involved in this work and a number of projects will be supported over the next six months.

In South Africa it will be led by Charity Monareng, with support from Andrew Scheibe. In Kenya, INHSU will work with a working group to lead projects and activities. Rebecca Vassarotti from INHSU will continue to provide ongoing support.

- Advocacy events have already commenced, with a very successful event held on World Hepatitis Day, launching the *Connecting with Care South Africa* digital story and reflecting on the experience of participants of the film through the current pandemic. Almost 100 people attended this event, and in addition to project hosts INHSU, TB HIV Care and SANPUD, project partners included the South African National Department of Health, the South African National AIDS Council, and the South African National Department of Social Development. At the end of August, a roundtable to highlight World Overdose Awareness Day was also held. In addition, a working meeting to discuss progress around policy briefs (led by South African project partners with support from INHSU) was held.

To facilitate ongoing engagement, we are planning to conduct two additional roundtables in the coming six months. These include:

- Early November: a round table to discuss progress around advocacy for law and policy reform, and general advocacy projects
- Early Dec: a round table to discuss general progress of priority activities and sustainability beyond the life of the project.