Implementing Needle and Syringe Programs (NSPs)

Despite strong evidence supporting NSPs as a life-saving harm reduction strategy, they remain severely under-implemented worldwide due to entrenched policy, procurement, and funding barriers.

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In October 2024, 54 stakeholders from multilateral organisations, governments, civil society, and community-led networks gathered for INHSU's Policy Day to identify practical, evidence-based solutions to scale up NSPs globally.

Using an implementation science framework, participants identified the most pressing policy barriers across three domains. This summary captures those barriers and the solutions developed.

Key takeaways across all domains

1. **Community engagement is essential:**
   People who inject drugs should help choose NSP equipment and estimate what's needed. Their input makes services stronger and more effective.

2. **Implementation science strengthens strategy:**
   Using structured, evidence-informed frameworks can help identify priority barriers and map out practical solutions — what works, in which settings, at what cost. This process can easily be replicated or adapted to suit different contexts.

3. **Political will and sustained investment are non-negotiable:**
   Scaling up NSPs requires long-term funding commitments and policy support at both national and global levels.

4. **NSP products must be high-quality and preferred by people who will use them:**
   Requests for commodities must reflect preferences of local communities and NSP suppliers should agree on quality standards and fair pricing for preferred products.

5. **Coordinated messaging and shared goals will accelerate progress:**
   A multi-stakeholder push can support governments in adopting and scaling NSPs. There are education and technical assistance needs but together they can be met.

The report provides a framework for policymakers, funders, community-led networks, and implementers to take action. Progress relies on embedding NSP scale-up into national and global health priorities. DOWNLOAD FULL REPORT.

Domain 1: Global Policy Barriers

Barriers

- Lack of global guidelines for NSP commodity selection and procurement
- Funding restrictions from global donors

Solutions

- Engage people who inject drugs in developing procurement guidelines
- Revise Global Fund NSP request processes to require community input
- Advocate for harm reduction as a standalone funding priority
- Educate funders on NSP effectiveness and public health impact

Domain 2: National Policy Barriers

Barriers

- Limited political will to fund or request NSP scale-up
- Restrictive access policies (e.g. 1:1 exchange requirements, ID mandates)

Solutions

- Build national advocacy coalitions to push for NSP funding
- Convene cross-sector workshops to align stakeholders and secure commitments
- Reform national guidelines to enable peer delivery, vending machines, and flexibility

Domain 3: Procurement Barriers

Barriers

- Inadequate quantity of NSP commodities requested by countries
- Product specifications do not align with community needs

Solutions

- Develop a WHO-endorsed NSP quantification tool
- Provide training to national procurement teams
- Engage manufacturers to align product quality, pricing, and community preferences
- Create a global values and preferences tool to guide country requests

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