



## EXPERIENCES OF INCARCERATION AMONG PEOPLE WHO INJECT DRUGS IN THAILAND

### BACKGROUND & METHOD

- In many countries, including Thailand, the dominant response to drug use is arrest and imprisonment.
- Unfortunately, it is well known that incarceration has many negative health impacts for people who inject drugs, including infection with HIV and death from overdose.
- In 2008, researchers working with the Mitsampan Community Research Project investigated the experiences of incarceration among people who inject drugs in Bangkok.

### QUICK FACT

*ALMOST 30% OF DRUG USERS WITH A HISTORY OF IMPRISONMENT REPORTED USING DRUGS WHILE IN PRISON.*

### FINDINGS

- Among 252 study participants, 78% had been imprisoned at some point in the past.
- Compared to those without a history of incarceration, those ever incarcerated were more likely to report having been in compulsory drug treatment and having shared used syringes.
- Almost 30% of drug users with a history of imprisonment reported using drugs while in prison, and 81% of these individuals also shared used syringes while incarcerated.

### IMPLICATIONS

- This study highlights how drug policies based on law enforcement have fuelled the HIV epidemic in Thailand.
- The Thai government should take immediate action to implement syringe exchange in Thai prisons, as well as a more health-focused response to harms of drug use.

Hayashi K, Milloy MJ, Fairbairn N, Kaplan K, Suwannawong P, Lai C, Wood E, Kerr T. **Incarceration experiences among a community-recruited sample of injection drug users in Bangkok, Thailand.** *BMC Public Health*, 2009; 9: 492.

