



EXPANDING THE REACH OF HARM REDUCTION IN THAILAND: EXPERIENCES WITH A DRUG USER-RUN HARM REDUCTION CENTRE

BACKGROUND & METHOD

- Despite an ongoing epidemic of HIV infection among Thai people who inject drugs, Thailand has been slow to implement harm reduction programs.
- In response, the drug user-led Mitsampan Harm Reduction Center (MSHRC) opened in Bangkok in 2004.
- During August 2008, researchers examined experiences with the MSHRC among people who inject drugs in Bangkok, Thailand.

QUICK FACT

PARTICIPANTS COMMONLY REPORTED ACCESSING THE MSHRC FOR INFORMATION ABOUT HIV AND SAFER INJECTING.

FINDINGS

- 30% of the 252 research participants reported that they had been to the MSHRC previously.
- Those who had been to the MSHRC before were more likely to be male and to have had difficulty accessing sterile syringes.
- Forms of support most commonly accessed at the MSHRC included food and a place to rest, information about HIV, safer injecting, and access to sterile syringes.
- The primary reason given for not previously attending the MSHRC was "didn't know it existed."

IMPLICATIONS

- The MSHRC is expanding harm reduction programming in Thailand by reaching people who inject drugs, including those who report difficulty accessing sterile syringes, and by providing various forms of harm reduction education.
- In order to maximize the benefits of the MSHRC, efforts should be made to increase awareness of the centre, especially among women who inject drugs.

Kerr T, Hayashi K, Fairbairn N, Kaplan K, Suwannawong P, Zhang R, Wood E. **Expanding the reach of harm reduction in Thailand: Experiences with a drug user-run drop-in centre.** *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 2010; 21(3): 255-258.

