

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

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1.

WHO WE ARE

1. WHO WE ARE

VISION

A world in which drug policies uphold dignity, health and rights.

MISSION

We use data and advocacy to promote harm reduction and drug policy reform.

We show how rights-based, evidence-informed responses to drugs contribute to healthier, safer societies, and why investing in harm reduction makes sense.

We are an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations (UN). We collaborate and partner with allies to strengthen harm reduction, human rights and drug policy around the world. These activities support the achievement of the organisation's vision and mission.

To advance our UN level advocacy, HRI contributes to the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Civil Society Group on Drug Use and HIV, and the World Health Organization Working Group on Hepatitis and Substance Use. HRI is an invited, expert member of the Strategic Coordination Group to the UN on HIV and Drug Use (SCG). We also contribute to the European Union (EU) Civil Society Forum on Drugs, Geneva Global Health Hub (G2H2), the United Kingdom Enhanced Harm Reduction Working Group, the Correlation European Harm Reduction Network, and the Civil Society Alliance for Human Rights in the Pandemic Treaty. We are members of STOPAIDS, Action for Global Health, the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, and the Global Fund Advocates Network (GFAN).

2.

WHAT WE DO

2. WHAT WE DO

We advocate for an inclusive definition of harm reduction that emphasises non-judgmental, evidence-based health interventions and is grounded in justice.

We are committed to centring equity across our work and highlighting the negative impact of criminalisation and the compounding effects of intersectional vulnerabilities, specifically how drug policy interacts with gender, ethnicity, race, poverty and socioeconomic status.

WHAT IS HARM REDUCTION?

Harm reduction refers to policies, programmes and practices that aim to minimise the negative health, social and legal impacts associated with drug use, drug policies and drug laws.

Harm reduction is grounded in justice and human rights. It focuses on positive change and on working with people without judgement, coercion, discrimination, or requiring that they stop using drugs as a precondition of support.

OUR WORK

- We strengthen support for harm reduction through partnerships at international, regional and national levels.
- We convene at Harm Reduction International events for learning, sharing, activism and solidarity.
- We challenge the disproportionate impact of drug control on Black, Brown, Indigenous and ethnic minority individuals and communities.
- We use data and analysis to advocate for increasing funding for harm reduction.
- We connect and collaborate with allies in health and social justice movements.
- We use international human rights standards to challenge rights violations committed in the name of drug control.

OUR GOALS

- Harm reduction is accepted, community-led and adequately funded.
- Drug policy advances human rights, racial and social justice.
- The harm reduction and drug policy reform movements are characterised by solidarity, equity and evidence.

3.

LETTER FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

2024 marked a pivotal year for the field of harm reduction. It marked a forever altered political climate, with increasing volatility expected to impact the funding landscape, and increasing attacks against already criminalised groups, including people who use drugs. There were changes at Harm Reduction International too. Throughout this period of change, we delivered, and our team demonstrated remarkable resilience. This is testament to their strength, their political clarity and their expertise.

We published two flagship publications; *The Global State of Harm Reduction 2024* and *The Cost of Complacency: A Harm Reduction Funding Crisis*, which revealed the stark reality facing our movement. With harm reduction funding at just USD 151 million in 2022 - representing only 6% of the USD 2.7 billion needed annually by 2025 - we documented a 94% funding gap that threatens the very foundation of harm reduction services globally. The report became a catalyst for action. Launched at the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board, advocates had in their hands the evidence they needed to hold donors and governments accountable. Key findings were cited both in the media and by activists, who continue to demand for investment in human dignity, including in life-saving services.

The ninth edition of our *Global State of Harm Reduction* report featured groundbreaking thematic chapters on Indigenous people, people in prison, and young people. A research survey for the report was made available in five languages for the first time and we received contributions from 284 people across 101 countries - the highest participation in history.

Simultaneously, our Divest/Invest campaign gained momentum. We exposed how almost USD 13 billion in US taxpayer money had been allocated to “counternarcotics” activities internationally since 2015 - more than the US government spent on primary education or water supply in low- and middle-income countries. This evidence resonated across international fora, building a broad coalition calling for resource reallocation from punitive approaches to community-led health initiatives.

Our human rights advocacy achieved significant breakthroughs. The side event we organised on the death penalty for drug offences at the UN Commission on Narcotics Drugs received a record-breaking 19 co-sponsorships, including those from the global majority, signalling a growing commitment to abolition.

The work of HRI's conference team exemplified our commitment to representation and excellence as they prepared for the Harm Reduction International Conference 2025 in Bogotá, Colombia. At the end of 2024, HRI convened the Programme Committee after receiving 1,200 abstracts from 75 countries. A fifth of these were from Latin America, including more than 100 abstracts submitted in Spanish. 200 members of the HR25 Online Review Committee evaluated abstracts and informed the conference programme.

2024 showed that when we combine rigorous evidence with strategic advocacy and authentic partnership, we achieve transformative change. We are now in a poly crisis. We are part of a wider struggle, and we come in solidarity with an invitation for other movements to join hands with us so that we meet this new political moment head on. So too, with the global funding crisis – it demands of us urgent action, an openness to new ways of organising, and a long-term perspective. We commit to the same determination, the same drive and grit, and the same passion that has brought us to here. It is this that will bring in a world where we can uphold human dignity, health and rights.

Mina Barling
Chair, Harm Reduction International
Board of Trustees

4.

OUR WORK AND IMPACT

1

EXPOSING THE HARM REDUCTION FUNDING CRISIS



The release of *The Cost of Complacency: A Harm Reduction Funding Crisis* in June 2024 marked an important moment in our advocacy for sustainable harm reduction financing. As the only independent monitoring report of its kind, this flagship publication provided irrefutable evidence of the catastrophic underfunding facing harm reduction services worldwide.



Read [*The Cost of Complacency: A Harm Reduction Funding Crisis*](#)

The report revealed that identified harm reduction funding amounted to just USD 151 million in 2022 - representing only 6% of the USD 2.7 billion needed annually by 2025. This creates a devastating 94% funding gap, far exceeding the 29% funding gap for the overall HIV response.

Beyond documenting the crisis, the report serves as a powerful accountability tool, providing advocates with concrete evidence to challenge donors and governments while highlighting the urgent need for increased transparency in financial data.

The impact was immediate and far-reaching. We launched the report at a high-profile UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board (PCB) side event, co-sponsored by leading organisations including the World Health Organization (WHO) United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), International Network of People who Use Drugs (INPUD), and UNAIDS. Our strategic presentation during the PCB's thematic segment on sustaining HIV gains ensured that decision-

makers could not ignore the evidence of chronic underfunding.

The report's findings were rapidly disseminated through strategic partnerships, with key data cited in reports by Aidsmap's *Global Fund Observer* and referenced by activists worldwide. This evidence base has become indispensable for advocates seeking to hold governments and international donors accountable for substantial additional investments in harm reduction services.

Our track record of monitoring harm reduction funding over the past 15 years has established HRI as the definitive source for evidence on this critical issue that affects the entire sector worldwide.

The 2024 report reinforces our unique position as a watchdog organisation, providing the data and analysis necessary to challenge the persistent underfunding that threatens the expansion of life-saving services globally.

2

BUILDING THE DIVEST/INVEST MOVEMENT



2024 marked a breakthrough year for our Divest/Invest campaign calling for donors and government to divest from the drug war and redirect this funding by investing in programmes that prioritise community, health and justice. This multi-year campaign brings together all the different strands of our advocacy.



See the [Divest/Invest campaign](#).

We expanded our evidence base and continued building a coalition calling for a fundamental divestment of resources from punitive drug control.

Our partnership with the Drug Policy Alliance produced devastating evidence of misplaced priorities in international drug policy funding. Building on our groundbreaking 2023 report *Aid for War on Drugs*, which documented nearly USD 1 billion in donor spending on “narcotics control” through aid budgets, our 2024 investigation revealed the true scale of counterproductive investment. Almost USD 13 billion in US taxpayer money had been allocated to “counternarcotics” activities internationally since 2015 - exceeding government spending on primary education or water supply and sanitation in low- and middle-income countries.

The report's impact extended far beyond documentation, providing compelling case studies from Colombia, Mexico and the Philippines that

illustrated the devastating consequences of such funding within recipient countries. The report received media coverage including features in *Filter*, *La Jornada-México*, *Cáñamo*, *Marijuana Moment*, and *Benzinga*, ensuring that these findings reached diverse audiences across multiple languages and regions.

The campaign's messages resonated across an unprecedented range of fora, from technical conferences like International Network on Hepatitis and Substance Use (INHSU) and the UNITE Forum to high-level policy gatherings including the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board Meeting, the UN Commission on Narcotics Drugs (CND) and Human Rights Council sessions. The integration of Divest/Invest messaging into strategic high-level speeches, including by the UN Special Rapporteur on Health and Malaysia's Deputy Health Minister, demonstrates how our advocacy has influenced international discourse on drug policy reform.

The *Global State of Harm Reduction* report is produced through a collaborative effort between community and civil society representatives and researchers.

It includes 9 regional chapters authored by experts from each region. The 2024 report differs slightly from previous editions as we emphasise key regional issues and populations that continue to be neglected by harm reduction services. Each regional chapter presents data on the availability of harm reduction services and addresses two key issues that require special attention, in addition to the new thematic chapters. It also includes data to map the implementation of viral hepatitis services for people who use drugs.

3

MAPPING HARM REDUCTION



The *Global State of Harm Reduction* is the only report that provides an independent analysis of harm reduction around the world. The report's 9th edition released in 2024 was our most comprehensive analysis of harm reduction services and policies to date, featuring groundbreaking innovations that expand both the scope and accessibility of harm reduction data worldwide.



Read [*The Global State of Harm Reduction*](#).

For the first time in the report's history, we conducted our global survey in five languages (Arabic, English, French, Spanish, and Russian), dramatically expanding participation and ensuring more representative data. This resulted in contributions from 284 people across 101 countries - the highest participation in the report's history and a testament to the growing global engagement with harm reduction evidence.

This edition introduced three new thematic chapters focusing on populations that continue to face systemic barriers: Indigenous people, people in prison, and young people.

These chapters, developed through dedicated surveys with experts, service providers, and people with lived experience, provide unprecedented insight into the intersectional challenges facing the most marginalised

communities. The focus on these populations directly addresses the reality that many people who use drugs face multiple forms of discrimination and exclusion that restrict their access to essential services.

The *Global State of Harm Reduction 2024* provides unique insights into underserved populations and regional challenges. This enables donors to prioritise funding for neglected populations and allocate resources where they can achieve the greatest impact. The expanded scope reflects our commitment to addressing the reality that stigmatisation and criminalisation remain major obstacles for people who use drugs, particularly those with intersecting marginalised identities. By providing concrete data on these underserved populations, we enable advocates to make evidence-based cases for inclusive programming that address the full spectrum of barriers to harm reduction access.

④

STRENGTHENING HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCACY FOR HARM REDUCTION



2024 marked a significant year for our human rights work, as we achieved international engagement and launched tools to strengthen advocacy worldwide.



Read [*The Death Penalty for Drug Offences Report 2024*](#)

Our side event on the death penalty for drug offences at the UN Commission on Narcotics Drugs (CND), organised with Amnesty International, received a record-breaking 19 co-sponsorships by civil society, UN agencies, and member states, including from the Global South.

This represents the highest level of international support for a death penalty side event in the Commission's history and signals growing political support for abolition even in traditionally conservative diplomatic spaces. The significance of this achievement extends beyond symbolic support. It demonstrates how sustained advocacy can shift international discourse on the most challenging human rights issues. The level of co-sponsorship suggests that our evidence-based approach to documenting trends and impacts has created space for states to take principled positions on drug policy and human rights.

We published a decade-long analysis of death penalty trends which provided crucial evidence for reform efforts, identifying common drivers behind successful abolition campaigns and highlighting the dramatic increase in drug-related executions in recent years. With almost one in two executions now carried out for drug offences, our documentation serves as both an accountability mechanism and a strategic resource for abolition advocates.

The launch of our Human Rights Standards Database in 2024 represents our commitment to making international human rights tools accessible to advocates worldwide. By compiling standards from UN human rights bodies in an accessible format, we've created a living resource that enables civil society to hold states accountable using the full weight of international human rights law. The database addresses a critical gap in advocacy resources. While human rights standards related to drug policy exist across multiple UN platforms, they are often inaccessible to advocates not familiar with the UN system. Our compilation provides a user-friendly tool that enables more effective advocacy while strengthening the evidence base for human rights-based approaches to drug policy.

We continued our efforts to provide information to our sector before and after Human Rights Council sessions, through the publication of periodic briefings. These briefings serve as a critical information resource for both civil society and delegations, providing timely analysis of opportunities to advance human rights-based drug policy within the UN system. This coordination ensures that as many opportunities as possible are leveraged to highlight the impacts of punitive drug policies and promote evidence-based reform.

5

HR25 PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

The programme for the Harm Reduction International Conference is mostly abstract-driven. Our delegates submit their best ideas, which are reviewed by our Programme Committee. We strive to ensure that this process to create is inclusive, expansive and rigorous.

For the Harm Reduction International conference 2025 (HR25) we received:

1200 ABSTRACTS


75 COUNTRIES

200+ ABSTRACTS FROM LATIN AMERICA


100+ ABSTRACTS SUBMITTED IN SPANISH

200 members of the HR25 Online Review Committee evaluated these abstracts using a simple online scoring method and the Programme Committee met in mid-November to do a deep dive into the abstracts and build the conference programme. Our Programme Committee meeting is mostly online to allow for greater geographic diversity in its makeup. A smaller group of team leaders meets in Liverpool, UK to oversee the process.

We convene our conference in a different city every two years. It attracts over 1,000 international delegates and has been held in almost every region of the world. In 2025, we announced the location for the Harm Reduction International Conference 2025 (HR25): Bogotá, Colombia.

 [Watch our video announcing the location](#)

Where we go depends on bids we receive from local partners. We decide based on a list of criteria that balances the practicalities with purpose.

 [Read our blog about how we decide where to take the conference](#)

CHAMPIONING GENDER-CENTRED HARM REDUCTION

We collaborated with the African Women in Harm Reduction Group (AWHRG) to highlight progress in addressing the systematic barriers that prevent women who use drugs from accessing essential services across Africa. Our joint webinar showcasing various models of gender-centred harm reduction services in Africa provided a platform for sharing innovative approaches and best practices. The event highlighted the critical importance of services designed specifically to address the multiple barriers women face, including gender-based violence, reproductive health needs, and childcare responsibilities.

In December 2024, we participated in the Association for Women in Development's conference in Bangkok, attended by 4,000 participants from around the world. Our message to divest from the unjust drug war, and invest in gender-sensitive approaches was delivered to the conference during the closing plenary. This engagement provided a crucial platform to highlight how women are disproportionately impacted by punitive drug policies and to advocate for gender-responsive approaches to drug policy reform.

This work addresses the reality that women who use drugs face intersecting forms of discrimination and marginalisation that require specialised responses. By supporting the development of AWHRG and showcasing gender-centred models, we're contributing to a more inclusive harm reduction movement that recognises and addresses the full spectrum of barriers to service access.

7

STRENGTHENING VIRAL HEPATITIS INTEGRATION



Our continued work at the intersection of viral hepatitis and harm reduction supported crucial progress toward 2030 global elimination targets while strengthening the evidence base for integrated service delivery.



See our [Viral Hepatitis Data Repository](#).

The update of our Viral Hepatitis Data Repository provides essential global, national, and regional data on key indicators related to viral hepatitis and people who inject drugs. This resource serves as both a monitoring tool for progress toward elimination targets and a powerful advocacy resource for community-based organisations highlighting the disproportionate impact of hepatitis on people who inject drugs.

The repository's data on population size estimates, hepatitis B and C prevalence, and service coverage enables advocates to make evidence-based calls for better access to prevention and treatment services. The updated data strengthens advocacy for integrated HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C programming while providing the evidence base necessary to hold governments and donors accountable for progress toward elimination goals.

Low-dead space syringes could prevent thousands of new HIV infections while proving cost-effective in high-income settings, according

to modelling research we disseminated to the global health community via a webinar on the topic. Our evidence demonstrated that even small reductions in transmission risk from these syringes are cost-saving when integrated with expanded needle and syringe programmes, directly supporting hepatitis elimination goals.

This work recognises that harm reduction interventions are essential to achieving global hepatitis elimination commitments. By providing accessible data and evidence on the intersection of these issues, we support advocates in making the case for integrated programming that addresses the full spectrum of health needs among people who inject drugs.

5.

OUR BOARD OF TRUSTEES

5. OUR BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Harm Reduction International is an international, not-for-profit NGO. It is a charitable company limited by guarantee, meaning it is incorporated and registered with the UK Charity Commission (Charity Number – 1117375) and at Companies House (Company number – 3223265).

We are governed by a Board of Trustees that is elected for a three-year term. We follow a Foundations Model of governance, in which the directors are also the members of the organisation. Board appointments are made by resolution of the Board itself.

OUR BOARD OF TRUSTEES 2024 WERE	● Lucy Burns Chair	● Mina Barling	● John Porter Treasurer	● Alexander Stevens
	● William Pick	● Raminta Stuikyte	● Fany Pineda Miranda	● Oluseyi Kehinde

6.

OUR DONORS

6. OUR DONORS

In 2024, Harm Reduction International benefitted from the support of:

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| ● Open Society Foundations | ● The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria |
| ● The Robert Carr Fund | ● Drug Policy Alliance |
| ● Great Britain China Centre | ● World Health Organization |
| ● AIDS Healthcare Foundation | ● European Commission |
| ● Elton John AIDS Foundation | ● Viiv |

7.

OUR FINANCES

Statement of Financial Position

Balance sheet as at 31 December 2024

	2024	2023
Fixed assets		
Tangible assets	-	-
Total	-	-
Current assets		
Debtors	£29,921	£15,126
Cash at bank and in hand	£805,138	£1,016,889
Total	£835,059	£1,032,015
Liabilities		
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(£161,821)	(£498,686)
Net current assets / (liabilities)	£673,238	£533,329
Total net assets / (liabilities)	£673,238	£533,329
The funds of the charity		
Restricted income funds	£224,266	£147,061
Unrestricted income funds		
Designated funds	£93,670	£220,360
General funds	£355,302	£165,908
Total unrestricted funds	£448,972	£386,268
Total charity funds	£673,238	£533,329

Statement of Financial Activities

(incorporating an income and expenditure account)
For the year ended 31 December 2024

	Unrestricted Funds 2024	Restricted Funds 2024	Total Funds 2024	Total Funds 2023
Income from				
Donations and legacies	£11,873	-	£11,873	£29,138
Charitable activities				
Project work	£252,998	£737,694	£990,692	£1,224,607
Conferences & support	£252,310	-	£252,310	£750,095
Investments	£2,940	-	£2,940	£7,226
Total income	£520,121	£737,694	£1,257,815	£2,011,066
Expenditure on				
Charitable activities				
Project work	£27,770	£660,489	£688,259	£1,081,810
Conferences & support	£429,647	-	£429,647	£854,336
Total expenditure	£457,417	£660,489	£1,117,906	£1,936,146
Net income/ (expenditure) for the year	£62,704	£77,205	£139,909	£74,920
Transfers between Funds	-	-		-
Net movement in funds	£62,704	£77,205	£139,909	£74,920
Reconciliation of funds				
Total funds brought forward	£386,268	£147,061	£533,329	£458,409
Total funds carried forward	£448,972	£224,266	£673,238	£533,329

HARM REDUCTION INTERNATIONAL ANNUAL REPORT 2024

