

September 2019

INPUD Statement: HIV2020



INPUD's Support of HIV2020

The International Network of People who Use Drugs, INPUD, is resolute in our support of the HIV2020 Conference in Mexico City.

Despite recommendations of global community-led networks, the International AIDS Society (IAS) have chosen the United States as the site for its next International AIDS Conference in 2020. We will not be participating in this 2020 International AIDS Conference being organised in San Francisco and Oakland. We are proud to stand in solidarity with GNP+, ICW, NSWP, MPACT, ITPC, and with Mexican HIV activists and networks of people who use drugs, who are working hard to plan a community centred, alternative gathering to be held between the 5th and 7th July 2020.

The IAS decision to hold the AIDS Conference in the United States shows a disregard for their own organisational values, which include an explicit focus on human rights and inclusivity, whilst encouraging meaningful engagement of people living with HIV and key populations. Moreover, it highlights a concerning willingness to ignore community voices and further marginalise and exclude already marginalised and discriminated against populations.

Increased Discrimination; Increased Exclusion

Since the last US presidential election, minority and marginalised communities and key populations have experienced increasingly discriminatory political rhetoric, hate speech, violence and a rolling back of freedoms and rights. Travel restrictions affecting people who use drugs, sex workers, and people with a criminal record present a significant barrier for many people who use drugs to participate in the conference in the US. Those restrictions also now apply to people from predominantly Muslim countries and some countries in Central America. These restrictions allow the United States to legally restrict visas for people who use drugs, sex workers and those with two or more convictions. This means that many people who use drugs, as well as other criminalised and marginalised populations, will be essentially barred from attending and participating in AIDS 2020 in San Francisco and Oakland.

Increasingly, we see the space for communities of people who use drugs to participate in discussions that relate to their health worryingly shrink; these are crucial spaces that allow for communities to be involved in events that will inform decisions that affect their lives. The AIDS Conference is an important global forum, which should provide a safe space for people who use drugs to express themselves and to have visibility. The IAS decision to hold their next conference in a country that increasingly tolerates discrimination against people of colour, migrants, people who use drugs, sex workers, LGBTQ people, and other key populations and marginalised communities, sends a message that intolerance and social exclusion are acceptable. People who use drugs have fought this stigmatising message for decades, and to have to fight it still in 2020, because of this IAS decision, is unacceptable.

An Alternative: Inclusion and Solidarity

HIV2020 in Mexico will provide a safe alternative for individuals who are unable or unwilling to enter the US for the AIDS Conference in 2020. It will offer opportunities to reaffirm the leading role communities play in the global HIV response. HIV2020 is a critical necessity; it is a call for change.

Led by people living with HIV, people who use drugs, sex workers, gay and bisexual men, transgender people, and allies, HIV2020 will run concurrently with the first half of the international AIDS conference, and will concentrate on issues of equity, parity and inclusion. It will be key population-led, inter-disciplinary, and will

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reflect a changing paradigm in the global community-led response to HIV. The event will centre conversations and debates that importantly showcase work and research conceived and led by people living with and disproportionately affected by HIV, ensuring that these narratives are heard in San Francisco and Oakland, and all over the world.

Though we will not be attending the conference held in the United States, INPUD recognises that some people who use drugs, particularly those in the US, may wish to attend AIDS 2020. We emphasise that we are not calling for a boycott by our members. We acknowledge and support the role of our communities who will be present in the United States, advocating for a rights based, community-led domestic agenda. However, INPUD will not participate in AIDS 2020 as we are one of the organisers of this event, and will be focussing on ensuring that people who use drugs, sex workers, gay and bisexual men, and transgender people from all over the world are able to participate in this alternative event, HIV2020, in Mexico City.

We encourage our members and other organisations to support HIV2020 by [officially endorsing the HIV2020](#).

Planning for HIV2020 [is already underway](#), registration will open on 23 September 2019 - visit www.hiv2020.org for more information.

[Subscribe here](#) to receive updates from HIV2020, follow HIV2020 on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#), and [save the date on Facebook](#).