WHERE ARE WE! Rhetoric Voice of the People Who Use Drugs [PWUD] in Kenya as we Seek a Voice from a Void of Harm Reduction

Issue: Harm reduction program has been in existence for about ten years. The program is heavily saturated by professional-based organizations who have never considered the growth of PWUD community to be a complementary rather a competitor. As a result, efforts towards reduction of HIV prevalence from 18.3% PWID has born little efforts as Community leaders have faced blackmail and character assassinations due to selfish individuals who are not willing to appreciate the growth of PWUDs as a community of interest resulting in stigmatization.

Setting: Kenya has six mainstream organizations that work for PWUDs but they are not led or owned by PWUDs. This contravenes Injecting Drug User Implementing Tool [IDUIT] which has not been fully operationalized by the existing mainstream organizations instead it has been practically and politically mutilated for a lack of agency in its operationalization.

Key Arguments: PWUD leaders have been discouraged from taking their space in harm reduction program in Kenya. The PWUD leaders have been threatened, had reduced self-esteem and at some point used to fight their own in proxies of the mainstream managers. The existing partners have only deployed PWUD community as either peer educators or outreach workers with low stipends below the purchasing power.

Outcome: To this the PWUD community recommends and support the referral systems that ensures all structural barriers are addressed by PWUD in order to impose the reality to the gatekeepers as we look forward to growth in our PWUD Community. The existing mainstream organizations will work in realistic targets that exist and be accountable to the beneficiaries of harm reduction in Kenya. There needs to be a proper mapping of PWUD organizations even in their loose entity and organizing to ensure the representation of ourselves as we answer the question.... Where Are We! As We Are Here!