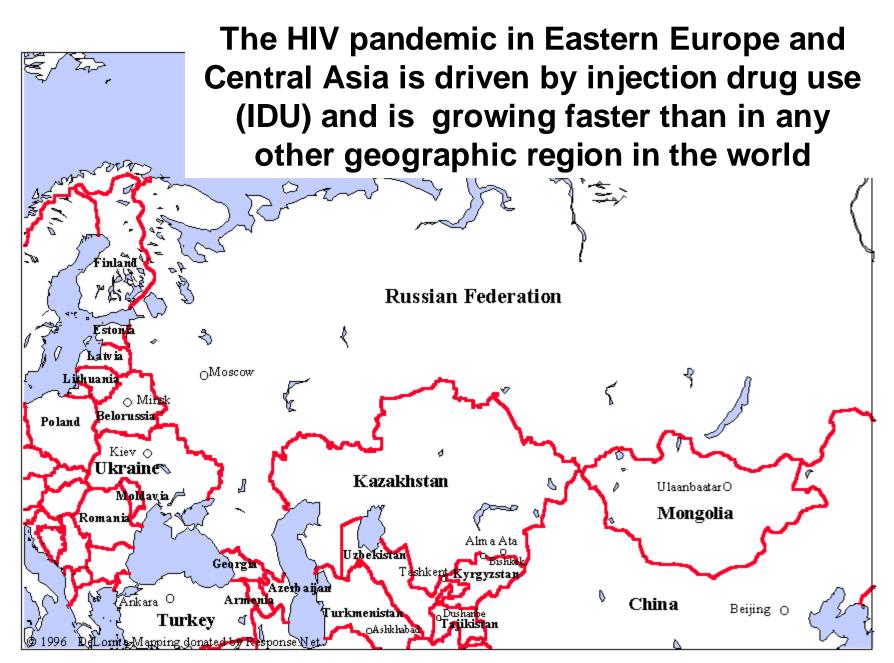


### International Harm Reduction Development Program (IHRD)



- Since its foundation in 1995, IHRD has partnered with national Soros foundations and local organizations to support more than 200 projects in 26 countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia
- Projects seek to reduce HIV and other adverse consequences of drug use through evidencebased approaches
  - Needle and syringe programs (NSPs)
  - Opiate substitution treatment (methadone and buprenorphine)
  - Peer outreach
  - Medical and social services
  - Community Advocacy
  - Human rights protections and policy reform

Photo: Dan Bigg



http://www.reliefweb.int/mapc/cis/reg/ee\_ca.html, map provided by Relief Web

## Socio-Political Transition, Injecting Drug Use, HIV/AIDS, and the State

- Massive migration, emigration and political conflict
- "Rewiring" of economic system, with collapse of old state role and industrial patterns (Castells)
- Economic desperation often leads to emergence of underground economies drug trafficking, sex work, smuggling
- HIV epidemic moves in those same channels







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# Eastern Europe, former Soviet Union and Central Asia

- Russia-fastest growing epidemic in the world
  - Estimated 1 million with HIV-more than in North America
  - ¾ under age 30, 70%
     IDU
- Ukraine-estimated 400,000 HIV cases, 69% IDU
- Central Asia, cases doubling yearly, >80% IDU



Photo: Mia Foster

### Good News.....

- Evidence-based interventions to stem HIV and other harms against IDU's exist
- Syringe exchange programs and methadone maintenance treatment have been proven easy to implement and are highly effective in trials from Australia to Thailand to Belarus.

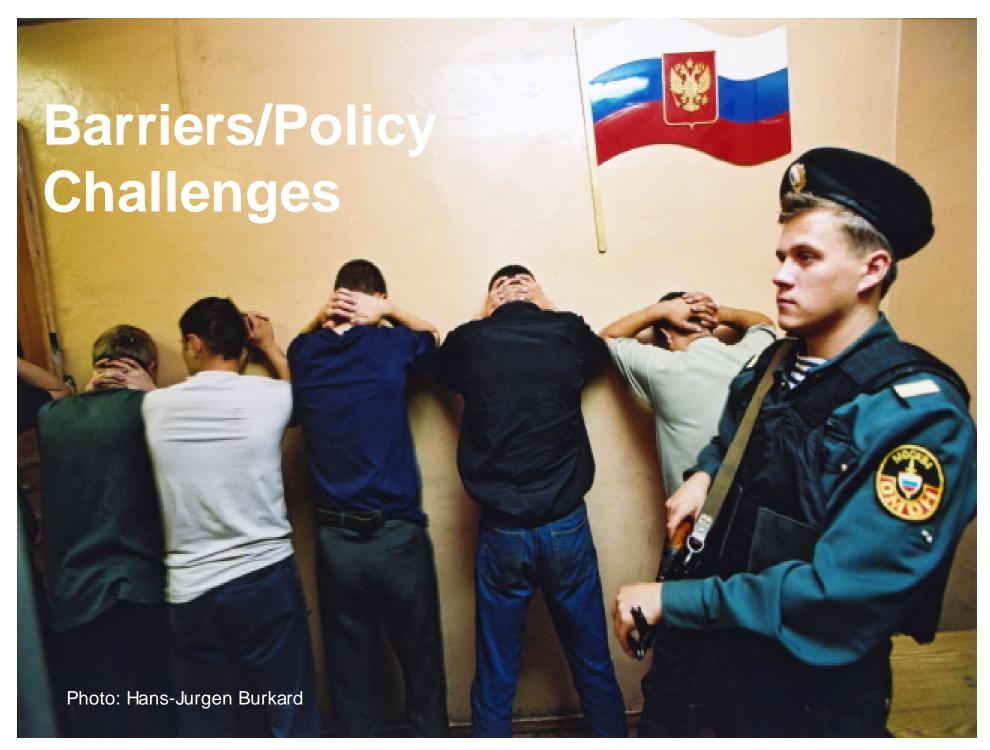


### Bad News.....

- Evidence of effectiveness has so far proved a poor match for ideology
- Countries with injectiondriven epidemics continue to emphasize criminal enforcement and demand for abstinence over the best practices of public health.



Photo: Hans-Jurgen Burkard



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### **US War on Drugs**

- The United States Government's war on drugs includes efforts to remove harm reduction language from international treaties and policies.
- Creates a barrier to disseminating information about evidence-based interventions and implementing harm reduction programs
- Influences policies worldwide

#### Not a Solution



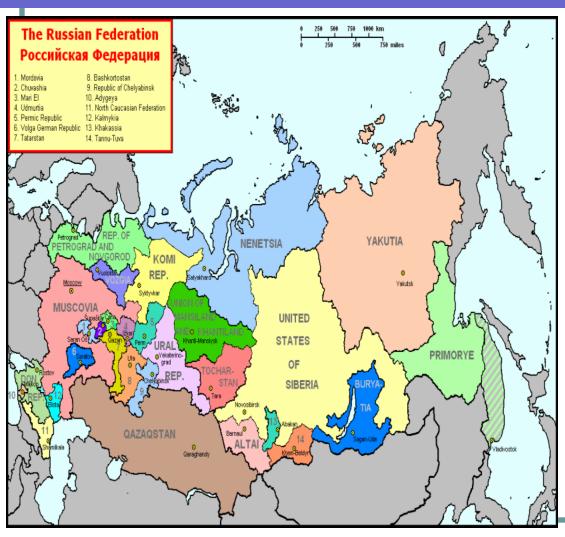
- •Common reaction is to become tougher on drug users
- Drives users underground
- Less likely to access services
- Condemning drug users to overcrowded prisons where needles are shared and HIV rates are surging

Photo: Hans Jürgen Burkard

### Limited support in the region

- Several countries have responded to the HIV epidemic by implementing pilot substitution treatment and syringe exchange programs, but efforts must be scaled up and strengthened.
- Harm Reduction programs are often regarded with distrust by law enforcement
- Methadone is only available in 2 countries of CIS
  - Programs extremely controlled and high threshold
  - Uzbekistan pilot only for those with HIV (25 methadone, 75 buprenorphine)
  - Restricted by age, only for those with repeated attempts at drug-free treatment, etc.

# Countries not open to ST: Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan



- •Refuse to open their doors despite large numbers of drug dependent individuals
- •Russia has half a million opiate users yet, no substitution treatment. As a powerful nation in the region, Russian policies often influence neighboring countries.

www.geocities.com/wenedyk/ib/russia\_map.png

## IHRD Response: Evidence Based Harm Reduction

- Use the approaches proven most effective to control infections and reduce deaths: clean needles, substitution treatment, etc.
- These methods, extensively studied and endorsed by UNAIDS, WHO etc., decrease HIV risk and do not encourage drug use
  - Work with law enforcement
  - Media campaigns about evidence base



### IHRD Response II: Advocacy for National Reform

- Disentangle public health from law enforcement
  - Forced testing, registration, sharing of information with police
- Fight discrimination through litigation and regulatory reform
  - Document human rights abuses at program sites
  - Challenge barriers to HIV treatment, laws criminalizing HIV+ adults, lack of employment and housing protections



Photo: Jakarta, 2006

### **Advocacy for National Reform**

- Change overly punitive, ineffective incarceration and institutionalization policies and "scale up" prevention
  - Russian drug law reform in 2004
  - Call to set drug treatment standards, making it unacceptable for forced detention and labor camps in China, Indonesia, Vietnam, etc, to be called drug treatment.



# IHRD Response III: International Advocacy

- New IDU epidemics require new policy responses
  - Plenary speeches, satellite meetings and reports at International AIDS conferences
  - Inclusion of IDU issues, and funding, at WHO, Global Fund, bilateral aid efforts
  - UN Commission on Human Rights and Commission on Narcotic Drugs
    - With Human Rights Watch and government of Brazil, special briefing with Paul Hunt, Emma Bonino and Aryeh Neier



Photo: Reuters, 2004

## Thank you

### Kasia Malinowska-Sempruch

International Harm Reduction Development Program
Open Society Institute

kmalinowska@sorosny.org