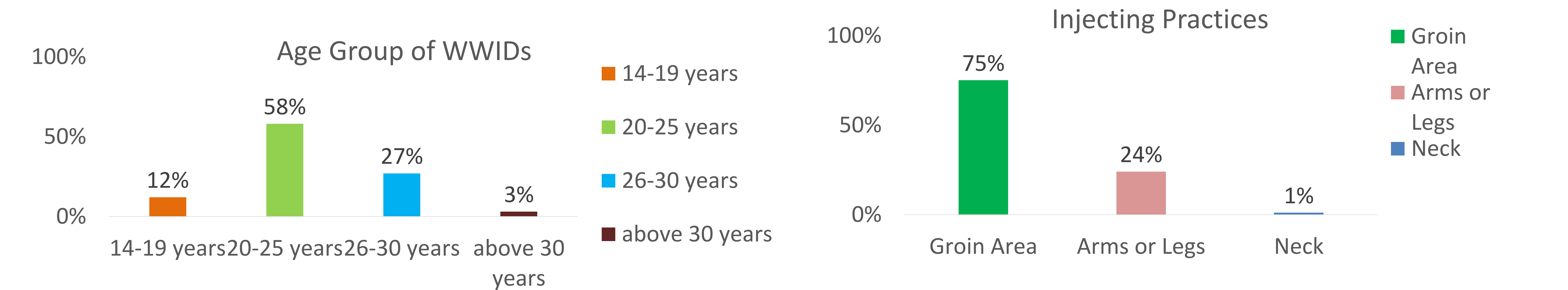


Title: "Implementation of Harm Reduction Strategies: Prevention, Health Care and Treatment Services for Women Who Use Drugs"
Author: Sujata Khadka

Nepal, a predominantly male-dominated country, offers limited harm reduction (HR) services for Women Who Use Drugs (WWUD). In response, Recovering Nepal Women (RN-Women), a national network of WWUDs, launched a Harm Reduction/Needle Syringe Exchange Program (NSEP) in 2021 with funding from Save the Children/Global Fund, serving as the only Sub-Recipient focused on WWUDs. The **program operates in five districts of Nepal which has high number of WWIDs and has enrolled 1,391 beneficiaries till September 2024, with 1,256 receiving regular services.**

RN-Women provides a wide range of **gender-specific services, including HIV testing and counseling (HTC), behavior change communication (BCC)** on HIV/AIDS, safer injecting practices, overdose prevention, sexually transmitted infections, abscess treatment, hepatitis B and C, and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services. Beneficiaries are also **referred to opioid agonist therapy (OAT), rehabilitation centers and antiretroviral therapy (ART).** Recently, **hepatitis C** testing has become a **priority** among injecting drug users. With support from Recovering Nepal, one implementing partner has established primary healthcare services for comprehensive care.



Demographic data of service recipient shows **that 58% of beneficiaries are aged 20-25 years, 27% are aged 26-30, and 12% are teenagers aged 14-19** . Alarminglly, **80% of WWUDs began drug use before the age of 20, with 95% identifying marijuana as their first drug.** Other commonly used substances include brown sugar, opioids, and various pills. Moreover, it revealed that **75% of beneficiaries inject drugs in the groin area, 24% in the arms or legs, and 1% in the neck.** The data also revealed that **70% of WWUDs faced harassment by police, 30% experienced partner violence, and 20% expressed the need for separate women-friendly OAT services which supports in increase number of WWIDs in OAT.**

These findings highlight the **need for PHC** at all drop-in centers and the geographical expansion of Harm Reduction programs. Additionally, the **overlapping cases** of HIV infection among **WWUDs and female sex workers** emphasize the **need for targeted interventions.**



Distribution of syringes to beneficiaries



Collection of used syringes from hotspot



Coordination with local police personnel



HV Testing of beneficiries



Segregation of Waste Management



Advocacy to ensue Hepc Treatment



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Celebration of International Drug Users Day