

Correspondence

Afghanistan: vaccinate drug users against COVID-19

Afghanistan has the highest proportion of opiate users in the world (B. Rasekh *et al. Nagoya J. Med. Sci.* **80**, 329–340; 2018). We call on the Afghan government and its health allies to ensure that people who use drugs are given priority for COVID-19 vaccination. This is justified by the size and spread of the group and its extreme vulnerability to infection.

People in this group are typically criminalized, stigmatized and marginalized (S. E. Wakeman *et al. Nature Med.* **26**, 819–820; 2020). Weakened immune systems and chronic conditions such as hepatitis and infection with HIV mean that people who use drugs are at high risk of contracting COVID-19, especially if they are homeless and living in densely populated and insanitary urban areas.

Access to vaccines during a pandemic is a human right, so no groups should be left out (J. N. Nkengasong *et al. Nature* **586**, 197–199; 2020). The United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recommends that the most disadvantaged and marginalized people should be the first to receive the help they need. No one is safe until everyone is safe.

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Jettison 'master-slave' terminology in biology

In my view, biologists should stop using 'master-slave' terminology. This is an all-too-common descriptor for entities that control many others and processes that occur exclusively at the expense of alternatives. A precedent for ending use of such terminology has been set by the IEEE, the world's largest association of technical professionals (see go.nature.com/3e4yp4k). Language freighted with racism, degradation, brutality and human suffering has no place in the scientific lexicon.

A literature search reveals that use of 'master-slave' is still widespread in publications on topics from immunology to gene conversion and DNA methylation (see also A. Khan *eLife* **10**, e65604; 2021). For example, the gene that triggers sex determination in *Drosophila* fruit flies is currently referred to as the 'master' gene; those with roles later in the sequence are called 'slave' genes (see C. Dechaud *et al. Mob. DNA* **10**, 42; 2019). Papers on the subject often contain offensive extended metaphors.

Case-specific alternatives are readily found. For instance, 'donor' and 'acceptor' could be used in discussing gene conversion, and 'controller' and 'responder' would work in the case of sex determination.

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Value of Mexican nature reserve is more than monetary

Our monetary compensation programme for poor rural communities in Mexico's Sierra de Manantlán Biosphere Reserve encouraged them to forgo exploitation of their natural resources to provide ecosystem services for the city of Colima (see *Nature* **591**, 178; 2021). But focusing solely on the monetary value of ecosystems isn't enough.

The National Forestry Commission of Mexico and the Fund for Natural Protected Areas have made compensatory payments of almost US\$1 million to communities in the Cerro Grande region of the reserve since 2003, backed since 2013 by a local fiduciary fund of voluntary contributions from Colima's citizens. However, the voluntary payments are minimal because most people don't acknowledge the importance of the mountain forest that provides 90% of their water.

As well as monetary schemes, the cultural traditions and the land-tenure rights of communal organizations must be recognized. They should be empowered to draw up contracts between owners of natural resources and urban beneficiaries that will promote their common social, economic and livelihood interests. To increase productivity and family income for impoverished small landowners, payment for ecosystem services could be implemented by using diverse marketing approaches that include sustainable agroforestry and livestock production.

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COVID-19 recovery: build on Belgium's findings

As president and a member of Belgium's Superior Health Council, respectively, we suggest that an international consortium of researchers could help to accelerate society's recovery from COVID-19. The researchers would be drawn from the social sciences, the humanities and the arts to help mitigate the psychosocial effects of the pandemic for people and the economy.

The council issued recommendations a year ago for offsetting the impact of the pandemic on Belgians' mental health (updated in February; see go.nature.com/3359qkf). These are in broad agreement with those discussed by Hetan Shah (*Nature* **591**, 503; 2021). It has since set up the Belgian Mental Health Data Repository (see <https://doi.org/199jc>) as a tool for analysis of Belgian research on the topic.

Similar projects are running in other countries. Governments need such local data and information for policymaking. An international knowledge-sharing network could coordinate these efforts, consolidate the outcome and underscore the importance of the consortium's input for responding to global challenges.

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