

BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF CARE



SUPPORT. DON'T PUNISH
2021 GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION
SUMMARY REPORT



Building communities of care:

The Support. Don't Punish 2021 Global Day of Action


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Support. Don't Punish is a global, decentralised and grassroots-centred initiative that mobilises communities targeted by and resisting repressive drug policies, and their allies. Under a common banner, we promote **harm reduction and drug policies that prioritise health, human rights and well-being.**

The campaign seeks to raise the profile of harm reduction and sustainable responses to drugs by strengthening communities' mobilisation capacity, opening dialogue with policy-makers, and raising awareness among the media and the public.

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'Prohibition fills the prison'.
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KEY MESSAGES OF THE CAMPAIGN

The drug control system is broken and in need of reform.

People who use drugs should not be criminalised.

People involved in the drug trade should not face harsh or disproportionate punishments.

The death penalty should never be imposed for drug offences.

Drug policy should focus on health, well-being, harm reduction and meaningful community engagement.

Drug policy budgets need rebalancing to ensure health and harm reduction-based responses are adequately financed.

KEY NUMBERS OF THE DAY OF ACTION

365
events worldwide

260
participating cities

96
participating countries

110
media items

33
statements of support by high-reach personalities

38,484
combined following on social media accounts

INTRODUCTION

MOBILISING TO PROTECT LIFE

BRAVING CONCURRING CRISES

Pandemics in contexts of punitive drug policy

2020 was a painful year. As the COVID-19 pandemic shook the world, people were forced to live, work, and in many cases suffer, in isolation.

Punitive drug policy – combined with poor or unavailable public services – worsened the already devastating consequences of the pandemic, driving up health risks and pushing people further into poverty and marginalisation.

Notwithstanding, **Support. Don't Punish** campaigners were undeterred, creatively collaborating in ways that were so impactful and diverse that one could witness that our transnational struggle is truly based on a **'solidarity that cannot be confined'**.

After a disastrous year, the beginning of 2021 saw a **hope-giving roll-out of vaccines** to potentially curb the spread and harms of COVID-19 worldwide. Unfortunately, the turning of the year saw the greed of the few prevail over the need of the many.

Vaccine apartheid has left poor, racialised and other marginalised communities across the globe with **little to no access to vaccines**, while too many remain in precarious living conditions, struggling to afford the most basic needs such as food, healthcare, and housing.

New waves of COVID-19 infections also hit this year, with detrimental impacts most felt by populations in the global south, from Indonesia to Tunisia to Brazil.

Meanwhile, repressive policing – COVID-19 related or otherwise – continues to erode spaces for communities and civil society to organise, a phenomenon exacerbated by a **decline in funding for harm reduction** programmes and advocacy.

COLLECTIVE ACTION FOR CHANGE

Potentiating a groundswell of support

Against this backdrop of towering challenges, this year's **Support. Don't Punish Global Day of Action** reached a record high. In over 260 cities in nearly 100 countries, campaigners of diverse backgrounds worked together to counter the 'war on drugs' and the oppressive systems of violence and neglect that sustain it.

In mobilising for change, most campaigners relied on a bottom-up and community-centred approach to organising, inviting potential and aspiring allies and accomplices to collectively create a world where drug policy promotes **care and compassion**, not discrimination and stigma.



Activists in Kabul, Afghanistan, on a photo break from outreach activities. Photo by: BRIDGE

ORGANISING CAMPAIGNS

EMPHASISING CARE AND SUPPORT

MATERIAL SUPPORT

In times of growing need

Punitive drug laws hurt and kill people, especially when coupled with discrimination, stigma, inequality, and a pervasive lack of access to **essential public services** – including harm reduction.

Preventable deaths among people who use drugs are on the rise, along with risks related to HIV, hepatitis, and other health conditions worsened by the lack of availability of vital programmes, like needle and syringe programmes, opioid agonist therapy, and naloxone for opioid overdose management, as noted in the **2021 World Drug Report**.

This situation is even worse for communities living in poverty and those forced to live in custodial settings, such as prisons and other detention centres.

Compounded by the various challenges brought about by COVID-19, campaigners around the world responded to this growing need by seizing the opportunity provided by the Support. Don't Punish Global Day of Action to initiate and extend campaigns of care and support.

With the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, campaigners were able to organise – albeit still

“ With the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, campaigners were able to organise in-person support activities for people living in situations of vulnerability. ”



In Bogotá, street-based people were provided harm reduction materials focused on prevalent stimulants.

Photo by: Acción Técnica Social / Échele Cabeza

with limitations – in-person activities in support of people living in situations of vulnerability.

NO ONE LEFT BEHIND

Mobilising in all latitudes

In Perth (Australia), Peer Based Harm Reduction WA prepared 100 packages of ‘Needles, syringes, and your rights’ for people who inject drugs, each of which contained hygienic injecting materials, snacks, and information cards regarding the basic rights of people who use drugs, especially in relation to city-level policing.

In Bogotá (Colombia), people who use drugs organised at a local shelter to distribute meals and host conversations with street-based people who use drugs. Reminded of the fact that inequality also exists within marginalised communities, organisers led by Acción Técnica Social mobilised under the banner: ‘May your privilege as a user not cloud your empathy’.

Similarly inspiring and lifesaving initiatives took place in so many other locations that it is nearly impossible to track them all.

In Alexandria (Egypt), the Middle East & North African Network for People who Use Drugs (MENANPUD) held field visits to distribute sanitary equipment and information brochures for people who use drugs.

In Ekaterinburg, Perm, and Togliatti (Russia), advocates mobilised with the Eurasian Network of People who Use Drugs to deliver food packages, medicines, as well as sanitary materials and services for people who use drugs living with HIV and tuberculosis.

Meanwhile in Tijuana Baja California (Mexico), Previncasa A.C. headed to an area of the city known as 'El Bordo', where street-based people who use drugs (many of whom have experienced the violence of the nearby US-Mexico border) live in situations of great deprivation and exclusion. Campaigners operated a mobile clinic, offering

primary medical consultation as well as distributing syringes and naloxone. For many in this area, perpetually threatened by social cleansing and police violence, in a context of systematic denial of healthcare, the support provided by advocates is nothing short of a life-line.



*Campaigners in Tijuana share their medical expertise and harm reduction supplies with street-based people.
Photo by: Previncasa A.C.*

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Group photo in front of the Boyle Street Community Services Centre. Photo by: AAWEAR

COMMUNITY CARE AS SELF CARE

2021 Global Day of Action in Edmonton (Alberta, Canada)
Small grants programme highlight

The overdose crisis in Alberta (Canada) has pushed an ever-growing number of people into harms way since the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

Mainly associated with fentanyl poisoning and the lack of a safe supply of opioids, the crisis is worsened by the lack of evidence-based responses from the local government, as illustrated by recent attacks on life-saving harm reduction programmes, such as safe consumption sites.

Between January and July 2021 alone, almost 900 people died from drug overdoses in Alberta.

The number of deaths and injuries occurring in the context of punitive drug policy is the painfully visible part of an ongoing catastrophe.

Not as easily measured is the overwhelming amount of loss, grief, and trauma that have become the daily realities of communities on the ground.

In response to this need for collective healing, a coalition of organisations in Edmonton, including Alberta Addicts Who Educate and Advocate Responsibly (AAWEAR), Canadian Association of People who Use Drugs (CAPUD), Boyle Street Community Services, Streetworks, and the Welcome Mat project, held a community gathering on the Support. Don't Punish Global Day of Action on 26 June 2021.

Part of larger networks across Canada, these organisations specialise in the provision of harm reduction and social support for people who use drugs, especially those without access to housing and other essential public services.

The gathering took place in Boyle Street Community Services centre, welcoming more than 100 people throughout the afternoon, accommodated by COVID-19 physical distancing and sanitary guidelines.

The event began with a sharing circle in which people interacted with one another, exchanging thoughts and feelings as well as insights as to what 'Support. Don't Punish' meant to them.

This exchange was then followed by a set of Indigenous rituals, including a smudge ceremony, music, dancing, drumming, and singing circle.

These elements made up an important part of the event, as Indigenous people bear a disproportionate burden of Edmonton's drug-policy-related harm. At this occasion, many of them expressed their demands not only for a proper response to the fentanyl poisoning crisis, but also for a wider systemic change beyond the scope of the health crisis in Edmonton.

The event enabled people to come together, share and process their grief collectively. As articulated by Shanell Twan, one of the organisers, 'we are, obviously like everywhere



In times of great loss, the beat of the drum created space to connect with life, nature and each other.
Photo by: AAWEAR

else, devastated by the amount of fentanyl poisonings. Just last week we had 18 overdoses in one day. We feel that it's good to do self-care.... And self-care sometimes is community care.'

With this, the campaign truly was an embodiment of the 'Support. Don't Punish' philosophy that emphasises connection and empathy –after all, when we discuss drug policy, we are talking about human lives, and most often, the lives of people who are our friends, family, and part of the community we live in.

“ We feel that it's good to do self-care... And self-care sometimes is community care. ”

Shanell Twan, Streetworks

ORGANISING CAMPAIGNS

EMPHASISING CARE AND SUPPORT (CONTINUED)

DELIVERING MATERIAL SUPPORT

In times of growing need

As shown in previous years, campaigns of care come in different shapes and sizes. They can carry and offer different meanings in different contexts, but most share one vital characteristic: they are organised by, with and for the community.

In Concepcion (Chile), campaigners from Proyecto Epicuro - Fundación Ciencias para la Cannabis held a harm reduction conversation with people who use smokable cocaine, after which a collaborative community garden project was developed.

In Mexico's Baja, Mexicali and Tijuana, women who use drugs supported by Verter A.C. and the **Women and Harm Reduction International Network (WHRIN)**, conducted outreach activities and held a 'reflection circle' to discuss their experiences of drug use, as well as the numerous challenges they face



*Advocates pose for a group photo on the Global Day of Action in Mexicali.
Photo by: Verter A.C.*



*Still from UISCE's naloxone training with the The Red Door Project in Drogheda, Ireland.
Photo by: UISCE*

due to intersecting forms of stigma and discrimination, and gender-based violence.

Similar actions led by women who use drugs (often organised in collaboration with women living with HIV, sex worker activists, and other women-led collectives) could be found in Indonesia, Italy, Kenya, Portugal, and more.

Equally energising is campaigners' stronger-than-ever commitment to harm reduction, particularly with regard to sharing practical information and access to lifesaving tools like naloxone and drug checking.

Workshops for naloxone administration took place in Drogheda (Ireland), Copenhagen (Denmark), and Ljubljana (Slovenia).

In Lisbon (Portugal), local organisations operated a mobile safe consumption site and provided drug checking services for people who use drugs. A space was also created for peers to socialise and voice their hopes and expectations for future drug policies.

GENERATING INCOME

AN EXPERIENCE IN RADICAL HARM REDUCTION

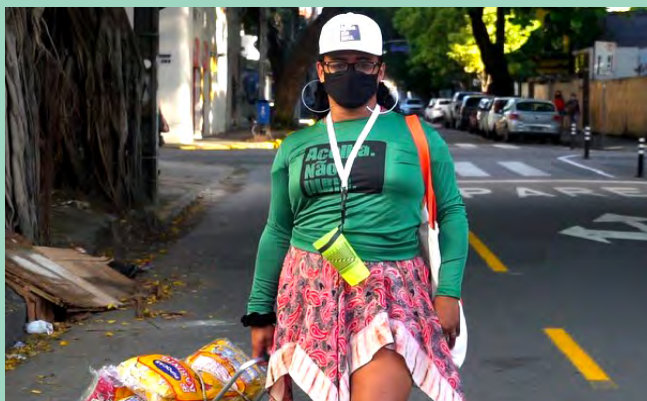
**2021 Global Day of Action
in Recife (Brazil)**

*Small grants programme
highlight*

**“Everyone
should have
the right to
dream and
achieve a
different
life for
themselves.**

”

*Priscilla Gadelha, Escola Livre
de Redução de Danos*



*A campaigner gets ready for the Generating Income project in Recife, Brazil.
Photo by: Escola Livre de Redução de Danos*

PROVIDING MEANS OF SELF-SUPPORT

Weathering the storm, planning for the future

Since 2020, Brazil has been amongst the countries worst affected by COVID-19. The country's high levels of economic exploitation and inequality mean that the impacts of the pandemic have disproportionately hit people living in precariousness and exposed to criminalisation.

Day-to-day subsistence is becoming harder for many, especially for women and non-binary people who use drugs pushed into poverty.

Partly for this reason, campaigners from Escola Livre de Redução de Danos (the Free School of Harm Reduction) in Recife came up with the 'Generating Income' initiative (*Gerando Renda* in Portuguese).

As explained by Priscilla Gadelha and Jose Arturo Escobar (of the *Escola*), the campaign sought to support people who use drugs to strengthen their capacity to support themselves.

The initiative began with a workshop prior to the Global Day of Action, where community members were invited to discuss their needs in relation to their livelihoods. Most were keen to receive material support to start selling snacks and

water bottles on the streets, as well as to provide barbering services. Organisers thus responded by distributing strollers (to carry water bottles), hair-cutting tools and equipment, and more.

Around 20 people – mostly street-based people who use drugs – took part in the initiative. A few months later, community members are now requesting for a second edition of the campaign.

‘With this activity, we wanted to focus on the social determinants of health,’ says Jose Arturo Escobar, emphasising the importance of people who use drugs’ autonomy and capacity to sustain themselves. Especially in contexts of high vulnerability and discrimination, this is an essential part of what harm reduction should entail: Meeting people where they are, but not leaving them there.

HARM REDUCTION BEYOND DRUGS

Creating conditions for all to thrive

Colleagues from the *Escola* felt that it was crucial to clarify their political stance on harm reduction. In Brazil, despite support by some local authorities, existing programmes can be too rigid, they suggest.

‘Harm reduction is not [just] about taking or substituting drugs, but about responding to living conditions from a perspective of care, (...) We need to support, not punish,’ said Priscilla Gadelha at a forum organised by the state legislature.

This is why, through *Gerando Renda* and other empowering activities (from harm reduction courses to dance workshops), the *Esco-*

la centres meaningful and active community engagement.

In mobilising for the collective well-being of the community, the *Escola* embodies the ethos of the Support. Don’t Punish campaign.

The *Gerando Renda* campaign was a modest yet affirming and powerful initiative. As underscored by Priscilla, autonomy and dignity means that ‘everyone should have the right to dream, as well as to envision, desire, and achieve a different life for themselves’, regardless of who they are.

Together, we have the power to build societies that enable people’s capacity to envision and live more prosperous meaningful lives.

In a globalised unfair system that favours the rich and powerful while producing harm for the masses, an initiative like that of the *Escola* is a promising experiment in radical harm reduction.



*Street-based people who use drugs were provided materials and skills to take on barbering.
Photo by: Escola Livre de Redução de Danos*

MOBILISING FOR FAIRER DRUG POLICIES

PUNISHMENT IS NOT SUSTAINABLE!

A GROUNDSWELL OF SUPPORT

People power to change drug policies

Decades of suffering and destruction have shown that punitive drug policies do more harm than good. The message of the Support. Don't Punish campaign has always been loud and clear. We must end the 'war on drugs' –globally.

The way forward is not only about undoing, but also rebuilding. The invitation to end the 'war on drugs' encourages us to conceptualise and trial fairer alternatives.

For these to materialise and be sustainable, concrete and strategic efforts are needed to create 'enabling environments', including

through life- and rights-affirming drug laws and policies.

Advocates, activists, and communities surely know this, for many of them have been in this transformative journey for years, if not decades; practicing harm reduction in often unforgiving contexts, supporting peers with legal and mutual aid schemes, conducting research and advocacy, engaging public institutions, and more.

Each year, the Support. Don't Punish Global Day of Action accelerates momentum, enhancing these efforts, spurring exciting ideas and initiatives that in turn strengthen



As part of their series of events, ACRDR held a concert where children and youth are encouraged to participate and learn about the Support. Don't Punish campaign. Photo by: ACRDR

the work that campaigners do on a regular basis.

The 2021 Support. Don't Punish Global Day of Action was not any different. Despite the pandemic situation, this year's campaigners worked tirelessly to organise activities to keep pushing for progressive drug policy reform.

In Maseru (Lesotho), pioneering advocates from S.H.E.L.T.E.R (Sustainable Health, Education, Livelihoods, Training, Equity & Rights) spoke at national radio stations about drug policy reform in the country, discussing the need to improve health services for people who use drugs.

Beyond media engagement, campaigners organised two panel discussions involving people who use drugs and government agencies on prevailing problems like prison overcrowding and human rights violations faced by people who use drugs, as well as the future of harm reduction and decriminalisation.

In Oslo (Norway), with leadership from the Association for Humane Drug Policy, a gathering was held outside of the Parliament building, attracting groups of people who use drugs, parliamentarians, a cabinet minister, and other supporters. Marking the 50th year of the 'war on drugs', attendees were



New York NGO Committee members express support for the Global Day of Action. Photo by: NYNGOC

given Support. Don't Punish t-shirts and sported campaign placards.

Meanwhile in Delhi (India), the Delhi Users' Network organised a webinar with academics, legal practitioners and key government officials to prompt a productive talk about people-centred drug policies in the state of National Capital Territory of Delhi.

In Maroua and Mora (Cameroon), the Cameroonian Association for Harm Reduction for the Youth (ACRDR) organised a series of highly varied activities for more than a week, from a media tour resulting in 13 news items, donations to people in prisons, a dialogue with policymakers, to an outdoor concert with local artists.

Calling for a revision of the drug law, ACRDR focussed on issues faced by people in prisons, while continuing to raise awareness around opioid agonist therapy for people who use drugs.

COMMUNITIES AT THE CENTRE
Fostering grassroots empowerment

Central to some of these campaigns for drug policy reform was the role of people and groups whose voice often remains unheard or silenced, such as young people who use drugs. This reliance to bottom-up, community-led activities holds tremendously powerful emancipatory potential and is



Flyer for the multi-stakeholder online forum organised by the Delhi Users' Forum. Photo by: DUN



Student-led capacity development activity on the gendered impacts of punitive policy on health.
Photo by: SSDP Zimbabwe

at the heart of the growing success of the campaign.

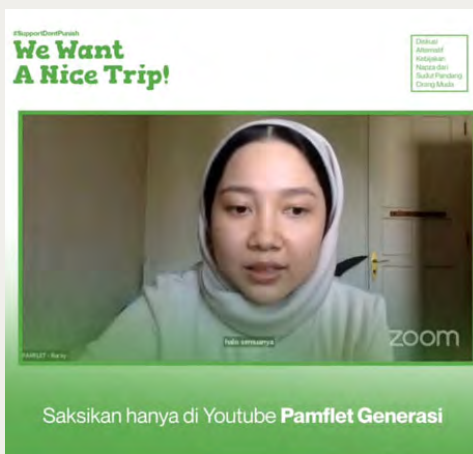
In Abuja and Enugu (Nigeria), YouthRISE Nigeria and the Bensther Development Foundation held a policy round-table joined by youth advocates, government and parliamentary stakeholders and civil society, promoting cooperation towards evidence-based and socially just drug policy.

Advocates highlighted the success of the 2020 needle-and-syringe pilot, underscoring the programme's success and the importance of sustaining and expanding this critical harm reduction intervention. Like in many other latitudes, campaigners expressed support for the global **Rome Consensus 2.0** campaign, which promotes human-rights based drug policies.

Collaboration with converging mobilisation initiatives is part of the campaign's DNA. Both the campaign's hubs and its hundreds of local partners actively seek to build alliances to create a broad common front for harm reduction and drug policy reform.

Similarly grounded in youth liberation, Pamflet Generasi in Indonesia joined forces to invite young people to submit courageous videos and photos expressing their opinions on the catastrophic 'war on drugs'.

In Wakiso (Uganda), the Teens Link Uganda network convened young people for a



'We Want A Nice Trip' saw multiple youth-led conversations on the future of drug policy in Indonesia.
Photo by: Pamflet Generasi

demonstration demanding for better care and support for young people who use drugs, who have long experienced exclusion and violent policing.

In so doing, campaigners invited public figures, policymakers, media agencies, service providers, and harm reduction and HIV community activists.

Continues on page 18 →



'For a new drug law that is responsible and fair' - Campaigners in Honduras call for drug law reform.
Photo by: Movimiento Prolegalización



*GENPUD activists organise a peaceful protest before the State Chancellery of Georgia.
Photo by: GENPUD*

COMMUNITY MOBILISATION FOR PERSON-CENTRED DRUG POLICIES

2021 Global Day of Action in Georgia *Small grants programme highlight*

In response to the slow process of reforming drug policies Georgia, campaigners from the Georgian Network of People who Use Drugs (GeNPUD), New Vector, Imedi, Rubicon and Phoenix organised a series of actions in five cities of the country: Tbilisi, Rustavi, Kutaisi, Ozurgeti and Batumi.

The series consisted of four elements:

1. Informative and strategising meetings within the community,
2. An in-person demonstration with the distribution of advocacy leaflets by the State Chancellery of Georgia,

3. A social media campaign,
4. A petition to the Prime Minister concerning drug policy reform; and,
5. Meetings with supportive parliamentarians.

‘Under the current drug law, Georgian citizens still face criminal liability for possessing insignificant doses and spend years of their lives in captivity. This is when the first obligation of the state is to take care of its own citizens. The need for these people is moral, social, health support, not punishment,’ says Konstantine Labartkava of GeNPUD.



GeNPUD invited Members of Parliament who have spoken in favour of drug policy reform for an office visit.

Photo by: GeNPUD

This series of activities, especially the protest and petition, focused on punitive drug laws and policies as well as inadequacies within Georgia's opioid agonist therapy (OAT) programmes.

As explained by Konstantine Labartkava, 'replacement therapy outlets operate with a number of drawbacks and outdated, damaging regulations. Among other things, it is critical to note that these zones are currently a risk area for the massive spread of COVID 19, which is associated with the abolition of the practice of handing out 5-day doses.'

Besides mobilising for fairer prescription practices with regard to opioid agonist therapy medication, campaigners were keen to reignite the drug policy reform discussions that initiated in 2017.

Support. Don't Punish campaigners had contributed to build momentum and organise around a 'National Drug Policy Platform'. The platform involved community-led organisations, activists, victims of current drug policies and their families, as well as Georgian parliamentarians.

Unfortunately, despite its urgency, the process came to a halt.

GeNPUD and colleagues' mobilisation around the Support. Don't Punish Global Day of Action seeks to ensure that drug pol-

“
The needs of [people who use drugs] are moral, social, health support, not punishment
”

Konstantine Labartkava, GeNPUD

icy reform and modifications to the unnecessarily-straining practices of OAT prescription are firmly back on the agenda.

These efforts by Georgian colleagues highlight the importance of the campaign as a means to sustain grassroots engagement and revivify struggles for change.

GeNPUDs reliance on a mix of community organising, direct political advocacy and public engagement via high-reach media outlets ensures that, especially under the pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic, the needs of people who use drugs become a policy priority.



GeNPUD campaigners joined 'Good Morning Georgia' to explain the importance of de-stigmatisation.

Photo: Still from Good Morning Georgia

MOBILISING FOR FAIRER DRUG POLICIES

PUNISHMENT IS NOT SUSTAINABLE! (CONTINUED)

REACHING THE PUBLIC

Shifting the narrative

Though vital, the process of designing sustainable and just drug policies can undoubtedly be a tall order, especially in contexts in which prohibitionist policies and narratives about drugs remain dominant.

Drug prohibition as an oppressive tool, aided by other forms of oppression like racism, capitalism, patriarchy, and carcerality, can cloud our minds, sabotage our empathy, and dampen our imagination.

But just like in previous years, this year a multitude of campaigners came up with fas-

cinating projects inviting the general public to pause, feel, think, and reflect.

In Balti (Moldova), PULS Comunitar organised a street action near the city hall, attracting around 8.000 people! While focusing primarily on harm reduction advocacy, organisers creatively raised the issue of stigma and punishment through a **street art installation** entitled 'Would You Punish Them Too?'.

The installation consisted of a display of portraits of well-known and popular figures who used drugs during a period of their lives, including Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley, Kurt Cobain, Angelina Jolie and Sting. By reminding passers-by that people who use drugs are more than what is often present-



By reminding the public that many well-known personalities have used drugs, activists sought to counter stigmatising accounts that malign and demonise people who use drugs. Photo by: PULS

ed by sensationalising media accounts. And that in no case should their challenges be responded to through punishment.

In Brussels (Belgium), campaigners of the CAL Luxembourg presented a board game co-produced by clients of the harm reduction service *Drugs'care*. The game, entitled 'Toxocity', invites players to **put themselves in the shoes of a person who uses or sells small amounts of drugs**, shedding light on the many harms associated with criminalised drug markets, including for the health and well-being of people in situations of great vulnerability.



Co-produced by harm reduction service clients, Toxocity speaks of the challenges of surviving criminalised drug markets. Photo by: CAL Luxembourg.

PRESENT, WITH AN EYE ON THE FUTURE

Consolidating gains and planning for next steps

Importantly, this year's Support. Don't Punish Global Day of Action was also filled with a number visionary activities.

Forward-looking and optimistic campaigners from the **West Africa Drug Policy Network (WAPDN)** in Accra (Ghana) held a forum with a wide array of stakeholders to

**“
Discussing police raids
and human rights activism
can bring new allies to our
mobilisation.
”**

Gleb Paikachev, Russian activist

take stock of the changes brought about by the country's new drug law adopted in 2020.

The event sought to counter misinformation on the recent legal changes, highlighting gains in terms of public health and community-well-being; including in relation to the formal support that it offers to harm reduction services for people who use drugs.

On the other side of the globe, in Saint Petersburg (Russia), campaigners from the **Andrey Rylkov Foundation**, Trava and more conducted a presentation on harm reduction models for urban areas, guided by the question: 'If we think about the infrastructure of support instead of punishment, how can it look like?'

By consolidating information about positive change whilst keeping an eye on next steps, Support. Don't Punish campaigners build momentum for reform, away from coercion and toward stronger systems of care in the community.



*Journalists recording and annotating during a lecture as part of the 'Nigeria drug policy media forum'.
Photo by: AFRI LAW*

FINDING MEDIA THROUGH THE WEST AFRICA MODEL DRUG LAW

2021 Global Day of Action in Enugu (Nigeria)
Small grants programme highlight

CHANGING THE NARRATIVE

Direct engagement with journalists

Amplifying voices of civil society and communities working in and affected by drug policy makes up a large part of advocacy efforts. After all, the 'war on drugs' is as much a legally-sanctioned apparatus of violence and neglect, as it is a system of stigmatising beliefs that deliberately excludes affected communities from having access to the public sphere.

AfriLAW and WADPN-Nigeria understand this well. To ensure journalists and media personalities are well equipped to counter misinformation and promote fair representations of the harms of punitive approaches, organisers put together a strategic campaign for this year's Support. Don't Punish Global Day of Action.

On 7 July 2021, advocates from both organisations held a drug policy conference aimed

at private and public media agencies as well as government representatives in Enugu.

Some of the media agencies included News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), National Association of Women Journalist (NAWOJ), South-East Media Executives Roundtable (SE-MERT), alongside print, online, and radio stations.

Workshops were organised on all things related drug policy and law reform, sparking interest among previously less informed government and media representatives, who, following the conference, showed enthusiasm in mainstreaming drug policy reform.

Indeed, the event itself enjoyed significant publicity thanks to organisers' successful media engagement.

THE WEST AFRICA MODEL DRUG LAW

A powerful media advocacy resource

Throughout the conference and engagement, campaigners used the **West Africa Model Drug Law** to guide and harmonise their messaging with regard to a drug law that is based on human rights and public health.

According to Okereke Chinwike, of AfriLAW, participants of the event —mostly made up of media representatives, 'commended the efforts in producing the Model Drug Law and expressed support for it as a template for drug law and policy reform in Nigeria.

Journalists also expressed the need to train and sensitise more media about it, as well as drug law and policy reform issues in Nigeria.'

This 'case study' offers at least three important lessons:

1. Working with media professionals can greatly enhance campaigning and advoca-

“

Media representatives invited showed good understanding of the issues and promised to partner with us to promote drug law and policy reform issues in Nigeria.

”

Okereke Chinwike, AFRILAW

cy efforts; working with them through direct engagement and workshops is a wonderful way to enhance or kickstart a working relationship.

2. Our collective work to change policies and laws is strengthened by shifts in public perceptions, toward evidence-based and human-centred understandings of drug policy; and, finally;

3. West African advocates have throughout the years built momentum for reform, paving the way for the emergence of a **West African model** of drug policy reform, which responds to local needs whilst fully affirming the rights of people who use drugs and all communities harmed by the 'war on drugs'.



*Snap from the convening of media representatives on the 2021 Global Day of Action.
Photo by: AFRILAW*

CREATIVE COLLABORATION FOR CHANGE

OUT OF THE BOX, INTO THE FUTURE

BREAKING THE MOULD

Art that heals

Drugs and drug policy unfortunately remain a marginal issue and taboo in most countries' mainstream public discourse.

But even in growing circles where drugs and drug policy are spoken about in more progressive terms, the exclusionary dynamics of privilege are still rampant. The 'war on drugs' is pervasive.

These injustices hinder change, as they contribute to disenfranchise and alienate key voices from engaging in policy-making and related spaces.

No wonder if many campaigners around the world opt for a more creative and artistic approach, finding connection, meaning, and empowerment in social spaces that are less formal and more inclusive in nature.

For those facing exclusion, art can truly serve as a refreshing and liberating –as well as incredibly effective– alternative, or



*Art exhibition in Gaborone, Botswana.
Photo by: Timothy Tumagole*



The campaign 'Without decriminalisation, there's no mental health' used compelling (and hilarious!) memes to catch people's attention. Photo by: Intercambios A.C.

addition to, the more conventional forms of advocacy.

Previous editions of Support. Don't Punish Global Day of Action showed the importance of artistic formats like theatre, poetry, music, dance, and paintings in organising and campaigning for drug policy reform and harm reduction.

NEXT TO THE STAGE!

Re-imagining a world without the 'war on drugs'

This year in Skopje (North Macedonia), campaigners led by Healthy Options Project Skopje (HOPS) invited their community to write poems about the war on drugs. Similar calls for artistic submissions featured in the



The psychedelic aesthetics of rave culture take on the message of the Support. Don't Punish campaign.

Photo by: Trava

campaigns of activists from Indonesia, several Latin America countries, and beyond.

In Barcelona (Catalonia), Metzineres and DonARSU held a cabaret performance summing up why drug prohibition is the broken system, after which organisers created graffiti and distributed hygienic equipment and goodies at the venue.

Meanwhile, across 24 cities in Ukraine, with the leading work of PUD.UA/ VOLNA, organisers staged theatrical performances to illustrate the brutality of police violence that

victimises people who use drugs on a daily basis.

Flash mobs were also held, in addition to the dissemination of Support. Don't Punish campaign materials, as well as press conferences and engagement with policy-making bodies.

In different parts of Russia, a number of organisations including the Andrey Rylkov Foundation, Trava and Hand-help.ru, held a 'right to dance' campaign with the electronic music community.

Campaigners created informative graphics and materials about police raids (especially during rave parties –hence the slogan 'make rave not raid'), harm reduction for party-goers, and for event organisers. The materials were distributed via Telegram forums and other communications channels, reaching around 10.000 people.

Continues on page 26 →



TERJEBAK!!!!



*"Trapped!!!!": Art concerning a piece on the impacts of criminal legal systems on women couriers and their families.
Illustration by: Psychoactive Education Coalition*

COLLECTIVE LEARNING AS A MIND-ALTERING EXPERIENCE

2021 Global Day of Action in Indonesia
Small grants programme highlight

COMMUNITY ORGANISING

Building resources for popular education

As it goes with other policy sectors, drug policy intersects with issues related to gender, class, race, and many more. These links are inevitable as, in the words of Audre Lorde: *'we do not live single-issue lives'*. But they are also intricate, making the process of understanding and learning –let alone engaging in advocacy– as complex as it is vital.

Indonesia Cannabis Feminist, an online platform offering gender- and class-conscious perspectives related to drugs and drug policy, decided to take part in this

year's Support. Don't Punish Global Day of Action to address this gap.

Cannabis Feminist collaborated with **Resister Indonesia**, a mutual aid and learners' collective focusing on gender and development, as well as with **Lingkar Ganja Nusantara Semarang**, a local branch of one of the Indonesia's leading cannabis advocacy groups.

The three organisations – with the adopted name **'Psychoactive Education Coalition'** – started the campaign in the beginning of June 2021.

A first step consisted in calling members of their social media and community networks

to register for a series of courses on drug policy and its relationship with social, political-economic, and cultural issues, as well as with development and (eco-)feminist issues.

A small yet enthusiastic group of 20 people participated in the (online) series, consisting of three sessions on the history of drug policy in Indonesia, gender and other socioeconomic issues, and the future of humanist policies in the country.

The sessions were deliberately made restricted to registered participants, in order to ensure a safe space for open and honest discussions.

Prior to the final session on 26 June, participants were invited to submit pieces of work articulating their thoughts, concerns, and hopes regarding drug policy understood through the lens of intersectionality.

Around a dozen pieces, including poems, drawings, and articles, were submitted, which were then compiled as a collective zine made publicly available online.

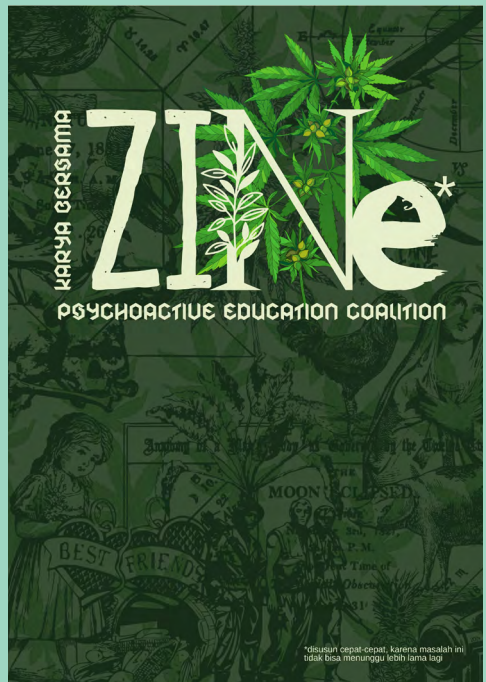
ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE *Building networks for sustainable change*

Each work carries the same fundamental message that the ‘war on drugs’ has wrecked lives, and that **another world is possible** – but each work is also unique in its own way.

Several highlights include a poem titled ‘The Most Secretive Places’ (by Putri Brillianty) – a tribute to women involved in the drugs trade **simply to survive** and feed their families, a short article on drug use as a means for **creative pursuit** amongst Indonesian artists, and several pieces calling for a stronger feminist movement against the **death penalty** that disproportionately impacts poor women.

At the last session on 26 June, participants were given a chance to present their work, and to share any valuable lessons and ideas they learned during the series. Most expressed their **eagerness to continue thinking critically and fighting for human rights and dignity for all.**

Indeed, months after the initial campaign, most participants and organisers still make use of the series’ dedicated WhatsApp group to keep the conversation alive, sharing questions, ideas, and initiatives that could potentially bring us closer to a world of just and gender-sensitive (drug) policies.



*Zine cover produced by Indonesian activists.
Photo by: Psychoactive Education Coalition*

CREATIVE COLLABORATION FOR CHANGE

OUT OF THE BOX, INTO THE FUTURE (CONTINUED)

A LEARNING COMMUNITY

Engagement and dialogue for reform

It is truly uplifting to see such a wide array of activities to facilitate awareness raising and learning during this year's Support. Don't Punish Global Day of Action.

Campaigners have organised in a variety of ways to tailor their work to the COVID-19 situation of each location, navigating restrictions with ingenuity. Webinars, training sessions, street art and many more have kept the Support. Don't Punish flame bright in trialling times.

In Melbourne (Australia), Drug Policy Australia organised a film screening of 'The United States vs Billie Holiday', a moving film partly based on Johann Hari's book *Chasing the Scream*. Followed by an engaging conversation with Johann Hari himself, the event attracted approximately 600 attendees.

In Dodoma (Tanzania), STEPS Tanzania gathered local and international NGOs, policy-making bodies, faith-based organisations, and people who use drugs to raise awareness about human rights and public

“
Compared to 2020, we sense that our small contribution towards realisation of national goals for serving the lives of people who use drugs is being more widely recognised.
”

*Ally Mamlo.
STEPS Tanzania*

The poster is titled 'GESTIÓN DE PLACERES' in large green letters, with the subtitle 'Y LA MILITANCIA POLÍTICA DE LXS USUARIXS DE DROGAS' in red. It features two circular portraits: VERO RUSSO, an activist and president of RADAUD, and PATO LIDDLE, a student at the Universidad Nacional de Quilmes. The event is scheduled for 'JUEVES 24/6 | 19HS' and will be broadcast 'LIVE' on Instagram. Logos for 'Acompañar. No castigar.' and 'ARDA' (Asociación de Reducción de Daños de Argentina) are also present.

In Argentina, community and civil society networks organised expert talks related to decriminalisation and harm reduction. Photo by: ARDA / RADAUD

health principles in drug policy. Staff and people who use drugs affiliated with STEPS Tanzania held workshops to debunk myths and misconceptions about harm reduction, emphasising the benefits of strategies like needle and syringe programmes, and discussed matters related to overdose management as well as HIV, TB, and COVID-19 prevention.

Group discussions additionally took place in San José, Cartago, Heredia, and Alajuela (Costa Rica), where organisers led by Lati-noamérica por una Política Sensata de Drogas mobilised to construct workshops on a broad range of issues of relevance to their contexts: harm reduction, legal regulation, cannabis domestic cultivation, and women in prisons.

In Warsaw (Poland), a group of organisations (Social Drug Policy Initiative, drop-in Monar, drop-in Prekursor Foundation, Le-

galize Belarus) worked together to hold online talks with several experts dealing with mental health and drug use, safety, as well as service and care provision for people who have challenging relationships with their drug use.

Meanwhile in Lusaka (Zambia), local police refused to grant permission for campaigners from Decisive Minds to march on the occasion of the Global Day of Action.

Undeterred, campaigners resorted to a smaller outreach action within their community, organised a live stream on social media, and spread their message through radio and television channels. Through these means, campaigners called for the end of criminalisation of people who use drugs, better budgets for health oriented drug policies, and harm reduction for people who use drugs inside and outside prisons.

In Lima (Peru), organisers from Soma selected three key educational topics to disseminate during the Global Day of Action,

concerning the harms of the global war on drugs, drug crackdowns in Peru, and how to talk about drugs in the family.

Aimed at direct engagement with the general public, leaflets were produced, each containing only 100 words summing up the three key headings:

1. 'What has drug prohibition achieved?'
2. 'The ineffective heavy-handed approach to drugs'; and,
3. 'Drugs: a conversation for the home'.



*Despite police denying their right to march, Decisive Minds gathered and organised outreach activities.
Photo by: Decisive Minds*



PHOTO PROJECT

AN EVER-GROWING PHOTO PETITION

The **Photo Project** is a key component of the Support. Don't Punish campaign. As an ever-growing, open, photo petition with over 10,500 entries to date, the Photo Project showcases the breadth of this global effort.

Snap's feature advocates, community members, government and UN officials, celebrities, and a long etcetera - all united under a clear, universal, shared message: Support. Don't Punish.

If you wish to add your photo to the list, please do not hesitate to send them to campaign@idpc.net.

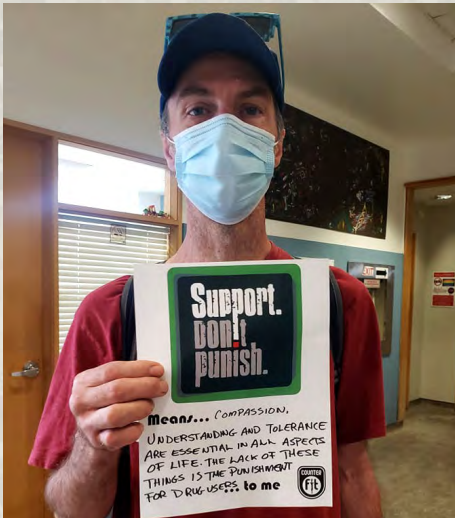


Photo by: South Riverdale Community Health Centre



*Demonstration in Honduras.
Photo sent by: Movimiento Pro-Legalización*



*Lithuanian Freedom Party parliamentarians.
Photo sent by: Laisvės partija*



Present in Brazil! Photo sent by: CULTIVE



One for the creative vault! From Savalou, Benin
Photo sent by: Conseil Communal Enfants de Savalou



Campaigners in Sarghoda, Pakistan



Support to the campaign and the Rome Consensus 2.0.
Photo sent by: Red Crescent Society of Kyrgyzstan



By a mural in San Pablo, Philippines.
Photo sent by: Kimmi



Campaigners in Cameroon. Photo sent by: ACRDR



Norway's former Minister of Health. Photo sent by: FHN

CONCLUSION

REIMAGINING, RESISTANCE, RESILIENCE

The 2021 Support. Don't Punish Global Day of Action was a resounding success despite the barriers compounded by COVID-19 related inequalities and injustice.

That said, the intensifying plight and challenges triggered by the pandemic situation have also pushed activists, campaigners, and communities to **embrace radical imaginings** not only in terms of drug policy and harm reduction, but also for self/community care, collaboration, and decision- and policy-making.

As shown throughout this report, **campaigners adjusted to pandemic-related restrictions and impacts**, navigating all manners of challenges with great ingenuity to ensure communities are supported, not punished by state responses to drugs.

Such resilience should be celebrated, though it should not be used as an excuse to continue criminalising and ignoring people's needs.

Surely, this report has its limitations, capturing only the 'tip of the iceberg'. The Support. Don't Punish campaign's breadth and distributed approach means that impact far exceeds our efforts to quantify it. But each activity, regardless of its size and type, carries its own unique value for the communities behind it.

As punitive policies sadly prevail to this day, the most important message remains: The 'war on drugs' ruins and claims lives. It fuels and feeds off intersecting systems of oppression that spark division and spread hate.

Support. Don't Punish campaigners know this, and though each of us envisions different futures, we are united in the conviction that we can build a world where care, kindness, and support will prevail over criminalisation, stigma, and discrimination.

SUPPORT. DON'T PUNISH!



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

AN ECOSYSTEM OF SUPPORT

A DECENTRALISED EFFORT

The campaign's modus operandi

The Support. Don't Punish is an international decentralised networked effort, contributed to by thousands of campaigners and hundreds of **local partner organisations** worldwide.

The **International Drug Policy Consortium** hosts the Support. Don't Punish campaign and acts as its main hub. As such, IDPC leads on global fundraising, capacity development and communication efforts, and provides material and in-kind support to campaigners across the globe.

THE CAMPAIGN'S SISTER HUBS

Championing our common cause worldwide

IDPC is in regular dialogue with organisations that actively promote the campaign and contribute to the mobilisation of grass-roots groups, including through their own fundraising efforts.

These **sister hubs** often have a regional or thematic focus. Their commitment has been crucial for the campaign's growth and many of the activities that have been mentioned above owe themselves to their unwavering dedication.

For this reason, an account of the 2021 Support. Don't Punish Global Day of Action would not be complete without acknowledging the fantastic work of sister hubs such as: the **Drug Policy Network South East Europe (DPNSEE)**, the **Eurasian Harm Reduction Association (EHRA)**, the Eurasian Network of

People Who Use Drugs (ENPUD), the **European Network of People who Use Drugs (EuroNPUD)**, the **Middle East and North Africa Harm Reduction Association (MENAHR)**, the **Women and Harm Reduction International Network (WHRIN)** and **YouthRISE**.

CAMPAIGN DONORS

Resourcing people power for harm reduction

Last, but by no means least, IDPC is incredibly grateful to the campaign's donors, who provide absolutely essential means for campaigners to challenge criminalisation and promote harm reduction.

IDPC has received dedicated campaign funds from the **Elton John AIDS Foundation**; the **Robert Carr Fund**, the **Levenson Foundation** and the **AIDS and Rights Alliance for southern Africa (ARASA)**. Important core support has also been received from the **Open Society Foundations**.

