

Global summary of activity

SDP with a focus on women 2020

[#WHRINetwork](#) [#SDP2020focusonwomen](#) [#womenusedrugs](#)

With growing scale and urgency, peer led and other harm reduction groups around the world have again put the spotlight on human rights and service gaps impacting women who use drugs during the Support don't Punish campaign for 2020. Despite additional challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, numerous women who use drugs groupings, drug user networks and harm reduction advocates have thrown inspiring energy and creativity into the campaign.

This summary highlights actions across 12 countries; **Kenya, Ukraine, Philippines, Seychelles, Australia, Spain, Tanzania, Nepal, Portugal, USA, Mauritius and Mexico.** The demands of women who use drugs are consistent, clear and can no longer be ignored.

Womens Nest, Kenya:

There has been an escalation of human rights violations among women who use drugs in Kenya during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the support don't punish with a focus on women campaign, Womens Nest highlighted these violations through the use of [posters](#) as a call to action demanding a stop to violations against women who use drugs and instead invest in harm reduction services that work for women.



The poster series capture some of the human rights violations and gendered challenges that women who use drugs have been experiencing during the current COVID-19 crisis.



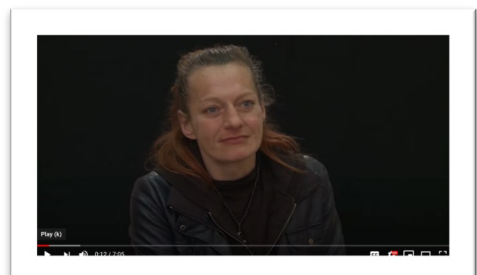
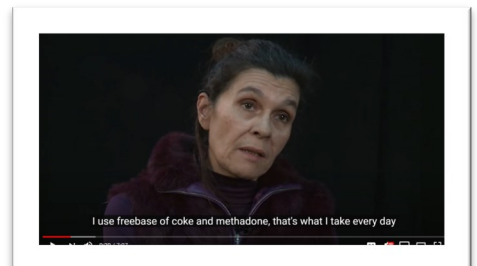
The posters were shared widely through social media channels on 26th June 2020 and drew positive feedback.

CASO, Portugal

In 2020, CASO's action for the international campaign Support Don't Punish *with a focus on women* was based on a special edition of two interviews that give voice and face to the demand: "Stop the war on women who use drugs. Invest in harm reduction services that work for women". Both interviews were debuted on Support Don't Punish day, and disseminated on social networks.

The straightforward testimonies fly in the face of drug user stereotypes. The protagonists – [Gitti](#) and [Cristina](#) - were involved in the process of organising the campaign, including their assessment of the final edition.

On the 27th of June the testimonies were projected in a safe space for women in vulnerable situations, with the collaboration of Gitti and Cristina. The screening was followed by a conversation that started with the impressions of both protagonists about the videos. A major highlighted theme was the way to present and represent must be intentionally made without any judgement or prejudice, as WUD representation is usually biased in the media. Other themes included housing issues, access to dental treatment, need for legal aid, and dealing with violence. Despite being reduced for meeting size due to pandemic measures, everyone had a great time socializing and there was incredible sharing.



This days of focused campaign are very important to the ongoing building of the WUD community.

No Box, Philippines

NoBox Philippines' participation in this year's Support Don't Punish with a focus on women global campaign kicked off on June 26 with a series of promotional teasers on social media intended to tap the curiosity of the online community about *Caligtangan*: an interactive online "choose-your-own-adventure" story inspired by true stories of women incarcerated in the Philippines. Aimed at making the women's situation more concrete, visual, and relatable to the public, *Caligtangan* gives the players an immersive first-person experience of the women's stories. This experience aims to improve player understanding of the women's context, while also giving emphasis on the importance of the current system and its influence on the situation of women involved with drugs.

To strategically carry the message forward, the posts are being coursed through various groups across sectors and through connecting with online personalities and friends with parallel advocacies. Each post aims to build interest in *Caligtangan* and the concerns of the incarcerated women by highlighting basic needs and/or activities typically enjoyed by society without a second thought (e.g., hygiene supplies, communication with family) but which become precious and prized commodity for the women in detention. For those interested in knowing more about the situation of women, links to relevant materials such as previous research reports are made available.

The social media posts have garnered a total estimated reach of 4,500 to date. The level of interest is encouraging given the aim of engaging with people outside the Harm Reduction and drug policy reform circles. One exciting outcome is how a local online magazine has reached out and is writing an article about the project and campaign.

On the remaining days of this 3-week campaign, efforts and resources will be invested in increasing engagements with the objective of building partnerships and interest in the advocacy. After the launch of the micro-site, the collected narratives of women incarcerated for drug offenses will be highlighted on the succeeding posts. Plans are also underway to bring together formerly incarcerated women together with civil society partners in a conversation revolving around the issues raised in this campaign. While guided by prior engagement social media posts, the activity becomes an opportunity to hear directly from the women about their experiences with incarceration and drug policies. (*updates on this project will be made available through the WHRIN website (WHRIN.site).*)



RN Women, Nepal

For Support Don't Punish *with a focus on women* this year, working with limitations posed by COVID-19, a [short video](#) was created focusing on drug use and women. Women who use drugs involved in making the film worked within pandemic restrictions, overcoming several challenges to complete production. The message of this video is intended to sensitize policy makers on need for change to the old standing Narcotic Control Act. The video shows the need for a paradigm shift on drugs law by witnessing the difficulties faced by women who use drugs in Nepal.



CAHMA, Australia

CAHMA's weekly radio show *News From The Drug War Front* invited women listeners to send personal stories involving examples from their life of how they experienced/are experiencing harmful influences of war on people (women) who use drugs. Suggestions were also sought on what gender sensitive services could minimise that harm and how.

Each week two chosen stories were read on air and rewarded \$30. Several [promotional resources](#) explain the nature and the purpose of the campaign which have been massively shared on social media. See also the [FB promotion](#) of the campaign.



The response was excellent. After the radio show, a CAHMA volunteer who works on NFTDWF podcast isolates the [individual stories](#) for each week. Guarding confidentiality of the authors, transcripts of the stories are stored and will be used in different CAHMA advocacy activities. The campaign started on 19 May and was supposed to end on 30 June, however, anonymous donation from a community member will enable us to run the project for another 8 weeks.

Project outcomes:

- The project resonated with the community and increased solidarity levels between women who use drugs in the Canberra region.
- Several women wrote the story for the campaign but didn't want to take the payment, asking that the money be used instead to reward a few more stories so as to run the project longer.
- The majority of participants reported that hearing their story "on the air" was an empowering experience that made them feel valued and accepted by the broader community and that they had become more accepting of their own lives and choices.
- Several researchers have offered to do a qualitative evaluation of the project and are in contact regarding possible cooperation.
- Male community members who cooperated on the project or listened to the show, commented that these stories opened their eyes in terms of having better understanding of specific additional challenges faced by women who use drugs.

Integración Social Verter A.C., Mexico

Starting with a live to air newscast, SDP with a focus on women kicked off with reading the press release on radio. The statement was also uploaded on social networks of the organization and other people who helped share it. In addition, a canvas was provided where women who use drugs could write down their experiences, thoughts about criminalization, stigma and discrimination and how using drugs has affected their lives. Some of the sentences they wrote were:

"We have the right to decide about our lives"

"I have the right to have my children with me"

"Your respect, all I ask"

"We want naloxone for all".

The activity helped to boost community spirit among the women and to improve awareness of their needs and rights.



AILES, Mauritius

Empowering WUD to be safe', this year's SDP with a focus on women [campaign](#), was mainly conducted through social media platforms. The campaign spanned a 7-day calendar of activity: with [a photo montage with women](#) and allies, as well as [informative videos on the campaign](#) highlighting the challenges faced by WUD, followed by a [Press release](#) and small focus group sessions to collect lived experience accounts of women who use drugs during this restricted mobility period (examples [here](#) and [here](#)). Posters featuring security guidelines and harm reduction measures were designed and disseminated at OST sites.



An I-stories series was released during the same period to emphasise the daily struggles of WUD. Protective equipment such as masks and gloves were also distributed to improve safety while accessing methadone dosing at the police station. The campaign culminated with a [video montage](#) created with collaboration with Collectif Urgence Toxida (CUT) and WUD clients. The campaign was covered by National TV.



Images: Posters with preventive measures

Seychelles SDP campaign (in collaboration with AILES)

This year AILES also collaborated with Seychelles counterparts, who organised a focus group with concerned stakeholders and women who use drugs and also participated in the photo montage campaign.



NCSU, USA

North Carolina Survivors Union called upon women in the National Union, along with women who are local syringe exchange participants, friends and allies asking them what they identified as some of the specialized services for women who use drugs currently missing, yet desperately needed in harm reduction programs. Answers were collected for a month confirming the absence of: free tampons and sanitary napkins; a safe place to receive health care and support for pregnant women who use drugs; education on dealing with child protective services; and drop in centres and fixed sites offering a day, or set hours for women only. Selected quotes were highlighted by sharing them within a graphic frame and posting the image on all NCSU social media.



NCSU also reached out to the community of syringe exchanges and harm reduction programs in North Carolina, and asked them to support women who use drugs and start offering some of the services suggested. The programs that said yes were asked to display [the poster](#) North Carolina Survivors Union created using some of the WHRIN poster graphics asking others to invest in services for women who use drugs.

As the campaign week was about to start, House Bill 918 went to vote in the North Carolina senate. The bill would allow the expedited removal of children from mothers who use drugs, along with giving foster parents equal custody rights as the biological parents. The bill helped illustrate the extreme importance of programs offering services for pregnant women who use drugs.

To celebrate the International day of Action with a focus on women, NCSU created a [video slideshow](#) titled "Women Use Drugs". The video shows some of the quotes NCSU had highlighted on social media, along with some of the harm reduction programs and women who work in harm reduction sharing the NCSU created poster in hope other programs will follow and invest in women.

Salvage, Tanzania

In Dar es Salaam, the Tanzania Network for People who Use Drugs (TaNPUD) and SALVAGE, a network for women who use drugs, with support from UNAIDS, is [supporting people who use drugs](#) and their families in 19 campsites, called “maskanies”, and one shelter in Dar es Salaam. TaNPUD, provided information and communication messages on COVID-19, and basic supplies for a month for each family. Women report that they can't afford to provide for their families as COVID has disrupted part-time cleaning jobs etc with employers not wanting anyone to visit their homes to wash clothes or clean for fear of contagion. The support reached about 25 families of women who use drugs with food, hygiene materials and soap, with goods distributed to the women’s maskanies on Support Dont Punish Day.



Ukraine

A nationwide campaign from the [PUD.UA](#) organizations in 17 regions of Ukraine was conducted with the aim of changing drug policies and adopting UN recommendations. Women of the WUD Community from Club Eney and She organizations spoke about the high levels of stigma, discrimination and violence



against women who use drugs, and spoke about laws that criminalize mothers from the community. The messages were:

“Stop financing the war against drugs, invest in harm reduction services that work for women”,

“Children are not toys of the system, play with toys instead of children”.

Metzineres, Barcelona, Spain

Metzineres. Environments of Shelter for Women who Use Drugs Surviving Violence is the first integrated harm reduction program in Catalonia only for women and non-binary people. As part of SDP activity in 2020, Metzineres produced [this film](#) about the impact of their work in the community. The neighbours explain how their prejudices against people who use drugs disappeared after sharing experiences and organizing together with the womxn of Metzineres. The movie was release on June 26th together with Energy Control that also released the short [War on drUGS](#). To celebrate it Metzineres cooked a tasty paella, community members, politicians and other stakeholders shared one of the most typical Spanish meal and draw a multi-coloured graffiti saying "Support, not punishment".



Congratulations to all campaigners. For more information about any of these activities, please contact ruth@whrin.site