

# 2021 Support Don't Punish with a Focus on Women



The 2021 SDP with a focus on women campaign built on partnerships and consensus among women who use drugs, organisations and groups worldwide

- to highlight the need to expand harm reduction services designed for women
- to end violence against women who use drugs and
- to improve drug policies for women from a health and harm reduction perspective.

The demands of Support Don't Punish with a Focus on Women are for:

- Immediate abolition of capital punishment, extrajudicial killings, compulsory treatment, drug user registration systems and punishment for use of drugs in pregnancy.
- Decriminalisation of drug use and sex work
- Allocation of resources and long term funding to harm reduction services and networks that are led by and meaningfully involve women who use drugs and are based around care, compassion and individual autonomy
- Creation of gender responsive comprehensive harm reduction services and policy environments that are non-judgemental, non-discriminatory, safe, relevant and supportive for all women who use drugs
- An end to the distortion of facts that surround drug use and pregnancy and coercive campaigns of abortion and sterilisation
- Upholding the right to autonomy over the bodies of women who use drugs including choices around safer drug use
- Implementation of mechanisms for prevention of violence and support for women who use drugs survivors
- An end to using drug use as reason for the invasion or disruption of women's privacy, public or domestic life
- Inclusion of women who use drugs as a key part of research, planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of any policy or action that affects them.

Joining the Women and Harm Reduction International Network in claiming these basic rights for women who use drugs worldwide, please find a summary of some of the 2021 SDP with a focus on women campaign actions. In several cases, groups led by or involving women who use drugs (WUD) came together to form campaign coalitions or collectives to amplify actions at local and national levels. All participants followed national COVID regulations which did nothing to dampen campaigner enthusiasm.

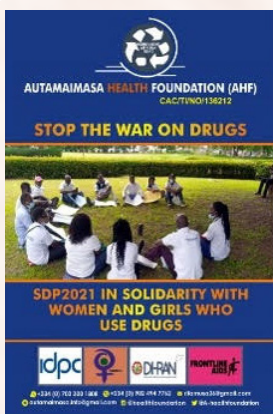
## Mexico: Collective de Mujeres en contra de la Guerra de las Drogas; Las Borders; La Casa del Centro-Clinica de Heridas and Verter A.C.

Coordination of the campaign across the two Northern Mexico state of Baja, Mexicali and Tijuana resulted in collective development of a press release which was circulated in social media and through local press. Custom made T-shirts and stickers were printed and shared. The Campaign was used to reopen conversations among sister organizations and service users to collectively brainstorm and plan actions to ensure women who use drugs hold their own spaces to organize and make use of allies to accompany them in these process. This was also an opportunity to bring other potential allies in different settings on both sides of the US Mexico Border into the discussion. Activities included a reflection circle and outreach activities held in Mexicali, Tijuana and San Diego California. The reflection circle with women shared specific needs and struggles in women's daily lives, revealing how stigma, discrimination, questioning, and prejudice about their drug consumption is extremely common and stands in the way of support network access. Tijuana Violence has escalated during recent months and this is having an impact on the mobility of people who use drugs, especially women. Violence plus COVID has hit hard on people on the streets. Fewer women are visible now in usual venues.



Part of the discussion was to explore possible ways that members of the collective can better be in solidarity with women who use drugs. One of the ideas that came forward was to have ongoing women's group gatherings. The collective agencies also agreed to henceforth collaborate in planning a 2021-22 calendar for WUD advocacy action.

## Nigeria: Autamaimasa Health Foundation (AHF) and Equal Health and Rights Access Advocacy Initiative (EHRAAI)



AHF used the campaign opportunity to conduct group sensitization on sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) and harm reduction practices with women who use drugs at the AHF branch office in Abuja. Other community groups including one involving sex workers also joined the campaign. Short video interviews were held on law enforcement harassment against women who use drugs in the community to be used in advocacy for WUD targeting the general public. The 2021 campaign centred on developing and sharing advocacy information. Information and education materials created on drug user health and human rights were directed at several police stations across the States but unfortunately the AHF advocacy requests were not immediately responded to by the State police.

Also in Nigeria, EHRAAI conducted a campaign celebrating solidarity with women who use drugs in Lagos. Activity included social media advocacy using women-centred online material to reach hundreds of stakeholders in Nigeria (networking with the Nigeria Network of People who Use Drugs, Lagos State AIDS Control Agency and the Centre for Integrated Health Program). Working through the outreach sites of Lagos, access for 100 women who use drugs on safer drug use education was created while adding information on human rights violation reporting, SRHR and promoting female condoms as a source of sexual empowerment. Thirdly, EHRAAI also engaged men through a "Men Engage Process" both on social media and physi-

cally, to help create momentum around the culture of solidarity in protecting the rights of women who use drugs. Materials used were selected by women who use drugs opinion leaders. Soon after the campaign, NNPUD (which is an Affiliate of AfricaNPUD and INPUD) decided to form a NNPUD Women Forum, to ensure gender issues and voices of WUD/ WID are amplified.



## Italy: Chemical Sisters



Chemical Sisters participated in the SDP event organized together with ItanPUD at the Parco Dora in Turin. Women who use drugs service users from Turin and Alexandria gathered to talk about the rights of WUD, issues of parenthood and substance use, and violence at rave parties and in the different contexts of nightlife entertainment. Together with radio Banda Larga, various interventions were aired and also echoed through the [Chemical Sisters facebook page](#). T-shirts,

bags, chemical kits, and cards for snorting, using the 2021 slogan of the campaign, 'in solidarity with women who use drugs' were created and screen printed for distribution by donation. The women involved reported it a pleasure to carry on the movement and the fight for our rights.

## Mauritius: AILES

An event focussed on women who use drugs was held at AILES headquarters in Mangalkhan, Mauritius. Grassroots stories were collected to show the impact of harm reduction strategies and the importance specific strategies for women. The stories were then printed on boards and exposed on the global day of action. Banners explaining the philosophy of SDP and its importance were also ordered and promoted on that day in [video](#) and poster form. Training was also provided to other partnering organisations together with service users from the community involving also a member of the Human Rights Commission. T-shirts were made with the official orange SDP with a focus on women logo. In collaboration with Collectif Urgence Toxida (CUT), a (pretend) prison was built for the photo campaign (while respecting precautions due to the COVID19 pandemic). A [press release statement as well as the stories](#) were forwarded to the local media and to date 10000 signatures have been collected on a [petition for humane drug policy](#).



## Portugal: CASO and GAMEM

This years SDP with a focus on women campaign brought a unique happiness in getting together with other women and non-binary people who use drugs in Porto on the road to new women and



non-binary safer spaces in the cities of Lisbon and Porto. The campaign meeting united three groups of women who use drugs, from CASO, GAMEM and Porto Solidário, bringing new collective, creative energy through the group of eleven activists in the growing collective dynamics around building a safe space for women who use drugs. The group worked to deepen concepts on characteristics for the space and the commitment of each activist to the project. The group were also introduced to INPUD's [On the A-Gender Community Monitoring Tool for Gender-Responsive Harm Reduction Services for Women who use Drugs](#) assessment tool. The day worked to not only focus on needs but also desires of and contributions from those present, resulting in a greater sense of collective energy and empowerment. The connections are getting wider and stronger. Some days after this meeting the group

came together again, this time in Lisbon for a public peer assembly that gathered more than 25 participants. It was significant to have women well represented in this assembly with all anticipating results that will echo on in the community. GAMEM and CASO will present these precious inputs in the near future in meetings both in Porto and Lisbon with health service representatives committed to listen to the community of women who use drugs and to facilitate the development of gender specific harm reduction services.

## Indonesia: PPRI (Indonesia Recidivist Sisterhood), Meduza and Womxn Voice.

Three organizations made up of women who use drugs worked together for the 2021 SDP, Stop the War on Drugs campaign in the city of Bekasi. The women involved conducted an oration, reading a list of demands in front of the Bekasi legal sector office, and then held discussions which were broadcast live on social media about the failure of the war on drugs in Indonesia which must be stopped immediately, as has been done by several other countries that have changed and improved their drugs policies. The contribution of the women's collaboration in this campaign bought focus on women who use drugs. In this action the women encouraged the government to divert funds from the war on narcotics to instead provide health and harm reduction services that can be easily accessed by women who use drugs in Indonesia.



## Kenya: Bar Hostess Empowerment and Support Program (BHESP)



The BHESP campaign focussed on [key advocacy messages](#) passed across [social media platforms](#) and during a marching event. T-shirts were printed with the Support Don't Punish logo and the solidarity with women who use drugs message on the back, for 10 WUD sex workers who boldly took part in the campaign. A 4km walk holding the banner and passing print-outs of key messages, was completed on SDP day. In addition, a core activity was to create an [animation video](#) to pass across the situation of women sex workers who use drugs, which was shared also on social media platforms.

Accompanying hash tags were strategically attached to campaign asks to reach a wider audience and

were actively retweeted. The campaign attracted mainstream media attention and even featured in the local radio station Star FM as a news item and a call to action. Through this campaign, it is hoped that there is a reduction in violence against women who use drugs. It is also hoped that the call for gender specific harm reduction services will be considered for future programming. In any future campaigns of this nature, BHESP plan to collaborate with allied agencies to amplify messaging.



## Ukraine, Club Eney



An open-air party was held in Independence Square, Kyiv using colored smoke, dance costume production, stand-up comedy and songs by Club Eney. Organisers called for an end to violence against women who use drugs and to make drug policies humane in order to respect civil rights to health. All participants of the action were representatives of the community of WUD. The action program included a theatrical dance performance, songs, feminist comedy, support and inspiration. Club Eney called to support women who use drugs and stop violence including threats, restriction of liberty,

beatings, forced sterilization and abortion. There are so many talented women who use or have used drugs and want to show the world their talent in full bloom. A bright action with posters and slogans about women by women worked to attract partner organizations, journalists, tourists and passers-by.

## Kenya: Kwale Network of People Who Use Drugs (KwaNPUD)

On 26th June, women who use drugs gathered and conducted a dialogue with a senior magistrate of Msambweni Law Courts in Kwale County, Kenya. The activity was facilitated by a senior magistrate who discussed violence that has been negatively impacting the WUD community. The activity provided a platform for women to express the challenges they face in the Kenyan criminal justice system. They explained how they commonly face sexual violence which goes unreported due to social stigma and discrimination against. Based on such facts, women who use drugs wished to understand the trial and judicial system to improve opportunity for reporting incidents and to understand what usually happens before a case is referred to the jury. Participants explained the challenges they face when reporting violence at the police station. Police officers are reluctant to record their statements and instead blame them for the violence they have experienced. This means that a huge number of rape and assault cases go unreported and unpunished. Police raids at the dens are brutal and some of the women face physical violence in police custody.



The magistrate emphasized that WUD need to work with their program staff who will help them in reporting these cases at the police station and also to access first aid and treatment at the government facilities. The issues that were presented by WUD were taken into consideration and will be discussed at the court user committee in order to expedite cases presented by women who use drugs.

Recommendations following the dialogue were:

- The shared challenges to be tabled at the court user committee (CUC) and ensure there will participation from people who use drugs in the committee.
- Frequent dialogue between judiciary and women who use drugs so as to bridge the existing gaps within the criminal justice system.

## Barcelona, Spain: Metzineres

This year Metzineres together with CATNPUD remembered the impact of the war on drugs since its beginning. Together with an exhibition of anti-prohibitionist projects and organizations, Metzineres organized a discussion on the impact of the war on drugs with experts, including people directly impacted, doctors, professors, and service providers. In Barcelona, the first interventions against the use of cocaine and heroin happened during the 1920s, and were linked to night life and the cabarets, impacting specifically on women and gender non-conforming people. Thus Metzineres organized a cabaret, where members and DonARSU Tot showed their talent whilst simultaneously fighting against stigma. The cabaret was organized at an iconic venue located in Plaza Real, where the Counterculture and hippy movement used to meet during the 1970s. It is a place where people can relate with the high number of people who have died since prohibition began because of overdose and AIDS. To remember all the people who were killed by the war on drugs, Metzineres, together with CATNPUD installed a commemorative plaque in the square.



WHRIN wish to thank all those who took part in 2021 Support Dont Punish with a Focus on Women actions. This is a growing movement of importance for women who use drugs around the world.

**Together we cannot be ignored.**