

# Solidarity and Support. Don't Punish, with a focus on women and gender diverse people who use drugs



On 26th June, for [Support. Don't Punish Global Day of Action 2024](#) WHRIN encouraged action from interested groups and partners to improve drug policies and services for women and people of diverse gender identity and expression who use drugs.

This report summarises some of the activities that were reported from Kenya, Nepal, Italy, Indonesia, Ukraine, Namibia, and Mexico. Embedded hyperlinks connect with related social media.

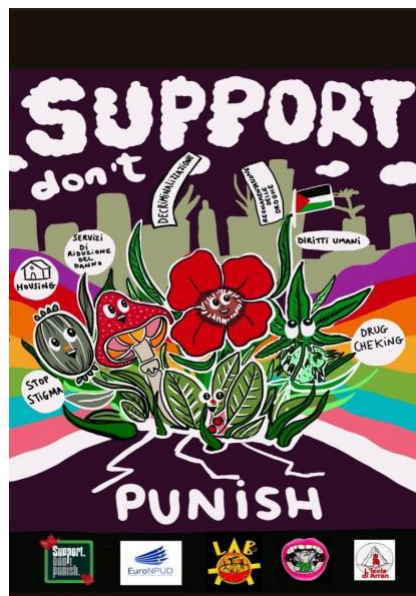
Please share this report with those who participated, your networks and to contacts useful for advocacy efforts.

Acknowledgements to IDPC, all amazing campaigners and to artist **Yvonne Samuel** for the beautiful 2024 poster.



## LAB57- Alchemica + Chemical Sisters - Italy

For Support. Don't Punish 2024, Lab57 Alchemica, the Isle of Arran and the Chemical Sisters in Italy led the campaign for women and gender diverse people who use drugs in activities over 5 consecutive days. Campaigning commenced on 25<sup>th</sup> June at 3.30pm in the community garden at Beltrame - Sabatucci centre in Bologna, during the Campi Aperti farmers' market, where Lab57 held a public book discussion on "*Guida Stupefacente*" with the authors, people who use drugs representatives, harm reductionists and anti-prohibitionist advocates. The book addresses harm reduction approaches to psychoactive substances and the application of broader harm reduction principles, and includes artwork, quotes and statements from scholars and intellectuals. The *Guida Stupefacente* is designed to dispel myths about drug use and presents itself as a manual of information, established to guide people to "*form an opinion on the matter and educate themselves to self-regulation, making informed and free decisions, with the maximum possible protection of oneself and others*". The link is available [here](#). Facebook post is available [here](#).



On 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> June, the L'isola di Arran ODV association promoted two days of "peer support" training with men and women passing through the Turin drop-in. Guest speakers included Matteo Cavallone, the Mayor of Collegno, Roberto Bacchin, the Councillor for Social Policies, and Jacopo Rosatelli, the Councilor for Welfare, Rights and Equal Opportunities of Turin. Facebook post is available [here](#).

This activity was followed on the 27<sup>th</sup> with an event hosted by the Chemical Sisters. The president of *Forum Droghe*, Susanna Ronconi, addressed the issue of human rights and the Neutavel project conducted free drug checking.



Also, on the 27<sup>th</sup> in Bologna, LAB57 with the support of Radio Spore organised a highly interactive day of music, audience interaction, debate and reflection with round tables and workshops on the topics of criminalisation of drugs, the right to get high and consent with and without the use of substances, the demonisation of particular substances, framed within the historical overview of prohibitionist legislation and patriarchal violence towards women and gender diverse people who use drugs. Speakers included lawyer Elia De Caro and Giacomo Marsala from Canva, a cannabis grower and producer of CBD from the Campi Aperti Association. Discussion was followed with a collection of responses to the question: "*How do you imagine substances in an anti-prohibitionist world?*" Related link is available [here](#). Facebook post is available [here](#).



To end the 5 days of Support. Don't Punish campaigning, on the 29<sup>th</sup> the Chemical Sisters invited Lab57 to Turin to the self-managed trans feminist space "*Zona Umida*", for a day of discussion on pleasure, self-management and of self-determination. Speakers included a social worker from the Prato Prison (Tuscany) who shared professional insights into the challenges of harm reduction provision in closed settings and concern for human rights violations experienced by people who use drugs in prison. Facebook post is available [here](#). Lab57 and Chemical Sisters agreed to a contribution of 50 euros to be left to the space that hosted them in this activity.

## Club Eney – Ukraine

As part of the Support. Don't Punish global campaign, Club Eney Ukraine interviewed women who use drugs in order to assess barriers to social inclusion and employment, including the experience of stigma and discrimination. The results of these discussions were posted across social networks on the 26<sup>th</sup> June, Support. Don't Punish day. This assessment found that 80% of women who have used drugs have also faced difficulties in finding work and others had experienced workplace violence or bullying because of their history of drug use. Further, this violence inadvertently harms their families and society as a whole, as without work these women inevitably need more social services and support.



Alarmingly, almost 90% of women interviewed intimated that they see themselves as “not worthy” and not employable, even for the “worst job”, because of their drug use history which reportedly acts for them as a demotivator for seeking employment. Survey results were shared to the Ministry of Social Policy to advocate for policies and efforts to eliminate employment-related discrimination towards women and gender diverse people who have a history of drug use.

Previously, Club Eney together with the Women and Harm Reduction International Network (WHRIN) prepared a shadow report for the 83rd session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The report entitled "Shadow Report 9th Review of CEDAW in Ukraine: Discrimination against women who use drugs in Ukraine, 2022" provides recommendations for the observance of the rights of women who use drugs in Ukraine. The recommendations were re-promoted as part of the campaign. Facebook post is available [here](#) and Instagram post is available [here](#).

## Women Nest consortium (with WEKESWA and Kwale Network of people who use drugs) – Kenya



This year during the Support. Don't Punish 2024 campaign, the Women Nest Kenya Consortium conducted the following activities:

- Awareness Raising for women and gender diverse people who use drugs on sexual and reproductive health rights. This community conversation with women and gender diverse people who use drugs was held to identify and address sexual and reproductive health rights needs. In collaboration with NOSET, a local harm reduction provider partner, women and gender diverse people shared information on challenges to healthcare access, ways in which to navigate these service barriers and links to avenues for support.
- Online Campaigning. In partnership with the Kwale Network of People who use drugs (KwaNPUD) from Kwale County and WEKESWA from Kisumu County, the consortium implemented a joint online campaign advocating for sexual and reproductive health services for women and gender diverse people who use drugs (on Facebook, Instagram and X) targeting diverse audiences.
- KwaNPUD Peer-Sharing Session on intimate partner violence. A peer-led discussion was held on intimate partner violence and strategies to address this within the women who use drugs community.



- WEKESWA Panel Discussion on Services for Sex Workers who Use Drugs. A key stakeholder panel consisting of researchers, methadone clinic staff, pharmacists and clinicians was held and issues raised included barriers for sex workers who use drugs in service access and the absence of opportunities for sex workers to be included as partners in research at the Jaramogi Oginga Odinga Teaching and Referral Hospital with the goal of improving service provision and access.



Dr Mitchel Okumu (Director Research JOOTRH) and Dr Tom Atanya (Methadone Clinic Lead at JOOTRH)

## RN Women - Nepal

Since 2017, RN Women has worked as an informal network to empower women who use drugs and organisations that support them. In January 2020, RN Women was legally registered as a National Network of Women Who Use Drugs and Drug Service led Organisation to ensure the meaningful involvement of women who use drugs in all phases of policy formulation and programming, including assessment, analysis, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.



As part of Support. Don't Punish 2024, on 25<sup>th</sup> June, 2024, RN Women conducted an interactive meeting with stakeholders from the Ministry of Health, the Nepali Police Department, local government, partner organisations, and community members. The primary focus of the meeting was to highlight that drug use is a health issue and “*not a crime*”. During the meeting, community

members also shared their lived experience facing social and familial stigma and discrimination. In this discussion, one community member intimated that she “*feels the sense of humiliation from society due to using drugs and they do not try to understand the situation we have been dealing with - rather they humiliate and discriminate against us, which is very sad and heart breaking*”.

The [Narcotics Drug Control Act 2033](#) provides two options apart from jail time for people who use drugs facing charges, that is opioid agonist treatment or placement at a drug treatment and rehabilitation centre. During this meeting, through discussions it became evident that participants lacked awareness of agonist treatment as an available service, and knowledge was predominately focussed on enrolment at costly rehabilitation centres as a diversion strategy. The potential benefits of opioid agonist treatment were discussed as a low cost and low threshold option for those wishing to reduce, replace or stop opioid use. Dialogue participants reached informal consensus that drug use is a health issue and law enforcement representatives pledged support for further engagement in discussions on initiatives for people who use drugs.



On 26<sup>th</sup> June, wearing t-shirts with the "Support. Don't Punish" slogan, with around 35 community participants, RN Women conducted a peaceful march as an opportunity for the SDP campaign to reach a greater audience, including government stakeholders, such as the Minister of Youth and Sports, the Minister of Education, Science and Technology, the Minister of Health and Population, and the Minister of Home Affairs, students, and various organisations. During the event, RN Women spoke on issues such as stigma, discrimination, and violence against women who use drugs, using slogans translated in Nepali such as "*Stop Stigma and Discrimination against Women Who Use Drugs,*" "*End Violence against Women Who Use Drugs,*" "*Human Rights are For Everyone*", and "*Discrimination is Unacceptable*". After the public campaign, RN Women held a gathering at their office, where people who use drugs currently were informed



about their human rights and the implications of the Narcotics Drug Control Act, 2033. Learn more about the event through RN Women [social media](#).



## GAMMA – Indonesia

The "Support. Don't Punish" campaign in Indonesia was organised by GAMMA Indonesia, an organisation focused on drug-related issues among young people and individuals of diverse genders and sexualities. A hybrid event was held at Belva Huis in Bogor on 30<sup>th</sup> June and was attended by 43 people, including members from various civil society organisations such as Female Plus, Bumi Pemuda, Pesona Bumi Pasundan, Srikandi Pakuan, Intimuda Indonesia, several universities including Gunadarma University, STIE MBI University, and Pakuan University of Bogor, as well as GAMMA Indonesia members.



Event discussion content included the purpose and intentions of the Support. Don't Punish campaign, as well as an introduction to GAMMA Indonesia itself and the principles of harm reduction in the context of human rights. Discussion included the presentation of a video on harm reduction and was followed by a Q and A session. Participants were also invited to take group photos with campaign materials provided by the organisers.



The event aimed to guide activists and academics to understand the concept of harm reduction and to introduce GAMMA Indonesia in more depth. As an organisation advocating for people experiencing intersectional oppressions, this activity hoped to reduce stigma and discrimination and promote support without punishment or judgment towards people who use drugs. Through improved understanding, it is hoped that the community can actively support the harm reduction approach and create a more inclusive environment for people who use drugs from diverse backgrounds. Facebook post is available [here](#)

### Y-Fem Namibia Trust – Namibia

This year, on 26<sup>th</sup> June the Young Feminists Movement of Namibia (Y-Fem) contributed to the Support. Don't Punish campaign in Okahandja in the Otjiizonzupa region by organising a safe space to advocate for “compassionate, health-focused drug policies over criminalisation”. The event aimed to raise awareness, challenge stigma, and promote solidarity with people who use drugs. Participants held signs with the message "Support. Don't Punish" in English and native languages with the view to expanding inclusion. A short campaign clip was produced; the video link is available [here](#).



On June 29th, the Y-Fem Team and Staff continued their SDP awareness activities by participating in a Price Pop-Up event in Windhoek. This event provided an opportunity to engage with the public, distribute informational materials, and initiate conversations about the need for a health-centred approach to drug use.

Following this, Y-Fem hosted the second screening of the Support. Don't Punish documentary in Okahandja, Hasego Guesthouse with 15 LGBTIQ Organisational leaders. Y-Fem informed the community of the need to prioritise setting up a consortium for harm reduction for LGBTIQ communities and sex workers in Namibia. As associated press release is available [here](#).

### **Mexico - Latinoamérica por una Política Sensata de Drogas (LPSD)**

The Mexico campaign through LPSD was deferred to August. LPSD have negotiated to be able to enter the prison, including the psychiatric ward where women with psychosocial disabilities and dependent use of psychoactive substances are held. The approach involves a reflection circle about psychoactive substances and their different uses where women can discuss their consumption of these substances and how it has impacted their lives.

The activity aims to capture, through drawings, magazine clippings, and phrases, their experience with psychoactive substances, including the stigma, exclusion and discrimination they have been subjected to. There will be a workshop: "Getting to know psychoactive substances without taboos, misinformation and stigmas". The team will then work with the women to craft paper mural titled "Me and my relationship with psychoactive substances, outside and inside prison". A day or two later, the mural will be completed together with a reaction activity (karaoke). The women will also be encouraged to discuss the policy environment and whether they consider that the current laws in Mexico should be improved.

*Many thanks to all those who participated in support don't punish with a focus on women and people of diverse gender identity 2024. Please share this summary with all who were involved and others to showcase the need to end punitive responses to drug use as part of the movement for gender equality and human rights for all.*

