

# PROGRESS REPORT 2020-2021

## 15 YEARS, 15 LESSONS

OCTOBER 2021



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## Foreword



It is with great pleasure that I present this Progress Report in celebration of IDPC's 15th anniversary. This report is structured around 15 critical lessons that we have learnt over the last 15 years and in parallel showcases highlights of our work in 2020-2021. All 15 lessons are essential and will guide the focus of our network in the coming years, resonating strongly with our new Strategic Plan for 2021-2023.

The first lesson – that our success is driven by our strong, supportive membership – is, and has always been, our North Star.

IDPC was founded to connect diverse groups around the world in advocating for reform of harmful, failed and unjust drug laws and policies. One of the central organising principles for the network was to maximise the collective impact of strongly interconnected advocacy at the national, regional and global levels. I am proud that IDPC's mandate as a network first and foremost remains at the heart of all that we do at the Secretariat.

As a fledgling network IDPC started with less than 30 members, and on our 15th anniversary we now number nearly 200 members from over 70 countries. Together we have tirelessly brought the evidence to bear in advocating for reform of drug policies; for the respect and adherence to human rights; and for the strong, consistent and meaningful engagement of civil society and communities. We have built strong and credible relationships with committed individuals working in government and UN bodies to shift the debate immeasurably in this time, and the previous blind adherence to punitive prohibition has become utterly untenable.

The drug policy reform movement grows ever broader, more diverse, intersectional and sophisticated. We are excited and humbled to be a part of this strong and unstoppable global show of force. There is no doubt that our collective mission is not over, and much more needs to change in order to achieve our vision of drug policies that advance social justice and human rights. In this regard, the 15 lessons presented in this year's report – which are exemplified by 15 highlights of our work from April 2020 to March 2021 – will guide and focus our efforts as we work together in solidarity to end the endemic global war on drugs. I hope you will enjoy reading our latest Progress Report.

In solidarity,

**Ann Fordham**  
Executive Director



As Chair of the Board and as someone who has been involved with IDPC since the network was founded, I am excited by what the International Drug Policy Consortium has achieved over the past 15 years. From modest beginnings in 2006, IDPC has grown into a diverse and deeply committed international movement, working to improve global and community responses to drugs and drug markets. Prioritizing human rights, social justice, equity and inclusion, IDPC has become a constructive and facilitative force within the often fractious international drug policy environment. The global pandemic has exacerbated and exposed the devastating toll that traditional punitive approaches to drugs have taken on people around the world. COVID-19 has set the stage for a major rethink in many of our policy approaches to urgent social justice issues. By amplifying the voices of its broad membership, IDPC has a critical role in ensuring that new responses to drugs embrace the diverse experiences of all those impacted by historic and unsustainable drug policies. Fifteen years after its inception, the work of our network is more necessary than ever.

**Donald MacPherson**  
IDPC Board of Directors



I have been associated with IDPC for almost a decade. During these years, I have experienced first-hand the value of the support that the network consistently provides to the community of people who use drugs. This includes facilitating community representation at international policy-making fora like the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (including thorough guidance and orientation), but also supporting the creation of spaces for members to speak on issues related to drug policies and human rights, as well as actively engaging the community in discussions on decriminalisation, with inputs from internationally renowned experts. Through the Members Advisory Committee (MAC), communities can also review the strategic direction of IDPC, and provide feedback before the finalisation and publication of critical document. Many community members have also been encouraged to join the IDPC capacity-building programmes, honing their facilitation skills and enriching perspectives on issues related to drug policy. In all of these aspects, the role of the network is irreplaceable.

**Charanjit Sharma**  
IDPC Members Advisory Council (MAC)

## About IDPC

The [International Drug Policy Consortium](#) (IDPC) is a global network of 191 NGOs that come together to promote person-centred, rights-reinforcing policies at the national, regional, and international levels.

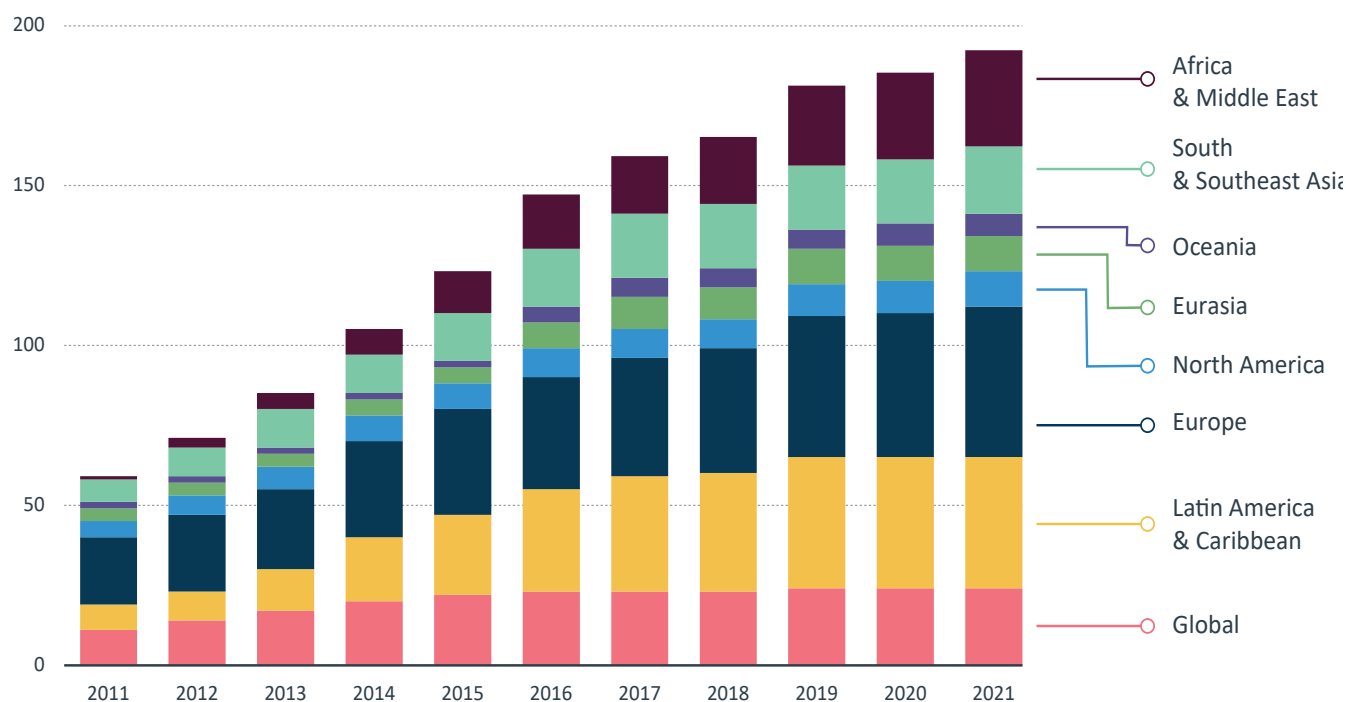
IDPC was founded in 2006. Since 2011, it has been an independent, not-for-profit organisation legally registered in the UK, with offices in Bangkok and London. In 2020, IDPC was also legally registered in the Netherlands, and set up a formal office in Ghana.

Our mission is to amplify and strengthen a diverse global movement to repair the harms caused by punitive drug policies, and promote just responses. Through this mission we seek to achieve our vision – drug policies that advance social justice and human rights.

IDPC members agree and align with five core policy principles:

1. Drug policies should be developed through an objective assessment of priorities and evidence
2. Drug policies should comply with national, regional and international human rights principles, laws and standards
3. Drug policies should focus on reducing the harmful consequences rather than the scale of drug use and markets
4. Drug policies should promote social justice and the inclusion of marginalised groups, rather than focus on punitive measures towards them
5. Drug policies should be developed and implemented based on open and constructive relationships with civil society and affected populations.

## The growth of the IDPC network over 15 years





# 15 lessons learnt over 15 years of IDPC

## **Lesson 1**

### **IDPC's success is driven by its strong, supportive membership**

The IDPC Strategic Plan 2021-2023 culminates 15 years of growth  
January 2021

## **Lesson 2**

### **Drug policy reform is critical to ending mass incarceration**

IDPC advocates for decarceration as a key response to COVID1-9  
April 2020

## **Lesson 4**

### **Even in the hardest circumstances, communities remain resilient**

Stories of Substance – documenting harm reduction responses to COVID-19  
July 2020

## **Lesson 3**

### **Undoing the 'war on drugs' requires global solidarity**

The Support. Don't Punish 2020 Global Day of Action  
June 2020

## **Lesson 5**

### **Momentum for decriminalisation is growing and irreversible**

IDPC joins Campaign for the Decriminalization and Reclassification of Petty Offences in Africa  
July 2020

## **Lesson 6**

### **Community voices are amplified through intersectional advocacy**

The SPIRIT project in Southeast Asia  
August 2020

## **Lesson 8**

### **Social justice must be at the heart of legal regulation**

The first IDPC principles for the responsible legal regulation of cannabis  
September 2020

## **Lesson 7**

### **Drug policy reform advocacy drives change**

Challenging regressive policies in the EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2025  
August 2020

## **Lesson 9**

### **Drug policy reform is not a 'single-issue struggle'**

The Support. Don't Punish #NotAWebinar series  
October 2020

## **Lesson 10**

### **A new generation of advocates is emerging**

Training-of-trainers for decriminalisation advocates in Asia  
November 2020

## **Lesson 11**

### **It's time to decolonise drug policies**

The UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs reschedules cannabis  
December 2020

## **Lesson 12**

### **Drug policy reform is a feminist issue**

Advocacy for the rights of women deprived of liberty in Latin America  
January 2021

## **Lesson 13**

### **Human rights must be at the centre of policy reform**

The first Brandenburg Forum in Geneva mobilises the UN human rights system  
February 2021

## **Lesson 14**

### **Building evidence is essential to uncover the harms of the 'war on drugs'**

IDPC takes stock of progress made since the UNGASS 2016  
March 2021

## **Lesson 15**

### **The voice of the reform movement grows stronger at the UN every year**

Civil society participation at the first virtual CND  
April 2021

# Lesson 1

## IDPC's success is driven by its strong, supportive membership

**January 2021. The IDPC Strategic Plan 2021-2023 culminates 15 years of growth**

The creation of an international network for drug policy reform was conceived and led by the organisations that would become its first members. As early as 2005, the roots of the International Drug Policy Consortium were taking hold, initially under the auspices of the [Beckley Foundation](#), whose November 2005 Global Drug Policy Seminar was used to “formalize IDPC as a credible, global NGO network that would engage constructively with governments by providing policy makers with a ‘critical friend’ analysis, and realistic proposals of how dilemmas in drug policy and programme formulation could be resolved”. In this manner, 26 NGOs came together to create IDPC, as they recognised the need for greater coordination, communication, strategic planning, and collective responses

Since then, the membership has grown to nearly 200 organisations – with ever-increasing geographical diversity, thematic scope, capacity and credibility. From the very start, IDPC's role as a network has been the primary focus – and the membership continues to be our greatest strength and resource.

IDPC members are provided with continuous opportunities to shape the work, direction and strategy of the network: they receive monthly ‘alert’ newsletters and more detailed quarterly ‘Members Updates’; there are annual membership surveys to check on progress and challenges, and the secretariat hosts members meetings throughout the year. Additionally, a [Members’ Advisory Council \(MAC\)](#) serves to provide a formal link between the membership, secretariat and the Board of Directors – with thirteen representatives from different regions or constituencies who are elected by IDPC members.

In early 2021, IDPC launched our new [Strategic Plan for 2021-2023](#), a critical document that redefines our core principles and key areas of work – and once again the guidance and support of our members was instrumental.



As part of this process, the membership agreed to update the network's vision and mission, and defined five ‘priority areas’ for 2021-2023: decriminalisation and criminal justice reform; drug policy impacts on women; the global [Support Don't Punish](#) campaign; cross-UN involvement and the [UN System Common Position on Drugs](#); and protecting civil society space and building alliances.

The new Strategic Plan also reinforced the existing pillars of our work: networking and communications; building evidence; international advocacy; regional and national advocacy; and capacity strengthening.

The process to develop the Strategic Plan began with a consultation with the Members Advisory Council in 2019, and included questions in the annual members survey of 2019, as well as a series of face-to-face meetings with members at the International Drug Policy Reform Conference (USA, November 2019), the International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (Rwanda, December 2019), and the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (Austria, March 2020). The successful implementation of the Strategic Plan will require that the IDPC membership remain in the driving seat in the forthcoming years.



IDPC Members Meeting in Vienna, March 2019

Credit: Unknown



# Lesson 2

## Drug reform is critical to ending mass incarceration

### April 2020. IDPC advocates for decarceration as a key response to COVID-19

For years, IDPC and its membership have challenged mass incarceration and have advocated for strategies to reduce the number of people imprisoned for drug-related activities, including for drug use and possession for personal use. IDPC has historically focussed on the incarceration of women, particularly in regions where women are detained for drug offences at alarmingly high rates, such as [Latin America](#) or [Southeast Asia](#).

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, concerns over the life and health of people deprived of liberty were greatly heightened, as neither social distancing nor adequate standards of hygiene, medical care, and physical and mental health can be guaranteed in places of detention. Critically, international agencies such as the World Health Organisation issued [guidance](#) documents on how to prevent the spread of the virus in prisons, including through the use of non-custodial measures to reduce prison overcrowding.

Starting in April 2020, IDPC worked with members and colleagues to strategically advocate for the release of people deprived of liberty at local level, including through the dissemination of region-specific advocacy notes on [Southeast Asia](#), [Latin America](#), [Europe](#) and [Africa](#). Partnering with members in Southeast Asia, IDPC received a COVID-19 emergency grant from the Open Society Foundations to push for decarceration in the region.

The interest in the topic amongst civil society, academics and policy makers become obvious with the webinar [Reducing Incarceration in the time of COVID-19 in Southeast Asia](#), which we co-organised with UNAIDS Asia-Pacific in May 2020, and has now logged over 5,000 views on Facebook. (In Spring 2020, IDPC also co-organised additional webinars on decarceration and COVID-19 at a global and Latin American level). As part of our transition into online advocacy and networking, IDPC engaged new audiences through a weekly newsletter focussed on COVID-19 and prisons, virtual consultations with local partners, and social media campaigns.

In the weeks following the outset of the pandemic, many governments announced important measures to decongest prisons – however, the releases that followed these announcements have been disappointing, and many people deprived of liberty have suffered increased isolation and health risks during the pandemic.

In a joint report released in February 2021, [Prisons and COVID-19: Lessons from an Ongoing Crisis](#), IDPC showed that even where decongestion measures were being carried out, people continued to be targeted and incarcerated for drug offences at disproportionately high levels. During the pandemic, people in prison have been unable to access the

most basic legal, health, and drug services. Once released, formerly incarcerated people have faced severe challenges, such as exclusion from the formal economy, social stigma, and exploitation, with lack of re-integration support from the state.

Two lessons learned in this past year stand out: first, that there is strong interest from several sectors for coalition-building to advocate against incarceration; secondly, that the visibility of drug policies in driving mass incarceration is growing (see, for instance, the April 2021 [UN system Common Position on incarceration](#)).

We must capitalise on these trends, and work collaboratively and creatively to push for the reform of drug laws, and the end of mass incarceration.



# Lesson 3

## Undoing the ‘war on drugs’ requires global solidarity

### June 2019. The Support. Don't Punish 2020 Global Day of Action

The ‘war on drugs’ is a global apparatus of state-sponsored violence and neglect. While enforced locally and domestically, the [tragic impacts](#) of prohibition trace their roots to [norms enshrined in international law](#). Undermining this complex edifice of punitive policies, practices, and discourses to build sustainable alternatives demands [networked](#) efforts. This is not only a strategic choice, as our movement’s capacity to effect change is strengthened by collective, cross-border learning and collaboration. But also a moral one, as the struggles of street-based people who use drugs in Manila cannot be fully separated from those of rural coca-growing communities in Colombia’s Cauca region. Mobilising to end the ‘war on drugs’ reminds us of our interdependence and how, in the words of Martin Luther King, ‘no one is free until we are all free.’

The [Support. Don't Punish](#) campaign’s Global Day of Action is one of the avenues through which IDPC honours this commitment to international solidarity. Since the campaign’s inception in 2013, IDPC has served as its central hub, fundraising to provide financial and in-kind support to the hundreds of local partners that add their voice to this ever-growing global show of force for harm reduction and drug policy reform.

The [eight Global Day of Action](#) in 2020 was a difficult one, marked by the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic and resultant repressive government responses. Acknowledging these challenges whilst realising the redoubled importance of ‘leaving no one behind’, IDPC worked with sister hubs and local partners to produce a ‘[Bank of Ideas for Mobilisation](#)’, with suggestions for safe and impactful activities. Our messaging and processes in preparation for the Global Day of Action were also adapted to keep our mobilisation relevant, decisive and caring.

The response from local partners was [nothing short of spectacular](#). Thousands of campaigners, led by hundreds of collectives, organisations and networks, engaged in 288 activities organised in **239 cities of 90 countries** around the world! From the provision of protective equipment, to flash mobs and rallies, to virtual conferences and too many beautiful diverse actions to name, campaigners demonstrated that, together, our voices are louder, our collective message stronger, and ultimately our global clamour for change will be impossible to ignore.



Credit: Various



# Lesson 4

## Even in the hardest circumstances, communities remain resilient

### July 2020. Stories of substance – documenting harm reduction responses to COVID-19

Since 2020, our lives have been drastically altered by the COVID-19 pandemic. In many countries the pandemic, but also and mostly the policies adopted in an effort to curb infections, have severely restricted access to life-saving services for people who use drugs. They have exacerbated health harms in prisons and cut people deprived of their liberty from their families, lawyers and essential services. Restrictions have further contributed to shrinking civil society space. And of course, they have brought drug policy debates and advocacy work online.

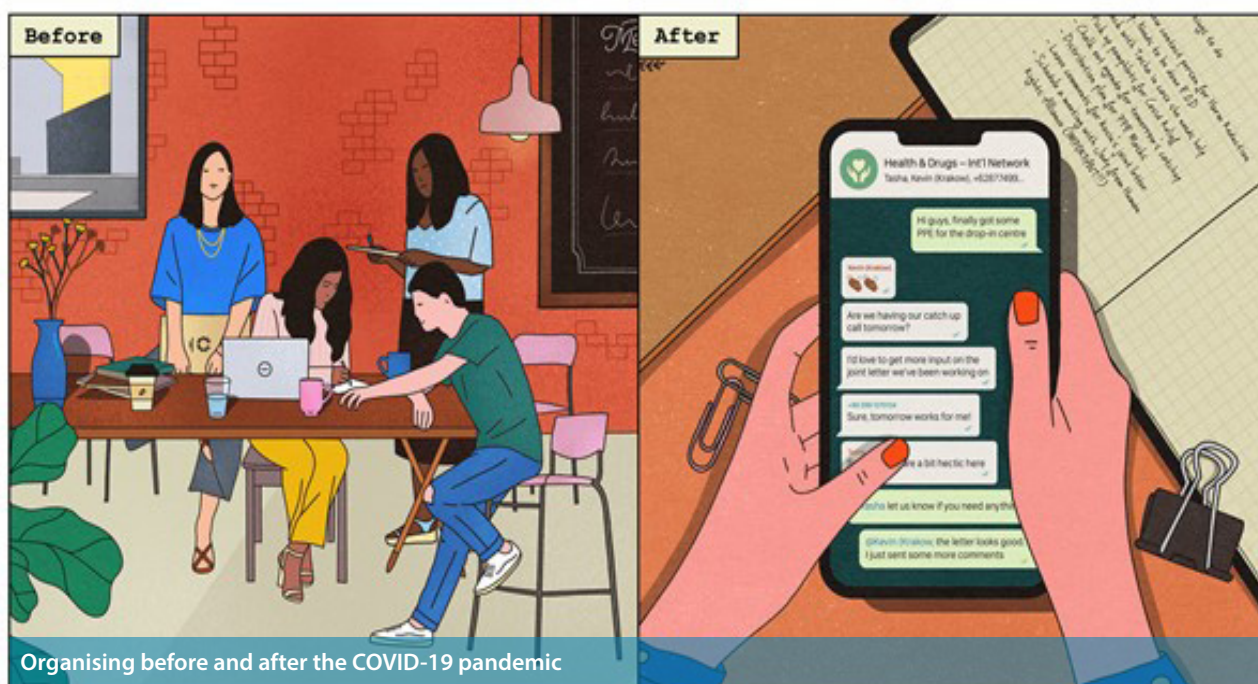
Despite the hardship, the restrictions, and the complete reshuffling of our lives, we have been incredibly proud and humbled by the sheer resilience, solidarity and creativity that the network has shown.

As soon as the pandemic hit, the IDPC Secretariat did its best to adapt to new circumstances, document some of

the key issues faced by the drug policy and harm reduction movement, respond to critical requests for help, support and funding from the network, and leverage online tools and our 15 years of experience and expertise to strengthen our collective fight for drug policy reform.

Early on, we sought to learn as much as we could from what was happening at membership level, and document how civil society and community colleagues were responding to this 'new normal'. We did this through civil society surveys and interviews with NGOs, governments and UN officials, which fed into webinars, our [Stories of Substance](#) newsletter, a [COVID-19 resource page](#), and a [briefing paper](#) dedicated to how the modes of advocacy had shifted in times of COVID-19.

We brought our findings and recommendations to policy makers. We elevated the stories and testimonies of advocates, affected communities and service providers wherever we could – highlighting hard times, but also examples of how people have risen to this new challenge with innovative programmes and initiatives. Much of our advocacy focused on [reducing incarceration](#) and [ending prison overcrowding](#), but also on ensuring that the [voice of civil society is not stifled](#), with policy makers using COVID-19 as an excuse to exclude us from critical debates. And of course, the [Support. Don't Punish](#) June 2020 Global Day of Action showed how important spaces of solidarity, care, compassion and support remain for the drug policy reform movement.



Organising before and after the COVID-19 pandemic

Credit: Sargam Gupta



## Lesson 5

### The momentum for decriminalisation is growing and irreversible

#### July 2020. IDPC joins the Campaign for Decriminalization and Reclassification of Petty Offences in Africa

In recent years, the debate around drug policy, harm reduction and decriminalisation has grown exponentially across all continents – and the momentum has built especially fast in Africa. More and more actors are calling for the decriminalisation of drug use and possession for personal use, as one key component of drug policies that are grounded on human rights and public health. In West Africa in particular, these debates were kick-started by the creation of the [West Africa Commission on Drugs \(WACD\)](#) – convened by the former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. In collaboration with civil society, the Commissioners' work and reports have opened the space to bring stakeholders together for honest discussions about the debilitating effects of punitive drug laws – especially in a region that is still emerging from decades of violent conflict, civil wars and economic instability.

IDPC played an important role in supporting the Commission's flagship report ([Not Just In Transit](#)) in 2014, as well as the follow-up production of a detailed [West Africa Model Drug Law](#) in 2018. These continue to be invaluable tools for regional advocacy for policy change – facilitating important steps in Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Cote D'Ivoire and the Gambia, as well as across the rest of too.

In 2020, the Parliament of Ghana [passed](#) a new Narcotics Control Commission Bill into law – the culmination of

discussions in the country since the first WACD report was launched. The new law is a significant step forward for the country and the region overall – fundamentally shifting how drug use and dependence are viewed as public health issues rather than criminal concerns. Prison terms were replaced with non-criminal sanctions (including fines), and the new law also provides for life-saving harm reduction services and the regulated production of cannabis products with low levels of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). Efforts are ongoing to ensure this new legislation is translated into practice on the ground, and further advocacy is required to continue pushing the debate forward in Ghana.

In July 2020, IDPC also became an official partner in the [Campaign for Decriminalization and Reclassification of Petty Offences in Africa](#) – building bridges with like-minded allies from across different sectors (led by the [African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum \(APCOF\)](#)) to push against the widespread criminalisation of vulnerable groups. Among other successes, the Campaign helped to secure an important declaration from the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights in 2020 that national vagrancy laws are in breach of the African human rights legislation and must be reformed. During the COVID-19 pandemic, serious concerns have also been raised about the creation of new petty offences that particularly impact homeless populations and others such as people who use drugs who are unable to comply with government lockdowns and restrictions.

A few years previous, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights adopted a set of ground-breaking '[Principles](#)' on petty offences – but drug use and possession for personal use were not included within this definition. By joining this campaign, IDPC and our members in the region aim to highlight the overlaps and facilitate discussions around drug decriminalisation – linking to other initiatives such as [Support. Don't Punish](#).

To continue supporting and promoting these debates, and to support our growing membership across Africa, IDPC registered a formal office in Ghana in July 2020 – 'IDPC Africa'.



The Parliament of Ghana debates the adoption of the new drug law

Credit: West Africa Civil Society Institute Ghana

## Lesson 6

### Community voices are amplified through intersectional advocacy

#### August 2020. The SPIRIT project in Southeast Asia

Working with formerly incarcerated women and other champions for ending the criminalisation and punishment of women who engage with drugs, has highlighted the critical importance of reaching out to other groups with intersecting vulnerabilities. We learned that we cannot highlight the impacts of punitive drug policies without making dedicated efforts to understanding the specific situations faced by women who use drugs, formerly incarcerated people, transgender people and sex workers, and supporting their empowerment to lead advocacy efforts.

During 2020-2021 IDPC had the privilege of working with formerly incarcerated women and women who use drugs, including transgender people and transgender sex workers, as part of the [Voice](#) funded, “Strengthening and empowering women who use drugs in Southeast Asia” (SPIRIT) project, across Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines.

In August 2020, IDPC launched a new podcast series with UNAIDS Asia Pacific called [Reality Bytes: On Drugs in Southeast Asia](#). In the first episode Rosma Karlina –s the Women’s Program Coordinator at AKSI Keadilan Indonesia and the SPIRIT project lead – shared her experiences as a woman who uses drugs, including a period of incarceration. She is a fierce advocate, and is determined to help women avoid police detention, criminalisation and imprisonment through offering paralegal assistance. Along with other project partners



Workshop with transgender sex workers who use drug organised in Pattaya, Thailand, in 2002

Credit: Pattamon Tae Wattananantachakorn, IDPC

in the Philippines, Malaysia and Thailand, AKSI also works to support leadership and empowerment amongst formerly incarcerated women and women who use drugs, including transgender women and sex workers.

For IDPC, it was also a privilege to be part of the [first workshop organised by the Health Opportunity Network with transgender sex workers who use drugs](#) to promote harm reduction and self-care. The concerns raised during this workshop regarding law enforcement abuses and drug use led to an event involving Rangsit University, Ozone Foundation and the Asia-Pacific Coalition on Male Sexual Health (APCOM), which hosted a [dialogue on LGBTQ+ people, drug policy and law enforcement in Thailand](#).

A critical takeaway from this experience is the need to keep building and strengthening alliances with advocates in broader feminist and women rights movements. To deepen our engagement in intersectional advocacy we teamed up with International Women’s Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAP) to host a [tweet chat on intersectional feminism and the war on drugs](#) that featured perspectives from community and civil society experts in women’s rights and drug policy. Later in 2021, IDPC and AKSI will join partners focussed on LGBTQ+ people, women with disabilities, refugees and migrants, and sex workers in an IWRAP-led regional project on intersectional feminist advocacy.



Kick-off meeting with partners in the SPIRIT project

Credit: IDPC



# Lesson 7

## Drug policy reform advocacy drives change

### August 2020. Challenging regressive policies in the EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2025

When the drug reform movement unites it can challenge stigmatising narratives and drive real policy change. A good example of this was in July 2020, when the European Commission released the [EU Agenda and Action Plan on Drugs 2021-2025](#) – the main drug policy document for the region, which was meant to guide the action of the EU institutions on drug-related matters, and would have been used as guidance for national-level drug strategies.

To the surprise of many, the EU Agenda was intended to be a paradigm-shifting document – but in the wrong direction. Although it was troubling on many dimensions, three aspects should be highlighted. First, it adopted a militaristic ‘war-on-drugs’ rhetoric, which is better exemplified by the fact it was publicised together with strategic plans to fight child abuse and firearms trafficking. Secondly, it deprioritised health-based approaches to drugs, and removed important commitments to human rights and to international cooperation. Lastly, it was adopted without a genuine consultation with civil society or communities.

The blow was felt across the continent. Particularly in countries where illiberal politics are becoming increasingly entrenched, and the EU is seen as an ally of rights-based coalitions.

The EU Agenda on Drugs was presented to the EU institutions and to civil society as a closed document that could not be reviewed. However, IDPC rushed to mobilise 29 of its European members, who signed an [open letter](#) laying out their concerns and demanding political leadership to change the strategy. Later on, other bodies like the EU Civil Society Forum on Drugs also joined with [strong recommendations](#) to review the document.

Under pressure from this strong and unified position challenging the document and the process of its development, the European Council decided to review the EU Drugs Agenda thoroughly, integrating civil society input. The resulting document – the [EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2025](#) – is one of the most reform-oriented EU drug strategies we have seen. Amongst other issues to note, it designates harm reduction as a standalone key priority – separately from demand reduction –, it puts human rights at the forefront of its commitments, and it includes new sections on people marginalised on the basis of their race, ethnicity, migration status, sexual orientation and gender identity.

Though far from perfect – for instance, it falls short of endorsing decriminalisation –, the biggest criticism that can be made of the EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2025 is its disconnection from reality. Across the EU, the state of national drug policies differs greatly from the principles and values contained in the Strategy. However, the EU Drugs Strategy lacks effective mechanisms to oversee and facilitate its own implementation. In the coming years, it will fall on our movement to carry out this important monitoring work.



EU Civil Society Forum on Drugs plenary meeting, in 2018

Credit: CSFP

## Lesson 8

### Social justice must be at the heart of legal regulation

#### **September 2020. The first IDPC principles for the responsible legal regulation of cannabis**

In recent years, discussions on the legal regulation of cannabis have emerged and accelerated across the world, from Indonesia to Luxemburg, to Morocco to Uruguay.. As of today, over 50 countries have adopted regulatory frameworks for medical cannabis, while a growing number of jurisdictions have regulated adult non-medical use, with many more poised to follow.

For several years, IDPC hesitated in taking a strong position on cannabis regulation.. The members of our network operate in a wide variety of legal, political, and cultural contexts. As befits this diversity, some IDPC members actively advocate for legal regulation, while others focus on different public health and social justice measures. In some cases, they operate in political contexts where advocating for legal regulation has historically been seen as counterproductive. But the legal regulation of cannabis, either for medical or adult non-medical use, is fast becoming an unescapable debate.

The new [IDPC principles for the responsible legal regulation of cannabis](#) respond to this reality. They are the result of a member-led process that started with a first draft produced by several IDPC members from Latin America in late 2019. Throughout 2020, successive versions of the document were discussed with the membership in several rounds of online consultations, as well as in an in-person meeting that took place in March 2020.

The resulting document proposes twenty principles that should inform any regulatory framework for cannabis markets, whether for medical or for non-medical use. These principles are organised in five blocks: health and human rights of people who use drugs; social justice; inclusive & equitable trade; responses to activities outside the legal markets; and a gender-sensitive approach. Through these five pillars, the Principles offer a comprehensive vision of a regulatory framework based on the values of social justice, inclusion, and sustainability– an increasingly pressing need, as multinational corporations threaten to capture the new legal markets.

Although this Advocacy Note only addresses the legal regulation of cannabis, the twenty principles and the underlying values of social justice, inclusion and human rights, can and should – with appropriate adjustments – be extended to other scheduled drugs. IDPC looks forward to expanding and updating these principles in view of the emerging new initiatives, research, and regulatory experiences in the near future.



Credit: Dania Putri

Cannabis farmers in the Rif mountains, Morocco



# 20 PRINCIPLES FOR THE RESPONSIBLE LEGAL REGULATION OF CANNABIS

## Health and human rights of people who use drugs

### 1. PROTECT RIGHTS

Regulated markets enable consumer protection and health regulations to uphold the rights of people who use drugs, while labor laws protect cannabis workers from exploitation and extortion.



### 2. PUBLIC HEALTH & HARM REDUCTION

Legal regulation can be a powerful harm reduction tool, reducing stigma against people who use drugs, enabling access to health services, and guaranteeing a safe supply of drugs.



### 3. AUTONOMY, LIBERTY & PRIVACY

Regulations should seek a fair balance between individual rights to autonomy and privacy, and the protection of public health. All restrictions must be based on evidence.



### 4. ACCESSIBLE & NEEDS-BASED

To become a viable alternative to the informal supply, regulated markets need to be accessible, and to respond to the needs of people who use drugs, including users of cannabis-based medical products.



## Social justice

### 5. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Legal systems should be informed by the wealth of knowledge accumulated by people involved in currently illegal markets, from cultivators to people who transport, sell and use cannabis.



### 6. TRANSIT TO LEGALITY

Legal markets must support the participation of people and communities involved in informal drug economies by removing existing legal, financial, technical, and bureaucratic barriers.



### 7. SMALLER-SCALE GROWERS

To guarantee sustainable livelihoods for traditional cannabis farmers, legal regulations should prioritise their participation in supply, and ensure they are not displaced by new private actors.



### 8. REPARATION, SATISFACTION & NON-REPETITION

Legal frameworks must include reparations for people who suffered prohibition, redress rights violations, and allocate resources to those unjustly targeted.



### 9. TRADITIONAL USES

Legal regulations must recognise the value of cannabis' rich history of traditional, cultural, religious and medical uses, and ensure their preservation.



## Inclusive & equitable trade

### 10. INCLUSIVE BUSINESS MODELS

Legal markets should seek to distribute power and value across the supply chain by enabling alternative business models that empower communities.



### 11. WORKERS RIGHTS

In a legal system, workers are entitled to labour rights and protections, which can be enforced through formal oversight mechanisms.



### 12. MAXIMISE VALUE

Regulators should work with producers and users to develop innovative certification schemes that bolster the competitiveness of small and medium-sized producers.



### 13. CHALLENGES TO INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Regulators should reflect on how to remove the legal barriers that impede the transnational trade of non-medical cannabis, while protecting traditional growers from the inflow of foreign capital.



### 14. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

To address potential environmental harms, legal frameworks must include strong regulations, as well as ecolabeling schemes, to promote sustainable practices throughout the supply chain.



## Responses to activities outside of the legal market

### 15. DECRIMINALISE ALL DRUG USE & ANCILLARY ACTIVITIES

A socially just legal framework is not compatible with any form of criminal or administrative punishment for the personal use of any drug.



### 16. PROPORTIONALITY

Where retained, criminal justice responses to drug-related activities, such as drug trafficking, must be strictly proportionate, consider personal circumstances, and accompanied by support.



## A gender-sensitive approach

### 17. WOMEN & CULTIVATION

In addressing the history of discrimination and harassment of women growers, legal regulations should establish gender-sensitive protections against exploitation and abuse.



### 18. ACCESS TO SERVICES

Legal regulations must promote gender-sensitive drug treatment and harm reduction services that respond to the specific needs of women.



### 19. EQUALITY

Regulators must take immediate action to address structural gender inequalities and power imbalances in legal cannabis markets.



## Monitoring and learning

### 20. DATA COLLECTION & COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Legal frameworks must be constantly reviewed in light of objective data, lessons learnt, the evolution of the market, and feedback provided by affected communities and civil society.



Credit: Juan Fernández Ochoa, IDPC



# Lesson 9

## Drug reform is not a 'single-issue struggle'

### October 2020. The Support. Don't Punish #NotAWebinar series

The ramifications of the 'war on drugs' are pervasive and far reaching. The harmful policies at the heart of prohibition are intermeshed in broader structures of exclusion, punishment, and criminalisation with resulting harms experienced very differently across lines of class, gender, race, ability, immigration status and other factors of social marginalisation..

As such, promoting fairer responses to drugs and communities associated with them requires developing our movements' capacity to explore and address these intersections in ways that foster synergies and collaboration.

Foreseeing long-lasting impediments to in-person events as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 [Support. Don't Punish #NotAWebinar workshop series](#) set out to do precisely this.

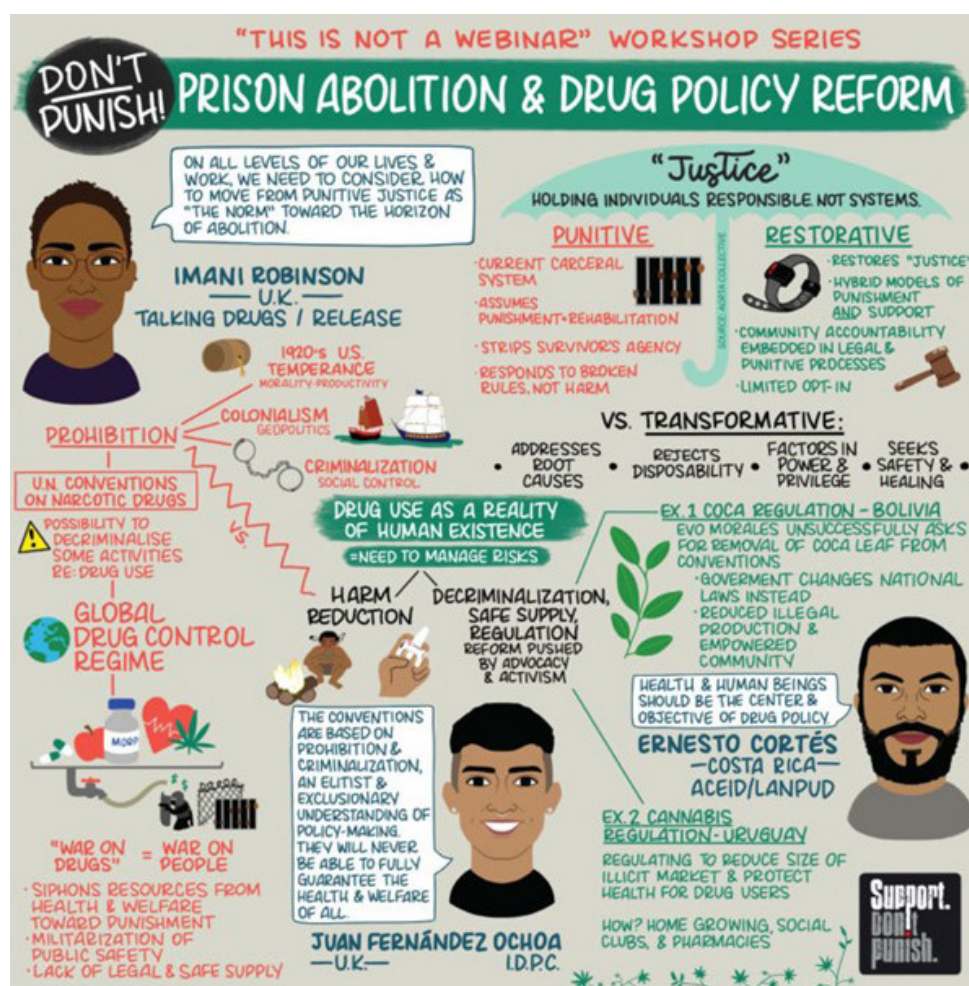
The online workshops were organised around three topics selected in consultation with campaigners:

- 'In their best interests'? – Making drug policy work for young people
- *Don't Punish* – Prison abolition & drug policy reform
- *Strategic, effective and genuine messaging* – Communicating reform.

Each one of the sessions followed a similar structure, starting with short and stimulating presentations by workshops facilitators, most of whom belong to communities disproportionately impacted by the 'war on drugs'. As our brains buzzed with ideas, we moved on to 2-3 breakout rooms for guided discussions.

The conversations in the breakout rooms were incredibly rich and gravitated around issues identified by the participants themselves, promoting a sense of ownership and seeking to re-create, as much as possible, the conditions of an in-person meeting. Visual summaries (available in English, Spanish and French) were commissioned for each one of the workshops, as an aide-memoire but also to serve as feedback for colleagues, networks and the general public.

These workshops embody a key strategic pillar of IDPC's work, on strengthening our movement's capacity to effect change – but is also a priority area of our work, as defined by IDPC's [Strategic Plan 2021-2023](#), on *Protecting civil society space and building alliances*. While this priority has been part of IDPC's ethos since its inception, in recent years we have intentionally sought to deepen a practice of solidarity with convergent social justice movements mobilising for the health and rights of [LGBTQ+ people, women and Black and other racialised people](#), just to name a few.



Credit: Juan Fernández Ochoa, IDPC

# Lesson 10

## A new generation of advocates is emerging

### **November 2020. Training-of-trainers for decriminalisation advocates in Asia**

We are part of a reform movement that is growing, not just in numbers but also in the ability to advocate with more nuanced understanding about drug policies, their impacts, and how to develop the policy asks that will achieve the changes we seek. Such growth is particularly evident on the topic of decriminalisation of drug use and possession for personal use, due at least partly to the increasing support for decriminalisation by policy makers around the world.

After some years of offering introductory training on drug policy in Asia, IDPC members and partners had repeatedly requested additional capacity-building on drug policy advocacy. In light of this, in November 2020 IDPC organised a virtual workshop under the format 'Training of Trainers',

which was open to people who had already completed previous IDPC training programmes, and aimed to provide established advocates with the toolkit to train and build the capacity of new generations of activists.

This effort was supported by a Global Fund grant for harm reduction advocacy. The 'savings' resulting from its conversion into an online workshop – a daunting challenge forced upon us by the pandemic – were used to provide a fellowship to five of the trainees, so that they would have the resources to design and run their own trainings at local level after the completion of the workshop. We engaged a brilliant training coordinator and community and civil society experts from the region to deliver the training, which helped create a fun and positive learning environment. Having the chance to network and to undertake mutual learning from peer advocates in the region, as always, was greatly appreciated.

A very positive aspect of this workshop was the opportunity to welcome participants who are relatively new to drug policy reform advocacy – some living in contexts where the reform movement is still nascent, such as Sri Lanka or Bangladesh – and championing intersectional concerns such as LGBTQ+ rights. IDPC will continue to work with them and to support their advocacy, as we also keep producing, updating and refining our training toolkit to foster the sustained growth of the drug reform movement.

## **Training of the Trainers Workshop: Advocacy for Decriminalisation in Asia**

Featuring theoretical and practical exercises to help you develop effective advocacy strategies and equip you with the skills to deliver online and in-person training



- 4 online sessions throughout November 2020
- Trained by international experts on drugs and drug policy
- Opportunity for a fellowship grant to support delivery of your own training workshop!





# Lesson 11

## It's time to decolonise drug policies

### December 2020. The Commission on Narcotic drugs votes to reschedule cannabis

The growing global calls to interrogate and address the deep-rooted, structural and institutional legacies of colonialism resonate loudly for drug policy reform. The connection between colonialism, racism and drug policies are profound and complex. Since 2020, there has been a renewed focus on racial justice and Indigenous rights, and this has given space for the discussion of critical ideas such as defunding the police and prison abolition – which might have been previously seen as too radical.

IDPC and the broader drug policy reform movement have **embraced** the need to decolonise drug policies. This work requires greater scrutiny of the colonial roots of drug control, as well as the determination to challenge the continuing geo-political imbalances that permeate the vectors of power defining global drug policies, from UN multilateral fora to multinational corporations, thus undermining progress, and hampering social justice outcomes.

A critical opportunity to address an aspect of colonial legacy was brought about by the rescheduling of cannabis at the UN in recognition of its medicinal and therapeutic properties, which took place in December 2020. In the many months leading up to that vote, IDPC worked together with the Transnational Institute to reach out to CND member states,

particularly in **Africa** and in the **Caribbean**, encouraging them to vote in favour of removing cannabis from Schedule IV of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs. Votes from Thailand, Nepal, Morocco, South Africa and India led to a positive result. These are all countries with historical traditional use of cannabis, and to some extent their positive vote reclaimed this history.

While IDPC **welcomed** this result and noted that it will help to accelerate the trend towards medical cannabis, the reality is that this reform alone does not challenge in itself the colonial legacy of cannabis prohibition, as cannabis remains in the highly restrictive Schedule I alongside heroin and cocaine.

The original decision to prohibit cannabis lacked scientific basis and was rooted in colonial prejudice and racism. It disregarded the rights and traditions of communities that have been growing and using cannabis for medicinal, therapeutic, religious, and cultural purposes for centuries, and has led to millions being criminalised and incarcerated across the globe. The cannabis review process missed an opportunity to correct this historical error, which has had devastating implications.

This small win on medicinal cannabis is just the very beginning of the decolonisation of the UN drug control regime. This modernisation is way past due, and is urgent at global and national levels. The removal of prohibitions on drugs must seek to redress the harms of decades of prohibition on marginalised communities, particularly on people of colour and Indigenous peoples. Governments must decriminalise drug use and cultivation of prohibited plants, ensure full respect for Indigenous rights, and divest from law enforcement and prisons. Social justice must be a central tenet in cannabis regulation. Across all of these dimensions, the struggle to decolonise drug policies is essential. It is only just beginning.

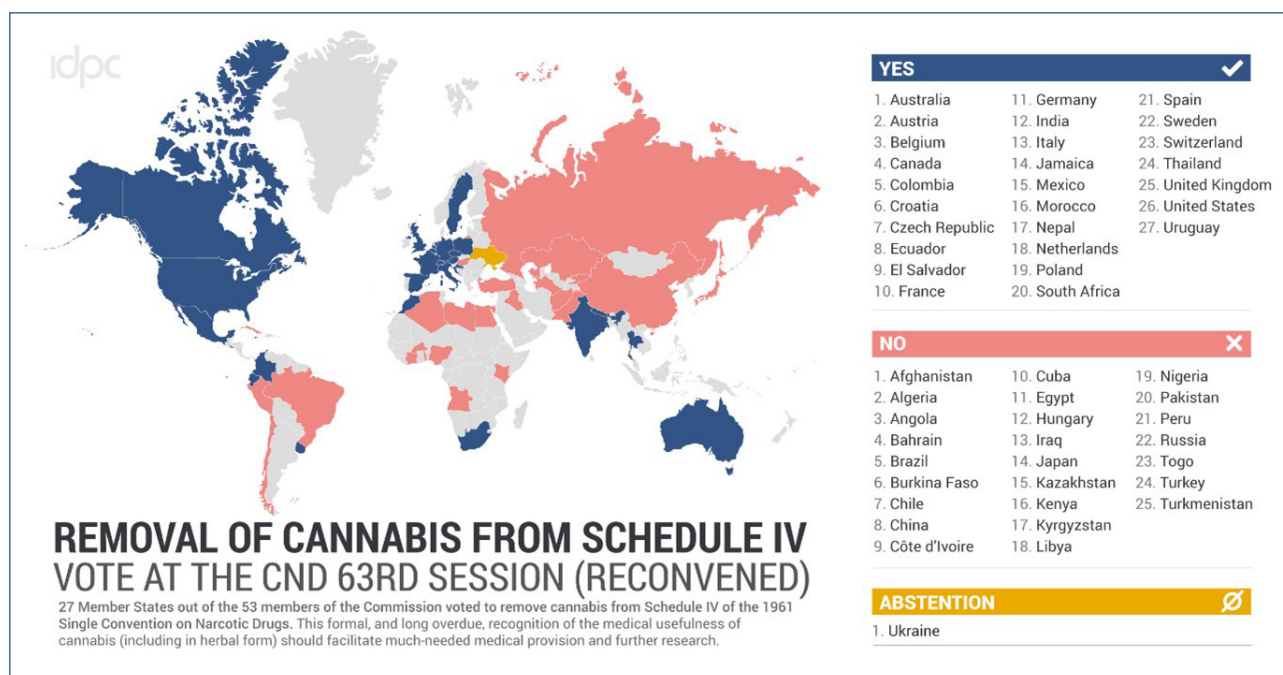


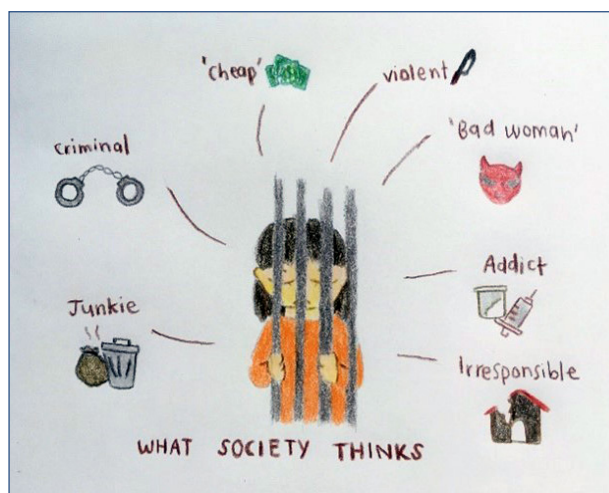
Illustration by Juan Fernández Ochoa, IDPC

# Lesson 12

## Drug reform is a feminist issue

### December 2020. Advocacy for the rights of women deprived of liberty in Latin America

Repressive drug policies have devastating impacts on women. Women involved in illegal drug activities are disproportionately affected by incarceration, with over a third of women in prison being detained for drug offences – a proportion that can reach 50 to 80% in Asia or Latin America. Women who cultivate plants destined for illegal drug production are left behind in development responses. Women who engage in illegal drug supply are demonised, abused and incarcerated for disproportionate amounts of time. Women who use drugs face huge stigma, criminalisation, ill-treatment and discrimination, deterring them from accessing health, harm reduction, treatment and social services. But thanks to tireless efforts by civil society and affected women, these issues have gained increasing visibility all over the world.



Over the past year, IDPC has collaborated with organisations from Latin America, Asia and elsewhere to highlight the human rights toll faced by women impacted by drug policies. We used the opportunity of the [10-year anniversary](#) of the UN Bangkok Rules to document how drug policies are impacting women worldwide, as well as in specific countries (for example in [Cambodia](#)), and with a focus on [trans women](#). We also highlighted how reforms should be women-centred and women-led to ensure that they don't create more harm, and that they truly address women's needs and demands – an issue particularly important when discussing [policy alternatives](#).

Along 2020, we also created space for affected women to tell their stories at the highest levels of policy making. Women shared their experiences of violence, criminalisation, abuse and discriminations – but also how they are fighting back against oppression, misogyny and reject with powerful, courageous and inspiring actions – at the [Commission on Narcotic Drugs](#) in Vienna, and at the [Commission on the Status of Women](#) in New York. In Latin America, IDPC [supported efforts](#) from regional NGOs to elevate women's voices and demands at the Inter-American Court on Human Rights.

We will continue this essential advocacy work to ensure that women don't wait for another 15 years before drug policies are truly enshrined in human rights and a strong feminist approach.



Credit: Pattamon Watanawanichako (Tae) IDPC

# Lesson 13

## Human rights are at the forefront of drug policy reform

### February 2021. The first Brandenburg Forum on human rights and drug policies

The war on drugs has been an unmitigated catastrophe for human rights. For decades, it has driven widespread and systematic rights violations, from thousands of extrajudicial killings to the mass incarceration of millions, the denial of harm reduction services, the criminalisation of Indigenous traditions, or the uncounted acts of violence and abuse committed against people who use drugs. In all cases, marginalised people such as people of colour, people living in poverty, women or LGBTQ+ people have borne a disproportionate share of these harms.

This devastation has been fuelled by a deliberate separation between drug policy making bodies, and human rights institutions. At an international level, the UN human rights system and the global drug control regime have developed for sixty years in parallel, but in complete isolation from each other. Until the 2010s, human rights were scarcely considered by the Vienna-based UN drug control bodies, while the Geneva-based human rights system paid little attention to the abuses associated to the war on drugs.

One of the strategic priorities of IDPC is to end this separation. In the last years, we have been part of a successful effort to get UN human rights experts to document and denounce the human rights impacts of drug policies. In 2020-2021 alone, we filed submissions to the UN human rights bodies on topics such as [arbitrary detention](#) and drug policies, rights violations in the [administration of justice](#), or the situation of

people who use drugs in a broad range of countries including [Belgium](#), [El Salvador](#), [Guatemala](#), [Nepal](#), and [Sweden](#), amongst others. In addition to that, we also created the IDPC Human Rights Calendar, an online resource that provides our membership with a schedule of opportunities to engage with the UN human rights system.

In spite of this progress with human rights experts, we are still facing clear obstacles in drawing the attention of Member States in Geneva to drug-related matters, as the conviction that drug policy 'belongs' to Vienna is deeply entrenched amongst some diplomatic corners. To address this challenge, in February 2021 we organised, as part of the Global Partnership of Drug Policies and Development the first edition of the Brandenburg Forum in Geneva, which was co-sponsored by Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland.

The [Brandenburg Forum on Drugs and Development Policies](#) is a yearly high-profile event held in Germany since 2016 that seeks to provide a trusted space for important discussion and debate around drug policies. In 2021, the Forum was moved online, and the format was completely revisited to provide space for a conversation on how to strengthen the drug policy focus within the human rights bodies in Geneva. To do so, we brought together a diverse group of 72 participants, including [high-level representatives](#) of UN agencies, government officials from 14 countries, human rights experts, and civil society and community representatives.

Following the standard methodology of the Brandenburg meetings, the participants were distributed in different working groups that submitted to the plenary a series of recommendations on how to advance human rights in drug-related debates. At the end, all participants voted on the proposals submitted to the plenary. The two recommendations that garnered most support concerned the creation of a 'Group of Friends' to systematically advance drug policies in Geneva; and the adoption of a new resolution on human rights and drug policies by the UN Human Rights Council. In the next year, IDPC will work to advance these and other proposals to ensure the alignment of international human rights standards and drug policies.

## Voting results at the first Brandenburg Forum in Geneva





# Lesson 14

## Building evidence is essential to uncover the harms of the war on drugs

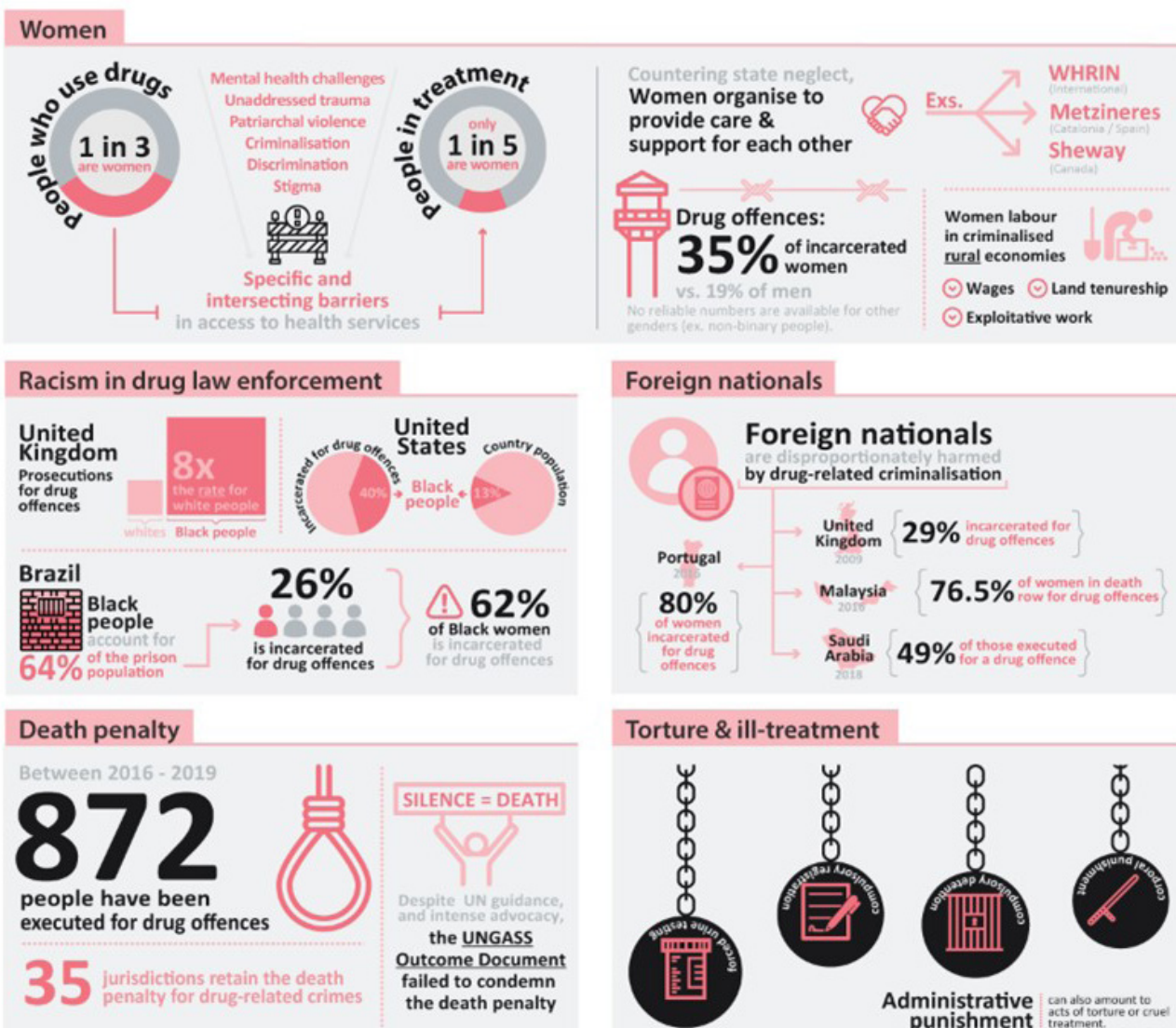
March 2021

Over the past 15 years, IDPC has dedicated much of its work to denouncing the harms driven by repressive drug control. As 2021 marked the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1971 UN Convention on Narcotic Drugs, the 50 years of Nixon's war on drugs, and the 5-year anniversary of the UNGASS on drugs, we worked together as a network to highlight the devastating impacts of global drug control on human rights, health and development, drawing from available data, as well as the lived experiences of people and communities from all over the globe.

In an effort to evaluate progress made in reform since the 2016 UNGASS, IDPC produced the report '[Taking stock of half a decade of drug policy](#)', drawing data from the UN, academia and civil society, and stories and quotes from affected communities from Colombia, Greece, Kenya, Indonesia or the USA, among many other countries. While some advances have undeniably been made, the research gathered by IDPC showed that in the last five years the gap between policy commitments on paper and meaningful change on the ground has continued to widen. The report is being used as an advocacy hook to promote decriminalisation, harm reduction and other progressive drug policies at the UN and with national governments.

In addition to these efforts, IDPC, as part of the Harm Reduction Consortium (funded by the Robert Carr Fund), and in partnership with Swansea University, is currently developing the very first [Global Drug Policy Index](#). The Index will score and rank countries focusing on four overarching themes: criminal justice policies, harm reduction, access to medicines and development. The Index will not be launched until November 2021, but the period 2020-2021 has been used to hold consultations with over 100 representatives from civil society, UN officials and academics to design a solid and useful framework for this ground-breaking advocacy project.

## FIVE YEARS AFTER UNGASS HUMAN RIGHTS & CRIMINAL LEGAL REFORM



Credit: Juan Fernandez Ochoa, IDPC

# Lesson 15

## The voice of the movement at the UN grows stronger every year

### April 2021. The first virtual session of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs

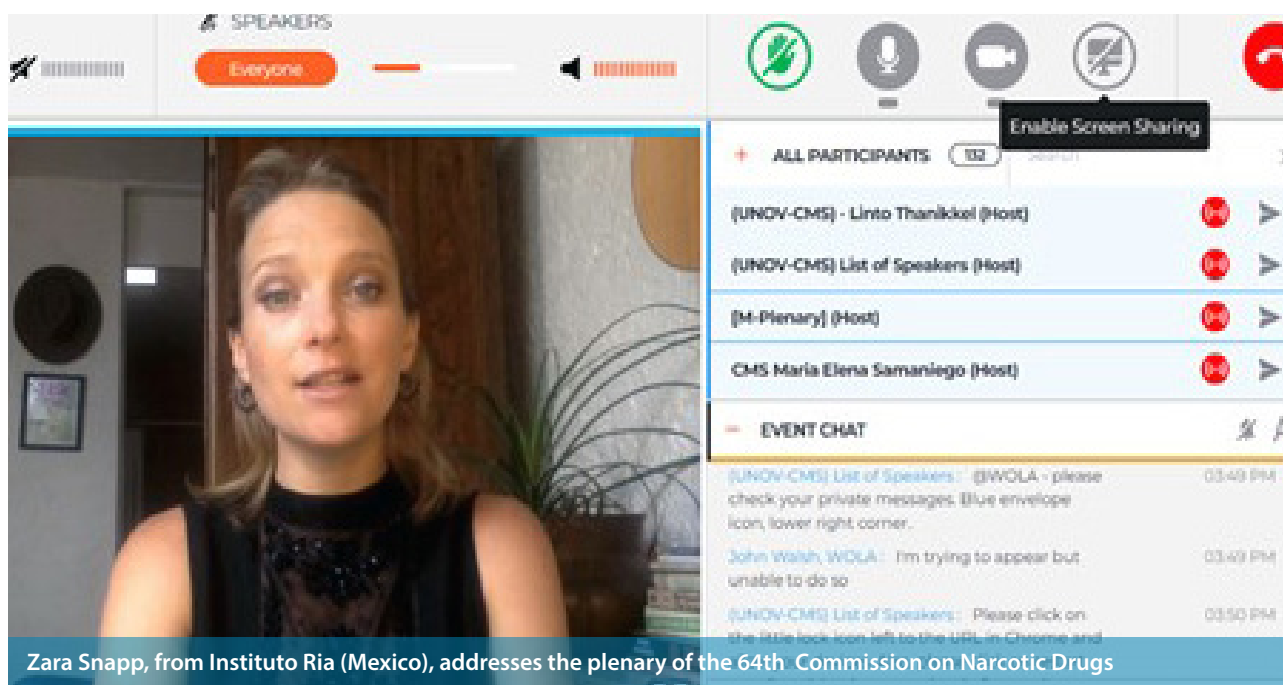
The global COVID-19 pandemic, and the related measures used by governments to try and reduce infections and deaths, have defined 2020 and 2021. This new virus has resulted in serious short- and long-term economic and public health implications, as well as significant and sustained changes in public life, working practices, public services, and democratic processes around the world. Amongst this hugely challenging landscape, there was also widespread disruption of the various channels and dynamics of civil society advocacy – through social distancing and travel restrictions, rapidly altering government priorities, and/ or the [shrinking of civil society space](#). There were therefore widespread concerns about the impact this would have on the momentum for drug policy reform.

Aiming to better understand these emerging challenges and to support the network's responses, IDPC initiated a process of documenting and analysing the experiences of civil society and governmental actors working in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. This resulted in an important report

with recommendations for civil society partners, policy makers, and donors launched in March 2021: [Innovation and Resilience in Times of Crisis](#).

In early 2021, as the first ever online UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) meeting approached, there were also concerns about how civil society would be able to engage – especially after negative experiences from several other UN forums. For example, one month prior to the meeting, the [Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs \(VNGOC\)](#) released an urgent position statement in the absence of any clarity from the UN hosts – stating that 'an online CND should be an opportunity to expand participation, rather than limit it'.

Thankfully, the 2021 CND did ultimately benefit from the strong visibility and voice of the drug policy reform movement, which has become a central part of these meetings. Civil society organisations, including IDPC, were able to register on the main forum platform, apply to make interventions, engage with policy makers, hold side events online, and generally use the Commission as a convening moment. IDPC helped to secure registration spaces for our network, facilitated collaborations around interventions, made [interventions in the Plenary sessions](#), and coordinated side event proposals and submissions – including directly co-organising six side events covering topics such as [legal regulation](#), [women](#), [protecting civil society space](#), the [harms of criminalisation](#), and [taking stock on the five-year anniversary of the 2016 UN General Assembly Special Session \(UNGASS\) on drugs](#). All in all, this experience confirmed that, even in the most disrupting circumstances, the drug policy reform movement is determined to be heard clear and loud at the heart of the UN drug institutions.



## Looking back at IDPC's 2020 membership survey

The fifth annual IDPC Membership Survey was distributed virtually in December 2020 in English, French and Spanish.

The survey is a valuable opportunity for the membership to take stock and exchange information on progress and challenges in national and regional drug policy debates. For the IDPC Secretariat, it is also a valuable accountability and feedback mechanism through which we receive recommendations and guidance in defining work plans and strategic priorities. Among other indicators, the survey tracks perceptions of key influential stakeholders on drug policy, and the state of civil society participation domestically and internationally.

This year, the survey was completed by 81 organisations in 47 countries, which makes up approximately 40% of the IDPC membership.

Below is a brief overview of some of the responses received in relation to key drug policy reforms, both positive and negative, which have taken place over the past year, or are anticipated in the coming year.

### Progress

85 responses from 35 countries reported positive moves towards drug policy reform over 2020, and 27 responses (from 22 countries) anticipated further positive developments in the following year. The majority of responses focused on harm reduction. Many answers noted positive changes as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as increased access to naloxone (e.g. Colombia), reduced barriers for take-home doses of OAT (e.g. Canada, India, Netherlands) and the opening of new consumption sites (e.g. Australia, Canada, Greece, Scotland, Norway).

Many other responses discussed promising reforms in relation to cannabis, such as improved access to medical

cannabis (e.g. Argentina, Australia, Mexico), growing support for legal regulation (e.g. Germany) and new pilot programmes (e.g. The Netherlands). Many respondents also highlighted legal regulation bills being brought before parliament (e.g. Mexico, South Africa, United States).

A significant number of responses highlighted criminal justice reform. Many reported decriminalisation bills being tabled (e.g. Chile, Dominican Republic, Lithuania) and ongoing efforts to move from criminal charges to spot fines (e.g. Australia, Sierra Leone), reforms providing for diversion schemes (e.g. Canada, Lebanon) and more proportional sentencing (e.g. Costa Rica, Ivory Coast).

### Setbacks

46 organisations reported negative drug policy developments this year, and 20 responses anticipated a further negative evolution in 2020 (in 14 countries). The majority of these responses were concerned with the closure of harm reduction services, often as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g. Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Brazil) as well as budget reductions for harm reduction programmes both nationally (e.g. Colombia, Hungary, Serbia) and internationally (e.g. The Netherlands).

Reports were also concerned with the continuation and expansion of criminalisation against people who use drugs (e.g. Benin) with many countries increasing the criminalisation of possession (e.g. Costa Rica, Guinea, India), the introduction of mandatory drug testing (e.g. Liberia) and ongoing attempts to reintroduce the death penalty in the Philippines. The resumption of aerial spraying of coca and cannabis crops was also reported (e.g. Colombia).

The survey in full is available [here](#).



## Trans women deprived of liberty: Invisible stories behind bars

This breakthrough report outlines the framework of rights protection for trans women deprived of liberty in Latin America, exploring available statistical data, information on structural inequalities prior to detention, living conditions in contexts of confinement, post-release social reintegration, and trans women's experiences of agency, along with good practices. Launched together with Almas Cautivas A.C., Casa Hogar Paola Buenrostro, Casa de las Muñecas Tiresias A.C., Dejusticia, Equis Justicia para las Mujeres, Prison Ombudsman's National Office in Argentina, Red Corpora en Libertad, Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA)



## COVID-19: Prisons and detention in Southeast Asia

The opening instalment of our series on prisons and COVID-19 calls on governments of Southeast Asia to take urgent measures to decongest prisons in order to prevent the spread of the pandemic in places of detention



## Drug use, regulation, and policy in Japan

IDPC and the Japan Advocacy Network for Drug Policy provide an overview of drug use in Japan, responses by public authorities and available support by civil society.



## Sustainable measures to prevent and address COVID-19 in European prisons

The European version of the IDPC series on prisons and COVID-19 focuses on States' obligations to preserve the mental and physical health of people deprived of liberty during the pandemic, particularly in situations where prisons have been permanently cut off from contact with the community.



## COVID-19: Prisons and detention in Africa

This document provides an Africa version of the IDPC Advocacy Note on the impact of COVID-19 in places of detention, with recommendations on how to reduce prison populations tailored to African policy makers.



## The 5th Brandenburg Forum on Drugs and Development Policies

This meeting report summarises the proceedings of the 5th Brandenburg Forum on Drugs and Development Policies, which offered a space for government, UN and civil society representatives to discuss the state of play of international drug policy. The report is launched with the other co-hosts of the Brandenburg Forum.

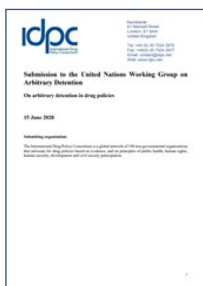




### Cannabis rescheduling: What could it mean for Africa

In this briefing paper, IDPC and the Transnational Institute argue that the recommendation to reschedule cannabis will be an opportunity for African States to further decolonise drug control and strengthen the legal basis for emerging medicinal cannabis programmes. This was the first instalment of a series of papers on the rescheduling of cannabis under the UN drug conventions.

July 2020



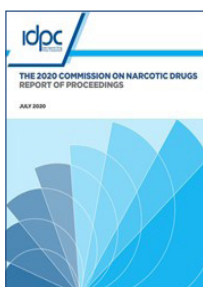
### On arbitrary detention in drug policy

IDPC's submission to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention highlights the main ways in which drug policies result in the arbitrary deprivation of liberty across the world.



### Imprisoned at home: Women under home arrest in Latin America

This report, produced by a working group of civil society organisations engaged with women and incarceration in Latin America, provides a review of the legal frameworks allowing for the home arrest of women across the region, as well as insight into the problematic aspects of their implementation. This report was launched together with Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales, Dejusticia, Equis: Justicia para las Mujeres, the Institute for Judicial Investigations at the Autonomous University of Chiapas, the Prison Ombudsman's National Office in Argentina, Instituto Pro Bono, and the Washington Office on Latin America.



### The 2020 Commission on Narcotic Drugs – Report of Proceedings

This report provides an overview of the central issues debated during the 63rd session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, an analysis of the negotiations of the CND resolutions, and highlights from civil society participation. This paper has been published together with the Global Drug Policy Observatory.

August 2020



### '2020 vision: Advocating for drug policy reform in Africa'

This briefing paper provides an overview of drug use in Africa, regulatory efforts by police and the judiciary, governmental and legislative responses in the region, and support for people who use drugs and other civil society actors. This paper was published jointly with TB/HIV Care.



### Closing doors: The exclusion of civil society at the 'topical meetings' of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs

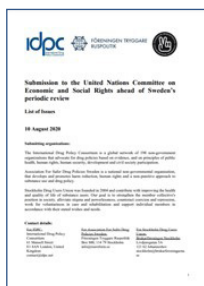
In this advocacy note IDPC explains how civil society was excluded from the newly-created 'topical meetings' on the WHO cannabis re-scheduling recommendations, and why this departs from recent progress on openness and civil society participation.





## WHO cannabis rescheduling and its relevance for the Caribbean

This briefing paper provides an analysis of the recommendations on the rescheduling of cannabis issued by the World Health Organisation in January 2019, highlighting their historical context and their implications for Caribbean countries. It is part of a series of papers on the rescheduling of cannabis published together with the Transnational Institute.



## The right to health and people who use drugs in Sweden

This joint submission to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights analyses the main violations of the right to health of people who use drugs in Sweden. It was prepared together with the Association for Drug Policies Sweden and the Stockholm Drug Users Union.



## The right to health and people who use drugs in El Salvador

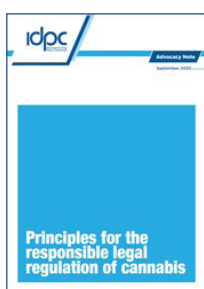
First instalment of a series of submissions to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on the right to health of people who use drugs in Central America. Drafted together with the Latin American and Caribbean Network of People who Use Drugs (LANPUD).



## The right to health and people who use drugs in Guatemala

Second instalment of a series of submissions to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on the right to health of people who use drugs in Central America. Drafted together with the Latin American and Caribbean Network of People who Use Drugs (LANPUD).

September 2020



## Principles for the responsible legal regulation of cannabis

This advocacy note contains the first edition of the IDPC Principles for the Responsible Legal Regulation of Cannabis. Through these principles, the IDPC network proposes a bold and comprehensive vision for advancing social justice, equity and human rights through the legal regulation of cannabis.

October 2020



## Cannabis rescheduling: a global introduction

This briefing provides an analysis of the recommendations on the rescheduling of cannabis issued by the World Health Organisation in January 2019. This is the global version of two regional papers on the same topic, also co-published with the Transnational Institute.



## IDPC Progress Report 2020

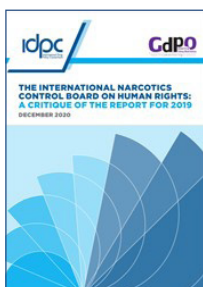
IDPC's yearly report provides a summary of the highlights in IDPC's work between April 2019 and March 2020.



## Clean start: Creating second opportunities for women and girls in Kenya

This short briefing describes the work of Clean Start, a social enterprise led by women who have been in prison in Kenya. Clean Start aims to restore hope, dignity, and self-confidence to incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women and girls. It is part of the series 'Innovative Approaches to Drug Policy and Incarceration', which is published by IDPC, the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), and Dejusticia.

December 2020



## The International Narcotics Control Board on human rights: A critique of the report for 2019

This report provides a critique of the INCB Annual Report for 2020, with a focus on the Board's approach to human rights. Published together with the Global Drug Policy Observatory.



## The right to health of people who use drugs in Brazil

Joint submission to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, focusing on the violations to the right to health of people who use drugs in Brazil. Drafted together with Conectas Direitos Humanos and Iniciativa Negra por uma Nova Política de Drogas.

January 2021



## Solidarity that cannot be confined – Support. Don't Punish 2020 Global Day of Action

This briefing paper provides an overview of drug use in Africa, regulatory efforts by police and the judiciary, governmental and legislative responses in the region, and support for people who use drugs and other civil society actors. This paper was published jointly with TB/HIV Care.



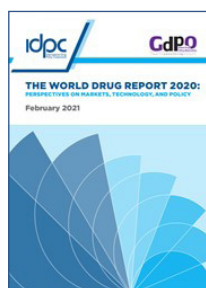
## Human rights and the administration of justice

Joint report to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the current and emerging challenges faced by people detained for drug offences, and by people who use drugs deprived of liberty. Submitted in collaboration with Harm Reduction International.



### Punitive drug laws: 10 years undermining the Bangkok Rules

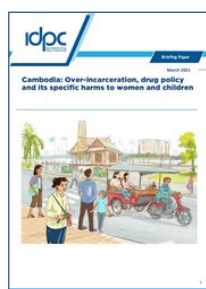
This briefing paper provides an overview of the concrete ways in which punitive drug legislation has impacted upon the achievement of the Bangkok Rules since their adoption in 2010, and offers several recommendations to align drug laws and policies with the commitments set out in the Bangkok Rules. Co-published with the Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS), Dejusticia, LBH Masyarakat, Penal Reform International (PRI), the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), and the Women and Harm Reduction International Network (WHIRIN).



### The World Drug Report 2020: Perspectives on markets, technology, and policy

The 2020 World Drug Report provides a comprehensive and sophisticated analysis of the current state of global drug markets, as their size, complexity and intricacy continue to grow. However, it can also be criticised for turning a blind eye on the negative consequences of states' drug control efforts, and for overestimating the success of law enforcement approaches. This critique explores these shortcomings through a close reading of its sections on cryptomarkets, and on the eradication of crops destined for the illegal drug market in Colombia. Published together with the Global Drug Policy Observatory.

March 2021



### Cambodia: over-incarceration, drug policy and its specific harms to women and children

This briefing paper aims to review developments relating to incarceration and drug policy in Cambodia, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, and their specific impacts on women and children. It includes recommendations for reducing the high rates of incarceration and ensuring that gender-specific needs are identified and met, in accordance with international guidance and standards.



### Prisons and COVID-19: Lessons from an ongoing crisis

Drawing on four case studies, this briefing paper provides a snapshot of the lessons that can be learnt from the impact of the COVID19 pandemic on the world's overcrowded prison systems. Co-published with Harm Reduction International, Penal Reform International, and Repeive.



### Innovation and resilience in times of crisis: Civil society advocacy for drug policy reform under the COVID-19 pandemic

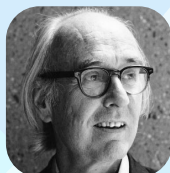
Based on original research by IDPC on the experience of civil society across the globe, this IDPC briefing paper outlines key lessons learned by advocates during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, and provides recommendations to policy makers.



## IDPC's Board

The Board of Directors comprises eight appointed Directors and is responsible for the financial and legal oversight of the organisation. More information, and detailed biographies, can be [found here](#).

Donald MacPherson



Alison Holcomb



Vicki Hanson



Ernestien Jensema



Kathryn Leafe



Rupert Markland



Valentin Simionov\*



Julita Lemgruber\*



\*left the IDPC Board at the end of their term, in July 2020.

## IDPC's Members Advisory Council:

The [Members Advisory Council](#) of the Board is responsible for the strategic direction and work plans of the Consortium. It contains 15 members: two Board members and 13 representatives from different regions or constituencies who are directly elected by IDPC members:



Charanjit Sharma,  
Alliance India, India, South Asia



Ciarán Weir (Youth Organisations  
for Drug Action, Ireland) Youth



David Subeliani (Eurasia Harm  
Reduction Association, Georgia)  
Eastern Europe and Central Asia



Geoff Ward (INPUD, Australia)  
Representative of people  
who use drugs



Isabel Pereira (Dejusticia, Colombia)  
Latin America and the Caribbean



Katrin Schiffer, (Correlation European  
Harm Reduction Network, Netherlands)  
Western & South East Europe



Kunal Naik (PILS, Mauritius)  
Sub-Saharan Africa



Michelle Wazan ((Skoun, Lebanon)  
Middle East and North Africa



Nang Pann Ei Kham (Drug Policy Ad-  
vocacy Group, Myanmar) South East  
Asia



Olivia Rope, (Penal Reform  
International) International  
Organizations



Penelope Hill (Harm Reduction  
Australia) Oceania



Scott Bernstein (Canadian Drug Policy  
Coalition, Canada) North America



Donald MacPherson, IDPC  
Board member - Chair



Ernestien Jensema, IDPC  
Board member



Pedro Arenas (OCCDI, Colombia)  
Representative of farmers  
of crops deemed illicit

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Thanks to our interns Francesca Frasca, Henry Pope, Jirapart Limakorn, Marianne Coulavin, whose work was critical to the smooth running of the IDPC Secretariat between April 2020 and March 2021.

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**Programme Officer**



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## Donors

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- Elton John AIDS Foundation
- Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria – via the India HIV/AIDS Alliance)
- The Global Partnership on Drug Policies and Development (GPPD) – managed by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)
- Open Society Foundations: Global Drug Policy Program, International Harm Reduction Development Program, and Human Rights Initiative
- The Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) – via the West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI)
- The Partnership to Inspire, Transform and Connect the HIV response (PITCH) – funded by the Dutch Government, via the International HIV/AIDS Alliance
- The Robert Carr Fund for Civil Society Networks
- The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)
- The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
- Voice – via Asia Catalyst
- The Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA)
- The World Health Organization (WHO)

## IDPC Members

### Global

1. AIDS Foundation East-West
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3. Global Exchange
4. Health Poverty Action
5. Human Rights Watch
6. International AIDS Society
7. International Association for Hospice and Palliative Care
8. International Centre for Science in Drug Policy
9. International Harm Reduction Development Program
10. International Doctors for Healthier Drug Policies
11. Frontline AIDS
12. International Network of People of Who Use Drugs
13. Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEAP)
14. Mainline
15. Médecins du Monde
16. Penal Reform International
17. Reprieve
18. Students for Sensible Drug Policy

19. Transnational Institute
20. Women's Harm Reduction International Network
21. World Coalition Against the Death Penalty
22. World Hepatitis Alliance
23. Worldwide Hospice Palliative Care Alliance
24. Youth Rise

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25. Agência Piaget para o Desenvolvimento
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27. AKZEPT
28. Ana Liffey Drug Project
29. Asociación Bienestar y Desarrollo (ABD)
30. Association Française de Réduction des Risques
31. Associazione Luca Coscioni - ALC
32. Autosupport des usagers de drogues
33. Beckley Foundation
34. Citywide Drugs Crisis Campaign
35. Correlation European Network on Social Inclusion and Health
36. European Network of People Who Use Drugs
37. Fachverband Sucht
38. Federacion Andaluza ENLACE
39. Fédération Addiction
40. Federation Bruxelloise Francophone des Institutions pour Toxicomanes (FEDITO BXL)
41. Finnish Association for Humane Drug Policy
42. Forum Droghe
43. Gadejuristen (the Street Lawyers)
44. Groupement Romand d'Études des Addictions
45. Metzineres
46. Norwegian Association for Humane Drug Policies
47. Norwegian Association for Safer Drugs Policies
48. Organisation for the Prevention of Intense Suffering/Recovering Justice
49. Release
50. Réseau Français de Réduction des Risques
51. Rights Reporter Foundation
52. RIO
53. Scottish Drugs Forum
54. STEPS for people
55. Transform Drug Policy Foundation
56. Trimbos Instituut
57. Unión de Asociaciones y Entidades de Atención al Drogodependiente
58. Utrip
59. Youth Organisations for Drug Action



## **South East Europe**

60. Aksion Plus
61. Association Margina
62. Association Prevent
63. Association Terra Croatia
64. Diogenis, Drug Policy Dialogue in South East Europe
65. Drug Policy Network South East Europe
66. Greek Drug and Substitute User Union
67. Healthy Options Project Skopje
68. Initiative for Health Foundation
69. Praksis
70. Re Generation
71. Romanian Harm Reduction Network
72. South Eastern European Adriatic Addiction Treatment Network
73. YCC Juventas

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75. Alternative Georgia
76. Andrey Rylkov Foundation for Health and Social Justice
77. Alliance for Public Health
78. Eurasian Harm Reduction Association
79. Galiu gyventi - "I Can Live" Coalition
80. Hungarian Civil Liberties Union
81. Polish Drug Policy Network
82. PREKURSOR

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84. Acción Semilla Boliviana
85. Acción Técnica Social
86. Andean Information Network
87. Asociación Costarricense para el Estudio e Intervención en Drogas
88. Asociación de Estudios del Cannabis del Uruguay
89. Asuntos del Sur
90. Brazilian Drug Policy Platform
91. Center for Studies on Public Security and Citizenship
92. Centro de Convivência "É de Lei"
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94. Centro de Estudios en Seguridad Ciudadana
95. Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales
96. Centro de Investigación Drogas y Derechos Humanos
97. Centro de Orientación e Investigación Integral
98. Centro de Respuestas Educativas y Comunitarias A.C
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100. Conectas

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102. Corporación Humanas Colombia
103. Corporación Teméride
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105. Elementa, Consultoría en Derechos
106. Espolea
107. Equis Justicia Para las Mujeres
108. Fundación Latinoamérica Reforma
109. Guyanese Association of Harm Reduction
110. Iglesia Evangélica Protestante de El Salvador
111. Iniciativa Negra por Uma Nova Política sobre Drogas
112. Institute for Land Work and Citizenship
113. Instituto RIA
114. Intercambios
115. Intercambios Puerto Rico
116. International Centre for Ethnobotanical Education, Research and Service
117. México Unido Contra la Delincuencia
118. Nierika AC
119. Observatorio de cultivos y cultivadores declarados ilícitos
120. Plataforma COLI – Coca Orgánica, Libre e Informada
121. Psicotropicus
122. Red Americana de Intervención en Situaciones de Sufrimiento Social
123. Red Chilena de Reducción de Daños
124. Rede Brasileira de Redução de Danos e Direitos Humanos
125. RESET - Política de Drogas y Derechos Humanos
126. Washington Office on Latin America

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127. Canadian Drug Policy Coalition
128. Canadian Foundation for Drug Policy
129. Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network
130. Community Addictions Peer Support Association
131. Drug Policy Alliance
132. Harm Reduction Coalition
133. Harm Reduction Nurses Association
134. Help Not Handcuffs
135. Institute for Policy Studies
136. Pivot Legal Society
137. StoptheDrugWar.org

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138. 12D
139. Asia Catalyst
140. Asian Network of People Who Use Drugs
141. BABSEACLE
142. Indonesian Association of Addiction Counsellors
143. Indonesian Coalition for Drug Policy Reform
144. Indonesian Harm Reduction Network (Jangkar)

145. LBH Masyarakat
146. Malaysian AIDS Council
147. Persuadaraan Korban Napza Indonesia (PKNI)
148. PSI Thailand Foundation
149. Rumah Cemara (Indonesia)
150. Supporting Community Development Initiatives (Vietnam)
151. Thai AIDS Treatment Action Group
152. NoBox Transitions Foundation (Philippines)

## **South Asia**

153. Drug Policy Advocacy Group
154. India HIV/AIDS Alliance
155. Lawyers Collective
156. Ozone Foundation
157. Recovering Nepal
158. Society for the Promotion of Youth & Masses

## **Oceania**

159. Australian Drug Foundation
160. Drug Policy Australia
161. Harm Reduction Australia
162. New Zealand Drug Foundation
163. New Zealand Needle Exchange Programme
164. Penington Institute
165. Uniting

## **Middle East/North Africa**

166. Association de Lutte Contre le Sida
167. Association Tunisienne de Prévention de la Toxicomanie
168. Middle East and North Africa Harm Reduction Network
169. Skoun Lebanese Addiction Centre

## **Sub-Saharan Africa**

170. Community Additions Peer Support Association
171. AIDS and Rights Alliance for Southern Africa
172. Alliance Nationale des Communautés pour la Santé (ANCS)
173. Association Sénégalaise pour la Reduction des Risques Infectieux chez les Groupes Vulnérables
174. Bensther Development Foundation
175. CONAD-CI
176. Collectif Urgence Toxida
177. Foundation against Illicit Drug and Child Abuse
178. Foyer du Bonheur
179. Institute for Drug Control and Human Security
180. Kenyan AIDS NGOs Consortium
181. Perle Sociale ONG
182. PILS
183. REVS PLUS
184. TB/HIV Care Alliance
185. Uganda Harm Reduction Network
186. UNIDOS
187. Union Contre la Co-infection VIH/Hépatites/Tuberculose
188. Voices of Community Action and Leadership (VOCAL-KE)
189. West Africa Civil Society Initiative
190. West Africa Drug Policy Network
191. Women NEST
192. Youth RISE Nigeria
193. Zimbabwe Civil Liberties and Drug Network

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The International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC) is a global network of 191 NGOs that come together to promote person-centred, rights-reinforcing policies at the national, regional, and international levels.

Our mission is to amplify and strengthen a diverse global movement to repair the harms caused by punitive drug policies, and promote just responses. Through this mission we seek to achieve our vision – drug policies that advance social justice and human rights.

This Progress Report provides 15 highlights to showcase some of the most exciting and impactful advocacy events and activities from the IDPC membership between April 2020 and March 2021.

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