

# Feminist Movements and Women Resisting the War on Drugs

Documentation of an AWID Learning, Movement-Support and Engagement Process

2018-2019



awid



The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) is a global, feminist, membership, movement-support organization. We support feminist, women's rights and gender justice movements to thrive, to be a driving force in challenging systems of oppression, and to co-create feminist realities.

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# Content

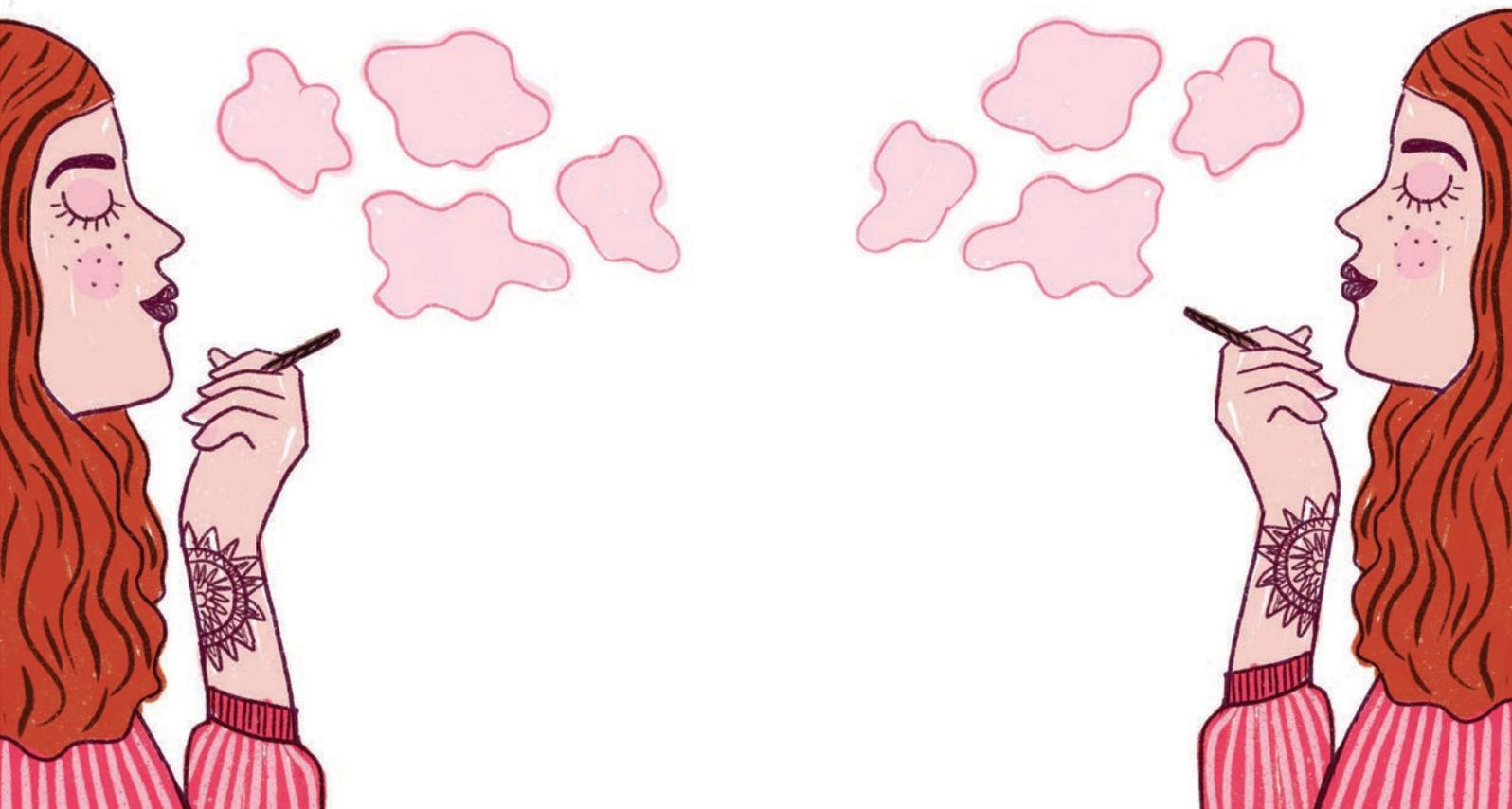
- ▶ **Why document a movement-support process?** - Page 4
- ▶ **How this collaboration came to be** - Page 7
- ▶ **A 4-step process** - Page 9

- ▶ **First convening** - Page 11

Feminist concepts - Page 13

- ▶ **Community scan: Research with women who use drugs** - Page 18
    - ▶ **Second convening** - Page 19

- ▶ **Key learnings** - Page 22





**Why document  
a movement-  
support process?**

# Why document a movement-support process?

As feminist movements, much of our history is about learning and unlearning: of ignorance, stigma, the meaning of privileges, for example. It is an ongoing story of comprehending power relations and confronting them, externally in society as well as internally in our own organizing. Feminists often do this work intuitively. Yet, even when it is done intentionally, it is rarely documented.

## Building trust

Our purpose with this documentation is to share AWID's experience of strengthening relationships and building trust between feminist movements and women who work on humane drug policy in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA) region, and supporting the inspiring movement-building process led by womxn<sup>1</sup> who use drugs globally.

We are keen to share this experience because it has been a valuable and deep learning process for AWID as an organization. We believe this process could be useful to groups and movements involved in other cross-movement conversations, and to strengthen relationships and build new alliances.



<sup>1</sup> In this document, we use “women” to address the group of participants in the project as it consisted exclusively of cisgender women, and “womxn” as a term currently used in the global movement-building process led by cis and trans women and non binary people.

## Lessons learned

What we have discovered and rediscovered in our collaboration with women resisting the war on drugs:

-  It is critical for feminist movements to develop awareness of the gendered, racial and class aspects of repressive drug policies and the associated criminalization and stigmatization of people who use drugs.
-  Harm reduction movements intersect with movements of sex workers, people living with HIV, racial justice, and LGBTQI movements, among others.
-  We must expand what feminist logistics mean to us, and make feminist spaces more accessible, safe and welcoming for women who use drugs. This is a particularly important lesson for us in AWID, as an organization that hosts convenings.

## A collective effort

The structure of this engagement process has proven to be simple, solid and productive. We hope it can provide a positive example for building relationships across groups, communities, and movements.

Our partners in this project have been documenting this process throughout - taking photos, streaming videos, writing posts<sup>2</sup>.

This paper is our humble contribution to this collective effort. We are honored to share our learnings and experience. It has been an incredible opportunity to build new relationships with a growing and inspiring movement led by and for womxn who use drugs and are affected by drug policies. We have learned a lot, and hope you will too!

*We do not ask for charity but for solidarity. We demand to live in safety and freedom.*



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<sup>2</sup> For example: Olga Belyaeva, "They thought they had buried us. But they did not know that we are seeds", 12 March 2019, <https://harmreductioneurasia.org/they-thought-they-had-buried-us/>



How this  
collaboration  
came to be

# How this collaboration came to be

## At the 2016 AWID Forum

In 2016, women organizing for humane drug policies and harm reduction from Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA), brought their campaign to the AWID International Forum in Bahia, Brazil, with the support of Open Society Foundations. It was the first time that a delegation of women active in harm reduction participated in an international feminist convening.

This is how we met with the women from Eurasian Harm Reduction Association (EHRA). The partnership with EHRA, an organization rooted in the region and the local movements, has been at the heart of this process. AWID and EHRA remained in communication with each other since.

## Holistic protection / Bridging the gaps

We realized how little the effects of repressive drug policies on womxn who use drugs are discussed in international feminist spaces that we are part of, and how exclusionary feminist movements and women's rights organizations can be to womxn who use drugs. For example, shelters for survivors of domestic violence often refuse to accept women who use drugs, albeit they are more likely to suffer violence and abuse.

Similarly, women defending the human rights of people who use drugs are often not perceived as Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) and are therefore unaware of the international human rights processes developed for the protection of WHRDs. In 2017, EHRA invited an AWID staff member to present on holistic protection for WHRDs at a regional Eurasian Harm Reduction Conference. The holistic protection framework drives recognition of the risks and abuses faced by activists - from police violence and social stigma to physical and emotional burnout or economic hardships - are not individual problems but a structural issue that requires a deliberate and institutional response. It also underscores the way in which violence against activists is gendered, and women defending rights face gender-specific forms of violence.

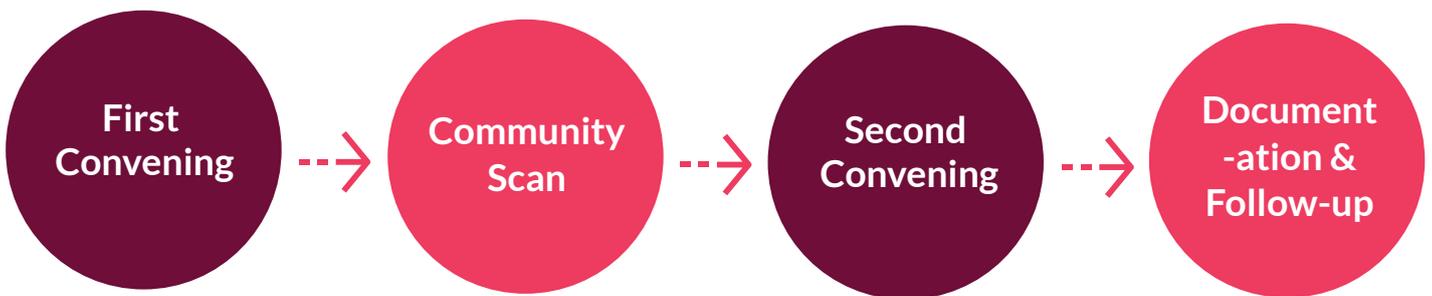
This shift in perception is particularly important in contexts of restrictive policies, criminalization, harsh social stigma and lack of access to adequate health services. Hence, EHRA found it important to introduce this approach to harm reduction movements.

Later, in 2018, once resources became available, AWID embarked on a designated project to strengthen our relationships with womxn who use drugs and to bridge the gap between feminist and harm reduction movements, with EHRA as our main partner.



A 4-step  
process

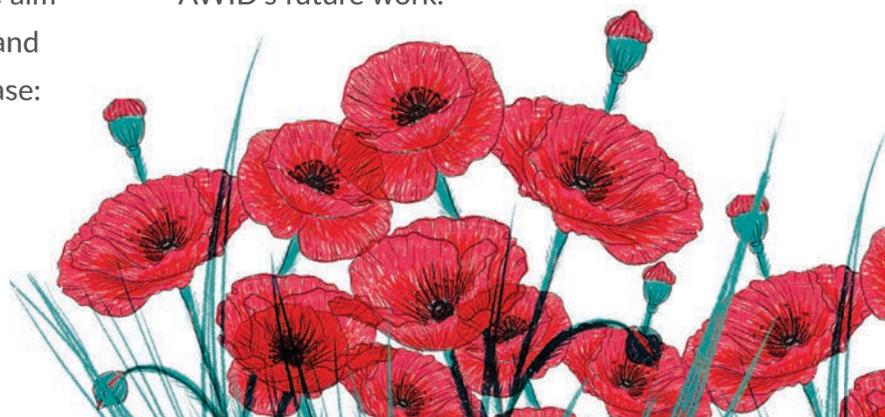
# A 4-step process



Building on the interpersonal connections established at the AWID Forum, AWID and EHRA began a process led by 12 women - two AWID and three EHRA staff members, and six women working on harm reduction and drug policy in the EECA region (Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Estonia). Many of the participants identify as women who use, or have used drugs.

## The process was structured around four steps:

1. A convening took place to start the process of strengthening relationships and solidarity among feminist and harm reduction movements and to collectively decide on next steps;
2. Stipends were given to participants to compensate their labor in the implementation of the next steps they decided on. We called it a “community scan” - an open term for a process conducted by activists to collect stories from their own community that illustrated the gendered consequences of repressive drug policies. Based on the stories gathered, the aim was to identify and understand the needs and interests of their own community, in this case: women who use drugs;
3. A second convening was organised to share the results of the community scan with a broader audience of allies interested in the intersection of feminism and harm reduction/ drug policy and to build further cross-movement solidarity;
4. The last steps were documentation of the process; assessment of participants’ needs and interest in future engagement; agreement on the resources required for it; and finally, the development of a collaboration strategy for AWID’s future work.



## 1. First Convening (May 2018, Berlin)

### Participants:

This convening included women who use drugs and women working in drug policy from Eastern Europe and Central Asia as well as representatives from AWID, Eurasian Harm Reduction Association (EHRA) and Deutsche Aidshilfe.

**Duration:** Three days

### Language:

The convening took place primarily in Russian, as we found it powerful and important for all participants to be able to express and take ownership of their feminism in their own language. Informal interpretation was provided for the AWID staff member who did not speak Russian.

### Goals:

- ▶ Provide a space for relationship and trust building between participants and with members of feminist movements, including AWID staff and local groups in Berlin.
- ▶ Understand the legal, social and political situation for people who use drugs in each country represented.
- ▶ Raise consciousness, by sharing feminist concepts to frame and understand common experiences of women who use drugs through a feminist lens - including the gendered impacts of repressive drug policies.
- ▶ Plan the continuation of the project in a community-led and collective way.
- ▶ Collectively visit, discuss and reflect on harm reduction services in Berlin. This was particularly of interest for participants due to the lack of similar services and support available in their countries.



### Activities:

In planning the convening and programme, we focused on building a safe space to learn and share lived experiences, build feminist knowledge, as well as learning from local harm reduction and feminist initiatives.

On the first day, the participants shared their experiences as women who use drugs in their own contexts. On the second day, building on these conversations and lived experiences, we introduced a range of basic feminist concepts and frameworks. Participants were invited to reflect individually and collectively on how these concepts relate to their lives and activism, applying these to the experiences they had shared on the first day.

### Site visits:

The convening included a tour of Berlin, a presentation on local drug policy and existing services, and a visit to harm reduction sites, which participants expressed an interest in prior to the meeting. We also visited the

International Women's Space (IWS), where a discussion took place between participants and migrant feminist activists. Participants exchanged observations about how they organised in their contexts and also learned more about how to work in solidarity and support women who use drugs. As a result, IWS decided to include the story of a woman who uses drugs in their new book of testimonies by refugee women in Germany. Finally, we organised an informal discussion with a social worker who shared information about domestic violence and women's shelters in Berlin (including access for women who use drugs).



### The feminist concepts we discussed:

#### ► Patriarchy:

We discussed it as a social system of subordinating women, trans, gender-nonconforming and non binary people, in all spheres - economic, cultural, political, and all levels - from intimate relationships to social and state institutions. One powerful example shared by the participants was a common situation in which women agree to take the blame for drug charges, being convinced by a husband or partner that she would receive a lighter sentence. Women often end up in prison, where men are diligently visited by their partners, but women are often abandoned. Another clear example was how women who use drugs face harsher stigma than men within their families and communities. They are often perceived as being unfit mothers and housekeepers and are stigmatised for failing to conform to stereotypical gendered expectations.

#### ► Intersectional feminism:

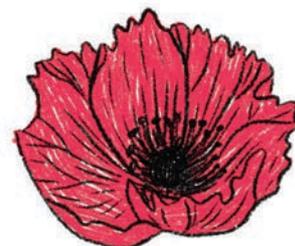
We talked about feminisms as a non-monolithic body of knowledge, theories and political movements in history - and specifically intersectional feminism as coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw<sup>3</sup>. Intersectional feminism offers a recognition of the particular complexity in lived experiences and multifaceted identities of people - for example, of women who use drugs - and this resonated with participants right away. It allowed us to put into words that women who use drugs have particular and unique experiences and struggles in society due to their multiple, intersecting identities.

As one participant shared:

*“It would be impossible to separate what is more important for me – accepting myself as a person, who enjoys psychoactive substances, or as a woman, whose transformation is scary for other people, and a joyous process for me.”*

#### ► Bodily autonomy:

People who use drugs are often denied their right to bodily autonomy. Some are forced to undergo abortions and even sterilisations, because of harmful misconceptions around drug use during pregnancy. The ideas of autonomy and self-determination over one's body, despite society's claim to power and control over our bodies, also greatly resonated with the participants and corresponded with the experiences of people who use drugs. This concept is central to the harm reduction philosophy - a feminist articulation also centers ideas of consent in intimate relations and of the right to live free from sexual harassment and infringement on our bodily integrity.



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<sup>3</sup> See for example: Bim Adewunmi, Kimberlé Crenshaw on intersectionality: “I wanted to come up with an everyday metaphor that anyone could use”, New Statesman, 2 April 2014, <https://www.newstatesman.com/lifestyle/2014/04/kimberl-crenshaw-intersectionality-i-wanted-come-everyday-metaphor-anyone-could>

### ▶ **Women Human Rights Defenders:**

Here we introduced the international human rights framework that recognizes women human rights defenders and the particular risks they face because of their human rights work and gender identity. We also introduced the available mechanisms in the United Nations human rights system. We discussed the particular risks faced by women defending the human rights of people who use drugs, from criminalization to stigmatization. “Coming out” as a woman who uses drugs can be extremely dangerous to the safety and wellbeing of the woman and all those depending on her care - one heightened risk, for instance, is the loss of parental rights.

### ▶ **Violence against women / gendered violence:**

Women who use drugs experience heightened forms of violence - within the family and at the hands of state institutions - yet are often unable to access shelters and services. We discussed the many forms of physical and psychological violence that women who use drugs face - from their families, the police, the incarceration system, social services and other state institutions, the medical establishment, and society at large.

### ▶ **A feminist critique of the medical establishment:**

The long history of the medical establishment’s sexist and abusive treatment of women provided a strong context for the experiences of women who use drugs, as well as women living with HIV. This discussion brought up difficult and painful examples, ranging from the denial of medical care or inadequate medical procedures to outright violent and humiliating treatment at the hands of medical institutions and personnel. Sexual and reproductive health and rights are also a key issue, where women who use drugs and women living with HIV experience particular forms of violence and discrimination.



Drug policy has been very male-dominated and it's something we're trying to challenge and bring more visibility to our issues

I learned how the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) exploits gender stereotypes



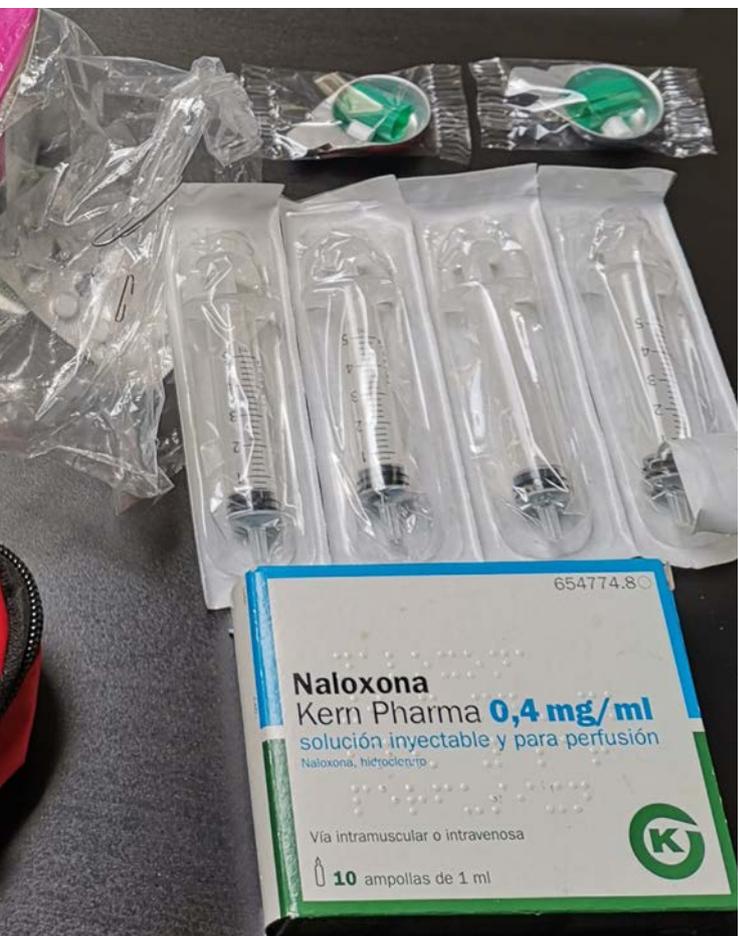
## Feminist movements and women resisting the war on drugs

This structured consciousness-raising exercise demonstrated how multiple personal experiences of women who use drugs were political and structural. Participants emphasized the importance of realising the oppression and marginalisation they faced wasn't their "fault" but a result of society's stigma and violence, and the importance of moving away from self-stigma. Connecting feminist concepts to the lived experiences of women who use drugs led us all to a new and expanded understanding of feminism. The participants coined the term narco-feminism, reflecting:

***“Probably the most important thing that I realized.. is that even before meeting the community I've always been a feminist, just a narco-feminist... I've always defended the rights of women, and my personal right of staying true to myself! ...Thanks to the meeting I realized that I want to deal with women's issues. I monitor feminist organizations in my country. I want to promote our idea, our movement. I understand that we need support, and this is where I start: establishing communication and partnerships with local feminist organizations.”***



## Feminist movements and women resisting the war on drugs



On the final day of the meeting, and building on our sessions in the previous days, AWID and EHRA staff facilitated a brainstorming session for participants to develop follow up activities for the remainder of the project.

Participants decided on the following steps:

- ▶ A webinar to introduce feminism and feminist concepts to more womxn who use drugs and/or work on humane drug policy in the EECA region.
- ▶ Community-based participatory research on the experiences, problems and needs of womxn who use drugs in EECA region.
- ▶ Creating campaign materials to raise the visibility of womxn who use drugs as women's rights defenders, and raising awareness on drug policy as a feminist issue.

Decisions were made by participants, thereby ensuring they had ownership over the follow up steps, with EHRA and AWID sharing information and resources where needed.



## 2. Community Scan: Research with women who use drugs

### Goals:

Participants decided to conduct research on the experiences of women who use drugs in their region, building on the existing research expertise among the group. This research would give them a better understanding of the situation in their local communities, help them build connections with women who participated, as well as gathering useful data for future advocacy efforts.

### Process:

The participants conducted and analyzed 47 interviews with women who use drugs in their own communities in Ukraine, Estonia, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, with support from EHRA.

### Outcomes:

According to the participants, the interviews enabled them to build connections and stronger relationships with women within their own communities. It was also powerful that they received stipends to conduct this work and that they were centered as the 'experts' on their own experiences and the experiences of their communities. So often the voices of women who use drugs are neglected and marginalized within harm reduction and drug policy spaces.

Research findings were organized around six topics: self and social stigma in personal relationships; harm reduction services; HIV and other health situations and quality of health

services; pregnancy, parenting and childcare; employment; the police. The findings revealed high instances of physical and psychological abuse by family members and partners, abuse of power by child protection services, discrimination in health settings and police violence, among others.

***"I lived with an aggressive man who was very jealous, he often beat me. .. Once we had a fight and he took a knife ... he beat me once with this knife. Usually I didn't go to the police ... So it all started and I hit him in the back, he survived, thank God, but he was in intensive care. For this I was imprisoned for 5 years."***

Although it is not the first time that research has been conducted on the gender-specific aspects of repressive drug policies, this research process has been unique in its community-led and movement-building character and in the application of a feminist lens. The systematic analysis of women's lives and experiences built on the earlier steps of feminist consciousness-raising in the project. Participants indicated that they would continue using these research findings in their own national advocacy efforts and activism. It also enabled them to build links and mobilise other women who use drugs within their communities for future organizing, thereby contributing to a feminist movement-building process.



### 3. Second Convening (Barcelona, February 2019)

#### Participants:

The second convening took the intersections between feminist and harm reduction themes and movements to the next level. In addition to the project participants, this convening brought together feminist organizations, academics and funders (altogether approximately 25 attendees).

For this convening we partnered with Metzineres - a Barcelona-based feminist space for womxn who use drugs. This partnership has been invaluable in opening a window into the vibrant womxn's community in Barcelona and the inspiring local field of harm reduction approaches and services. Importantly, Metzineres suggested community spaces that allowed the meeting to be grounded in the local context and allowed womxn from EECA and Barcelona establish connections.

#### Duration:

This three-day convening was followed by an additional weekend, initiated and hosted by Metzineres, which aimed to generate an international movement-building process of womxn who use drugs (see box on page 29).

#### Language:

This meeting took place in Russian, English and Spanish, with simultaneous interpretation provided for all participants.

#### Activities:

- ▶ Collective discussion of the findings of the community scan and their meaning and implications for future organizing and advocacy;
- ▶ An interactive presentation by International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAP-AP) on the United Nations Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and how it can be used for international advocacy by and for women who use drugs.
- ▶ An interactive workshop on racial justice, prison-abolitionist organising and drug policy, in collaboration with Release, a UK based organization with expertise on drug policy.
- ▶ A roundtable on resourcing the organizing of women using drugs and why they haven't been on the feminist funding agenda until now: with FRIDA Young Feminist Fund, Calala Spanish Women's Fund, Georgia Women's Fund and Open Society Foundation.
- ▶ Site visits to a substance testing service, cannabis club, mobile consumption space and safe injection rooms, and the community space of Metzineres.
- ▶ A workshop on feminism and drug policy.

Participants shared that they learned the following:

*“The realization of being a feminist happened here with you. The principles and values of the women’s movement were manifested in practice during our meetings, and allowed me to give examples of how it was convenient and useful to hold meetings for us - women who use psychoactive substances. The level of expertise was improved in our group thanks to the constant practical immersion into the life of intersectional feminism. Our stream of narcofeminism movement joined the flow of women’s movement in drug policy.”*

*“I improved my cooperation with women from feminist organizations, began discussing and planning joint activities. I want to change the attitude of donors to women’s issues, so that programs will become gender sensitive. I will share my experiences from the trip to Barcelona with various women’s communities in my city.”*

*“I learned how the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) exploits gender stereotypes to make more women live under the pressure of the system out of prison, to force them to plead guilty and get incarcerated and how it all affects the lives of women and their families (if this system is maintained).”*





Мое тело – мой выбор  
Мое право, мой голос

# Key learnings

MOMMY NEEDS A JOINT  
SHOULD BE JUST  
AS SOCIALLY  
ACCEPTABLE AS  
MOMMY NEEDS  
A GLASS  
OF WINE.

### Drug policy is a feminist issue

Women, gender non-conforming and trans people who use drugs come up against particular forms of violence and specific kinds of stigma. The war on drugs, and repressive drug policies in the vast majority of the world's countries, affect people in ways that are gender-specific, racialized and class-based.

Like all policies, their meaning and impact is different for people who already experience discrimination and violence in society, who struggle to survive oppression and dehumanization in its misogynist or transmisogynist, lesbophobic, biphobic, racist, classist or ableist forms, to name just a few.

For example, women, gender nonconforming and trans people experience gendered and sexual violence from the police and from the medical establishment, particularly when they are Black, Indigenous, sex workers or migrants. Women who use drugs and/or live with HIV are often denied medical care or encounter abusive treatment, so that their sexual and reproductive health and rights are systematically undermined. With regard to stigma, in many cultural contexts, drug use is tolerated in the case of men, but not women.

Dismantling this division between “good” and “bad” women is, in our understanding, the spirit of feminism. It is not surprising that a participant from a lesbian organization commented: *“if we replace the word “woman using drugs” with “lesbian”, I hear exactly the same stories”*.

### There is a growing global movement of womxn who use drugs

While women have long been active in harm reduction and drug policy organizations and activism, more and more women are coming together specifically as women and as feminists active on drug policy. This is an exciting time, as various initiatives and people come together in what is essentially a movement-building process. The Barcelona Declaration was collectively drafted and published on International Women's Day, 8th of March 2019 (see below for more details) and an engaging and well-attended feminist session bringing together women resisting the war on drugs took place at the Harm Reduction International Conference in Porto in April 2019.

Building on our initial interpersonal contacts, our primary partners in this project came from EECA region. Over these two years, we continued expanding our connections with feminists from harm reduction and drug policy organizations and movements from other regions. This is an ongoing journey of discovery of inspiring activism and alliances globally.



*Drug policy has been very male dominated and it's something we're trying to challenge and bring more visibility to our issues. There are many women specific issues that don't get enough traction. [...] Connecting with feminist movements and having these discussions can re energise us and bring some excitement to the movement. We need to find links of solidarity and spaces to share our issues.*

### Feminist concepts are powerful and life-changing

As we introduced and explained different basic concepts, ideas and theories of feminism - from “the personal is political” to bodily autonomy and intersectional feminism - we rediscovered their power to generate feminist consciousness-raising.

In many ways, building personal and political trust and relationships is about finding a common language. But beyond learning each other's terminology and language (although we keep learning a lot about harm reduction and drug policy!) it is also about enriching each other's concepts and expanding their meaning.

Our interactive conversation about the meaning of these concepts and their relevance to the lives of women who use drugs was a process of expanding feminist knowledge. For example,

we have expanded our understanding of bodily autonomy to include the use of psychoactive substances and access to harm reduction services.

### Valuing and compensating time and labour is key

We found it crucially important to direct resources to women activists who are working hard for their communities, some outside of NGO structures. Many grassroots activists across social movements all over the world end up helping their community day and night without any compensation, struggling to meet their own basic needs and support their families.

Stipends for participants have been central to the project structure and critical to the success of our mission. The stipend was paid in two installments - at the beginning of the project (once the participants confirmed their interest in the process) and before the second convening. The stipends had a material and a symbolic meaning. They served the purpose of compensating the participants' time and labor and recognizing those most affected by repressive drug policies as the experts. They have also been an expression of trust, because the participants had the autonomy to decide on the content and design their plans (rather than implement a pre-designed plan).

Recognizing that activists are often overworked and overburdened, the project - to the best of our intentions and abilities - didn't entail a pressure to “deliver”, but intended to build on the organic work, interest and commitments of the activists. Recognizing our own power position

## Feminist movements and women resisting the war on drugs

as a distributor of resources, we communicated these expectations as clearly as we could, and emphasized commitment to everyone's wellbeing.

### Feminist movements have an opportunity to learn and unlearn

Our journey with womxn who use drugs and with feminists from harm reduction movements has only just begun.

At AWID, this collaboration keeps teaching us the gendered, racial, class and other features

and impacts of repressive drug policies and helps us understand our own prejudices and misinformation, and to unlearn stigma. We are also improving our feminist logistics, and learning how to create spaces that are welcoming and accessible to women who use drugs.

This means, for example, knowing the drug policy context in the location where we host meetings and connecting with local harm reduction groups to learn from their experiences - assessing the risks, having medical and legal support available, and ensuring people can access the medicines they need or bring them into the country.

#### Harm Reduction

**Harm reduction**, as defined by harm reduction coalition, "is a set of practical strategies and ideas aimed at reducing negative consequences associated with drug use. Harm Reduction is also a movement for social justice built on a belief in, and respect for, the rights of people who use drugs" ([read more](#)).<sup>4</sup>

#### War on Drugs

**War on Drugs** is a term made popular in the early 1970s by the U.S. government campaign aimed at eliminating the trade, production and use of illicit and/or illegal psychoactive substances. It particularly targeted Black communities and was used as a tool to decimate Black liberation movements in the U.S. Other governments have used the term, or adopted the agenda it describes. As a set of beliefs, policies and practices, it is associated with violent law enforcement, incarceration and execution, de-humanizing stigma and widespread human rights abuses, particularly against marginalized communities.



Illustration from the Barcelona meeting by Tamara-Jade Kaz

<sup>4</sup><https://harmreduction.org/about-us/principles-of-harm-reduction/>

## NarcoFeminism

*#Narcofeminism* is a term and hashtag invented by the participants of this project, to capture feminism that recognizes and centers the human rights, autonomy and dignity of women and people who use drugs. The term presents a challenge in translation: in the Russian language, *narkotik* is the word for drug; *narkoman/ka* is slang for a drug user, which can be used both as a slur and as a self-identification. Narcofeminism is therefore a powerful term with double reclaiming of two identities devalued in society: feminists and drug users. However, in the Spanish language, *narco* is short for a drug trafficker and is used to describe the devastating effects of the illegal drug trade on communities on political and economic levels (*narco-state* and *narco-capitalism*). This complex conversation on regional and international terms evolves as women resisting the war on drugs connect across regions and languages to build a collective terminology and a joint agenda.

## Opioid Substitution Treatment (or Therapy), naloxone,

*and other terms you're bound to learn! Throughout the project we kept learning about terms and themes of harm reduction and health. This knowledge is important not only to comprehend the struggles of harm reduction movements but also to ensure that the spaces we create and organize are inclusive and safe for womxn who use drugs.*



### Making the Links

Drugs are a complicated topic, which we approach with careful awareness of our need to learn more. Public narratives are shaped by a great deal of misinformation, stigma, moral panic and manipulation of people's fear and trauma. Fascisms, fundamentalisms and corporate power are at play, while the economic and political interests behind the war on drugs and its repressive policies often remain hidden.

#### The global perspective:

From an international perspective, the pressing issues change from one region to another. In countries like the U.S, the Philippines or Russia, where the War on Drugs is raging, the main concerns of harm reduction and other groups concentrate on repressive drug policies and their effects on human life. In countries like Mexico or Colombia, it is the devastation of rural and Indigenous communities and the threat to their survival and wellbeing from the drug industry or the state; including for communities that grow illicit crops<sup>5</sup> and people involved in transport as drug 'mules'.

These and many other critical topics remain to be explored more deeply and critically by feminist movements and our societies at large.

#### Building connections and solidarity:

Moving forward, AWID is committed to bringing topics such as the War on Drugs and harm reduction into feminist conversation and spaces, including the AWID International Forum, as well as working with women who use drugs to create safe spaces to engage and exchange with other feminists in their own voices.

As feminists seeking justice beyond criminalisation and repression, we have learned throughout this process that building relationships and inter-movement links with those most impacted by the War on Drugs is essential. By visibilising and uplifting each others' struggles, challenging stigma and exclusion within our movements, and building cross-movement solidarity, we are all stronger.

*"I wasn't really interested in feminism before the invitation to join the narcofeminist movement. But our meeting changed my mindset and understanding of the real position of women in society. I changed my attitude and reviewed the ways of raising my daughters. I also reconsider my position in the family. The relationship with my husband became even better after my acquaintance with the feminism. I became happier and freer."*

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/opendemocracyuk/ending-the-war-on-drugs-requires-justice-for-the-impooverished-communities-who-grow-them/>

*“As a woman, I hadn’t felt the motivation, enthusiasm and energy in a long time, that I’ve felt here at the moment. [...] We’re often put in a ‘charity’ light and spoken for - it’s so exciting to see this next wave of feminism and be loud and proud - to inject that into the WUD movement. [...] It’s going to be so exciting to pull apart all these complexities and putting all these different feminists together. I burst into tears, 40 minutes after walking into the room yesterday - and I realised it was because I felt safe.”*

We don’t always know how crazy it is out there, and what we carry around with us - always having to be strong.



# Barcelona Declaration

Read the Declaration in different languages: <http://bit.ly/BarcelonaDeclaration>

One exciting outcome of the final, additional day of the second convening hosted by Metzineres in collaboration with women's harm reduction networks from different countries, was the drafting of the Barcelona Declaration. The Declaration was published for International Women's Day 2019 (available in the link). The Declaration has now been signed by over 160 groups from around the world and has been translated into at least seven languages. It articulates the gendered impacts of the war on drugs and calls for global solidarity. Today we can see womxn who resist the war on drugs from across the world organising and communicating regularly. The Declaration goes beyond acknowledging the oppression and violence, and celebrates the creativity and resilience of womxn who use drugs and resist repressive drug policies.

**“Despite living with these and other multiple forms of violence daily, Womxn Fighting back Against the War On Drugs are resourceful, enterprising, creative and strong. We possess remarkable resilience. We fight back against prohibition with solidarity, mutual support and leadership, building our networks from the grassroots to the global, from immediate action to long-term strategies to end this war on womxn who use drugs. We embrace intersectional and anti-prohibitionist feminism that integrates queer/trans-inclusive and non-ableist approaches, racial justice and the right to use drugs and experience pleasure. We work to reclaim our bodily sovereignty, including rights to the full range of sexual and reproductive health, gender-sensitive health services, and rights to use drugs. We do not ask for charity but for solidarity. We demand to live in safety and freedom.”**

**- an excerpt from the Barcelona Declaration, 2019**

