



www.supportdontpunish.org

South Africa 2016

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On 26 June 2016 the International Drug Policy Consortium's (IDPC) "Support. Don't Punish" campaign included organized events in South Africa in Cape Town and Durban. With Support from IDPC, TB/HIV Care partnered with The Urban Futures Centre at Durban University of Technology (UFC@DUT) and the Cape Town Drug Counselling Centre (CTDCC) to hold a public gathering and a community march.

The efforts of Prof Monique Marks and Dr Tamlynn Fleetwood at UFC@DUT and Mr. Ashley Southgate at CTDCC enabled these events to take place. Their credibility and influence secured the inclusion and support of people and organizations not usually be considered as drug user activists or advocates for PWUD. These events have raised an awareness and started a conversation that will continue. [See last page for more pictures]

SUPPORT DON'T PUNISH EVENT: DURBAN

- Where:** Durban University of Technology (DUT) City Campus Courtyard
- When:** 14h00 to 17h30
- What:** An afternoon of knowledge sharing and cultural activities with poetry, maskandi, pop and jazz artists, short talks from experts and personal stories from current and former drug users. Local celebrities and the Cardinal will give messages of support.

DURBAN EVENT



The 2016 Support Don't Punish event was held for the first time in Durban. This event took place at the City Campus of the Durban University of Technology. The event was given full backing from the University, which is very unique, particularly in a South African context. UFC@DUT partnered with TB/HIV Care Association in organising and hosting the event. The

TB/HIV Care Association mobile clinic was present at the event for the entire period offering a range of services to those attending the event. About 120 people attended the event, 80 of which were from the drug use community who live on the streets of Durban.

The event took the form of an advocacy platform for users to tell their stories and for medical doctors and activists to express the urgent need for harm was a

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celebration, a day for drug users and others in the community to share a celebration of life. The Durban SDP was fortunate to have a number of very popular South African musicians, poets, and rappers perform at the event. The MC for the day was a well-known TV celebrity, Melusi Yeni. For the street level drug user community, it was extremely significant that this range of celebrities had taken time to join the campaign and to actively show their support.

Messages of support were provided by Dr Jairam Reddy, the Chair of the DUT council; Razeen Dada, Mr India South Africa; and Cardinal Napier (Archbishop of Durban). The Archbishop comes from a community that is deeply affected by problematic drug use, Wentworth. He noted that he is well aware that current punitive approaches are failing and he reached out to drug users present in a non-denominational prayer.

Significantly, a police officer from the Durban Metropolitan Police, Captain Dingaan gave a very moving message to the user community at the event. He spoke about how as a police officer he understood that drug users are people who need support and they should not be victimised by the police. He spoke openly about his discomfort with the current enforcement and displacement strategies of the police in South Africa. Captain Dingaan made the powerful point that it is his role, and the role of all police, to protect every citizen of the country. Drug use, he said, was a symptom of a much bigger problem.



Significantly, an arrangement was made with the two public policing agencies in Durban that they would not enter into the DUT campus unless called upon by the organisers. They also agreed not to harass users who were coming in or out of the event. The ‘policing’ of the event was left to students who acted as marshals and the university Protection Services. An agreement was made with the Protection Services that a ‘blind eye’ be turned to the use of drugs at the event. Despite warnings from the police that there was likely to be petty theft and acts of aggression at the event, this was not the case. Not a single incident of crime or violence took place, indicating to many people who attended the event that drug use and crime should not be lumped together.

The event could best be described as dignified, awareness promoting and festive. Drug users, many for the first time, entered into a university and were welcomed as guests. It was a chance for many users to break the silence about their lives, and a number of users spoke spontaneously on stage and to the press. There was very wide coverage of the event on radio, television and in the print media.

SUPPORT DON'T PUNISH MARCH: CAPE TOWN

Where: Mitchell's Plain Drug Counselling Centre, cnr of Civet and Klipspringer Street, Eastridge, Mitchells Plain (Cape Town Drug Counselling Centre, Mitchells Plain)

When: 11am - March starts at 11.30am

What: A community march through the community



The Cape Town event was a community march that started at the Eastridge premises of CTDC and moved through the community of Mitchells plain, and area reported to have the highest levels of drug use and gangsterism in South Africa.

What was notable was the active involvement of the local community policing forum. This position on drugs. Ashley Potts,

participation marks a significant shift in their position on drugs. Ashley Potts, who is the Director of the CTDC, is also a respected member of the community and he has been educating members of the CPF and the community on alternative approaches to addressing drug users in the community.

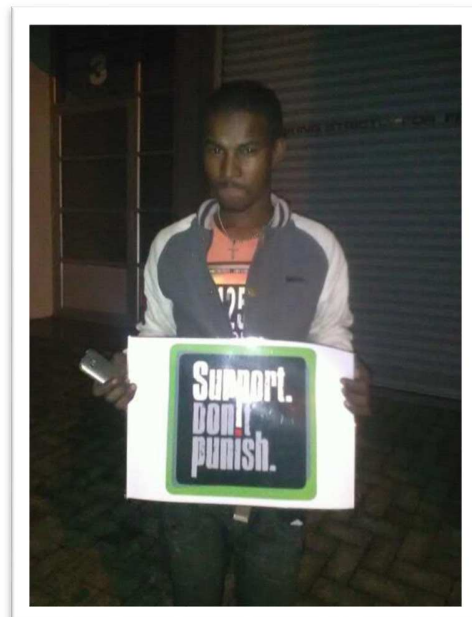
During the march a number of signatures in support of the campaign were collected from community members. Those participating were able to interact with community members, and while some were initially shocked by what we were saying, many agreed with the sentiments of the campaign.



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OTHER ACTIVITIES

On the 26th a member of the Cape Town drug user network took photos of people with the SDP poster. Photos were also taken as part of the StepUp Project service delivery in Cape Town and at the community advisory group meeting in Pretoria.



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FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

A letter of support is being circulated to collect the signatures of community members, academics, health professionals, activists, religious leaders and affected people in support of the SDP campaign (see appendix).

This letter will then be sent to the press along with an opinion piece to continue the message.

The community policing forums in the Mitchells Plain area will receive further training and information on alternative approaches to drug use and community engagement will take place.

The campaign message will be highlighted throughout the coming 12 months and bigger events are planned for 2017.

MEDIA COVERAGE

A media release was sent out (attached) and there was the following media coverage:



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| LINK | MEDIA |
|---|--|
| http://bereamail.co.za/84975/support-dont-punish-2/ | Online article |
| http://allevents.in/cape%20town/cape-town-support-dont-punish-march/243765009344134# | Online article |
| http://www.dut.ac.za/global-call-for-better-drug-policies-and-interventions/ | Online article |
| Cape Talk | Radio interview - Shaun Shelly |
| SAFM | Radio interview - Monique Marks and Jamie Bridge |
| https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6-UgS9dek3o | SABC news story |
| https://www.facebook.com/events/639769319510225/ | Facebook Event |
| https://www.facebook.com/events/243765009344134/ | Facebook Event |
| http://www.iol.co.za/dailynews/news/pilot-plan-for-addicts-2038867 | Independent Online News |
| http://m.news24.com/news24/SouthAfrica/Local/Peoples-Post/calls-for-drug-policy-reform-20160627 | Peoples Post Community paper |
| http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/Local/Peoples-Post/calls-for-drug-policy-reform-20160627 | News 24 |
| http://allafrica.com/stories/201606280792.html | AllAfrica News |
| http://www.thedailyvox.co.za/dont-like-smoking-whoonga-anymore-unemployed-isnt-helping-either/ | Daily Vox |
| At least 5 further radio interviews took place. | |

LETTER OF SUPPORT



www.supportdontpunish.org

PRESS STATEMENT: SUPPORT. DON'T PUNISH 2016

Sunday 26th of June marks the United Nations' International Day against Drug Abuse and Illegal Trafficking. Many drug enforcement agencies and their governments use this day to call for harsher penalties against drug users. Many people will use this opportunity to highlight the use of drugs in our communities, blaming drug users for a multitude of social ills. However, there are many – academics, health professionals, law enforcement officers, parents and representatives from all walks of society - who will carry a different message. We will be asking that our government stops criminalising and incarcerating people who use drugs, and we encourage our fellow South Africans to join us in our cry: "Support. Don't Punish!"

We have come to this position for many reasons and we hold diverse opinions on the complexities of drug use, but we agree on these well-researched and documented points:

1. The criminalisation of drug users leads to social exclusion, stigmatization, increased health risks and barriers to accessing appropriate services, all of which impact negatively on the duration and the resolution of substance use disorders
2. The enforcement of drug laws through police action and arrests, courts and prisons is expensive and ineffective. Incarceration results in over-crowded prisons and increased vulnerability to HIV and other diseases. Detention facilities serve as a recruiting ground for gangs, further destabilising communities.
3. Drug laws impact disproportionately on poorer and under-resourced communities, women and children.
4. The criminalisation of drug users has not significantly reduced the use or supply of drugs.

Criminalisation does not take into account the inequalities of the past and the extensive evidence showing that trauma, unemployment, lack of opportunity and few economic resources all contribute to the levels, vulnerabilities and harms related to drug use. We are adding to the burden of our communities through the inequitable application of our drug policies. We therefore call on our leaders to rectify this imbalance by:

1. Diverting the money spent on drug law enforcement to the establishment of community based services that provide support, training and alternative activities for all community members, especially our youth.
2. Recognising that the best response to drug use is not a criminal justice approach, but a health and human rights approach, as recommended by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, The African Union's Common African position on drugs, UNAIDS and the World Health Organisation.

We believe that this approach will reduce many of the harms related to drug use and will contribute to stronger, healthier and more integrated communities – a common goal for all South Africans. We therefore ask our leaders and fellow citizens to hear our message: "When dealing with drug users, support, don't punish!"

Yours sincerely

MEDIA RELEASE

“Support. Don’t Punish” events in Cape Town and Durban on June 26 call for an alternative approach in response to drug use.

The war on drugs has failed. In South Africa the widespread use of drugs has resulted in many people being criminalised simply for drug use. Drug use disorders are often driven by socio-economic, environmental and individual vulnerabilities. It is time for South Africa to stop trying to solve what is essentially a social and health issue with a criminal justice approach. Criminalising drug users increases drug-related harm, social exclusion and stigma. Criminalisation impacts negatively on employment opportunities, access to health services, social reintegration and makes research into substance use disorders difficult. In a recent position paper, the Central Drug Authority recommended focusing on [harm reduction and decriminalisation](#) as approaches to cannabis use. This should extend to all drugs. [Globally](#), there are calls to move towards a rights and health approach to resolving and reducing drug-related harm. On 26 June drug policy activists, members of the public, academics, religious leaders and community members will join events in Mitchell’s Plain and Durban to show solidarity and support for the global “Support. Don’t Punish” campaign.

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BACKGROUND

Supporters are expected to turn out for a march on Sunday 26 June 2016 in Mitchells Plain in Cape Town and a community event at Durban University of Technology to show their commitment to the global Support Don't Punish campaign.

The Support Don't Punish Global Day of Action takes place barely two months after the international community met at the UNGASS 2016, the biggest United Nations meeting on drugs in almost two decades. The global gathering laid bare the fault lines beneath the international agreements on drug policy, with dozens of countries, international bodies and NGOs [calling for a profound revamp](#) of the system.

Cape Town and **Durban** will join over 100 cities in all continents to echo these calls for reform and an end to the “war on drugs”. This initiative takes place under the banner of the “[Support. Don't Punish](#)” campaign, a worldwide effort calling on governments to put an end to expensive and counter-productive drug policies based on punishment and repression. Thousands of people are expected to take to the streets as part of an international show of force to demand more humane and effective drug policies.

All actions are coordinated on or around the 26th of June, as the date marks the United Nations' International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking – a day when governments typically celebrate drug arrests and drug seizures. In the past, some governments have even commemorated this day by holding public executions or beatings of drug offenders. Yet this is all part of a global war on drugs that, by the United Nations' own admission, has failed to reduce drug use and has led to serious negative consequences.

The campaign aims to reclaim this date from the perspective of activists and victims of punitive drug policies, underscoring their catastrophic consequences and high cost. Drug laws spending equals over \$100 billion per year, yet seems to have little-to-no effect on a progressively complex illegal drugs trade. Furthermore, the reliance on law enforcement has led to the mass incarceration of vulnerable and poor people across the world, fuelled epidemics such as HIV, hepatitis and tuberculosis, and diverted attention and funding away from effective public health approaches to the problem.

Ann Fordham, Executive Director of the International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC) which oversees the global campaign, said “International drug policies are supposed to pursue the health and welfare of humankind, but the current regime has shown it is incapable of achieving these goals. Instead, there is growing recognition that repressive policies are causing more damage than the drugs they are supposed to eradicate. This year's *Global Day of Action* will see the biggest international demonstration against the war on drugs, with thousands of activists in over 90 countries stressing the urgency of finding alternatives. How long will governments keep ignoring these deafening calls?”

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ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN

The “Support. Don’t Punish” campaign is a global initiative calling for investments in proven effective and cost-effective harm reduction responses for people who use drugs, and for the decriminalisation of people who use drugs, and the removal of other laws that impede public health services. The campaign was launched in 2013 - as an initiative of the International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC), the International Network of People who Use Drugs (INPUD), Harm Reduction International (HRI), and the International HIV/AIDS Alliance. On 26th June 2013, [41 cities](#) participated in the Global Day of Action. On 26th June 2014, events were held in [100 cities](#), and in 2015, [activists in 160 cities](#) joined forces to call for drug policy reform, with street performances, street art, protests, music events, football tournaments, processions, and even a boat show in the Nile!

This year, actions are planned to take place in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, French Guinea, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Ivory Coast, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Lebanon, Liberia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Montenegro, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Northern Ireland, Norway, Palestine, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Romania, Russia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vietnam and Zimbabwe!

For more information and resources about the campaign, visit www.supportdontpunish.org and <http://supportdontpunish.org/day-of-action-2016/>



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