



Zimbabwe Civil Liberties and Drug Network

National Capacity Strengthening Workshop on illicit drug use in Zimbabwe

Support. Don't Punish Campaign

23 June 2016, Harare, Zimbabwe

Introduction

The Support Don't Punish campaign for 2016 took place at Jameson Hotel in Harare. The All Stakeholder workshop, under the theme '**Capacity Strengthening Workshop on illicit Drug use in Zimbabwe.**' was well attended by the civic society network members and government line ministries including legislators. The ministries represented were President's Office, Education, Justice, Health, Parliament of Zimbabwe and Home Affairs through the drug squad.

Attendance

A total of 40 people attended the conference. They included:

- The Zimbabwe Civil Liberties and Drug Network team and trustees
- The chief health advisor to the president of Zimbabwe Honourable Dr Timothy Stamps
- Honourable Mutsvangwa (legislator/member of parliament and designate to the Southern African Development Community parliament)
- Honourable Mohadi (legislator/Deputy Chief Whip in the Parliament of Zimbabwe and designate to the Southern African Development Community parliament)



- **Director of Mental Health and Substance Abuse** in the Ministry of Health, also the focal person on the implementation of the African Union's (demand reduction) Mrs Dorcas Sithole.
- Ms Rumbi Matewe, Zimbabwe National Network of People living with HIV AIDS. She presented on the nexus between HIV/AIDS and drug users in Zimbabwe.
- Detective Sergeant Maenzanise, Zimbabwe Republic Police Criminal Investigation department (Drugs and Narcotics). The department is responsible for the implementation of the African Union's (Supply Reduction)
- School Headmasters
- Representatives from religious institutions
- Drug users
- HIV/AIDS Programmers, Parents and journalists.

Events of the day

1. Introductory message

The Director of Zimbabwe Civil Liberties and Drug Network, Mr Wilson Box welcomed guests and presented the Objectives of the workshop and the programme of the day. He highlighted the concept of harm reduction, the need for drug policy reform and the Support Don't Punish campaign concept and showed direction on how policy reforms will lead to interventions which promotes human rights and uphold public health. The workshop had the following as its objectives:

- Share an overview of the drug abuse situation in Zimbabwe
- Share the multi- dimensional effects of drug abuse like the spread of HIV/Aids, Hepatitis C and TB.
- Share the constitutional/legal response to drug abuse



- share global policy positions on tackling drug abuse and trafficking
- Collectively map way forward on policy interventions towards combating drug use and trafficking in Zimbabwe.

2. Presentations

- **Key note address (Dr T. Stamps)**

Dr Stamps pointed to gross misuse of prescribed medicines in the country and cited need for an urgent attention to the scourge.

- **Illicit drugs, an overview (detective sergeant Maenzanise)**

Highlighted the problems that comes with drug abuse such as crime and road accidents.

- **Drug users voice (drug user, network partner and Mufakose high density suburb support group on drugs)**

A powerful testimony from a drug user echoed how drug users need urgent attention in the country.

- **The role of policy (Honourable Mutsvangwa)**

Honourable Mutsvangwa applauded Zimbabwe Civil Liberties and Drug Network for championing policy reforms on the issue of drugs as this was long overdue. She explained the channels for policy formulation and how she is committed to push the reform motion in parliament.

- **Effects of Drug Use and Mental health statistics -An Overview (Mrs D. Sithole)**

Mrs Sithole presented on how the government support policy reforms in drug use and abuse. She further mentioned that Zimbabwe had no drug policy masterplan at the moment. The one present is now outdated and needs attention. So there was need to address the issue.



- **HIV/TB Prevalence in Zimbabwe – Drug users` case (Rumbi Matewe)**

The relation between drugs and behaviour change was explained showing how drug injection is contributing to HIV/AIDs, hepatitis B and C and TB. She recommended that the government introduce Harm reduction strategies such as syringe distribution among users and OST programmes. In Zimbabwe, there are no specialised facilities to treat drug users. Injecting drug users have no clear programme to assist them hence the possibility of HIV/AIDs spreading is high among drug users. There is an urgent need for intervention.

3. Plenary Session

The plenary session concluded the discussions and yielded action points on harm reduction and policy reform on drugs in Zimbabwe.

The key points from the plenary session were:

- Need to treat drug users as patients
- Need to have a drug master plan in place as a matter of urgency.
- Drug Policy in Zimbabwe should not criminalise users but support them through public health initiatives.
- Need for a comprehensive survey in Zimbabwe to compile data on the type of programmes in place for drug users to combat HIV/AIDs and TB.
- Reasons for drug using should be explored and addressed by the government of Zimbabwe.
- Law enforcement agents and policy makers should meet and look at alternative strategies to address drug use in Zimbabwe.
- Avoid punishing drug users whilst the traffickers are free.
- Need for more awareness campaign programmes amongst the youth
- Need to use drug users testimonials to conscioutise the youths.



- Need to set up rehabilitation centres to help bridge the gap between policy and practise.
- Need to create a bigger movement in Zimbabwe to advocate for drug policy reforms and harm reduction programs.
- Need to interrogate the supply side of drugs.
- Need for support groups in our communities to combat HIV/AIDs among drug users.
- Need to introduce drug awareness campaigns in all tertiary institutions in Zimbabwe.

Conclusion

The conference was a major success with all stakeholders reiterating the importance of policy reform and harm reduction interventions. It emerged that Zimbabwe does not have a drug policy and very few harm reduction activities were identified though they are not primarily crafted as reducing negative consequences of drug abuse. There is need for follow up on the drug master plan for Zimbabwe.