

Affected Populations: Youth

Submitted by Julius Kramer and Vasilka Lalevska, CSTF Representative and Alternate Representative

Affected populations: Youth

The youth consultation took place in the format of an online survey targeting organizations and individuals, as well as two in-person consultations, one in Spain and one in Nigeria. The survey was answered by 71 organizations and 269 individuals, with representation from every region, between November and the end of December 2015.

Best practices

- ✓ Initiatives aimed at improving socio-economic conditions and tackling youth unemployment and poverty
- ✓ Preventing drug use through youth empowerment and education (formal and non-formal)
- ✓ Measures reducing risks and harm associated with drug use

Main challenges

- Lack of engagement from society in preventing and reducing harm to health, and drug-related crime. A general need emerges for increased responsibility and involvement by national governments in addressing the world drug problem
- The world drug problem has a negative impact on the rights of children, women, youth, and human rights in general
- Lack of funding for civil society initiatives and lack of investment in opportunities for young people, related to the job market, education, quality leisure activities

- Access to health care, continued stigmatization and discrimination of users
- The rise of New Psychoactive Substances

Action-orientated recommendations for the UNGASS roundtables:

Drugs and Health

- ✓ To treat the world drug problem as a public health issue
- ✓ To acknowledge the harm of drugs to physical, mental and social well-being of young users and people in their surroundings
- ✓ To increase civil society initiatives focused on prevention, awareness and youth empowerment
- ✓ To improve young people's access to treatment, rehabilitation, reintegration and social services
- ✓ To acknowledge mental health issues leading to and deriving from drug use among young people
- ✓ To effectively implement evidence-based policies for prevention and harm reduction
- ✓ To improve controlled access to prescription drugs

Drugs and Crime

- ✓ To improve socio-economic conditions for young people and support vulnerable youth
- ✓ To increase civil society initiatives focused on prevention, awareness and youth empowerment
- ✓ To take measures to challenge stigmatization and discrimination of users caused by policy implementation and law enforcement

- ✓ To take measures protecting young people who are often targeted and victimized in the operations of organized crime
- ✓ To consider treatment and rehabilitation over incarceration in cases involving young people
- ✓ To abolish the death penalty

Cross-cutting issues: drugs and human rights, youth, women, children and communities

- ✓ To protect children from the illicit use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, following the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 3 and 33)
- ✓ To counter gender-based violence, domestic violence and violence against children, connected to drug trafficking and drug use, as hinders to women's rights and children's rights
- ✓ To acknowledge that drug use compromises the rights of people in the user's surrounding
- ✓ To counter human rights violations subjected to drug users by law enforcement (for example racial profiling, selective enforcement, etc)
- ✓ To underline that drug use can obstruct youth rights by affecting their employability and participation in society
- ✓ To improve access to healthcare and harm reduction measures for users

Cross-cutting issues: new challenges, threats and realities in preventing and addressing the world drug problem

- ✓ To ensure effective implementation of evidence-based drug policies by accountable institutions
- ✓ To introduce policies effectively countering new psychoactive substances
- ✓ To improve access to information and evidence on the world drug problem

Alternative development

- ✓ To motivate bigger responsibility among national governments in adopting and implementing alternative development programmes
- ✓ To encourage actions by society in changing the social factors that cause young people to take up drug use (for example, socio-economic inequalities, empowering low-income communities)
- ✓ To introduce education, employment and leisure activities, as an important aspect of preventing young people from becoming drug dealers
- ✓ To reduce the stigma around users in order to allow them a smoother entry to the labour market.