

# Press Release

## LET'S NOT FIX YOURSELF BY BREAKING US

*International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking & International Day in Support of Victims of Torture*

KATHMANDU (25 June 2014)—June 26 is the United Nations' International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. This day is used by many member states to celebrate the 'war on drugs' and has even been used to stigmatize, torture, and even execute people for drug related offences. Coincidentally, 26 June, is also the UN's International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. The day also calls for an end to the widespread torture and abuse suffered by people—including those who use drugs.

This year, thousands of people across Nepal and across the globe, will make their voices heard in order to stand up for change. Our campaign is dedicated to raising awareness of the harms caused by punitive policies and practices and to call on leaders for the immediate end of expensive and counter-productive approaches to drugs. This old approach has failed to reduce drug use or supply, has cost in excess of \$100 billion to enforce, and has driven HIV, tuberculosis and hepatitis epidemics around the world. Actual harms caused by the policies are more damaging than the drugs themselves and have resulted in public health crises, imprisonment, corruption, and violence.

June 26 is an important opportunity for Nepal to review its inhumane policies and to make a strategic shift toward informed, evidence-based policies. We ask for better approaches and to identify new ways of doing things. Unless we change our approach here and now, it will cost us more in the future to repair the damage caused by our current actions.

There is a window of opportunity between now and 2016 for us to build the country's capacity with the aim of holding our government and other actors accountable and to stand up for humane and evidence based drug policies around the world.

Let's come back to the original spirit & content of the UN Conventions. Prohibition is not the spirit rather to improve the health and wellbeing of humankind. The serious misinterpretation of the UN conventions and distorted and misguided national approaches, pose a serious threat to human rights and health. Moreover, draconian laws have the potential to restrict public health and rights based activities, both access and delivery, by criminalising, stigmatising, and punishing people who use drugs, thereby driving them underground.

There is a need for a strategic shift in investment, and ask for resources to be directed strategically in order to maximize impact. The huge expenditure on enforcement is not producing the intended results. We ask the government and donors to increase funding for proven, effective and evidence-based harm reduction and health care services. The complete reliance on a criminal-justice approach will not be able to address our complex drug problem and leave us one step behind the problem.

Today, we call upon everyone to take the reform agenda closer to their hearts. And to make their voices heard loud and clear. We should push for quality reforms and come together to demonstrate leadership and commitment with action. Tell our government and governments across the world to hear our voice and fix their broken policies and work to and repair the large scale damage wrought by these failed approaches

The scientific battle has been well fought and hard won. Now it's high time to overcome the moral, political and ideological debate. So we call upon everyone for renewal of country commitment and actions to change the way people think by discussion, advocacy, evidence and action, use common sense, non-judgmental and pragmatic ways of dealing with the problems caused by drugs and to show tolerance, respect for the personal choices of others and defend health and human rights of most marginalized people in this planet.