

IDPC Members Update – February 2010

IDPC members will receive an update on activities and progress against the IDPC work plan every three months. These quarterly updates are internal IDPC communications and should not be forwarded to third parties.

Governance

The IDPC Steering Group (SG) had their quarterly conference call in January. One of the main agenda items was a discussion of the upcoming re-election process for the both the SG members and the IDPC Chair. The elections will take place at the SG meeting in the margins of the CND meeting in Vienna in March 2010. The Secretariat will email the members to initiate the process by mid-February. It was noted that presently there is no SG member from the Western Europe region (an active region for IDPC) so there will be one additional SG place for this region.

The SG noted that due to careful financial management over the previous quarter, IDPC will end the financial year in a breakeven position. Fundraising efforts are under way for 2010/11 with a new bid submitted to the EC in December 2009, approaches to a number of foundations and national governments.

Communications

In addition to French, Spanish and Portuguese (live at the time of the previous members' update) the IDPC website now has all static content in Russian and Italian. We are now considering what other languages may be appropriate for the website especially given that South East Europe will be a priority region for IDPC in 2010/11.

The Secretariat is currently looking at strategies of how to increase the number of subscribers to the IDPC Alert. IDPC members are asked encourage their colleagues, partner organisations and other contacts to subscribe to the Alert at www.idpc.net. Ideas on how to increase the number of subscribers are welcome!

Networking

As of 1st February 2010, IDPC welcomes eight new members to the network.

The new network members are:

- NGO Veza (Serbia) - <http://www.ngoveza.org.rs/lang/en/activities>
- Centro de Investigación Drogas y Derechos Humanos (Peru) - <http://www.cidhdh.com/es/proyectos.php#>
- World AIDS Campaign (The Netherlands) - <http://www.worldaidscampaign.org/>
- AIDS Foundation East West (The Netherlands) - <http://www.afew.org/>
- Romanian Harm Reduction Network (Romania) - <http://rhrn.ro/index.php?l=en>
- Red Chilena Reducción de Danos (Chile) - <http://www.reducciondedanos.cl/wp/>
- Akision Plus (Albania) – <http://www.aksionplus.net/>

The new partner member is:

- YouthR.I.S.E (International) - <http://www.youthrise.org/>

There are still a number of new organisations who have accepted the invitation to join IDPC but have not yet finalised the membership process. The Steering Group feel that membership expansion should be an ongoing and organic process. Presently there are 52 members (30 partner members and 21 network members). We estimate that by the end of 2010 this number will have increased to approximately 60 to 65 members.

Please see attached to this update the revised IDPC members contact details list. If you have any amendments or changes please advise the IDPC secretariat (afordham@idpc.net).

International advocacy

CND

The 2010 CND will take place in Vienna from 8 – 12 March. While this year's meeting has no special or high-level elements, it will be interesting to see whether the mood is different following the 2009 high-level meeting or the change of administration in the US. There are likely to be resolutions on essential medicines, data quality, and HIV prevention. IDPC will facilitate and support the involvement of members and other like-minded NGOs, including:

- Distributing information to members and partners on the procedures, agendas, and facilities available at the CND (A simple guide was sent out at the end of January).
- Helping NGOs with the practical arrangements for registering delegates, and gaining access to sessions (If you are intending to attend the CND, and want advice or help with registration, please let us know as soon as possible).
- Arranging briefing and co-ordination sessions for like-minded NGOs to discuss advocacy plans and opportunities (These will most likely be held each morning, but we will see what the official VNGOC are planning in this regard).
- Facilitating and hosting satellite events in the margins of the CND (We aim to run one IDPC lunchtime session, to launch the IDPC toolkit. If you are planning a satellite session, please let us know as soon as possible, so we can help with arrangements, or avoid clashes).
- Hosting an evening reception at the embassy of one of our friendly governments (this is still to be decided as there are a number of evening events taking place).

We have yet to receive a formal response to the requests we submitted through the VNGOC, requesting a range of improvements to civil society involvement in the CND. We are chasing Dave Turner (Chair of the VNGOC) at the moment to find out how the CND secretariat responded to these requests.

UNODC

The issue of the post of Executive Director of the UNODC remains unresolved, and it is still unclear what will happen when Antonio Costa's current term runs out in May. While it is a distinct possibility that Ban Ki Moon will grant an extension to Mr Costa while the process of finding a successor is concluded, there are currently two candidates (from Brazil and Canada) who are formally being promoted by their governments for the post, and a few other potential

candidates being discussed. If a decision is made in time, it is possible that a new Executive Director could be unveiled at the CND.

We have exchanged some ideas with Angela Me, the head of the Data and Analysis Unit at the UNODC, on how the 2010 World Drug Report can make the best use of available data, and ensure that the report does not make unjustified claims that are not supported by the data.

Alternative development

TNI, the lead member on this work stream within IDPC have been active in a number of regions on the issue. Afghanistan remains the world's largest producer of opium and has an under-reported but growing heroin-use problem. Current drug control policies in Afghanistan are unrealistic, reflecting a need for immediate signs of hope rather than a serious analysis of the underlying causes and an effort to achieve long-term solutions. Last November Tom Kramer and Martin Jelsma travelled to Afghanistan on a research mission where they met with local organisations, farmers and visited harm reduction programmes. They blogged while they were travelling which can be access here (<http://www.alertnet.org/db/bloggers/61640>) and produced a briefing based on the mission called 'Redefining Targets - Towards a Realistic Afghan Drug Control Strategy'.

In January 2010, TNI co-organised a workshop in Kunming titled, "Chinese Agricultural Concessions in Laos and Myanmar". During this small informal workshop the participants from China, Laos and Burma focused on two related themes: (1) identifying previous research, related activities, and overall scenario of Chinese-invested rubber concessions in northern Laos and Myanmar; and (2) networking in order to foster future work on addressing identified issues and impacts. The workshop provided an opportunity to share ideas on how to mitigate negative influences and improve possible positive impacts. The eventual goal is to gain momentum to improve the manner in which China's national opium crop substitution policy is implemented. The other co-organisers were the University of California and Health Unlimited. The project is funded by Oxfam-Netherlands (Novib).

TNI together with IHRA and IPS are organising a session at International Harm Reduction Conference in Liverpool on 'Farmers perspectives on the war on drugs' (Thursday 29 April, 9 – 10.30am). In a significant omission, production and supply-side issues have not been a traditional focus of the IHRC. This year's conference in Liverpool is intended to provide participants with an overview of the diversity and seriousness of the issues facing people in four very different producer nations from the perspectives of those with first-hand experience.

Human rights

Briefing of the Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights:

On 16th November 2009, Human Rights Watch ('HRW') and the International Harm Reduction Association ('IHRA') hosted a meeting of the Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights ('CESCR') on the issue of Drugs, HIV and the Right to the Highest Attainable Standard of Health. The meeting was attended and supported by UNAIDS, WHO, UNODC, the International Drug Policy Consortium ('IDPC'), and Groupement Romand d'Etudes des Addictions ('GREA'). The event drew the attention of the Committee members to a number of key drug policy issues which relate to their mandate and directed them to written briefings that had been prepared on the following topics: compulsory drug treatment; crop eradication; harm

reduction; harm reduction in places of detention; drugs, criminal laws, policing practices, and HIV/AIDS; and, controlled essential medicines. The Committee was urged to join the momentum within the Human Rights system towards a thematic consideration of drug policy. The Committee welcomed this novel approach to their mandate and in particular noted that they would be interested in receiving country-information from civil society on drug policy and human rights issues within their mandates as states come up for reports before them. It was discussed that such engagement over time could lead to a day of general discussion on drug policy and human rights issues within CESCR at a later date and ultimately, a General Comment.

There is certainly a great deal of work to be done and CESCR - if it can: focus upon drug policy throughout its mandate; address drug related human rights abuses as a regular part of its interactive dialogues and investigations at country level; and work with other treaty bodies and mandate holders on how to address these issues - has the potential to make a significant contribution towards a more human rights compliant drug control framework and the civil society partners present at the meeting, committed to developing this working relationship, are optimistic about seeing this potential materialise.

Engagement with Permanent Missions to the UN Office in Geneva:

In the week beginning November 16th 2009, HRW, IHRA, and IDPC met with the representatives of various permanent missions to the UN in Geneva as well as OHCHR in meetings arranged and facilitated by the Geneva office of Human Rights Watch. The missions met with were as follows: Argentina; USA; Brazil; Bolivia; Slovenia; Indonesia; the Netherlands; the United Kingdom; Uruguay; Russia; France; Norway; and Mexico; and further meetings were held subsequently by Human Rights Watch alone.

The primary purpose of the meetings was to sensitise the delegations to human rights issues that arise under the auspices of drug control and to build relationships that will enhance the consortium membership's ability to feed into the processes of the human rights mechanisms where abuses relating to drug policy arise. The ultimate aim of this programme of work is to see drug policy human rights issues mainstreamed across the human rights framework; this was a first step towards that long-term goal.

Some delegations expressed particular priority areas within their human rights focus - for example Norway's key themes when preparing for the UPR are freedom of speech, human rights defenders, and women's rights and Argentina's key themes are the death penalty, discrimination, and detention without trial - in such, meetings HRW, IHRA, and IDPC sought to contextualise various drug policy issues within the delegations' specific focus; in other cases, a broader briefing was delivered.

The opportunity was also taken to consult with these human rights experts on their advice as to how this work programme could be most effective and specifically, advice was sought on: how to integrate relevant aspects of drug policy human rights issues into the UPR and HRC resolutions; which draft or forthcoming resolutions might provide opportunities for language about drug policy issues; the merits and possibility of a formal thematic panel discussion on drugs and human rights in the plenary of the HRC; the merits and possibility of a side event on drugs and human rights; the timings for such a session; how, more broadly, to mainstream these issues, and to work with various mechanisms and delegations on these issues; which

other State delegations to work with and what issues we might face when working with these delegations; and, finally, to what extent they could support this programme work themselves and whether they would be able to work with the counterparts in Vienna or in Capital to progress such issues in other fora.

With each delegation some common ground was found wherein a working relationship could begin and some useful advice and information was imparted to us. All the delegations stated that they welcomed this approach and suggested that such briefings were the essential first step in our work-plan and recommended that we meet with as many other delegations as possible – they agreed that a long-term view was necessary. The second step, the delegations broadly agreed, would be to arrange a second round of briefings with other missions along the same lines. The majority of delegations also saw the third stage in developing the mainstreaming of these issues as the holding of a side event on drugs policy and human rights in the margins of the HRC (as opposed to the margins of the UPR) and some offered the possibility of co-sponsoring such a meeting, whilst many said that they would happily attend – it seems at this stage that June or September 2010 would be the most likely timing for such a meeting. As an ongoing process, all delegations advised on the importance of working with partners such as WHO, UNAIDS, HRC, CESCR, and the Special Rapporteurs on these issues also and the need to always embed the information we provide about a particular drug policy issue within the context of the relevant convention right or mandate. Likewise, many delegations agreed that it would be helpful for civil society to feed into their UPR preparation on drug policy human rights issues and a number of delegations gave specific time-lines and suggestions in terms of such co-operation that were less rigid than the formal NGO reporting route (as indeed had CESCR). Finally, a number of forthcoming resolutions were discussed and it was agreed that a helpful next step would be if a calendar of opportunities to progress drug policy human rights issues within the Geneva framework were devised that also incorporates drug policy happenings more widely.

Going Forward:

HRW, IHRA, and IDPC will continue to work together to pursue this work plan in the terms suggested above. As stated, through the building of these new relationships with CESCR and the Permanent missions in Geneva, there may be more scope to feed into the various state-reporting processes of the UPR, CESCR, and the Human Rights Committee and more scope also to feed in outside of the formal time-lines. Please contact Genevieve Horwood at IDPC on ghorwood@idpc.net for more information on this work-plan.

Regional work:

Western Europe

It has been agreed that the IDPC work plan for Western Europe will focus for 2009/10 on producing briefing papers on particular issues and countries. The first of these, a review of Swedish Drug Policy, was published with the January alert. Further briefing papers will be published in February and March.

South East Europe

The South East European work is now well underway with research visits to Serbia, Romania, Albania and Croatia in November 2009 and to Bulgaria and to the Former Yugoslav Republic of

Macedonia in December 2009. Reports of the visits are available from the IDPC secretariat. In the first half of 2010 a regional conference will be organised in order to discuss the possibilities of cooperation between NGOs in the region as well as cooperation with the competent authorities of the countries in the SEE region. The conference will be combined with a one day seminar on the issue of drugs and criminal law in the SEE countries. This issue has been identified as a common concern during nearly all the visits to the region and is something that is being discussed in several of the SEE countries. The aim of the seminar is to exchange ideas and discuss planned or existing initiatives and experiences.

Eurasia

The 3rd Eastern European and Central Asia AIDS Conference was held in Moscow in the end of October 2009. Despite the promise made by the Ministry of Health last year, the government announced that they do not intend to provide funds for the harm reduction programs previously funded by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM). The Hungarian Civil Liberties Union's video advocacy team attended and filmed the event and produced a movie ("Officially Neglected") with a mobilizing message calling people to sign on the petition that asked the Global Fund to extend its funding. A few days later the Global Fund decided to extend its funding of NGO-led HIV prevention programmes in Russia (known as the 'GLOBUS' project) by two years - at an additional cost of US\$24 million. HCLU paid scholarships for 8 journalists from 6 countries to attend the conference and make a report – all of them produced quality articles.

On the International Drug User's Day, November 1, 2009, activists organized a protest in front of the Federal Drug Control Service (FDSC) in Moscow to pay tribute to the memory of people who died in overdoses or drug related diseases. The protesters laid flowers and white slippers (the symbol of death) on the doorsteps of the agency's building to remember the great number of lives claimed by inhumane Russian drug policy. (Watch HCLU's movie about the event!)

The Russian government still refuses to consider the adoption of harm reduction policies. On December 28, 2009, the Russian State Anti-drug Committee submitted for adoption to the President of the Russian Federation a Draft Strategy of the National Anti Drug Policy, which includes controversial statements and omissions that threaten the future of HIV prevention among injecting drug users (IDUs) in Russia.

On December 10, 2009, during the conference co-hosted by the Polish Penitentiary Service, the Social AIDS Committee and Open Society Institute's Global Drug Policy Program recommendations to improve access to opioid substitution treatment (OST) in Polish prisons were signed by the Polish Government.

The president of the Czech Republic signed the law that de jure decriminalizes the possession of small amounts of drugs for personal use from January 1. Offenders are not prosecuted any more but fined or warned by the police. Possession of "larger than a small amount" of marijuana can result in a jail sentence of up to one year. For other illicit drugs, the sentence is two years.

The Hungarian parliament adopted a new drug strategy that was attacked by the Conservative opposition because of its alleged "ultraliberal" approach. The document lays equal emphasis on criminal justice and public health approaches.

The Hungarian Civil Liberties Union has produced a film portfolio on the 2009 activities of its video advocacy program.

Latin America

In December, Mike Trace made a visit to Mexico City to hold a series of meetings with NGOs and government officials. Hosted by Ana Paula Hernandez and Jorge Tinajero at CUPIDH, the itinerary included:

- A workshop with NGOs and academics interested in drug policy reform to discuss advocacy issues, opportunities and tactics.
- Meetings with INSYDE, a law enforcement NGO, to discuss a partnership for implementing the IDPC law enforcement project in Mexico.
- Discussions on the possibility of a Mexican candidate for the post of Executive Director of the UNODC.
- A meeting with the federal government's Attorney General to discuss the implementation of the new law, in particular the provisions on decriminalisation of minor offences.
- A meeting with the Head of the Federal Security Council to discuss the overall federal drug strategy (he was formerly a senior official in the last drug strategy co-ordination structure in Mexico), and the potential for a refocusing of law enforcement strategy.

CUPIDH are now in the process of following up on the contacts made, and ideas discussed, and are planning further meetings in the margins of their conference at the end of February. We are hoping that Tom Lloyd will be able to travel to speak at this conference, and progress the partnership with INSYDE.

While both Argentina and Ecuador continue to move forward with proposals to bring the countries' anti-drug legislation in line with international human rights and due process standards, Colombia took a step backward. In 1994, the Colombian Constitutional Court ruled that punishment for possession of small amounts of drugs for personal use was unconstitutional. Since assuming office, President Uribe has sought to overturn this ruling claiming that it is incompatible with his government's all-out war on the drug trade. After several failed attempts, he finally succeeded. On December 9, 2009, the Colombian Congress approved a constitutional reform that overturns the 1994 ruling. While the constitutional reform does not mandate criminal sanctions, it is clearly a step backwards from international trends to decriminalize the possession of drugs for personal use.

Given the range of drug law reforms under consideration in Latin America, Martin Jelsma at TNI has prepared the attached document, Drug Law Reform Trends in Latin America, which provides an easy-to-read chart followed by country analysis.

Across the world, attention has been riveted on Haiti and horrifying destruction caused by the Jan. 13 earthquake. IDPC member Viva Rio has a significant presence in Haiti through its local office and is working diligently to respond to the crisis. We wish them all the best in these trying circumstances.

The OAS's Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) is in the process of reviewing its anti-drug strategy and action plan, which have not been updated since 1996. A

preliminary meeting was held in Sao Paolo, Brazil in September with the objective of approving final documents at the bi-annual CICAD meeting in November. However, not surprisingly, policy disputes prevented an accord from being reached and the draft documents will be reviewed in another meeting in late February. While the original draft includes references to human rights, the role of civil society, and the importance of basing policy on scientific evidence, consensus could not be reached on including a reference to harm reduction and it was taken out of the draft. Officials involved in the process are sceptical regarding the final outcome of this process.

IDPC member organisations in the region have held a series of key events since last September, including:

Argentina:

Buenos Aires was host to the sixth of the series of informal dialogues organized by WOLA and TNI. The meeting was held with the support of the Argentine Government through the office of the Chief of Cabinet Ministers and the Scientific Advisory Committee and Intercambios. Participants included 38 persons from Latin America, Europe and the United States who are directly or indirectly involved in the current reform processes of national and international legal instruments related to drug issues. Debates centred on three key areas: (1) Reforms in policies regarding the prevention and treatment of problematic use of substances; the future of Harm Reduction programs in Latin America; (2) Decriminalization of possession; limits to and extent of current penal reforms; and (3) Legal reforms in the international arena: the case of the coca leaf.

Coinciding with the dialogue, the three IDPC member organisations hosted an international forum, Drug policy reform: toward a new paradigm, which took place October 21, 2009, at the University of Palermo in Buenos Aires. Speakers included John Walsh from WOLA; Pien Metaal, from TNI; Ricardo Soberón from CIDDH; and Elsa Conde, former federal representative in Mexico. Federal Judge Horacio Cattani was the moderator. The opening remarks were delivered by Roberto Saba, dean of the University of Palermo Law School, along with Graciela Touzé, president of Intercambios.

The Eighth International Congress on Mental Health and Human Rights took place in Buenos Aires on November 20 at the Popular University of Madres de Plaza de Mayo. Intercambios organized a roundtable on “Drug users as subjects of human rights: The right to health and state answers.” The inherent legal capacity and decision-making on the part of drug users, and the role of mental health services, were emphasized in the presentations by Horacio Cattani (Federal Judge and Professor at UBA), Alicia Gillone (Permanent Assembly for Human Rights), Roxana Amendolaro (Centre of Social and Legal Studies, Mental Health Team), and Araceli Galante (Intercambios). Alejandro Corda, researcher at Intercambios, moderated the table.

Brazil:

The Brazilian House of Representatives organized a seminar, Drugs, harm reduction, legislation, and relation between sectors, on October 20 and 21, 2009. Legislators and government employees, in cooperation with international specialists, debated the decriminalization of drug possession and proportionality in sentencing for low-level offenders. “Differentiating penalties between big and small traffickers is imperative, as is tackling the

regulation of domestic cultivation,” argued a representative from the Workers’ Party, Paulo Teixeira, and organizer of the event. In his presentation, Pablo Cymerman of Intercambios proposed the “reconsideration of harm reduction not only as a public health perspective, but also as a social model based on human rights.”

In addition, Viva Rio organized a number of events including the Brazilian Commission on Drugs and Democracy’s second meeting on public security issues held in Rio de Janeiro on October 23, and a workshop with youth and young leaders to hear their voices on the issues related to drug Policy held in Rio on December 8.

Chile:

“Chile must move toward drug policies that place emphasis on health, not punishment; for the same reason they should generate inclusive policies for alcohol and drug users, to overcome the stigmas of being sick or addicted.” Using this statement as a premise, the Chilean Harm Reduction Network (RECHDA) met on October 27 and 28 during the seminar, Strategies of Harm Reduction: Policy, Drugs, and Citizenship, that took place in the auditorium of the School of Psychology at the Diego Portales University. The Chilean Harm Reduction Network has requested to become a member of the IDPC.

One month later, between November 27 and 29, the National School for Studies and Training on the Treatment of Addictions and Associated Critical Conditions (EFAD) and the National Pastoral on Alcoholism and Drug Addiction – both of Chile – organized the Fifth National Meeting of Networks in Punta de Tralca. The groups are part of the American Network for Intervention in Situations of Social Suffering (RAISSS).

Paraguay:

Toward a new policy on drugs was the title of the conference that took place in the National Congressional Auditorium in the city of Asunción on December 2, 2009. House of Representatives president Enrique Salyn Buzarquies C. and Parliament member Elvis Balbuena delivered the opening remarks of the meeting. Among the invited international guests were the Brazilian Ministry of Justice representative Carolina Dzimidas Haber, Ricardo Soberón of CIDDH, Ilona Szabó from the Latin American Drug and Democracy Initiative, and the president of Intercambios, Graciela Touzé.

Peru:

The Fifth Latin American Forum on HIV/AIDS took place in Lima, Peru from Nov. 21 to 23, 2009. Participants explored the close relationship between drug policy, HIV/AIDS, and sexually transmitted infections. A satellite session about “Drug Policies, HIV, and Human Rights” opened the debate about pending legal changes. It was organized jointly by the Caribbean Harm Reduction Coalition (CHRC), the International Youth Network Resources, Information, Support, Education for Reducing Drug-Related Harm (Youth RISE), the Pan-American Health Organisation (PAHO), and Intercambios Civil Association. Among those who presented were Graciela Touzé of Intercambios; Aram Barra, representative from Youth RISE; Marcus Day, coordinator of the CHRC; and Marcelo Vila, Regional Assessor for HIV in the Southern Cone region for PAHO.

At the forum, the regional UNICEF office for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Pan-American Health Organisation (PAHO), and the regional office for UNAIDS presented the publication, Challenges posed by the HIV epidemic in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The report presents a photograph of the characteristics of HIV in the region, as well as how the epidemic varies in different countries. In 2006, in the UNGASS on HIV/AIDS (UNGASS), Latin American and Caribbean countries pledged to reach the goal of universal access for prevention, treatment, medical care, and the support of people with HIV before 2010. Nevertheless, in order to achieve this goal, much remains to be done.

United States:

Finally, a large Latin American contingent participated in the biannual Drug Policy Alliance (DPA) conference held in Albuquerque from November 11 to 14, 2009. With support from the Angelica Foundation and OSI, CUPIDH organized a delegation from Mexico, Psycotropicus brought a delegation from Brazil and Intercambios organized the participation of approximately 10 additional delegates from other South American countries. The panel, "Confronting the U.S. War on Drugs in Latin America: Local and Regional Strategies," filled the conference room, illustrating more interest in the region than at previous DPA conferences. The Latin American participants also organized an informal meeting to share experiences and strengthen communication on drug policy reform issues.

Upcoming events include:

International Seminar, Reforms in Drug Legislation in Latin America, to be held in Lima, Peru on February 8, organized by WOLA, TNI and CIDDH. That evening the Drugs and Democracy Commission will present its report in Lima, Peru.

International Seminar, Latin America in the Crossroad of International Drug Policy, organized by CUIPHD and to take place between Feb. 22 and 25, 2009 in Mexico D.F..

Satellite session, "Drug policy, HIV and Human Rights," at the Central American Congress on HIV/AIDS and STI to be held in San José, Costa Rica in March 2010, organized by Intercambios.

North America

In December, IDPC (in partnership with WOLA and the Latin American Commission on Drugs and Democracy) organised a delegation to visit Washington to present ideas for drug policy reform, and engage in a series of meetings with NGOs and officials. The delegation was made up of Ruth Dreifuss (former President of Switzerland), Jean Felix Savary (IDPC Swiss member), Joao Goulao (Portuguese drug 'czar') and Mike Trace. Fernando Henrique Cardoso (former President of Brazil) joined the group for some of the meetings.

The main event was a seminar at the Carnegie Endowment on 10th December, where an audience of academics, NGOs and policy officials heard presentations from each of our delegation, plus Peter Reuter and Moses Naim from the US. The running theme of the presentations was that the reliance on tough enforcement based policies was no longer credible, and that practical and politically feasible alternatives were available, and had been implemented successfully in many countries. While there was a lively question and answer session, it was striking (and a little disappointing) how everyone in the room seemed to agree

for the need for change. The same theme was pursued the following day by Joao and Ruth in a workshop for NGOs hosted by Sanho Tree.

In terms of bilateral meetings:

- The delegation met Senator Jim Webb to discuss his proposed commission, and how (if it comes into existence) it might make use of experience in other countries. On Capitol Hill, the delegation also met Congressman Mark Souder, with whom it is fair to say that there was not a meeting of minds.
- The delegation had a very timely meeting with the Mayor of Washington DC (on the day that the federal appropriations bill finally passed, freeing him up to pursue needle exchange and medical marijuana initiatives) which gave the space for a discussion how these might be implemented. DC officials also showed interest in viewing the Swiss heroin prescription trials.
- While the group did meet with officials from the State Department and ONDCP, it seems that neither part of the administration wanted to be seen to be formally meeting with the ex-Presidents at a high level. What we were told at the meetings was that the administration is comfortable with promoting a real departure from previous policies, and that their first strategy document (due to be published by ONDCP in February) will include a meaningful redirection of focus and resources from supply to demand reduction. We urged them to explicitly reflect this change of emphasis in their orders to US representatives engaged in international programmes, whether as donors or diplomats who deal with CICAD, CND and UNODC, and the GENEVA agencies.

Caribbean

The Caribbean Drug Policy Forum lead by the Caribbean Drug & Alcohol Research Institute, and supported by The Caribbean Vulnerable Communities Coalition and the Caribbean Harm Reduction Coalition held the first in a series of Caribbean drug policy conferences, The Jamaica Drug Policy Conference on 2-3 November at the Mona campus of the University of the West Indies, Funded by a grant from Open Society Institute's Latin America Program, the Conference brought together government, NGO and academics for 2 days of presentations and discussions on issues related to Jamaican drug policy, cannabis policy, and harm reduction. Presentations were made by Professor Barry Chavannes, Chair of the Ganja Commission who gave an update on progress toward cannabis decriminalization, Dr. Marlyn J. Jones, Associate Professor, Division of Criminal Justice, California State University, Sacramento spoke on medical marijuana and its implications for the Caribbean,

Howard Gough and Ionie Whorms made a joint presentation on Combating Stigma in Harm Reduction Policy and how "Not in my back yard" affects the placement of harm reduction projects in the areas most in need. Dr Winston Delahaye spoke on issues related to drug treatment and psychiatric illness and how the criminalisation of mental illness did nothing to promote the treatment of people with co-occurring disorders. Dr Marcus Day spoke on how HIV was changing the face of drug policy in the Caribbean. On the practical side Kellie Magnus of the Caribbean Media Centre of the university spoke on Making the News: How to Get the Media to Cover Your Issue.

24 participants spent 2 intense days of discussion and stayed an hour and a ½ past the anticipated close discussion the next steps.

South East Asia

Response Beyond Borders held their Second Asian Consultation on the prevention of HIV related to drug use from the 21st to the 23rd January in Bangkok. This event saw the formal launch of the Asian Network of People who Use Drugs (ANPUD) and also the creation of an Asian Parliamentary Standing Committee on Harm Reduction. IDPC was asked to give a presentation on developments in international drug policy as part of the 'Parliamentarians on Harm Reduction' track. This session covered recent developments in drug policy including drug law reform and some discussion around barriers to scaling up harm reduction programmes in the region. There were several sessions that focused on the issue of compulsory drug treatment that is a predominant approach in the region. The discussions highlighted the issue of efficacy, effectiveness and the lack of evidence-base for compulsory treatment as an appropriate model. Furthermore, concerns centred on human rights violations committed in the name of drug treatment in a number of Asian countries.

Thailand:

In January, TNI and IDPC were invited to a seminar at the ONCB on 'Drug Policy Reform'. ONCB is currently chairing a working group on drug law reform in Thailand and Khun Pithaya Jinawat (Deputy Secretary-General) had particularly asked for a presentation from Martin Jelsma (TNI) outlining the recent legislative reforms in drug policies and laws in Latin America. The seminar was attended by over 60 participants, many of whom were senior officials from ONCB, the Metropolitan Police and the Probation Service. The presentation was followed by a lively debate on issues pertinent to Thailand such as the un-scheduling of the kra tom place (a mild stimulant used in the south of Thailand) and the issue of methamphetamines being the predominant drug of choice in Thailand. TNI and IDPC are now preparing a joint work plan on drug law reform in the region in consultation with regional members. The first step has been to commission a desk-based overview of existing laws and policies in the region.

Malaysia:

IDPC held a successful law enforcement seminar in Kuala Lumpur in December 2009. This event had been months in the planning in partnership with Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC) and the Royal Malaysian Police (RMP). A report of the seminar is available from the secretariat. One of the main outcomes of this seminar is an interest in further collaboration with IDPC from MAC and the RMP. IDPC is currently exploring how this work can be funded and taken forward sustainably in 2010/11.

Indonesia:

As outlined in the previous members update, the Indonesian Law No 35/2009 on Narcotics was adopted in September 2009. Since then, aspects of the law has been scrutinised by NGOs and governmental agencies (e.g. Indonesian National AIDS Commission, IDPCR or LBHM) These analyses, which were conducted either in the format of workshops or by textual analyses, pointed out problematic aspects of the law such as human rights, gender issues, legal inconsistencies and possible implementation deficiencies. The outcomes of this analysis are not easily accessible and, if written, most of them are available in Indonesian language only. None of the publicly available reports have confirmed the initial supposition that the Narcotics Law is unconstitutional.

Responses to the Narcotics Law were proposed (which included actions such as a formal judicial review of the law or advocacy letters to the Indonesian government from Indonesian activists, international media coverage – see previous members update(Oct 2009)), but very few of them has been implemented. International organisations and donor countries are unlikely to take direct actions, but Indonesian NGOs are still assessing the options and developing the strategy for a judicial review.

Further to the initial ideas, discussions have started to focus on the content of governmental decrees on the implementation of the law. The narcotics law calls for the drafting and adoption of implementation decrees of various aspects of the law. It delegates these tasks, both explicitly and implicitly, to government agencies such as the President's Office, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health, or the Ministry of Social Affairs. According to legislation, the requested presidential and ministerial decrees must be drafted within a year of the adoption of a particular law, although it is not unusual that the adoptions are seriously delayed. Nevertheless the implementation decrees are important legal tools to cushion the negative impacts of the narcotics law. In most cases the responsible Indonesian government agencies do not discuss and share draft documents with third parties; therefore assuring the best possible outcome imposes a challenge for both the interested Indonesian and international NGOs.

Middle East and North Africa

IDPC co-organised a session at the first MENAHRA conference in Beirut in November with IHRA and the International HIV/AIDS Alliance called "Policy and Practice: From Global to Local". This session has generated some interest in IDPC from within the MENA region and the secretariat is following up on contacts made during the event to start a nascent network in MENA.

National advocacy

IDPC Drug Policy Guide

The IDPC Drug Policy Guide is now in its final stages of production. Many IDPC members have contributed to the editing and peer review process providing critical feedback and important editorial comments. The Secretariat has worked hard to incorporate all the feedback received in the final draft which has now been sent to the editor. We are still on schedule to launch the guide at the 53rd CND in March.