

24th IFNGO Conference - November 2011

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL COUNCIL ON DRUGS



ASIA-PACIFIC DRUG ISSUES COMMITTEE

MEDIA RELEASE

**International Federation of Non-Government Organisations (IFNGO)
24th World Conference
November 2011**

The Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) is the principal advisory body to the Prime Minister and Federal Government and at the request of the Australian Government, the ANCD established the Asia-Pacific Drug Issues Committee (APDIC) to work collaboratively within our Region and advise the government on drug issues affecting our Region.

For a number of years the ANCD and APDIC have been working with governments and non-government organisations in the Region on a range of drug related issues and harms. This work has included the development of a close relationship with the IFNGO which resulted in the ANCD & APDIC hosting and organising, with a number of local partners, the IFNGO 24th World Conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from the 8th-11th of November 2011.

The Conference theme was 'Strength, Unity and Diversity – Time for an International Voice for NGO's' and included a number of significant presentations and events:

- An opening ceremony convened by the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, His Excellency the Honourable Tan Sri Dato' Haji Muhyiddin Bin Mohd. Yassin, the Australian High Commissioner to Malaysia, His Excellency Miles Kupa and IFNGO President-elect and ANCD Executive Member, Mr Garth Popple, which was attended by over 800 delegates;
- A 3 day conference with over 50 speakers from many countries around the world, including the Director General of the Malaysian National Anti-Drug Agency, Puan Sri Dato' Zuraidah bt Haji Mohamed, the Indonesian AIDS Commissioner, Dr. Nafsiah Mboi, Mr Gary Lewis from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Mr David Turner from the Vienna NGO Committee, Mr Mike Trace from the International Drug Policy Consortium, Ms Sushma Taylor from the Treatment Communities of America, Mr Anthony Edmonson from Narcotics Anonymous World Services and senior representatives from China, Thailand, Taiwan, Australia, Macau, Iran, New Zealand, the Philippines, UK, USA, Sweden, Vietnam, UNAIDS and the Indonesia Narcotics Control Board;
- The election of Mr Garth Popple, representing the ANCD, as the IFNGO President for 2011-2013;

- The election of Mr Nuno Jorge, on behalf of OFAP Macau, as the IFNGO President-elect for 2011-2013 and President for 2013-2015;
- The acceptance of proposed resolutions made by Macau to the IFNGO constitution to allow full membership for all eligible NGOs;
- The endorsement of a recommendation from Australia for a thorough review of the IFNGO constitution to ensure it continues to operate at the highest levels of transparency, accountability and engagement with the NGO sector;
- The election of Mr David Templeman as Treasurer of IFNGO for 2011-2013;
- The launch of a new report providing an international legal analysis on the use of corporal punishment by the International Harm Reduction Association;
- Field visits to a government operated treatment Cure and Care Clinic and a PENGASIH (NGO) operated therapeutic community.

Speaking as President of the IFNGO, Mr Pople stated – “This is a new and exciting era for the IFNGO. The successful hosting of the conference with such high quality presentations and involvement from so many influential people from around the world provides a real launching pad for the IFNGO. I want all NGOs working in the area of substance use to join and contribute their views and expertise to the IFNGO. This is imperative if we are to achieve our goal of ensuring NGOs are heard at the highest levels of decision making on drug policy and practice. I am very grateful for the support and commitment shown by the ANCD and my organisation WHOS (We Help Ourselves) to the international NGO movement, as well as our Malaysian local host partner PEMADAM, for their assistance in making this such a successful conference. In particular Dato Kamillia Ibrahim, the Secretary General of PEMADAM and her wonderful staff and volunteers deserve a special mention and vote of thanks. I would also like to thank our partners NADA/AADK, PENGASIH, CERiA and the Malaysian AIDS Council for their assistance and contribution to making this conference a success.”

The Chairman of the ANCD, Dr John Herron and the Chair of APDIC, A/Prof Robert Ali also expressed their thanks to all the speakers and participants and stated – ‘we truly hope that the next few years will see the voices of the NGO community working in the area of substance use become a regular feature of national and international decision making on drug policy and practice. We encourage all NGOs to consider joining the IFNGO when new and open membership categories are formally announced. We are also very encouraged by the Australian Government’s increasing understanding on the important role for Aid development agencies in providing assistance to countries in our Region on drug policy and practices in order to more effectively address poverty and gender issues’

A copy of the speech by His Excellency Miles Kupa is located at: [Speech](#)

A copy of the conference programme can be downloaded at: [Conference Programme](#)

Recommendations from the 24th IFNGO World Conference

Strength, Unity and Diversity:

Time for an International Voice for NGO's

The 24th IFNGO World Conference was held in Kuala Lumpur from 8 – 11 November, 2011. Delegates from NGOS, Governmental and Intergovernmental organizations and from academic and research institutions, coming from X countries met to present and exchange ideas, experience and knowledge on effective responses to problems related to substance misuse. The vast majority of those present were involved with organizations directly delivering a wide range of services including, but not restricted to primary prevention, low threshold, harm reduction, treatment and rehabilitation. They are committed to working to assist people achieve recovery where they gain or regain participation in a fruitful and fulfilling personal and social life. Those gathered at this conference represent a valuable resource to comment on, review and contribute to the development of effective policies and practices.

As a contribution to the continued development of responses to the problems related to substance misuse, from this conference we have noted a number of specific areas and issues which deserve greater attention in the development of policy and practice.

The Big Picture

We know that treatment works and that investment in prevention and treatment can have a significant impact on the health and social well-being of society as a whole. An intensified health and public health response is required.

Prevention and treatment systems need to be further developed. A balanced response is needed which incorporates all elements of drug demand reduction from primary prevention through early intervention, low threshold and treatment services to recovery. There is an urgent need for more evaluation and an expanded evidence base to build on effective prevention programs and to identify new approaches, monitored and evaluated.

Treatment systems need to be transformed to meet the needs of drug users, families and communities. The development of "Cure and Care" in Malaysia represents an example of such a transformation which should be replicated in other countries as a move to replace compulsory detention. The challenge is to go further in providing pathways to recovery and to offering ways of sustaining progress to and achievement of recovery. For this to occur, all relevant government bodies must work together, and with a wide range of civil society organizations, so that stigma, discrimination and punitive measures do not act as a deterrent to effective measures to reduce substance misuse and related problems.

We recognize the importance of community engagement in efforts to prevent substance misuse through education and the provision of alternative activities. We also note the importance of involving those most affected by substance misuse in developing policy and services, including families, community based organizations, those in recovery and user networks. Involving women and children and addressing gender specific issues is an important element in the provision of effective responses.

NGOs

In most countries, NGOs are significant providers of prevention, early intervention, harm reduction treatment and rehabilitation services. In many countries they are the main providers. Their expertise and experience needs to be utilized in the development of policy and practice. They should work together towards the

development of a humane and integrated set of services with the goal of establishing multiple pathways to recovery. The Declaration and Resolutions from “Beyond 2008” provide a common basis for such a development and for engaging with policy makers at national and international levels.

NGOs are in a position to most effectively engage community participation for prevention, but also to challenge stigma and discrimination which can act as a barrier to access to services and to recovery. They need to take up this role to an even greater extent. They also need to develop their monitoring and evaluation capacity so that they can contribute more fully to the evidence base and demonstrate their effectiveness.

Ethics

We recognize that responses to drug related problems are based on the provisions of the three UN drug conventions and that all signatory countries should respect the requirements and intentions of these conventions. We also note that the drug conventions operate within a wider framework of the UN Charter and other conventions, including the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the Constitution of WHO, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and that there should be complementarities between these international instruments and the respective UN bodies responsible for them. We further note the importance of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco and the WHO Global Strategy to Reduce the Harmful Use of Alcohol.

In this context, we consider that compulsory detention under the guise of treatment should end and the resources be utilized to provide evidence based treatment designed for recovery. We reject the notion that addiction is a sign of moral deficiency or criminality and recognize that such views can undermine rather than support effective drug demand reduction and the prevention of transmission of blood borne disease.

The number of drug misusers in closed custody settings has continued to increase. Too often in such settings there is limited or no access to treatment and recovery services but high risk behaviours continue or are initiated. We consider that much greater use should be made of the provisions within the drug conventions for the offer of alternatives to imprisonment

We believe that the purpose of all responses should be the prevention of substance abuse and the promotion of recovery. To this end policy and practice should be guided by the principle “Above all, do no harm”.

Challenges

Many challenges remain in our capacity to respond to the problems associated with substance abuse. The world economic crisis has placed challenges on public and private expenditure. At the same time, there has not been a down turn in the illicit drugs economy. Thus, at a time when our ability to respond is being curbed, the very problem we are seeking to tackle remains and is expanding.

One major challenge, therefore, is to build the alliances and networks which will allow us to pool resources and work together. The separation between providers, for instance between HIV/AIDS services working with injecting drug users and drug treatment services, needs to end so that together we can build pathways to recovery.

A second major challenge is the link between and the impact of the development sector and the drug policy sector on each other’s agenda and work. The Millennium Development Goals are relevant to our work and equitable social and economic development can have immense impact on prevention of and recovery from

substance abuse.

A third major challenge is the rapid increase in the availability and use of amphetamine type stimulants (ATS). However, the majority of services are still designed to respond to the needs of opiate dependents. New and adapted services are required which are attractive to this population.

We face the challenge of developing and maintaining our capacity to build an effective and knowledgeable workforce and require additional support to ensure that the gains which have been made in our capacity are not undermined.

A further challenge is how we utilize new technology, such as social media, to promote health and support prevention and recovery. Exciting new initiatives have been developed and these need to be expanded and evaluated so that we can reach additional populations.

We recognize that the challenges and issues we face present new opportunities for the development of accessible, effective and humane responses. We look forward to working together, with other sectors and with government partners to develop ever more effective to a global crisis.

We call upon NGOs and IFNGO to consider how, in their own settings and within their own competence, they may take forward these recommendations from the 24th IFNGO World Conference in their meetings with government and intergovernmental organization officials and ask that reports on action be sent to IFNGO so that it may provide a coordinated report to the 25th World Conference in Macau, 2013.

A copy of the resolutions can be downloaded at: [Resolutions](#)

For any further details on this conference please visit www.ifngoconference.org or please contact the ANCD Secretariat on ancd@ancd.org.au or (02) 61669600