

Rome Consensus for a Humanitarian Drug Policy participates in the 2009 Red Cross-Red Crescent Youth Camp

23-28 June 2009 - Solferino, Italy

In collaboration with the Italian Red Cross, Villa Maraini Therapeutic Community and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Council on Security and Development (ICOS) participated in the international Youth Camp of the Red Cross-Red Crescent in Solferino, Italy in June 2009, providing two presentations of the Rome Consensus for a Humanitarian Drug Policy project:

1) Thursday 25 June - During the Workshop *Youth and drugs: from being passive actors to becoming a resource for the community*

2) Saturday 27 June - During a Round Table Discussion *A Red Cross-Red Crescent humanitarian response towards stigma and discrimination linked to drug use*

The camp was organised to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the Movement under the title of *Youth on the move: Doing more. Doing better. Reaching further.*

1) Thursday 25 June – Workshop - *Youth and drugs: from being passive actors to becoming a resource for the community*

During the week long event, the youth participants (Red Cross-Red Crescent volunteers aged from about 15-25 years) were asked to attend one workshop per day. ICOS and the Italian Red Cross, the Co-Chair organisations of the Rome Consensus for a Humanitarian Drug Policy had requested the opportunity to provide a workshop on a humanitarian approach to drug use.

The workshop, which was attended by 42 youth participants from all over the globe, aimed to reaffirm the vital role of youth within the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement in addressing the issues of drug use and its harmful effects and associated stigma, underlining the connection between youth and drugs. It aimed to provide young people with information in order to raise awareness about the risks of using drugs, whilst providing information on best practices in drug response programmes.

All the workshops during the camp had the obligation to develop a Declaration and a Call to Action with concrete recommendations to improve Red Cross-Red Crescent Youth involvement in the particular area covered by the workshop. It was hoped that the outcome of the Drugs workshop would be a call to strengthen and expand active participation of youth in addressing drug related problems at community level – though a humanitarian approach and with an emphasis on reducing the stigmatisation and discrimination associated with drug use.

Key learning points at the workshop included:

1) A background to drugs:

What are drugs?

Current Drug Trends

Why do young people start using drugs?

Why are young people at risk?

2) Types of drug use responses available:

Prevention in schools, in families, in recreational environments

Peer education approach

The Harm reduction concept and overdose prevention.

3) What are the main problems related to drug use?

Addiction

Overdose

Stigma and Marginalisation

4) How to implement advocacy activities

How to fight against stigma and discrimination in a more effective way

5) Humanitarian Drug Policy:

The Rome Consensus for a Humanitarian Drug Policy.

Expected results

By the end of the workshop, it was intended that participants would be aware and have a good understanding on the issues of drug use, aspects of prevention, treatment and harm reduction and 'what works' and 'what doesn't work' with regards to the different responses available.

Sections 1-4 of the workshop were presented by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent and staff from the Villa Maraini Therapeutic Community, run by the Italian Red Cross.

Following this Jane Francis from ICOS presented an overview of the Rome Consensus for a Humanitarian Drug Policy- its aims, objectives and principles, as well as a brief history of its achievements. This included information on the Declarations of the Rome Consensus for a Humanitarian Drug Policy and the documents that are available such as the Guidelines for a Humanitarian drug Policy and the EU Guidelines that were drafted to help National Societies to implement effective responses to drug use in their countries. The presentation also covered the European Action on Drugs (EAD), the new initiative of the European Commission that was to be launched the next day in Brussels. The aims of the Rome Consensus have strong links with the aims of the EAD, notably the objective of reducing the stigma and discrimination associated with drug use.



Presentation of the Rome Consensus for a Humanitarian Drug Policy



The learning curve during the day was steep: In the morning, many participants had never really thought about the underlying issues behind drug use and of the devastating effects of discrimination and stigmatisation. By the end of the workshop the group's approach took into account the suffering caused by drugs and a humanitarian approach was adopted by the participants.



Groups discuss what they have learned that day and put down some point to include in their Declaration.

At the end of the workshop, the Declaration drafted by the participants was as follows:



The Declaration is drafted

We want to increase peer education on drugs, step up the fight against stigma and discrimination and address drugs as a health issue not only a criminal one.

The Call to Action:

We call on Governments, the United Nations, Youth Movements, National and international Red Cross-Red Crescent to actively implement a humanitarian approach to drug use.

2) Saturday 27 June - During a Round Table Discussion A Red Cross-Red Crescent humanitarian response towards stigma and discrimination linked to drug use



The Round Table discussion on A Red Cross-Red Crescent humanitarian response towards stigma and discrimination linked to drug use was attended by 21 National Societies of Red Cross-Red Crescent representing countries in Africa, Europe, South East Asia and Latin America.

Discussion was focussed, and was led by with Dr Barra, Founder of Villa Maraini Therapeutic Community, Vice President of the Standing Commission of Red Cross-Red Crescent Societies and Co-Chair of the Rome Consensus for a Humanitarian Drug Policy.

Dr Fabio Patruno intervenes during the Round Table discussion

The discussion was an affirmation from all present of the need to approach drug use without discrimination and avoiding the stigmatisation of drug users, underlining that drug use is above all a health issue that often touches the most vulnerable members of society. *Rapporteurs* from the Youth Workshop read out the main conclusions of the workshop and the Declaration and Call to Action.

In the course of the discussion Jane Francis, representing ICOS as Co-Chair of the Rome Consensus for a Humanitarian Drug Policy, provided a brief overview of the aims of the Rome Consensus and the new European Action on Drugs (EAD) initiative, underlining the principles of non discrimination of drug users.

ICOS and Villa Maraini had made a commitment to the EAD initiative the day before in Brussels and the Rome Consensus team invited participants to make a commitment of their own to the EAD. Information on the Rome Consensus and the EAD was available to all participants during the Round Table discussion and on the Villa Maraini/Rome Consensus 'Market Stall' at the event.

The main conclusion of the Roundtable discussion was the need for continued endeavours to make drug use a humanitarian priority within the Red Cross-Red Crescent Movement.



Red Cross-Red Crescent members visit the Market Stall