

**Get to know one another:
Drugs and Youth in Latin America**

Universidad de las Madres de Plaza de Mayo
Buenos Aires, Argentina
14:00 through 17:30hrs - August 7th, 2009

The **MAIN GOAL** of the meeting was to collect opinions, visions and perspectives of issues regarding current and former drug users throughout the region. The forum brought together young people from different professional backgrounds, countries and interests to dialog and express their concerns regarding drug policy and harm reduction programs. In general, the intention was to collect experiences that help strengthen the regional work of Inpud, Youth RISE, Espolea and Students for Sensible Drug Policy (SSDP).

PARTICIPANTS: A total of 30 people from different backgrounds (Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Unites States and Canada) participated in the meeting. The group was then divided into two working groups (youth and general population).

The main **EXPECTATIONS and INTERESTS** presented at the beginning of the meeting were as follows:

- * Promote regional dialog
- * Compare experiences of drug policies and existent harm reduction programs
- * Learn more about harm reduction programs and what they entail
- * Link drug issues with HIV/AIDS prevention strategies throughout the region
- * Advocate for more research on marijuana and health

Young people across the region -in particular from the Southern Cone- identified some **BASIC NEEDS** in order to better the context in which they live by smoothening the transition phase from childhood to youth and by finding true and real political representation in public forums and political institutions.

What is Latin America lacking in terms of drug policy?

Based on the identified needs and expectations, participants found drug policies in Latin America needed improvement in the following areas:

- * Drug policies focused on young people
- * Educational programs based on complete and reliable information
- * Spaces for participation for people between 13 and 25 years of age
- * Genuine political representation in all relevant spaces
- * Policies that include harm reduction programs and strategies

- * Strong support networks for young drug users
- * The social context in which young people live (including subjects such as education, economy, employment access, health services, etc.) in order to prevent drug addictions and other drug related problems.

Some **STRATEGIES** based on these needs were identified:

- * Create a trusting environment among current and former drug users in order to gain from personal experience and improve team work
- * Utilize peer education as a means to better inform youth regarding drug policy and harm reduction programs
- * Improve communication between family members
- * Approach places where young people have access to drugs, such as night clubs and pubs, in order to provide information regarding drugs, drug use and drug related problems and risks
- * Broaden the harm reduction and drug policy agendas as to collaborate with other movements such as human rights, health, HIV/AIDS, fair labor, migration and unions
- * Identify young leaders from other social areas like political parties, labor unions and the academic communities
- * Build on networks at a regional level to facilitate the sharing of information, processes and experiences regarding drug policies and harm reduction
- * Continue a constant dialog between young people working on drug related issues throughout the region
- * Recognize that for Argentina, neighborhoods have a stronger community sense than university chapters, and provide a more effective route of communication through which to reach young people and affect their perceptions and use of drugs.

For more information please contact us:

Amber Langston: amber@ssdp.org
Aram Barra: info@espolea.org



Jóvenes y drogas América Latina

Reunión de articulación

Los jóvenes representamos el 20% de la población latinoamericana y el 50% de las nuevas infecciones de VIH en el mundo. Una gran parte de nosotros consumimos drogas y tenemos vidas sexuales activas. Todos y todas tenemos derechos y merecemos respeto.

Con el objetivo de aumentar nuestra participación en la política de drogas, te invitamos a una reunión de articulación. Ahí queremos conocernos, rebotar ideas y pensar en nuevas iniciativas regionales.

¿QUÉ? Reunión de articulación: jóvenes y drogas

¿CUÁNDO? 7 Agosto, de 15 a 17 hrs.

¿DÓNDE? *Universidad de las Madres de Plaza de Mayo - Hipólito Irigoyen 1584, Sede 1, 1er piso, Aula por determinar*

Información con Aram Barra y Amber Langston en info@espolea.org