

## **DECLARATION ON YOUTH ENGAGEMENT FOR A NEW HUMANITARIAN DRUG POLICY**

During the Regional Training Workshop on “Youth Engagement in the Field of Drug Abuse ” held in Malindi, Kenya from 8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> May 2017, we the youth volunteers of RC/RC from Kenya, South Africa, Seychelles NSs became aware of the importance of engaging ourselves in the drug abuse issue that all the countries in the world are facing.

We realized that there is a wide gap in how the worldwide phenomenon of drug abuse is interpreted and understood by the old and by the new generations and how people who have the power do not understand how deep is the problem and how the existing policies do not respond to the needs of the people using drugs. All the strategies aimed to criminalize the phenomenon have caused great damages through the so called “war on drugs” which has quickly become a “war on drug addicts” producing further damages, human suffering, and human rights violations.

Instead of war on drugs we unanimously support a humanitarian drug policy based on compassion and respect of the human rights.

Substance abuse is both a taboo and a reality in our communities, for that reason we want to contribute to tackling this humanitarian challenge throughout our youth leadership and commitment and raise a wider awareness on this issue within our NS and our governments.

It is evidence-based that substance abuse is not a choice, for this reason we want to contribute to be a resource in our NS and in our countries for providing peer support to those of our fellows who need to be brought to a safe place.

We want to elevate and update the key role of the RC/RC in protecting human dignity.

For this reason we want to commit ourselves to:

- Build a Task Force on Drug Abuse within the NS to start training and campaign for volunteers
- Develop education Tool such as Blogs and Vlogs to raise awareness
- Involve community leaders (elders, chief of the villages, counsellors, national assembly) and religious leaders and keep a consistent relationship with them
- Organize Social and Health Campaign on Drug Abuse, Hep C, HIV/AIDS, Stigma targeting the community (distributing condoms, testing)
- Mapping existing Youth clubs and participate to local, national and international youth meetings
- Organize activities in schools involving both teachers and students (awareness raising on the issue, debate, peer education, counselling)
- Provide external education and informal education targeting out of school youth, street youth and youth living in slums through Mobile Youth Camps (MYC)

In order to carry out the above mentioned activities through a holistic approach on this issue, we ask to our NS to support us in:

- ➔ Facilitation of access and involvement in the health and social departments to conduct research and data collection
- ➔ Provision of cameras in order to shoot videos for the creation of a Vlog, hardware and software for editing, and internet for publishing the materials
- ➔ Provision of the necessary equipment for organizing trainings for the volunteers through the peer education methodology
- ➔ Provision of the necessary equipment in order to carry out MYC
- ➔ Increase attention and enhance discussion on this topic during the RC/RC Movement official meetings in order to revise and amend the Resolution on Drug Abuse that was last edited in 1986

In order to implement the above listed activities, we ask public authorities to:

- Treat drug users as sick people and not criminals: they should be referred to rehabilitation centres instead of prison
- Provide specific services for drug users inside prisons, such as opioid substitution treatment (methadone) and psycho-social support
- Establish a referral system between prisons, health services and csos to ensure follow up and continuation of services for drug users after release from prison
- Conduct research and surveys to collect data on the drug abuse situation in the community, collaborating with CSOs working in the field
- Impose heavy fines on drug traffickers and use this money for treatment and rehabilitation services
- Consider stigma, discrimination and violence against drug users as an offence
- Encourage local production of methadone, in order to reduce costs, increase the number of clients and improve economy of the country
- Decentralize services for drug users in order for them to have easy access to the facilities
- Facilitate the social inclusion of drug users through the provision of vocational skills training, income generating activities and scholarships
- Include harm reduction strategy in the national drug policies and allocate specific budget for these programmes
- Ensure drug users equal access to criminal justice system like any other offender (no beaten up, no assault, no arbitrary arrest)
- Include drug abuse topic in the training curricula for law enforcement officers
- Include drug prevention in the school curricula, starting from primary school
- Respect, protect and promote the health and human rights of drug users, adopting an humanitarian drug policy



With the Financial Support of:

