



PRESS RELEASE

Paradigma Coalition Launched First Exhibition: "We Need to Talk About Drugs (Policy)" at the UN Civil Society Conference in Nairobi, Kenya

Nairobi, Kenya – May 9-10, 2024 – The Paradigma Coalition proudly held the exhibition, "We Need to Talk About Drugs (Policy)" at the United Nations Civil Society Conference in Nairobi, Kenya, on May 9th and 10th, 2024. This powerful and thought-provoking exhibition aimed to ignite crucial conversations about the global impact of current drug policies.

The UN Civil Society Conference served as a critical platform leading up to the Summit of the Future, a significant global event focusing on addressing the most pressing challenges of our time. The themes and discussions at the conference, including those highlighted by the Paradigma Coalition's exhibition, will directly feed into the agenda of the Summit of the Future, which will take place in New York in September 2024. This alignment aims to ensure that the voices and perspectives of civil society, especially those of young people, are integrated into shaping a more sustainable, equitable, and inclusive global policy framework.



Isaac Olushola, YouthRISE's Programme Assistant & Capacity Building Officer overseeing Paradigma's Exhibition during the UN CSC

About the Exhibition:

Each year, the world spends over USD 100 billion on drug law enforcement. These laws, rooted in punitive approaches, have fueled the "war on drugs," leading to harsh consequences for people, communities, and the environment. Despite their long-standing presence, these policies have failed to reduce drug use or sales, instead fostering human rights abuses, increasing cases of HIV and hepatitis, and causing countless unnecessary deaths.

The exhibition shed light on these critical issues through a blend of evocative images and poignant written testimonies, all contributed by young people aged 18-30 from around the world. These personal stories illustrated the profound and often detrimental impact of drug policies on young lives, highlighting the need for a shift towards more compassionate, evidence-based approaches.

Why This Exhibition Mattered:

Young people are at the forefront of creating new spaces, practices, and dialogues, challenging existing norms and paving the way for brighter futures. Yet, our voices often go unheard in discussions about drug policies. Instead, we are seen as vulnerable and used to justify harsh laws that end up doing more harm than good.

This exhibition amplified young people’s voices, showing the human dimensions of drug control policies and calling for a reevaluation of punitive approaches. By intertwining diverse narratives, "We Need to Talk About Drugs (Policy)" sparked meaningful conversations and nurtured empathy for those affected by the war on drugs. It emphasized the connection between drug policies, sustainable development, and human rights, advocating for inclusive, compassionate, and comprehensive policy reforms.



Paradigma Exhibition, in highlight, the picture and story of Fran, from Malaysia, who was incarcerated as a young person and was standing on death row for drug offenses. He was recently released due to the work of Hayat, a local human rights organization.

About Paradigma Coalition:

The Paradigma Coalition is a global network of youth-led and youth-focused organizations, alongside young people who use drugs. The coalition is dedicated to amplifying the voices of young people and advocating for an evidence-based, compassionate, and inclusive approach to drug policy reform, centered on harm reduction, human rights, and sustainable development.

Invitation to Reflect and Act:

Through this exhibition, the Paradigma Coalition invited attendees to reflect on the human cost of punitive drug policies and to advocate for a more compassionate and equitable approach. The curated selection of photographs and images offered a rich tapestry of identities and perspectives, with contributors sharing personal portraits, anonymous photographs, or self-made artwork.

Join Us:

The Paradigma Coalition welcomed all attendees of the UN Civil Society Conference to experience "We Need to Talk About Drugs (Policy)" and join the movement towards more humane and effective drug policies. Visit us at: <https://paradigmacoalition.com/>

For More Information:

For additional details about the exhibition or media inquiries, please contact: rmarques@youthrise.org

With Support From:

Youth RISE, Students for Sensible Drug Policies International, Hayat, Australian Students for Sensible Drug Policies, Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policies, International Drug Policy Consortium, VOCAL Kenya and Metzineres.

