

Implications of Social and Legal Punishments on Women in High Risk Situations Related to Drugs

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3RD COPOLAD II ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The Basis for Success

Education

Hard Work and dedication

Service to God and Man

Local, Regional or International representation

Women = “The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world” - William Ross Wallace, 1865

An Equal Playing Field???

Women in High Risk Situations / Not High Risk Communities

The Situations –

Communities - Urban, Suburban and Rural

Economic access – High, Medium, Low

Educational Access- Prestige Schools VS The Others

Spiritual Connections – Some doctrines define women's roles

Family – Varying Systems

International Drug Control

The UN Conventions guide drug policy

For the Americas – OAS Drug Policy supports

National Legislation – Influenced by external agendas – War on Drugs

Policy was unbalanced – Emphasis on Supply Reduction and Control

Drug Legislation and its Labelling in The Americas

Traditional labels:

Supply Countries – Latin America

Transit Countries – Caribbean

Consumer Countries

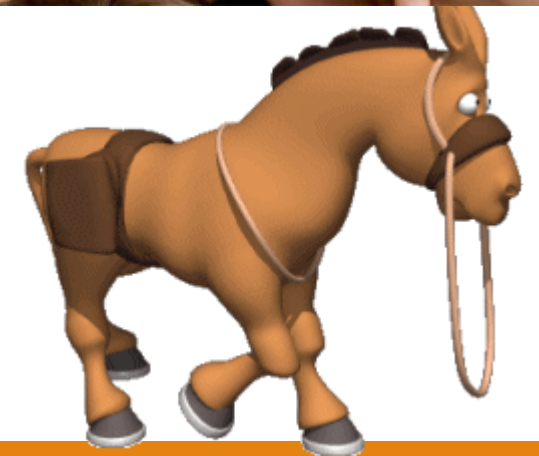
- USA
- Canada
- United Kingdom
- Europe



Impact in the Americas

Consequence

- Increased Drug Couriers
 - Women as Couriers
- Build up of local markets
 - More drug consumers
- Development of micro-trafficking
 - Provision of small amounts for sales in communities
- Increased violence
 - Protection of turf etc
 - Gun Violence
- Increased health related issues
 - Increased local use and attendant health consequences



Impact of Legal Punishments

Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities (TASC):

Lasting detriments of convictions and incarceration

Convictions – Even for minor and non-violent offences – result in lasting collateral consequences

Within 3 years of release from prison, 68% of individual prisoners are re-arrested

Removing men and women out of communities at their peak income producing and child rearing years

Families are destabilised

WOLA – Women, Drug Policies and Incarceration Project

Drug sentencing policies affect women in a number of particular ways. Across the Americas, women are being incarcerated for minor, non-violent, drug-related crimes at an alarming rate.

- In many Latin American countries, up to two-thirds of all incarcerated women are in prison on drug-related charges.
- According to 2008 research from the Pew Research Center, one out of every 100 black women between age 35 and 39 is behind bars,
- One out of every 265 women—irrespective of age or gender—is incarcerated.
- Many have little or no schooling
- Live in conditions of poverty,
- Heads of household and responsible for the care of young and elderly dependents.

They are not leaders or protagonists in criminal networks. Rather, most are performing low-level, high-risk tasks and are sometimes coerced into drug dealing and trafficking by intimate partners.

“The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world”

82% of the women incarcerated in Cook County Jail, Chicago have minor children



Social Justice and Women

Substance Use – A Public Health Issue

Micro - trafficking – Economic Subsistence

Both lead to the conviction of many young men

- Fathers
- Sons

Impact on the home – Male often the major bread winner

Visits to the prison

- 85% of women visit men in Prison
- 70% of women visit women in prison
- 30% of men visit women in prison –
 - Fathers visit their daughters
 - Husbands visit their wives 6-12months into the sentence



Populations in High Risk Communities

Persons in disadvantaged Communities are usually in High Crime communities

Anecdotal information from State Officials have noted:

- Women “gang leaders”
- Women’s role as couriers of illicit arms and drugs

Role of Women in these communities – “It is imperative that an examination of women’s leadership and peace –building efforts be considered from the intersection of roles as

- Leaders
- Women
- Racial and Ethnic individuals
- Mothers

Access to Social Resources

Economic State of Our Countries

- Government's ability to provide social services

Women's ability to access the services

- Limitations of time and access – Urban and rural dwellers

Magistrates and Judges are far more open to contemplate ALL Issues

Alternatives to Incarceration now institutionalized

- Drug Treatment Courts
- Electronic Monitoring
- Community Service Orders
- Behaviour Bonds etc.

Targeted Intervention

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Empowerment



Structuring Empowerment

Improving the International position – 2016
UNGASS Outcome document

- Focusing on Women, Gender and Youth
- Alternatives to incarceration

Implementing balanced interventions

Nurturing a sense of Self – Worth

- Establishing a Council of Women leaders to strengthen communities
- Establishing / Re-Establishing connections
 - Spiritual
 - Educational
 - Professional

Nurturing a strong Family

- Empowering Women as Parents
- Empowering men as Parenting – Partners

Recognizing that women supporting women can strengthen capacity and service delivery

Empowerment Cont'd

Partnering with Communities

- Establishing a community free of drugs and gun violence
- Including Women's organisations in National Committees to plan on issues
- Training in advocacy from vulnerable communities

Nurturing Financial independence

Changing the conversation from Law Enforcement to Public Health

Advocating for sentence reform

Supporting balanced interventions

Supporting women as secondary victims of gun violence

- Designing and implementing programmes in consultation with the women
- Creating and actioning a data base of immediate and dependent family members

WHO AM I ????

I AM STRONG

I AM INVINCIBLE

I AM WOMAN



Thank you

