

Summary of Consultation Session with Young People at the Sutasinee Noin Foundation for Children and Youth, Yasothon, Thailand

22 March 2003

Participants: Youth who are provided services by the Sutasinee Noin Foundation for Children and Youth and other youth from Yasothon who have had past experiences with drugs and drug treatment programs. There were 12 youth between the ages of 16-20. Check accuracy of ages years old that participated in this session.

Note takers: 3 Officers of the AIDSNet-Northeastern office, 1 UNICEF staff from the Thailand Country Office and 1 UNICEF consultant.

Date and Venue: 22th March 2003, 8.30-16.30 hours at Sutasinee Noin Foundation for Children and Youth in Yasothon

Summary of Youth Responses

Why do young people begin using drugs?

- Young people especially begin using drugs to experiment (this response was given by a number of participants and in a summary discussion was identified as the main reason young people begin using drugs)
- Many people begin at the invitation of their friends (this response also received multiple responses)
- To be more productive at work or school
- Because of a lack of information and a misunderstanding regarding the dangers of drug use
- While drug use was forbidden, no one took the time to explain why it was a bad idea to use drugs
- Some people are not strong enough to resist the temptation to try drugs
- Some young people feel it is cool to use drugs
- Some are bored with their lives and feel drugs will make things more exciting
- There is generally very little for young people to do
- Family problems lead some young people to try drugs
- Problems with boyfriends and girlfriends is a reason for some people
- If someone's boyfriend or girlfriend uses drugs, it is more likely that person will start using too
- Some individuals have been neglected by their families; their parents show very little interest
- In some cases it seems like everyone else is using drugs so why not you too
- Some people do not believe drug use is harmful
- It can be a way to get money for some people
- To keep yourself from falling asleep

Why do some young people continue to use drugs for an extended period of time?

- If you use drugs for a long time you find that you cannot quit
- Some people are too lazy to quit
- Other people simply do not want to quit; they enjoy using drugs
- Some people are very bored and have nothing better to do
- People don't see using drugs as something that is wrong
- People have the money they need to continue using
- People tend to get into the habit of using drugs
- The environment is conducive to continued drug use
- People continue to use drugs to get along and earn the respect of older young people
- The drugs are readily available and easy to get
- Even though the government is cracking down on small dealers, the factories that produce the drugs are still operating with support by some civil servants
- The potency of the drugs is so strong, it makes it very difficult to quit
- The media promotes values that make some people that it is cool to use drugs
- Drug use can reduce stress
- People feel they are still productive even when they use drugs
- No trusted advisor to help you consider why you should quit and to help you stop
- Once you get involved with a group of drug abusers there is a social factor that will make it more likely that you will continue to use drugs
- People become afraid that the opposite sex will no longer like them because they are no longer cool
- If a person becomes brokenhearted because a boyfriend or girlfriend has left them, they might continue to use drugs to ease the pain
- Some women use drugs to keep a good figure (but a young woman in the group pointed out that this is not the primary reason most women use drugs)

What are some of young people's general perceptions about drugs (including harm reduction)?

General Perceptions

- Drugs stop you from getting tired
- Using drugs like amphetamine makes alcohol taste better and the effects of each drug last longer
- For both males and females, drugs make you want to have sex more and it makes each sexual experience last longer
- Drugs give you more energy and keep you from sleeping
- Price is a major determinant in what drugs young people use; if you have the money you might prefer to use amphetamine, if not you might use glue; if you had a lot of money you might use ecstasy

- Since ecstasy is very expensive, youth in this area have had very little experience with it, although they have heard that it makes you want to have sex and that you enjoy sex more when you use it
- Overall glue is not so popular in this area
- Ganja is also used by a number of youth and is preferred to glue
- Generally speaking, boys like any drugs while girls have a preference for amphetamines; according to the group, this is due to the fact that girls are image conscious and some drugs make girls appear silly in their behavior
- There are a number of ways to mask drug use so you will not be tested positively (these include drinking a number of commercially available products which - according to the youth participants - confound the tests and render false negatives)

Harm Associated with Drug Use

- One of the harms associated with drug use is getting caught by the police
- Drugs will change your mood and make you angry and unhappy
- Drugs will effect you physically (examples: swollen eyes, numb hands and feet, infected nasal passages)
- Drugs will leave you feel dazed and disoriented
- Needle sharing can lead to problems and needles can be hard to get in rural settings so some amount of sharing does take place
- In cases where individuals do use individual needles, they will still use a common spoon to heat the drugs and draw liquid
- Fake drugs represent a range of additional problems and often result in pain and illness (which passes once the effects of the drug wears off)

Note: *Overall the group did not seem to be very knowledgeable either about HIV/AIDS in general or about the specific relationship between drug use and HIV/AIDS*

Why do some young people stop using drugs?

- Many people through a process of maturity come to believe that drugs will ruin their future and hurt their family (this was identified by the group as the number one reason that young people stop using drugs)
- Some see that drugs will lead them nowhere in the long run
- After a period of experimentation, some feel that is as far as they want to go
- Others are concerned that continued drug use will ruin their bodies and that they will no longer be handsome or beautiful
- Some people realize that using drugs are not good for them
- Some people come to feel that drug use is no longer fun
- Some people realize that it is not a good idea to follow the images in the media
- In some cases, a person's boyfriend or girlfriend cannot accept them using drugs
- Some people are afraid that their mother and father would be disappointed and upset
- Some parents understand the situation and give their children the support and opportunity to quit using drugs
- Some believe if they keep doing drugs their families won't love them anymore

- Some are afraid they will be caught by the police
- Others are concerned that they will lose their reputation
- Some get regular work and do not want to lose their jobs
- Some cannot manage to get enough money to continue using drugs
- Sometimes it becomes difficult to find an adequate supply of drugs
- While most youth are not concerned what younger people think about them, they are interested in setting a good role model for their own brothers and sisters, so some people stop because they do not want to influence their younger siblings
- Some people are afraid they will die either by use or by the current government crack-down

What are some programs that have been developed to address drug use by youth?

The following were the programs related to drugs that the youth were aware of:

- Workshops and trainings on drugs and their effects that have been provided in the villages
- Visits to the villages from resource persons
- Programs organised by the police to encourage people who have been discovered using drugs to inform on the names and location of other drug users
- Police sponsored programs on the dangers of drug use
- The current government crack-down on amphetamine selling in Thailand (which the youth judged successful by the fact that amphetamine is now difficult to get and that the cost has risen)
- Friends Help Friends groups in schools provide peer education and support
- Therapeutic program for treatment and rehabilitation in detention settings with follow-up periodic reporting to the police upon release
- Boot Camps run by the police and the military
- To Be Number One Program

How effective do you feel these programs have been?

- The current government crack-down on amphetamine selling in Thailand has been effective given the fact that amphetamine is now very difficult to get and that the cost has risen dramatically (from as low as 5 Baht to as high as 300 Baht per tablet). On the other hand, the young people observed that the crack-down is not touching the major dealers, so in time everyone expects things will go back to the way they were before this campaign was initiated
- Seminar presentations and groups are still in an implementation stage so it is too soon to say
- Some youth said that Friends Help Friends programs are good
- Programs that involve sports are effective sometimes but not others in that many people who play sports also use drugs
- No general experience with the *To Be Number One Program* since it is school-based and most of the youth in the group were out of school

What prevention and harm reduction programs would you like to see developed?

- Develop alternative activities to help youth use their free time more productively
- Methods such as boot camps and forced meditation do not work
- Provide programs that teach occupational skills so young people can generate income
- Develop youth camps as opposed to boot camps that emphasize nature, arts and sports; provide opportunities in these camps for young people to learn how to make decisions, exchange views (*like this meeting*), learn to engage in other activities than drug use

Thailand Adult Discussion Groups

Summary of Consultation Session with School Teachers in Chiang Mai Province, Thailand

12 March 2003

Summary:

What are the reasons of the students to use drugs?

The main reasons are:

- Eighty percent of the young people who used drugs or have presented some behavior, which indicated that they use drugs, are from the broken family or single parent family. Other are the students who are currently staying or living with their grand parents feel that “I have a problem”(related to inferiority complex).
- The value exists in the society or community - The young people perceive that using drug is a common behavior, after they have frequently seen this behavior. The perception of this behavior causes the curiosity among the young people to lead them to ask their peers to join together and try it.
- Peer - The young people at this age perceive that their friends are the ones that understand them. They can get the maximum understanding from/among their peers. They have to have the same behavior as their peers to get acceptance form the group. To disappear from the class or hanging around such as during nighttime with their peers or use drug like their friends is the behavior that they do as a member of the group.

Why did some young people stop using drugs? What was the important motivation for them to stop using drugs?

- The first reason is they are afraid to be kicked out of school. The second is that the members of their family have noticed a change in their behavior and realize that drug use is involved.
- An increase in programs on the drug prevention activities and assistance to help overcome this problem, such as various treatment centers and treatment strategies help the young people gain easier to access to the treatment.
- At this school, the students will not be kicked out because they use drugs. Moreover, methods of severe punishment will not be used with the students who used drugs. If the students felt like they face with any problems, then they can consult with their advisor or guidance teacher. The teachers always provide the opportunity for them to change their behavior and assist them in the area that needed.

Why are some young people not able to stop using drugs-they still use it?

- It is a chronic problem of the existing value and the drug use cycle. Some of the young people return home and face an environment where they feel unloved, and where there is a lack of understanding and support between the parents and the young people. The generation gap that

causes this problem can not be solved. Even we have tried to overcome this problem but as long as the problem still exists in the family, the treatment will not succeed.

- Peers -the young people would like to be accepted by their friends.
- Lack of self-confidence and self-esteem, the young people like to compare themselves with others. They feel unworthy toward themselves (inferiority complex) especially the young people who face many existing problems in their families.
- Belief – The young people don't feel confident in the persons surrounding them, such as parents, teacher and etc. They feel that when they discuss about their problems with them, then they will be blamed or punished.
- The parents can not accept the real behavior of their children that they use drugs. This caused the problem becomes unsolvable. Moreover, some of the parents severely punish their children. This causes the children to feel that “My family doesn't accept me”. This type of feeling or attitude will automatically push the young people run away from their home to leave with their friends and be in the group that accepts them.
- Ineffective treatment – Several of the young people would like to stop using drugs by entering to the treatment center. Here, they met friends who also use drugs and they can learn several new methods to use them. They keep contact with one another even after the treatment program had finished, so that they cannot stop using drugs.

What activities have been implemented by this school?

- The intervention activities suggested by key government policy have been carried out approximately once a month. These include training on drug and substance use and a parade.
- This school has developed a policy for the prevention and control of drug and substance use problem before the government gave the order. This school has carried out the following activities; promoting the role of advisor and guidance teacher, training, viewing the VDO, Lifeskills training, and other activities that relevant to the behavior of the young people such as listening songs, group discussion, and etc.
- Promote the *Clear School* or *White School* program to support the children and young people to learn and be able to prevent drug and substance use.
- TYAP has organized training activities that integrated into the regular studying hours. They also help to encourage students to carry out and participate in several activities, such as camping, promote and support the students to produce their newsletter, production of radio spot and etc.

How successful are the activities that had been implemented?

- The teachers have not expected that any of the activities that have been initiated by the government, such as the parade and training, will achieve any results. It is quite impossible for the young people and children to stop using or not to try drugs just because they have participated in the parade. These activities come from policies that they have to follow. However, there is also a duplication of activities and efforts. For example, the Office of the Provincial Public Health may call for teachers to participate in a training session and the Municipal Office may organize a parade on the same weekend.
- Activities, viewing videos, discussions ,or integrating drug and substance use lessons into the regular school hours are organized continuously and as frequent as possible to help reinforce

the information that received. The students learn things from the existing social processes. According to the education provided, the teachers expect that the students will make their decisions not to use drug. There was a case that one student was asked by an older brother to distribute the drugs for free at school. But most of the student refused it. However, we don't know what will happen when they go back home [after they leave school].

- The activities arranged by NGOs, such as TYAP, can help build trust and increase the discussion among the students and with the staff. Moreover, TYAP has encouraged the students to become involved in various activities, such as production of newsletter and radio spots. This brought the students discuss and consult among one another and give opportunities to make decisions to solve some problems.

What problems or constraints are faced by the teachers?

- Because of the workload, teachers cannot provide enough supervision to all students. Moreover, differences in the personalities of each teacher also may cause difficulty for the students to ask for assistance or consult with them.
- For the students, this period of time is the crucial timing of change. They feel confused about themselves. The generation gap and other differences make them distrust adults. They feel fear and are reluctant to consult with their teachers when they face any problems. They also don't want to consult with their parents, but they feel trust with the outsiders much more than their parents. The teachers are not able to reach and help overcome or solve these problems. When the teachers know or realize that there is a problem, most of the time it is too late.
- Collaboration in terms of information sharing between the NGOs that work in the schools, such as TYAP, will help the teacher be able to work easier. TYAP has closer relationship with the students than the teachers, but they haven't shared any information with the teachers caused the teachers have never known any developments related to the students.

What is the future direction of the activities or planning of the teachers?

- The less meaningful activities will be cut off and replaced with Lifeskills development activities that will also help build psychological strengths among the students. The teachers also plan to increase the participation of parents to work closer with the teacher in solving or coping with the problems.
- Promote activities for the students to do at their free time. These leisure time activities will be organized by the students, while the teachers will help provide suggestions or be the advisors. This is a developmental approach and will help the students use their leisure time in a more meaningful way.

SUMMARY OF PRE-CONFERENCE CONSULTATION WITH BUDDHIST MONKS, SANGKHA METTA PROJECT, THAILAND 13 March 2003

Participants: Six monks who are currently working with their communities.

Date and Venue: 13th March 2003, 13.30-16.30 hours at Sangkha Metta office

Summary

What was/were the first reason(s) to use substance?

From their experiences, the young people used drugs because:

- It is cool.
- Peer pressure or influence
- Curiosity
- Combination factors that derived from family, economy and community.
- Lost of mutual support and weakness of family and community networks and support from these. Young people don't know who they can turn to when they face problems.
- Lost of focus or things to do at leisure time.
- Weakness of society and lost of fundamental relationship with the family
- Increasing of individualism and consumerism
- The educational system can not build critical thinking among young people. They are able to memorize information, but can not analyze it. They haven't been taught to ask the questions.
- The weakness of community has derived from the management strategy too, such as the top down policy. The community members have never received the opportunity to think, analyze and find the solutions for their own problems or solutions for the problems existing in their community.
- The drug dealers support young people to change their status from users to be dealers.
- According to the current trends in middle class families both parents are work hard to earn greater income so that they no longer have enough time to take care their children. So several of the young people form the middle class group have entered into the drug cycle as users and dealers. The rich ones and the poor ones will not do this.
- The generation and communication gap between grandparents and children especially the family that parents left their children with the grandparents become factors that pushed young people to use drugs.
- Would like to gain more attention from their parents
- Influence of media and modeled behavior especially from their peers and media
- Increase in alcohol consumption that leads to the use of other drugs.
- The problem of drug use among young people is derived form multiple factors as a result of a weakened society.

- Young people today select and use most of the items because of the brand. Several items that selected are not based on the need. It is the psychological need. Drug use is a psychological issue too.
- Generation and communication gap between senior people and young people in the community caused the young people feel like strangers and can not turn to any person when they face problems.
- Loss of the influence and importance of religion for young people. The young people can not internalize or personalize religious principles and use them in their lives.
- The young people haven't been taught the importance of responsibility, this includes taking responsibility for their own lives.

What was/were the reason(s) to continue using those drugs/substances?

- Return to the same environments/places and meet with the same groups. Some young people meet with new friends in the detention center.
- Pressure that young people face at the detention center can not help them stop taking drugs. Moreover the drugs are available inside.

What was/were the reason(s) to stop using drugs?

- Only few of the young people don't return to use drugs after release from the detention center. They would like to prove themselves (to be accepted by others) toward the community and family that they have stopped using drugs.
- Strong family relationship can help protect young people from drug use.

What are your feedback or lesson learned about the existing programs?

- The current programs haven't developed based on the comprehensive understanding about the problem. These programs tend to target at young people while other related factors (family, community and society) have been ignored.
- Most of the works that responded to the drug use problem have developed based on the concept that the drug use problem hasn't been related to other factors. Other factors on society and family parts haven't been analyzed.
- There is a rehabilitation center run by government sector at a province in the northern region. At the closing ceremony, all young people that participated in this camp became sons or daughters of the governor. The process used to recruit young people and provide prestige status to the young people have destroyed the existing structure and mechanism in the community. This process caused untrustworthy feeling between young people and community members. Several of young people who received this prestige status have returned to use drug. This situation become more and more difficult or unmanageable for the officers and community members. They like the untouchable persons.

What other suggestions do you have for program developers?

- Former drug user can be powerful educators and role models for the drug and substance use programs.
- To provide space and help organize several activities for the young people can help reduce the incidence of drug use in the community. Moreover to help support and counsel young people who face the problem will help decrease the opportunity of the young people to use drug. (Direct experience of one participant)
- Community Therapy is a better strategy than to put young people into the detention center.
- One participant mentioned that in the past, he was so scared that a drug user would be ordained as a monk. He has now changed his attitude because in his personal experience he has been able to help some former drug users with their drug problems and to reunite them with their families and community. Now he is happy to help and support them.
- Acceptance and support play crucial roles in helping former drug users reunite with their families and community.
- They expressed a concern regarding the female youth because the monk can help take care only the male youth. There is a consensus that they should have a mechanism to help promote the role of nuns in this area too.
- The role of the monk in this area should not be limited only at the supportive role for the former drug users. The monk can also help mobilize the community to respond to this problem.

Summary of Consultation Session with Adults at the Sutasinee Noin Foundation for Children and Youth, Yasothon, Thailand

23 March 2003

Participants: Twelve adults from Yasothon including staff members of the Sutasinee Noin Foundation for Children and Youth; a former teacher; two parents; a provincial public health official; a social worker with the Ministry of Social Development; a primary school teacher; a policeman; a community member; and a member of a local task force to eliminate drug use.

Note takers: 3 Officers of the AIDSNet-Northeastern office, 1 UNICEF staff from the Thailand Country Office and 1 UNICEF consultant.

Date and Venue: 23th March 2003, 8.30-16.30 hours at Sutasinee Noin Foundation for Children and Youth in Yasothon

Summary of Adult Responses

Why do young people begin using drugs?

Individual

- Experimentation
- Experiencing a great deal of pain in their personal lives
- Feeling unhappy and insecure and seeing drugs as a way to be happy
- Don't know about the consequences of drug use
- Even when young people do have knowledge, they don't always think about the consequences

Peer

- Afraid on not being accepted by their peers
- Feeling like they are not part of a group so they use drug to fit in with peers
- Seeking acceptance of friends
- Challenged by friends to use drugs

Family

- Problems with their family
- A lack of understanding on the part of parents

Environment

- It is easy to get drugs
- People who sell drugs target young people and aggressively push them towards drug use with appealing sales pitches

- Some young people are deceived into drug use by being told that the drugs are food supplements that will make them strong and look better
- They are deceived by people who will benefit from young people using drugs
- Some boys think it will increase sexual performance

Why do some young people continue to use drugs for an extended period of time?

Individual

- People don't want to take responsibility for their own life
- Some young people are attracted to drug use and like the effects of drugs
- Some young people get addicted to drugs
- Young people use drugs to obtain happiness but it is not fundamental happiness
- Some people continue using drugs out of fear
- They get caught up in the drug experience
- Some see it as a challenge to continue to use drugs
- Continued suffering and pain contributes to continued use
- Denial of the situation

Peers

- Friends keep them interested in drugs

Environment

- Drugs are easily available
- Adult dealers have a vested interest in making sure young people continue to use drugs
- When they want to quit, dealers tell them they will tell their parents and their school
- Lack of available advice from trusted adults
- Society rejects drug users so it becomes difficult for them to re-enter society
- Young drug users are labeled as bad so they feel it makes no difference what they do
- No alternative activities are provided
- Policies to deal with young people who use drugs encourage drug use by expelling them from school for use, transferring them to other schools (where they have no support of family and good friends or just drop out because they don't want to be transferred away from their home)
- The media promotes drug use but directly and by promoting role models who use drugs

Why do some young people stop using drugs?

Individual

- Some are fearful of being killed
- Some reflect about the harm they are experiencing from drug use
- Some are tired of the effects and symptoms
- They develop a more mature approach to managing life
- They become aware of ways to stop
- Some are taken to treatment programs where they stop using drugs
- Some increase their awareness and gain a better understanding

- Individuals become stronger
- Others place a greater value on their life

Peers

- Some young people return to living with others who do not use drugs
- Some receive help from others around them

Environment

- Stricter enforcement at the village level
- Some experience difficulty in continuing to obtain drugs due to increased prices
- Some get involved with alternative activity programs; this can be key for many especially if the alternative activity leads to employment and an opportunity to generate income

What are some of the current programs addressing drug use by young people?

Prevention

- Workshops on drugs for young people at the village level
- The white village project

Treatment

- Therapeutic communities provide individual and group counseling

Supply Reduction

- Seeking information on current users and dealers
- Some receive help from others around them
- income

How effective are the current programs addressing drug use by young people?

General

- It is hard to measure success because there is a tendency to count numbers of participants at programs or in treatment as opposed to measuring impact
- Programs in Thailand have had mixed results; some have been successful and others have not

Prevention

Treatment

- Treatment programs have mixed results
- More evaluation of these programs are necessary

Supply Reduction

- Supply reduction activities have suppressed the supply of drugs
- The current campaign on drugs has increased the degree to which drug laws are enforced

- Dealers are now more wary regarding selling drugs
- Civil servants are now more aware of their responsibilities to address drug issues
- Killing people associated with drugs and drug dealing is not a viable solution; it will create more social problems than the one you are trying to solve

What recommendations would you make to programs that address drug use by young people ?

General

- Not right to blame young people but instead we should strengthen the support for young people in the family and in the schools with curriculum and other programs
- We should not fault young people for their lack of understanding but should use psychology to help young people and their families develop mutual understanding
- Need to overcome the lack of closeness in some families especially between fathers and sons and help families learn to cooperate together more and open communications
- Develop family camps to support families in better addressing young people's drug use
- The media can play a role in analyzing situation and proposing better approaches as opposed to only criticizing current efforts
- On the other hand, let's not just accept what the Thai and foreign press say about the issue; let's engage in a serious study of the situation ourselves
- A study of the situation should include an analysis of key risk groups as well as the key factors that influence the behavior of these groups
- Need to build comprehensive systems at the community level to combat drug use that includes study visits, camps, workshops, plays and group activities
- Programs need to be continuous and not one-off in nature
- No recipe for the entire country, need a variety of approaches
- There is a need for more rigorous monitoring and evaluation of programs

Prevention

- Important to show people the harm associated with drug use and to make them afraid of drugs by presenting a frightening picture of drugs
- Also important to build resistance to drug use
- Individuals who work with young people must be talented, understand the issues, be a good communicator, and non-judgmental
- Create opportunities to mix users and non-users, girls and boys so they can share perspectives and learn from each other
- Conduct public forum events associated with major events such as World AIDS Day
- Provide opportunities to receive input from young people to the end of improving program development and effectiveness
- Provide young people with alternatives to drugs including opportunities to volunteer in the community

Treatment

- There needs to be follow-up and aftercare
- Need to develop more effective systems for monitoring treatment and measuring success

Supply Reduction

- There is a need to make the process more clearer
- Need to move beyond the phase of catching the "small fish" drug dealers and move on to identifying and arresting the major dealers
- The process of "taking-out" dealers has turned policemen into hired guns and this is not good for Thai society
- Consider legalizing use (but not dealing) so police can then focus on dealers
- Need to develop a national system to coordinate law enforcement efforts
- Need more evaluation regarding the effectiveness of these approaches

Summary of the Consultation Session with Young People and People Working with Young People Southern Region, Hat Yai 25 March 2003

Participants: 32 persons, 21 persons who work with young people and 11 young people who have experience with drug use.

I Summary of the session with people working with young people

What do you think about when talk about drugs?

- Young people, because there were a lot of young people that were currently using drugs. They were easy to be deceived and also because their families are dysfunctional.
- Things getting worse because it will cause theft. This will cause trouble for society, communities and families.
- The killing of key informants among dealers and others related to the trade. A lot of people are people are dying because of drugs these days.
- Several problems occurred as consequences such as weakness in health, family problems and social problems
- It destroys the feelings of both users and persons closed to them.
- Young people gathering together because when they gather they will persuade one another to use drugs.
- Newborn babies – currently many children are automatically addicted to drugs because their parents are addicted.
- A dark future – because a lot of young people are addicted and wen they use drugs they are not able to do anything.
- Death – because if you use drugs, it can help you to die faster.
- The demise of the local population because a lot of young people becoming addicted.
- Get something and lose something because you will have a short period happiness and then troubles will follow.

Problems or reasons that led young people to use drugs

- Family problems such as broken family, spoiled child, lack of warmth, understanding, attention and support, forced demands, pressure, poverty, or parents sell drugs.
- Curiosity and imitate the behavior of friends (challenge, would like to know the taste, don't believe when someone says it is no good, learning about it 10 times is not equal to trying it once)
- Drugs could change their behavior to be a “man” (masculinity).
- To prove loyalty to the group

- Misunderstanding that was created by their peers (could have sex for a longer period, could have more fun when you went out at night)
- It was a solution of a problem.
- Socialization
- Didn't have enough income
- To get back at family (vengeance)
- Available (easy to buy)
- Would like to forget troubles and worries
- Be stand out from others

Factors that contributed to the continuation of drug used

- Lack of motivation to get treatment
- Feel good when using drugs.
- Had a lot of friends who use drugs. Don't have any new friends or could not adjust/adapt to the group of new friends.
- Gives happiness and addicted to the taste
- Don't love self or country
- Lack of responsibility among the leaders. Leaders are not interested in solving the problem. Parents do not accept, are ashamed or are afraid that they may lose face and reputation.
- Lack of help, assistance and support that young people can rely on

Factors or motivations that help young people stop using drugs

- Be trusted by others – believe in them, don't be suspicious and try to find faults with young people
- Participation of family members in supporting young people to stop using drugs
- Have the feeling that they are a valuable member of the family.
- For the children and family member - Thinking about the children and other members of the family.
- Health begins to weaken and they don't get the usual high after using drugs.
- The effectiveness of the suppression efforts – they are afraid to be arrested or killed
- They had an idea to stop using drugs by themselves
- They felt love in themselves and their family so they would like to improve themselves (made themselves better)
- Family and society accept and forgive them. They are not discriminated against and are allowed to participate in family and community activities.
- They would like to practice/follow the religious principles.

Problems and obstacles faced by young people when they stopped using drugs

- They would behave/act aggressively after they had used drugs for a long time.
- They mental health became weak
- They were involuntary/forced to quit.

- They could stand the symptoms related to drugs and the physical suffering related to withdrawal.
- They were not trusted or supported by others closed to them
- They didn't believe in the treatment and thought that they would return to use drugs again. They didn't make a commitment to staying at the treatment center.
- The assistance that provided to the young people did not reflect their needs. They [the staff] didn't know the real problems of the drug users.

Problems or reasons that caused the relapse among young people

- They don't change their attitudes about drugs, they still think that using drugs will help them solve all their problems.
- The socioeconomic situation is worsening.
- The works or services for drug users are not comprehensively or continuously provided.
- They didn't accept treatment or do not attend the full course of treatment.
- Lack of motivation from family members. Family members are still suspicious of the young people. The parents have high expectations of the young people. The parents like to compare the young people to others.
- The young people feel stressed and feel hurt
- The government sector wants to see outcomes rather than sincerely putting their efforts into this area (quality)
- The responses of family and society after the young people have undergone treatment (would not provide opportunities in many areas).
- They didn't realize the negative consequences of drugs.

What do think about the efforts or policy on drugs?

- The current policy caused a reduction in the drug supply. It was really difficult to by drugs right now
- I think the government is working seriously on this issue.
- It was good that the property of the dealers was confiscated but the killing of key informants, dealers and others related to the trade is not good.
- I worried that the current action is ad hoc (like a fire on a straw hut) because past actions have been this way.
- They should allow the non-government agencies to collaborate with the government.
- The problems in the chain of drug use have been reduced (The psychological disorders of the drug users are affecting families).
- Anyone doing wrong must pay his/her due. Anyone creating the problem will pay their due.

Feedback/suggestions toward the work with young people who used drug

- Have to understand the feelings of young people and help advise them.
- Need to provide assistance that corresponds to the feelings caused by problems with understanding and attention.

- A trusting relationship with young people needs to be created before they will sincerely commit to treatment.
- Respect rights, opinions, and suggestions on the methods that the young people want to use and provide support to them.
- Provide continuity.
- Accept and allow the drug users to reenter society. Make them feel that they are a part of the society.

II Summary of session with young people

What did you think about when we talk about drugs?

- A mistake in life – because education will be lost from dropping out of school.
- Friends who used drug together – both friends in school and out of school
- Make parents feel sorrow.
- Society does not accept it.
- A cycle that we have seen/experienced
- Need/demand to use drugs – the bone was likely broken out into several parts

Problems or reasons that led young people to use drugs

- Drugs were available at all entertainment places. Go anywhere and they are available.
- Would like to try
- Follow the behavior (use) of friends – Their friends already used it. They would like to be a member of the group and be accepted.
- Have a lot of money and don't know how to use it.
- Family problems, such as quarrelling with others in the family
- Fun

Factors or reasons that contributed to the continuation of drug use among young people

- Would like to try. It is cool.
- The existing/current living condition remains the same.
- Drugs make better friends than parents.
- Family problems
- Lack of emotional support
- Easy to buy
- I do as I please
- Would like to get pleasure
- Society surrounding me ostracized me as a bad person

Factors or motivations that help young people stop using drugs

- Would like to return to ordinary society
- Think about the future and would like to have a good family
- Would like to continue to study
- Drugs not available
- Suppression policy of the government
- Don't want my family to feel more miserable than this
- Would like to quit/stop

Problems and obstacles faced by young people when they stopped using drugs

- Encounter with the same environment and friends who use drugs.
- Would like to use drugs after drinking beers and alcohol (did not get drunk to the desired level).
- Lack of psychological support. When we undergo treatment we would like to have the psychological support of our families.
- Feel ashamed of one's self. Feel inferior. Don't dare to face others in society.
- Don't have strong enough willpower to stop. Always thinking about it and would like to use it.
- Be pressured by others in the society. When looked down upon, one cannot stop.

Factors or reasons of the relapse among young people

- Don't have strong enough willpower to resist temptation.
- Would like to try it just one more time because we think we can stop.
- Use in order to help while reading books/studying (to not feel asleep).
- Weakened psychological state. When encountering problems we don't know who to consult or how to solve our problems.
- We are labeled by the society as "drug users" (druggies)
- A lot of people in the community also use drugs.

What do you think about the current efforts or policy on drugs?

- Too cruel. Afraid that someone may use this opportunity to kill for revenge and claim that it was because of drugs.
- Drugs haven't been eliminated. In 2-3 years, they will be back more rampant than before.
- Expand the treatment center because it can help people stop using drugs.

Feedback/suggestions toward the work with young people who used drug

- Should designate a smoking area in the treatment center because some young people still can not stop smoking cigarettes.

Observations gained from the consultation in the south

- ❖ 90 % of the participants are from treatment centers, both staff and young people. Most of the young people are 16 years old have just undergone treatment for the first time. Only one person of this group that has undergone treatment two times because that person was arrested and is currently awaiting sentencing. Methamphetamines is the most used substance, glue is second.
- ❖ The young people here (in the south) would answer questions but without a lot of explanation. The way of thinking was also less complicated than the group in central region. This group also had fewer experiences with drug use and in their own lives in comparison to the group in central region.
- ❖ About family background of the young people in the south: They received good attention from their families and also got the things that they would like to get. Moreover they also received good support from their families. Their families had never beaten them.
- ❖ The range of time that the young people use drugs is 1 to 12 years and the average duration of use is 4 years. There was one person that had used drugs for 1 year and another one had used drugs for 12 years.
- ❖ Ya-Ba is the most popular drug. The young people like to smoke it because of the taste and smell.

The young people here [in the South] have less opportunity to receive information about drug use, other than in the treatment center, especially in comparison to young people in Central Region. The young people received other information through the forum that discussed about the Rehabilitation Act. They have the opportunity to discuss policy, unfair situations or the rights of the drug users through various occasions organized by Office of Narcotic Control Board, communities, hospital personnel. These forums have not been organized in the South. The young people have not been equipped with information. Even the people who work with the young people do not have wide range of ideas and visions. They don't have a good understanding of the Rehabilitation Act. Some don't even know about this Act. This caused some limitation if the issues that were shared and discussed.

- ❖ The young people mentioned that the treatment center is only a place where they can learn about drugs, but it is not the place that can help them stop using drugs.
- ❖ Even though the family is not the first factor that made them turn to drugs, however the family is an important factor in quitting drugs or preventing relapse. The family should give them a chance after they have stopped, stand by them and support them, provide consultation and advice and be their friends until they become stronger.

Suggestions from the organization that arranged this consultation session

1. Beside the work that targets at policy level, it is important to change the attitudes of the people who work in this area as well as the attitudes of drug users. To increase understanding of community toward drug use is also important, to understand not only about the drugs but also about the people.

2. Working on the psychological aspect of children and young people after they had stopped using drugs or during the treatment process – Organize weekly rehabilitation sessions by a psychologist/psychiatrist or someone who really understands children and young people, to help improve their psychological state.
3. Psychotherapy session for families should be arranged too to help increase their understanding and to prepare them for when their child/young person will return home.
4. The treatment center should increase their interest/focus on psychological aspects of treatment.
5. A forum on the Rehabilitation Act or other drugs related issues should be organized in the south or other region to help the children and young people gain equal access to accurate information.

Vietnam

SUMMARY OF PRE-CONFERENCE CONSULTATIONS WITH YOUTH: YOUNG PEOPLE AND DRUGS VIETNAM, 2003

Background

The ready availability of cheap heroin has led to an explosion of injecting drug use in Vietnam's big cities in recent years. The extent and pattern of drug abuse in Viet Nam is shifting from the rural older age groups to the younger age groups in urban areas. The emergence of amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) in Viet Nam is also likely to have an impact on the young generation. ATS have become available in large quantities in the major cities and in some of the larger provincial centres.

According to the Lao Dong (Labor) trade union newspaper, police reports show nearly 28,000 new addicts recorded in 2002, bringing the total number of known drug users to 140,000. According to the statistics from Standing Office of Drug Control in Vietnam 4,799 of these drug users are children (under 16 years).

According to the new Government Decree enforced since April 2002, all drug users, including those between 12 – 18 years, have to undertake mandatory rehabilitation from one to two years consisting of both manual labour and clinical treatment in centres. Decisions are made by the district chairperson of People's Committees. This compulsory admission is not recorded as a legal offence. It only applies to those young people who have already undergone detoxification in their homes or communities but returned to drugs, and those who have no fixed abode. Previously the minimum age for forced admittance was 18 years.

The government plans to send all known drug addicts through rehabilitation programs by the end of 2005. The Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) officials also plan to send all the city's 20,000 known drug users and 3,000 sex workers to rehabilitation centres by the end of 2002. The decision is taken in an attempt to implement the "three reductions" (crime, prostitution and drugs) campaign announced by the City People's Committee in 2001. The City spent VND 292 billion (equivalent to about USD 19,500,000) on this campaign in 2002.

The increase in the length of minimum stay in the rehabilitation centres initially from three months to one year and then to two years is an effort to improve the high failure rate. Officials say that the national average relapse rate is more than 90 percent. Currently, 97 percent of addicts in Hanoi treated at the centres return to drug use within five years and the relapse rate in Ho Chi Minh City is put at 99. Mass breakouts were reported from several of the centres in Southern Vietnam in 2000 and 2001 in protest of overcrowding and extended length of minimum stay.

There are about 71 rehabilitation centres in Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh City alone has a total of 29 (state run and private) detoxification centres for drug users. The city has expanded old and built new centres to increase the service capacity from 5,000 to 20,000 by the end of 2002. Five more centres are in the pipeline.

Consultation process

Consultations with young people, parents and government authorities were carried out in March 2003 in HCMC and Hanoi.

The consultations in HCMC included two groups of four young people between 19 - 25 years living in the community. In addition a group of ten 2nd year college students and a group of five street educators were consulted. In Hanoi a consultation was carried out with a group of 35 young people aged 11-17 involved in community-based healthy living and life skills (HLLS) project. The total number of young people consulted was 58.

In a poor community of HCMC with many social problems (including drug use), a group of 10 adults representing commune level government authorities, mass organisations and a local social organisation participated in the consultation.

In Hanoi discussions were carried out with three groups. One consisted of 12 parents some with children who use drugs. Another group of 40 officers and volunteers of the Vietnam Youth Association and Women's Union involved in the HLLS activities in five northern provinces. Thirty central level officials from the same two mass organisations and the Ministry of Education and Training were represented in the third group. The total number of adults consulted in Vietnam was 92.

Who are the users/those at risk of drug use?

According to the young people in HCMC pupils and students between 16-22 years are considered most at risk of addiction. Other groups are young people in well-to-do families or young people who do not receive adequate attention and care from their family and young people who have no job - especially those who have migrated from the countryside with low education or skills and are therefore unemployed. Among young people from 12 to 16 years, street children are regarded as facing the biggest threat of drug addiction.

In Hanoi, young people said that adolescents from 14 to 18 years (in-school, out-of-school, more boys than girls) may resort to drugs. Some of them mentioned the age group 20-35 years, including migrants, at particular risk of drug use. Some young people face problems in school or are living in families with problems such as failure in business, family conflicts, divorce etc. They feel sad and neglected and run away from problems thinking they will find relief and camaraderie in drug use, mostly injecting.

Those working with young people vulnerable to drug use in HCMC confirmed that working/street children, student and pupils and unemployed young people as most vulnerable.

The local authorities in HCMC believed that groups of young people most at risk of using drugs are children who are away from home, children of divorced parents and children who are disobedient and have dropped out school.

The parents consulted in Hanoi also felt that drug users fall in the 20-30 year age group and are more often men than women. According to the representatives of provincial level mass organisation, drug use is also increasingly found among young people of 20-30 years. In some provinces 70% of drug users are under 30 years. They include workers, drivers, sex workers (many of whom sell sex to finance their addiction), street or working children and other children both in and out of school. The central level participants considered children and young people, street children, students and sex workers to be among drug users. They come from rich as well as poor families.

Reasons for using drugs?

Young people in HCMC believed that changes in socio-economic situation of families have contributed to increase in drug use. In recent years, peri-urban districts of the city have been urbanised. Many farmers suddenly get a lot of money from selling their land and without a good orientation for development, they spend a lot of money for personal needs. Young people lead a snobbish way of life and get gradually addicted without knowing much about the consequences.

In all groups young people agreed that in many cases children run away from problems and conflicts in the school or family. Sometimes, because of their low education level, young people are lured by their friends to try drugs and after some time they get addicted. The main reason is that young people lack knowledge, caution, determination, ability or skills to resist peer pressure and temptation. Wanting to appear superior to or more “cool” than others, curiosity, aping friends and being neglected by parents was among other reasons that could lead to drug use. The group of parents also linked drug use to unemployment and lack of family attention. Provincial mass organisation representatives and the central level authorities quoted the same reasons. In HCMC local authorities believed that lack of knowledge and care in the family was a major contributing factor to drug use. Also, there are almost no appropriate recreational and entertainment activities for young people in the community.

As one of the reasons that may lead to continuation of drug use, young people described the strategy of drug dealers who entice or coerce addicted young people to “recruit” others. The addicted young person will receive drugs free of charge for five days if they succeed to make a child of a government official at ward/commune level get addicted, for ten days for an addicted young person in a rich family or in a family of a district level government official and for some months up to a year for getting a young person in a city-level cadre’s family addicted.

According to young people and parents, drugs are also easily available. Law enforcement against the drug supply problem is not strict and consistent enough. Many cited that drug issue is linked with different types of crimes. The very people trusted with law enforcement work closely “like hand in glove” with drug dealers as has been seen in big criminal/corruption cases discovered in Vietnam recently. While supply is not effectively dealt with, the measures towards the addicted are very severe.

Comments on current policies and programmes for drug prevention and care

Young people in HCMC spent some time to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the “three reductions” campaign and new Government Decrees concerning drug users in rehabilitation centres.

They felt that these measures help to reduce the number of criminals, the risk for HIV/AIDS transmission, social evils and the tension and cost that parents, communities and society are subjected to because of the drug problem. It provides a legal framework for separating drug users from their environment in order to provide concentrated management and rehabilitation of drug users for a limited period of time.

However, the rehabilitation centres lack facilities and are seriously overcrowded. As a result, trainees¹ with HIV and those who are not infected are kept together, without paying much attention to prevention. Trainees are likely to adopt bad habits when living in a social camp (= rehabilitation centre) environment. Young drug users often have a “could-not-care-less attitude” which makes them easily enticed to do bad things. Staff in rehabilitation centres has to apply a very strict discipline without sympathy and affection because they have to manage a large number of trainees.

Educational approach and effort to make drug users quit their habit voluntarily is lacking. The trainees are under psychological pressure. For example, after the first 2-years of rehabilitation at the centre, trainees are persuaded to sign an agreement for 2-3 more years (This additional period for vocational training, work practice is being piloted in HCMC). A long separation makes the drug users and their family worried and anxious.

Government operational staff sometimes works in a mechanical and inflexible way. For instance, people who have given up drugs are arrested because their names are still on the local authorities’ list of drug users. Meanwhile addicted street children who need and want to undergo detoxification are not accepted because their place of origin cannot be verified in order to complete their personal files that are required.

Currently reintegration into society (follow up monitoring and support for reintegration) after the programme is not effective. Poor coordination among government sectors and low priority for this work among authorities due to other responsibilities were also mentioned as a constraint.

It was also noted that a campaign like this might drive the problem “underground”. To avoid being arrested, addicted people inject in hiding and/or share injecting equipment. According to the group of parents, drug users from shooting galleries in other parts of Hanoi flood into their part of the town in an effort to avoid the social evils prevention campaigns that are implemented more vigorously in other areas.

¹ The term “trainee” is used in Vietnamese to refer to people undergoing detoxification in the rehabilitation centres

Young people in Hanoi commented that they are aware of police checks to carry out social evils prevention. Identified drug users are put into drug rehabilitation centres, but when they leave they start use drugs again.

The group of parents in Hanoi stated that IEC campaigns are conducted by the local authorities and through the mass media. The community comes to learn about the danger of drugs and associated risks such as HIV. Social evils prevention campaigns are carried out, but they are not very effective. Drug users continue using drugs; they keep their group members company and share needles and syringes. In terms of drug treatment, the impact has been low and there is a high rate of relapse.

In HCMC local authorities noted that the managers and staff of rehabilitation centers are overloaded. They are under pressure of having to receive more trainees while guaranteeing security and discipline in the centers and implementing the re-education programme to restore resident's dignity and humanity.

The Government rehabilitation centres are different in terms of staff capacity and the character of the centre. Young people in HCMC shared their experience from such centres as follows:

Some centres organise friendship meetings between drug users and students, information dissemination sessions, vocational training and literacy classes and good opportunities for physical exercise. There are also centres where rules are not strictly obeyed. Trainees under detoxification are allowed to go outside where they can buy non-prescription drugs that they use to get high. Some of the staff is involved in selling drugs to the trainees. Violence and robbery among the trainees is taking place in the centre but the officers are not aware of it. There are also parents who send drugs to their children in the centre. Many start to reuse drugs after they come back home. In some of the centres, enrollment in vocational classes is very low because a training certificate issued by the centre can hardly help them find a job. It was recommended that the certificate be issued by the district vocational training authority instead of the drug rehabilitation centre, as is already done in some centres.

Information, education and communication (IEC) activities in the community were seen to be ineffective by most people consulted. Young people said that they learn about HIV/AIDS and drug use via the mass media, especially newspapers, and friends. Quite a few respondents had gotten some information through school. However, the limitations of school-based IEC was its superficial and once off nature. The most common forms of IEC were meetings, parades, speeches to all students in the schoolyard, quizzes and billboards. The fact that IEC resource materials were scarce was also noted by the street educators.

Mass organisation cadres feel powerless in front of the spreading of drugs and they do not know how to create an interest among people about the threat of drug use. The current content such as campaigns and competitions for "the cultural ward", "the new cultural family" (i.e. those free of the three social evils) do not seem to penetrate well among the population.

Central level authorities in Hanoi expressed the view that although IEC programmes have been carried out by various mass organisations, the message is still general for instance that drug and

prostitution are social evils and people should not get involved in those, young people should say “no” to drugs. Drug prevention needs to be integrated into other programmes and activities with children and young people, including school curriculum. Life skills education to promote safe and healthy living practices needs to be taken to scale.

Views on harm reduction and recommendations for prevention-rehabilitation-reintegration

In HCMC three out of four groups touched upon the issue of harm reduction but nobody was familiar with this approach. The discussion with children in Hanoi on harm reduction was conducted by using the leaflet: “One person, one needle” produced by UN Office for Drugs and Crime and National AIDS Standing Bureau, reflecting the harm reduction messages. The local officials and children liked this leaflet, which provides practical information. These children learn about drugs through IEC activities conducted by the ward authorities as part of the healthy living and life skills education. The children were of the opinion that more such activities were necessary for prevention of drug use.

When asked about clean needles, the group of parents responded the amount of drug that the users can afford is often too small to be allocated into separate injecting equipment for each person. Injections were thus provided for one after another, using the same injecting equipment. Few members of the group were aware of harm reduction. Some proposed that the selling of needles and syringes at pharmacies needs to be stopped to limit drug users’ easy access to needles and syringes for more injections. Others believed that harm reduction would be useful to avoid further spread of HIV. It was suggested by parents that IEC programmes need to be better targetted and more consistent. The importance of more education for children to learn how to protect themselves and proper law enforcement to stop HIV positive drug users from spreading HIV/AIDS to others through injection was emphasised.

Regarding needle exchange initiative, the provincial mass organisations reported that in some communes of a few districts the Health Station and Women’s Union had conducted such activities for a few months distributing injecting equipment. After that, they did not receive instructions and necessary supplies to continue. These officers believed that such initiative could be useful to stop the spread of HIV if drug users have not been able to stop using drugs. It was recommended that IEC for drug prevention be strengthened and that stronger measures need to be taken against drug related crimes.

Central level authorities thought that harm reduction approach is practical in order to put HIV transmission under control, but they were not sure how this could be done on a large scale and expressed the need for high level leadership in this respect.

Young people expressed their concern that the age at which young people start drug use is getting lower and lower. If there is no prevention or early intervention, many young people will get involved in drug use.

As regards alternatives for rehabilitation, family/community like environment (warm shelters and open houses) was mentioned as a good option for young drug users. It is there young people

can calm down mentally, think about themselves and make a good transformation. However, such houses/shelters may face constraints as regards acceptance from the community. It is important that the organisations providing the service build good relationships with the local authorities. If the local authorities are unaware of the existence and goals of the operation, it may hinder the rehabilitation activities.

Acceptance by and reintegration into society for those who recover from drug addiction is not self-evident. After recovery young people fear being abandoned by their family, friends and neighbors, being unemployed and denied by society. Parents should be supported to create a warm family atmosphere, to stand by their children and encourage them in their effort to reintegrate and avoid repeatedly talking about mistakes that the child may have made in the past.

Likewise the community should avoid alienating, criticising and discriminating children. They should be aware of the need to protect children and help children to have an active role in the community. Children should be regularly included in relevant meetings and forums so that social policies would not have top down approach but be responsive to needs of children and young people.

In HCMC the group of local authorities recommended that government should persuade the drug user's family to accept the two stages of the rehabilitation process which consists of 2 years for the first stage (detoxification) and 2-3 years more for vocational training, work practice and working. Among the parents and provincial mass organisations in Hanoi, there were also views that drug users should spend longer time in the treatment facilities for successful abstinence and there should be follow-up support and supervision.

Some members of the group of local authorities in HCMC presented two specific recommendations. One of them was to simplify the administrative process (that currently lasts up to 6 months) for sending a drug user to a rehabilitation centre. The other recommendation was to distribute the list of names of rehabilitated drug users among relevant authorities in the community for closer and better follow up and supervision.

Two participants in the group suggested that compulsory detoxification should be seen as last resort and that more attention should be paid to getting informed consent of the drug user before detoxification.

The following chart summarizes the country consultations.

SUMMARY REPORT OF GROUP DISCUSSIONS ON DRUG RELATED ISSUES

In 2002, the Vietnam Women's Union was supported by UNICEF to participate in the regional workshop on Young People, Drug Use and HIV/AIDS-related Harm Reduction in Kathmandu, Nepal. VWU conducted a session last year with 30 central level officials from MOET, Vietnam Youth Association, Vietnam Women's Union to disseminate the insights learned from Kathmandu as well as to generate discussion and thinking around harm reduction approach with reference to the drug using reality. A series of consultations have recently been conducted with children and young people, parents and commune officers around drug use related issues to feed into the International Conference on Harm Reduction to be organised in Chiangmai March 2003. Below is a summary report of the discussion.

<p>Group 1: 35 young people aged between 11-17 years who are involved in the community-based healthy living education activities in Phuc Tan Ward, Hoan Kiem District, Hanoi (Vietnam Women's Union-Vietnam Youth Association – UNICEF) - March 2003</p>	<p>Group 2: A group of 12 parents of children, some of their children used drugs (These parents are involved in the healthy living education activities in Kham Thien Ward, Dong Da District, Hanoi (Vietnam Women's Union-Vietnam Youth Association –UNICEF) - March 2003</p>	<p>Group 3: A group of 40 officers and volunteers of the Vietnam Youth Association and Vietnam Women's Union from 10 districts of 5 provinces involved in UNICEF-supported Healthy Living and Life Skills Education Project (Quang Ninh, Lao Cai, Lang Son, Hai Phong, Hanoi) - March 2003</p>	<p>Group 4: 30 central level officials from the Ministry of Education, Vietnam Youth Association and Vietnam Women's Union involved in UNICEF-supported Healthy Living and Life Skills Education Project (May 2002)</p>
<p>1. Situation analysis: Who uses drug? In which way? Why ?</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adolescents 14-18 years (in-school, out-of-school, more boys than girls) who may resort to drugs because of the following reasons: to run away from problems e.g family conflicts, school problems, to be curious and want to take risks, to be pressurised into drug use. - Young people, particularly 20-35 years, including migrants. - Injecting is most common. Needles and syringes are found in the neighbourhoods, in the walkways, still with fresh blood. The children and young people who joined the discussion said they are very worried about stepping on such needles. They are very conscious of the HIV/AIDS related risks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people, particularly 20-30 years; more men than women. Drug can be linked to unemployment issues, lack of family attention. Drugs are easily available in various forms, and parents are concerned that it poses threat to children and young people in the community. - DUs from shooting galleries in other parts of Hanoi flood into this ward, following social evils prevention campaigns. This become a headache for these parents. 	<p>In these provinces, drug users include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - children, in and out of school. Many may not understand the danger of drugs. Many others do; however, they do not know how to resist pressures by peer or adults for drug use. - Sex workers who use drugs (many sell sex in order to buy drugs) - Street or working children (may be lured into drugs, use it out of curiosity and get addicted) - Drug use is increasingly found among young people. In some provinces, 70% of drug users are under 30 years. They mostly inject. Besides smoking, sniffing, taking pills. HIV infection among drug users is very high in Vietnam. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children and young people, street children students, sex workers. - They use drugs in such ways as smoking, sniffing, taking pills, injecting. Injecting has increased. - There are multiple reasons why people use drugs: curiosity, pressure, running away from problems, wanting to assert. Drug users are from rich families as well as poor families. - According to statistics by the Police, there are 10,000 drug users in Hanoi, 17,000 in Ho Chi Minh City. MOH statistics indicate 60,000 HIV positive cases as of February 2003.

2. Comments on current policies and programmes interventions for drug prevention; including harm reduction approach.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The children are aware of police checks for social evils prevention. They said drug users identified are put into drug treatment centres, but when they leave they use drugs again. - The discussion with children on harm reduction was conducted through the use of the leaflet: "One person, one needle" produced by UNDCP and National AIDS Standing Bureau, reflecting the harm reduction messages. The local officials and children like this leaflet, as it provides practical information. - These children learn about drugs through IEC activities by the ward authorities, through the healthy living and life skills education activities. - The children recommends that more education activities will be necessary for prevention of drug use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - IEC campaigns are conducted by the local authorities and through the mass media. The community come to learn about the danger of drugs and associated risks such as HIV. - Social evils prevention campaigns are carried out, but they are not very effective. In terms treatment, the impact has been low. High rate of relapse. HIV spreads among IDUs. - When asked about clean needles, they responded that the amount of drug that the DUs can afford is often too small to also buy syringes and needles. Injections were provided for one after another with just 1 needle-syringe. - Not much knowledge about harm reduction. It was even proposed that the selling of needles and syringes at pharmacies need to be stopped. This is because the drug users will then have very easy access to needles and syringes for more injections. Though some believe that it is useful not to allow the further spread of HIV. - It is proposed by parents that IEC programmes need to be strengthened with more consistent effort. - There are also views that DUs should spend more time in the treatment facilities for successful abstinence. - The importance to educate children more, to help them understand and learn to protect themselves. - Law enforcement needs to be in place to stop HIV infected IDU from spreading HIV/AIDS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interventions include: Drug treatment IEC programmes, campaigns against social evils. though the drug trafficking business is increasingly serious, and is linked with crime. - Some support programmes are available in Hanoi on trial basis to provide follow up help to IDUs following drug treatment. However, it was acknowledged that drug treatment is not always very successful with very high relapse. HIV spread among IDUs is fast and concerning. - Regarding clean needs initiative, it was reported that the Health Station and Women's Union in some communes of a few districts (Hai Phong, Hanoi) led that activity for a few months. After that, they were not instructed and provided with needles to continue. - These officers believe that such initiative could be useful to stop the spread of HIV while drug users have not been able to stop. - It was recommended that IEC for drug prevention be strengthened; and that stronger measures need to be taken against drug related crimes. Time for drug treatment should be extended to 2-3 years, and there should be follow-up support and supervision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - IEC programmes are done through the work of various mass organisations, but the drug message is still general: drug and prostitution are social evils which people should not get involved, young people should say no to drugs. - Education of drugs need to be integrated with other programmes and activities with children and young people, including school curriculum. - Life skills education to promote safe and healthy living practices need to be taken to further scale. - Harm reduction approach is practical to put HIV transmission under control, but they are not sure how this can be done on a large scale. High level leadership will be needed.
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