

Section Two
Summary of Country Consultations

Conducted in March 2003

Indonesia

Papua New Guinea

Thailand

Vietnam

SUMMARY OF COUNTRY CONSULTATION YOUNG PEOPLE AND DRUGS INDONESIA

Background

As part of the preparation of the Youth Sessions in the International Harm Reduction Conference in Chiang Mai, on 6-11 April 2003, UNICEF along with its partners in Indonesia has conducted a pre-consultation with young people in Indonesia. The pre-consultation involved 40 young people at Yayasan Harapan Permata Hati Kita (Yayasan Kita), a drug treatment and recovery community center and at a meeting of eight young people hosted by Badan Narkotika Nasional (BNN) a government agency working with young people in drug prevention activities. The discussions were both held on the 17th of March 2003.

Summary of Youth Responses

Part One: Young People's Views on the Nature of Drug Use

Why do young people begin using drugs?

- Curiosity and a desire to experiment
- Lack of information and experience
- Personality types which make some youth vulnerable to drugs
- Poor personal characteristics including poor decision making
- Pressure from self to fit in
- It was available, offered by a friend
- Felt pressured by friends, mainly at school
- Following other people's lifestyles (adopting ready made lifestyles) that looks cool
- Trying to find something new
- Parents used drugs
- Poor communication with parents
- To gain parental attention
- Angry at parents
- House servants were using
- Availability of alcohol at home
- Early initiation with alcohol
- No alternatives to drug use for enjoyment
- Coping with difficulty in sleeping
- Experimenting at first, abusing next, addicted after

Why do some young people continue to use drugs?

Self

- Problem avoidance, such as stress, loneliness
- Avoiding reality
- To get attention, especially that which is not received from family
- Improved ability to socialize
- Liked the enjoyable effects and sensation of drugs
- Felt that drugs was the whole world and that drugs had become one's best friend

Friends

- Wanting to have fun with friends
- Because a significant other (boyfriend/girlfriend) was also using
- Because friends also continued to use

Family

- Parents could not control young person's behavior, provided too much freedom, or are too soft

Lifestyle

- Because it felt right
- Began to enjoy the lifestyle
- Wanting the freedom of self expression
- It gave a sense of self confidence
- Wanting to be cool

The Nature of Drugs

- Did not know how to stop
- Didn't have information on how to stop
- Using became a need; once they started heroin, they had to use to avoid withdrawal symptoms

Why do some young people stop using drugs?

Personal Feelings

- Tired and bored of an addicted lifestyle, tired of being tired
- Stressed out, desperate, feeling guilty and depressed
- Having a will to stop
- Feeling that they have damaged the family by lying, stealing and cheating

Because of Others

- Parents by far are the strongest forces of change that can help addicts find help and stop use
- Most significant others: parents or boyfriend/girlfriend found out and forced them to stop
- Loss of good friends
- Thinking about the negative effects drug use to family and siblings

Risks Involved in Continued Use

- Began to look into the future
- Increasing risk of HIV
- Already have HIV and HCV
- Risks of overdose (already overdosed)
- Risks of getting caught by police
- Always had problems
- Thinking about the possibility of having drug addicted kids
- Life has become unmanageable
- Decline in their general state of health

Financial Reasons

- Difficult to continue to support the habit financially

Part Two: How Young People Feel About Current Approaches

What are some of the options for young people who want to stop using drugs?

Medical Approach

- Attend an outpatient clinic and be treated by doctors and psychiatrists
- Detox through inpatient programs (including mental hospitals)
- Go to a counselor at a drug dependence hospital

Home Therapy

- Cold turkey (isolating oneself at home)
- Geographical move (moving to a different neighborhood or city)
- Substituting the use of other drugs
- Imagining the future
- Finding activities and staying busy

Rehabilitation

- Go to rehabilitation centres (religious, therapeutic community, police rehabilitation, bootcamps)
- 12 Step programs: trying to be clean just for today, one day at a time
- Find a support group

Alternative Healers

- Herbal medicine
- Shaolin approaches
- Shamans

Religious Approach

- Go to a religious boarding houses
- Go to a religious leader to be exorcised and prayed for

What problems have young people encountered in finding help to stop using drugs?

Basic Problems

- Did not have much information as to where to go for help; had to ask friends who were addicts
- The services provided were pathetic and inadequate
- Bad experiences and treatment from providers, i.e. discrimination, stigmatized as addicts
- There were no facilities available that were good for addicts
- No information was ever provided on HIV, HCV, effects, transmission and prevention

Medical Community

- Medical community only knew about giving medicine, conducting detox and tending the body
- Medications are too high in dosage
- Did not provide counseling or information on drugs, harm reduction or viruses
- Doctors do not have accurate information on substance abuse and addiction
- Addicts end up disliking the service providers because their service were minimum and uncaring
- Not professional in providing services
- Testing for HIV without consent
- Providing naltrexone and rapid detox to HCV positive addicts
- Service providers do not really care, only how much addicts pay

Religious Community

- Religious people only knew how to give advice without having information on substance abuse
- Addicts end up disliking the service providers because their service were minimum and uncaring
- Not professional in providing services
- Harsh treatment and violence

Police Related Community

- Violence
- Punishment

What support do young people need to stop using drugs?

- A community that can provide therapy (recovering addicts helping addicts)
- A good facility with a good program that understands addicts and makes us feel comfortable
- The finances to be able to go to proper treatment
- Knowledge and information about addiction as well as on the best programs available
- Patience and dedication on the part of service providers in working with addicts
- Support groups for clients (addicts helping addicts) and support groups for families
- Emotional support from family and significant others, mental serenity and a sense of faith
- Help in gaining the awareness of the need to recover and a clear program to work on
- Aftercare including the active involvement and support of parents
- Support services such as drop-in centers and 24 hour help hotline
- Support from the nation in supply reduction, demand reduction and harm reduction
- Materials that are comprehensive and continuously provided to the public

What are young people's feelings about service providers?

- Resentful, distrustful, confused and shameful
- Service providers are discriminative and stigmatize addicts
- Service providers don't have the welfare of the addicts and young people in mind
- Service providers don't have information and skills and are ineffective in helping addicts thus making addicts feel pessimistic about the likelihood of ever getting better
- Great because doctors give medicine that addicts can mix with other street drugs
- Service providers are annoying and not professional enough to work with addicts
- Angry because they misled addicts with wrong information (i.e. naltrexone and rapid detox as the magic bullet and cure or that a person would overdose if they use after these treatments)
- Annoyed that medications provided created side effects
- They don't provide us with enough time to consult
- Fearful (having had been beaten and sodomized at a religious center and police based center)
- Happy and hopeful about the possibility of recovering at Yayasan KITA

Were prevention or harm reduction messages provided by service providers?

- Prevention messages were never available, none
- No information prior to using regarding effects and dangers of drugs
- Only knew about the types of drugs available to use
- Providers that addicts came in contact with did not have any information about drugs, viruses
- Information received on harm reduction was so limited and vague
- Only knew about overdosing and avoiding abscess, but never followed instructions
- Myths were plentiful (i.e. not necessary to use new needles; alcohol would kill all germs; HIV is only infecting sex workers, squatters; to revive an overdosing addict just inject him with salt)

What advice would you offer to service providers for working with young people?

Prevention Issues

- Seek effective ways to prevent the misguided curiosity of young people
- Prevention must be done before exposure to drugs because once you begin you will not listen
- Programs must move beyond using scare tactics to more effective approaches such as life skills
- Parents need to take part in prevention, providing attention and discipline (tough love)
- Schools to take a bigger part in preventive measures, as early as possible (5th grade)
- Provide workshops at school level, teachers must be informed (most schools are not ready)
- Programs currently have very limited penetration outside major metropolitan areas

Harm Reduction Issues

- Not available and not provided; most young people do not have information on harm reduction
- Service providers do not seem to have information on harm reduction, and never pass on harm reduction messages to young substance abusers when they seek help

Early Intervention Issues

- Help young substance abusers to understand the risk involved with the use of drugs
- Create a healthy drug-free environment in hang out places
- Associate drug-using lifestyle with risk and problems, because most do not do so
- Help young people learn the skill of problem solving
- Provide information on how to stop drug use, what young people can do when friends are using
- Encourage families to be involved and educated in how to intervene

Treatment Issues

- Professionalism in dealing with addiction is still lacking
- Young people feel that there's a huge gap between their needs and the services provided
- Young addicts are distrustful in general, and are distrustful and resentful of service providers
- Young addicts feel misunderstood and mistreated
- Harsh treatments are reported in religious and police settings, while discriminative treatment is reported in the medical communities

How to Prevent Youth from Using Drugs

- Schools can provide age appropriate information about drugs that is also culturally appropriate
- Information at all levels for everyone before experimenting with substances
- Specific goals and dreams for youth - support for goals and dreams
- Provide good environmental factors at home
- Good communication with parents who are willing to discuss sensitive issues
- Use positive peer pressure and allow youth to develop programs
- Greater socialization with other individuals and youth as opposed to interaction with technology
- High availability of constructive, alternative options for youth (parks, community centres)
- Alumni and ex-drug addicts can visit schools with drug information
- Provide positive role models

How to Motivate Youth to Stop Using Drugs

- Highlight the stress and tiredness associated with living life as an addict
- Help young substance abusers see the problems they are creating for themselves and how unmanageable and filled with problems their lives have become
- Highlight problems associated with drug use, i.e. health issues, age, and risks
- Help young substance abusers to look into the future
- Highlight the financial effect of drug use

Young People, Drugs and HIV/AIDS

- Most university students understand AIDS and the relationship between drugs and AIDS
- High school students have little or no knowledge or believe that it is not going to affect them
- Elementary students have no knowledge at all
- Most youth have serious misconceptions regarding the means of available protection
- Most are not properly informed about the high possibilities of AIDS due to IDU
- Many don't know how to protect themselves or understand the proper use of condoms
- Most young people are in state of denial in regards to their vulnerability to AIDS and STD

SUMMARY OF COUNTRY CONSULTATION

YOUNG PEOPLE AND DRUGS

Papua New Guinea

Background

Five consultations among young male drug users and ex-drug users were conducted in five different locations in Port Moresby. The consultations were carried out in the form of focus group discussions among young people aged between 14 to 26 years. The institutions which conducted the focus groups are: Port Moresby City Mission, Jesus Centre - Half Way House, National Narcotic Bureau and Stop AIDS - Anglicare. The major drug the young people focused on was cannabis. The consultations took place on Sunday 9th March 2003. The total number of participants in the consultation was 78.

A Profile of the Young People Who Participated in the Consultation

<u>Characteristics</u>	<u>Number of Boys</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
How many boys had taken drugs	72	92.3
How many boys had ever sold drugs	20	25.6
How many were heavily addicted	16	20.5
How many boys were affected mentally	5	6.4
Gave up drugs and later resumed use	19	24.4
Peer pressure contributed to use	60	76.9
Family problems contributed to use	12	15.4
Started taking drugs at school	33	42.3
Parents reprimanded for taking drugs	72	92.3
Parents reprimanded for drinking alcohol	42	53.8
Number of boys involved in the following:		
Petty crime	76	97.4
Serious crime	38	48.7
Rape	11	14.1
Murder	1	1.3
Number of boys from broken homes	30	38.5
Number of boys abused sexually	3	3.9
Number of boys abused physically	36	46.2

Summary of Youth Responses

Part One: Young People's Views on the Nature of Drug Use

Why do young people begin to use drugs?

- Removes boredom
- Makes life enjoyable
- Cheaper than alcohol (*current users mentioned that cannabis is cheaper than alcohol and this probably had contributed to an increased use of cannabis in those provinces in the country that had banned the sale of alcohol*)

Part Two: How Young People Feel About Current Approaches to Drug Prevention and Treatment

What are some of the current programs that address drug use?

- Opportunities for employment
- Educational opportunities
- Sports participation programs

How do you assess the current programs for addressing drug issues?

- Current programs are only partially effective
- Not working, young people go back to drugs again

What advice would you offer to service providers for working with young people?

- The drug problem should be addressed seriously in all schools
- Schools should establish counseling facilities to help those addicted to drugs
- Young people who are being rehabilitated by the Christian agencies would like young people to be converted into Christianity as one of the steps to stop taking drugs
- Use reformed drug users to assist in rehabilitation programs

SUMMARY OF COUNTRY CONSULTATION

YOUNG PEOPLE AND DRUGS

THAILAND

Background

As part of the preparation of the Youth Sessions at the International Harm Reduction Conference in April 2003, UNICEF along with its partners in Thailand conducted a pre-consultation with young people throughout Thailand. Discussion groups were held in Nakorn Ratchasima, Yasothon, Chiang Mai, and Bangkok. In Nakorn Ratchasima participants were young people under the responsibility of the Nakorn Ratchasima Detention Center who have previously used or sold drugs. Eight youth between the ages of 16-20 years old participated. In Yasothon, 12 youth between the ages of 14-19 years old met at the Sutasinee Noi-in Foundation for Children and Youth. In Chiang Mai two sessions were held. The first comprised eight street children/young people between the age of 15-24 years old. In this group there were seven males and only one female because the majority of street children/young people are males. The second involved a group of 11 young people (six males and five females) who are members of the WY Group (a program that serves young people who do not participate in traditional school activities). In Bangkok, ten young people (nine male, one female aged 23-25) from throughout the Central Region of Thailand participated. The consultations in Nakorn Ratchasima and Yasothon were conducted by AIDSNet-Northeastern Office. The consultations in Chiang Mai were coordinated by AIDSNet-North and conducted by The Volunteer's Group for Children Development and the WY Group. The Bangkok meeting was conducted by CARE Thailand/Raks Thai Foundation. All consultations occurred in March 2003.

Summary of Youth Responses

Part One: Young People's Views on the Nature of Drug Use

Why do young people begin using drugs?

Personal Feelings

- Some young people are curious, want to experiment and don't believe they could get addicted
- They feel lonely and upset because of all the problems that they face
- Unhappy, feelings of not being loved, low self-esteem
- Some young people felt the media promoted the message that it is cool to use drugs
- There is generally very little for young people to do
- Some young people do not believe drug use is harmful
- Some used to feel superior to others
- Some young people are not strong enough to resist the temptation to try drugs
- Some are bored with their lives and feel drugs will make things more exciting
- Some are ostracized by the community (*response from street children/young people*)

Family

- Parents who always quarreled
- Living in a broken home or single parent family
- Bored with parents and feeling unhappy at home
- Family problems lead some young people to try drugs
- Parents show little interest and neglect them
- Even if a parent provides children money, if young people don't feel loved they may use drugs

Peers

- To follow the trends of the group
- To be accepted as a member of the group
- Urged or persuaded by friends to use drugs
- Many people begin at the invitation of their friends
- In some cases it seems like everyone else is using drugs so why not you too
- 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 use

Desired Effects

- To keep yourself from falling asleep
- To be more productive at work or school
- To be in good shape, lose weight, and to look beautiful as ways to increase self-esteem
- Increase energy to dance and stay out all night at discotheques
- To be a diligent person as the diligent person will be loved and accepted by others
- To improve your ability to do things such as sports
- To help increase the time before ejaculation and increase the number of sexual acts

Misinformation

- Because of a lack of information and a misunderstanding regarding the dangers of drugs
- While drug use was forbidden, no one took the time to explain why it was a bad idea

Why do some young people continue to use drugs?

Personal

- Drugs let you release suppressed feelings
- To cope with feelings of loneliness or inadequacy as a person
- They imagine that they can do things that they are not able to do in real life
- Drugs become a way to help forget problems and stress
- Some young people have the money available to buy drugs and are attracted to the feelings and experiences of using drugs
- People feel they are still productive even when they use drugs
- To stimulate their imagination and help them forget their problems and difficulties
- After getting the first drugs for free, they start to buy and/or sell drugs
- Feeling a sense of excitement when hiding from the police
- When using the drugs, our bodies need more and more drugs so we continue to use
- If you use drugs for a long time you find that you cannot quit

- Some people do not want to quit; they enjoy using drugs and don't see it as wrong
- Some people are very bored and have nothing better to do
- People have the money and they need to continue using
- Some people are too lazy to quit
- To be in a good shape

Peer

- To follow the trends of the group
- To be accepted as a member of the group
- People continue to use drugs to get along and earn the respect of older young people
- 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
- To be loved by boy/girlfriend
- If a person becomes brokenhearted because a boyfriend or girlfriend has left them
- People are afraid that the opposite sex will no longer like them or think they are cool

Environment

- The environment is conducive to continued drug use and drugs are readily available
- The potency of the drugs is so strong, it makes it very difficult to quit
- The media promotes values that make some people think it is cool to use
- No trusted advisor to help you consider why you should quit and to help you stop
- Even though the government is cracking down on small dealers, the factories that produce the drugs are still operating

What are some of the harms associated with drug use?

- Drugs can affect you physically, make you weak and lead to failed health
- Drugs will make you get old faster than normal
- Losing your sense of self value
- Drugs will cause hallucinations
- Drugs will leave you feeling dazed and disoriented
- Drugs will change your mood and make you become short-tempered or irritable
- Drugs make you unable to control yourself or hurt others
- Face stigma including a double stigma if you are both a user and HIV/AIDS positive
- Fake drugs represent a range of additional problems and often result in pain and illness
- To be arrested by the police, lose your freedom and have to stay in a confined space
- Some young people understand that they can get infected with HIV virus through sharing needles and syringes or by having unprotected sex. They could protect themselves by not sharing needles and syringes and by using a condom. But sometimes they don't always think about these issues and needles and condoms are not always available
- In cases where individuals do use individual needles, they will sometimes still use a common spoon to heat the drugs and draw liquid

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

Why do some young people stop using drugs?

Personal

- Some get regular work and do not want to lose their jobs
- Others are concerned that they will hurt their reputation
- Some cannot get enough money to continue using drugs or find adequate supply
- Others saw friends who were caught or shot dead
- Some could stop using drugs for a while because they were arrested
- Some could stop using for longer period as they started to see their own personal value, think more thoroughly, grow up to be an adult, and not be so attached to their peers
- Some became aware that using drugs decreased their own personal value or that they would like to do something that they could be proud of

Family

- Some felt guilty for bringing sadness to their family
- Some people are afraid that their mother and father would be disappointed and upset and that their families won't love them anymore
- Some stopped because they wanted to set a good role model for their brothers and sisters
- Some parents understood the situation; gave their children the support and opportunity to quit using drugs and worked directly with them to help them quit using

Peer

- In some cases, a person's boyfriend or girlfriend could not accept them using drugs
- Motivation from friends and boy/girlfriend

Environment

- Some people realized that it is not a good idea to follow the images in the media
- External pressures to stop, such as pressure from the society
- Living in a drug-free environment where pressure to use drugs are not present (such as friends who use and/or problems with their family)

Negative Consequences

- 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 are afraid they will be caught by the police
- Some people are afraid they will die either by continued use or by the current government crackdown on drugs
- Many people through a process of maturity come to believe that drugs will ruin their future and hurt their family

Part Two: How Young People Feel About Current Approaches

What are some of the current programs that address drug use?

Prevention

- Prevention activities such as parades in the community and sport activities
- Pledges to refrain from using and selling drugs, camps and seminars
- Police sponsored programs on the dangers of drug use
- *Friends Help Friends* groups in schools provide peer education and support
- Workshops on drugs and their effects provided in the villages by resource people
- *To Be Number One* program
- Local broadcasts in the school or community

Treatment

- Rehabilitation Centres such as boot camp to increase physical stamina and build discipline like soldiers and live within laws and regulations
- Therapeutic program for treatment and rehabilitation in detention settings with follow-up periodic reporting to the police upon release

Supply Reduction

- The current government crackdown on amphetamine selling in Thailand
- Programs organised by the police to encourage people who have been discovered using drugs to provide the names and location of other drug users

How do you assess the current programs for addressing drug issues?

Prevention

- Seminar presentations and discussion groups are still in an early implementation stage so it is too soon to say
- Some youth said that *Friends Help Friends* programs are good but the group was not sure if all youth feel that way
- 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

Treatment

- While it is good that treatment programs are free, they will not work unless young people enter voluntarily; it will not work if you force someone to go
- Most young people who attend treatment eventually return to drug use since there is no after care or follow-up services and support

Supply Reduction

- 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
- Other young people observed that the crackdown 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

What advice would you offer to service providers for working with young people?

General

- See drug users as good people who have some value; do not look down on them or hold negative perceptions of them at all times; services providers in particular should treat them with respect
- When parents see children using, do not become frantic and send them off to treatment
- Talk to us and try to understand the reason why we use drugs
- Please do not be too emotional or just blame young people
- Involve young people (including current users) in developing policy and program approaches
- Develop ways to increase understanding between drug users and service providers
- The media should present a more balanced perspective of the life of the drug user
- Young people need time to stop using drugs, it will gradually happen
- Do not put pressure but instead give options to them for making their own decisions to stop
- The support of family and friends can play a critical role in preventing relapse

Prevention

- Need to move beyond simple messages such as *To use drugs is not good*. - only providing this message will not help people stop using drugs
- Develop alternative activities to help young people use free time productively and to feel happy
- Provide programs that teach occupational skills so young people can generate income
- Allow young people to participate in activities which will allow others to view us positively
- Develop programs that use positive peer influences to encourage the nonuse of drugs
- Organize a camp where we can share our ideas and opinions like we are doing now. This can help young people stay away from drugs
- Organize a discussion for drug users to share ways that they have [or will] stop using drugs

Treatment

- Have varied periods of time for the course of treatment as per individual need
- Treatment should be on a voluntary basis with a choice of treatment facilities offered
- Develop youth camps as opposed to boot camps that emphasize nature, arts and sports; provide opportunities in these camps for young people to learn to make decisions and learn alternatives
- Methods such as boot camps and forced meditation do not work
- The 30 Baht scheme (a government health provision program) should include methadone treatment since the government classifies drug users as patients

Supply Reduction

- Reconsider the drug crackdown program's effect which forces users to find more money to buy drugs or to be dealers so that they can get free drugs
- Current approaches for supply reduction (such as government crackdowns) result in feelings of resentment and develops negative feelings towards the police on the part of young people

SUMMARY OF COUNTRY CONSULTATION

YOUNG PEOPLE AND DRUGS

VIETNAM

Background

Consultations with young people were sponsored by UNICEF and carried out in March 2003. In HCMC the discussion groups were facilitated by the Thao Dan Street Children Program and the Australian Red Cross Peer Education Program. In Hanoi similar meetings were conducted by the Women's Union. The consultations in HCMC included two groups of four young people aged 19 - 25 living in the community. In addition a group of ten 2nd year college students 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.

Summary of Youth Responses

Part One: Young People's Views on the Nature of Drug Use

Why do young people begin to use drugs?

- The main reason is that young people lack knowledge, caution, determination, ability or skills to resist peer pressure and temptation
- Some young people want to take risks
- Young people use drugs to deal with problems
- To avoid conflicts in school or in their families
- The socio-economic situation of families such as low educational levels, increased income and urbanization
- Young people lead a snobbish way of life and get gradually addicted without knowing much about the consequences
- Some young people want to appear superior to - or more cool than - others
- Some are neglected by parents
- Some use because they are curious

Why do some young people continue to use drugs?

- 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 the ward/commune level get addicted; for ten days for an addicted young person in a rich family or 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
- Many cited that the drug issue is linked with different types of crimes
- Drugs are also easily available
- Law enforcement against the drug supply problem is not strict and consistent
- 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

What are some of the major problems young people face from drug use?

- Since injecting is most common, needles and syringes are found in the neighborhoods, in parks and in the walkways, still containing fresh blood
- Children and young people who participated in the discussion group said they are very worried about stepping on used needles
- Young people are very conscious of the HIV/AIDS related risks of drug use

Part Two: How Young People Feel About Current Approaches

What are some of the current programs that address drug use?

- Young people are aware of police checks for social evils prevention
- Drug users who are identified are put into drug treatment centres, but many times when they leave treatment they use drugs again
- Young people learn about drugs through Information, Education and Communication (IEC) activities by the ward authorities
- School based programs that include healthy living and life skills education activities

How do you assess the current programs for addressing drug issues?

Government Policy

- 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
- There is poor coordination among government sectors and low priority for this work among authorities due to other responsibilities
- Some felt that the new government decrees concerning drug users help to reduce the number of criminals, the risk for HIV/AIDS, social evils and the tension and cost for parents and society
- Other felt that strong anti-drug campaigns run the risk of driving the problem "underground"

Prevention

- IEC activities in the community were seen to be ineffective including meetings, parades, speeches in the schoolyard and billboards
- IEC was described as superficial and once-off in nature
- Young people said that they learn about HIV/AIDS and drug use via the media and friends

Treatment

- Rehabilitation centres lack facilities and are seriously overcrowded
- In the centres trainees (patients) with HIV and those who are not infected are kept together
- Trainees are likely to adopt bad habits when in a camp and in some cases continue to use drugs
- Staff in rehabilitation centres apply a very strict discipline without sympathy and affection because they have to manage many trainees
- 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 resulting in a long separation that makes the drug users and their family worried and anxious
- Addicted street children who need and want to undergo detoxification are not accepted because their place of origin cannot be verified
- Currently reintegration into society after the programme is not effective

What harm reduction messages are provided by service providers?

- In HCMC three out of four groups touched upon the issue of harm reduction but nobody was familiar with this approach
- In Hanoi young people reported that a program on harm reduction was conducted using the leaflet: *One Person, One Needle* produced by the UN Office for Drugs and Crime and the National AIDS Standing Bureau, reflecting the harm reduction messages
- The local officials and children liked this leaflet because it provides practical information

What advice would you offer to service providers for working with young people?

- The age at which young people start drug use is getting lower and lower so the need for prevention or early intervention is more critical
- As an alternative to rehabilitation, family/community environments were mentioned as a good option for young drug users
- Community-based programs that are supported by local authorities need to be put in place and communities must be open to developing such programs
- Society must be willing to accept and reintegrate those who recover from drug addiction
- Parents should be supportive of their children and encourage them to reintegrate into society
- Communities should avoid alienating, criticising and discriminating against young people who use
- Young people should be included in relevant meetings so that social policies will not be top down but be responsive to needs of children and young people