

## Policy Brief-4

May 2022

# Raising awareness about drug use by young people



### Summary:

There are currently no public drug treatment facilities in Nepal, despite significant annual increase in the number of drug users in the country. Treatment facilities are outsourced to private organizations and provided at a cost that is beyond the reach of most people. This means that legal provisions granting immunity from prosecution to those who enter drug treatment are denied to people who cannot afford it. With the majority of drug users below 20 when they first start using drugs, this issue has a major impact on young people. Our research explores the causes of drug use and suggests some key policy recommendations.

### Key Recommendations

1. Raising awareness amongst young people about the dangers of using drug.
2. Expanding access to drug treatment and harm reduction programs at the community level so that services are available without any discrimination.
3. Ensuring that private drug treatment centers provide evidence-based treatment on a voluntary basis, through the adoption and implementation of a regulatory framework that provides authorization, training, price setting, and quality control oversight over such centers.
4. Creating a collaboration between youths, community police, and local government to co-create of awareness programs and materials against the use of drugs.

*This research is part of the [Mobile Arts for Peace – MAP – project](#), which aims to strengthen peace by teaching young people to express their ideas and feelings through the creative arts and by highlighting the need to participate in the life of the community.*

# Introduction

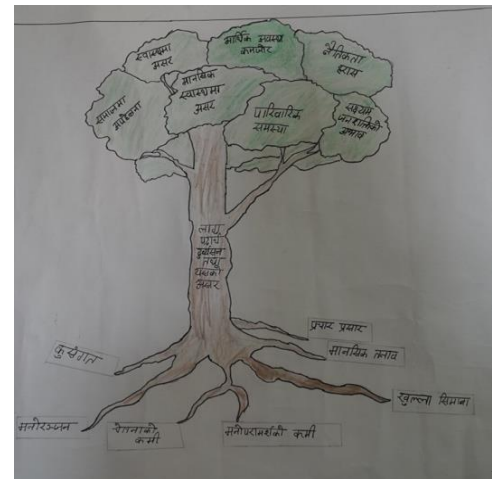
The government of Nepal has not established any public drug treatment facility, despite annual increases in drug users of above 11%. Instead, it has outsourced this responsibility to private actors, who operate so-called drug treatment and rehabilitation centers without training, authorization, or approval. Treatment for drug dependence is available only in private facilities, and at a cost that is beyond reach for most people. Legal provisions granting immunity from prosecution to those who enter drug treatment are denied to people who cannot afford it.

Data shows that most people are 20 years old or younger when they start taking drugs, so this is an issue that is of particular importance to young people. However, despite this significance for young people, there is a lack of youths, local government, community police, and parents against drug abuse, and young people are not involved in policy decisions relating to the use and control of drugs.

Government documentation, including the Drugs Control Strategy 2010 and the National Policy for Drugs Control 2006, envisions a society that is healthy, prosperous, and free of drug abuse. However, the annual increase in drug users clearly shows that more needs to be done to tackle drug use, particularly among young people.

# The research

Members of the Churiyamai Child Club at the Churiyamai Secondary School started their research with a number of meetings – with partners, community youth, youths involved in drug use, the school management committee, and a social worker – to identify and select an issue to focus on. They then used the problem tree – pictured here – to identify different causes and consequences of using drugs. From these discussions, they found a number of reasons, including the company of bad friends, lack of proper guidance by parents, entertainment, lack of counseling, and open borders. The team then created a video, in collaboration with community police of Hetauda Municipality ward no 15., to raise awareness of the issues. This video has helped to create a dialogue between youth and policymakers.



“This program is a good way to spread public awareness against the existing distortions in the society. Since the message is also useful for the meticulous study of young people who are likely to fall into the trap of addiction, I will continue to support and cooperate with the club in the future.”

*Police Officer, District police,  
Makwanpur*

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