

Policy Brief 7

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Youth vulnerability to drug use



Summary:

There is no specific research that has identified or adequately addressed the needs of young people who use drugs in Nepal and there is a consensus among drug experts that drug use is rapidly increasing in urban areas of Nepal. Drugs are becoming more accessible and people are experimenting with drugs at a much earlier age, many as young as 12 or 13. The Sachetana Child Club seeks to raise awareness of the issues by sharing a video they have made exploring drug use and its effects. Their research has also generated the following key policy recommendations.

Key Policy Recommendations

1. Local government needs to mobilize Nepal Police to increase surveillance in unorganized areas.
2. As the school is the primary location for raising social awareness, various street plays and awareness programs need to be conducted with the support of the children's club in the school.
3. Since the incidents of drug addiction are due to illiteracy and unemployment, local government should run an employment program for those affected by drug use.
4. Government of Nepal, political parties, and community stakeholders should to formulate appropriate policies to minimize drug abuse.

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

Drug use can have negative impacts on the social, cultural, economic, academic, and physiological development for the individuals involve. At the same time, drug abuse is also an important and serious issue for the nation which needs to be addressed. For over a decade, Nepal has initiated small-scale harm reduction-based programs such as opioid substitution therapy (OST), needle syringe exchange program (NSEP), and community and peer outreach with the drop-in centers in a few major cities. However, experts agree – and the data shows – that the number of drug users is increasing at alarming rates, particularly in urban areas.

People are now experimenting with drugs at a much earlier age, many as young as 12 or 13, and the majority of drug users were under 20 when they started. This has led to major public health issues related to drug use in young people. Drug use among young people has been attributed to various factors, including the relatively porous open borders between Nepal and India, the influence of the hippy era, poverty, illiteracy, drug availability and accessibility, along with peer pressure, curiosity, and lack of awareness of the dangers involved.

The research

Sachetana Child Club, under the MAP project, prepared video and street drama to raise awareness of drug abuse, using the video and drama to ask a series of questions: is there an answer to what is drug addiction? who is most vulnerable? why do people use drugs? what effect does drug use have on the community? The video and drama were shared with teachers, university officials, community leaders and local policy makers to explore the issues and develop the recommendations.

Under the Mobile Art for Peace project, discussions between teachers of the school and the officials of the children's club led to the selection of public awareness video dramas and street dramas on drug abuse and its effects. Although we have many other social problems, we have selected drug abused because the number of drug addicts is very high. In addition, illiteracy, poverty, lack of public awareness, increasing incidence of drug addiction and smuggling, daily news coverage of drug related incidents are the main reasons for choosing this title.

For more information

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