

Rapid Situation and Response Assessment (RSRA) on drugs and HIV in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka

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**RAS/H13: Prevention of transmission of HIV among drug users in
SAARC countries
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Background

- **Injecting drug use (opioids and pharmaceuticals) has diffused rapidly in the South Asia**
- **HIV infection among IDUs is reported in all countries in South Asia and the epidemic is differential**
- **Sexual transmission of HIV from the IDUs to their non-injecting sexual partners has been established**
- **Developing appropriate responses to this emerging problem requires a rapid situation and response assessment (RSRA) of drug users and their regular sexual partners.**

Aim

- **Study the extent and nature of drug use (demographic characteristics, drug use patterns, risk behaviours, knowledge and attitudes in relation to HIV/AIDS) and its associated adverse health consequences in the countries of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka.**
- **Assess the extent and nature of injecting drug use.**
- **Recommend an action plan to reduce the adverse consequences of drug abuse.**



RSRA sites

Distribution of drug users across countries

Country	Frequency	Percent
Bangladesh	1090	11.5
Bhutan	200	2.1
India	5800	61.3
Nepal	1330	14.1
Sri Lanka	1045	11
Total	9465	100

Bangladesh

Characteristics of drug users

- Age group of 21-30 years (60%), Married (57%), Employed (83%) and Illiterate (27%)
- 28% of the drug users were IDUs
- Among IDUs, lending (43%) and borrowing (39%) of needles and syringes was common.

Injecting Site, Bangladesh



HIV related risk behaviours and risk perception

- **Only 26%, 23% and 15% of the participants reported condom use with casual partners; commercial sex partners; and, regular sex partners respectively**
- **Nineteen percent of the drug users reported genital ulcer in the past year**
- **Only 49% of the drug users believed that they were at-risk of getting infected with HIV**
- **A very small (5%) proportion of drug users have been tested for HIV**

Bhutan

Characteristics of drug users

- **Age group of 21-30 years (50%), Married (16%), Employed (24%) and Illiterate (3%)**
- **19% of the drug users were IDUs**
- **Condom use with casual, non-regular partners (55%); commercial sex partners (55%); and, regular sex partners (37%)**
- **Only a third (34%) of the drug users believed that they were at-risk of getting infected with HIV**
- **39% drug users have been tested for HIV**

RSRA workplan in Bhutan



India

Characteristics of drug users

- **Age group of 21-30 years (50%), Married (48%), Employed (62%) and Illiterate (15%)**
- **62% of the drug users were IDUs**
- **More than three-fourths (78%) of the drug users switched to injecting from non-injecting methods**
- **Among IDUs, lending (51%) and borrowing (46%) of needles and syringes was common**

HIV related risk behaviours and risk perception

- **Only 21%, 23% and 20% of the participants reported condom use with casual partners; commercial sex partners; and, regular sex partners respectively**
- **Thirteen percent of the drug users reported genital ulcer in the past year**
- **Only 32% of the drug users believed that they were at-risk of getting infected with HIV**
- **22% of drug users have been tested for HIV**

Group session with IDUs, India



Nepal

Characteristics of drug users

- **Age group of 31-40 years (66%), Married (33%), Employed (35%) and Illiterate (5%)**
- **80% of the drug users were IDUs**
- **Most (92%) of the drug users switched to injecting from non-injecting methods**
- **Among IDUs, lending (38%) and borrowing (24%) of needles and syringes was common**

HIV related risk behaviours and risk perception

- **Only 46%, 51% and 34% of the participants reported condom use with casual partners; commercial sex partners; and, regular sex partners respectively**
- **Twelve percent of the drug users reported genital ulcer in the past year**
- **Only 35% of the drug users believed that they were at-risk of getting infected with HIV**
- **32% of drug users have been tested for HIV**

Outreach with IDU, Nepal



Sri Lanka

Characteristics of drug users

- **Age group of 21-30 years (49%), Married (52%), Employed (86%) and Illiterate (6%)**
- **4% of the drug users were IDUs**
- **Most of drug users (93%) were currently using heroin by non-injecting method (smoking)**
- **Less than a fourth of the drug users (23%) had been treated ever for drug dependence**

HIV related risk behaviours and risk perception

- **Only 31%, 28% and 14% of the participants reported condom use with casual partners; commercial sex partners; and, regular sex partners respectively**
- **Only 36% of the drug users believed that they were at-risk of getting infected with HIV**
- **16% of drug users have been tested for HIV**

Interaction with family members, Sri Lanka



Common Regional Findings

- **In all countries diffusion of pharmaceutical drugs is a major concern**
- **Most drug users have used licit drugs like alcohol before starting to use opioids and injectable drugs and there is time lag between onset of licit and illicit drugs.**
- **Switch from non-injecting to injecting methods of administration is common among drug users**

Common Regional Findings

- **Among the IDUs recruited, lending and borrowing of injection equipment are common in India, Nepal and Bangladesh.**
- **Drug users in the region are sexually active and have a median of two sexual partners.**
- **Condom use with any partner is low, particularly with regular sexual partners.**
- **Drug users often have unprotected sex with sex workers. Drug use before commercial sex is often reported by drug users.**

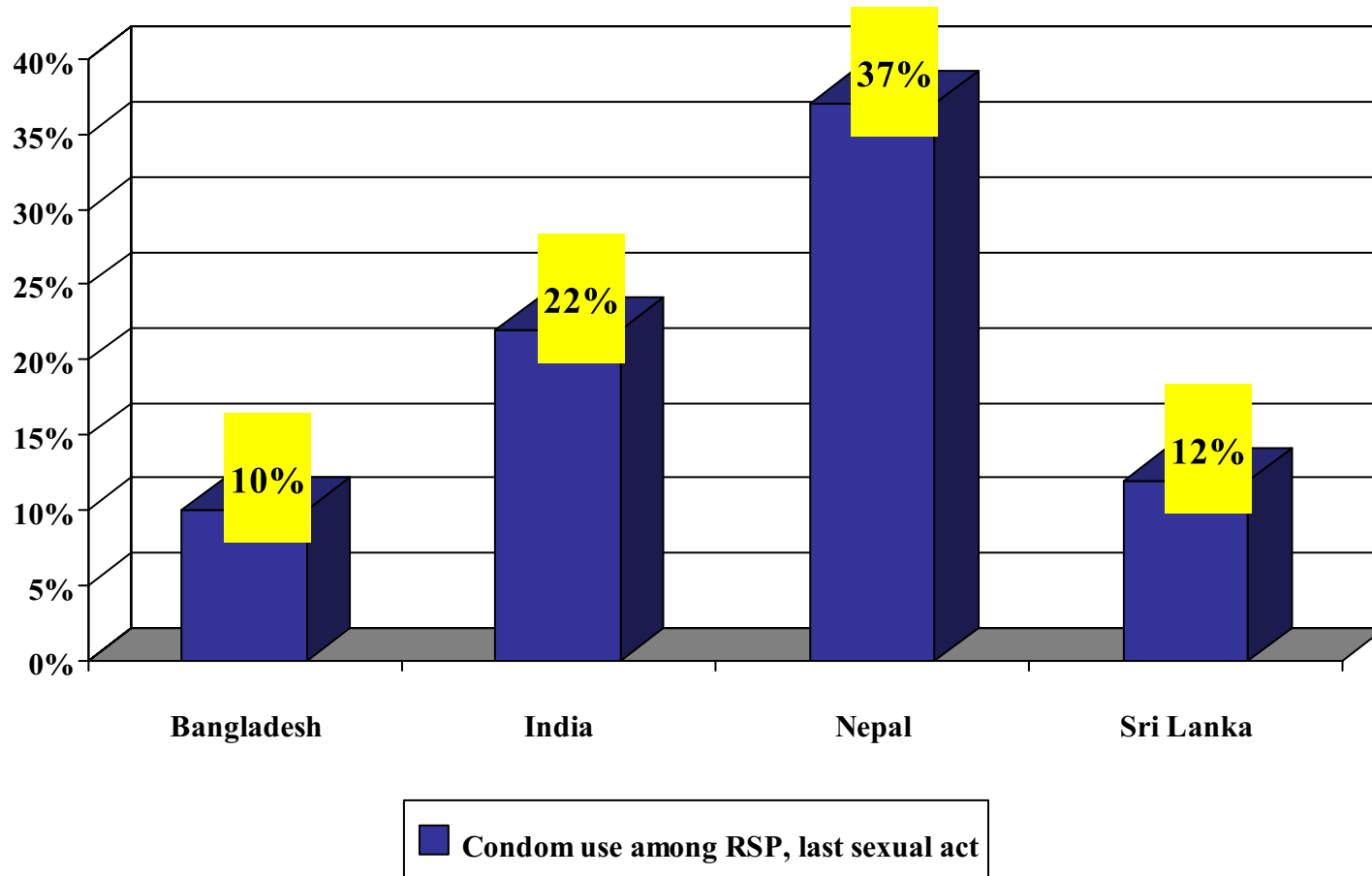
Common Regional Findings

- **Despite fair levels of knowledge relating to HIV/AIDS, HIV risk perception is low among drug users**
- **A sizeable proportion of drug users have not been tested for HIV.**
- **Many drug users are willing to disclose the HIV+ results to their regular partners.**

Regular sexual partners



Condom use among regular sexual partners, last sexual act



Regional recommendations

Future interventions should aim to:

- **Prevent the transitions from licit drug use to opioid use**
- **Prevent switch to injecting by the non-injection opioid users**
- **Deal with diffusion of pharmaceutical drugs**
- **Provide drug use treatment, particularly opioid substitution therapy**

Regional recommendations

- **Targeted interventions for drug users addressing both the injection and the sex related risk behaviours**
- **Interventions for IDUs and their regular sexual partners**
- **Promoting condom use among the drug users and their regular sexual partners is an important challenge**

Consider couple and community level interventions

Regional recommendations

- **Implement comprehensive HIV interventions for drug users and their regular sexual partners**
 - **NSP**
 - **OST**
 - **STI services**
 - **Condoms**
 - **VCT**
 - **ART**
 - **Community outreach based IEC**
 - **Primary medical care (abscess care, TB management)**

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