

SOUTH ASIA

**DRUG
DEMAND
REDUCTION
R E P O R T**



UNDCP Regional Office for South Asia New Delhi

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***A WORLD FREE OF DRUGS;
WE CAN DO IT***

FOREWORD

The use and abuse of drugs is not a unique phenomenon restricted to certain countries or regions of the world. The first ever World Drug Report prepared by UNDCP in 1997 has shown us that no country can claim to be immune and the South Asian sub-region is no exception.

Most experts believe that drug abuse in the sub-region is increasing, but this commonly held view cannot be validated, as national level surveys on the extent of abuse have not been carried out. Although rapid assessment surveys have been carried out in Nepal and Bangladesh, these do not provide the necessary information on the extent and nature of abuse. As a consequence, the seriousness of drug abuse in the countries of the sub-region has not been substantiated with hard data on the extent of abuse, types of drugs abused, socio-economic background of the drug users, their gender and age groups. Thus, the drug control agencies, international organizations such as UNDCP and WHO, and NGOs have not been in a position to advance a cogent argument in favour of a more focussed, adequately financed, well structured and comprehensive programme to reduce demand for illicit drugs. Consequently, demand reduction programmes have been pushed to the margins of national priorities.

Cognizant of this fact and in line with its mandate, the UNDCP Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA) has attempted to gather, process, analyze and disseminate data on drug issues to generate awareness among national, regional and international policy makers, users/abusers of illicit drugs and the public at large of the complex drug abuse situation in the sub-region. It is ROSA's sincere hope that this initiative will contribute to increased national, regional and international efforts to reduce the supply of and demand for illicit drugs.

The report is an attempt to collect and collate drug abuse related information from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, India and Sri Lanka to provide a sharper focus on several key issues of drug abuse and offer a regional perspective. It is a collection of contributions by several professionals, with Dr. Rajat Ray, Additional Professor at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, as the task manager, editor and main contributor. Dr. Ray has drawn heavily on UNDCP documents and data provided by national drug control agencies. Thus, the contents of the report are a combination of official data, results of isolated researches, outcomes of NGO demand reduction activities and authors' views. The report does not necessarily represent the official views of UNDCP.

This report is a first step in ROSA's effort to generate knowledge on drug related issues in the region. We hope to undertake a number of specialized studies in the future, with greater depth of analysis to serve as useful tools for decision makers in the region.

Abdul Latif
Regional Representative

CONTENTS

CHAPTERS AND BOX ITEMS	PAGE
I. Introduction - <i>R. Ray and Ashita Mittal</i>	1
II. Current extent and pattern of drug abuse - <i>R. Ray</i>	5
Box items:	
1. Profile of intravenous heroin users in Manipur, India: Case report - <i>S. Manikanta Singh</i>	14
2. Profile of a non-heroin injecting drug user: Case report - <i>Luke Samson</i>	16
3. Profile of a female drug user: Case history - <i>Harish Shetty</i>	18
4. Profile of a heroin user: Case study - <i>Pratima Murthy</i>	20
5. Street children and drug abuse in India - <i>Rita Panicker</i>	34
III. Earlier Era - <i>R. Ray</i>	37
Box Items:	
6. A typical case of opium dependence - <i>Anil Malhotra</i>	40
7. Profile of a typical cannabis user: A case history - <i>H.K. Sharma</i>	41
8. Traditional use - <i>Anju Dhawan</i>	49
9. Transition from traditional opium use to heroin use: India and its neighbourhood - <i>Anirudh Deshpande</i>	53
IV. Health and social consequences - <i>R. Ray and U. Sharma</i>	56
Box items:	
10. Health and social consequences of injection drug use in north-eastern states of India - <i>Samiran Panda</i>	59
11. HIV/AIDS and drug abuse - <i>Cornelia E. Davis</i>	64
12. Drug abuse and mental health problems - <i>R.K. Singh</i>	70
13. Women's health issues with special reference to drug abuse - <i>Mala Kapur Shankardass</i>	80
14. Economic burden of drug use - <i>Barun Kanjilal</i>	83
V Public perception towards drug use - <i>Raj. Chengappa</i>	86
Box item:	
15. We the Abused - <i>Vijayluxmi Bose</i>	89
VI. National drug demand reduction programmes - <i>R. Ray</i>	91
Box Item:	
16. Role of International organizations in South Asia - <i>Ravi Raj Thapa</i>	110
VII. Legislative basis for demand reduction programmes - <i>D.C. Jayasuriya</i>	113

CHAPTERS AND BOX ITEMS	PAGE
Box item:	
17. Legal provisions and significant court judgments in India - <i>M.C. Mehanathan</i>	118
18. Incarcerated addicts - <i>Hira Singh</i>	120
VIII. Treatment, aftercare and rehabilitation - R. Ray	123
Box items:	
19. Treatment programmes for drug dependents in an Indian prison - <i>H.S. Sethi</i>	126
20. Harm reduction programmes in Nepal: A special focus on the needle exchange component - <i>Shiba Hari Maharjan</i>	131
21. Methadone maintenance programme - <i>N.M. Shrestha</i>	133
22. Narcotics Anonymous - Its role in recovery - Public Information Sub-Committee, Delhi Area, NA	138
23. Therapeutic Community - <i>Fr. Joe Pereira</i>	141
24. Facilities and services under indigenous systems of medicine - <i>V.N. Pandey</i>	150
IX. Community Based treatment - Shanti Ranganathan	154
Box items:	
25. Community based detoxification camps for heroin dependents - <i>N. Kodagoda and Y. Ratnayake</i>	157
26. Drug de-addiction: Camp approach - <i>D.R. Purohit</i>	159
27. The open community approach to drug abuse control - <i>H. Sell</i>	165
28. Five years at Nizamuddin - <i>Jimmy Dorabjee</i>	167
29. Community drug rehabilitation and workplace prevention programme - <i>Mukhtiar Singh</i>	169
X. Role of NGOs in drug demand reduction - R. Ray	171
Box items:	
30. DAPC projects :	
a) Development of training guides for peripheral implementations, SLANA - <i>Dharshine Guniyangoda</i>	175
b) De-mystification approach to drug prevention in selected communities (ADIC) - <i>Kushlani Amarasuriya</i>	176
c) APON - Addiction Rehabilitation Residence, Dhaka - <i>Br. Ronald Drahzoal</i>	176
d) All India street theatre workshop against drug abuse, STEP - <i>Rakesh Bhardwaj</i>	177

CHAPTERS AND BOX ITEMS**PAGE**

e)	Drug Abuse prevention and rehabilitation for street children in Madurai, NANBAN - <i>Br. S. James</i>	_____	178
f)	Navjyoti Rehabilitation Project - <i>Suneel Vatsyayan</i>	_____	179
g)	Drug Abuse Awareness and Preventive Education Centre for Criminal Addicts in Central Jail - <i>Pramila Srivastava</i>	_____	179
31.	National Coordination Council of Anti-drug NGOS (NCCADN), Bangladesh - <i>Nasir Uddin</i>	_____	181
32.	Bangladesh Anti-drug Federation of NGOS, BADF - <i>Salahuddin Ahmed</i>	_____	183
33.	FINGODAP, India - <i>Rajesh Kumar</i>	_____	184
34.	NGO Involvement in drug demand reduction: SAARC NGO Forum, SAFNGO - <i>Shirley Tissera</i>	_____	185
35.	The Asian harm reduction network (AHRN) - <i>Jimmy Dorabjee</i>	_____	187
XI.	Prevention of drug abuse in South Asia - <i>Y. Ratnayake</i>	_____	189
	Box Items:		
36.	Education and prevention of drug abuse among school children - <i>R.M. Kalra</i>	_____	195
37.	Television and drug demand reduction - <i>Avdesh Sharma</i>	_____	199
XII.	Measures to reduce non-medical use of prescription drugs in South Asia - <i>S.B. Lall and R. Paul</i>	_____	204
	Box Item:		
38.	Bangladesh National Drug Policy - <i>Nurul Islam</i>	_____	211
XIII.	The Relevance of laboratory services in South Asia - <i>Raka Jain</i>	_____	214
XIV.	Human resource development - <i>R. Ray</i>	_____	223
XV.	Research - <i>R. Ray</i>	_____	234
XVI.	Advocacy and initiatives - <i>A.K. Agarwal and Sudhir Kumar</i>	_____	241
	Box Items:		
39.	The Cannabis debate - <i>Hem Raj Pal</i>	_____	244
40.	Community mobilization in South Asia - <i>Kiran Bedi</i>	_____	249
XVII.	Challenges ahead - <i>R. Ray and Ashita Mittal</i>	_____	251

Annexure

COUNTRY PROFILES:	PAGE
1. Bangladesh	256
2. India	259
3. Nepal	262
4. Sri Lanka	265
5. Selected Health Parameters	267
6. Expenditure on Health (1990)	267
7. Central Government's Expenditure (1991)	268
8. Number of Registered Opium Addicts, India	268
9. Number of Opium Distribution Outlets (State-wise), India	269
10. Total Quantity of Opium Released to Different States, India	270
11. Total Quantity of Opium Sanctioned to Different States, India	271
12. Purity of Street Sample, Northern Region, India	272
CONTRIBUTORS	273