Objectives of National Drug Use Survey – 2011/2012:

Primary Objective:
To estimate the number of drug users and hence, the drug use prevalence in the Maldives.

Secondary Objectives:
(i) Identifying trends (by various categories of characteristics, e.g., age, gender, drug of choice, etc.), drug use extent and patterns across the country
(ii) Assess behavioural characteristics associated with drug use; and
(iii) To study community knowledge, attitudes and perceptions towards drug problem.

Survey Methodology:
Target age group for the Survey: 15-64 years of age

**Malé**
- Respondent Driven Sampling (RDS); (for size estimation)
- Focus Group Discussions (for Community Component)
- 635 “Current Drug Users” interviewed and average age was 23 years

**Atolls**
- Household Survey Approach (for size estimation)
- Focus Group Discussions (for Community Component)
- 18,172 persons screened and 162 “Current Drug Users” interviewed and average age was 26 years

Between October 2011 to February 2012, 50 enumerators went around the entire country, visited over 3500 household and interviewed 762 people. In addition 27 Focus Group Discussions were also held in both Malé and the Atolls, in order to understand the social stigma, community knowledge, perception and attitudes towards drug use problem; and behaviours associated with drug use.
Key Findings:

Estimated number of current drug users (aged between 15-64 years) in the Maldives = 7,496

- Due to the use of different methodologies in estimating prevalence in different localities, estimating a single prevalence figure for the whole country was not possible
- Current Drug User is defined as any person who reported using psychoactive substances for non-medical purpose within the preceding 12 months of the survey period.

Prevalence of top three most common types of drugs used among current drug users in the country

Cannabinoids - Resin - Hashish (Hash Oil) was the drug most commonly used among current drug users in both Malé (70%) and Atolls (68%).

In the Atolls the second most common drug used among current drug users was Opioids (53%) followed by Alcohol (51%).

In Malé, Alcohol (47%) was the second most common drug used followed by Opiods (40%).

Among 10 current drug users it is likely that 7 of them used cannabinoids-resin-Hashish, both in Malé’ and the Atolls.

Estimated number Vs prevalence of drug users - Estimated number of drug users in the Atolls was 3,154 and the estimated number of drug users in Malé was 4,342.

Drug dependence and need for treatment: Two out of three current drug users in Malé and almost half of current drug users in the Atolls are likely to be dependent users and will require substance abuse treatment urgently.

Unemployment: More than half of the drug users in both Malé and Atolls were unemployed.

Initial age of drug use: Most drug users reported the onset of drug use at a young age - drug users in Malé and Atolls, had their first experience with drugs by trying tobacco and inhalants & solvents, at the age of 13 and 16 years, respectively.

Estimated Number of Current Drug Users (in Malé) 4,342
Malé Population (15-64 years) 65,436
Malé - Prevalance (%) 6.64

Estimated Number of Current Drug Users (in Atolls) 3,154
Atoll Population (15-64 years) 156,136
Atoll - Prevalance (%) 2.02%

Age Profile of “Current Drug Users”:

Malé: Highest proportion of current drug users were between the age group of 15-19 years (48%) followed by 20-24 years (24%) age group.

Atolls: Majority of the current drug users were under the age group of 20-24 years (30%), followed by age group 25-29 years (20%).

Out of 10 Current drug users in the Atolls 3 users will be in the age group 20-24 and about 7 users will be less than 30 years of age, while in Malé out of 10 current drug users 6 to 7 of them will be less than 30 years.