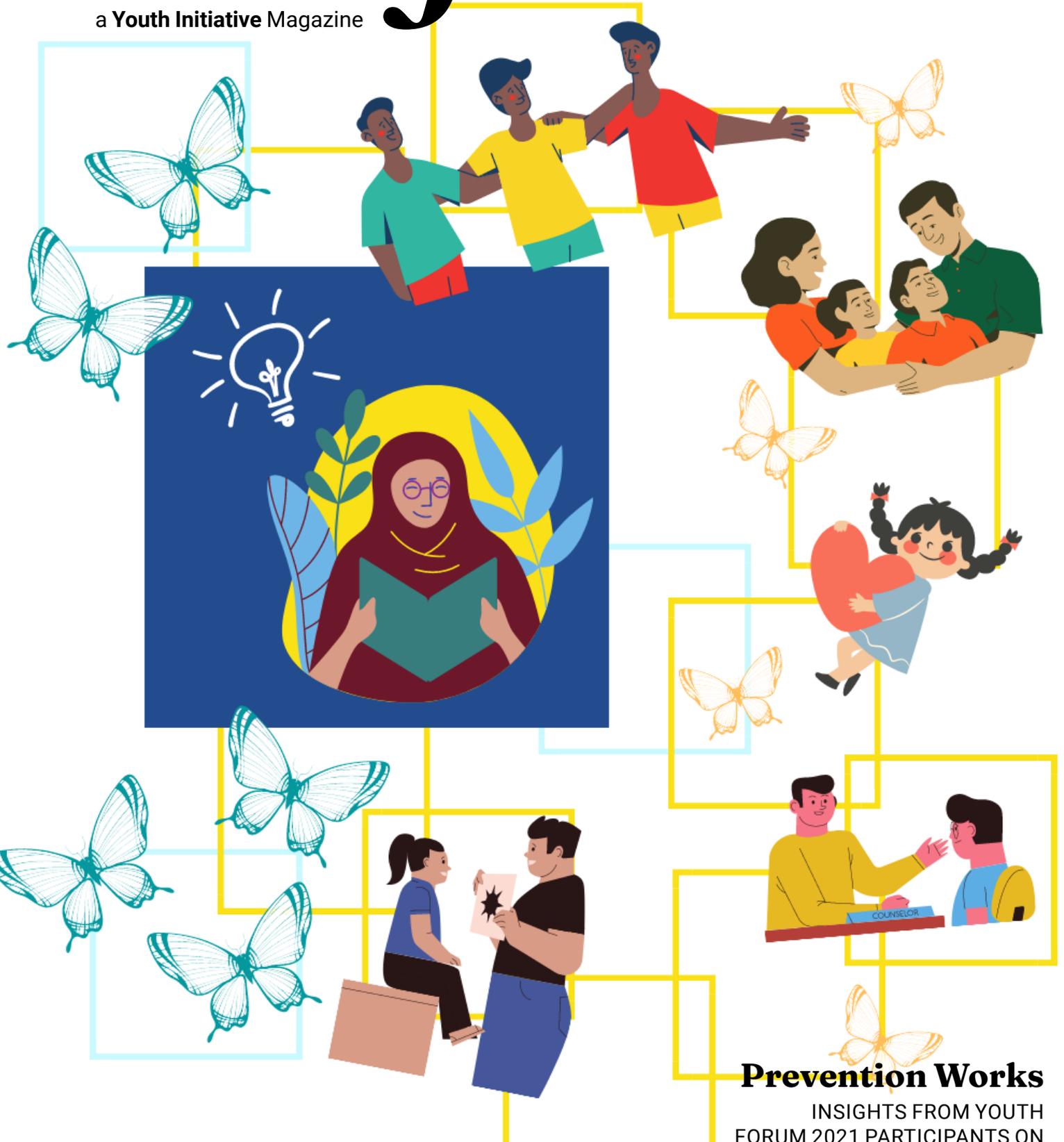


Butterfly Wings

a Youth Initiative Magazine



Prevention Works

INSIGHTS FROM YOUTH FORUM 2021 PARTICIPANTS ON SUBSTANCE USE PREVENTION

July 2021

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THANKS TO THE GENEROUS SUPPORT OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AND THE SOVEREIGN ORDER OF MALTA

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The Butterfly Wings

WRITTEN BY NUR AISHAH JASMINE MOHD NASIR

The butterfly effect is coined from a metaphor of a butterfly flapping its wings in Tokyo, and consequently causing a large tornado strike in Tennessee. Meteorologist Edward Lorenz invented the phrase "butterfly effect" after discovering in the 1960s that a minor, butterfly-scale adjustments to the starting point of his computer weather models resulted in everything, from bright skies to severe storms, with no means of knowing what would happen ahead of time.

Unfortunately, we commonly underestimate our ability to make a difference in the world. We often misjudge the ramifications of our actions on a larger scale. Due to this mindset, we tend to wind-up in inaction and wait for someone significant or powerful enough to create the impact. Little do we realise that not only are we capable of making a change, we are actually the change, and it all begins with us.

To ponder upon this matter, when we watch movies about time travelling to the past, we notice how characters are meticulously cautious about their actions, since even the slightest change could substantially affect the present. Yet ironically, no one in the present feels that they can make a major difference in the future. If a single flap of a butterfly's wing can create bright skies or severe storms, this could speak volumes about the small things we can do to create a whirlwind of change.

This magazine features the voices of UNODC Youth delegates who aspire to be the change. They have taken the initiative to create this publication to encourage everyone to take on preventative measures in the present time in order to develop a better future. With this, we wish to convey to the readers, please do not undervalue the impact you could generate. Let us join forces to shape a better future.

I wish to end with:

We are all beautiful butterflies,

keep fluttering our wings butterflies,

our beautiful flutters will create a tornado of change.

Our Voices are Strong

WRITTEN BY RODAINA ABOELENIN

Straighten your **back** and open your **ears**
Because we need to **state** our **fears** .

To the **stakeholders** and **policy makers**, hear us out.
I believe we the **youth** can make a **difference**, no doubt.

For so long we haven't been **heard**
Our **voices** may come second or maybe even third.

We won't be **silenced** or **shushed** any more.
We are the **solution**, we are the **core**.

And when it comes to **drug prevention**,
we dedicate all our **efforts** and **attention**.

So please give us the **chance**,
with our **power** we can flip the **balance** in a glance.

We still need your **help** and to stand with us,
to have the **light** and leave the **dusk**.

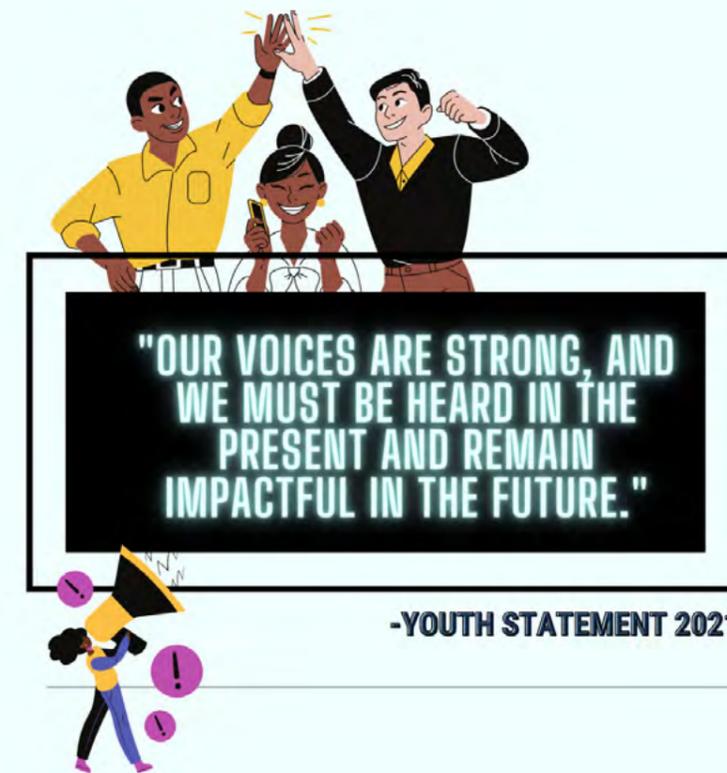
Drug use is life abuse,
But we believe with **prevention**, numbers can be **reduced**.

We trust your **decisions**,
but we need to be **involved** cause we share the same **vision**,
so would you **help** us with this?

To have our **backs** and help with the gaps and **cracks**,
to **support** and to **escort**
to **teach** and to help us **reach**.

Together we can make a real **change**,
and the roles we can **exchange**.
It may sound **strange** but there's no **harm** with us given the stage.

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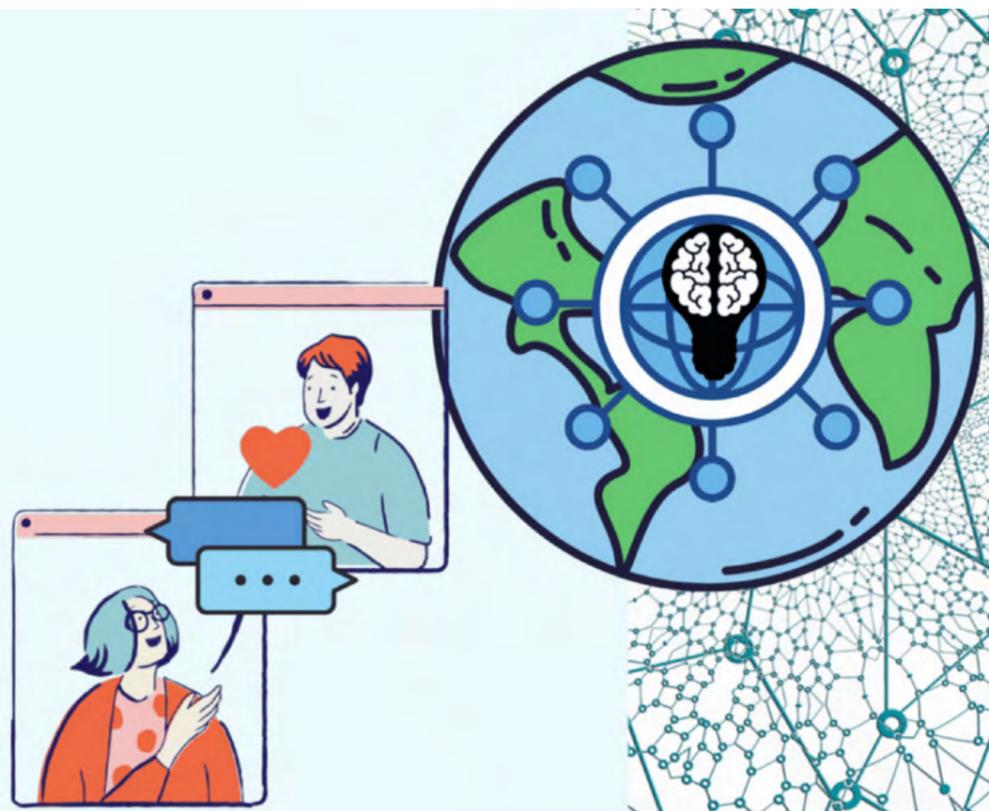
To look with the real **eyes** on the field,
and the gaps we can **reveal**.
To work on them and we all together take an **action**.
To have a **knowledge** of the reactions,
with the right **prevention programs**, strategic plans.
And **together** hand in hand,
we can make a real **change!**

Cause you are the **stem** and we are the **root**,
Together our work, we will always **pursuit**.

To watch our amazing leaves **grow** by years,
and our **fears** disappears.

So **straighten** your back and **open** your ears,
because we **will achieve** our dreams.
We **believe** together we can,
and we believe **together** we will.

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The Power of Youth

WRITTEN BY MERVE ALUÇLU, ASLIHAN YESIR, KARTHIKA PILLAI

“When you are young, they assume you know nothing” is the lyrics from a popular song named, “Cardigan” by Taylor Swift that demonstrates how society perceives today’s young generation. However, a quotation by Jane Goodall (2015), states that “if young people are informed and empowered, when they realize that what they do truly makes a difference, can indeed change the world.” So, it can be claimed that young individuals have the power to change the world into a better place when they understand and use their potential. As advocates for substance use prevention from all around the world, we are certain that through our combined efforts, a snowball effect¹ can be procured to achieve the task of creating healthy and sound communities.

The United Nations define “Youth” as reflecting the age group of 15 to 24 years. The World Health Organization (WHO) considers adolescence between 10 and 19 years and the term “young people” refers to the composite age group 10-24 years. These definitions are based on a certain consensus about the factors (biological, social and cultural) that define youth worldwide. However, it should be noted that the notion of youth may vary considerably across countries due to the socio-economic-cultural context. The social and cultural entry into adult life may correspond to the

economic autonomy of the person, the establishment of a family or the participation in a certain ritual. There are over 1.8 billion young people today out of which 90% reside in the global south taking up a large portion of their population.²

One of the biggest dangers that directly threatens the well-being of today’s youth is the non-medical use of drugs and other substances. According to statistics³ there was a steep rise in the global drug use pattern for people aged 15-64 between 2009 and 2018. The UNODC and WHO International Standards on Drug Use Prevention⁴ emphasize the importance of focusing on youth. They are more sensitive towards its harmful effects due to risk factors such as dysfunctional families, mental disorders, try-out of adult roles, and responsibilities, to name a few. The International Standards have identified scientific interventions with age-appropriate activities suitable for a particular developmental stage to be introduced at an early stage. Research shows that when youth have ongoing, caring relationships, they have access to guidance, support, help, and even improved psychosocial, behavioural, and academic outcomes [Thompson et. al., 2015].

Additionally, UNODC encourages a comprehensive approach that includes various evidence-based inter-

“If young people are informed and empowered, when they realize that what they do truly makes a difference, can indeed change the world.”

ventions and another supporting-awareness raising. For example, the “listen first”⁵ materials provide a safe space for children and youth to make them feel heard and valued and inculcate skills such as self-management, or patience by enhancing interpersonal relationships in families.

When asked about the significance of positive youth engagement, youth are recognized as a major resource for all development efforts. Their active involvement and leadership must fully and sustainably achieve global development goals (Handbook on Youth Participation in Drug and Prevention Work, 2020). Especially for preventing substance use, youth engagement can be presented as a protective factor; as peer relationships directly influence decision-making among individuals. Relatedly this takes us back to Goodall’s (2015) words, which stresses on educating the youth and involving them in prevention activities to become the torchbearers of the future and spread awareness among their peers through positive influence.

Youth engagement creates a sense of belongingness, builds a common identity that inspires action, or brings like-minded people together to pursue a common cause. Rather than trying to achieve a goal as a single unit, it is better to strive towards it as a group, the impact is bigger. Driven and passionate individuals together in a forum sharing varied experience, or working together as an organisation to bring a change in the community or using their resources to create a positive impact is what the world needs right now.

To further the goal of empowering young change-makers, an excellent example of a great work that we are proud to be a part of that embodies the power of youth in all aspects is the “Global Youth Forum- UNODC”. The Forum is an annual event organized by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime as an initiative in the broader context of the Narcotics Drugs Commission (CND) The event which enables young people to take

an active role in drug prevention and health promotion activities in their communities through a shared platform for exchanging ideas and perspectives. As advocates for substance use prevention from all around the world, we are certain that through combined efforts a snowball effect can be procured to achieve the task of creating healthy and sound communities.

Due to the unprecedented pandemic circumstances, the Youth Forum 2021 was organised virtually but despite that saw the participation of 62 young representatives from 41 countries! The forum stands as an opportunity that showcases the concept of unity in diversity perfectly. Even though each individual is unique in their approach, they all believe in the same values regarding the importance of prevention activities. The power of a global youth network gives out an important message that the strength of young people can overcome a myriad of challenges and together their voices are strong enough to be heard on any platform and leave a mark. As a matter of fact, the final CND Youth Statement created by the young individuals as a culmination of their combined effort in the forum carried this emotion perfectly as they addressed the policymakers in their speech, “Our voices are strong, and we must be heard in the present and remain impactful in the future.”

In conclusion, initiatives such as youth forums act as contributing factors towards educating young people in science-based substance use prevention activities as well as in enabling a global platform to create a reservoir of connections to be used as resources. When considering the power of acting together, it would be appropriate to include the following idiom: you cannot make a sound with your one hand, but you can surely clap with two of them; so let’s clap our hands for a better world!

See Appendix for references.

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Protect children from drug abuse in educational institutions!



The Power of Protective Factors

WRITTEN BY CARMEN VALERIA HERNANDEZ AGUIRRE, VALENTINA RENDON

Based on science, there are important periods of one's life in which prevention can be more influential and crucial to forestalling drug consumption. One of these is middle childhood.

During this stage (about 6-10 years), children learn to be more independent. They attend school, build friendships and develop their own interests. With this in mind, it is key to favor the best possible environment for children before they reach adolescence and potentially come in contact with substances for the first time.

Talking about the science behind substance prevention holds a lot more weight than simply speaking about avoiding the consumption of substances. Prevention's main purpose for youth is and should always be healthy and safe development. Knowing that, a question that we can ask ourselves is, "how can I successfully prevent people in my community from using substances?" We believe the answer lies in embracing the protective factors.

But what is a protective factor? According to the World Health Organization (WHO), protective factors enhance the likelihood of positive outcomes and lessen the possibility of negative consequences from risk exposure. Put simply, protective factors are the strengths that help to buffer and support families.

The reassuring truth about substance prevention is that it is science-based. This not only means that many studies have been done in this field and are peer-reviewed. This also means that there is information and material that is easy to access and understand for anyone interested in learning about it.

Do Social Skills Make a Difference?

Socialization is a process of transferring culturally acceptable attitudes, norms, beliefs and behaviours and responding to such cues appropriately.¹ The idea of social skills education in teaching in an efficient way to face difficult situations that occur daily without putting a person's health at risk. The idea of social skills education is to teach in an efficient, way that models how to face difficult situations that occur in everyday life without endangering a person's well-being. A good way to put this into practice is by getting used to asking and answering questions and always being honest about our feelings while allowing others to share theirs as well.

Let's suppose a 10 year old person is willing to go out with his friends by themselves for the first time. As a result of the request, the parents shut him down and simply say "no". If this person grows up with this kind of restriction happening regularly, they may develop difficulties with socialization and communication. Instead of that, it is advisable to sit and talk, ask about their feelings and thoughts, and be receptive to them. During this process, a crucial step is to be equally fair in sharing thoughts and reasoning behind them. Finding a middle ground for both parties in a healthy way will

help mend the differences they might face, and create a trusting bond that is necessary for substance protection, and for providing a healthy home environment essential for the development of every child.

Opportunities for some success at school and recognition of achievement.

Growing up is not easy. Nobody is born knowing how to navigate life or create their perfect future, but being applauded for our little and big triumphs becomes a significant element for healthy development through childhood to adolescence. Recognizing one's achievement may contribute to identifying personal passions. While at the same time, this may help increase our chances of succeeding in a variety of settings, such as school, or sports, or community groups.

This protective factor will also aid in taking the initiative and inducing creativity, helping to learn how to accept criticism and other's opinions. For example, a teacher or a mentor, can promote this by planning enjoyable activities and offering awards to the participants. A parent can make an effort to acknowledge tasks that may be big challenges for a child and praise their efforts. Taking the role of a motivating individual is ideal.

How can we help our communities?

Another crucial protective factor in middle childhood is establishing strong support networks. A support network refers to all the people in one's life that help achieving personal and professional goals. It is important to note that a good support network builds up and assists an individual both formally and informally. A support network should be diverse and be present in many different parts of one's life. In relevance to middle childhood, a good support network might consist of family, friends, teachers, coaches and role models alike. These positive connections are significant to building self-esteem and learn about self-advocacy, as well as having people to rely on in different environments and circumstances.

Creating and implementing good support networks could include simple and sustainable efforts. For example, a parent or guardian may make it a regular occurrence to do weekly bonding activity with their

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*"In a gentle way
you can shake
the world!"*



“Based on science, there are important periods of one’s life in which prevention can be more influential and crucial to forestalling drug consumption. One of these is middle childhood.”

child that allows them to strengthen the relationship. Coaches may host team bonding activities within practice that connect and bond teammates as well as the entire team. Being a good friend can be as simple as checking on them at school, work, or even online. Teachers may recommend opportunities to students that will help them be successful inside and outside of school. These are just some examples of many possibilities for building healthy support networks. One positive factor of a good support network is to elevate success and promote professional and personal well-being.

Positive school climate

According to the NSCC School climate refers to the quality and character of school life. School climate is based on patterns of students’, parents’ and school personnel’s experience of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and worganizational structures. “A positive school climate is a positive factor that can deter bullying, school failure, participation in negative peer group influences as well as disinterest or poor attachment to school. It is very important that schools are positive and safe places for youth to develop their social skills as they interact with peers, as well as develop personal interests and pursue their education.” A positive school climate should promote cultural competence, inclusivity, respect and pride in school achievement as well as fair and benevolent behavior.

Contributing to a positive school climate can be done by anyone involved in the school including faculty, parents, students and even the community. On a faculty level it can be promoting positive attitudes in the workspace including classrooms, and acknowledging and rewarding favourable work and behaviour with co-workers. Parents and the community can

contribute by volunteering and assisting teachers with student related events and programs. Students may strengthen a positive school climate by being inclusive and kind to their peers as well as respectful to teachers and other faculty. A school climate involves so many different aspects and people; because of this we can infer that there are so many different ways to improve and promote a positive school climate. Thus there are many ways to reinforce protective factors, and efficient methods are not limited to specific resources.

Taking action

Finally, there are lots of efficient and simple ways to intervene and strengthen protective factors. Although sometimes it may seem difficult and impossible, there are approaches to reduce and prevent substance use in communities. We need to take advantage of the resources and knowledge we have on hand to reduce the risk of substance use, and increase the protective factors as we move forward in our communities. We must continue to utilize scientifically proven methods backed by evidence; as well as to unlearn practices that may be contradictory to current data and science. While these measures take consistent efforts and patience, with steady ambition, achieving sustainable change is within our reach.

Through the studies and data conducted by influential agents of change such as Hawkins and Catalano, we can stride forward taking action for the betterment of youth towards fulfilling their utmost potential. Our drive inspired by building safe and healthy communities will carry our efforts forward and with that our mark will be made. The goals we implement should start in the simplest of manners; they should be to collectively give our best efforts to those who are at risk, and to be committed to the action we take.

See Appendix for references.

Warriors of Prevention

SONG AND LYRICS BY KARTHIKA PILLAI

This song is an attempt to capture the essence of the power youth beholds in being a catalyst towards substance use prevention activities. I dedicate this song to the youth across the world who are trying to bring a positive change through their commitment, passion and hardwork. I hope this song inspires you to continue your journey towards creating a safer and inclusive society.

VERSE

There is a fire in your eyes, so young so pure.
We can do it, we can prove it, because we are the youth.
We believe in you.

You want to change the world that we live in.
So many plans and ambitious dreams,
you just want to be seen.

PRE-CHORUS

The waves are crashing in, the mountains are so high.
No matter the hurdles, we will fly like butterflies.
So watch us soar!

CHORUS

We will change the future with our present actions.
We are the warriors of prevention.
Aim for the stars and the world would be ours.
Have that faith in your heart.

VERSE

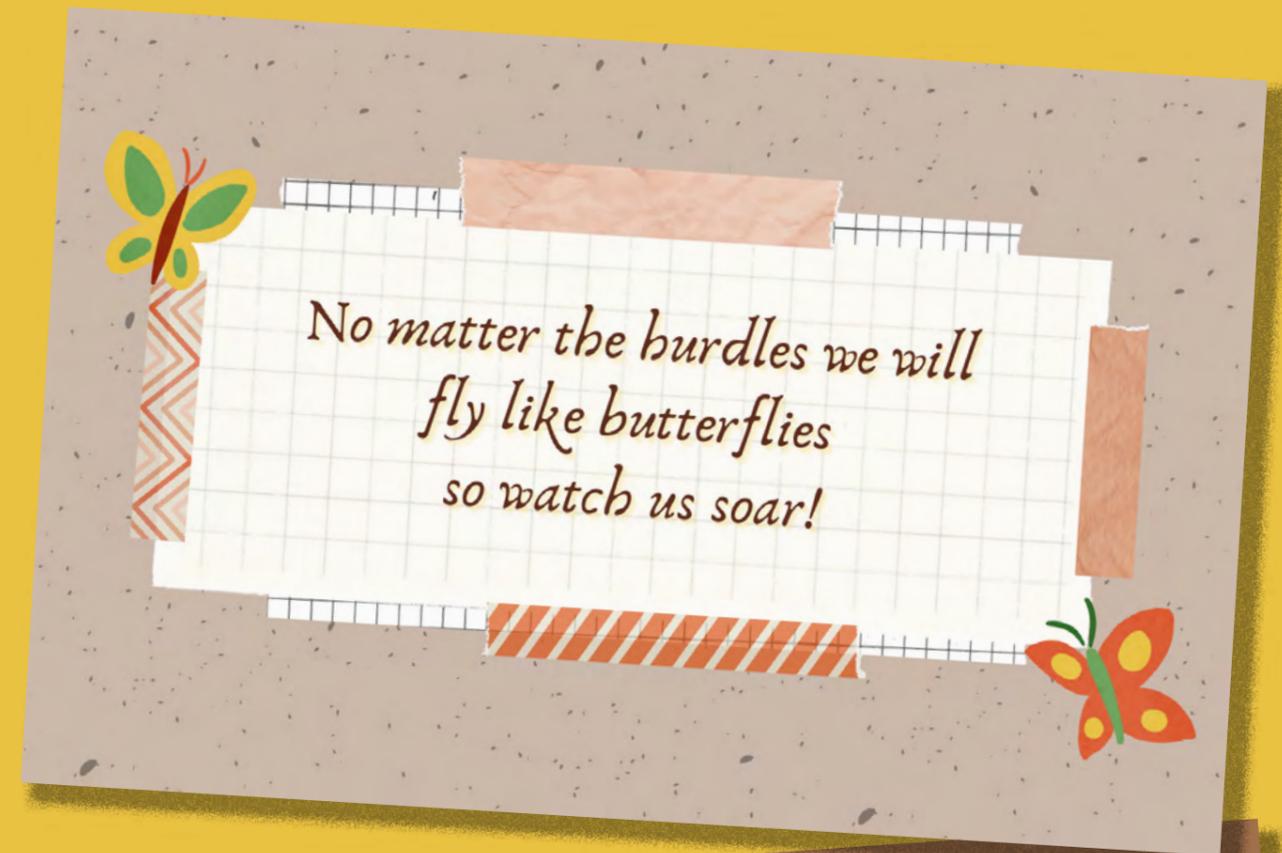
Our voices are stronger together, so much better.
Suddenly the words have a meaning, can't you see?
Our worlds are colliding, we keep on trying.
We bring out the power of unity in diversity.

PRE-CHORUS

The waves are crashing in, the mountains are so high.
No matter the hurdles, we will fly like butterflies.
So watch us soar!

CHORUS

We will change the future with our present actions.
We are the warriors of prevention.
Aim for the stars and the world would be ours.
Have that faith in your heart.





Substance Use Prevention; a Personal Reflection

WRITTEN BY NUR RAIHANA BINTI ZAKARIA

It has been more than 40 years since drug use was declared a national security problem in Malaysia in the 1980s. From the latest drug statistics available, the National Anti-Drugs Agency of Malaysia reported in January to June 2020, around 67% of people who use drugs in Malaysia were adolescents and youth, which represents almost 67 thousand individuals. This alarming fact caught my attention and inspired me to dive into substance use prevention. Therefore, it was a privilege for me to participate in the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Youth Forum 2021 on Substance Use Prevention.

Before joining the Youth Forum, I was fully aware that the known overwhelming impact of substance use on individuals, families, and communities and the reality of the potentially life-long and complex recovery process of substance use requires effective, supportive, and comprehensive-collaborative interventions. While I kept wondering what makes one get involved in substance, little did I realize that determining the cause(s) will be endless as it is more complicated, and it would never be that straightforward or clear cut. The vulnerability factors may come throughout the

developmental and life phases and are interrelated between individuals, family, school, and community – sometimes leading to a vicious cycle. Understanding this fact is one of the core points in substance use prevention because it will help us be more empathetic and less judgemental.

Substance use prevention aims to avoid or delay the initiation of substance use, or if someone has already engaged in substance use, it will be more effective to engage in treatment interventions to stave off the development of substance use disorders.

During the Youth Forum, I had an “aha” moment and realized that the overall aim of substance use prevention is much broader. It aims to ensure the healthy and safe development of young people and their well-being and resilience so that they can discern and optimize their talents and potential and become altruistic contributing members of their community. Thus, prevention interventions should begin as early as infancy. His means not only parents, but every member of the society shall be empowered with appropriate skills such as social life skills, parenting and caregiving

skills, and decision-making skills. Effective prevention forwards children, youth, and adults positive and constructive engagement with their families and schools, workplaces, and communities.

I was impressed with the way Ms. Elizabeth Mattfeld, a Project Coordinator with the Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation Unit of UNODC, enlightened us on substance use prevention, making it more understandable. She started explaining substance use prevention by emphasizing what is not; “substance use is not treatment, nor punishment.” She then highlighted that in prevention, it is never about telling people the danger of drugs or any other psychoactive substances, or commanding people not to befriend people who use drugs or any other don’ts; or labeling and identifying who are at risk. Instead, prevention aspires to improve skills, endurance, educate the do’s, and subsequently promote individuals to function in a healthy physical and socio-cultural-spiritual environment in the long run. And there is no way for us to ignore any aspects of physical health, mental health, nutrition, education, family well-being, financial, policy-making, or law in substance use prevention, let alone to look at those aspects independently. Substance use prevention is indeed a long-term strategy within a holistic approach to preventing individuals from engaging in drug abuse by focusing on evidence-based programs that can strengthen protective factors and reduce risk factors; and everything in between.

Reflecting on what we have or used to do worldwide, we must agree that many countries are yet to have successful models or efforts in prevention. I acknowledge all agencies’ or ministries’ commitment to creating a society free of drug threats to ensure the community’s well-being, maintaining national stability and resilience. However, it is always good to take a step back and ponder on the efficiency and efficacy of the intervention taken. Moving forward, we could do better - prevention shall be more inclusive and voluntary, rather than spending resources on the selective approach like prevention education programs conducted among families, primary school students, and youth who are at risk or already identified engaging in substance use.

Besides, we should pay more attention to how we practice substance use prevention, what works, and

how we evaluate its efficiency. For example, some may think the lack of knowledge about substances and the consequences of their use are among the main factors that increase an individual’s vulnerability or contribute to the initial reasons for drug use initiation. But I was a bit surprised that knowledge or information alone does not change behavior and does not work for substance use prevention. When policies and practices rely only on feeding the public with knowledge about substances and their adverse effects, substance use prevention is compromised.

We should refine our actions and comprehend that developing skills such as communication, decision-making, rational thinking, and stress reduction are critical as part of a comprehensive substance use prevention program.

In substance use prevention, we must be determined to adhere to evidence-based approaches. We must be ready to unlearn our old beliefs and usual practices that may be inconsistent with science. Substance use prevention is not a taboo or gut feeling, it is scientific, and it is worth fighting for. Unfortunately, Even when considerable funding is spent on treatment, only one in eight people worldwide can access this treatment. Investing more diligently in prevention, we can save up to 10 dollars for every dollar spent, reduce substance use and protect our young generation worldwide.

In conclusion, I am now well-informed that to make substance use prevention successful, we need continuous multiple prevention programs at every community level involving many stakeholders. Those are what we need to create a healthy, effective, and sustainable prevention system. All elements of prevention and roles taken (or ignored) by individuals are interconnected; strengthening every single element will cause a snowball effect; anyone could start the positive action and give sustained results in return, like a domino effect; and we need everyone’s small and light touch in substance use prevention to bring the butterfly effect; ultimately lead to what we all have been dreaming for: healthy, happy, resilient and proactive young people who can contribute to the community and society. Yes, long way to go, but I have the utmost faith that prevention works.

See Appendix for references.

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prevention does not labelize or discriminate, its inclusive and voluntary!



Empathy in Our Societies

WRITTEN BY SAMUEL LINARES

“Learning to stand in somebody else’s shoes, to see through their eyes, that’s how peace begins. And it’s up to you to make that happen. Empathy is a quality of character that can change the world.”

– Barack Obama

Have you ever wondered about the situation of other people? It is necessary to think about our feelings and actions towards a person in challenging circumstances.

There are many factors that contribute to a healthier, positive, and more sustainable society for the future. To educate the world population and provide tools to encourage individual behaviour to reduce the risk of harmful activity and encourage personal and professional development.

Prevention is where we design strategies to reduce these risks in order to create a healthier and sustainable community for everyone. Being supported in many

“Our goal has to be to demonstrate our unconditional support for the healthy lives of our family members, peers, and fellow human beings.”

social and cultural areas should be considered key when studying our communities’ risks. However, in this article I will focus on the importance of protective factors, one of which can be seen as empathy.

Empathy is the ability to perceive and understand the feelings, thoughts, and emotions of others. Recognizing this important ability is the first step to achieving a better and healthier future.

We have been making valuable efforts to highlight the priority of strengthening other protective factors in communities, such as family communication, caring, and the level of community support.

For example, many families find it difficult to talk about important topics, such as sexual orientations, religion, or drug use. Not talking about these sensitive topics may be caused by fear of judgment, punishment, or humiliation.

Opening an honest conversation may support the affected person and allow them to explore alternatives to talk about these topics.

When there is no space given to have an open and honest conversation, there may be no reason to talk about personal problems or concerns with family

members. This can lead to social isolation which increases the risk of substance use or other risky behaviours. Being unable to put oneself in another’s shoes can be considered as a lack of empathy. But what does that mean?

The lack of empathy is not only present in the described situation, but it may be experienced at any time when we are not able to put ourselves in others’ shoes.

For example, if we see a person struggling in any way, and we simply do nothing but observe, we are part of the problem. If we do not listen to our partner when important topics are being discussed, we are part of the problem.

In relation to drug use prevention, this is a problem for implementing strategies in the communities. This is because the level of support may not be sufficient enough, as necessary information could be missing due to the lack of understanding. For example, if problems or concerns can not be openly expressed, it is difficult to provide the necessary support.

That being said, we want to draw attention to empathy and strengthen protective factors. These could be a positive environment in the community that creates or enhances support services in the community.

Activities could be established in the community to expand prevention strategies and thus be a support for the community.

That is why it is important to target an objective that focuses on teaching empathy in communities and corresponds to the development of a supportive society. Once implemented, actions, activities, habits, and behaviors will help address any situation in support of a person, whatever their problem is.

We cannot stand the mere thought of the responsibility of being empathetic. Our goal has to be to demonstrate our unconditional support for the healthy lives of our family members, peers, and fellow human beings.

See Appendix for references.



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An Ode to Prevention

WRITTEN BY DIKSHA RAMDONEY

Nestled beneath the flamboyant and plush feathers of your mellow mother,
 O fledgling¹, hear the clamour of those ambivalent² realms which hover;
 'Tis alike that astringent³ savour of your first pomegranate seed,
 A medley of fructuous trees in a blossoming orchard from your phantasmal mead⁴,
 along with blood-flecked clouds of the ghastly reality guaranteed.
 Teeter not on the wavering fringes of metaxy⁵,
 O cherub⁶, prevention is the aversion of such calamity!
 Listen! The breeze carries chieftain's⁷ assuage⁸ to your mother's flustered twitters;
 How sunbeams vivify your iridescent purple armour⁹ - cloaking your first flight jitters.
 Quell the quivers in the flutters and follow the brightest¹⁰ pole star,
 "Mistake me not for the gleaming gold¹¹ merging with the blue-hued horizon afar",
 Whistles Aeolus¹², the caution of your mother against such mirage,
 Chant these as your prayer to preserve your plumage¹³!
 O cherub, prevention is the sustenance of health and equanimity¹⁴!
 Under an umbrous¹⁵ tree, your teacher first ignited the eternal flame of intellect¹⁶,
 "Life is a perilous quest for hidden treasures¹⁷ in a labyrinthine garden of introspect¹⁸;

Tame your tempestuous mind¹⁹ into a serene star sheathed in bright mist –
 Thorny paths lead to feasting florets, placid rivulets of reprieving nectar with magical cryst²⁰,
 And, plain ones to carnivorous verdure, covetous serpents, and galling fire.²¹"
 Gear up with the sharpest insight, shield yourself with resistance.²² Heed to your sire!
 O cherub, prevention is the assertion of agency²³!
 Post winter's misty drizzle, apprehensive kernels of forage²⁴ burgeon in your bosom,
 Pilgrimage to the realm of ambrosia²⁵ luxuriant in passion petals and ripe fruits of plum.
 On your guard! The vulture²⁶ holds your chums spellbound to the wind-swept mountaintop,
 Where there is a filbert tree yielding green pistachio, camouflaging his eyrie in the backdrop.
 Use the mirrored necklet imparted by the chieftain²⁷ to reflect its blackish soul to your peers²⁸,
 Quick! Warble the hymn of danger²⁹ and fly away along with your dears!
 O cherub, prevention is the protection of your buddies and the affinity!
 From the infernal chasm of your psyche, a begrimed phantom³⁰ emanates³¹ to loom over your nest;
 Whirling around you, it intertwists pictures of your falls off the perch³² with zest -
 Spectres of precedent blunders, inadequacy and regress pummel³³ you ruthlessly to the floor,
 Bruises of your heart fester into suppurative wounds³⁴, bloodstaining your core.
 At once, wavy and radiant spirits³⁵ uplift you, washing your woes away like seashells into the sea.
 As your mother and chieftain often contemplate, "Family is identical to coral reefs,
 absence of one fringing reef³⁶ ensues ruinous wave crests undersea.³⁷"
 O cherub, prevention culminates in a convivial and harmonious family and society!

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“Older people can be productive in many ways as grandparents, workers, storytellers, volunteers...”

At the sunset: Prevention with elders

WRITTEN BY ALEXANDRA BRAVO SCHROTH

“Even when science tells us that most people are still strong and independent when they age.”

How afraid we are of grey hair and wrinkles! We want to stay young forever, dreading the idea of growing old and becoming part of the elderly population.

This fear of old age is based on the belief that turning 60 means losing all independence and health. In other words, we do not usually see elders as productive individuals. Even when science tells us that most people are still strong and independent when they age. Furthermore, older people can be productive in many ways as grandparents, workers, storytellers, volunteers...

It is evident that the way we view the senior population must change. It is crucial to adopt an optimistic view, highlighting the qualities and capabilities of this age group, such as wisdom and experience. A negative perspective not only encourages fear and isolation but also impedes prevention work with this age group.

It seems contradictory to do prevention work with older people when they are at the sunset of life; in fact, they are not often considered when talking about prevention. However, it is imperative to remember that the science of prevention focuses on developing different skills a person may need to adapt and adjust when transitioning to a different phase of life. Prevention is fundamental because when it is done effectively, it ensures the healthy and safe development of people, along with promoting positive relationships with their families and in their communities, and the realization of their talents and potential.

The way prevention works with elders is as with any other group. In other words, the goal is to help them develop resources to adapt to the challenges they face, like entering the retirement phase, experiencing illness, or overcoming the passing away of partners and friends. It is universally acknowledged that those difficulties could promote stress and even hopelessness, mainly because no one is prepared to face them. Nevertheless, with the proper resources, people can rise above and live healthy and happy lives.

Prevention analyzes risk and protective factors and uses science-based multi-component initiatives to help people, in this case, elders, develop or access the resources they need to adapt. These resources include coping mechanisms to deal with stress and grief, time management, community involvement, and many others. Prevention also includes improving environmental factors like housing, assistive technologies, or social facilities, promoting social connections, offering support, and helping them develop adaptive strategies.

As previously stated, there are many ways to implement prevention for elders. Two evidence-based strategies that can be implemented in any community are brief interventions and entertainment venues. It is important to remember that substance use is not a reason to stigmatize or isolate a person, and the initiatives created must be based on respect and compassion.

Brief interventions consist of short counseling sessions delivered by trained professionals like psychologists or social workers. These sessions have two main targets. The first one is to identify if a person has a substance use problem or assess the risk of developing it. After that, the professionals seek to provide immediate basic counseling to help someone with decision-making and goal setting. If necessary, they also refer the person to appropriate treatment.

The second evidence-based strategy, the creation of entertainment venues, the primary goal is to provide safe social meeting spaces where people of all ages can interact and create long-lasting and cherished connections. These gatherings can take place almost anywhere. A public library is the perfect meeting spot for a book or chess club. Community gardens can be installed in free outdoor spaces. A park can be used to teach or practice different sports like yoga or tai-chi. Other examples of entertainment venues include alcohol-free concerts, movie nights, or any game-oriented gathering like bingo.

It is important to emphasize that many effective initiatives developed to address substance use at any age are multi-component programs created for the community by its members. Everyone deserves access to these initiatives. These strategies can improve and preserve mental health and general well-being. We must not assume that the experience that comes with age equals proper resources to deal with life stressors and changes. Elders were once young and took care of us; it is our turn to protect them.

See Appendix for references.

Appendix

The Power of Youth

WRITTEN BY MERVE ALUÇLU, ASLIHAN YESIR, KARTHIKA PILLAI, P.8

¹The snowball effect describes when something grows in significance or size at an increasingly faster rate. The name comes from imagining a snowball rolling down a hill - it gets larger and larger with more snow and becomes faster and more powerful as it moves onward.

²<https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/One%20pacer%20on%20youth%20demographics%20GF.pdf>

³In 2018, an estimated 269 million people, or 5.4 per cent of the global population aged 15-64, had used drugs in the previous year. Over the period of 2009-2018, the estimated number of past-year users of any drug globally increased from 210 million to 269 million, this is an increase by more than 25 percent. Among the estimated 269 million people who used drugs in the past year, some 35.6 million are estimated to suffer from drug use disorders, meaning that their drug use is harmful, or they may experience drug dependence and/or require treatment. This corresponds to a global prevalence of drug use disorders of 0.7 per cent among the population aged 15-64

⁴International Standards on Drug Use Prevention (unodc.org)

⁵Link to read more about Listen First: <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/listen-first/>

The Power of Protective Factors

WRITTEN BY CARMEN VALERIA HERNANDEZ AGUIRRE, VALENTINA RENDON, P.10

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Substance use prevention: a personal reflection

WRITTEN BY NUR RAIHANA BINTI ZAKARIA, P.16

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Empathy in Our Societies

WRITTEN BY SAMUEL LINARES, P.18

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An Ode to Prevention

WRITTEN BY DIKSHA RAMDONEY, P.20

¹ A young bird that has just fledged.

² A loud and confused noise, especially that of people shouting.

³ Sweet and lightly acidic or bitter.

⁴ Metaphor of imagination.

⁵ Middle ground. A dilemma often experienced by youngsters: whether to take drugs or not.

⁶ A beautiful or innocent-looking child.

⁷ Knowledgeable head of the bird tribe, symbolising a trained nurse or social worker visiting new mothers to provide them with parenting skills.

⁸ Words which make (an unpleasant feeling) less intense.

⁹ Representing the plumage/body.

¹⁰ Symbolical of the mother and her guided instructions.

¹¹ Representing the sun.

¹² Divine keeper or God of the winds.

¹³ Representing human body.

¹⁴ A state of psychological stability and composure which is undisturbed by experience of or exposure to emotions and pain.

¹⁵ Shady.

¹⁶ Symbolical of the first lesson on substance use prevention. Trained teachers engage children in interactive activities to give them the opportunity to learn and practise a range of personal and social skills.

¹⁷ Symbolical of instances of happiness, success, and prosperity.

¹⁸ Experiences and responses provide the youths with the opportunity to evaluate themselves.

¹⁹ The desire, impulse or temptation to do something, especially something wrong or unwise, such as substance use.

²⁰ Allegory of peaceful life.

²¹ Allegory of being engaged in the pursuit of pleasure; sensually self-indulgent.

²² Endorsement of the model temperament they should have to deal with substances.

²³ It is only through their choices that they can harness the power of sound decision-making.

²⁴ Represent the anxiety of the discharge of social skills.

²⁵ Metaphor of outside world.

²⁶ Simile of beguiling urge.

²⁷ Symbolical of the knowledge from Classroom environment improvement programmes which strengthen the classroom management abilities of teachers, and support children to become better students, whilst reducing early aggressive and disruptive behaviour.

²⁸ Substance use prevention is about sharing the information acquired with friends.

²⁹ Represents the art of persuasion.

³⁰ Represents psychological vulnerabilities.

³¹ Some personality traits such as sensation-seeking, impulsivity, anxiety sensitivity or hopelessness, are associated with increased risk of substance abuse. These indicated prevention programmes help adolescents that are particularly at risk to deal constructively with emotions arising from their personalities.

³² Represents traumatic or bad memories.

³³ To strike repeatedly.

³⁴ Allegory of deteriorating mental health.

³⁵ Representative of the natural mentoring in the relationships and interactions between young adults and non-related adults such as teachers, coaches and community leaders which has been found to be linked to reduced rates for substance abuse.

³⁶ Simile of coral reef but has a metaphorical value of a united family.

³⁷ Represent familial disputes and disharmony.

At the sunset: Prevention with Elders

WRITTEN BY ALEXANDRA BRAVO SCHROTH, P.22

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Illustration by Saptadipa Mallick

**Dedicated to all of the UNODC
Youth Forum participants of 2021**