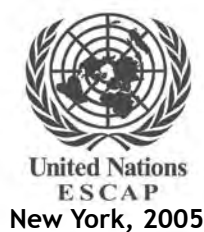


Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

# YOUNG PEOPLE and SUBSTANCE USE:

## Introduction and Resources



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# Contents of the training guide

## **CONTENTS** (Booklet 1)

### **Introduction and Resources**

- Acknowledgements
- Abbreviations
- Introduction
- Glossary
- Some website resources on substance use and life skills
- References

## **CONTENTS** (Booklet 2)

### **Module 1**

#### **Understanding Substance Use**

- Getting started
- Session 1:** Probing the world of a young substance user
- Session 2:** Why do young people use substances?
- Session 3:** Substances and their use
- Session 4:** Consequences of substance use and stages of change

## **CONTENTS** (Booklet 3)

### **Module 2**

#### **Prevention: Principles and Strategies for Intervention**

- Session 1:** Prevention principles and interventions
- Session 2:** Preparing for interventions on prevention
- Session 3:** Skills for preventing substance use
- Session 4:** Designing an intervention on preventing substance use

## **CONTENTS** (Booklet 4)

### **Module 3**

#### **Treatment and Continuing Care: Principles and Strategies for Intervention**

- Session 1:** Principles of treatment and continuing care
- Session 2:** Stages of change and stages of care
- Session 3:** Core life skills
- Session 4:** Designing an intervention on treating substance use

# Acknowledgements

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In the development of the guide, the secretariat worked closely with John Howard, Director of Clinical Services, Training and Research, Ted Noffs Foundation, Sydney, Australia. The guide is based on a training course on young people and substance use that John Howard had developed. The course drew from and extended a training package on working with street children that had been developed in part by John Howard for the World Health Organization.

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# Abbreviations

AIDS	acquired immune-deficiency syndrome
ATS	amphetamine-type stimulants
BBV	blood-borne virus
DARE	Drug abuse resistance education
DT	delirium tremens
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
FGD	focus group discussion
HBV	hepatitis B virus
HCV	hepatitis C virus
HIV	human immuno-deficiency virus
HIV+	positive test for the human immuno-deficiency virus
LAAM	levo-alpha-acetylmethadol (a substitution medication for opioid dependence)
IDU	injecting drug user
IEC	information, education and communication
LSD	lysergic acid diethylamide (an hallucinogen)
MDMA	3, 4-Methylenedioxymethamphetamine (“ecstasy”)
NCO	national counterpart organization
NGO	non-governmental organization
STI	sexually transmitted infection
THC	tetrahydrocannabinol (active ingredient in cannabis)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
WHO	World Health Organization

# Introduction

## Background

The enormous economic and social changes occurring across the Asian and Pacific region have a profound impact on its young people, with positive and negative consequences. Substance use and other risk behaviours appear to be increasing across the region. As a result of substance use and related difficulties, young people are dropping out of or being excluded from school and other education and training opportunities. The involvement of young people in drug-related crime is rising with their increasingly entrapment in supplying and selling drugs. This increase in youth drop-out and crime takes its toll on individuals, families, communities and nations.

Young people are in the forefront of vulnerability to HIV infection. Among the increasing HIV-positive population in the region, many are young people, with a substantial proportion becoming infected via injecting drug use or unprotected sexual activity, especially while intoxicated. There are estimates that, in some countries of the region, 70% of injecting drug users (IDUs) are aged 16 to 25, and 50% of IDUs are HIV-positive. At the same time, the age of initiation into substance use and transition to injecting drug use is declining.

The current widespread manufacture and use of amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS), such as methamphetamine and *ya ba*, in the region significantly raise the risk of blood-borne viral transmission. This is especially so where injecting drug use has become fashionable or the norm and where unprotected sexual activity occurs. Also associated with the increase in ATS use are increased levels of violence and other crimes against persons and property.

There is an urgent need to reduce the spread of problematic substance use and delinquency, and to treat young people who are substance-dependent in a humane manner and with age-appropriate approaches. There is also an urgent

need to develop and implement appropriate and targeted interventions based on the best available evidence.

Prevention and treatment interventions that work in the case of addressing opioid dependence (for example, heroin or opium) may not be appropriate for tackling ATS use. As yet, there is no reliable pharmacotherapy to assist in treatment. Thus, psychosocial interventions play a major role in the treatment of ATS use. However, there is no overwhelming evidence that what has been tried to date in the region has been successful either in preventing substance use or in providing effective treatment.

Some of the interventions that have been tried are culturally inappropriate imports of little relevance to young people. Others are based on philosophies that conflict with local customs and belief systems. There are, however, interventions that could be easily adapted.

ESCAP emphasizes an integrated approach to substance use – prevention, treatment and rehabilitation – and works with diverse partners to build the capacity of young people and health workers in dealing more effectively with substance use among young people. Equally important, this training guide aims to contribute to drug demand reduction among young people.

Under the ESCAP project entitled “Reducing drug abuse and delinquency

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