

Global Voice: Prevention

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The Consultation around Prevention has been done both in person and by electronic consultation via email. The electronic consultation was sent out to over 2000 email addresses, 53 organizations participated. The consultation in person was done from July to December 2015, over 100 organizations were consulted during this process.

The importance of prevention is highlighted as one of the most crucial aspect to solve the World Drug Problem. The view that prevention needs to be discussed more on the international level is stressed, and also that more resources should be put in place to enable a comprehensive and evidence based prevention. Drug abuse is seen as a health problem that should and can be prevented, prevention is cost effective as it reduces the possibility of future problem from drug use, such as addiction, health issues and crime.

Much of the work being done in the sphere of prevention is in one way or another focused on children or youth. Many activates that are being done focus on self-awareness, self-confidence, self-expression good leisure and nutrition for young people. The organizations are describing a great variety of different interventions that are being done around the world. Below is a description of some of the key issues that was raised during the consultation, both best practices and challenges.

Best practices

- ✓ Knowing the local conditions: Organizations are stressing that “doing good” activities is simply not enough, we need to know the local preconditions and also do activities that are relevant and based on evidence or best practices, non-medical drug use is a complex phenomenon.
- ✓ Importance of family and community: A common stressed aspect is the importance of both the community and the family in prevention work. Hence many organizations are working with strengthening the capacity of parents, both in the west and in the global south. Another intervention is community based approach to achieve population level change. The model builds on a comprehensive approach, that there is no single entity that bears the full responsibility and hence the responses should be a mix of environmental and individual efforts, many actors need to be involved.
- ✓ Involving youth: The need to involve the youth both in the planning and implementation of the prevention activities is stressed. They are the experts in the area and have a lot of important information and input on how we better can reach them and adapt our message, both where they want to be reached and how the message could be formulated.
- ✓ Cooperation: One area that is mentioned by almost all the responses is the need for, and the possibility of, increased cooperation and coordination between the actors and sectors that are involved in the area of prevention. This will enable to use the existing resources better and could be part of the solution of the scarce resources that are described as a limitation. This

is mentioned both as a challenge and best practice.

Main challenges

- Lack of data: As stated above many organizations state that best practices should include knowing the local condition when planning a prevention activity. Since data is lacking in many areas of the world this is seen as a challenge when planning prevention interventions. There is a need for both quantitative and qualitative data on the use of drugs and the dynamics behind initiation of drug use, this is especially stressed from responses from global south.
- Negative influence of media and culture: The influence of media and culture with a more positive attitude towards drugs is mentioned as a way of normalizing drugs is mentioned as a challenge
- Prevention activities towards marginalized groups: One issue of concern is the special needs for children growing up in marginalized areas, such as the slum areas or other areas affected by poverty and social exclusion. The need to connect the World Drug Problem to poverty is being raised, there is also a sense of neglect in this area of the world. Organizations are asking for answers on how we better can support children growing up in slums with high rate of addiction among the adults, to break the vicious circle. Other areas that are connected are the problems of corruption, unemployment and school drop-out, just to mention a few challenges that many organizations face.
- Availability of treatment: Another important challenge is to close the gap between the need and the availability of treatment, especially in poor areas.
- Selected interventions: Answers are also highlighting that we need to develop our

capability to identify risks and our answers to intervene early to interrupt drug use. Civil Society has different ways of reaching young people of risk, some use the Criminal Justice System and others sees it as a hinder.

Recommendations

- ✓ Prevention of drug use should be a top priority for Global Drug Policy;
- ✓ The Global Drug Policy needs to be implemented, a policy will not make any difference without a plan for implementation and resources;
- ✓ Drug policy discussions should have a child focus, with the aim to protect the child from illicit drugs, in line with article 33 in the Convention of the Rights of the Child;
- ✓ Prevention should be evidence based in line with the UNODC's International Standard of prevention;
- ✓ Develop and implement methods for community based prevention;
- ✓ Prevention activities should be in line with Human Rights and the international Drug Conventions;
- ✓ The current development of legalization of cannabis needs to be stopped;
- ✓ More data is needed, this is a precondition for developing local prevention strategies;
- ✓ Prevention intervention should involve the target group, often the youth or children, both in the planning and the implementation of prevention activities;
- ✓ Include the expertise and knowledge of the civil society;
- ✓ Take better use of the resources by cooperation and coordination;
- ✓ Develop and implement selected interventions with the aim to reach young people at risk and provide early interventions.