

People's Power Against Drugs : An International Perspective

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UNODC Regional Centre for East Asia and the Pacific

2003 Winter School in the Sun

Trends and Options

30 June – 3 July 2003

Brisbane, Australia

"Globalisation offers the human race unprecedented opportunities. Unfortunately, it also enables many anti-social activities to become "problems without passports". Among these are drug abuse, which brings misery to millions of families around the world every year, and drug trafficking, which cynically promotes and exploits that misery for commercial gain. If the international community is to deserve its name, it must respond to this challenge. Happily, it is beginning to do so."

Kofi Annan
World Drug Report 2000

A devastating global issue

- ▣ In 2002: 200,000,000 drug users (3.4% of world's population) were reported:
 - 162,800,000 use cannabis
 - 42,000,000 use ATS
 - 14,100,000 use cocaine
 - 14,900,000 use opiates

A devastating global issue (Cont'd)

- ▣ In 2001: 61% of global ATS seizures were reported in East and Southeast Asia of which:
 - 50% in Thailand
 - 29% in China
 - 11% in the Philippines
- ▣ In 2002: 45% of the global illicit opium poppy cultivation was in Myanmar while other 8% was in other Southeast Asian countries

A new response to the drug scourge is emerging.

Essential components

- Visionary leadership
- Public participation
- Transparency on drug determinants & outputs of drug control policies

Adaptive changes in drug control strategies are needed

- ▣ The economic aspects of drug abuse and related interventions are relevant to the development of well-informed, evidence-based decision making on drug policy.
- ▣ The hidden nature of drug abuse makes it difficult to quantify production, consumption, import, export or price.
- ▣ The lack of basic data collection systems and the lack of capacity to disaggregate costs of drug abuse, including private (internal) costs and social (external) costs.

Modern drug trade

- ✦ in the past, it is represented a self-contained criminal activity
- ✦ today, it branches out into many other businesses, creating criminal networks associated with the trafficking of arms, the trafficking of human beings, money laundering and terrorism

Institutional responses pace ? rapidly changing nature of problem

- ✦ The public has started to see the drug problem as a social malaise deeply rooted in people's behavior and no longer sees government as the only party responsible for drug control
- ✦ Government no longer see drugs as a purely criminal matter requiring only a counter-crime response
- ✦ Public health issues and social distress related to drug abuse are now recognized by policy makers

Adaptive change of drug control is interwoven with increased drug use & the effects of globalization with regard to trade, culture, and entertainment

- ✦ The public understands more that drug-affected societies cannot rely on government response alone
- ✦ Communities and their leaders now acknowledge that the cause of drug problem has cultural and economic roots that the government cannot fully control
- ✦ Decision to use drugs by workers & youth is a personal one, dictated by desired self-image and performance

The public is extremely concerned by the magnitude of drug use and feels the need to counteract the problem through primary prevention

People find the courage to overcome drug related stigmas, speak out, denounce or confront drug dealers, and expose official complacency towards drugs, including the acceptance of bribes, corruption and law enforcement inertia.

Governments increase policy-making transparency and renounce non-practical evidence based strategies

- ✦ Authorities at all level are willing to share intelligence and successful strategies.
- ✦ Most policy makers overcome denial and finger-pointing at foreign scapegoats.
- ✦ A new collective attitude brings more transparency, consistency and sustainability to the four areas of drug control measures : advocacy, supply reduction, control measures, demand reduction

Organized civil society and special interest groups identify methods to reduce harm from drug-based economies and drug abuse

- ✦ Stigma and cultural bias attached to drugs are demolished and approached as a widespread social evil rather than a personal sin.
- ✦ Drug control institutions reveal what works in drug control strategies, while exposing institutional complacency and bureaucratic inertia.

A new openness is fashionable.

- ⌘ The quality of the information available on most websites of drug control authorities in the region, the establishment of toll-free lines on drugs and the more honest reporting by the Chinese press and authorities on drug problems are good examples of the new openness toward drug awareness and policy.

Drug control policies will have more immediate impact through empowerment of communities

People & communities must be given the instruments to act and react, and to become genuinely responsible for their own present and future, so that they can be the catalysts for real and lasting change. Among the more effective instruments are primary prevention and secondary prevention measures.

Common primary prevention measures for non-users

- ⌘ Public education
- ⌘ Attitude and behavioural changes
- ⌘ Social and public action such as neighbourhood improvement
- ⌘ Public awareness
- ⌘ Public service announcements, advertisements, and media coverage
- ⌘ Attitude and behavioural change measures eg. parenting skill training, peer counselling and resistance skills training

Secondary prevention measures for experimental and casual drug users

- ⌘ Hotlines, crisis counselling services and community-based information and referral network are examples of people-based measures.
- ⌘ Detoxification and after-care services are more institutionalized activities, but public support helps to make the services more accessible.

Towards more people's power

People's empowerment against the drug threat has originated in countries where drug abuse is significant and where the government has had no wish to maintain a monopoly over the response (i.e., Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia).

Adaptive Changes in Alternative Development

- ⌘ Drug production has always been the greatest challenge, but arms smuggling, illicit logging, trafficking of humans, and money laundering are also targets of change.
- ⌘ Change in response to drug production was ignited by agents external to the communities. Peasants were not self-motivated to abandon illicit crop production, but they eventually embraced the change.

Thai formula on alternative livelihood

No -nonsense, Back to basics development design including :

- Public awareness
- Public interest
- Evaluation and trial period
- Visionary leadership
- National unity & political will
- Commitment of ample resources
- Public participation

Empowerment of people

- ⌘ is the most important determinant of success in remote and isolated areas and even more important than government support.
- ⌘ The advancement of people's fundamental rights and their entitlement to development know-how, including food security, are the top priorities.
- ⌘ Opium elimination is no longer a target in itself, but a side effect of the new rural economy with the people at its centre.

Prevention is Better Than a Cure

- ⌘ Hundreds of communities and institutions across the region are engaged in demand-reduction initiatives to prevent the use of illicit drugs and to rehabilitate drug users.
- ⌘ Those who choose primary prevention are possibly the smartest of all drug controllers.

Innovative Regional Partnerships

- ⌘ The international congress "In pursuit of a drug-free ASEAN 2015: Sharing the vision leading the change" gave an opportunity for an honest and comprehensive diagnosis of the difficulties encountered by regional drug policies.
- ⌘ The plan was called ASEAN and China Co-operative Operations in Response to Dangerous Drugs (ACCORD).

ACCORD is innovative

- ⌘ ACCORD is now the only integrated regional drug control plan, with clear objectives, measurable targets, established timelines, a business plan, an online monitoring and co-ordination mechanism, and a strategy for funding.

ACCORD rests on four pillars

- ⌘ Advocating civil response and awareness of the dangers of drugs
- ⌘ Building consensus and sharing successful strategies of demand reduction
- ⌘ Strengthening the rule of law
- ⌘ Eliminating the supply of illicit drugs by boosting alternative development programmes.

“For decades, we have all exerted great efforts and allocated tremendous resources to eradicate the illicit use of drugs. Despite a good deal of progress, some aspects of the problem are somehow persistent and keep transforming. It is said that the quickest way of ending a war is to lose it. Naturally nobody should take that road. Existing programmes are now integrated in the ACCORD plan of action, with a more holistic approach and new strategies. We have shared a common vision, let us now lead the necessary changes.”

Surin Pitsuwan
Foreign Minister of Thailand in 2000

Two likely difficulties

- ✦ *Setting up the planned funding strategy* as it requires a significant level of trust among countries that are not used to making multilateral investments of their taxpayers' money.
- ✦ *Maintaining a high level of commitment and determination*, especially when failure becomes apparent.

Millions of lives – and possibly sustained economic growth

depend on the quality of leadership, public participation and transparency of this Asian coalition in the years to come.

IQ

- ✦ The design of national and regional drug control is normally based on a collective understanding of the drug problem in the framework of local resource capacity.
- ✦ We could define data collection and data analysis mechanisms as the drug intelligence “quota” or “IQ”. The IQ on drugs has always been growing significantly, and practically everywhere.
- ✦ Governments, people, press and academia, with few exceptions, have made a significant effort to know more while monitoring drug control policies, with a growing evidence base.

EQ

- ✦ The growing weight of evidence based knowledge has only marginally affected, positively or negatively, the other essential component of drug control policy making, which is the “emotional quota”.
- ✦ The EQ of drug control has been consistently high in recent decades. However, the cross fertilisation between EQ and IQ on drug control policies has not grown at the same pace.

IQ / EQ

- ✦ In international policy discussions, the impression was that those who have a greater knowledge of illicit drug science, often do not feel a strong empathy with those who have high emotions on drug control matters.
- ✦ IQs and EQs on drugs do not grow together and have not developed an easy dialogue.

GQ

- ⌘ A “governance quota” or GQ of the drug problem could then be measured from the “street side” similar to the “urban score cards” that some UN programmes have developed to measure the quality of the governance on other community problems.
- ⌘ People are often not really in control of drugs, even where their IQ and EQ on the subject are high, because little attention has been given to what works in practical terms and what does not work in a specific community, regardless of the collective expectations of IQs and EQs.

Transparency is a key

- ⌘ Much more attention should be given to the impact of drug control policies and to develop simple and pragmatic communication between protagonists of drug control actions.
- ⌘ More transparency on what is done in practice to fight drugs and on the situation before and after information and enforcement campaigns, should be a must to enhance the local, regional, and international “governance quota” of drug control

Thank you for your attention

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