



Drug Demand Reduction

Introduction

Development problems are risk factors for drug abuse and addiction. At the same time, drug abuse poses serious obstacles to sustainable human and social development. It affects individual health as well as the overall social development of a neighbourhood, community, city or even country. Substance abuse and addiction produce dramatic costs for all societies in terms of lost productivity, family and social disorders, crime, violence, transmission of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, and an increased burden for health care systems.

Approach

Drug demand reduction is a health-oriented approach comprising prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and harm reduction. It seeks to teach and support behaviours that lead to improved personal health and social functioning. It also reduces threats to public health (e.g. HIV/AIDS) and public safety. Through this approach, which intervenes at various states of the drug consumption continuum, the spiral between drug problems and development problems of individuals can be halted.

Methods

Drug abuse prevention aims to prevent or delay the onset of drug abuse by creating healthy and attractive alternatives to substance abuse. Prevention is delivered in settings such as schools and universities, communities, primary health care services, places of worship, etc. The focus is generally on building individuals' life skills, strengthening families, reorienting health services, encouraging community action and involving the media. The method chosen depends on the target group and the risk of the target group members to develop drug abuse problems. Since some of these methods prove more effective if they are peer driven, they can address the specific needs of vulnerable or disadvantaged target groups, such as youth, street

children, refugees, minorities, and certain occupational groups in their respective environments.

Treatment comprises detoxification, stabilisation and ongoing care to maintain physiological and emotional improvements initiated during detoxification. It seeks to enhance and sustain reductions in drug use or abstinence by means of inpatient and/or outpatient health and psychosocial care. At the same time it teaches and motivates behavioural and lifestyle changes that strengthen the client to refrain from substance abuse.

Harm reduction is designed to halt the descent of drug users into poverty, crime and social exclusion. It reduces health risks, especially that of spreading HIV/AIDS. Outreach, distribution of clean needles and the provision of substitute drugs such as methadone are the most important measures designed to support drug addicts in acute phases of addiction and crisis. The aim of harm reduction measures is also to reach out to extremely marginalised groups and to facilitate their access to treatment and care without the prerequisite of becoming drug-free.

Rehabilitation assists patients in regaining or attaining improved personal health and social functioning. These improvements in lifestyle support sustained control over substance use and a self-sustained life. Measures include reintegration into the family, community and society, i.e. through family counselling, vocational training or employment opportunities.

World Drug Situation: According to the UN World Drug Report 2005:

- 200 million people worldwide use illegal drugs
- 150 million use cannabis
- 38 million use amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS)

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- 15 million use opiates of which 9 million heroin
- 13 million use cocaine

The pattern of drug consumption has moved from traditional use to a more problematic use of substances, which includes the misuse of legal drugs such as alcohol and tobacco.

Injecting drug use – mostly heroin – has increased, putting more and more people at risk of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases through the sharing of contaminated needles. Worldwide about 13 million people are now injecting drug users (IDU). Developing and transition countries are most affected by this phenomenon: currently about 78% of all IDUs live in these countries. At present, about 30% of all HIV infections outside of sub-Saharan Africa can be traced back to injecting drug use.

Lessons Learned

Drug demand reduction requires ongoing political commitment. Help for addicts must be balanced and coordinated with law enforcement. The multi-causality of the problem calls for multisectoral approaches involving sectors such as education, health, security and law enforcement, youth and families. Political will, legal frameworks and financial investment are needed, together with qualified and engaged personnel, in order to achieve sustainable target-oriented and needs-based results.

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH embraces drug demand reduction as part of its development-oriented drug control approach and supports partner countries in delivering more effective national or local drug demand reduction strategies and programmes. The set of drug demand reduction instruments offered by GTZ allows for a multilevel approach well-tailored to both the causes and the effects of drug use in our partner countries.

Effective drug demand reduction calls for a continuum of care that addresses the physical,

mental and spiritual health needs of the target group. Services must be culturally appropriate and consumer-driven, respecting clients' rights, capacities and needs.

Impact

Demand reduction in all its facets can make a significant and sustainable contribution to achieving the goals set out in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) relating to the reduction of HIV infections. The harm reduction approach in particular is crucial in order to ensure that HIV prevention and treatment for IDUs is in place, so that the rising HIV/AIDS epidemics in Asia and Eastern Europe driven by injecting drug use may eventually be stemmed.

Despite effective concepts, strategies and instruments, development-oriented drug control must remain realistic in its aims and goals: German Development Cooperation does not claim to be able to solve the global drug problem. However, significant contributions can be made to mitigating local drugs and development problems.

Challenges for Development Cooperation

The United Nations General Assembly's Special Session on Drugs (UNGASS) of 1998 and its Political Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction put drug demand reduction on the international agenda and formulated the concept of the balanced approach between supply reduction and demand reduction as an effective means of tackling the global drug problem.

Drug demand is caused by a variety of economic and social factors. Therefore, reducing the problem of drug abuse requires multisectoral approaches. Greater impact and synergies can be achieved by integrating or mainstreaming drug-specific measures into existing projects or programmes that deal with education, health, youth promotion, poverty reduction, etc.

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