

**For meeting on
24 September 2009**

Paper FC 4/2009

Report on the Youth Drug Abuse in Hong Kong

PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members on (a) the latest scene of youth drug abuse and (b) Government strategies and measures to curb the problem.

LATEST DRUG SCENE

2. The total number of drug abusers reported to the Central Registry of Drug Abusers (CRDA) fluctuated in the 10 years between 1999 and 2008. After reaching its peak with over 18 000 in 2000 and 2001, the number decreased steadily to 13 252 in 2006. The number then increased again to 14 175 in 2008. The increasing trend continued into the first half of 2009 as the number of reported abusers (8 916) increased by 1.7% as compared with the same period of 2008.

3. There is an alarming rising trend for young drug abusers aged under 21. There were 3 430 reported young abusers in 2008, representing an increase of 57% in four years. As a result, the declining trend in the total reported number of drug abusers has been reversed since 2007. Specifically, the number of those aged between 12 and 15 has more than doubled in four years.

4. In the first half of 2009, the number of young drug abusers aged under 21 was 2 175, being 3.3% higher than that in the same period of 2008. The increase was mainly attributable to a rise in the number of the younger ones aged between 12 and 15 (from 454 to 504).

ANTI-DRUG STRATEGY AND MEASURES

Overview

5. The overall strategy for reducing the supply of and demand for illicit drugs comprises five prongs: preventive education and publicity, treatment and rehabilitation, legislation and law enforcement, external cooperation, and research.

6. To arrest the trend of youth drug abuse, a high level inter-departmental Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse was formed in October 2007, under the chairmanship of the Secretary for Justice, Deputy Chairman of the Fight Crime Committee. The Task Force led by the Secretary for Justice released its Report on 11 November 2008. The Report contains some 70 recommendations spanning the five prongs of the anti-drug policy. The recommendations also include the promotion of a community culture of care for young people through the *Path Builders* initiative.

7. In July 2009, the Chief Executive announced the further stepping up of the anti-drug campaign in five aspects, namely community awareness and mobilisation, community support, drug testing, treatment and rehabilitation, and law enforcement.

8. The latest progress and action plan are summarised in the ensuing paragraphs.

Progress and Action Plan

Preventive Education and Publicity

9. To mark the second year of the two-year territory-wide campaign launched in June 2008, with the theme “No Drugs, No Regrets. Not Now, Not Ever.”, a pledge ceremony was launched by the Narcotics Division (ND) and the Action Committee Against Narcotics (ACAN), in collaboration with the Family Council on 21 June 2009. A new series of TV and radio Announcements in the Public Interest (APIs) for the campaign, targeting various stakeholders including parents, young people, teachers and high-risk

youths, was launched on the same day. ND and ACAN have since organised various large-scale functions. Over 120 district-level anti-drug activities were also organised.

10. Various community organisations such as religious bodies, uniformed youth groups, business associations, professional bodies and women organisations have also responded to the anti-drug cause. This year, the Beat Drugs Fund has approved funding for over 50 projects initiated by community organisations and schools to enhance drug prevention and publicity.

11. A resource kit to equip parents with anti-drug knowledge, attitude and skills to prevent, identify and handle youth drug problems was released on 24 June 2009. Talks for parents have been arranged in all the 18 districts. A series of “train the trainer” workshops and demonstrations was arranged to help teachers and parents use the resource kit. An online website was also launched. A telephone enquiry service for parents (number 186 186), manned by professional social workers, has been provided since August 2009 for an initial period of six months.

12. In addition, ND is developing an anti-drug Internet portal with a view to strengthening anti-drug work online and facilitating various stakeholders to obtain resources and information on the anti-drug cause. It is also embarking on a project to revamp the Drug InfoCentre by phases into a focal point and resource centre for drug education.

School Sector

13. The Education Bureau (EDB) continues to spearhead and coordinate efforts in the institutionalisation of a “Healthy School Policy” with an anti-drug element. It will further strengthen anti-drug education in the curriculum, e.g. a new subject “Life and Society” will be offered at the junior secondary level which covers anti-drug education. To support the promotion of anti-drug education in the school curriculum, learning and teaching resources as well as professional development programmes for teachers will continue to be provided.

14. To equip students with the knowledge, skills and attitude to say no to drugs, in the 2009/10 school year, ND has commissioned non-government organisations (NGOs) to deliver programmes targeting 75% of local primary four to six students and 60% of students in international and non-Chinese speaking schools. Drug prevention programmes subvented by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) target to reach 75% of secondary schools. SWD and EDB also support PATHS to Adulthood, a project funded by the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust that includes life skills education against drug abuse. From the 2007/2008 school year onwards, the Department of Health (DH) has incorporated anti-drug elements in its Junior Health Pioneer Workshops for primary three students. Furthermore, since 2008/09, drug education has become a core basic life skill training for all Form 1 students enrolled with Adolescent Health Programme. With the creation of 27 new Police School Liaison Officer posts in 2008/09 on top of the previous 58, the Police have extended coverage of anti-drug school talks and enhanced collaboration with NGOs concerned and schools.

15. ND is working with SWD, the Police, DH and NGOs concerned to enhance and coordinate various programmes in the 2009/10 school year, with a view to extending the coverage gradually to all primary (upper primary students) and secondary schools as far as possible in three years' time.

16. The Beat Drugs Fund has sponsored an NGO to develop an anti-drug resource kit for the school sector under the steer of a working group formed under ACAN. The resource kit includes framework and practical guidelines on the development of a healthy school policy with an anti-drug element, incorporation of anti-drug elements in the curriculum and teaching resources, as well as protocols for handling suspected or confirmed student drug abuse cases. Seminars, training and demonstration will be organised following the scheduled launch of the kit in October 2009. A telephone enquiry service for teachers manned by social workers (telephone number 186 186) has been provided since August 2009 for an initial period of six months.

17. ND and EDB are arranging for the provision of basic and advanced teacher training programmes in the 2009/10 and 2010/11 school years. They will also continue to reach out to more parents for enhanced home-school cooperation in the anti-drug cause, in collaboration with parent-teacher associations, the Committee on Home-School Co-operation

and parent education units.

Treatment and Rehabilitation

18. Programmes in this regard include compulsory treatment programmes operated by the Correctional Services Department, a voluntary methadone out-patient treatment programme offered by DH, substance abuse clinics (SACs) operated by Hospital Authority, counselling centres for psychotropic substance abusers (CCPSAs) and voluntary residential treatment programmes in drug treatment and rehabilitation centres (DTRCs) run by NGOs. All services are provided to young persons.

19. We are enhancing our social and medical services in order to trawl drug abusers, and help them kick the habit and reintegrate into society. In 2008/09, we strengthened our outreaching, medical social work and residential treatment services. Resources have been allocated to provide 101 additional subvented places in DTRCs, to enhance medical social services in SACs, to open two new SACs and two new CCPSAs, and to strengthen the manpower of the 16 District Youth Outreaching Social Work Teams, 18 teams of Overnight Outreaching Service for Young Night Drifters and five teams under the Community Support Service Scheme.

20. SWD has commissioned the seven existing CCPSAs to provide on-site elementary medical support with effect from 1 October 2009, including body check-up, motivational interviews and voluntary drug testing in the course of voluntary counselling to help motivating and sustaining the young drug abusers on the drug treatment and rehabilitation programme.

21. The Fifth Three-Year Plan on Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation Services (2009/2011) (Fifth Three-Year Plan) was released on 2 April 2009. A host of medium-term recommendations in the Task Force Report have been further developed and taken forward therein. These include the development of a networking model on a cluster basis, provision of training for anti-drug workers, enhancement of the reintegration elements in treatment and rehabilitation programmes, improvement in capacity and quality of various programmes, and resources re-engineering.

22. Efforts are being made to pursue implementation of the Plan. For example, ND held a collaboration meeting in June 2009 among the seven CCPSAs and the seven SACs. Separately, with funding support by the Beat Drugs Fund, the Hong Kong Medical Association commenced on 24 May 2009 a Professional Training Course for Family Doctors.

23. As part of the enhanced anti-drug campaign, the Chief Executive announced in July 2009 that more treatment and rehabilitation facilities should be provided for young abusers who undergo voluntary treatment and rehabilitation programmes. In this regard, the Government plans to invite shortly proposals for possible new and effective models of treatment and rehabilitation services.

Drug Testing

24. To help identify young drug abusers early for treatment, the Task Force has recommended drug testing at various levels. First, we will provide voluntary drug testing in CCPSAs as part of the elementary medical support for target young drug abusers to enhance the engagement and counselling process. Progress is given in paragraph 20 above.

25. Second, the Task Force recommends that, as a matter of principle, introduction of new legislation to empower law enforcement officers to require a person reasonably suspected of having consumed dangerous drugs to be subjected to a drug test. We will set out our detailed proposal for a compulsory drug testing scheme in a consultation paper to invite public views.

26. Third, at the school level, the Chief Executive announced in July 2009 that we will launch a trial scheme of drug testing in 23 secondary schools in Tai Po District in 2009/10 school year. Details are provided in a separate paper. Alongside the trial scheme, we will commission a research project in the fourth quarter of 2009 to, among other things, evaluate the effectiveness of the trial scheme and to devise possible school-based drug testing schemes for gradual rolling out to all schools in the future.

27. Also under the Chief Executive's anti-drug abuse campaign, the Administration will explore the possibility of introducing hair test to Hong Kong as a means for voluntary drug testing.

Enhanced Probation Service

28. Preparation is underway to carry out a two-year Pilot Project to provide more focused, structured and intensive treatment programmes for convicted young drug offenders who are put on probation pursuant to the Probation of Offenders Ordinance (Cap 298). The Pilot Project will commence on 1 October 2009 in the two Probation Offices serving the Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts and Kwun Tong Magistrates' Courts respectively. Services of the Pilot Project include probation supervision with more frequent progress reports to court, more frequent urine tests and curfew checks, intensive counselling programmes, therapeutic groups, employment assistance, school guidance, etc.

Law Enforcement

29. The relevant law enforcement departments are taking forward various recommendations of the Task Force. First, the law enforcement agencies and Department of Justice have been working closely together to continue to invoke section 56A of the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (Cap.134)¹ and the aggravating factor of importation of drugs for enhanced sentencing in appropriate cases.

30. Second, a team established in the Police since April 2008 continue to carry out Internet patrol on drug offences. The law enforcement departments also continue to sustain their crime prevention efforts through publicity and preventive education in collaboration with NGOs as well as industry partners.

31. As a key direction in the Chief Executive's campaign on anti-drug abuse, law enforcement departments was spearheading major enhancement of

¹ Section 56A of the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (Cap 134) empowers the court, where it is satisfied with evidence that an adult has involved a minor in the commission of a drug-related offence and if it thinks fit, to pass a sentence on the convicted adult offender that is more severe than the sentence it would, in the absence of such evidence, have passed.

enforcement efforts specifically for the summer vacation in 2009 and beyond by conducting territory wide anti-drug operations in order to combat the problem of youth drug abuse at the supply side and to ensure no efforts are spared.

Cross-boundary Drug Abuse

32. Since the publication of the Task Force Report, various actions have been taken to step up efforts against cross-boundary drug abuse. First, the proposed arrangements for the sharing of information on youngsters caught abusing drugs in the Mainland, as well as repatriation of those who have been administratively detained by the Mainland, was a subject of discussion between the Chief Executive and the Mayor of Shenzhen at a meeting on 23 June 2009. We are following up with the Mainland authorities for implementation. Second, Customs & Excise Department (C&ED) has enhanced its detector dog services and plainclothes operation at boundary control points. Third, publicity at boundary control points has been enhanced during the festive seasons and dedicated efforts have been made in the summer vacation of 2009.

33. Apart from the above efforts, the Police have started making enquiries of youngsters apparently under the influence of drugs at boundary control points and contacting their parents. To appeal to parents to better exercise their responsibility over their children's movements to the Mainland, publicity efforts have included the message that parents may consider keeping their children's Home Visit Permits and that they can apply to the Immigration Department for a statement of travel records on behalf of their children.

34. We have recently discussed with the Shenzhen authorities and stepped up joint operations, enhance intelligence exchange and publicity efforts at boundary control points in order to deter boundary drug abuse and trafficking.

External Cooperation

35. ND continues to monitor the latest development on discussion over tightening of ketamine in international fora such as World Health

Organisation Expert Committee on Drug Dependence and International Narcotics Control Board. We will provide necessary information to these organisations to support our case when suitable opportunities arise.

36. A meeting between ACAN and the Anti-Drug Committee of Macao was held in May 2009. ND will pursue the resumption of the tripartite cooperation framework among the Mainland, Hong Kong and Macao. In addition, the Police and C&ED continue to pursue closer collaboration on law enforcement efforts with their Mainland and overseas counterparts.

Research

37. The results of the latest Survey of Drug Abuse among Students will be released in end 2009. As for the CRDA, ND rolled out a series of improvement measures in the first half of 2009 which include maintaining close contact with the reporting agencies and enhancing their efficiency in reporting to CRDA, assessing and reducing the extent of under-reporting, and widening and deepening the reporting network.

38. Several research studies, including two studies on the impact of ketamine, a longitudinal study on socioeconomic and health impacts of psychoactive drug abuse, as well as a study on effective ways to dispel at-risk youth's misunderstandings about psychotropic substances, are underway. They are expected for completion from 2010 to 2011. ND is also working to commission further studies in 2009 and beyond.

39. ND, DH and SWD have also been following up on the recommendations of the Task Force on evaluation of drug treatment and rehabilitation services.

40. An evaluation has also been planned for 2009 for the Service Information System², which is currently in use under a pilot scheme by five subvented DTRCs. Subject to the findings of the final review and necessary adjustments, ND will consider extending the Service Information System to

² The Service Information System is a data management system which collects data regularly from each participating Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation Centres about the centre itself, its programmes and clients, for compiling outcome indicators to measure the effectiveness of respective programmes, and provides greater characterisation of the clients and a wider range of behavioural and other changes with which to describe the outcome.

all other subvented DTRCs and promote it for voluntary adoption by non-subvented DTRCs as far as possible to facilitate continuous service improvement.

Community Mobilisation, Support and Care

41. To facilitate various sectors of the community to support anti-drug work through different means, ND and the ACAN launched the “*Path Builders*” initiative in September 2008. To date, over 200 organisations and individuals have pledged support for the *Path Builders* initiative. Recognition was given to contributors at the Pledge Ceremony of the territory-wide campaign on 21 June 2009. ND is tailor-making individual packages and matching the contributors’ offers with potential beneficiaries based on their preferences.

42. As part of the initiatives under the five directions announced by the Chief Executive in July 2009, the 18 District Offices (DOs) of the Home Affairs Department (HAD), with support from SWD and various sectors in the local community, launched anti-youth drug abuse community programmes in their respective districts in August 2009. The programmes will last for one year initially and major elements of the programmes include:-

- (a) identification of at-risk youths and youths with drug abuse history, and organisation of activities (e.g. team sports and recreation activities) to engage the youths in healthy pursuits, cultivate positive values among them and deter them from taking drugs;
- (b) organisation of seminars, workshops, etc. for parents, teachers and youths to inculcate positive values and give them sufficient knowledge on drugs and their adverse impact; and
- (c) organisation and promotion of public education events in districts.

43. To augment our efforts to help youths stay away from drugs, HAD and its 18 DOs are launching mentoring schemes in the districts. There are two types of mentoring schemes, a community-based mentoring scheme in each of the 18 districts which will last for one year initially and an in-depth mentoring scheme for Tai Po to strengthen the downstream support services for the Trial Scheme on School Drug Testing in the district.

ADVICE SOUGHT

44. Members are invited to note the latest progress of implementation of anti-drug strategy as set out in the paper.

Narcotics Division
Security Bureau
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