

Protecting Adolescents and Youth in Bhutan from Substance Abuse



Adolescents and Youth in Bhutan

- More than half of Bhutan's population is below 25 years old.
- A third of Bhutan's total population is in the age group 10 – 24 years, making adolescents and youth an important age group.
- Nearly 42 per cent of the population are age 18 and younger.

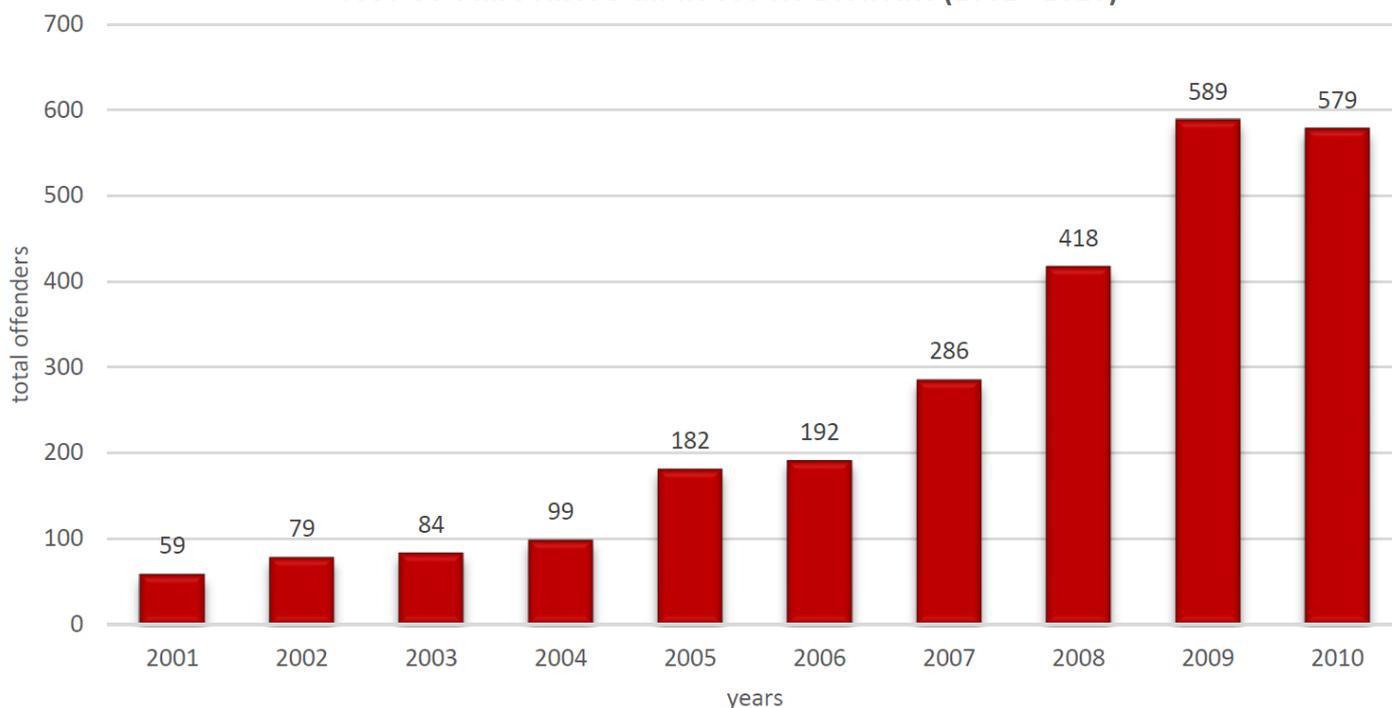


Enactment by young volunteers on the vulnerabilities faced by youth in urban centres

Substance abuse among adolescents and youth:

- Adolescents and youth are increasingly experimenting with risky behaviours such as drug and alcohol abuse and unprotected sexual practices
- About 84 per cent of the drug users are adolescents and youth between 13 to 24 years old; more than 43 per cent of them are students
- Substance abuse causes long term impacts on the wellbeing and the future of adolescents and youth
- Alcohol, tobacco, marijuana/cannabis, pharmaceutical drugs and solvents are some of the commonly abused substances

No. of substance abusers in Bhutan (2001 - 2010)



Source: BNCA

The most effective way to prevent substance abuse among adolescents and youth is to enhance their participation and engagement in social and civic life



Preventing substance abuse among adolescents and youth – What needs to be done?

- Increase public education and awareness about substance abuse, especially among adolescents and youth
- Initiate behaviour change interventions through regular outreach activities by community-based non-governmental organizations
- Establish partnerships between schools, communities, and local authorities to promote healthy behaviours among adolescents and youth
- Facilitate the delivery of high quality rehabilitation services



A recovering addict at the YDF Rehabilitation centre in Thimphu, sharing her story

What has been done for effective coordinated actions and collaborations?

A framework for harmonized approach and communication among relevant agencies to address issues related to use of alcohol and other drugs among youth in Bhutan has been developed.

A Child Protection in Emergencies (CPiE) manual has been developed to facilitate school counsellors and youth volunteers in providing better psycho-social support to children during emergencies.

Life skills training for young people (both in and out-of-school) focusing on vulnerable youth and skills development on drug education and livelihood skills for recovering clients/staff continue to be provided in collaboration with relevant stakeholders.

Youth Networks - to accelerate services to youth in regional and national level, various youth networks have been set up in different districts across Bhutan.

Key partners

- Bhutan Narcotic Control Agency
- Ministry of Health
- Department of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Education
- Youth Networks
- CSOs such as Bhutan Youth Development Fund, Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy, etc.

KEY MESSAGES:

- Government should increase investments on after-school programmes, mentoring and skills building and job training programmes to protect adolescents and youth from substance abuse
- Advocate with and orient all relevant ministries, departments, CSOs, and Youth Groups on the National Youth Policy (2011), the National Policy and Strategic Framework to Reduce Harmful Use of Alcohol (2013 - 2018), and the National Adolescent Health Strategic Plan 2013 – 2018
- Invest in the development and implementation of comprehensive communication and rehabilitation programmes, encompassing education and awareness on substance abuse and prevention and response mechanisms
- Partner with schools, youth groups, and parents to raise awareness, identify vulnerabilities, and promote healthy behaviours among adolescents and youth

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