



FINAL REPORT 2025



National Dangerous Drugs Control Board
Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka



*Drug Prevention, Five – day
Youth-based Training Program
Series and Awareness program
Series in Mahaweli Areas.*

2025

Final Report

Conducted by
**Preventive Education and Training Division
National Dangerous Drugs Control Board**

Organized by
Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka

Executive Summary

Drug use in Sri Lanka has become an increasingly serious public health and social challenge in recent years. The misuse of both traditional substances like cannabis and emerging drugs such as heroin and methamphetamine has affected various segments of society, including youth, adults, and even professionals. Authorities have reported large quantities of narcotics being seized and a steady rise in arrests for drug-related offences, highlighting the expanding scope of the problem. Estimates suggest hundred thousands of people engage in some form of substance use — ranging from alcohol and tobacco to illicit drugs — with notable numbers involved in heroin, cannabis and synthetic drug consumption. Trends also show an alarming increase in drug use among younger populations and rural social groups, indicating that the issue transcends socio-economic boundaries. Despite ongoing government and law enforcement efforts, including anti-narcotic operations and prevention campaigns, Sri Lanka continues to struggle with drug availability, addiction, and the need for more effective prevention, treatment and rehabilitation support systems.

Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka has collaborated with National Dangerous Drugs Control Board to enhance the quality of lives their farmers and reduce the use of substance in their areas since 2016.

National Dangerous Drugs Control Board (NDDCB) is the pioneer government institution, which discharges its functions with an aim to control (Demand Reduction) the drug menace from Sri Lanka. In 1984, parliament enacted the National Dangerous Drugs Control Board Act No. 11 of 1984 and the board came into operation on 9th of April 1984.

The Prevention Education and Training Division is committed to fulfilling the responsibility of the National Dangerous Drugs Control Board to reduce the prevalence of drug abuse and mitigate the harm caused by drugs in accordance with the statutory law and international conventions of Sri Lanka.

The Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka established in 1979 by an Act of Parliament. They are involving more than 40% of total land of Sri Lanka to innovative Agriculture productivity based on the latest technology supplementing the generation of renewable energy, best environment and tourism for the enrichment of the Sri Lankan community and their living standards.

Introduction

Evidences show that youth is a powerful force in drug prevention in the world. They have an outstanding understanding and ability to reach out their peers more than any prevention expert. This makes them easy to reach their own youth group members with positive drug prevention messages without stigmatizing. “Sujatha Daruwo” programme aims to train these youth groups as peer educators and drug prevention agents to deliver drug prevention message to community in their respective Mahaweli areas.

Youth substance abuse remains one of the most pressing social and public health challenges in Sri Lanka, posing serious threats to individual well-being, family stability, community safety, and national development. Adolescents and young adults are particularly vulnerable to drug use due to factors such as peer pressure, unemployment, lack of awareness, psychosocial stress, and exposure to high-risk environments. Recognizing the critical need for early prevention and youth empowerment, structured interventions that combine education, skill development, and community engagement have become an essential strategy in addressing drug-related issues at the grassroots level.

In response to this national concern, the National Dangerous Drugs Control Board (NDDCB), in collaboration with the Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka, implemented a Youth-Based Drug Prevention Five-Day Training Series and Community Awareness Programs. These initiatives were designed to strengthen youth capacity to resist drug use, promote healthy life skills, and enhance community awareness on the harmful consequences of drug abuse and trafficking. The programs targeted youth leaders, community volunteers, and residents within selected Mahaweli zones, ensuring both individual and collective impact.

The five-day training series focused on providing participants with comprehensive knowledge on drug prevention, legal frameworks related to narcotic substances, psychosocial factors contributing to addiction, and practical prevention strategies. Emphasis was placed on life skills development, leadership, communication, peer education, and community mobilization. Interactive training methodologies such as group discussions, role plays, case studies, and participatory learning techniques were used to encourage active engagement and critical thinking among participants.

Complementing the training series, community awareness programs were conducted to disseminate key messages on drug prevention to the wider public. These programs aimed to

create a supportive social environment by increasing awareness among parents, educators, and community members, while fostering collective responsibility in safeguarding youth from drug-related risks. The collaboration between the NDDCB and the Mahaweli Authority enabled effective outreach by integrating drug prevention efforts into existing community development frameworks.

This final report documents the objectives, implementation process, outcomes, challenges, and key lessons learned from the Youth-Based Drug Prevention Training Series and Community Awareness Programs. It seeks to highlight the significance of inter-institutional collaboration and youth participation in strengthening national drug prevention efforts, while providing recommendations for future interventions aimed at building resilient, drug-free communities in Sri Lanka. In 2025 Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka has organized ten (10) Youth-based Trainings and Evidence based Substance Abuse Prevention Program series in Mahaweli System areas targeting community organizations.

Vision

- Drug Free Mahaweli

Goals

- Develop active volunteer youth work force for SUD prevention
- To avoid or delay drug use, especially adolescence in Mahaweli areas.
- Enhance the quality of living in Mahaweli villagers.
- Reduce the demand for the substances in Mahaweli areas.
- To Make an Active Drug Prevention work force in the area.

Objectives

- Conduct drug prevention activities (Awareness and Campaigns) in the area.
- Build a supportive group in the village for drug prevention.
- Empower government and non-government societies for Substance Abuse Prevention in own areas.

Method

- Interactive Sessions (Discussions ,Using Multi – Media, Group Activities)
- Group activities and Discussions
- Role plays

Project Outputs

- Conducted 10 workshops
- Trained 466 youth volunteer leaders
- Conducted 206 public awareness programs and educated 26 692 people including school students and youths in Mahaweli Systems.

Project outcomes

Key Outcomes of the Youth Volunteer Leadership Training Program- Trained 466 youths as volunteer youth leaders.

Enhanced Knowledge and Awareness

As a result of the 10 training programs, 466 youth volunteer leaders demonstrated improved knowledge on drug use, its health, social, and legal consequences, and effective drug prevention strategies. Participants gained a clearer understanding of risk factors, protective factors, and early warning signs related to substance abuse among youth.

Development of Youth Leadership and Life Skills

The trained volunteers developed essential leadership competencies, including communication skills, teamwork, decision-making, problem-solving, and peer influence skills. These competencies strengthened their capacity to act as positive role models and change agents within their communities.

Strengthened Community-Based Drug Prevention Interventions

Youth volunteers were empowered to plan and conduct drug prevention interventions in their own local areas, including awareness sessions, peer discussions, school-based activities, and community outreach programs. This contributed to expanding prevention efforts beyond the training venues into grassroots community settings.

Increased Youth Engagement and Peer-to-Peer Prevention

The program promoted active youth participation in drug prevention through a peer-to-peer approach, increasing the acceptance and effectiveness of prevention messages among adolescents and young people, who are often more responsive to messages delivered by their peers.

Creation of a Sustainable Volunteer Network

A network of trained youth volunteer leaders are established across different regions, enabling continued collaboration, information sharing, and collective action in drug prevention. This network enhances the sustainability of prevention efforts beyond the project period.

Positive Attitudinal and Behavioral Change

Participants reported positive changes in attitudes toward drug use, including increased resistance to peer pressure and stronger commitment to healthy, drug-free lifestyles. Many volunteers expressed motivation to advocate for substance-free environments within their schools and communities.

Improved Community Awareness and Responsiveness

Community members, including parents, teachers, and local leaders, showed increased awareness of drug-related issues due to youth-led interventions. This helped foster a more supportive environment for early prevention and timely referral to relevant support services.

Training Curriculum Included

- Prevention Science

Prevention Science is a multidisciplinary field that focuses on understanding the causes of problem behaviors and identifying effective strategies to prevent them before they occur. It integrates research from psychology, public health, sociology, and education to design, implement, and evaluate prevention programs that promote healthy behaviors and reduce risk factors, particularly among vulnerable populations.

- Evidence-based Prevention Interventions

Evidence-based prevention interventions refer to strategies and programs that have been scientifically tested and proven effective through systematic research and evaluation. These interventions rely on empirical data to ensure that prevention efforts are efficient, ethical, and capable of producing measurable positive outcomes in reducing substance abuse and related social problems.

- **Substances of Abuse: Characteristics and Consequences**

Substances of abuse include drugs and chemicals that have the potential to cause physical, psychological, and social harm when misused. Understanding the characteristics of these substances—such as their addictive properties and patterns of use—is essential for recognizing their short- and long-term consequences on individuals, families, and communities.

- **Environmental-based Prevention**

Environmental-based prevention focuses on modifying social, physical, and policy environments to reduce risk factors and limit access to harmful substances. Rather than targeting individuals alone, this approach emphasizes community-level strategies such as regulations, awareness campaigns, and supportive environments that promote healthy and safe behaviors.

Suggestions

- **Established a Youth Drug Prevention Workforce**

It is recommended to establish a Youth Drug Prevention Workforce by mobilizing the 500 trained youth volunteer leaders to strengthen community-based drug prevention efforts. This workforce will provide a structured and sustainable mechanism to ensure the continued engagement of trained youth beyond short-term training programs.

The establishment of this workforce adds value by institutionalizing peer-led drug prevention, increasing the reach, credibility, and effectiveness of prevention interventions at the community level. Trained youth will act as peer educators and community mobilizers, enabling early identification of risk behaviors and promoting healthy, drug-free lifestyles among young people.

By utilizing trained volunteers and existing community structures, the Youth Drug Prevention Workforce represents a cost-effective and sustainable approach that strengthens youth leadership, enhances community resilience, and supports national drug prevention objectives.

Key Value of Establishing a Youth Drug Prevention Workforce

- **Sustains Impact Beyond Training** – Transforms trained youth from short-term participants into an organized, long-term prevention mechanism.
- **Strengthens Peer-to-Peer Prevention** – Prevention messages delivered by youth are more credible, relatable, and effective among adolescents and young people.
- **Expands Community-Level Coverage** – Enables drug prevention interventions to reach grassroots and high-risk areas through locally based youth volunteers.
- **Enables Early Identification and Prevention** – Trained youth can recognize early signs of substance use and risk behaviors, supporting timely awareness and referral.
- **Cost-Effective Use of Resources** – Maximizes existing training investments by utilizing volunteer leadership and community structures.
- **Builds Youth Leadership and Civic Responsibility** – Develops leadership, accountability, and social responsibility among young people.
- **Strengthens Community Ownership** – Encourages active youth participation, increasing community commitment to drug prevention efforts.
- **Supports National Drug Prevention Goals** – Aligns youth action with national policies and institutional prevention frameworks.

Continuing the Youth Drug Prevention Training Program in Mahaweli Areas

The continuation of the youth drug prevention training program is vital to sustaining effective drug prevention efforts in the Mahaweli areas, where changing social conditions, population mobility, and limited access to preventive services increase the vulnerability of young people to substance use. Continuous training ensures that prevention strategies remain relevant, updated, and responsive to emerging drug-related trends and community needs.

Ongoing training plays a critical role in strengthening and sustaining the Youth Drug Prevention Workforce by enhancing the knowledge, skills, and leadership capacity of trained youth volunteers. Refresher and advanced training programs help maintain the quality and consistency of community-level interventions, while also reinforcing ethical standards, peer education skills, and early identification of risk behaviors.

Furthermore, continuous capacity building supports the long-term motivation and retention of youth volunteers, enabling them to remain actively engaged in drug prevention activities within their own communities. This contributes to the institutionalization of youth participation, transforming short-term training outcomes into sustained community action.

By continuing the training program, the Youth Drug Prevention Workforce can function as a reliable, cost-effective, and community-based prevention mechanism, strengthening community resilience, promoting drug-free lifestyles, and supporting national drug prevention objectives across the Mahaweli regions in a sustainable manner.

Provide further education for selected volunteers

Providing further education for selected youth volunteers is essential to strengthen the effectiveness and sustainability of drug prevention efforts. Advanced and specialized training enhances volunteers' knowledge on emerging drug trends, prevention science, counseling basics, and community intervention methods. Further education also develops leadership, communication, and coordination skills, enabling volunteers to take on greater responsibilities within the Youth Drug Prevention Workforce. By building a group of highly skilled youth leaders, the program ensures higher-quality interventions, consistent prevention messaging, and improved early identification of risk behaviors. Ultimately, further education supports long-term community resilience and strengthens drug prevention efforts at the grassroots level.

Budgeted and Organized by

- Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka.

Conducted by

- Preventive Education and Training Division of National Dangerous Drugs Control Board.

Project Responsible

- Chairman of National Dangerous Drugs Control Board.
- Director General of Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka.
- Director General of National Dangerous Drugs Control board.

Operational Responsible

- Mr. U. G. P. Ruwan Kumara – Director, Institutional Development Division, Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka.
- Mr. Pradeep Koholanegedara - Deputy Director – Preventive Education and Training, National Dangerous Drugs Control Board.

Project Coordinators

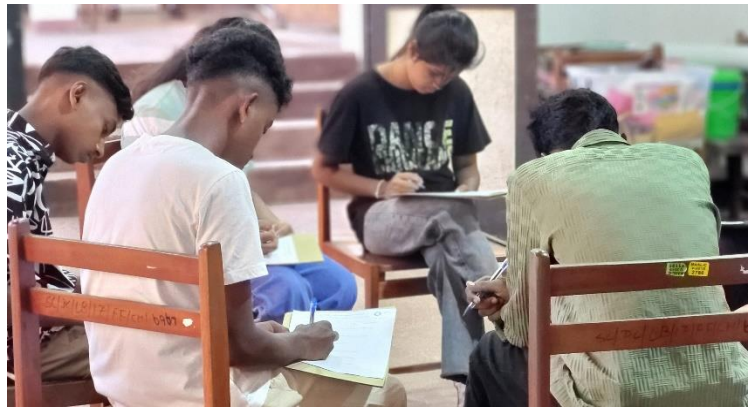
- Mr. W. G. Supun Udana – Drug Education and Information Assistant, National Dangerous Drugs Control Board.
- Ms. K. K. Sanjeevani Vasana Wijesekara – Institutional Development Officer, Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka.

Project Development Committee

- Mr. U. G. P. Ruwan Kumara – Director, Institutional Development Division, Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka.
- Mr. Pradeep Koholanegedara - Deputy Director – Preventive Education and Training, National Dangerous Drugs Control Board.
- Ms. Priyadarshani Rathnayake - Drug Education and Information Officer. Preventive Education and Training, National Dangerous Drugs Control Board.
- Ms. J. A. I. Sewwandi Jayakodi - Drug Education and Information Officer. Preventive Education and Training, National Dangerous Drugs Control Board.
- Mr. W. G. Supun Udana - Drug Education and Information Assistant. Preventive Education and Training, National Dangerous Drugs Control Board.

Photo Gallery

Training Program



Cultural Night



School and Community Awareness Programs



Affixture 01:- Summary of the Programs

Summary of the Trainings

- Conducted 10 five-day trainings and trained 466 youth volunteer leaders in Mahaweli Systems

Summary of the Awareness Programs

No.	Name of the Program	Number of program	Number of Participants
01	School Program	104	19 749
02	Community Program	72	4958
03	Parent Awareness Programs	14	1194
04	Government Officer's Awareness	06	193
05	Youth Awareness	06	308
06	Law Enforcement Awareness Programs	03	230
07	Larger Workplace Awareness Programs	01	60
Total		206	26 692

Affixture 02 :- Trainer and Resource Panel

- Ms. Priyadarshani Rathnayake - Drug Education and Information Officer. Preventive Education and Training, National Dangerous Drugs Control Board.
- Ms. J. A. I. Sewwandi Jayakodi - Drug Education and Information Officer. Preventive Education and Training, National Dangerous Drugs Control Board.
- Ms. Inusha Nilmini Hettiarachchi - Drug Education and Information Officer. Preventive Education and Training, National Dangerous Drugs Control Board.
- Mr. M. M. G. B. M. Rashad – Assistant Drug Education and Information Officer. Preventive Education and Training, National Dangerous Drugs Control Board.
- Mr. N. G. D. S. Wijesinghe – Assistant Counseling Officer. Preventive Education and Training, National Dangerous Drugs Control Board.
- Mr. W. G. Supun Udana - Drug Education and Information Assistant. Preventive Education and Training, National Dangerous Drugs Control Board.

Prepared by,

Preventive Education and Training Division of National Dangerous Drugs Control Board