

## ADVOCACY NEWSLETTER MAR 2024

### Dear Partners and fellow Advocates

This month, we are proud to announce a historic milestone: Singapore's inaugural membership in the United Nations (UN) Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND)! Mrs Josephine Teo, Minister for Communications and Information and Second Minister for Home Affairs, led Singapore's delegation comprising officials from the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Health Sciences Authority and the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) to the 67th session of the CND. Our Anti-Drug Advocate Ms Anne Megan Kong represented Singapore at the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (ODC) Youth Forum which was held alongside the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

Read about our school outreach programme with Kiss92FM to help students develop confidence in public speaking, build resilience against drugs, and say no to drugs firmly.

Continuing our collaboration with the Singapore Prison Service, we present 'Can you hear my heartaches?', a personal account of a mother's steadfast love and support for her son who was struggling with his drug addiction.

In the first of the three-part series from the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) report 2022, we shed light on the key challenges brought about by cannabis legalisation.

We also discuss the importance of guarding teens from cannabis temptations abroad.

Looking ahead, we are thrilled to share the upcoming Anti-drug Ambassador Activity 2024 and the DrugFreeSG Video Competition 2024, offering engaging opportunities to contribute to the anti-drug cause.

Happy reading!

We value your feedback and inquiries on our programmes and activities. Please feel free to reach out to us at [cnb\\_community\\_partnership@cnb.gov.sg](mailto:cnb_community_partnership@cnb.gov.sg).

Thank you for your ongoing support and commitment to the drug-free cause!

If you wish to stop receiving our newsletters, kindly send an email to us at [cnb\\_community\\_partnership@cnb.gov.sg](mailto:cnb_community_partnership@cnb.gov.sg).

## ADVOCACY/67TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS (UN) COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS (CND)

The 67th session of the United Nations (UN) Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) was held in Vienna, Austria from 14 to 22 March 2024. Mrs Josephine Teo, Minister for Communications and Information and Second Minister for Home Affairs, led Singapore's delegation comprising officials from the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB), and the Health Sciences Authority. The CND is the primary drug policy-making body of the UN. It meets annually to discuss the world's drug problem, develop strategies on international drug control, and recommend measures that governments can take to address the problem.

As a new member of the CND for the term 2024 to 2027, Minister Teo expressed Singapore's strong commitment to the work of the CND, including the funding of research for the 2025 World Drug Report. This research aims to examine the global societal impact of illicit drug use, contributing to a better understanding of the harms caused by illicit drugs and supporting global efforts to develop effective strategies to address them.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Youth Forum is an annual event held alongside the CND meeting, providing an opportunity for youths from around the world to exchange perspectives on drug control policies and develop a joint statement to be presented to policymakers at the CND meeting. Ms Anne Megan Kong, a volunteer with CNB's Anti-Drug Advocate Programme, represented Singapore as a youth participant at this year's Youth Forum. "This year's forum was insightful and reflective – teaching us not only important concepts of evidence-based drug use prevention but also reminding us that we are not alone in the fight for a drug-free world," said Ms Kong.



*Photo source: Mrs Josephine Teo's social media account and Ms Anne Megan Kong*

# ADVOCACY/ COMMUNITY ROADSHOWS

Learn about the harms of drugs and gain valuable insights into drug prevention at the following community roadshows.

Event Name	Venue	Date and Time
DrugFreeSG exhibition booth @ Vesakhi Mela 2024	Singapore Khalsa Association, 2 Tessensohn Road, Singapore 217646	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 27 April 2024, 10am – 6pm</li><li>• 28 April 2024, 12 –5 pm</li></ul>

## CALL for VOLUNTEERS

Interested in sharing the drug prevention message? Email us at **CNB\_Community\_Partnership@cnb.gov.sg** if you are keen to help out at any of our roadshows and events!





In a special tie-up with Kiss92FM, Radio DJs Nat Koh, Shawnrick Hu, Juliana Yeow and Daphne Ko conducted the "Say Something, Say No" outreach programme at National Junior College and Greenridge Secondary School earlier this month. Through the programme, students learn to build confidence in public speaking and resilience against drugs, and to say "no" to drugs firmly. A voiceover competition was also organised, where winners had a go at recording and broadcasting their very own anti-drug announcement at Kiss92FM Radio Station.



"Waiting For You", an initiative by the Singapore Prison Service features a compilation of stories written from the perspectives of the drug abusers' family members and loved ones. In this edition, we share with you "Can You Hear My Heartaches?" – a heartfelt account of a drug addict's mother's unwavering love and support for her son despite the personal cost to her, and how it strained her relationship with her other son.

## Can You Hear My Heartaches?

If my heartaches had a voice, what do you think they would say? At the age of 68, I have been through settling my husband's gambling debts, a divorce, raising my 2 sons singlehandedly, cleaning up my son's debts incurred from drug addiction and watching my sons' relationship with each other destroyed. This sums up the story of my life; a life that revolved around three men. I never had the time nor the opportunity to look after myself. Today, I continue to work to pay off outstanding debts on behalf of my son. For them, I remain frugal to make ends meet. For them, I cannot afford to purchase a flat to call my own. For them, I distanced myself from my siblings to avoid unwanted conversations about my family. If my heartaches had a voice, what do you think you would hear?

My marriage was a difficult one. My ex-husband was a gambler who did not care for this family. Throughout our marriage, I had to continuously help him pay off his gambling debts. I eventually filed for a divorce as I felt that the marriage was going nowhere, and I feared that my two sons would role-model after their father. I slogged through two jobs then as I had two other mouths to feed. Every day, I left home before the sun was up and only returned when the sky was dark. Much as I wanted to be with my boys, I had to make money to put food on the table.

If life took a 90-degree sharp turn after my divorce, the bend became more arduous to navigate when I discovered that my younger son James was on drugs. James was in his twenties when I noticed something amiss. He lost weight rapidly and languished at home for long periods without work. He would deny it whenever I raised my suspicions, but my heart sank the day he was arrested for drug consumption. Where did the son who once excelled in both school and work disappear to?

The path that James chose did not just affect his life. It brought unexpected destruction to our family in so many ways. I had prayed so hard for my sons not to follow in their father's footsteps, but it seems my prayer was not answered. James's drug addiction resulted in colossal debts and once again, I was back to settling debts. As if this was not enough for a mother to bear, I also had to witness the breakdown of my sons' relationship with each other. James's brother could not tolerate his behaviours and was constantly furious with me for fending for and defending James. It was heart-wrenching to be sandwiched between my sons and nothing I did appeased anyone. At times, when I close my eyes, I wish that this would not be my life when I reopen my eyes.

I must persist for James's sake. But has James ever spared a thought for his suffering mother? Once, our church pastor informed me that James was contemplating suicide. With a heavy heart, I rushed to James who remained completely indifferent to my concern. I felt an acute pain in my heart and all I could think of was why my son would consider ending his life despite his mother's struggle to support him in every way possible. How powerful are drugs that they can create so much damage and change a person so drastically? When James was sober, he was the perfect son. He was kind, caring and considerate towards almost everyone. I was touched when he helped with the household chores and bought me food. He taught me how to converse in English too. He extended help to others and would often ask if he could donate groceries to friends who were in need. This was James without drugs; endearing and likeable.

You would probably not like James on drugs. He was demanding and unreasonable. He would disappear without a trace for days on end. When he was home again, he instructed me to buy him food with stronger flavors or he would refuse to eat. These were signs that he was back on drugs. I could never understand why; I had thought that he was enjoying his work and performing well as he was promoted. What drove him to return to this detestable habit again? Would someone explain this to me?

In James's current sentence, I am showing support by visiting him and bringing him everything he had requested. During these visits, I take care not to mention anything that might cause him stress. I wish I could talk to my son about my woes and worries but he comes first, and I should not burden him so that he can focus on his rehabilitation. I have assured him that he does not have to support me financially as I am still fit enough to work. I will persevere and do my best to help with his outstanding debts. I have no one to talk to, so I will say here that I once had to delay my dental treatment at the expense of my health as I could not afford it.

There was also a time when I did not have an income for five consecutive months, and I had to tighten my purse strings just to survive. I could never share these with my son for fear that he would be stressed. If I had to choose all over again, I would still choose to sacrifice myself. If there was a button to end all these heartaches, I would press it with all my strength and refuse to let go. "I will change.", were once words of hope and music to my ears. Dismally, these hopes have been crushed time and again. I am numb and I need more than words to convince me now. If James could hear my heartaches, he would know that his mother's love is eternal. He would know that his mother would support him until her very last breath. He would know that she wants nothing more than for him to be forever free from the shackles of drugs.

The easing of regulations on cannabis has unintended consequences, as evidenced by the experiences of countries that implemented such measures – some of whom may have come to regret the miscalculation in the costs to their society. These repercussions pose a range of challenges, as highlighted in the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) report 2022.

# INCB REPORT 2022: ANALYSIS OF THE TREND TO LEGALISE NON-MEDICAL CANNABIS

**Background:** Legalisation of non-medical use began in the U.S. a decade ago, and has since spread to Europe and other regions. While Asia and Africa have not been widely affected, recent developments in South Africa and Thailand forecast change to come. INCB (International Narcotics Control Board)'s 2022 annual report highlights the following key challenges.



## CHALLENGE #1: PREVALENCE OF CANNABIS USE & DEPENDENCE DISORDERS

- Cannabis is the world's most widely used illicit drug. **According to UNODC's World Drug 2022 Report, cannabis use has risen by 23% in the past decade, with 209 million people (4% of the global population) using cannabis in 2020.**
- While prevalence of cannabis use varies by region, it is the **highest in North America, Oceania and West Africa.**
- Between 2000 and 2018, **global admissions related to cannabinoid dependence and withdrawal increased by more than 8-fold, while admissions for cannabis-related psychotic disorders more than quadrupled.**

## CHALLENGE #2: BOOM IN ILLICIT PRODUCTION

- Illicit cannabis production is extensive but challenging to accurately estimate. Nonetheless, **cannabis cultivation can be found in more than 190 countries and territories.**
- **Seizures of cannabis and cannabis resin increased in 2020 by 15% and 29% respectively to 4,707 tons and 2,190 tons.**
- **Due to improved extraction and isolation techniques, a growing number of countries have reported increased indoor cannabis cultivation.**
- Criminal organisations linked with large-scale illicit production and trafficking have benefited from expanding demand for cannabis.





## CHALLENGE #3: LEGALISATION OF MEDICAL CANNABIS - REGULATION ISSUES

- A growing number of countries have approved the use, cultivation and manufacture of cannabis / cannabis-related substances for medical purposes.
- The quickly expanding cannabis industry has caused some Governments to **expedite lifting of controls on cannabis use to maximise commercial profit, without considering the provisions that regulate the cultivation of cannabis for medical purposes** under the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 (as amended by the 1972 Protocol).
- Many Governments are unsure about the continued relevance of cannabis controls and find it **difficult to implement policies that monitor & regulate the cultivation, production, trade and consumption of cannabis and cannabis-related substances for medical and scientific purposes.**



## CHALLENGE #4: HEALTH RISKS - HOME CULTIVATION, SYNTHETIC CANNABINOIDS & CANNABIS PRODUCTS

- **Household cannabis cultivation and home production of cannabis extracts for self-medication is dangerous** - the plants could contain herbicides and the amount of cannabinoid is unknown, making it impossible for the dosage to be determined.
- **Synthetic cannabinoids are far more potent than their natural counterparts. As their adverse effects are not fully known yet, usage entails higher health risks.**
- **New forms of cannabis products with high delta-9-THC potency is now common**, i.e. edibles / vaping products which are marketed to adolescents.
- The **growing accessibility and availability of cannabis & cannabis products diminishes the reality of health risks** associated with its use.



## CHALLENGE #5: LACK OF INTERNATIONAL CONSENSUS

- The classification of cannabis and cannabis-related substances within the international drug control system has been debated at the political level for a few years.
- Some civil society groups and Governments have called for **cannabis and cannabis-related substances to be rescheduled or even removed from international control, leaving each country to decide on applicable controls and restrictions to access and use.**
- This **presents a challenge to the long-standing international drug control conventions which stipulate that any kind of drug use must be limited to medical and scientific purposes; contravention of which should be treated as punishable offences.**



Scan the QR code for the full report:



BRANDED CONTENT

# Vacation caution: How to protect your teen from cannabis while overseas

With the drug legalised and lurking on menus in some countries, here's what parents must know to keep young ones safe



A weed bar in Bangkok. PHOTO: SPH MEDIA

With cannabis legalised and lurking on menus in some countries, youths may think that it is a “soft” and harmless drug. In our latest ‘Smart Parenting’ editorial, find out some myths about cannabis and what parents can do to keep their loved ones safe and clear of temptation, whether at home or overseas. Scan below to read the full Straits Times article now.



<https://go.gov.sg/smartparenting-feb-2024>





Calling all primary schools! A NEW EDITION of the Anti-drug Ambassador Activity 2024 is coming your way with a brand new storyline and exciting activities. Schools who participate in the activity stand a chance to win a \$500 cash prize for the highest participation rate or the best anti-drug montage.

Stay tuned for more updates, and we look forward to your participation!

The DrugFreeSG Video Competition is back this year! For those interested in video production and aged between 12 and 25, here's your chance to use your creativity to raise awareness about the dangers of drug abuse through storytelling, and stand a chance to win cash prizes worth over \$15,000! The theme for this year's competition is **"Drug abuse is not victimless"**.

Scan the QR code below to check out the competition microsite and watch past winning entries for inspiration!



And that's not all! Join us for our FREE upcoming videography workshop on **20 April (Saturday)** where you will get to learn filmmaking tips from industry professionals and gain the necessary skills to produce your video. There is also a show-and-tell segment showcasing various production equipment and settings!

Find out more at **drugfree.sg** or email [contact@drugfree.sg](mailto:contact@drugfree.sg) if you have any enquiries.

# HELP US SPREAD THE ANTI-DRUG MESSAGE



The **Anti-Drug Abuse Advocacy Network (A3 Network)** is a volunteer scheme jointly administered by the NCADA and CNB. The A3 Network, which is under the umbrella of the Home Team Volunteer Network comprises various groups of people who identify with, support and promote the anti-drug cause\*.

*\*Volunteers under the Network do not represent CNB and NCADA, nor are they spokespersons of CNB and NCADA during or outside the term of deployment.*

Help us grow the A3 Network by telling your friends about us and the volunteering opportunities with CNB. Scan the QR codes for more information about the different schemes, or drop us an email at [cnb\\_community\\_partnership@cnb.gov.sg](mailto:cnb_community_partnership@cnb.gov.sg)



Scan here to find out about the A3 Network and different advocates schemes



Anti-Drug Advocate Programme for youths aged 17 - 25 years old

Scan below to find out about the **Virtual Heritage Gallery** that you can access at your convenience. Access PDE resources from our **PDE Handbook online**:



Scan here for the virtual heritage gallery



Scan here for the PDE Handbook

Drop us an email at [CNB\\_Community\\_Partnership@cnb.gov.sg](mailto:CNB_Community_Partnership@cnb.gov.sg) if you would like to unsubscribe or add your colleagues into our mailing list!

If you come across drugs, or what you suspect to be drugs, you should call CNB hotline at **1800-325-6666**

For more information, please visit the CNB website at [www.cnb.gov.sg](http://www.cnb.gov.sg)

Connect with us:

