



# TEN STEPS

## Alcohol and Drug Prevention for Development Agencies



Drinking place in Port Au Prince, Haiti during a voodoo festival (Photo: Rune Eraker)



FORUT - CAMPAIGN FOR DEVELOPMENT AND SOLIDARITY  
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The following are ten recommended steps for development organizations with the intention to integrate alcohol and drug prevention in their projects and programmes. The first five steps are for defining and understanding the challenge, while the latter five are for planning interventions.

### **Step 1: Defining the problem**

Make a brief description of the problem, as it has been experienced by your organization, your staff, your local partner organizations:

- How do the alcohol/drug problems manifest themselves in your project area or target group?
- What kind of substance(s) create the problem?
- Which groups (social, gender, age etc) are involved? As users?  
Other groups than the users who are affected by the problem?

### **Step 2: Deciding to do something**

Involving in alcohol and drug prevention will necessarily result in additional work, even if the new activities are integrated into your already existing programs. This should be realized already from the outset.

Discuss in a responsible body:

How much time and money are we prepared to put into a preliminary assessment of the problem and – later – on possible interventions, as outlined in these Ten Steps?

### **Step 3: Understanding the issue**

There is a huge amount of available knowledge and competence on alcohol and drug problems, in all their aspects. Your organization need not adopt the full knowledge base to do a good job with prevention programs. Working together with more specialized agencies and organizations is a better strategy, at least in a preliminary phase. However, some of your staff members need a basic understanding of the issue, beyond what is common sense, myths and beliefs.

In the “ADD Curriculum” you will find recommended literature for those who need a basic introduction to the issue of substance abuse as a development issue:

[www.add-resources.org/curriculum](http://www.add-resources.org/curriculum)

## Step 4: Describing the problem more in detail

As you start reading the basic literature on alcohol and drug problems, you will acquire the competence to make a broader and more precise description of the problems you have discovered than the initial picture you made under Step 1.

Therefore it may be useful to make a new description of the problem. This shall serve several purposes:

1. To define if the problem is of a character and magnitude that can/should be handled by your organization.
2. To see if it is necessary to select a more specific aspect of the problem a) to make it more manageable and b) to make it more relevant for your organization.
3. To decide if your organization is prepared to involve in this problem.
4. To select the most effective strategies and interventions (see Step 8).

In the first place the ambition need not be to produce a big, very scientific report. In most cases organizations will not have the resources to conduct new research programs before taking action. The solution then is to produce a compilation of data that already exist without too much work;

- existing research and documentation (reports, official statistics etc)
- experiences from your target groups, your partners, field workers, local governments etc

A problem definition could start by elaborating the issues under Step 1:

1. Which are the social, health, cultural and economical consequences of alcohol/drug use in this particular case?
2. Which are the substances of abuse? How and where are they distributed?
3. Who are the users? Age? Gender? Social groups? Geographical areas?
4. Who else, besides the users themselves, are suffering from the alcohol/drug use?
5. In which settings does the substance abuse occur? Times? Places?  
Social situations?
6. Which are the factors that promote the substance abuse? Social?  
Cultural? Economical? Personal? (For more, see Step 7)

If you want to make a broader and more systematic problem description, we recommend you to use the tool “Assessment of alcohol and drug problems”:

[www.add-resources.org/tools](http://www.add-resources.org/tools)

## Step 5: Identifying the stakeholders

According to the description in Step 4 and your organization's experience; who are the stakeholders? Which groups, institutions and individuals are involved in or affected by the substance abuse problems?

Some alternatives:

- Users of alcohol/drugs
- Their families and relatives
- Third parties affected by someone's drinking or drug taking
- The village or local community
- Vested interests in production, distribution and sale of alcohol/drugs
- Government institutions
- Political parties
- The health and welfare system
- Other professions
- Media
- Other groups?

## Step 6: Identifying possible partners

Based on your knowledge of the community in question, make a list of organizations, institutions, groups and individuals who could be mobilized as your partners in prevention.

Some alternatives:

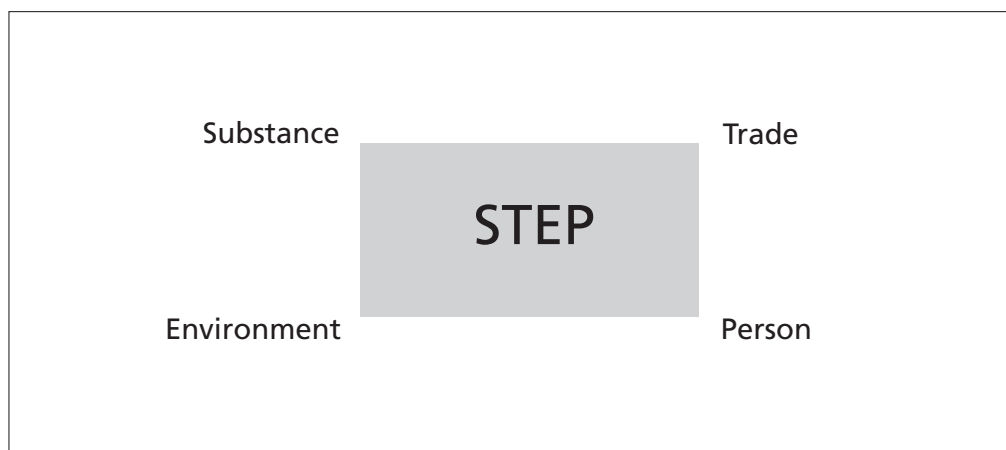
- Social groups: Women, students, youth...
- NGOs, churches, community based organizations (CBOs)...
- Resource persons in local governments, the scientific community...
- Local or national governments...
- Professional groups: Doctors, social workers, teachers, nurses...
- Other development NGOs...
- Media persons...
- Community leaders, chiefs, celebrities...



## Step 7: Defining the determinants behind the problem

In order to design the most effective interventions, it is essential to understand the reasons and mechanisms that draw or push persons towards drinking or taking drugs and, in turn, lead to increased consumption. We have used the word “determinants”; factors that control or influence what will happen.

Some of the determinants will be found in the social and cultural environment, while others rest within the users and biological and psychological mechanisms. Here is a model for a more systematic search for determinants; the “STEP model”: Substance, Trade, Environment, Person.



### **Substance**

Characteristics of the substances that are being used (intoxication, dependence etc)

### **Trade**

The economical aspects of substance use (vested interests in production and distribution of alcohol and drugs, price of the substances, purchasing power etc)

### **Environment**

The social context where the alcohol or drug use is taking place (values, traditions, norms, peer pressure etc)

### **Person**

The personal characteristics of the user

A part of this exercise must be to make an assessment of which determinants are the most important and which are less influential, as well as an evaluation of which determinants that - after all - can be influenced by our interventions.

## Step 8: Defining strategies and interventions

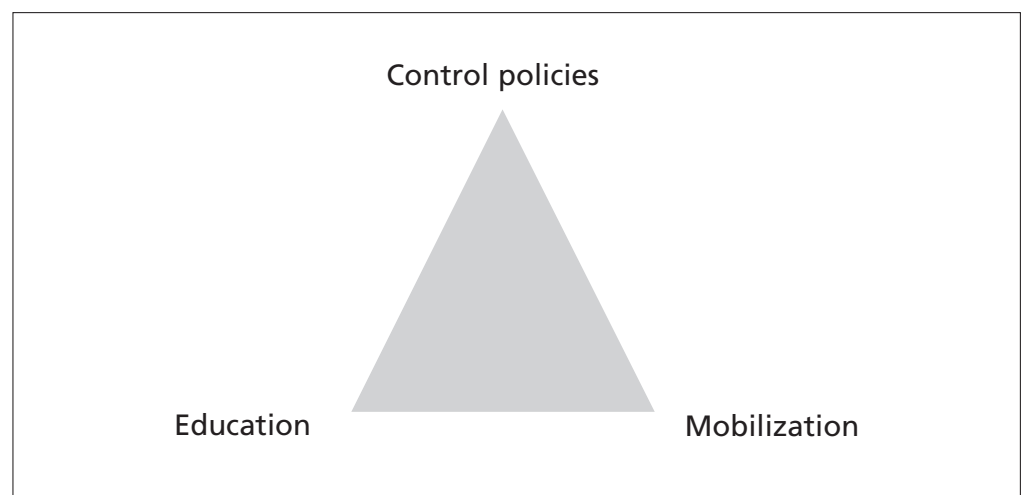
“There are many things we do with good intentions. Some of these undoubtedly improve our world. But a good part of our effort goes waste for lack of a clear enough idea of how best to get the results we want.” This is the starting point of the FORUT publication “Strategies to Address Alcohol Problems”, written by Professor Diyanath Samarasinghe at the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Choosing the right strategies and interventions is of course the crucial issue in these Ten Steps for prevention of alcohol and drug problems. The choice must be made with the objective to achieve a maximum result with a minimum of resources. The good news is that there is a broad evidence base for selecting which are the more and the less effective policy interventions. This international evidence is summarized in the WHO-sponsored study “Alcohol – No Ordinary Commodity” (Thomas Babor et al). For more information about the book and the summary: [www.add-resources.org/publications](http://www.add-resources.org/publications)

The sad side of the story is that the most effective measures (restrictions on availability) also are the less popular, while the most popular interventions (information etc) also seem to be least effective, at least in isolation. There are, furthermore, very good reasons to assume that a batch of coordinated interventions are more effective than single and isolated activities.

Bearing in mind the determinants you have defined in Step 7, the next step is to select strategies and activities for prevention of alcohol and drug problems: How can we influence the most important determinants in our particular case?

We recommend a comprehensive approach where, if possible, a combination of several interventions and activities are used. The “prevention triangle” may be a good guide to such a comprehensive strategy:



**Control policies:**

Interventions by governments to reduce the availability of a substance and to guarantee - from a health and social point of view - a best possible production and distribution system.

**Education:**

Training of professionals, education of consumers, parents, youth etc and campaigns to raise awareness, challenge and motivate the public and to create an understanding of the need for control policies.

**Mobilization:**

Make alcohol and drug prevention a part of the agenda for social and political movement, link the issue to other key policy issues and involve leadership and members in practical activities.

The book “Strategies to Address Alcohol Problems” by Professor Diyanath Samarasinghe is a good guide to designing interventions. A manual with the same title, based on the book, will be available towards the end of 2007.

Read more about the book: [www.add-resources.org/tools](http://www.add-resources.org/tools)

**Step 9: Integrating the issue**

Making your alcohol and drug prevention activities a success, both internally and externally, will be easier if you manage to link the planned efforts to your already established programs and activities. You will then create synergies, and you can draw more effectively on the already existing competence in your organization.

An important issue for internal clarification is therefore: How can new activities in the field of alcohol/drug prevention be integrated into your existing strategies and programmes?

**Step 10: Training of staff and partners**

Some of your key staff will need extra training on the topics and activities you have chosen. Many others will need basic education and, most of all, motivation for their own involvement. For training purposes you will find tools and material at the ADD web site: [www.add-resources.org](http://www.add-resources.org)

**And then implementation!**

### **Suggestions for improvements?**

*FORUT has the intention to develop this document, both its structure and content, based on practical use of it in a variety of settings and organizations. If you have suggestions for improvements, please contact us.*

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### **Alcohol, Drugs and Development**

*“Alcohol, Drugs and Development” (ADD) is a global program in FORUT, in the sense that it involves all countries with FORUT activities and also FORUT action on the international level. As one of its main priorities, FORUT aims at integration of alcohol and drugs perspectives in its development programs, as well as in the field of development cooperation in general.*