

Study for Rehabilitation of Drug Addicts

Note: Prior to the establishment of the 5 phase programme in 1999, I decided to conduct a study on the rehabilitation programmes that were available for them and what were the key areas I would have to delve into in our programme.

In the 1990s there was no specific programme for street drug addicts' rehabilitation. Just one organization in the city had commenced a programme that was more an outreach programme than a therapeutic centre based programme. The study hence focused on the indigenous and governmental medical resources that the street addict had at his disposal to overcome his addiction.

It was found that 65% of the street addicts graduated from sniffing drugs to more hard core drugs like heroin. The general view was that there is no way out of the addiction cycle and that they cannot get help from anyone. The government hospitals only exacerbated their stress. The age group at which the boys were generally introduced into sniffing was between 11 to 13 years. The older street addicts found it difficult to pick up a trade if they were employed by some skilled roadside workshops and soon gave it up. Their skills, capacities and attitudes were already formed and hence they found it difficult to learn new trades and skills. Their preferred occupations were working at wedding sites or picking scrap for recycling. Those addicts who took the decision to go home were referred to as being rehabilitated, though there was no evidence to prove the same. In the absence of a structured programme, a measured and focused rehabilitation was seen to be lacking for the street addicts.