

## **Trends of drug abuse in Sri Lanka**

Drug abuse trends in Sri Lanka between 1997 and 2001 are discussed in this paper. Indicators of drug treatment and drug law enforcement were used to analyse the drug abuse trends. These Indicators suggest the following changes in trends of drug use in 2001 compared to those of 1997. The changes of the indicators were determined using percentage change and prevalence rate change of the variables.

The findings of the paper are based on quantitative data reported from the drug law enforcement and treatment agencies. Data reporting of these agencies are subjected to many internal and external factors. Also, due to the stigma attached to drug use obtaining reliable data is constrained. Hence, wherever possible the findings of the paper should be corroborated with qualitative data, for a more accurate picture of the drug use situation. 295 The new trends reported between 1997 and 2001 were as follows. The rate of persons seeking treatment for drug use had increased at a higher rate than that of drug related arrests. Number of women seeking drug treatment and getting arrested for drug offences had increased at higher rates than those of men. Number of Tamils seeking treatment for drug use and getting arrested for drug offences had increased at a higher rate than those of other ethnic groups. Number of persons aged below 30 years seeking treatment for drug use and getting arrested for drug offences had decreased. Number of persons seeking drug treatment from outside the Western

Province and Colombo districts has increased. Cannabis related arrests had increased at a higher rate than those of other drugs. Number of Persons seeking treatment for drug use from Non-Governmental treatment facilities had increased at a higher rate than those from Government treatment facilities. Trends related to gender, ethnicity, age, location, drug type and type of treatment facility had changed in 2001 compare to that of 1997 with respect to drug treatment and drug law enforcement. Policy makers and programme planners should take these new trends into consideration when developing drug control programmes.