

## Executive Summary

The use of Amphetamine-Type-Stimulants, of which crystal methamphetamine (crystal meth) is the most potent form, is rising. Crystal meth has become a popular drug of choice in a lot of Southeast Asian countries, including urban areas in Vietnam. Despite its euphoric and energetic effects, prolonged use or taken in high doses is associated with increased HIV risk and can cause specific health and mental issues. To our knowledge, there is little evidence available in Vietnam. For this reason, this study will describe the pattern, scope and analysis of the bio-behavioural characteristics of crystal meth users in urban areas.

In this cross-sectional community-based study in Ho Chi Minh City, a total of 307 PWUM were recruited by way of respondent driven sampling. Peers were used to include participants and executing surveys and interviews through a key informant approach.

18.2% of the participants used crystal meth every single day, 30.6% used 2 to 5 times per week and 30.6% used only once in the last 7 days. Smoking 98.4% and injecting 7.8% were the most preferred methods of consuming crystal meth. About 51.1% have used meth for the last 1-4 years, 36.8% have used for 5-10 years and 6.8% have used for more than 10 years. Most of the participants (85.34%) consumed crystal meth with other people, often in small friendship groups of approximately 4-5 people. Sharing a pipe and drugs were also common, 96.6% and 71.1%, respectively. Most people confessed that they have used crystal meth more than they would actually want (68%). About 70% reported having either a physical health or mental health problem. The majority of the participants reported low levels of consistent condom use with both partners or clients, only 15.9% always used condom with partners and 47.2% always used with clients, respectively. Condom use was also much lower among LGBT groups, among PWUDs and among PWUM for more than 5 years. Among those tested, 19% were diagnosed as HIV+, 10.2% with STIs and 35.7% with HCV.

The study gives an in-depth insight into understanding the patterns of methamphetamine-related issues and it helped in designing tailor-made harm reduction interventions for meth users in Ho Chi Minh City. The study found that ensuring mental health referral mechanisms from a user service delivery provider are essential to reduce the mental harm of using methamphetamine. This also includes increasing the knowledge on meth and the capacity of both service delivery and community initiatives, thereby also reducing stigma and discrimination among community and service providers on mental health. Despite reaching the sample of more than 3,000 PWUM in the study, more research on the link between crystal meth use and HIV transmission through sexual risk practices is needed, especially within key populations, such as Sex Workers, LGBTI communities and current drug users on Opioid Substitution Treatment and other users beyond the reach of the CBOs involved in this study. Based on the outcome of this bottom-up study, the involved organisations started to set up

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community-based harm reduction programmes in Ho Chi Minh City and initiatives were scaled-up to other urban areas of Vietnam.