CHAPTER-IV

NARRATIVES GENERATED FROM THE HIV POSITIVE
INTRA-VENOUS DRUG USERS IN THE FIELD

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The state has the highest number of Intra-venous drug User (IDU) in terms of population density in India. It is estimated that there are more than 15,000 IDU in Manipur (MACS, 2008). The use of stimulants like Khaini, Zarda, Ganja and alcohol is very common among all the ethnic communities in Manipur. The pharmaceutical drugs were first drugs of use and became very popular among the teenagers during the 1980s. It was followed by the use of Heroin which is popularly known as No. 4. It was previously used orally in the form of smoking. The popular socializing practices coupled with political instability and unemployment led to further rise of drug use during 1990s.

Many HIV positive individuals are now employed in NGOs which are working on HIV/AIDS. In few cases both husband and wife are employed. They derive their livelihood from the salary drawn from the NGOs. It sometimes gives confidence and a platform for sharing their loneliness and insecurity. It unites them to fight together. They find it difficult to remain calm even if they knew that they can live longer with good food and healthy lifestyle. Some of the respondents said that working in NGO offices with other peers helped them to overcome the persistent fear of agonizing death. Sharing together and going out of house have helped them to realize that they can still live a normal life. This also facilitates their learning skills. They would avail latest information about any HIV/AIDS related development through the reports available in the office. I met most of my respondents initially in the NGO settings and gradually developed rapport with them. The narratives that are recorded in this chapter are a summary of all the recordings that I made during various phase of the interviews that I did in different locations. I once again reiterate that a lot of information may have been lost in translations and in the preparation of transcripts. The following narratives may be read keeping limitations of the method in perspective.

I am citing here a long narrative from one of my respondents that demonstrates effectively various facets of drug abuse vulnerability. The narrator was on drugs from
1983 onwards. He is now rehabilitated and works for a care providing organization called Care Foundation at Imphal. He was one of most articulate respondents. This case history is cited in detail as it documents the kind of pressure drug addicts experience, importance of support system (family and NGOs), and importance of alternative means of tension release that some of the drug addicts in this sample took recourse to for self rehabilitation.

**Narratives of male respondents**

4.1. **Johnson**

age 35 is a resident of Kwakheithel. He is married and has a daughter. He is employed as an outreach worker with one of the NGOs in Imphal and earns Rs. 4000/- per month. He passed his B.Sc in 1997 from D.M.College, Imphal. He did his schooling from one of the reputed schools in Imphal. He shifted school first to Tiny Tots in Imphal and then moved to Hyderabad Vidyalaya in Hyderabad. He received his matriculation in 1993 from Manipur Education Board. He was good in studies. His wife is an M.A. in Education. She is a housewife and also makes sticks for Agarbati, sells pickles, ice-cubes, etc. She earns Rs. 1000-1500 per month. This is what Johnson narrated in his interviews:

> I was very enthusiastic and enjoyed doing social work. I had an Enfield motorbike and enjoyed long drives. I enjoyed festivals with friends such as Thabal Chongba and Kang. I liked to have small parties and I was very friendly to others.

> I was a good student. I came here during my vacation in 1983 and met many friends who belonged to rich families. They insulted me for not knowing what Heroin was. They were already drug users and smacked Heroin. They introduced Heroin to me with a cigarette filled with it. They told me that it was very costly and was brought specially from Moreh (International Border town in Manipur bordering Myanmar). I was excited and eager to taste it. My heart beat suddenly became faster and I lost my consciousness for a while just

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1 Real name has been changed, only pseudonym is used.
after the administration of Heroin. My friend taught me how to control it. I 
continued to use drugs daily after that incident.

I had never thought that I would be hooked to it. Initial experience was 
like a paradise for me and I surrendered myself totally to it. I took money from 
my parents. My mother gave me money most of the time. I was energetic and 
enthusiastic. Friends motivated me in the field of fashions and using drugs. 
Imitation of the fashion trends and company with my close friends belonging 
to rich families played a crucial role in my habit of using drugs. They used it 
and I readily accepted their offer. I thought that anything they do would be 
good. My family owns transport business at Imphal. So, Money was never a 
problem for me.

I use drugs during festivals, social functions and celebrations. Initially, 
there was no restriction as people hardly knew about it. Public spaces became 
more conservative as there were massive awareness campaigns regarding 
harmful effects of the drug. Availability of drugs was also a problem. Drugs 
became more expensive after the anti-drug movements and were not readily 
available as it was before. It became more difficult to use drugs in the later 
phase. There were stringent laws against drug user and physical and 
psychological tortures of the users were very common during 1986. They put 
drug addict in jail. I bribed policemen to keep me out of jail.

I have never stolen money from anyone to buy drugs. I never thought of 
it. I spent most of my time with friends listening to English songs. In 1982-83 
youth were under the influence of western fashions and music from rock bands 
like ACDC, Iron Maiden, Metallica, etc. So, my study and career got diverted 
to drugs and music. Cultural invasion of music and western fashions came 
into play during 1980s.

I celebrate festivals with friends who were drug users. I was very 
popular in those days. I was known for showing off my bikes and biking skills. 
In those days, Enfield was considered as a sign of being macho. I used to
wear Nike shoes and it was regarded as being innovative in small towns of the
state of Manipur. I talked most of the time in English and listened to English
songs. I started wearing jeans when I was 19 years old. Use of Heroin was
considered as a status symbol.

I experienced peer pressure from my friends. They often came to my
place and even asked to share or give some space to use drugs. We spent most
of the time at my friend’s house in a separate room or at the outskirts of RIMS
(Regional Institute of Medical Sciences). Every Birthday was celebrated with
gaiety, drinks and drugs.

I shared needles first in 1990 and I was then 14 years of age. I am HIV
positive because of my sharing habits. I shared very often. In 1989, we used
drugs with the help of ink dropper and it was very common. Syringe was
rarely used.

I think my becoming of an addict had a very close relation with peer
pressure; TV, media, etc. Western Songs too had a great impact on us. We
used to watch blue/XXX films in those days with the tribal girls. Tribal girls
who hailed from Churachandpur mainly stayed at Lamphel official quarters.
We used to invite them for parties. They would invariably accept our
invitation for the party. We enjoyed parties with drinks and drugs. It ended up
having sex with some of them. Imphal was a safe heaven in those days for
drugs and sex.

My lifestyle centered on drug use. We brought drugs form Imphal, local
area and shared it with friends. We normally used drugs in the groups of 2 or
3 persons. Use of drugs became a habit and a routine affair. It seemed
impossible for us to leave the habit. Therefore, it was difficult to quit. I took
breaks for 2 to 3 days when I tried to quit it. I had never used substituted
drugs.
I read novels (Vernacular Manipuri) Madame was one of my favourite novels. I listened to music (Hindi, Lata, Kishore Md. Rafi). I sometimes cried when I thought of how I had wasted ten years of my life.

I realized I am addicted to drugs when I experienced constipation, loss of appetite, lethargy, psychological traumas and back pain. I was never caught by any authority/organization for using drugs.

I informed my parents about my addiction in 1998. I confessed under the influence of drugs. They knew about my status. I was only the darling son for them and not a drug addict. I consider my family as a happy family and I am proud of them. They have been very co-operative and supportive. I am very close to my father. I experienced financial bankruptcy in the family after my addiction. My parents were quite responsive towards me.

I think youths are prone to drug addiction. I did not believe in God when I was young but now I have become a devotee because of my present situation. Some of my friends had become CDS officers and IAS. I lament for it. I have been trying to stop using drugs since 1989, but I have quit it only recently.

My brother has also become a drug user. I used to have many friends. I was involved in Bahai community work in 1994. I tried community service to save and rejuvenate myself.

I started using smack in 1983; started injecting drugs in 1986 on Diwali. I was tested positive in 2000 and has been under medication since 2003.

My first girl friend became my wife. She was also involved in Bahai Community. She motivated me to test for HIV and when I was diagnosed as positive, she continued to support me. We got married in 2005. She married me even after knowing that I was an HIV positive.

I used drugs regularly till 1990s. I tried to avoid it after I realised that my health was deteriorating. I started visiting Bahai Temple.
I have never confronted anyone. Parents are always very supportive. I have very high regards for them. I thought of helping my parents sometimes but could not do so because of my addiction. I rarely share my problems with them. I talk to my parents very often. My father consumes alcohol regularly as he was in the army.

My friends continued to use drugs while I was undergoing de-addiction treatment. It is the second phase of my life that I am living peacefully with my wife and children away from old friends. Peer pressure is one of the factors that hamper the de-addiction process. I tried most of the time to get away from such friends. I have never joined rehabilitation centre. I think my main driving force to quit drugs is my self motivation.

I have started my new phase of life in Care Foundation as an outreach worker. I was also introduced to religious life. I would advise people to test for HIV before marriage and take counseling if they were found to be positive. My CD4 count had reduced to 139 in 2003.

I am serving as a counselor and an advisor in one of the NGOs for drug users. I knew the taste of drugs. The environment is friendly to drug use. Clients’ character and behavior could influence me to use it again. I prevent myself from it due to dedication to duty and realizing its harm. I do not smoke in front of the clients. My family keeps an eye on my behavior and they will feel bad if I start using it again. I am not satisfied with the doctors’ feedbacks particularly the psychological feedbacks. I am facing problems of ART shortage, health problems and maintenance of nutrition and diet.

I thought that I could start a life after drugs. But later psychological pressure and health problem have made it difficult to quit. I am worried that my daughter will realize one day that I was a user. It may create an embarrassing situation in her social interaction, marriage and social gatherings.
Ritual ceremonies can be transformed progressively. Westernization propaganda makes misinterpretation of religious concept and traditions. We need to preserve religion, its principle and teachings. It helps in developing moral values. I think our tradition is conservative.

This narrative represents many other stories that are being documented here and many others that I have not been able to reproduce here, given the nature and limitations of presenting research. I am deliberately not offering any analysis here, reading them for the purpose of analysis only in the later two chapters of the thesis. This is being done to let the reader acquaint with a free flow of information that is coming from the study participants.

4.2. Raju age 21 is unmarried and he is a resident of Nongmeibung Thawanhaba Leikai. He did his Schooling from CC Higher Secondary School, Imphal. He is matriculate but unemployed. His father works in Tribal Welfare Department. He has two school going brothers.

I was an active participant in sports and social services. Now, I am not interested in social issues. I enjoyed large gatherings of people. I am very friendly towards others. I am against the restrictive approach of the society. The tradition of discrimination like pure and impure is really creating problems in the society. Festivals like Yaosang and Kang give opportunity to initiate drug use among the youths. The peer pressure and excitement during the festivals create the situation favorable for drug use. Mass gathering in social services involve drugs and are often carried out under the influence of drugs.

I was caught by the police two or three times for using drugs and was kept in a lock up. I was warned by the local women organization and clubs to stop drug use. I often take money and things from others and never returned them. I have cheated them. Sometimes, I even stole things from the people of my locality to buy drugs.
I used to spend most of my time roaming with my friends. We celebrated festivals and occasions under the influence of drugs. We were the most popular faces in the party. I think youths are very much prone to drug addiction. Parents do not inspect the behavior of their children. Moreover, friends insist them to take it. There is complete lack of awareness about drugs among the parents.

I started using drugs and subsequently got addicted due to psychological pressure while competing with my friends. I started going for dates in 1998. We had broken our relationship and started taking SP tablets to overcome the pain.

My relationship with parents deteriorated after I had started using drugs. I have bad relations with every member of my family. I had more than 15 friends at a time in those days. I was an average student during my school days. We use to go to Moirang, Sagolband Moirang Leirak, and Café Indre Sagolband after consuming drugs. I have learnt Thang-Ta (Indigenous form of martial art) and drug use from my friends. I normally talked to my father under the influence of drug for any demands. Our family is an average middle class family.

They wanted me to live a normal life when they came to know that I have become a drug addict. They are very understanding now. They have stopped shouting at me. Now, they consider addiction as a disease where a person is being entrapped.

I used to quarrel with them whenever my demands were not met. My parents used to accept every demand made by me before I started using drugs. I did not tell the truth about my drug use to them. I should have told the truth when I started it. Now, they refuse to fulfill my demands even if it is genuine.

I felt really bad when I heard that my father was seriously ill. I prayed to God for his recovery. I stopped asking money from him. I took money from my mother thereafter.
I tried very often to quit Heroin but failed every time. My friend circle compels me to use it. I could not distance myself from using it whenever I was in situations like parties. My friends introduced drugs to me in the parties for enjoyment. They brought it with them. I tried a number of times to stop it. I was kept in de-addiction centre, stayed in other places and also remained confined at home to quit it but failed in all my efforts.

I came to know that I am addicted to it when drugs were not available as I started experiencing withdrawal symptoms. I knew more than 15 or 16 people in our locality who are still using drugs. I shared syringe with my friends for more than 5 years. One of my elder brothers in the locality introduced drugs to me. I might be just 16 years old when I used it for the first time. I often shared syringe.

I cannot live without drugs. It is my life. Love is not that important as drugs, it can wait but drugs are essential for my survival. I think drugs increase our sense of satisfaction and we can fully enjoy life under it. Group living culture among youths has influenced me to use drugs. I started using drugs since school days.

We need syringe, container and cotton for drug use. We do not use drugs alone. We always take it in a group of 2 or 3 people and sometimes 6 or 7 people at a time. I felt anxious, dizzy and even vomited the day I used drug for the first time. Drug has changed me mentally and spiritually. We started with SP, and then my friends insisted that I must try Heroin. I would enjoy movies and would often sleep in my room during the daytime. I take drugs regularly till now. Initially, I thought I could control myself.

I took money from my family members especially from my mother. I cheated them by telling lies like going for birthday party, dating, ceremonial occasions and festivals. I do manual work to earn money and get Rs. 50 to 60. I spent it on drugs. I think drug use is favorable when we go for meeting with girls.
I would suggest people not to share syringes, avoid sex worker and abstain from sex till marriage. We should prohibit homosexuals; give them counseling before and after marriage. Drugs affect our body as well as our mentality. We should take special care for the environment. We should start sharing good ideas and help each other to grow.

The first narrative that I recorded is of a respondent who claimed that he was no longer on drugs and was on his way to recovery from drugs but his HIV status makes him feel depressed and physically weak. The second narrative is from a respondent who is still on drugs and continues to endorse drug use as he believes; it gives him additional emotional strength. He is young and not married and is not overtly experiencing any social pressure to quit drugs.

The next narrative is from another rehabilitated former addict. He also works as a peer educator in the care foundation.

4.3. Suraj age 37 is married and resides at Singjamei Mayengbham Leikai. He has a son. He is now working as an out reach worker at Care Foundation, Chekon, Imphal. He is a matriculate. He is earning Rs. 2000/- per month. His son is studying in II\textsuperscript{nd} standard.

I enjoy social work and participate in almost all the social gatherings and festivals. I also enjoy attending large public functions. I am very friendly by nature.

The huge expenditure on marriages in Manipur is really affecting most of the families. The marriage should not be an expensive affair. Our culture is very conservative that it never allowed me doing whatever I wished in my teens.

I was introduced to drugs by friends when I was 15 years old during festivals. I started experimenting with drugs in a social gathering in an older person’s home. A minimum of 3 persons are required while using drugs. An expert for injecting drugs is always required for the first timers. I used drugs orally in the beginning but found injecting more effective. I thought I could quit anytime. I took drugs for fun in the beginning. It gives me a wonderful
pleasure. I feel free from day to day worries. It brought me into a new world where there is no fear, inhibition. I feel like a complete man. There is no pain after taking it. It gives tremendous boost to my confidence in public places.

I was caught two times by the anti drug organization and local Meira Paibi, police and even by the underground rebel groups. They warned me to stop my habit. I sometimes stole money when I could not find money to buy drugs. I stole household goods and anything that I could sell and get some money to get a daily dose. I lied to my parents and made lame excuses while asking for money. I pretended as if I was going for some important celebrations like a birthday party, marriage or any other occasion. I started thinking about drugs right from the morning till I slept. I kept thinking about means to get money for it.

I started taking drugs when I was in the VII standard in 1985. I feel society and culture as very prohibitive. I used drugs in social functions.

There were no particular occupations as we were students. We used to spend our time in groups of 4 to 5 persons. Our daily routine included going to school, escaping classes and visiting isolated places. We would smoke and take ganja. We would go to places after taking bath which would be usually after mid afternoon as per the prevalent tradition in Manipur where we could sit together and take ganja and other drugs till late at night. This kind of daily routine prompted us to look for new things for excitement.

We did celebrate festivals with drugs. We were the most privileged class of people in those days. We were provided with all the modern facilities. All our demands and desires were met by our parents. Our parents bought bikes, new dresses and gave pocket money as per our demands. So, we were able to do whatever we would like to do at that time.

Youth are very prone to drug addiction. Peer pressure has a large role in addiction. The attitudes of the youths have changed a lot. The youths in this generation has narrow vision as opportunities for employment have become limited. There is no hope for future. Money is power nowadays. Those who do
not have money live a miserable life. They consider life meaningless and have nothing to keep them occupied.

I have a strong faith in God. He is also like a human being; if human being was not there, God will not be there either. I have good relations with my siblings, but our relations got deteriorated after I started using drugs. I had few friends in school but most of them are not with me now.

I was a good student till my VIIIth standard. I changed my school and the atmosphere was different there. In those days, I had a serious affair with a girl for nearly 7/8 years. She would stop me from taking drugs in those days. She was short tempered. She came to me one day and asked me to elope with her. She had quarreled with her parents on that day. I could not fulfill her demands for eloping as all my clothes were wet. I had washed them in the morning.

The next day she eloped with someone else. I was heart broken and used a larger dose. I could not see any reason to live. She meant everything to me. I endure the pain with drugs and it helped me to pass through that dark phase of my life. I often shared syringes. I took 3 shots per day and sometimes more. I managed to get money from my family. I took money from my mother. I threatened her many a time to get money. I used all possible means to get money. I never had sexual relation with my first love.

I had been involved in 5 or 6 affairs after that. I got married in 1997. I divorced my wife in 2000. It compelled me to continue with drugs. My perspectives towards women have changed and I had sex with many women. I went to Moreh for ‘time pass’ and had sex. I have changed my attitude after being tested HIV positive. I have come to know more about HIV/AIDS through the advertisements and messages displayed on walls, billboards and radio programmes organized by MACS. MACS helped me to overcome my dilemma.

I did not take drugs for almost a year. I had cordial relations with my parents. I was unemployed. I asked them to give me money as I wanted to do business, but they declined. I went for treatment to detoxification/de-addiction
centers many a times but relapsed after a while. In my opinion, if the addict himself has a strong determination, he can come to live a normal life. Forceful efforts by the family members will not bring any good results.

I was 12 years old while I was in the VIIth standard. I sold my gold rings to buy drugs. We were three in a company. We did not know about its effects when we used drugs. I might not have used drugs, if I knew it has bad effects. I visited many places after taking drugs. Drug use was a fashion at that time. Drug users were usually viewed as trendy and fashionable and have sleepy eyes. The image had changed after Jagdish (a drug user who kidnapped and murdered a child at Imphal in the 90s). I have quarreled with my family several times as I have become selfish and think only about availability of drugs. I try to get money at any cost. I manage to get a daily dose. No other member of my family has ever used drugs.

I thought of quitting it on several occasions. My friends compelled me to use it. Sometimes I am reluctant to take drugs in their company. It continued for years. I took drugs continuously for 3 years. I realized that I am addicted to drugs when I was yawning almost all the time while playing cards. We took drugs 3 to 5 times a day. I used to take drugs like tablets, ganja, alcohol and cocaine. After I got married I became an alcohol vendor and that helped me to earn Rs 200 to 300 everyday.

We used dropper to inject Heroin in 1987. One of my local elders who were a police officer introduced drugs to me. He was posted in Moreh and served as an officer in charge at Moreh Police. He was already HIV positive. I went to Churachandpur to buy drugs with my friend after I got married and had sex with CSWs. We visited places to enjoy with friends when we were high on drugs.

I can not do all that stuff now-a-days, even if I want to do. I have many responsibilities towards my family. My children are growing up. Sometimes, I feel very low in front of my school friends.
People did not mix with us and did not talk to us. I lived a strange and miserable life without any help from the society. Marriage has really helped me to share intense emotional bond with my wife. My family is my biggest strength. It is always a great relief for me. My wife cares for me. She is worried about me. I have stopped going out at night as it is dangerous due to army and insurgency.

On the other hand, discrimination and gossiping have made life miserable for me and my family. I am aware of health related problems and take nutritious food like milk, banana etc. I have even started going for walks in the morning and do exercises to keep myself fit. I have changed my lifestyle after being tested as HIV positive. I am taking extra care of my health. I did not take such care before I became positive.

Stigma and discrimination can be reduced through awareness campaigns. Counseling and support to HIV positive persons are really helpful to fight against this disease. I would request the education department to introduce lessons on HIV/AIDS in school curriculum to educate students. Awareness programme in school will really help in reducing stigma and discrimination. I think there should be a good system of communication among the staffs of the NGOs and the clients to fight against the disease.

There are strong similarities in the narratives of our first respondent and this one. They are working together and have similar stories to tell about how they became addicted. The important difference that one can note is that the first respondent always had the support of his first love to whom he is now married and received support form the family. Suraj on the other hand went through emotional break ups, divorced once and is now remarried to another HIV positive who is working in the same organization. He has relapsed many a times. This is indicative of his desire to quit but in the absence of strong support structure and lack of self control, he is lapsing again and again. On enquiry from others around him, I found that many believe that he is still using drugs.

4.4. Sameon, is the son of a high profile family from Singjamei Thongam Leikai, Imphal. His father was a big businessman and his mother was a social worker. He was the only
son of his parents. He is married and has a son. His son is studying in Class one in Imphal Public School. His wife is a housewife and is engaged in handloom and embroidery work to support the family. He did his schooling at Kodagiri Public School, Nilgiri and completed XIIth class at Shillong, Meghalaya.

I will rate myself as a good student. I started using tablets and continued till 1996. I was then studying in XII standard at Shillong. I became an IDU in 1998 and tested HIV positive. I have not yet shown any symptoms of AIDS. I got married in the year 1998.

I came home from Shillong to attend Holi in Manipur and went to the market to dry clean my clothes at North AOC, Imphal. I met one of my friends and he requested me to accompany him to North A.O.C. I kept standing with my scooter while my friend had gone inside. I was caught by narcotic cell division. I requested them to release me saying that I was not a drug user. They did not believe me. They took my photographs and flashed it in the newspaper the next day as a Heroin injector along with other twelve users. I met my father’s friend in the jail. All this has changed my world view and I have become a drug user as there is no means to tolerate the blame and humiliation. If I knew that it was a drug joint I would not have gone there.

I vomited like anything the first day I took drugs. I found it pleasurable after three or four days. I continued it for 4 to 5 years. I went to a rehabilitation center in 2003 and came out in 2004. I used it again in 2004 and continued till 2006. Initially, I thought I could control myself but it was not possible.

I had a crush on a girl when I was in VIII/IX standard. It was not an everlasting relationship. It lasted for 4 years. She was somebody whom I loved the most. The worst part was that she refused to meet me after she heard that I was an addict. Her relatives and family made fun of me whenever I went to her place to meet her. They did not allow me to meet her. She had refused to see me after that.
It must have been more than ten to fifteen years that I started sharing syringe. Depression, peer pressure and shattered dreams had really made me use drugs and prohibited me from coming into the common man’s world.

I would do anything that others feel odd to make myself popular in the group. I would prefer casual and Yankee dress. I was a bright student. I started using drugs–SP when I was in the VIth standard. I started it at Manipur Bhavan in Bangalore with a friend in 1992. He had come to Bangalore six or seven months before I did. SP was not even used in Manipur at that time. I did not do anything wrong in the class. I participated in all the co-curricular activities and sports. I used to sing songs during functions and played football in school. I was the captain of my team.

SP was not available when we came to Manipur. So, we started using Heroin as a substitute. We visited many places in search of Heroin such as Lilong and North A.O.C. I shared syringes under inevitable circumstances otherwise I bought new ones. I hid syringes in places (like bamboo bushes) on the way and used them personally. Sometimes, I hide them inside my stockings. I have learnt nothing from my friends except jealousy. My friends were jealous of me. True friends are very rare. I would clear one thing about friendship that it is always temporary among the drug users. Nobody will come to help you at the time of crisis.

I used drugs in social functions. I was caught by police once. I used to remain confined in my room after taking drugs or roamed around with friends. I used to celebrate festivals under the influence of drugs. I was part of privileged class of people at that point of time. I have started using drugs for momentary pleasure in the beginning. It was really good for ‘time pass’. I found it a good companion too as I used to stay alone. I have visited many places for detoxification like Bangalore and Chennai.

My lifestyle and company had really made it difficult to stop. I used to remain occupied by engaging myself in the family business. It’s very difficult to quit drugs. Peers insult me whenever I talk of abstaining from taking drugs.
They make fun of me and challenge me saying for how long would I be able to stop it? I visit DIC, learn lessons from recovered addicts, read stories, meet with senior addicts and share helpful messages. All this have really helped me to get rid of drugs. Strong determination is required to stop it.

Addiction is a disease as per my understanding. I realized that I could not live without drugs in 2003. I was admitted to a rehabilitation centre and stayed there for 6 months. The most difficult part in quitting drug is that there is always an urge for it in our mind.

Our society is not open; we are in the habit of backbiting. The prevailing situation like unemployment, group living culture of the youths, corruption and lack of awareness have made youths prone to drug addiction. Our entire generation was using drugs in those days. I can say with certainty that nearly 99 per cent of all the youths in our locality in Imphal used drugs. Many of them have died now. Fifty per cent of them have not even visited NGOs for HIV test nor taken any treatment. They took help from medical staffs secretly who part of the circle of their family friends.

I stopped fixing in 2006 after my father expired and circumstances demanded that I become more responsible towards my family as I am the only son and the owner of a large sum of property. If I do not take care of it, everything will be used by others. It has become a prestige question now.

I took money from my parents. I took three to four thousands rupees from my mother whenever I dropped her in her office. I had some reservations as far as my attitude towards my father was concerned. He would not give money without asking reasons. I stole money from his almirah. I used to have a duplicate key with me. I got any amount of money from it.

I earned money for myself too by doing contract work and earned crores of rupees. I spent money like anything and I never thought I would ever be without money.
My family never trusts me because of my frequent relapse though my relations with my family are good. I am very close to my mother and take money from her only. She would ask me to collect money from the transport office. I used full dose then and thought I would never be without money. My parents were very responsive towards my needs. My only wish was to keep myself away from drugs. I used to take money from my father’s friend from Dimapur and Calcutta as they were business partners. Nobody in the family used any other Nisas (drugs). People have lost faith in me. Even if I stop using it, people would always consider me as user. I can hardly control my life.

I am now feeling weak and find myself spiritually bankrupt. My first priority remains the choice of the chemicals. I fear the unchangeable attitude of the society about drug addicts. People normally consider the addicts like a spoilt child who will never come to the mainstream. An old Burmese had once scolded me for using drugs. He said it was meant to be used only when one becomes old. Old men have nothing to do; they use it to gain their lost world and dreams and to kill the present day worries. The anti drugs groups’ pressure tactics to stop drug use will not really help the user. They should realize addiction as a disease and not as an anti social activity.

Competition with friends was one of the reasons for becoming an addict. I was always depressed to see my friends pursuing prestigious professions. I wanted to terminate my life.

I am living in very sensitive situation now. I am the only son in the family and my father has already expired. Things have drastically changed now. My siblings and relatives never asked me to quit drugs rather they help me to get drugs. They want me to die soon so that they would be able to acquire the whole property.

I have an extra burden as well. I am emotionally attached with an NGO staff where I get detoxified. She has recently lost her husband to AIDS. She had children too. I was working here as an outreach worker but was expelled after one of my senior colleague accused me of having an affair with her. He
had a strong crush on that lady and even warned her about kidnapping her after her husband’s first death anniversary. She is a Brahmin girl who was married to a Meitei and I am a Brahmin boy married to a Meitei girl. Both of us share ideas and are comfortable with each other. She used to enquire about my whereabouts and has asked me to visit her. She even came to my home and asked about my well being. We went to Bishnupur for field work together. She asked me to drop in at a fast food joint but I declined to do so. Instead, we sat at tea stall so that nobody could suspect our intention. I strongly believe that she really loves me. She will not ask anybody to give company except me whenever she goes out of town. I really want to help her. I am not jealous of her beauty or anything. I fear that I would relapse if something happens against my wishes.

I am very keen towards social activities. I am very friendly towards others. I have no opinion on tradition and customs.

I was involved in underground revolutionary activities with RPF in 1997. I was caught by the police twice. I came out from the jail on bail and I got married to a family friend. We have a son now. My ex-girlfriend is about thirty one years old and is still unmarried. She has once again become close to me and my family but I have refused to meet her after I got married. I even suggested her to get married.

The narrative presents many contradictions. The narrator comes from a rich family, admits to having tasted drugs before he was nabbed by the narcotics department. He believes that it was his and his family’s public humiliation after his pictures were published in the Newspaper after his arrest that has pushed him into drug use. He is not even able to state clearly whether he is till on drugs or has left it. He is muddled about his relations with women in his life. He is married and has a son. He is also blaming his other siblings and relatives for encouraging him to continue with drugs so that they can take his property. This case narrative is an example of confusion that drug addicts experience while talking to others.
4.5. Tony age 37 is unmarried. He works as a carpenter. He studied till the VIIIth standard only. His father is a government employee and is working in the fisheries department. His brother is also a carpenter. He earned Rs. 4,000/- per month and his total family income comes around Rs. 9,000/-.

I belong to a middle class family. I was not a good student. I did not pay much attention towards my career and stopped studying after I had passed the eighth class. I had more than 15 friends during my teens and we would enjoy festivals together.

I have been using drugs since the age of ten. One of my friends’ friend introduced drugs to me. I often shared syringe. I used it for fun and enjoyment. It has no relation with fashion or my personal life. I am not highly qualified and I really did not know what I should do. I was often under depression. I used drugs to make myself happy. I used to inject drugs with two people. I could not recollect any special moment of my initial days but the kick after taking heroin is really wonderful. I thought I could control myself in the beginning. I found drugs the most enjoyable in the first five minutes of using.

I earn money as a manual worker. When I could not make enough money, I took it from my parents particularly from my mother. I took money at the pretext of going for a friend’s marriage or for buying clothes. I took money almost everyday. I would take heroin whenever I was alone.

I used drugs initially only on festivals but now I am taking it everyday. I was punished by the militants for using drugs and was shot once in the thigh. Our youths are prone to drug addiction as there is no political stability and there is the problem of unemployment. Competition and fashion have no role in drug use. The worst thing about this habit is the isolation from the society and family ties. The respect I enjoyed earlier from the peer and siblings are now lost. I did not learn anything from my friends except the art of painting. The process of socialization and public response is encouraging addiction. I am close to my family. I love my mother. It is only she who is worried about my future. I feel really sorry when I think of it. I quarreled with her and felt
ashamed. I confront my family at the slightest pretext and take advantage of it. I am sometimes worried about my parents as I could not help them in anything. I have tried to give up drugs at least 7/8 times. The lifestyle always compelled me to use it again. It will be better if I can go to live at some other place for some time.

This narrative reflects an addicts’ intense desire to give up narcotics but he find that he is not able to do so. He is working and not consuming drugs as some of the other narrators mentioned only for ‘time pass’. He even openly ponders possibility of moving away form his native place with the intent of giving up drugs. He has no family responsibility as he is not married. But he feels, he has not been able to do anything for his mother. There is regret and admission that his drug habits have nothing to do with fashion or peer pressure but his own inability to give up something that he started enjoying early in his life.

4.6. Joy, age 28 is unmarried and is a resident of Yumnam Leikai, Imphal-West, Manipur. He passed his plus two and is currently unemployed. He belongs to scheduled caste and his family income is Rs.37,000/- per month.

I used to attend almost all the social gatherings and ceremonies. I behaved badly in the public under the influence of alcohol. I am not interested in any social service or social work. I enjoy drugs in small parties. I am against group living culture of the youths on the roadside in the evenings. If there are no groups and gossip in the society, we could have lived in a better way.

I was an average student. We were in a group of more than 15 friends. We used to miss classes intentionally and consumed drugs during my school days. We spent most of the time at war cemetery and certain other places.

First time, I used drug with one of my friends was 3-4 years ago. I was 20 years old at that time. I got it by injecting with syringe and we did it in a group of 2-3 people. I used it out of curiosity and as a fashion statement. I became a drug addict due to my friend circle and group living lifestyle. I was
a student in those days. I wanted to test its euphoria. The condition was quite favorable for drug use as I had money in my pocket everyday.

I could not control myself on the first day. I became more dependent on drugs. I took it without interruption. I am full of regrets as I lost my social prestige and relationship with my dear ones. Initially, I thought I was using it just for fun and could control myself.

I took money for buying drugs from my mother and other members of my family. I lied to them saying that I wanted to buy a new dress, go for a date, a programme, etc. I had never earned money for myself. Festivals were the most favorable time for drug use.

Drug users (IDU) and HIV/AIDS are inter-related. A large number of cases of HIV are detected mostly from the IDU. Everyday, it is quite likely that drugs users (IDU) will share needle and syringe due to lack of money or due to shortage of syringes or instant urge. Therefore, if there are more IDU (drugs users), there will be more HIV infections in Manipur.

I would increase my drug dose during festivals. I sometimes stole things when I did not have money. I enjoyed with friends. I was a popular face in my locality. Because of our nature, the youths in our vicinity are scared whenever they saw us. The number of Heroin users has decreased in the present scenario.

I have forgotten all about my girlfriend with the passage of time.

None of the members of my family take drugs. I often fought with the members of my family. I talked to my father under the influence of drug. My parents were quite supportive and looked after me. I have committed lots of mistakes and annoyed them. I am under pressure to meet their expectations.

This narrative shows that all IDU have not taken the same route of starting form oral drugs and then moving to intravenous use for greater kick. In this case, he stated experimenting with needles in the very first instance and got addicted immediately.
4.7. Rehman age 23 is a resident of Golapati J.C. Road. He has passed VIIth class. He is married and his wife is doing business and she is only 18 years old. His family income is approximately Rs. 5,000/- per month.

I often participate in social work and sports. I prefer to consume drugs in large groups. I am very friendly towards others. I am totally against group living culture of youths on streets. I would advise people to concentrate on their own duties and work hard to get their goals.

I think our culture is quite encouraging. I do not use drugs in social gatherings. I use drugs only on Friday as I go to the mosque on Friday. I was never punished for drug use.

I stole things to buy drugs. I used to roam around with friends. I used to celebrate most of the festivals with my family. I was not a popular person in those days.

I think our youths are prone to the use of drugs. There is lack of awareness about drug use among the parents. Parents do not care for their children. They are not observant enough to notice changing attitudes of their children. Elder persons in my locality introduced drugs to me. I used to fix in a secret place in my home. I inject drugs and use cotton and water to filter and prepare solutions. Initially, I wanted to taste it but I continued to use syringe. I felt dizzy on the first day and even vomited. But I started enjoying it later. In the beginning, I thought, I could control myself but I became a regular drug user.

I was a good student in my school days. We visited different places such as restaurants, hotels, river banks and cemetery to pass our leisure time. I decided to improve myself as I realized that I have spoiled the golden days of my life by using drugs.

I have never talked to my father under the influence of drugs. Our family was a happy family before I started using drugs and I had good relationship
with every member of the family. They would give in to every demand made by me. They were understandable and had faith in me.

I felt guilty of using drugs. Things would have been quite different if I did not use it. I would have been in a respectable position. I have ruined my life and family. I had wasted a huge amount of money on drugs. My demands overtook the family income and resources. I asked for money often, almost all the time.

No one else in the family ever used drugs. I have tried infinite times to quit this habit. During my de-addiction days, I kept myself away from my friend circle. I used to stay alone in the house. The reason for being hooked on to it was friends. I have even tried to work in a garage and have been engaged in domestic work to keep myself busy so that I do not remember about drugs.

I know more than hundred people are still using it. I shared syringe three years ago. I was 21 years old when I used it for the first time. I was punished for using drugs. I am HIV positive and I think I got infected from sharing of syringes. I have stopped sharing after I knew my HIV status.

I think there is very close relationship between drug and romance. I became a drug addict after I got to know that my girl friend had eloped with someone. I do not think fashion has anything to do with drugs. I was not able to marry my first love. She married a boy from Yairipok at the age of 17. It took me three to four months to come over the trauma. I used drugs consistently during that period.

I took money from my mother, friends and other members of the family at some pretext or the other. My mother would give money most of the time. I cheated my parents and friends to get money. I have never earned money till date.
This is the story of another young man who was jilted in love and believes his addiction was because of his depression. He is a Muslim and the previous story in which the respondent cited similar reasons for addiction came from the Meiti community.

4.8. **Hussain** age 36 is married and has passed Xth standard. He is a government employee. He lives in Thoubal. His total income is Rs. 10,000/- per month.

I had a happy childhood. I was a good student. I had large number of friends in those days and we were very happy in the company of one another. We started visiting different places in Manipur like Imphal, Churachandpur, Moreh and Moijing after my Xth board examination. These places have number of drug vendors and drugs are available at a cheaper rate.

I have been using drugs for more than ten years. One of my relatives introduced me to drugs. I was 21 years old when I started using it. We shared syringe often in groups of 2-5 people. I tried to taste it. The main reason for using drugs was group living culture as we had nothing else to do. I used drugs for the first time during a festival.

I earned money and spent it on drugs. I have never asked for money from anybody. Now, I am spending almost my entire salary on buying drugs. I hardly care for my spouse. I think I can live without my spouse but not without drugs. So, I continue to use it.

I realized that I am addicted to drugs when I found it difficult to live without drugs. I have tried to stop four to five times but relapsed after two/three months. Life is miserable without drugs. I had stayed in Rapid Intervention and Care (RIAC) centre for rehabilitation. I cannot resist myself when I see drugs and meet my friends with whom I shared drugs earlier.

My family is quite supportive. I am living with my wife and receive her love and respect. I am still on drugs and use it everyday. Dose increases during festival season. I am very popular in my locality. Young people would not like to use drugs when they see my condition. They will obviously opt for other things.
In this narrative, respondent talks about being introduced to drugs by a relative. He has also stayed in a rehabilitation centre but has failed to give up drugs. He realized that he is not able to care for his wife, who continues to take care of him despite his addiction and HIV status.

4.9. Rafijuddin age 32 is unmarried and he belongs to Muslim Community. His parents are farmers. He belongs to a middle class family. He is the only son among his five siblings. He passed his Xth standard. He also did a course in Islamic studies.

I was brought up in a very cozy and lovable atmosphere. I was the favorite child of my parents as I am the only male child in the family. They provided all that I wanted. I was a good student. I lived in a boarding school. I had 2-3 close friends in the boarding. I enjoyed good times in the boarding school. I got busy with my friends with no strict rules. The place where I lived called Lilong has number of drug vendors. Drugs were easily available at a cheaper price. One piece is available at just Rs. 30 sometimes at Rs. 10. Thus, it was the best thing to use as Islam does not allow drinking liquor.

We used to share syringes. It is difficult to remember how often we did not share syringe. I was infected because of it.

The innumerable festivals in the state have influenced the use of drugs. We enjoyed all festivals irrespective of our religious affiliations. It is in the festive season that drug use is at its peak. We used drugs inside the bathroom in the school campus. We used to miss classes, changed our uniforms and went to theatre and other places. We hang out at market place and street corners. We always used drugs. Fashion has really influenced me. I wanted to enjoy life and sing songs.

I took money from my parents. Money was not a problem in those days in boarding schools. I took money from the parents on weekly basis on the pretext of studies and other purpose. Now, I am demanding money almost everyday from my mother as my father had already expired. I did nothing for earning and I am totally dependent on my family. I am infected with HIV and the symptoms of AIDS have already started showing. The local NGOs are
helping me emotionally and medically. I am in constant touch with them. I took money from the peer educator and anybody who came for interviews. I am now working with NGOs. It makes my daily earning.

I tried a number of times to stop consuming drugs. I was sent to Delhi for an Islamic course for two and a half years to make myself religious so that I could get rid of the habit. But it could not help me. I was in a de-addiction centre 2/3 times but that had no lasting effect. My relationship with my siblings and family has also deteriorated due to my drug use habit. They have lost faith in me. They scolded me for using it but it does not help.

There is no particular reason for drug use. I did not know that the search for pleasure and fun would lead to miserable life like I live today. It is hard to live without it. Time has gone that I can do something about improving myself. It is only God who can help me to lessen my emotional and psychological burden.

I think the number of drug users will increase as there is lack of understanding among the public and there is no discipline. The high headedness of the youngsters and not following the advice of the elders will make the youngsters more prone to drug use. Culture of the communities is quite encouraging for drug use.

Boarding school in this narrative emerges as the primary place where drug use started. Boarding schools also facilitate cash inflow as parents are not in direct control to know where the funds are being spent. This narrative also draws attention to the use of religious teaching for facilitating de-addiction.

4.10. Taslim age 25 is a resident of Oinam Sawombung. He passed his Xth standard. He is unemployed. His family income is Rs 2000/-

I participate in social activities. I am very friendly towards others. I do not have any opinion against the societal norm.

I used drugs during festivals under peer pressure. I was never caught by law enforcing agencies. I managed to get Heroin by earning myself. I was a
salesman and worked in a shop at Paona Bazaar and took money whenever I required. The owner will adjust it with my salary. In extreme cases, I took money from my mother. My relations with my family got strained after I used drugs.

I used to go to cinema halls and hanged out with friends. I used drugs regularly. I celebrate festivals under the influence of drugs. I was not popular in my society. I think development and awareness about drugs will decrease its use.

I had 2-5 friends during my school days. I was an average student. We frequented Bazaar, Imphal Barrage and Guwahati. Imphal Barrage is the place where most of us started drug use. I have learnt that a good friends’ company can make a real difference. I talked to my father under the influence of drugs.

There were no financial problems as my father was employed and there were only two brothers in the family. I am on good terms with my parents. I have not quarreled with anybody and did not do anything that will bring bad name to my family.

I demand money from my parents nowadays. I ask for Rs. 200-300/- once a week at the pretext of buying clothes and working in the locality. Nobody in my family take drugs. I have tried two to three times to stop it. The major problem with drug use is its intolerable urge and physical pain without it. I remained without drugs for one month but relapsed as I find myself bore without drugs.

I have even tried to detoxify and take other substitutes to stop it. I realized that I am addicted to it after one year. I was 21-years old when I used it. I am an HIV positive and aware of HIV. Earlier, I often shared syringes with anybody. Drugs help me to meet girls. It has a capacity to make one feel free and fear none while talking to girls. We called it Misilin (code word for bold nature). Movies influenced us to use drugs.
Now, I don’t share syringe with others. I started drug use with SP tablet. I used to sell SP tablets two-three years back. I also take it ½ capsules per day. I used smack whilefeasting and continued for five months. Later, I started fixing with the help of two people at a drug vending outlet. Thereafter, I used it for myself and spent Rs. 40-50 per day. There are times when spend Rs. 200-300 for three shots a day.

I have never had sex with any girl as I did not get a chance. Despite my HIV positive status, I want to live more but I have a constant fear of HIV and it made me difficult to live happily. Who wants to die? People are scare of it as people in my locality are dying because of HIV/AIDS. I could not control my habit of drug use.

My problem is frequent relapses. I also have some health problems. The society has no respect for considered addict as they will never become a normal person. Friends and family has lost faith in us. We are financially handicapped as we are unemployed.

Another young Muslim narrator who is not married, never had sex, is HIV positive because of his needle sharing habit and laments that he may die without enjoying life. His story is full of sorrow and tale of early peer pressures that has affected young life adversely.

4.11. Jayanta age 30 is unmarried and working as a peer educator in one of the NGOs. His father is a Muslim and mother is a tribal. His father works in one of the travel agency in Imphal. He did his graduation from D.M. College, Imphal.

I am aware of the trends in the society and familiar with different communities residing in the state. I am very popular among my clients because I work as a peer educator. I enjoy every festival and entertain in large groups.

I was an average student. I used to have 2-5 friends during the school days. I can not recall any special occasion or moment that happened in my student’s life.
My life changed after I joined the college. I started using drugs and it’s been 10 years. My friends introduced drugs to me. We consume drugs in groups comprising of 3-5 persons. We shared syringe to inject drug. We had never attended any class throughout my graduation. I passed the examination by using unfair means. I often demanded money from my parents and relatives. I took Rs. 50 -500 everyday from them and used them to buy drugs. My home is located in the vicinity of drug vendors and drugs are easily accessible within a walking distance. All my friends are from my locality and we had a close network. We spend time together. These situations are very favorable for the drug use and played a vital role in my getting addicted to it. I tried a number of times to de-addict myself but relapsed within a few months sometimes even within a couple of days. If somebody asked me about why I used drug, my answer to the question would be nothing but to stay with my friends. There is no other specific reason for it. We visited many places in the Imphal city. We did not do anything else other than searching for drugs and enjoying ourselves. I am very popular in my group as I provide drugs to my peer groups.

I take 3 to 4 shots everyday. I enjoy every festival under the influence of drugs. The most favorable time and occasion for drug use are festivals and functions. Durga Puja and Yaoshang festivals are the two popular festivals favorable for drug use. We use drugs at my house when we cannot find any other place for injecting drugs.

The reason for uninterrupted use of drugs could be due to unemployment. The unemployed youths are all the time free and find it boring, living inside the room. This situation made me look for some excitement. That is the main reason for relapse. I tried a number of times to quit it but failed. I wanted to lead a normal life. Friends insisted to join them and I ended up using drugs. The temptation for Heroin is very high and hard to control. Therefore, very few people can control the urge to use it again.
Things would have been different if I had been married. I would have earned money for maintaining family. Timely marriage of the youths would give ample opportunity to lead a normal life. Unemployment and carefree lifestyle compelled many to remain addicted to this dangerous habit.

There is reasoning in this narrative, Respondent feels that his perpetual addiction is because he is a bachelor. In the absence of any family responsibilities, he tends to relapse.

4.12. Pao is married and has two children. Both of his children are in school. His son is 5 years old and daughter is 4 years old. He studied up to IXth standard. His father is a Meitei and Mother, a Paite. His parents are now separated. His father is an advocate and from a reputed family from the Imphal city. His mother is a teacher in a government High School. Pao narrates:

I have no particular occupation. I do part time jobs from time to time depending on the availability. My wife is a housewife. My father is an alcoholic and quarrels with other family members almost everyday. I have witnessed it since my childhood days.

My father had built a house and asked us to come there. He came to our home one day. My brother and I insisted upon him to stay in our house for a day. We cooked fish for him. We really loved and missed our father. But my mother kept on scolding us all through the night for keeping him there that night. He never returned to our house after that.

I keep myself occupied now by participating in social work. I prefer small group for any kind of celebration. I am very friendly to others. I do not have any regrets about the culture and tradition of the society. I am totally against communal riots and Bandhs.

I use drugs at social functions. I started with cigarettes, pan, and dendrites and tablets one after the other since third standard in the school. I use tablets in celebrations like Thabal Chongba. My friends include juniors as well as seniors from the school in those days. I am a real freak. I was caught
by police more than ten times and was also arrested five times by Meira Paibi in cases relating to stealing things and using drugs. I stole utensils, goods from friends, shops and even took cycle from a friend and mortgaged it for buying Heroin. I considered myself privileged in those days as all my demands were met by parents as both of them were employed. My father did not speak most of the time and rarely interacted with us. He used to give money whenever I asked. I took money from mom too. I demanded Rs. 1000-2000 at a time.

I realized that I am addicted to Heroin after I got separated from my first wife. She was very smart and good looking woman. She left the house when I was in Guwahati. Our marriage lasted for six months only. We had no quarrels. She accepted my proposal for marriage as she needed shelter. I realized after marriage that she belonged to a militant organization. She left my house after she had completed her mission. She brought a suitcase and it was full of bomb and other ammunitions. She left 2000 bullets and a 9mm pistol and kept behind a wall clock. I sold the bullets to someone who is in the police for Rs. 10,000/-. I used money to buy Heroin. We were formally divorced later.

I went to Shillong to move away from my friends and my drug group partners and stayed with my sister who was working there at that time. I used to see other friends there and always looked for enjoyment. I found some of them using SP tablet and I used to take these tablets with them. I used to tease a Kuki girl who studied there. She came from Churachandpur. She was the daughter of an army officer. I saw her at North A.O.C in a rented room after her father retired. I did all kinds of things to impress her and even tried to approach her with emotional blackmail and eloped with her later. I had just Rs. 10/- in my pocket when I eloped with her. I continued to use drugs. I want to quit it now.

I was a smart boy and was popular in school. I had affairs with girls since I was in fifth standard or sixth and even kissed a girl inside a restaurant.
It was a brief affair and lasted for a month. We went to places like Moreh, Churachandpur and other places for buying Heroin.

I was caught and sent to jail when I was only 19 years old at Checkon. I took Rs. 100/- in the morning and evening from my mother everyday. She shouts at me whenever I asked for money. She throws money at me. My parents are now divorced for nearly 20 years. I went for a training course to make shoes. I want to open a shop for making shoes. I think we would live happily if our parents were together and if my father and mom did not give me money. My mom could not refuse our demands and ended up giving money to me.

I am HIV positive and sold even my wife’s earrings to get a dose. I could not endure the pain of not taking drugs. I had to get it anyhow. I have tried a thousand times to get out of it. Lifestyle, company and personal reasons compelled me to continue with it. I have a shop where I sell chicken and I could earn Rs. 100-200 everyday. I managed to get money everyday at all cost. I have visited many rehabilitation centers but relapsed after a brief period. I have even threatened to sell my share of family property whenever my mother refused to give money.

I realized that I am addicted to it after one week of its use. I have been using drugs for 10 years. One of my friends introduced me to drugs at home at the age of 17. I was tested HIV positive almost six years ago. I often shared syringe. The urge for Heroin has prompted me to continue it.

I am worried about my wife and children. I am anxious about the well being of my children. I have stopped sharing needles after I was tested positive. I am taking extra care about my diet.

A complex narrative-narrator comes from a broken family tells a heart rendering story, when as a child they tried to stop their father from leaving them, narrates at length how he has been stealing things, selling even his wife’s gold earrings to collect money for his daily dose. His desperation for the well being of his wife and children is his catharsis, though he has no answers.
4.13. Thoithoi age 25 is married and belongs to a tribal community. He passed IXth standard from a reputed school at Imphal. He was brought up by his mother and resides in one of the buzzing business centers in Imphal near Khuman Lampak Sports Stadium. His mother and brother are earning their livelihood by running eateries and fast food joints near the stadium. He had married 6-7 years ago. He has two children.

I came to Imphal in 1990. I used harvesting festival of Thalio to use drugs when I was in my hometown. I prefer to enjoy in small gatherings. I am not talkative but my friends like me. We were 15 friends in our group during teens. I was an average student. We visited Chingmeirong frequently and hang out at market places and cinema halls.

I started using drugs at a very early age. I was just 11 years old when I used drugs for the first time. We stayed together in groups throughout the day. We used drugs for fun. My friends introduced drug use inside the school campus. Thereafter, I used drugs whenever I got the chance. We often shared syringe among 4-5 people.

I took money from my parents. I would demand money every 2 hours to buy drugs. I spent Rs. 1000/- per day on drugs. I knew that my parents are not happy but they had no option. They were forced to pay money. They thought that giving money is a better option than to face public humiliation if I stole money from somebody. One of my elder brothers had died of drugs. My family has a long history of drugs. I was once caught by the anti drug cell and charged me Rs. 3000/- and I was released later.

I had lived in a de-addiction centre for two months. I quit drugs for three or four months but relapsed after some time. The reason for relapse is my inability to find suitable vocation. I have money in my pocket most of the time. Lifestyle is the main factor for my continuous drug use. There are 30-40 people using drugs in my locality. Fashion, TV and mass media had no influence in my life. I usually inject myself, and then I just wander around and enjoy the day. I must admit that I am using drugs not because I particularly enjoy it but I need it for my survival.
What emerges strongly in this narrative is to meet the unwarranted demands of their addicted children to save themselves from public humiliation, if children are caught stealing somewhere.

4.14. Jeffree age 26 is married and divorced after six months of marriage. He had passed Xth standard from a govt. high school at Hinglep, Churachandpur. He is a seasonal labourer and has poultry business.

I was enthusiastic towards social issues and did lot of social work. I was always enjoying in large gatherings. I enjoy customs and traditional rituals and ceremonies. I think it encourages us to do good deeds.

I used drugs at social functions as well. I was caught by police and beaten up. I was kept in lock up for using drugs. I have not stolen anything for buying drugs. I used drugs only when I have enough money. I use to work as a butcher and did domestic work as well.

I was a good student during my school days. Life got a dramatic turn when the communal riot between Kuki and Naga broke out in 1997-98. We were 10 in numbers 4 boys and 6 girls. Ours was a happy family. We had lost all our property and home as well. We ran away and took shelter in Imphal. We started doing manual work and any other odd jobs to get two square meals a day. I stopped my education because of financial problems and communal riot. Our parents do not have money to support us. I was not able to fulfill my dreams and desires in my life. I could not get any job. My father was employed as a grade IV government employee after coming to Imphal.

We celebrate festivals with friends. I was not a popular boy in my area. I think the coming generation will realize that drugs are dangerous after they see our miserable life. I believe they will not use drugs as we did. I had about five friends in those days. I also had couple of love affairs. I had sexual relations with them. We frequently visited local areas and Churachandpur main bazaar.
I have tried a thousand times to quit this habit. I used Spasmoproxivon (SP) capsule earlier. It’s difficult to stop drug use. I continue to use it for three years consecutively. I used SP as a substitute when I did not find Heroin. The main reason for persistent use is its temptation and forgetfulness of earlier promises. Lifestyle is another contributor in this regard. The main problem is to ‘pass time’ in the evening and night. We have lost our interest in life. We do not have any hope about our future. I try to quit it every week but failed to do so. I keep myself occupied so that I do not feel a strong urge for it. I could get relieved in the care centre. I took Bruphrenone to abstain from Heroin.

I realized that I am addicted to these drugs in 2004. I shared needles about three years ago. One of my friends introduced it to me. I was 25 years old when I started taking drugs.

I have tested positive for HIV. I often shared needles. I have used drugs for fun. I think it might have been also related to financial problems. You will definitely use them when you feel miserable in life. My case is just like that. Group living culture and depression is secondary factor for continuing it. We first used Heroin in a social gathering. I experienced vomiting in the first instant. I used it regularly then and thereafter till now.

I am a manual worker. I always look out for opportunities to get money to buy Heroin.

I experienced health problems like pain in the stomach, fever and liver problem now. I am psychologically and emotionally restless about HIV in future. I have also been diagnosed for Hepatitis C.

This narrative brings out the fact of migration due to intertribal violence. Dislocation, lack of acceptability in the new geographical setting, unavailability of employment opportunities and depression due to financial crisis subjected the respondent to drug use. Like other case studies, the narrative also documents police arrest and public humiliation faced by the respondent.
Narratives of female respondents

4.15. Tilotama age 57 is a resident of Luwangswombung in Imphal-West, Manipur. She has four children, two sons and two daughters. She has grown up children. The youngest one studies in tenth class. She is into Casual Sex Work for the last 20 years. She is a widow.

I used to inject five times a day. My husband expired in 1992. I came to Imphal to earn money to bring up my children. I was selling pan and talab at Samu Makhong in Imphal.

I met Seema who happens to be an old business women sitting next to my stall. She asked me to accompany her for business from Moreh and supply items at different places in Manipur and Guwahati. I started my business with her with only initial capital of rupees six thousand. I made profit of rupees twenty one thousand in the first trip from Moreh to Guwahati. Next time I made a profit of sixty one thousand. The quantity of Heroin that I brought at that time was ten grams only. When I invested 61 thousand it brought me one lakh ten thousand.

I met a businessman cum supplier at Moreh and we became business partners. We had planned to take three kg of Heroin to Mumbai. I had a share of one lakh for one kg of heroin. We were caught at Guwahati and kept at Paltan Bazaar Jail for nine months.

I came to my old place without any money in hand. I was wearing a saree and phanek mapalnaiba. I was having short hair. I was standing at a pan stall owned by an old woman. I was standing near the pan stall at Pratap cinema. The old women offered me pan. I had a packet of pan from her. She gave me a ticket to enter the cinema hall.

I did not know anything about what was expected of me inside cinema hall at that time. It was quite early by the time I entered inside. I found one man sitting in the same row. He invited me for tea as it was too early for the
show. He asked for tea very politely. I had no doubt about his intention as he
seem to be a noble person and soft spoken.

I entered Raj Hotel, people looked at us mischievously. I reached first
floor, another man came by and asked for the order. We placed the order and
he locked the door from outside when he went out. The man who brought me
there was inside the wash room. The man inside the bathroom came up and
told me that he had given Rs. 1000/- to the old woman in the pan stall. I was
shocked at his words and warned him not to approach me or touch me lest I
will shout. He forcibly grabbed me and tried to overpower me. I was quite
healthy at that time and I kicked at his chest and pushed him to the corner of
the bed. The third person heard the sound and ran and reported the incident
to the old woman. She asked him to help the man to rape me as I was alone.
(Nupa Noi Ani Suribo, Nupi Mathantana Kari Touba Ngamdoino).

His helper opened the door and pulled my hands from the back and the
customer pulled my dress and raped me. As soon as it was over, I came out of
the room without even bothering to comb my hair. I shouted at the lady. She
pretended to be very normal and said that she knew nothing about the
incident.

I approached my old business partner Iche Seema and told everything to
her. I cried a lot. She assured me that we will take revenge.

I reached home and found Rs. 500 note inside the pan packet. I had no
other means of livelihood and I had to bring up my children. I continued in
this profession thereon. I had to earn money to start my drug business again
from Moreh. I went to Moreh after I earned enough money, and found
Kunjabihiri, a resident of Mongshangei. He became my business partner for
sometime.

He offered me a Navy Cut cigarette and assured me that if I smoke it, I
will sleep instantly. I was suffering from insomnia and depression because I
had lost lot of money. I slept instantly on that day as he said. Later, he told me
that he had mixed it with Heroin. I continued it since then.

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There was a price hike of Heroin in 1998 in the International market. I could not get my daily dose and bought only small quantities. I started injecting it in order to use it effectively. I started fixing from that time. Somebody in the group helped me to get it fixed as I am afraid of needle. I did not look at the needle while injecting to other. My companion injects me.

I use drugs five times a day. One injection dose costs Rs.100 and I spend Rs.500 per day. I am using it for the last 15 years and never thought of quitting it. I used to enjoy 15 customers in a day in my youthful days. I would normally charge Rs.150-300 per customer.

There are categories of CSW in Manipur. The first category includes young college going students. The most popular colleges at Imphal are GP Women College, DM College, Budhachandra College. These girls normally charge Rs.200 per customer. They normally earn Rs. 700 per night. The number of customers they entertain in a day ranges from 5-15. The second category of CSW is middle age women. They frequently visit Hotel Raj, Mohari, and Hotel Kali at Thangal Bazaar, Anand Continental, Nirmala Hotel and Mass Hotel. You will find three/four CSW available at every hour of the day inside these Hotel rooms. They would wear loose dresses, casual skirt, middy and jail net dresses, half pant etc.

We also search for new girls who may like to earn money as CSW. We keep a close watch while searching for probable recruits in the street, markets, cinema halls, and hostel vicinity. We track such girls and women by observing their body language, gesture, movement, route, gali, timing, company, dress, lip movement. We approached them later after confirming their gesture.

After gathering enough details about her, we try to locate her. Normally we ask for a wash room and examine the surroundings and try to take notice of their attitudes and lifestyle and talk casually. We try to find the head of the gang who acts as a manager. We normally take contact number and provide customer. We charge 50 per cent commission from single assignments.
In one of the case, a young girl is involved in this racket. She came to the market alone and met Seema (Pan Dukan) and Seema offered to help her. Seema herself was a CSW. Seema talked to her and lured her. She took care of the girl. She was just in sixth standard at that time.

Seema suggested an opportunity to earn Rs. 600/- per day. She came to Seema’s Dukan in the evening and as usual, her shop was busy with young men as she was a CSW. She was given a chance to talk to the boys in the evening. They asked her to come for a movie/picnic. She was taken to friend’s house and had sex. She continues to be in the profession. She is -21 yrs old now.

I think there are 100 and more personal in the forces including police, Commando, IRB who are IDU. There are some 20 Armed personnel who are also always on the look out for new CSW.

Dress profile of young Casual Sex Worker (CSW) can be best exemplified by short hair with goggle, light make-up and lipstick (Kaho Na Pyar Hain Colour), tight tops, and skirt. Nobody is sure about the use of condom. CSW fail to put condoms to clients many a times due to situation and time limitation. The rooms are dark. They forget to use condoms out of lust, eagerness and time limitation. Condoms also burst at times.

There is a new oral condom. We put it in our mouth. Men usually do not realize because they are drunk. We pretend to clean it and end up putting the condom without his knowledge. We do it because we charge more money for having sex without condom.

Police harassment is one of the major problems. They normally charged Rs.600/- per CSW per month. We are earning money by selling our ijat (modesty) and blood. These police forcibly took money from us and they even put their hands inside our bra.

There are naughty customers. They pick/bite at cheek, play with us as if we are mechanical toys through out the night. I feel really annoyed and angry.
There are good customers. They normally had sex 2 times a night. They happened to be very noble.

Young CSW are scared of police and gave money instantly. We don’t give money to them and they cannot do anything to us as we knew them well and are accustomed to their behavior.

Two policemen came on a Yamaha yesterday. They started beating all young CSW standing in a line. They stopped and picked two new CSW who come only that day from Motbung and they slept with them. Policemen went back in the morning.

We never refused any girl who comes to us for getting inducted in this profession. I know they will join this network at any cost with someone’s help. We never decline their request because we know other people in the network will catch her even if we did not take her.

The reasons for becoming a CSW are many-1) For fun, 2) frustration because of large age difference with their husbands, 3) revenge from husband because he is a philanderer, 4) widows for earning and enjoyment, 5) Independence and pocket money.

There are categories of CSW: 1) high school, 2) college girls, 3) university student, 4) CSWs in hotels, 5) CSW cum IDU in North AOC. Let me cite one case where a lady teacher, teaching in one of the reputed school in Manipur also works as CSW. She has short hair, fair complexion, and one mole on left chick, wears sari and she used to entertain business men and bureaucrats in Imphal.

There are categories of customers-1) people in active services, mainly army, 2) businessmen, 3) Engineers, 4) Minister, 5) Officer, 6) Widower that are looking for sex partners. Some men have voracious appetite for sex and they are the main customer for the CSWs. He lives near Pratap Cinema and he would go for sex with any women.
The nature of the CSW who are high school going students spend their days on streets and are easily identified by the recruiters on the pretext of giving jobs and money. They were hired and given Rs. 200/- per customer. They do not complain about amount charged by their pimp from the customer. They do it for fun. The college going girls prefer to go for businessman. The University student and other employed CSWs prefer to go for engineers and other moneyed man. The problems of customer are that there is no specified place for selecting partners to fulfill their sexual needs.

Many customers try to hide their intention to have sex by wearing simple dress, maintaining innocent looks and voice but we could identify them instantly. We bargain for money. Customers are afraid of our HIV status and cleanliness. Police harassment is also another fear factor for the customer. Police constables would generally take all belonging/mobile/money/purse from the customer if caught and threaten to flash pictures and if they do not want to oblige it, they have to pay huge sums as bribe. I have seen a customer who cried to free him when he was caught by the police.

I am employed as a peer educator in a drop-in-centre run by Indian AIDS Consortium. I sell drugs for new clients. I took commission from the clients as well as the CSWs for giving it to customers. Sometimes, police personal bought drugs for me when they got their salary.

I was caught once by local Meira Paibi while supplying condoms in hotels in Paona Bazaar. One box was kept in every hotel at that time. I served as peer educator. I was beaten badly by the Meira Paibi and the news was flashed in local newspaper suggesting that I was a casual sex worker.

I shifted to North AOC after that incident. I kept one condom box in every hotel. The awareness for HIV was very high. I was tested HIV positive. I know about HIV and advised other CSW to use Nirodh and protect them from HIV. I lived in a rented house with a friend. I visited home once in 3 months. I do not care about my future. I had never thought of it. I see only drugs all the time.
Some of the IRB personnel use drugs. Police used drugs and there are different kinds of users in Police department. They take money from others to get money for drugs. Customers are advised to consume alcohol before sex.

We normally go for regular health check up. Most of the CSW are checked 2/3 times for HIV/STD.

The timing for entertaining customer is from 2 pm in the evening till 12 o’clock at night. The peak time starts from 2 to 9 o clock in the evening. There are different demands from customers like some ask for party, sex, enjoyment. Festivals are peak time for this business.

This long narrative from a woman respondent not only tells her individual story but also elaborates the drug and sex trade network in the district. It provides glimpses into life history that starts with drug trade for profit, arrested for drug trafficking and on return after loosing all her profits being duped into sex work. Having no other choice, she becomes a regular sex worker and now works as a pimp as also a peer educator. It is a fascinating account that will help in developing meta-narratives in the later sections of the work.

4.16. Geeta is 34 years old CSW in Imphal and she works as outreach worker for Leimarol Sinai Sang.

The code word for CSW is pan. I earn Rs. 300 per day injecting drugs three times a day. I borrow money to buy drugs. I want to come out of this profession. I have come across good, bad and very bad customer.

I came here to challenge my husband. He did not know my status. He considered me innocent. He can not identify me as CSW as he had never caught me on the spot. I challenged him by asking for HIV test. I used another name while meeting my customers.

4.17. Saroja age 27 is resident of Hatta Golapti and married to IDU. She did not know his drug use habit at the time of marriage. She is married to him for the last 10 years. She is separated now from her husband because of her family pressure. Her husband was a manual worker. She does small business, lending money in the market. She also acts as a
collector for other financers. She had a son from her previous marriage and he is studying in nursery class.

I am illiterate. I came to de-addiction centre after my cousin brothers told me. I am staying with my parents.

My story of drug use begins with pain in my heart. I realized my husband’s drug addiction after my daughter was born. He often demanded money. It was very difficult to decline his demands. He would do anything to get money. He knew that I have money as I used to go to the market everyday for collecting money. He also knew my financer. One day, he had taken money from my financer by telling lies. I was so frustrated and angry. At the same time, I knew he would not listen to me if I say or do anything to him. What he sees is only his daily dose of drugs. I asked him to use drugs along with me. I thought that if I started using it, then he would not use it again. We ended up using it together and got addicted. I did not experience any excitement in the first week. I came to realize that I am addicted to drugs when I found that it was difficult to live without using it after a week. I used Heroin regularly after that. We both used it regularly. He used to bring drugs for me. I have never gone to buy it. We used all our savings in the banks and the money that I had earned. I sold my gold, jewelry to buy drugs. I turned to selling household goods after selling all my precious items. My parents did not know that we were using drugs for one year. I spent most of my time sleeping in the room. It is quite a pleasure to sleep after taking the full dose. It feels really fantastic and mesmerizing. My family came to know about our involvement in drugs later and forced him to leave my home. We remained separated for one year and reunited later meeting secretly at some place. My family compelled us to separate again.

I was caught by police once but my husband was caught almost everyday. They released me on the spot because I was a woman.

I was facing lots of problems when I was with him. I was not able to go anywhere as he was always on the look out for an opportunity to get drugs.
We had children but he did not care about it. There was no sharing of thoughts and ideas between us as husband and wife.

It is almost three years that I started using Heroin for the first time. I tried to quit it many times but failed. I felt restless and experienced many health problems when I do not use it. The urge and temptation for it is unbearable. I know how to inject it and I do it on my own. I shared syringe with him. I have tested HIV positive. I do not take ART. I do not feel the necessity to take it.

North A.O.C. was the popular drug spot. I experience nausea, giddiness and constipation when I do not use it. I left my business because of ill health. I keep sleeping in my room under the influence of drugs. My relatives started avoiding me and I was isolated in social gatherings. We spent Rs. 1000/- everyday on drugs. Sometimes, we would go to Moreh and bought drugs from there at cheaper rate and then sell it here at a higher price. He used to bring drugs for me.

My life has changed after coming to the drop-in-centers. Now, I do not fear anyone. What I care most at this point of time is my only daughter. She is just 9 years old. I think of her life after my death as I am HIV positive.

A very different story- here is a young woman who starts taking drugs because she wants her husband to be close to her. Unwittingly she gets addicted. She becomes HIV positive. There is a nine year old daughter who was born before her addiction and is HIV negative. Saroja refuses to take ART. She is dejected but worried about her daughter’s future. Social alienation has added to her depression. There may not be many similar stories but there is a probability that traditional drug abuse studies may not have looked into.

4.18. Noorjahan age 27 is married and now separated from the previous husband. She lives with a new husband who is a Meitei. She was using No.4 for the last 7/8 years. She was married to a Muslim boy and found her husband was an IDU. She was under mental depression and could not endure mental torture because of husband’s persistent demands
for money. She lost patience to tolerate his behavior and decided to use drugs to challenge him. Later, she became a regular drug user and is now addicted to it.

    My husband was already a drug addict when I married him. He was the only bread earner in the family. He was a driver. He used to go to Dimapur and Gauhati. He is now married to a girl from Dimapur and stays there. I had no way to support myself. One of my family relatives brought me here. I came to know a NGO functionary here. We became close to each other over time. Then we decided to stay together.

4.19. Anulag age 40 is a resident of Soibam Leikai. She is married and has two children, the elder daughter is 15 years old and her younger son is 13 years old. She studies in the VIIIth standard. Her husband did his schooling from Bangalore and completed Matric. She is from Hanglep, Churachandpur.

    I have seven brothers and four sisters. My family is very supportive. They gave equal opportunity to all the children. My father has a permanent government job and he also has agricultural land.

    I was brought up as a normal girl and remained involved in domestic chores and agriculture related work during agricultural season. I am very friendly person. I have no opinion against the tradition and customs of the society.

    I was working in Doordarshan Kendra along with my sister before I got addicted to drugs. I continued my job for five years after my marriage. I found him to be a drug addict after I got married to him. I started consuming drugs after marriage. I left my job. We went to my native place to get him deaddicted. We stayed there for one year. He relapsed again and started using drugs after one year. Though, he lived there without using drugs for one year, he was not happy with the decision to keep us there. Our parents forcibly took us there to stop drug use.

    My father is a village chief of Hanglep and my family often came to Imphal for the education of children and for business purposes. They have
good relations with the landlord in Imphal. I used to come to Imphal along with his family and stayed there for months. I was very simple and innocent. The son of the landlord lured me and forcefully eloped with me. There were fights between the two families on that issue. I thought that he loves me. I decided to marry him. My family took Rs. 20,000/- as compensation for forceful eloping from my husbands family. Things were fine then and thereafter. Though, I belonged to a tribal community but my in-laws never treated me differently. They treated me like their own child. My in-laws are good especially my mother-in-law. She helps me in all kinds of situation and taught me how to prepare food, how to, dress up like traditional Meitei and, taught me Meitei language, tradition and customs. It was because of her that I continued to stay here for so long.

He continued to use drugs after returning from Hanglep and I warned him not to do so lest I will also start using it. He had not listened to me and I have no other means to tolerate his high headedness. In a fit of rage and with the intent to teach him a lesson I started using it as revenge to his addiction. I had no other option left, as I could neither leave him nor keep him away from it. I thought it is better to die together. That’s how I started using it. I continued for one year and then went in for de-addiction to a center.

I used drugs in social functions too. I used it three times a day. I remain confined to my home and stayed inside my room after I had it and sleep there. It feels really good to sleep after a shot. Whenever, I did not have money, I sold bed sheets, dress, rice, household goods and in extreme cases requested the tenant to give money in advance.

I face number of problems. Our source of income is from rented rooms. Monthly turnover from rent is around Rs. 10, 000/-. My husband goes for manual work and that supplements the expenditure. The problem is the education of our children. Domestic violence, health problems have made the situation worst. He has been using drugs for the last twenty years.
His brothers are quite supportive to our family. They take care of our problems especially health matters. When my husband was in coma for almost a year after an accident, my in-laws took charge of the finances and looked after his well being and the children. It was at the behest of my in-laws especially mother-in-law that we could still maintain to live together as a family.

My husband is very possessive. He did not want me to work outside home and earn any money. One of the NGOs asked me to become a peer educator but I declined. My husband did not want me to take up any job. He always gave me company whenever and wherever I went.

Problems started arising after he met an accident where he got injured on his head. He now gets angry abruptly and it takes me hours to calm him. I do not want my children to be affected by our quarrels.

I try my best to quit drug use but could not succeed. He was caught by police many a times. I ask children to go outside and play when I inject myself. I do not allow them to see us using drugs. My husband introduced me to drugs. He brought it home. He often took it from North A.O.C. I realized that I am addicted to it after a week when I felt uneasiness without it. Nobody in the family at that time knew that I had also started using drugs.

It is now two-three years that we shared syringes. He can not sleep without it. He is under the influence of drugs most of the time. I am using other less harmful drugs now. I started using drugs when I was 35. It’s very difficult to quit Heroin as its urge and pain is hard to tolerate. I regularly use it. I stay three days away from it voluntarily but could not do without it and continued to use it.

My husband is a very kind hearted person. He never blames me or beats me. He always listens to me. He consoles and shares every moment of my life. My mother-in-law took care of the children. We kept tenants who are mainly college student. We get money from them and they teach our children.
I feel pity for myself when I realize that I am completely addicted to it. I think of the society and how they will react to my children if they know my status. They would never get married if people knew that their parents are drug addicts. I worry about my children. Sometimes, I am confused whether we will be able to support them till they get a job.

I come to the drop-in-center for my substitution therapy after I complete my domestic work of cleaning, cooking and sending children to school and return home after 2 pm when children get back from school. I have started quarreling with him these days with him. I want to protect family image.

Tamo has adjustment problems because of head injury in the accident. I have my own inhibitions as I belong to a tribal community. I do not get involved in social gathering and interaction. My husband in a way is everything for me. His family is too good and my heart belongs to them. My children are fine and have no problems till date. They are good in studies. He has given up drugs now. I know he will relapse if I separate from him.

Anulag’s story is remarkable. It tells a tale of family support, love and commitment and ironically induction into drugs for the same reason. The world of drug addicts becomes more complex with each narrative. There are diverse angles to it and any single explanation of it will not bring us to meaningful meta-narratives.

4.20. Lumpkin age 28 is married and has three children. She is resident of Ukhrul but presently staying in a rented accommodation in Zomi Villa. She belongs to Thangkhul, Naga community. She is currently a drug user. She uses it four times a day. She has been using it for the last six years. She got initiated into it after depression.

My husband does not earn a single penny. I have three children. Two of them are in school. I have to take care of them. I have to look after their studies, diet and finances. I felt totally lost and frustrated whenever I think of my family.

I have to earn for my family. My husband is an alcoholic and he spends his entire day drinking. I was beaten badly by my business partner. Moreover,
my husband tortured me a lot because he did not earn anything and demanded money from me.

I dropped out from the school after matriculation and married at the age of 14/15 years and he must have been 20/21 years old. I was in the eighth standard when I came to Imphal. I studied at Christian School. We were four children, 2 male and two female. I was second child of my parents.

We had love marriage because we were in love and both the families accepted our marriage. I am the only bread earner now. We have three children. I started using drugs after I got my second child. My husband does not use drugs. He is an alcoholic.

Now, my business is to give contacts for buying and selling drugs. My husband is jealous of me. I can not stop the business as I have to earn money. I have family problems. He tortures me at home and made me a drug user. I took drugs to help in getting even after mental trauma.

He tortured me. It sent me in a state of mental depression. I sometimes threaten to kill myself. I did not know how I became addicted to it. I was introduced to it by one of my friends in a hotel.

I feel dull whenever I do not use it and could not earn money. I sold drugs earlier. I enjoy life after having drugs. I start searching for customers after I consume drugs and feel good. Life really came alive after being in drugs.

I am addicted to it. I do not have appetite without drugs. I earn money for children and myself. I am not divorced. I know about HIV. I know it from awareness camps and check up. My husband knows about my habit. He asked me to de-addict. The problem is that who will earn if I stayed in the centre.

I went to a village and stayed there for 3 months and kept away from Heroin. I relapsed after coming back here. The urge for it is so demanding that I tend to forget all my promises. I think of it again and promised to myself that it would be the last one.
I would be better if I shift from this place and remain at an isolated place, away from drugs. The problem in such a situation would be how to spend my time.

NGOs have offered me numerous incentives for de-addiction at the centre. They provide free medicine and money for subsistence. They have promised to give us free care. I can not change my position when I think of my children. I can not go away from my home. My eldest son is still very young. I could not remain away from my family. This creates tension. I could not live without drugs. I can not provide any solution to my family problems. My husband does not help me either.

I earn money as I have fixed customers who come here to buy drugs and take drugs from me only. I take Rs 10/20 as commission from them. I use the money to buy drugs. I bring back the excess money home. I search drugs for customers and seek customers for CSW. I take commission from them for providing sex workers to the customers. I refuse when some people ask me for sex but never felt angry when asked. I talk well and help them to find their partner. They normally charge Rs.150-200/- per customer.

My customers who came to buy drugs from us wait for me if they do not find me. I manage drinks for them too. I sell dress, borrow, money from friends. I cannot stop the urge for drugs. I would seek money with any means. I cannot live without drugs. My husband beats me many a times. I can not control myself. I feel normal only after taking drugs. I cannot sleep and lose my appetite without it.

I returned home with Rs. 200-300/. I prefer to do the present job. I cannot talk and bargain as CSW do.

I am addicted. I have no guts to call my old friends when I meet them in the streets. I feel totally lost. I am HIV positive. I feel low in public gatherings. There is lot of discrimination. I have experienced discrimination from people and they do not want to touch and use things that we had used at home and at
other places. They would not eat food cooked by us. Even, their children were kept away from us.

I come here after Children are fed and sent to school. I came here at 10 o’clock in the morning. I return home between 7-10 p.m. after buying vegetables. I cook for them again. I was caught charging commission for selling drugs by police. I have learnt about AMADA. I am taking extra precaution. Many people have already left this business as they were afraid of these authorities.

Everyone knows that it is bad but we have no other means to earn our livelihood. The question is who will take care of the children? Everybody wants to lead a decent life. We are afraid of our ijat (modesty) and worry about the social stigma being attached to this business.

I thought of quitting it. I fear gossip. I wish to stay at some other place. I want to discontinue drugs. I want to remain idle and enjoy life. I tried to de-addict and rehabilitate myself two times. I have shared syringe with friend.

I am not sick. I go for health check ups regularly. My children are fine. I worry about my children’s life when they grow up. They will face social discrimination and face financial problems.

People look at us mischievously and consider us as lost. I am also struck with another stigma of marriage at early age. I have been supporting my family and also my husband’s parents. Family insists that I should stop consuming drugs.

We have 4 people who are IDU but not CSW. We took help from NGOs. We consult them, talk to them. They give valuable advice.

The discrimination and stigma experienced by a married woman, who was married early and had an abusive husband who refused to earn and this is the probable explanation for addiction that marks this narrative.

4.21. Mary age 24 is a divorcee and is a resident of Yangdong, Churachandpur. She was married in 1996. She passed VIIth standard from a Government High School. She lived at
North AOC in Imphal with her cousin brother who happened to be a drug addict and a divorcee. He acts as a pimp for her and gets commission from it. Mary has five sisters and two brothers. One of her brothers is married to a Meitei from Kakwa. She took care of Mary at the time of need. Her mother is a school teacher and she has two brothers who are employed in the armed forces, one is in the BSF and the other one is employed with the Manipur Police.

I belonged to Hmar community. I was interested in domestic work as a child. I was an enthusiastic participant in local social services. I prefer large groups. I am very friendly by nature. I was married to a Meitei boy from Sekmaijing. He did not do anything. We were separated from his paternal family and earned livelihood on our own. I acted as a bread earner in the family. I sold local liquor and earned money. My brother took me from there. I did not use Heroin at that time.

I returned to Churachandpur and did not use drugs. I now normally used Heroin three times a day regularly. I take first dose in the morning, the second at eleven o’clock and third one in the evening. I started using it after a gap of one year after I started staying at Imphal. One of my friends introduced it to me.

I was divorced from my husband and I did not want to stay at home. It was quite boring. So, I came here. I was a bit depressed. I spent most of my time under the influence of drugs.

I had a love affair in my village. He was my first love. I loved him very much. Their family was against me and we did not marry. He was married to another girl and they are divorced now. I was again married to a business partner. I was doing wine business at Lamphel. He happened to be a drug addict. I was introduced to him in one of the hotel at Paona Bazaar by my friend.

I was caught three times by police on the spot for using drugs and for illegal trafficking. I earned money as a Casual Sex Worker. I could earn up to Rs.800/-per day. We spent the entire amount on Heroin as my cousin brother.
also used it. He acted as pimp and arranged clients for me. I entertain them and earn money. My clients include army and policemen, rickshaw puller and coolie.

Bandhs, strikes and curfew are the worst days in our business. We can not earn money on these days. I sell my belongings such as blankets and dress to get money to buy Heroin.

I spend most of my time under the influence of drugs, singing and entertaining my customers. Sometimes, I sat idle and listen to radio. I entertain every kind of customer, be it a Meitei, a Pangal, a hao or anybody.

I celebrate most of the festivals with friends. I drink on Christmas days and I was popular among young men despite being ugly. I wonder how and why boys like me?

I think I have enjoyed a lot till date. I did everything that I wished in my life. Now, I would like to live a normal life in a village. I want to live happily with a man and lead a normal life. It makes me more vulnerable now. All the excitement seems to have stopped.

I offer prayers everyday for myself and other near and dear ones. My elder sister is married to a Meitei from Kakwa, he visits me. I took money from her whenever I need it. The amount of money depends on my requirement.

I do not have friends. I was ugly and no one wants to be a friend. My first affair lasted for about two years. He promised to marry me and had sex with him. The affair did not work. I considered myself as completely lost and I went to Shillong with my aunty. I thought I am all alone in this world. Ours was an intimate affair. I even tried to commit suicide. He is employed in the police department.

I have visited Moreh, stayed there for one year. As a child, I lived in Dimapur too. I talked to my father under the influence of drugs. I will rate my family as always in trouble. I was not on good terms with my parents. I am
very close to my elder sister at Kakwa. I am afraid of my brother who stays at Lamphel. I go to him whenever I am sick. I think my parents are not responsive to my needs and requirements. I do not want to go back home and stay there. Nobody in the family drinks.

I have tried twice to quit Heroin. My lifestyle and my companion are some of the factors for my inability to leave this habit. I spent five months at a centre and even detoxified but relapsed as soon as I came here. I was lured to use Heroin by telling imaginative excitements like going to America etc.

I am addicted to it for about a year now. I took alcohol, Khaini and other addictive too. I started with smack and started taking it in the form of injection to save money.

I am HIV positive. I have shared syringe but use condoms while having sex with my customer. Romance and loss of faith and hope are the main reasons for using Heroin. My brother is married and my sister-in-law’s attitude makes me reluctant to return home. Moreover, group living culture, romance and depression contribute to my addiction. It was very enjoyable to roam and visit places after having it. It takes all my worries away and I feel really good. I vomited on the first day. I experienced happiness and enjoyment during my days in North AOC. I considered I could control myself on the first day.

I started as a CSW three years ago in 2005. I entertain 2-7 customers in a day. There are fewer customers on the days of Bandhs and strikes. I have had sex with my customer without condoms two times. I charge Rs.300-500/- from each customer. I do not have any other means of earning. I give 15 minutes to each customer. It is compulsory to drink before starting the actual act.

My father lives at Dimapur with my step mother. He is in the police department. My mother is married to another man at Churachandpur. All my brothers are married. I want to live a normal life but I do not see any way to
go about it. I go for regular health check up such as STD and other related problems. I normally take syringe, condoms and attend awareness camps.

Mary narrates story of a woman who has low esteem about her looks. She comes from a broken family. Apparently all her other siblings are well settled in life. She talks about support for her sister and her husband; she also describes how her cousin acts as pimp for her and uses drugs with her. What strikes in her narrative is her desire to live a normal life but given her complex about her looks, where she keeps calling herself as ugly, she is not able to come to terms that she can also live a normal life.

4.22. Lucy age 36 lives in North A.O.C in Imphal. She has been using drugs for three years. She got married with a local boy from her village. She realized later that he was a drug addict. She was a mother of two children by the time this realization dawned on her.

I belonged to Kabui-langlen which is popularly known as Jia-Rong. Our village lies on the way to IT road. Our village is called Thongam at Kangpokpi which is 22Km from Kangpokpi. I have passed XIth standard from National Open School, New Delhi. We got married in 1996. We have three children. Ours was a love cum arranged marriage.

I stayed at Great Bible College, Gurgaon in Haryana under the funding of American Consultancy. I was just 16-17 years old. We were asked to pray to God to see would-be husband in our dreams. On the 3rd day, I saw my present husband. I could not believe. After the completion of the course, I came here at Imphal and stayed with my sister and we came to know each other.

I came to know about HIV and other related information when the NGOs started visiting our place and started spreading AIDS related messages. I have asked my husband to test his HIV status. We were tested positive including our children.

I was never interested in gatherings. I have done some social work. I was a secretary of a women’s group in a village for about three years. I
resigned from the post after three years to look after my children as they were very small. I promised to take charge when they are grown up. I provided best services during my tenure and the villagers requested me to take charge again. All dues were cleared during my tenure.

I am against social gatherings at midnight during Christmas. I think one night is enough for Christmas. We party for five days as the tradition remains. It was very difficult to change.

They made mockery of me when I quit the group in night gathering. They laughed at me and challenged that I would not be able to remain like that for a long time. Now, the village elders have fixed the timings and sitting arrangement for boys and girls. I spent most of my youthful days outside my village. One of my elder sisters is married to a soldier from Kohima. My family comprised of ten sisters and one brother. They took care of us. We were allowed to go only to church while we were in the army camp. I appeared for Board exams in 1988 and failed. I cried for 4 days. I have remained restless since then.

Boys and girls meet at night and nobody has any control in the gatherings in the village. They would be drunk and it made the environment worst. That’s really a free zone for them. This tradition is very dangerous because of the threat of HIV and I am against it. It has a very bad influence on the youths.

We were little scared while using drugs and the boys use to buy syringe. Sharing of syringe was very common and they had multiple sex partners. It causes the spread of HIV in our village.

Some of the boys were educated in Imphal and other places. They brought back HIV when they come home and infect their spouses. These boys used to stay for one week in Imphal and then return home.

We knew about HIV/AIDS after research persons and NGOs visited our place. I took initiative to test our HIV status. It was quite sad when we came to
know that all of us are positive. Emotions were bursting and I cried. I felt so sorry about myself. I cried asking God to forgive me. I am taking ART therapy distributed by the State AIDS Control Society. Our children are also under treatment. I am worried about my children. NGO people have assured maximum help but I am still scared about my children’s future.

No body in the village knew our status. One of my sisters-in-law came here for liver problem and we tested together. Doctors had given the report to her. She might know our status because of it.

Spread of HIV in tribal areas is mostly because of the spouse. Those who get education from outside the village are carrier of HIV and most of them had multiple sex partners under alcohol and drugs. I became a drug addict because my husband was using drugs. I have given up drugs but my husband continues to use it.

These narratives present a challenging data for any researcher to interpret and arrive at meta-narratives that explain a large body of texts. We cannot cite all the two hundred thematic life histories generated in the course of the data collection. Twenty two narratives cited at length her largely represent the core of what most of them were saying. There were individual differences but the road that most travail found expression in one or the other narrative cited here. We will try and correlate some of these experiences with earlier stance that culture plays a significant role in the experiences that make individuals vulnerable and susceptible to social concerns like substance abuse and related question of HIV.

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