

**OPENING REMARKS BY MR AMRIN AMIN, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY
FOR HOME AFFAIRS, AT THE SANA VOLUNTEER & DONOR APPRECIATION
NITE ON 6 NOV 2015, 7.45 P.M. AT THE GRASSROOTS' CLUB**

Mrs Quek Bin Hwee, SANA President,
Members of the SANA Board of Management,
Volunteers and Community Partners,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Evening.

It is my pleasure to join you this evening.

2 This is my first SANA event and I thank you for the warm welcome. SANA is an important partner of the Ministry of Home Affairs in our efforts to build a drug-free Singapore. I am heartened to see so many SANA volunteers and supporters here today. A big thank you to all of you for your time, dedication and commitment in working towards a drug-free Singapore.

Current Drug Situation – Youths and Drugs

3 While the drug situation in Singapore remains under control, there are several developments of concern involving our young people.

4 First, the number of drug abusers arrested who were below 30 years old has increased by 34% over the last five years, from 826 in 2010 to 1,110 in 2014. We see the continuation of this trend in the latest arrest figures in the first half of 2015.

The number of drug abusers arrested who were below 30 years old increased by 25%, from 528 in the first half of 2014 to 661 in the first half of 2015. The proportion of new drug abusers who were below 30 years old has also increased, from about 50% in 2010, to about 70% in the first half of 2015.

5 Second, the profile of young drug abusers has changed. In particular, many cannabis abusers come from middle-income families. They are also performing relatively well in schools.

6 Third, many cannabis abusers cited what they read on the Internet and the social media as a reason why they started to abuse cannabis. They think that cannabis is less harmful and less addictive. This is not true. Many cannabis abusers also said that they started abusing cannabis, as they were influenced by how drug abuse was portrayed as a social norm or even glamourised, in movies and the lifestyles of celebrities and singers.

7 To address these concerns, a Task Force on Youths and Drugs was convened last year, and was chaired by Minister Masagos. The Task Force announced its recommendations in June this year. One of the recommendations is to set up an Anti-drug Abuse Advocacy Network. Through the Network, we will build a community of advocates against drug abuse, who will strengthen Singaporean's support for our zero-tolerance stance against drugs. SANA has been a very important partner in our fight against drugs and I look forward to SANA supporting and joining the Network as an advocate for the anti-drug cause.

Community Effort

8 In addition to the work by Government agencies and NGOs such as SANA, the community has an important role in the fight against drugs. In this regard, I would like to commend SANA for taking the lead in actively seeking and nurturing relationships with individuals and corporations to provide training, jobs, financial aid, and counselling to ex-drug offenders. They help ex-drug offenders and their families reintegrate into the society, and move more confidently ahead in their lives.

9 I look forward to hearing the testimonies from some SANA beneficiaries this evening. One of these partnerships that SANA established is with Luxasia Foundation, to equip ex-offenders with beauty and make-up skills to enhance their job opportunities. We appreciate and welcome the efforts of individuals, such as Mr Pratap Kishan, and corporations such as Yun Onn Company Pte Ltd, Tembusu Foundation and Marican & Associates, who have stepped forward to help. I urge more to join this effort.

Recognising our Volunteers & Donors

10 SANA's success cannot be achieved without its volunteers and donors. I am happy to see many of you with us this evening. I am encouraged by your passion and commitment in your work. Your generosity in dedicating time and resources to support SANA has left a positive impact on the lives of many. Together, we are keeping Singapore safe and secure for ourselves and our children.

11 This event is organised to recognise your efforts. Thank you to all the volunteers, partners and donors for your support and commitment as we continue to strive towards a drug-free Singapore.

12 I wish you a pleasant evening ahead. Thank you.