

A SEMINAR HELD IN SHAGRILLA HOTEL ON DRUG PREVENTION AT CHILAS, DISTRICT DIAMER PAKISTAN

Illicit drugs destroy innumerable individual lives and undermine our societies. Confronting the illicit trade in drugs and its effects remains a major challenge for the international community." -- **Kofi Annan**

Illicit trade in drugs and its effects is a major challenge for the international community, truly mentioned by the UN General Secretary Kofi Annan. Same is the case in the Northern Areas of Pakistan which is a semi tribal area and facing the challenges of Drug Abuse with so many other challenges. According to some unofficial statistics, in The Northern Areas of Pakistan every fifth individual uses drug. There is no any health facility or centre to help the people to get rid of drug abuses. Even there is no serious effort either from public or private sector to prevent drug abuses in the region. Unfortunately, majority of youngsters are indulged in this sort of abuses.

A local non-governmental organization named as “**Strive Towards Education and Progress (STEP)**” took initiative to highlight the issue with technical assistance of Association of **Global Humanists and Ethics (AGHE** اگہی اے). This joint venture remained successful as first time in the history of region, a voice raised against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking and a practical step was taken.

A seminar was held on International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking 2006. The seminar provided an opportunity to the policy makers, health workers, law enforcement agencies and social activists to meet and think collectively to take practical measures to prevent drug abuses in the areas. All the notable participants were provided opportunity to share their experiences, information, suggestions and recommendations regarding challenges of drug abuses and its illicit trafficking in the Northern Areas. In this regards following were some major recommendations and suggestions of the participants to prevent the region from drugs abuses:

- The government of Northern Areas and NGOs must seriously notice the increasing numbers of drug users in the area and must take practical steps to control the situation. It was also suggested that the government, the communities and the NGOs must launch an awareness campaign through out the Northern Areas against drug abuses and its effects and must deliver youth friendly service at districts level.
- Children and young people of all ages are affected by drug abuse and illicit trafficking; especially those street children who are working and living in dire conditions are vulnerable. So, the government and NGOs must start youth friendly and free medical services for the affected children and young people.
- Drug Prevention Centers must be established at least at district headquarter level in each six districts of the Northern Areas.
- Concept of community policing must be introduced in the region to increase communities participation level and to make law enforcement agencies' role more effective against drug abuses and its illicit trafficking.
- Religious leaders and intuitions can play an active role against drug abuses so they must be sensitized and facilitated to come forward and speak up against drug abuses and its illicit trafficking.

In closing ceremony of the Seminar, in his presidential address Mr. Saeed Ahmed Khan Project Director IFAD, UNDP District Diamer and Ex. Home Secretary of the Northern Areas of Pakistan thanked the participants and the NGOs for their initiatives against drug abuses and focusing district Diamer for this purpose. He also offered IFAD's cooperation to increase awareness among the masses that "Drugs are not child's play".