

Recommendations for Change in Pakistan's Anti Narcotics Policy

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Recommendations developed by Society for Sustainable Development for changes in Pakistan Anti Narcotics Policy after comprehensive review of laws, policies, on ground situation, literature review and in-depth interviews with stakeholders

Recommendations for Change in Drug Policy of Pakistan

In the light of all the activities, consultations, group discussions and dialogues amongst the policy makers, law enforcing agencies, experts and project team the following recommendations are being presented before the parliamentarians to make the humane drug policy.

1. The drug policy should focus on treatment rather than criminal punishment. Different treatment options should be advised to the drug users instead of custodial sentences. In addition, the Drug Users can be given choice between treatment and imprisonment. The Drug Users should be treated as Patient rather than a criminal.
2. The arrested drug users should be referred to some treatment centre provided there is no other criminal offence has been done by him. This can be done even after give some initial imprisonment for the offence.
3. The quantity for personal use should be redefined in the light of the best practices of the world. Small quantity possession of drugs should be completely decriminalized this will lesson the burden on courts. And the law enforcement agencies will get more time to control the other criminal issues rather then dealing with drug users.
4. It is also important that the term Drugs should not be used in a generic way but there is a need to make the policy according to the characteristics of each substance.
5. Effective Specialized Drug Courts should be introduced to deal with the drug related crimes, which can differentiate the drug use cases from drug trafficking.
6. Harm reduction programs should be encouraged to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis “C” amongst the drug users and Injecting Drug Users. As it is evident through various studies conducted in the country that the spread of HIV & AIDS amongst the Injecting drug users is on the high. One of the main reasons is the use of dirty needles by Injecting Drug Users. Therefore, the needle exchange programs should be encouraged in the country.

7. Drug Policy should address the “**Harassment of Drug User by Police**”. Because it has been observed that the police and Law enforcing agencies are involved in violation of the Basic Human Rights of the drug users.
8. The Control of Narcotic Substances Act (CNSA), 1997 concerns about drug trafficking have overshadowed domestic problems of drug use, treatment and rehabilitation of users. The Drug policy should be focused on the control of drug trafficking and the drug addiction cases should be referred to the public health system for rehabilitation.
9. The Prohibition (Enforcement of Hadd) Order makes use of intoxicants a serious offence. The CNSA, on the other hand, does not criminalize drug users. Instead, the Act obligates the government to identify, register, treat and restore drug users back to the community. The two statutes are at variance vis-à-vis the legal treatment accorded to persons with drug related problems. Whether an addict in contact with authorities finds himself in prison for violating the Hadd Order or is able to seek treatment at a centre established under the CNSA remains unclear. This anomaly should be eliminated.
10. No specific provision has been made for drug dependent children either in the Ordinance or the rules enacted there under, besides medical treatment for juveniles suffering from serious illnesses including TB, Hepatitis B and C, and HIV/AIDS. Therefore there is a need to introduce specific provision to deal with such children.

Social Factors in Drug Addiction

The following social factors should also be given due attention to provide a healthy environment to the drug users who are seeking treatment and for those too who can not live without taking the drugs.

1. Awareness program should be introduced to educate the general public about the basis human rights.
2. Efforts should be made to reduce stigma and discrimination for Drug Users, so that they can be treated as normal human being. Dependence on drugs should not be

treated as crime. This will also help to reduce the discriminations against the families of the drug users.

3. Equal job opportunities should be provided to the rehabilitated drug users regardless of their past habits.
4. Causes of the drug dependence should be highlighted and effective measure should be taken to counter such causes.
5. Access to public health facilities should be equal for drug users as these are being provided to other people.
6. Free legal aid should be provided to the drug users if their basic rights have been violated at any stage.
7. In order to make the new generation safe from drug addict, there is a need to introduce some information in the curriculum in which the bad affects of drug use and its impact of the individuals and society should be included. The new generation should aware of the harmful effects of drugs.
8. Finally, the war should be against the drugs but not against the drug users.