



“Drug Prevention among Youth in Peshawar, Pakistan”

Funding Source: GTZ
Term: 1999-2002

Project

The project Drug Prevention among Youth in Peshawar was implemented by the local non-governmental organisation (NGO) DOST, with technical support from GTZ. DOST was established in 1992 for the treatment and rehabilitation of drug users and their families in Pakistan. The organisation carries out programmes with high-risk youth in various settings, such as educational institutions, the workplace, streets, parks, neighbourhoods, refugee camps and prisons. DOST works with drug users, small-scale drug traffickers and dealers, juvenile delinquents, women and children. The programmes are mostly financed by governmental institutions and international donors.

Establishment of self-help groups of young people in Peshawar

The aim of the project was to establish self-help groups of young people in two sections of Peshawar, and to enable them to use a peer-to-peer approach for drug abuse prevention activities. The young people were chosen as the target group because they were more likely to experiment with and use drugs.

The project is based on the observation that drug and development problems are closely related. Thus the work to reduce drug abuse is seen not only as controlling certain substances but also as reducing poverty, promoting women and youth, providing healthy alternatives to drug use and empowering people as agents of change.

Major activities:

- Conducting a survey of living conditions among the youth of Peshawar to serve as a baseline for needs-driven prevention of drug abuse
- Holding training workshops for youth and teachers
- Initiating and supporting self-help groups
- Building networks

The drug situation in Pakistan

- Pakistan is a major transit route and market for opiates from neighbouring Afghanistan
- There are about four million drug users in Pakistan, including 500,000 heroin addicts.
- Increasing numbers of young people are using drugs.
- Injecting drug use is becoming the preferred method of substance abuse, particularly in major cities.

A further aim was to improve the professional capabilities of DOST personnel and other professionals working with youth groups, so that DOST could continue the project after German support ceased. Networking with other relevant actors at communal, regional, and national level was also to be improved and the experience of prevention work with youth was to flow into policy dialogue at all three levels. The overall goal of the project was to empower young people to communicate with their peers about the dangers of drug use and to conduct prevention activities among their peers that would reduce drug abuse and the risk of addiction.

Impact

The survey of youth behaviour was carried out at the beginning of the project. Gender differences in drug consumption patterns were identified. For cultural reasons, problematic drug use among girls and women was mainly connected with sedative medicines. Drug consumption among males took place out of the home in the company of friends, often as a result of peer pressure, whereas most women consumed drugs alone at home. While cigarettes, alcohol, and cannabis were considered pleasure drugs, sedatives were commonly used by persons experiencing stress.

commissioned by:



A total of 48 self-help groups – made up of young people and networks among groups – were successfully established. Young people between 12 and 24 in Peshawar, especially from poorer social groups and especially young women, were identified and trained in drug prevention methods, as were multipliers (teachers) to enhance the project's sustainability. About 35 percent of the young people were girls. The groups varied in size from 3 to 10 members, with 7 members being the average.

The aim of the self-help groups was to reinforce the healthy behaviour of their peers through measures to prevent drug abuse and addiction. The activities carried out by the self-help groups included poster and essay competitions and making banners, holding fun fairs, drama performances and demonstrations, and creating IEC materials, such as badges and buttons, with information about drugs and their effects.

Given the Islamic and Pashtoon cultural context, this project was a pioneer effort in the field of peer-to-peer education in Pakistan. The Pashtoon culture is characterised by male authority, with restrictions on the mobility and independence of women and youth. The insti-

tution of the family is very important for access to young people and their involvement in the peer-to-peer activities: hence the effectiveness of this prevention approach. Socio-cultural and religious factors must be considered in the implementation of drug abuse prevention and intervention activities. Qualitative research prior to project design is essential for an understanding of socio-cultural and religious conditions.

It was difficult to ensure the sustainability of the self-help groups that had been established, especially without DOST backstopping; nevertheless, 36 of 48 self-help groups continued after project completion.

Lessons learned:

The peer-to-peer approach:

- improves access to and contact with target groups that are normally very difficult to reach
- increases acceptance of the prevention activities because young people themselves are responsible for planning and implementation
- facilitates the implementation of gender-sensitive approaches by addressing drug use among young girls and women
- helps young people, their friends and families to realistically assess the risk of slipping into drug consumption and to take responsible decisions accordingly
- can be integrated into other health, social or educational development measures and readily adjusted to local conditions.

Imprint

Published by:
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH
Development-oriented Drug Control Programme (DDC)
PO Box 5180
65726 Eschborn, Germany
Phone: +496196 79-4202
Fax: +496196 79-80 4202
Eod-info@gtz.de
www.gtz.de/drogen

Design by: Medienbüro Profil, © 2006
Photos: © GTZ
Printed on 100% recycled paper

Status: 02/2006

