

Drug Abuse, Poverty and Illiteracy

The issue of drug abuse has concerns not only parents or schools; it has also occupied the minds of international institutions such as the United Nations. The latest UN General Assembly Special Session on Drugs (UNGASS) was held on 19-21 April 2016, and in the same year UNDOC has also released its 2016 World Drug Report, highlighting the fact that: "...1 in 20 adults, or a quarter of a billion people between the age of 15 and 64 years, used at least one drug in 2014... over 29 million people who use drugs are estimated to suffer from drug use disorders, and of those, 12 million are people who inject drugs (PWID), of whom 14,0 per cent are living with HIV, the impact of drug use in terms of its consequences on health continues to be devastating."

A social problem such as drug abuse and drug trafficking is always a complex matter. It is almost impossible to find a linear line that connects the dots between its causes and effects. In the quest of fighting drug related crime, the root of the problem must first be recognized. This article will look at the relationship of illiteracy and poverty with drug.

Robert Kaestner's study in 1998 titled "Does Drug Use Cause Poverty" stated that only limited evidence suggests, "...drug use is expected to lower productivity, reduce earnings, and results in increased likelihood of poverty." The International Journal of Basics and Applied Sciences' work titled "Is poverty to be Blamed for Narcotics Abuse? A Case Study of Pakistan" also suggests that poverty plays an important role in a way of motivating people in becoming drug users, while drug use itself does not directly cause poverty in a significant way. How is it possible since most drugs are known to be expensive substances? How can the poor even dream to use drug?

The UNDOC report asserts that while those in the higher socioeconomic groups have a greater propensity to initiate drug use than those in the lower socioeconomic groups, it is the lower socioeconomic groups that are more likely to become drug dependent.

Martin Yim in his article "Addiction and Poverty Connected" finds that poverty and addiction feed each other; poverty leads to mental states, which can lead to drug abuse, which leads to addiction, which leads to crime, which leads to worse employment prospects.

When we speak about drug abuse, then we cannot skip the issue of drug cultivation and crime. UNDOC's World Drug Report 2016 stated that: "The relationship between economic development and drugs is particularly evident in the case of the illicit cultivation of drug crops. In rural areas, socioeconomic elements such as poverty and a lack of sustainable livelihoods are important risk factors leading farmers to engage in illicit cultivation."

What then, caused poverty, which seems to be the root of so many social problems, including drug abuse and crime? What makes a person poor?

The International Journal of Basics and Applied Science found that literacy and employment rate has an inverse relationship with poverty and that drug crime and opiate cultivation increases due to illiteracy, unemployment and income inequality. Mariam Hinds' "Illiteracy and Violence; Confusion about Cause and effect" article highlighted how psychiatrists internationally asserted that every poor reader who fail to receive appropriate will develop significant emotional problems, and that it is highly possible for teenagers who can't read or spell and who consequently hate school to be drug dealer's targets.

Hence, the first step of rooting out the problem of drugs, should be education, even if it in its simplest form such as basic reading and writing skills, and, as one of the recommendations presented in the UN's World Drug Report, end poverty in all its forms everywhere.

With 758 million adults - as recorded by UNESCO - aged 15 years and older who are categorized as illiterate, as well as just under 1 billion people - as recorded by the World Bank - live on less than \$1.90 a day, we still have a long way to go. Yet it is a step that must be taken, because we owe it to the generations that will inherit this world. In a world where everything has a price tag on it, one cannot afford

to be poor.