

From Crisis to Recovery: Successful Experiences in the Eradication of Narcotics in Afghanistan Local Communities

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ABSTRACT

Afghanistan, as one of the world's largest producers of narcotics, faces significant social, economic, and health challenges. Despite numerous efforts to combat the cultivation and consumption of narcotics, the issue remains a major problem in many local communities. However, some of these communities have succeeded in achieving remarkable progress in reducing narcotics cultivation and consumption through participatory programs and alternative economic development. This research aims to identify and analyze the successful experiences in narcotics eradication in local Afghan communities and to evaluate the factors contributing to these successes. A qualitative methodology was employed, utilizing semi-structured interviews with local community members, experts, and government officials. The data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The findings of the research indicate that educational programs, awareness-raising initiatives, the development of alternative economic opportunities, and active community participation have played a crucial role in reducing narcotics cultivation and consumption. Nevertheless, challenges such as financial constraints, administrative corruption, and cultural resistance remain significant barriers to the successful implementation of these programs. The study concludes that with increased international support, administrative transparency, and strengthened educational and economic programs, the dependency of local communities on narcotics cultivation can be significantly reduced. This research provides a foundation for the development of effective national policies in the fight against narcotics in Afghanistan.

Keywords : narcotics, eradication, local communities, alternative economic development, awareness-raising, social participation

INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan, as one of the world's largest producers of narcotics, faces deep-rooted social, economic, and health challenges. According to the 2023 UNODC report, Afghanistan accounts for approximately 85% of the world's opium production. This situation has led to increased poverty, unemployment, and violence in many regions, particularly affecting young people and farmers, who, due to a lack of viable job opportunities, turn to narcotics cultivation (Alemi et al., 2023; Yar & Zarghani, 2024; Ziaee et al., 2019). Despite these severe challenges, some local communities have managed to make significant strides in reducing this crisis by implementing successful programs. This paper aims to examine these successful experiences in eradicating narcotics and identify the key factors behind these achievements in local Afghan communities. Narcotics represent one of the most serious social, economic, and health challenges in Afghanistan. This issue not only endangers public health but also disrupts social and economic structures, negatively affecting the quality of life. In recent decades, Afghanistan has become recognized as one of the largest narcotics producers in the world,

exacerbating national security concerns and contributing to rising poverty, unemployment, and violence (Rahmani et al., 2021). On the other hand, some local communities in Afghanistan, despite facing numerous challenges, have developed effective models for combating narcotics. These successful experiences demonstrate the potential of local capacities and social abilities in the eradication of this harmful phenomenon. For instance, some communities have utilized innovative educational methods to increase awareness of the consequences of drug consumption and educate younger generations about its dangers (Yar et al., 2022). Additionally, social participation and the mobilization of local cooperation have been other key factors in the success of these efforts. In this regard, the establishment of local councils and support groups, involving community members, women, and youth, has played a significant role in improving conditions. These groups not only identified local needs and challenges but also helped create alternative economic opportunities for farmers and families previously involved in narcotics cultivation (Schwartz et al., 2024). Research indicates that development programs aimed at creating employment and improving livelihoods can serve as effective strategies in combating narcotics. For example, in some regions, sustainable agricultural projects and the production of value-added products have not only reduced the dependency on narcotics cultivation but also strengthened the local economy (Yar & Yasouri, 2024). This paper delves deeper into these successful experiences and identifies the factors contributing to narcotics eradication in local Afghan communities. It also analyzes the challenges and obstacles faced along this path and offers suggestions for improving and expanding these models. The primary goal of this research is to provide both scientific and practical bases for the development of effective policies and programs in the fight against narcotics in Afghanistan. Given the importance of this issue and its profound impact on people's lives, it is hoped that the findings of this research will aid decision-makers, researchers, and social activists in creating a drug-free society and improving the quality of life in Afghanistan.

Research Objective: The primary objective of this research paper is to examine the successful experiences in eradicating narcotics in local Afghan communities and identify the factors contributing to these processes. The research seeks to provide practical and scientific solutions for policymakers, researchers, and social activists to develop effective programs to combat narcotics and improve living conditions in these communities.

Research Questions

1. What successful experiences exist in the eradication of narcotics in local Afghan communities, and what key factors have contributed to these successes?
2. What are the challenges and obstacles in the fight against narcotics in these communities, and how can they be addressed?
3. How can the successful experiences of local communities be used to develop effective national policies?

Research Significance: This research is significant from several perspectives:

Establishing a Scientific Foundation: By examining successful experiences, this paper can serve as a credible scientific resource for researchers and students in social and economic fields, contributing to the development of existing literature in this area.

- Guidance for Policymakers: The results of this study can assist decision-makers and policymakers in designing and implementing effective programs to combat narcotics. By identifying successful methods, this research can help develop sustainable solutions.

- Raising Public Awareness: This paper can contribute to raising public awareness about the consequences of narcotics and the importance of fighting against it, encouraging greater public participation in this process.

- Social and Economic Development: By identifying and promoting successful experiences, this research can contribute to improving the social and economic conditions of local communities, leading to reduced poverty and unemployment.

This research can be seen as a critical step toward creating a drug-free society and improving the quality of life in Afghanistan.

Problem Statement: Afghanistan, as one of the world's largest narcotics producers, continues to face problems such as the instability of anti-narcotics programs, administrative corruption, and financial resource shortages. Despite numerous efforts, these programs often yield unsustainable results due to the lack of strong support structures and limited community participation. This research aims to identify the factors behind successful efforts in certain communities and leverage these experiences to develop national policies (David Jr et al., 2020). While narcotics pose significant challenges to local communities, some have successfully eradicated or significantly reduced this phenomenon through innovative and participatory approaches. These successful experiences demonstrate the local capacities and social potential for creating positive change. However, the question remains: What factors have led to these successes, and how can they serve as models for other regions? (YAR et al., 2024) Moreover, the challenges and obstacles in combating narcotics, including resource shortages, a lack of government support, and cultural and structural barriers, require thorough analysis. Without a deep understanding of these factors, efforts to fight narcotics may face failure. Therefore, the problem statement of this research focuses on identifying successful experiences in narcotics eradication, analyzing key contributing factors, and examining the challenges and obstacles. This study seeks to provide practical and scientific solutions for developing effective policies and programs in the fight against narcotics and improving living conditions in local Afghan communities.

Theoretical Framework

In the fight against narcotics, theories of social change suggest that altering social behaviors requires active community participation and changes in cultural attitudes. According to collective behavior theory, individuals are more inclined to participate when they feel their involvement makes a positive impact. Therefore, in the fight against narcotics, establishing local councils and involving women and youth can lead to sustainable behavioral changes and reduce drug consumption.

1. Sustainable Development Theories: These theories refer to processes that aim to preserve natural resources and improve the quality of life in local communities. In the fight against narcotics, these theories can help identify and promote sustainable agriculture and substitute crops for narcotics. For instance, development programs that train farmers to grow alternative crops can create economic opportunities and improve livelihoods (Agbodjato & Babalola, 2024).
2. Socio-Cultural Theories: These theories examine the impact of culture and society on individual and group behaviors. In the context of narcotics, cultural beliefs, and attitudes play a significant role in both consumption and combating this issue. In some communities, drug consumption is socially accepted. These theories can help analyze cultural challenges in the fight against narcotics and identify effective strategies for changing attitudes (Tirasawasdichai et al., 2022).

3. **Social Participation Theories:** These theories emphasize the importance of cooperation and community participation in development and social change processes. They highlight how active participation of community members in decision-making and programs can foster a sense of responsibility and belonging. In the fight against narcotics, the creation of local councils and support groups can mobilize social efforts and improve the outcomes of anti-narcotics programs (Samsudin et al., 2024).
4. **Economic Theories:** These theories focus on the impact of economic factors on social and individual behaviors. In this context, analyzing the economic drivers of narcotics cultivation and providing alternative economic opportunities can reduce dependence on this phenomenon. Analyzing the impact of unemployment and poverty on the increase in narcotics cultivation and consumption is also crucial in this regard (Ngubane et al., 2023).
5. **Public Health Theories:** These theories focus on the prevention and treatment of health-related issues. In the fight against narcotics, these theories can help develop educational and preventive programs against addiction. Educational programs that provide youth and families with information about the dangers of narcotics can reduce consumption and increase public awareness (Yar & Nasih, 2024). The theoretical framework of this research is based on sustainable development, sociocultural, social participation, and economic, and public health theories. These frameworks aid in analyzing successful experiences in narcotics eradication in local Afghan communities and can help identify effective strategies to combat this issue and improve living conditions in these communities. With a deeper understanding of these theories, researchers and policymakers can propose better solutions to address this crisis.

Literature Review

The literature review for this research examines previous studies on the eradication of narcotics in local communities, particularly in Afghanistan. This review covers various related topics, methods used, and key findings that contribute to a better understanding of the challenges and effective strategies in this area.

1. **Research on the Impact of Narcotics on Local Communities:** Numerous studies have explored the negative effects of narcotics on local communities. For example, many studies have shown that the cultivation and production of narcotics not only lead to a decline in public health but also exacerbate poverty, unemployment, and crime (Nations, 2020). These negative impacts on daily life can result in a cycle of poverty and addiction.
2. **Successful Experiences in Narcotics Eradication:** Some studies have highlighted successful experiences in eradicating narcotics in local communities. For instance, a study conducted by the Afghan Ministry of Counter Narcotics showed that educational and social empowerment programs can help reduce narcotics cultivation (Xinwei, 2019). These programs include training farmers on alternative crops and providing market access for these products.
3. **Role of Social Participation and Civil Society:** Research indicates that social participation and the role of civil society are critical in the fight against narcotics. Studies examining the impact of NGOs and local groups have shown that these organizations can act as a bridge between the government and society, playing a significant role in raising public awareness about the dangers of narcotics (Goodhand, 2008).
4. **Alternative Economic Strategies:** Many studies have explored alternative economic strategies for narcotics cultivation. Specifically, research shows that development

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programs that train farmers to cultivate alternative economic crops can reduce dependence on narcotics cultivation (Esar et al., 2024). These programs include financial assistance, technical advice, and market access for new products.

5. Role of Education and Awareness: Numerous studies emphasize the importance of education and awareness in reducing narcotics consumption. For example, a study on the impact of educational programs in schools found that awareness of the dangers of narcotics can help reduce consumption among adolescents (Alemi et al., 2023). These programs must be designed to address the specific needs of the target community.
6. Challenges and Obstacles in Narcotics Control: The existing literature also highlights the challenges and obstacles in narcotics control. For instance, lack of government support, administrative corruption, and financial resource shortages are among the main barriers to the effective implementation of programs (Nations, 2020). These challenges can reduce the effectiveness of strategies and programs. The literature review demonstrates that narcotics eradication in local communities requires comprehensive and multifaceted approaches. Previous research emphasizes the importance of social participation, alternative economic strategies, and education and awareness. Additionally, identifying existing challenges and obstacles can help in developing effective solutions. Given the successful experiences in other countries and local Afghan communities, it is hoped that this research can contribute to identifying effective models and developing sustainable policies to combat narcotics.

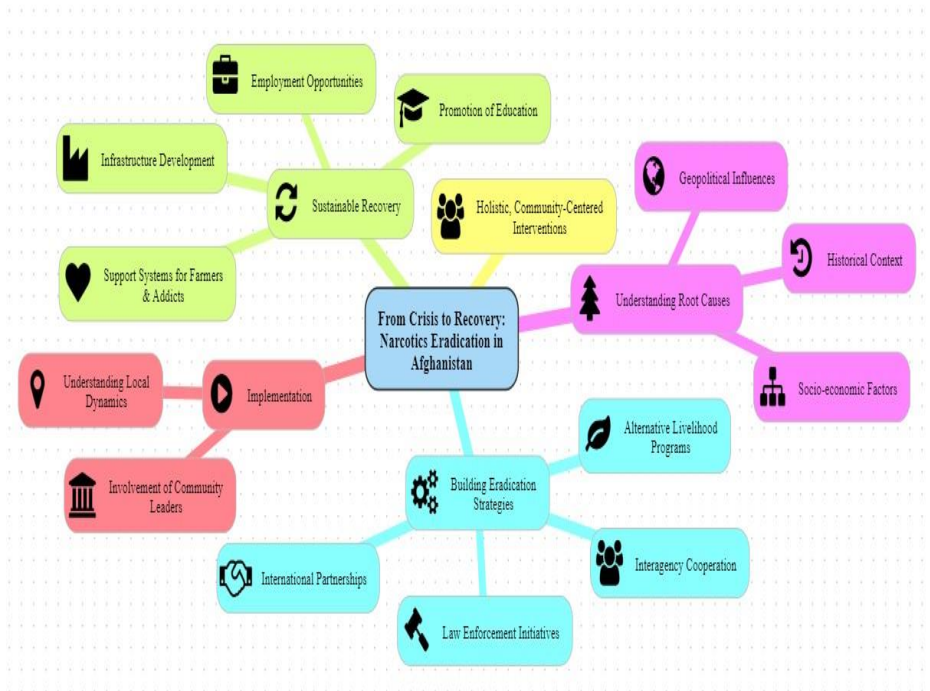


Figure 1: Mind map From Crisis to Recovery: Successful Experiences in the Eradication of Narcotics in Afghanistan Local Communities Source: Author Mind Map

RESEARCH METHOD

This research adopts a qualitative approach, focusing on semi-structured interviews and content analysis. Thirty participants were selected, including local community members, experts, and government officials, all of whom had direct experience with narcotics eradication efforts in Afghanistan. The participants were purposively chosen to

provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and successes in local communities.

The data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, allowing for flexibility in exploring the participants' insights and experiences. Additionally, quantitative data from reports by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Afghan Ministry of Counter Narcotics were incorporated to provide contextual support for the findings. This mixed-method approach ensured that both subjective experiences and objective data were analyzed.

A qualitative content analysis was applied to the interview transcripts to identify recurring themes, patterns, and factors that contributed to successful narcotics eradication. Codes were assigned to significant statements, which were then categorized into broader themes such as community participation, educational initiatives, and economic development programs. The findings were further cross-validated with existing literature and statistical data to ensure reliability and comprehensiveness in understanding the phenomena under investigation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this research are based on data collected from semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and a review of relevant literature on successful experiences in narcotics eradication in local Afghan communities. These findings cover successful experiences, contributing factors, challenges, and suggestions for improving the current situation.

Successful Experiences in Narcotics Eradication

Education and Awareness Programs:

One of the most successful experiences in local communities has been the implementation of educational and awareness programs. Interviewees mentioned that organizing workshops and educational courses for young people and families on the dangers of narcotics, especially in regions where narcotics cultivation is prevalent, had a significant impact on reducing consumption. For example, in some areas, NGOs worked with local communities to hold workshops that explained the consequences of narcotics use and ways to prevent addiction. These programs have been particularly effective in reducing narcotics use among teenagers.

Social Participation:

Social participation and community cooperation in anti-narcotics programs have been other key factors in achieving success. Local groups and NGOs have established local councils and support groups, fostering a sense of social responsibility and belonging among community members. Many interviewees highlighted the positive role of these local groups in identifying individuals at risk and engaging them in the programs. This participation has led to increased public awareness and the creation of a supportive environment for those attempting to overcome addiction.

Alternative Economic Development:

Programs focusing on alternative economic development, particularly in regions where narcotics cultivation is common, have been highly effective. Farmers, after receiving proper training and financial support, have shifted towards cultivating sustainable and high-value crops. For example, in some regions, farmers have begun cultivating saffron, fresh fruits, and vegetables, which not only improved their livelihoods but also reduced dependence on narcotics cultivation. These changes have led to increased family income and improved economic conditions.

Factors Contributing to Program Success

Local Leadership Commitment:

The commitment of local leadership and their support for social and economic initiatives has been a key factor in the success of these programs. Local leaders, by encouraging the community and building trust, played an important role in mobilizing community participation. For example, in some areas, local leaders organized public meetings where they urged community members to engage in anti-narcotics programs, strengthening cooperation and solidarity among community members.

Government and International Support:

Financial and technical support from the government and international organizations has also played a significant role in the success of these programs. Securing funding and technical advice has helped ensure effective program implementation. International organizations such as UNODC and USAID have been instrumental in providing resources and training local experts.

Cultural Change and Social Values:

Cultural shifts and increased public awareness about the dangers of narcotics have been other key factors in the success of these programs. Local communities, by adopting new values and establishing social norms against narcotics use, have contributed to the reduction of narcotics cultivation and consumption. These cultural changes have typically been driven by educational and awareness programs and have gradually become institutionalized within the community.

Challenges and Obstacles

Lack of Financial Resources:

One of the main challenges in implementing these programs has been the lack of financial resources. Many programs have faced serious difficulties due to insufficient funding, which has impacted the quality and scope of their activities. Particularly in remote areas, the lack of financial resources and necessary infrastructure has made it difficult to execute programs effectively.

Administrative Corruption:

Administrative corruption and a lack of transparency in the distribution of resources and aid have been other significant obstacles in the fight against narcotics. This issue has undermined the credibility of programs and reduced public trust in government institutions. Interviewees specifically pointed out negative experiences related to the lack of transparency and financial mismanagement in anti-narcotics projects.

Cultural Resistance:

In some areas, there has been cultural resistance to new changes and programs. Some community members, due to traditional beliefs and outdated attitudes, have been reluctant to cooperate with anti-narcotics initiatives. This resistance is often rooted in insufficient awareness about the dangers of narcotics and their negative impacts on society.

Suggestions for Improvement

Strengthening International Cooperation:

To address the current challenges, strengthening international cooperation and securing further support from international organizations could prove effective. This cooperation could include financial resources, knowledge exchange, and sharing of successful experiences.

Expanding Educational Programs:

Increasing educational and awareness programs at different levels, particularly in schools and educational centers, could help reduce narcotics consumption and cultivation. These programs should be tailored to meet the specific needs of the target communities and be closely aligned with the local language and culture.

Job Creation:

The development of job and economic opportunities for youth and families will help reduce dependence on narcotics cultivation and improve economic conditions. These programs should include vocational and technical training as well as market access for new products.

The findings of this research highlight the importance of successful experiences, key contributing factors, and existing challenges in the fight against narcotics in local Afghan communities. These results can serve as a foundation for developing effective and sustainable strategies in this area and contribute to improving the social and economic conditions of local communities.

Discussion

The discussion section of this research analyzes and interprets the findings, linking them to existing literature. The results obtained from this study reflect successful experiences, contributing factors, and challenges in combating narcotics in local Afghan communities. This section delves into these topics and seeks to provide a deeper analysis of them.

Successful Experiences in Narcotics Eradication

The successful experiences identified in this study demonstrate the importance of a multifaceted approach in this field. Educational and awareness programs, particularly in local communities, have significantly contributed to reducing narcotics consumption and shifting social attitudes. According to the study's findings, these programs have not only helped raise awareness about the dangers of narcotics but have also created a supportive environment for those seeking to overcome addiction. These findings align with previous studies, which indicate that education and awareness-raising are key tools in combating addiction (Alemi et al., 2023).

Role of Social Participation:

Social participation has been a critical factor in the success of these programs. The results show that fostering a sense of belonging and social responsibility in local communities has contributed to greater collaboration in the fight against narcotics. These findings are particularly significant when compared to previous research that emphasizes the importance of social participation. For instance, (Goodhand, 2008) found that active community involvement in decision-making processes can increase the effectiveness of anti-narcotics programs.

Alternative Economic Development:

One of the most important factors identified in this research is alternative economic development programs. These programs provide training to farmers, enabling them to shift from narcotics cultivation to the production of sustainable crops, thus creating new job opportunities. The results of this study indicate that transitioning from narcotics cultivation to sustainable crops has not only improved farmers' livelihoods but also reduced their dependence on narcotics cultivation. These findings are consistent with those of (Esar et al., 2024), which emphasize the importance of alternative economic strategies.

Challenges and Obstacles:

Despite successful experiences, there remain significant challenges and obstacles in the fight against narcotics. Financial resource shortages, administrative corruption, and cultural resistance are among the main issues highlighted by interviewees. The findings show that sufficient financial resources and greater transparency in administrative processes are necessary for effective program implementation. These results align with previous studies that highlight the impact of corruption on social programs (Nations, 2020). Administrative corruption, particularly, has led to the inequitable distribution of resources and aid within communities. Many interviewees pointed to a lack of transparency in financial processes and the distribution of international aid. Additionally, limited government support and a lack of coordination between government agencies and local communities have prevented many programs from achieving their goals.

Suggestions for Improvement:

Given the challenges and obstacles identified, this research provides several suggestions for improving the current situation. Strengthening international cooperation and securing additional support from international organizations can help provide the financial and technical resources needed for these programs. Additionally, expanding educational programs and creating job opportunities for youth can contribute to reducing narcotics consumption and cultivation. These suggestions are particularly important for fostering sustainable change in local communities. The discussion of this research highlights the multifaceted nature of the narcotics issue and the need for comprehensive, coordinated approaches to combat this crisis. Given the successful experiences and the existing challenges, there is hope for developing effective and sustainable solutions. This research, by identifying key contributing factors and offering practical suggestions, can assist policymakers and researchers in improving the current situation and reducing the narcotics crisis in local Afghan communities.

CONCLUSION

This research highlights the potential for local Afghan communities to play a central role in the eradication of narcotics through educational initiatives, community participation, and alternative economic programs. The successful experiences documented in this study demonstrate that with the right support systems and strategies, communities can reduce their dependency on narcotics cultivation and consumption.

The findings suggest that educational and awareness-raising programs, especially when tailored to local cultural contexts, have a significant impact on reducing drug use. Furthermore, involving communities in the design and implementation of anti-narcotics initiatives fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility, enhancing the sustainability of these programs.

While the successes are noteworthy, significant challenges remain, particularly in terms of financial resources, administrative corruption, and cultural resistance. Addressing these challenges requires increased international support, improved transparency in government operations, and continued efforts to shift cultural perceptions regarding narcotics.

The lessons drawn from this research can serve as a foundation for policymakers in Afghanistan and beyond, offering a model for creating comprehensive, community-based programs to combat narcotics. With a coordinated, multi-faceted approach, there is potential to mitigate the narcotics crisis and improve the socio-economic conditions of Afghan communities.

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