



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

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Abstract:

Purpose:

Afghanistan, as one of the world's largest producers of narcotics, faces significant social, economic, and health challenges. 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.

Methodology:

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.

Findings:

The research findings indicate that educational programs, awareness-raising initiatives, the development of alternative economic opportunities, and active community participation have played crucial roles in reducing narcotics cultivation and consumption. Nevertheless, financial constraints, administrative corruption, and cultural resistance remain significant barriers to successfully implementing these programs.

Implication:

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.

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 significantly reduced 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 severe 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 eradicating 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 critical factors in the success of these efforts. Establishing local councils and support groups involving community members, women, and youth has significantly improved conditions. These groups identified local needs and challenges and helped create alternative economic opportunities for farmers and families previously involved in narcotics cultivation (Schwartz et al., 2024). 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 reduced the dependency on narcotics cultivation and 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: This study's results 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 help raise public awareness about the consequences of narcotics and the importance of fighting against them, encouraging greater public participation in this process.
- Social and Economic Development: This research can improve local communities' social and economic conditions, leading to reduced poverty and unemployment, by identifying and promoting successful experiences.

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 solid support structures and limited community participation. This research aims to identify the factors behind successful efforts in specific 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 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 positively impacts them. 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 preventing and treating 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. They can help identify effective strategies to combat this issue and improve living conditions in these communities (Paradila et al., 2022). With a deeper understanding of these theories, researchers and policymakers can propose better solutions to this crisis.

Literature Review. This research's literature review examines previous studies on the eradication of narcotics in local communities, particularly in Afghanistan. It covers various related topics, methods used, and critical 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 adverse 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 eradicating narcotics in local communities. For instance, a study 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 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, significantly 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 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.

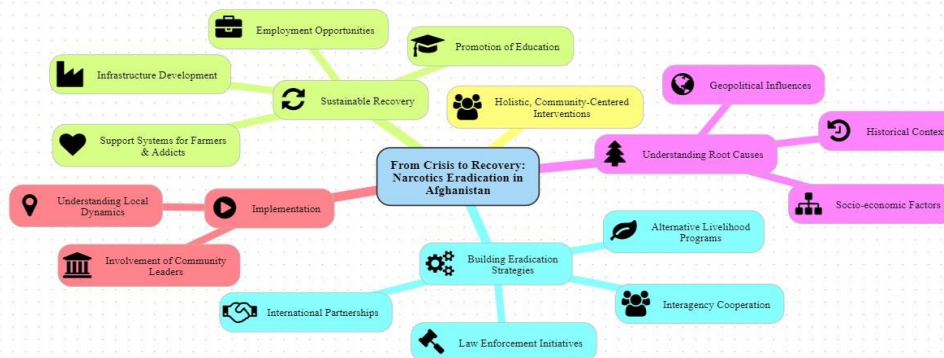


Figure 1. Mind Map From Crisis to Recovery: Successful Experiences in the Eradication of Narcotics in Afghanistan Local Communities Source: Author Mind Map

METHODS

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. They had direct experience with narcotics eradication efforts in Afghanistan and 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 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 (Antari et al., 2023). 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 contributing to successful narcotics eradication. Codes were assigned to significant statements and then categorized into broader themes such as community participation, educational initiatives, and economic development programs. The findings were cross-validated with existing literature and statistical data to ensure reliability and comprehensiveness in understanding the investigated phenomena.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research's findings 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.

1. **Education and Awareness Programs.** One of the most successful experiences in local communities has been implementing 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.
2. **Social Participation.** Social participation and community cooperation in anti-narcotics programs have been critical to 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.
3. **Alternative Economic Development.** Programs focusing on alternative economic development have been highly effective, particularly in regions where narcotics cultivation is expected. After receiving adequate training and financial support, farmers have transitioned to cultivating sustainable, high-value crops. For example, in some regions, farmers have begun cultivating saffron, fresh fruits, and vegetables, improving their livelihoods and reducing dependence on narcotics cultivation. These changes have led to increased family income and improved economic conditions.

Factors Contributing to Program Success.

1. **Local Leadership Commitment:** Local leadership's commitment and support for social and economic initiatives have been critical factors in the success of these programs. Local leaders were essential in mobilizing

community participation by encouraging the community and building trust. For example, in some areas, local leaders organized public meetings that urged community members to engage in anti-narcotics programs, strengthening cooperation and solidarity among community members.

2. 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.
3. Cultural Change and Social Values: Cultural shifts and increased public awareness about the dangers of narcotics have been other critical factors in the success of these programs. Local communities have contributed to the reduction of narcotics cultivation and consumption by adopting new values and establishing social norms against drug use. Educational and awareness programs have typically driven these cultural changes and have gradually become institutionalized within the community.

Challenges and Obstacles.

1. Lack of Financial Resources: One of the main challenges in implementing these programs has been the need for more financial resources. Many programs have faced severe 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.
2. Administrative Corruption: Administrative corruption and a lack of transparency in distributing resources and aid have been significant obstacles in the fight against narcotics. This issue has undermined the credibility of programs and reduced public trust in government institutions. Interviewees pointed out negative experiences related to the lack of transparency and financial mismanagement in anti-narcotics projects.
3. 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.

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Job Creation: Developing 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 and 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 (Jamal, 2023). These results can serve as a foundation for developing effective and sustainable strategies in this area and contribute to improving local communities' social and economic conditions.

Successful Experiences in Narcotics Eradication. The successful experiences identified in this study demonstrate the importance of a multifaceted approach. 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 vital 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 compared to previous research emphasizing 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 this research identifies is alternative economic development programs. These programs train farmers, enabling them to shift from narcotics cultivation to producing 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 has mainly led to the inequitable distribution of resources and aid within communities. Many interviewees pointed to a need for more 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 provide these programs with financial and technical resources. Additionally, expanding educational programs and creating job opportunities for youth can contribute to reducing narcotics consumption and cultivation. These suggestions are essential 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 identifies key factors and offers practical suggestions to help policymakers and researchers improve the current situation, thereby reducing the narcotics crisis in local Afghan communities.

CONCLUSION

This research highlights the potential for local Afghan communities to play a central role in eradicating narcotics through educational initiatives, community participation, and alternative economic programs. The successful experiences documented in this study demonstrate that with suitable 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, significantly impact drug use reduction. 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 regarding 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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