

Global Health Starts with Drug-Free Communities



The most successful approaches in drug use prevention involve the critical role of families, schools, and communities to build on protective factors to ensure safe and healthy childhood and adolescent years and to provide viable and legitimate livelihoods for adults.

Globally every year an estimated 210 million people use illicit drugs, with almost 200,000 of them dying annually. Drug use and drug trafficking are not only a health threat, but also threaten global stability and socio-economic development across the world.

In 2008, when the world community gathered at the end of a 10-year period to fight drugs, Member States were still “gravely concerned about the growing threat posed by the world

drug problem.” They re-committed themselves to “eliminate or significantly reduce” the overall drug supply and demand by 2019.

“The context in which we observe this year’s World Drug Day is an ambitious but visionary challenge the world community committed itself to. It’s clear that we all have the right to live free from drug use,” says Mr. Sven-Olov Carlsson, President of the World Federation Against Drugs.

“Drug addiction is a modern form of slavery that kidnaps the free will of drug users, creates massive social burdens and promotes hostile and dangerous behavior. To eliminate this problem, as the world community has pledged, we need balanced and restrictive policies including pre-

vention, treatment, law enforcement, and research focusing on both demand and supply reduction, says Mr. Sven-Olov Carlsson, President of the World Federation Against Drugs.

Many illicit drug markets have reached global dimensions and require control strategies on a comparable scale. In that context, there is a need to better understand these transnational markets and the manner in which they operate. Non-medical use of prescription drugs is reportedly a growing health problem in a number of developed and developing countries.

Moreover, in recent years, several new synthetic compounds have emerged in established illicit drug markets. Many of these substances are marketed as ‘legal highs’ and substitutes for illicit stimulant drugs such as cocaine or ecstasy¹.

“Drugs are a paramount obstacle for social and democratic development in societies all over the world. Therefore drug prevention is such a crucial approach”, says Ms Kristina Sperkova, Deputy-President of IOGT International.

“Our children deserve that we make all efforts in preventing drug use by comprehensive policies: studies clearly show the gateway effect of the so called legal drugs, like alcohol. Students do not use illicit drugs unless they also use alcohol. Children who smoke are 19 times more likely to use cocaine than non-smokers. Children who use alcohol are 50 times more likely to use cocaine than those who don’t use alcohol. For the sake of global development and poverty elevation we need to get this right, says Ms Kristina Sperkova, Deputy-President of IOGT International.

¹ World Drug Report 2011 <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/WDR-2011.html>

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IOGT International is the largest worldwide community of non-governmental organizations with a mission to independently enlighten people around the world on a lifestyle free of alcohol and other drugs.

The World Federation Against Drugs (WFAD) is a multilateral community of non-governmental organisations and individuals. The members of the WFAD share a common concern that illicit drug use is undercutting traditional values and threatening the existence of stable families, communities, and government institutions throughout the world.