

## Drug abuse rising in campuses and call centres

Drug abuse is rising in campuses and call centres and a strong partnership between public and private sectors is required to check its growing dangers, according to the UN Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

'In the present scenario, where drug abuse is continuing to increase, it has become necessary for all sections of society to come together and prevent this menace,' Ashita Mittal, senior national programme officer with the UNODC, said in an interview on the eve of the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking.

Through the government of India, the UNODC regional office for South Asia is partnering with various voluntary groups, schools, colleges and private companies to spread mass awareness about the dangers of drug abuse.

'We are working closely with the ministry of social justice and empowerment, which has set up over 400 de-addiction centres across the country,' Mittal told IANS.

There are eight regional resources centres and a national centre for drug abuse prevention, with the UNODC playing a supporting role in all of them. The UN body is also helping in the rehabilitation of former drug users after the de-addiction process.

'The UNODC has initiated a project in which we have trained 2,000 people to act as counsellors. Each trained person will educate five others, and the chain will continue.'

Laying stress on the importance of going out and finding the drug users rather than waiting for them to come to de-addictions centres, Mittal said that there should be more community-centric services.

'We have to be friendly to the drug abuser if we want to wean him away from drugs. Support groups should be established for this purpose.'

Mittal expressed concern about the rise in drug abuse at colleges and call centres. 'The problem is serious, but it can be controlled if private organisations take a proactive approach.'

The UNODC has partnered with the management at some call centres to include drug prevention courses in their induction programmes.

'We are conducting lectures and short term sessions in these firms and believe that other organisations will join these initiative soon, for the sake of their own employees,' she said.

The UNODC has also been distributing posters, handouts, pamphlets and study material about the dangers of drug abuse in schools and colleges.

In a project called 'I decide', the UNODC is spreading the message that a person is free to choose how to spend his or her life. The project is being run in schools all over the world.

Mittal said the lessons learnt through this and other projects were being used in schools around India. 'We bring modules of the programme developed globally. We bring in the expertise and the

information. We see what the global standards are and if they can be adopted locally.'

(The UNODC can be contacted at [bidisha.pillai@unodc.org](mailto:bidisha.pillai@unodc.org))

(JUNE 26 IS INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST DRUG ABUSE AND ILLICIT TRAFFICKING)

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