

Thank you very much. Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. I kept on thinking for hours and hours about what I should speak today? Should I speak about drugs and the scenario in my country, what we are doing, the role of Government, or NGOs, etc., etc.? Then I decided to make it simple. I am going to share my personal story with you. I was born in a small town in Pakistan, to a mother who was just 14 years old. When I started going school, my father shifted from the village to Islamabad, the capital city. My father had a strong desire that his girls should get good education so he moved to the city against the norms and pressure of his family. My graduate studies in applied psychology took me to Sunny Trust drug treatment and rehabilitation centre for taking case histories as a part of my course work. This was my first ever interaction with persons having SUDs in 2004. I was astonished to see the young faces, suffering with a disease, shocked to know that a patient suffering from Cannabis Induced Psychosis killed his 21 years old brother by bumping bat into his head, another sold his daughter for less than 10 dollars to buy drugs, etc. It was heartbreaking to see crying and helpless mothers. Side by side I was so much impressed to see the love, care and support given to those desperate souls by Sunny Trust staff. A desire arose within me to be part of this dedicated team, questions started pinching me that why I was here, what should I do and so on so?

Overwhelmed with the feeling of helping humanity, I started volunteering with Sunny Trust alongside my studies and over the years rose to become Head of Psychology Department and Director Rehabilitation Sunny Trust. In the course of 15 years, my profession turned into a passion. It was not an easy journey in my country. I had to face a lot of resistance from family, society and male dominant professional community. I am grateful to God for choosing me to serve in this neglected field and my head Dr. Sunny, sitting here, for his continuous encouragement and support. In our keenness to grow professionally, and learn about evidence based practices, we started looking for participation and contribution in the area of International drug policy.

In year 2012, we heard about WFAD through random Google search. We applied for membership and the same year we participated in the 3rd World Forum against Drugs at Stockholm. We came to know Linda, who was a great support. It was my

first ever international travel, and first ever boarding of an aeroplane. It was opening of a whole new world to me. We interacted with so many like-minded people and shared our experiences across the globe. We realized how similar were our problems and challenges; and the need to work together across borders and cultures to rid the world of the drug menace.

It was an honor to see Prof. Bertha Madras, Dr. Nora Volkov, Prof. DuPont and Kevin for the first time and their powerful impact on drug policies. A beginning of a new journey! In the 4th Forum we not only got an opportunity to participate as speaker, but were also selected as Deputy Board Member for Asia and a Member in the Nomination Committee. From 2014 onward we have assessed a huge number of applications from our region and many organizations became member of WFAD. In the 5th Forum, I travelled all the way from the US, where I was on a yearlong fellowship, to Austria to speak in the Forum.

There is one important thing I would like to highlight. Like many organizations in Pakistan and other parts of world, we were not aware of civil society's contribution in policy process and UN Special Sessions. It was WFAD which recognized our grass root level work experience, not only introduced us to UNGASS but also provided me the opportunity to participate in UNGASS session as a keynote speaker. A great opportunity for my organization and of course unforgettable achievement of my career. We got connected with DPF (Drug Policy Future), a powerful community, who really wanted to make this world a better place to live. Having great leaders like Dag Endal and Esbjorn, we are joined together and fighting selflessly, we have commitment, passion, and strong purpose to achieve this goal. By linking with colleagues, befriending, learning and sharing our experiences, we have taken small practical initiatives back home but with significant impact. I would like to share few.

First there is a paradigm shift. We have moved from confrontational approaches towards motivational approaches to drug treatment and rehabilitation. It's a big change in mindset of our community as addiction was strictly believed to be a criminal act, moral sin or character flaw.

Recovery Club: Drug addiction has increased rapidly in Pakistan from last 2 decades with 6.7 million illicit drug users in 2012. Overall treatment services were found highly deficient, not evidence based, accessed by only 30,000 drug users, and mostly male oriented. Among those treated, relapse rate is very high (almost 98%). Many factors like stigma, lack of psycho-social support, poor life skills and lack of aftercare etc. contribute in that. To address the issue Sunny Trust has created a “Recovery Club” at its premise. The basic purpose is to provide a safe and open space for those who are working on recovery and need psycho-social support to promote recovery. This club provides them a friendly space for recovering addicts to discuss their issues with other persons in recovery and staff members over a cup of tea or coffee. It was started with 2 patients and number of patients has risen to 30 in a year.

Sakoongah: Despite over 1.5 million female drug users in Pakistan, drug abuse is typically considered a male problem. Drug treatment services are highly deficient, and are basically male-oriented. This lack of female-friendly services and women’s reluctance to access drug treatment due to cultural inhibitions and social stigma makes them suffer in silence or be exploited by non-professionals. Sunny Trust is creating a separate, female-friendly drug treatment centre, to provide inpatient and outpatient services to female drug users and serve as a resource and training facility for female drug treatment professionals in Pakistan.

Two other projects in pipeline are Community Coalition and Smart International.

Community Coalition: *We all believed that “It takes a whole village to raise a child”.* During my one year fellow-ship at US, I did internship with CADCA and learnt about very powerful, data-driven, community coalition against drug abuse. CADCA is part of WFAD network. We are working on creating this model in Pakistan and mobilizing communities.

We had a great meeting with Smart International during this Forum. We are looking ways for replicating Smart International at Pakistan.

Look what a great contribution WFAD has made in our country. This is a global NGO platform; it has opened so many doors for us and is creating snowball-like effect. They are contributing in Africa and other parts.

Let me remind this worthy gathering that saving millions of men and women already lost to drugs remains a global obligation. And preventing many more from falling prey to drugs is an even bigger global responsibility. The horrific drug situation confronting the world is a result of collective global failure.

We really need the platforms like this. I know we are less in number, we have meager resources, but our voices are powerful, we are committed to what we believe is right. I heartily appreciate the work we all are doing. We are really lucky that we have the Swedish government, their strong support. I wish we could have the same in other countries too. We are highly grateful and appreciative for the endless support of WFAD.

“It takes someone strong to make someone strong” and we are the strength of each other.

Thank you Per for teaching me “Don’t be afraid to be ambitious about your goals”.

Thank you Linda for letting me believe that you believe in me.

Thank you Kevin for teaching me “Tenacity”, Perseverance, never give up.

Thank you Sunny Trust for giving me the opportunity 15 years ago, so I am on this floor today.

In the last, but not least. Thank you WFAD for giving me so many good friends like Erik, Sue, Monica and the list is very long.

For us WFAD is Hope; Helping other people Excel.

Thank you.