

# Media Update

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## UNDP

### NEWS RELEASE

## Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, U.S. Embassy and UNDP hold groundbreaking ceremony for Agriculture Training Centers in Merged Areas

**Islamabad, 20 January 2022** — Planning and Development (P&D) Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the U.S. Embassy's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) held a groundbreaking ceremony for Agriculture Training Centers (ATCs) in the Merged Areas, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

With the support of the U.S. government, these four training centers will be constructed in Bajaur, Khyber, Mohmand, and TorGhar districts. Currently, there is a tendency in these districts to cultivate poppy, a crop that causes detrimental socio-economic impact and is illicitly traded, especially in the tribal areas adjoining Afghanistan.

The training centers will provide training on cultivation of alternative crops which will open new avenues of income generation leading to elimination of poppy related businesses and other drug-related crimes in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The training centers will promote agriculture cultivation by developing farmers' skills and creating relationships between farms and enterprises. Agricultural information on timely land preparation, planting, weeding, irrigation, harvesting, storage, and marketing have always been central concerns to the farmers. The use of these training centers, especially through modern technologies, can improve the way farmers in these areas receive, exchange, and harness information.

At the groundbreaking ceremony, the Director General Sustainable Development Unit (SDU) Mr. Sohail Khan thanked UNDP and INL for their continued support and extended full support of the P&D during the construction. "These districts are a top priority of the Government of Khyber

*Pakhtunkhwa, and we appreciate INL and UNDP's support. This initiative will lead to economic and social development of these district and will help in the curtailment of poppy and trade of other heinous drugs," he said.*

INL Director, Mr. Mark Tervakoski said that the project will play a key role in disseminating agricultural knowledge and technologies and increase economic opportunities for people in KP. He stated *"These centers will increase the farmers sources of income and expand employment opportunities, especially for women. Once these training centers are constructed, the KP government can train hundreds of farmers annually on high-value, licit crop production practices for years to come."*

UNDP Resident Representative Mr. Knut Ostby mentioned that these centers with their modern agriculture technology trainings will strengthen the skills of farmers and give them access to information in technology that will open new avenues for them. *"This project will play a key role in disseminating knowledge, technologies and agricultural information as well as linking farmers with other stakeholders in the economy. The training centers will play a crucial role in transforming transitional subsistence farming to modern commercial and agriculture farming to promote household food security, improve incomes, and reduce poverty," he said. He further added that the construction of these training centers will serve as a reference point and example for other districts as well.*

This intervention will take place under the UNDP Amn-o-Insaf Programme, that supports both supply and demand sides of the rule of law by strengthening justice institutions and citizen rights, and by deepening the ongoing efforts to secure peace and stability.

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