

# Media Update

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## UNDP

PRESS RELEASE

### Four Agriculture Training Centers Established in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including Merged Districts

**Islamabad, September 7, 2023** — The Directorate of Agriculture Extension of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the U.S. Embassy Office of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Pakistan inaugurated four Agriculture Training Centers (ATCs) established in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including the merged districts. The objective of establishing these centers is to enhance the capacity of farmers in the merged districts to promote the cultivation of alternative crops and eradicate illicit crops and other drug-related crimes.

With funding from the U.S. Embassy Office of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, the ATCs were established by the UNDP Pakistan Rule of Law Programme in partnership with the Sustainable Development Unit of the Planning and Development Department (P&DD), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in the districts of Bajaur, Khyber, Mohmand, and Torghar. These centers will facilitate the training of the local farmers on the cultivation of alternative crops in the merged districts, where the cultivation of poppy predominates. Alternatively, crop cultivation will create opportunities for income diversification, gradually diminishing the prevalence of any illicit activities associated with narcotics in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The training at ATCs will include skill-building sessions on timely land preparation, planting, weeding, irrigation, harvesting, storage, and marketing. These training centers, especially through modern technologies, can improve how farmers in these areas receive, exchange, and utilize information. The farmers will also be connected with enterprises for long-term income and job opportunities.

Ms Lori Antolinez, Director, U.S. Embassy Office of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, Mr Muhammad Jawed Marwat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Secretary of Agriculture Department, and Dr Samuel Rizk, UNDP Resident Representative joined the event to celebrate the successful completion of the \$975K project.

In his address, Mr Muhammad Javed Marwat, Secretary Agriculture Department, extended his gratitude to UNDP Pakistan and the U.S. Embassy Office of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement for their unwavering support. He asserted, “We are committed to curbing poppy cultivation and the trade of illicit substances to drive economic and social growth in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, especially the merged districts.”

Under the U.S.-Pakistan Green Alliance framework, the U.S. is committed to supporting Pakistan as it strengthens climate resilience, pursues energy transformation, and fosters inclusive economic growth. At the event, the U.S. Embassy Office of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Director, Ms Lori Antolinez said, “Through these training centers, these farmers and their families can take pride in developing new skills, producing lucrative crops, and, even more importantly, building a more secure and prosperous Pakistan. ”

UNDP Pakistan Resident Representative, Dr. Samuel Rizk highlighted the U.S. Embassy Office of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement’s pivotal role in developing sustainable alternate livelihood solutions in the merged areas, “We appreciate the U.S. Embassy Office of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement’s collaboration and funding to build the first-ever Agriculture Training Centers in the merged districts. These centers will promote the cultivation of alternative crops as a sustainable source of income generation for many individuals and communities. Over time, these centers will not only reduce drug-related crime but will also improve the quality of life of those living in the merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, paving the way for inclusive, dignified, and sustainable development.”

**The UNDP Rule of Law Programme is implementing a range of interventions to enhance security and justice sector governance in Pakistan.**

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