

## **Webinar On ‘Factors Driving Drug Abuse In Northeast India’ Organised By the School Of Social Sciences.**

An exclusive webinar session on the topic “Factors Driving Drug Abuse in Northeast India” was organized by the school of social sciences, The Assam Kaziranga University on 17 August, 2021. The aim of the webinar was to raise awareness on the rising issue of drug abuse in Northeast India. The key speaker of the webinar was Mr. Amrit Kumar Baishya who is the founder and counselor of Shristi Wellness Home, a recovery home which deals with addiction of any form such as alcohol, substance and drug abuse.

Mr. Amrit Kumar in his insightful speech addressed the social stigma and misconceptions surrounding drug addictions of which he was a victim himself. Drug abuse is not just a bad habit, an abnormal madness or a curse to the family, but drug abuse is a disease and it can happen to anyone irrespective of age, gender, caste, community or social standards. He continued by emphasizing the importance of knowing the causes/factors leading to Drug Abuse in the NorthEast Region in order to tackle it which has now become a social epidemic and completely taken over the North East region. The major factors responsible for this social problems are -

- Geographical position: Illicit drug trade along the North East region bordering the infamous Golden Triangle.
- Curiosity: The early use starts with this intensity of exploring the unknown and gradually dependency arises.
- Anxiety: Personal issues, family issues and conflicts related to relationships often cause anxieties among the teenagers in what is called Teenage Crisis. The inability to handle this crisis is an underlying factor for early drug abuse.
- Machoism: Teens with a history of parental abuse and childhood humiliation are likely to adopt Drug Abuse to cover up the lapses of character.
- Fashion and Icons: North East being the fashion hub of India, teenagers in the area are often influenced with the western culture and music. Teens often encounter drugs in such platforms or adopt a similar lifestyle of their icons. E.g., Wiz Khalifa, Curt Cobain, etc.
- Peer pressure: The pressure of Drug use coming from our friend circle is one of the major factors leading to drug abuse. In hostels, in mess, in a PG, irrespective of gender, we have seen this problem when a teenager got introduced to vulnerable chemicals by one of his closest friends.

The key takeaway points from the webinar are that addiction is a disease which affects us both mentally and physically. When we are addicted to drugs, we don’t usually have control over our cravings. Among young people between the ages of 17-21, it has now become a fashion to take drugs without knowing its side effects. Most often, people start taking drugs due to peer pressure and curiosity and at the end, it becomes a chronic illness, with no repairable damage sometimes. So, it is of utmost importance to tackle

the issue of drug abuse, and support and encourage people with addictions to reach out to mental health professionals.

The students of Medical and Psychiatric Social Work, MSW 4<sup>th</sup> Sem, School of Social Sciences, played the leading role in organising this webinar under the guidance of Ms. Rini Gogoi, Assistant Professor, the Assam Kaziranga University. It was attended by around 75 participants.