

Extent of Heroin Use in Kenya

Kirwa Lelei^{*}, John Muteti¹, Victor Okioma¹ and Adrian Njega¹

¹National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA), Kenya

*Corresponding Author:

Kirwa Lelei,

Directorate of Research and Policy Development,

National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA),

Kenya

Submitted: 11th May 2021

Published: 30th June 2021

Introduction

Drug use around the world has been on the rise, in terms of both overall numbers and the proportion of the world's population that uses drugs. In 2009, the estimated 210 million users represented 4.8 per cent of global population aged 15-64, compared with the estimated 269 million users in 2018, or 5.3 per cent of the population (UNODC, 2020). In Kenya, seizure and prevalence data shows that heroin is second most widely used narcotic drug after cannabis. Implementation of interventions on supply and demand reduction targeting heroin users has focused primarily on the traditionally known hotspots of Coast and Nairobi regions. However, given the dynamic nature of heroin trafficking, the problem of heroin use may be entrenched in other non-traditional counties. Towards understanding the landscape of heroin use in the country, NACADA conducted an assessment to establish whether there were any new emerging counties with the problem of heroin use. Suspected samples were collected in the 8 regions of Kenya stratified across 18 purposively sampled counties. They were submitted to the Government Chemist for analysis and identification.

Findings

Laboratory results confirmed that 25 samples were heroin. Emerging evidence also shows that the abuse of heroin has penetrated to other non-traditional counties like Nakuru, Uasin Gishu, Kisumu, Isiolo and Kiambu (Table 1). The findings therefore confirm that there is need to target programs on heroin to other counties in order to curb this emerging challenge much earlier. Further interventions on demand and supply reduction addressing abuse of heroin needs to be implemented in these new upcoming markets.

Table 1: Laboratory analysis report for heroin samples

No.	Sample no.	Confirmed drug	Sampled County
1.	F/MISC/642/19	Heroin	Nairobi
2.	F/MISC/648/19	Heroin	Nairobi
3.	F/MISC/725/19	Heroin	Nairobi
4.	F/MISC/736/19	Heroin	Nairobi
5.	F/MISC/746/19	Heroin	Nairobi
6.	F/MISC/748/19	Heroin	Nairobi
7.	F/MISC/761/19	Heroin	Nairobi
8.	F/MISC/762/19	Heroin	Nairobi
9.	F/MISC/690/19	Heroin	Kilifi
10.	F/MISC/704/19	Heroin	Kilifi
11.	F/MISC/708/19	Heroin	Kilifi
12.	F/MISC/712/19	Heroin	Kilifi
13.	F/MISC/713/19	Heroin	Kilifi
14.	F/MISC/683/19	Heroin	Mombasa
15.	F/MISC/684/19	Heroin	Mombasa
16.	F/MISC/685/19	Heroin	Mombasa
17.	F/MISC/724/19	Heroin	Mombasa
18.	F/MISC/693/19	Heroin	Kwale
19.	F/MISC/695/19	Heroin	Kwale
20.	F/MISC/696/19	Heroin	Kwale
21.	F/MISC/791/19	Heroin	Kisumu
22.	F/MISC/830/19	Heroin	Nakuru
23.	F/MISC/733/19	Heroin	Kiambu
24.	F/MISC/668/19	Heroin	Isiolo
25.	F/MISC/806/19	Heroin	Eldoret

Recommendation

The study established a growing market for heroin in the country beyond the traditionally known hotspots of Mombasa and Nairobi. There was confirmation of heroin abuse in Uasin Gishu, Kisumu, Nakuru, Kiambu and Isiolo counties. Therefore, there was need for enforcement agencies to adopt new narcotic drug control approaches to respond to these emerging challenges including continuous monitoring of new upcoming markets for heroin.