

# Is there a big rise in the availability of drugs these days?

**Q** Dear Counsellor, is there a big rise in the availability of drugs these days? Twenty years ago, when I took a relative to rehab, 90% of the patients there were alcoholics. Lately, most patients are drug addicts, and they are taking all kinds of stuff like pharmaceutical drugs (such as Tramadol or Pethidine), cocaine, heroin. Marijuana smoking is now just as common as tobacco smoking. A friend of mine abroad told me that he is having a similar experience.

Mosha, Namugongo

**A** Dear Mosha, It is true that there is a high rise in drug

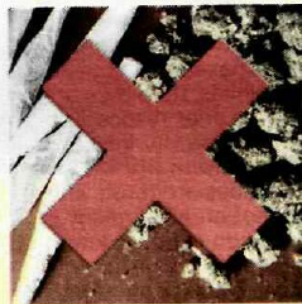
abuse not only in Uganda, but also all over the world. According to the World Drug Report 2018, there is an opioid crisis, prescription drug abuse has expanded; cocaine and opium have hit record highs.

The report observed that the non-medical use

of prescription drugs is becoming a major threat to public health and law enforcement worldwide, with opioids causing the most harm and accounting for 76% of deaths.

It pointed out that Fentanyl and its analogues are a big problem in North

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America, while stuff like Tramadol (a drug that treats to severe pain) has become a big problem in parts of Africa and Asia. Drugs such as fentanyl and tramadol are important for medical use, but drug traffickers manufacture them illicitly and sell them causing a spike in addictions.

According to the World Drug Report 2018, the global seizure of pharmaceutical opioids in 2016 was 87 tonnes, which was roughly the same as the quantities of heroin which were seized that year. Seizures of pharmaceutical opioids – mainly tramadol in West and Central Africa, and North Africa accounted for 87% of the global total in 2016. Interestingly, countries in Asia, which had previously accounted for more than half of global seizures, reported just 7% of the global total in 2016.

The report revealed that global cocaine manufacture in 2016 reached the highest level ever reported, with an estimated 1,410 tonnes

being produced. Most of the world's cocaine comes from Colombia while the Report also showed that Africa and Asia are emerging as cocaine trafficking and consumption hubs.

"The findings of this year's World Drug Report show that drug markets are expanding, with cocaine and opium production hitting absolute record highs, presenting multiple challenges on multiple fronts," said United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime executive director Yury Fedotov.

The report revealed that the global number of cannabis users increased by roughly 16% in the decade to 2016.