Is there a rise in availability of abusable drugs these days?

BREAK FREE with OSCAR BAMUHIGIRE

Q Dear Counsellor, is there a big rise in the availability of abusable drugs these days? How bad is it? Twenty years ago, when I took a relative to rehab, 90% of the patients there were alcoholics. But these days, most of the 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 America, while stuff like Tramadol (a drug that treats 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 in illegal markets 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 further 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 report further observed that from 2016-2017, global opium production shot up by 65% to 10,500 tonnes, the highest estimate recorded by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), since it started monitoring global opium production at t start of the twenty-fir century. As a result of marked increase in op poppy cultivation and gradually improving y in Afghanistan, opium production there last reached 9,000 tonnes

"The findings of this year's *World Drug Rep* show that drug marke expanding, with cocai and opium production hitting absolute recor highs, presenting mult challenges on multiple fronts," UNODC execu director Yury Fedotov

The report revealed cannabis was the mos widely consumed drug in 2016, with 192 millio people using it at leas once during the previo year.

It also stated that th global number of cann users continues to rise appears to have increa by roughly 16% in the decade to 2016.