



UNITED NATIONS  
Office on Drugs and Crime



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**LEN members in your country:**

*This project RAF/B66/F66/H66—Local Expert Networks for Demand Reduction Programme in Africa is supported by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, thanks to the kind contributions of Italy and Sweden.*

**LOCAL EXPERT NETWORKS IN AFRICA:**

*we can make a difference*

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**LOCAL EXPERT NETWORKS  
FOR DRUG DEMAND  
REDUCTION IN AFRICA**



**Local Expert Networks**

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The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is identifying, training and cooperating with African experts to develop a stronger local counterpart base for drug control and to increase the participation, knowledge and ownership by African stakeholders in UNODC's new drug demand reduction programme for Africa.

Local Expert Networks (LENs) bring together pools of experts with solid credentials and proven track records in drug demand reduction. Members of the networks are independent experts drawn from government institutions, NGOs, universities, hospitals and research institutions who donate their time on a voluntary basis. They bring varied backgrounds and expertise in the fields of:

- Drug abuse treatment and rehabilitation;
- Drug abuse prevention;
- Integrated drug abuse/HIV/AIDS prevention.

**LENs in Africa** LENs are part of UNODC's efforts. They currently exist in East Africa and are expanding into West and North Africa. Once established, LENs will link local experts with the international demand reduction community and facilitate the exchange of information and best practices.

### LENeast

*The Eastern African Region is the pilot site for the first Local Expert Network (LENeast), which was launched in 2001. LENEast's priorities and main thematic areas are "Peer-to-Peer Youth Preventive Education" and "Treatment and Rehabilitation". LENEast is fully operational and has received training in "Advocacy and work with media" and "Project Cycle Management". The network is collaborating with UNODC in various activities, including the management and delivery of demand reduction projects in the region, the organization of specific events/initiatives and the identification of good practices for the two main thematic areas. LENEast also cooperates with the epidemiological expert networks set up by UNODC's Global Assessment Programme to reinforce data gathering and analysis with operational action.*

## LENs Focus on Demand Reduction

### Advisory

- Provide UNODC with advice, local knowledge and expertise to design, implement and monitor drug demand reduction activities in Africa;
- Promote the adoption of innovative and effective approaches in drug demand reduction in their respective countries/regions.

### Sharing and dissemination of information

- Exchange best practices and lessons learned from the day-to-day working experience;
- Maintain a constant flow of information among African experts and exchange data and information available on drug demand reduction;
- Identify suitable venues for disseminating the experience of the network and advocate for the adoption of new and up-to-date approaches on drug demand reduction.

## DRUG ABUSE IN AFRICA

An estimated 32 million Africans abuse drugs. Although cannabis remains the most widely abused drug, consumption of heroin, cocaine and amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) in certain pockets of the African population have emerged at levels close to global figures. These rapidly changing drug abuse patterns in Africa require close monitoring.

The link between drug abuse and HIV/AIDS in Africa must also be investigated and documented. It is clear, however, that the increase in the intravenous injection of drugs in North Africa and in many urban and tourist areas of sub-Saharan Africa has the potential to aggravate the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the continent and hinder the renewed development process in several countries.

### AFRICANS ESTIMATED TO ABUSE ILLICIT DRUGS → 32 million

- Abusers of cannabis → 27 million
- Abusers of heroin, opiates, cocaine, psychotropic substances → 5 million

### ESTIMATED ANNUAL DRUG ABUSE PREVALENCE RATES

	Africa	Global
Cannabis	5.8%	3.4%
ATS	0.5%	0.6%
Cocaine	0.3%	0.3%
Heroin	0.12%	0.22%

### NEW DRUG ABUSE PATTERNS

- More female abusers
- Younger initiation age
- Drug abuse by combatants and street children
- IDU higher in North Africa and increasing in pockets of sub-Saharan Africa (capitals, tourist regions)

UNODC is responding to this rapidly changing drug abuse scenario with activities and programmes designed to improve Africa's drug control situation and to build on the Africa Union Drug Control Action Plan 2002-2006, including:

- Political mobilization, through increased visibility and advocacy
- Stronger participation of local African experts/partners in UNODC programme planning, design and delivery
- Networking and exchange of information among African experts involved in the different fields of drug control
- More research and studies on new drug abuse patterns and increasing synergies between drug abuse and HIV/AIDS