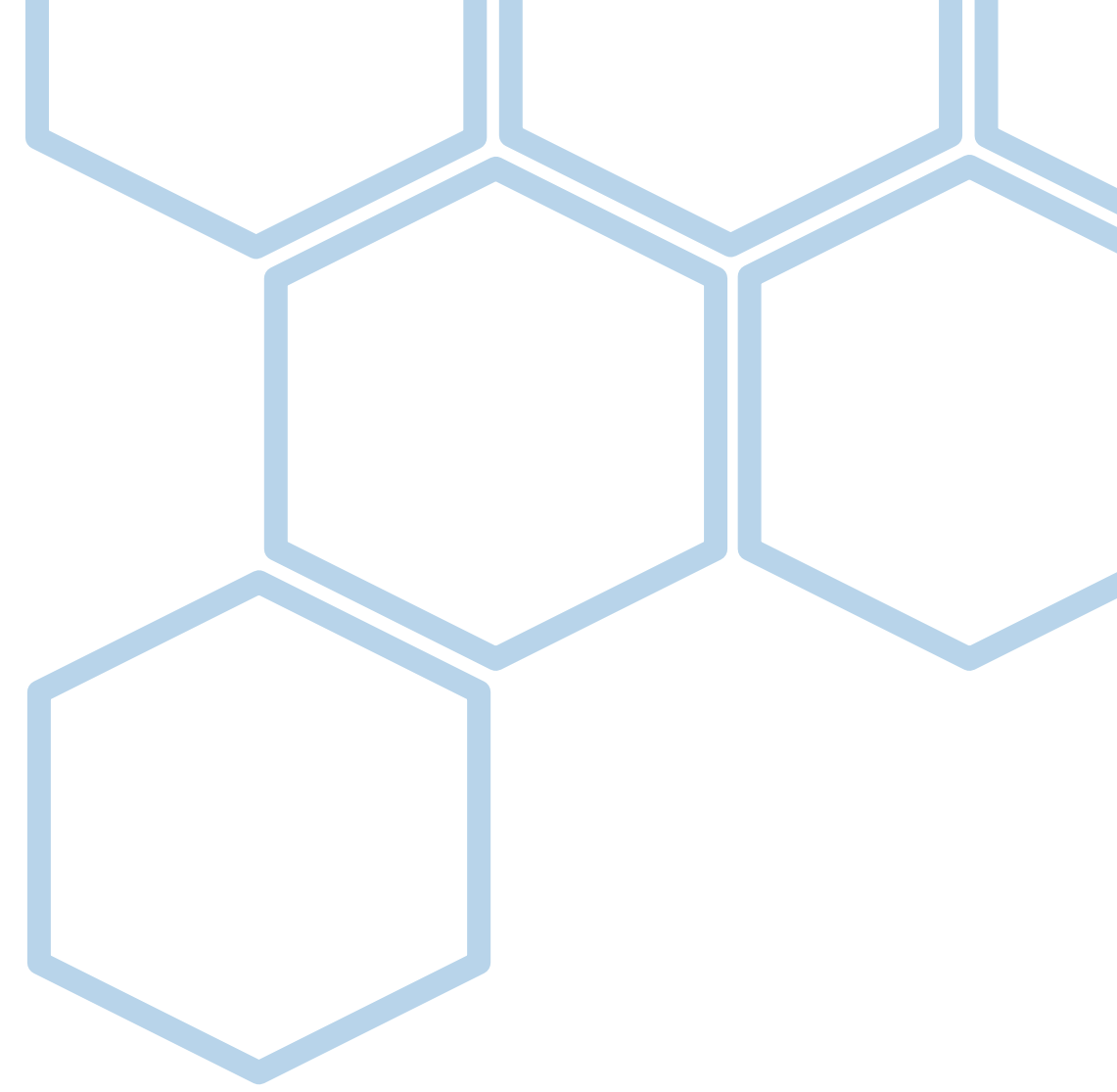


Persisting Issues: Ongoing Substance Use Challenges Affecting Youth in Africa

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Key challenges, barriers, and lessons from prevention and response efforts



Youth Substance Use Challenge

- Substance use among young people remains a major public health and social concern across Africa.
- Changing social, economic, and environmental pressures influence patterns of use.
- Effective responses require prevention, treatment, community support, and policy action.



Substance Use Trends Among Youth

- Increasing exposure to alcohol, cannabis, marijuana, inhalants, tobacco, and other substances.
- Mental health issues, urbanization, unemployment, peer influence, contribute to vulnerability.
- **New** and **emerging substances** create additional monitoring challenges in Africa

Risk for Continued Substance Use

- Economic hardship and limited opportunities for young people.
- Peer pressure and normalization of substance use in some communities.
- Family challenges and weakened social support systems.
- Drug dealers innovate new marketing techniques everyday.

Persistent Barriers to Prevention and Treatment Services

- Limited availability of youth-friendly prevention and treatment programs.
- Shortages of trained professionals and specialized services.
- Insufficient funding and uneven access between urban and rural areas.
- Weak integration of substance use services into broader health systems.



Stigma and Discrimination

- SUDs are often viewed as moral failures rather than health conditions.
- Fear of judgment prevents many young people especially female from seeking help.
- Discrimination can isolate affected individuals and delay recovery.
- Reducing stigma is essential for early support and treatment.

Limited Awareness and Access to Evidence-Based Interventions

- Many communities have limited knowledge of proven prevention approaches. Most are doing what just to respond to KPI's of donors
- Evidence-based counseling, rehabilitation, and harm reduction services remain inaccessible to many.
- Programs need to be culturally appropriate and adapted to local realities.

Lessons Learned from Prevention Efforts

- Community involvement improves trust and program effectiveness.
- Early prevention in schools and youth settings can reduce risk.
- Youth participation strengthens relevance and sustainability.
- Collaboration between health, education, and social sectors is critical

Priority Actions

- Expand accessible, affordable, and youth-centered services.
- Strengthen prevention education and public awareness.
- Train healthcare and community workers.
- Promote supportive environments free from stigma.
- Promote establishment of child based intervention to save the young generation of tomorrow. Eg. Child centers, child curriculums.

Conclusion

- Youth substance use challenges in Africa require long-term, coordinated and innovative responses.
- Prevention, treatment access, and social support must work together.
- Investing in young people strengthens healthier communities and future development.

