

ROLE OF DSD IN FIGHTING SUBSTANCE ABUSE, SPECIFICALLY ALCOHOL

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- To present on the role of the Department of Social Development in fighting substance abuse, specifically alcohol



- Introduction
- Legislative Framework
- Alcohol Abuse in South Africa
- Interventions by DSD
- Gaps and Recommendations to prevent FASD
- Conclusion

- South Africa, like other countries, is adversely affected by drug use and substance use disorders.
- Harmful substance use threatens the democratic order, national safety and security, social cohesion and communities.
- Substance use disorders (SUDs) have placed a health and socio-economic burden on South African society that the country cannot afford.
- Their influence reaches across social, racial, cultural, language, religious and gender barriers and affects everyone, whether directly or indirectly.

- Research has highlighted the link between SUDs and premature death; dysfunctional families; risky sexual behaviour; infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, hepatitis and HIV/AIDS; cancers and Foetal alcohol syndrome; crime (particularly crimes of violence, gender-based violence (GBV), crimes associated with the supply of or trafficking in substances); absenteeism and school failure; and loss of productivity, unemployment and other economic effects.
- It is devastating that alcohol and drugs have become so easily accessible in the country. This may be attributed to, among other things, the marketing and advertising of alcohol; our porous borders; and the emergence of new psychoactive substances that are not under international control as well as designer drugs that are easily affordable.

The Prevention of and Treatment for Substance Abuse Act, 2008 (Act No. 70 of 2008)

The Act provides for:

- a comprehensive national response for the combating of substance abuse;
- mechanisms aimed at demand and harm reduction in relation to substance abuse through prevention, early intervention, treatment and re-integration programmes;
- the registration and establishment of treatment centres and halfway houses;
- the committal of persons to treatment centres for their treatment, rehabilitation and skills development in such treatment centres; and
- the establishment of the Central Drug Authority

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National Drug Master Plan

- The NDMP is the SA's blue print to provide strategic direction to the country's efforts to deal with the use and abuse of substances.
- It stipulates the role each stakeholder play in fighting the scourge of substance abuse, and the focus is on three pillars of intervention:
 - ✓ **The demand reduction pillar** is aimed at preventing the onset of harmful substance use as well as eliminating or reducing the effect of conditions conducive to the use of dependence-forming substances.
 - ✓ **The supply reduction pillar** is aimed at reducing the supply of both legal and illegal drugs. This pillar is the responsibility of law enforcement.
 - ✓ **The harm reduction pillar** includes treatment for SUDs and related activities aimed at reducing harm caused by the use and abuse of substances in communities.

- Alcohol is the most widely used psychoactive substance in South Africa and is a severe public health and social crisis in the country
- South Africa ranks among the highest countries in the world in binge drinking, and tend to do so at excessively high volumes
- Alcohol plays a role in roughly half of all non-natural deaths in the country and is linked to a lot of social ills (GBV, Crime, Violence and premature deaths)
- According to 2017 UNODC Report, people living in rural areas in South Africa, particularly those with a lower socio-economic status, account for a higher prevalence of heavy episodic drinking.
- Alcohol is widely used among young people

- About 12% of South African youth start drinking alcohol before the age of 13, as alcohol use is normalized in communities, tied to socializing, peer pressure and entertainment.(2022 Enyobeni Tragedy)
- Poverty, high level unemployment and easy access to liquor outlets in low-income areas drive adolescents to use alcohol as coping mechanism for stress.
- Binge drinking increases the risk of traffic accidents, violent injuries, poor mental health and physical dependency.
- Alcohol misuse is strongly linked to unprotected sex, multiple partners and a higher vulnerability to sexually transmitted infections including HIV.

- Additionally, drinking can impair how a person performs as a parent as well as how he or she contributes to the functioning of the household.
- Children can suffer from FASDs when mothers drink during pregnancy.
- After birth, prenatal drinking can lead to child abuse and numerous impacts on the child's social, psychological and economic environment.
- The impact of drinking on family life can include mental health problems for other family members such as anxiety, fear and depression

To fight the scourge of substance abuse in South Africa, DSD's interventions are implemented at four levels; namely:

- Prevention
- Early Intervention
- Treatment
- Reintegration and aftercare services

1) CAMPAIGNS:

▪ **Commemoration of the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking**

South Africa annually commemorates the day on the 26th of June to raise awareness to individuals, families and communities about the harmful effect of substance abuse.

▪ **Education and awareness at institutions of higher learning**

The aim of this campaign is to create a substance abuse free environment to empower students to aspire a healthy and substance free lifestyle. The ASSIST tool is conducted to assess the risk levels in terms of the use, abuse and misuse of substances at institutions of higher learning.

▪ **Festive season campaign**

This campaign serves to remind communities about the dangers of alcohol and substance abuse during festive season because many lives are lost in road accidents caused by drinking and driving. Conducted through Community Dialogues, Blitz, at Shopping Malls, Train stations, Beaches etc. Also put the emphasis on the dangers associated with “Pens Down Parties”

▪ International Overdose Day Campaign (IOD)

Overdose Day is conducted annually during August month in partnership with relevant stakeholders. The purpose of the campaign is to raise awareness around the silent killer that overdose and the stigma that surrounds overdose fatalities. South Africa encourages the message that overdose death is preventable.

▪ Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Campaign (FASD)

The campaign is implemented from September month, raising awareness in all provinces about the dangers of drinking alcohol while pregnant. It is conducted in health facilities during ante-natal visitation, targeting pregnant women, women of child-bearing age, and community members.





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2) PROGRAMMES

▪ Universal Prevention Curriculum

South Africa collaborated with Drug Advisory Programme (DAP) in Colombia on the implementation of UPC. This is a curriculum that stresses that prevention is science and should be informed by research and practice. It also emphasize that prevention strategies should be evidence based.

▪ Ke Moja Drug Awareness Programme

The programme aims to raise awareness on the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol targeting children, youth, parents and older persons. It is comprising of 4 Modules namely; Ke Moja Kids, Peer Educators, Holiday Programme and Parents and Caregivers

▪ Siyalulama Outreach programme

The Department targets hot spot areas to conduct this programme. The purpose of this programme is to take services to people who are affected by the Substance Use Disorders and other social ills who cannot take initiative in reaching out for such services. The Department collaborates with other stakeholders to conduct this programme.

- Screening for risky substance use is critical in determining the nature of substance use by individuals.
- Screening tools such as AUDIT and ASSIST are mainly used during this level.
- AUDIT is a 10-item screening tool developed to identify individuals whose alcohol consumption has become hazardous or harmful to their health.
- ASSIST identifies substance use and related problems in primary and general medical care settings. It was developed as a component of the screening process to be used with a brief intervention.
- The above supports the notion that the provision of early intervention services should facilitate early identification of substance use and reduce or eliminate risky use of substances prior to the onset of addiction.

- Treatment services by the Department are rendered in the following treatment settings:
 - **Inpatient:** a residential treatment service provided at a treatment centre;
 - **Outpatient:** a non-residential service provided by a treatment centre or halfway house to persons who abuse substances and to persons affected by substances abuse and which is managed for the purposes of providing a holistic treatment service;
 - **Community Based:** services provided to persons who abuse or are dependent on substances and to persons affected by substance abuse while remaining within their families and communities;
 - **Halfway houses:** a public or private halfway house that has been established or registered to provide a sober living environment for service users who have completed a formal treatment programme.

- There are currently 13 rehabilitation centres that are run by the State in all 9 provinces and 1 public halfway house and more than 300 registered treatment centers.

Programmes available:

- Universal Treatment Curriculum (UTC) to empower treatment professionals with skills and knowledge to deal with SUDs
- Women's Intervention for Substance Exposure(WISE) to address the unique treatment needs of women with SUDs.
- CHILD Curriculum provides treatment providers with tools to identify, assess and treat children with substance use disorders (SUDs)

- For effective treatment to be achieved, reintegration services should form part of service users' individualized treatment plans.
- Reintegration services should address issues that may have contributed to service users' SUD and should also mitigate structural and environmental factors that might negatively impact recovery.
- Reintegration services involving more than one service provider, e.g. for education or training of vocational skills, should be coordinated by a case manager to ensure proper management of service users' recovery process.
- This service is critical for all service users who undergo treatment, as it is intended to strengthen their capacity for recovery and thus prevent relapse.
- Support groups should be established to provide support to service users who have completed treatment programmes in order for them to maintain sobriety.

- Substance Abuse Helpline: 0800 12 13 14
- SMS line: 32312

They are operational 24 hours



- The prevalence of FASD in South Africa remains a public health concern. Therefore, it is pertinent for the South African government to respond to this epidemic in a more coordinated and comprehensive manner by designing a specific policy and targeted interventions aimed at preventing and managing FASD.
- Research has shown that only 45% of health professionals who care for pregnant women routinely ask about alcohol use and only 25% of them provide information on the consequences of alcohol use in pregnancy. Therefore, we recommend training is recommended to of health professionals on how best to assist women with an alcohol problem.
- FASD-related screening of babies with confirmed exposure to alcohol during pregnancy should be routinised. Routinised screening can promote early diagnosis and intervention to prevent secondary disabilities.

- Relevant service providers should be trained to be able to document and counsel individuals appropriately as well as pregnant women with alcohol problems.
- Early diagnosis and the establishment of national surveillance for FASD are encouraged to create a mechanism for managing FASD
- The inadequate access and barriers to treatment have the potential to influence alcohol use before and during pregnancy. Therefore, we propose an increase in access to treatment.
- Training all professionals on how to manage FASD should be considered essential, as FASD requires a multidisciplinary team to diagnose and manage.

- FASD is a lifelong disability that affects individuals, families and communities, preventing people from actualising their potentials, thus it is recognized as a public health problem.
- As the 2026 theme says: ***Everyone Plays a Part: It takes a community***; This theme emphasizes that everyone can contribute to supporting individuals with FASD and promoting healthy pregnancies through various actions like raising awareness and having conversations.
- There has been a persistent increase in FASD prevalence despite current prevention efforts.
- Developing a multi-sectoral policy for FASD could improve communication and collaboration among the relevant departments and, consequently, the coordination of FASD-related services.
- In order to reduce accessibility and availability of alcohol, we recommend that the government should take the enforcement of liquor laws seriously.

FASD is 100% preventable, however 100% irreversible: Say No to alcohol while Pregnant

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