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Lecture 4: Consumption of drugs

Objectives

By the end of this lecture, the students should be able to:

1. Examine trends in drug use and abuse globally, focusing on data from official and unofficial reports to the United Nations, while evaluating the effectiveness and consistency of the reporting process by parties to the 1961 Single Convention over the past decades.
2. Identify and assess regional gaps in official reporting on drug use and abuse, particularly focusing on the implications of limited reporting from Africa and the percentage of countries reporting drug use data across various regions during the specified period.
3. Examine the prevalence of drug abuse among different demographics, including age and gender, with a particular focus on trends related to women's labor market participation and the prevalence among young adults.
4. Investigate the socioeconomic factors contributing to increased illicit drug demand in specific regions, such as the Americas and Eastern Europe, and identify regions experiencing increasing drug abuse trends, including documenting states with decreasing patterns of drug abuse.

Consumption of drugs

Trends in drug consumption and misuse are documented in both official reports to the United Nations and various unofficial sources. Nations that are parties to the 1961 Single Convention requires to submit reports to the United Nations; however, an evaluation of this reporting process over the last ten years shows unsatisfactory outcomes. According to the United Nations Secretariat, the data provided by governments from 1983 to 1991 fell short of the intended data collection goals. Only 13 countries submitted reports for all nine years, while 25 countries failed to report at all during this timeframe. The information received exhibited significant variability across different regions and inconsistencies within the same regions.

Significant regional disparities existed in official reporting during the nine years from 1983 to 1991. The average percentage of countries that provided reports during this period were as follows: Europe (74%), the Americas (51%), the Near and Middle East (46%), Asia and the Pacific (40%), and Africa (37%) (as referenced in table 2 in 8, p. 4). In Africa, which has the lowest reporting rate to the United Nations, only about one-third of the countries submitted reports six or more times over the past nine years. The lack of consistent reporting in this region heightens its vulnerability, as trends occurring there may go unrecognized or be challenging to detect until well after they have transpired.

According to qualitative data compiled by UNDCP, a majority of governments indicate that drug abuse is significantly more prevalent among men than women. Nevertheless, there is a noted rise in drug abuse among women, often linked to their recent advancements in entering the workforce (8, section 11). While drug abuse is prevalent across all age demographics, it is particularly common among young adults. Many countries in the Americas and Eastern Europe have observed an increase in the demand for illicit drugs, which is often attributed to the socioeconomic crises in these areas, especially the high rates of unemployment. The opening of borders in Europe, between the East and West has also been enhanced interactions and

communication among traffickers and others, leading to a greater number of drug transit routes and a higher potential for drug consumers. Throughout the reporting period, there was an overall rise in illicit drug demand in Western Europe, with a few exceptions.

Documents submitted to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (8, section 11) reveal that drug abuse has risen in most parts of the world, although the specifics of this increasing trend differ from one country to another and even within countries. The regions experiencing these rising abuse trends include Africa, Europe (notably Eastern Europe), and the Americas (except the Bahamas, Canada, Ecuador, and the United States). In the Asia-Pacific region, a mixed pattern has emerged, with an equal number of countries reporting stable or slight declines as those reporting increases. In the Near and Middle East, rising abuse rates were observed in Egypt, Israel, Pakistan, and the Syrian Arab Republic. Conversely, several states reported overall declining trends, including Bahrain, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia.