



IMPROVING ROAD SAFETY THROUGH ON SPOT TESTING OF ILLICIT DRUG USE AMONG BODA BODA CYCLISTS



Evidence shows that one in ten boda boda cyclists uses illicit drugs and continue with their daily routine of transporting passengers, hence, exposing them to the risk of accidents.

CONTEXT

In Uganda, 67% of road traffic accidents and 24% of road fatalities are attributed to motorcyclists. The use of illicit drugs accounts for a high proportion of road traffic accidents among commercial motorcyclists. The monetary cost of the combined economic burden, which includes repairs, medical costs, lost output, and imputed cost of pain, grief, and suffering is approximately US\$ 3.6 million annually¹.



Road accidents hinder Uganda's attainment of SDG 3 concerning providing access to safe, affordable, accessible, and sustainable transport systems for all by 2030. Previous efforts to promote road safety among road users have focused on road use behavior and alcohol on-spot testing² excluding drug testing. To address this challenge, there was need to assess the prevalence of illicit drug use and its association with the occurrence of road traffic accidents among boda boda cyclists in Kampala district.

DATA GATHERING

Data were gathered from 768 boda boda cyclists and key stakeholders using: surveys, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews. Ethics approval was sought and study participation was voluntary.



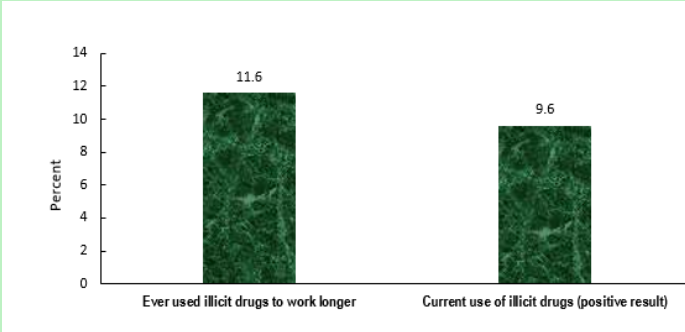
Sample of Test Kit

The kit tested for several illicit drugs: marijuana, cocaine, amphetamine, methamphetamine, opiates, phencyclidine, benzodiazepines, barbiturates, methadone, oxycodone, buprenorphine, and alcohol.

The commonest drugs consumed by boda boda cyclists in Kampala:

- Methamphetamine
- Cocaine
- Cannabis/ Marijuana

One in 10 boda boda cyclists uses illicit drugs



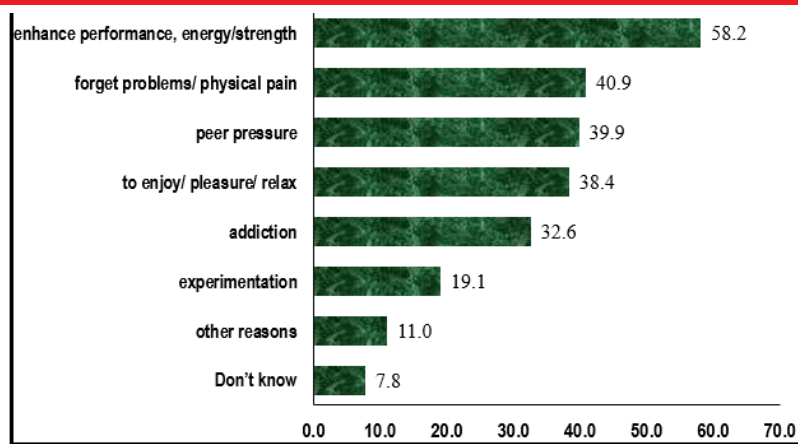
ON SPOT TESTING FOR ILLICIT DRUG USE

We used an oral/saliva drug test kit. This simple-to-use saliva drug test kit instantly screens for and detects the presence of illicit drugs and alcohol. Oral saliva samples were collected from 450 boda boda cyclists.

Feasibility: Results got in 5 – 10 minutes, is acceptable to users, tests for several drugs, easy to use, is nonclinical. *Cannot test for local substances i.e. Khat "mairungi" and shisha. It's rather costly.*



REASONS FOR ILLICIT DRUG USE



More than half of boda boda cyclists use illicit drugs to enhance their work performance, energy, and strength.

WHO IS LIKELY TO USE ILLICIT DRUGS?

Boda boda cyclists from Nakawa division are three times more likely to use illicit drugs compared to boda boda cyclists from Kawempe division. Religious commitment, house ownership, and living with a family are associated with a lower likelihood of illicit drug use.

IMPACT OF ILLICIT DRUG USE

Illicit drug use increases the risk of road traffic accidents by 2.3 times. Illicit drug use alters one's behaviour and human body functioning as highlighted by a cyclist:

"Sometimes drugs give one more energy and make people fearless and these people end up making wrong decisions on the road... they end up swerving in the road and get knocked down...."

KEY MESSAGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Sixty eight percent of boda boda cyclists were involved in road traffic accidents in the past year.

- ☛ Strengthen policy on illicit drug use for improved road safety.
- ☛ Conduct mandatory on-spot testing for illicit drug use among boda boda cyclists.
- ☛ Intensify coordination between Ministry of Works & Transport, Directorate of Road Safety, and Ministry of Internal Affairs/ Police - Directorate of Narcotics & Directorate of Traffic to address the problem of increasing road traffic accidents due to illicit drugs.
- ☛ Sensitize cyclists about the dangers of illicit drug use by Civil Society Organizations.
- ☛ Develop a tailor-made on-spot saliva test kit that isolates locally consumed substances such as Kuba/ shisha and khat.
- ☛ Increase funding to Police (narcotics & traffic departments) to procure testing kits.
- ☛ Enforce punitive measures to discourage riding under the influence of illicit drugs.
- ☛ Curtail the supply chain of illicit drugs.



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FOOTNOTES

1. Richard Sebagala, Fred Matovu, Dan Ayebale, Vincent Kisenyi, and Masharck Katusiimeh (2014) the cost of motorcycle accidents in Uganda
2. Naddumba, 2004; Tumwesigye, Atuyambe, & Kobusingye, 2016; Wanume, Nduhura, Mugerwa, Bagambe, & Ninsiima, 2019

