

## A Neglected Drug Crisis in the City of Johannesburg

By Blessing Ngwenya

Release date: 02 September 2023

Johannesburg is a city that is well known for its minerals and job opportunities. But Johannesburg is also known as a focus-point for drug distribution, addiction and drug-related violence. Youths are the main demographic devastated by the drug epidemic. Drugs have even entered primary and secondary schools, with children becoming addicted, and their communities being able to do little to help them.

Brian, a Johannesburg resident interviewed by *Karibu!* said, "It all starts with [marijuana], and eventually [drug users] end up using [hard] drugs. The drugs that they are using make them look like crazy people because they stop bathing and start picking up things on the streets or speaking to themselves for hours. The types of drugs that they are using are all dangerous, and our government is doing nothing to help these kids. Instead, these drugs are being brought into our communities by government officials in a manner of gaining a profit out of it."

Brian mentioned some of the drugs being used in his community, namely, crystal methamphetamine (also known as Tik), and Methcathinone (CAT), and what is colloquially called *Ndanda* (madrax) as the drugs that he usually comes across daily. He added, "[Drug users] usually smoke at parks, streets, or even use abandoned houses to smoke."

This makes many areas dangerous because, he claims, drug users "start to rob people at night and even during the day. It's hard to walk in the streets around 10 at night because they will be all over the place and it's not safe anymore."

Issues of drug-related crime have been ongoing for a long time, with the crime rate in South Africa remaining high.

Drug addiction has also resulted in large numbers of school dropouts, and incidents of violence against schoolteachers. Reports indicate that school children who use Tik often leave during lessons and smoke in school toilets.

Vusimuzi Ngcobo (23) is from Orange Farm, south of Johannesburg, and is a member of the Sisonke Revolutionary movement (SRM) – a community organisation from Orange Farm, which deals with a range of challenges that are being faced by the community, including drug-abuse. Speaking from his experience of the drug crisis in Orange Farm, Ngcobo said, "When drug users smoke, they start to act like crazy people. They become angry for no reason and start assaulting people, or worse, rob our parents at night."

He continued, "We have initiated a program called Wanya Tsotsi that deals with drug users who steal from people. We go door-to-door looking for stolen property and take it back to its rightful owner whenever there is a complaint of something being stolen." The concept of Wanya Tsotsi began in the Eastern Cape and has spread to other areas of South Africa.

"These guys are not willing to get help, even if you take them to [a rehabilitation centre], eventually they will come back and smoke again. So, the best way is to wait for them to come to you when they are ready to stop and that's when you can help them," Ngcobo argued.

The drug epidemic is a force of destruction in local communities and is yet to be made a top priority by the South African government.

*This article was submitted on 21 August 2023. You may republish this article, so long as you credit the authors and Karibu! Online ([www.Karibu.org.za](http://www.Karibu.org.za)), and do not change the text. Please include a link back to the original article.*