



PRESS STATEMENT

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ALCOHOL AND MARIJUANA USE RIFE IN PNG

Legal alcohol, illegal homebrew and marijuana are the most commonly used drugs in Papua New Guinea. They contribute to people's risky behaviour for HIV, but little is done to address this, a report has found.

The report, [*Emerging HIV Risk in Papua New Guinea: Alcohol and injecting and other drug use and HIV risk*](#), by PNG Institute of Medical Research (IMR), was commissioned by the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, with funding from UNAIDS.

The assessment was carried out in four provinces – National Capital District, West Sepik, Western Highlands and Morobe. It sought to identify the risk for HIV associated with alcohol and injecting and other drugs.

“Like other reports, we found that there is a widespread culture of intoxication due to alcohol and marijuana, often consumed simultaneously. On the other hand, use of illicit drugs that were either injected or swallowed such as heroin or ecstasy was less common but present,” said IMR's Dr Angela Kelly, Principal Investigator of the study.

“Misuse of alcohol and drugs often brings negative social and health impacts, including an increased risk of HIV through unprotected sex, whether consensual or violent,” she said.

“Despite the long term acknowledgment of the negative impacts, surprisingly little is being done that is known to be effective to address the reasons for addiction, or the addiction itself.

“PNG does not have trained drug and alcohol counsellors and few medical staff specialise in treating people with drug dependency.

“Legislation regarding drug and alcohol misuse does not address current and emerging trends, in particular the developing market for drugs other than cannabis.

“Both government and non-government organisations have strategies to address the abuse and misuse of alcohol and marijuana, but most are not evidence-based and there is a lack of infrastructure, facilities and human resources to successfully address these issues. This hampers their efforts. For example, prohibition is a common strategy but has been shown not to work in PNG or elsewhere,” Dr Kelly said.

The report is available on our website under [Research Publications 2013](#).

Media contact: Geraldine Vilakiva – phone: (+675) 532 2800 or (+675) 7266 6569
Email: geraldine.vilakiva@pngimr.org.pg