



LEGAL ASSISTANCE CENTRE, NAMIBIA, 2008

PREVENTING UNDERAGE DRINKING

A GUIDE TO
INDIVIDUAL
AND
COMMUNITY
ACTION



ALCOHOL USE CAN HAVE SERIOUS EFFECTS ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S HEALTH.

- ◆ Loss of coordination and judgment
- ◆ Doing risky things while drunk
- ◆ Damage to the liver, heart or brain
- ◆ Loss of appetite and malnutrition
- ◆ Blackouts (loss of memory)
- ◆ Hangovers (nausea, headache)
- ◆ Increased vulnerability to violence
- ◆ Greater likelihood of unplanned, unprotected or unwanted sexual activity (increased HIV risk behavior)
- ◆ Becoming less fearful to commit crime
- ◆ Car accidents
- ◆ Hurting yourself and others

YOUTHS ARE AT AN INCREASED RISK OF HARM DUE TO ALCOHOL USE.

Because youths are still developing they suffer from an increased risk of psychological and physical harm from alcohol use.

- ◆ Youths may have less sensitivity to the intoxicating effects of alcohol, leading them to drink larger amounts of alcohol and becoming very drunk.
- ◆ Youths may have a greater likelihood of damage to brain development and memory processing.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S TENDENCY TO TAKE RISKS ALSO INCREASES THE LIKELIHOOD OF SOCIAL HARM.

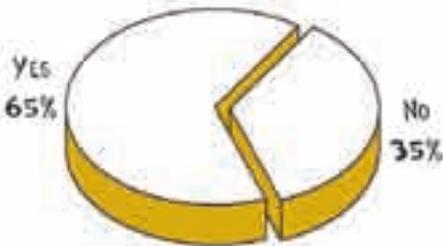
- ◆ Youths have an increased tendency to drink excessively.
- ◆ Youths have a higher probability of engaging in aggressive and antisocial behaviour.
- ◆ Youths suffer from an increased connection between excessive alcohol consumption, risky sexual behavior and sexual assault.

ALCOHOL IS EASY FOR YOUTHS TO FIND.

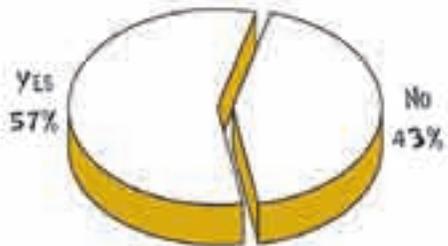
A study on alcohol use in Namibia found that more than half of the respondents felt that youth had easy access to alcohol, and almost half felt that communities were contributing to alcohol use by youth in some way:

- ◆ 65% of respondents agreed that it was easy for the youth to get access to alcohol at shops in their community.
- ◆ 57% of respondents believed that it was easy for the youth to get access to home-brewed alcohol in their communities.
- ◆ 49% of respondents agreed that in their community, very young children were given home-brewed alcohol to ease their hunger or stop them from crying.
- ◆ 41% of respondents felt that their communities had become more tolerant of underage drinking.

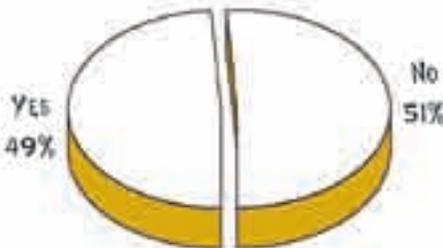
Is it easy to access alcohol at shops in your community?



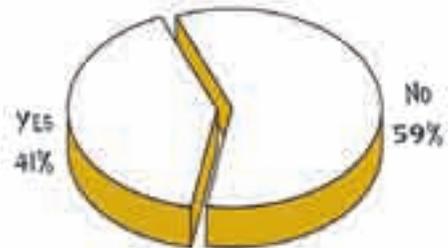
Is it easy to access homebrew in your community?



Are young children in your community given homebrew?



Has your community become tolerant about underage drinking?



GRAPHS: Based on 2 832 interviews in a 2002 nationwide survey.

UNDERAGE DRINKING AND THE LAW

The **Liquor Act 6 of 1998** contains offences relevant to underage drinking:

- ◆ It is an offence for any person to sell or supply liquor to any person under 18 years old. This includes parents, bartenders and shebeen owners, and even other youths.
- ◆ It is an offence to become intoxicated in a public place.
- ◆ It is an offence to produce any alcoholic drink (such as homebrew) in order to sell or supply it to others without a licence.

On a first conviction for any of these offences, the penalty is a fine of up to N\$4000 and/or imprisonment for up to a year. On a second conviction, the penalty is a fine of up to N\$8000 and/or imprisonment for up to two years.

Does your community tolerate underage drinking or alcohol abuse?

What can a community member do if a neighborhood shebeen is supplying liquor to persons who are under the age of 18?

1. Report the shop to the police.

2. Community petition:

- ◆ A petition signed by at least 15 residents who live close to the shop (within 1km if the shop is in a town; within 20km if the shop is outside a town) can be given to the Regional Liquor Licencing Committee. The petition can request that the Committee cancel, suspend, amend or review the shop's liquor licence. The petition must also explain why the community is asking for this review of the shop's liquor licence.
- ◆ The Committee will meet to consider the petition. The shebeen owner and anyone living close to the shebeen may attend the meeting to give their opinions.
- ◆ The Committee will then decide what to do. It might cancel or suspend the liquor licence. It might amend the conditions which apply to the liquor licence, such as the opening hours or kinds of alcohol that can be sold.

SAMPLE PETITION

A petition from the Community of Karasburg

REQUEST FOR THE CANCELLATION OF THE WHITE DOG BAR'S LIQUOR LICENCE

TO: The Regional Liquor Licencing Committee

We, the citizens of Karasburg, request the cancellation of the White Dog Bar's liquor licence. The White Dog Bar is selling alcohol to children under the age of 18 in Karasburg. The people who have signed this petition believe this is a serious problem for the following reasons:

- It is illegal to sell alcohol to a person under 18 years old.
- The excessive use of alcohol could lead to violence, injury or death. Children who are drinking may be the cause of this violence, or because they are drunk they may be vulnerable to this violence.
- The use of alcohol at a young age can have a serious effect on health and growth.

The people who have signed this petition request that the Regional Liquor Licencing Committee investigate the White Dog Bar's sale of alcohol to children under the age of 18 in Karasburg.

Please send all notices relating to this petition to:

James Hoffa
PO Box 704
Karasburg

Signed,

Signature

Name

Date

IDEAS FOR COMMUNITY ACTION

Organise social clubs

Consider starting an after-school club to provide an alternative space for youths to socialise. People under the age of 18 usually turn to alcohol because there are few other things to do. In fact, being exposed to an environment where alcohol is used makes children three times more likely to use alcohol themselves. Alcohol use by under-18 year olds will decrease if youths do not spend time in places where liquor is easily available.

Activities that engage the mind and bodies of Namibia's youth can take the place of underage drinking. Social clubs that do not involve alcohol could be arranged around sports, hobbies or work skills training. Talk to schools, churches, or other community organisations that might be willing to lend their space. Also, encourage clubs and bars to host weekly "under 18" nights where no alcohol is sold.

For more information on how to start youth social clubs contact Teenagers Against Drugs and Alcohol Abuse at (061) 230 296 or (061) 206 3709. This organisation has experience forming clubs in schools around the country to discourage underage drinking.

Be a role model

Consider becoming a role model to help a youth who seems at risk of alcohol abuse. Youths with families, parents, or role models who disapprove of underage youths drinking are half as likely to drink as those whose immediate communities do not mind their drinking.

For more information on mentorship contact LifeLine/ChildLine at (061) 226881. This organisation hosts discussions in various regions about peer pressure and other factors that influence drinking at schools.

You can also contact the After School Centre at (061) 212962. It has existing mentorship programs and deals exclusively with students in various regions.

Intervene to help specific young people

If you are worried about specific children in your community, there are organisations which help with interventions and work with teenagers. Contact a social worker or one of these groups – some have branches or activities outside Windhoek:

- ◆ NovaVita Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Centre: (061) 201-2380
- ◆ Alcoholics Anonymous: (061) 222477
- ◆ Etegameno Rehabilitation and Resource Centre: (061) 269348/250404

Help spread the word about the dangers of youth alcohol abuse

Many Namibians believe that their communities are becoming more tolerant of underage drinking. Help educate friends and neighbors about the dangers of underage drinking. Make sure not to exclude youths from the conversation!

FREQUENTLY-ASKED QUESTIONS

1. *May a parent consent to an underage person drinking?*

No, it is an offence for any person, including parents, to supply a person under 18 years old with alcohol.

2. *If I see a parent, shebeen-owner or other adult supplying alcohol to a person under 18 years old, what can I do?*

It is a crime for any person to give liquor to a person under 18 years old. If you are concerned that an adult is supplying an under-18 year old with alcohol, you can report the offence to the police.

3. *If I see someone under age 18 purchasing alcohol, what should I do?*

If you see someone under age 18 purchasing alcohol, you can report the seller to the police.

4. *What will the consequences for the adult be?*

On a first conviction the adult might have to pay a fine up to N\$4000 and/or face imprisonment up to one year. On a second conviction the adult might have to pay a fine up to N\$8000 and/or face imprisonment for up to two years. On a third conviction the court may choose to take away the adult's liquor licence (if he or she is a shebeen-owner or bartender) and prevent him or her from obtaining a licence in future.

5. *Is it illegal to supply a person under 18 years old with homebrew?*

Yes. It does not matter whether the liquor is commercial or homebrewed; it is illegal to supply a person under 18 years old with alcohol.

6. *What are the opening hours of places which sell alcohol?*

Shebeen or restaurant	from 10h00 to 24h00 on any day except Sundays from 10h00 to 14h30 and from 18h00 to 24h00 on Sundays
Bottle store or supermarket	from 8h00 to 19h00 on any day except Saturdays and closed days from 8h00 to 13h00 on Saturdays

SOURCES FOR THE INFORMATION IN THIS PAMPHLET

- ◆ International Center for Alcohol Policies, www.icap.org (Policy Issues: Young People's Drinking).
- ◆ SIAPAC (for Ministry of Health and Social Services), *Nationwide Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice (KAP) Baseline Survey on Alcohol and Drug Use and Abuse in Namibia* (2002).
- ◆ UNICEF, *A Future in Doubt: Youth Alcohol Abuse in Namibia*. (2007).
- ◆ UNICEF, *HIV and AIDS Knowledge, Attitudes, Practice and Behaviour (KAPB) Study in Namibia 19* (2006).
- ◆ UNICEF, *My Future is My Choice; Participants' Guide* (2006).

PETER & SOPHIE

I'm bored. Let's go to the White Dog Bar.

But we are not old enough to buy alcohol.

So what. The owner always sells me alcohol.

That is bad. Last week Ben crashed his car after too much tombo. But what really scares me is what happened to Mary. She had unprotected sex when she was drunk and now she is waiting to hear if she is HIV positive.

IS IT WORTH THE RISK?



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FRONT COVER: The photograph was posed; the children did not actually drink alcohol. (Photo by Mark Nonkes.)