

Synthetic drugs are making headway in Afghanistan, UN agency reports

14 February 2017 – Methamphetamine is increasingly being seized by law enforcement in Afghanistan, and there is also evidence that it is being produced in the country, according to the first of its kind assessment on synthetic drugs released today by the United Nations drug and crime agency.

After spending eight-months gathering information on drugs known locally as 'glass,' 'tears of love' or 'sheesha,' the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) concluded that "there are strong indications that methamphetamine use is establishing itself among opiate users, which are already one of the most vulnerable parts of Afghan society."

"The report comes in a timely fashion, adding another layer of understanding to the very complex Afghan drugs situation," said UNODC's Director of Public Affairs, Jean-Luc Lemahieu.

He praised Afghan contribution to the report, noting that the country has had "impressive" growth in capacity.

The Afghanistan Synthetic Drugs Assessment includes missions to five provinces in Afghanistan, where interviews were conducted with over 100 key sources, drug users and law enforcement officials at government offices, health service centres and drug treatment providers.

"Although data and information remains scarce, reports from law enforcement officials, drug treatment providers, forensic experts and drug users in Afghanistan point to a differentiated market for synthetic drug," the investigators reported.

Source: UNODC's Afghanistan Synthetic Drugs Situation Assessment

"Increases in the number of methamphetamine seizures, together with reports of methamphetamine manufacture and increases in treatment registrations in certain parts of the country, suggest that synthetic drugs are of growing concern in Afghanistan," says the report.

Among its findings, the report noted that the largest number of methamphetamine treatment registrations have been reported by treatment centres in Kunduz province, in the north-east of Afghanistan, and Nimroz province, to the south-west of Afghanistan.

It also found that the current national drug control law seems to provide a much lower penalty framework for methamphetamine compared to other drugs such as heroin or cocaine.

Investigators conclude that the issue must be studied more thoroughly by

national and international partners.