

At what cost 2.0

All Rands and No Sense

A frank look at the dangers of dagga use, by Quintin van Kerken of the Anti Drug Alliance of South Africa.



Introduction

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Around two years ago, I sat down with the team and began to put all the data together for what turned out to be called “At What Cost?”, a report about what the “war against drugs” (or more specifically dagga) is costing South Africa.

What the report showed was that hundreds of millions of rands are (in my opinion, and that of many South Africans as well) wasted annually fighting a war not against dagga, but against people.

The floodgates of communications were smashed open when the report was published. Our organisation received an unbelievable amount of communications. Many telephone calls were made to us “just to say thank you”, whilst others called or wrote in just to argue. There were the few extremists that took things overboard and offered death threats, and yet on the other side of the coin, we received a few very entertaining emails from some rather interesting people as well, offering their “5 cents” of opinion.

We believe the greatest thing that came from the report was dialogue. It felt if the report was a catalyst of sorts, a small match that ignited a runaway fire of people talking.

I recall many instances of overhearing conversations in coffee shops where people were openly debating the legality of cannabis; I spent many long hours on the telephone explaining the report over and over to journalists and role players, and many late evenings responding to emails from South Africans questioning my sanity or reasoning.

Just on two years down the line, the landscape has changed somewhat. We have a number of legalisation / decriminalisation movements happening.

The Medical Innovation Bill seeks to see cannabis regulated for use by people with diseases that choose not to use conventional medications. As I write this document, Jeremy Acton will soon be challenging the constitutionality of the laws governing cannabis in the Western Cape High Court, shortly followed by the Dagga Couple's case in a few month's time. These are two cases that are gaining massive media coverage and momentum, including the attention of a public that is beginning to question whether cannabis is the evil plant many make it out to be, or a plant that is really just and age old “medicine” that may hold the cure to many diseases.

It really boils down to two schools of thought. Firstly the prohibitionists who seek to keep the plant banned, and secondly the anti-prohibitionists, who seek to see the plant legalised / decriminalised (either for medicinal or recreational use or both).

We live in a sickly dualistic country. On one hand we saw pictures of parliamentarians standing up and applauding the late Mario Ambrosini for taking the stand and proposing the Medical Innovation Bill, and yet we constantly see pictures of several policemen triumphantly standing around a man that has been caught with a bag of cannabis.

“At What Cost 2.0 – All Rands And No Sense”, follows up on the original “At What Cost?” Report, and besides asking some pertinent questions, this report makes some important points.

The Anti Drug Alliance likes to look at harm reduction. As will be explained in this report, we believe that more harm comes from keeping the plant illegal than does from legalising it.

We do not wish to attack or defend any specific group, person or entities. Instead, we wish to take an unbiased look at prohibition in South Africa, and see whether the current laws are effective or need to be re-looked and whether spending billions of taxpayer money arresting and jailing dagga users is worth it all or not.

Statistically Speaking

We'd like you, the reader, to keep the following number in mind:

266902

According to latest crime statistics in South Africa (<http://www.crimestatssa.com/national.php>) that is the number of arrests that were made for “drug related crimes” in the reporting year 2014 – 2015.

It is unfortunate that the actual breakdown of these figures is somewhat harder to get. By somewhat harder, we mean practically impossible. Hence, we will use what we have at our disposal, that is the Government Central Information System (GCIS) and figures from credible sources which we have been able to obtain. We'll list these sources at the end of this document.

One particular page on the GCIS gave us much food for thought, as it supplied some very interesting figures which have allowed us to extrapolate very useful information.

We advise you to read the page (<http://www.gcis.gov.za/newsroom/media-releases/media-briefing-operation-fiela-inter-ministerial-committee-migration>). The page is speaking about arrests made by Operation Fiela in July 2015. The arrest figures that stood out to us were:

- Number of arrests for possession 585
- Number of arrests for dealing 16

These arrests were made over two days 30 and 31 July 2015. The aforementioned numbers speak volumes with regards to how Police operate. The ratio of dealer to user arrests is 1:36

ON AVERAGE, ONE DEALER IS ARRESTED FOR EVERY 36 USERS ARRESTED.

Based on the above numbers, it is very clear who the law targets. It is clearly not dealers, but users. This simply makes no sense on any level.

The figures give us more insight:

CONFISCATIONS

Drugs:	Cannabis / Dagga (grams)	60540
	Cannabis / Dagga Plants	94
	Cocaine powder (grams)	0.016
	Crack Cocaine / Rocks (grams)	32.02
	Crystal Meth TIK TIK(grams)	118.54
	Ecstasy (1 tablet)	76
	Ecstasy (½ tablet)	2
	Heroin Thai White (grams)	734
	Khat (grams)	35909
	Mandrax (1 tablet)	148
	Mandrax (½ tablet)	11
	Mandrax powder (grams)	1.5
	Nyaope (grams)	34
	Whoonga (grams)	3

Let's put that into easier to understand numbers:

Dagga:	60.54kg	(61%)
All other drugs:	37.07kg	(39%)

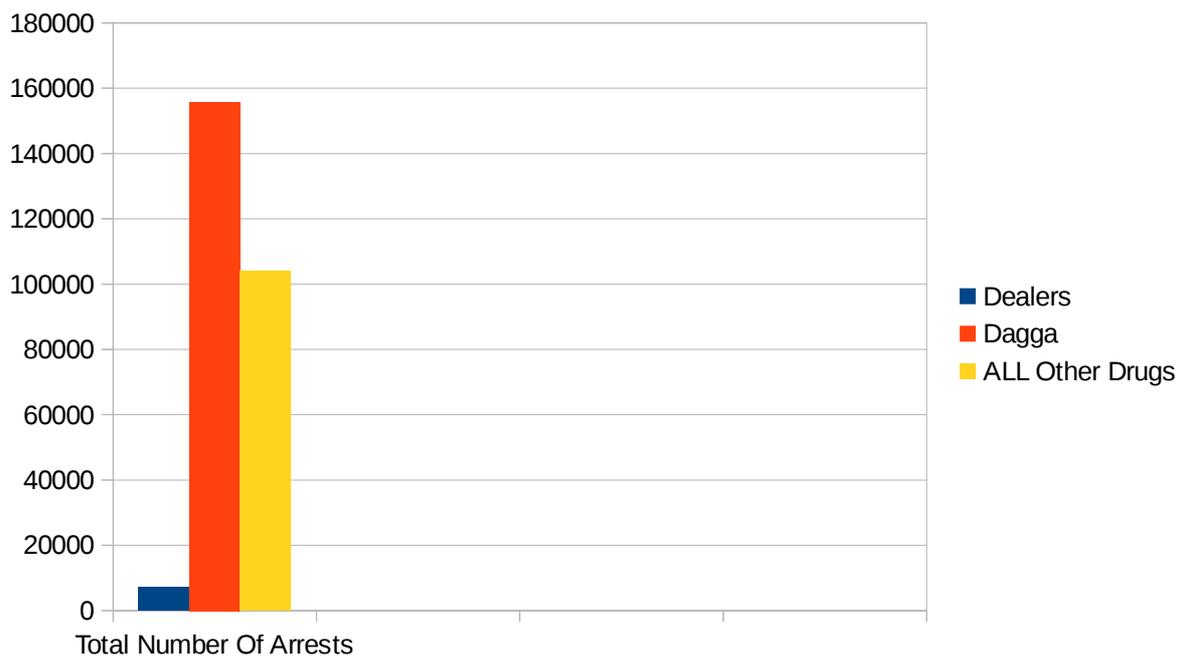
For ease of use for this report, we would like to use a general percentage split of 60/40. Dealing of drugs contributes roughly 2.7% of the total number of arrests.

Looking at operation Fiela's numbers and taking our numbers into consideration, we can see that we can possibly extrapolate that roughly 60% of all drug users arrested for possession are for dagga. (Arrest figures are confirmed at <http://www.tnt.org.za/index.php/2012-06-29-07-13-09/item/120-should-sa-decriminalise-or-legalise-dagga>)

Do you remember the figure 266902? Let us put what we have extrapolated from the figures above into easy to understand numbers.

- 7206 dealers arrested
- 155818 dagga users
- 103878 other drug users

This below graph illustrates the aforementioned figures.



Calculating the costs

We will use the same calculation methods that we used for “At What Cost?” and have decided, for the ease of use of this report, to use the exact same financial cost calculations. We will post all of the pages we used to work out figures at the end of this report, which are also noted in “At What Cost?”. However that may be, we suggest you download “At What Cost” here - <https://app.box.com/s/ro3rea65fvutqdn26b2k> to see how we worked out the numbers.

This means that the financial amounts we will be quoting *will possibly be much lower than actual figures*, as they are amounts from old reports and sources that have been published, and are freely available on the internet.

What we know:

- It costs R329.21 a day to keep a prisoner behind bars – R9876.35 per month
- Current conviction rates in South Africa are about 9%
- It costs about R89 to arrest someone
- It costs R356 to keep someone overnight in the cells
- It costs about R671 to investigate someone arrested for possession
- It costs the state about R398 for court proceedings for a person arrested for possession
- It costs the state about R1638 to convict someone of possession
- You can get up to 2 years in prison for possession
- You can get up to 25 years in prison for serious drug crimes like dealing

Now that we have these figures, we can actually work out what the Drug War in South Africa (possibly) cost us in the 2014 / 2015 year that the figures were reported for.

Arrests for Dealers

We noted that we have seen an arrest rate of about 1 to 36 when it comes to dealers. That means of the 266902 arrests, (statistically speaking) 7206 dealers were arrested.

Immediate Costs

R11 972 946

Cost of arresting 7206 dealers	R641 334
Cost of keeping 7206 dealers in the cells overnight (once)	R2 565 336
Cost of investigating 7206 dealers	R4 835 226
Cost of court proceedings for 7206 dealers	R2 867 988
Cost of conviction (9%) (649)	R1 063 062

Long Term Costs

R769 170 138

Cost of keeping 649 dealers in prison for an average of 10 years

Arrests for All Other Drug Users

Immediate Costs

R158 334 354

Cost of arresting 103878 for possession	R9 245 142
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Cost of keeping 103878 users in the cells overnight (once)	R36 980 568
Cost of investigating 103878 users	R69 702 138
Cost of court proceedings for 103878 users	R41 343 444
Cost of conviction (9%) (9349)	R1 063 062

Long Term Costs **R2 216 015 908**

Cost of keeping 9349 users in prison for an average of 2 years

Arrests for Dagga Users

Immediate Costs **R258 879 764**

Cost of arresting 155818 for possession	R13 867 802
Cost of keeping 155818 users in the cells overnight (once)	R55 471 208
Cost of investigating 155818 users	R104 553 878
Cost of court proceedings for 155818 users	R62 015 564
Cost of conviction (9%) (14024)	R22 971 312

Long Term Costs **R3 324 142 378**

Cost of keeping 14024 users in prison for an average of 2 years

Adding up the immediate costs (that is what is costs the taxpayer), to arrest, keep in the cells, investigate and LET GO 242881 people that were arrested for possession or dealing, and CONVICT 24021 people that were arrested for dealing or possession comes to **R429 187 064**.

Putting 24021 people in prison for being convicted for “Drug Related Crimes” arrested in the last year will cost the taxpayer **R6 309 328 424**.

That puts the immediate and long term costs of the “drug war” in 2014 / 2015 at a staggering **R6 738 515 488**.

Calculating a cost of war against people

Well, if we have to look at the above figures, the “war” against dagga ALONE for 2014 / 2015 will cost the taxpayer R3 583 022 142.

That is just over 53% of the total “drug war” cost of 2014 / 2015.

How much dagga is confiscated annually versus how much is produced annually?

This was a difficult question to answer. When it comes to confiscations, we simply could not work out how much. Several exercises and many headaches later, we simply gave up. We know the figure goes into tons, but that's about it. When it comes to production, we have more data to work with, and are able to get an idea on how much South Africa (excluding Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana) produces annually.

According to http://www.unodc.org/pdf/southafrica/sa_drug.pdf, which was published in 1999, South Africa was producing +52.6 tons of cannabis annually. If we *conservatively* say that production has increased 1% a year, and put a straightforward 15% increase onto the original amount (another 7.89 tons) that comes to 60.49 tons of dagga that is produced annually in South Africa.

In a recent exercise, the Anti Drug Alliance priced dagga sold by street dealers in different parts of South Africa.

- Johannesburg averaged out at R27 a gram (most expensive R200 for 5 grams, cheapest R70 for 5 grams).
- Rustenburg averaged out at R10 per gram (most expensive R70 for 5 grams, cheapest R30 for 5 grams)
- Durban, Cape Town and Bloemfontein averaged out at R22 a gram (most expensive R200 for 5 grams, cheapest R20 for 5 grams).

This gives us a national average of R19 per gram for sale on the streets.

From this we can extrapolate that the possible street value of dagga sales in South Africa is **R1 149 310 000**.

Let's stop right here.

The total cost of the “war against dagga” in 2014 / 2015 was R3.5 billion, whilst total annual sales only topped R1.1 billion?

A logical question here is why are we spending R3.5 billion a year to “fight” something that clearly can never be beaten? Are we not literally flushing money down the toilet?

(Please note that these were prices quoted by street dealers, and are being used to work out possible turnover only. We believe actual turnovers may be substantially more).

Perspective

R3 583 022 142 = 63500 RDP houses

VAT on dagga sales of R1 149 310 000
= R160 903 400
= University fees to educate +-4100 social workers

Questioning dagga's dangers to South African society.

In order to question how dangerous dagga is, let us look at the harm other popular drugs in South Africa cause. The widest used drug in South Africa is alcohol.

Older statistics on (legal) alcohol by Arrive Alive <https://arrivealive.co.za/Alcohol-And-Road-Traffic-Crashes> put the number of deaths in South Africa attributed to alcohol around the 12000 mark annually. Breaking that down, that is about 1000 deaths per month, and around 30 people PER DAY that die from alcohol related deaths.

Whilst researching this report we tried to find reliable and realistic figures that could directly attribute deaths to dagga in South Africa.

We could not find any.

This does not necessarily mean that there were not any, it simply means that in our research no deaths directly attributed to dagga were found. We do concede that there are possibly deaths that can be attributed to dagga. There will always be exceptions.

If we took out moral / religious beliefs and objections for a moment, and looked *only* at the science behind it, any scientist would say that if we look at the harm a substance causes, the fact is that alcohol should be banned, and dagga should be legalised.

At this stage, let us talk about the exceptions we spoke about. Yes, dagga can be abused. But with that being said, so can gambling, sex, porn, alcohol, social media, cellphones, chocolate, food, sugar and caffeine. (Dagga is the only illegal one in this paragraph).

Researching deaths attributed to sugar (<http://bit.ly/1NdWWtH>) versus deaths attributed to cannabis (<http://bit.ly/1N9lZK1>) you will note that it is extremely difficult to conclusively prove any cases of death because of cannabis, whilst millions of people die every single year because of sugar abuse.

The biggest opponents of legalisation all seem to quote the same arguments -

- cannabis is a gateway drug
- cannabis is highly addictive
- cannabis causes schizophrenia
- legalising cannabis will increase use

Well, this is simply NOT the case.

(We would like to credit an article in the US Magazine Newsweek for the following in italics).

When analysing what acts as a “gateway” to hard drug use, there are a number of factors at play. None involve cannabis.

- *[Poverty and poor social environment](#) is a gateway to drugs, according to [much research](#).*
- *Association with people who use hard drugs is a [better predictor](#) of harder drug use.*
- *Certain [mental illnesses](#), such as [antisocial personality](#) and [bipolar disorder](#), are found to predispose some people to use drugs.*

- Other research notes that [criminalization and prohibition](#) are real gateways to harder drugs. With so much research challenging the gateway theory, it's important to examine—and dispel—the research that proponents of the myth latch onto. But what about all that evidence?

Most of the research linking marijuana to harder drug use comes from the correlation between the two. However, as any junior scientist can tell you, [correlation does not mean causation](#). Correlation is a first step. A correlation can be positive or negative; it can be weak or strong. And it never means a cause unless a rational reason for causality is found.

[The brain disease model](#), which describes [changes in the brain](#) during the progression from drug use to addiction, currently gets a lot of attention as a potential causal link of the gateway theory. For example, in a 2014 article, neuroscientist Dr Jodi Gilman [reported](#) that even a little marijuana use was associated with “exposure-dependent alterations of the neural matrix of core reward systems” in the brains of young marijuana users. The reasoning goes that this would predispose them to use other drugs.

But other researchers were quick to point out the [flaws](#) of the Gilman study, such as a lack of careful controls for alcohol and other drug use by those whose brains were studied. Nonetheless, Dr Gilman's research continues to be cited in the news media, while its critics are ignored.

[In another study supporting the gateway theory, the authors admit to limitations in their study:](#) that they excluded younger cocaine users from the analysis, as well as older cocaine users who had never used marijuana. This means that those cases that might provide evidence of no gateway effect were left out of the analysis.

One the other hand, there's a wealth of research showing the [flaws](#) in the gateway theory. Unfortunately, the common thread among these studies is that much of them come from [outside the U.S.](#) or from [grassroots organizations](#) within the U.S. that are promoting marijuana legalization.

As for the whole schizophrenia scare:

Dr. Lester Grinspoon, Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry at Harvard, has done serious research in the field. He has shown that cannabis use has no effect on the number of cases of schizophrenia.

Lynn E. DeLisi, MD, Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, et al., stated in their article titled "A Controlled Family Study of Cannabis Users with and without Psychosis," published online by Schizophrenia Research on Dec. 2, 2013:

"The results of the current study suggest that having an increased familial morbid risk for schizophrenia may be the underlying basis for schizophrenia in cannabis users and not cannabis use by itself...

This study aimed to determine whether people who use cannabis during adolescence have a greater risk for developing schizophrenia because they have an increased familial risk for the illness, and

thus have a genetic predisposition for developing it regardless of cannabis use. If this is the case, we would expect to find a significantly higher morbid risk for schizophrenia in the relatives of people who develop schizophrenia compared to the relatives of non-schizophrenia controls, regardless of whether they do or do not use cannabis.

The results of the current study, both when analyzed using morbid risk and family frequency calculations, suggest that having an increased familial risk for schizophrenia is the underlying basis for schizophrenia in these samples and not the cannabis use. While cannabis may have an effect on the age of onset of schizophrenia **it is unlikely to be the cause of illness.**"

Martin Frisher, PhD, Senior Lecturer in Health Services Research at Keele University, et al., stated the following in their Sep. 2009 article titled "Assessing the Impact of Cannabis Use on Trends in Diagnosed Schizophrenia in the United Kingdom from 1996 to 2005," published in Schizophrenia Research:

"Based on literature suggesting a) an elevated risk of developing schizophrenia/psychosis among cannabis users, b) a substantial rise in cannabis use in the UK from the mid-1970s onwards and c) an assumed elevated risk of 20 years, this model would predict a corresponding increase in schizophrenia/psychosis during our study period [1996-2005]..."

The results of this study indicate that the incidence and prevalence of diagnoses of schizophrenia and psychoses in general practice did not increase between 1996 and 2005...

Decriminalisation will not make more (or less) people use it.

A [2004 study](#) compared Amsterdam, where marijuana was decriminalized, to San Francisco, where cannabis was, at the time, still criminalized. The authors found that criminalization of marijuana didn't reduce use, while decriminalization didn't increase use. An article [published](#) in the American Academy of Pediatrics, the authors found no evidence that young people had increased marijuana use in states that had legalized medical or recreational marijuana.

Well, is dagga addictive or not?

Thankfully there has been research into that.

Drug	Mean	Pleasure	Psychological dependence	Physical dependence
Heroin	3.00	3.0	3.0	3.0
Cocaine	2.39	3.0	2.8	1.3
Tobacco	2.21	2.3	2.6	1.8
Barbiturates	2.01	2.0	2.2	1.8
Alcohol	1.93	2.3	1.9	1.6
Benzodiazepines	1.83	1.7	2.1	1.8
Amphetamine	1.67	2.0	1.9	1.1
Cannabis	1.51	1.9	1.7	0.8
Ecstasy	1.13	1.5	1.2	0.7

According to this table, researched by leading UK scientists, it's clear that dagga is second to the

bottom of the list, and that our favourites – alcohol and cigarettes – which are both very legal, ARE MUCH HARDER TO QUIT THAN DAGGA. In fact, alcohol has a higher physical dependence than cocaine!

Cigarettes are highly addictive – no one argues this point – and yet, very legal and is a highly taxed product. Cigarette smokers damage their health, and smoking is linked to lung cancer. Manufacturers are required by law to put a warning on each pack. “Smoking is addictive”, “Smoking causes cancer”, and many other warnings, go along with a telephone number on the pack to help you quit, if you want.

Gambling is addictive. Many thousands of people have destroyed their lives because of it. Yet, the “gaming” industry is one of the major contributors to SA's GDP. The industry employs many thousands of people that support their families thanks to the billions of taxed rands that flow into the industry. Let's not forget that casinos are required by law to put up a sign that gambling is addictive. “Winners know when to quit” is their way of saying that their industry destroys lives.

Porn is very addictive. Yet, it is still legal and businesses selling naughty DVD's have to pay tax. Many people's lives have been decimated because of porn, yet, the “adult entertainment industry” is thriving and employs many people.

Alcohol is possibly the most highly addictive and dangerous drug out there, causing more death and destruction than all other drugs combined, and yet, big companies such as SAB Miller pay billions in tax every year and hire thousands of people who support their families which equates to thousands of more people that benefit from the industry.

Prescription medication addiction is on the rise, and yet, big pharmaceutical companies hire thousands of staff, and pay millions in tax. They just hide the fact that the sleeping pill you take is addictive amongst a whole host of other “contra-indications” on the insert in the pack.

The fact is that anything in life is open to abuse or addiction. Cellphones, Twitter, Facebook, gambling, smoking, porn, Lotto, pills the doctor prescribes, sex, masturbation, fighting, alcohol, chocolates, sugar, and even caffeine are all open to addiction.

The fact is cannabis can be misused or abused. The fact is that people could become dependent on it. But that fact rings true for just about any substance or action. Any scientist will tell you that.

However, on any given day, the chances of someone who uses dagga breaking into your home to steal your television to support his habit is close to zero. If we had to use crystal meth or heroin as an example, well, those figures would be exponentially higher.

In fact, recent research (<http://www.metronews.ca/news/vancouver/2015/09/30/uvic-ubc-study-says-marijuana-could-be-exit-drug.html>) shows that more addicts use dagga to *come off of hard drugs, prescription medication addiction and alcohol addiction*, leading us to believe that dagga is AN EXIT DRUG, and **not a gateway drug**.

Let's summarise

- “The war against dagga” costs SA R3.5 billion a year, every year. And that figure is just climbing. The money being spent simply does not justify the results.
- South Africans spend about R1.1 billion on buying dagga (extremely low estimate) annually.
- Dagga is less dangerous than alcohol, and tobacco (scientifically proven).
- Dagga is not a “gateway drug”.
- Dagga is an exit drug, not a gateway drug.
- Legalising it won't really impact the numbers of people using it dramatically.
- As far as we know, no deaths have been recorded directly attributed to dagga in South Africa.
- Dagga doesn't cause schizophrenia.
- Sugar kills more people in our country than dagga does.
- If we legalise it, we can CONTROL it.
- If we legalise it, we can study its medical benefits.
- If it's legal, we can TAX it.
- If it is legalised, there would have to be legal frameworks in place to control it, and that means job creation.

What we know is that there are many industries and substances out there that are more dangerous than dagga. In the beginning of this document, we spoke about harm reduction.

Well, it is the opinion of the Anti Drug Alliance that keeping dagga illegal is counter productive. We believe regulating the industry is a much better idea. Government can earn tax money, and users can be assured of quality. Cannabis growers internationally even conform to ISO standards and are certified!

In South Africa, if you have a criminal record, it is very problematic, and does not bode well for you. You can't be a director of a company; your employment prospects are very bad because of your record; you are marginalised; you are seen as a second rate citizen.

What would happen if alcohol were illegal?

You would go to jail for two years for having a bottle of brandy hidden in the boot of your car. Eight cops would stand proudly around you having a photo taken while you stand cuffed in front of a case of beer. You'd spend up to 25 years behind bars for brewing beer in your garage. You'd be laughed at by society and told that booze will make you dumb. You would have to buy your wine from a dodgy guy on a street corner (at a massively inflated price), and you wouldn't be sure if he laced it with something or not. You would drive home in fear after buying it praying you don't get caught.

Dagga users are people like you and me.

They are students who are tomorrow's leaders, doctors who save lives, lawyers who put bad people in jail, surgeons who do life saving transplants, entertainers who make us laugh and cry, mechanics who make sure our car doesn't fall apart, nurses who help us heal, refuse collectors who keep our neighbourhoods clean, the friendly face behind the till at our neighbourhood grocery store, the courier who delivers your parcels, the friendly old lady walking her dog that you pass every day, or the journalist writing a story about this report. A dagga user could be your neighbour, your best

friend, your brother, your mother, your father, your cousin, or grandparent. A dagga user is no different to a person who stops at the bottle store after work to buy a few beers to unwind after a long week at work. In fact, you probably know several dagga users that are normal people, going about their lives just like you and me, not hurting anyone or breaking any laws (well, except for the fact that they buy and use an illegal plant).

Some people use dagga (in various forms) to help them through cancer treatment, or to actually treat their cancer. Some use it because without that joint every few days, their Multiple Sclerosis would flare up. Some use it because without cannabis oil on a daily basis, their fibromyalgia would be so debilitating that they could not even play a few minutes of soccer with their child on the lawn. Others light up after a tough day at work. Others yet use it for their religion. Some use it to have a few laughs with their friends. Some use it to meditate, while others use it to relax. Some use it to focus or calm down, while others use it to celebrate their team winning the finals.

The fact is that our country has spent so much time focusing on punishing people who have been arrested because of a law that came into existence for racial reasons that we have lost sight of the fact that the plant could actually benefit us.

Hemp products (from paper to clothing to diesel (yes even your 4x4 can run on diesel made from dagga)), medicinal products that have been proven beneficial in treating a wide variety of diseases such as cancer, epilepsy (in minor children even), dementia, MS and a whole host of other diseases are all ways we can capitalize on the cannabis. If people want to use it recreationally, well, it is less harmful and much less addictive than alcohol (proven scientifically).

It simply does not make sense to keep cannabis illegal anymore. Science has proven it less harmful and safer than alcohol or sugar, and more beneficial than many medicines the doctors prescribe.

Financially, if put into the right frameworks, legal dagga can put big money (and foreign currency) into government's coffers. Not only from local sales but from exporting to countries where it is now legal for recreational or medical use.

Dagga is less harmful to society than alcohol or sugar. It is more versatile and beneficial than almost any other plant, and can be used to produce medicine, paper, clothing, diesel, and a wide variety of other products, even bricks.

It would be financially more beneficial to legalise it, control it and tax it. Keeping it illegal means quality can never be assured, pricing can be set by a drug dealer who also sells heroin and crystal meth, and we will never be able to study its medical benefits.

IN THE ENTIRE HISTORY OF MANKIND, SIMPLY BANNING SOMETHING HAS NEVER STOPPED IT. IT HAS ONLY FORCED THE SALE OR DISTRIBUTION OF IT UNDERGROUND, AND GIVEN CRIMINALS AND GANGSTERS THE POWER TO CONTROL IT.

Finally

The single biggest threat to dagga users in South Africa is not death, not overdose, not addiction or dependency or the chance of contracting a mental illness.

The single biggest threat to dagga users is the risk of being arrested and going to prison for ingesting a plant to either relax, enjoy themselves or medicate themselves for whichever reason they choose. A plant which was made illegal not because of scientific research or its properties, or even because it may destroy lives.

The only reason dagga is illegal in South Africa is because of racism, and a law which was passed for racial reasons.

It is very clear that the “war against dagga” is not a war against a “drug”. How can one declare war on a noun?

A war has been declared on people. People who choose not to use legal, highly addictive and destructive drugs such as alcohol or prescribed medication, but an illegal plant, which grows wild, and which has (scientifically speaking) more benefits and very little negative value.

The question begs to be asked, why is it still illegal?

It's not moral or religious objections, because science makes quick work of those.

If we just look at the taxed alcohol industry, the destruction it has caused, and continues to cause, it becomes clear that one of the only possible reasons that government is keeping dagga illegal is that they simply have not figured out a way to tax it.

There is no reason whatsoever, beside illicit financial gain, that it is still illegal.

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For the purpose of this report we will say that the arresting officer and holding cell officer are both a sergeant with a mid range pay grade of R138 963 per year, the investigating officer a warrant officer earning R174 264 per year, and that both the magistrate and prosecutor are mid-range on their respective pay grades i.e. R671 219 per year and R180 594 per year. Hence:

1. A sergeant earns R44.53 per hour (annual salary / 12 months / 21.67 working days / 12 hour shift) *
2. A warrant officer earns R55.85 per hour*
3. A prosecutor earns R86.81 per hour (annual salary / 12 months / 21.67 working days / 8 hour shift) *
4. A magistrate earns R322.65 per hour*
5. Court Interpreter – R115 212 – R135 714 per annum (SL 05) *

*These amounts may be substantially less than current salaries and pay grades.

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Disclaimer

Many of the financial figures used in the calculations in this report are based on older and possibly outdated figures. Calculations use the lowest possible figures from these sources.

Therefore, whilst the calculations are mathematically correct, the actual cost implications to our country are most possibly (and have a higher probability of being) much higher than of the figures quoted in this report.