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What harm? Kenyan and Ugandan perspectives on khat

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Abstract

What harm does khat actually do to users and the communities in which they live? In this article, the health-related, social, economic, and religious arguments of Kenyans and Ugandans for and against khat consumption are reported. The medical evidence for harm from khat is far from compelling, and the East African debate on khat is informed by local political discourses that often are closely connected to issues of ethnicity and the control of resources. As a result, the harm attributed to khat consumption is contested. The objective of most local efforts to curb the use of khat in East African towns is the reduction of social and economic ills. Yet, eliminating khat consumption would not reverse the problems that it is identified as causing.

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