

Issue: The Legalisation of Marijuana

Stakeholders

Drug companies	Youth	Families	Communities	Governments	Schools
Health care providers	Legal / Lawyers	Recreational users	Medicinal users	Farmers	Substance abuse councils

Issues (What is the issue, how is it framed, how do the various stakeholders understand the issue?)

Why is marijuana considered illegal (as compared with alcohol or cigarettes being legal) in many countries across the globe when it has been scientifically proven that it is not physiologically addictive? Alcohol and cigarette use/abuse kill millions yearly, yet there have not been any recorded deaths related to marijuana usage. The contradiction is startling.

Positions (What are the positions of the key stakeholders?)

Recreational users / Youth: “Marijuana is not a drug, it is a plant.” “It’s healthier/cleaner to smoke marijuana than to smoke cigarettes.” “It’s not bad for you; it’s good for you!” Cigarettes have more chemicals and tobacco is worse than marijuana and yet cigarettes are legal. If we are saying that the abuse of marijuana is bad, but compared to other drugs that are legal? Alcohol and cigarettes kill the most people yet they are legal.

Governments / Substance abuse councils: You should not have to depend on something to live your life normally. Out of the hundreds of substances in marijuana, only a couple are good for you; the rest are harmful. It’s a gateway drug.

Drug companies: Not everyone who takes drugs becomes addicted. Drug addiction isn’t a choice of lifestyle; it is a disorder of the brain or a genetic/chemical imbalance.

Legal / Lawyers: Comes down to the law and how that law affects the way society views marijuana. There is much scientific research that shows it is harder to overcome alcohol abuse than marijuana abuse. Two things to note here is that (1) it all comes down to abuse and (2) it does not mean that marijuana is not a dangerous drug/substance. All drugs are dangerous, so it goes back to the definition of whether marijuana is considered a drug. Also, if there is a discussion around legalization of marijuana, one has to address at what age would it be made accessible?

Farmers: An additional crop to focus on and diversify, increase their economic potential. Many industrial uses for hemp (fibre made from male cannabis plant), which is the strongest natural fibre in the world.

Medical users: It helps with the pain and brings back appetites of cancer and AIDS patients. It allows terminally ill people to “die with dignity”, without much pain and suffering. Helps with nausea, asthma, has anti-inflammatory properties and many, many more medicinal uses. Has been used as a medicine/medicine base for thousands of years.

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Interests (What are the interests of each party?)

Drug companies: Economical – how can we make money from this market? Is it something we can control and manage so that we are not “undercut” but individual persons dealing rather than the large corporations?

Governments: Economical, political & legal – how can we tax this drug and generate revenue for the country? Would our political stance affect our votes in future elections? What are the laws we would need to address to manage this new system within the community?

Recreational users: Emotional, spiritual and cultural – having the right and freedom to engage in a recreational activity that is not harmful to anyone, without having the prejudice of the people and the threat of legal action to scare them.

Farmers: Economical – able to create a livelihood by planting, harvesting and selling the plant – both as a herb and as hemp to maximize their output.

Youth: Emotional, spiritual and cultural – usage amongst young people would be highly monitored as they would be considered a “vulnerable” group. Most may cite usage to help them relax and keep them centred and grounded

Families: Emotional, spiritual and cultural – how does the usage of marijuana affect the wider family, especially if even if the practice is legalized it still is not viewed on as acceptable by the family?

Schools: Emotional, educational – how does legalized marijuana use affect the role and responsibilities of the schools to educate the youth who will be using or are interested in marijuana?

Medicinal users: Physical/health – usage of marijuana has had scientific positive effects on cancer patients. Persons using for medicinal purposes would like these positives highlighted and usage encouraged, it is not a drug but a herbal medicinal plant

Health care providers: Economical, legal, political – they need to ensure that they are making a profit if they are engaged in this field providing a service, adhering to the laws governing this and also following the governing political will. It is very difficult to make a profit from a naturally recurring substance such as marijuana.

Substance abuse councils: Emotional, spiritual – To provide support to persons who may “abuse” or “misuse” marijuana and will need support and guidance

Legal/Lawyers: Legal - How to manage the laws governing the use of marijuana, will it be controlled? The process of addressing the legal system, putting legal structures in place to govern this new system.

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Power (What are the power relationships among/between the different stakeholders?)

Governments have formal power on drug companies, legal/lawyers, youth, families, health care providers, communities, farmers, recreational and medicinal users, schools, substance abuse councils. In turn, all these stakeholders have informal power on governments

Legal/lawyers have formal power on youth, families, health care providers, communities, farmers.

Drug companies have informal power on youth, families, communities, health care providers

Farmers have an informal power on all the stakeholders