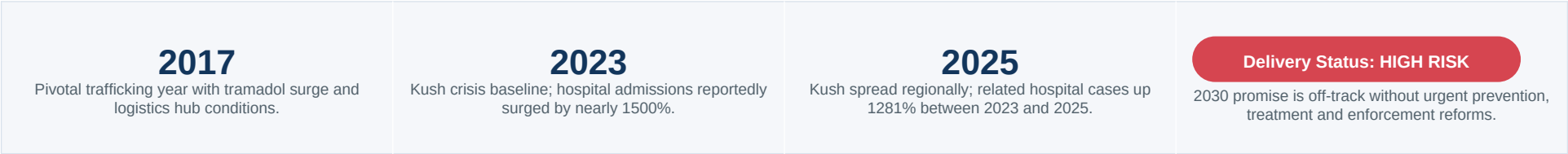


Youth Trend Analysis: Drug Proliferation and Abuse in Sierra Leone

Strategic objective: create an enabling youth sector environment that helps young people use their talents, undertake viable and innovative business activities, and benefit from global opportunities including digital penetration in socioeconomic activities.



Trend interpretation

Overall direction: worsening. Sierra Leone moved from trafficking vulnerability in 2017 to a severe domestic synthetic drug crisis by 2023, and then to a regional spillover risk by 2025.

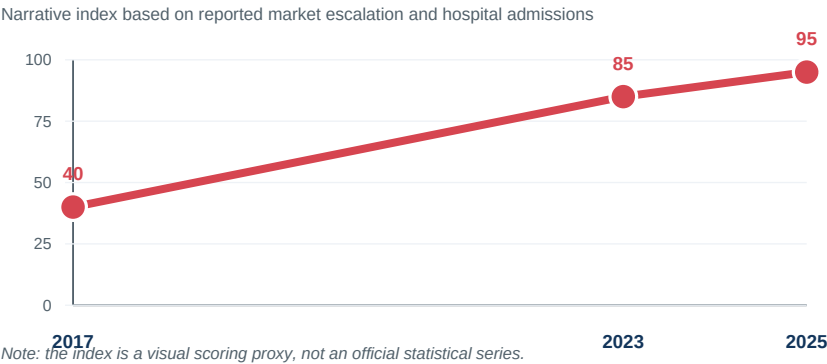
2017: the problem was mainly structural and criminal-market based, driven by unregulated tramadol imports, cocaine transit activity and synthetic drug redistribution.

2023: the challenge became a public health and youth protection emergency as Kush use escalated and hospital admissions rose sharply.

2025: the crisis deepened. Kush-related hospital cases reportedly rose by 1281% between 2023 and 2025, while synthetic drug markets expanded across West Africa.

Scorecard judgement: despite the MTNDP 2030 promise, the evidence points to high delivery risk. Stronger intervention is required across border control, youth services, community prevention, rehabilitation and labour-market reintegration.

Crisis severity trend index



IGR scorecard trend matrix

Year	Baseline / Status	Evidence signal	Development implication	Scorecard rating
2017	Pivotal year for trafficking and tramadol import surge.	Major logistics hub conditions for cocaine and synthetic redistribution.	Youth vulnerability increasing, with weak early-warning and regulatory response.	High concern
2023	Baseline year for severe Kush crisis.	Hospital admissions reportedly surged by nearly 1500%.	Problem shifted from criminal justice concern to national public health emergency.	Critical
2025	Crisis expanded and intensified.	Kush-related hospital cases reportedly increased by 1281% between 2023 and 2025.	2030 target at serious risk; urgent multi-sector response required.	Off-track

Priority action areas for 2026-2030

1. Establish a national youth drug early-warning dashboard linking hospitals, police, schools and border agencies.

2. Expand youth rehabilitation, mental health support and community counselling services.

3. Tighten pharmaceutical import controls, border intelligence and financial investigation of trafficking networks.

4. Build school, chiefdom and district-level prevention campaigns focused on Kush, tramadol and synthetic substances.

5. Link recovery programmes to skills training, entrepreneurship support and digital work opportunities for at-risk youth.

Sources: MTNDP 2024-2030, Page 104; Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime; user-provided scorecard notes.