



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A YOUTH-CENTERED **DRUG POLICY** IN NIGERIA

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FORWARD

Young people represent a critical population in any society, and any issue that affects them must be given the required utmost attention. The use of licit and illicit drugs is a growing challenge affecting young people in Nigeria. The country, just like others in West Africa, has for many decades been a major transit route for drug trafficking from South America to Europe, North America and parts of Asia. With the discovery of over fifteen clandestine methamphetamine laboratories and other recently published information, drugs are not just only in transit but are produced and widely consumed in the country. Unfortunately, the current drug laws in the country are those developed mainly to counter drug trafficking and diversion of controlled drugs. The development of the laws can also be said to be reactive rather than being proactive taking into account the realities of the issue and how it affects the growing population.

After many years of drug control efforts, with emphasis on use of repression and

the criminal justice system, Nigeria is yet to emerge out of its drug problem with the youth experiencing most of the negative outcomes. It is in this light that YouthRISE Nigeria embarked on a regional consultation in five geo-political zones to discuss with experts, young people and political leaders on the need to reform our laws and programs. The consultation process emphasized the need to take into account what is working and what is not. Of importance is the need for proactive measures that build on evidence, and apply them to the drug control response in the country. The recommendations in this document is an outcome of an extensive deliberation and we hope policy makers and program planners will find them useful as we work towards an effective drug control response in Nigeria.

Adeolu Ogunrombi

Project Coordinator, Youthrise Nigeria

BACKGROUND

The rising rate of illicit substance use in Nigeria has become a concern. This concern has been expressed by various actors of the society which includes the government, religious institutions, families and traditional leaders. The concerns are being expressed despite ongoing government efforts in addressing the situation. Nigeria has a burgeoning youth population with young people constituting over sixty percent of the population. Therefore, issues that affect them such as drug control require an utmost attention. It is however noteworthy that the current drug control response in Nigeria is reactive and places drug use within the confines of the criminal justice system. This has come with a lot of consequences such as human rights abuses, ill-health, problematic drug use and limited evidence-based treatment options. Furthermore, the rising use of all forms of substances, both licit and illicit is also an indication that punitive drug control is not an effective measure for drug prevention and control. Hence, a need for a review of the country's laws and policies as it relates to drugs.

The call for the review of Nigeria's drug control response is not in isolation. At the international level there is a growing call for countries to review their drug laws and policies to be able to effectively

“ We must have the courage to change policies that no longer fit the reality”

OLUSEGUN OBASANJO
FORMER PRESIDENT OF NIGERIA

address the situation. The outcome document of the April 2016 UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS), the African Union Commission (AUC) Specialized Technical Committee on Health, Population and Drug Control Ministers report, March 2017 and the report of the West African Drug Commission (WACD) consistently call for member states to shift their response to drugs use as a public health, human rights and development agenda. However, for this to happen in Nigeria there is need for legal and policy reform. An effective drug policy must also be youth centred because the effect of any policy option adopted by the country will mostly be borne by the youth. It is for this reason that YouthRISE Nigeria with support of Open Society Foundation carried out regional consultation among young people, experts and key stakeholders on key recommendations for a Youth-Centered Drug Policy in Nigeria.



A cross section of Participants at the North-West (Kano) regional consultation exercise discussing issues relating to drug-use and human rights



Discussion focused on the Prevention of Drug-use at the consultation exercise held at the South-South region (Akwa-Ibom)



A cross section of participants at the consultation exercise held in the North Central Region (Abuja)

THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

The consultation meeting was held in five geo-political zones of the country and provided a platform to engage stakeholders in an inclusive discussion on the current drug situation in Nigeria, document their opinions and develop a set of recommendations.

The five geo-political zones are: South-East (Enugu State); South-South (Akwa-Ibom state); South-West (Lagos state); North-West (Kano State) and North-Central (FCT, Abuja). The North-East zone was exempted due to the current security unrest in the region. These meetings were held as follows:

- South-East (Enugu State) - 12th & 13th June, 2017.
- South-South (Uyo, Akwa-Ibom State) - 15th & 16th June, 2017.
- North-West (Kano State) - 11th & 12th July, 2017.



A cross section of participants at the Consultation exercise held in the South-South region (Akwa-Ibom)

- South-West (Lagos State) - 15th & 16th August, 2017.
- North-Central (FCT, Abuja) - 13th & 14th September, 2017.

Participants at these meetings were strategically selected to involve key actors from the National Drugs Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA); State Agency for the Control of AIDS (SACA); Ministry of Health; National

Human Rights Commission; Legal Aid Council of Nigeria; Civil Society Organizations; Youth-Led Associations; Public Health experts; Legal Practitioners; School teachers, Student groups, Members of the media and People Who Use Drugs (PWUDs).

The recommendations provided in this report is through a synthesis of all the opinions provided and does not represent the opinion of any single institution represented at the event.



A cross section of Participants at the consultation exercise held in the South-South region (Akwa-Ibom) sharing ideas on Treatment and Harm Reduction.

Key Issues Discussed

► Prevention of Drug Use

- The age of drug initiation is lowering with drugs being more available and accessible to the young ones because of an unregulated drug market.
- Prevention efforts over the years lack evidence of what works.
- Drug prevention activities within the school settings are limited to awareness creation and sensitization programs. Much of these utilize scare tactics or fear mongering, lacking in facts.
- Many schools, including higher institutions lack an established system for responding to drug use among students.



Beating and embarrassing a child will not stop drug use. If it were possible, it would have stopped drug use a long time ago. What works is love, care and counselling”

FORMER DRUG USER

- Parents are usually at crossroads on how to engage their children on issues relating to drugs.
- Most schools have no standard age appropriate manual mainstreamed into the school curriculum for drug prevention education.
- Expulsion of students from educational institutions on account of drug use has not shown any benefit to the individual in most of the cases that have been reviewed.

Recommendations:

- Programs should be created to engage parents on how to communicate with their children on drug prevention and what an appropriate response should be when a child initiates drug use.
- Prevention strategies should take into account risk and protective factors for young people.
- A national age appropriate school based curriculum should be developed and mainstreamed into the educational program.
- Development and implementation of programs that build the skills of young people on how to evaluate every information they come across.
- Drug education should be about focusing on developing competency that build resilience in students and not just a narrow space of focusing only on drugs.
- Indicators to measure effectiveness of drug education should not be basically about abstinence but also measuring social connectedness and ability to make informed and intentional decision.
- Young people will always experiment so they should be provided with accurate and evidence based information about drugs at all times.
- Rather than placing a ban on essential and critical medications as a prevention strategy, government should put in place frameworks to adequately monitor and regulate pharmaceutical activities.

► Treatment and Harm Reduction

- There is high drug treatment need among Nigerian youths. Unfortunately, much emphasis is on arrest and seizure which has resulted in limited investment in treatment facilities.
- There is also a wide misinformation that everyone who uses drugs require drug treatment leading to forced rehabilitation and violation of rights.
- Many drug rehabilitation centers are lacking in human rights standards. The practice of inhumane treatment, apart from being ineffective, breeds anger, frustration and recidivism in young people.
- Injecting drug use has been reported in every part of the country, with those who inject sharing needles and engaging in practices that make them susceptible to HIV/AIDs, Hepatitis and other infections.
- There are young people who are dependent on opioids, who have been in and out of rehabilitation centers many times but are yet to recover because the available treatment options are limited.
- Stigma and discrimination against young people who use drugs is causing more harm than good. This is one of the reasons why some youths are sent out of their homes by family members who cannot bear the stigma. Stigma also prevents young people from seeking help when needed and makes reintegration into the society difficult.



Drug use is not an issue of morality. It is not limited to miscreants on the streets. I have had cause to counsel elites, women, and even religious scholars

NDLEA STATE COMMANDANT

Recommendations:

- It is very important to have a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for drug treatment services in Nigeria. The SOP should be developed based on evidence.
- Rehabilitation/Treatment centers should be monitored regularly. The standards should also include protection of human rights and dignity.
- Effort should be put in place to integrate drug dependence management into primary health care services to allow for universal coverage.
- A comprehensive harm reduction policy should be developed and implemented in Nigeria. This should include implementation of needle and syringe program.
- Treatment options should be expanded in Nigeria to include Opioid Substitution Therapy (OST).
- Provision should be made in the National Health Insurance Scheme to accommodate young people who are indigent and in need of drug dependence treatment.



Personally, to me, needle and syringe program is something I'll like to be done. It does not mean we are encouraging drug users, it's a way of saying they should protect themselves and the society"

FORMER DRUG USER

- Youth-friendly drop-in centers that provide specialized and integrated services to young people who use drugs should be established across the country.
- Health care service providers should be properly trained to reduce stigma against young people who use drugs in healthcare facilities.

► Human Rights and Legal reform:

- The use of arms, punishment or force has not been able to stop or curtail drug use, particularly among young people.
- The tagging of young people who use drugs by the law as criminals is inappropriate. The current drug law does not make a clear distinction between a person who is involved in the use of drugs and those involved in trafficking.
- Data from those serving prison terms does not reflect proportionality of the offence.



If you like put all the police and military on the streets, they cannot solve the drug problem in Nigeria”

LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENT



- The incessant arrests and incarceration of young people who use drugs, by the police under the guise of drug control often result in recidivism, extortion and series of human rights violation.
- The criminalization of people who use drugs fuels corruption, as law enforcement agents particularly the police exploit the situation for personal gains.

Recommendations:

- The NDLEA Act of 1989 should be reviewed to be humane and allow a Public health response towards those who use drugs. The Act should provide alternatives to incarceration for people who use drugs. Young people who use drugs should have more contact with social and health workers than with the criminal justice system.
- Thresholds for drug possession should be established to distinguish between a user and a dealer. The threshold should however be informed by evidence and not assumptions.
- There should be proportionality in sentencing for drug offences. A developmental approach should be provided as a response to young people who are caught within the illicit drug trade.
- There is need for close monitoring of rehabilitation centers by National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), and law enforcement agents should be mandated to undergo capacity building training on human rights.



**Prisons are no longer reformatory
instead they are deformatory.
Many come out of prisons worse”**

LEGAL EXPERT

- There should be the establishment of State Drug control Committees to involve Law Enforcement and Health Agencies, young people, Civil Society and Human Rights Organizations.
- Legal provision for proceeds from convicted drug traffickers should go into evidence based prevention programs, rehabilitation and treatment of drug users.
- Strengthen human rights response in the administration of criminal justice Act.

► Over- Arching Socio-Economic Development

- Unemployment and underemployment are strong factors contributing to increasing problematic use of drugs among young people.
- Many young graduates are getting involved in the drug trade, particularly as street dealers as a result of not being able to secure gainful employment.
- The number of homeless youths are increasing in many urban cities. Many are turning to drug use to escape their harsh realities.
- Many parents are finding it difficult to meet the basic needs of their families. The young ones are left to fend for themselves. Available opportunities are usually within the informal sector where they have to labour for long hours. Drugs are many times used as coping mechanism.

Recommendations:

- Formal education and skill acquisition should be institutionalized into rehabilitation programs. This will help in the post-treatment and reintegration into the society.
- Skill acquisition/Entrepreneurship should be institutionalized in the education curriculum.
- Government should invest more in youth empowerment programs which can serve both as preventive and rehabilitative against problematic drug use.
- Improving the overall economic situation of the country is key to youth development.

► New Metrics Issues:

- The drug control response for many decades have been measured majorly by the control of supply of drugs. This focuses on number of drug offenders arrested, size or volume of illicit drug seized, size of cannabis farm land discovered and eradicated. This attempt has undermined the needed comprehensive response to drug. It has shaped the narrative and placed everything about drugs within the criminal justice system. Setting new indicators is very important because indicators clearly represent the goals and objectives of a course of **action**.
- Indicators help to define what direction to give **priority to**.
- It helps in measuring and determining **impact**.
- Indicators are important in showing how to channel limited resources **effectively**.

Recommendations:

- There is a need to shift our focus from eradication of drug use to reduction of harm that results from drug **use**.
- New metrics for measuring drug control should be developed and these should focus on the following among many **others**:
 - Public Health Indicators
 - Human Rights Indicators
 - Socio-economic Indicators
 - Education Indicators



A group Photo of Participants at the South-East Regional Consultation exercise held in Enugu State



A group Photo of Participants at the North-central Regional Consultation exercise held in Abuja

Appendix

List Of Participants

► South-East Geo-political zone

S/N	NAME	ORGANIZATION
1.	Ochiabuto Modester	Help for Humanity International Initiative
2.	Nwokolo Francisca	National Human Rights Commission
3.	Dr Ezema Godian	Association of Public Health Physicians of Nigeria
4.	De. Onu Justus U	Federal Neuro-Psychiatric Hospital
5.	Dr Ohanyere Anthony	State Commandant, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA)
6.	Unogu Afamefuna C.	Queen's Model Secondary School Enugu
7.	Mmeka Calista U.	National Drug Law Enforcement Agency
8.	Ugwuagbo Paul Henry	Charity Heart for Good Health Initiative
9.	Egbuogu Pius C	National Drug Law Enforcement Agency
10.	Udichi Chuwudi	Charity Heart for Good Health Initiative
11.	Reuben Linda	Prisoners Rehabilitation & Welfare Action (PRAWA)
12.	Rotr. David Ukachukwu	Rotaract Club
13.	Okafor Grace Gift	
14.	Amb. Mark Onuoha	National Youth Council of Nigeria
15.	Okereke Chinwike	AFRILAW
16.	Uche Nwokocho	National Human Rights Commission
17.	Orame Chibuzo	ACF
18.	Abdulfattah A. Bakare	Legal Aid Council of Nigeria

19.	Mfam Mercy O.	Legal Aid Council of Nigeria
20.	Ezeh Matthew O.	University of Nigeria Students Bar Association
21.	Nonso Maduka	Bensther Development Foundation/Community Intervention Network on Drugs (CIND)
22.	Elekwuchi Chimezie	Urban Space
23.	Ugwu Francis S.	Ministry of Youth and Sports
24.	Chukwuemeka Uzoma	Prisoners Rehabilitation & Welfare Action (PRAWA)
25.	Christiana Ikpantan	YouthRISE Nigeria
26.	Oluseyi Kehinde	YouthRISE Nigeria
27.	Adeolu Ogunrombi	YouthRISE Nigeria

► South-South Geo-political zone

S/N	NAME	ORGANIZATION
1.	Bekong Ushie	National Human Rights Commission
2.	Magaret Udoh	Greater Tomorrow Initiative
3.	Hua Orduen	Legal Aid Council of Nigeria
4.	Victor Obot	Brokline Foundation
5.	Shedow Gaura	State Commandant, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA)
6.	Aniedi Emah Akpan	Drug Free and Preventive Healthcare Organisations (DAPHO)
7.	Patrick Eneyo	International Health Regulations (IHR)
8.	Bernadette J. Ekam	GTC
9.	Asukwo Etuk	ECEWS
10.	Clement Edoho	Akwa Ibom State Agency for the Control of Aids

11.	Nkereuwem Ekanam	Akwa Ibom State Agency for the Control of Aids	11.	Waziri Yahaya	Society for Family Health
12.	Mpong Moses		12.	Ibrahim Muhammed M.	Society for Family Health
13.	Jonathan Ofonime Etop		13.	Aminu S. Adamu	Society for Family Health
14.	Favour Effanga		14.	Ismaila Muhammed	Ministry of Information
15.	Ndifreke Aniedi Okon		15.	Habibu Lawan	Technology Incubation Centre
16.	Harrison Emmanuel Friday		16.	Abubakar Sadiq Ibrahim	Tamako Support Group
17.	Ndarake Eno-Mfon Okon		17.	Abdullahi Mohammed Nyako	Gamzaki Development Association
18.	Prof. Isidore Obot	Psychologist; Substance Abuse Expert & Consultant	18.	Hamisu Mohammed	Kano Youth Congress
19.	Christiana Ikpantan	YouthRISE Nigeria	19.	Bahayura Ahmad	Umma Support Initiative
20.	Oluseyi Kehinde	YouthRISE Nigeria	20.	Salisu Danbali kunya	Ministry of Health Kano
21.	Adeolu Ogunrombi	YouthRISE Nigeria	21.	Tijani Bashir	Al Mumuamai
			22.	Shafiu Yahaya	Ray Power fm.
			23.	Engr. DA Mohammed	Tagwaye Haske
			24.	Fatima Haruna	Tamako Support Group
			25.	Bello Abdu Magaji	
			26.	AbdulKadir Yahaya Umar	Tamako Support Group
			27.	Christiana Ikpantan	YouthRISE Nigeria
			28.	Oluseyi Kehinde	YouthRISE Nigeria
			29.	Adeolu Ogunrombi	YouthRISE Nigeria

North-West Geo-political zone

S/N	NAME	ORGANIZATION
1.	Hassan Umar	Dalsa Local Govt. Students Association
2.	Ismail Dankai	National Human Rights Commission
3.	Nura M. Idris	NASSI
4.	Ibrahim Idris Bala	Dalsa National Body
5.	Taisu Yusuf	Gamzaki Development Association
6.	Abdulhadi Abdullahi	Taimako Support Group
7.	Ajuzie Rosemary	National Drug Law Enforcement Agency
8.	AA Umar	Legal Aid Council of Nigeria
9.	Hamza Umar	State Commandant, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA)
10.	Ghazali Kabiru A.	Tamako Support Group

South-West Geo-political zone

S/N	NAME	ORGANIZATION
1.	Josephine Odikpo	Centre for Rights & Development
2.	Biebele Ajibola	Legal Aid Council of Nigeria
3.	Diana Joseph	EHRAAI
4.	Ebuka Chizoba	National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA)
5.	Moronfolu Adeniyi	Students for Sensible Drug Policy

6.	Cmdr. Kayode Adeniyi	Deputy Commandant, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA)	10.	Akufai Jonah Development	Creative Media Center For
7.	Ochubili Adaora Chioma	Legal Aid Council of Nigeria	11.	Segun Olaniyi	The Guardian Newspaper
8.	Awosika Harold Olumuyiwa	EHRAAI	12.	Amadi Dorathy Onyekachi	Federal Ministry Of Health
9.	Chibuike Paulinus	The Source Magazine	13.	Chigbundu Patricia	Care For Legal Assistance
10.	Emeka Ibua	The Drug Salvation Foundation	14.	Bisan Veronica	Kingdom Human Rights
11.	Dr. Sule Omolola	Lagos State Agency for the Control of Aids	15.	Akufai Kolebin Peter	Federal University, Lafia
12.	Wilson Ehihon Ighodalo	The Drug Salvation Foundation	16.	Alexandar Marcus Yahaya	Federal University, Lafia
13.	Kolawole Oreoluwa	YDHI	17.	Fadare Abimbola	Students For Sensible Drug Policy
14.	Xavier N.	The Oracle News	18.	Lim Pricilla	YouthRISE Nigeria
15.	Racheal Ubani	Crime Watch Foundation	19.	Abubakar Sadiq Idris	YouthRISE Nigeria
16.	Nwoguh Judith	National Human Rights Commission	20.	Adeolu Ogunrombi	YouthRISE Nigeria
17.	Olusesan Oshatimehin	Freedom Foundation	21.	Osesumhen Ugege	Heartland Alliance
18.	Christiana Ikpantan	YouthRISE Nigeria	22.	Christiana Ikpantan	YouthRISE Nigeria
19.	Oluseyi Kehinde	YouthRISE Nigeria	23.	Aisha Tafida	Parents Against Drug Abuse
20.	Adeolu Ogunrombi	YouthRISE Nigeria	24.	Joseph Amenaghaon	Open Society Initiative For West Africa (OSIWA)

North-Central Geo-political zone

S/N	NAME	ORGANIZATION
1.	Tete Priscilla	Hot FM 98.3
2.	Akinsunmade Dolapo	Students For Sensible Drug Policy
3.	Fortune M. Udott	Federal Ministry Of Health
4.	Sunday Adaji	Coalition Of Lawyers For Human Rights
5.	Onyekwelu Victoria	Legal Aid Council of Nigeria
6.	Anyanwu Chidara Precious	Students For Sensible Drug Policy
7.	Saidu Alcus	National Human Rights Commission
8.	Awobusuji Tayo	Student For Sensible Drug Policy
9.	Ada L. Okey Nwagbara	FCT Agency For The Control Of Aids

25.	Phillip Njag	YouthRISE Nigeria
26.	Oluseyi Kehinde	YouthRISE Nigeria
27.	Nonso Maduka	Community Intervention Network On Drugs
28.	Fatima Abubakar	YouthRISE Nigeria
29.	Folusho A. Adeleke	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
30.	Ahmed Yusuf	YouthRISE Nigeria

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