

WORKSHOP REPORT ON THE NEXUS BETWEEN DRUG AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE, VIOLENCE AND INSECURITY IN NIGERIA.

Overview

The workshop which held on the 10th of October 2024, was hosted by SSADASA, PACA and Cyd Sessions, at the Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR) on the Nexus Between Drugs /Substance Abuse, Violence and Insecurity in Nigeria.

Drug abuse is a scourge that has seemingly become inter-woven with the growth of our society. According to statista (2022), there was a significant increase in the number of drug use and crimes across the 6 geo-political zones between 2018 and 2019, the result of what we see today in our homes and society. The session covered a presentation of a comprehensive study, showing the distribution link in drugs and substances, its impact across states, underlying factors, and motives for action.

The findings amongst others, showed that substance and drug abuse has been a significant component in the alarming rise in violence and insecurity of in our communities. This underscores a critical call for help from all government agencies and organisations to address this huge challenge.

Our purpose is to support the establishment of a safe and healthy society that will foster the development of its citizen and the Nation at large.

Objectives of the Workshop

1. Highlight the critical catalyst that may be interacting with other factors to facilitate violence and criminality in Nigeria, especially insecurity and electoral crisis.
2. Foster Networking and Collaboration amongst key Agencies and Organisations.
3. Collective contribution to enhance a sustainable society in Health, Socio-economic and Security welfare.
4. Activities:
 - A welcome remark by the D.G., IPCR : Dr. Ochogwu welcomed participants and thanked everyone for honouring the call to duty, joining forces in combating the pandemic that threatens the foundation of our society.
 - Participants : SSADASA, IPCR , PACA Africa, Cyd Sessions, Office of the National Security Adviser (NSA), Office of the Chief Of Defence staff Department of State Service(DSS), Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, ministry for Health, Ministry for Women Affairs, National Emergency Management Agency.

- Overview of Study : Presented by Mr. Fabian Igbaji of Cyd Sessions

The accessibility of drugs and substance use across different geopolitical zone depends on a number of dynamics. These can include: (a) the aim for which the use is intended, (b) the distributors, (c) final users and other factors. Investigating the connections through retrospective events, reports and undergone studies reveals valuable information and point where intervention can be useful.

- Key Findings: Presented by Mr. Fabian Igbaji, Cyd Sessions

Insecurity :- Substance use leads to various degrees of crime.

-Violence and crime can lead to substance use.

-Substance use /violence and crime co-exist amidst common set of influences.

Health : -Addiction is a serious condition that affects both the individual and society.

-Often, breaking free from dependence requires institutional help, for many, this help only exists in the realm of wishes.

Drug Availability : The Availability and access to illicit drugs and substance is ravaging, disrupting lives and communities of great concerns.

Socio-Economic Disadvantages: The state of the economy creates pressure within the family units, this eventually results in dysfunctional households. The resultant dysfunction exposes children and young people to parental neglect and economic disadvantages. Neglect exposes young people to influences that they normally may not have been exposed to.

- Breakout Sessions and Discussion:

Participants were grouped into 3 Components , with each group numbering between 5 - 10 persons based on participants level of expertise and interest. This was done so as to engender the recommendation of solutions for the key findings of the study report (Health, Socio-Economic and Security). Using the findings shown, personal interest, stories and group discussion, participants were able to model sustainable interventions that if implemented, managed and monitored across various platforms, will yield progressive result.

Final recommendations were presented following a process of review, deliberation, and team acceptance. In addition, with further support from local communities, international agencies and organisations, there could be a reduction in drug abuse and violence by about 5 -7% if successfully implemented.

Group A: Rapporteur for findings around Health: Mr. Fabian Igbaji of Cyd Sessions

Group B: Rapportuer for findings around Socio-Economic: Mrs Mary Agbaji PACA Africa

Security C: Rappouter for findings around Security: Dr. Micheal , Department of State Service

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the review of the study by the experts and in line with international best practices, this study was adequately validated and adopted by experts representing the following institutions; Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR), Office of the National Security Adviser, Office of the Chief of Defense Staff, DSS, NSCDC, Representative of the states under study, Victims of Drug Abuse, Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, NEMA, made their recommendations among other individuals. The recommendations are categorized into three broad areas: Security, Socioeconomic implications, and the effect on Health. Experts advise that a brute force approach should be applied across these categories within a 5-10-year strategic plan that will address significant changes in drug and substance abuse in Nigeria and the ECOWAS Regional.

SECURITY

1. **Inter-Agency Collaboration:** There should be synergy across all uniformed personnel to combat drug abuse. Therefore, NDLEA should organize training for other security agents (government, private Sector, and CSOs) on how to manage drug-related problems, to setups a drug taskforce unit to fight against manufacturing, distribution, and sales of illicit drugs in Nigeria and the ECOWAS Region.
2. **The Keep Them Away Principle:** The Catch Them Young program should be established and championed by NDLEA, IPCR, SSADASA, PACA Africa, and other relevant CSOs, to set up clubs in schools, motor parks, and other related institutions. Educative programs against drugs and substance abuse be encouraged especially in both government and private secondary schools across Nigeria and the ECOWAS Region.
3. **Nationwide Survey to be conducted:** The experts recommended that a more inclusive nationwide survey is needed at this material time to understand the real nature of the drug-associated problems to come up with a more lasting solution.
4. **Capacity Building:** A comprehensive approach is required to strengthen the capacity of the security agencies and key CSOs like SSADASA and PACA Africa among others who work in the area of drugs and substance abuse reduction to engage the public through advocacy and sensitization programs.

HEALTH

5. **Prevention:** A more holistic approach of Advocacy in Government and private institutions, hospitals and other health institutions, religious stakeholders, traditional stakeholders, academia, and owners of schools, should be carried out

in other to ensure that the younger generation do not engage in drug-related practices and reduce drug and substance abuse in our communities.

6. To strengthen primary health centers by providing access to counseling at the grassroots level, training more personnel, and posting them to primary health care facilities across the country, these will prevent, control, and in most cases treat the already existing addicts among us.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC

7. The Federal and state governments through the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Women's Affairs, related government agencies, international development partners, and Donor agencies should partner with SSADASA and PACA Africa to organize a national campaign on drug and substance abuse and provide incentives to families affected by drugs.

8. A national policy should be established for social media censorship of all contents, parents regulating what children watch, a penalty for parents leaving children recklessly, and also establishing a professional caregiver institution charged with professional caregiving in other to prevent children from engaging in drug-associated crime and violence.

9. Establishment of Vocational Skill Development Centers in all 6 geo-political zones, to train the less educated and empower them with skills that will improve their well-being and contribute to GDP