

It is my singular honor and privilege to chair this lecture series on the topic: DRUG ABUSE AMONG YOUTHS IN AFRICA: IMPLICATION FOR NIGERIAN ECONOMY.

A burning issue that needs urgent attention not just for the economy but for the sustainability of mankind.

First and foremost let's dive in by looking at the following keywords:

Drug abuse:

Drug abuse is defined as "the habitual taking of illegal drugs." In the context of international drug control, drug abuse constitutes the use of control outside therapeutic international under substance indications, in excessive dose levels, or over an unjustified period of time. Tupper (2012).

Youth:

Youth is the time of life when one is young, and often means the time between childhood and adulthood (maturity), but it can also mean one's peak in terms of health or the period of life known as being a young adult.

Economy:

An economy encompasses all of the activities related to the production, consumption, and trade of goods and services in an entity, whether the entity is a nation or a small town.

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) said recent statistics have revealed that 40% of Nigerian youth between 18 and 35 years are deeply involved in the abuse of drugs.

The current health situation of Nigerian youths is disheartening and worrisome considering their engagement into hard drug abuses. They take hard drugs like Syrup, tramadol, Diazepam, cocaine, Shisha mix among others. The statistic is worrisome and has shown that the problem had reached an epidemic level in the country.

The societies we live in are predominantly made up of unskilled young persons who indulge in drug abuse and cannot be regarded as healthy and a developed one, since the abusers lose their potentialities to this activity.

Drug abuse has inflicted immeasurable harm on public health and safety in the country and Africa at large over the years, and threatens the peaceful development and smooth functioning of our societies. Today we will be looking at the implications of drug abuse on the Nigerian economy.

There are numerous consequences of drug abuse, and it ranges from volume of untimely deaths such as suicides, road accidents, violent crimes, laziness, mediocrity and subsequent impoverishment. To this end, homes are broken, dreams are shattered, and potential manpower is wasted as drug abusers struggle to sustain the habits embedded in this subculture. They therefore become burdens to themselves, families, the society, and the country at large. Unfortunately, young persons who are supposed to shoulder Nigeria's future development in terms of socio-economic aspect are constant promoters of this Sub-Culture, and anti- social activity of drug abuse.

With all of the aforementioned, it can be drawn that the effects of drug abuse can really be divided into two primary domains which are

A Social effects: There are numerous number of social effects of drug abuse in Nigeria which include

- I. financial losses: the financial losses and distress suffered by alcohol and drug related crime victims, increased burdens for the support of adolescents and young adults who are not able to become self- supporting, and greater demands for medical and other treatment services for these youth (Ashton, 1987).
- II. Relationship with crime/ increasing criminal activities: Some criminal activities like robbery, burglary, rape, vandalization of public properties kidnap and arm bandits etc. are associated with drug abuse, the congestion of penitentiaries where the government spends more in the maintenance of prisoners, and the growing numbers of destitute which our social welfare administration system cannot carter thereby depleting government's budget.
- III. Impact on public safety: people under the influence of drugs pose major safety risks and costs to people around them and the environment. For example, drug-affected driving accidents have emerged as a major global threat in recent years. It also increases number of insurgencies and unrest because 95% of the insurgences are drug addicted

IV. Drug abuse increase number of political thuggery which results to killing of innocent citizen

V. Drug addict increases number of mental disoriented persons in the country

#### B. Economic effects.

I. The economic effect looks at the loss of potential manpower, low productivity, and creation of an unfavorable environment for investors which of course will affect the Gross National Income as well as the internally generated revenue.

#### II. Impact on productivity

A further cost of drug abuse that is often cited is the loss in productivity that can occur when drug users are under the influence of drugs or are experiencing the consequences of their drug use (e.g., while in treatment, incarceration or hospital). Studies have put the costs of lost productivity borne by employers at tens of billions of dollars.

While in treatment or when incarcerated, drug users may be unable to participate in work, education or training, adding to the economic loss, in addition to the cost of treatment or incarceration. It should be noted that these productivity costs will be lower if job opportunities are already scarce as a whole

III. Government is spending a lot of funds on security and settlement of IDPs created by insurgents as a result of drug abuse instead of using such funds to provide basic needs and infrastructural development, It tarnishes the image of the country

IV. Drug abuse encourage corruption among Nigerians

V. It also encourage looters to loot public funds

VI. It causes political unrest in the country

After all has been said, we all have to come together and proffer meaningful solutions to curb the menace of drug abuse, and how can we (the societies at large and the government) intervene?

Fundamentally, we should work to reduce societal pressures on the youth arising from family disorientation, social media peer pressure depression that leads to drug abuse or even suicide.

1. Employment opportunities: Government should redouble its efforts to create more employment opportunities and empower youths to keep them busy to avert drug abuse. Government policies targeted at developing the society are more often than not mere paper work. The government should also ensure that through its policies, jobs are created, social services are rendered, and above all, its policies should be feasible and capable of implementation.

2. Community Participation: There should be largely involvement of communities by forming committees to fight drug abuse among its societies. This is a group of people living in an area. Community has a big role to play in prevention of drug abuse. Individuals, families, communities, and the entire society should ensure that moral values are inculcated in the youths, by joining the government's fight against the menace.

3. Institutions like the National Drugs Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) and the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) should be empowered to squarely deal with "Drug Barons" as well their traffickers, peddlers, and conduits. This is because at times, their performances are undermined by the threats they get as well as the purported connections such barons and the traffickers have with people in higher authority.

4. The mass media should facilitate the government's campaign against drug abuse, and avoid such thrilling advertisements and jingles like those of tobacco and alcohol (Liquor) etc. Meanwhile sensitization programmes should be channeled through this medium. On-

Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Based Community Organizations (CBOS) should encourage the sensitization campaigns against drug abuse as well as engage in rehabilitation programmes.

5. There should be proper scrutiny and licensing of patent medicine stores, and such should be operated by well-trained Pharmacists. Alongside this, street drug hawking should be discouraged since this can promote accessibility to drug abusers.

6. Lastly, educational Institutions at all levels whether public or private should organize workshops, lectures/symposiums to enlighten the people on the dangers of drugs and substance abuse.

We look forward to learning from the experts, our more experienced and knowledgeable guest speak to do justice to the topic.

Thank you.

#### References

1. United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 520, No. 7515.
2. Ibid., vol. 1019, No. 14956.
3. Ibid., vol. 1582, No. 27627.
4. General Assembly resolution S-20/2, annex.
5. See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2009, Supplement No. 8 (E/2009/28), chap. I. sect. C.