

# The Role Of Law Enforcement In Evidence -Based Substance Use Prevention.

By

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# Outline

- ▶ Introduction
- ▶ What is Evidence-based Prevention
- ▶ Levels of Prevention
- ▶ Barriers to Prevention Interventions/ Public Health Responses by Law Enforcement
- ▶ The Critical Roles of Law Enforcement in Substance Use Prevention
- ▶ Law Enforcement Practices That Can Support Substance Use Prevention/Public Health Practices.
- ▶ Conclusion.

# Introduction

- ▶ Substance use has impacted negatively on public health globally,
- ▶ Caused injuries,
- ▶ Lost income and productivity,
- ▶ Family and community dysfunction and death.
- ▶ Drug use around the world is on the increase in terms of the proportion of the world's population that uses drugs (UNODC 2020).

# Substance Use is a World-Wide Problem

Number of past-year users in millions  
2018



cannabis

192



opioids

30  
opiates

5  
8



amphetamines and prescription  
stimulants

27



"ecstasy"

21

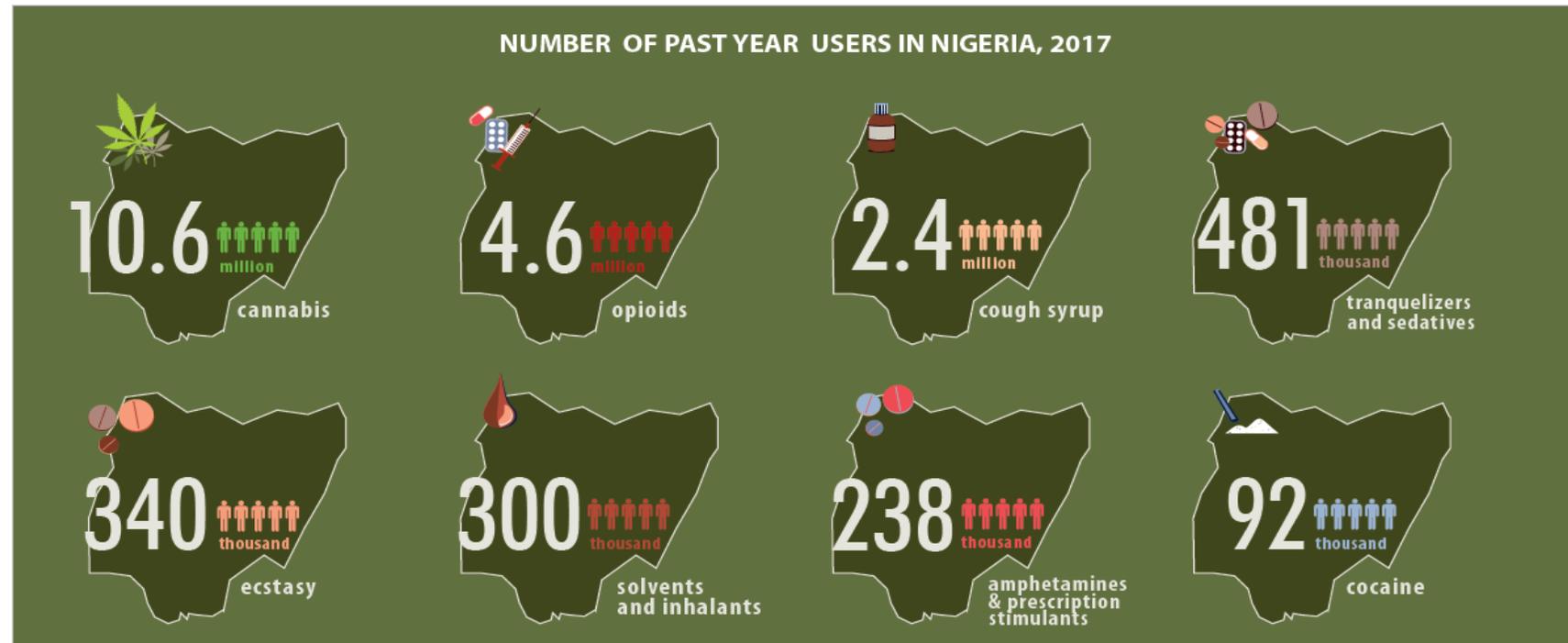


19  
cocaine

Around 269 million people used drugs worldwide in 2018

# Extent of Drug Use in Nigeria 2017

## MAJOR FINDINGS



- Estimated 14.3 million people (aged 15 and 64 years) had used drugs, *excluding* alcohol & tobacco (UNODC, 2018)
- 14.4% (range 14% - 14.8%) of population in Nigeria used drugs (UNODC, 2018)
- Much higher than the 2016 global prevalence of drug use estimated at 5.6%

# What is prevention/1

- ▶ Prevention is the application of prevention science to address the health and safety of individuals through improving socialization processes to enhance self-realization and participation in society (UNODC, 2015)
- ▶ Note that this definition goes beyond substance use.

# What is evidence-based prevention

- ▶ Evidence-based prevention refers to the prevention programmes, strategies and policies that have been rigorously tested under research conditions and found to be effective in changing substance use behavior and attitude.
- ▶ Instead of tradition, gut reaction, or single observations as the basis of decision making, evidence-based practices rely on data collected through experimental research.

# What is prevention/2

## ▶ Primary objective:

- ▶ Help people, particularly young people, to avoid or delay the initiation of the use of substances
- ▶ Avoid the development of substance use disorders (e.g. dependence).

## ▶ The general aim:

- ▶ The healthy and safety of our communities and for us all to realize our potential and
- ▶ Become contributing members of our community and society.

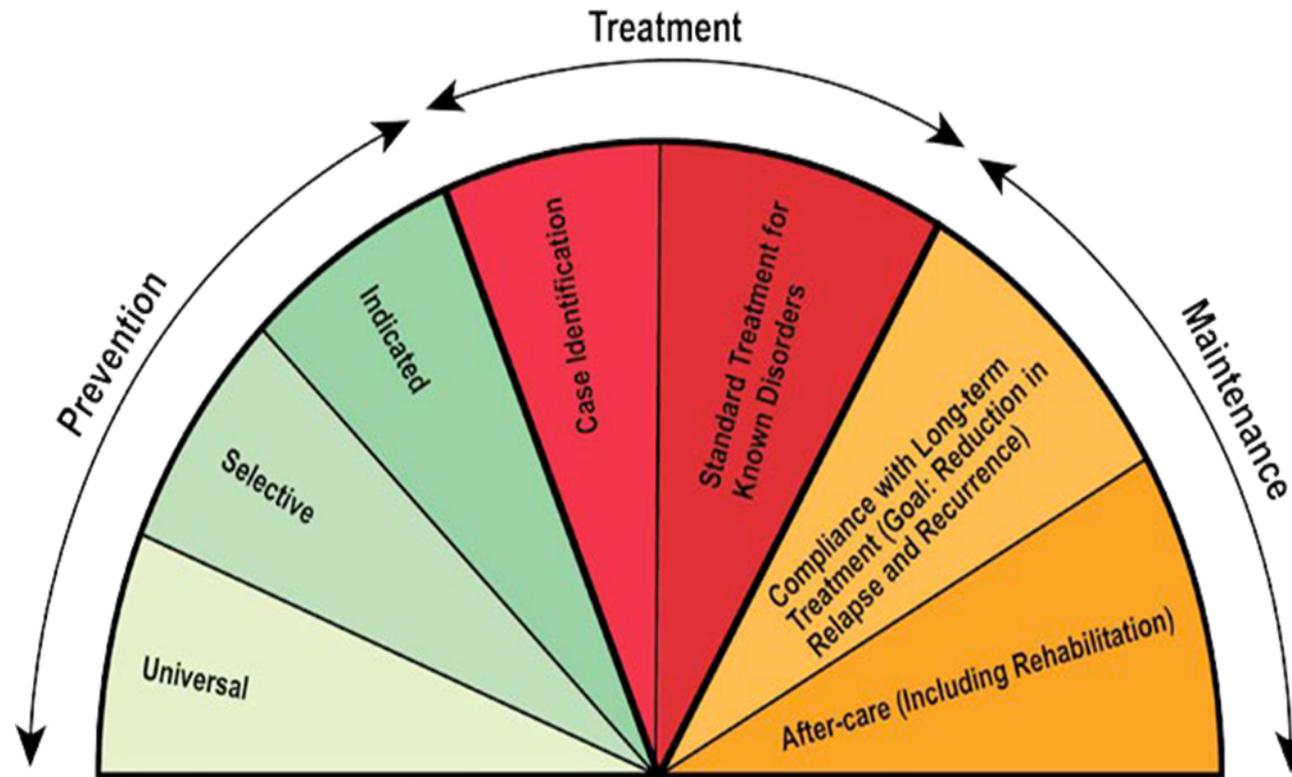
## Substance Users Represent a Range of Use Patterns and a Range of Interventions

In any population at any point in time we will find:

- Non-users
  - Resolute non-users
  - Vulnerable non-users
- Initial users with the potential to progress to abuse and substance use disorders
- Those who are already using and may or not be experiencing the consequences of their use.

# What is prevention/3

Substance Users Represent a Range of Use Patterns and a Range of Interventions



National Research Council, 1994

# What is prevention/4

- ▶ Prevention, treatment, and maintenance are an integrated whole in the array of services needed for all populations exposed to substance use.
- ▶ The three levels of prevention interventions aim at making an individual drug free and minimizing the problems associated with its use.
- ▶ Ultimately aim at making the individual healthy and productive in the society.

## General Law Enforcement Views

- Law enforcement agencies in the area of drug control predominantly focus on enforcement of drug laws and dealing with the consequences of illicit drug use
- Law enforcement can often develop very negative attitudes towards illicit drug use
- Many law enforcement officers may not be initially supportive of various drug treatment services and programmes ...

# WHY Law Enforcement Reluctance to Support Public Health Response/1



# Some Reasons for Law Enforcement Reluctance to Support Public Health Response/1

- Public health response—including harm reduction interventions—viewed as being in conflict with law enforcement goals
- Suspicion that health service intervention sites will attract People Who Use Drugs as well as possible drug dealers that may prove disruptive to others
- Concerns that existence of any harm reduction program will compromise prevention of drug use and treatment

## Some Reasons for Law Enforcement Reluctance to Support Public Health Response /2

- Public health response approaches might ‘increase drug use’ by not stressing the ‘SAY NO TO DRUGS’ or zero-tolerance approach
- Effective approaches and HIV interventions for people who inject drugs are viewed as ‘too liberal’
- Health services for drug users may deny the ‘innocent’ or non-drug users of medical treatment, especially where such services are limited

# WHY are the Roles of Law Enforcement Critical



# Roles of Law Enforcement/1

- Ensure everyone lives in a safe and secure environment
- Law enforcement do not function in isolation. They are part of the community, playing a critical role in protection and maintenance of public health
- Long history of working across a range of public health issues
- Gatekeepers to criminal justice system
- Interface and interacting with broad ranging community members

# Roles of Law Enforcement/2

- Law Enforcement are Well Placed to Steer Drug Users to Assistance
- Law enforcement are there 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- Law enforcement have frequent contact with dependent and problematic users
- Law enforcement have contact with drug users at 'treatable moments' (times of crisis)

- Law enforcement can be the best friend, or the worst enemy, of a public health response
- Unsupportive or unaware of public health services can severely disrupt functions of intervention and programmes
- Law Enforcement behaviour towards injecting users can be one of strongest determinants of whether behaviour will be conducive to transmission of HIV or not
- Critical need for a supportive and enabling environment for public health and harm reduction interventions to reduce HIV infections among People Who Inject Drugs (PWID)

## Law Enforcement Actively Targeting Public Health Services Will Lead to:

- Decline in the number of drug users in health services
- Increase risky injecting practices and other associated harms among those that inject drugs
- Increased movement of PWIDs to other areas of town or city, resulting in less contact with health service providers
- People Who Use Drugs (PWUDs) highly reluctant to engage generally with service providers for fear of arrest. Services find it difficult to find them

**WHAT** Are The Law Enforcement Policies and Practices that Successfully Support Public Health Response Approaches



## Law Enforcement Policies and Practices that Successfully Support Public Health Response Approaches/1

- Provide support for harm reduction programmes such as needle and syringe programme.
  - Use of discretion in attending to drug overdoses and policing near harm reduction services.
  - Law enforcement should not conduct unwarranted patrols and person checks or conduct other activities within the immediate vicinity of the service for PWUDs or it may act to disrupt or deter people from using such services
  - Law enforcement should not arrest peer educators or outreach workers while they are performing their primary duties of providing services to PWIDs when the peer educators or outreach workers have not committed any offences in the course of their work

## Law Enforcement Policies and Practices that Successfully Support Public Health Response Approaches/2

- Law enforcement should not arrest PWID when they are detected with injecting equipment and no other offence is committed
- Law enforcement should ensure the safety of drug users while in custody
- Support Community Drug-Prevention Programmes
  - Participate in Technical Working Groups to provide support and act as local level multi-sectorial steering committee in the community.
  - Initiate and manage multimedia campaigns raising public awareness of public or social policies.
  - Help in creating healthy macro-level environment that strengthens the community and minimizes negative influences.
  - Implement and enforce policies on accessibility, age of use, purchase and sales of tobacco and alcohol.

## Law Enforcement Policies and Practices that Successfully Support Public Health Response Approaches/3

- ▶ Encourage entry into drug treatment services through a range of programs:
  - ▶ Provide referral information to people in the community
  - ▶ Provide alternative to incarceration for PWUDs while in contact with the criminal justice system
    - ▶ Warning
    - ▶ Caution
    - ▶ Arrest and referral
    - ▶ Drug diversion programme
    - ▶ Drug court

# The Role Of National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) In Substance Use Prevention/1

- ▶ Nigeria's deliberate effort at evolving an Institutional Framework for dealing with the drug problem led to the establishment of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) in 1989 with dual responsibilities:
  - ▶ Drug Supply Reduction
  - ▶ Drug Demand Reduction

## **Drug Supply Reduction/ Law Enforcement**

- ▶ Through its law enforcement strategies, the Agency plays significant roles in reducing the availability and accessibility of drugs through the various illicit drug supply chains
- ▶ Support public health responses to drug control
- ▶ As the lead agency for drug control in Nigeria, NDLEA collaborate with stakeholders towards a balanced approach of drug demand and supply reduction

# The Role Of National Drug Law Enforcement Agency In Substance Use Prevention/2

## **Drug Demand Reduction**

- ▶ Develops and implements sustainable sensitization and prevention programmes at all levels and target populations:
  - ▶ School
  - ▶ Workplace
  - ▶ Community
  - ▶ Family
- ▶ Counselling and rehabilitation services for PWUDs
- ▶ Referral services

# Conclusion

- ▶ The role of law enforcement is key in implementing evidence-based substance use prevention programmes / public health responses in the society. Public health efforts are negatively affected without the active participation and support of law enforcement.

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