

CONCEPT NOTE

Youth Engagement Virtual Session – ISSUP Togo

Mobilising Youth for Substance Use Prevention and Social Inclusion

21st March 2026

1. Background and Rationale

Substance use has become an increasing concern in Togo, with significant implications for public health, human capital development, and social cohesion. This issue is closely aligned with key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).

Available data highlight concerning trends. Alcohol remains the most commonly used substance, accounting for approximately 43% of reported cases, followed by cannabis (26%) and diverted opioids such as tramadol (19%) (Source: national report relayed by Togofirst, 2023). In addition, alcohol consumption prevalence can reach as high as 62.7% in certain population groups (Source: Ministry of Health, Togo). The age of first exposure typically falls between 11 and 19 years (Source: Togofirst, 2023), indicating early vulnerability among young people. More broadly, youth aged 10 to 25 represent the most affected group in terms of substance use (Source: ISSUP Togo country profile).

These trends have direct consequences on educational outcomes, employability, and social stability. They also exacerbate existing vulnerabilities, particularly in relation to mental health and social exclusion. Despite ongoing efforts, responses remain largely curative and institution-driven, with limited involvement of young people as active contributors to prevention

efforts. This gap reduces the effectiveness and sustainability of interventions at the community level.

In this context, there is a clear need to promote a more inclusive and preventive approach by actively engaging young people as agents of change capable of influencing behaviours within their communities.

2. Objective of the Session

1. **Initiate a structured youth engagement dynamic in support of substance use prevention efforts led by ISSUP Togo**
2. **Raise awareness of substance use challenges in Togo**
3. **Promote a preventive and inclusive approach to addressing substance use**
4. **Highlight the strategic role of youth in driving sustainable solutions**
5. **Encourage youth participation in future activities**

3. Target audience

The session is primarily intended for students, young professionals below 25 years old. A total of approximately 30 participants is expected, allowing for meaningful interaction and active participation.

The session will take place on **21 March 2026, from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.**, in a virtual format. The online platform will be communicated to registered participants in due course.

4. Session Structure

The one-hour session will be designed to combine knowledge sharing, lived experience, and a strong call to action.

It will begin with a ten-minute opening segment, introducing ISSUP Togo, outlining the national context, and highlighting the link with the Sustainable Development Goals. This introduction will set the stage and emphasise the central role of youth in driving social change.

The first intervention, lasting up to twenty minutes, will be delivered by a public health or addiction specialist. It will focus on substance use trends among youth in Togo, key risk factors, and the associated health and socio-economic impacts. This segment will provide an evidence-based foundation for the discussion.

The second intervention, also limited to twenty minutes, will be delivered by a young leader. This contribution is essential to bring forward the voice of youth by sharing real-life perspectives, peer dynamics, and the social realities surrounding substance use. It will also highlight how young people can play an active role in prevention and community transformation.

The session will conclude with a ten-minute interactive segment, allowing participants to ask questions, share reflections, and express their interest in engaging further. This segment will also present the next steps, including opportunities to join a youth engagement initiative under ISSUP Togo.

5- Expected Outcomes

- Increased awareness and understanding of substance use challenges among participants
- Improved recognition of the importance of prevention and youth involvement- Identification of a core group of motivated young volunteers
- Strengthened visibility of ISSUP Togo among young audiences- Initial interest and commitment towards a structured youth engagement initiative

Next Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Establish a Youth Task Force composed of selected committed participants- Create a communication channel (e.g., WhatsApp or email group) to maintain engagement- Design and launch pilot activities (school outreach, awareness campaigns, digital engagement)- Provide basic orientation or training for youth volunteers on prevention approaches- Develop a structured ISSUP Togo youth engagement framework aligned with national priorities- Explore partnerships with universities, youth organisations, and community actors
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6 - Conclusion

Addressing substance use in Togo requires a comprehensive approach that combines technical expertise with strong community engagement. In this regard, the active involvement of young people is essential to ensure sustainable and meaningful impact.

This session represents a first step towards building a structured youth engagement dynamic, positioning young people as key actors in prevention and social development. It marks the beginning of a collective effort to promote a healthier, more inclusive, and resilient society in Togo.