

The Role of Drug Supply Reduction in Addressing Drug Use in Nigeria

The NDLEA Experience

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ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Femi Babafemi

Director, Media and Advocacy, NDLEA

- Appointed Director, Media and Advocacy of the NDLEA in January 2021, leading the Agency's public communication, press relations, and advocacy campaigns nationwide.
- Femi Babafemi is a seasoned communications strategist and law enforcement spokesperson with three decades of experience in journalism, public affairs, and institutional advocacy
- Holds an M.Sc. in Public and International Affairs from the University of Lagos and a B.A. in English Language from Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.
- Trained in communication strategy, public relations, and strategic people management at RIPA London, Lagos Business School (Pan-Atlantic University), and The Management School, London. He has also undergone extensive training in Drug Prevention, Treatment and Counselling (DPTC), reinforcing his standing as a well-rounded voice at the intersection of media, public policy, and law enforcement communication.
- Serves as the Agency's principal spokesperson, regularly briefing the Nigerian and international media and public on NDLEA operations, drug seizures, and prosecutions.



INSTITUTIONAL MANDATE

The NDLEA at a Glance

MANDATE

Nigeria's lead agency for eliminating the growing, processing, manufacture, sale, exportation, and trafficking of illicit drugs; and for coordinating the enforcement of all laws on narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

GUIDING FRAMEWORK

Operations are anchored on the National Drug Control Master Plan (NDCMP) — Nigeria's multi-sectoral roadmap coordinating supply reduction, demand reduction, access to controlled medicines for medical & scientific purposes, alternative development & sustainable livelihoods, disruption of illicit drug economy, governance, financing & coordination, which are the updated pillars for the next five (5) years.

A BALANCED, TWO-PILLAR STRATEGY

Under Chairman/CEO Brig. Gen. Mohamed Buba Marwa (Rtd), the Agency has pursued a balanced strategy that combines robust supply reduction with expanded demand reduction — treating enforcement and public health as two arms of one mission.

“Behind every arrest, conviction and seizure are lives saved, families protected and communities made safer.”

THE CONTEXT

Why Supply Reduction Matters Now

+40%

Projected rise in drug use across Africa by 2030 (UNODC projection), as against 11% globally.

Transit corridor

West Africa remains a major transit route for cocaine trafficking between Latin America and Europe.

Shifting threat

Growing abuse of synthetic substances, prescription opioids, new psychoactive substances and poly-drug use among young people.

Digital evasion

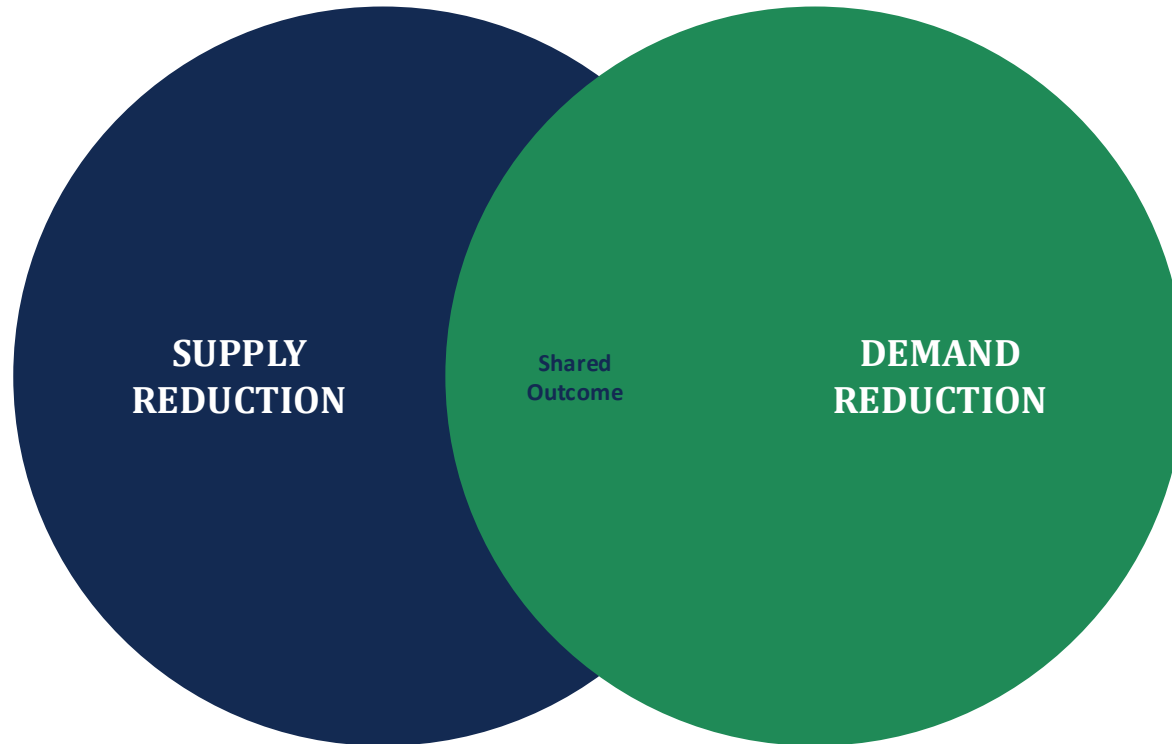
Traffickers increasingly rely on encrypted platforms, the dark web and complex financial channels to evade enforcement. A typical example of this is the Simon Amadi's case that involved multi-year, multi-country to dismantle in April 2026.

Mexican Drug Cartels threat

With the pressure on drug cartels operating in South America by the US Government, the cartels have now been looking towards other parts of the world especially Africa to set up their methamphetamine production lines. The recent dismantling of their meth labs by NDLEA in Enugu, Ogun, Oyo and Ebonyi attests to this

FRAMEWORK

Supply Reduction and Demand Reduction: One Continuum



Interdiction · Prosecution · Border & maritime control · Asset forfeiture · Financial disruption

Prevention · Treatment & rehabilitation · Counselling · Community reintegration

Reducing supply constrains availability and disrupts organised crime.

Reducing demand lowers the number of people who use drugs in the first place.

Neither works in isolation — together they narrow the space in which the drug economy operates.

OPERATIONAL STRATEGY

Six Pillars of NDLEA Supply Reduction

1

Intelligence-Led Interdiction

Real-time intelligence sharing and targeted operations at airports, seaports, land borders and highways to intercept consignments before they reach communities. In the last five years, the Agency has arrested 93,790 drug offenders including 250 drug barons with 15.7m kilograms of assorted illicit drug worth trillions of naira seized.

2

Prosecution & Asset Forfeiture

Fast-tracked prosecution of traffickers and barons, paired with confiscation of criminal proceeds to dismantle the economic base of trafficking networks. Within the same period a total of 16,485 offenders have been successfully prosecuted and convicted in the court, while assets worth billions of naira have been forfeited to the Federal Government by the convicts.

3

Border & Maritime Control

Joint operations with Customs, Immigration, and maritime agencies to secure land borders and coastal entry points against trafficking.

4

Disruption of Illicit Financing

Financial surveillance and investigation to trace and freeze the money-laundering channels that sustain cartels. The Agency through its Directorate of Assets and Financial Investigation: Proceeds of Crime Management as well as Prosecution and Legal Services has more than ever before focused and destructed the financial backbone of drug syndicates.

5

Cartel & Network Dismantling

Coordinated takedowns of transnational syndicates, including cross-border cartels and clandestine drug-manufacturing operations, especially the Nigerian-Mexican meth cartels, four (4) of which have been dismantled this year alone with five Mexicans and their local collaborators arrested and now facing prosecution.

6

Community-Based WADA

Local intelligence networks and community partnerships that extend the Agency's reach beyond formal checkpoints through our War Against Drug Abuse (WADA) social advocacy initiative and entrenching alternative and sustainable livelihoods in place of illicit cropping.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Supply Reduction in Numbers

Cumulative results: Jan 2021 – August 2026

93,790

Drug offenders arrested

15.7M kgs

Illicit drugs seized

£Trillions

Estimated value of seizures

16,485

Convictions secured

250 major drug barons apprehended over the last five years — including cross-border cartels, clandestine methamphetamine manufacturing operations, and international money-laundering networks.

LOOKING AHEAD

The 2026–2030 National Drug Control Master Plan

Building on the successes achieved under the 2021–2025 framework, the new Master Plan responds to a changing threat landscape while deepening the supply–demand balance.

Alternative Development

New pillar promoting sustainable livelihoods to address the socio-economic conditions that fuel the drug economy at its roots. The pilot scheme of AD in three (3) communities in Ondo state has been very successful, and we look forward to this spreading across the country

Intelligence-Led Financial Disruption

Sharper focus on illicit drug financing through coordinated investigations and enhanced financial surveillance.

Countering Digital Trafficking

Strengthened capacity to track encrypted communications, dark-web marketplaces, and digital payment channels used by traffickers.

Multi-Stakeholder Governance

Continued coordination across government, international partners (UNODC, EU, ECOWAS), civil society, and the media.

From Enforcement to Recovery: The WADA Approach

WAR AGAINST DRUG ABUSE (WADA)

The Agency's nationwide sensitisation campaign takes prevention messaging directly into schools, barracks, and communities — reaching students, teachers, and local leaders with education on the dangers of drug use. The Agency has conducted in the last five years, 17,213 advocacy programmes with over 6million participants.

COUNSELLING, NOT CRIMINALISATION

In appropriate cases, drug users identified in operations are referred for counselling and rehabilitation support rather than prosecution alone — reflecting the understanding that the person who uses drugs is often also a patient. A total number of 53,843 persons have been successfully counselled and treated through the 31 rehab centres managed by the Agency across the country within the same period.

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR THIS AUDIENCE

- Every seizure disrupts a supply chain — but every referral to treatment interrupts a cycle of use.
- Enforcement data (seizure patterns, trafficking routes, substances in circulation) is a rich and vital input for demand-reduction planning.
- Practitioners and policymakers benefit from a shared operational picture across both sides of the response.

HONEST REFLECTION

Challenges and Lessons Learned

CHALLENGES

Evolving trafficking methods

Encrypted platforms and dark-web marketplaces require continuously updated digital-forensics capability.

Resource and capacity limits

Nigeria's land and maritime borders demand surveillance capacity that must keep pace with trafficking innovation.

Stigma around treatment

Public stigma still discourages voluntary treatment-seeking, limiting the reach of demand-reduction referrals.

LESSONS LEARNED

Partnerships extend reach

Joint operations with Customs, Immigration, and international bodies (UNODC, EU, ECOWAS, INTERPOL, US-INL, US-DEA, UK-HOIO, UK Border Force, UK-NCA, French Police, German BKA etc.) multiply operational impact.

Communication builds trust

Transparent, regular media engagement strengthens public cooperation and agency accountability. The Agency has over the past five years built a formidable communication infrastructure including our own radio station, CleanBeat 91.5fm to maintain continuous engagement with the Nigerian public and stakeholders.

Balance sustains legitimacy

Pairing enforcement with visible investment in prevention and rehabilitation sustains public and political support.

IN CLOSING

Supply Reduction Is Not the Opposite of Demand Reduction —It Is Its Partner

- Enforcement and treatment succeed together, not in competition, for the same population.
- Nigeria's scale of seizures and arrests only matters if paired with growing investment in prevention and rehabilitation — which it is.
- International, cross-sector collaboration — enforcement, health, academia, NGOs, CSOs, media and professional bodies like ISSUP, is the multiplier for every pillar in this presentation.

*Together, reducing supply, reducing demand is
tantamount to protecting the future.*

**Thank you for your
attention**

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