



Tackling the Illicit Drugs Use in Nigeria: The Need for Policy Appraisal

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ABSTRACT In spite of the profundity and scope of the current drug control activities of the government, illicit drug use has become more prevalent in Nigeria in recent years. While, recent development in drug addiction studies emphasises treatment and rehabilitation of drug-addicts as a viable means of assisting recovering drug-addicts reintegrate successively into the community; current drug control efforts in Nigeria rely rigidly on law-enforcement, even when it contradicts international drug policies and produces unintended negative consequences. Relying mainly on secondary sources of data collection, this paper examines the sanction-approach option of drug control policy of the government and questioned the associated “unintended negative consequences” of such policies, which includes widespread human right abuses. This paper concludes that the Nigerian drug control policy should be revised because it is reactive, punitive and subjects drug users to stigmatisation, marginalisation and social exclusion without making recourse to the development of appropriate rehabilitative models.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of drug use and abuse is a serious global problem; indeed, this menace has attracted the attention of both the national and international actors over the last five or six decades (UNODC 2013; Fraser et al. 2014). Although the problem is generally not new in the literature, yet, it poses a significant threat to the health, the social and economic fabric of families, communities and nations. The increasing rate in the number of people becoming addicted to various psychoactive and other illicit drugs in recent times has consequently contributed to both national and international tensions. Of the 246 million drug users in the world in 2015, 27 million are estimated to suffer from drug addiction and related disorders (UNODC 2015). This high level of cases of drug abuse and addiction in recent times has culminated into problems such as an increase in violence and crime, HIV/AIDS diseases, and collapse in the social structure (UNODC 2007, 2008, 2015).

The problem of drug use and addiction is firmly established in the sociological lexicon globally; and this has generated a lot of interest in social research, statistics and policy areas. The fact, however, that drug use and addiction has placed a significant burden on individuals and

societies has necessitated greater attention from the public health community, civil society bodies and appropriate policy responses needed to address the associated health and social problems (Oshikoya and Alli 2006). However, with increasing number of young people becoming involved in the act of illicit drug use every year; and the fact, that many of the so-called occasional, recreational drug users are gradually gravitating to problematic substances users; tackling the issue of drug use, abuse and other associated problems have become a topic that is hotly debated in many parts of the world.

Within this climate, responses to high rates of drug use and addiction in many parts of the world in the last decades have increased significantly, and the availability, accessibility and diversity of such drug control mechanisms in many of these countries have also assumed an upward spiral. In effect, there has been a significant increase in the number of drug control policies and institutional frameworks of governments and relevant international bodies and organisations. In short, the global multi-level and multi-dimensional war on illicit drugs has over the intervening millennia gradually culminated into the creation of local, regional and international legal frameworks and policy documents, which have witnessed several modifications since the dawn of the 20th century.

Prominent among these drug control frameworks and instruments are: the 1912 Opium Convention in Hague; the United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs (1961); the UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971; the UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances in 1988; and many other regional/continental Drug Action Plans and Strategies. In short, the overall aim of these instruments and policies is to significantly reduce the prevalence of drug use and its attendant social, economic and health implications.

Scrutiny of these global and regional drug control policies revealed a range of measures, strategies and approaches enacted mainly to ensure that the prevalence of production, trafficking, sales and the use of the illicit drug are adequately tackled. Measures such as law-enforcement option; treatment (medically and psychologically), rehabilitation, reintegration, and some other non-custodial sentencing constitute the primary sanctions in most of these legal and regulatory frameworks enacted for tackling illicit drug use and other associated vices. Globally, the ultimate aim for formulating some of these strategic policies and institutional structures is to assist countries in stepping up activities and efforts necessary to prevent the occurrence of new cases of drug abuse and addiction. One other vital reason for the enactment of such policies both locally and internationally is to ensure that treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes are made available and accessible for drug abusers and addicts.

Of all the measures listed in most of the global, regional and local drug control policies as means of tackling illicit drug use and its other associated activities, none is recognised to be overused and counterproductive like sanctioned approach, which is often applied in the form of imprisonment. Even though there is a rise in the overall use of imprisonment throughout the world, there exists little or no evidence to attest that its increasing use has so far improved public safety (UNODC 2007). As a matter of fact, the number of prisoners in the world is growing, and the reality is that the rise in the numbers of prisoners worldwide is without doubt leading to overcrowding in prisons all across the globe (Walmsley 2005).

Law-enforcement Approach: Nigerian Most Preferred Drug Control Policy

In Nigeria, the issue of illicit drugs use and trafficking is a significant problem that affects all and sundry. The adverse impact of the cultivation, production, traffic, and abuse of illegal drugs is profound; though this is not visible to many people due to the clandestine nature and the way the affected drugs find their way into the society (NDLEA 2012; NDCMP 2015). To counteract drug issue and its associated problems, the successive administrations in Nigeria have over the years embarked on various cross-cutting tasks to combat the physical, psychological, physiological and socio-economic maladies attributed to illicit drugs and trafficking in the country (NDLEA 2012).

However, the surge in drug and crime configuration in the country has made the law-enforcement option a key feature of approaches adopted in responding to the challenges of drug trafficking, production and use in the country (NDCMP 2015). Over the years, successive Nigerian governments had ratified major national and regional drug and crime conventions to support various anti-drug and anti-crime initiatives, programmes, and policies. Also, administrations had enacted several anti-drugs and anti-crime legislation coupled with the establishment of several national agencies to coordinate and ensure the effectiveness of anti-drug and anti-crime policies that was made. As a matter of fact, successive administrations have been found to place more emphasis on law-enforcement approach in Nigeria at the expense of other drug control options such as treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration due to factors such as, absence of harm reduction programmes in the country, inadequate counselling services, emphasis on abstinence, availability of treatment and continuous care in few hospitals, and the fact that the Non-governmental and faith-based organisations only offer few services in the area (NDCMP 2015).

Within the last three decades in Nigeria, the only important means on the part of the government for tackling drug use and addiction is the conservative or traditional means known as a law-enforcement option. While most countries in Europe and America are gradually moving

away from sanctioned approach in favour of provision of qualitative and improved drug treatment towards the management and cessation of substance use, most drug control activities of the government in Nigeria are predominantly oriented towards law-enforcement or what is sometimes referred to as sanctioned approach (Asare and Obot 2013).

In Nigeria, the regularity by which law-enforcement approach is applied in the form of imprisonment has now made it a natural way of punishment for drug offences. Whereas, in many parts of the world, imprisonment is seen as counterproductive and antithetical to the reformation of drug offenders (UNODC 2007). In line with the words of Applegate, Cullen and Bonnie (1997), imprisonment and other punitive measures are described as disciplinary options that always culminate into the dismissal of programmes designed to reform and rehabilitate offenders. Based on this conclusion, they queried penal harm movement's rejection of rehabilitation as unsound public policy. According to Petersilia (1992), and Cullen and Brandon (1998), locking up of offenders and "throwing away the keys" is a limited and counterproductive approach to crime control. They thought that incarcerated offenders would one day be released and sent back into the society; and that incarceration would make some of them remain unchanged or not reformed, while some others would come out with a lot of problems, and also in dire need of services.

In line with the above, the fact remains that, the growing recognition of inadequacies of law-enforcement approaches as veritable means to protect current drug-users from further social exclusion, with a particular focus on returning them to productive living as law-abiding citizens in the society has reignited the call for non-custodial sentencing such as rehabilitation and social reintegration for current and recovering drug-addicts. Though, recent research findings have shown that law enforcement approach impacts positively on addicts' physical and psychological health, and is to some extent helpful in reducing drug use and criminal activities; it remains insufficient as far as providing additional social support required to prevent relapse and ensure social and economic inclusion of mar-

ginalised and stigmatised recovering drug-addicts is concerned (Neale and Kemp 2010; WHO 2009; UNODC 2008; Stewart et al. 2002).

Indeed, the conclusion that law-enforcement approach has been mostly unsuccessful in the reformation and reintegration of recovering drug-addicts into the society has contributed significantly to the rising international, regional and local clamour for the adoption and inclusion of rehabilitation and social reintegration programmes into full drug use and addiction treatment. While on the other hand, a growing body of evidence has demonstrated the critical need for treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration for current and recovering drug-addicts (Neale and Kemp 2010; WHO 2009; UNODC 2008). This stance (inadequacy of law-enforcement approach) has prompted the support of international bodies such as United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) for the adoption of rehabilitation and social reintegration as veritable alternative to increase human, social, economic and institutional capital of disadvantaged and vulnerable recovering drug-addicts, and consequently prevent further social exclusion (EMCDDA 2012; IDPC 2012; UNODC 2008).

As part of the global efforts to achieve recovery and social inclusion for all offenders, including drug-addicts, rehabilitation and social reintegration is enshrined and codified in several international treaties, conventions, regulations and other instruments (Sumnall and Brotherhood 2012).

Objectives

The main objective of this paper is to assess the effectiveness of the Nigerian drug-control policies (formulated and/or adopted) in tackling the raging illicit drug use in the country. However, against the background of sustained calls for rehabilitation and social reintegration programmes for current and recovering drug-addicts and other marginalised and vulnerable members of the society, the paper also aimed to investigate the workability of the local policies and frameworks put in place to tackle illicit drug use in Nigeria, with a view to recommend policy appraisal if they are found wanting.

METHODOLOGY

The paper made use of secondary sources of data. The researcher through literature search reviewed books sourced from Questia, journals and materials in selected websites and databases such as Google scholar, Emerald and some other on-line materials that focused on the subject matter.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

Drug Control Penal Provisioning in Nigeria: An Appraisal

The Nigerian drug control policy as indicated in the National Drug Law and Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) Act, 1992 and National Drug Control Master Plans (NDCMPs) of 1999, 2008 and 2015-2019 relies more on punitive measure and is silent on the provision of support aimed at physical, psychosocial and other needs of problem drug users. The need to address this apparent gap in the drug control policy of the government forms the rationale upon which this section of the paper is anchored.

Worldwide, there is a growing recognition that law-enforcement option (in the form of arrest and imprisonment) has recorded little or no success in tackling the ever-increasing drug use and abuse. Furthermore, it is recognised as being harmful to drug offenders, their family members, and to the members of the community as a whole (WACD, 2018; UNODC 2006). According to the United Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC 2006), imprisonment is recommended to punish the drug offender by depriving them of their freedom after conviction. However, it is deficient in ensuring successful rehabilitation of drug offenders during the period of incarceration. To UNODC, imprisonment has been unsuccessful in addressing the underlying factors responsible for drug use and addiction – these are factors which are necessary for reducing their likelihood of relapse and recidivism. On the contrary, evidence abounds that prison rarely rehabilitates but more often than not, further criminalise individuals, an act that leads to further re-offending, and a cycle of release and imprisonment (United Nations 2007).

In line with restorative justice, sanctioned approach as a punishment for drug offences is seen widely as an obstacle to the spread of rehabilitation and social reintegration, notwithstanding of the claim of some criminal justice personnel about the effectiveness or the need for sanctioned approach. In short, the basis of sanction approach is mainly a demand for a purely punitive approach to drug offending. In the words of Murji (1998), drug policies should not lean heavily on waging war on drug offenders. For Murji, punitive approach in the form of imprisonment opens room for spiralling prison population and elicits a great concern regarding human rights abuses that offenders suffer when they are incarcerated. He thought that sanctioned approach should be rarely adopted because it demonises drug offenders and thereby indirectly turns the war on drugs to the war on drug users.

In spite of the fact that the Nigerian society and the nature and extent of drug use in the country have changed considerably over the last two to three decades, the approach through which the problem of illicit drug use and other associated vices is tackled has not sufficiently been appraised to embrace the changing drug control policies in many parts of the world. The NDLEA Act of 1992 and the NDCMP's of 1999, 2008 and 2015-2019 still promote the 'war on drugs' rhetoric while drug control policies in many parts of the developed have gradually moved away from punitive measure to the initiative that underscores treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration for current and recovering drug addicts/offenders.

This paper presents the contents, assumptions, and implications of the different drug policies and institutional frameworks in use in Nigeria. Globally, the main reason for the formulation of these strategic policies and institutional structures is to assist countries in stepping up activities and efforts necessary to prevent the occurrence of new cases of drug abuse and addiction. Another important reason for the enactment of such policies both locally and internationally is to ensure that treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes are made available and accessible for drug abusers and addicts.

National Drug Control Master Plan (NDCMP)

Over the past decades in Nigeria, a deep interest in the formulation of policy frameworks and policies to combat the issue of illicit drug use has grown dramatically. Though addressing drug-related problems within legal frameworks is not a new practice in the country, mainly because Nigeria is a signatory to all the three UN Conventions on illicit drugs. However, the official responses to the dangerous twist in drug issue in the country in recent past, most notably to the escalating drug use and crime connections among the youths, has resulted in strategically and operationally-oriented legal frameworks and policies that are known as National Drug Control Master Plans.

In spite of the adoption of the three National Drug Control Plans, Nigeria still lacks practicable existing rules and regulations which foreground treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration and give priority to the provision of material and psycho-social assistance for drug users and recovering drug-addicts during and after their release from incarceration. Nigeria is a signatory to all the UN and AU conventions, treaties, and drug control strategies, which fully or partially support the provision of treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration complement for all offenders, including drug-addicts. Indeed, the country over the years has promulgated drug and crime control legislation (see NDLEA Acts of 1989 No. 48, 1990 No. 33, 1992, No. 15, 1995, No. 3 1999, No. 62) which only emphasise social reintegration of offenders including recovering drug-addicts in theory (not in practical terms).

National Drug Control Master Plan – 1999

The interplay of problems associated with illicit drugs such as drug abuse and addiction and trafficking in Nigeria has made governments respond to several damaging consequences of drugs through the enactment and promulgation of relevant legal instruments and policies. Indeed, the thrust of these plans and strategies is aimed at reducing the problem of illicit drug use and its attendant issues in the country as well as actively supporting the global efforts to combat drugs-related issues and ultimately enhance global security.

As part of measures to extricate Nigeria from her precarious illicit drug situation through formulation and provision of comprehensive and integrated approach to counteract the many effects of drug cultivation, production, distribution, abuse and addiction, the national government represented by Inter-ministerial Drug Control Committee (with contributions from civil society and professional) rolled out the first National Drug Control Master Plan in the year 1999. It was strategically envisioned to tackle illicit drug issues from four different fronts. The areas identified in the document are drug demand reduction, drug supply reduction, adequacy of legal frameworks, and the control of the supply of licit drugs. As revealed in the document, the targets of 1999 National Drug Control Master Plan were law enforcement to back up demand and supply reduction, and treatment in government hospitals to cater for the needs of those that are battling with the problem of drug dependence. As a whole, the document has no provision for rehabilitation, and social reintegration complements for current and recovering drug-addicts.

National Drug Control Master Plan -2008 -2011

The document referred to as the National Drug Control Master Plan (NDCMP) of 2008 to 2011 which was eventually extended to 2013 was a by-product from reviews made on the 1999 National Drug Control Master Plan. The reason for the amendments and revisions was borne out of the need to readjust and repackage Nigeria's drug control activities and strategies to meet up with best international practices, and to as a matter of urgency embrace other relevant policies that were neglected or omitted in the first NDCMP of 1999. The NDCMP of 2008 was positioned to address myriad problems of an illicit drug such as cultivation, distribution, trafficking, and abuse, which in no small measure affect the country negatively. In Nigeria, the planting and abuse of certain illicit drugs have become perennially unresolved complex problems which have not only defied most of the existing strategies and legal frameworks but have also ushered in organised crimes such as money laundering, terrorism, human trafficking etc.

The focus of the NDCMP of 2008-2013 is two-fold. The first is centred on overview and situation reports of the drug problem in Nigeria and the efforts the governments have made so to mitigate the problem. The second focus of NDCMP outlines activities deemed appropriate to enhance effective implementation of national strategies and policies. In spite of the fact, that the overall or main objective of the 2008 NDCMP as evinced in the document is gradual reduction of drug problem in the country through concerted efforts to participate in regional and inter-regional activities and also align with international policies and legal frameworks to which Nigeria is signatory, the country has failed to include rehabilitation and social reintegration as part of the agenda or appropriate programmes needed to assist recovering drug-addicts to be reinserted into the community.

National Drug Control Master Plan -2015 – 2019

The National Drug Control Master Plans (NDCMP) 2015 like others before it was made to proffer solution to challenges posed by cultivation, trafficking and abuse of illicit drugs in Nigeria. The NDCMP 2015 – 2019 emerged to offer both integrated and comprehensive approach required to address the broad spectrum of drug issues in the country. Specifically, the 2015 NDCMP is built on the previous National Drug Control Master Plans (1999 and 2008) to produce a national scheme to counteract the complex problems of drug trafficking, abuse and addiction.

Besides the growing recognition of inadequacies embedded in the two previous NDCMPs of 1999 and 2008, the urgent need to adopt new methods capable of counteracting some of the newly adopted strategies of actors that engage in illicit drug use and trafficking are some of the reasons that necessitated the adoption of 2015 NDCMP. As indicated in the 2015 NDCMP, new dimensions and tactics which were not previously known or adopted by criminal elements who have decided to continuously eke out livelihood from activities related to illicit drugs and at the same time conceal their various nefarious activities from the prying eyes of the relevant government agencies and security operatives have been on the rise.

Based on this, the 2015 NDCMP have incorporated all new African and global developments within the legislative and policy contexts. Unlike any of the previous NDCMPs, the 2015 - 2019 version illuminates the human right and the rule of law dimensions to address public health and criminal justice challenges previously associated with the fight against illicit drug use and abuse.

However, a critical examination of the 2015 NDCMP like other previous ones also indicates that it failed to recommend or support the inclusion of rehabilitation and social reintegration programmes as a means for social inclusion of recovering drug-addicts in Nigeria. Instead, law enforcement and treatment are recognised and recommended as the workable alternatives to achieving drug “desistance”.

National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies ACT - N30, 1989

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) was established in 1989 as a specialised anti-drug and crime control entity by an ACT of Parliament (NDCMP 2015). This Act, among many other things empowers the NDLEA to enforce the law against drugs related issues that range from cultivation, processing, sale, trafficking and any unauthorised use. This same Act has empowered the agency to carry out the necessary investigation on any individual who deals with drugs and other related matters.

A cursory look into all the Acts supporting the law enforcement role and responsibilities of NDLEA (see NDLEA Act 1989 No. 48, 1990 No. 33, 1992, No. 15., 1995, No. 3 1999, No. 62) shows that various Acts that established the agency favour law enforcement at the expense of programmes that accommodate rehabilitation and social reintegration of drug offenders. Indeed, part I, section 2 of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency Act, number 30, 1989, the composition and proceedings of the agency provide a clear picture of how the highest ruling body of the agency should be composed. The first is the Chairman, others are: a representative of the Nigerian Police (the rank or position of such official must not be below that of an Assistant Inspector-General); and Directors from Military Intelligence Department, State Security

Service, the Comptroller-General of Customs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Director General of National Intelligence Agency, and three other persons. Without a doubt, a glance at the composition and the offices of most of the people to form members of the highest ruling body of the agency emphasises the involvement of people whose background is rooted in the military and paramilitary services.

However, the Act that established NDLEA and its accompaniment favour law enforcement as the appropriate method to tackle drug problems in the country. At the same time the NDLEA Act, Cap. P.4 1992 No.15 (3b and c) also empowers the counselling unit of the agency in conjunction with the Federal Ministry of Health in Nigeria to provide after-care rehabilitation, social reintegration, education, and welfare for recovering drug-addicts. The provision is stated as thus:

“The counselling unit shall, in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Health have responsibility for (a). Campaigns, seminars and workshops aimed at educating the public on the danger of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substance, thereby stimulating interest in and awareness about drug-related problems: (b). After-care rehabilitation, social reintegration and education of addicts: c. The promotion of the welfare of convicts” (NDLEA Act, Cap. P.4 1992 No.15 (3b and c).

The provision (Cap. P.4 1992 No.15 (3b and c) is, however, the only one that considers issues about rehabilitation, after-care and social reintegration for both current and recovering drug-addicts.

An introspective examination of the entire Act that established NDLEA depicts paperwork that has little or no consideration for rehabilitation and social reintegration of recovering drug offenders. As illustrated in the quotation above, social reintegration is mentioned once in the entire paperwork; and this was done in passing, without any further discussion or explanations of the term social reintegration, its meaning, implementation, how it can be measured, and the other necessary supporting mechanisms. By implication, Nigeria is yet to adopt (in practice) social reintegration for recovering drug-addicts despite her status as the signatory to the rele-

vant international treaties and charters. Indeed, a careful perusal of the National Drug Control Master Plan (NDCMP) of 2015 -2019 has revealed that the issue was not even captured in the plan.

Law-enforcement Strategy: A Subtle form of War on Drugs and ‘Demonisation’ of Drug Users

Adopting law-enforcement strategy as means of achieving drug demand and drug supply reduction is outside the purview of UN’s drug control conventions – the 1961 UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic Drugs, and the 1988 UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. Indeed, Article 3(4) (d) of 1988 UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic substances recommends the provision of treatment, education, aftercare and social reintegration as alternatives to conviction or punishment. As fallout of this, recent development in the world has shown a gradual shift in the global approach to drug use. Indeed, many countries in the world are gradually moving away from policies and laws that are inimical to the fundamental human rights of people who use drugs.

The commonality and intense use of the criminal justice system to control illicit drug use has come under harsh criticism from several quarters. For instance, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in 2014 described the futility of fifty years of “war on drugs” without averting increasing widespread supply and use of illicit substances. At the same time, UNODC berates the excessively high unintended negative consequences that have so far thronged the adoption of punitive enforcement strategy employed to stem illicit drug use.

According to the World Drug Report of 2015, a large percentage of two hundred and forty-six million (246) million drug users in the world have been criminalised and marginalised by national legislation. While many have been subjected to violence, imprisoned due to possession of small quantities of drugs meant for personal consumption, a significant number of women have been coerced to into abortion, sterilisation, and separated from their children and other loved ones.

However, of all the many negative consequences associated with the demonisation of drug abusers and addicts by enforcement agencies or what is known in other parlance as “war on drug-addicts” mantra as identified by UN-ODC, none has received extensive scholarly attention like the human right costs that demonisation of drugs has attracted. Anand Grover, a UN Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health in 2010, commented thus:

“The current international system of drug control has focused on creating a drug-free world, almost exclusively through the use of law enforcement policies and criminal sanctions. Mounting evidence, however, suggests this approach has failed ... While drugs may have a pernicious effect on individual lives and society, this excessively punitive regime has not achieved its stated public health goals, and has resulted in countless human rights violations.”

Also, the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon in 2015 observes the collateral harms associated with current drug policies and consequently clamours for new approaches that are rooted in care and social inclusion. His exact words are quoted below:

“In full compliance with human rights standards and norms, the United Nations advocates a careful rebalancing of the international policy on controlled drugs. We must consider alternatives to criminalisation and incarceration on people who use drugs and focus criminal justice reports on those involved in supply. We should increase the focus on, public health prevention, treatment and care, as well as on economic, social and cultural strategies.”

The United Nation Office for Drug and Crime had provided further indictment against governments and societies that rely rigidly on criminal justice system or punitive measures in controlling drug use and addiction when it averred that, penalisation for personal drug possession and use was never part of UN recommendations. The organisation surmised further, that, human rights of drug offenders are violated in countries where the parallel system of justice does not align with international best practices.

The recent recognition of shortcomings associated with law-enforcement strategy has

helped significantly in shifting the orientation of drug control from punitive strategy to approaches that are human-rights inclined. But while countries in North America, Europe and Asia are progressively changing and adapting their conception of what works in drug control policy from law-enforcement option to human-rights friendly strategies; Nigeria is disproportionately focused on law enforcement strategy that is purely hinged on punitive measures. The reality of this, of course, is that the accompanying calls to shift acute punitive model of drug control to model that favours social reintegration measures nested within larger recovery-oriented systems of care has gone mostly unheeded.

CONCLUSION

Unlike what is obtainable in developed countries such as Germany and Sweden and many others; where robust discussion and evidence-based research on drug-related issues have prompted reassessment and gradual withdrawal of drug law enforcement agencies from punitive measures in favour of other harm reduction strategies, the NDLEA is still embroiled in pursuance of sanction-approach policy as a panacea to the drug problem in the country. In spite of the fact that the underlying principle and fundamental objective of both the UN 1961 and 1971 conventions is to ensure the realisation of “health and welfare” of drug offenders, the Nigerian drug control plan model as portrayed in NDLEA’ Acts and NDCMPs of 1999, 2008 and 2015 is intensely based on the principles of “coercion and deterrence”. Based on this, however, there is an indication that Nigeria, in her resolve to combat drug problems, still pursues law enforcement agenda vigorously even at the expense of social reintegration and other forms of care.

As demonstrated in the National Drug Control Master Plans of 2015 2019, efforts of Nigeria’s law-enforcement agencies to tackle drug-related problems appear to be increasingly fraught with obstacles. For instance, challenges such as lack of technical and logistical know-how needed to react to drug problems, the fact that drug investigation relies heavily on retroactive techniques instead, the issue of low level capacities of enforcement officers in the collection and analysis of Intelligence, inter-agency

rivalry, distrust, inadequate legal and policy framework, unethical practices among enforcement operatives and inconsistent sentencing outcomes among many others have all rendered war against drug abuse and addiction ineffective. These suggest that Nigeria's over-reliance on law-enforcement approach, over and above other strategies, despite its debilitating nature might not be unconnected with her penchant for policies that favour "demonisation of drugs" and "criminalisation" of drug-addicts or what is generally referred to as "War on Drug". Nonetheless, in the face of overwhelming evidence in NDCMP of 1999 and 2008 that implementation of law-enforcement strategy in tackling drug problems in Nigeria is not only ineffective but counterproductive and plagued by varying degrees of shortcomings; the same policy still plays a dominant role in NDCMP report of 2015.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In line with the objectives of this article and the direction to which the argument put up therein has assumed, the following are recommended for the improvement of policies and institutional structures put in place to meaningfully tackle the use of illicit drugs in Nigeria. Social reintegration as a re-entry support programme for recovering drug-addicts should be included in all the three National Drug Control Master Plan documents in the country. In line with the findings of other studies that found social reintegration programme for recovering drug addicts to be a key protective factor against social exclusion, the Nigerian government should draw up social protection and inclusion plans which should directly address the social reintegration needs of current and recovering drug addicts in the country.

Also, the law-enforcement approach as the National blueprint and framework for tackling illicit drug use as established in the country's drug control policies should be downplayed. Due to the highlighted lack of supervision and external checks on the social reintegration of intervention of FBOs in Nigeria, the article also recommends that at the policy level there is the dire need to establish a national agency that should collaborate with the National Drug Enforcement Agency to effectively monitor the

social reintegration activities of FBOs so as to ensure they implement effectively the prescribed global and regional strategies and prescriptions.

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