

## **PSYCHOLOGY, SECURITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: THE NDLEA PERSPECTIVE**

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**Psychology** is the scientific study of the mind and behavior. Psychologists are trained to study and understand the mental processes, brain functions and behavior. They are also involved in the act of testing intelligence and personality and serve as consultants in communities, organizations and health facilities to help in diagnosis and treatment of people and also teach other future psychologists and those in other disciplines.

**Security** is defined as being free from danger, or feeling safe. It also means an organization or department whose task is protection or safety of lives and property. Oxford dictionary defines it as the activities involved in protecting a country, building, or person against attack, danger etc.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is the United Nations General Assembly initiative established in 2015 to drive an inclusive and minimum standard of living for people in the world by the year 2030. The seventeen SDGs are the summary of the one hundred and seventy-nine targeted objectives that are to be achieved to make the world a better place for living for people.

### **The primary themes of the SDGs are:**

1, No poverty, 2. Zero hunger, 3. Good health and well-being for people, 4. Quality education, 5. Gender equality, 6. Clean water and sanitation, 7. Affordable and clean energy, 8. Decent work and economic growth, 9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure, 10. Reduced inequality, 11. Sustainable cities and communities, 12. Responsible consumption and production, 13. Climate action, 14. Life below water, 15. Life on land, 16. Peace, justice and strong institutions and, 17. Partnerships for the goals. The NDLEA perspective has to do with the contributions of the Agency towards achievement of the sustainable development goals.

The NDLEA is a federal law enforcement Agency established by Decree No. 48 of 29th December 1989, now CAP N30 FRN. The promulgation of the decree was chiefly in response to the rising trend in the demand for and trafficking of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances which adversely affected the international image of Nigerians and Nigeria in the 1980s. Since then the trafficking of illicit substances has become an organized criminal activity that undermines the security and development of the country and therefore demands urgent attention and priority from the government.

### **NDLEA'S MANDATE: Relationship with security and sustainable development.**

National Drug Law Enforcement Agency has two broad mandate:

- Supply reduction which has to do with law enforcement aspect of the job. Information is received, processed into intelligence. This process is referred to as "Intelligence Led Policing". Proper surveillance is carried out guided by operational plan. Then a raid is carried out which leads to arrest of suspects, followed by investigations and prosecution of culprits. The guilty ones are jailed accordingly by competent court.
- The second arm of the Agency is the Drug Demand Reduction Unit. This unit is the humanitarian aspect of our operations. They are saddled with the responsibilities of drug prevention education programs which aim at delaying the initiation of drug use or if initiated already, inhibit generation of problematic disorders such as dependence. This program also helps the youths and other individuals discover and develop the potentials in them which will enable them become useful and contributing members of their society.

Sensitization is also carried out to ensure that awareness is created amongst law enforcement officers and other policy makers and practitioners, so that stigmatization of drug users are highly reduced. This will enable drug users seek and access medical assistance due to their drug use, which is a health condition and should be viewed as such rather than as criminal activity.

NDLEA also renders treatment services through Counselling interventions in order to aid those suffering from drug use disorder to gradually come out of it. This is done through professional approach. If

need be, in collaboration with doctors and other health professionals in accordance with the Agency's Standard Policy and Practice Guidelines. So NDLEA contributes her quota in the area of security checks and provision in the country through intelligence led Policing and drug demand reduction using psychological and Counselling skills through well trained professionals in psychology, Guidance and Counselling, and other related disciplines.

A healthy nation is a wealthy nation. Drug use has been identified as a catalyst and the major enhancing agent that boosts criminal activities in the society. Most of the crimes perpetrated in the society such as banditry, rape, armed robbery, kidnapping, terrorism, and a host of others are done under the influence of drugs and alcohol. To worsen the situation, minors are now fully engaged in drug use and crimes. It is terrible to observe that terrorists and bandits recruit young children, daze them with drugs, train them in the use of dangerous weapons and firearms, and engage them in destruction of lives and property. This act will definitely cripple our target of achieving the sustainable development goal in our nation.

But NDLEA, through our dual mandate of supply reduction and demand reduction put in our best to mop up existing drugs in our society through intelligence led Policing and also reduce to the barest minimum, the demand for such drugs and substances through drug abuse preventive education in schools, religious organizations, communities, amongst the youths in and out of schools, etc.

Psychotropic and psychoactive drugs act on the Central Nervous System to give highs, lows or distortions. NDLEA has well trained professionals, who were trained as psychologists and counsellors and are also trained nationally and internationally to balance the dual mandate of supply reduction and demand reduction in the mandate of NDLEA. A few years ago, the main approach to addressing drug use globally was to criminalize those using drugs. But recently, with evidence based research, there has been a paradigm shift. It is discovered that drug abuse is a brain disease, hence the need to promote and provide public health response to the needs of drug users.

National Drug Control Master Plan is a major strategic plan and tool used by NDLEA in the execution and achievement of drug control activities.

NDCMP 2015-2019 identified the need to channel more energy and focus on mid to high-level drug traffickers and producers more than the low-level drug users because the former are the ones supplying drugs on large scales to the latter throughout the country. The same Master Plan also identified the need to have a balanced approach between law enforcement and demand reduction, which was not given equal attention in earlier Master plans in past years.

Due to this major default, drug users find it difficult to access treatment, either that the services are too expensive or they are not even in existence. This is a major challenge because even if a drug user wishes to stop, he could not access treatment. It is very important to note that without demand for drugs, suppliers will be out of business.

Drug use and crime are closely linked (related).

Four categories of drug related crimes:

- Crimes of drug use and distribution (primarily using and selling illicit drugs)
- Crimes occasioned as a result of drug use (usually violent crimes linked to the use of certain drugs)
- Crimes committed to obtain money to buy drugs (robbery/burglary/fraud)
- Organized crime and drug trafficking

For years, people's perception of drug issue is tilted towards law enforcement, shunning the fact that drug use is a mental health issue.

Today there's a balanced approach to interventions in drug matters. Equal attention is given to Supply as well as Demand Reduction. NDLEA is in charge of drug policy and control in Nigeria. Within this purview, the Agency has the mandate to curtail illicit production, importation, exportation, sale and trafficking of psychoactive substances. Employees of NDLEA carry out interdiction and destruction of narcotic drugs and other illicit substances. They also engage in preventive drug abuse activities such as advocacy and counselling, and rehabilitation of drug users.

NDLEA works in collaboration with other sister Agencies such as NAFDAC, Nigerian Customs services, Correctional services (Prisons), police, NCSC, and institutions such as the ministry of Youths and cultural development, ministry of Education, the State and Local government, traditional rulers, religious organisations, universities and other higher institutions, amongst others in this war. With the determination to succeed in these mandates, the Chairman/Chief Executive Officer Brig Gen Mohammed Buba Marwa launched Offensive Action (Supply Reduction) on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021 and War Against Drug Abuse (WADA for Demand Reduction) on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2021 by the president respectively to effectively actualize a successful achievement of drastically reducing the prevalence of drug menace in our society.

**SUMMARY:**

In fulfilling the mandate of the Agency, thousands of expert narcotic operatives and well-trained support staff of NDLEA work across Nigeria with a visible presence at international airports, seaports, border crossing and major highways and State Commands. Committed to keeping society safe from the dangers of illicit substances and their purveyors, NDLEA operatives are actively engaged in the tracking, arrest and prosecution of traffickers of dangerous substances under the various relevant drug laws of Nigeria.

Drug users are also taken into consideration and catered for through our drug demand reduction activities.

**Conclusion:** Drug war is a global problem and NDLEA alone cannot effectively win the war without the cooperation and collaboration of all and sundry. Hence the invitation and encouragement of stakeholders to partner with the Agency in order to achieve the desired result.

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