

20-Yr-Old Man Dies Of Overdose As Pupils, Youths Openly Abuse Drugs In Lagos Communities

- Mushin Olosha, LUTH Road, Daleko, Matori, White House Bus Stop, Amikanle, Tunji Alaso listed as notorious spots
- Home testing kits coming for families —NDLEA
- Community leaders, rehab centre react

By SUBAIR MOHAMMED On Jan 21, 2023

WEEKEND LAGOS



SUBAIR MOHAMMED, in this piece, looks at the festering drug problem in Nigeria's most populous state.

AS the menace of drug abuse among youths in Lagos State spirals, the most recent casualty has been identified as a 20-year-old boy (name withheld) in the Agbado-Oke-Odo area of the state.

This comes as notorious spots for drug abuse in the state are uncovered, with primary school pupils identified among young residents who consistently abuse drugs.

With 33 per cent prevalence rate, Lagos State is a hotbed of drug and substance abuse in the South-West.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) World Drug Report in 2021, about 275 million people used drugs worldwide in the year under review, while over 36 million people suffered from drug use disorders.

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In Nigeria, however, the 2018 National Drug Use Survey revealed that about 14.3 million Nigerians used drugs.

Of the number, close to three million Nigerians reportedly suffer from drug use disorder with Lagos State occupying the first position in drug abuse in the South-West.

Speaking on the prevalence of drug use in his community, the CDC chairman in Agbado Oke-Odo, Mr Ernest Kasunmu, told Saturday Tribune that the rate of drug and substance abuse in the area was very high.

According to him, drug users in their numbers lurk around the White House Bus Stop in Ajasa Command, in Amikanle and Tunji Alaso.

He said: “Drug addiction begins with idleness and joblessness of youths. Once they lack engagement and livelihood, many of them are bound to go into substance abuse.

“Also, some parents are responsible for their children going into drug addiction as was the case with the 20-year-old man who died of substance abuse in my community. When I visited his father to condole with him, I discovered that he was aware of his son’s case. The man could not feign ignorance of his son’s drug addiction. He knew the kind of company his son kept. So, he could not claim not to know what he did. The young man died of drug overdose.

“The rate of substance abuse in Agbado Oke-Odo is now very high. We have them lurking around the community. They are there at the White House Bus Stop in Ajasa Command. They are in Amikanle and Tunji Alaso. It takes the strong-willed to be able to walk through these areas. The CDC is doing its best to positively engage the younger ones, especially primary school pupils before they are lured into that destructive lifestyle.

“There are boys and girls among them but 80 per cent of the addicts are male. The female among them that are into substance abuse are not from the community. They are from outside Lagos State. Even the boys who are mainly okada riders and Marwa operators are tools in the hands of politicians. It is very difficult to get them off the substance once they are addicted to it but before they go into it, we ensure we engage them with positive pastimes.”

Kasunmu also called attention to a more worrisome dimension to the plague.

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alcoholic substances. At the point Nigeria is, we have to start engaging the minds of the younger generation to save them from destruction.

“We have to shut down the supply chain and go after the barons because the addicts are victims of uncontrolled supply of substances. Idleness is no excuse for going into drug and banditry but some politicians are culpable too. They supply them with drugs to get high.

“We have to start educating our youths, starting from the primary schools. In the olden days, at the children’s boarding school in Osogbo, we were engaged in literary and debating society and different sports. And by the time I got into secondary school, I was already representing the old Oyo State, in the 70s and 80s, in boxing. There was hardly any one of us that did not have one thing or the other doing but today, there are no recreation facilities for the young ones and in the absence of this, whenever the opportunity to gather at a spot presents itself, they recruit themselves into drug and other social vices.”

Drug as breakfast

In Mushin, a notorious suburb in the state, the tribe of addicts is reportedly growing and young users now start their day with the banned stuff.

Former General Secretary of the CDC in Mushin Local Government Area, Olusina Alade, disclosed that in time past, hard drug use was restricted to Akala, a community known for drug and substance abuse.

But today, he stated, it has spread to other areas like Mushin Olosha, LUTH Road, Oye Junction, along Isolo Road, off Olu Aina in Daleko, Oduduwa and Odo in Matori.

Alade said: “They are there drinking alcohol and sniffing cocaine. They don’t even care and law enforcement agents helplessly watch them.

“The same drug problem that Akala is known for is applicable to other areas in the Mushin metropolis. Some parents don’t care about the wellbeing of their children and some of the people you see abusing drug didn’t go to school and during school hours, they cool off at drug spots with alcohol.”

Dissecting how the communities sink deeper into the drug crisis, Alade said: “Peer pressure is another reason we have drug menace in Mushin. People between ages 10 and 20 are into drug and substance abuse. it involves both sexes but the percentage of male are higher. Orientation is very important to redirecting the minds of the youth that have become addicted to drugs.”

He proffered a way out: “The government needs to sensitise the people because many of them are ignorant of the consequences of drug addiction. The school too must enlighten the pupils on the danger of drug abuse. The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), the National

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enlightenment campaign. The rate of drug abuse in Mushin is at an alarming rate.

“As early as 7 o’clock in the morning, you will see young boys and adults taking hard drugs. Drug abuse was restricted to Akala but it has spread to other areas like Olosha, LUTH Road, Oye Junction along Isolo Road, off Olu Aina in Daleko, Oduduwa and Odo in Matori. It is spreading.”

Drug crisis is unprecedented —Rehab manager

Advancing reasons for teenagers and young adults abusing alcohol and substances, a psychologist and facility manager at a rehabilitation home for alcohol and drug addicts, Alcohol and Drug Referral Services, Surulere, Mrs Itunu Onifade, identified peer pressure, dysfunction homes and lack of connection between parents and children as the main factors responsible for the menace.

According to her, more than ever before, there is so much availability and invention of drugs in the society.

She said: “Primarily, one of the reasons youths go into drugs is peer pressure because they are at a point in their lives when they seek opinions of others and the love of other peers and the influence that comes from parents. Generally, peers introduce them to substances. It also has an indirect cause because for a teenager to be influenced by his peers, that means he has a remote cause.

“Such a person lacks some coping skills. Sometimes peer pressure is also linked with low self-esteem and lack of coping mechanism. For you to really be pressured by peers, you have lacked some of life skills which can lead to peer pressure and peer pressure can lead to drug addiction.

“Also, some people have issues with depression and family issues and lack of connection between parents and children. Some parents don’t understand their children and when they get to school, they find solace in their friends. So, whatever their peers tell them, they adhere to.

“if the children are from dysfunction homes where parents don’t connect with them, definitely the people who are outside of the home and the school will have an upper hand in influencing them. But some people go to school and they are not influenced by peer pressure because the connection has been formed from home. These are some of what led the youth into drug addiction.

“In this time and season, more than ever before, there is so much availability of drugs in the society. As a substance use manager, almost every day, drug abusers do dangerous combination and invention of drugs. The youth see ‘highness’ as a thing of pride. If you don’t get high on drug, you are not among the classy.

“The advent of modern technology is another factor. The social media platforms easily lure the youth to get into substance abuse. With the kind of artistes and music they listen to, they are easily influenced into alcohol and drugs. You can imagine the kind of artistes they listen to. Artistes of questionable characters who are into substance abuse are role models to young ones and the youth.

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boys and girls are into substance abuse.

“However, to control these substances, regulating agencies need to reduce outlets where these substances are brought in.

“The NDLEA is doing a great job with the way they are reducing the substances and the work of professionals like us needs to be commended. We are reducing the harms for those youths that have gone into substance abuse. We make sure that people that are on the verge of substance abuse are prevented from doing and intervention for those that are already in it.

“Damage control is how we can control what has been damaged. It is in phases. At Alcohol and Drug Referral Services, we are case manager of alcohol and drug addiction. We help people come off the addiction by assessing them and recommend different kind of treatment plans” she stated.

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