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South Saharan Social Development Organization  
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March 27, 2020

The Permanent-Secretary,  
Ministry of Health,  
Enugu State

Dear Sir,

### **DRUG ADDICTION AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE AMONGST SOUTHEAST YOUTHS**

South Saharan Social Development Organization (SSDO) is a not-for-profit legal entity duly incorporated on the 5<sup>th</sup> of January 2001, with a primary focus on equipping women, youth and children with the social, health, economic, educational and political skills needed to survive and compete favourably in a vastly changing and urbanizing Sub-Saharan Africa.

South Saharan currently implements a Good Governance project- The Awakening. The project airs on radio through Radio Nigeria in all south-eastern stations sensitizing youths in the southeast Nigeria on good governance and civic rights.

We write to bring your attention to our discoveries through interactions with citizens on the weekly Awakening radio program and social media platforms, on the system of local government practiced in the state and the method of selecting local government council members.

Attached to this letter is a policy brief with the details of the discoveries and our recommendations for your swift attention.

Sincerely,

Stanley Ilechukwu (MD)  
Executive Director



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## **THE AWAKENING POLICY BRIEF SERIES**

**March 27, 2020.**

### **DRUG ADDICTION AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE AMONGST SOUTHEAST YOUTHS**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Drug abuse is the repeated use of drugs, alcohol or other chemicals for the purpose of creating pleasurable effects on the brain. Using substances in this manner often leads to addiction, which is a chronic brain disease that causes compulsive and excessive cravings for a particular drug or substance.

According to a United Nations report on Drug Use in Nigeria [1], an estimated 14.3 million Nigerians use and abuse drugs and other substances, of which about 1.5million of these users are based in Southeast Nigeria. Hundreds of thousands are currently hooked on substances such as cannabis, opioids, stimulants, sedatives, solvents, codeine and cocaine.

South Saharan Social Development Organisation [2] initiated the Awakening Program [3], with funding from OSIWA/DFID [4] [5]. The Awakening Program, initiated by South Saharan Social Development Organization has continually been used as a platform to enlighten and create awareness on issues regarding good governance, health, education and other key areas of democracy. This action program is aired weekly on radio across the south eastern states of Nigeria, accompanied with social media engagement on the key issues.

## **SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM**

Drug abuse often results in negative consequences for the user, including deteriorating physical and mental health, diminished personal income, poor performance in school or at work, and broken relationships with friends and family. About 6 percent of high-risk drug users are living with blood borne infections such as HIV, hepatitis and tuberculosis. Nearly one quarter of high-risk drug users had been arrested for a drug-related offence during the course of their drug use.

Non-users are also affected as they could become victims of domestic abuse, theft or other crimes committed by those who are under the influence. Society suffers due to an increase in crime and sickness, and a decrease in productivity and security.

Breaking away from the habit can also be difficult as a high percentage of drug users are unable to access help or treatment due to the cost of treatment, the stigma attached to drug use, unavailability of treatment services or information about treatment services.

The current situation shows that there is a need for such preventive and rehabilitative measures.

## **APPROACH**

The Awakening phone-in radio programme which was aired on Dream 92.5Fm Enugu and Flo 94.9fm Umuahia between 2 :00pm-3:00pm, featured a topic on, “**DRUG ADDICTION AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE AMONGST SOUTHEAST YOUTHS**”. The issue was thoroughly analysed by experts and guests, and citizens raised several questions and gave their opinion on the issue through the call-in session.

Some of the issues raised were;

- Lack of awareness amongst youths on the severity and dangers of drug and substance abuse.
- People who are already addicted to drugs or substances do not know where to seek help and rehabilitation.
- Illegal drug manufacturers and dispensaries exacerbate the issue of drug addiction and substance abuse by making harmful substances readily available and accessible.

## **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

In response to the issues raised by the audience and suggestions made by the guests during the Awakening radio program, here are some policy recommendations drawn up to help tackle and manage these diseases in the Southeast and Nigeria as a whole:

- Collaborate with the National Orientation Agency to create public awareness on the dangers of drug abuse amongst youths.
- Sensitize the public on the remedies available to drug users, and appropriate channels through which they can seek help or rehabilitation.
- Sensitize the public on the need to be active citizens by reporting illegal drug manufacturers, dispensaries or suspicious behaviour in their localities.

## **REFERENCES**

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