

ANTI-DRUGS CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE FRONTIERS OF NIGERIA**NWINADUM GBENENEE, PhD.****Department of Sociology****Faculty of Social Sciences****Ignatius Ajuru University of Education****P.M.B. 5047, Port Harcourt****Rivers State, Nigeria****And****CELESTINE POROMA, PhD.****Department of Sociology****Faculty of Social Sciences****Ignatius Ajuru University of Education****P.M.B. 5047, Port Harcourt****Rivers State, Nigeria*****Abstract***

The problems of fake drug proliferation in Nigeria have affected the credibility of the Healthcare system and can exert very harmful effects on the consumer resulting to illness, disability and even death and anyone can be a victim. Some of the incidences have resulted in death even among children because most times the consumers do not know the quality of what they are buying or taking. This makes it imperative that there is need to intensify effort in fake drug eradication. National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) is the government agency in Nigeria that is fully empowered to regulate and control the importation, exportation, manufacture, advertisement, distribution, sale and use of drugs in order to ensure that safe and quality drugs are available to the public. As NAFDAC tasks herself dutifully in fighting fake drugs, more challenges come up from unscrupulous drug dealers who sometimes have the backings of lawmakers and politicians making the stipulated drug laws and standard unattainable.

Keywords: Fake drug, drug laws, Healthcare, disability, consumers, quality drugs.

Introduction

The Anti-Drug Abuse Act ("Act") is a federal legislation enacted in 1988. The Act prohibits illegal importation, manufacture, distribution, and possession and improper use of drugs. The Act also prohibits those controlled substances that have a detrimental effect on the health and general welfare of the people in Nigeria.

The Act prohibits money laundering in which the money is obtained illegally from the sale of illicit drugs. The Act also recognizes the danger involved in the manufacture, distribution, and use of certain psychotropic substances for non-scientific and non-medical purposes. The Act provides for strong and effective measures to control illicit trafficking and to regulate legitimate uses of psychotropic substances in Nigeria. Abuse of psychotropic substances has become a phenomenon common to many countries, and is not confined to national borders. Hence, the Act necessitates Nigeria to cooperate with other nations in establishing effective controls over international traffic in such substances.

Nigeria is not an exception in the problems of fake drugs till date. Some people still prefer to self-medicate when they are ill, and often time the drugs are bought from unlicensed drug vendors, whose drug quality is not sure. Through the past two decades in Nigeria, the problem of fake drugs has been a very big issue. In addition, fake drugs proved a major factor

in contributing to high death rates. Such problems led to the establishment of NAFDAC, which would help create a fake-drug-free environment (NAFDAC Consumer Safety, 2003).

Conceptual Definitions of Anti-drugs

Anti-drugs is a global public health problem, because the effects can be felt from both the country of manufacture to the recipient countries. Hence, national measures for combating of fake drugs in country might be insufficient because of the advanced sophistications of those who manufactures and sells them (Bates, 2008).

World Health Organization defines a “counterfeit” as “A medicine, which is deliberately and fraudulently mislabeled with respect to identity and/or source”. Counterfeiting can apply to both branded and generic products anti counterfeit products may include products with the correct ingredients or with the wrong ingredients without active ingredients, with insufficient *active* ingredients or with fake packaging.” (WHO, 2006).

There is no universal definition of anti-drug as every country has their own meaning. In the definition of anti-drug as defined by the Nigerian Counterfeit and Fake Drugs and Unwholesome Processed Foods (Miscellaneous Provisions) will be used which is:

- Any drug product which is purported to be; or
- Any drug or drug product which is so colored, coated, powdered or polished that the damage is concealed or which is made to appear to be better or of greater therapeutic value than it really is, which is not labeled in the prescribed manner or which label or container or anything accompanying the drug bears any statement design, or device which makes a false claim for the drug or which is false or misleading; or
- Any drug or drug product whose container is so made, formed or filled as to be misleading; or
- Any drug product whose label does not bear adequate directions for use and such adequate warning against use in those pathological conditions or by children where its use may be dangerous to health or against unsafe dosage or methods or duration of use; or
- Any drug product which is not registered by the Agency in accordance with the provisions of the Food, Drugs and Related Products (Registration, etc) Decree 1993, as amended. (WHO, 2008).

Channels of Anti-drug in Nigeria

Drugs are illegally trafficked through the following channels:

Smuggling through the Porous Borders

Drugs are smuggled into the country through the various porous borders. Nigeria is bedeviled with porous borders as it shares common borders with Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger that are known as countries that transit illegal drugs into the country. Illicit drugs are usually smuggled across the nation’s land, air and sea ports. However, various types of drugs in heavy kilograms and grams; cannabis, heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine and others are smuggled in and out of the country and they are sealed in ceramics, woman hairs, bags, sewing threads, basket handles and even swallowed by the traffickers.

Internet

Drugs are increasingly advertised and traded online on the (dark web or markets). The drugs are booked on internets and later transported in parcels to end-users through the traffickers. These hard drugs are also parceled and shipped in and out of the country and at the same time, the drug barons ‘settle’ some of the security agents that could *serve* as impediments to their business. Drugs are parceled in cartons, bags, food flasks and others.

Air route

Anti-drug is transported to the country through air routes. Those smuggled by air are usually wrapped in protective film and swallowed, to be excreted at the destination of the trafficker or are tucked away in the smugglers luggage.

That is why the former Chairman of National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, Alhaji Ahmad Giade years back, ordered a close monitoring of passengers and goods on the Nigeria-Brazil route in the year 2015. The directive was given as operatives of the Agency apprehended four (4) suspected drug traffickers at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport, Lagos over illegal importation of 3.455kg of cocaine. The suspected drug traffickers were caught with the substance while returning from Brazil. Generally, Nigerian trafficking syndicates based in Brazil and other places in South America remain quite active in cocaine trafficking, with these groups importing cocaine through containerized consignments and maritime shipping, air couriers and postal shipments.

Factors that Encourage Anti-drug in Nigeria

Financial burdens

Global drug trafficking is a multibillion dollar business. According to a March 2014 CNN world report, the Mexican drug cartels alone made between \$19 and \$29 billion dollars in sales per year. This huge amount means that people are willing to take massive risks to perpetuate their drug trade.

Youth unemployment

In a country like Nigeria that is burdened with massive youth unemployment, corruption, poverty and a general loss of hope in the government, this financial rewards act as a huge inducement for engagement in drugs trafficking.

Get-Rich-Quickly Syndrome

Another factor is the quest of Nigerian youths to make money big and fast. The drugs trade though with its attendant risks is a quick way to make money. Youths that have weak and low moral structures can easily fall victim to this evil act of trafficking drugs from one nation to another.

Peer pressure

This is an instance whereby if a friend takes or uses heroin or other substance, it is possible to get the other one influenced into the system.

Addiction

Healing from drug addiction takes time. For an addict to make up his/her mind to stop using hard drug is a big step. Being addicted makes him/her afraid of what would happen if he/she does not keep taking the drug. People *often* would not try quitting until they are forced to, because it seems too hard. But when the addict stops using the drugs, it upsets his/her body and brain. He or she might fall sick for a while, and feel a very strong need to take the drug.

Sexual Involvement

People take hard or illicit drugs in order to gain sexual vigour. This is a result of suffering from erectile dysfunction while having sexual relationship with loved ones. As a result of this, they use hard drugs.

Break-up relationship

Using hard drugs to 'cope' with a break-up relationship is a very bad idea. It is one of the best reasons to get addiction, Break-up in relationship is very hurting though, that is why we see many people end up their lives heroin, cocaine and others in order to quickly put behind the break-up experience in them.

Challenges of Anti-drugs in Frothier of Nigeria

The problems of anti-drug have embarrassed our healthcare providers and denied the confidence of the public on the nation's healthcare delivery system. The result of anti-drug proliferation has led to treatment failures, organ dysfunction or damage, worsening of chronic disease conditions and the death of many Nigerians. The situation became so bad that even when patients were treated with genuine drugs, there is no response due to resistance caused by previous intake of fake drugs. (Akunyili, 2005).

The problem of laxity of ineffective judicial system and widespread corruption are major reasons why it is easy to produce and sell anti-drug. It enables anti-drug producers to sell their products cheaply to chemists who in turn sell to the consumers. The ultimate loser are the consumers and the doctors who are treating, as patients would not get relieved or cured and the doctor's reputation would be damaged as a result, giving bad image to the health system (Dhikav, 2003).

Access to essential medicines by the population irrespective of their income status is very important for healthcare delivery services to succeed. Prices people pay for medicines are very high, making access to medicine very difficult (Lambo 2006). The chaotic drug distribution network and many unauthorized outlets, helps in anti-drug circulation. There is poor accountability to the disposal of medicine, which complicates the work of drug regulatory agency NAFDAC (WHO 2006).

The high incidence of anti-drug in Nigeria is a fallout from the haphazard ways import license on drugs were issued to anyone by then politicians and military leaders in the 80's, disregarding the eventual public health implications of their actions. Some of the beneficiaries of the import license found out that a lot of money could be made from the drug business, and suddenly became emergency drug importers. With the booming market and competition, some of them looked at the option of importing fake products in order to have an edge over their competitors.

In Nigeria today, it is common knowledge that drugs are treated as general merchandise, which can be obtained easily from open markets, moving vehicles, faceless medicine stores, ferries, and even in the provision stores. This is because the drug distribution business has been left in the hands of non-professionals who just want to make profit at the expense of the consuming public.

Poor people are faced with a confusing myriad of health providers and drug sellers (NAFDAC consumer safety bulletin 2006).

NAFDAC, recently in 2007 seized 82 truckloads of fake, banned and expired drugs and closed five anti-drug warehouses at the well-known Onitsha drug market which according to a World Health Organization survey. It has 30% fake drug prevalence as against 10% in other parts of the country (Nigerian Tribune, 2007).

Through the past two decades in Nigeria, the problem of anti-drug has been a very big issue. In addition, fake drugs proved a major factor in contributing to high death rates. The problem of anti-drug was so severe that neighboring countries such as Ghana and Sierra Leone officially banned the sale of drugs made in Nigeria. The issue of fake drugs did not just stop there, but it went to the extent that drugs were hawked even in commercial buses. All these problems affected Nigeria as a whole. On the one hand, but with the inception of the "new NAFDAC" in April 2001, some achievements were reached causing a reduction to the problems. (NAFDAC Consumer Bulletin, 2003).

According to World Health Organization (2007) the prevalence of anti-drug is higher in countries with weak regulations, enforcement, and scarcity of supply of basic medicines, unregulated markets and unaffordable prices. Because of these, the quality safety and efficacy of drug products especially in developing countries cannot be guaranteed. Anti-drug and their

allies aggressively seek to avoid detection and they often disguise their activities. The production of fake drugs need not occur in large infrastructures or facilities but in ordinary households, small cottage industries or in backyards. The high demand for medicines and low cost of production prompts counterfeiters to continue because adequate drug deterrent legislation is lacking. The high cost of medicines gives way to consumers especially the poor to seek medicines outside the normal supply system.

Recommended Strategies of Preventing Anti-Drug in Nigeria

The war on drugs could be sustained if the following recommended strategies are employed to tackle the menace:

Reduction of Target Market

This involves bringing about a decline in the consumption of these substances thereby reducing demand. This will in turn cut down on the revenue of the anti-drug, hence making the business less lucrative.

Adequate Funding and Training of Security Operatives

In as much as the government has done well by setting up the NDLEA, the agencies involved with, the war on drugs should be adequately funded both by government and concerned citizens. Added to funding, they also have to be routinely trained to enable them keep up with the ever changing war.

Orientation and Education of the Youth

The majority of those associated with anti-drug both with respect to abuse and trafficking are youths, this means that if the youths are kept away from drugs the entire problem is almost solved. The Nigerian youth needs to be further oriented on the dangers involved with engaging in trafficking and abuse of drugs and not to see it as a means of livelihood.

Use of Full-Body Scanning Machines

The United State has donated full body scanning machines for the Lagos, Kano, Abuja and Port Harcourt international airports and has provided security training and orientation for airport officers. The machines have proved effective in catching smugglers and couriers taking cocaine from Latin America to Europe by way of Nigeria.

Strong Law and Good Governance

Three institutions can be reformed to promote good governance: the state, the private sector and civil society. However, among different cultures, the need and demand for reform can vary depending on the priorities of that country's society.

Adequate Intelligence Gathering on Drug Trafficking

Strategic intelligence focuses on the current picture of drug trafficking from cultivation to distribution that can be used for management decision making, resource deployment, and policy planning.

Recommendation

- Mandatory provision of pre-shipment information provided by all importers before their drug products arrives at the port of entry of Nigeria.
- AU Nigerian banks are working with information from NAFDAC to make drug importers to get the Agency's clearance first before financial documents are processed for them.

- Issuance of guidelines to airlines that might lift drugs for importers without proper authorization from the Agency.
- In addition, any importation of unregistered drug product attracts penalty fine and seizure until the product is registered.
- Carrying out post marketing surveillance in accordance with WHO specifications.

Conclusion

There is need for sustained efforts of specialized agency of NDLEA aimed at strengthening the national capacity to capture, analyze and regularly monitor baseline data and trends on anti-drug.

NAFDAC has not been able to achieve good success in the fight of anti-drug in Nigeria even with their intense efforts to do so. Some of the reasons are lack of adequate and continuous support of the government. Inadequate support from some stakeholders that are expected to join team with NAFDAC in the fight such as the customs, police and the judiciary.

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