



TEN STEPS FOR AFRICA

Implementation of the UNGASS Outcome Document in an African Setting

1 Mobilize the youth

With youths comprising over 60% of the population of most African countries and realizing that the youth segment of any countries population are most susceptible to abuse substances, there is greater need for African countries to prioritize and focus their efforts at substance abuse reduction strategies at the youth. This should in particular involve programs driven by young people themselves.

2 Protect the child; protect society's future

Children are most vulnerable to harms posed by drugs and least capable to protect themselves or make appropriate decisions regarding drug abuse. Children are innocent victims of adults' drug use when such use prevents adults from fulfilling their roles as parents, care-givers, bread winners etc. The African Child, the continents future and most prized resource, deserves, in accordance with the provisions of Article 33 of the Convention to the Rights of the Child to which most African countries are signatory, to special protection from substances of abuse.

3 Substance abuse prevention is cost-effective

Already overburdened with primary health care concerns and with health systems lacking in critical personnel and infrastructure required to effectively address drug abuse problems, prevention of the onset of the abuse of substances should be the priority of African countries.

4 Poverty + illiteracy = disastrous substance abuse situation

Endemic poverty and high illiteracy levels, twin notorious predisposing factors to increase abuse of substances, are prevalent across the African continent. African countries should incorporate substance abuse prevention programs into the fabric of national development agenda towards attaining the Sustainable Development Goals – particularly Goals #11 and #3 on Eradication of Poverty and Good Health and Wellbeing respectively.

5 Humane and socially-responsible policing required

Repressive policing practices with the use of brutal force and incarceration, without taking into consideration the prevention and health care component of substance abuse is counter-productive. Police should work in collaboration with local authorities and civil society in community-based prevention and early intervention programs where alternatives to incarceration and other methods that bring young people back into the community are used for minor drug offences. Sanctions must be proportionate to the crime committed.

6

Absence of dedicated substance abuse prevention agency

The need for the prioritization of Substance abuse prevention strategies and programs and health care concerns requires the establishment of dedicated specialized and dedicated agencies to cater for substance abuse prevention, treatment and care issues as opposed to the current regime where such issues are lumped together in agencies whose primary focus is Drug Law enforcement.

7

Need for reliable data

The general absence of reliable data in virtually all aspects of human development, with particular reference to health care and law enforcement issues, makes effective planning to address substance abuse issues quite difficult, or better still, near impossible. There is need to enhance data collection, collation, use and information dissemination across the African continent.

8

Incorporating traditional and cultural authorities in substance abuse reduction efforts

Some traditional, religious and cultural practices across the African continent promote the abuse of some substances. Usage of marijuana, khat amongst other substances capable of abuse falls within this category. Appropriate traditional, religious and cultural authorities should be incorporated in efforts aimed at addressing the substance abuse situation.

9

Prioritization of substance abuse issues

Ignorance of the seriousness/primacy of the substance abuse problem to the wellbeing and developmental aspirations of African countries has led to the inability to mobilize sufficient resources to address the substance abuse problems afflicting many African countries.

10

Domesticating ownership of efforts at addressing substance abuse issues

Current efforts at addressing substance abuse issues appear geared towards preventing trafficking of substances to other continents through Africa. There is need for African countries to domesticate ownership of efforts at addressing the scourge of substance abuse by getting their populations to buy into such efforts. Governments should incorporate Civil Society organizations as key partners in their efforts at addressing Substance abuse issues.

Slum Child Foundation, Kenya

Uganda Youth Development Link, Uganda

Paddi Foundation, Nigeria

Serenity Harm Reduction Programme Zambia

FORUT, Norway

World Federation Against Drugs