



## **UGANDA ALCOHOL POLICY ALLIANCE (UAPA)**

**Media Presentation by Uganda Alcohol Policy Alliance (UAPA) on the occasion to commemorate the International Day Against Drug Use and Illicit Trafficking**

**World Drug Campaign theme is:** Drug use disorders are preventable and treatable.

**Venue:** Ibamba Restaurant, Kamwokya

**Date:** Thursday, June 26, 2014

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### **Youth Drug abuse in Uganda and Epidemic of Multiple Health Risks**

Today Uganda joins the rest of the world in commemoration of the International Day Against Drug Use and Illicit Trafficking. This year's World Drug Campaign theme is: Drug use disorders are preventable and treatable.

The problem of drug and substance abuse among young people has been increasing in Uganda. Most of the risky behaviours that young people engage in are highly influenced by use of drugs.

UYDEL conducted a study that examined risks for substance abuse, sex risk behaviours and Protective Factors among Kampala slum young people between the ages of 14-24, , 2012 revealed a high prevalence of substance use (45%; sexual risk involving multiple partner (1-3 persons daily), unprotected sex and limited survival opportunities. 70% youth had a history of early sex involvement with a medium age 15years and 17% had a history of forced sex. Girls were more likely to have had an HIV test in the past 3 months (60%) and to discuss safe sex with partners (71%). What is surprising is that the girls were more likely to have sexual activity under the influence of drugs and many reportedly exchanged sex for money, goods, or services (60%). Boys were more likely to have used drugs or alcohol and to have ever tried cigarette smoking. All groups exhibited low level of protective factors (skills, attachments and resources).

Another study conducted by UYDEL examined High Risk Behaviors among Vulnerable Youth Living in the Slums of Kampala, Uganda, March 2014 revealed that;



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- 50% of the youths between 12 and 18 years drink two or more times per week
- 42% had their first sexual intercourse prior to age 14 and unprotected sex because of use of alcohol and drugs.
- We have also observed commercial sex is highly fueled by alcohol and drug use.
- 56% did not use condom at time of first sex.
- 46% report having sex with 3 or more partners.
- 50% drink 2 or more times per week; 47% of youth obtain alcohol from a friend; 73% drink alcohol with their friends

Ugandan youth are exposed to many risks to their health, fitness and well-being. In fact, research (Fox, et al., 2010) indicates that the majority of youth may experience two or more co-existing risk behaviors. Together, multiple risk habits interact to compound the pain, suffering and sadness youth and their families experience by increasing the likelihood of injury, illness, personal and social problems, and premature death.

The problem of drug and substance abuse is also reported to be evident in secondary schools and juvenile remand centers across the country and this appears to be pushing back the gains made in fighting HIV/AIDS scourge. Drug abuse culture is also highly promoted in film, video halls and disco places. Prostitution, sexual exploitation of children and crime is highly linked to the use of drugs. The Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances (Control) Bill, 2007 has not been enacted for the last six years and yet more young people are increasingly getting hooked to drug use. We are particularly worried about the decreasing age of initial consumption, and the increase in the number of drug abuse consumers among women and girls,.

Illicit drugs threaten the health and welfare of the people in Uganda. Narcotic drugs are a human rights issue and more especially to children as highlighted in Article 33 of the UN Convention of the Rights of Children. This article states that;

*States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislative, administrative, social and educational measures, to protect children from the illicit use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances as defined in the relevant international treaties, and to prevent the use of children in the illicit production and trafficking of such substances.*”

Therefore Article 33 sets out to protect/prevent children from three main things:

1. Illicit use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances (protection);



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2. Participation in production of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances (prevention);
3. Participation in trafficking of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances (prevention).

The best interest of the child should be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children; and compels formulation of child centred policies which is highly relevant in drug policies. By failing to provide a law means failure to protect millions of children who constitute over 50% of the population from harmful effects of drugs. Failure by government to enact an enabling law on address drug use implies non-compliance to UN Conventions, of which Uganda is a signatory.

Uganda is a signatory to the major United Nations Conventions namely;

- Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 as amended by the 1972 Protocol;
- Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971;
- United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988.

The International Standards on Drug Use Prevention show that for every \$1 spent on prevention, at least \$10 are saved in future health, social and crime costs. The most successful approaches in Narcotic drug use prevention involve the critical role of families, schools, and communities to build on protective factors to ensure safe and healthy childhood and adolescent years and to provide viable and legitimate livelihoods for adults.

UAPA has been at the fore front of fighting for alcohol and drug abuse prevention advocating for the need for an effective alcohol policy and law to regulate alcohol production, sale and consumption with emphasis on prohibition of sale of alcohol to minors.

Legal drugs are the main problem that we have in our country as it relates to morbidity and mortality. By far, many more people die of tobacco than all of the drugs combined together. Many more people die of alcohol than all of the illicit drugs together.

### **Global movement on legalization of marijuana**

We are aware that 2 states in the U.S have decriminalized or legalized cannabis for non-medical use and eight states more are heading towards some kind of legalization. Considering this trend of affairs, we highly suspect that the movers of this motion will soon spread their messages to the third world countries and we must state that this is a risky social experiment that should be tolerated by government. The process of legalization generates a much greater exposure of people hence negative consequences will emerge. As a country we do not have the capacity, machinery and resources to regulate legalized marijuana and thus this position is untenable. We know the costs on health care, costs on accidents and lost productivity.



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### Appeal and Call to Action;

- Therefore we urge the Parliament of Uganda to expedite the process of enacting the Narcotic and Psychotropic Substances (Control) Bill, 2007 to save the children and the future generation.
- Responsible government organs should enforce existing laws to curb the drug abuse problem in whatever magnitude.
- Children are our future and we should do whatever is humanely possible to protect them from drug and substance abuse.

### References

1. [www.iogt.org](http://www.iogt.org)
2. Here is the link to the press release by IOGT-NTO: <http://us2.campaign-archive2.com/?u=208eb41381d07b9517fc37d74&id=0a1a513292>
3. [www.unodc.org](http://www.unodc.org) (<http://www.unodc.org/drugs/en/index.html>)
4. [http://preventionpluswellness.com/youth-epidemic-of-multiple-health-risks/?utm\\_source=JMATE+August+2012&utm\\_campaign=27da556b01-CPS\\_6\\_25\\_146\\_24\\_2014&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_4fe5e0d1c2-27da556b01-26795909](http://preventionpluswellness.com/youth-epidemic-of-multiple-health-risks/?utm_source=JMATE+August+2012&utm_campaign=27da556b01-CPS_6_25_146_24_2014&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_4fe5e0d1c2-27da556b01-26795909).
5. [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/21/opinion/tm-luhrmann-as-marijuana-laws-ease-the-risks-grow.html?hp&rref=opinion&\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/21/opinion/tm-luhrmann-as-marijuana-laws-ease-the-risks-grow.html?hp&rref=opinion&_r=1)

Compiled by;

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mutaawe Rogers'.

Mutaawe Rogers  
UAPA Secretary