



2019

ANNUAL REPORT

Drug Policy

Health

Youth Empowerment

Research



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Executive Director

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S DESK

Dear Friends,

We are most glad to share our 2019 journey with you. Last year, we focused on consolidating existing projects while exploring opportunities to expand services for maximum impact. YouthRISE Nigeria through relevant multi-sectoral partnerships contributed to situating national drug control response as a development agenda in contrast to using the criminal justice approach only. This collective effort resulted in the approval for implementation of harm reduction program inclusive of Needle Exchange Program, Medically Assisted Therapy and community Naloxone distribution by the government of Nigeria. YouthRISE Nigeria from inception has been at the frontiers of advocacy for implementation of a comprehensive harm reduction in Nigeria, as part of a public health approach to drug use in-country and its approval remains a huge achievement in our advocacy efforts.

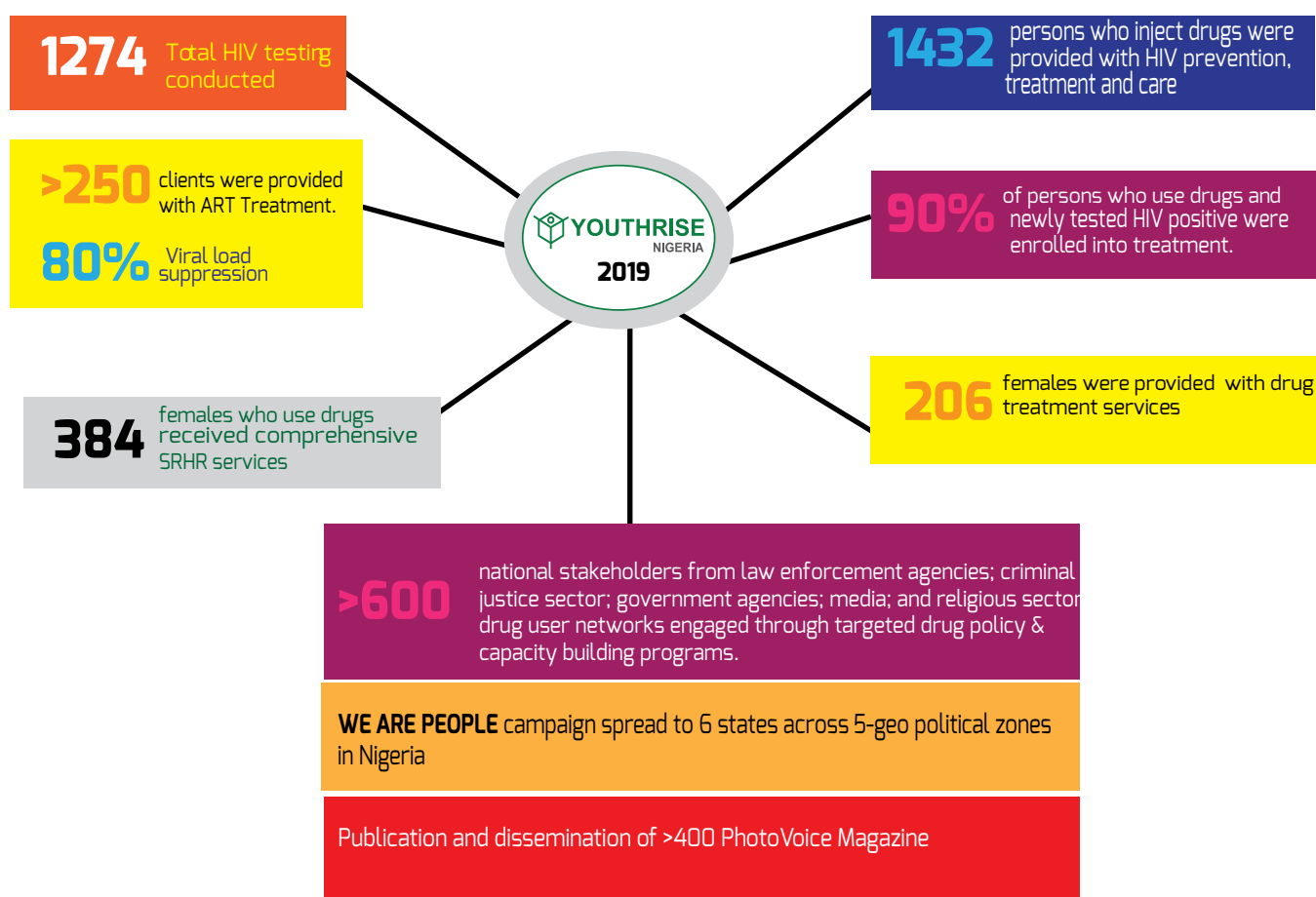
Our treatment services ensured improved quality of life and well-being for People Who Use Drugs (PWUDs), those enrolled on Anti-Retroviral Treatment (ART), while we scale up access to HIV testing; STI treatment; screening for Tuberculosis; screening and vaccination for hepatitis and related referrals. YouthRISE Nigeria Drop-in treatment Centre (DIC) facilitated provision of community-based drug treatment to hundreds of young females who use drugs, who also benefitted from Gender Based Violence intervention, and other related health services.

We are pleased to contribute to national and international development programs in; health, human rights and social justice, as it affects young people and the general population. Our experience in the past years has helped us advance the drug policy reform agenda as well as create opportunities to prioritise the health and dignity of the most vulnerable in our society.

We immensely appreciate our donors, partners, communities and amiable board members for their unflinching support thus far in achieving the progress captured in this report. We are excited having you on board as we journey into next year.

Stay on course!

YOUTHRISE NIGERIA'S IMPACT AT A GLANCE



Note: Service delivery data limited to Abuja and suburbs.

DRUG POLICY THROUGH THE LENS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

In setting the agenda for drug policy reform in Nigeria, the focus of YouthRISE Nigeria's advocacy work in 2019 was to open up the dialogue space, on drug policy and sustainable development. In our engagement with national stakeholders and the general public, we provided evidence-based information on development perspective to drug control in Nigeria and the need for a paradigm shift from the current criminal justice approach to drug use, to a balanced multi-sectoral response that prioritizes health, human rights and development of vulnerable populations.

We conducted a mini study on cannabis cultivation in 3 states- Lagos, Edo and Ogun states in Nigeria. Engagement with cannabis farmers and law enforcement officers (The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency) to gain insight into the dynamics of the cannabis trade in the country and its impact on local economy was cardinal in the exercise. The need for alternative development as an integral part of drug control response in Nigeria is one of the recommendations in the study report.





RESPONDING TO DRUG USE AMONG STUDENTS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

The approach to drug use among tertiary institutions in Nigeria is established on the 'use of force', which is evidently lacking in evidence-based responses to the growing challenge among students. Expulsion remains the commonly used approach by the school management due to lack of structured school-based policy that caters for the health and well-being of students.

To plug this gap, in June 2019, YouthRISE Nigeria engaged student leaders, youth influencers; youth-led associations and young educationist in a 2-day Consultation to develop a 'Model School-Based Drug Policy' which will be a veritable resource for tertiary institutions to adopt, in responding to drug use among students.

Discussion at the forum centred on trends and pattern of drug use among students; dominant response to drug

use in tertiary institutions; vulnerabilities of young persons and other predisposing factors. Participants shared relatable experiences, ideas and recommendations towards a youth-centered school-based drug policy.

We also built the capacity of participants to advocate for evidence-based, non-punitive drug policy in their respective institutions.





DRUG CONTROL BEYOND THE RHETORIC: FOCUSING ON WHAT WORKS

In commemoration of the 2019 World Human Rights Day, YouthRISE Nigeria in collaboration with the Office of the Special Assistant to the President on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) organized a national symposium and open house event themed: Drug Control Beyond Rhetoric; Focusing on What Works.

The event was well attended by national stakeholders- top government officials, law enforcement officers, policy and health experts, Civil Society Organizations, media, Youth networks, religious leaders, students, People Who Use Drugs, community leaders etc.

The importance of refocusing national drug control indicators to ensure they do not inhibit the attainment of SDGs by 2030, was one of the high points of discussion at the event. This stressed the need to deploy indicators to track and measure the impact of current drug control approach on the achievement of the SDGs. Conversations at the program served as a wake-up call for national drug control to be situated within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Furthermore, in line with our effort in advocating

for humane drug control in Nigeria, we collaborated with the Administration of Criminal Justice Monitoring Committee (ACJMC) and West Africa Drug Policy Network (WADPN) to hold a round table on Drug Control and Criminal Justice Reform in Nigeria.

The program focused on analysing the Nigeria drug law and its impact on the human rights of people who use drugs. A holistic implementation of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act, 2015 (ACJA) and the need for a shift from the current retributive justice to a restorative justice system were key recommendations at the meeting.



ADVANCING ACCESS TO HIV TREATMENT AND CARE

Youthrise Nigeria plugs the gap in HIV prevention, treatment and care for People Who Use Drugs and support healthy lifestyle for People Living with HIV. Last year, our work in Abuja Nigeria and its suburbs, focused on improving access to HIV and integrated services through client-centred differentiated care approach, via established mobile and stationary outlets (One-Stop-Shop and Drop-in-Centre).

We offered ART enrolment, drug refills; adherence counselling, partners notification service (PNS), HIV Testing Services, Tuberculosis screening, Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) syndromic management, behavioural maintenance, Psycho-social & paralegal support, referral; and support group meetings. Underpinned by sustained advocacy and community engagement, we were able to mobilise and garner stakeholders' support towards having supportive policies for effective HIV service delivery in Nigeria.

We implemented interventions to address cross-cutting issues affecting People Who Use Drugs (PWUD) such as; Gender-Based Violence (GBV), Human Rights Violation and punitive laws that limit access to service uptake. Our response in this regard include representation in the National Gender & Human Rights (GHR) technical working group, state gender response team and supporting access to justice.

Furthermore, we provided technical expertise in the development of national Key Population HIV guideline document; development of ECOWAS strategy document for provision of HIV; SRHR and Tuberculosis services to key population. We equally participated in Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis advocacy campaign, supported by the National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA).



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PROMOTING SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS FOR YOUNG WOMEN WHO USE DRUGS



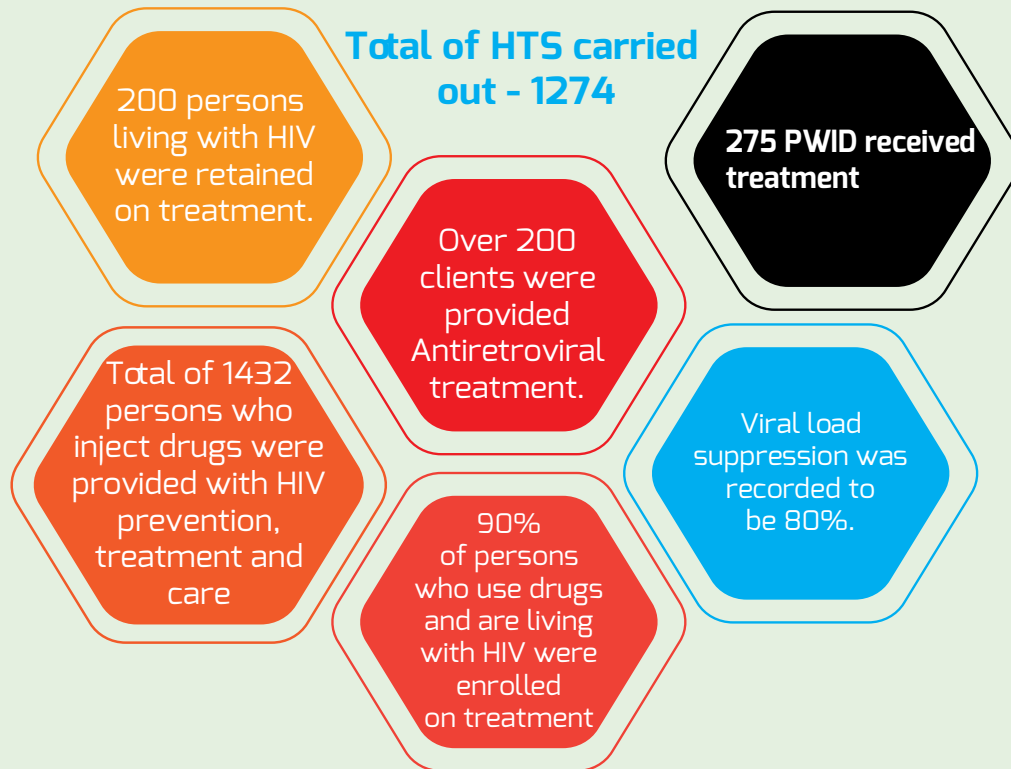
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Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) is a critical component of our health intervention. SRHR services are essential to young women who use drugs. Unfortunately, they are often excluded in the delivery of these services due to the stigma and discrimination associated with drug use.

Many of these young women lack essential knowledge and information on SRHR, hence engage in high risk sexual and health practices, which increases their vulnerability to HIV, unintended pregnancy, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) and violation of their rights.

YouthRISE Nigeria offers comprehensive SRHR education; provision of SRH commodities (Condoms, sanitary and hygiene kits; delivery kits alongside nutritional support); STI screening and syndromic management, HIV Testing Services with integrated Hepatitis B and C testing; Anti-retroviral Therapy; pregnancy test; referral for family planning, post-abortion care, and ante-natal care; psycho-social support; and management of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence cases.

HIV Treatment services



SRHR Services provided to young females who use drugs

624 young females were provided with SRHR information



162 females who use drugs were provided with STI treatment



384 young females who use drugs were provided SRHR services



18 females who use drugs were referred to primary health care facilities for antenatal and post-abortion



250 hygiene kits were provided to 149 young females who use drugs



59% Gender based violence cases were reported and managed



SPOTLIGHT ON THE YOUTHRISE NIGERIA DROP-IN CENTRE. .

One of our strategies for reaching women who use drugs is through our Drop-In-Centre (DIC) in Abuja, Nigeria, which provides community-based drug treatment integrated with other related services. Our treatment model includes cognitive behaviour therapy and motivational interviewing, tailored to meet specific needs of each client. Our integrated service approach also aids the provision ancillary HIV and SRHR; maternal child health services to meet the peculiar needs of each female drug user.

To address the socio-economic needs of this special population, and foster social re-integration of those who have undergone treatment at the facility, we offered vocational training at the DIC and also supported family reunification.

The DIC serves a friendly, non-discriminatory environment and ‘safe space’, supportive of women who use drugs. Hence, the achievement of 60% success rate for drug treatment, 52% success rate in family reunification, about 20% of the women benefitted from economic empowerment program, 9.8% school re-enrolment, and 49% got jobs in 12 months of operation.

We are challenged and poised to do more in sustaining these achievements despite the funding constraint.



TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION OF A COMPREHENSIVE HARM REDUCTION IN NIGERIA

YouthRISE Nigeria's decade of action and sustained advocacy towards the implementation of comprehensive harm reduction program in Nigeria yielded a laudable and positive result in 2019 as the federal government through the minister approved the national concept note for the implementation of Needle Syringe Program (NSP); Opioid Substitution Therapy (Medically Assisted Therapy); and Naloxone distribution. This marked the inception of delivery and coordination of this very important national program.

YouthRISE Nigeria actively participated in the development of the approved concept note and we supported the process that led to the inauguration of National Technical Working Group (TWG) on drug demand and harm reduction. With the support of local and international partners, we were able to lead community engagement; support the national multi-stakeholder policy dialogue process and actively contribute to the development the national NSP implementation guideline and training manual.

Furthermore, in line with efforts to shape public perception and narrative on drug use and harm reduction, YouthRISE Nigeria organized a 2-day workshop to build the capacity of media practitioners.

As a frontline organization in harm reduction, we continue to mobilize resources, galvanize the efforts Civil Society Organizations, partner with stakeholder and advocate for removal of legal barriers to the implementation of comprehensive harm reduction program in Nigeria.

Currently, YouthRISE Nigeria is involved in the implementation of pilot Needle Syringe Programme in the country as we finalize esource mobilization and entry activities.



A SNAPSHOT OF OUR HEPATITIS PROGRAM

Hepatitis program is a key intervention required by People Who Inject Drugs (PWID), yet not readily available to this population in Nigeria.

The country has an existing hepatitis program implementation guideline, but substantial investment has not been made, except pockets of donor-subsidized services for general population in priority states. This problem persists in the face of available evidence of high-risk drug use practices evident in needle sharing and use of contaminated injecting equipment, which predisposes PWID and their community to risk of hepatitis infection.

It is on this premise that YouthRISE Nigeria officially launched its hepatitis program on July 28, 2019 in commemoration of World Hepatitis Day. The launch is part of efforts to scale up hepatitis service provision to PWID and generate more evidence to serve as baseline for future programs as there is no available data on hepatitis B and C among PWID in Nigeria. This program is critical to our institutional harm reduction intervention and contributes immensely to national hepatitis program.

In 2019, YouthRISE Nigeria reached 193 persons with Hepatitis screening and testing services out of which 84 persons were vaccinated for Hepatitis B with related referrals and linkage for continuum of care.

We hope to mobilize fund, raise awareness among People Who Use Drugs and the general public; support national discourse/consultation and work with relevant stakeholders to increase access to hepatitis service in Nigeria



YOUTH EMPOWERMENT, AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR RESPONSE

Research and programmatic evidence on People Who Use Drugs (PWUD) in Nigeria shows limited education and poor access to economic opportunities. This situation is worse for female drug users, who experience higher stigma and have limited skills. Hence, are dependent on their male partners which widens the gender inequality gap.

In line with the Sustainable Development Goals 1 & 3, addressing poverty; and promoting sustainable health and well-being, YouthRISE recognizes the importance of empowerment through development of essential life skills and vocational training to mitigate the impact of poverty on health and well-being. Hence, our socio-economic empowerment programs gear towards empowering PWUD to be self-reliant and productive members of the society.

Last year, we supported the training of 28 young women who use drugs, in beauty and cosmetology, Fashion design, Baking and confectionery.

An initial assessment with the beneficiaries informed the choice of trainings in line with individual preference as well as type of support in terms of materials, equipment, mentorship and linkage to resource mobilisation opportunities upon completion.



WE ARE PEOPLE

Our Flagship Advocacy Campaign “WE ARE PEOPLE” further gained traction in 2019 as it enjoyed support among stakeholders locally and internationally. In commemoration of the June

26th International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking- “World Drug Day”, the campaign involved Students for Sensible Drug Policy (SSDP) Nigeria; Law Students Association of Nigeria (LAWSAN); Smiles International Youth Development Initiative who used their respective platforms to create awareness on the failures of repressive drug policy and promoted humane drug control.

In addition, the YouthRISE Nigeria team created and leveraged on opportunities offered through local and international meetings and conferences to further promote the campaign using Information Education and Communication materials (IEC). Our social media platforms were integral in this effort.



16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE: ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN WHO USE DRUGS "THE ORANGE CAMPAIGN"

In advocating for non-violence against women who use drugs and acceleration of gender responsive policies, YouthRISE Nigeria collaborated with the Women and Harm Reduction International Network (WHRIN) to develop and implement the -'Orange Campaign' as part of the global campaign (in 13 countries) in commemoration of the 16 days of activism against Gender-Based violence from 25th November to 10th December 2019. The community-led campaign which involved women who use drugs, started with a press release calling for an end to the violence and human rights violations perpetrated under the guise of drug control in Nigeria and recommend the implementation of humane drug control in the country.

The unintended consequences of the repressive drug law in Nigeria was brought to light by sharing experiences and compelling stories of women who use drugs, via social media throughout the campaign.

The Orange Campaign ended on a high note at a photo exhibition held in commemoration of World Human Rights Day, where pictorial representation of harsh realities of women who use drugs were brought to the fore through framed photographs. 100 signatures were gathered on the mural to show support for humane drug control in Nigeria.

Other activities include novelty football game organized between female police officers and young women who use drugs which provided a platform to advocate for right-based drug control and also correct negative perception held among law enforcement officers about women who use drugs and people who use drugs generally.



PARTICIPATION IN CONFERENCES

- YouthRISE Nigeria made a paper presentation titled ‘Injecting Pharmaceutical Practices among People Who Use Drugs in FCT-Abuja: Lessons Learnt and Policy Recommendations’, at the 4th Biennial CRISA international conference. This projected the public health risks- HIV, Hepatitis, Tuberculosis associated with injecting drug use in Nigeria and the urgent need for the implementation of comprehensive harm reduction in Nigeria. An important recommendation was the need to adopt a public health response to drug use.
- At the 2019 National Council on AIDS organised by the National Agency for the Control of AIDs, YouthRISE Nigeria presented a memorandum proposing the inclusion of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Services for females who use drugs into national HIV Programming, to address limitations to uptake of this essential services among females who use drugs consequent on criminalisation of drug use. A public health approach to drug use in Nigeria was one of the key recommendations.
- The 13th Annual International Society for the Study of Drug Policy (ISSDP) Conference in Paris, France provided a global platform to engage with Civil Society Organisations, policy makers and drug policy stakeholders to consolidate innovative approaches in providing evidence-informed response to drug use. YouthRISE Nigeria’s Oluseyi Kehinde made poster presentation on ‘The Role of Multi-sectoral Stakeholders Engagement Towards Evidence Based Drug Policy in Nigeria’ giving insight into gaps in Nigeria’s drug control response and emphasising the need for a multi-sectoral and balanced approach to the growing drug problem in the country.
- YouthRISE Nigeria led the delegation of other African Civil Society Organizations to the 3rd Session of the Specialised Technical Committee on Health, Population and Drug Control in Cairo, Egypt. At this high-level meeting, YouthRISE Nigeria engaged with state and regional policy makers and state actors in reviewing progress thus far on drug control and health, develop roadmap and make recommendations. These efforts are geared towards institutionalisation of public health driven approaches- such as harm reduction, and decriminalisation of drug use, for effective drug control across the region, with further exploration of alternative and sustainable development in drug policies.

- We participated in the Cycle 7 of the international Harm Reduction Academy (HRA) organized by Alliance for Public Health and in conjunction with Alliance consultancy, Ukraine. The training supports initiatives and interventions that allows transfer of knowledge and acquisition of best practices in harm reduction. Our participation was part of our proactive measure to build capacity of our workforce with knowledge and skills to design, plan, implement and evaluate institutional harm reduction program, provide leadership and contribute to national harm reduction program.
- At the 20th International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA) held in Kigali, Rwanda with the theme: AIDS FREE AFRICA -Innovation, Community, and Political Leadership; YouthRISE Nigeria's Oluseyi Kehinde made a poster presentation titled- Introducing PhotoVoice as an Advocacy tool for Promoting Harm Reduction and HIV Prevention Among People Who Inject Drugs in Abuja, Nigeria. This was the outcome of a research conducted among people Who Inject Drugs in Abuja, Nigeria, to document their realities and generate evidence in advocating for a public health and human rights approach to drug use.
A research abstract on "The Role of Support Group in Promoting Retention Among PWID-Living with HIV Assessing Treatment in Nigeria", by Okiwu Henry was selected for presentation at the conference.

DONORS AND PARTNERS



EUROPEAN UNION



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