











YEAR 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

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### **Foreword**



We are delighted to share our 2020 journey with you. Despite the outbreak of the Coronavirus epidemic early in the year, YouthRISE Nigeria did strengthen its engagement and relationship with local and international stakeholders and more importantly, ensuring that young and vulnerable populations are reached with adequate information, quality services, while mitigating the impact of COVID-19.

As the year proceeded, the COVID-19 posed challenges that created opportunities for us to explore and expand patterns in connecting with communities and progressing our work. Notably, the team expanded the scope of advocacy and service delivery, engaging prison facilities, providing evidence-based information on COVID-19, drug use and safety, health and nutrition support to reduce the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on the prison population. We sustained our HIV, Sexual Reproductive Health interventions within communities, ensuring access to treatment and support services for young women, and people living with HIV during this pandemic. Furthermore, we continued our support to the national harm reduction program particularly the commencement of the implementation of the Pilot Needle Syringe Program in the FCT.

A special acknowledgment to our donors, partners, community members, board members and dedicated staff for their support in making 2020 a success.

Ifeanyi Okechukwu

Executive Director, YouthRISE Nigeria

Steanyi Okechukwu

## Vision



A society where the health, human rights, and development of every young person in Nigeria is promoted and protected

### Mission



Our mission is to promote evidencebased policies and development, with the meaningful involvement of young people and most affected communities



### **Glossary**

AGYW Adolescent Girls and Young Women

**ECOSOC** Economic and Social Council

FIDA International Female Lawyers Association

**FEMCHIC** FCT Emergency Maternal and Child Intervention

Center

**GBV** Gender Based Violence

**HIV** Human ImmunoDeficiency Virus

**NSP** Needle Syringe Program

**SRH** Sexual Reproductive Health

STI Sexually Transmitted Infection

**UNDP** United Nations Development Programme

### **Highlights of the Year**



COVID-19 Intervention reached 5000+ persons (people who use drugs, people living with HIV and prison communities)



YouthRISE Nigeria gained UN ECOSOC Status



Providing technical support to the national Needle Syringe Program in Nigeria



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Inaugurated as a technical working group member of FEMCHIC to provide support in enabling access to sexual reproductive health and services for adolescent girls and young women





# Promoting Health and Rights of Adolescent Girls and Young Women beyond Restrictions.

YouthRISE Nigeria has continued to serve the urgent demand for the development of Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW), especially those who use drugs in marginalized communities. These interventions ensure to promote Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH), human rights, equality, and socio-economic empowerment. We created a platform to build the capacity of AGYW in marginalised communities in Abuja and Nasarawa, Nigeria, through the peer-to-peer education strategy. This involved cohort and support group sessions with trained peer educators providing practical information on sexual reproductive health, drug use and safety, reaching 389 adolescent girls and young women. This structure has since improved referral and linkages of clients to services like; antenatal care, HIV and STI treatment and other sexual reproductive health services. 259 beneficiaries also received hygiene kits on monthly basis.

YouthRISE Nigeria strengthened the GBV response mechanism by building the capacity of our community outreach workers on case identification, documentation, and referral for post-care services. We also strengthened our relationship with the Police, to ensure prompt response to cases of gender-based violence, particularly among AGYW who use drugs.

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YouthRISE Nigeria forged partnership with the FCT Primary Health Care Development Board; (the government agency responsible for promotion and development of primary health care strategies and services within the Federal Capital Territory) to promote youth-friendly services within primary health care facilities across the FCT. We focused on training primary health care workers across five local government areas in the FCT, to understand drug related issues, facilitate sexual reproductive health and rights for AGYW, and promote youth-friendly services for young people who use drugs.

On December 22nd 2020, YouthRISE Nigeria was inaugurated as a Technical Working Group member of the FCT Emergency Maternal and Child Intervention Center (FEMCHIC). This provides a platform for us to support the coordination of all reproductive, maternal, new-born, child, and adolescent health Nutrition (RMNCAH+N) in the FCT. YouthRISE Nigeria is at the fore of promoting evidence based SRH services for AGYW particularly those who use drugs.





## Impacting Drug Policy through Advocacy



YouthRISE Nigeria sustained its drug policy reform advocacy, by actively engaging stakeholders in the criminal justice system and promoting national discourse on alternative measures to incarceration for low-level non-violent offences particularly drug use. This came on the heels of the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated the gaps in Nigeria's criminal justice system. This formed the basis for our advocacy for prison decongestion and the release of young low-level drug offenders from select prisons in Nigeria. We equally invested in strategic capacity building of stakeholders such as law enforcement officers, religious leaders, media practitioners, staff of area councils in Abuja and the public. This was done through a series of training activities and workshops on evidence-based drug policy, drug prevention, treatment and care.



During the lockdown period, we organized a two-part webinar series - "COVID-19: A Wake-UP Call for Criminal Justice Reform" exploring the dynamics of drug control in context of criminal justice and other pertinent issues bordering on proportionality in sentencing, COVID-19 and drug supply chain etc. This platform presented recommendations for policy makers on the urgent need for drug policy reform to consider restorative justice rather than retributive justice.

The media continues to be a critical tool in shaping the narrative and public perception on drug use. YouthRISE Nigeria promoted conversations on evidence-based drug policy through the traditional and social media, which tended towards amplifying the nexus between humans right, health, social justice in drug control response. We established a strategic partnership with the National Orientation Agency (Government's foremost agency that engages the public on government policy and promotes public perception on policy issues) to promote an 'Anti-Stigma campaign' focused on influencing widespread negative perception and treatment of People Who Use Drugs. The campaign is expected to kick-off in 2021 on one of the foremost local radio stations in Nigeria and estimated to reach over a million people.

We led a high-level dialogue meeting with high-ranking police of including representatives of the Inspector General of Police to discuss the need for the institution to prioritise respect for human dignity in its

operations during the lockdown. especially among young people who use drugs. It was an opportunity to discuss right-based drug control and the role of law enforcement in a public health approach to drug use.

YouthRISE Nigeria Launched the Drug Policy Internship (DPI)
Program to offer young people the opportunity of interning
with the organisation to develop their skills and gain hands on
experience in areas of; drug policy, advocacy, harm reduction
and human rights. We understand that young people are
central to drug policy reform and this program is set to help
raise the next generation of drug policy reform advocates.

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support and advocacy.

# **COVID-19 Emergency Response: reaching underserved communities.**

The disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable persons and communities prompted the emergency intervention by YouthRISE Nigeria. This intervention was directed to people who use drugs, people living with HIV in isolated communities and the prison population. Our COVID-19 Emergency response ensured that we sustained mobile enrolment and Home-Based HIV Care, and supported the provision of COVID-19 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), education materials, medication, food, hygiene kits, to People who Use Drugs (including women and their children), in isolated communities and suburbs of Abuja, Nasarawa, Lagos and Abia states, in Nigeria. We equally ensured people in prison facilities were not left out in our palliative

Through active media engagement and strategic collaborations with prison officials, and partners CSOs, we successfully achieved the release of 71 persons incarcerated including women imprisoned for drug-related offences. Outreach workers continued mobile testing, refill, and home-based care to sustain our community-based HIV/AIDS intervention and support adherence to treatment also educated on harm reduction addressing issues like overdose prevention and management. Our Drop-in treatment centre switched to virtual psycho-social support for people who use drugs, especially women who are vulnerable to Gender-Based violence. We consistently provided food to alleviate the challenges posed by COVID-19 lock down restrictions.

As we continue to rise above the challenges posed by the pandemic, our team has so far reached over 5000 vulnerable and marginalized persons in communities.

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### We are People!

Our flagship campaign- *We Are People* focused on increasing reach across geo-political zones in Nigeria by collaborating with organizations. The campaign spread across eight states in Nigeria, with advocates amplifying awareness on the impact of punitive drug control response on human rights, health and social justice, especially of people who use drugs and marginalized communities. YouthRISE Nigeria partnered with; CRISA, SSDP, Bensther Foundation, Speak Out Initiative, Foster Initiative, David Folaranmi Foundation, SIRP and Centre for Communication and Development, to engage with stakeholders and the public at grassroot level.



Partners engaged health care workers in capacity building programs on evidence based drug treatment and care. This was to improve the knowledge and response measures of health care workers in providing services to people who use drugs without stigma and discrimination. care givers in treatment and rehabilitation facilities were provided with evidence-based information on humane approaches to drug treatment. This was supported by IEC, COVID-19 relief materials and hygiene kits.

Ultimately, the campaign was a platform to highlight the ills of repressive drug policy address issues of stigma, inhumane treatment of people who use drugs, and call for a drug policy reform



Let's Talk Orange was a significant campaign in line with 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence. It involved dialogue sessions with; community leaders, community members, law enforcement officers and CSOs focused on gender issues. This was to identify peculiar enablers of gender-based violence among women who use drugs and advocate for an effective response and the active involvement of community leaders, law enforcement agencies and other members of the community.

A major objective of the campaign was to promote community ownership of response measures to gender based violence. Traditional leaders, women, and youth leaders were sensitized on the causative factors of gender-based violence and the impact on the development of adolescent girls and young women. This discussion identified reporting and response to cases or incidence of GBV, leveraging on the support from civil society organizations and law enforcement.

There was also engagement with the State Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department of the Nigeria Police, to increase the capacity of police officers on gender and human rights related issues.

We strengthened our relationship with the gender desk of the State CID, which is expected to improve the response to gender-based violence.







### **Support Don't Punish**

YouthRISE Nigeria has continually been part of the global campaign – *Support Don't Punish* to symbolically take action in promoting drug policy reform in Nigeria. In 2020, we joined other drug policy reform advocates to call for progressive drug control approach rooted in public health and human rights. An important part of the campaign was the *youth hangout* we organized to promote the inclusion of young people in drug policy discourse by providing a platform for knowledge sharing.

Under an informal and relaxed ambience, participants from various youth groups and civil society organizations got to chat on their experiences, vulnerabilities of young people to drug use and impact of repressive drug policies on the health and development of the youth population in Nigeria. Recommendations for a youth-centred drug policy in Nigeria were provided as well as strategies to promote the involvement of young people in drug policy reform. Everyone left the event with acknowledging the fact that "Young people are indeed central to drug policy reform".



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### **Partners**































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