

Statement delivered by Mr. Ezra Napoleon Tumuhirwe, Country Representative, Uganda Christian Counselors Association (UCCA), on the occasion of the Fourth Intersessional Meeting of the 59th Commission on Narcotic Drugs

10 October 2016, Vienna, Austria

I am Ezra Napoleon Tumuhirwe the Country Representative of UCCA- Uganda Christian Counsellors Association. UCCA is a not for profit company limited by guarantee founded by a group of professional Christian counsellors with a mission to provide researched, practical, effective counselling children, youth, families and communities.

Drug abuse is on the increase in Uganda and yet the problem has not been given attention it deserves. The laws in Uganda are weak, we lack professionals, have limited interventions and we lack funding. The state involvement is limited.

Because we lack funding, we rely on collaborations with institutions that include; ministry of education, ministry of health, ministry of Justice, police, prison, Uganda National Drug Authority, Uganda National Bureau of Standards, parliament committee on health and private sector. We are also working with academic institutions like Uganda Christian University.

- UCCA president has helped Uganda Christian University develop Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse policy that to provide a safe University environment framework where the drug abuse victims access care, treatment and support services. This helps fight stigma associated with treatment and promotes recovery.
- Drug Free Club has been established to develop and promote a culture of drug free lifestyle among the University community members through sensitization and education. Students sign contracts committing themselves to stay drug free. The ultimate goal is to see the club vision become an Inter-University programme where other Universities will emulate the initiative. We are collaborating National Student Guild Leadership Forum to encourage them start Drug Free Clubs in all Universities in Uganda.

Drug Free Clubs will continue to be established in schools to promote drug free lifestyle and to fight stigma and discrimination while students reach out to fellow students with sensitization and encouragement messages. The youth Target groups will be 12yers -17, and 18-25 years both girls and boys in school. We plan to roll out to non-school going youth with time. Given capacity the younger children less than 12 years are preferred but we currently do not have human capacity to do that.

- Helped start support groups like AA-Alcoholics Anonymous. Trained 130 people in recovery in workshops about recovery management, sponsorship, prevention, and how to establish and maintain support groups across the country.
- Have trained staff of 8 drug rehab centres in Uganda although we lack professionals to do this training. The rehab centres lack qualified personnel and good medication for treatment. We have organised workshops that brought together 1014 major mental health and addiction professions with people in recovery, advocates, and other stakeholders (including experts in curriculum and workforce development).

- The current long term self-sustainable project is collaborating with Inter-Religious Council Uganda which has a number of schools and Universities under their leadership. This project targets a minimum of 20 million school going youth within the next ten years with empowering information to help youth resist drug abuse and promote drug-free environments in schools. Uganda is 98% is religious and working with Inter-Religious council will enable us reach 98% of Ugandan population. We chose to work with Inter-religious council because the corruption levels are much less with religious leaders than the government.
- The proposed programme is to integrate alcohol and drug abuse prevention programmes through school-based policies, education, leaders, parents and teacher training, employment of professional counsellors in schools, influence national policies on production, promotion/advertising and sale of alcohol, education about drug abuse and HIV interface, and promote behavioural change among vulnerable groups.
- The current impact is that a Bill has been moved by our area MP Hon. Betty Nambooze to regulate alcohol promotion, production and sale. Currently the laws are silent about that with minors accessing alcohol any time anywhere without restriction.
- The Minister Kampala City is pushing for a declaration to ban production, promotion and sale of alcohol in small sachets which are cheap and easily accessible to youth.
 - 1.http://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1423838/regulate-alcohol-offing-nambooze ,
 - 2.<http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/MP-Nambooze-starts-Anti-Alcohol-drinking-campaign/688334-3373538-hvwrqz/index.html>
- The RT. Hon. Ruhakana Ruganda has asked other Universities in Uganda to emulate the programme our president is coordinating at Uganda Christian University. This was at a walk campaign to prevent drug abuse in the city where he flagged off the walk. The link is where Ezra was interviewed by the leading News paper in Uganda. http://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1434812/walk-campaign-prevent-drug-abuse

Recommendation

Let UNODOC establish an Office in Uganda please. For the last three years we have tried to connect with UNODC Kenya with difficulty.