LIBERIA UNITED YOUTH FOR COMMUNITY
SAFETY AND DEVELOPMENT
Yini Field Road, Harley Street
Ganta City, Nimba County
Liberia, West Africa Luycd2003@yahoo.com

WRITTEN STATEMENT AND RECOMMENDATION TO UNODC.

Dear Mr John Brandolino
Director Division for Treaty Affairs

We are pleased to present to you a written statement and recommendation for reducing reoffending through rehabilitation and reintegration by LUYCSD research report and intervention strategy.

Currently The country still plays host to an unresolved past characterized by human rights violations against bulk of the downtrodden masses, endemic corruption, legislative and judicial weakness, international partners have initiated several reform measures but some areas of human activities remain backward in the reform efforts. One of such areas is the rehabilitation of the country's youthful population, which was drugged to fight intractable unconventional thirteen years of war between 1990 and 2003.

The country's geographic landmark and weak security system manned by poverty stricken under-paid personnel accounts for increasing penetration by heavily funded drug barons. Drug lords have permeated the security system thus turning the country into a drug transit point. Between 2005 and 2011 to 2020 Liberia got enlisted among West African states in which above 90 kilograms of Cocaine was seized, with total seizure in the West African region amounting to 2,500 kg (WACD, 2014).

The foregoing figure accounts for the amount of drugs falling within the dragnets of state securities and reported. There are indications that much more is not accounted for given the quantity on the local market. In 2014, the president signed the Liberia Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and the Act establishing the Liberia Drug Enforcement Agency. Efforts by civil society, NGO, CBO, and development partners, prior to signing the acts, to advise government on areas where both acts contravene international conventions and current global trend in dealing with the world's drugs problem proved futile. Consequently the acts are pushing more for criminalization and punitive measures against low quantity drug users, ignoring human rights, public health or harm reduction

Currently It is unimaginable that a legislative enactment emanating from a country that is still grappling with the aftermath of a gruesome civil war in which the current youthful at the age of 12 to 46, population was conscripted and indoctrinated into the use of drugs to harness bravery for fighting unconventional warfare With generational and future ramifications, drugs and crime tend to put Liberia in an irreversible economic and political downward trend. Proxy such as age range of people arrested daily by drug enforcement agency without providing them vocational training, increasing number of street adolescents who openly show abnormal attitude and high level crime tend to be pointing to high prevalence of drug abuse. Additionally, post conflict Liberia has inherited approximately 38% of youth who were drugged to participate in unconventional warfare (1990 – 2003). The problem is rooted from the use of children as war machines. Between 1990 and 2003, many children were conscripted and regularly drugged to fight wars for various factions fighting forces in the multidimensional Liberian civil war were dominantly children forcefully conscripted and drugged to engage into unconventional warfare, currently the new legislations are steps in the wrong direction. Instead of adopting a right-based approach wherein drug use would be seen primarily as a public health issue and where law-enforcement initiatives would focus on high-level traffickers rather than small-scale dealers, the new laws broadly criminalize every aspect of drug-related activity. The criminalization of drug use and possession, the lack of distinction between small-scale dealers and high-level traffickers, as well as the absence of any provisions prohibiting human rights violations in the context of law enforcement activities are of particular concern.

A study of LUYCSD, people who use drugs (and other marginalized communities at increased risk of HIV) in Liberia concluded that an estimated 3303 people use drugs, and 657 people inject drugs. As is the case in the fifteen county, the study confirmed that cannabis is the drug most frequently used in Liberia Evidence of growing drug, trafficking in the region, fears associated with terrorism, perceptions of States' lack of "required technical and financial means to respond. Effectively" to illicit cultivation, manufacture and drug use. Canadian Expert's Analysis of Liberia's Drug Law, Togging and J. K. Tegli, Technical Report Size Estimation of Sex Workers, Men who have Sex with Men, and Drug Users in Liberia, December 2011, to 2020 Tegang & M. Badin, Integrated Bio-Behavioural Surveillance Survey, 2013.Canadian Expert's analysis of the Drug Law in Liberia. More than 600 interviews were conducted in the ghettos,

Were males while 18% were females, 626 by age category, male and female between ages 25 – 29 years constituted 30%, followed by those between 30 – 34 years, accounting for 21% and 35 – 39 years representing 19% responded to questionnaire. Another 14% of the respondents were within an interesting youthful age category of 20 – 24 years. These rates inarguably suggest trend of youthful life directly involved with drugs, how did you get involved with drugs?

The popular drug with which many respondents started taking drugs, according to the responses so far, are cannabis (popularly known as Marijuana in Liberia) and Italian white (common called cocoa among Liberian drug users). Marijuana and Italian White both compete for dominance on the table of popular drug of debut, with Marijuana leading by slightly 1%. Forty five present of respondents said they started with Marijuana, while 44% said they started with Italian White. The individual user, seventy present of those who took drugs on the first occasion said they smoked the drug, another 27% have said that they inhaled the substance. Fifty six persons among the respondents said they felt stimulated on the first occasion, 33% said they were depressed and another 10% said they were hallucinated by the drug. Bulk of the respondents (77%) claimed that the drug lasted one to four hours in their systems, while 11% said they were under the influence of the drugs for five to nine hours. Interestingly, 12% of the respondents have said that they were under the influence of the drugs for more than ten hours; three hundred and ninety two of them said body weakness was their sign of drug withdrawal, while 88 of them mentioned withdrawal sign as stomach pain. Some respondents might have forgotten their withdrawal syndrome and did not respond to the question. Fifty five present of respondents have said their relatives don't trust them anymore, another 22% have said their family members consider them as rogues; yet 17% has also said their families have rejected them.

Social impact of drugs entails family and peer tension, community exclusion from social services and other forms of social disadvantages They don't trust me, They consider me as criminals, They always reject me, While bulk of them approximately 60% said they did not have dependents, 26% said they had one to two dependents and another 14% said their dependents were between three to six persons. On the issue of what they did for living in order to sustain their dependents, only 2% claimed to be employed; 15% said they were contractors; 6% claimed to be self-employed; and 8% boasted of being in business without describing the kind of business. The respondents have said that there are things that they don't do together with their fellow drug users. Twenty nine present said they do not eat together with their fellows; 5% said they don't load the same car

together; while 23% have said that they don't bathe together with their colleagues, They maintained that decisions made in communities do not usually represent their aspiration since they are not usually allowed to form part of the gathering least to talk about participating in the discussions. Another 31% have said that they are sometimes allowed but under high restriction and careful watch. Nine present said their only means of access was to force their way in

They were asked to state any immediate action that could be taken by government or the community to help them. On this point, 34% suggested that government give them money to do business while 30% stressed the need to send them to vocation training school. Roughly 24% of them asked for jobs to be given to them and another 10% said sending them to school was best immediate solution to their problem.

Within the fifteen county 15, the snowball interview process was conducted in ghettos and offices within ghetto proximity the study team comprised 15 data collectors, three data entry clerks and two report development consultants.

These team members were selected from member staff from LUYCSD. LUYCSD, formulate criteria for selection of individuals within and operational research, project/programme evaluation and institutional capacity building. This baseline survey team was initiated to understand Formal and vocational education rate among drug users is very low to an extent that only 2% has ever entered college, while over 20% never went to school. Senior, junior and elementary school entry rate is 27%, 28% and 21% respectively. Significant 86% of them declined commenting on reason(s) for their failure to continue school, while 4% and 8% blamed their failure on war and lack of support. In spite of the ghetto lifestyle, 73% of respondents consented being parents. The survey on most affected areas on drugs users in Liberia, Nimba-County, Congo-community, Gompa, Bong-county (Gbanga), Baho-quarters Community, located on Gbanga Broad Street. Kakata, Mangibi (Mandiggo quarters) Motserrado county congo town, Chocalate city, New-kru town, Clara town, Duala, Red light and west point.

They noted that police raid them at some part of the year (especially prior to Christmas and July 26 celebrations) and put them into cell without any explanation, warrant or whatever. Per the trend of the discussion, drug users are the object of security harassment, arrest and even torture. They are the scapegoats of an offence committed equally by all and sundry. Low formal and vocational education and the consequential lack of employment opportunities have staggering effect of idleness and non-engagement of youthful drug users.

Since the cessation of warring activities and the endangered lifestyle, comprehensive de-drugging rehabilitation program had not been instituted for ex-combatants.

Currently with a wide rage experience, LUYCSD should be empowered to engage women and children at the age of 12 to 36 in ghettos through positive women empowerment and child rearing programs that will not only transform them into productive citizen but also to avert the impending health burden with national ramifications .

Limited mainstream drug prevention program within the various sectors of the society over the years tends to be responsible for entrenched widespread drug abuse. Substance entry into the facilities, provision of medical and counselling services and providing skills training over a period of time will make meaningfull impact in addressing the problem within the sixteen county, these conclusions are intrinsically based on findings of the survey. Regardless of their addiction brain disease condition, access to health services is their inalienable human rights that should not be denied them Provision of health services is an essential component of rehabilitation of drug users, which needs to be blended with creation of host facilities and skills training program.

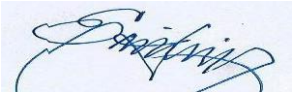
The burden of the law or its absence is on users than any group of drug actors. The Liberia Controlled Drugs and Substances Law show unequal distribution of justice for drug offenses, with drug users bearing the blunt of punishment. While the law is crafted from a criminalization perspective, there is punitive disparity that fewer traffickers over users. Setting the scale for gravity of the problem, traffickers commit higher latitude of the crime and deserve heavier gravity of punishment while users are usually caught with minimum quantity and should be given minimum punishment.

The lesson learned from the field of work

The community at large accepted the strategy in implementation of the research to reduced poverty and reducing reoffending through rehabilitation and reintegration. The community members such as the elders, women and girls where encouraged in sharing their story about their experiences in the project focus areas which has been their dream to see the Liberian United Youth for Community Safety and Development (LUYCD) to come in their district with this innovative strategy.

We are pleading/appealing to United Nations UNODC to connect LUYCD with a friendly donors/organization that will assist us in supporting our work up to 2030. LUYCD do not have a donor or international partners; all of our projects has been supported with a membership due and individual contributions to our work.

Given under our hand and seal on this 29th day of, AD July 2022



Board Chairman

J. Kofa Tolbert

Chief Executive Director
Mr. Fred C. Johnson