

NACADA QUARTERLY

A Publication of the National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse



Launch of Nationwide RRI for the Elimination of Substandard and Counterfeit Alcoholic Drinks

**Parents
Blamed for
Increase in
Alcohol and
Drug Abuse
among
Learners**

**A Closer Look
at the
Relationship
Between
Alcohol Abuse
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CEO's Message



Welcome to the Fifth Edition of the NACADA Quarterly Newsletter, which highlights our efforts for past three months.

2021 continues to be quite a year for all of us. We have been through many developments, both in drug demand reduction and suppression, that are at times less favourable in the prevailing circumstances. Nevertheless, we have also had huge achievements.

We are happy to report good progress. To begin with, the development and launch of the National Guidelines on Alcohol and Substance Use Prevention and Management in Basic Learning Institutions, 2021 in collaboration with our key partner– Ministry of Education. I encourage you to visit our website www.nacada.go.ke/ publications to get a copy of the Guideline proposals to be implemented while conducting substance abuse prevention programs for basic learners.

Further, the Authority hosted the National Assembly Parliamentary Committee on National Administration and Security to review the progress of the Miritini Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre.

Finally, we inked an agreement with the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) on a long-term strategic partnership for the promotion of peace, social cohesion and peace building that would negatively be impaired by substance abuse.

Of course, there is still a lot of work being done both at the national and county levels. The launch of the nationwide Rapid Results Initiative (RRI) for the elimination of substandard and counterfeit illicit alcohol was necessitated by the increase of illicit products and unfortunately the deaths of some of our citizens. This underscores the importance of the various arms of government to collaborate in elimination of the illicit products in our markets.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen a huge increase in the need for mental health services and increase in suicide cases in Kenya. We know alcohol and drug abuse are among the major risk factors for suicides and homicides. It is not always easy to determine when someone is in danger. Encourage those at risk to seek help from a health professional or call our Helpline number 1194 anytime any day. Demystify myths with facts and destigmatize addiction.

Going forward, I am optimistic to more success and improving the efficacy of our programs.

Victor G. Okioma, EBS
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Editor's Note



This edition of the NACADA Quarterly is distinct because it documents a high profile visit to our flagship project; the Miritini Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre in Mombasa County. Relish the captivating details of how the Parliamentary Departmental Committee on Security and National Administration made a grand tour of the facility and the commitments they made towards the centre.

In this edition, read all about our role in ensuring that cohesion and integration remain a key pillar of peaceful elections. This is after we signed an agreement with the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) whose main thrust is the interface between drug and substance use and abuse and electoral turmoil.

Find out about our strategic approach to dealing with drug and substance use in basic learning institutions following the launch of an evidence-based framework to address the issue differently. Read

all about how this policy direction is further buttressed by the partnership between the Authority and the Ministry of Education.

As the country gears up for the festive season and following deaths and hospitalization of imbibers occurring from consumption of illicit and counterfeit alcohol, the government launched a Rapid Results Initiative (RRI). Read about the commitment from the government on eradication of such drinks so as to preserve life and health.

There are several other interesting articles which will inform, educate and entertain you- the reader- and I urge you to take time and read through the publication.

Enjoy the read.

Simon Mwangi
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Fast-Tracking Construction of the Miritini Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre



Limuru MP Peter Mwathi (centre) walks alongside NACADA CEO Victor Okioma and PEAR Director Dr. Yvonne Olando. / **Photo: Samuel Kamau.**

By Simon Mwangi

The Authority played host to the National Assembly Committee on National Administration and Security when they visited the Miritini Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre in Mombasa County, which sits on 13 acres of land.

The team, led by the Committee Chair who is also the Member of Parliament for Limuru Constituency Hon. Peter Mwathi, visited the facility on a familiarization mission so as to adequately support its completion as envisioned by the Authority and in line with a Presidential directive on its establishment issued in 2015.

The team was hosted at the facility by the NACADA Board led by the Chair Prof Mabel Imbuga and CEO Victor Okioma.

Speaking during the event, Prof. Imbuga said that the rehabilitation centre currently houses 24 inpatient clients, with another 270 more on the outpatient program undergoing treatment.

“From February 2020, NACADA launched the outpatient unit at the facility with about 40 clients getting their methadone dose daily. This facility, once upgraded, will have a capacity of 200 inpatient clients and will be a centre of excellence in treatment and rehabilitation of substance use disorders in East and Central Africa. It is also important to note that we shall be admitting clients from all over the country and continent and thus it will not just be a facility for the coast region despite statistics showing that it is the most affected,” she said.

In March this year, the first batch of about 30 clients were brought to the facility and they were treated and discharged.

Currently, the second lot of 24 inpatient clients are undergoing a comprehensive rehabilitation programme.

“The vision for us at NACADA is to establish a center of excellence in management of substance use disorders in the country. The State Department of Public Works has developed for us a master plan that will cost about Sh1.2 billion when fully implemented. However, the allocation of funds has been slow and erratic slowing things down but since the relevant parliamentary committee has visited us we are optimistic that these challenges will be dealt with once and for all,” said the CEO.



Limuru MP Peter Mwathi during the tour of the facility. / **Photo: Samuel Kamau**

The Committee chair said the project lauded the Authority for its work at the facility saying that the government is committed to its speedy construction and completion.

“We came to understand the programmes that are being offered here and most importantly what programmes NACADA has to ensure that people are properly sensitized against the use of drugs,” Mwathi said.

He said since Parliament will soon be discussing the supplementary budget, the committee will persuade other MPs to support the project in terms of advocacy for the required Sh1.2 billion.

“So that the centre can be what the President intended to be,” Mwathi said.

He said though other parts of the country also need such facilities, Mombasa and the Coast region has the highest prevalence of drug abuse and addiction in the country.

The author is the Manager, Corporate Communications.

Magoha Blames Parents for Increase in Alcohol and Drug Abuse among Learners



Education Cabinet Secretary Prof. George Magoha at the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) on July 9, 2021. / **Photo: Courtesy.**

By Samuel Musungu

Education Cabinet Secretary Prof. George Magoha has slammed parents for the increased cases of alcohol and drug abuse among school-going children. He attributed the trend to poor parenting, saying kids follow the footsteps of their parents.

“A child will not do what you say. A child will do what you do. If you consume alcohol and drugs at home as your children watch, they will assume that’s the right thing to do and will start using the substances and get hooked over time,” said Magoha.

The CS stated that in order to eradicate the vice, it’s vital for parents to play their role and practice what they preach. He added that as much as parents love their children, part of the love should be instilling discipline in them.

“For us to get to the bottom of this issue, there is need for parents to first accept that they are responsible for what happens to their children as far as alcohol and drug abuse is concerned,” he said.

Magoha spoke during the launch of the National Guidelines for Alcohol and Substance Use Prevention and Management in Basic Education Institutions at the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) on July 9, 2021.

The guidelines, developed by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with TSC and NACADA, provide a framework to guide interventions on alcohol and substance use prevention and management in primary and secondary schools.

“Alcohol and drug use in institutions of basic education is a growing problem that needs urgent attention. Task

forces and commissions of enquiry established to investigate indiscipline and student unrest in the country have repeatedly pointed at alcohol and drug use in learning institutions as one of its causes,” reads the document in part.

“These guidelines will be used in basic education institutions and will apply within school premises and at school events. They seek to address alcohol, tobacco, inhalants and any other chemical substances that when consumed alter the functioning of the normal behaviour of the user.”



Education Cabinet Secretary Prof. George Magoha hands over copies of the guidelines to NACADA Chief Executive Officer Victor Okioma. / **Photo: Courtesy.**

Interior Cabinet Secretary Dr. Fred Matiang’i said the main goal of the guidelines is to promote a safe and healthy environment free from alcohol and substance use to enable learners realize their full potential.

“The guidelines will address misinformation and myths on alcohol and drug abuse and also guide teachers on instituting effective preventive and management approaches in responding to alcohol and substance use in schools,” said Matiang’i in his speech read by Interior Principal Secretary Dr. Karanja Kibicho.

“Key objectives of the guidelines include eradicating alcohol and substance use in school premises, functions and activities, establishing mechanisms that support alcohol and substance use preventive education for the school community, and responding appropriately to learners with substance use challenges.”

Matiang’i assured of his ministry’s commitment towards attaining a drug-free environment in learning institutions. He said the work had just started and it is upon all stakeholders to make sure the guidelines have been effectively implemented.

The author is a Corporate Communications Intern.

Launch of Nationwide RRI for the Elimination of Substandard and Counterfeit Alcoholic Drinks



Interior CS Dr. Fred Matiang'i (seated fourth right), Interior PS Dr. Karanja Kibicho (seated centre), NACADA CEO Victor Okioma (seated far right) with National Government Administration Officers at the Kenya School of Government (KSG) on September 9, 2021. / **Photo: Courtesy.**

By Simon Mwangi

The government launched a 100-day Rapid Response Initiative (RRI) to get rid of sub-standard and alcoholic drinks and other substances in the country on September 9.

The multi-pronged campaign will also target alcoholic administrators, who have been identified as the weakest link in the fight against illicit brews.

When officially launching the exercise, Interior Cabinet Secretary Dr. Fred Matiang'i added that the RRI programme seeks to enforce compliance with the national standards and other regulations, eliminate illicit and counterfeit alcoholic drinks and educate the public on the dangers of the drinks.

"The proliferation of cheap and illegal liquor, whose supply and consumption tends to rise sharply towards election season, poses serious public health and safety challenges to a system that is already reeling from the strain of Covid-19 pandemic. Alcoholism among chiefs and their assistants is also a matter of concern, as it is always reported that they cannot not discharge their duties effectively. In line with this, I hereby direct that any administrator found guilty be sent to rehabilitation centres," said the CS.

Speaking during the same event, NACADA Chief Executive Officer Victor Okioma revealed that the Authority had noticed increased consumption of illicit brews, especially during the electioneering period and urged youths not to partake the illicit drinks as they can be hazardous to their health.

"We have a serious challenge of alcohol abuse aggravated by the season of elections. Some people imagine it is time to provide cheap liquor to enable campaigns. In some cases, this trend is chronic. The most unfortunate bit is that the youthful population who imbibe these drinks endanger their lives and risk having lifelong conditions or even death as most of the contents of what they consume cannot be ascertained," said Okioma.

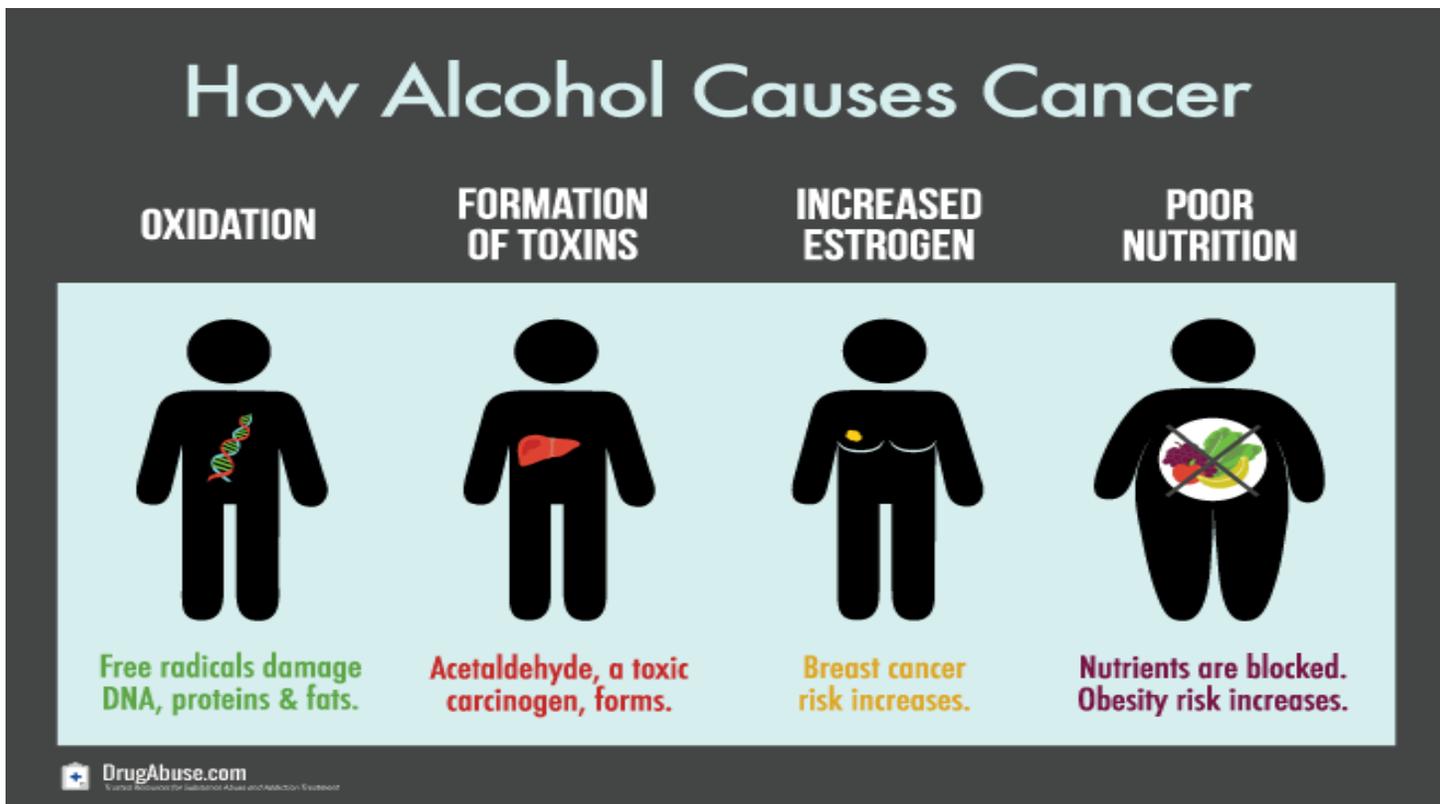
The RRI is expected to be carried out over a 30-day period and National Government Administration Officers (NGAOs) are expected to spearhead the crackdown in their respective jurisdictions. NACADA Regional Managers are also leading the multi-agency teams comprised of membership from, among others, the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA), the Anti-Counterfeit Agency (ACA), and Ministry of Health. The teams will also include officers from the Directorate of Criminal Investigations and the National Police Service.

The CS revealed that some administrators had been compromised by the brewers and sellers, thus slowing down the war on illicit brews. He also blamed county governments for licensing bars and other joints even in residential areas, hence compromising efforts to address the menace.

"When you ask them why they do so, they say it is their responsibilities and that they are chasing revenue. It is wrong," he said.

The author is the Manager, Corporate Communications.

Alcohol Abstinence a Day Keeps Breast Cancer at Bay



Most women who use alcohol, therefore, have higher incidences of breast cancer compared to the general female population. / **Photo: DrugAbuse.com.**

By Rebecca Adeli

Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer and the leading cause of cancer death among women globally with over two million women being diagnosed each year; it is the number one greatest phobia of the girl child.

Over the past years, there has been a rapid growth in the number of breast cancer cases in the world with over a 3.5 percent mortality rate per year, according to the World Health Organization.

Girls these days grow up hearing about their increased risk of getting this type of cancer through the family: grandmothers, mothers, and aunts with the disease, and this increases the fear without really not dealing with the issue at hand, and that is how to reduce the cases and increase awareness of this type of cancer .

The use of alcohol, to be specific, causes an imbalance in the levels of estrogen and a breast cancer gene due to its carcinogenic nature. In fact, alcohol, when abused, may even reduce the effectiveness of breast cancer treatment. Most women who use alcohol, therefore, have higher incidences of breast cancer compared to the general female population.

There have been many misconceptions around breast cancer treatment and prevention. One of them is that red wine reduces the chances of getting breast cancer. This

is, however, not true because red wine is an alcoholic drink that is carcinogenic and upon excessive intake removes the balance of estrogen levels and increases the chances of breast cancer.

Women with substance use disorders (SUDs) have a high tendency not to have a balanced meal. This in a great way reduces their immunity and their body's ability to fight the cancer cells. Proper nutrition and abstinence from ADA greatly increases the body's immunity, thus, the chance to fight these cancerous cells and protect the body from them as well.

In creating awareness of breast cancer and fighting for the rights of those who have been still are victims of this menace, in trying to reduce the infection rate and narrow the mortality rate, in trying to ensure that the general public do not run on misconceptions, it is important to take action and use the information received to lead by example and make sure people around you do not fall victims.

Avoid alcohol, reduce breast cancer, share information and save lives!

The author is a Communication practitioner specializing in Public Relations.

Tree Planting to Promote Therapeutic Wellness at the Miritini Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre



NACADA Chief Executive Officer Victor Okioma is assisted by a Kenya Forest Service Officer to plant a tree at the Miritini Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre in Mombasa. / Photo: Samuel Musungu.

By Samuel Musungu and Emma Machoka

The Authority kick-started a tree planting initiative at the Miritini Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre in Mombasa on September 15, 2021. NACADA had envisaged to plant more than 1000 indigenous and fruit trees at the facility for environmental benefits.

Chief Executive Officer Victor Okioma said the planted trees will help enhance the therapeutic and healing process at the centre as well as boost the food quantity in the country in line with the government's Big Four agenda on food security.

"The only way forward, if we are going to improve the quality of our environment, is to get everybody involved. Let us do this by planting more trees," said Okioma. He as well urged the staff at the facility to take care of the trees and ensure they all grow.



National Youth Council Chief Executive Officer Roy Sasaka waters a tree after planting at the Miritini Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre. / Photo: Samuel Musungu.

National Youth Council (NYC) Chief Executive Officer and NACADA Board Member Roy Sasaka underscored the importance of the exercise, saying "people who will not sustain trees will soon live in a world that will not sustain people."

"The effects of climate change are real and we have experienced it with the droughts witnessed in the country. That is why we have to plant more trees to increase forest cover, conserve biodiversity, and provide more food," said Sasaka.

Also present at the event were Coast Regional Commissioner John Elungata, Reachout Centre Trust Director General Taib Basheeb, and representatives from the Kenya Forest Service (KFS).



Coast Regional Commissioner John Elungata fills soil around the root ball of a planted tree. / Photo: Samuel Musungu.

The tree-planting exercise was part of the Authority's efforts of transforming the Miritini rehab into a centre of excellence on substance use prevention, management and care. It also contributes to Kenya's commitment to plant more than 1.8 billion trees by next year.

In 2018, President Uhuru Kenyatta issued a decree that the attainment of 10 percent national tree cover be accelerated by 2022 and subsequent directives that all Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) commit 10 percent of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) budget to tree growing activities.

Kenya's forest cover, which currently stands at seven percent, equates to 67 trees per individual compared to the global average of 420. The low tree cover has largely largely been occasioned by increased human activities such as illegal logging.

Musungu and Machoka are Corporate Communications Intern and Attaché respectively.

Partnership to Promote Peace and Cohesion in the Country



NCIC Chair Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia (third left) together with NACADA Board Member Ms. Priscilla Tabitha (third from right) and the Chief Executive Officers from both organizations with the technical team members during the MoU signing ceremony at NCIC offices. / **Photo: Courtesy.**

By Simon Mwangi

The National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA) has inked an agreement with the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) on long term strategic partnership and collaboration for joint advocacy activities in the promotion of peace, social cohesion and peace building.

Drawing from their mandates both organizations have mapped out the key areas of partnership which will transcend the electioneering period in the country. Speaking during the MoU signing ceremony, NACADA Chief Executive Officer, Victor Okioma, underscored the need for concerted effort in the fight against substance use and abuse as one of the triggers of instability.

“Research the world over shows that alcohol and drugs are outright aggravating factors for conflict and disorder hence curtailing the principle of cohesion and social integration. As the country readies itself for the general election next year, it is important for those of us involved in advocacy to focus our energies on addressing the issues threatening lack of peace before, during and after the polls. It is for this reason that we are formally joining hands with NCIC in this noble endeavor,” said Okioma.

Speaking during the same event, the Chairman of the NCIC Commission Reverend Dr. Samuel Kobia highlighted the NCIC’s mandate as the key pillar in activities geared towards rallying the country towards nationalism.

“All our activities are hinged on the promotion of national unity, equity and the elimination of all forms of ethnic discrimination by facilitating equality of opportunities, peaceful resolution of conflicts and respect for diversity among Kenyan communities. It is for this reason that we are reaching out to like-minded partners like NACADA with a view to ensuring that we adopt a common approach to the issues inhibiting achievement of this vision. Drugs and other substances of abuse have continually been flagged as some of the reasons why youth engage in conflict which eventually undermines harmony and social cohesion. We are proud of this and commit our support to the engagement and look forward to working with our counterparts with a view to promoting peace in the country,” added Kobia.

Among some of the areas that the two organizations will collaborate in include carrying out joint select community outreach activities, promotion of media-based alcohol and drug abuse and peace advocacy campaigns as well as undertaking joint research activities to inform strategy and policy.

The Commission recently launched a roadmap to a violence free 2022 election whose overall objective is to set the agenda and needed direction for all peace actors to make adequate preparations for a peaceful electoral process.

The author is the Manager, Corporate Communications.

Utilise Licensing Fees to Support Fight Against Drugs, Counties Told



NACADA Chief Executive Officer Victor Okioma (seated third right) with other stakeholders at the consultative forum in Nyamira County. / **Photo: Samuel Kamau.**

By Esther Okenye

The Authority's Chief Executive Officer Victor Okioma has challenged county governments to utilize resources collected during licensing of premises dispensing alcohol to bolster the fight against drug abuse in their respective regions.

Speaking during a stakeholders' consultative forum in Nyamira County organized by the Nyanza Regional Office in partnership with Giselle Foundation, the CEO underscored the need for counties to complement NACADA's work at the grassroots.

"The function allowing licensing of bars and entertainment joints was devolved to counties following the advent of devolution in the country. This, therefore, means that the devolved units have a responsibility by law to utilize part of the proceeds from this function to promote the fight against alcohol and drugs at their level. I wish to request them to partner with us in the realization of this expectation so that we can have concerted effort towards this issue," he said.

Addressing the 100 stakeholders drawn from various sectors of the region, including political and administrative leadership, Faith Based Organizations, Civil Society Organizations and youth leadership, Nyanza Regional Commissioner Mr. Magu Mutindika decried the increasing challenge of illicit brews proliferation within the county.

"As the National Government Administration Officers in this region, we are alarmed at the high rates of illicit brews that have engulfed this specific county. It is for this reason that we are meeting today to discuss and find solutions to the problem of these prohibited brews in Nyamira in the wake of the ongoing Rapid Results Initiative (RRI). We shall not relent until this challenge is completely neutralized. And in the same breadth, we shall take stern action against any government official found abetting this vice," said Mutindika.

The activity was aimed at spurring community action towards addressing the menace and bringing political leadership on board to support the activities.

Statistics indicate that most remote villages in the county have been experiencing slow economic development, a problem they blame on widespread production, sale and supply of brews, which have left many low-income households in ruins.

Concerns have also been raised that some schoolchildren have been visiting such dens especially after the coronavirus pandemic hit the country.

The author is the Manager, NACADA Nyanza regional office.

National Guidelines on Alcohol and Drug Use Prevention: The Future of Drug Use Prevention in Kenya

Globally, there has been tremendous growth in the field of prevention science over the past two decades. Initially, programs implemented were based on the realization that most people had little or no knowledge about the harmful effects of alcohol and illicit drugs. This led to the development and dissemination of public information campaigns designed to replace myths with facts. These attempts have not been totally effective.

Over time, the field has increasingly become oriented with approaches that are based on theories and research. Currently, prevention strategies provide a good basis for evidence-based interventions for targeted populations aiming at positive lifestyle outcomes.

The primary objective of psychoactive substances use prevention is to help people, particularly but not exclusively of younger age, to avoid or delay the initiation of the use of psychoactive substances, or, if they have started already, to avert the development of substance use disorders. Effective prevention contributes to the positive engagement of children, youth and adults with their families, schools, workplace and community.

Available scientific evidence shows what works for families, schools, workplaces and communities in addressing risk factors and enhancing protective factors

for various age groups. Risk factors contribute to increased vulnerability to initiation of substance use while protective factors reduce individual vulnerabilities. These risk and protective factors differ according to age.

These Guidelines provide a framework for state and non-state actors to effectively carry out prevention programs and policies that are applicable to our Kenyan context. They aim to improve delivery of programs, interventions and policies in Kenya in order to produce positive outcomes for the targeted populations. The National Guidelines on Drug Use Prevention are anchored on the International Standards on Drug Use Prevention (UNODC, 2015).

Interventions and policies are grouped by the settings in which programs are implemented and major developmental stages in the life of an individual from pregnancy, infancy and early childhood, middle childhood, adolescence and adulthood. They present three aspects for each evidence-based prevention strategy: a brief description of the strategy, a summary of the available, and those characteristics that can be linked to outcomes.

A copy of the National Guidelines on Alcohol and Drug Use Prevention, 2021 is available on the NACADA website <https://nacada.go.ke/publications>.

National Guidelines for Alcohol and Substance Use Prevention and Management in Basic Education Institutions: Safe Schools & Healthy Learning Environment

Alcohol and drug use in institutions of basic education is a growing problem that needs urgent attention. Task forces and commissions of inquiry established to investigate indiscipline and student unrest in the country have repeatedly pointed at alcohol and drug use in learning institutions as one of its causes.

For decades many have believed that what children and youth need most is information on drugs and the harms they cause. Prevention work therefore has focused on sensitization sessions, use of scary posters and even testimonies shared by persons in recovery in the hope that this would lead to the choice to be drug free. Most schools have taken a punitive approach to dealing with learners involved in drug use with drug testing and exclusion being the key strategy used to respond to drug incidents. Research has however revealed that many of these approaches do not work.

Non-interactive teaching methods like lecturing, providing information only and non-structured dialogue-based sessions do not yield positive results in drug use prevention among children. It is also recommended not to use ex-drug users to provide testimonies nor to place a focus only on moral values or self-esteem in prevention efforts. The most effective approaches in schools shun stand-alone, single event activities and

instead embrace ongoing, comprehensive, and developmentally appropriate strategies.

Taking cognizance of this, the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Teacher Service Commission and NACADA developed the National Guidelines for Alcohol and Substance Use Prevention and Management in Basic Education Institutions, 2021 to provide a blueprint for schools in Kenya to effectively address the challenge of alcohol and substance use.

The Guidelines seek to address use of alcohol, tobacco, inhalants and other chemical substances and shall apply within the school premises and at school events. Indicative approaches and measures for responding to alcohol and substance use in schools have been provided. Schools are required to create and promote a child friendly learning environment. Elimination of alcohol and substances of abuse will be a major achievement in enhancing access, retention, transition and completion.

A copy of the National Guidelines for Alcohol and Substance Use Prevention and Management in Basic Education Institutions, 2021 is available on the NACADA website <https://nacada.go.ke/publications>.

Global Concern over the Rise of Drug Sales over the Internet



Drugs make up two-thirds of all offers on the dark web. / Photo: IT Solutions.

By Steven Nyabuti

The world commemorated the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking (IDADA) on June 26. One of the main issues that came out during the celebrations is the increase of drug sales through the dark web. These details are contained in the World Drug Report and they point to a growing area of concern in the fight against drug abuse the world over. According to the report, the amount of drugs trafficked through the dark web from mid-2017 to 2020 translate to about \$315 million.

This is testament that traffickers are resorting to technology to enhance their activities, even as the world is highly leveraging on the same since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. Drugs make up two-thirds of all offers on the dark web. Whether heroin, lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) or cannabis, these illegal intoxicants can often only be found on a single platform. Payment is made with the cryptocurrency Bitcoin.

Public-private partnerships have become crucial in addressing drug trafficking on the Internet. The drug supply chain now involves Internet Service Providers (ISPs), technology companies, and shipping and mailing companies.

In September last year, the European police agency Europol and the US Department of Justice (USDOJ) announced that international law enforcement agents had carried out 179 search warrants and arrested more than 170 suspects in a coordinated operation that targeted "vendors and buyers of illicit goods on the dark web." The operation, codenamed DisrupTor, netted some \$6.5 million (€5.5 million) in cash and virtual currency, as well as weapons and 500 kilos of

drugs, such as cocaine, fentanyl, heroin, oxycodone and methamphetamine.

Originally a niche medium of exchange for the technology community, Bitcoin emerged in 2011 as the currency of choice for drug dealers conducting transactions on a dark-web site known as the Silk Road. Over the past five years, the combination of an encrypted network hidden from most of the world and a transactional currency that is nearly untraceable by law enforcement officials resulted in a small but significant marketplace of illicit vendors selling illegal wares.

Clearly, governments globally need to improve response to drug trafficking over the internet by forging public-private partnerships with ISPs, technological companies, and shipping and mailing companies. Illicit or rogue Internet pharmacies are a recognized global public health threat that have been identified as utilizing various forms of online marketing and promotion, including social media. Illicit online pharmacy social media content for Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace remained accessible despite highly questionable and potentially illegal content.

The highlight of this year's IDADA was the theme **Share Facts on Drugs, Save Lives**, which was aimed at spreading facts to fight misinformation regarding drug abuse. As part of the theme, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) encourages everyone to share facts on drugs to help save the lives of those caught up in the trap of drugs and illicit trafficking.

Rising web-based sales could transform global drug use patterns and, thus, there's urgent need to control the drug supply chain on the internet by removing drug adverts and listings as well as sharing information with law enforcement. Additionally, cryptocurrency markets need to be properly regulated even as electronic payments are monitored to detect suspicious transactions and illicit financial flows from drug trafficking.

On the flipside, Covid-19 has triggered innovation in drug prevention and treatment services. This then means that players in the sector need to maintain Covid-19 adaptations to the delivery of drug-related services in order to increase accessibility and coverage of services.

The author is an ICT Officer.

Drug Users Too Have a Right to Access Appropriate Health Services



NACADA CEO Victor Okioma and Board Vice Chair Vincent Muasya 'Chipukezy' engage with recovering addicts at the Miritini Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre on May 25, 2021. / Photo: Samuel Kamau.

By Judith Twala

A conversation on whether persons with substance use disorders (SUDs), loosely referred to as 'addicts', have rights even in their state is the main motivation behind this piece. This is because it is increasingly becoming clear that the commonly held belief is that someone battling addiction is more or less an outcast and thus devoid of any rights. Well, the truth is they do and justly as such. The use of drugs does not mean people forfeit their human rights - they remain entitled to the right to life, to the highest attainable standard of health, to social services, to privacy, to freedom from arbitrary detention, and freedom from cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, among others.

It is on this premise that health providers are sometimes controversially cited for what in treatment of addiction is referred to as harm reduction. While there is no universally accepted definition of *harm reduction*, it can be said to refer to policies, programmes and practices that aim to minimize the negative health, social and legal impacts associated with drug use, drug policies, and drug laws.

Harm reduction encompasses a range of health and social services and practices that apply to illicit and licit drugs, including needle-syringe programs, drug dependence treatment, testing, treatment and care for HIV, and Tuberculosis (TB). It is premised on ensuring drug users are treated with dignity and respect and have access to a selection of treatment options to enable them to make an informed decision about their individual needs and overall wellbeing while reducing the harms associated with drug use. It is the lack of this knowledge that has continually perpetuated the thinking that drug users do not have inherent rights to medical treatment.

It sounds weird that a health provider would provide new syringes to injecting drug users, it reads like an action

aimed at promoting the practice. Ordinarily, healthcare providers are expected to assist such people to quit the habit but the moment they are seen as if they promote it then questions arise.

The bigger picture in that whole arrangement is that health care workers are working to create an enabling, friendly and judgment-free environment for drug users to seek health care services. They are also implementing interventions targeted at reducing the health and social harms associated with addiction and substance use, including contraction of communicable and contagious diseases such as HIV & AIDS and tuberculosis.

Harm reduction policies and practices are informed by a strong body of evidence that shows interventions to be effective, safe, practical, feasible, and cost-effective in diverse social, cultural and economic settings. Most of these interventions are easy to implement and low-cost, and all have a strong positive impact on individual and community health.

The use of drugs does not mean people forfeit their human rights - they remain entitled to the right to life, to the highest attainable standard of health, to social services, to privacy, to freedom from arbitrary detention, and freedom from cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, among others.

One of the most progressive principles of harm reduction is the reduction of stigma. Practitioners accept people who use drugs as they are and are committed to meeting them "where they are" in their lives without judgement. It is on this premise that the services are mainly found in drug dens for instance or even brothels.

It is, however, important to note that the concept of harm reduction does not in any way negate the presence of cessation interventions. It cannot also be effective when employed singularly as a strategy since drug use and abuse require an all-round approach hence this concept is among them.

The author is the Manager, Counseling & Rehabilitation.

What Comes First: Substance Use or Mental Health Problems?



Substance abuse and mental health disorders, such as depression and anxiety are closely linked, although one does not necessarily directly cause the other. / Photo: Law.com.

By Caroline Kahiu

There is no health without mental health. Mental health is essential to the well-being of individuals, families, and communities. Good mental health empowers people to realize their full potential, promotes resiliency in the face of life's adversities, supports productivity, and helps maintain social cohesion through meaningful connections. Unfortunately, mental health and substance use disorders affect over 200 million people worldwide.

When you have both a substance abuse problem and a mental health issue, such as depression, bipolar disorder, or anxiety, it is called a co-occurring disorder or dual diagnosis. Dealing with substance abuse, alcoholism, or a drug addiction is never easy, and it is even more difficult when you are struggling with mental health problems. Substance abuse and mental health disorders, such as depression and anxiety are closely linked, although one does not necessarily directly cause the other. So, what comes first?

Alcohol and drug are often used to self-medicate the symptoms of mental health problems. People often abuse alcohol or drugs to ease the symptoms of mental disorders, to cope with difficult emotions, or to temporarily change their mood. Further, alcohol and drug abuse can increase the underlying risk for mental disorders. Since mental health problems are caused by a complex interplay, it is difficult to say if abusing substances ever

directly causes them. Lastly, alcohol and drug abuse can make symptoms of a mental health problem worse. Substance abuse may sharply increase symptoms of mental illness or even trigger new symptoms.

While substance abuse problems and mental health issues do not get better when they are ignored—in fact, they are likely to get much worse—it is important to know that you do not have to feel this way.

Keep in mind there is always hope for both mental health, alcohol and drug abuse problems are treatable conditions. Recovery takes time, commitment and courage. People with substance abuse and mental health problems can and do get better. Realizing this vision calls for a whole-of-society approach to ensuring mental health for all.

The author is a Corporate Communications Officer.

NACADA, WHO Mull Strengthening Collaboration to Boost Tobacco Cessation Campaign



Corporate Services Director Patrick Obura (seated second right) together with counselors and representatives from WHO. / Photo: Samuel Musungu.

By Samuel Musungu

The Authority is working to strengthen its partnership with the World Health Organization to boost the fight against tobacco consumption. This was the highlight of the meeting between the helpline counselors and WHO delegates held at NACADA offices on September 22, 2021.

In her brief report, WHO Technical Officer Dr. Simone Sinclair revealed Kenya is ranked among the top five countries in running successful media campaigns against tobacco use globally. She said that was an encouraging statistic and looked forward to even better outcomes in the future.

Sinclair promised to engage with other doctors to train more health care professionals on tobacco cessation, who would, in turn, help more people to quit tobacco use. In the same light, she divulged the contracts of the WHO counselors at the call centre had been extended so that they continue offering counseling services to people with substance use disorders.

The WHO representative as well talked about a new WhatsApp program that is still in inception stage, which will provide one-to-one support to tobacco users. The program sends tips and encouragements daily for up to six months to help people remain tobacco free. In case of relapse, one can still restart the program. Sinclair disclosed that the system is yet to accommodate all languages but they are working to incorporate most of the widely spoken ones.

NACADA Corporate Services Director Patrick Obura, who represented the Chief Executive Officer Victor Okioma, suggested that the Authority should explore the new WhatsApp system in earnest and synchronize it with the helpline toll-free number 1192.



Counseling & Rehabilitation Manager Judith Twala gifts WHO Technical Officer Dr. Simone Sinclair a NACADA-branded shawl after the meeting. /Photo: Samuel Musungu

According to the Pan African Medical Journal, more than 6,000 people die of tobacco-related diseases every year in Kenya while more than 220,000 children and more than 2,737,000 adults continue to use tobacco each day. Additionally, 79 men and 37 women are killed each week as a result of tobacco use.

The author is a Corporate Communications Intern.

Taxation of Tobacco Products in Budget Boost to the Fight Against Drugs



Tobacco use is a leading global disease risk factor and underlying cause of ill health, preventable death, and disability. / Photo: Bigstock.

By Eric Murugami

The government through its tax proposals to parliament has recommended to tax tobacco-related products with a view to raise more taxes and enhance tobacco cessation activities. This is a welcome move considering there are mind-boggling statistics on the devastating effects tobacco continues to have on its users. Most importantly, this move aims at reducing the uptake of the novel tobacco products that have revolutionized tobacco use and abuse, especially among the youth locally and internationally.

Truth be told, the tobacco industry continues to experience exponential innovation to keep up with dynamic market demands. In addition, the industry is reinventing itself to grow its profits as the multi-billion shilling companies supporting the sector seek to remain afloat and continue making money.

Tobacco use is a leading global disease risk factor and underlying cause of ill health, preventable death, and disability. It is estimated to kill more than seven million people each year across the globe, accounting for more deaths each year than HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria combined. If current trends persist, tobacco will kill more than eight million people worldwide each year by 2030, with eighty percent of these premature deaths taking place in the developing world.

Regulating tobacco use using excise taxation, restrictions on smoking in public places, and restrictions on youth access and sale of tobacco products is now a widely-accepted policy action to prevent its harmful health effects. Locally, there are quite a number of legislative frameworks that have been put in place to regulate access and tobacco use, especially in public areas.

Kenya is a signatory to the WHO's Framework Convention of Tobacco Control (FCTC). Article 13 of the Convention clearly talks about banning all forms of tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship. According to the Tobacco Act of 2007, tobacco companies are required to set aside two percent of their revenue to go into the Tobacco Fund to assist people suffering from the health effects associated with smoking.

The government issued a directive in mid-February this year requiring the tobacco industry to register all nicotine products as tobacco products. This was mainly necessitated by the entry of a new, smokeless tobacco product whose contents could not be immediately verified. The proponents of the product presented it as an easy tobacco-quitting medical alternative while those in prevention argued that it contained more potent form of nicotine than what is contained in cigarettes.

In recent years, policy deliberations at the global level on whether e-cigarettes and other smoke-free nicotine delivery systems should be classified as tobacco products, and therefore be regulated in the same way as cigarettes, have acquired great significance. While the e-cigarette, a battery-powered device that heats a liquid containing nicotine into a vapor that is inhaled like a cigarette, is being touted as a harm reduction technological innovation to protect smokers from the ill effects of cigarettes, which continue to be marketed globally, we must ask: Is there strong scientific evidence that justifies this claim and exempts e-cigarettes from being regulated as another tobacco product?

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) Technical Manual on Tobacco Tax Policy and Administration, excise tax increases should aim to reduce the affordability of tobacco products. The base on which the tax is applied is also important. For specific taxation, the tax base should be the quantity in clearly defined units. For mixed taxation, the best practice is to use the retail price as the tax base and introduce a minimum excise tax.

In principle, administering tobacco taxes on tobacco products other than cigarettes is similar to administering them on cigarettes. However, there is a lack of standardization of other products and sometimes large informal markets.

The author is an Accountant.

The Relationship between Fear and Substance Use Disorders Prevalence among University Students in Kenya



By Rebecca Adeli

Many of the decisions we make in life are inspired by our fears and the perspective we choose to view them from. Some people fear failure so much that they tend to study a lot to be successful. Some, however, opt not to take up any task just to avoid failing. The two categories of people are driven by the same fear but their perspectives determine their responses to the fear.

There has been a growing prevalence of drugs and substance abuse among university students. Despite the efforts to enlighten them on the harm of these substances, the numbers of these cases are still on the rise. Some people are well aware of the harm caused by drugs and substance abuse but their fear of loneliness and not belonging to the group of the stereotyped 'cool people' in school is too great and, therefore, drives them to indulge in substance use and abuse.

'Of all the liars in the world, sometimes the worst are our own fears'- Rudyard Kipling.

If fear is looked at from the negative perspective, it tends to impair one's judgment and may result in serious ramifications. But if it is looked at as a stepping stone, it can be the area of an individual's greatest strength.

It is possible to know the harm caused by drug and substance use and abuse and still be a victim of it. That is because you have chosen to see the fear as a stumbling block instead of being objective and use the fear as a strength to be uniquely you and be independent enough not to bow to social constraints.

Aristotle asserted that he who overcomes their fear is completely free because once you understand that which completely frightens you, it is very simple to use it as your strength. Fear completely robs one the power to act and reason, and streamlines a person to only see the negative eventuality. As for matters drug and substance abuse, people are driven by fear to start using and thereafter abuse these substances. It also keeps them in the SUDs because of their perspective.

Choosing to stop drug use and abuse is a very personal and intrinsic decision, which is a combination of self-awareness, self-value and self-worth in actualizing self-conceptualization. If you have great knowledge of your strengths, weaknesses, values and even fears, you will be able to objectively look at them and offer viable solutions for them.

Knowledge of the harm caused by drug use and abuse is necessary but the decision to opt out ought to come from within yourself, aside all the fear that has decapitated you. Fear robs your mind the power to rationally act and reason. It blinds one to the harm caused by drugs and substance abuse and only opens them up to the downside of not using them. However, looking at the fear as a stepping stone and choosing to focus on the health benefits of staying away from SUDs is the first step of many steps to fulfillment.

We can forgive a child who is afraid of the darkness but can we really pardon a grown person who is so afraid to see the light? Only you have the power over yourself and the strength to build capacity against your fears. You need to be intentional about turning them to sources of strength through having an open mind and being rational and objective in making decisions around the areas that you consider as your greatest fears.

The author is a Communication practitioner specializing in Public Relations.

Why Athletes, Just Like Everyone Else, Fall into Drug Abuse



Athletes are at risk of drug abuse due to the competitive nature of sports. / Photo: Banyan Treatment Center.

By Simon Mwangi

Athletes face unique challenges when it comes to substance use and addiction. To prevent and treat addiction among them, it is important to understand how and why this drug abuse occurs.

Sometimes it is difficult to imagine the sports icons who grace our screens in our living rooms or social places bringing out their best on the pitch or elsewhere can be brought down by substance abuse. The truth is that when we put down all that divides us to cheer our favourite team or sportsman, their sterling performance allows them to occupy a larger than life position in our minds. Unfortunately, we forget that in their human nature they can also falter and even fall, more so where drugs are involved.

Athletes of every age can feel internal and external pressure to succeed as athletic competition requires physical and mental toughness beyond what the average person is capable of. Between the scrutiny of coaches, families, friends and the consumer market, an athlete faces tremendous pressure. As a result, many athletes turn to drug use.

Eight-time Olympic gold medalist and American swimmer Michael Phelps not only plunged into the water and made history but also toyed with drugs. In 2009, he lost his endorsement contract with Kellogg's after a photo emerged of him taking a hit of marijuana. He later confessed to having been driven to the vice by depression.

Athletes are at risk of drug abuse due to the competitive nature of sports. Participation in aggressive sports can lead to incessant, extreme pressure to become stronger and faster and perform better. On top of everyday

responsibilities and obligations, such as work, school and childcare, the stress can mount and lead an athlete to try different substances that may reduce their body's response to stressors or increase their performance.

Moreover, drug abuse can follow sports injuries where athletes are often prescribed powerful painkillers after sustaining injuries, and the use of these drugs can lead to addiction. At times, substances are also used by athletes recreationally.

In his own admission, Kenya's Wilfred Bungei should have celebrated the birth of his third child in 2012 but was too inebriated to even get to hospital. He had already retired from his illustrious running career that saw him captain the Kenyan team to the Beijing Olympics and winning the 800m gold. The low point came on that day nine years ago when he was supposed to witness the birth of his child. He said he reached for the vodka bottle after fooling himself that to prepare to watch childbirth, he needed a drink. He ended up in a ditch that very same day.

Although many people look up to athletes and enjoy the results of their labour, people who participate in organized sports at any level face unique challenges in terms of substance misuse and addiction. Understanding why and how athletes' drug misuse occurs is critical in preventing addiction and treating it in those already struggling.

Others will turn to drugs or alcohol to cope with their poor mental health from intense pressure and sometimes loneliness during their careers. With all eyes on them, it is not uncommon for athletes to also suffer from some sort of mental health disorder.

For some athletes, the first step to discontinuing drug use is overcoming the fear to ask for help. One study found that 56 percent of steroid users never told their doctor about their use. Some individuals find behavioral therapy helpful, and those who have a severe addiction may obtain relief from withdrawal symptoms with antidepressants and medications used to help restore hormonal balances.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to the problem of drug addiction, either among athletes or anyone else. Sessions are customized to respond to the various needs of all persons with substance use disorders and they are always rejigged after assessment.

The author is the Manager, Corporate Communications.

A Closer Look at the Relationship Between Alcohol Abuse and Suicide



Many people experiencing both suicidal tendencies and alcohol abuse/addiction stay quiet about their conditions. /
Photo: iStock.

By Alice Mwangi

As with many tragedies and life traumas, we don't fully understand the impact of suicide on those close to the victim until we have experienced the loss of someone close to us. The emotions range from feelings of loss and grief to anger and guilt. We wonder whether there were signs we should have recognized or that we possibly disregarded them as insignificant.

Suicide is one of the top causes of deaths in the world for all ages. Data on suicide attempts is up to 20 times more frequent than completed suicide. It is estimated that about one million people die annually from suicide, i.e. a global mortality rate of 16 per 100,000, or simply put one death every 40 seconds.

There is no single cause of suicide.

Suicide is complex with several psychological, social, biological, cultural, and environmental factors. Alcohol and drug abuse are among the major risk factors for suicide. The harmful use of alcohol is a global problem, which is associated with many serious individual and social consequences. In addition to the chronic diseases that may develop in those who drink large amounts of alcohol over a long period of time, a significant proportion of the disease burden is the result of intentional and unintentional injuries, such as violent behaviors, suicides, and traffic accidents.

It's not always easy to determine when someone is in danger of suicidal thoughts or behaviors. Many people

experiencing both suicidal tendencies and alcohol abuse/addiction stay quiet about their conditions. However, there are some signs that may indicate that someone is at an increased risk of alcohol-related suicide.

Danger signs of alcohol-induced suicidal thoughts or behaviors include: dangerous or risky behavior, talking about suicidal thoughts, and previous suicidal attempts or self-harm. These signs should not be ignored. Even if the person appears to be joking, stress or another negative event could trigger the person to act on a suicidal impulse.

Seeking treatment for co-occurring alcohol addiction/abuse and depression is the best way to prevent the possibility of alcohol-induced suicide. Individuals suffering from these conditions often find the most success through formal treatment programs addressing every aspect of a person's dual diagnosis.

Public education regarding the relation between alcohol consumption and suicide may also help reduce suicides among individuals with alcohol misuse.

*The author is a Public Education & Advocacy Officer,
NACADA Eastern Regional Office.*

Congratulations Dr. Yvonne Olando!



NACADA is pleased to announce that our Director, Public Education, Advocacy, Rehabilitation and Regional Coordination Yvonne Olando was awarded a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Clinical Psychology from the University of Nairobi on September 24, 2021.

On behalf of the entire organisation, we congratulate Dr. Yvonne Olando for this milestone and look forward to her putting theory into practice as we strive to create a nation free from alcohol and drug abuse.

Dr. Olando is a thought leader and has dedicated her passion and expertise to substance use management interventions and programs. She is a Clinical Psychologist and a Certified International Addiction Professional (ICAP111). In addition, she is a Tobacco Cessation Specialist (CTTS-MAYO, SA), a Global Drug Demand Reduction Trainer (NODC) and a Global Master Trainer, Universal Treatment Curriculum (Colombo Plan). She is also a World Health Organization Emerging Leaders Fellow.

“Congratulations on successfully completing your PhD from the entire staff at NACADA. You have earned every single moment of this praise and sure it is very inspiring indeed,” Mr. Victor Okioma, Chief Executive Officer, NACADA.

“Best wishes for this important milestone in your life and career. May there be many more to come. Welcome to the club,” Prof. Mabel Imbuga, Chairperson, NACADA Board.

Appointment of Director, Compliance, Quality Control and Risk Management



The National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA) is delighted to announce the appointment of Mr. Lukas Katee Mwanza as the Director, Compliance, Quality Control and Risk Management. Mr. Mwanza brings vast knowledge and experience in development and dissemination of government policies and reforms. He will lead the Compliance and the Quality Control & Risk Management department.

Prior to joining NACADA, he was the Deputy Head/ Director of Operations at Huduma Kenya. He has also served as a Senior Deputy Secretary in charge of reforms and training in the former Ministry of Provincial Administration & Internal Security. He has also served as a District Commissioner in various regions across Kenya.

He holds a Master's Degree in Business Administration from the Management University of Africa and a Bachelor's degree in Arts from the University of Nairobi. In addition, he is extensively trained in strategic leadership, performance management, security and conflict transformation from local and international organisations.

Appointment of Roy Sasaka Telewa to the Board



The National Authority for the Campaign Against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA) is pleased to announce the appointment of Mr. Roy Sasaka CHRP, MCIPS, MKISM to its Board for a period of three years. He will serve as the alternate Principal Secretary for the Ministry of ICT, Innovation & Youth Affairs.

He brings to the Authority immense wealth of experience in strategy and leadership, which will steer the youth agenda on prevention and management of substance use. In addition, he brings a deep understanding of the dynamics of strategic & operations management, fundraising & resource mobilization, corporate governance and stakeholders' relations.

We look forward to strengthening our cooperation and partnership, especially in the areas of development and implementation of evidence-based interventions, youth empowerment and driving positive change in our communities.

We are also eager to tap into his capability as an influential youth advocate who is renowned for spearheading the youth agenda in Kenya. He has been instrumental in the formulation and implementation of numerous national and regional policies. He is a youth policy advisor to a number of local and global organizations.

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