

**Africa Faith & Justice Network Nigeria**

**Contact.1: Sr. Bernadette Okure, SHCJ, National Coordinator**

**Contact2: Sr. Fidelia Alao, EHJ, Secretary**

**Phone: 07036735895**

**Email: [beyewanokure@yahoo.com](mailto:beyewanokure@yahoo.com)**

*Press Release*

**A CALL TO JOIN HAND TO TACKLE DRUG ABUSE, RITUAL KILLINGS, AND CULTISM IN NIGERIA AND FASHION A BETTER FUTURE WITH OUR YOUTHS**

1. In response to the growing concern in the society over the rising incidence of drug abuse, cultism, and ritual killings in the country; Africa Faith & Justice Network (AFJN) Washington DC in collaboration with Catholic Caritas Foundation of Nigeria (Caritas Nigeria), Africa Faith & Justice Network Nigeria (AFJN-N), and Dominicans for Justice and Peace (DJP) organized a three-day workshop on the theme **“Tackling Drug Abuse, Ritual Killings, and Cultism in Nigeria: Fashioning a Better Future with our Youths”** from the 17th to 19th May 2022.
2. The workshop which was held at the Resource Centre of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, Durumi, drew participation from various stakeholders including state actors; church leaders and women groups; youth bodies; academia and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). There was also high-level participation from key government agencies; National Orientation Agency (NOA), National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Federal Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Women Affairs, the Nigeria Police Force, Nigerian Universities Commission.
3. We listened to contributions from experts on the subject including two panel discussions facilitated by Channels Television personnel, that featured relevant government agencies and civil society organizations involved in addressing the issues, including representatives of organizations who have experience in working with addiction.
4. The inputs from experts paint an alarming picture of the problem. We learnt that from a recent data, about 14.3 million Nigerians between the ages of 15 and 64 had used psychoactive substances other than alcohol and tobacco; that about 10.6 million were using cannabis and 4.6 million were hooked on prescription opioids while, 2.5 million men and women were hooked on cough syrup containing codeine. We learned further that the problem was most common among those between 25 and 39 years.
5. As we engaged in group dynamics, we identified the interconnectedness of the triple epidemic of drug abuse, ritual killings, and cultism. It became clear too that drug abuse was the hinge on which the others thrive. This problem has assumed an alarming proportion that threatens the very fabric of society at the level, the

family, local communities, faith institutions, and the country at large. The situation calls for urgent and collective action to contain and reverse the trend.

6. As we analyse the problem further, it became clear that some of the factors driving this problem include breakdown in family systems and family values; the craze for sudden wealth in the society; inadequate security systems in tertiary institutions, and poor implementation of existing laws and guidelines. The menace is further exacerbated by an education system that produces job seekers rather than job creators, resulting in massive unemployment of many young university graduates. We noted too that in addition to harmful cultural practice, there is the failure of the judiciary system to hold culprits accountable, thereby allowing the reign of impunity.
7. Based on the foregoing, and to stem the tide of this triple menace in our society, we urge the government, as a matter of urgency, to
  - Mobilize all the relevant government agencies to join efforts to cut the supply chain of drugs both internal and external to stop the supply of drugs to our youths.
  - Integrate life skills into educational curriculum as well as the inclusion of drug education in school curriculum
  - Inaugurate programs to create awareness on this problem in our families, and educational institutions within the purview of the government
  - Carefully review of the judicial system to address the existing gaps
  - Develop measures to address the porous security system in the country
  - Establish appropriate mechanisms for rehabilitation and safeguarding against drug abuse, including functioning toll-free phone lines for drug related emergencies
8. On our part commit ourselves to:
  - Undertake comprehensive sensitization programmes in our schools, local communities, faith groups, and other institutions within our reach.
  - Continue to reach out to those affected by the menace and where possible provide rehabilitation to the extent of our resources.
  - Work with parents to build their parenting capacity that enables a trusting environment in the family