



Narcotics

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Editorial

Drug of ruin

Narcotics are becoming a grave concern for West Africa. The controlled or banned substances have been subjects of illicit trades, raking in an estimated US\$13bn in their movement through the region. Terrorist acts carried out by groups that obtain their funds directly or indirectly from the illicit drug trade are on the increase.

The United States and other developed nations are concerned with this increase, probably more concerned than African nations. Recently, in July 2012, the New York Times reported that the "United States has begun training an elite unit of counternarcotics police in Ghana and planning similar units in Nigeria and Kenya as part of an effort to combat the Latin American cartels that are increasingly using Africa to smuggle cocaine into Europe."

There is concern about Guinea Bissau, which is being described as 'the world's first narco-state', a state where all leadership is hinged on or linked to drug trade. In fact, it is said that not only are the 88 islands off the country's coast prime drug transit points between South American and Europe, narcotics account for US\$2bn which is twice Guinea Bissau's GDP. This is alarming.

But more so is the spread and influence of the illicit drugs trade across the region. There are suspicions of drug being used to fund elections in Ghana; narco-terrorism being a fuel of instability in countries like Mali, Liberia and Nigeria. West Africa is alluring to drug peddlers because of weak state institutions. For instance, Nigerian comedian Mr. Babatunde Omidina popularly known as Baba Suwe, got judgment to be paid N25m (about 158,400 USD) by the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) after the agency detained the actor for weeks following body analyses that supposedly revealed foreign objects in Baba Suwe's stomach. The circumstances surrounding the arrest, airport scanner and laboratory analyses, as well as the unusually speedy legal processes raised eyebrows, especially on social media. Some commentators argued that narcotics catalysed the processes!

Donor support for and aid to national institutions in the form of gadgets and machines for detecting narcotics are important. But these are only reactive. The push and pull factors comprise of bad governance and weak institutions. State structures are important in combating trafficking. Glamour associated with entertainment is serving to recruit more traffickers. The more delicate is how to dissuade future generations from taking to this vice. Home entertainment holds prospects for enlightenment in this regard. Nevertheless, like all else, the onus seems to lie in commitments of governments. And that's a boring refrain!

Odoh Diego Okenyodo
Editor

Communities resort to motorcycle as ambulance

As communities across West Africa engage in endless search for health service delivery, motorcycle ambulance has proven to be very imperative in helping them achieve this. Most communities in West Africa are now using motorcycles to convey patients to hospitals. Most of the patients are women. In Ghana, the government has woken up to this reality as the Ministry of Health has put up plans to adopt the use of motorcycle ambulance to convey patients that require urgent health care in the state rather than making use of vehicle ambulance. This arises as a result of the challenges in the cost of buying vehicle ambulances together with high cost of maintaining them. Motorcycles are the best option for the government since they are cheaper and easy to maintain. A fully equipped motor-vehicle medical ambulance is sold at about 100 and 130 million shillings (between 38,165 USD and 49,615 USD) whereas a motorcycle ambulance is sold at about 20 (about 7,680USD) and 30 million shillings (about 11,450 USD).

In Guinea, the trend is not different as motorcycle ambulances are playing



important role and saving lives in communities and remote villages. A graphic case here is using a motorcycle ambulance to convey Marie Tounkara from her remote village to the Kissidougou principal hospital where she put to bed a baby boy.

This initiative becomes more interesting when one looks at what is happening in Guinea where numerous remote villages in Guinea do not have motorable roads and motorcycle ambulances have become the best option to help the inhabitants of these villages to get to hospitals to access medical attention in an emergency situation. The motorcycle ambulance initiative and project came into existence in 2008 as part of expanding maternal health programmes in Guinea under the mutual health insurance organizations aka MURIGAs. This was established by the government of Guinea in partnership with UNICEF.

Away from West Africa, Namibia has launched its motorcycle ambulance project in partnership with the Bicycling Empowerment Network Namibia (BENN). This project will facilitate the manufacturing and delivery of over 60 motorcycle ambulances to different communities in Namibia for the coming 12 months. However, this goes beyond mere improvement in the delivery of health service and transportation, but to enhance the capacity of the communities' inhabitants on local technology. The inhabitants of the communities are trained on how to construct and maintain the ambulance.

In Nigeria, Transaid has introduced motorcycle ambulance to make available emergency transport for pregnant women. Senegal is not left out in this initiative as

the Women's and Health Alliance International (WAHA) piloted the test of motorcycle ambulance in the country in 2010, though a more fortified design was finalized a year after. In 2011, WAHA produced over 100 motorcycle ambulances with support from the Fistula Foundation and they are being used in Senegal, Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya. Six ambulances are being used in 47 villages, two health centres and the main district hospital in Sierra Leone, and they serve a sum population of 22,152 persons.

Though this is a good initiative, it is likely not to be

improved upon as we have seen in most of the local and traditional technology initiatives across West Africa. Most countries in the region do not seem to take initiatives of this kind serious enough to improve on them. Governments in the region are yet to start making financial and political commitments to traditional technological developments.

Audu Liberty Oseni

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Mobile phone holds great prospects

Everybody has been entwined in the global wires of mobile phone technology. The technology has brought tremendous influence in virtually every society; transformation in communication, social networking, research, business advert, conferencing, etc. Mobile technology has proven to hold the most market prospects in Africa with particular reference to West Africa given the sheer size of the region's population.

Taking a look at Nigeria, the public is embracing mobile telephony, and those who are left out are working towards joining the league of mobile phone users. At inception in Nigeria in the

year 2001, mobile telecommunication industry was considered a prospective competitor with petroleum if duly harnessed. The mobile phone network providers in Nigeria achieved an amazing boost in the number of subscribers moving from 45,000 lines in 2002 to 78.8 million subscribers in year 2010 attaining 50%, and making Nigeria the third biggest subscriber base globally. Arising from competition among the major network providers in Nigeria-- MTN, Airtel, Globacom, and Etisalat-- the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) reveals that about 88 million mobile phones were in use in October 2011, with some Nigerians owning two to three mobile phones.

Ghana is also riding the wave

of mobile technology. The first cellular phone service in the state came into existence in 1992 with the initiative of Mobitel. That year, 19,000 Ghanaians became owners of mobile phones. On the expansion of mobile phone usage in Ghana, in the year 1998, mobile phone users grew to 43,000. At mid 1999 it grew to 68,000, and in year 2000 it grew to 132,000. At the moment, mobile phone is fastest growing businesses in Ghana and great number of Ghanaians use them. Audience Scapes Ghana survey confirms that in year 2010, 88% of Ghanaians were already using mobile phones. Mobile phone network business in Ghana is so huge and six major network

providers MTN, Tigo, Vodafone, Zain and Kasapa, and Globacom are harnessing the potential. Mobile phone growth in Ghana has been projected to reach 90% of Ghana entire population which is about 23 million at the end of year 2012.

In Senegal the trend remains the same, mobile phone use is on the high. As at 2009, Senegal already had over 6.9 million active lines, and at the moment, the country's mobile market has been experiencing a significant expansion and this has made mobile phone use in Senegal to be about 3.6 million. The Gambia has over 1,433,000 mobile phones in the country. Niger has the second highest yearly growth pace of mobile phone usage in West Africa, and the fourth highest in Africa.

Mobile phone has created numerous jobs for the unemployed in most cities in West Africa. In Nigeria's commercial capital Lagos, operators of mobile phones maintenance centres employ many youths. Some of the youths that work on mobile repair make an average of N7,000 (45 US dollars) daily. Waheed, a mobile phone repair expert, has trained many youths who are making living from mobile phone repairs. The telephony has emerged as one of the major providers of jobs in Africa. In year 2010 about 5.4 million persons gained employment directly or indirectly in the mobile industry.

Africa is the world's second leading mobile market and the most rapidly expanding

mobile market globally. In year 2011, the continent already had 649 million mobile phones in use and the subscriber bases grow at about 20% yearly; it is projected to hit over 735 million subscribers by the end of year 2012. (MTN, which is a regional mobile operator in West Africa, projects mobile phone usage in the region to be about 80% by 2012 in 15 West African states markets.) The mobile industry in Africa at the moment makes around US\$56 billion or 3.5% of entire GDP, with mobile operators exclusively bring in US\$49 billion.

West African countries are giving better room for the telecoms industry to grow in the region. In Nigeria, the government has put in place a policy to make telecom operators not to encounter difficulties in siting their facilities and also protect the facilities from vandalization. The Minister of Communications Technology, Mrs Omobola Johnson, disclosed this at the first National Telecom Subscribers Summit in Lagos. The policy also seeks to put in place uniform charges by the operators.

Looking at the huge receptiveness of mobile phone technology across West Africa, the region is likely to be the leading mobile phone market in the shortest possible time. This is based on the fact that at the moment, over 150 million West Africans have a mobile phone in a population of 300 million. Nigeria alone has a large market for telecoms industry; with the country's population of about 170 million, about 89 million persons own mobile phone. This shows that since half of the population in West Africa now own a mobile phone and the crave among those who do not

own to own one and those who own to own a higher version of smart phones, by the year 2018 all population in the region is likely to own a mobile phone. This holds a great prospect for those who may wish to invest in telecommunication industry in the region.

Audu Liberty Oseni and Ugo Azubike

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How West Africa's narcotics trade fuels insecurity



The influx of narcotics from Latin America has become an issue of concern in West Africa because of its impact on both public and private institutions and the population at large. The effect of this illicit trade complicates the challenges of state fragility in the region¹. The United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC) described the scale of the problems as follows:

“the crisis of drug trafficking in West Africa is gaining attention, alarm bells are ringing about the volume of cocaine transiting the region (roughly about 50 tons a year). West Africa has become a

hub for cocaine trafficking worth almost \$2 billion a year. This is more than a drugs problem. It is a security problem²”.

Due to the volume of shipment of cocaine that pass through the region two main hubs have been created by the narco barons, namely: Guinea Bissau for the northern hub, and Ghana servicing the southern hub. The effect extends beyond these two hubs almost all the countries along the maritime shore are experiencing increase seizures from Cape Verde, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Guinea, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

Transnational organized crime has evolved challenges that are linked to peace, security and stability in the region. Narcotic or drug trafficking as a form of organized crime is attractive in the West Africa because of poverty, unemployment, lack of border control, weakness of law enforcement structures and endemic corruption. The region is also the shortest and most cost effective channel for trafficking illicit drugs to Europe. The effect of illicit trafficking of drugs is evident in the case of Guinea Bissau, where most of the country's leadership has been implicated in drug trafficking.

Closely related is an increase in narco-corruption in the form of contributions to election campaigns. During the 2008 elections in Ghana political parties traded accusations and counter accusations of getting financial support from drug cartels. Also, issues of narco corruption related to bribing, recruitment and retainment of the services of the government officials and security forces have been reported. This has affected the effectiveness of anticorruption and institution building

efforts as it cuts across political and state administration institutions build and/or strengthen corrupt networks with state officials to facilitate or reduce the risks of their operations. There is also the link between drug trafficking and piracy linked to lack of effective monitoring and security frameworks of the maritime areas and borders by most countries in West Africa.

In recent times, organized transnational crimes and activities of extremist groups have been linked to fuelling terrorism in different parts of the world. The financing of the activities of these extremist groups have been linked to activities of transnational organized crimes within the African continent, particularly in North Africa, and it is believed that it will be matter of time before same is manifests in West Africa most especially with the activities of the Boko Haram and Al Qaeda in Nigeria and Mali.

For most countries in the region that have become active in transiting drugs, the population is gradually taking to using drugs particularly cocaine and heroin and this is becoming a social problem in the cities. West Africa is experiencing a demographic shift because more than 50% of its population are made up of young adults ranging from between 15 -34 as stated in the African Youth Charter³. The problems associated with this are related to manifestation of larger domestic criminal groups, lower economic

productivity and higher rates of drug addiction and dependence. This has been related to gradual erosion of traditional social fabric and values. The influence of emerging movie industries such as Nollywood in Nigeria which has a large audience among young people across the region from Republic of Benin to Ghana to Burkina Faso, which glorifies illicit wealth gotten by drug barons. Young artistes such as musicians who use cocaine, hemp, and heroin contribute to the problem.

The manifestation of this social vice in inner city communities in the urban areas where the prevailing environment of poverty, illiteracy and general lack of social facilities and infrastructures makes it easy to recruit the couriers. The people recruited are sometimes both victims of human and drug trafficking and can become dependent on the substance(s).

Steps have been taken to address some of the challenges identified by national governments, the regional economic commission ECOWAS and other international development agencies, including various UN entities working on youth related issues. The steps taken have been in the form of researches, studies undertaken to have a better understanding of the dynamics of the challenges, workshops, and seminars at national, regional, continental and global level. For example, several nongovernmental organizations such as Rotary, Lion and Lioness clubs, the International Federation of Female Lawyers have been involved in educational programmes in informal settings as well as general public educa-

tion.

The CLEEN Foundation, a nongovernmental organization set up to promote public safety, security and accessible justice in Nigeria, under its Youth and Policing programme, implemented an anti-drugs project in public schools in Ajegunle slum area of Lagos State. With support from Cordaid and in collaboration the Nigeria Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), the project set up drug-free clubs.

The Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) have had engagements and responses to drugs menace from as far back as October 1998 during the 21st Summit of Heads of State and Government in Abuja when it issued a declaration. In recent times there has been the:

Resolution relating to prevention and control of drug abuse in West Africa;

Recommendation C/98 on the establishment of a regional fund for financing of drug control activities in West Africa;

Decision on the establishment of a regional fund for financing drug control activities.

In May 2011 a high level United States delegation had meetings in Ghana and Liberia to begin the formulation of a strategic approach to undermine transnational criminal networks in West Africa and to reduce their ability to operate illicit criminal enterprises. These meetings set up the West

Africa Cooperative Security Initiative (WACSI). WACSI will work to build accountable institutions that will address corruption within the justice and security sectors, high level corruption of government elites and the culture of impunity; harmonization of legal frameworks regarding drugs. It will support processes that bring about credible governments that would be able to extend the rule of law, secure communities and enforce common transparent laws for the citizens.

There are a number of scenarios possible from this intervention. First, the infusion of drug money into national politics is likely to significantly alter the terrain giving an edge to parties that are willing to engage with the cartels. Where such parties are elected to office, they become hostages of the drugs barons with significant impact on the ability and willingness of law enforcement agencies to deal with the scourge, due to either political pressure or cooptation. This will erode public and international confidence thereby increasing the risk of relapse in post conflict countries or collapse of once stable states.

Secondly, the WACSI initiative could extend to health promotion, enhancement, and recovery programmes even as it is focusing on addressing the direct security challenges. The programme should exist at regional, national and community levels. There will



be need to involve elders, parents and youth both as targets. The programmes could be integrated within existing institutions and structures to the extent possible.

At the national levels, educational action programme that would balance supply and demand reduction and integrate education on drug abuse within all channels of flow of information and attitudes within society and communities hold prospect of medium- to long term effect. This could include integration of drug abuse prevention within all relevant educational curricula.

On the whole, having communities participate in planning and implementation of demand reduction activities will be a plus. The narcotics problem is as much a grand security challenge at the transnational level as it is a local problem in communities. Community participation can be carried out by nongovernmental organizations and faith based organizations so as to get support

to meet grassroots needs of individuals and communities, providing relevant and culturally sensitive materials.

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Rural enterprise project

To alleviate poverty, many West Africa nations have tried several projects involving local and international partners. Ghana one of West Africa's foremost nations in terms of human and natural resources continues to have a large part of its population struggling with poverty. One of such projects initiated to tackle poverty in the rural areas especially has been the Rural Enterprise Project which was initiated by the GRATIS Foundation with the support of the International Agricultural Development (IFAD).

The objective of the project is to increase rural production, employment and income in order to alleviate poverty through the increased output of small off-farm enterprises. This is being accomplished by facilitating access to new technology and business advice; promoting easier access to financial services; improving the efficiency of existing small rural enterprises, supporting the creation of new enterprises, and removing communication constraints through feeder road rehabilitation. The project was designed to build on the Government of Ghana's economic reforms and to encourage individuals and other private sector actors in rural areas to take

advantage of opportunities created by the opening up of the economy.¹

At inception the project targeted 48 000 families or 300 000 people in the project area who live in poverty. Of these, an estimated 10 000 families live in absolute poverty. At design, it was estimated that direct benefits would accrue to 16 000 families or about 100 000 people in the target group. The design gives special attention to the most vulnerable households, socially disadvantaged women, unemployed youth and those who have been apprenticed to a trade but lack the capital or experience to start a business.² Over the years considerable impact has been made in trying to better the lives of poor Ghanaians. Conservative estimates from the government indicate that over 170,000 people have been trained under REP in various community-based trading and enterprise development undertakings. Between 2003 and 2010, almost GHS150000 (\$83,000) was been disbursed by financial institutions involved in the project.

A Graduate Apprenticeship Scheme initiated in 2009 has so far produced over 12,000 new businesses. And several rural-based small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) dealing in things such as clothing, textiles, soap-making, carpentry, hair-dressing and food-processing have benefited from the project's business development services,

technology transfer, apprenticeship training, and rural finance services³. A major success story of the project has been the fact that it has lifted many women who feel most the impacts of poverty in a country like Ghana. In the Garu-Tempene District of the Upper East Region, for instance, half of the 1,200 clients using support services are female. And in the same district, women are healthily represented in the 150 new businesses and 700 jobs created in 2014.

The project has great potential for reducing poverty by transferring technical skills to rural people, making it easier to get a job or to improve the returns to their own businesses. Improving the business skills of rural people, allowing them to start their own business or to reduce costs and increase benefits in their existing businesses has been a significant achievement. It has provided low-income people with access to banking services and capital, and generated new jobs as new businesses were created or existing businesses expanded. Provided facilities for technical services have allowed small rural entrepreneurs to grow and flourish, lowering transaction costs linked to transport for rural people. In all, it has built self-

confidence and fostered optimism among rural people with whom it worked⁵.

As West Africa's population continues to increase, projects like these provide opportunities into the future with respect to lifting people out of poverty. A study of how this has been successful in Ghana by the rest of the nations of West Africa would be a welcome development as

the struggle to alleviate poverty continues. The success of such projects clearly presents a scenario of better equipped people in their quest to improve their livelihoods and that of the communities that they live in. A replication of such in other nations increases overall across West Africa better socio-economically empowered people right across the region

Terfa Hemen

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Nigeria moves to curb youth unemployment

According to the World Bank, nearly 70% of Africa's over 1 billion people are under 30 years. Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, leads the pack with a "very young age structure" where two-thirds of 167 million Nigerians are under the age of 30. By 2030, Nigeria will be one of the few countries in the world that has young workers in plentiful supply, concludes the Next Generation Nigeria report commissioned by the British Council and the Harvard School of Public Health. Youth, not oil, the report argues further, will be the country's most valuable resource. This demographic dividend is expected to be of immense benefit to the whole world because of the aging experienced in other countries across continents but how does this demographic dividend become of benefit to

Nigeria?

Even as the population keeps growing in a geometrical progression, the educational system in Nigeria appears not be of a standard to prepare the nation to take up the challenges arising from the rising population. Literacy rate of ages 15-24 years hovers around 65 to 75 %, notwithstanding a regional divide along northern and southern parts of the country. While enrollment and retention at the primary schools have increased, the enrollment rate at the secondary level has remained at 25 percent. Alarming, is the failure rate recorded during the last Senior School Certificate Examination conducted by National Examination Council (NECO) and West African Examination Council (WAEC). Ninety percent of the candidates that sat for NECO failed as only 10 percent out of the 110,724 candidates that sat for the examinations scored a credit and above in the core subjects,

including English Language and Mathematics. However, WAEC in the last May/ June 2012 recorded an improvement with 649,156 candidates representing 38.81 percent obtaining credits in five subjects and above, including English Language and Mathematics.

University education has given cause for more worry. Graduates pour into the labour market poorly equipped to fit into the labor market, thereby increasing the already saturated unemployed youth roaming the street. While unemployment rate is on the high increase in Nigeria, employers keep complaining that their new recruits are not skilled enough to perform the jobs they are hired for nor do they have the skill set necessary to perform even some of the less mentally strenuous jobs on the market.

The youth have also identified exclusion in decision-making processes as one of the factors affecting the youth in the country. Arguing that exclusion from the decision-making processes affects a pro-youth orientation in decision-making. There are no provisions on youth in the constitution, except prescription of ages for contest of elections, which is beyond the youth reach. Relevant is the government approach of placing the youth question as an agenda before the youth ministry. The youth question and responses go beyond the youth ministry but rather should be mainstreamed into the activities of other ministries such as health, planning, education, agriculture, interior, etc.

Also identified is economic inequality reproducing itself endlessly into a series of other inequalities. The youth have commenced agitations to be included in the decision making process in an ongoing constitutional review exercise. We hope this move comes to fruition as the way government treats this group is important given that youth is the critical bridge connecting the incoming generation (younger) with the outgoing generation (older) in every society.

As youth unemployment keeps becoming a big issue in the country, Government has introduced several initiatives in curbing it by introducing the Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YOU

WIN) which was conceptualized to support the entrepreneur skills. Subsidy Reinvestments and Empowerment Program (SURE-P) is a Graduate Internship Scheme, which aims to provide the unemployed graduate youths with job apprenticeship opportunities that will expose them to skills and experiences relevant to the current labor market and enhance their employability.

In a related development, the Entrepreneurship Development Center is a CSO led initiative, one of three Central Banks of Nigeria (CBN) initiatives managed and operated by Africa Leadership Forum (ALF) to address youth unemployment. The Center for Entrepreneurial Development (CEDL) is another CSO led entrepreneurial skill Centre with programs including Internship Programs, Summer School, Job Center and Employment Summits.

Another non-state sector initiative is the literacy improvement program of the Orderly Society Trust. The program adopts four-dimensional approach, including reading and writing classes for primary school students; mathematics and English classes for secondary school students; literacy classes for adults and the Skills and Proficiency Programme (SAPP) for young graduates.

However laudable some of these interventions are, they remain grossly inadequate for Nigeria to benefit from the youth budge. It is merely not enough to rely on one man's capacity to create jobs for an entire nation; the nation itself must take responsibility to rise to the standards of success.

Will this youth demographic dividend become a window of opportunity, a blessing or another curse like that of oil? This will be determined largely by the prompt and effective interventions or non-interventions of both state and non-state actors.

Idayat Hassan

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“Narcotics fuel instability in West Africa-Garuba”

Scholar and civil society activist Dauda Garuba, who works for Revenue Watch Institute, says while drugs were neither the cause nor the trigger for conflicts in West Africa, narcotics always become the stimulants that protract them. Here is an excerpt of the interview Terfa Hemen



What in your view is responsible for the increasing narcotics trade across West Africa?

Narcotic trade in West Africa is a function of increased demand for supply. Not all of the drugs getting into West Africa are used in the region, given that narcotic trade in the region is largely in the context of transit route to Europe and America. However, the nature of our weak institutions and the attendant endemic corruption have continuously hamstrung and incapacitated designated government institutions to effectively combat the threats posed by the illicit business. This, regrettably, has translated the drug trade into a big business regulated by naked politics, even within governments in some

troubled countries of West Africa.

What are the consequent effects of this trade on society, especially in the face of the youth bulge in the region?

Besides its devastating impact on youths, the drug trade in the region impacts on corruption and threats to internal security of many states. Guinea Bissau has been in the wounds for a long time now largely because the trade in narcotics created a complete culture of political instability in that country. Traders and users of narcotics rely largely on political instability for the flourishing of narcotic trade. Of course, there are also concerns about how the devastating impact of narcotic trade has entrenched money laundry; being the single most powerful conveyor-belt for 'purifying' illicit money in transnational economic crimes.

What is your view on the transnational organized crime with respect to narcotics and the region?

The same forces that ushered in the unprecedented opportunities defined in globalization have also precipitated unprecedented vulnerabilities and insecurities. In other words, the very things

that facilitated the movement of goods, people and money around the global economy have also pushed the movement of narcotics and dirty money. West Africa is not insulated from such possibilities.

What policies do you think governments within region have to put in place or implement if West Africa is to be protected from this emerging scourge?

First, the family is the nucleus of every society and should therefore be the focus of a well planned regional renaissance that could be spearheaded by relevant government ministries, departments and agencies. Second, governments of West African states should deliberately formulate policy aimed at delivering education to its youths and creating an environment that is capable of delivering and sustaining jobs for youths. Lastly, there should be a collective regional framework and concerted actions to deal with the threats of narcotics.