



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **CSO: Speak Out Africa Initiative (SOAI) Public Statement on the 2024 World Drug Day**

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As we commemorate World Drug Day on this day, 26th of June 2024, Speak Out Africa Initiative stands united with the global community under the theme "The evidence is clear: invest in prevention" to amplify the call for increased investment in drug abuse prevention in Nigeria and beyond.

This year's theme underscores the importance of preventative measures in combating drug abuse and promoting a healthier society. By focusing on prevention, we can address the root causes of drug abuse and provide our communities, particularly our youth, with the tools they need to lead productive, drug-free lives.

Drug abuse is not merely a personal issue; it is a societal challenge that affects physical health, mental well-being, and community safety. Today, we support and encourage all individuals to engage in proactive prevention measures. We urge policymakers, educators, and community leaders to invest in and promote programs that educate and empower our youth to resist drug abuse.

Speak Out Africa Initiative (SOAI) renews its commitment through the Skool n Skill 4 Naija project, supported by the European Union and co-implemented by CISS, which integrates digital skills education and drug abuse prevention into the Nigerian secondary, education curriculum. Nigeria faces a significant challenge with a youth unemployment rate of 27.1%, impacting around 21.7 million young individuals. Additionally, 14.4% of the population, or approximately 14.3 million people aged 15-64, are involved in drug use. In response, "Skool n Skill 4 Naija" aims to address these issues by targeting: 108 Secondary Schools, 12 States, 144 Teachers, 7,200 Students. Together, we confront a 14.4% drug crisis, striving for a brighter, drug-free future for Nigeria's youth. We seek partnership and sponsorship from interested development partners as we work tirelessly on extensive advocacy and awareness campaigns across schools, hospitals, and youth gatherings, empowering and supporting young Nigerians.

Every young person deserves protection, education, empowerment, and support. Let us protect our youth from the harms of drug abuse (physical, emotional, and health-wise), empower them with education (including digital skills), and provide the support they need to thrive. This we believe is a powerful tool in fighting against drug abuse and eradicating its stigma. We must continue to promote their welfare and listen to their stories.



In conclusion, on this World Drug Day, we call on the Government, the Ministry of Health, development partners, the international community, parents, and every well-meaning individual to join in this global movement to invest in prevention, educate their families and communities, and support initiatives that empower and protect our youth. Together, we can create a future where no young person will fall into the trap of drug abuse.

**#InvestInPrevention**  
**#WorldDrugDay**  
**#SpeakOutAfricaInitiative**  
**#SkoolnSkill4Naija**

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