

MESSAGE FROM
ATTORNEY-AT-LAW SAMUEL KOFI WOODS, II
PRESIDENT
OF THE
NATIONAL BOARD OF THE YMCAs OF LIBERIA
ON THE OBSERVANCE OF
WORLD DRUG DAY
MONDAY, JUNE 26, 2023

Today, as Liberia celebrates International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Drug Trafficking or World Drug Day, The Board of the National Young Men's Christian Associations (YMCAs) of Liberia not only join you in celebrating but bemoans the pains and agony of millions of People especially parents who undergo the daily psychological trauma of the effects of Drug abuse and the escalating threats posed to individuals, families and communities worldwide.

In December 1987, the General Assembly decided to observe 26th June as the International Day against Drug Abuse and illicit trafficking as an expression to achieve the goal of an international society free of drug abuse. The objective of the day is to strengthen action and cooperation in achieving a world free of drug abuse.

However, since this expressed commitment by the United Nations, drugs abuse and its effects on society is on the rise. Its consequences are far-reaching, leading to deteriorating health, broken relationships, and a loss of productivity.

“The stigma and discrimination associated with drug use can further harm people’s physical and mental health and prevent them from seeking help” says UNODC.

This year’s theme is **“PEOPLE FIRST: STOP STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION, STRENGTHEN PREVENTION”**

The YMCAs of Liberia joins and intends to strengthen efforts to raise awareness about the importance of respecting and empathizing with drug users, providing evidence-based, voluntary services to all, offering

alternatives to punishments, prioritizing prevention, and leading compassionately.

This year's campaign aims to combat stigma and discrimination against people who use drugs by promoting language and attitudes that are respectful and non-judgmental.

Recent statistics confirm that there are over 866 ghettos in Monrovia where chronic drug users reside. Our homes, schools and communities are increasingly being surrendered to drug use.

As part of these efforts the YMCAs of Liberia will fully participate and integrate programs that will aggressively create awareness and prevention campaigns throughout our networks and mainstream them into all our activities.

We will ensure that our Y-Clubs and communities work to build structures in our schools and communities to address this problem.

We will promote efforts to support strong legislations and work with individuals and organizations undertaking similar programs.

As we pledge to do this and consistent with this year's team, the YMCAs will not refer to those living under such difficult circumstances as Zogos anymore. They are Liberia's **Chosen Ones**. We must pay special attention to them because they challenge our conscience to act and to act decisively to highlight this problem and call us to urgent action.

Thank you and congratulations for this year's celebrations!

GOD BLESS