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ZCLDN, CID Drugs join hands in fighting illicit drug use

THE Zimbabwe Civil Liberties and Drug Network in conjunction with the ZRP's Criminal Investigations Department (CID) Narcotics and Drugs on 4 March held a workshop at the CID headquarters in Harare on drug identification, investigation and interdiction techniques.

The workshop was attended by officers from the narcotics and drugs section based in all the country's districts.

It is the first interaction by the ZCLDN with CID Narcotics and Drugs on how best the country can handle the rise of illicit drug use and implement harm reduction strategies.



CID director (centre left) with ZCLDN director, Box (centre right) at the CID HQ

In his keynote address, the CID director Commissioner Chrispen Charumbira said the work of a drug law enforcer was intricate.

"It requires a fusion of experience and formal training for one to be proficient. Inferring from the topics constituting this workshop, I have no doubt that you will be sufficiently equipped with the requisite knowledge, attitude and skills for the execution of your duties," he said.

The workshop among other issues covered topics on drug policy reform, drug identification, drugs of concern, informer management and current local and international illicit drugs trends.

"Furthermore, let us not underestimate the relevance of the public in policing. They are the source of information from which we develop intelligence. In the face of current global developments as information technology is concerned, criminals are ever learning novel tricks to execute their illicit deeds and counter detection.

"I therefore call upon you all to professionally develop yourselves and keep abreast with the advancements in the social, technological, and political milieu so that you could be able to pro-actively reverse the common adage which says, 'criminals are always ahead' to read 'detectives are always ahead'," said Commissioner Charumbira.

ZCLDN director, Wilson Box said it was an important occasion for the organisation to be part of the police's efforts in combating illicit drug use in Zimbabwe.

"This is our first interaction with you but we hope to cement our relation as we continue to advocate for authorities and other stakeholders to provide improved health care facilities for People Who use Drugs and not criminalise or discriminate them," said Box.

ZCLDN engages female MPs on drug policy reform

THE ZCLDN on 14 February, this year, held a one-day workshop which was attended by legislators from the Zimbabwe Women's Parliamentary Caucus, senior police officers and officials from the Ministry of Health and Child Care.

The purpose of the meeting was to sensitise and train MPs on drug policy reform and implementing harm reduction strategies in Zimbabwe.

It was also meant for the parliamentarians to be more informed and make informed and evidence based decisions in Parliament.



Dr. Rwafa (standing) making a presentation at the Women's Parliamentary Caucus workshop

Estimates show that 45% of young people in Zimbabwe have either used drugs or are at a

high risk to begin using illicit psychoactive substances.

Illicit drug use has also proliferated new HIV infections, crime, violence and mental health challenges and the consequences are now manifested in most communities.

In his presentation, ZCLDN director, Wilson Box said Zimbabwe was grappled with many socio-and economic challenges and issues of drug use has become a cavalier.

“Of concern is the relationship between drug use and the spread of HIV/AIDS, drug use and mental health challenges. This training will give us a compass to where we want to take our country to,” Box said.

The deputy director for mental health at the ministry of Health and Child Care, Dr. Chipo Rwafa said the prevalence of alcohol and substance problems are one of the three diagnoses seen in mental health services in all ten provinces.

“Alcohol and substance use are a significant health concern affecting the health status of a nation, family life, community life and the national economy. Alcohol and substance use is linked to road accidents, interpersonal violence, domestic violence, suicides, as well as numerous health consequences,” she said.

Dr. Rwafa said alcohol alone is linked to over 200 diseases including liver disease, gastrointestinal cancers, hypertension and heart failure. She also said her ministry was working on finalising a national drug masterplan, which would be submitted before Parliament soon.



In her remarks, the chairperson of the Women’s Parliamentary Caucus, Goodlucky Kwaramba said female MPs would support

the national drug masterplan when it is brought before Parliament.

ZCLDN programmes coordinator, Hilton Nyamukapa said there was need for Zimbabwe to adopt favourable harm reduction strategies that benefit People Who Use Drugs and not incarcerate them and treat them as social outcasts.

Roundtable drug masterplan

Also in February on 15, the Zimbabwe Civil Liberties and Drug Network held a breakfast roundtable meeting in Harare with government officials, police and officials from several non-governmental organisations on the National Drug Control Masterplan and the way forward.

The Ministry of Health and Child Welfare is currently in the process of adopting a national masterplan on drugs in response by the government to find a solution to challenges posed by the abuse of drugs and alcohol and the trafficking of illicit drugs in Zimbabwe.

Participants were drawn from the health ministry, the Zimbabwe Republic Police Criminal Investigations Department, National AIDS Council, Zimbabwe Youth Council, church and People Who Use Drugs.



Participants at Drug Control Masterplan in held Harare

In her address, Dr. Chipo Rwafa from the health ministry’s mental health department said since 1980, Zimbabwe had seen a gradual increase in drug related cases.

“There is need for a national coordinated approach to controlling the alcohol and substance use problem in Zimbabwe with the aim to; preventing, reducing supply, reduce demand in communities and treating those affected,” Dr. Rwafa said.

She said 50% of patients admitted to mental health services, test positive for cannabis use while 20% admit to abusing codeine based cough syrups like Broncleer and Histalix. At least 10% of the adult male population admitted to binge drinking compared to 1% females.

Other worrying data was the children as young as 12 years and in primary school started alcohol and substance abuse.

Dr. Rwafa urged alcohol drinkers to consume seven pints a day spread over one week and have two days of rest per week to rest the liver.

She said by adopting the Drug Masterplan allow treatment service for substance abuse more accessible to everyone, develop and promote laws that are protective of the communities that we live in.

Wilson Box, the ZCLDN director said it was good news for People Who Use Drugs that the Drug Masterplan was undergoing review.

“I want to urge the government to share the document with stakeholders from the church, youths, NGOs, lawmakers and other interested parties before it is adopted,” said Box.

Mbare trio in court for illegal broncleer trade

THREE men from Harare’s Mbare suburb Wednesday appeared in court to face trial for illegally possessing and dealing in broncleer, among some illicit medicine.

The three, Dankin Marimira (23), Learnmore Tom (26) and Tafadzwa Matanhira (38), were also charged with money laundering after they were found with large amounts of money in both forex and local currency.

Harare magistrate Learnmore Mapiye Wednesday heard that on January 16, 2019, detectives from

the CID Drugs and Narcotics section received information to the effect that the three were selling unregistered medicines.

Detectives then made a follow up to the cited house number 74, 4th street Mbare where they carried-out some surveillance and observed Marimira and Matanhira taking turns to collect bottles of Broncler and Histalix behind a toilet at the premises and giving them to Tom.



Tom was the one selling to members of the public in loose bottles and dispensing in a small plastic tube through a window.

The detectives conducted a search at the premise leading to the arrest of Marimira and Matanhira who were standing behind the toilet hiding 52 x 100 ml Broncleer cough syrup and 21 x 100 ml Histalix cough syrup in a dug out.

The law enforcement agents instructed Tom to open some steel doors securing the room where he was dispensing drugs from, but the latter resisted.

The detectives then called for reinforcement and were soon joined by another team of detectives but Tom still refused to open the steel doors.

They then used a crow bar and bolt cutter to gain entrance into the room where they conducted a search to discover 2 x 100 ml Broncleer, 2 x 100 ml half used bottles and cash amounting to US\$ 2 133-00, R 750-00, \$19 789-00 bond notes and \$61.85 bond coins and several empty bottles of the medicine.

The cash was seized as proceeds from dealing in restricted medicines after they failed to give satisfactory account of the source of the money.

Testifying in court, Gift Milazi, a member of the ZRP and investigative officer in the matter, said during that raid, they also sent away about 20 customers who had come to purchase Broncleer and Histalix from the house. The trio is currently out on \$300 bail each. – NewZimbabwe.com

Police recover 810kg of mbanje

POLICE last month intercepted a contraband of mbanje weighing 810 kilogrammes believed to have been smuggled into the country from neighbouring Mozambique.

The dagga was found in Cephass Sibanda's car, which had broken down along the Mupandawana-Chatsworth Road.

Police allegedly pounced on Sibanda before he had a chance to stash the dagga in a nearby bush after he realised law enforcement agents were

circling his Toyota Mark II vehicle.

Masvingo provincial police spokesperson Chief Inspector Charity Mazula confirmed the incident.



On the fateful day, she said police officers from Chatsworth who were on routine patrol came across Sibanda's vehicle which was parked by the roadside and was not occupied at the time.

Sibanda was allegedly seated in a Honda Fit vehicle that was parked behind the Mark II vehicle.

The police officers allegedly became suspicious and demanded to search the Mark II vehicle.

The officers were further alerted by the smell of dagga that filled the air when Sibanda opened the vehicle's doors.

They searched the vehicle and discovered several 90kg bags of dagga.

They then arrested Sibanda and he implicated an accomplice who is still at large.

The recovered dagga will be presented in court as an exhibit. – The Herald

Govt approves 37 mbanje investors

THE government has approved 37 investors who have shown interest to produce cannabis for medicinal or scientific purposes.

This follows last year's decision by Government to legalise cannabis production. Lands, Agriculture, Water, Climate and Rural Resettlement Deputy Minister Vangelis Haritatos said Government was overwhelmed by applications after more than 200 foreign and local investors showed interest in venturing into production of cannabis in the country.

The deputy minister said this while addressing chief executives at the 6th Africa Round Table forum recently.



Deputy Minister Vangelis Haritatos

He said Government is now working on licensing the selected investors in line with Statutory Instrument 62 of 2018 (Dangerous Drugs Production of Cannabis for Medicinal and Scientific use Regulations).

“In the last few months, more than 200 local and foreign companies have shown interest in venturing into medical cannabis production.

Cabinet has approved about 37 of them and they will be issued with licences. For now we are in the process of registering them,” said Haritatos.

He said the investors would be issued with 12-month long licences pending renewal.

Haritatos said Government will strongly guard against illicit dealings in cannabis.

He said the global cannabis business is worth \$24 billion per year.

The deputy minister said his ministry would be working closely with the Ministry of Health and Child Care in production of medicinal cannabis, in partnership with investors.

Haritatos highlighted that the industry was facing teething problems in rolling out cannabis production as they feel it will encourage abuse of drugs such as mbanje.

“Let's give investors a chance. There is a lot of excitement which will bring a lot of investment and help people produce oils for cancer and other medicinal purposes,” he said.

There is strong evidence of cannabis medicinal benefits in the treatment of nausea and vomiting associated with cancer chemotherapy, neuropathic pain, spasticity in multiple sclerosis and spinal cord injury, among others.

Venezuelan gets suspended sentence over \$469k cocaine

A VENEZUELAN woman arrested last year after being found in possession of more than 5kg of cocaine valued at \$469 000 could not believe her luck last month when Harare magistrate Morgan Nemadire gave her a wholly suspended sentence.

Delcy Daymar Rodriguez Guererro could not hide her joy after Nemadire, who earlier convicted her, delivered a wholly suspended seven-month jail term or \$700 fine for a matter which ordinarily attracts more than 10 years imprisonment.



In sentencing her, Nemadire ruled that it was expensive to keep foreigners in local prisons, adding that the convict had also complained of ill-health.

Nemadire ordered the State to dispose the cocaine. Prosecutor George Manokore had submitted that a fine would trivialise the gravity of the offence and would be a mockery to the justice delivery system.

“Zimbabwe should not be taken as a playground for drug-related offences. In some jurisdictions such as China, and generally Asian countries, they impose capital sentence and that shows the seriousness of the offence in relation to drugs.

The State suggests that the accused be sentenced to the maximum penal provision,” Manokore told the court.



The court heard that on October 18 last year, police on duty at Robert Gabriel Mugabe International Airport received a tip-off that Guererro was travelling to Harare from Brazil and was suspected to carrying dangerous drugs.

When Guererro disembarked from the flight, she proceeded to the clearance counter in the arrivals hall to clear her passport.

She was immediately identified as she was getting her passport stamped. The immigration officer alerted detectives, who detained her and found the drug among her luggage.

Additional tests by the forensic scientist laboratory confirmed the banned substance.

Last year, a Mbare woman, Veronica Matongo, was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment by regional magistrate Hosea Mujaya for illegal possession of 2,3kg of cocaine with a street value of \$185 464.

A Peruvian drug trafficker was also sentenced to 10 years imprisonment in December last year after he was found in possession of 1kg of cocaine valued at \$91 520 hidden in his suitcase handles at Robert Gabriel Mugabe International Airport. – News Day

ZCLDN Events in Pictures



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