

A Review by
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AGENCY:
*Image Merchants Promotion
Limited (IMPR)*

CLIENT:
*National Drug Law Enforcement
Agency (NDLEA)*

TITLE:
WADA – War Against Drug Abuse

SUMMARY

The War Against Drug Abuse (WADA) is a nationwide public relations, enforcement, and social mobilization initiative led by the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA).

Launched under the leadership of Brigadier General Mohammed Buba Marwa (rtd), WADA integrates intelligence-driven interdiction, prevention, rehabilitation, and institutional reform, reinforced by robust communication strategies.

The campaign employs strategic storytelling to amplify its message—highlighting arrests and prosecutions of traffickers, major drug seizures, successful rehabilitation cases, and broad-based community engagement.

Through these efforts, WADA has strengthened public confidence, reshaped the NDLEA's image, and delivered measurable operational outcomes. It has transformed sporadic enforcement into a coordinated national movement, repositioning the NDLEA as both a protector and a public-health ally, rather than merely a punitive agency.



BACKGROUND

- Nigeria is both a transit hub and a consumer nation for illicit drugs, with rising abuse of pharmaceuticals such as tramadol and hard substances like cocaine and heroin posing significant security and public-health threats.
- Before the campaign, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) struggled with structural weaknesses, welfare challenges, corruption risks, and limited forensic capacity.
- The appointment of Brigadier General Mohammed Buba Marwa (rtd) in 2021 ushered in discipline, reform, intelligence-driven operations, and the launch of the National Drug Control Master Plan (2021–2025).
- Under his leadership, the War Against Drug Abuse (WADA) was institutionalised as a nationwide master strategy that integrates law enforcement with social intervention.



PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

1. Escalating drug abuse among youth was affecting productivity and education.
2. Transnational trafficking networks exploiting Nigeria's porous borders.
3. Low public awareness and high stigma limit rehabilitation uptake.
4. Limited forensic and surveillance capacity within NDLEA.
5. Weak inter-agency coordination at ports, borders, and with global partners.



APPROACHES FOR THE CAMPAIGN



- To ensure well-coordinated PR strategies, the following approaches were practical:
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Key stakeholders, including traditional rulers, religious leaders, celebrities and communicators, actively participated towards shaping the process of implementation of the campaign. Their buy-in ensured broad-based support and helped bridge the trust gap between the government and communities.
- **Event Management:** Public events, including seminars and workshops, highlighted the challenges of drug abuse, fostering empathy and prompting collective action. Town hall meetings allowed for direct feedback.
- **Media Relations:** A robust media strategy amplified the campaign's reach by disseminating information and success stories. Journalists were given firsthand information with regular updates.

OPPORTUNITY:

Leadership Commitment: Under the leadership of Brigadier General Mohammed Buba Marwa (rtd), the campaign benefited from substantial political goodwill, strategic clarity, and heightened national urgency.

Global Support: The initiative tapped into international momentum for anti-drug collaboration, leveraging global partnerships to strengthen intelligence-sharing and build institutional capacity.

Community and Local Partnerships: Collaborations with local communities and NGOs, who recognised the anti-drug campaign as a pathway to a safer and more secure society, rallied behind WADA and amplified its reach and effectiveness.



OBJECTIVES OF THE PR CAMPAIGN

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1. Rebuild public trust through transparency and consistent communication.
2. Increase awareness of health and security consequences of drug abuse.
3. Strengthen prevention through sensitisation linked to rehabilitation pathways.
4. Promote NDLEA as a modern, professional institution.
5. Enhance national and international partnerships for interdiction.
6. Secure long-term political support—culminating in Marwa's 2025 reappointment.



LOCATION AND ENDORSEMENTS

Location: Nigeria

Communications Tactics:

- Stakeholder Engagement
- Media Relations
- Event Management
- Crisis Communication

Target Audiences

- Media organisations
- Community and religious leaders
- Youth (15–35)
- Policymakers and international partners



Sponsor:

National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA)

Supported

Centre for Crisis Communication

Communications Tactics:

- Stakeholder Engagement
- Media Relations
- Event Management
- Crisis Communication

STAGES OF EXECUTION

1. **Orientation State:** This involved nationwide mapping of trafficking corridors and addiction hotspots, alongside a review of early successes such as arrests, seizures, and community engagements, which guided subsequent actions.
2. **Brainstorming Stage:** During this stage, stakeholders—including community representatives, religious leaders, and public relations consultants—participated in consultative meetings to shape the policy framework and design the integrated WADA communication blueprint.
3. **Implementation Stage:** This stage saw the nationwide launch of WADA, featuring extensive media campaigns, rehabilitation referrals, and the publicisation of high-impact seizures and arrests, all aimed at deterring traffickers and discouraging drug abuse.
4. **Feedback Stage:** Finally, this stage ensured continuous monitoring through media reviews and stakeholder input, enabling adaptive implementation that addressed emerging challenges and refined strategies for greater effectiveness.

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NDLEA: Fighting Illicit Drug Trade to Protect Families and Streets

Concerned about the growing trends of drug trafficking, abuse patterns and their adverse effects on the society, the National Drug Law and Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) under the leadership of Brigadier-General Buba Marwa (rtd.) has in recent times, scaled up the war against the menace. The 2024 annual report of the agency obtained during the week by The Explainer showed how drug cartels have become more and more desperate, devising several tricks to sustain their illicit activities and concealing the illicit substances to evade seizure, arrest and prosecution.

Empiricism has shown that increasing drug activities pose huge threats to the society as most young individuals who use drugs eventually end up in crimes more so that drug consumption alters their physiological

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Brigadier-General Buba Marwa
Chairman, NDLEA



FG Completes 135 Road Projects in North

The federal government on Tuesday in Kaduna disclosed that it has completed no fewer than 135 road projects across northern Nigeria as part of its infrastructure renewal drive.

Speaking at a two-day interactive session organised by Ahmadu Bello Foundation, Minister of Transportation, Saïdu Alkali, said aside completed projects, 216 additional road construction projects are currently ongoing in the region.

A statement by the Director, Public Relations in the Ministry of Information and National Orientation, Suleiman Haruna, said the minister further disclosed that 312 road maintenance projects had been completed while 50 others are in progress.

According to Haruna, the minister also said several legacy projects cutting across many states of the federation are underway, including Sokoto-Badagry Super Highway, Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway, Calabar-Abuja Super Highway and the Akwanga-Jos-Bauchi-Gombe Road.

In the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), the statement said 14 road projects had not only been completed but also commissioned, listing other completed projects to include Greater Abuja Water Supply Network Project, construction or rehabilitation of numerous primary and secondary schools as well as the commissioning of three world-class bus terminals.

www.noa.gov.ng

Creative Solution

Creative Solution:

To ensure accuracy in communication and prevent misconceptions or misinterpretations of sensitive issues surrounding drug trafficking and addiction, the NDLEA issues a carefully crafted press release every week. These releases are strategically timed—often on weekends—when media outlets are actively seeking stories, thereby maximizing visibility and shaping the narrative effectively.

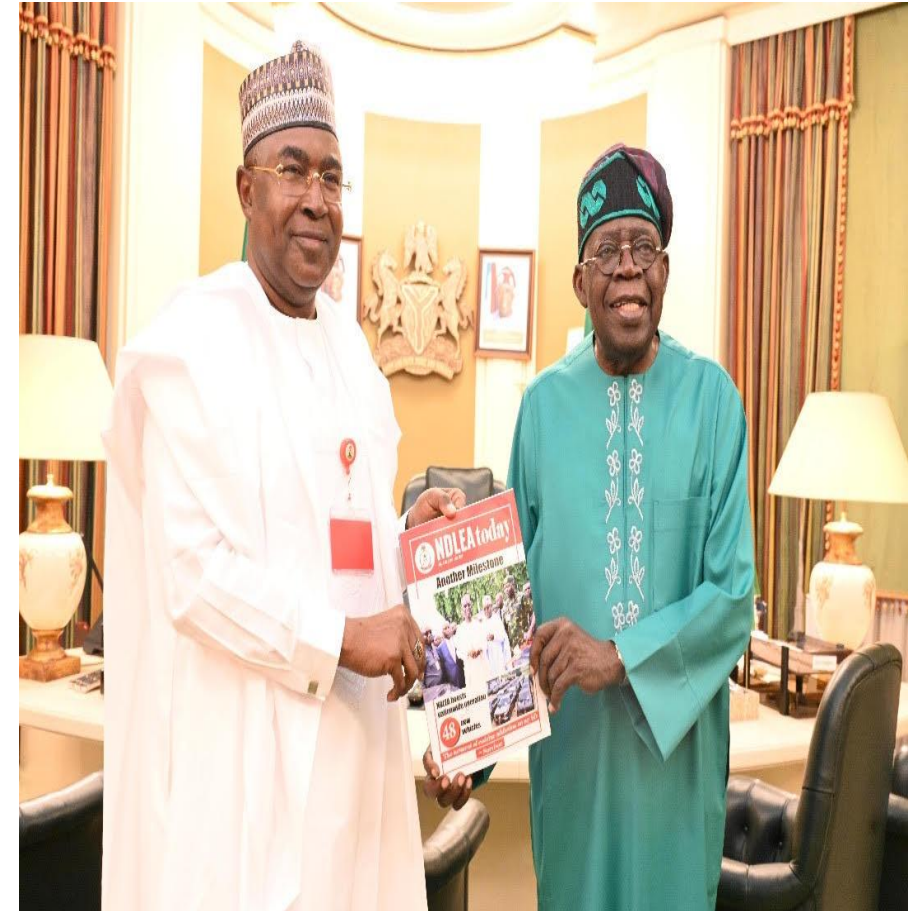
Difficulty Eliminated

The receptive leadership style of NDLEA Chairman, Brigadier General Buba Marwa (rtd), reinforced by his open-door policy, particularly towards critical stakeholders such as the media, has been instrumental in curbing misinformation. This approach not only prevented the spread of fake news but also ensured that the agency's narrative remained accurate, credible, and widely accepted.



OUTCOMES

- 1. Operational Enhancement:** Beyond intelligence gathering, heightened public awareness encouraged citizens to report suspicious traffickers and users. This proactive engagement contributed to multi-tonne drug seizures and the disruption of trafficking networks.
- 2. Preventive Measures:** The campaign's grassroots outreach and awareness initiatives reduced stigma around addiction, resulting in a surge of rehabilitation referrals and stronger community–police cooperation.
- 3. Reputational Management:** Transparent communication reshaped the NDLEA's image from a purely punitive body into a protective, public-health–driven agency, thereby strengthening public trust and credibility.
- 4. Political Will:** Sustained executive support was evident when President Tinubu reappointed Brigadier General Mohammed Buba Marwa (rtd) in November 2025 for another five-year tenure, establishing a platform for long-term reforms spanning 2025–2031.
- 5. Media & International Visibility:** Extensive national and international press coverage highlighted the NDLEA's renewed vigor, while enhanced global cooperation boosted Nigeria's credibility in international drug control efforts.



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