

Addictions: Battling drugs in the entertainment industry

DRUG ADDICTION: Just like many ordinary men and women, celebrities too have their fair share of struggles, including substance abuse. **Esther Oluka** digs into the drug problem eating up our society and compiles some of the notable celebrities who have battled alcohol and drug addictions.

It is no longer a secret that substance abuse is rampant in the entertainment industry, especially among musicians. From time to time, stories surface of artists struggling with either alcohol or drug abuse. While some of these celebrities continuously live in denial, preferring to keep their addictions under wraps, others have come out admitting to substance abuse and shared personal stories of how they are con-

ing. But why is it that entertainers are vulnerable to drug addiction? In a recent post on his Facebook timeline, Douglas Lwanga, the NTV *The Beat* presenter wrote: "We people in the entertainment industry have seen things happen and stayed quiet about it. So many people including our beloved artists are falling prey to this (drugs).". According to Lwanga, entertainers are often lured into using drugs because of the nature of their work: "These artists are usually tempted because they work late into the night, a time when evil tends to prevail the most," Lwanga says.

He adds that since artistes always undergo a lot of pressure to make hit songs, they get stressed and some opt to using drugs for different reasons, including calming their nerves.

"Some of these artistes want to perform like others who have great vocals and stage presence. So, in order to be like them, they resort to doing drugs to attain self-confidence," Lwanga adds.

The criticism from members of the public, bad publicity from the media, urge to experiment or look cool are among the other reasons artists are said to turn to drugs.

Also, performers that use drugs believe that they cannot work without the drugs; it is like fuel to them, as Albert Louis Elwa, the director of Recovery Uganda, says: "I understand there are all sorts of pressures in this industry to keep up with the fame and staying relevant but it is possible to be successful without necessarily relying on the drugs. You only have to believe in your talent."

Where do artistes find these drugs?
During an interview on NTV's *Mwasuze Muya* with Faridah Nakazi-bwe, hairstylist Kennedy Zziwa said the suppliers of these

drugs are people among us, and often hang around celebs.

around... Zziwa, who recently went clean, says he was introduced to drugs in one of the nightclubs. "The drugs in Uganda are readily available, the quality is good and quite affordable. I used

A waitress who preferred to only

A waitress who identifies herself as Subra, working at one of the prominent nightclubs in Kampala, says many times she has witnessed drugs exchanging hands within and outside the discotheque.

"A couple of times, I have witnessed drugs being tactfully slipped into an

The most abused drugs on the market

different drugs on the market, sometimes patients have preferences. Some opt for marijuana commonly known as weed because it is cheaper and

know it, they head to the washrooms to chew, sniff or even inject themselves," she says.

Sometimes, the drugs are handed to the artiste's entourage. But besides nightclubs, some of these drugs are sold by middle-men to drug lords.

Blowing things out of proportion
Bryan Sablitt, a radio personality known to many as McKenzie, says substance abuse is an all-round problem not only in the entertainment industry but also penetrating schools, universities and work-

places. We live in a hypocritical society. We condemn these performers and yet they are in the public eye and there are many people out there, including those holding public offices abusing drugs," McKenzie says.

Sometimes the public is quick to judge some of these artists because their lives are out there before them. "When some members of the public see these artists performing on stage, they are not aware of the pressures, the stress, the anxieties, the dreadlocks, having energetic performances or hanging out with a particular crowd, they assume that they're depending on with a drug, yet this may not be the case," McKenzie explains, adding, "In fact,

know of only few musicians abusing drugs in this industry." Rather than throw daggers at those in the entertainment industry, McKinnis wishes that critics look at the enigma of why some people fall into substance abuse at different levels and find help for everyone affected.

Why is addiction a difficult habit to

break." In Ze's words, "It's a win-win situation. From drugs is good! It is the best feeling but it is only shortlived and never worth it."

"It makes the addicts feel good and forget their worries for stipulated periods of time," says Joseph Kalsry, a recovering addict who has previously sold drugs to interested parties.

The 35-year-old says some of his past clients have been middle men who have sold drugs to artists: "A middleman would come to me asking for a particular drug and reason that a particular artist was willing to pay any amount of money," he says, adding, "I got a lot of money from

selling drugs to high profile people." Kasirye opted out of selling drugs because he was getting addicted to the drugs himself.

Celebs that have been associated with drugs

Davis Leekwago
a.k.a. **Timon Dash**

Last week, social media was awash with video clips of Davis Lukwago aka Dave Dash, a former TV and radio personality walking and running naked on the road. Dash had reportedly been using drugs, an addiction believed to have cost him previous jobs. Another unclaimed report says the dreadlocked lad became depressed after Wellke Weirika, his partner, ended him.

Kennedy Zedwa
also **Hair by Zedwa**

The 30-year-old celebrity hair stylist is one not afraid to speak about his escapades with alcohol and cocaine. In previous media interviews, Zivias admitted to using alcohol and cocaine for about six years, having spent about \$10,000 on drugs in one year alone. He would drink throughout the day as well as organise binge drinking parties at his house. Zivias says the addictions helped him fit easily into society by having similar conversations with his friends. After realising that his addiction was getting out of control, he sought help from Butchika hospital, where he spent 60 days before coming out in July 2017. The now-reforming alcohol and drug addict plans to establish a non-profit organisation to warn others of the dangers of such practices.



Jackie Chanderu
A lot has been said about Jackie Chanderu, a former member of all-girl music group, B*W*E. From her past whoredom romance with (twice) Gaby Aribas to her 2010 marriage to Mel Yim Yuen, a Polish national, who now wants a divorce. Let's not also forget the countless reports making rounds that she is currently recovering from substance abuse. In a July 2010 *Sapao* interview, Chanderu returned claims that she

Robert Ssentamu
Kyagulanyi a.k.a Bobi Wine
Tubana Robert Kyagulanyi a.k.a Bobi Wine

As a member of Parliament, Howard depicts his less legislative role, he cannot run away from his past. Frequently in active politics this year, Reynolds was not shy to profess his love for his wife. "There are some hot buttons on different issues which are driving him along a path and therefore smoking it. One of the photographs shows him wearing a cap professing his love for food. But that is all in the past, after Bobb. We released a song Bobb & Zo So's, a few years later, confessing that he had just loved. Today Bobb is a shadow of his former self, after not only a stroke and an aneurysm but also a heart attack and an aneurysm of his MIT, he is still always smiling. Besides conducting legislative work, running his personal businesses, the 35-year-old is also involved with the police in the fight against drug trafficking.

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Radio and Weasel

Moses Sisekongo a.k.a Radio and Douglas Mayonis a.k.a Westel have previously battled police cases of alleged illegal possession of drugs in their Neverland Ranch home, allegations they often refute. That aside, Radio in many circles has for long been known as a heavy drinker, whose uncontrollable habit causes him to act erratically. He has been seen on live TV appearing seemingly intoxicated.

Jocelyn Tracey Keko

drink and substance abuse during the peak of her music career in 2014. In fact during this time, rumours often circulated that Keiko had been seen on the streets not acting her usual self. She blamed her addiction on lack of self-esteem as well as surrounding herself with fake friends. Keiko was able to seek treatment from facilities such as Serenity Centre