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**FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE
PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION BY THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT OF CICAD
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From Theory to Practice: Project Implementation by the Executive Secretariat of CICAD

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CICAD's mission is to strengthen the human and institutional capacities of its member states to reduce the production, trafficking and use of illegal drugs, and to address the health, social and criminal consequences of the drug trade. And one of your Secretariat's most important and demanding tasks is to execute specific projects in support of that Mission. Today, I want to step back and provide you with a behind-the-scenes account of the work that the Executive Secretariat does on a day-to-day basis. In other words, to show how an initiative begins with a MEM or Expert Group recommendation, or a Commission directive, gets formulated as an OAS action, and finally, in executing the project, turns it into something of value to the member states.

I'm going to give you details about three of our current projects – the BIDAL project for seized and forfeited asset management; the Life Skills School-based Drug Abuse Prevention project, and the Caribbean National Drug Information Network project, so that you can understand a little better how the Secretariat operates between CICAD meetings.

The **Seized and Forfeited Asset Management** project, which is better known by its Spanish acronym, BIDAL, is an example of a new kind of initiative that the CICAD Executive Secretariat put into motion after some extensive thought about how the Secretariat could best assist national drug commissions to resolve their perennial problem of inadequate funding for both for their anti-drug law enforcement programs

and demand reduction programs, while also supporting the main objective of asset seizure which is to deprive the money launderers and traffickers of the profits of their illegal activities. Based on our own experience and that of many experts around the region, assets seized by member states from drug traffickers and money launderers represent a seriously underutilized resource. Frequently, these seized assets are neither properly administered nor employed to help our member states respond to the challenges posed to their societies by the drug trade.

The BIDAL project represents an innovative approach to identifying how a country's legal and administrative system could better detect and capture the illegal proceeds resulting from drug trafficking and money laundering, then manage seized assets more efficiently by applying a set of standard but flexible measures, and finally channel those resources into drug control measures and other programs.

The Executive Secretariat initially put forward a concept paper to OAS Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza, who immediately saw the value of this initiative. He endorsed the idea wholeheartedly first at the 39th regular session of CICAD, and then again at the OAS General Assembly in Santo Domingo in June 2006.

In the next phase, a special working group on asset seizure and administration within the Expert Group on the Control of Money Laundering analyzed relevant legislation and experiences of several countries. Then, the full Expert Group accepted its working group's recommendation to prepare a pilot project centered on three countries -- Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, chosen because of the relative similarity in their legal systems and their geographic proximity. At CICAD 43, the Commission itself endorsed this proposal. The Secretariat recruited a project coordinator and stationed him in Montevideo so that he could have closer interaction with our national project partners. By the way, not only has he received excellent support from the pilot project's three governments, but also from the office of the OAS representative in Uruguay.

The BIDAL project has proven to be an extraordinarily valuable learning experience for the Executive Secretariat, the project team, its pilot countries and the Money Laundering Expert Group. Thanks to the contributions from all parties involved, we ended up with an outcome that surpassed our expectations. By applying a systemic, holistic perspective to the entire process, from the investigative phase and asset detection and selection, to forfeiture and allocation, the project team identified key bottlenecks in the investigation, court proceedings, sentencing and asset administrative process, as well as gaps in legislation, regulations and jurisprudence.

As a direct outcome of the pilot project, each of the three countries has received specific recommendations for revamping its system and each has created an inter-ministerial committee to follow through on those findings. The Money Laundering Expert Group has produced an excellent document of good practices and specific recommendations on training, and has proven to be an exceptional forum for brainstorming about this issue. Shortly, this Expert Group will be presenting for consideration by this body a change in CICAD's model anti-money laundering regulations, also a product of the BIDAL project.

In conclusion, a modern, efficient, fair legal system can aggressively prosecute criminal organizations, disrupting their operations and depriving them of their profits, while ensuring that society recovers from the social and economic damage caused by these illegal activities. If we can obtain the resources to expand the BIDAL project to a hemispheric scale, our member states will hit the drug traffickers and money launderers harder where it hurts -- their wallets--; our national drug commissions could have access to significantly increased revenue sources for internal use, and also make annual contributions to the CICAD Secretariat to carry out our ambitious agenda of cooperation, training, evaluation and analysis for our member states.

While the BIDAL project had a unique inception, most CICAD projects start out as recommendations from either an Expert Group or the MEM. The **Life Skills School-Based Drug Abuse Prevention** program arose out of the work of the Demand Reduction Expert Group. After studying many school-based prevention models for drafting guidelines for school-based programs, it specifically recommended the Lions Quest Life Skills program. CICAD staff had previously developed contacts with the program's sponsor, the Lions Club International Foundation (LCIF), which welcomed the opportunity to work in the region through CICAD, and to make substantial contributions to the program through its local affiliates.

Life Skills programs help students gain positive attitudes and important life skills through easy-to-use classroom materials, solid in-service experiences, and important community links. The end result is that those young people who participate in the Lions Quest program emerge with stronger critical thinking skills to make intelligent, informed decisions about substance abuse and other risky behaviors. The program has been running in Belize, Paraguay, Peru and Colombia for a pilot three-year cycle. In these four countries, the program has trained around 1,000 teachers in the delivery of the program and expects to train another 600 over the next year. Prevention materials were provided to 170 schools, from kindergarten to 8th grade. In 2009, the Dominican Republic and Mexico joined the program.

OAS regulations require that all major cooperation programs carried out by OAS agencies be supported by a memorandum of understanding signed with each participating government. An MOU is a contract that defines the responsibilities of each party and lays out the mechanisms for disbursement of funds and reporting. In the case of the Life Skills program, the OAS Secretary General has so far delegated to the Executive Secretary the authority to negotiate and sign MOUs with nine countries.

The CICAD staff has to be creative and resourceful in juggling multiple requirements and demands in a program like the Life Skills program, because we have had to adapt the program to each country and then align diverse organizations behind the project: the national drug commission, the Ministry of Education, the LCIF and local Lions Club chapters, participating school directors and teachers, community leaders and other stakeholders.

It is a tribute to CICAD staff that *we can point to several programs, in addition to the Lions Quest Life Skills Program, that have dealt with complex sets of stakeholders and have grown dramatically over the past few years:* for instance, the Drug Treatment Counselor Training and Certification project, the EU-LAC City Partnership initiative, the Schools of Nursing university partnerships, and specialized training in police investigations and money laundering control.

Another distinction of the Life Skills program is that several national programs are currently undergoing independent evaluation using CICAD's own toolkit, also recommended by the Demand Reduction Expert Group and approved by the Commission. This evaluation demonstrates our commitment to evidence-based programs, since if the evaluation shows that the program does little to affect the students' perceptions about drugs, we will not recommend it as a drug prevention program in the future for other countries. CICAD has incorporated an evaluation mechanism into several of its projects.

CICAD has been fortunate to have built strong working relationships with its donors; otherwise, it would not have been feasible to carry out anything more than the most basic activities. Fairly early in the process of formulating a project, the Executive Secretariat has to identify a potential funding source. This is no easy task, and it requires significant effort on our part. We can not start a new project just because we identify a funding opportunity. Project initiatives have to fit within a set of criteria that guide OAS General Secretariat's planning, and the project must be justified by clear mandates from

General Assembly resolutions, the Summit process, and international conventions, as well as other commitments. The funding decision also has a ripple effect across all of your Secretariat's activities because our resources are limited and we have to foresee our activities several years out into the future, something extremely difficult in our troubled economies. This also means that we have to keep our donors and other partners fully informed about project activities.

In previous CICAD meetings, I requested that member states make annual contributions to CICAD so that we can keep working for you. In the case of the **National Drug Information Networks** program for the Caribbean, we have received funding not only from traditional funders, like the United States and Canada, but also from the governments of Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

The **Caribbean National Drug Information Network** project came out of MEM recommendations that many Caribbean member states needed to improve the use of timely, valid, and reliable information in drug policy making and program evaluation, as well as step up their participation in the MEM process. CICAD's Inter-American Observatory on Drugs (OID) decided to design the project in such a way as to improve its prospects of being sustainable after CICAD funding runs out, and also to engage as many stakeholders as possible in the information-gathering process. Most Caribbean countries were starting from scratch. The Executive Secretariat also wanted to increase the value of information and recommendations flowing back to the stakeholders so that they could see the benefits of compiling accurate information over time and investing in the MEM process.

From CICAD's perspective, information is not an end unto itself. We don't expect to install fully-fledged national drug observatories from the start. We don't want more surveys of drug use for the sake of doing a survey. *Our goal is to create a lasting network of*

stakeholders within the existing government structures and enable them to put information to good policy use.

Under OAS Secretary General José Miguel Insulza's leadership, the OAS has undergone a major overhaul of its organizational structure, managerial procedures, financial administration and project oversight. The Department of Analysis and Follow-up and its Project Evaluation Committee, under the Secretariat for Administration and Finance, ensure that projects are well developed and constituted with clear, realistic milestones, that they meet OAS priorities, and show that they are well coordinated and do not lead to duplication of efforts with other international organizations.

Aside from helping to develop and execute projects, CICAD manages an increasing array of requests for information from within the OAS family: from the Secretariat for Multidimensional Security, which has direct responsibility for overseeing our activities; from the Secretary General and Assistant Secretary General; from the Permanent Council and its Committee on Hemispheric Security; from multiple areas within the General Secretariat; and from OAS Country Offices and Permanent Missions to the OAS. Handling all these requirements as well as our project activities is no small task, since this year we've organized more than 120 events. To help us manage our activities more efficiently, the Executive Secretariat underwrote the development of a software application that tracks all of activities, expenses, contracts, agreements and trainees.

Finally, it's our primary task to keep the Commission members informed about our activities. To improve CICAD's capacity to do more in less time and for less money, the Executive Secretariat has invested in teleconferencing equipment.

The bottom line is that moving from theory to practice in a multi-lingual, multi-cultural environment such as our is a complex undertaking. I stress to my staff that the projects the Secretariat carries out must meet the real needs of the member states, and that they

must listen very carefully to what you, our partners, have to say about the value of a project to your own country.

As an international organization, we strive for the highest standards of internal legal, financial and project review, which ultimately makes for better project implementation and sustainability. We strive for technical and operational excellence, and put our subject matter expertise to work for the member states. CICAD's approach to project management allows us to transform the Commission's concepts and policy proposals into real and tangible programs that make a contribution to the larger objective, which is enabling our member states to deal effectively and intelligently with the drug trade and its repercussions on our societies.