



OID Program to Strengthen Drug Research

Approaches for the Caribbean

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The Significance of Research for Policy Making

The development and delivery of sound and effective programs and interventions rely wholly upon a solid understanding of patterns of drug use and their relationships to health and other social problems.

To this end it is necessary to have access to reliable, current and recurrent information on the present drug situation and our responses to the problem.



OID Program to Support Research Development across the Hemisphere

A multi-tiered program applying three key elements

- 1) Strengthening the relationship between the national drug observatories and academic researchers;
- 2) Supporting the development of new research on drugs through universities; and
- 3) Enhancing the capacity and formation of drug researchers in the hemisphere.



Linking National Drug Observatories with Academics

- Network of drug researchers – *Red Latinoamericana de Investigadores en Drogas (REDLA)*
- Research Awards Program – for university students
- Partnering with national universities to provide training in research techniques – for professionals in the drug field



Advantages

- Sustainable strategic alliances
- Incentive to for collaboration between government and non government entities relieves national observatories of human resource burden,
 - Ultimately to link with US researchers for collaborative research
- Incentives for students to contribute to body of knowledge on the drug problem



Expanding our Research Scope

- Studies on the morbidity and mortality associated with drug use
- Studies in special populations
 - University students
 - Prison population
 - Emergency room patients
 - Treatment center surveys
 - Drug use in the workplace
- Economic impact studies
 - Direct costs (Public expenditures)
 - Indirect Costs (public health, prison system, lost wages)



Research Capacity in the Caribbean

- Most countries have drug commission or council, however...
- Lack of highly trained researchers in the National Drug Observatories (NDO'S)
 - Difficult to carry out well designed basic epidemiological surveys on the drug problem.
- Even in the best case scenario, it is not realistic to expect the NDO's to be able to perform all the research necessary to fully understand the drug problem in their country.



A Possible Approach for the Caribbean

- **Focus on the basics**
- **Infrastructure:** Need to work to ensure that each country has a functioning drug commission or council
 - Must have a person or unit dedicated to the issue of research
- **Encourage collaborative relationships with academic institutions in the region**
 - Possible network of key persons and institutes in the Caribbean that carry out research
 - Epidemiological network on drug addiction in the Caribbean
- **Need for sustainable, periodic studies in the most fundamental populations: secondary schools.....**



From Research to Policy and Planning

- Planning and implementing effective drug policy is a long and complicated process,
- Countries themselves will ultimately be responsible for taking the steps to develop their own policies
- Nevertheless, it is a process that can only begin once policy makers have a ***clear understanding*** of the drug problem based on sound and reliable evidence.



Thank you

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