

## Final Report

# CARICOM/CICAD Demand Reduction Training Workshop & Meeting of Caribbean National Observatories on Drugs St. George's, Grenada, September 10-14, 2007

## Summary

The Inter-American Observatory on Drugs Section (**OID**) of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (**CICAD**) held its first biennial meeting of Caribbean drug observatories in Barbados in June 2005. This year, St. George's Grenada served as the venue for the second meeting of observatories and in conjunction with CARICOM, a demand reduction training workshop was facilitated during the period September 10 to 14, 2007. In attendance were 41 participants from Caribbean member states of the OAS along with one from Montserrat. Officials from CARICOM, CIFAD, The EU, and some international speakers also participated.

The meeting was themed '**From Research to Policy to Practice**' and this embodied the following broad objectives:

- (i) To present and discuss the findings of recent drug epidemiology surveys and other studies;
- (ii) To sensitize service providers on the use of research-based evidence for the development of policies and programmes in the area of drug control and demand reduction; and
- (iii) To strengthen the capacity of drug demand reduction practitioners to develop and deliver programmes to special populations.

The first three days of the meeting were focused on the activities being implemented in the national drug observatories in the member states in conjunction with the OID. The results of several studies were presented by delegates from the participating countries along with the preliminary results of a comparative study that will soon be published by the OID. This part of the meeting also looked at the issue of policy, and to this end presentations on policy formulation were made and participants were able to benefit from the vast experience of an expert in this field. Information networks, the MEM, regional coordination, and institutional issues were also discussed. The second part of the meeting was a training workshop where participants were given a practical assignment to demonstrate policy development and the implementation of demand reduction programs. **Note well that this report covers only those sessions on the first 3 days of the meeting and should be read in conjunction with the report from CARICOM along with the copies of the PowerPoint presentations and other documents that will be available at the following webpage:**

<http://www.cicad.oas.org/oid/NEW/en/Caribbean/CaribMeeting2007.asp>

## **Summary of Sessions**

Monday Sept 10

### **Session 1 – Review of Activities over last 2 years/Results of SIDUC secondary school surveys**

The first session of the meeting comprised of reviews of research in the region over the last two years, presentations of a summary of the results of SIDUC secondary school surveys by delegates from Antigua & Barbuda, Dominica, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Lucia, and Trinidad & Tobago, and finally, a discussion on the technical aspects of surveys. The following issues were raised during this session:

- There have been about 30 drug related studies implemented in the Caribbean between 2005 and the present time.
- Only about 7 of these studies have been published.
- Most of them have had no impact on policy, and only a few have had a little impact on policy.
- It is obvious therefore that we do not lack the capacity to carry out fieldwork and collect data, but we do lack sufficient capacity to interpret and report the results of these studies.
- While the country presentations were very uniform with regards to the main drugs used by students (alcohol, marijuana, tobacco), each country had at least one peculiarity.
- The discussion consisted of a very thorough presentation on the methodological aspects of surveys.

### **Session 2 – Comparative Study of Drug Use among Secondary School Students in Caribbean**

The second session of day 1 consisted of a presentation of the preliminary results of a comparative study of drug use among secondary school students in the Caribbean. The following conclusions and issues were discussed during the presentation:

- Although data is still preliminary, there are some interesting conclusions to be drawn

- Drug use in the region is very uniform in most aspects, but in others, each country has its own unique drug taking behavior (e.g. Tranquilizers and stimulants in Haiti, Bedy in Jamaica, gender differences in Barbados)
- Alcohol use is relatively high in the Caribbean while cigarette use is relatively low.
- Inhalant use appears to be very high in a few countries and is a major issue of concern, but this needs to be studied further through follow-up and more in-depth studies.
- There appears to be an association between ethnicity and prevalence of drug use.
- There is a need to have a thorough discussion on the approaches being use in the region to implement drug education and demand reduction programs.
- In most countries, past year and past month use of marijuana use exceeds cigarette use
- The findings of this research needs to be shared with ALL stakeholders so that they and their programmes can benefit.

### **Session 3 –SIDUC national household surveys**

The final session of the first day focused on the SIDUC household survey methodology. An introduction of the methodology was presented by CICAD with a specific emphasis on its usefulness while highlighting the main differences with school survey studies. Barbados’s presentation on their national household survey demonstrated the type of information that can be generated from these surveys by showing, in addition to prevalence data, some interesting analyses of the relationship between substance use and the variables work status, age, and gender among others. Some policy recommendations were also made.

The subsequent discussion looked at the opportunities, challenges and next steps to implementing household surveys in other countries in the region. Here, Suriname discussed the challenges it faced (multiple languages, ethnicities, remote villages, and difficult terrain) in implementing their national survey. Some other challenges that will be faced by any country include sampling, dealing with non response, and the high cost of implementing the fieldwork for the survey. In the end however, the general consensus was that despite these challenges, all of the countries present would be able to implement such a survey with the right amount of funding and technical assistance.

Tuesday Sept 11

### **Session 1 – An Introduction to the Policy Process**

The focus on this day shifted towards the policy process and how we can use the data and information that were discussed on the previous day to influence policy. Leading the group through this exercise was Dr. John Carnevale, who gave an introduction to the policy making process and explained how to move from research findings, to the implementation of policy and then to practice. The entire presentation was very well received, but what participants found particularly interesting in this presentation were the guidelines for moving from research to policy as well as the 4-step model to move from policy to practice in any area of drug policy implementation. It is interesting to note that Mr. Carnevale's presentation served as the main point of reference for many of the subsequent speakers throughout the rest of the week.

The discussion following this session was led by Jamaica, and the participants in general made the following observations and conclusions:

- It was accepted that policy is very important to guide future activities undertaken in response to the drug problem
- Most countries have not clearly defined the elements that were identified for good policy making: Community, Strategy, Budget, and Evaluation.
- There needs to be closer attention paid to drugs in relation to other problems e.g. violence, crime, HIV/AIDS.
- Researchers need to be involved in policy making, but currently they are not included as they should be.
- Expertise in policy making is needed in the region
- A common agenda (among countries) needs to be developed so that a partnership can be created to lobby and advocate to influence policy.
- There needs to be greater use of survey data that most countries possess. This data should also be made available to universities and other institutions that could assist with converting it into more information.
- The MEM process by itself is a policy tool. Use it!!
- Be strategic in your communication. Choose a person or persons who have a level of respect, stature and prominence that enables them to speak with a louder voice than the average person.

The participants also received a brief history of CARICOM's Technical Advisory Body (TAB) and an explanation of its role in relation to the 2000 Regional Strategy that was endorsed in 2001 by relevant Ministers. The TAB looks at drug demand reduction issues from the regional perspective, provide technical advice, and will have the opportunity to attend meetings of CARICOM's Council on Human and Social Development (COHSOD).

## **Session 2 – The Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM) and its linkages to policy making**

The second session of the day dealt exclusively with the MEM process. CICAD's MEM Coordinator provided a brief introduction to the MEM process and then a frank and thorough review of the countries participation in the last evaluation round.

The majority of the subsequent discussion focused on the performance of countries during the evaluation rounds, and there was a consensus that Grenada was consistently the best performer in all categories. The Grenada National Coordinating Entity (NCE) shared his simple but effective strategy with the group:

1. The staff at the Drug Control Secretariat have enjoyed very low turnover and the same persons have been there for many years. Hence, they know the MEM process very well.
2. The establishment of the Grenada Drug Information Network (GRENDIN) was a key element of the strategy. Over 90% of the statistics for the MEM actually come from GRENDIN. So an established information system greatly assists in the data gathering process for the MEM and very little 'new' data has to be collected.
3. NCEs need to set rigid and realistic deadlines for the receipt of information and data
4. The staff and supporting cast behind the NCE need to be committed to the process

The participants identified the following as some problems they face:

- NCEs that are non-responsive and request information late
- Source agencies that are non responsive and require "baby sitting" before they provide data
- Incomplete responses from source agencies

Some suggested solutions, besides following the Grenada model, were as follows:

- The NCE should have the opportunity to liaise with their local GEG expert to get things done.
- Local (in-country) training is needed to support the MEM process
- Forging of relationships at all levels between the NCE and local source agencies is important
- Quality control is important and it is important that the NCEs review all information received before submitting to CICAD

### **Session 3 – Other Research Studies and Priority Topics for further Research**

This session looked at the results of some other research studies done by Suriname (Focus Assessment Study of Drug Use among Prisoners), Grenada (Public Sector Employee Drug Use Survey) and Barbados (Primary School Drug Use Survey).

The subsequent discussion was about priority topics for further research. The following topics were proposed by participants:

- Prevention education effectiveness
- Evaluation of Public Relations
- Criminal Deportees and Drugs
- The homeless population and drugs
- Recidivism and its relationship to drug use
- Evaluation of Prevention Programmes
- Qualitative research (to assist in the interpretation of survey research)

### **Session 4 – The Inter-American Drug Supply Control Data System (CICDAT)**

The final session of the day was a presentation on CICAD's CICDAT supply data system and then a discussion on how to improve the collection and reporting of supply reduction data. Dominica recounted how earlier in the year they benefited from a local workshop demonstrating the CICDAT system and the creation of drug information networks and they reported that there was a subsequent improvement in their MEM reporting.

Wednesday Sept 12

### **Session 1 – National Drug Observatories and Drug Information Systems**

The first session of the day was used to examine the functions of a national drug observatory and to look at the usefulness of drug information networks. The presentation by a representative of the Community Epidemiological Working Group in the USA demonstrated in the clearest way possible how important it is to have regular surveillance, information networks, and people to interpret and use the information to the benefit of practitioners and the community at large.

The discussion that ensued focused on the state of national drug observatories in the Caribbean. The state of these observatories range from the very active to in some cases the non-existent. The objective of CICAD along with partner agencies should be to

determine how best to assist countries in establishing working observatories or at least implementing the needed research and surveillance.

## **Session 2 – Regional Support Activities**

This session gave regional and international agencies the opportunity to present and discuss the supporting and coordinating role that they play in the response to the drug problem in the region. Presentations were made by the Chief of CICAD's Institutional Strengthening Section, the French Anti-Drug Agency (CIFAD), Chief of CICAD's Demand Reduction Unit and the European Union.

The follow-up discussion looked at new sources of funding and other resources for activities. The current key sources of financial and other assistance were identified by the group as follows:

- OAS/CICAD
- PAHO/WHO
- EU
- US Federal Government (USAID, USINL)
- CHRC
- Government of Canada
- UNICEF
- UNESCO
- NIDA

Of course, the biggest source of funds for most countries is their government, and it was suggested that the focus for new funding should be on reallocating funds rather than seeking increased allocations. This idea was not endorsed by the majority of the participants and the general consensus was that new and/or increased sources of funding are needed. The following suggestions were discussed:

- Agencies need to re-strategize and change the way they operate so that the persons in finance ministries who make decisions on funding are invited to become more involved in significant activities that occur from time to time. That way they will have a better idea of where the money is going and better understand why more is needed.
- The need to effectively defend an organizations budget as a key element in sourcing funds was also discussed. Suggested strategies included establishing realistic and achievable goals and secondly, demonstrating the efficient use of funds in previous years. It was acknowledged however that research agencies find it challenging to demonstrate efficient use of funds since it was difficult to show the impact of their work.
- Most funds for substance abuse treatment are allocated under mental health, and this may be an opportunity to access new funds.

- Participants were advised to make better use of their existing data to show the impact of substance abuse on the economy, national development and human capital. In this vein, it was also suggested that participants impress upon their governments that it is far more costly to incarcerate than to prevent and treat drug offenders
- The proceeds from assets forfeited by convicted drug offenders are another possible source.
- Another view expressed was that monies identified for the anti-drug sector are being diverted to HIV/AIDS programmes. Hence there is a need to establish links between these two areas to access funds. The countries represented reported mixed success with establishing this link that ranged from outright rejection to some collaboration.
- The private sector and the use of volunteers was also put forward as a consideration for accessing and maximizing volunteers

### **Session 3 – Direction of Future Research and International Coordination**

The third session included presentations from CICAD on their programme to strengthen drug research and on revisions and new developments to SIDUC methodologies.

The ensuing discussion focused on proposal writing, sharing of information and organization of resources. In summary the participants concluded that:

- There is not enough knowledge about proposal writing,
- Many practitioners are unaware of how and where to look for funds and other support
- There needs to be support from stronger countries to weaker ones to assist with these issues.

### **Final Summary and Discussion of Observatories Meeting**

The feedback from participants indicated that the information that was provided and the level of the discussion met or exceeded their expectations and that they will be actively seeking to improve their observatories and think more about policy. The following issues that were discussed by participants have been identified by CICAD as areas for greater attention and future work:

- There needs to be a greater effort made to publish and disseminate the results of research in the region. The current situation with respect to disseminating results

of research can best be described as fair. For publishing, the situation is very poor. Before there can be any thought of influencing policy, the scientific information that is generated needs to be presented to relevant stakeholders. The OID will be assisting countries wherever possible to take full advantage of the data and information that is being generated.

- The Comparative Study on Drug Use Among secondary school students in the Caribbean will be published and distributed by the end of the year. A summary will be prepared for the next CICAD Commission Meeting.
- The implementation of household drug surveys face several challenges including high costs, the fact that it is labour intensive and lack of expertise for certain aspects of the study among others. As a result most countries have not had the opportunity to implement national household drug surveys. It was concluded however that given the recent experiences of three of the countries present, each country in the region could implement a household survey with the right amount of resources and technical assistance
- The policy process was explained during the second day of the meeting, and for many of the participants, this was the first time that they have been exposed to this type of material. The process is neither straightforward nor easy, and it will take some time for countries to adjust their way of thinking and operating in order to make their systems more suitable to policy making. However some ideas and examples of existing systems and tools were presented, (namely drug information systems like the CEWG in the USA as well as the MEM), that if used effectively could greatly assist countries in the generation of the basis information needed to develop policy. The OID will increase its efforts to develop drug information systems in member states using Grenada's GRENDIN as a model. The increased use of CICDAT will also be pursued.
- Several new areas of research were suggested as priorities by the participants. Evaluation, qualitative research, research with special populations, and the relationship between drugs and other issues were proposed
- The discussion on new sources of funding generated several ideas and these are fully articulated on page seven of this report. The participants concluded that there was indeed a need for funding from new untapped sources, and strategies need to be developed to increase the current contributions of governments. It was also suggested that drug councils needed to examine their efficiency to ensure that they are maximizing the use of the resources they currently have. Horizontal cooperation was also encouraged.

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