



Organization of
American States

Drug Information Network Project

Regional Workshop for Drug Information Networks (DINs)

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Introduction to CICAD

- CICAD was created more than 20 years ago and currently serves the 34 member states of the OAS (Organization of American States)
- CICAD's core mission is to strengthen the human and institutional capabilities and harness the collective energy of its member states to reduce the production, trafficking and use and abuse of drugs in the Americas.



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Introduction to the Inter- American Observatory on Drugs

- The 'OIA' was created in 2000
- It is the statistics, information and research unit of CICAD
- It works to varying degrees with all OAS member states
- Its mission is to build a drug information network for the Americas



The OIA's Mission

- To help promote and build a drug information network for the Americas that offers objective, reliable, up-to-date and comparable information so that member states can better understand, design and implement policies and programs to confront the drug phenomenon in all its dimensions.

FUNCTIONS OF THE OI

- Ø TO ASSIST MEMBER STATES TO IMPROVE THEIR CAPACITY TO COLLECT AND ANALYSE DRUG STATISTICS
- Ø TO ASSIST MEMBER STATES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DRUG SURVEYS AND OTHER STUDIES
- Ø PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT AND ESTABLISHMENT OF NATIONAL DRUG OBSERVATORIES AND THE USE OF STANDARDISED DATA AND METHODOLOGIES

FUNCTIONS OF THE OI

- Ø TO GENERATE DRUG INFORMATION THAT IS OBJECTIVE, RELIABLE, UP-TO-DATE, AND COMPARABLE
- Ø TO HELP MEMBER STATES TO BETTER UNDERSTAND, DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS TO DEAL WITH THE ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES OF ILLEGAL DRUGS



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Description of the DIN Project



Description of Project

Goal:

- To improve the participating countries' performance in the making of drug policy, design and implementation of responses and programs, and the evaluation of outcomes through the use of timely, valid, and reliable information.



Description of Project

Specific Objectives:

- To assist in the establishment of drug information networks in participating countries.
- To improve the availability, quality and timeliness of information related to drug production, trafficking, use, and the consequences thereof in the participating countries.
- To improve the level of participation and performance in the MEM.



Expected Outputs from a DIN

- Needs and resources analysis undertaken and report prepared (if required)
- Initial Network Meeting convened and report prepared. It is essential that a report for every subsequent meeting is prepared.
- Data collection and analysis
- Annual Network report prepared



Actual Results to Date



Challenges

- Turnover → Lack of Continuity
- Finance
- Lack of coordination in countries
- Lack of Institutional structures



CICAD On-Going Support for DINs

- Some member states, will need additional help in getting their networks up and running
- More importantly, countries need help to make their DINs a routine part of their drug control mechanisms.
- Training and re-training (to address turnover)
- Data collection
- Report writing and dissemination
- Policy development.



CICAD On-Going Support

- Hiring of consultants to provide data collection, analysis and report writing services for member states that need this type of assistance.
- Drafting and publishing of annual DIN reports.
- This support is contingent upon
 - Coordinator identified and appointed
 - One (1) DIN stakeholder meeting convened and meeting report prepared.



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Development of a national drug information network



Background and Importance

- The nature of the drug trade and drug consumption means that obtaining some types of information will be a difficult prospect.
- Several countries have come to realize that in order to get reliable and up to date information on drugs, there needs to be a dedicated mechanism that collects this information from multiple sources.
- To this end, in 2002 the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) published a document that serves as a toolkit for persons wanting to develop drug information networks.
- We have used this toolkit along with other documents and consultations with key persons, as guidance for the development of this workshop.



Importance of Drug Information Networks

- A drug information network for the purposes of this project is defined as a group of people who representing either themselves or an agency, collect, analyze and disseminate information on drugs for the purpose of monitoring trends, developing policy, and implementing appropriate programs and responses.



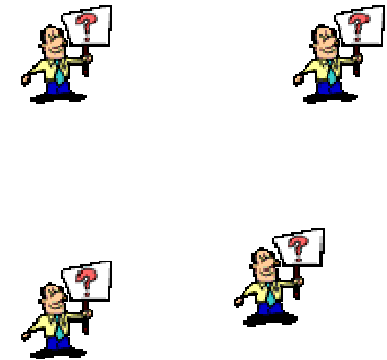
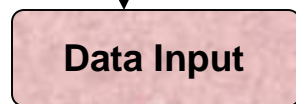
Importance of Drug Information

Networks cont'd

- Central and Southwest Asia (Central Asian Epidemiology Work Group)
- European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA)
- Surveillance System for Epidemiological Addictions (SISVEA) in Mexico
- South African Community Epidemiology Network on Drug Use (SACENDU)
- USA Community Epidemiology Working Group (CEWG)
- Grenada Drug Information Network (GRENDIN)
- St. Lucia Drug Information Network (NATDIN)



Structure of a Drug Information Network





Elements of a Drug Information Network

- A coordinator
- An interactive network of professionals and agencies
- A structured way of collecting and reporting information
- A network meeting, at least once a year, where members discuss their data in the following context:
 - Identifying existing drug use and drug trafficking patterns
 - Identifying important changes in drug use or drug trafficking
 - Discussing the implications of the data for policy and practice
- Present their data to policy makers and to the general public where possible
- An annual report
- A dissemination plan for important publications



Step 1 – Information Needs and Resources Analysis

- this is a way to create an inventory of potential data sources and provides the tools to assess these data sources. The Coordinators should carefully examine what each potential network member brings to the table in terms of data and information, research abilities, ability to communicate, and ability to contribute.



Step 2 – First network meeting

- This meeting is extremely important since it will serve to introduce members to the *raison d'être* of the network. It will also introduce them to the way the network will function, what the inputs and outputs will be, and what the products will be used for.



Some more advice about this first meeting:

- Start small. Be selective about who you invite to attend. It is better to start with a small manageable group, and then add persons as other sources are identified...or to change members as the need arises.
- Have clear attainable objectives for the meeting. Avoid trying to do too much during this first meeting
- Establish an agenda in coordination with other participants so that they feel invested from the beginning
- Give each participant a role to play and a contribution to make.



Subsequent meetings

Subsequent meetings should also be short since members of the network will most likely be busy people, but sufficient time should always be allocated for:

- Every participant with data to present his or her findings
- After each presentation or group of presentations, discussion of what the data or information shows.
- Follow-up on issues that may have been raised at earlier meetings
- Discussion of the agenda, date, time, and place of next meeting



Step 3 – Collection and analysis of data & Information

What type of data or information should a network collect?

- Treatment center data
- Arrests, seizures, and other law enforcement data
- Drug use statistics from surveys and other research
- Hospital emergency room data
- Forensic Science labs
- Public Health data
- Expert opinion



Data Sources

- Existing Data
 - Hospital admissions, emergency dept logs, public health reports, coroners and medical examiners' records, Treatment center records
 - Drug related Crime stats (arrests, seizures, prosecutions, convictions) from police, customs and other law enforcement
- General Surveys (Households)
- Special population surveys (school students, prisons, universities, out of school youth, treatment centers, emergency rooms, drug users)
- Rapid Assessments
- Key Informant Interviews, focus groups



Data Sources cont'd

NB

When starting an information system in a country where existing data sources are not developed, key informants can still provide unstructured reports from their own experience. For example, in some African countries, the initial network meeting received reports from treatment specialists, doctors and community workers on the nature of the drug problem in their particular area.



Step 4 – Publication of Annual report

- If you do not publish and disseminate the findings of your network, it can easily become useless, and die a quick death.



Further steps

Once the network is up and running, then the following steps can be considered as the network matures:

- Further standardization of data
- Expanding or changing membership
- Upgrading data systems for network members
- Developing a web-based data system
- More publications (newsletters, research reports, etc)



Main Activities in Developing DIN

- Needs Analysis (INRA) (information gathering, analysis, reporting)
- National Sensitization Meeting (One day (or less) to sensitize national stakeholders)
- Data Collection (Data gathering from all relevant data sources)
- National Report (Drafting of national drug info network report)



Definitions of Data Elements

1. Treatment

- Substance abuse treatment data

2. Drug Consumption

- Prevalence of substance use by the General population, students, and other special populations
- Incidence and Frequency of use, Problematic use,
- Other consumption data and related demographic, knowledge, attitudes, and behavior data.

3. Supply Reduction

- Seizures (drugs, plants, chemical precursors, raw materials, weapons, assets), labs discovered, area cultivated, area eradicated, persons arrested, tried, convicted, and sentenced for drug offences,



Definitions of Data Elements

4. Other Survey data
5. Other Qualitative Data & Information
6. Others to consider (According to needs of individual countries)
 - Substance related suspensions among public school students
 - Drug-caused and drug related deaths
 - Substance-related traffic accidents
 - Substance-related emergency department visits



Network meetings and the Interpretation of data

The network meetings are the most important component in any integrated drug information network. It is here that the data are presented and discussed. And, the discussions that arise during these meetings should help to provide content for the annual report. This is why in some countries this type of arrangement is referred to as a working group like the CEWG in the USA.



Network meetings and the Interpretation of data

- It is important for network members to understand that they are expected not only to report their data, but to bring some level of analysis to the meeting.
- It would also be useful if from time to time, specially invited guests are invited to participate in network meetings.
- The frequency of meetings should depend on the maturity of the network. In the beginning, the network will probably meet regularly to get itself up and running. Once established, the network should meet about twice a year minimum and a national report should be prepared at the end of every year.



Some tips and reminders.....



Remember this is your network!

- It should be small enough to allow presentation of information and discussion of findings;
- It should be comprehensive: including diversity with the representation of a number of perspectives, such as treatment, law enforcement, health policy and research;
- It should be flexible enough to allow the inclusion of additional expertise
- It should be led by a coordinator who will organize meetings, agendas and reporting.
- It should be committed to meeting on a regular basis and at least once a year, preferably twice a year depending on the dynamic nature of the drug problem.



Desired Outcomes

- Greater collaboration between anti-drug stakeholders in the country
- Improvements in the availability and quality of drug related information (e.g. an annual report)
- Regular meetings of the network
- Better decision making based on improved information
- Long term survival of the network and steady improvement in the functioning of the network



Thank you for your attention.

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