



Organization of  
American States



Inter-American Drug Abuse  
Control Commission

# Canada

## SUB-REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON DRUG INFORMATION NETWORKS (DINS)

MAY 29 TO 30, 2013

Conference Room, Courtyard Marriott  
Bridgetown, Barbados

### WORKSHOP REPORT

#### Day One: May 29, 2013

The opening ceremony of this Sub-Regional Workshop on Drug Information Networks (DINS) was held at the conference room at the Courtyard Marriott in Bridgetown, Barbados. The OAS representative in Barbados, Mr. Francis McBarnette, and of the Deputy Manager of Barbados' National Council on Substance Abuse (NCSA), Ms. Betty Hunte, attended the ceremony. Mr. Pernell Clarke from CICAD welcomed the group and introduced the authorities.

Mr. McBarnette thanked everyone for their presence and highlighted the importance of the work CICAD does in the Caribbean and in Barbados. He recognized the valuable contribution projects that involve data collection have to the development appropriate policies and offered his and the OAS office's support and assistance to CICAD projects in the country.



Ms. Hunte recognized the importance of the information obtained through this pilot project in Barbados and thanked CICAD for the great work. The information on treatment centers and clients is very valuable for a policy standpoint and provide a rich source of information for a more multidimensional approach of the drug addiction and treatment options. She believes the information can certainly be used in other areas and projects in

Barbados, such as demand reduction.

The workshop itself started with brief introductions by all participants. Among the attendees there were representatives from Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago who participated in the pilot project, as well as representatives from treatment centers in these countries who were also part of the pilot. In addition to individuals involved in the treatment center pilot project, the workshop had the presence of



representatives from other Caribbean Drug Information Network (DINs). One of the objectives of their participation was to be presented to this pilot project, discuss the results and outcomes, and explore the possibility of expanding the project to other Caribbean countries that have drug treatment centers. A complete list of participants along with an agenda can be found in the annexes to this report.

Mr. Pernel Clarke, from CICAD, delivered a presentation on the drug treatment pilot project. He mentioned that while most countries do not have data collection standards for drug and alcohol treatment, this challenge can be converted into an opportunity. The data collected would allow countries to identify patterns for drug use and utilization of treatment services. The first step in this direction would be to work on standardizing the way drug treatment data is collected. A pilot project was developed to start that process and three countries participated: Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. After appropriate training, the countries agreed to apply the standardized form in treatment centers for a period of six months. CICAD provided support for the data analysis and for the publication of the results into a report.

Mr. Clarke's presentation was followed by a panel discussion with the treatment center project coordinators in Barbados, Mr. Jonathan Yearwood, Jamaica, Uki Atkinson, and Trinidad and Tobago Ms. Reisha Flemming.



These three representatives described their experiences and challenges with implementing the pilot project, including suggestions for areas of improvement in the process and in the questionnaire being used.

Mr. Yearwood focused his presentation on improvements and punctual corrections to be made to the instrument/questionnaire.

Ms. Atkinson presented the process Jamaica went through to implement the pilot project, which included letters and reports on the pilot training as well as explanation of the purposes, timeline and benefits of the project to relevant stakeholders. The DIN was also responsible for printing and numbering forms used in the pilot, assigning codes for the centers, and develop a tracking system for distribution and collection of these forms. The issues faced during the process include duplication of information, which resulted in unnecessary additional work, and concerns expressed by stakeholders about the use of the data.

Ms. Flemming, from Trinidad and Tobago, talked about the enthusiasm that some treatment centers showed to see this project being executed, even though some other centers showed a lack of interest. She also mentioned that the instrument was straightforward and easy to use and that the instructions were clear. Additionally, some changes to the instrument were recommended.

Dr. Ken-Garfield Douglas, the consultant hired by CICAD to analyze and report the information obtained in the treatment centers, provided a comprehensive review of the pilot project in Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago.

At the early phase of this project, one person from the national drug observatory in each country was trained, along with one representative from each treatment center in the country. The observatory was responsible for sensitization other individuals in their home countries.

The standardized questionnaire was applied at the treatment centers for a period of six months, from November 2012 to April 2013. A total number of 510 forms were registered in this period (Barbados 122, Jamaica 120, Trinidad and Tobago 268). The national observatories collected and entered the data into forms that were delivered to CICAD for analysis and report.

Dr. Douglas presented the results of socio-demographics questions, as well as results related to treatment history, current substance use, prevalence of arrest, treatment of psychiatric disorder, and contagious disease history. He identified a few glitches during this pilot, which included data entry mistakes in Jamaica, and lack of clarity in some responses from Barbados. Nonetheless, the implementation of this project pilot went very well, and the results show valuable data on demographics, substance use, treatment history, and criminal justice history. Additionally, the standardized instrument on these three countries allows for comparison of results within the region, which can be very interesting.

Participants reviewed the instrument being used in the pilot project and provided comments and suggestions to improve specific points. A revised version of the instrument can be found at the web address <http://www.cicad.oas.org/apps/EventDocuments.aspx?IE=BB087&Lang=ENG>. The review was followed by a brainstorming discussion on how to expand this project to other Caribbean countries.



Ms. Martha Jarvis, representative from Dominica, explained that the country does not have treatment facilities per se, and indicated that it would be impossible to implement the project.

Ms. Elizabeth Japal, from Grenada, expressed interest in the project and raised some questions regarding the facilities in the country that would be considered "treatment facilities". The question generated a very interesting discussion regarding the exact definition of treatment facility and the different types of institutions in each country.

The representative from Saint Lucia, Mr. Caleb Paul, showed interest and deemed it possible to implement such a project in his country.

The group had several other interesting interactions including a debate on how to avoid duplication of data and the collection of information on the same patient multiple times. There was a discussion on how the treatment facilities could assign a unique identifier to persons being treated in order to avoid including data from the same individual in the survey twice or multiple times.

The major challenge identified was how to assign an ID that could be implemented in all Caribbean countries without compromising the privacy of any individuals. Multiple suggestions were made including, for example, the use of birth dates. However, there would be situations where the patients' birthday is the same. There was a suggestion to use birthdays and initials, but some participants thought this would compromise the individuals' privacy.

### Day Two: May 30, 2013

On the second day of the workshop representatives from Drug Information Networks from Jamaica, Barbados, Dominica, Haiti, Saint Lucia, and Grenada delivered presentations on the activities being implemented by their offices.

Presentations included recent activity and meetings, data trends, and the DIN plans moving forward.

Jamaica – Ms. Uki Atkinson highlighted the efforts of the National to strengthen their relationship and links with key stakeholders including the academia, and Ministries of education and health. Their Drug Information Network has held weekly meeting with researchers from the University of the West Indies (UWI), and has plans to share data that may foster drug-related research among graduate students, benefitting all. Jamaica has also planned meetings with other stakeholders in the public and private sectors to present their work and discuss their role in the network.

Barbados – Mr. Jonathan Yearwood and Ms. Laura Lee delivered a presentation on the Barbados Drug Information Network, which is currently active. They presented some indicators of drug prevalence in Barbados as well data related to person who seek treatment at the Centre for Counseling Addiction Support Alternative (CASA), drug seizures, and incarcerations related to drugs. For the future, the BARDIN is looking at expanding their data on drug seizures.

Dominica – Ms. Martha Jarvis delivered a presentation on the activities of the Drug Information Network in Dominica. The network counts with the contribution of several stakeholders, including the Police Force, Financial Intelligence Unit, Ministries of health and education, among others. Among the work recently done by the drug network in Dominica is a Prison Survey conducted in full collaboration with CICAD/OAS. Additionally, Dominica conducted a School based health survey, Youth Tobacco survey, and a National Secondary School Survey. Dominica’s plan for the future is to address one of their most urgent needs, which is the training of personnel.

Haiti – Mr. Jean Alain Bernadel presented the current status of the drug information network in Haiti. The network currently counts with eight regular members, including law enforcement and health centers. The network has been carrying out meetings for data collection and is involved in an ongoing school survey project with CICAD.

Saint Lucia – Mr. Caleb Paul said the DIN in Saint Lucia was launched again in 2012 after a period without operating since 2010. Currently, the DIN has been engaged in meetings with stakeholders, data collection, Secondary School Prevalence Survey in collaboration with CICAD, and preparation of a local report. The network is working on publishing some data and making information available to stakeholders and other relevant organizations.

Grenada – Ms. Elizabeth Japal spoke about the Grenada Drug Epidemiology Network (GRENDEN), which was initially established in 2002 under a different name. The network in Grenada collects data from 11 different departments. Data trends in Grenada include a spike on the cultivation and trafficking of marihuana, a downward trend in seizures of cocaine, and an increase in availability and production of illegal alcohol “bush rum”.



The presentations were followed by discussions on new drugs in the Caribbean. Participants found that similar substances have different names depending on the island, and that sometimes a name is used to designate different substances. Two countries mentioned an increase in the use of a new substance called mollys. This type of interaction was very interesting as it allowed countries to share knowledge and experience and appreciate the need and importance of exchanging information and communicating among themselves.

Representatives from Drug Information Networks were asked to present the challenges they encounter in their work and the status of the DIN annual report.

Mr. Yearwood from Barbados expressed concern with the lack of human resources and qualified individuals to work on qualitative data. He highlighted the importance of having reliable quantitative data combined with qualitative data for the production of adequate reports. For him, there's a need for triangulation in order to be able to move forward.

Ms. Martha Jarvis from Dominica raised the issue of lack of human resources to produce a report every year, and mentioned its agreement with CICAD to present its report biennially instead of annually.

Mr. Paul from Saint Lucia also expressed they have a limited number of individuals assigned to the DIN and the workload is very high.

Mr. Bernadel from Haiti shared the same concern regarding the lack of resources and personnel to undertake all activities. He suggested more frequent interactions and meetings with Drug Information Networks across the Caribbean and experts from the hemisphere and CICAD to exchange knowledge and collaborate on various projects. Mr. Bernadel suggested an increased use of technology such as videoconference equipments to maintain connection and overcome challenges posed by lack of funding for bigger meetings and travel.

## Main Conclusions

- The treatment center pilot project in general was well implemented by the participating countries. Through this process, some challenges and issues with the instrument and the process were identified and these will be corrected before disseminating the revised tools to the pilot countries.
- The coordinators in the pilot countries presented their experiences and those of the participating treatment centers in applying the instrument. They all agreed that with the suggested fixes and the lessons learnt, the instrument and this process could be institutionalized in their countries.
- Some very useful information on demographics, substance use, treatment history and criminal justice contact by persons seeking treatment was obtained during the pilot. A full report on the pilot is currently being drafted and will be disseminated to all stakeholders.
- A plan will be developed to implement and institutionalize this instrument and across the Caribbean
- The DIN Coordinators who attended this meeting shared information on recent drug trends in their countries:

§ An increase in the number of females seeking treatment in Grenada

- § An increase in the availability of illegally produced alcohol known as 'bush rum' also in Grenada
  - § Decrease in cocaine seizures in Trinidad & Tobago along with an increase in foreign nationals charged for drug trafficking mainly by swallowing.
  - § Significant increases in drug related accidents in Dominica
  - § Increases in cocaine seizures in Haiti.
- Countries have agreed in principle to work towards the publishing of annual or at least biennial DIN national reports