

*National Drugs
Observatory
The Bahamas*



Structure

The National Drugs Observatory (NDO), is a unit within the National Anti-Drug Secretariat (NADS). NADS is located in the Ministry of National Security.

Staff



Ms. Indirah Belle, MSc.
Manager, National Drugs Observatory
indirahbelle@bahamas.gov.bs



Ms. Greer Mckinney, BSc
Researcher, National Drugs Observatory
greermckinney@bahamas.gov.bs

Activities

Reports Produced

- 2015 Drug Situation Report (Approved)
- 2016 Drug Situation Report (Pending)
- 2017 – Work in progress

- 2016-2020 Drug Strategy (Approved)

The NDD assisted with the drafting of this strategy.

Research Agenda

Household Drug Prevalence Survey and Rapid Assessment Study – At risk Youths 18yrs -25yrs. (This age group are the main perpetrators and victims of crime)

Both Studies were carried out in 2017 in collaboration with Ministry of Health and Caribe Sigma Research Group respectively.

- The NDD worked closely with CICAD and Ministry of National Security to secure approval by Cabinet.
- The NDD assisted CICAD and Ministry of Health and Caribe Sigma with the coordination of activities associated with these projects,
- The NDD provided appropriate feedback and policy recommendations based on study results.

Drug Information Network

The Bahamas has an active Drug Information Network that consist of stakeholders across the divide of drug Control. These partnerships include government , non government and civil society agencies, This network of agencies have been fully engaged in all activities of the NDD and NADS, Meeting were held on a monthly basis in 2015/2016 and quarterly in 2017,

As a result of the Drug Information Network the NDD is able to monitor on an annual basis activities such as

- Number of persons in Treatment broken down by age gender and type of drug abused etc.
- Amount and type of drugs seized, location; mode of transport, assets forfeited, person arrested and prosecuted broken down by age gender and nationality . Type of charge etc

- Number of persons incarcerated for drugs broken down by age gender and type of offenced. Number of persons on remand vs sentenced ; sentence length etc
- Amount of suspicious transaction – FIU
- Training activities/ acquisition of equipments etc

Other Key achievements of these collaborative meetings for the period under review include: Coordinating activities for hosting CICAD 60th Regular Session; drafting of a Drug Treatment Court Bill and regulations; drafting the new drug strategy; completion of drug situation reports and completion of annual surveys. Cordination of International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Traficking and Drug Free School Day.

Drug Information Network Cont'd

Supply Reduction Partners include;

RBPF, RBDF, BDOCS, Bahamas Customs and Immigration, Financial Intelligence Unit
The Nassau Container Port, Airport Authority,

- Demand Reduction Partners include: National Drug Council, Sandilands Rehabilitation Center., Health Information and Statistics, National Drug Agency, Community Counselling and Assessment; Ministry of Education, Ministry of Youth; Ministry of Social Services., Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Office of the Attorney General, Department of Public Prosecutions.
- Treatment Centers: Teen Challenge, BASH, Great Commission Ministries, The National Lead Institute
- Civil Society Organization: Civil Society Bahamas
- Prison Fellowship
- US Embassy INL Section

The NDO looks forward in 2018 to forge new alliances with other agencies in government/ non government to improve the information gaps in the network.

Studies carried out/ Summary of Results

- The summary of results for the Household Survey will be presented by a Ministry of Health Representative since this Ministry was the execution agency.
- The Rapid Situation Assessment of Drugs and At Risk Youth 18 -25yrs was carried out by Dr, Sandra Smith c/o Caribe Sigma Research Group.
- The initial stage of this research involved a consultative meeting with anti-drug stakeholders to discover the pressing issues affecting the country as well as those related to drugs, This meeting was hosted by the NDO.
- This qualitative study interviewed a total of sixty participants,53 males and 7 females. Participants were selected from different islands of The Bahamas including Nassau, Grand Bahama, Abaco and Exuma .
- Key findings revealed that the marijuana was the drug of choice among the participants and believed that it was not harmful and addictive.
- The majority of the respondents did not think of Marijuana as a drug but a plant. Further the participants felt that the law should be amended so that persons are not prosecuted for the possession of one joint.

Studies Carried out/ Summary of Results

- Females were reluctant to admit their drug using behaviours.
- Age of initiation to marijuana range from 10 to 19rs. With the majority(55%) falling into age group 10to 14 .
- Less than 10% were arrested for a drug related offence.
- Main recommendations called for the increase of rehabilitative programs and community outreach.
- Additionally the increase of After School programs,

Future research studies of the NDD will explore the use of more qualitative studies to supplement quantitative methods. Further future research efforts will examine the drug use behaviour of women using less intrusive methods since it was indicated in this study that females were more reluctant to report their report their drug using behaviours..

New Drugs / New Ways of Using Drugs

Purple Drink (Lean)



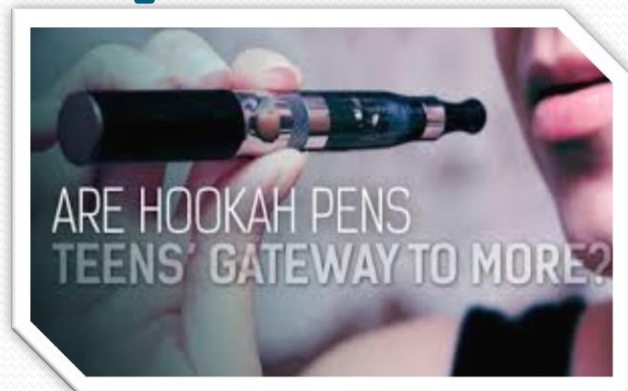
Marijuana Cookies / Brownies



Beedies



E- cigarettes (Hookah Pen)



I'M LOVING ME
DRUG FREE!

Challenges

- **Small Staff:** There is a need for an additional research specialist. This would allow for better management of the unit and coordination of efforts especially considering the fact that the NDO is still in its early stages of development and there is a lot of ground work required to build the infrastructure. This would also increase the availability of trained personnel with the skills to collect and analyze drug data hence contributing to the overall sustainability of the unit.
- **Space :** A larger office space is needed for staff and to facilitate a library section for members of the public seeking information on drugs .
- **Website and Social media platforms:** A website and social media platforms can assist with sharing information with our stakeholders, the general public and can be useful in receiving feedback/ information requests. These platforms also provide low cost ways to carry out ongoing research activities .
- **Budget:** An assigned budget for research activities is needed so that School Surveys, Population Survey and RSA of vulnerable populations are carried out on a more consistent basis,' We are currently due for a school survey last one was in 2012. Population survey was just done, the last one was almost 25yrs ago.

Challenges Cont'd

- Funding is necessary to carry out / sponsor other types of research initiatives and co-ordination meetings to prepare country reports eg ARQ and MEM activities. Further these meetings facilitate the maintenance of the existing drug information system.
- Funding is necessary to assist stakeholders in building their capacity to collect data. There is also a need to include additional stakeholders to fill information gaps as the structure of the drug information network is dynamic requiring new partnerships with new organizations as issues emerge and. For example gender dynamics and this would result in new partnerships with the local Women's Bureau . Additionally with Department of Rehabilitative Welfare and Department of Labour to better monitor employment opportunities and other social requirements for those impacted by drug use and drug offenders reintegrating in society. (Consistent with the recommendations of the UNGASS Outcome document 2016 and the SDG).