



Marijuana Policy in Jamaica: Implementation & Implications for Research

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National Situation

- Current prevalence among 12-65 years is 16% (NHS 2016)
- Lifetime prevalence among adolescents is 20% (NSS 2013)
- Average age of initiation lower among males (15yrs) than females (18yrs) (NHS 2016)
- 95% of adolescent referrals to NCDA are for ganja use (NCDA 2016)
- Main drug of impact for clients in treatment centres (OAS\CICAD\NCDA 2016)
- Largest Caribbean supplier of marijuana to the United States and Caribbean region – identified among 22 countries as a major illicit producing and drug transit country
- Cultural acceptance of ganja (medicinal and recreational use, Rastafarians)
- 2015 policy changes – Amendments to the Dangerous Drugs Act (DDA)
- 30% of population unaware of changes to the DDA

Snapshot of the Legal Landscape

- ❑ 1948 Dangerous Drugs Act (DDA) addresses all illegal substances in Jamaica.
- ❑ Efforts to amend law in Relation to Cannabis (Ganja) spanning 40 years
 - ✓ 1977 Joint Select Committee Letter of Recommendations
 - ✓ 2001 Report of the National Commission on Ganja - national consultations
- ❑ Amendments to the DDA
 - ✓ Passed into Law by House of Representatives - February 24, 2015
 - ✓ Took effect with Governor General sign off - April 13, 2015

Rationale for Change in Policy

- ❑ Reduction in offence was necessary to reduce the burden on overloaded courts and adult correctional facilities (prisons)
- ❑ Creation of framework for the development of legal medical marijuana, hemp and nutraceutical industries was necessary to mainstream a sustainable approach to the industry
- ❑ Legalization not possible given obligations under international law which do not allow full legalization, trade and export of cannabis
- ❑ Decriminalization on the agenda of successive governments - its implementation has been supported by the two major political parties

Amendments in a Nutshell

- ❑ Decriminalization of the possession of 2oz or less of Ganja – now a ticketable offence
- ❑ Use of ganja for medical or therapeutic purposes as recommended or prescribed by a registered/approved medical professional
- ❑ Expungement of past convictions for smoking ganja, possession of ganja where the sentence imposed was a fine not exceeding J\$1,000, and possession of pipes or other utensils used in connection with smoking of ganja
- ❑ Scientific research by a tertiary institution or company, approved by relevant authority
- ❑ Use for religious purposes as a sacrament in adherence to the Rastafarian Faith
- ❑ Use at events primarily for the purpose of celebrating or in observance of Rastafarian faith
- ❑ Home growing (up to 5 plants per household)
- ❑ Establishes the Cannabis Licensing Authority (CLA) as the entity under the industry portfolio
- ❑ Establishes the National Council on Drug Abuse as the referral agency for persons under 18yrs found in possession of marijuana and those over 18yrs who appear to be dependent

Cannabis Licensing Authority (CLA)

❑ Established to oversee:

- ✓ Development of regulations for the industry in accordance with international obligations (with Minister of Justice approval)
- ✓ To issue authorisation, licenses and permits for the handling (cultivation, transportation, processing and sale) of marijuana

❑ Steps to develop regulations

- ✓ Consultancy to recommend discrete components of the regulations (BOTEC)
- ✓ Definition of the entity's guiding principles
- ✓ Board consultations to develop detailed drafting instructions

❑ Progress

- ✓ Creation of licensing regime – 5 license types, 11 categories
- ✓ Fee structure for the industry
- ✓ Security and enforcement monitoring mechanism, incl. pre-inspection
- ✓ Determination of terms and conditions for each license type
- ✓ Recent establishment of Alternative Development Unit (COPOLAD partnership)

Alternative Development in Jamaica



AD Unit Established: Ministry of Industry Commerce Agriculture and Fisheries (MICAFA)

1 Year Pilot Approved for Alternative Development Programme for the transition of traditional ganja farmers into the regulated cannabis regime (Led by CLA)

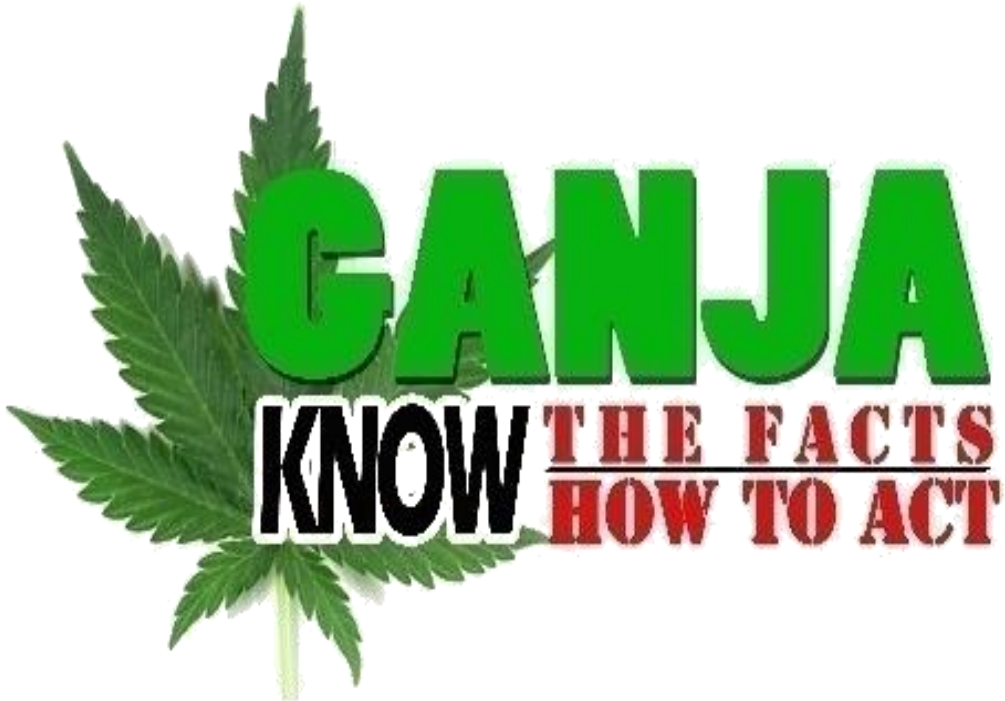
Buy in from key government stakeholders to support AD (MNS, RADA, SDC, NLA)

Outstanding Matters

- ❑ MOH to finalise medical permits and regime for prescriptions
- ❑ Regulations for hemp to be undertaken
- ❑ Policy position on import & export licenses to be determined
- ❑ Policy decision on R&D Orders to be determined
- ❑ MOUs with JCF, NEPA and FID to be finalised
- ❑ Security and monitoring framework (incl. framework for banking) to be developed
- ❑ Continued public education as changes occur
- ❑ Training of law enforcement officers, ticketing and referral system

National Council on Drug Abuse Public Education Campaign (2016)

- Traditional media
- Billboards
- Drug Awareness Month
Focus



National Council on Drug Abuse Youth Public Education Campaign (2017/2018)



- Endorsed by MOH/MNS/MOE/MOJ
- MOH Funding
- Social & traditional media
- In-school peer led prevention programme (100 schools, 2000 peers, 40,000 students)
- All-island school tours – edutainment led by popular artistes – TDT Jingle

Implications for Research

- ❑ Evidence from recent studies helping to guide policymakers and educate general public – good baseline quantitative data (NHS/NSS/GSHS) Good contextual/ qualitative data RSA
- ❑ Ongoing partnership with academia going well re further analysis and publication of data
- ❑ Follow-up NSS would be ideal to determine situation among adolescent population (pre and post DDA changes), access, risk perception, edibles etc.
- ❑ Economic cost study would be timely for policy makers
- ❑ Gold-standard would be a longitudinal study to determine causal factors – pathways to impact – highly expensive, challenging to implement
- ❑ Qualitative methodologies useful for deeper understanding of situation – more of these studies necessary among targeted populations
- ❑ Jamaica approached by WHO re possibility to implement study on marijuana use and mental health (2018/2019) – selected high prevalence countries worldwide

Thank You