THE NEWSLETTER CELEBRATES FIFTEEN YEARS

The Drug Control Secretariat is pleased to inform you that its quarterly publication, "The Newsletter", will celebrate its fifteenth year of publication in March 2010. It was on 22 March 1995, that the first edition of The Newsletter was published.

During the period March 1995 and March 2010, sixty-one (61) editions of The Newsletter were published. It has served as a source of reference by researchers and other professionals. It provides information on all aspects of the national drug control program, including statistics, information on conventions, treaties signed by Grenada, and local legislation on drug control.

The Drug Control Secretariat is proud of this accomplishment. In September 2004, when Hurricane Ivan devastated Grenada, the Secretariat was able to publish the September edition of the Newsletter. In fact, The Secretariat has never missed publication of an edition of The Newsletter.

Several messages of congratulations were sent by local, regional and international organizations, to the Drug Control Secretariat on its accomplishment with the Newsletter.

One of the messages was from the National Drug Abuse Control Council of Belize (NDACC). In its message, Mr. Esner Vellos, Director of the NDACC, said, “On behalf of the National Drug Abuse Control Council of Belize and the Ministry of Health we extend to the Drug Control Secretariat of Grenada our most joyous Congratulations for the fifteen years of publication of the quarterly Newsletter”.

The Newsletter is currently one of the longest running publication by any Government Ministry in Grenada. It is widely circulated in Grenada, the Caribbean and internationally.

It is also available on line at: www.gov.gd/nocodc.html

JAPAL APPOINTED

Assistant Drug Control Officer Mrs. Elizabeth Japal has been appointed as Grenada’s Alternate Representative to the Fifth Round of the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM). Mrs. Japal will assist the Principal Representative Mr. Dave Alexander in the preparation of relevant documentation for the MEM and attend meetings of the Governmental Experts Group (GEG) of the MEM in the absence of Mr. Alexander.

OUR MISSION

The Drug Control Secretariat would endeavour to create an atmosphere of non-tolerance towards drugs, through the implementation of appropriate programmes, which would promote the well-being of all persons in the State of Grenada.
The expansion of its data collection mechanism by the Drug Control Secretariat, would be a critical factor in the formulation of new drug control policies and programmes, in 2010 and beyond. This expanded mechanism would generate new information on various aspects of the nature and extent of the drug situation in Grenada.

During the Sixth Annual General Meeting of the Grenada Drug Information Network (GRENDIN), held 4 December 2009, an analysis of the drug situation was presented by Dr, Cecilia Hemagin-Younger, Associate Professor of Biostatistics, St. George’s University, Grenada. In her presentation, Dr. Younger noted that there were several gaps in information about the local drug problem. These included: Impact of drugs on the society; Impact of knowledge and information on substance abuse; Impact of alcohol. To address these gaps, she recommended: Expand the data that is collected and reported; Inclusion of data on socio-economic status of persons arrested and incarcerated for drug-related offences; Use of emerging technology to track drug-related incidents.

The Drug Control Secretariat would give priority to these recommendations in 2010; their implementation would increase Grenada’s capacity to combat the drug menace.

INCREASED PRICES FOR ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO PRODUCTS

Cost of alcohol and tobacco products have increased with the introduction of an Excise Tax. This Tax was introduced alongside the Value Added Tax, effective 1 February 2010, to ensure no loss of revenue from repealing the General Consumption Tax (GCT), cigarettes and tobacco products. The Excise Tax and VAT are imposed on all alcohol and tobacco products, including those produced locally and imported. The increase in these prices could have some impact on consumption of these products.

According to the Honourable Nazim Burke, Minister for Finance, in his presentation of the national budget on 15 January 2010, “The imposition of these taxes on alcohol and tobacco products would address the negative consequences associated with the consumption of alcohol and tobacco.”

One of the concerns raised by some professionals is that the increased prices of alcohol and tobacco products may deter persons with limited disposable income, to produce, or purchase cheaper drugs such as marijuana, or the practice of smuggling to obtain cheaper alcohol and tobacco products. The Minister for Finance noted in his presentation, “Careful consideration has been given to the impact on the cost of living. We have also sought to calibrate the rates to support the viability of local manufacturers and jobs while minimizing any incentive for smuggling. Consequently, and after further consultation and dialogue, some rates have been adjusted.”

A research study entitled, ‘Are There Differential Effects of Price and Policy on College Students’ Drinking Intensity?’ Conducted in the United States of America by Jenny Williams, PhD, Frank Chaloupka, PhD, and Henry Wechsler, PhD, published in 2002 revealed, “We find that students who faced a higher money price for alcohol are less likely to make the transition from abstainer to moderate drinker and moderate drinker to heavy drinker, and this effect is equal across thresholds.”

As part of the research component of the national drug control programme, the Drug Control Secretariat would give consideration to the implementation of a research study on the impact of higher alcohol and tobacco prices on consumption habits.

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REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

Over sixty participants from fourteen Caribbean countries, including Grenada, participated in the, 'Workshop on Drug Prevention Planning for Behavior Change,' in Jamaica from 10 to 12 February 2010. The goal of the workshop was to strengthen substance abuse planning through the integration of culturally sensitive behaviour change models and approaches into Caribbean programmes.

Several presentations were done on various aspects of behaviour change communication. These included: Shaping Communication for Caribbean Audiences; Education–Edutainment Reconnecting with Caribbean Youth; Research, policy and Behaviour Change: Successes from HIV/AIDS; Communication, Culture, Science and Strategic Thinking for Behavior Change Communication.

Mr. Dave Alexander, Drug Control Officer, Grenada, made a presentation on the topic, “A vignette-Why Do Murals work In The Caribbean: The Grenada Experience".

Mrs. Elizabeth Japal, Assistant Drug Control Officer, did a presentation on the drug prevention education programme for preschoolers in Grenada. Grenada’s delegation to the workshop consisted of Mrs. Hermoine Baptiste, Head of the Health and Family Life Education Unit, Mrs. Japal and Mr. Alexander from the Drug Control Secretariat.

The workshop was convened by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat in collaboration with the National Council on Drug Abuse (NCDA), Jamaica. Funding was provided under the 9th EDF for the Regional Drug Demand Reduction Project.

EXPANDED DATA COLLECTION

The Drug Control Secretariat has expanded its data collection mechanism to include additional drug-related data. This expansion was one of the issues discussed at the Sixth Annual Meeting of the Grenada Drug Information Network (GREN D I N), held 4 December 2009.

Additional data to be collected would focus on details such as location of drug-related incidents, quantities and types of drugs seized, and socio-economic status of persons arrested and imprisoned. New methodology would be used to analyse the data collected.

This additional data would improve drug-related data, Techni- cal assistance on this matter was provided by Dr. Cecilia Hemagin-Younger, Associate Professor of Biostatistics, St. George’s Uni- versity, Grenada.
IN THE NEWS

A presentation on violence among students 2001 to 2009, and its impact on health, was made by the Drug Control Secretariat at a one week workshop entitled, ‘Adolescent Health Training & Stakeholder Consultation Workshop.” The workshop was held 30 November to 4 December 2009, and organized by the Grenada Ministry of Health and facilitated by Ms. Claudia Brann of the Pan American Health Organization. In addressing the participants, Acting Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Health, Allison Miller, applauded the initiative, saying that an effective health service system requires collaborative efforts.

Drug Control Officer Dave Alexander attended the Preparatory Meeting of the Governmental Group of Experts (GEG) of the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM), in Mexico City, Mexico, 10 to 11 December 2009. The Meeting dealt with various administrative and procedural matters necessary for the First Drafting Session of the MEM, scheduled for April 2010.

The construction of facilities for the implementation of the Advance Coastal Surveillance Radar System, is scheduled to commence in 2010. This announcement was made by the Honourable Nazim Burke, Minister of Finance, Planning, Economy, Energy and Cooperatives, during the 2010 budget, on 15 January 2010. This system will significantly enhance Grenada’s coastal surveillance capability. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago would provide the equipment for this system.

Prison reform is necessary to achieve the goal of effective rehabilitation of inmates. In the 2010 budget presentation, the Government of Grenada noted that three priority areas targeting prison reform would be addressed. These areas are: strengthening institutional capacity, strengthening our education programme and enhancing the physical facilities at Her Majesty’s Prison. Meanwhile, the matter of school violence would continue to be addressed in 2010, through renewed emphasis on citizenship education, anger management, and values.

NEW SERIES OF LIVING DRUG FREE

Television programme, ‘Living Drug Free’ has been reorganized. The program would now consist of two versions, a ten minute and a thirty minute version.

The shorter version would focus on dissemination of specific and precise information on substance abuse, statistical data and current information. Meanwhile, the thirty minute programmes would focus on components of the national drug control program, drug control strategies, and related matters. These programmes would take an in-depth look at these issues.

Production of ‘Living Drug Free’ would be a joint initiative of the drug Control Secretariat, and the Government Information Service. Broadcast of new episodes of the programme would commence in March 2010, on GIS Television. They would also be available online on the web page: www.gov.gd/ncodc.html

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