GRENDEN CONDUCTS TENTH ANNUAL MEETING

A n Analysis of the Nature and Extent of the Drug Situation In Grenada: 1 January to 30 June 2012 and 1 January to 30 June 2013, was the theme of the Tenth Annual Meeting of the Grenada Drug Epidemiology Network & National Observatory On Drugs (GRENDEN/NOD). The Meeting, held 23 January 2014 brought together members of GRENDEN and representatives of Government Departments and Non-Governmental Organizations who are involved in the implementation of the national drug control program.

One of the features of the meeting was an address by the Honourable Anthony Boatswain, Minister for Education and Human Resource Development. The Minister complimented GRENDEN on its successes in 2013 and outlined initiatives to be pursued in 2014. He noted that Grenada had successfully developed a framework for drug-related data collection and analysis, which has facilitated the development of technically sound and appropriate policies and programs.

The Minister also addressed the issue of legalization/decimalization of cannabis.

He stated that the Government of Grenada would not decriminalize nor legalize cannabis. "Our position on this issue is very clear. The cultivation and use of marijuana in Grenada is illegal, and therefore, we will abide by the Laws of our Land", the Minister announced.

Four (4) panels examined the nature and extent of the drug situation in Grenada, for the periods 1 January to 30 June 2012 and 1 January to 30 June 2013, in the following thematic areas: Drug Consumption; Consequences of Drugs; and Results of Policy and/or Program Responses. Officials from the Customs and Excise Department, Royal Grenada Police Force, Hospital and Treatment Centres, Pharmacy Unit, Financial Intelligence Unit, Chemist Laboratory, and the Prisons, comprised the panels. These presentations formed basis for discussions and analysis of the information presented, on issues such as drug trends and admissions for treatment.

Other highlights of the meeting were presentations on the Sixth Evaluation Round of the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM), and the report on the Ninth Annual Meeting of GRENDEN, held 7 December 2012.

The Eleventh Annual Meeting of GRENDEN is scheduled to be held on 5 December 2014.

GRENDEN is the mechanism through which Grenada collects, analyses, monitor drug trends and disseminates drug related statistical data. It was established in 2002.
Results from the Third Secondary Schools’ Drug Prevalence Survey indicate decline in the consumption of drugs such as alcohol, cigarettes and marijuana, as reported by the students. This decrease is in comparison to the similar studies done in 2002 and 2005. This decrease is commendable. However, concerted action need to be taken to sustain this decline.

It is interesting to note, that both data from the survey, and several other sources, indicate an increase in drug use, trafficking, and related crimes, in the aftermath of Hurricanes Ivan (2004) and Emily (2005). Indeed, this is a lesson to be learnt, and a situation to be closely observed, should there be similar natural disasters in the future.

The survey also showed that students are experimenting with inhalants, and their limited knowledge about drugs such as ecstasy and other stimulants. In fact, the survey pointed out that there is need for more drug prevention education in secondary schools. These are areas which would require the attention of policy makers and program managers.

The formulation of a national policy on alcohol and the implementation of the national anti-drug strategy 2013 to 2018, are measures which would contribute to the national efforts to reduce the prevalence of drug use.

Caribbean countries now have access to a new instrument to collect data on persons admitted to treatment centres for drug-related medical problems. The Regional Standardized Treatment Centre Intake Form emerged from a proposal by the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD), aimed at strengthening the capacity of its member states, to collect data on admissions to drug treatment centres in a standardized manner. The Intake Form provides a template which meets the criteria for a client registration information system.

Officers responsible for National Drug Observatories in their respective countries, as well as personnel from treatment centres, participated in a seminar held in Guyana during the 12 to 13 February, 2014, on the use of the Form. The main objective of the training was to strengthen the capacity of member states to gather, analyze and report drug-related information in a standardized format.

Grenada representatives at the seminar were Ms. Brenda Jones, Nurse at the Rathdune Psychiatric Unit, Ms. Verlina Straker, Records Clerk, Medical Records Office of the General Hospital, and Ms. Elizabeth Japal, Assistant Drug Control Officer, Drug Control Secretariat.

Five Caribbean countries benefited from the first phase of the training: Trinidad and Tobago, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, Guyana and Grenada. A similar seminar would be conducted for other Caribbean countries.

The training was conducted by Mr. Pernell Clarke, Research Specialist at CICAD and Dr. Cecilia Younger, Professor of Biostatistics at St. Georges University.
Decline In Drug Prevalence Among Students

The results of the 2013 Secondary Schools Drug Prevalence Survey, indicates that the prevalence of substance use among secondary school students in Grenada decreased in 2013 when compared to similar surveys in 2002 and 2005. Overall there was a reduction in alcohol use among the students with the current and past year use reverting to pre-Hurricane Ivan levels. However, the results revealed that the proportion of students consuming alcohol, males had a larger proportion reduction than females; possibly because there were more efforts in alcohol reduction directed towards males.

The survey also found that marijuana use is the second most popular drug that is presently being used among secondary school students, the first being alcohol. In relation to this, the data showed that the majority of students currently not using any substance, were curious to try marijuana.

The results indicated though that marijuana use had decreased drastically in 2013. Nevertheless, it is noted that there is more decrease in males than females, and that the issue of use is after Form 3. In relation to this, cigarette smoking decreased in 2013. This reduction is seen more with males than females and at the second form. Moreover, there is not much change in reported tranquilizer and stimulant use.

Areas of concern regarding drug use among secondary school students in Grenada included the potential for peer motivated drug use, the significant consumption of alcohol, marijuana and cigarette, and inhalants and solvents among secondary school students.

Recommendations proposed to address the above issues include, inter alia:

- Enactment of legislation on tobacco.
- Formulation of a national alcohol policy.

1,570 students of Forms 2, 4 and 5 in seventeen randomly selected secondary schools participate in the survey. One of the objectives of the survey was to establish comparisons with the results of the secondary school drug prevalence surveys conducted in 2002 and 2005. Additional information can be obtained from the Drug Control Secretariat.

Bishop’s College Discusses Social Issues

Bishop’s College in Carriacou host a successful educational event on social issues such as drug use, sexual health, child abuse and discipline. The event held 4 to 5 February 2014, was conducted through a series of lecture/discussions, for separate groups of male and female students. In the area of drug prevention, Drug Control Officer Dave Alexander. He examined gender-specific issues in drug use, trafficking and violence. Mr. Alexander also highlighted positive actions the students can take to prevent and reduce drug use. One of the presentations that generated much discussion was on the subject of sexually transmitted infections, by Dr. Tyrone Davis.

*Dr. Tyrone Davis Conducts Session on Sexual Health*

Chart Showing Prevalence of Drugs Used By Students, In 2013 Secondary Schools Drug
Legalization or decriminalization of cannabis is not an option for the Government of Grenada. This was announced by Mr. Dave Alexander, Grenada’s Commissioner to the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD). Addressing the Fifty-fourth regular Session of CICAD, held 11 to 13 December 2013 in Colombia, Mr. Alexander indicated that both the current and past Governments of Grenada have indicated on several occasions that they would not legalize or decriminalize cannabis. Prime Minister Dr. the Right Honourable Keith Mitchell has stated that the Government does not support changes in legislation on the status of cannabis. This position was also reiterated by Superintendent Rodriguez James, of the Royal Grenada Police Force (RGPF), when he represented the RGPF at a public discussion in early December 2013.

Two Officers from Carlton House Treatment Centre, and the T.A, Marrystow Community College attended the Caribbean Drug Prevention and Treatment Program (also known as PROCCER) Trainer of Trainers workshop in Drug Treatment, in Miami, 17 to 21 February. These Officers would conduct similar training for health professionals, community workers and relevant professionals, in Grenada, during the next few months, as part of the overall PROCCER initiative. PROCCER is an interagency and interdisciplinary program in the Caribbean for the development and institutionalization of training and certification mechanisms for drug prevention and treatment personnel. It aims to strengthen and consolidate ongoing programs in the member states of the Organization of American States (OAS), in the Caribbean.

Photos, GRENDEN Annual Meeting, 23 January 2014

Portia Fraser, Customs Officer (Above) & Sean Henry, Chief Analytical Chemist (Below) Make Presentations at GRENDEN Meeting

(Left to right): Sgt. Raymond Lockibly, Detective Sharm Roberts, Prison Officer Kester Charles at GRENDEN Meeting

(Left to right): Verlina Straker (Medical Records Clerk), Colette Alexis Prince (Medical Records Officer), Brenda Jones (Nurse) Panelists at GRENDEN Meeting