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cicad

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National Observatories on Drugs

An important goal of CICAD's Inter-American Observatory is to support the creation and enhancement of national observatories on drugs. This is being done through:

- infrastructure support and donations of computers (in 2000-2001, to Central America, thanks to the contribution of the Government of Spain; in 2001, Spain and CICAD will extend this cooperation to the Andean countries);
- national and subregional workshops attended by all sectors concerned with the drug problem, in order to improve the flow of information and statistics on drugs within the country and subregion (in 2000-2001, cooperation with Central America, through a contribution of Spanish Government; and with Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, and Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Suriname, thanks to contributions from the European Commission and the U.S. Government, Bureau of International Law Enforcement and Narcotics Matters. In 2001-2002, the Andean countries will also receive this type of assistance, again thanks to the contribution of the Spanish Government);
- basic technical work to improve the standardized statistical tools SIDUC and CICDAT (see below);
- development of Web pages.

Development of Web pages

The Inter-American Observatory has provided assistance to a number of national drug commissions on developing and launching their own web pages, which can now be seen at the following INTERNET addresses:

- The National Drug Commission of Honduras at www.cybertelh.com/ohsd
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- The National Drug Council of Antigua and Barbuda at www.geocities.com/goabinfosys/default.htm . The Inter-American Observatory's Web page also has a dedicated space for other organizations in Antigua and Barbuda that work in the area of drugs at www.cicad.oas.org/OID/Countries/Antigua&Barbuda/antiguaondcp.htm
- □Belize also requested that the Inter-American Observatory dedicate a space to NDACC at www.cicad.oas.org/OID/Countries/Belize/BelizeNDACC.htm.
- Jamaica's Drug Council asked the same, while they construct their own web site: see www.cicad.oas.org/oid/Countries/Jamaica/NCDA.htm
- Suriname at www.cicad.oas.org/OID/Countries/Suriname/surinameraad.htm

- St. Kitts' page is still under construction at www.cicad.oas.org/oid/Countries/St.KittsNevis/Saint_Kitts_and_Nevis.htm

CICAD has also been cooperating with the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA) in their initiative to develop an international Virtual Clearinghouse on Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs. The goal of the Virtual Clearinghouse is to provide full-text access to gray (unpublished) literature in the field of Alcohol and Other Drugs. The site also contains access to drug-related data bases and documentation from its members throughout the world. CICAD has actively contributed to the content and general direction of the Virtual Clearing house, which has recently gone live at www.atod.org. It has been developed in 3 languages and makes use of the latest information technology by offering its members a place to host on-line discussions and an automated translation tool.

Statistics

The Inter-American Observatory's top priority in 2000-2001 has been on improving statistics on drug use through the Inter-American Uniform Drug Use Data System (**SIDUC**), as follows:

- financial and technical support was provided in 2000 for surveys of drug use in drug treatment centers and hospital emergency rooms;
- in 2001, the priority is on helping member states conduct high school surveys, so as to provide baseline data for trends in drug use among adolescents in school; the Inter-American Observatory will provided assistance on the sample of students to be surveyed, training if needed in data analysis, and limited financial support to interested countries;
- new standardized questionnaires and methodologies were developed and exhaustively reviewed by the SIDUC Advisory Group. At a meeting in the Dominican Republic in February 2001, the national SIDUC coordinators named by member states revised and agreed to the eight questionnaires. The questionnaires and the procedures manual are available in English, Spanish and Portuguese. The Observatory seeks cooperation for the translation of these tools into French, Dutch and Creole.
- As reported to the twenty-eighth regular session of CICAD, the Inter-American Observatory on Drugs has worked closely with UNDCP on the revision of the demand reduction section of the UN's Annual Reports Questionnaire (ARQ). The revised ARQ was approved by the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs at its 44th Session in March 2001. The outcome of this collaboration is that both SIDUC and the demand reduction questionnaires of the MEM are compatible with the ARQ, which should help facilitate member states' reporting both to the UN and to CICAD.

- Drug epidemiology in the Caribbean is taking a large step forward in 2001, with the start-up of a three-year project to help member states conduct high-school surveys of drug use and rapid assessments. The Inter-American Observatory on Drugs is cooperating with the Caribbean Epidemiology Center (CAREC), executing agency for this European Commission-funded project, by providing training in the SIDUC methodology. UNDCP is also cooperating by offering its rapid assessment methods, and capacity-building in drug epidemiology.

CICDAT (Statistical System on Drug Control and Law Enforcement Data)

The new CICDAT software was recently delivered to member states and placed into operation. It is more efficient and less costly, in that it allows national institutions that produce statistical information on drug seizures, drug-related arrests, seizures of illicit drug laboratories, eradication of crops, and other law enforcement statistics, to enter data off line, and then forward them quickly on-line to the National Drug Commission and to CICAD. As funds permit, the Observatory will conduct additional technical seminars on CICDAT and the new software.

Statistics reported through the CICDAT system are included in the annual ***Statistical Summary***, which is available on CICAD's Web page.

Publications and dissemination of information

All CICAD publications will henceforth be published to its Web pages. Not only is this much less costly than print versions, but it makes information available to a much wider public. The most recent publication is the 2001 edition of the ***Directory of Governmental Institutions Charged with the Fight Against the Illicit Production, Trafficking, Use and Abuse of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances***.

The Inter-American Observatory on Drugs is also prepare to publish to its own Web site, short information bulletins in order to disseminate research findings, drug-related statistics, recent developments, and so forth (see <http://www.cicad.oas.org/oid>).

Drug-related legislation on the Web

Over the last few months, the Observatory has given priority to posting to the Web updates of national laws on drugs, chemical control, money laundering and arms control: http://www.cicad.oas.org/es/desarrollo_juridico/Legislacion/Indexleyes.htm. This link is a work in progress, which the Inter-American Observatory would like to update every six months to include changes in legislation, as well as any new laws passed. Member states are asked to inform the Observatory of any such changes, by sending an electronic copy of the new law or changes in the law. It would be most helpful if each member state could designate a contact person in the appropriate national legislature, congress, or Parliament, who could provide such information on an ongoing basis.

Lectures and articles on drug-related jurisprudence are also published here, thanks to the cooperation of their authors. Questions or comments may be directed to the following e-mail address: cicad@oas.org.

New information technologies and citizen access to government

1. Pilot project in Colombia

The Observatory is sponsoring the preparatory phase of a project designed to assist the National Alternative Development Plan of Colombia improve its communications with indigenous peoples in the South of the country. Scientists from Carnegie Mellon University, in the United States, working with the US National Science Foundation (NSF), are preparing a proposal to developing a computer translation system between Spanish and the Siona language.

2. Pilot project in Belize

The Observatory cooperated with the National Drug Council of Belize, by organizing a workshop in May 2001, together with the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF), to identify possible areas of cooperation in an advanced research design to automate the information on drugs gathered by the various government agencies. An NSF grant proposal will be developed to seek funding to carry out this project as a pilot effort in Belize and in one Spanish-speaking country.