

## Central and North America

*Submitted by Carmen Fernandez Cáceres and Donald MacPherson, CSTF Representatives for Central and North America*

### Best practices

- ✓ Define quality standards that are points of reference to assess the quality of intervention. They are based on expert consensus and focused on aspects such as intervention structure and process, so that quality is guaranteed (EMCDDA, 2011).
- ✓ Consider guidelines that establish norms to carry out preventive interventions based on the recommendations of national and international experts. This has helped to optimize prevention programs, as well as the analysis of theoretical references and risk factors related to drug consumption (CICAD, 2013; NIDA, 2004).
- ✓ Define good practices that facilitate intervention planning, particularly in regards to methodology development, based on scientific research and practices whose effectiveness has been proven (UNODC, 2013; Health and Consumption Office, 2010).
- ✓ Direct work with the target population, involving a multidisciplinary staff in the fields of psychology, social work, medicine, education, among others, allows emphasizing on preventive tasks, which are based on the population necessities and characteristics, life stage, and risk level, thus ensuring interventions regulated by quality standards.
- ✓ Network training and education are fundamental elements that must be included in addiction prevention programs aimed at health professionals, and in graduate courses syllabus.
- ✓ Consultancy, assessment, and academic and scientific research provide objective information that enables us to identify the efficiency of preventive programs and projects.

### Main challenges

- Misunderstanding the nature of addiction by medical community and government agencies.
- Insufficient funding for harm reduction services nationwide.
- Generating a comprehensive response to the opioid overdose epidemic sweeping the continent.
- Difficulty establishing more supervised injection-services.
- Insufficient coverage for harm reduction programs and interventions.
- Options and methods to regulate therapeutic marijuana.
- Reconstruction of the social fabric.
- Building drug policies with a gender, public health and human rights perspective, prevention of use criminalization, and have an impact over sentencing proportionality.
- Drug cartels are getting stronger
- Professionalization of public security forces
- Put emphasis in anticorruption measures.

### Action-orientated recommendations for the UNGASS roundtables

#### Drugs and Health

- ✓ Better access for adolescents and other people who use drugs to substance use, treatment and prevention programs, such as overdose prevention programs, the passing of Good Samaritan laws and easier naloxone distribution.
- ✓ Both Canadian and American civil society call for people who use drugs and people living with mental health have access to housing first

programs and programs designed to focus on their individual needs.

✓ An important sector of the civil society in Latin America and the Caribbean demands to open the debate and advance towards consensus in relation to the regulation of plants such as medical cannabis, as well the acknowledgment of therapeutic uses of cocaine and opium poppy. This should be the axis guiding drug policies.

### **Drugs and Crime**

✓ Ensure that the government respects the right to health, right to an adequate standard of living and right to freedom from discrimination for people with substance use disorders and to explore alternatives to incarceration for people convicted of nonviolent drug offenses.

✓ Ensure government commits to providing specific and accessible programming for women who have both substance use and mental health concerns.

✓ Strengthen comprehensive measures for both drug supply and demand, respect for the users' human rights, have a gender perspective as its corner stone, and restore the services that provide justice and security. Also, restoring economic development and growth as one of the main factors to prevent drug use and crime.

### **Cross-cutting issues: drugs and human rights, youth, women, children and communities**

✓ Advocate for programs specialized for outreach work for street children as well as programs for pregnant women and youth and ensure specialized harm reduction counselling for at risk groups.

✓ Strengthen protection strategies for vulnerable groups and monitor the respect for human rights

as the corner stone of any comprehensive drug policy.

### **Cross-cutting issues: new challenges, threats and realities in preventing and addressing the world drug problem**

✓ Ensure reform of the UN Drug Conventions as well as a readjustment of outcome metrics placing quality of life and reduction of harm above incarceration.

✓ The current situation requires the improvement of international approaches with the aim of strengthening users and non-consumers' human rights, and fostering social development as an essential preventive aspect. Thus a key element in the strengthening of is regional and international co-responsibility.

### **Alternative development**

✓ Ensuring that an understanding by government that the war on drugs is a symptom of larger social issues including poverty, racism, sexism etc.

✓ Governments must enact policies that focus on reducing poverty as a method of reducing drug use such as services that provide more food and shelter to families as a way of deterring substance use.

✓ Strengthen mechanisms for international cooperation for the economic development of the region, focusing on serious problems such as the immigration of unaccompanied children, human trade and other expressions of organized crime.

✓ Development must underpin the mechanisms of regional and international coordination against organized crime, in terms of production, distribution and sale of illegal drugs without undermining the human rights of the affected population.