



WORKSHOP REPORT



Media Workshop on Drug Policy in West Africa

Mensvic Grand Hotel, Accra, Ghana

03 - 04 June 2015



THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE
AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL
ORGANIZED CRIME



TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of acronyms.....	3
Executive summary.....	4
1.0 Introduction.....	5
1.1 Projection of WACD films	5
1.2 Opening remarks.....	6
1.3 Introduction of the participants.....	7
2.0 The West Africa Commission on Drugs.....	7
2.1 Presentation of the WACD report, recommendation, and its media impact.....	7
2.2 Presentation of the West Africa Drug Policy Network	8
2.3 Case study: Ghana	8
3.0 Setting the scene.....	9
3.1 The international drug control system and the UNGASS.....	9
3.2 Overview of dominant drug control approaches	10
3.3 The trees of drug policy	11
4.0 An introduction to investigate journalism	12
4.1 Investigative journalism basics.....	12
4.2 Investigating organized crime	12
5.0 Balanced drug policies: health.....	13
6.0 Harm reduction.....	14
6.1 Introduction	14
6.2 Peers, patients, prisoners or partners	15
6.3 Experience sharing from a former drug user	16
6.4 The Support Don't Punish campaign	16
7.0 Structuring an investigation and identifying sources.....	17
8.0 Closing session	18
9.0 Feedback from participants	18
10.0 Media Coverage	19
Appendix I: Agenda	20
Appendix II: List of participants.....	21
Appendix III: Photos from group exercises.....	23

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CND	Commission on Narcotic Drugs
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ECOSOC	United Nation Economic and Social Council
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
HAT	Heroin-Assisted Treatment
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IDPC	International Drug Policy Consortium
INCB	International Narcotics Control Board
KAF	Kofi Annan Foundation
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NSP	Needle and Syringe Programmes
OSF	Open Society Foundations
OSIWA	Open Society Initiative for West Africa
OST	Opioid Substitution Therapy
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNGASS	United Nations General Assembly Special Session
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WACD	West Africa Commission on Drugs
WACSI	West Africa Civil Society Institute
WHO	World Health Organisation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The West African region is not only a transit zone to transport illicit drugs from Latin America to Europe and beyond. The region is also a producing and consuming zone of drugs which has undermined the political and economic development and has also become a major security and public health threat to most West African countries. This two-day media workshop raised awareness and understanding of the true nature of drug problem in the region and called on the media to collaborate with civil society organisations to end the effects of the bad drug policies on human rights and public health. The workshop was based on the International Drug Policy Consortium's (IDPC) "West African Training Toolkit on Drug Policy".

SETTING THE SCENE

The UN General Assembly is the highest policy-making and representative organ of the UN, and will be holding a Special Session (UNGASS) on drugs in April 2016 – the first since 1998. The roots of the current international drug control system can be traced from the Shanghai commission in 1909, and today is based on three international drug conventions. These require that criminal sanctions be put in place at national levels for certain types of drug-related offences. Yet this approach has been associated with widespread human rights and public health concerns and even the UN itself has acknowledged a series of 'unintended consequences'.

BALANCED DRUG POLICIES

In order to become more effective, drug policies should focus on public health services rather than punishment and harassment to reduce drug-related harms. A health-based approach includes a focus on drug treatment, prevention, harm reduction, human rights and access to essential medicines. Effective drug prevention aims at reducing risk factors (mental health problems, family abuse etc) and strengthening protective factors (psychological and emotional well-being, strong attachment to caring families etc).

HARM REDUCTION

Harm reduction benefits people who use drugs, their families and the community. It is an evidence-based approach which reduces the adverse health, social and economic consequences of the use of legal and illegal psychoactive drugs without necessarily reducing drug consumption. The UN has identified and endorsed a "Comprehensive Package" of nine harm reduction interventions which provide prevention, treatment and care services for people who inject drugs, but many partners expand this package to also include services such as overdose prevention, outreach, safer injecting facilities and pill testing. However, very few harm reduction services currently exist in West Africa.

THE ROLE OF THE CSO DRUG POLICY NETWORK AND THE MEDIA

The main objective of the West Africa Civil Society Drug Policy Network is to support drug policy reform in West Africa by building the capacity of local CSOs to address the impact of drug markets on democracy, governance, human security, human rights and public health. In addition to the activities of the network, media practitioners could use their investigative journalism skills to uncover hidden information or find deeper meanings behind the organised crime such as drug trafficking to provide good accurate information to policy makers, security agencies and CSOs for better policy formulation and implementation.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In West Africa, civil wars have receded, democracy has gained ground and economies are growing. But a destructive and increasing threat is jeopardizing this progress: with local collusion, international drug cartels are undermining countries and communities, and devastating lives. After looking at the evidence, consulting experts from the region and around the world, and visiting some of the most affected countries and communities in the region, the West Africa Commission on Drugs (WACD) in June 2014, after 18 months of research, released their ground breaking report “Not Just in Transit: Drugs, the State and Society in West Africa”.¹ According to the report, drugs-related problems exist at all levels of society in West Africa and pose a threat to the development of West African countries. As the title suggests, the region is being increasingly destabilised not only by the illicit trade but also by the local production and consumption of drugs.

The results of this analysis shed light on the extent of the illicit trading. The trafficking of cocaine, estimated at 1.25 billion dollars alone, exceeds the national budgets of many states in the region. The WACD report’s recommendations present policy makers, donors, civil society and other actors in the region with an invaluable resource to review and reform drug laws. It is within this context that the International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC)² – in partnership with WACD,³ the West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI),⁴ the Kofi Annan Foundation (KAF),⁵ the Global Initiative against Transnational Organised Crime,⁶ and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)⁷ – organised this “Media Workshop on Drug Policy in West Africa”.

The main objectives of the workshop were to:

- Raise awareness and understanding of the true nature of drug problem in the region;
- Sensitize key opinion formers about the issues and dilemmas facing people who use drugs, law enforcement officials and politicians; and
- Discuss evidence-based and balanced approaches from Africa and elsewhere and seeks to sharpen journalists’ skills in reporting drug related issues across the region.

1.1 Projection of WACD films

Before the opening remarks, a short video from WACD was screened. The video builds on the WACD report to highlight the current state of drug policy in West Africa, and was played both in French⁸ and English.⁹

¹ <http://www.wacommissionondrugs.org/report/>

² <http://idpc.net>

³ <http://www.wacommissionondrugs.org>

⁴ <http://www.wacsi.org/>

⁵ <http://kofiannanfoundation.org>

⁶ <http://www.globalinitiative.net>

⁷ <http://www.usaid.gov>

⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZXaB0m6a20>

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c5dz9d22NGw>

1.2 Opening remarks

Jamie Bridge, IDPC Senior Policy and Operations Manager

Jamie Bridge thanked all the participants for attending the workshop. Jamie shared with the participants the mission and vision of IDPC. He said IDPC is a global network of 134 NGOs that focus on issues related to drug production, trafficking and use. He further added that international drug policy has failed to reduce drug use or supply, and this is why IDPC promotes objective and open debate on the effectiveness, direction and content of drug policies at the national and international level. The IDPC network supports evidence-based policies that are effective at reducing drug-related harm.

Jamie commented on the need to have the media convey this message, in order to achieve the changes that we want. He urged the participants to change the way they report about people who use drugs, and added that punishment and harassment make the situation worse. We need to change the current drug policies, which should be based on public health and human rights instead. He stated, “I wish everyone will leave the workshop with new ideas and stories to report on, which will enhance the debate on drug policy and will lead to better drug policies in West Africa”.

Ms. Nana Asantewa Afadzinu, WACSI Executive Director

The Executive Director of WACSI, Nana Asantewa Afadzinu, called upon the media to leverage their role, as opinion informers to lead the debate and ensure that the drug policies adopted by governments do not cause more harm than good to the society. She stressed the need for the media to engage in accurate reporting as a means of sensitizing the general population, and reiterated her organisation’s commitment to support civil society efforts towards more balanced and humane drug policies in the region.

Nana further talked about how drug trafficking affects West Africa economies, societies, and governance – and for this reason drug policy is one of WACSI’s main concerns. “Instead of building more prisons, why not focus on treatment and support,” added Nana.

Nana also entreated the participants to stop the stigmatization of people who use drugs, but rather to take care of them since drug use is a health issue. “We will get there if only the media communicates the right message, and so we encourage you to use the media’s power to persuade communities”.

Peter Tinti, Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime

Peter Tinti said he was happy to be in Accra, and introduced himself as an independent journalist from the United States. Peter has spent many years in West Africa (Mali, Nigeria, etc) and has written many publications on organised crime for The Global Initiative against Transnational Organised Crime – a network of prominent law enforcement, governance and development practitioners who are dedicated to seeking new and innovative strategies and response to organised crime and creating platform to promote debates.

Peter promised to help participants to understand some issues related to organised crime and strategies to minimise the risks when reporting on organised crime.

He advised participants to look for as much collaborations as possible, especially between the

media and civil society in order to help other stakeholders in the fight against organised crime.”

1.3 Introduction of participants

All of the participants introduced themselves and briefed what on what they are doing. We had 26 journalists present from the following countries: Benin (1 person), Burkina Faso (2), Cape Verde (1), Gambia (1), Ghana (4), Guinea Bissau (2), Ivory Coast (3), Liberia (1), Mali (2), Mauritania (1), Niger (1), Nigeria (2), Senegal (2), Sierra Leone (1) and Togo (2) – see Appendix II.

2.0 THE WEST AFRICA COMMISSION ON DRUGS

2.1 Presentation of the WACD report, recommendation, and its media impact

Alpha Abdoulaye Diallo, a WACD Commissioner from Guinea, started the presentation of the WACD report by introducing some of the other Commissioners present at the workshop – namely Dr Idrissa Ba from Senegal, and Adeolu Ogunrombi from Nigeria.

Responding to the threats to peace and stability in West Africa, Kofi Annan convened the West Africa Commission on Drugs in January 2013 as an independent body to study the issue with impartiality and directness and put in place recommendations for more effective policy responses. The Commission comprised 11 regional leaders from the political world, civil society, the health sector, security and law enforcement, and the judiciary. Chaired by former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, the objectives of the Commission were to develop evidence-based policy recommendations, to mobilise public awareness and political commitment, and to promote regional and local capacity and ownership to manage these challenges.

Alpha further stated that the report – “*Not just in transit: Drugs the state and society in West Africa*”¹⁰ – is the fruit of one and a half years of engagement with national, regional and international bodies. It was officially published in June 2014. The report states that West Africa is a drug trafficking, consumption and production zone, which disturbs the stability of the region. The estimated yearly value of cocaine transiting through West Africa is US\$ 1.25 billion, which is more than the annual national budgets of several countries in the region. Drug trafficking is a transnational organised crime facilitated by the fact that they are operating in a region with poor border controls. Also with the support of senior officials, drug traffickers exploit institutional weaknesses (i.e. through corruption) and operate under the cover of legitimate businesses.

Alpha added that the drug trade has led to an increase in money laundering which affects economic development. Furthermore, the criminalisation of drug use and possession is placing significant pressure on already over-burdened justice systems, inciting corruption and provoking violence and human rights violations. Therefore removing criminal sanctions for drug use is one of the most effective ways to reduce drug-related harms, to facilitate access to treatment, and to free up resources for law enforcement to focus on more selective deterrence and targeting of high-value traffickers.

The WACD report presents several recommendations that seek to address the plight caused by

¹⁰ <http://www.wacommissionondrugs.org/report/>

drug trafficking in West Africa. These recommendations include:

- Treat drug as a public health issue, rather than a criminal justice matter
- Strengthen law enforcement for more selective deterrence focusing on high-level targets
- Confront the political and governance challenges that incite corruption
- Reform drug policy on the basis of existing and emerging minimum standards
- Pursue the decriminalisation of drug use and low-level non-violent drug offences
- Avoid the militarisation of drug policy and related counter-trafficking measures
- Ensure that the shared responsibility of producer, transit and consumer countries is translated into operational strategies.

Alpha advised the participants that there is still a lot to do, and called for the media to disseminate the recommendations of the WACD report, to communicate the main message – as stated by Kofi Annan during the World Economic Forum, Davos, 2013: “I believe that drugs have destroyed many people, but wrong government policies have destroyed many more”.

2.2 Presentation of the West Africa Drug Policy Network

Adeolu Ogunrombi said that the West Africa Drug Policy Network is one of the key outcomes of various CSO workshops over the last two years (in Accra, October 2013, in Dakar, June 2014, and in Accra, February 2015) which aimed to examine key issues pertaining to drug policy and use in West Africa.

The Network is spearheaded by a secretariat in Accra and is coordinated by Adeolu. It’s main objective is to support drug policy reform in West Africa by building the capacity and communication of local CSOs to address the impact of drug markets on democracy, governance, human security, human rights and public health.

Progress made so far includes the identification and selection of focal points in 14 countries, in-country network formation, and the finalisation of a small grant programme for country networks to support their activities.

Adeolu concluded on the need of the network to have media support to achieve its objective due to: (1) sensitivity of the topic due to widespread misconceptions, stigma and non-evidence based information; (2) the involvement of high-level officials and well-connected individuals in society in drug trafficking; and (3) the ability of the media to shape public discourse.

2.3 Case study: Ghana

Maria-Goretti Ane from IDPC presented on a case study focusing on the Ghana network, and looked at the objective of the network, what the network is doing, and how they have involved the media in their advocacy work.

The Ghana network’s primary goal is to advocate for evidence based drug policy in the country. Also the commitment of the network is to ensure that government policies around drug addiction do not violate the human rights of the affected individuals, that they benefit from healthcare support, and that they are integrated into society with vocational support to enable them to become productive members of their community again.

Maria-Goretti stated that the Ghana network is an open forum and encourages people from all walks of life regardless of their professional background (researchers, advocates, psychologists,

lawyers, former drug users, religious leaders, etc). It aims to ensure:

- An open and inclusive debate as we prepare for the UNGASS;
- A focus on promoting health, human rights, development, social inclusion and human security, instead of just focusing on achieving a drug-free world;
- An end to the criminalisation of people who use drugs and other low-level drug offenders (such as small-scale farmers);
- The proportionality of sentencing for all drug offences.

As her last point Maria-Goretti said the network involves media in its various activities to amplify, broaden and enable greater outreach of the advocacy messages. Some of the media they have been working with are Radio XYZ and ETV, among others (see below).



Picture 1: Ghana network on ETV



Picture 2: Ghana network on radio XYZ

3.0 SETTING THE SCENE

3.1 The international drug control system and the UNGASS

Jamie Bridge shared the history of the international drug control system, whose roots can be traced back to the Shanghai commission in 1909, via the International Opium Convention of 1912, to the three current drug treaties namely:

- The 1961 UN Single Convention on Narcotics Drugs, as amended by the 1972 protocol
- The 1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic substances
- The 1988 UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substance

The UN drug control architecture is spearheaded by the UN General Assembly, which is the highest policy-making and representative organ of the UN, followed by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), then the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) – who are the specialist inter-governmental body on drugs within the system. CND also oversees and agrees the budget for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), who are the specialist UN agency. Aside these, there are also treaty-mandated roles for the International Narcotics Control Boards (INCB) and the World Health Organization (WHO), while the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) also plays a role alongside other UN agencies.

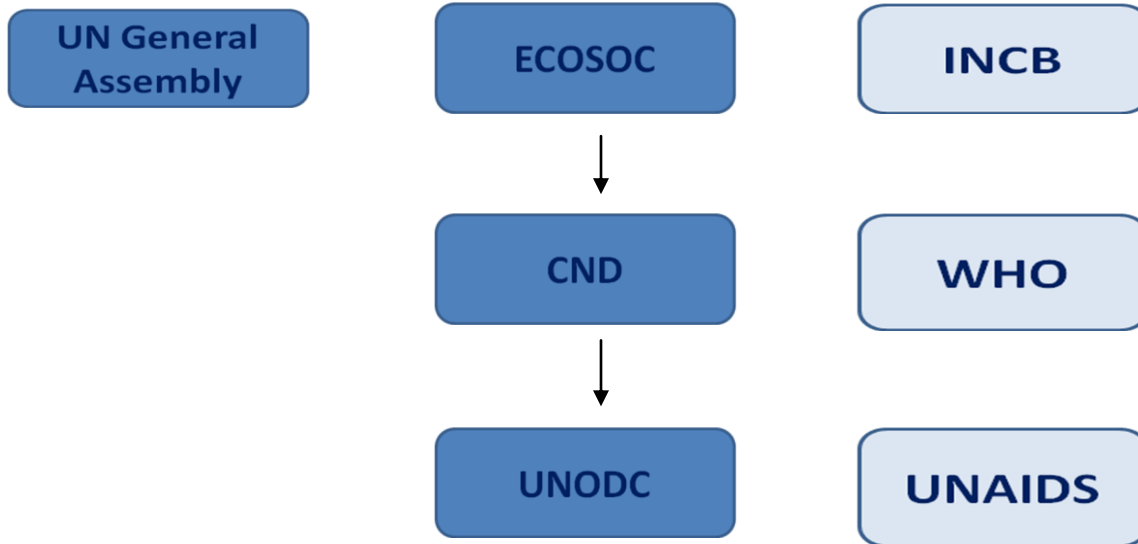


Figure 3: International drug control system¹¹

The international drug conventions aim to “protect the health and well-being of mankind”, yet they have been widely implemented as a “war on drugs” which focuses on punishment and harassment with little concern for the health and rights of people who use drugs.

Jamie mentioned the importance of the upcoming UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on drugs in April 2016 – the first such meeting since 1998. The UNGASS was requested by the presidents of Mexico, Guatemala and Colombia – with support from a number of other countries – to reflect the importance of discussing the world drug problem. It was intended to be an open and inclusive debate, but some governments seem keen to limit and restrict the discussions. However, Jamie stated that the timing is right for this meeting, as the “taboo” about the failures of the war on drugs has been broken, and calls to harmonise and modernise the international drug control system are getting stronger.

3.2 Overview of dominant drug control approaches

Maria-Goretti Ane stated that dominant drug control approaches to reduce the scale of drug markets and use are based on the deterrence principle, and focus on the implementation of tough prohibition-led laws against production, distribution and use and threat of punishment.

Therefore the rationale of the dominant drug control approaches is to have a drug free world market without any concern on human rights and health. This approach has been in place for more than 50 years, and has failed to reduce drug use or supply globally (as evidenced in UNODC’s World Drug Reports¹²). Instead, it has led to a series of unintended consequences – including the treatment of people who use drugs as criminals, and an imbalance in funding between health and law enforcement.

¹¹ <http://idpc.net/publications/2015/04/west-africa-drug-policy-training-toolkit-facilitation-guide>

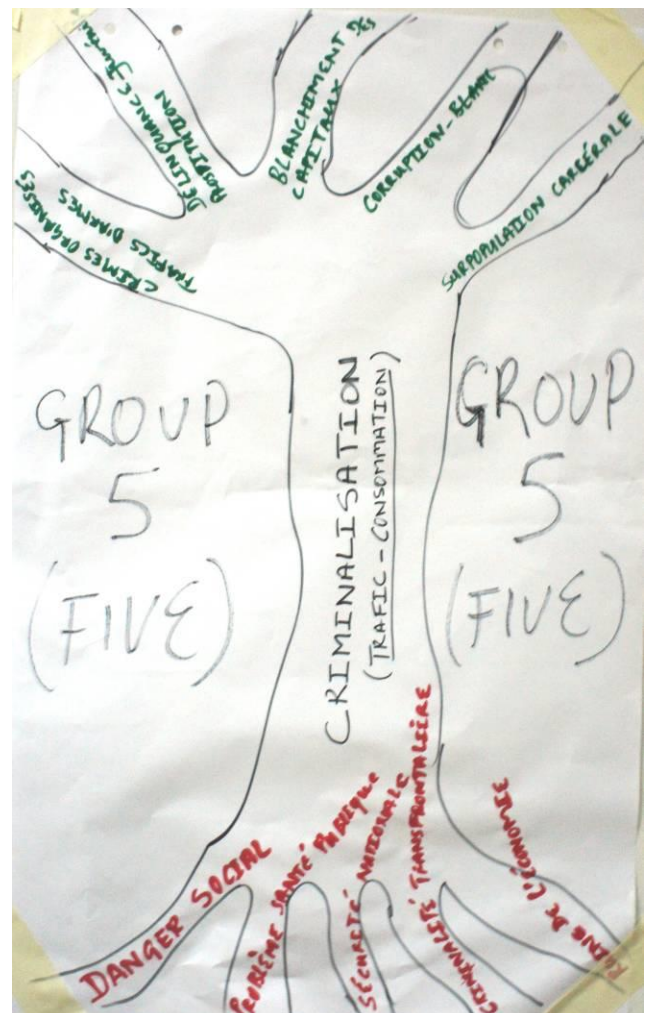
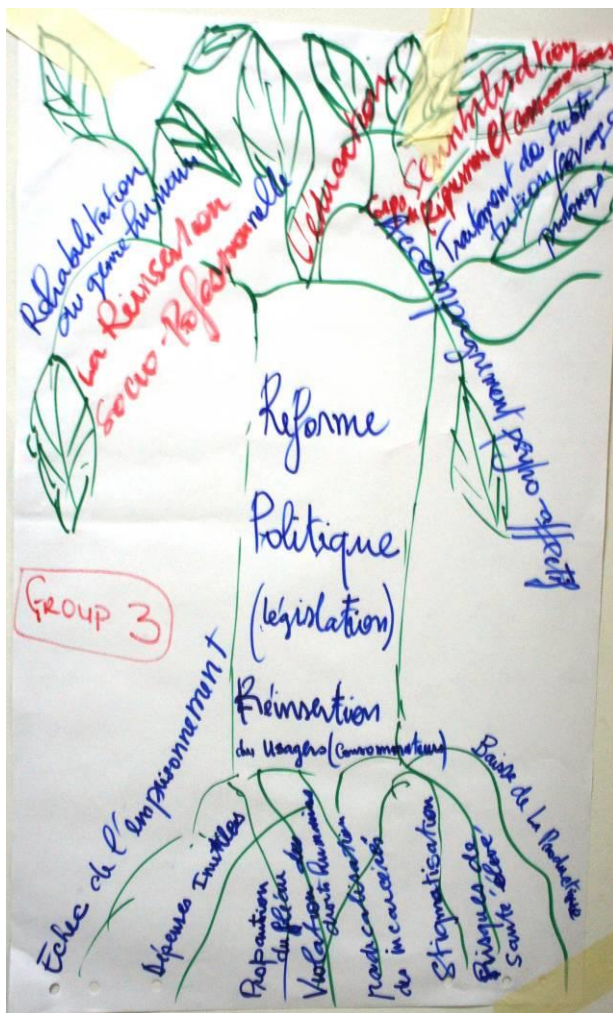
¹² <http://www.unodc.org/wdr2015/>

3.3 The trees of drug policy

Maria-Gorreti Ane introduced an activity whereby participants were asked to draw a tree to represent a specific drug policy or approach – which was made up of three parts:

- The trunk representing the chosen intervention that governments put in place
- The roots representing the rationale, justifications and underlying principles that underpin the intervention
- The branches representing the effects of the intervention – both negative and positive.

Participants were divided into groups of 5 or 6 people to design a tree of drug policies, based on what is going on in their various countries. The five groups then presented their work (see below).



Pictures 3: Group Exercise pictures

After these presentations, Maria-Gorreti discussed the impact and consequences of the dominant drug control approaches, which have resulted in:

- No reduction in scale of drug markets or drug use
- A rise in organised crime, violence and corruption

- Health issues (such as HIV transmission and overdose) being exacerbated
- Human rights violations
- Overcrowded prisons and over-burdened criminal justice systems
- The widespread laundering of money

4.0 AN INTRODUCTION TO INVESTIGATE JOURNALISM

4.1 Investigative Journalism Basics

Peter Tinti from the Global Initiative against Transnational Organised Crime presented the basics of investigative journalism, its characteristics, and the traits of a successful investigative journalist.

Investigative journalism strives to uncover hidden information or find deeper meanings behind the news, and this is what makes investigative journalism different from conventional reporting which is very brief and follows a daily, weekly or monthly news cycle.

Peter Tinti stated that investigative journalism is original, proactive and requires a lot of information and research. It also involves a process rather than an event (unlike news reporting), comes from a range of sources, and requires resources and teamwork.

Peter Tinti stated that the traits of a successful investigative journalist are curiosity, a strong desire to uncover the truth, and perseverance to stick to a project until it bears fruit.¹³

4.2 Investigating Organised Crime

In this session, Peter Tinti defined organised crime, shared with participants the trends on organised crime and outlined some of the primary steps for an investigative journalist.

Peter defined organised crime as criminal activity that involves several actors or groups on an ongoing basis, and added that it becomes transnational organised crime when it transcends national borders. According to UNODC, transnational organised crime has become a central issue in international affairs, and an immediate reality for people around the world, which shows the threat caused by this issue.

Types of organised crime may include:

- Trafficking and production of illicit drugs, tobacco, alcohol and petrol
- Cybercrime
- Weapons
- Human trafficking
- Environmental crime
- Financial crime and money laundering

Some of the primary steps of an investigative journalist are: following other media, cultivating sources, paying attention to the environment, and developing a hypothesis.

On this note, Peter asked the participants to break into groups and gave them group work to brainstorm among themselves. Groups were asked to pick a topic to investigate, develop a

¹³ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0019/001930/193078e.pdf>

working hypothesis for their investigation, and describe why the story is important.

5.0 BALANCED DRUG POLICIES: HEALTH

Jamie shared with participants the five IDPC principles for effective drug policy, namely that drug policies should:

- Be developed through an objective assessment of priorities and evidence
- Be undertaken in full compliance with international human rights law
- Focus on reducing the harmful consequences rather than the scale of drug use and markets
- Promote the social inclusion of marginalised groups, and not focus on punitive measures towards them
- Be developed and implemented based on open and constructive relationships with civil society.¹⁴

In reality, there is a clear imbalance in the current focus of international drug policies: more than US\$ 1 trillion has been spent on drug law enforcement, while only 7 percent of the global funding needed for harm reduction services has been made available. Furthermore, only 1 in every 6 “problem drug users” has access to evidence-based drug treatment, and 80 percent of world’s population live in countries with little or no access to controlled medicines for pain relief.

Jamie therefore advised that there is need to reform the international drug policy approach to ensure that people have access to health services. Jamie shared with the participants the “20/80 Rule” which was elaborated in the WACD report. This stipulates that only a small percentage of those who use drugs experience problems related to their drug use, and so evidence-based treatment services should focus on this target group to effectively reduce drug-related problems.

At the same time, effective and cost-effective drug prevention aims at reducing risk factors (mental health problems, family abuse etc) and strengthening protective factors (psychological and emotional well-being, strong attachment to caring families etc) – rather than promoting mass-media messages designed to frighten people away from drugs.

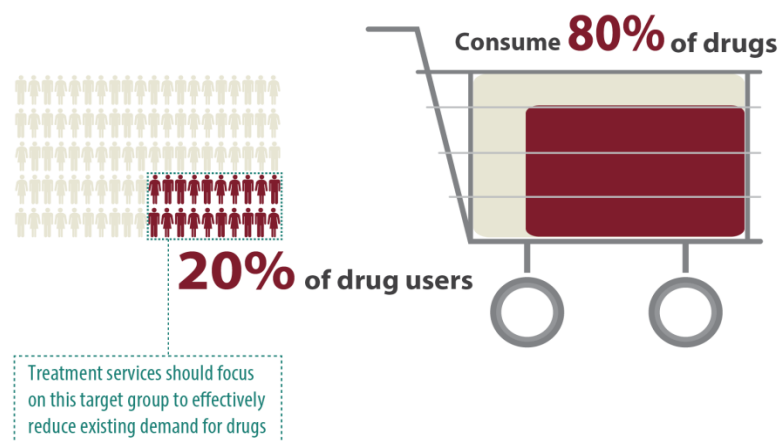


Figure 4: 20/80 rule of thumb¹⁵

¹⁴ www.idpc.net/policy-principles

¹⁵ <http://www.wacommissionondrugs.org/report>

6.0 HARM REDUCTION

6.1 Introduction

According to the Harm Reduction International, harm reduction are “policies, programmes and practices that aim primarily to reduce the adverse health, social and economic consequences of the use of legal and illegal psychoactive drugs without necessarily reducing drug consumption”.¹⁶ Harm reduction benefits people who use drugs, their families and the community, and is an evidence-based, proven approach that has been implemented for several decades with great success.

Jamie Bridge reiterated the importance of harm reduction as part of a balanced drug policy:

- 12.7 million people inject drugs worldwide – 13 percent of whom are living with HIV
- In Sub-Saharan Africa, an estimated 1 million people inject drugs – 5 to 10 percent of whom are living with HIV
- In some countries – including in Africa – HIV prevalence amongst people who inject drugs exceeds 30 percent (see below) Drug overdose is a major cause of mortality in many parts of the world, while people who use drugs also have a disproportionately high burden of hepatitis and tuberculosis.

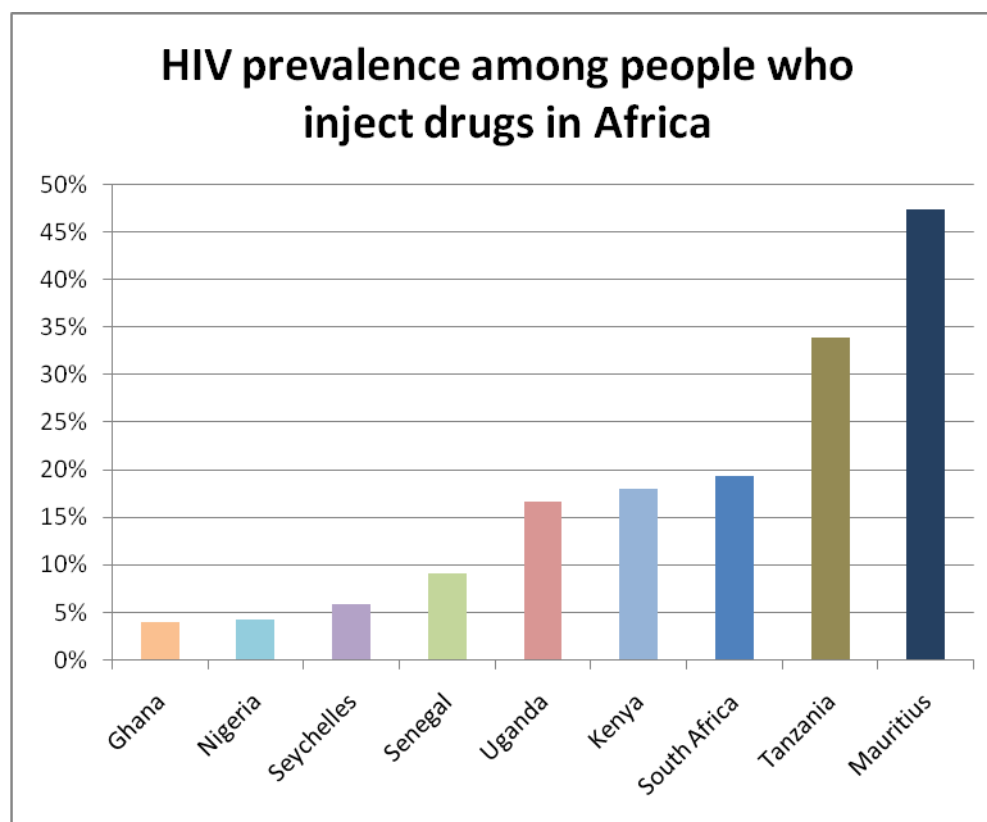


Figure 5: HIV prevalence among people who inject drugs in Africa¹⁷

¹⁶ <http://www.ihra.net/what-is-harm-reduction>

¹⁷ <http://idpc.net/publications/2015/04/west-africa-drug-policy-training-toolkit-facilitation-guide>

The UN has defined and endorsed a “Comprehensive Package” of nine harm reduction interventions to provide prevention, treatment and care services for people who inject drugs. However, Jamie stated that this is not comprehensive enough, and doesn’t include some important services such as overdose prevention, outreach, safer injecting facilities and pill testing (see, for example, the extended package defined by the International HIV/AIDS Alliance¹⁸).

At the top of the UN package are needle and syringe programmes (NSPs), which aim to reduce the transmission of HIV and other blood-borne viruses caused by the sharing of unsterile injecting equipment.

According to Harm Reduction International, no West African country has national policy documents that explicitly refer to harm reduction.¹⁹ Senegal and Burkina Faso have some provision of opioid substitution therapy (OST), while only Senegal provides sterile needles and syringes to people who inject drugs (see below). Participants also noted that services are close to opening in Nigeria. No country in sub-Saharan Africa is currently providing heroin-assisted treatment, safer injecting facilities or naloxone programmes to manage overdose emergencies.

Reference to harm reduction in national policy documents	Kenya, Mauritius, Tanzania
Opioid Substitution Therapy (OST)	Burkina Faso, Kenya, Mauritius, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania
Needle and syringe programmes (NSP)	Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania
Heroin Assisted Treatment	N/A
Safer injecting facilities	N/A
Take-home naloxone programmes to manage overdose emergencies	N/A

Table 1: Status of harm reduction practicing in Africa Sub-Sahara²⁰

Jamie ended the session by describing some of the common roadblocks for harm reduction that impedes its implementation – such as ideological views (such as the belief that people who use drugs are bad, weak or evil), treaty misinterpretation (as the international drug conventions do allow for harm reduction to be delivered), political will (as many politicians may regard people who use drugs as people who don’t vote), and many others.

6.2 Peers, patients, prisoners, partners

Jamie and Maria-Goretti then introduced another group activity, to explore the stigma that people who use drugs commonly face and fear. In groups, participants were asked to consider some of the common words and terms used in their countries to describe people who use drugs. What images do these terms create in your mind? How might these labels impact on a person’s self-image and their likelihood to access services?

¹⁸ www.aidsalliance.org/assets/000/000/383/454-Good-practice-guide-HIV-and-drug-use_original.pdf

¹⁹ <http://www.ihra.net/contents/1524>

²⁰ <http://www.ihra.net/contents/1524>

6.3 Experience sharing from a former drug user

Christian Lion Lokko from Ghana started taking drugs at the age of 13 and became addicted to marijuana, cocaine and alcohol. His career as a teacher of English in a secondary school came to abrupt end because of his drug use and the stigma attached to it. He became unemployed and started exhibiting traits of depression. He drank and smoked excessively.

He suffered a lot in his fight against drug addiction and felt rejected by society and his own family. His recovery was made possible by the help of a rehabilitation centre known as Remar Ghana.²¹

Christian said he was grateful to the CSOs for having put in place medical facilities to help people who use drugs, otherwise the situation would be worse. He stated that drug addiction is more of an epidemic than Ebola and HIV, and that prison is not the solution because drug use is a health problem.

Christian emphasised that every person who uses drugs is someone's son or daughter, brother or sister, mother or father. He stated that we should not portray people who use drugs as delinquents without understanding the reasons behind their problems and drug use (which, for many men and women can be for medicinal purposes).

Christian further stated that society's concern should be focused on the 20 percent of people who use drugs who experience problems, addiction or suffering, or are living their lives alone without any help. They need to feel a part of the society again.

The media participants had many excellent questions for Christian in an extended session, and he concluded by saying, "I want to dedicate my life for this cause, to be a voice for the voiceless. We should support people who use drugs because they belong to our society. I will advocate for better policies to help people who use drugs to rediscover themselves and bring them back in the society".

6.4 The Support Don't Punish campaign

Jamie Bridge then introduced the global Support Don't Punish campaign to the participants: www.supportdontpunish.org. He stated that it is a campaign for harm reduction and drug policy reform. The campaign objectives are to support harm reduction interventions, to respect human rights, to support drug policy reform, and to end the criminalisation of drug use.

The campaign centres around a 'Global Day of Action' which takes place on 26th June – the UN International Day Against Drug Trafficking and Drug Abuse.²² Partners around the world organise public gatherings, visual stunts, conferences and workshops, press briefings, etc. to build momentum for the UNGASS.

The West Africa countries involved in the 2015 Day of Action include Benin, Burkina Faso, Gambia, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Niger, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone. Jamie urged the media participants to take part in the campaign and to provide coverage and support to the CSOs in the countries involved.

Another key element of the campaign is the Interactive Photo Project, an online photo petition

²¹ <http://www.remarghana.org>

²² <http://supportdontpunish.org/day-of-action-2015>

for which more than 6,000 people have submitted pictures from around the world.²³ Maria-Goretti called on participants to support the campaign by taking advocacy pictures themselves (see below).



Picture 4: Support don't punish campaign²⁴

7.0 STRUCTURING AN INVESTIGATION AND IDENTIFYING SOURCES

Peter Tinti presented again on how to structure an investigation. The first thing to do is to develop a plan to make the work manageable by giving boundaries and goals. This assists in communicating, collaborating and “selling” the idea to others. It also allows the journalist to budget time and resources more accurately, provides criteria of relevance for the evidence the journalist collects, and lays the foundation for a coherent final story.

²³ <http://supportdontpunish.org/photoproject/>

²⁴ <http://supportdontpunish.org/photoproject/>

Peter advised the participants to turn their proposed story into a hypothesis or direct question that the story can answer. The journalist has to be concrete and specific, avoid vague terminology that be interpreted different ways, and avoid hidden bias.

Peter Tinti further shared with participant the two main sources of information – namely primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are those that come from direct or specific evidence and are the most valuable, however they must be verified. Secondary sources are valuable for establishing context and background, but there is need to verify the information and also the credential of the source. Types of sources can include human sources, paper sources, digital sources and “crowd-sourcing”, among others.

To gather useful and relevant information, the journalist has to map their available sources in order to see what information he or she has at their disposal.

Peter then ended the session with another group exercise which built upon session 4.2, and the various groups presented their work on source mapping.

8.0 CLOSING SESSION

Adeolu Ogunrombi expressed his profound gratitude to the participants for making time to attend this workshop, and urged them to go to www.wacommissionondrugs.com and use the report, which should be useful and relevant to their work.

He also invited the participants to write reports on 26th June for the Support Don't Punish campaign, based on what would be happening in their various countries, and encouraged them to be involved as well.

Adeolu reiterated that the West Africa Drug Policy Network needs the support of the media to achieve its goals, and invited the participants to share their engagement and reports with the network through the email of the network secretariat (wecsodp@gmail.com).

In addition, Maria-Goretti Ane and Jamie Bridge provided participants with their certificates, and thanked all of them. They wished the participants all the best for their ongoing work on the ground and encouraged them to share their reports with IDPC, the West Africa Drug Policy Network, and WACSI.

9.0 PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

IDPC distributed forms at the beginning and at the end of the workshop to assess the knowledge of participants on the issues that were discussed. Self-reported knowledge of the international drug control system increased from an average of 5.4 out of 10 before the workshop to 7.1 afterwards – and similar increases were found for knowledge of harm reduction (5.1 to 7.0), drug prevention and drug treatment (5.5 to 7.3), and ways to advocate for policy reform (5.7 to 7.2). Awareness of the WACD report and the UNGASS were also greatly improved by the workshop.

In other feedback, participants were also highly satisfied overall with the workshop in terms of contents, organisation, presentations, facilitation and materials. A number of participants commented on the lack of time available, with a lot of information covered in just two days – especially the need for more time for questions and discussion. Other ideas for future workshops

include site visits to drug services, and greater follow-up with participants in between workshops. In total, 25 feedback forms were received – and all 25 rated the workshop as “good quality” or “excellent”.

10.0 MEDIA COVERAGE

Below are links to some of the online articles and stories resulting from the media workshop:

- ✓ <https://www.modernghana.com/news/621141/1/media-workshop-on-drug-policy-in-west-africa-under.html>
- ✓ <http://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/article/drug-addicts-deserve-help-not-punishment-idpc>
- ✓ <http://wadpn.blogspot.com/2015/07/decriminaliser-la-consommation-de.html>
- ✓ <http://idpc.net/blog/2015/06/telling-the-story-drug-policies-and-the-media-in-west-africa>
- ✓ <http://wadpn.blogspot.com/2015/06/supportdont-punish-urges-alignment-of.html>
- ✓ <http://wadpn.blogspot.com/2015/06/drug-users-need-rehabilitation-not.html>
- ✓ <http://wadpn.blogspot.com/2015/06/une-plate-forme-recommande-une.html>
- ✓ <http://wadpn.blogspot.com/2015/07/decriminalize-dont-criminalize-drugs.html>
- ✓ <http://wadpn.blogspot.com/2015/07/afrique-lappel-soutenir-les.html>

APPENDIX I: AGENDA

DAY 1 – 3RD JUNE 2015

- 09:00 – 09:30** **Registration**
- 09:30 – 10:30** **Introductions from IDPC, the Global Initiative and WACSI**
- 10:30 – 11:00 BREAK
- 11:00 – 12:45** **The West Africa Commission on Drugs (WACD)**
- 12:45 – 14:00 LUNCH (PROVIDED)
- 14:00 – 15:30** **Setting the Scene – Presentations and Group Activities**
- 15:30 – 16:00 BREAK
- 16:00 – 17:30** **An Introduction to Investigative Journalism**
- 19:30 – 21:00 GROUP DINNER (PROVIDED)

DAY 2 – 4TH JUNE 2015

- 10:00 – 11:00** **Balanced Drug Policies: Health**
- 11:00 – 11:30 BREAK
- 11:30 – 12:30** **Experience Sharing from a Former Drug User**
- 12:30 – 13:45 LUNCH (PROVIDED)
- 13:45 – 15:30** **Structuring an Investigation and Identifying Sources**
- 15:30 – 16:00 BREAK
- 16:00 – 16:30** **Structuring an Investigation and Identifying Sources
(Continued)**
- 16:30 – 17:00** **Closing Session**

APPENDIX II: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

S/N	Name of Participant	Country	Organisation
1	Setondji Gerald Yaovi	Benin	Le Progrès
2	Basseratou Kindo	Burkina Faso	l'Express du Faso
3	Ouedraogo Boureima	Burkina Faso	Le Reporter
4	Tavares Correia E Silva Filomena Maria	Cape Verde	A Semana
5	Amadou Bah	Gambia	Association of Health Journalists
6	Juana Akuamoah Boateng	Ghana	Africa in Focus
7	Emelia Aryee	Ghana	Modern Ghana
8	Charity Tetteh Roberts	Ghana	Radio XYZ
9	Edward Kwabi	Ghana	TV3
10	Allen Yéro Embalo	Guinea-Bissau	RFI correspondent
11	Fernando Jorge Lopes Pereira	Guinea-Bissau	
12	Bamba Karamoko	Ivory Coast	Union des Radios de Proximité de Côte d'Ivoire (URPCI)
13	Lassine Fofana	Ivory Coast	Radio Télévision Ivoirienne (RTI)
14	Suy Kahofi Jischvi	Ivory Coast	West Africa Democracy Radio
15	Wade C.L Williams	Liberia	Frontpage Newspaper
16	Boukary Daou	Mali	Le Républicain
17	Massire Diop	Mali	L'indépendant
18	Thiam Mamadou	Mauritania	Calame
19	Ibrahim Manzo Diallo	Niger	
20	Ebhuomhan Usifo Sebastine	Nigeria	National Mirror
21	Tersoo Zamber	Nigeria	Rdio Nigeria

S/N	Name of Participant	Country	Organisation
22	Mohamed Gueye	Senegal	Le Quotidien
23	Demba Ali Jawo	Senegal	APANews
24	Chukwu Adeyemi Paul	Sierra Leone	Sierra Media Express
25	Kouami Zodzi	Togo	Reuters
26	Combetey Combey Djidjolé	Togo	Africa Rendez-Vous
RESOURCE PERSONS AND COORDINATING TEAM			
27	Christian Lion Lokko	Ghana	Remar Ghana
28	Peter Tinti	USA	Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime
29	Jamie Bridge	UK	IDPC
30	Maria-Goretti Ane	Ghana	IDPC
31	Amy Hamelin	Ghana	USAID
32	Erica Naegeli	Ghana	USAID
33	Adeolu Ogunrombi	Nigeria	WACD
34	Idrissa Ba	Senegal	WACD
35	Alpha Abdoulaye Diallo	Guinea	WACD
36	Jimm Fomunjong	Ghana	WACSI
37	Charles Kojo Vandyck	Ghana	WACSI
38	Franck Sombo	Ghana	WACSI
39	Leandre Banon	Ghana	WACSI

APPENDIX III: PHOTOS FROM GROUP EXERCISES





Group One

Peers: Friends, family,
Loved ones, School mates
Colleagues, acquaintances

Patients: **Critical care**, burden to
society, vulnerable people.
People who need assistance

Prisoners: Criminals, failures,
murderers, outcasts, threats
to society, burden, thieves

Partners: Crimemates, sharing same ideologies
Customers, smoking mates

GROUP 1

INVESTIGATION: Economic
The social, Economy and
Health cost of Criminalization
on the individual, family and
the nation.

HYPOTHESIS: Does Criminalization
- on impact on the social Economy
and health status of the
individual, family and the nation

SO WHAT? WHY DOES IT
MATTER?

- Lost Productivity, Stress
- unemployment, Disunity
- Stigmatization
- Discrimination
- Overcrowded prisons
- Lost of fund and Lives

Sujet: Travailleuses de sexe et drogue

Objet du sujet: Constat du nombre
grandissant de
consommation de stupéfiants
Notamment dans le milieu du sexe

hypothèses: La propagation de la drogue se
fait beaucoup plus facilement
dans le milieu du sexe
- Elles jouent le rôle de "dealer" de
la drogue.
- consommation pour pouvoir
supporter plus de clients

Sensu: Prison, problème de santé (maternelle)
et santé publique, sida - etc.

Pairs: les gens de même catégories - les
complices - toi et moi -

Patients: Malade, prêt à écouter, nécessiteux
personnes sous traitement

Prisonnier: vulnérable, abandonné, exclu
privé de liberté, privé de droit civique
Incarcére

Partenaires: l'État, ONG, Collaborations
Entreprises, support mutuel
échange, partage