




THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

# THE NATIONAL DRUG POLICY OF TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

Health, security and stability for all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago



INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING & INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION | RESEARCH | DEMAND REDUCTION | SUPPLY REDUCTION | CONTROL MEASURES

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## List of Abbreviations

<b>ACIB</b>	Anti-Corruption Investigations Bureau
<b>CFATF</b>	Caribbean Financial Action Task Force
<b>CICAD</b>	Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission
<b>DIN-TT</b>	Drug Information Network of Trinidad and Tobago
<b>DTC</b>	Drug Treatment Court
<b>EWS</b>	Early Warning System
<b>FIB</b>	Financial Investigations Bureau
<b>GoRTT</b>	Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
<b>LGBTI</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex
<b>LSD</b>	Lysergic acid diethylamide
<b>MDMA</b>	Methylenedioxy-methamphetamine
<b>MNS</b>	Ministry of National Security
<b>NDS</b>	National Development Strategy
<b>NDP</b>	National Drug Policy
<b>NPS</b>	New Psychoactive Substances
<b>NSOC</b>	National Security Operations Centre
<b>OAS</b>	Organization of American States
<b>PSIP</b>	Public Sector Investment Programme
<b>SIU</b>	Special Investigation Unit
<b>THC</b>	Tetrahydrocannabinol
<b>TTCG</b>	Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard
<b>TTR</b>	Trinidad and Tobago Regiment
<b>TTPS</b>	Trinidad and Tobago Police Service
<b>UNGASS</b>	United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Drugs
<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

## Glossary

**Drugs:** mean psychoactive drugs, of which there is non-medical use in addition to any medical use. Professional formulations (e.g. “alcohol and other drugs”) often seek to make the point that caffeine, tobacco, alcohol and other substances in common non-medical use are also drugs in the sense of being taken in part for their psychoactive effects.<sup>1</sup>

**Drug use:** means use of illicit drugs

**Drug misuse:** is used to distinguish improper or unhealthy use of legal drugs such as alcohol or a medication as prescribed. These include the repeated use of drugs to produce pleasure, alleviate stress, and/or alter or avoid reality. It also includes using prescription drugs in ways other than prescribed or using someone else’s prescription.

**Substance** means alcohol, tobacco, medication, or controlled drugs listed in the Dangerous Drugs Act, 1991 (as amended).

**Substance misuse:** suggests use that can cause harm to the user or their friends or family.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> (Lexicon of Alcohol and Drug Terms-World Health Organisation [https://www.who.int/substance\\_abuse/terminology/who\\_lexicon/en/](https://www.who.int/substance_abuse/terminology/who_lexicon/en/))

<sup>2</sup> (National Institute on Drug Abuse <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/media-guide/science-drug-use-addiction-basics>)

## Minister's Statement



Salutations to one and all.

As Minister of National Security, I view the issue of drug trafficking and consumption as one of the most troubling in our society, not just because of the criminal activity that it facilitates, but because it continues to rob many of our people, young and old, of the opportunity to fulfill their potential.

The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in its continued commitment to addressing drug control has developed the National Drug Policy 2021 and its Operational Plan 2021-2025. These documents will guide the implementation of coordinated interventions which will contribute to the reduction of the harms caused by trafficking in illicit drugs, and related criminal activities, as well as substance use disorders. The current Policy and Plan, build on their predecessor policies and plans by expanding its coverage of all areas of drug control in keeping with emerging trends, and has incorporated a more robust Monitoring and Evaluation framework to objectively assess the effectiveness and impact of the proposed actions.

In approving these documents, the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago has signaled that this Government remains resolute in putting an effective policy in place, while bolstering it with an operational structure that, when competently executed, will assure the well-being of our citizens. Additionally, the Cabinet recognized the alignment of the goals of the documents with Vision 2030-Government's Development Plan for Trinidad and Tobago.

Moreover, it should be noted that the content therein, reflects the priorities of the United Nations Conventions and other supporting UN documents, while also taking into consideration the Organization of American States' Hemispheric Drug Strategy 2020 and its accompanying Plan of Action 2021-2025.

As countries worldwide grapple with the ongoing debilitating effects of drug trafficking and use, which is manifested by rampant criminality, creation of a parallel illicit economy as well as the dysfunction in families, schools, work places and communities, it was incumbent on the drafters of Trinidad and Tobago's documents to seek the input of a wide cross section of stakeholders. This process was critical to ensure that the focal areas of Institutional Strengthening and International Cooperation; Demand Reduction; Supply Reduction; Control Measures; Research and Monitoring and Evaluation; are effectively addressed.

I am proud of the work that the National Drug Council has undertaken to ensure that input was received from different stakeholders, including those that are both directly connected to drug control in their primary responsibilities, as well as other NGO's and agencies, such as trade unions, special interest groups, and those with spiritual and community reach.

The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is cognizant of the fact that Trinidad and Tobago's geo-strategic location has been exploited by perpetrators of organised crime, to facilitate transshipment, money laundering and creation of domestic consumer groups, for existing and emerging drugs, including various forms of ecstasy and New Psychoactive Substances (NPS).

From data available to us for the period January 01, 2018 to December 31, 2020, our country's law enforcement agencies found and seized 2,621 illegal firearms and total of 65,395 rounds of ammunition. Our law enforcement authorities also were involved in several seizures of narcotics, eradication exercises and arrests for narcotic offences, this included – thirteen thousand seven hundred and sixty-six kilograms (13,766 Kgs) of Marijuana seized and approximately eight hundred and forty-two kilograms (842 Kgs) of cocaine seized.

There have also been over seven thousand (7,000) drug related arrests and the data reveals that persons as young as 15 are being convicted on these charges.

In addition, as reported by the Early Warning System, approximately thirteen thousand seven hundred and eighty nine (13,789) MDMA pills (ecstasy), some of which were positive for methamphetamines and other chemicals, were also seized.

We remain resolute in surmounting these challenges, and in this regard I am very proud to recognize Trinidad and Tobago's recent election to the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND).

Having already noted the alignment between these documents and the UN Conventions, our election to this body, which is the premier international decision making body for drug control, provides an opportunity for us to learn from countries with more experience, create new partnerships and also enhance our policies, legislative frameworks, and practices as appropriate. This by necessity includes the allocation of resources to ensure a balanced approach to the issues.

I again commend the National Drug Council and its partner agencies, on the development of this document and compliment them on the progress they have made, over the years with the implementation of, and adherence to, the national, regional and international standards associated with these Policies and Plans.

The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago welcomes this multi-faceted approach to addressing the challenges related to drug control, as we are convinced, that committed partnership and collaboration will result in improved public safety and security for our country.

**The Honourable Fitzgerald Hinds M.P.**

**MINISTER OF NATIONAL SECURITY**

## Executive Summary

### ***Statement of Purpose***

The National Drug Policy (NDP) 2021 for Trinidad and Tobago seeks to address the complex issue of drug control through a balanced and multi-pronged approach which prioritizes the health and safety of citizens. It aims to reverse the profoundly negative impacts of illicit drug trafficking, and the use of licit and illicit drugs on the physical, social and economic well-being of all nationals. It is developed with the inclusive input of key stakeholders in the drug control initiative.

The policy sets out the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago's (GoRTT's) whole of government approach to the implementation of policies and programmes. This approach is consistent with all United Nations Conventions on drug control, the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Drugs (UNGASS) Outcome Document 2016 and the Organization of American States (OAS) Hemispheric Drug Strategies and accompanying Plans of Action, 2010 and 2016-2020 respectively.

It recognizes that the ever changing nature of the drug problem necessitates multi-agency collaboration and action. Additionally, it reinforces a public health response to drug dependence as a complex health disorder. Further, it acknowledges the importance of a criminal justice system which is premised on restorative justice principles and balanced by strong law enforcement activities, geared towards interdiction and prosecution of drug-related crimes.

### ***Policy Context***

Internationally, drug markets are evolving at unprecedented rates. Cultivation and manufacturing of heroin and cocaine have reached record highs, synthetic drugs continue to expand, and the market for New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) remains widely diversified.

The World Drug Report 2019 noted that the adverse health consequences of drug use and misuse are more severe and widespread than previously thought. Drug treatment and health services, however, continue to fall short of meeting existing needs and drug use-related deaths have increased. The availability of NPS and the use of prescription drugs add another layer of complexity.

The Caribbean region remains an important transit area for the movement of illicit drugs and convoluted linkages between drug trafficking, corruption and other forms of organized crime which demand innovative approaches to stem the situation.

International discussions, particularly at the UNGASS in 2016, have noted that a public health approach to the drug problem should be prioritized through comprehensive prevention programmes and treatment services. Special attention should also be given to the following populations: Youth, Women, Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) community and Migrants. Cognizant of this, the policy notes that developing and/or enhancing systems to accurately understand and quantify the impact of drugs on these populations would be critical to the design of relevant intervention strategies.

### ***Alignment to the National Development Strategy of Trinidad and Tobago 2016-2030***

The policy is firmly anchored in the national developmental objectives, key principles and policies of the GoRTT, elaborated in Vision 2030, National Development Strategy 2016-2030 (NDS). Accordingly, the NDP 2021 seeks to provide an overall framework that emphasizes population health, socio-economic sustainability, and adherence to the rule of law, through a collaborative approach to drug control.

### ***Alignment with the Strategic priorities of the Ministry of National Security***

The Ministry of National Security's (MNS's) commitment to the national drug control system by providing a modern law enforcement and defence and security sector provides a critical layer of support. This facilitates enhanced capacities, and improves systems for alternatives to incarceration and partnerships with key stakeholders in the pursuit of restorative justice.

### ***Key Principles***

The NDP 2021 is premised on a number of key principles, the foremost being that the immediate, medium- and long-term concerns regarding drugs should be addressed. Other principles include:

- 1) Recognizing the drug problem as a major developmental and public health threat to the nation, which has economic, social and political implications.
- 2) Reviewing and re-developing drug policy with public education, data collection, analysis and evaluation, which is open to public scrutiny.
- 3) Respecting human rights, local judicial norms, diverse cultural attitudes to drugs and drug use, and the need for effective law enforcement.
- 4) Recognizing that the international implications of the drug problem, commits Trinidad and Tobago to full partnership on regional and international initiatives that seek to address this issue, commensurate with the country's best interest.

### ***Elements of the National Drug Policy***

The policy is built on five (5) thematic areas:

1. **Institutional Strengthening and International Cooperation:** Develop, strengthen and maintain institutional mechanisms that facilitate planning, coordination, execution, monitoring and evaluation for local and international drug control.
2. **Research:** Promote evidence-based policies and programs through timely, accurate and relevant information and research.
3. **Demand Reduction:** Improve the physical, mental, social, spiritual and economic health and well-being of citizens.
4. **Supply Reduction:** Reduce the supply of illegal drugs.
5. **Control Measures:** Reduce drug trafficking and its related criminal activities as well as control the diversion of pre-cursor chemicals.



Emanating from each of these focal areas are goals, activities and outputs which seek to actively advance the espoused objectives. These include:

- ***Evidence-based Policy Formulation***

Research on illicit drug trafficking and use of licit and illicit drugs, is an essential component of sustainable drug control policy. The Drug Information Network of Trinidad and Tobago (DIN-TT) therefore facilitates research-related collaboration and cooperation efforts and informs national counter-narcotics.

The Early Warning System, (EWS) developed as a result of the emergence of NPS, compliments existing detection and analytical tools and enables rapid responses to the presence of new psychoactive substances.

- ***The Drug Problem as a Public Health Issue***

In keeping with the current international approach to drug control, the NDP 2021 reiterates the government's commitment to a public health approach based on principles and strategies that have been implemented:

- i) to support healthy individuals, families and communities,
- ii) to direct attention to human rights and equity,
- iii) to ensure evidence-informed policy and practice, and
- iv) to address basic needs (e.g. income, housing, education)

- ***Severity of the Problem***

In Trinidad and Tobago, marijuana continues to be the most widely used drug followed by cocaine. Notwithstanding this, the following trends indicate the use of other substances:

- a) Use of Methylenedioxy-methamphetamine (MDMA) trending on the party circuit due to the low perception of risk and/or perception of its legality.
- b) New types of tablets containing ecstasy and NPS which are designed to mimic and trigger the same responses as illegal drugs (e.g. cocaine).
- c) NPS such as synthetic Cathinones.
- d) Emergence of "marijuana edibles" - food products infused with marijuana is very popular and they contain very high levels of Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the psychoactive component in marijuana.

- ***Preventive and Sustainable Alternative Development***

Trinidad and Tobago's approach to preventive and sustainable alternative development is underpinned by the principle that the adoption of healthier lifestyles among the population and vulnerable persons is a key factor in attaining personal development and national development, ultimately. This approach involves generating income, strengthening educational services, upgrading health care, improving infrastructure, gender mainstreaming and enhancing market skills, with special attention given to the participation and empowerment of people.

## Statement of Purpose

The National Drug Policy (NDP) 2021 for Trinidad and Tobago seeks to address the complex issue of drug control through a balanced and multi-pronged approach which prioritizes the promotion of a healthy and safe environment for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. It aims primarily to reverse the profoundly negative impact of illicit drug trafficking, its related criminal activities, and the use of licit and illicit drugs on the physical, social and economic well-being of all citizens.

The policy is built on five (5) thematic areas: institutional strengthening and international cooperation, research, demand reduction, supply reduction, and control measures and acknowledges the GoRTT's policy for a whole of government approach to the implementation of policies and programmes. This approach is in keeping with all United Nations Conventions on drug control, the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Drugs (UNGASS) Outcome Document 2016 and the Organization of American States (OAS) Hemispheric Drug Strategies and accompanying Plans of Action, 2010 and 2016-2020 respectively.

It recognizes that the drug control issue is constantly evolving. It is for this reason that it promotes multi-agency approaches for effective responses. At the same time, it reflects the urgent need to build and improve collaboration among the agencies, with primary responsibility for drug control, as well as civil society and social service agencies working with vulnerable populations. In so doing, it provides the required framework for all stakeholders to work in a more cost-effective and coordinated manner for the efficient allocation of resources.

The Policy acknowledges that drug dependence is a complex health disorder that is characterised by a chronic and relapsing nature with social causes and consequences<sup>3</sup>, and reinforces a response grounded in public health principles and human rights. There is clear recognition that drug use and misuse involve substantial risks, and that drug users require a range of support mechanisms to progressively reduce drug-related harm to themselves as well as the general community, including their work colleagues and families. This policy approach does not condone drug use and misuse.

It underscores the relevance of a criminal justice system which adheres to the principles of proportionality and the rule of law, and embraces restorative justice approaches that focus on reducing the incidence of substance use and the crimes resulting therefrom. The Policy supports the shift away from routine imprisonment of drug offenders, to alternatives including diversion into treatment for drug offenders, through the Drug Treatment Court (DTC). The recognition is that treating addiction and providing the offender with treatment, rehabilitation, aftercare and social reintegration services contribute to the reduction in relapse and recidivism.

It acknowledges that the drug problem is transnational in nature. The response to it, therefore, cannot be limited to national strategies, but must be part of regional, hemispheric and international counter-drug initiatives to be truly effective.

It further provides that the national drug control effort includes Preventive and Sustainable Alternative Development. This focuses on developing and enhancing human and social capital

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<sup>3</sup> Outcome Document of the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on the World Drug Problem 2016

through projects and programmes which facilitate inclusive opportunities so that vulnerable populations can experience healthy, positive and productive lives.

## Policy Context

Global drug policy finds its origins in three drug control conventions: the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, as amended; the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances; and the 1988 Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. Trinidad and Tobago is counted among the United Nations' Member States which are parties to all international drug control treaties. These conventions share the fundamental goal of safeguarding the health and welfare of humanity and ensuring the full enjoyment of human rights.

In addition to the Conventions, Joint Ministerial Statements issued at various High-Level Ministerial Meetings of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs have influenced some areas of Drug Policy. Mainstreaming a gender perspective, as well as implementing policies tailored to the specific needs of the most vulnerable members of society, including children and youth, were core elements in the resolutions adopted over the past decade.

In 2016, a comprehensive review of the conventions resulted in the convening of UNGASS which produced an Outcome Document that, for the first time, stressed consideration and incorporation of programmes on issues such as Harm Reduction, Proportional Sentencing, and Alternatives to Incarceration for minor drug-related offences. It urged member states to treat their drug-dependent citizens with more respect, and implement strong public health systems to provide interventions.

These international policy initiatives are also complimented by regional and hemispheric documents such as the OAS Hemispheric Drug Strategies 2010 and 2016-2020 and accompanying Plans of Action. Several related international, hemispheric and regional efforts also reinforce counter-narcotics policies through their cross-cutting focus on such transnational phenomena as money laundering, drug trafficking-financed terrorism, corruption, arms trafficking, human trafficking, migrant smuggling and organised crime. Together with other international instruments, including human rights treaties, these comprise the foundation for the international drug control system.

There is a continuing discussion at international and hemispheric levels, which seeks to examine alternatives to the "traditional" approaches, the impact of which is being questioned across the world. One aspect of that discussion has evolved into a position of increased decriminalisation and, in some instances, strong advocacy for legalisation of not just cannabis but several other drugs. The discussion evolved as the recognition that the "War on Drugs", which stressed a strong reliance on law enforcement, eradication, and incarceration had resulted mainly in the criminalisation of persons who suffered the disease of addiction, while not significantly hurting those criminal organisations which continue to move large quantities of drugs around the world. In December 2019, the GoRTT demonstrated its progressive approach to treating with marijuana through the enactment of the Dangerous Drugs (Amendment) Act, 2019. The Act effectively decriminalises the possession of not more than thirty grams of cannabis or not more than five

grams of cannabis resin, while creating offences which restrict the use of cannabis in specific instances. Government's policy is multipronged as it seeks:

- i. To reform the criminal justice system by alleviating the burden placed on the system, at all levels, by the plethora of cases relating to the possession of cannabis; and
- ii. To reduce the harmful impact of marijuana convictions which has been borne primarily by poor and underprivileged men.

These recent legislative amendments neither dismiss nor invalidate the concerns regarding the harmful effects of the psychoactive properties of cannabis and the emergence of new forms which are particularly attractive to and popular among the youth. They also do not nullify the need for actions that address supply reduction and control measures. Indeed, the continued review and crafting of initiatives to reduce the impact of the trade in illicit drugs, and its associated activities, on national security continue to receive fullest attention.

This policy has been formed through inclusiveness of key stakeholders. The multi-layered nature of the problem requires an approach that includes directed and sustained law enforcement efforts to disrupt and dismantle organised crime, and ensure the physical security of people, together with efforts that promote health, good governance, and sustainable development. All efforts are underpinned by the drug control conventions, and human rights laws, principles and standards, such as the principles of equality and non-discrimination. The complementarity of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, international drug control conventions, international human rights treaties and other relevant instruments is unquestioned.

The GoRTT acknowledges that all activities should be undertaken in full compliance with the Declaration of Human Rights, and focus particularly on inclusion of youth, children and women.

Furthermore, as part of the comprehensive, integrated and balanced approach that is fundamental to the drug control effort, the policy fully respects all human rights and fundamental freedoms while protecting the health, safety and well-being of all individuals - regardless of their race, ethnicity, nationality, migration status, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, and economic status.

The dignity of human beings and their right to health and safety are paramount to effective drug control policy. Health is a fundamental human right which is key to the exercise of other human rights. In keeping with this, the NDP 2021 endorses non-discriminatory access to justice, healthcare and social services; the design and implementation of drug control interventions for vulnerable populations including persons with disabilities, children, youth and women; and continuous capacity-building initiatives and support for persons who function directly or indirectly within the drug control effort.

Within the last decade, discussions at international level, and particularly at the UNGASS in 2016 have noted that special attention should be given to the following:

## Special Populations

### Youth

National development includes the purposeful creation of environments that allow young people to develop positive relationships with adults and peers. These environments should concurrently

provide opportunities for them to build their competencies and become engaged as partners in their own development as well as that of their communities and their country<sup>4</sup>.

Understanding and working with young people requires an approach which assumes that behaviour always occurs within a wider context of their families, their communities and society as a whole, as well as how they interact with each other.

Therefore, understanding their use of substances, both licit and illicit, must be seen in the context of the countless challenges with which they are confronted. Globally, young people are growing up in environments which are increasingly accepting of various forms of substance use, medical and non-medical, licit and illicit. The impact of technology and the accessibility to social media are also contributing influences to their behaviours.

Evidence-based responses require a clear picture regarding the nature and extent of both youth involvement in drug trafficking, and related criminal activity, as well as drug use and misuse, routes into problematic use at a young age, and the drug-related harms to which young people are vulnerable.

The development and sustained implementation of drug prevention education, which is interwoven with other issues of concern, is one approach to engaging young people in discussing the challenges they experience and in the eventual crafting and implementation of solutions.

Initiatives in areas such as sports, culture, skills training and community services would, as appropriate, include components which focus on leading healthy drug-free lifestyles and make available options and resources to mitigate the challenges that might lead them to use drugs and to engage in anti-social behaviour. It is equally important to encourage and guide them to build the capacity to take responsibility for themselves, to be accountable for their choices and actions, and to seek help for drug dependence.

The effective engagement of youth clubs and civil society organizations is crucial to the overall thrust of providing supporting environments and opportunities, so that youth can build their capacity to make decisions that support healthy drug free lifestyles.

The level of involvement of youth, specifically young males within the 25-35 age group, in illicit activities as well as their propensity to resort to violent behaviours in response to challenging situations and circumstances require specific and urgent attention.

The proclivity to such behaviours has, in many instances, its antecedents in certain conditions, including broken and dysfunctional families, juvenile delinquency, peer rejection, failure or disruptive behaviour at school, gang membership and incarceration. This is matched by the availability of drugs and, numerous opportunities for young men to gravitate to crime as an easy but dangerous way to earn a living.<sup>5</sup>

Addressing the needs and concerns of youth, and specifically young males, is therefore a component of this drug control policy and operational plan and is in alignment with the government's national development strategy.

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<sup>4</sup> Work with Young People: Theory and Policy for Practice. Ed by Jason Wood and Jean Hines 2009.

<sup>5</sup> No Time to Quit: Engaging youth at risk. Executive Report of the Committee on Young Males and Crime in Trinidad and Tobago 2013.

## Women

The following are listed among the international human rights laws which speak to the issue of women and drugs:

- ⇒ The Inter-American Conventions on the Granting of Civil and Political Rights to Women (1948),
- ⇒ the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966),
- ⇒ the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966),
- ⇒ the American Convention on Human Rights (1969),
- ⇒ the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), and
- ⇒ the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (1994)<sup>6</sup>

They make provisions for the following:

- ⇒ the right to personal liberty and freedom of association;
- ⇒ the right to be free from arbitrary arrest or detention;
- ⇒ the right to the presumption of innocence;
- ⇒ the right to due process, legal assistance, and prompt resolution of any pending charges;
- ⇒ the right of persons deprived of liberty to humane treatment, reformation and social rehabilitation;
- ⇒ the right to equality, including equality before the law, and non-discrimination; and
- ⇒ the right to live a life free of violence<sup>7</sup>.

Historically, women's rights or gender equality have not been given prominence in discussions on the world drug problem. The United Nations drug conventions of 1961, 1971, and 1988 neither make mention of discrimination based on sex nor recognize issues faced by women.

The need to interrogate how the world drug problem and drug control regimes intersect with gender equality and women's empowerment has been receiving increased attention internationally. It is widely agreed that drug control policies have not addressed the specific needs and circumstances of women. The need for strengthened institutional responses and public policies, on women's drug use and misuse, their participation in the drug trade and the impact of international drug control efforts on women, has emerged as a result of several factors. Some of these are elaborated below and merit consideration by the local drug control effort:

### **1. Inadequate information and data collection:**

The strengthening of information systems on drug production, distribution and use and giving priority to the collection of data disaggregated by sex are crucial. The lack of information and research about women's participation in the world of illicit drugs has been identified as a significant obstacle to effective gender-responsive policy. It has also been noted that in the absence of information and research the tendency to interpret it through assumptions and stereotypes, prevails. Such interpretation often leads to:

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<sup>7</sup> Women and Drugs in the Americas: A policy working paper. Organization of American States and Inter-American Commission on Women. January 2014.

- an insufficient appreciation of the social, economic, and cultural factors that determine this participation and,
- negative effects for women in terms of increased social stigmatization of their participation.<sup>8</sup>

## **2. Inadequate provision of, and discrimination in accessing, health services:**

It is widely acknowledged that drug policies and programs rarely consider the social and biological factors which make women's experiences with drugs vastly different to that of men. It is noted that gender-sensitive interventions have not been integrated into harm reduction services on a global level; and so the provision of sexual and reproductive health resources in addition to HIV prevention, treatment and care, specifically tailored to the needs of women who use drugs, are absent. Additionally, the stigma associated with women who use, in the context of what constitutes acceptable behaviour for women, often is a deterrent to them accessing harm reduction services, HIV prevention, care and treatment, drug dependence treatment, sexual and reproductive health care, as well as other medical services<sup>9</sup>.

## **3. Impact of incarceration on family unit:**

The consequences of criminal punishment are felt differently by women, often with greater impact on their children and families. Research, at international level, note that in many instances, women are incarcerated for non-violent offences and come from economically and socially marginalized backgrounds, with a main driver of crime being poverty. Many of them are mothers who are particularly vulnerable to engagement in micro-trafficking because of poverty and lack of any employment opportunity in the legal economy. In the instances when their partners are also incarcerated, the impact on the family unit is irreversible<sup>10</sup>.

## **4. Educational and financial development:**

There is a heightened need to create viable and sustainable opportunities for economic stability and human and educational development for women, as a concrete tool for empowerment and alternative to drug use and drug related crime.

This policy acknowledges that developing and/or enhancing systems to accurately understand, describe, measure and quantify the impact of drugs and drug control on women, is critical in the design of relevant intervention strategies. Further elaboration is provided in the accompanying Operational Plan 2021-2025.

## **Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) Community**

Drugs pose a significant challenge to public health, and research has noted that use tends to be more prevalent among marginalized social groups, thereby exacerbating health inequalities. Several studies suggest that Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI)

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<sup>8</sup> Drug policy and women: Addressing the negative consequences of harmful drug control. International Drug Policy Consortium Briefing Paper.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Women and Drugs in the Americas. A Policy Working Paper. Organization of American States and Inter-American Commission of Women. January 2014

communities are among the most likely to use these substances<sup>11</sup>. Various links are made to chronic stress, lack of positive events to buffer this stress, and internalized homophobia leading to increasing use and misuse of alcohol and drugs<sup>12</sup>. While some research is available, there is acknowledgement, at the global level, that there are existing gaps in research and data collection as follows<sup>13</sup>:

**a) Extent and nature of drug use:**

Drug treatment services lack sufficient understanding of the specific drug-related problems of the LGBTI community. Further research will ensure the development of services to more appropriately meet the community's needs and will lead to improved outcomes. Much of the research on drug use in the LGBTI community has focused on the associated risk of HIV transmission to the detriment of other aspects of high-risk behaviour and psychological issues with the recreational use of drugs.

**b) Prevention and treatment programmes:**

Drug prevention and treatment services need to be more accurately attuned to the needs of the LGBTI population. This is dependent on qualitative data on recreational drug use (e.g. use not solely relating to 'addiction'), on the different drugs of choice, and evidence relating to inhibiting factors for those who do not access services. The need to enhance the quality of information provided to the LGBTI community about drug treatment and services, is also noted.

This policy acknowledges that developing and/or enhancing systems to accurately understand, describe, measure and quantify the impact of drugs and drug control on the LGBTI community, is critical in the design of relevant intervention strategies. Further elaboration is provided in the accompanying Operational Plan 2021-2025.

## Migrants

Cognizant of the need to offer protection to vulnerable populations, the GoRTT acceded to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol in 2000, and is also signatory to the United Nations (UN) Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and supplementing conventions, and the UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.

Within recent times, Trinidad has experienced a surge in migratory flows from neighbouring countries. In light of its commitment to protect and promote the human rights of migrants, the government continues to revise policies and legislation to meet the demands of the migrant population while pursuing its own national security interests. The country experiences mixed migration movements and is considered both a transit and destination country to various categories of people on the move, including economic migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, and victims of human trafficking<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> All Partied Out? Substance Use among Northern Ireland's Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender Community. Eoin Rooney 2012.

<sup>12</sup> Sexual Exclusion – Homophobia and health inequalities: A review of health inequalities and social exclusion experienced by lesbian, gay and bisexual people. Susan Douglas Scott, Alastair Pringle, Colin Lumsdaine. 2004

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Statement by the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to the 67th Session of the Executive Committee of the UNHCR



International research has been unanimous in its findings that migrants generally have lower rates of substance use than their host communities. However, it has also noted that some may be more vulnerable to substance use and misuse for reasons such as trauma, unemployment and poverty, loss of family and social support. The use of drugs facilitates coping with trauma, boredom, uncertainty and frustration around immigration status; and in these circumstances, their vulnerability may be heightened by poor knowledge about and access to treatment services<sup>15</sup>.

In keeping with the commitment to evidence-based policy and programme formulation, the approach to this issue involves:

- Engaging in data gathering initiatives on the vulnerabilities and needs of the migrant population, in order to determine the required actions or protection interventions.
- Engaging in capacity-building and sensitisation, through specialised trainings, campaigns, and sharing of good practices for personnel who regularly interface with the migrant population.

This policy acknowledges that developing and/or enhancing systems to accurately understand, describe, measure and quantify the impact of drugs and drug control on the migrant population is critical in the design of relevant intervention strategies. Further elaboration is provided in the accompanying Operational Plan 2021-2025.

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<sup>15</sup> Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees: an overview of the literature relating to drug use and access to services. P. Lemmens, H. Dupont and I. Roosen. 2017

## The National Development Strategy of Trinidad and Tobago 2016-2030

Each facet of the drug problem—trafficking and use—influences national development prospects; and there are many risk factors which help determine the potential impact of the problem on individuals, communities, and society as a whole. The GoRTT's commitment to the long-term development of Trinidad and Tobago, and ensuring the highest standard of living for all citizens, reflected in its Vision 2030 National Development Strategy (NDS), provides the overarching national development framework for action to mitigate that negative impact. The strategy puts people at the centre of development in a socio-political environment that enables citizens to realize their full potential, individually and collectively, and to make a positive contribution to the growth and development of the economy and society. In reality, this position, along with the relevant interventions, aims to mitigate the socio-economic conditions which both give rise to, and are the consequences of the challenges posed by illegal drug trafficking drug use and misuse

The vision is that all citizens enjoy a superior standard of living and are assured of the opportunities to access quality education and training, healthcare, affordable housing, decent work and social protection.

The focus is on achieving sustainable economic growth through greater diversification of the economy, as well as improving the social conditions and quality of life of citizens in an inclusive and environmentally sensitive manner. The NDS, and the national goals and strategies which drive its implementation, incorporate the principles and objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and are built upon the economic, social, and environmental pillars for sustainable development. The strategy underscores the growth and development of Trinidad and Tobago, to ensure a safe and secure society, with emphasis on the health and productivity of the population, socio-economic advances and sustainability, and a strong basis in evidence-based decision making, as well as adherence to the rule of law.

The NDS identifies five (5) national areas for development or thematic areas, each with specific goals and key strategies outlined to achieve sustainable economic growth, improve social conditions, and promote environmental conservation for the enhancement of the lives of citizens. These Thematic Areas are:

1. Putting People First: Nurturing Our Greatest Asset: This involves the creation of a society in which all the basic needs of people are met in a nurturing environment;
2. Delivering Good Governance and Service Excellence: Good governance promotes strong public institutions, citizens who respect authority and the rule of law and benefit from a professional civil service;
3. Improving Productivity through Quality Infrastructure and Transportation: Developing efficient and resilient infrastructure enhances a country's productivity, and determines the country's attractiveness to foreign investors;
4. Building Globally Competitive Businesses: Through the maintenance of economic stability, the enabling environment is created for firms to thrive and be competitive, and the climate for entrepreneurship and innovation is strengthened; and
5. Placing the Environment at the Centre of Social and Economic Development: Environmental health is critical to the development of the country and wellbeing of its citizens. Sound environmental governance provides opportunities for creating

wealth and economic wellbeing. Thus, a culture and attitude of environmental consciousness must be engendered.

It is supported by the Three-Year Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP), which focus on new, transformational initiatives in the form of flagship programmes and projects that will trigger the impetus for further growth towards the realisation of Vision 2030.

The Government's policy direction is manifested through appropriate and timely actions in the legal, socio-economic and organizational spheres of drug control. This will ensure ongoing technical and institutional development of the related systems and structures within the lead entities for the coordination and execution of the NDP 2021 and strategies, as well as coordination of the national drug control effort.

Trinidad and Tobago has enacted legislation to combat drug possession and use, drug trafficking and related criminal activities. This comprehensive body of drug and related law will be strengthened, from time to time, as required, to ensure it remains relevant to the ever-evolving nature of the drug trade and related criminal activity; and to incorporate into domestic law the provisions of bilateral, regional and international treaties and agreements to which Trinidad and Tobago is obligated. Additionally, several enforcement agencies/units created, either legislatively or administratively, supplement and support the Government's legislative initiatives. The list of relevant laws is attached at Appendix A.

The key objective of the drug control initiative is to provide a solid, collaborative, integrated and comprehensive mechanism and structure required to effectively counter the production, trafficking and consumption of licit and illicit drugs at the national level. Notwithstanding the fact that this infrastructure is currently under review, the work required to advance activities in Supply and Demand Reduction, Control Measures, and other areas continue. A graphical representation of the Drug Control Initiative is attached at Appendix B.

The country's efforts, at the national level, to reduce both the availability and use of licit and illicit drugs as well as their attendant adverse consequences, are well supported by an extensive framework of international conventions and activities which confront illegal drug cultivation, production, trafficking, use and misuse, diversion of precursor chemicals, money laundering, corruption, and firearms trafficking.

This country's commitment to a series of multilateral, bilateral and hemispheric agreements for cooperation in counter-narcotics initiatives further strengthens this framework. Additionally, there is the maintenance of collaborative relationships with regional, hemispheric and international partners. A list of international drug conventions and multilateral, bilateral and regional agreements is attached at Appendix C. National compliance with international obligations will continue to be a critical component in the drug control efforts.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is therefore committed to:

1. Addressing drug use and misuse and drug addiction as national developmental challenges which have adverse economic and social implications for the nation.
2. Improving the development and implementation of a balanced approach to drug demand reduction and supply reduction.

3. Ensuring a high level of security for the general public by taking action against trafficking in drugs and related criminal activities, and by intensifying preventive action against drug-related crime, through effective cooperation and collaboration.
4. Attaining a high level of health protection, well-being and social cohesion by adopting and implementing action in preventing and reducing drug use and misuse, dependence and drug related harms to health and society.
5. Implementing coordinated and sustainable public education programmes on the dangers of all aspects of licit and illicit drugs.
6. Developing healthy communities, free from the negative consequences of licit and illicit substance use and the illicit traffic of narcotics.
7. Continued improvements in both the criminal and civil justice system.
8. Implementing modern, legal, regulatory and law enforcement systems.
9. Placing greater emphasis on rehabilitation and social reinsertion to aid recovery from the detrimental drain on the human resource development of the nation.
10. Enhancing the criminal justice system to incorporate restorative justice principles and practices for the victims of substance use related crimes, especially child victims.
11. Implementing standards of care across all treatment facilities.
12. Ensuring that opportunities for training to improve competencies are available to persons in/entering the field of drug control.
13. Ensuring that adequate human and financial resources are available to all agencies involved in drug control (both demand reduction and supply control).
14. Participating in all international efforts aimed at drug control, recognizing the transnational and international nature of the drug problem and acknowledging that international cooperation is an essential factor in counteracting it.
15. Local programme delivery – strengthening the role of community level interventions.
16. Supporting collaborative and cooperative efforts in research, analysis and dissemination of information which is the basis upon which any counter-narcotics effort is contemplated, developed and implemented.

### Alignment with the Strategic Priorities of the Ministry of National Security

The Ministry of National Security's (MNS') strategic mission "*to advance national development by creating a safer and more secure society through enhanced collaboration among all stakeholders, intelligence-based decision-making and strengthened inter-agency structures and systems*", is anchored to the Vision 2030 National Development Plan and provides an additional layer of context for the implementation of the Operational Plan 2021-2025.

The work that is done to advance the functioning of the national drug control system is also heavily dependent on the Ministry's commitment to providing a modern law enforcement and defence and security sector. These are essential for an enhanced capability to predict, deter, detect and prosecute crime and criminality, for improved systems for rehabilitation, and collaboration with key stakeholders in the pursuit of restorative justice.

## Key Principles

The NDP 2021 is premised on a number of key principles, the foremost being that the immediate, medium- and long-term concerns regarding drugs and its multidimensional impacts should be addressed. Other principles include:

- 1) The drug problem should be recognised as a major developmental and public health threat to the nation, which has economic, social and political implications.
- 2) Policy review, development, and re-development of the drug policy must be guided by public education, and evidence collection and evaluation, which is open to public scrutiny.
- 3) The drug policy should respect human rights, local judicial norms, our diverse cultural attitudes to drugs and drug use, and the need for effective law enforcement.
- 4) The policy, recognising the international implications of the drug problem, commits Trinidad and Tobago to full partnership on regional and international initiatives that seek to address this issue, commensurate with the country's best interest.
- 5) The drug problem is a national development challenge; one that has adverse economic and social implications for the nation.

The policy is firmly anchored in the national developmental objectives and key principles and policies of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, elaborated in Vision 2030, NDS, as they relate to countering the drug problem.

## Elements of the National Drug Policy



The NDP 2021 is built upon an existing approach of focal areas which are:

1. Institutional Strengthening and International Cooperation
2. Research
3. Demand Reduction
4. Supply Reduction
5. Control Measures

Emanating from each of these focal areas are goals, activities and outputs which seek to actively advance the espoused objectives.

### **Focal Area 1: Institutional Strengthening and International Cooperation**

Develop, strengthen and maintain institutional mechanisms that facilitate coordination, planning, execution, monitoring and evaluation for local and international drug control.

### **Focal Area 2: Research**

Promote evidence-based policies and programs through timely, accurate and relevant information and research.

### **Focal Area 3: Demand Reduction**

Improve the physical, mental, social, spiritual and economic health and well-being of citizens.

### **Focal Area 4: Supply Reduction**

Reduce the supply of illegal drugs.

### **Focal Area 5: Control Measures**

Reduce drug trafficking and its related criminal activities as well as control the diversion of precursor chemicals.

## **Evidence-based Policy Formulation**

Data collection and analysis regarding illicit drug trafficking and use of licit and illicit drugs, continues to be an essential component for long-term, sustainable drug control policy. The aim is always to have a progressively more comprehensive and useful understanding of the major issues and trends, backed by solid data.

Globally and nationally, drug challenges are evolving. The speed at which developments in drug production, distribution and consumption markets occur, as well as the level of sophistication which characterise these developments require an increase in and enhancement of data collection, dissemination, analysis and research from all involved in the drug control effort. Up-to-date, comprehensive, disaggregated and transparent data are essential tools to understand drug use and its impact on health and development; to understand drug supply and the dynamics of

drug markets; and to evaluate drug control efforts. This data also helps to measure the impact of illicit drug use as well as supply and drug control efforts on the enjoyment of human rights.

Within the law enforcement and intelligence communities, the application of the National Intelligence Model will continue to enhance capacity to conduct continuous collection, analysis and dissemination of strategic intelligence, to enhance collaboration and information exchange among agencies, to utilise specialised investigative techniques, to plan and execute intelligence-driven operations, and to address current and future drug control challenges.

Collaboration among stakeholders cannot be over-emphasised. The nature of the drug problem and its associated threats mandate that collaboration must occur not only among responsible agencies but must include entities/organizations which are not normally part of the “traditional” intelligence community. This approach is even more relevant in the context of the need to utilise relevant technology and technical expertise to identify existing and emerging threats. Collaboration also provides a platform for enhanced situational awareness, for reducing duplicity in efforts and for more informed and timely decision making.

The Drug Information Network of Trinidad and Tobago (DIN-TT) is at the forefront of the collaborative and cooperative efforts in research, analysis and dissemination of information which is the basis upon which the counter-narcotics effort is contemplated, developed and implemented. It is the mechanism through which data on the extent, distribution and volume of the national drug problem is collected from stakeholders connected to drug control, and subsequently analysed. In addition to providing insight to the different aspects of the national drug problem, the DIN-TT brings together institutions and individuals working in the areas of drug prevention, education, control, and law enforcement to exchange drug-related information and collaborate and support each other’s efforts. It forms part of the ongoing efforts to promote a better understanding of the nation’s drug problem and develop workable and sustainable policies and programmes.

The EWS, developed as a result of the emergence of NPS, is an addition to the array of detection, dissemination and analytical tools which provide for a broader understanding of Trinidad and Tobago’s drug problem, and an opportunity for better evidence based decision-making. An effective response to this threat necessitates developing the capacity to detect, identify and assess the associated risks, in order to respond rapidly and effectively to the presence of new psychoactive substances, by applying control measures when necessary. It is a crucial element in contemporary drug control.

Integral to evidence-based policy formulation is the ongoing evaluation mechanisms which collect and analyse data on the impact of policy and programming; provide evidence on the achievement or non-achievement of stated goals; and facilitate gap analyses to inform the allocation of resources in accordance with the varying situations/scenarios which require action. It is impossible to determine what needs to be done, if the impact of actions/activities and mechanisms that facilitate accountability, responsibility, value for money and decision making, are not measured.

## Severity of the Problem

Internationally, drug markets are evolving at unprecedented speed. The range of substances and combinations available to users has never been wider, and the amounts produced have never been greater. Cultivation and manufacturing of heroin and cocaine have reached record highs, synthetic drugs continue to expand, and the market for NPS remains widely diversified with a growing interplay with traditional drug markets. The non-medical use of regulated prescription drugs (either diverted from licit channels or illicitly manufactured) is becoming a major threat.<sup>16</sup>

Persistent and emerging challenges relate to the expansion and diversification of drugs and drug markets. Globally, the illicit cultivation and production of, and the trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances and their precursors have also recorded high levels. While drug trafficking online, using the “darknet”, continues to represent only a fraction of drug trafficking, it continues to grow rapidly, despite successes in shutting down popular trading platforms.<sup>17</sup>

Trinidad and Tobago remains a central transit area for illicit drugs moving from South American countries to Caribbean, North American and European consumers. The ever-increasing linkages between drug trafficking, corruption and other forms of organized crime, including trafficking in persons, trafficking in firearms, cybercrime and money-laundering and, in some cases, terrorism (including money-laundering in connection with the financing of terrorism) continue to compel law enforcement and intelligence personnel to move beyond the “traditional or accepted” approaches to addressing the situation. The range and sophistication of drug trafficking modes from large container shipments to small packages via the postal system now include the purchase of products directly online or via the “darknet” and these continue to pose challenges to law enforcement.

The World Drug Report 2019 notes that improved research and more precise data have revealed that the adverse health consequences of drug use and misuse are more severe and widespread than previously thought. Drug treatment and health services continue to fall short of meeting needs and deaths related to drug use have increased. The emergence of NPS and the adverse health consequences and risks associated with them, as well as the use of prescription drugs, pose increasing risks to public health and safety and add another layer of complexity.

In recent years, hundreds of NPS have emerged and globally, a total of 803 NPS were reported to United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) during the period 2009–2017. However, while the global NPS market remains widely diversified, except for a few substances, NPS have not established themselves on drug markets or replaced traditional drugs on a larger scale. The conditions are in place for an expansion of the NPS market (in terms of the numbers of substances), but there has been no sign of significant expansion to date. Most of the harm generated by drug use still comes from controlled substances (traditional classes) or non-medical use of prescription drugs rather than from NPS.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> What we have learned over the last ten years: A summary of knowledge acquired and produced by the UN system on drug-related matters. UN system coordination Task Team on the implementation of the UN system Common Position on drug-related matters.

<sup>17</sup> World Drug Report 2018. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

<sup>18</sup> World Drug Report 2018. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.



In Trinidad and Tobago, marijuana continues to be the most widely-used drug whilst cocaine, in all forms, follows. Notwithstanding this, the following trends point to other substances being consumed across the country:

- The use of MDMA is trending amongst the party going population due to the low perception of risk and/or perception of its legality. Globalized supply chains and the internet play a major role in driving its availability.
- New types of tablets which contain ecstasy and NPS which are designed to mimic and trigger the same responses as illegal drugs (e.g. cocaine).
- New Psychoactive substances such as synthetic Cathinones.

Act 24 of 2019 has also added new dangerous drugs, including, ecstasy, lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) and ketamine, and provides that the possession of more than the specified amount would be deemed for the purpose of trafficking.

Smoking is the most common route of administration of marijuana however varying cannabis extracts in electronic cigarettes, hookahs, and food preparations has become increasingly popular. The National Secondary Schools Survey on Alcohol and Other Drug Use in Trinidad and Tobago, 2013 noted that 42.5% of the participants found marijuana to be easily accessible. In the current reality “marijuana edibles” - food products infused with marijuana- have emerged as a very popular way to consume the drug. The danger of this method of consuming marijuana lies in the fact that “edibles” contain very high doses of THC, the chemical responsible for marijuana's psychoactive effects. There has been an increase in seizures of marijuana brownies and cookies from schools and among teenagers.

The challenge of evolving experimentation with illicit substances, primarily among youth, is further compounded by experimentation with mixtures of otherwise legal substances and/or medication which may momentarily provide a required surge of energy, but in the long-term are extremely harmful to a person's health.

The impact of the drug trade and use on the physical and mental health of the population can be categorised in terms of impact on the individual and on the society at large. The cumulative impact on individuals represents the cumulative impact on the society. In this regard the costs are virtually incalculable. It is the society that ultimately bears the costs associated with individual use including:

- Treatment in public and private institutions, including hospital/rehab admissions and duration of stay;
- Deaths or serious injuries by homicide, accident, or suicide associated with psychoactive substance use;
- Increased stress and psychological burdens on society, especially in response to escalating serious crime rates associated with the trade including property loss, murders and kidnappings;
- Cost of premature death; and

- Substance use and misuse reduction costs associated with creating awareness and encouraging attitudinal and behaviour change for current, past and non-users.

Significant social repercussions of substance use include poor school performance and school dropout; low work productivity and unemployment; economic costs to individuals who are ill and their families; and crime and violence. Other repercussions include:

- The correlation between drug use and mental health;
- The increasing instances of dysfunctional behaviours and the gender disparity in these behaviours;
- The link between parental drug use and infant mortality rates; and
- The link between parental drug use and developmental issues in exposed children.

### The Drug Problem as a Public Health Issue

The NDP 2021 focuses on the welfare and wellbeing of citizens through a public health approach to drug control in general, and to substance use specifically. This public health approach to substance use and misuse should underpin the approach to treating with substance use enunciated in all government policies relating to children, youth, schools and gender.

The public health system is best placed to take the lead in the provision of effective treatment services for people affected by drug use disorders, often in close coordination with social care services and other community services. The public health approach to drug treatment involves the least invasive intervention possible with the highest level of effectiveness and the lowest cost.

The reasons people develop substance use issues are complex, and include genetic, biological, emotional and social factors. Substance use is considered one of the critical public health problems of this era. The most recent data reveals that the problem is deepening, and the consequences are becoming even more deadly.<sup>19</sup> There is an urgent need to enhance awareness-raising activities on this issue.

Over the past two decades, there has been strong advocacy in the international community, and increasingly in the Hemisphere at the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission of the Organization of American States (CICAD/OAS) for a public health approach to drug control as well as the implementation of alternatives to incarceration. The latter included advocacy for proportional sentencing as well as programmes which would redirect, substance dependent offenders from incarceration.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago commits to a public health approach based on principles and strategies that have been implemented:

- to support healthy individuals, families and communities,
- to direct attention to human rights and equity,
- to ensure evidence-informed policy and practice, and
- to address basic needs (e.g. income, housing, education)

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<sup>19</sup> *What we have learned over the last ten years: A summary of knowledge acquired and produced by the UN system on drug-related matters.* UN system coordination Task Team on the implementation of the UN system Common Position on drug-related matters.

The provision of evidence-based treatment and care services to drug-using offenders, as an alternative to incarceration, has been shown to substantially increase recovery and reduce recidivism. Trinidad and Tobago's Drug Treatment Court programme is the institutional arrangement which diverts non-violent offenders with substance use and misuse problems from incarceration into court-supervised programmes with treatment and rigorous standards for monitoring and changing behaviour.

By increasing direct supervision of offenders, delivering treatment services, coordinating public resources, and expediting case processing, alternatives to incarceration can help break the cycle of criminal behaviour, alcohol and drug dependency, and imprisonment. Baseline research has indicated that over the past twenty years, Drug Treatment Courts have proved to be effective in not only helping many countries to reduce crime and high incidence of relapse into drug use, but has also served to curtail the economic costs of incarceration.

### Prevention

Substance use commonly begins in adolescence, with alcohol, tobacco and cannabis being the substances most commonly used by children and young people. Early onset of frequent substance use is associated with the increased risk of developing dependence or harmful use later in life, as well as being linked with physical and mental health problems, although there is no clear causal relationship. Health sector professionals are uniquely positioned to identify psychoactive substance use, at any stage, and provide the appropriate interventions. As substance use morphs and the propensity for experimentation increases, continuous capacity-building, for the sector, can neither be over-emphasized nor diminished.

Educating the public against the use of illicit drugs is essential in deterring drug use, and prevention must start early to delay the age of onset and reduce the problem of drug use and drug-related health and social risks and harms. Sustained prevention initiatives must be coordinated, well-timed and deliver standardized information in appropriately crafted messaging for each target group.

### Treatment

Investing in treatment has been shown to reflect sound judgment in human and economic terms, as research indicates that well-organised treatment delivered by trained and supportive treatment personnel can have a rapid and lasting impact on people affected by substance use and misuse. The Government commits to greater responsibility to providing the necessary resources and establishing standards for treatment programs.

Government's commitment to the national drug control effort has been further enhanced by the establishment of the Seized Asset Funds and the Seized Assets Advisory Committee to advise on the specific areas for which the fund is used, among them being: (a) community development; (b) drug use and misuse treatment; (c) rehabilitation projects; and (d) law enforcement.

The role of civil society organizations in the national drug control effort is undeniable as their inclusion in this drug control policy development ensures that the collective expertise and experience can be used to advance all aspects of drug policy.

## Preventive and Sustainable Alternative Development

Trinidad and Tobago's approach to preventive and sustainable alternative development is informed by and integrated into the broader national development strategy, and aligns with the approach relevant to countries which simultaneously feature as transit points and consumer markets. It is underpinned by the principles that health and well-being can be enjoyed by all and the acceptance and adoption of healthier lifestyles among the population and particularly among those most vulnerable to involvement with drugs, is one key to personal development and ultimately development at a national level. This approach involves not only income generation, but also strengthening of educational services, upgrading health care, improving infrastructure, gender mainstreaming and enhancing market skills with special attention given to the participation and empowerment of people.

A number of preventive, integral and sustainable development activities exist under various government ministries and non-governmental organizations aiming to redirect vulnerable groups engaged in any aspect of the illicit trade to legitimate forms of income generating activity. Trinidad and Tobago has adopted a number of programmes geared towards reducing youth violence and targeting all risk factors including narcotic use and misuse, cultivation and trafficking as well as programmes that focus on women's involvement in the supply chain. These also include several urban development programmes which foster public participation in crime prevention, community cohesion, protection and safety to stimulate innovation, entrepreneurship and employment.

Government's continued commitment to meeting the needs of the social sector is demonstrated in its investment in social and infrastructure development which will ensure the attainment of national development goals. Social programmes in the areas of education; community development; skills and life skills development, the prevention and reduction of substance use and the treatment and rehabilitation of drug-dependent persons are critical components for the people-centred development agenda.

## Conclusion

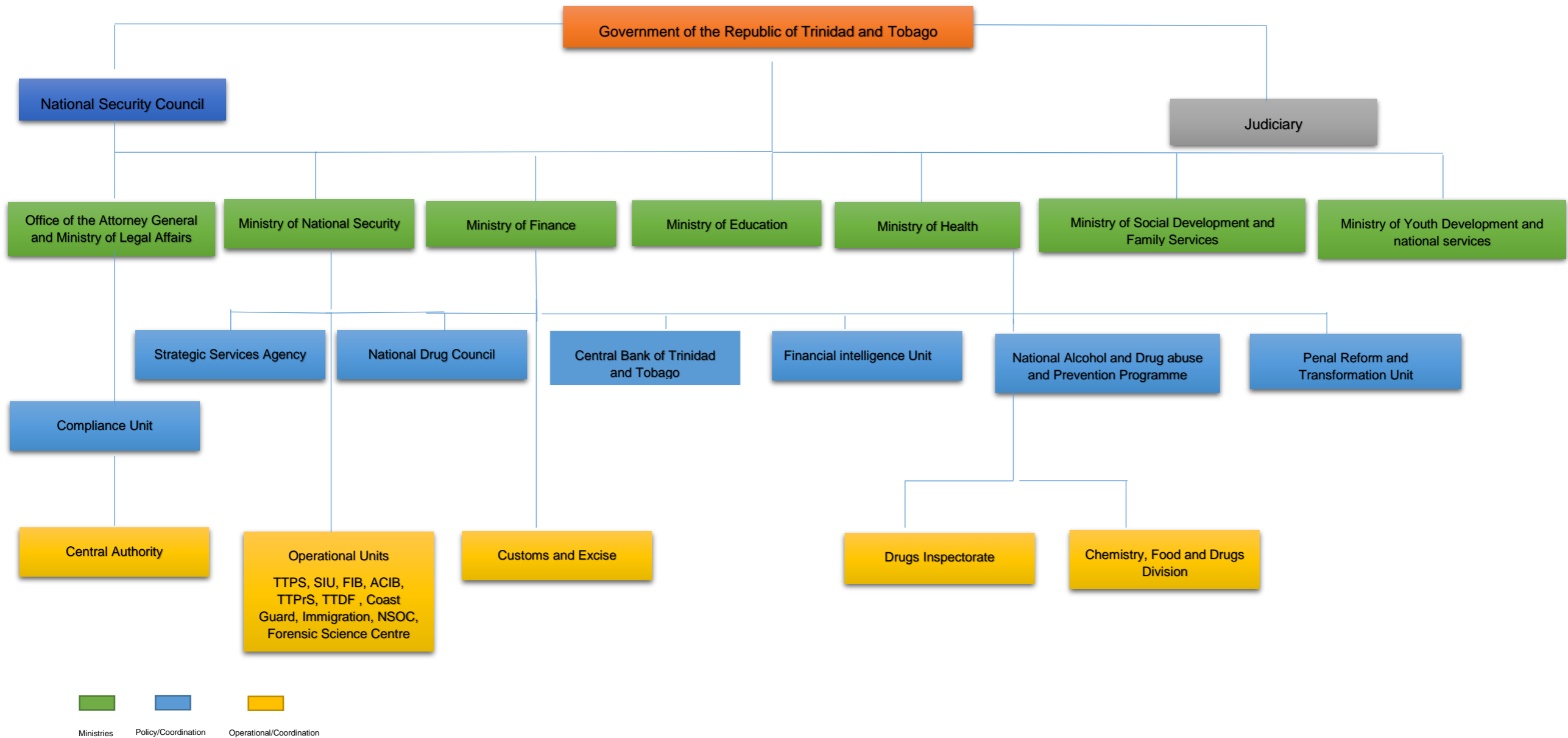
The NDP 2021 sets out the official position of the GoRTT to deal vigorously with the challenges of illicit drug trafficking and the use of licit and illicit substances. The Policy, firmly anchored within the Vision 2030 NDS, provides a balanced, comprehensive and multi-disciplinary approach to a complex and rapidly evolving issue. It establishes a robust framework within which the institutions, charged with the responsibility for drug control, will be engaged in collaborative national and international cooperation efforts to reduce illicit drug trafficking and associated criminal activities, as well as licit and illicit substance use.

## Appendix A: National Legislative Arrangements

- ✦ Dangerous Drugs Act, 1991 (as amended)
- ✦ Proceeds of Crime Act, 2000 (as amended)
- ✦ The Customs Act (Chapter 78:01)
- ✦ The Bail Act, 1994 (as amended)
- ✦ The Administration of Justice (Misc. Provisions) Act, 1996
- ✦ The Supreme Court of Judicature Act (Chapter.4:01) (as amended)
- ✦ The Indictable Offences Act (Preliminary Enquiry) Act (Chapter 12:01) (as amended)
- ✦ The Evidence Act (Chapter 7:02) (as amended)
- ✦ The Jury Act (Chapter 6:53) (as amended)
- ✦ The Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Act, 1997 (as amended)
- ✦ Offences Against the Person Act (Chapter 11:08) (as amended)
- ✦ Community Mediation Act, 1998 (as amended)
- ✦ Community Service Orders Act, 1998
- ✦ Criminal Injuries Compensation Act, 1999
- ✦ The Criminal Procedure Act (Chapter 12:02) (as amended)
- ✦ Criminal Procedure (Plea Discussion and Agreement) Act, 1999 (as amended)
- ✦ The Firearms Act (Chapter 16:01) (as amended)
- ✦ Integrity in Public Life Act, 2000 (as amended)
- ✦ Caribbean Court of Justice Act, 2005
- ✦ The Anti-Terrorism Act, 2005 (as amended)
- ✦ The Pesticide and Toxic Chemicals Act, No.42 of 1974 (as amended)
- ✦ The Food and Drugs Act (as amended)
- ✦ The Justice Protection Act
- ✦ The Electronic Transfer of Funds Act, 2000
- ✦ The Sentencing Commission Act, 2000
- ✦ The Anti-Personnel Mines Act, 2000
- ✦ The Police Service Act, 2006
- ✦ The Police Complaints Authority Act, 2006
- ✦ The Financial Obligations Regulations
- ✦ The Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) Act, 2007
- ✦ The Financial Intelligence Unit of Trinidad and Tobago Act, 2009 (as amended)

- ✚ The Financial Intelligence Unit Regulations
- ✚ The Interception of Communications Act, 2010 (as amended)
- ✚ The Trafficking in Persons Act, 2011
- ✚ The Miscellaneous Provisions (Kidnapping and Bail Act, 2011
- ✚ The Anti-Gang Act, 2011
- ✚ The Data Protection Act, 2011
- ✚ The Miscellaneous Provisions (Ministry of Justice) Act, 2011
- ✚ The Data Protection Act, 2011
- ✚ The Administration of Justice (Indictable Proceedings) Act, 2011 (as amended)
- ✚ The Bacterial (Biological) Toxic Weapons Act, 2012
- ✚ The Administration of Justice (Deoxyribonucleic Acid) Act, 2012
- ✚ The Administration of Justice (Electronic Monitoring) Act, 2012
- ✚ The Administration of Justice (Indictable Proceedings) (Amendment) Act, 2012
- ✚ The Indictable Offences (Committal) Proceedings Act, 2013
- ✚ The Indictable Offences (Committal Proceedings) Act, 2014
- ✚ The Miscellaneous Provisions (Administration of Justice) Act, 2014
- ✚ The Strategic Services Agency (Amendment) Act, 2016
- ✚ The Criminal Procedure (Plea Discussion and Plea Agreement) Act, 2017
- ✚ The Anti-Gang Act, 2018
- ✚ The Miscellaneous Provisions (Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, Proceeds of Crime, Financial Intelligence Unit of Trinidad and Tobago, Customs and Exchange Control) Act, 2018.
- ✚ The Miscellaneous Provisions (Proceeds of Crime, Anti-Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Unit of Trinidad and Tobago) Act, 2018.
- ✚ The Civil Asset Recovery and Management and Unexplained Wealth Act, 2019

## Appendix B: Trinidad and Tobago's Anti-Drug Initiative



## Appendix C: List of International Drug Conventions and Multilateral, Bilateral and Regional Agreements

Trinidad and Tobago is signatory to the following:

### **Narcotic and Psychotropic Substances**

- ✚ United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs (1961) as amended by the 1972 protocol.
- ✚ The United Nations Convention on Psychotropic Substances (1971).
- ✚ United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1988).
- ✚ Protocol Amending the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, (1961).
- ✚ United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime (2000).

### **Firearms**

- ✚ The related Protocol under the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2000).
- ✚ Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2000).
- ✚ Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2000).
- ✚ Protocol against illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Component and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2001).
- ✚ The United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms & Light Weapons in All its Aspects (2001).
- ✚ United Nations Instrument to Identify and Trace in a timely and reliable manner, Illicit trade in Small Arms & Light Weapons in All its Aspects (2005).
- ✚ Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and the Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunitions, Explosives and Other Related Material (1997).

### **Transnational Organized Crime (Money Laundering & Terrorist Financing)**

- ✚ The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2000).
- ✚ United Nations Convention against Corruption (2003).
- ✚ Inter-American Convention against Corruption (1996).
- ✚ Inter-American Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal matters (1992).
- ✚ Kinston Declaration on money Laundering (1992).



- ✚ International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism (1999).
- ✚ Inter-American Convention against Terrorism (2002).

### **Plans of Action**

- ✚ Summit of the Americas-Ministerial Communiqué on Money Laundering (1995).
- ✚ Anti-Drug Strategy in the Hemisphere (CICAD) 2016-2020
- ✚ Barbados Plan of Action (Plan of Action for Drug control, Co-ordination and Cooperation in the Caribbean (1996).
- ✚ Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF) Memorandum of Understanding (1996).
- ✚ United Nations Plan of Action 2009.

Enquiries relating to this  
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