NDS Implementation Summary
DRAFT
Office of Controlled Substances
Drug Strategy and Controlled Substances Programme
Healthy Environments and Consumer Safety Branch
Health Canada

1. General

    1. Canada does not have a computer application specifically developed for managing controlled substances (issuance of licences and permits)
    2. Canada had NDS installed in 1999 and has been using this system to transmit INCB quarterly and annual reports to UNDCP through EDI. Hard copies of these reports are printed using WordPerfect templates.
    3. NDS is installed in the Health Canada local area network and workstations within the Office of Controlled Substances (OCS) which have access to the shared applications.
    4. In September 2000, an NDS development team visited OCS and worked, together with OCS staff, to customize the system and to ensure that Canada≤s requirements for the issuance of import/export permits were met.

2. Implementing NDS

    1. As of fall 2000, information on Canadian establishments, substances and preparations had been entered into NDS. However the Office has encountered technical difficulties when data on import/export permits started to be entered. Consequently neither INCB reports nor import/export permits could be produced by this system. An extensive examination focussing on those technical difficulties revealed that they were the result of the information (data) entered in the wrong place. This problem can be partially associated to the fact that some terminologies used in NDS are unclear and sometimes misleading. Hence a data clean-up was needed.

    2. Since June 2001, OCS staff members have been testing the system in order to explore all relevant functions for permit issuance and INCB report submission, identifying the technical obstacles and further customizing the system for the Office needs. Up to now the following areas have been comprehensively tested:
        1. Masters:
            (1) demographic - a region master, country master
            (2) competent authorities - competent authorities master, CA function master, CA department master

      (3)   substances - pure substance master, preparation master, substance master

      (4)   establishment - establishment master

2.   Common - import/export

3.   Narcotics - narcotics

4.   Psychotropic - psychotropic

3.   Based on the results of the test, key areas that need to be worked on have been identified and the following relevant work has been accomplished so far:

     1.   Update the information on competent authorities with reference to the Competent National Authorities Under the International Drug Control Treaties published by UNDCP

     2.   Clean and update the following lists:

         (1)   substance list

         (2)   preparation list

         (3)   pure substance list

     3.   Enter information on establishments both in Canada and foreign countries

     4.   Unify codes for substances, preparations, competent authorities, establishments

4.   Meanwhile, the functions for import/export have been tested by entering real data obtained from the import/export permits already issued by this Office. So far, more than 200 permits have been used as samples to test NDS import/export functions. Beside some technical difficulties that need to be addressed and solved, major functions for import/export are operational.

5.   As a result to the test for import/export, functions of INCB reports (Form A and Form A/P) have also been tested. All functions are working well. As more data is entered into the system, tests for Form C and Form P will be done.

3.   <u>Lessons Learned</u>

1.   Essential information is crucial in making the system functional. Accurate and up-to-date information related to substances, competent authorities, establishments, etc., has to be maintained in a timely manner.

2.   NDS is designed in a very logical way. As it covers almost everything in drug control, it is a complex system. Using the system requires a good understanding of the principles

behind the interface, the international drug control framework, and the working procedures at the national level.

3. Details in substances, pure substances, and preparations must be as complete and precise as possible so that the system can calculate the total amount, pure anhydride content, aggregated import/export and create INCB reports without error. The latter is not easy as errors are difficult to identify because all figures are calculated automatically.

4. Evaluation and Suggestions for Future Improvements

1. When properly understood and handled, NDS can be a very useful tool for national competent authorities to manage data on substances controlled under UN drug control conventions. The national competent authorities can benefit from using NDS in their national drug control framework in terms of issuing import/export permits, compiling data for INCB reports, monitoring trade in controlled substances, and granting licences to the domestic companies which deal in those substances.

2. Since the system covers many areas in the drug control field and has a complex design, it is important for countries to fully understand the system, customize it to meet their specific needs, and update the essential information before implementing the system for their daily work.

3. The NDS User=s Manual is not a very helpful reference as some functions are not covered and many functions are not clearly described. We recommend that it be revised.

4. The NDS web site should be more informative and up-to-date. Technical information should be available and the experience of different countries should be shared through the web site. We recommend that a user chat room be created in the web site.

5. When installing NDS, NDS development team should make sure that all essential information is properly updated. It takes a long time and huge effort for competent authorities to clean and update such information. For instance, NDS installed in this Office indicated Harvard University as one of the competent authorities in the US and information on competent authorities are absolutely different with the current UN publication; iron, cooper, even cotton are listed as controlled substances; many Indian companies are in the establishment list.

6. Instead of allowing only deletion of whole records, NDS should give more flexibility in

correcting errors during data entry.

7. There are too many fields for codes - UDF, EAN, CAS, HS... Though it provides more options for countries to choose, not all codes are used at the same time. It would make it clearer to recommend using HS codes and to leave one field for country=s own choice.

8. There is no need, in import/export, to have tabs for Aimport authorization@ and Aimport certificate,@ either one will be sufficient to manage information on import documents.

9. CA department master and variation master do not seem necessary.

10. There should be a separate pull down list for preparations. Preparations and substances should not be mixed in <u>one list.</u>

11. Content in Ahelp messages@ should be more explicit. Some current help messages are unclear and confusing (i.e., Apad@ is used in some messages but there is no definition for it).

12. Some of the fields have limited space so the whole content cannot be completely displayed. However some fields have limited content but a huge space (i.e., all fields for codes). Accordingly, the layout of the database should be adjusted in order to best utilize the existing space.

In conclusion, we estimate that the NDS system could be in production for complete activities on permits and reporting to INCB by the end of this calendar year. Furthermore, we would appreciate being informed of the location and contact person for the NDS support centre for America.

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