

Drugs and Development: The Great Disconnect (Abridged) [∞]

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Policy Brief 8 | February 2015

Key Points

- The 2016 United Nations General Assembly Special Session on the World Drug Problem (UNGASS) will see a strong lobby in support of development oriented responses to the problem of drug supply, including from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).
- The promotion of Alternative Development (AD) programmes that provide legal, non-drug related economic opportunities for drug crop cultivators reflects the limited success of enforcement responses, greater awareness of the development dimensions of cultivation activities and the importance of drugs and development agencies working co-operatively in drug environments.
- Evidence from thirty years of AD programming demonstrates limited success in supply reduction and that poorly monitored and weakly evaluated programmes cause more harm than good; there has been little uptake of best practice approaches, cultivators rarely benefit from AD programmes, the concept of AD is contested and there is no shared understanding of 'development'.
- AD was popularised in the 1990s when development discourse emphasised participatory approaches and human wellbeing. This is distinct from the development approaches of the 2000s, which have been 'securitised' in the Global War on Terror and which re-legitimise military participation in AD.
- UNGASS 2016 provides an opportunity for critical scrutiny of AD and the constraints imposed by the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs on innovative, rights based and nationally owned supply responses. Cultivation is a development not a crime and security issue. Consideration must be given to a reconfiguration of institutional mandates, with supply and cultivation control removed from the UNODC and brought into the remit of development agencies.
- Deliberation around the post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals provides an entry point for new approaches to drug issues in the Global South and an opportunity to reverse the human, development and public health harms caused by current counter-narcotics policies, including AD.

[∞] This is an abridged version of Drugs and Development: The Great Disconnect, Policy Report 2, January 2015, Global Drug Policy Observatory, URL <http://www.swansea.ac.uk/media/The%20Great%20Disconnect.pdf>

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INTRODUCTION: DRUG CROP CULTIVATION AND PROHIBITION

Access to mind and mood altering substances is controlled by a century old treaty framework that is overseen and administered by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). As framed by US Christian Evangelical groups that first lobbied for drug prohibition in the nineteenth century, the end goal, restated alongside the 1998 UNODC ‘Political Declaration and Plan of Action’, is a ‘drug free world’.¹

Indicative of the path dependence within the treaty system, the focus of supply control interventions remains predominantly coca leaf, opium poppy and cannabis cultivated in the Global South, not the larger market for synthetic Amphetamine Type Substances (ATS – Ecstasy MDMA, amphetamine, methamphetamine,) manufactured in the Global North (Box 1).

Box 1: World Drug Consumption Trends;
UNODC World Drug Report 2013

Drug Users	Africa	North America	Caribbean and South/Central America	Europe	Asia	GLOBAL TOTAL
Cannabis	16,735,000	29,950,000	9,170,000	29,680,000	48,045,000	159,830,000
Opiates	1,805,000	1,335,000	1,030,000	3,555,000	9,493,000	17,360,000
Cocaine	1,845,000	6,170,000	2,732,500	4,770,000	1,350,000	17,225,000
ATS	3,375,000	3,150,000	2,180,000	2,845,000	21,210,000	33,305,000
Ecstasy	1,140,000	2,490,000	1,790,500	3,965,000	8,995,000	18,180,000

The treaty system imposes on states the obligation to terminate the cultivation, production, trafficking and consumption of substances listed under a schedule of agreed controls;² to punish those that engage in the illicit trade; and to co-operate internationally on the enforcement of treaty obligations.

The most important of the treaties is the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, as amended by the 1972 Protocol. In relation to supply side activities this:

- Limits cultivation of opium poppy, coca leaf and cannabis to medical and scientific requirement only;
- Restricts legal cultivation (particularly of medical opioids) to a handful of internationally agreed countries;
- Mandates signatory states to uproot and destroy all non-medical and non-scientific opium poppy and cannabis cultivation by 1979 and coca leaf by 1989.
- Criminalises drug crop cultivation, with Article 36 setting out that: ‘Subject to its constitutional limitations, each Party shall adopt such measures as will ensure that cultivation [...] shall be punishable offences when committed intentionally, and that serious offences shall be liable to adequate punishment particularly by imprisonment or other penalties of deprivation of liberty.’³

Achieving ‘zero cultivation’ has been an intractable challenge. Over fifty years since the Single Convention was ratified, the 2014 *World Drug Report* cites 296,720 hectares committed to illicit opium poppy in 2013: ‘the largest area since 1998, when estimates became available.’⁴ Afghan opium cultivation increased 36% between 2012 and 2013 to 209,000 ha. The area under coca cultivation in Peru, Bolivia and Colombia declined but was 133,700 hectares in 2012.⁵ This equated to production of an estimated 6,993 tons of opium and 560 tons of heroin in 2013, and between 714 and 973 metric tonnes of cocaine in 2012.⁶ By way of comparison with licit crops, the area under rice cultivation was 106 million hectares; 10 million hectares were cultivated with coffee, while the figure for tea was 2.8 million hectares. In global terms, and

in relation to cultivation of legal agricultural commodities, drug crop cultivation is marginal. Nevertheless, the entire cocaine and heroin demand of the US can be met by just 9,000 hectares of opium and 2,800 hectares of coca.⁷

Multiple factors account for drug policy failure as this relates to eradication of drug crop supply. These include:

- *An historic absence of international consensus* on how to compensate (if at all) producer states of the ‘Third World’ for losses following prohibition of crops embedded in rural economies and freely traded for centuries;
- *The weak capacity of states* in the Global South to enforce eradication, against the Treaty system’s assumptions of a Westphalian model predicated on a deterrent nation state with demarcated borders, territorial integrity and governance of a defined citizenship;⁸
- *The dynamics of the illicit market*; prohibition is based on the postulation that eradication of raw drug materials will elevate the cost of diminished supply, pushing consumers out of the market,⁹ and that punitive criminal justice frameworks will dis-incentivise participation in the trade, forcing cultivators and producers into legal employment. As extensively documented by the experience of other prohibitions (sex work, alcohol, tobacco, coffee) criminalisation generates a lucrative illicit trade.¹⁰ In the case of addictive and dependence inducing substances, markets have proved resilient with consumers acceding to pay escalating costs rather than be forced out of the market and due to the financial value added by prohibition to otherwise worthless plants and shrubs. These factors offset the costs of punishment at all levels in the manufacturing and distribution chain;¹¹

- *The counter-productive impact of efforts to enforce treaty obligations*, including through militarised eradication exercises led by the US from the 1970s onwards (discussed below), and related to this *the failure to address the drivers of continued illicit drug crop cultivation*, with the effect enforcement only displaces and fragments cultivation as activities relocate.

CULTIVATION AS A DEVELOPMENT ISSUE

The farming of opium poppy, coca leaf and cannabis by an estimated 4 million men, women and children in the Global South is linked to multiple factors of exclusion, poverty and insecurity. Cultivation of these low capital input/high yield drug crops is a rational livelihoods option for those exposed to multidimensional poverty¹² experienced as citizenship deficits in access to state services, land, infrastructure, markets and credit.

Drug crop cultivation occurs in societies characterised by structural inequality, violence and conflict. These crops provide livelihoods security and sometimes informal physical security for exposed and vulnerable communities, most particularly in conditions of the (diverse) conflicts that have affected the world’s leading opium poppy and coca producers (Afghanistan, Mexico, Colombia, Peru and Bolivia).

Opium poppy, coca and cannabis are well suited to the adverse conditions faced by displaced, itinerant and physically isolated populations (Box 2). They thrive on marginal terrain, in poor soil, at altitude, without any or sophisticated irrigation, or inputs such as pesticides, or the need for the storage, credit, transportation and market facilities required by perishable agricultural crops. Even low levels of cultivation of these high value to weight products provides an economic safety net for the land, food and cash poor, with

guaranteed markets, relatively stable prices, cash payment and ease of access to seeds. These crops provide access to on-farm and non-farm income, informal credit mechanisms and access to land through sharecropping or tenancy agreements.

In Afghanistan: ‘opium can define the “creditworthiness” of the land poor. Without it, access to basic food items, agricultural inputs and funds for health care becomes severely constrained.’¹³ Coca can be harvested four to six times a year after an eighteen month growing period, contrasting with the three years normally required for a coffee bean harvest. The labour intensive nature of planting, weeding and harvesting these crops provides an important source of employment for displaced and itinerant communities.

Drug crop farming and related refining and distribution processes (coca paste, morphine) has been a major generator of employment in conditions of economic and physical vulnerability:

- 96,000 families, equivalent to 804,000 people or 6.5 per cent of Moroccan agricultural households (2.5 per cent of the total population) were engaged in cannabis cultivation during economic adjustment in the mid-2000s;¹⁴
- In Bolivia, the numbers employed in coca during the searing market liberalisation process of the 1980s and early 1990s was estimated at 74,000 - 500,000 (out of an Economically Active Population of 1.8 million);¹⁵
- In Peru, an estimated 200,000 households or just over 1 million adults and children were involved in coca cultivation;¹⁶
- 240,000 households in Burma’s Shan State were engaged in poppy farming in the mid-2000s;¹⁷

Box 2: Cannabis Cultivation in Morocco

The Rif is one of the most unsuitable regions for intensive agricultural production: a rugged relief of steep slopes and poor soils, combined with heavy but irregular rainfall compounded by a lack of irrigation infrastructures, make most crops other than cannabis not worth the labour invested [...]

The economic crisis that unfolded in Morocco in the late 1970s and early 1980s hit especially hard in the Rif Mountains, where the mechanisation of agriculture was never satisfactorily developed and where emigration opportunities proved insufficient to compensate for the lack of employment [...]

Up to half cannabis growers’ income is provided by cannabis production, however [...] cannabis growers receive far less income than might be expected. The annual per capita income generated by cannabis production has been estimated at US\$267, compared to the GDP per capita of about US\$1,260 in Morocco in 2002.

P. A. Chouvy. (2005). ‘Morocco said to produce nearly half the world’s hashish supply.’ *Jane’s Intelligence Review*. 7(11) Nov.

- In Afghanistan, where the opium economy forms: ‘a well-linked market in terms of credit, purchase, transport and processing’, an estimated 5.6 jobs are generated in the rural non-farm economy for each hectare of opium poppy cultivated.

The conditions that drive drug cultivation in source countries are shared by states in Central America, Central Asia,¹⁸ West and East Africa,¹⁹ the Middle East,²⁰ and Southern and Eastern Europe²¹ that emerged as trafficking

hubs or ‘bridge’ states in the 1990s and 2000s. Social displacement, loss of livelihoods, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and the profusion of war time smuggling routes creates an environment propitious for production and trafficking activities, in particular by young men experienced in the use of violence: ‘who may find that the only marketable skills they possess are the skills of war, and their only productive asset, a gun.’²²

Exacerbating the vulnerability of these regions to trafficking and drug trade displacement are legacies of inadequate post-conflict DDR (Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration of ex combatants) and SSR (Security Sector Reform) processes, and post conflict reconstruction and market liberalisation interventions modelled on the ‘liberal peace’.²³ Set against low levels of remuneration, weak opportunities for social mobility, opaque governance and lack of viable economic alternatives, the lucrative nature of the \$322 billion per annum international drug trade makes poor and developing countries susceptible to the opportunities for corruption and livelihoods presented by the criminal economy.

Drug crops play multiple and diverse roles in livelihood strategies. No other crops provide the same range of benefits in marginal conditions. However this is offset by disadvantages. Production of drug crops and drugs can be less financially advantageous than cultivation of cash crops or non-agricultural employment, and it can be at the expense of deficits in the production of household staples (rice, wheat). Forward and backward linkages into the legal economy are limited,²⁴ locking many cultivators into long-term economic informality, and as in the formal economy, the benefits of cultivation differ according to a farmer’s assets and disproportionately accrue to large landowners.²⁵

Further negative aspects include the corrosive environmental impacts associated with the

clearing of areas for planting, and reliance on mono-cropping, which exacerbates fragile agricultural conditions. Cultivating communities are persistently vulnerable to the violence and coercion of other drug market actors, including criminal and insurgent groups, landowners, creditors, and the state and foreign military forces. The brutality associated with efforts to capture, defend and expand drug rents leads to population displacement, land grabs, civilian casualties in drug related violence and the erosion of public participation due to intimidation and violence. Revenues from the cultivation, production and trafficking of drugs exacerbate corruption in governance and the security sector, while inflows of narco-dollars distort economies and fuel illicit asset laundering and the blurring of formal and criminal sectors.

DRUGS, DEVELOPMENT AND THE UNODC

Over the last twenty years the UNODC has recognised the development dimensions of drug crop cultivation. Drug control has been: ‘framed into a more development-sensitive rational’²⁶ influenced by the limitations of enforcement and factors within the UN system. Of particular note is the development paradigm shift of the 1990s toward well-being and human security - as outlined in the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration and 2000 UN General Assembly on Social Development that established the goal of halving poverty by 2015. These development commitments were to be realised through a new vocabulary of rights based and participatory approaches that emphasised local ownership and stakeholder engagement.

Within drug control, development oriented solutions to the problem of sustained illicit cultivation are promoted through Alternative Development (AD) strategies. As set out in the landmark 1998 UNODC ‘Action Plan on International Cooperation on the Eradication

of Illicit Drug Crops and on Alternative Development’, AD is defined as:

A process to prevent and eliminate the illicit cultivation of plants containing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances through specifically designed rural development measures in the context of sustained national economic growth and sustainable development efforts in countries taking action against drugs, recognizing the particular socio-cultural characteristics of the target communities and groups, within the framework of a comprehensive and permanent solution to the problem of illicit drugs.

The 1998 document built on the impetus generated by the 1994 UNODC report ‘Drugs and Development’²⁷ that set out: ‘the influence of illicit drugs reaches far beyond the heroin addict and the crime syndicate. The drug problem is deeply rooted in broader socio-economic concerns.’ Institutionalisation of AD was supported by resolutions 8/9 (2005) from the Commission on Narcotic Drugs calling on the UNODC to strengthen its capacity in AD; a UN General Assembly resolution (2005) reaffirming the role of AD in drug control; and resolution 2006/33 of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) recognising the importance of mainstreaming AD into national and regional rural development plans. The UNODC has approved a number of technical and best practice documents, for example in relation to gender mainstreaming,²⁸ conflict sensitivity and AD design, and in 2013 ‘Guiding Principles on Alternative Development’ were approved.²⁹

AD approaches have undergone substantial change, moving from early crop substitution programmes and ‘micro level’ niche interventions in cultivation areas in the 1980s and early 1990s for example conducted by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the UN Fund for Drug Abuse Control (UNFDAC),³⁰ to broader ‘macro’ strategies of rural development, Alternative Livelihoods, Preventative Alternative Development, and

Development Oriented Drug Control (DODC).³¹ This incorporates a spectrum of initiatives, from strategies to generate employment alternatives through trade, tariff and market liberalisation strategies that promote growth in the formal economic sector,³² to recommendations (DODC) for: ‘development sensitive drug control interventions co-operatively implemented by development and drug control agencies’ that ‘promote peace and security in a drugs environment and permanently reduce poverty and dependence on the illegal drug economy.’³³

At the June 2014 UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) event ‘Sustainable Development and the World Drug Problem’, UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon re-emphasised the importance of supporting drug crop cultivators find alternative legal income streams. According to Moon, such measures not only contribute to the ‘fight’ against drugs and crime, they enable ‘peace and progress.’³⁴ UNODC Executive Director Yury Fedotov has urged closer collaboration between drug control and development agencies in the elaboration of the post-2015 international development agenda and ahead of the 2016 UN General Assembly Special Session on the World Drug Problem (UNGASS).

The 2016 UNGASS will see a significant lobby to advance AD as the principal supply response of the UNODC and as a ‘soft’ alternative to militarised enforcement. Regional organisations such as the European Union (EU) and the Organisation of American States (OAS) are strong advocates of AD. For example, the EU’s 2006 document: ‘EU Approach on Alternative Development’³⁵ recognises that illicit drug crop cultivation: ‘is concentrated in areas where conflict, insecurity and vulnerability prevail’, and that: ‘poor health, illiteracy and limited social and physical infrastructure reflect the low level of human development experienced by the population in these areas’. AD is embraced as a: ‘long-term strategy, based on a comprehensive approach

to rural development that seeks to place the foundations for sustainable development and independence from illicit drug cultivation in the long term', with respect for human rights, empowerment, accountability, participation and non-discrimination of vulnerable groups 'integral' to AD approaches.

Efforts to deepen the engagement of the UNODC in development initiatives should be discouraged. AD is a contested proposition that is unworkable within the broader framework of the criminalisation of the drug trade and ongoing reliance on militarised enforcement. Shorn of development indicators, absent explicit harm reduction and human rights principles, and without requisite expertise and reform of UNODC bodies, AD programmes are inchoate, fragmented and may do more harm than good. AD programmes are an impediment to the redistribution of economic and political power necessary to effect meaningful and sustainable social change and citizenship. AD is an old 'solution' to drug supply, having been implemented for over thirty years without evidence of tangible success or uptake of lessons learned.

THE LIMITATIONS OF AD

The record of AD is poor despite claims that well designed and coherently implemented AD programmes can make a significant contribution to reductions in drug crop cultivation.³⁶ Countries and regions have increasingly differentiated understandings of development, and of AD – particularly influential actors such as the US, EU, Russia³⁷ and China.³⁸ This has led to a profusion of contradictory programmes, implementation differences in relation to the sequencing of enforcement and development initiatives, and the conditions under which AD finances are dispersed. Moreover the 2000s has seen a significant shift in development practice.³⁹ Development interventions have been re-oriented away from the poorest countries,⁴⁰

to work co-operatively with military forces in 'weak, fragile and failing' states,⁴¹ through inter-agency missions to prevent 'transnational threats' to the Global North, including from drugs.⁴² This 'securitisation of development'⁴³ integrates counter terrorism, counter insurgency and counter narcotics objectives,⁴⁴ re-legitimising the role of the security sector in source reduction strategies, relegating 'AD' to a military stabilisation and consolidation strategy, while drawing the development community into a 'threat' perspective that conceptualises drugs as cause not symptom of poverty and exclusion.

Key concerns relate to the following: AD is not an alternative to enforcement rather an underfunded, second tier supplement in an increasingly mixed and confused international supply side response. There is an accumulation of evidence⁴⁵ to demonstrate that enforcement strategies of coercive eradication (manual destruction and aerial fumigation of crops by the security sector), create an environment inimical to health, security and development prospects. They lead to:

- I. **Acute economic stress for cultivators:** An estimated 260,000 households (1.2 million people) faced *starvation and death by treatable disease* during opium cultivation bans and eradication exercises in Burma in the mid-2000s,⁴⁶ similarly in Laos PDR, where external pressure to achieve zero cultivation by 2005 led to a 45 per cent decrease in cultivation between (2003 and 2004) at the cost of widespread hunger.⁴⁷ In Bolivia, forced eradication programmes in the early 2000s pushed 50,000 families into severe economic difficulties, resulting in malnutrition and recourse to illegal income-generating activities such as prostitution and migrant labour - a common cross country observation;⁴⁸ coercive eradication also leads to *displacement*, including of an estimated 5 million people (15 per cent of the population) in Colombia and 65,000 hill people in Laos PDR.⁴⁹

II. Rights abuses and cyclical violence involving the military, police and dedicated counter narcotics units manifest in beatings, disappearances, torture, arbitrary detention, arrest, rape and extra judicial killings in the context of security sector impunity, inadequate civilian oversight of counter narcotics actors and the recruitment of paramilitary forces into dedicated counter narcotics units;⁵⁰ *Escalation of conflict between the state and criminal organisations* for example in Mexico where drug war deaths during the administration of Felipe Calderón (2006-12) were estimated to be 65,362 or 908 per month, maintaining an upward trajectory under his successor President Peña Nieto. Deaths from organized violence during the first fourteen months of the new administration were estimated to be 23,640;⁵¹ the intensification of enforcement efforts is linked not only with an escalation of violence, homicide rates and the circulation of weapons but also new forms of violence including paramilitarism,⁵² vigilantism,⁵³ femicide⁵⁴ and by private security actors;⁵⁵ and the proliferation of other forms of crime such as kidnapping, extortion, money laundering, counterfeiting and the trafficking of weapons and people.

III. Acute political tensions / exacerbation of conflict stemming from threats to cultivator livelihoods, embedding local, national and regional level conflicts in cultivation areas as communities forge alliances with insurgent, rebel and criminal groups for security and the protection of livelihoods.⁵⁶

IV. Corruption as payment of bribes or ties of political or tribal loyalty can reduce the risk to cultivators their crops will be targeted for eradication; external financial support to defence and security sectors to enhance counter narcotics capacity in countries where sanctions against

corruption are absent, civil society is demobilised and oversight of the security sector is negligible has created predation and graft at the highest level.⁵⁷

V. Environmental and ecological damage including to alternative agricultures, husbandry and human health resulting from chemical spraying of narcotic plants and the forced relocation of populations.⁵⁸

The environment for 'jump starting' development initiatives following from forced eradication is unfavourable to human security, the exercise of citizenship and redistribution of economic and political power necessary for development.⁵⁹ For example, analysis of the impacts of a 95% fall in opium poppy production in Nangarhar, Afghanistan following a ban imposed by local authorities in 2004-05 demonstrate a downturn in the licit economy due to the steep reduction in disposable income and fewer employment opportunities, reductions in expenditure on food and healthcare, the selling of assets including livestock and land, and a growing inability on the part of households to meet loan repayment schedules. This in turn led to a: 'greater concentration of assets in the hands of the wealthy and those involved in illicit trade.'⁶⁰

Forced eradication and cultivation bans are associated with the 'balloon effect' within and between states as cultivation relocates following supply shocks that drive up raw material prices, in turn encouraging supply relocation or diversification into other types of drug:⁶¹ 'The reasoning is simple and rests largely on the fact that production costs (both cultivation and refining) constitute a trivial share of the retail price of drugs in the major Western markets [...] the costs of the coca leaf that goes into a gram of cocaine is usually less than \$0.50; the retail price of that same gram sold at retail in the West is more than \$100.'⁶² Despite well-documented and negative impacts, militarised enforcement 'at source' overseas remains the cornerstone of US

counter-narcotics policy. This approach contrasts with that of the European Union, which came late to drug supply control efforts⁶³ but which subsequently prioritised demand reduction in consumer countries of the EU, and institutional strengthening and development assistance to source countries.⁶⁴ The distinction, which is salient in explaining the limitations of AD, follows from the US launching of a 'war' on drugs under President Nixon and Ronald Reagan's subsequent 1986 National Security Directive No. 221 'Narcotics and National Security', which transformed the illicit drug trade from international legal and diplomatic challenge to threat to the national security of the US.

US declaration of war on source countries and its unilateral policing of the 1961 Single Convention has institutionalised the influence of the security and defence sectors in the planning, command and execution of overseas counter narcotics efforts. There has been an escalation of defence support to train and equip source country security sectors (military, police, intelligence, customs),⁶⁵ the primary theatre of US operations being its 'backyard' of Latin America⁶⁶ the source of global cocaine and US heroin supply. For over thirty years, Latin America has been the focus of US multiyear security agreements that aim to support and enhance the capacity of the security sector to eradicate and interdict drugs, but which also lock countries into market liberalisation strategies and trade agreements with the US, as with the Andean Trade Protection Act (APTA) of 1991 and contemporary State Department strategies in Central and South Asia.⁶⁷

Reinforcing pressures on countries to replicate draconian US drug policy, the system of de-certifying states⁶⁸ and blocking access to lending in the event of non-compliance with US strategy has led to punitive *mano dura* domestic drug policies that exacerbate rights violations and social injustice. This is manifest in the steep escalation of the Latin American prison population (120% over twenty

years) and gross disproportionalities in drug-related sentencing. For example, in Bolivia the maximum penalty for drug trafficking is 25 years, as opposed to 20 years for murder. Colombia has a maximum 30 years penalty for drug trafficking, while the maximum sentence for rape is 20 years. Matching trends of counter narcotics policing in the Global North,⁶⁹ it is low-level criminals, women and the poor that are most frequently subject to lengthy and punitive criminal justice proceedings in drugs related offences. The female prison population in Latin America almost doubled between 2006-2011, increasing from 40,000 to more than 74,000 inmates. The vast majority of incarcerated women are in prison for drug-related offenses. Estimates range from: 75-80% in Ecuador; 30-60% in México; 64% in Costa Rica; 60% in Brazil; 70% in Argentina; 90%+ of Argentina's foreign female prison population is incarcerated for drugs.⁷⁰

Compounding the environment of rights abuses are related problems of protracted pre-trial detentions, prison overcrowding and sentencing processes that include referral for forced abstinence based drug treatment programmes.⁷¹ In the Golden Triangle countries, an estimated 350,000 dependent drug users were held in drug detention centres.⁷² Robust domestic drug legislation is an impediment to access to essential medicines due to the climate of restriction and fear around the dispensing of medical opioids, with Latin America accounting for just 1% cent of opioid analgesics consumption,⁷³ while repression and stigmatisation of drug use contributes to unsafe drug administration practices and the spread of disease.

Spending on externally imposed, militarised counter narcotics strategies that have had negligible success in reducing drug volumes comes at high cost to the Global South, detracting scarce funds from capital and social spending.⁷⁴ As set out by Keefer, Loayza and Soares:

The Uribe government in Colombia committed the country to increasing defense expenditures from 3.6 percent of GDP in 2003 to 6 percent by 2006, increasing security forces from 250,000 (150,000 military plus 100,000 police) to 850,000 over four years. In contrast, public expenditures on health in Colombia were around 5 percent of the GDP in 2000.⁷⁵

By 2014, it was estimated spending on Colombia's drug war outstripped social spending at a ratio of 3:1. The most recent human development survey data for Colombia (2010) demonstrates: '7.6% of the population are multidimensionally poor while an additional 10.2% are near multidimensional poverty. The breadth of deprivation (intensity) in Colombia, which is the average of deprivation scores experienced by people in multidimensional poverty, is 42.2%.⁷⁶ Similarly in Honduras, where a 2010 report by the Honduran Commission of Human Rights cites approximately 220,000 young people (10% cent of the population aged 5-17) having no access to the education system, military and police expenditures are one of the highest in the world at 17% of GDP. The most recent survey data for Honduras (2011/2012) demonstrates: '20.7 percent of the population are multidimensionally poor while an additional 28.6 percent are near multidimensional poverty. The breadth of deprivation (intensity) in Honduras, which is the average of deprivation scores experienced by people in multidimensional poverty, is 47.4 percent.'⁷⁷

The Global North is complicit in wide scale, systematic human rights abuses in the name of drug control, while exporting the costs of its source focused 'drug war' to poorer countries:

The opportunity cost of these resources for developing countries, be it in terms of investments in health, education, or infrastructure, is almost surely larger than in richer countries and represents a substantial cost of the prohibition strategy that is generally neglected.⁷⁸

The 2016 UNGASS process (and AD advocacy lobby) must engage with the deleterious environment for development, health, rights and 'human security' generated by continued use of violent militarised state coercion. AD and coercion cannot sit side by side – AD in this context represents nothing more than 'war by other means.' Moreover the pro-AD lobby must engage with the implication of changes to US security strategy following from the US National Security Strategy of 2002,⁷⁹ which led to the integration of counter terrorism and counter narcotics operations, and Presidential Directive 44 and Department of Defence Directive 3000.05,⁸⁰ that made the State Department the focal point for reconstruction and stabilisation efforts, with responsibility for 'harmonizing' activities with the US military, whose role in these interagency operations includes stabilisation activities of restoring or providing essential services and repairing critical infrastructure (Quick Impact Projects).

While most immediately oriented to the experience of Afghanistan and Iraq, the move informs a new approach in militarised counter narcotics strategy and the role of development agencies as post conflict stabilisation actors within this framework, including in Colombia,⁸¹ Plan Mexico, the Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI), the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI) as well US strategy in Africa and South East / Central Asia. The implications are highlighted within the broader critique of AD below.

Metrics and Methods: The measurement of 'success' in AD programmes is reductions in drug crop cultivation based on the UNODC's institutional imperative to uphold the treaty system. Targets and appraisals are driven by short-termism configured around annual and quarterly reporting to the UNODC, and the US system. Reporting creates pressures on countries to achieve demonstrable declines, forcing *ad hoc* responses to rising cultivation levels, even though reliable estimates are difficult to obtain.⁸² UNODC metrics do not

incorporate human development indicators or measures of socio-economic progress (literacy, access to potable water or land titling etc) and the reporting system is a disincentive to long-term development strategies.

With the objective of AD being cultivation reduction, information gathering and programme methodologies prioritise data relating to crops, planting and harvesting not information about the conditions influencing household decisions around cultivation.⁸³ Inadequate assessment and analysis of development impacts in the design, implementation and evaluation of AD programmes means their potential to do harm and create new forms of exclusion and inequality is overlooked. For example in Afghanistan, there was negligible assessment of how opium poppy cultivators might benefit or be disadvantaged by AD interventions or what their responses might be to internationally funded ‘development’ programmes (relocation, replanting etc). As a result, there was: ‘no clear understanding of what influences households in their decision to move from illicit to licit livelihoods and how this differs by socioeconomic and gender group, as well as location’.⁸⁴

Absent data and information on the reasons for household cultivation, expensive AL and AD initiatives: ‘reduced the livelihood concept to that of income, microeconomics and farmers as profit maximisers’⁸⁵ to the neglect of engagement with the multifunctional role of opium poppy in livelihoods strategies. A review by the UK Independent Commission for Aid Impact⁸⁶ (ICAI) of the UK’s Department for International Development’s (DFID) £190 million annual aid budget in Afghanistan found poorly designed monitoring methodologies and inappropriate indicators to be common features of DFID projects and that:

The growth and livelihoods portfolio lacks strategic coherence. Weaknesses in design – particularly a lack of direct consultation with

intended beneficiaries and unproven theories of change – have made it harder for DFID to meet and assess its intended targets.

In the context of integrated peace and security operations in drug cultivating countries such as Afghanistan, direct ‘in field’ engagement by development agencies has been marginalised due to security concerns. This has resulted in a ‘defensive bunkering’⁸⁷ of an increasingly risk averse development community, with aid workers and NGOs in fortified compounds as military forces secure areas and initiate quick impact activities.

UNODC Capacity and Best Practice: As outlined in a review of AD experiences in the Andes: ‘Specialized AD agencies do not, like mainstream development institutions, have as their ultimate objective medium-term and long-term development. Their action in the field will therefore be of a more partial and limited nature.’⁸⁸ The implication is that AD is isolated from best practice in development and that the complexities of change in fragile agro-economies are frequently underestimated.⁸⁹

While there are a variety of technical tools and best practice manuals to support and mainstream AD, these are rarely integrated in practice. The relationship between AD and conflict has been ‘little studied’ despite application in situations of violent conflict and civil war, while gender mainstreaming has made negligible progress, addressed within AD projects with: ‘mixed results, dealing poorly with household gender roles and how they react to external pressure.’⁹⁰ There are also credibility issues around the models advocated as best practice in AD, such as the alleged ‘Miracle of San Martin’ in Peru.⁹¹

Despite the emphasis on stakeholder engagement, ownership and design of development initiatives, the criminalisation of cultivators under the 1961 Single Convention remains an impediment to meaningfully participatory processes, while US multiagency

operations are configured around security imperatives and hierarchical structures, not horizontal distribution of power.⁹² AD programmes continue to exclude local knowledge in the development of alternative options, they undermine municipal institutions and they erode cultivator confidence in national authorities and donor agencies.⁹³ The difficulties of engaging cultivators as stakeholders leads to strategies that do not accord with local traditions or constructs of community, most particularly where AD programmes conceptualise farmers as profit maximising individuals.

The use of the military in quick impact projects leads to the delivery of short term, top down projects by actors usually distrusted and feared by local communities. The result is an imbalance between the strong use of coercion and weak provision of AD, and the approach goes against AD best practice recommendations that emphasise:

*Alternative development projects led by security and other non-development concerns were typically not sustainable—and might result in the spread or return of illicit crops or in the materialization of other adverse conditions, including less security.*⁹⁴

Little progress has been made in mainstreaming AD into national development plans and donor support.⁹⁵ Afghanistan provided an entry point for maximising both development and counter narcotics impacts, however AD was a separate and individual pillar in the Afghan government's 2006 eight pillar counter narcotics strategy. This prevented mainstreaming of drug issues into national reconstruction and development strategy and made AD a discrete niche attracting its own funding, rather than: 'a goal to be achieved through the appropriate targeting and sequencing of eradication, interdiction and conventional development assistance.'⁹⁶ Separate from the eight pillars, Alternative Livelihoods programs intended to support the generation of legal economic alternatives

to the opium economy were channelled through the National Priority Programmes (NPP) (including the Microfinance Investment Support Facility in Afghanistan, National Emergency Employment Programme, and National Solidarity Programme (NSP). Delivery of projects under the framework of these programmes was not integrated,⁹⁷ programme areas core to AD such as the Programme for Skills and Market Linkages were not included in the NPP, initiatives were influenced by short-term opium reduction and security goals, rather than long term, integrated development strategies and 'best practice' in design and implementation including collation of household data and monitoring and evaluation of impacts on the poor was overlooked.⁹⁸

Technical guidelines for best practice in AD, including by the UNODC and EU stress the negative impacts of conditionality on assistance, particularly given cultivation levels cannot be accurately determined and farmers are subject to external pressures that they cannot control such as potential failure / price variations of cash crops. Nevertheless, conditionality has remained a cornerstone of US programmes, a practice that: 'sees development assistance as compensation rather than a means by which to promote equitable growth and empower the poor.'⁹⁹ The persistence of conditionality demonstrates lack of consensus within the drug control regime, lack of agreement on best practice, and core differences in the priority of donors.

Poor Targeting: Localised AD programme interventions have consistently benefitted farmers that are: a) easy to reach; b) not dependent on coca or opium poppy for livelihoods, and c) favourably positioned to transition to alternative income streams due to resource advantages such as ownership of land. While this enables short term reductions in cultivation levels and 'quick impact' results, these falls are not sustainable; they further marginalise the most insecure and vulnerable such as itinerant labourers and the landless,

while the provision of mechanical, chemical and infrastructure support to landowning farmers who are already connected to the legal economy inflates the value of their land and household income.

This generates or reinforces existing patterns of rural inequality and exclusion, in turn increasing the likelihood that those at the very bottom of the cultivation chain will seek out new areas and restart planting in order to sustain livelihoods.¹⁰⁰ In Afghanistan, AD did not directly target the land and resource poor most dependent on poppy cultivation, but accessible regions with agricultural potential or areas where the conflict had intensified. This compounded the marginalisation of the rural poor and increased cultivator vulnerability and political discontent in those areas where alternative livelihood opportunities were scarce.¹⁰¹

In multiagency responses that combine military security and stabilisation initiatives, AD has been skewed to consolidation objectives, with distribution determined by patterns of insurgency not cultivation or social exclusion. In Colombia, USAID / Government of Colombia AD activities focused on areas of paramilitary demobilisation (Catatumbo, the middle and lower Atrato, Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta) and not regions subject to spraying of illicit crops (Amazonia and Orinoco).¹⁰² The flexibility in resources and strategy associated with combined interventions is inimical to coherence in AD projects. In Afghanistan, 83% of villages reported receiving external assistance in 2007, with 64% receiving support from the national government, 21% from the UN and 14% from NGOs. Two years later, this had fallen to just 33% of villages as finances were re-oriented to the military 'surge' against the Taliban and as short term cultivation reductions were read as sustainable declines.¹⁰³ The UK's Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) found that in Afghanistan: 'Aid has often been used as a direct part of military operations, particularly interventions aimed at reducing opium poppy

growing and in the delivery of quick-impact projects aimed at winning the 'hearts and minds' of the local population.' The security led approach meant development funding was directed to areas where conflict not poverty was prevalent, causing: 'considerable resentment in the more peaceful provinces.'¹⁰⁴

Funding: AD remains underfunded within the UN system and among donors, with the UNODC failing to lead an institutional change process that reorients resources from enforcement to development.¹⁰⁵ The absence of mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating AD activities – a product of the UNODC's own reporting system – is a further impediment to securing financial support from donors, with national governments reluctant to commit resources that cannot be tracked and impacts evaluated.¹⁰⁶ Development organisations and multilateral institutions such as the World Bank do not contribute to AD because they are perceived as being 'economically unviable.'¹⁰⁷

Donors continue to channel counter narcotics funding along familiar institutional pathways - to specialised drugs agencies that focus on measurable, enforcement driven outputs of drug control such as seizures, arrests and eradication. Infrastructure projects such as roads and irrigation that provide cultivating communities with access to markets have been dynamic spurs of improvements in rural livelihoods but these are one off capital projects with responsibility for upkeep subsequently falling to the state or local authorities.

Market Led Approaches: AD / counter narcotics projects that indirectly address cultivation by promoting liberalisation of the formal economic sector and private sector participation in crop substitution and other forms of alternative livelihoods generation generate new forms of insecurity for cultivators from large economic interests in contexts where: commercial activities have links to the criminal economy, where private groups use violence to settle labour or localised conflicts

and when the commercial activity relates to environmentally degrading mono crop projects such as rubber plantations in South East Asia. AD / private sector initiatives have led to a number of 'white elephant' projects that lack linkages into rural economies and which are unsuitable for the agricultural conditions.¹⁰⁸

It is difficult to find any evidence 'macro-level' initiatives such as trade and tariff agreements that are intended to stimulate economic growth and which are classified as 'development' have been anything other than regressive. The US International Trade Commission found the 1991 Andean Trade Preferences Act (ATPA) impact on coca production in Colombia, Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador to have been: 'small and mostly indirect',¹⁰⁹ while the volume of goods exported was less than 1.5% of US imports. Although presented as an element of drug control, trade and tariff agreements have been more effective at locking source countries into market reforms than reducing dependence on drug crop cultivation.

Cultivators have little potential to capitalise on market and trade liberalisation processes. Lacking access to capital, collateral, credit or forms of identification, landless and itinerant rural communities are not positioned to benefit from the export opportunities that this type of EU and US agreement provides. The advantages instead accrue to existing private sector businesses and to financial and political interests that have access to markets, capital and infrastructure. This exacerbates the structural conditions of cultivation, such as inequality in the distribution of land and other resources, while simultaneously providing investment and transportation openings for high level operators in the drug trade. The illicit drugs industry has been a principal beneficiary of the market integration promoted by North / South agreements through the freer movement of capital, labour and goods such as NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement). Moreover strategies of privatisation, deregulation and related 'market openings' in contexts of states and political systems eroded

by drug trade penetration creates frameworks favourable to high level money laundering and the institutionalisation of criminal economic activity.

The 1991 ATPA, which expired in 2013, demonstrates that initiatives to stimulate formal economic growth have served only as a tool for raw material extraction from South to North. Petroleum and petroleum related products accounted for over 50% of exports from the four Latin American countries to the US under the ATPA. Moreover explicit in the ATPA was that preferences: 'were designed as a temporary bridge to a reciprocal trade relationship.'¹¹⁰ Bilateral trade agreements with Peru in 2009 and Colombia in 2012 'level the playing field' for the US by providing tariff free entry into Peru and Colombia for 80% of US industrial, consumer and agricultural exports and preferential access for US service suppliers.¹¹¹ According to Oxfam America,¹¹² the FTA forces Colombian agricultural products to compete without protection against US subsidized commodities. As a result:

Colombia's 1.8 million small farmers would see their net agricultural income fall by over 16 percent on average. The damage would be concentrated among nearly 400,000 small farmers, most of whom now earn less than the minimum wage but who would lose between 48 and 70 percent of their income. If 400,000 small farmers, who on average have less than five years of formal education, lose their livelihoods, their employment options will be limited.

A year after the introduction of the Colombian Trade Promotion Act: 'mass displacements jumped an incredible 83% in 2012, mostly in areas affected by the CTPA.'¹¹³

Innovative supply side initiatives that have broken with the orthodoxy (economic and political) of the US framework as in Bolivia under President Evo Morales (2005-) have faced a hostile environment, despite success in achieving reductions in cultivation and coercive

violence.¹¹⁴ Bolivia's trade preferences under the ATPA were suspended by the US following the government's 'Coca Yes, Cocaine No' strategy, impacting an estimated 25,000-50,000 jobs in the country's textile industry.¹¹⁵

CONCLUDING RECOMMENDATIONS

In his Synthesis Report on the Post-2015 Development Agenda,¹¹⁶ 'The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet', the UN Secretary General sees 2015 as: 'a unique opportunity for global leaders and people to end poverty, transform the world to better meet human needs and the necessities of economic transformation, while protecting our environment, ensuring peace and realizing human rights.'

Drug policy, and particularly as this relates to supply issues in the Global South must be incorporated into this agenda of change. Current approaches based on the securitisation of drugs by both the law enforcement and development communities are incompatible with post 2015 ambitions of: 'a path to inclusive and shared prosperity in a peaceful and resilient world where human rights and the rule of law are upheld.' To meaningfully embark on 'transformation' at this 'historic crossroads', development actors and institutions must indeed: 'lead and act with courage [...] embrace change' by recognising drugs as a development issue. Excluded, marginalised and insecure communities reliant on drug crop cultivation and employment in drug production cannot be excluded from Moon's ambition of: 'Change in our societies. Change in the management of our economies. Change in our relationship with our one and only planet.'

Lobbying for greater commitment to, and resources for AD programmes, including in national and regional action plans and at

the 2016 UNGASS, detracts from the serious and urgent need to critically reflect on the limitations of AD and the feasibility of development objectives within a prohibition oriented drug control framework. AD advocacy assumes benefits to drug control – and development - that are not proven, it is framed by a concept of 'development' that is unclear, contested and securitised and it neglects an accumulation of evidence that AD in its current form risks doing more harm than good. AD initiatives – national and niche, are a poorly funded, loosely 'owned', technically weak add-on to enforcement strategies and in this context the promotion of AD sits uncomfortably with wider post 2015 aspirations of 'sustainable development for all.'

AD neither delivers sustainable cultivation declines at the global level, nor does it realise development objectives - despite ambitions of refinement presented by Development Oriented Drug Control. National ownership and stakeholder engagement is recognised as crucial to the achievement of development goals. Yet drug control and AD within that, rests on adhesion to external targets to be achieved through externally determined, generic strategies policed by military force and threat of economic sanction. Fundamental to the concept of development is citizen agency and the redistribution of political and economic power. These principles are not realised in AD, which skirts complex issues such as the impact on stakeholder engagement resulting from criminalisation; the implications for peace, development and human security of escalating militarisation; the balloon effect, and politically complex and sovereign issues such as land titling and citizenship.

In seeking to better integrate development and drug control objectives, AD and DODC embed source-focused responses, perpetuating systemic bias against 'organic' drug producers in the Global South and cycles of violence. Moreover in bringing the development community into drug policy,

DODC and AD advocacy overlook criticism of the development ‘industry’ in relation to duplication, waste, inadequate ‘reach’ to the poor¹¹⁷ and the ‘securitisation of development’ exemplified by, for example, the performance of UK’s DFID in Afghanistan.

AD in all of its various iterations does not address the need for complex political change to achieve equitable and pro-poor outcomes. Rather AD emerges as a sticking plaster that diverts from the need for profound change in the international approach to both drugs *and* development. Continued donor support to the patchwork of AD initiatives in this context is a misuse of resources, most particularly at a time when countries of the Global North are mired in economic austerity, and international human development goals are unmet.

Drug supply is a global health and development issue and should rightly be situated within the portfolio of revised and reformed development theory and practice. At the September 2014 launch of the Global Commission on Drug Policy report *Taking Control: Pathways to Drug Policies That Work*¹¹⁸ Louise Arbour, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights argued that the UNODC was not positioned to implement rights based approaches in drug policy as these relate to demand side issues, highlighting that: ‘United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, it’s interesting it’s not called the UN Office of Drugs and Health’.

The UNODC is not an office for Drugs and Development. Pretension to such a role is problematic and should be resisted. It is inconceivable that an office whose remit currently includes corruption, firearms, HIV and AIDS, migrant smuggling, fraudulent medicines, maritime piracy, terrorism prevention, forest crime and money laundering is positioned to lead on development challenges in some of the most complex and violence prone regions of the world. A transformative and courageous international approach in 2015 and 2016 would galvanise moves to re-allocate the ‘drug’ remit of the

UNODC to health and development agencies, with a rationalised UNODC refocused on transnational crime. But this maximum framework for change has to question the type, role and strategies of development agencies and the utility, sensitivity and relevance of orthodox development recommendations that promote marketization, entrepreneurialism and global integration strategies in drug environments.

In the preface to the 2014 World Drug Report, UNODC Executive Director Yury Fedotov praised the 2014 High Level Review of the international drug problem for providing an: ‘open, inclusive dialogue [...] on the most effective way to counter the world drug problem.’¹¹⁹ In the context outlined above, multinational dialogue - especially in the lead up to the 2016 UNGASS processes must at a minimum consider:

- *Balancing the debate* on harm reduction, rights and decriminalisation to incorporate consideration of these approaches to supply side aspects. There is substantive research and policy initiative on demand side issues, but a paucity of analysis and discussion of supply side alternatives. The vacuum of research on development oriented and rights based supply side options needs to be addressed, including through large scale, international fieldwork and conference events. More and better research and evaluation of AD as this relates to human security and development dimensions is required and the plurality of understanding around AD, including by increasingly influential players in international drug control such as Russia and China needs to be acknowledged and negotiated;
- *Expanding the space for national ownership of supply side issues* including through discussions to revise the 1961 Single Convention as this relates to cultivation. Unlike consumption issues, where reforms can be framed within a ‘sovereign’

discourse and the (limited) latitude provided by the 1961 Single Convention, supply questions impact both South and North, while the 1961 Convention and the coercive manner of its enforcement provides no space for pragmatism. This delimits national ownership and culturally appropriate interventions. The experience of Bolivia demonstrates the limited room for innovation and sovereignty within the control system and the 1961 Single Convention, which do not recognise the complexity and tensions of change processes. The constraints on nationally owned responses in source countries and regions, including through the threat of economic sanction must be mitigated and avenues explored to rebalance the drug control model;

- *Scaling up capacity on development within the UNODC* for as long as it continues to involve itself in development initiatives, including to improve the design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation (metrics) of AD projects and to ensure that AD programmes implement best practice and minimise the risk of harm; embracing a wider system review of UNODC metrics and reporting requirements away from the focus on enforcement (seizures, arrests, eradication) to incorporate human development / health and well-being / governance indicators;
- *Providing a forum for drug, security and development communities from around the world* to: share methodologies and lessons learned, and engage in ‘out of the box’ thinking on complex supply questions, including how these relate to structural inequalities, the role of the state, peacebuilding and multidimensional poverty; explore best practice in enforcement measured against development indicators such as violence reduction and community engagement; build a deep and broad network of

participation and information exchange incorporating community stakeholders, NGOs and grassroots organisations.

Ultimately, as outlined by Barrett:

The war on drugs has been a systematic human rights onslaught. It has eroded and crowded out constitutional values democratic societies should defend. It has fuelled urban violence and hindered peaceful resolution of conflicts. It has been a consistent barrier to development in producer nations. It has been a vector of disease and an economic catastrophe; billions poured down the sinkhole of tail-chasing drug enforcement at the expense of proven, life-saving harm reduction and treatment interventions¹²⁰

Addressing the damage that the ongoing drug ‘war’ in the Global South has caused to governance, democracy, security, rights and livelihoods requires fundamental overhaul of guiding principles (prohibition), institutions (the UNODC), strategy (criminalisation) and the drug treaty framework, complemented on the development side by post 2015 approaches that meaningfully embrace citizen empowerment and the needs and agency of the poorest of the poor, including those reliant on illicit incomes from the drug trade.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

With thanks to Dave Bewley-Taylor, Neil Cooper, Tom Kramer and Desmond Cohen for comments on an earlier version of this paper. Any errors of fact or interpretation remain with the author.

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