Chapter 4

Strengthening communities
4.1 Controlled drugs and development

There is clear evidence of the nexus between controlled drugs and development, but insufficient effort has been made to identify and implement approaches that address these issues in a cohesive manner. Bridging the current gap between controlled drugs and development programmes will mitigate the negative consequences associated with narrow drug control policies and support the realisation of broader development goals.

Why is it important to link controlled drugs and development?

The UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs, see Box 1), adopted by 189 world leaders at the UN Millennium Summit in 2000, are the development ‘blueprint’ agreed to by all the world’s countries and leading development institutions intended to drive this century’s international development efforts. Although aiming to capture the key development areas where concerted efforts are essential, the eight MDGs and targets do not make a single reference to the issue of controlled drugs. Further, the UN agency responsible for controlled drugs, UNODC, is not included in the 27 UN agencies that are partners to the MDGs.

The absence of references to controlled drugs in the core development aspirations for the 21st century is indicative of a lack of attention to the link between drugs and development. This is particularly striking with regard to the first MDG, which addresses poverty, since drug problems are most often both a cause and consequence of poverty. Development constraints, in particular a lack of realistic economic alternatives, often foster drug cultivation, supply and consumption. In turn, drug use often results in a range of other development problems, including loss of productivity, poor health and negative impacts on community cohesion.

Despite clear evidence of the nexus between controlled drugs and development, little effort has been made by the development community to identify approaches that address these issues together in a cohesive manner. Yet the integration of drug components into programmes in the fields of rural development, poverty reduction, gender, HIV/AIDS, environmental protection and good governance, can bring results that are more sustainable and more likely to produce a long-term positive and wider development impact than projects with a narrow focus on drugs.
Understanding the nexus between controlled drugs and development

There are clear links between controlled drugs and development. For example, drug dependence can contribute to diminished health, leading to higher healthcare costs and decreased earning at the population level. This is most noticeable in the area of HIV/AIDS, where sharing contaminated needles increases the risk of HIV infection among people who inject drugs and fuels the broader spread of the epidemic. In addition, involvement in the illicit drug market absorbs people and resources that would otherwise be employed in licit economic activities, and the huge profits associated with the drug market foster organised crime and corruption, which in turn inhibit the development of good governance. Environmental degradation resulting from the cultivation and refinement of naturally derived drugs is also widely documented.4

Drug policy itself has a direct impact on development objectives. Many communities that grow opium or coca, for example, do so because of lack of realistic economic alternatives. Short-term crop-eradication campaigns have been extremely costly and have often destroyed drug-producing communities’ only form of economic survival, without providing alternatives to those affected. In addition, drug law enforcement results in significant numbers of people being incarcerated for minor possession charges, resulting in prison overcrowding, further depriving families and workforces of economic providers. Such policies also divert resources from other priority areas, such as investments in public health and education.5 This relates not only to the huge costs of finding and destroying drugs but also to the economic, human, health and social costs to societies across the world, resulting from the marginalisation, discrimination against, and repression of people who grow and use drugs.

Exerting pressure on drug control projects to deliver immediate, tangible ‘drug-centred’ results is socially and economically counter-productive, and bears evident short- and long-term negative consequences on broader development objectives. The idea of ‘rapid success’ can rarely be applied to drug control. In the same vein, development cannot happen overnight.
Tackling controlled drugs through the Millennium Development Goals

To address the disconnect between drugs and development strategies, it may be useful to start by recognising that drug policies are linked to the MDGs.

Drug policy and the eradication of poverty

MDG 1 aims to reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day.

Addressing poverty in drug-producing areas

Drug crops often represent a key element of smallholder families’ survival strategy. Drug production is mainly concentrated in developing countries and undertaken by the poorest and most vulnerable groups. They often inhabit hostile environments, and are subject to inequitable land tenure and credit arrangements. They usually only receive a share of the final crop or may be forced to sell their share in advance at prices well below the harvest time rate. The farmers usually benefit very little in terms of revenue. In Afghanistan, for example, less than 20% of the US$3 billion in opium profits goes to impoverished farmers, while more than 80% goes into the pockets of Afghan’s opium traffickers and their political connections. Even heftier profits are generated outside of Afghanistan by international drug traffickers.6 This reality is being played out in many other countries, including opium-producing countries such as Burma/Myanmar, or coca-producing countries such as Colombia or Peru.

Drug control responses in drug-producing areas have traditionally taken the form of standardised ‘one-size-fits-all’ opium/coca bans, crop eradication and the criminalisation of producers. Even where there have been attempts to promote alternative livelihoods, these have often been unrealistic in terms of the alternatives pursued (e.g. production of goods without market access or inadequate to the local geographical contexts), or too short term to enable communities to make the necessary adjustments. The effects of drug control measures in terms of sustainable reductions in poverty have been mainly negative: many communities that used to cultivate drugs now face food shortages, reduced access to health and education due to diminished incomes, growing indebtedness, displacement and/or forced migration.7 The vacuum left by the sudden disappearance of their primary source of economic survival can sometimes force these communities to engage in survival alternatives involving sex work or increased participation in the drug trade.8

Repressive measures against consumers and producers demonstrably reduce neither the consumption nor the cultivation of crops destined for the illicit drug market in the long term. Yet, their impacts can push further the spiral of violence (see Section 4.2: Reducing drug market violence), poverty and migration, and raise prices on the illicit market, which in turn makes cultivation and trafficking attractive.

Some positive alternatives exist – in some Latin American and South East Asian drug-producing areas, promising approaches have recently been developed.9 These programmes focus on long-term strategies that address the indirect causes of the drug problem, going beyond the immediate objectives of drug control (see Section 4.3: Promoting alternative livelihoods). A number of lessons have been learned from such approaches and are discussed below.

- Programmes must go beyond the immediate objective of crop eradication and aim instead at breaking those cycles that hinder human development and stability. Crop eradication should happen only within the context of broader rural development and programmes for poverty reduction, to ameliorate drug-producing communities’ living conditions and break their dependence on the drug economy.
• Programmes need to prioritise increasing food production, strengthening and diversifying income-generating opportunities and markets, and improving access to education and health services.

• Efforts should be undertaken to improve opportunities for participation by marginalised groups – such as ethnic minorities, indigenous people, women and young people – in the design and implementation of these programmes, to reduce their vulnerability to drug production, couriersing and use.

• Areas where cultivation of crops destined for the drug market takes place are heterogeneous in terms of the nature and size of cultivation zones, and socio-cultural, ethnic, economic, legal and political structures. Policies must incorporate local culture and the knowledge and skills of local communities.

• Long-term efforts to improve institutional frameworks should be an overarching objective of any drugs and development programmes (e.g. promote dialogue between government agencies and marginalised groups, increase the efficiency and transparency of public institutions, and address human rights violations).

• In societies that experience socio-economic transition, development efforts should address social and economic inequality, particularly among young people.\textsuperscript{10}

\textbf{Addressing poverty in drug-using communities}

Attempts to reduce consumption by imposing legal sanctions have failed to curb drug use. The deterrence principle has often exacerbated the social marginalisation of such groups. Overall, the recourse to criminal justice measures to respond to what are primarily health and socio-economic issues has been inappropriate. There is ample room for addressing drug use, its causes and its consequences within social protection strategies. Social protection nets within development programmes need to be remodelled in order to reach vulnerable people who are, or may become, involved in the drug market.

\textbf{Drug policy and gender issues}

MDG 3 calls for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Over the last decade, gender issues have become a core area of development practitioners’ discussions and have been given a prominent role within the MDGs. However, gender considerations have been largely absent from drug policies. The predominant discourse about women who use drugs is in the context of vulnerability to HIV and STIs.\textsuperscript{11} Other factors have received little attention in the context of drug policy and overall development strategies, including women’s social status and often low autonomy, social stigma, abuses from the police or courts and fear of punishment or loss of child custody, and the lack of women-centred health care and treatment services for harm reduction and drug dependence.\textsuperscript{12}

Programmes and policies have also taken little notice of the particular role played by women in drug cultivation and trafficking. Women are involved in most stages of opium poppy cultivation, and in areas of conflict are often required to fill the labour gap left by men involved in the conflict. Furthermore, women are often used as drug couriers for drug trafficking (see Box 2).
Box 2. Gender, poverty and drug couriering

From 2006 to 2009, the number of foreign women detained for drug-trafficking offences in Brazil rose by 253%. Similarly, in the last decade, the female UK prison population has doubled and is still rising. Official UK statistics show a 60% increase in the number of foreign national female prisoners who have committed drug offences, mainly drug trafficking. These are almost always first-time offenders from the poorest countries in the world, with the majority coming from Jamaica and Nigeria. These ‘international drug traffickers’ are in fact drug couriers. Despite the extreme dangers they face, the reason women become drug couriers is a relatively simple one – it is almost always due to situations of extreme poverty.

Incarcerating these women for lengthy sentences (in most cases between 6 and 8 years in the UK) has had little impact on the large global trafficking networks, which can rely on an endless, easily replaceable pool of desperate couriers. Rather, poverty-reduction approaches, income-generating programmes and women-empowerment strategies in the countries of origin would surely be more effective measures. This would prevent these women from falling prey to the exploitation of criminal groups, and deprive the large drug-trafficking organisations of this cheap and expendable manpower resource, upon whose desperation traffickers build their money and power.

A few programmes do incorporate strategies that place a genuine focus on the needs and particular characteristics of women affected by controlled drugs, with special attention to their cultural and social contexts. Where they exist,14 such strategies:

- ensure that gender assessments are part of the situation analysis for all drugs and development projects, and that programmes are designed to ensure women and men’s equitable participation and access to services
- identify and address legal, political, socio-economic and cultural barriers that keep women vulnerable to drug traffickers
- promote awareness and education campaigns to reduce stigma and empower communities to address women’s drug-use problems
- promote gender-responsive drug programmes through advocacy and networking at the international, national and community levels and within multi-sector programmes; women’s needs should be included in guidelines, targets and drug strategies (see Box 3)
- link treatment programmes for drug dependence and facilities such as prenatal and obstetric/gynaecological services, child welfare/protection services, crisis services including women’s shelters or sexual assault services and mental health services, to provide the array of support that women require
- ensure that women who use drugs can benefit from the protection of the law in full respect of their rights
- address linkages between drug use and sex work by, for example, reaching sex workers through harm reduction services or partnering with programmes targeted at sex workers, to provide harm reduction services.
Box 3. A practical checklist of concrete steps to assist gender integration throughout development programme cycles

The HIV/AIDS Asia Regional Programme (HAARP) supports gender-sensitive harm reduction programmes in South East Asia. The HAARP gender integration strategy, developed in 2008, includes a ‘gender checklist’. The HAARP Technical Support Unit first used this checklist to guide a consultation process with country programmes to help them reflect on their progress, challenges and opportunities in relation to gender-responsive programming. The checklist includes various statements that describe different aspects of a good-quality gender-responsive programme. These components are listed under the following headings:

- partnerships and engagement
- capacity building
- programmes and services
- monitoring and evaluation.

Country programmes can use this checklist to assess their progress towards comprehensive, gender-sensitive programming for both men and women who inject drugs, as well as their partners and spouses.

Drug policy, HIV prevention, and public health

MDG 6 calls for the halting and reversing of the spread of HIV/AIDS and the achievement of universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS.

In many parts of the world, the HIV epidemic is driven by the sharing of contaminated equipment for injecting drug use. Efforts in most countries to develop and implement pragmatic health-driven and harm reduction responses to drug use have sometimes been limited or undermined by drug policies based primarily on punitive approaches.

The criminalisation of drug use and possession can hinder attempts by people who inject drugs to engage with available HIV prevention, treatment and care services. According to non-governmental sources reporting to UNAIDS, only 16% of countries have laws or regulations protecting people who use drugs from discrimination. It is further estimated that 40% of countries have laws that interfere with the ability of service providers to reach people who inject drugs. In particular, restrictions on access to OST for people dependent on opioids constitute an important barrier to HIV prevention and other public health efforts.

Evidence-based harm reduction strategies are effective in reducing HIV transmission among people who use drugs.

There are a number of evidence-based harm reduction services that can be offered to people who use drugs. These include, for example, OST and NSPs (for more information, see Section 3.2: Harm reduction).
Drug policy and the protection of the environment

MDG 7 seeks to integrate sustainable development into country policies and reverse the loss of environmental resources.

There are numerous opportunities and ways to link environmental protection strategies with programmes to reduce supply within such a framework.

Crop eradication is a major cause of deforestation as farmers move cultivation to remote areas after their fields have been destroyed. In the Andean-Amazon region, this often involves burning down plots in national parks and the tropical forest, resulting in great damage to rich but fragile eco-systems.

A number of environmental and health consequences are also associated with crop eradication. In Colombia, the glyphosate sprayed over coca fields by US planes has caused gastrointestinal problems, fevers, headaches, nausea, colds and vomiting in people, and similar effects have been detected in animals. The spraying has sometimes forced whole villages to be abandoned. Management of natural resources in drug-cultivating regions is often inappropriate and results in increasing clearance of forests and drug cultivation in conjunction with drug trafficking. To counter these problems, a number of measures have been locally considered and/or implemented (see Box 4), including:

• development of new approaches for the cultivation and processing of agricultural products; these can include supporting small producers’ associations in sectors such as fish farming, fruit growing and product enhancement (e.g. fruit juices) and in the marketing of these products

• promotion of agricultural and forestry measures, with particular emphasis on environmental compatibility, as well as off-farm measures

• transformation of indigenous populations’ extensive knowledge on the cultivation of medicinal plants into income-generating opportunities for their communities

• support to small and medium-sized livestock farmers to promote economically sustainable, and socially self-reliant, livestock farming, by making production and marketing both more profitable and more ecologically sound.

Box 4. Promoting legal sources of income in drug-cultivation zones in Peru

The Selva Central Region of Peru is prone to drug cultivation because it attracts migrants from the uplands and offers limited licit income-generating opportunities. Management of natural resources in the region is usually inappropriate. One result of this is increasing clearance of the tropical forest; another is the possible expansion of coca cultivation in conjunction with drug trafficking and all the negative effects on the ecology, economy and social infrastructure that that entails.

The ‘Promoting the Production of Niche Products in Two Coca Cultivation Regions of Peru’ project was launched in 1997 to support selected indigenous producer groups in diversifying and marketing their medicinal plants and non-timber forest products. The aim was not only to transform the indigenous population’s extensive knowledge on medicinal plants into income-generating opportunities for their communities, but also to help counteract the marginalisation of drug policies should seek to protect the environment.
these groups. Since they did not own any coca fields, they were usually not included in alternative development projects. Yet, these communities, which comprise around 5–10% of the population in the cultivation zones, were continuously subject to cultural and socio-economic pressures and the threat of displacement. Building on the indigenous groups’ existing knowledge, it proved possible to both increase and assure the quality of products, and contacts were established with distributors to market the exportable products.

For the indigenous population, the cultivation and marketing of native medicinal plants is an economic option that is socially and ecologically compatible, is rooted in their traditional knowledge, and at the same time permits integration into modern markets. These types of projects aim to ensure that natural resources and traditional knowledge are valued and protected, while legal economic and social structures are strengthened and made more sustainable, in order to undermine the foundations of illicit activities.

**A wider partnership for development**

At the 2010 UN Summit, world leaders reiterated that ‘all the Millennium Development Goals are interconnected and mutually reinforcing’ and underlined the need to pursue the MDGs through a holistic and comprehensive approach. Regrettably, they have so far failed to address the interconnection between drugs and development, which has inevitably severed any holistic and comprehensive approach to the pursuit of the MDGs, and hindered the achievement of lasting success in those areas.

Over the years, partners in co-operation have adopted differing positions and disjointed approaches to drugs and development. This is despite collective endorsement of the MDGs and other guiding principles, such as those articulated in the UN drug conventions and the 1998 United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Drugs, which include the principle of human development based on shared responsibility for drug consumption, trafficking and cultivation. The collective endorsement of the MDGs has had little impact on the practice of disjointed drugs and development approaches.

The USA, for example, has put huge efforts into eradicating drug crops as a means to reduce supply, whereas the EU prioritises the establishment of sustainable licit livelihood systems before crop eradication and operates on the basis that development co-operation should not be conditional on particular drug control targets. Overall, very few international donors have sought to reduce drug-related problems by promoting broader development processes. Even fewer have seen drug control as an instrument of human development or understood that supply reduction is more likely to result from long-term integrated development processes than from short-term interventions that bear severe consequences for the communities concerned.

Regardless of the approach, it is now clear that drugs and development projects implemented in isolation from one another have not been able to reduce the harms associated with the global drug market, nor have they enhanced socio-economic development. Conversely, some have created new vulnerabilities and/or exacerbated existing ones.

While the severity of the drug crisis has triggered some important calls for a critical review of current drug control strategies (see Section 2.1: Drug law reform), it is also time to broaden the scope of the analysis and action and adopt more comprehensive policies. Policies and strategies must jointly
address the causes of the problem (especially those directly resulting from narrow drug control policies) rather than simply its symptoms. Hence, drug use needs to be addressed in conjunction with issues of unemployment, social exclusion, discrimination and poor housing and health care, especially among marginalised communities; drug production and drug-couriering must be linked to rural development and poverty reduction; and drug trafficking must be tackled by targeting the real beneficiaries of drug profits and must thus be linked to strategies that tackle money laundering and organised crime.

Alternative political strategies should also seriously consider options in relation to the depenalisation, decriminalisation or legal regulation of drug consumption and/or production (see Section 2.1: Drug policy reform).

**Recommendations**

1) Considerations of short- and long-term impact on social and economic development, with particular attention to the MDGs’ objectives and targets, should be the foundations upon which to build comprehensive development approaches to controlled drugs.

2) Drugs and development programmes must be bridged, and involve all relevant stakeholders in the design and implementation of integrated policies.

3) A common language and understanding of the overall objectives of drug policy and development must be agreed upon by all stakeholders working on drug policy and development, prior to the design of drugs and development programmes.

4) Integrated drugs and development programmes should promote positive change in the lives of people involved in drug production, courierring, trafficking and consumption, in order to provide them with viable alternatives to the illicit drug market. These programmes should address specific gender-related issues.

5) Drug policies should no longer aim to reduce the scale of the drug market but should aspire to reduce the harms associated with these markets through a development-oriented approach (see Section 4.2: Reducing drug market violence).

6) Alternative livelihoods should be promoted as the only viable option for reducing the production of crops used in the illicit drug market (see Section 4.3: Promoting alternative livelihoods).

7) Drug policies enshrined in development programmes should seek to promote the economic, social and cultural rights of indigenous people and use their knowledge, experience and participation to develop policies and programmes that affect them (see Section 4.4: Protecting the rights of indigenous people).

**Key resources**

Drugs and Development Programme & Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit GTZ (2001), *Drugs and development in Latin America* (German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Deutsche)


## Endnotes


This is particularly the case of East Asian countries. Higher-than-average levels of social and economic development seem to favour methamphetamine use by younger populations, particularly school-age youngsters and university students in Thailand, Macao and Hong Kong. Rapid socio-economic changes in this region also mean that the poorest and most vulnerable groups in society (such as for example truck drivers, fishermen, farmers, migrant workers) are often forced to accept bad working conditions with low pay and long work hours. These factors encourage the use of drugs, particularly amphetamine-type-stimulants, Chouvy P.A., & Meissonnier J. (2005), Yaa Baa: production, traffic, and consumption of methamphetamine in mainland Southeast Asia (Singapore: Singapore University Press).

Female sex workers who inject drugs receive attention because of their elevated HIV risk and potential to act as a so-called ‘bridge’ by which HIV can be transmitted to sex worker clients and then to their non-sex-worker partners. Research on sex workers who inject drugs is often narrowly focused, concentrating on the containment of sex workers who inject drugs as a ‘vector of disease’, rather than on the health, safety, and human rights of people who use drugs or sex workers themselves. See Pinkham S, Malinowska-Sempruch K (2007), Women, harm reduction, and HIV (New York: International Harm Reduction Development Program of the Open Society Institute)


HIV/AIDS Asia Regional Programme (HAARP) (2008), Gender integration strategy, http://www.haarp-online.org/Link-Click.aspx?fileticket=Us_k4jMTM_o%3D&tabid=2171


EU presidency paper (4 July 2008), Key points identified by EU experts to be included in the conclusion of the open-ended intergovernmental expert working group on international cooperation on the eradication of illicit drug crops and on alternative development (Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), http://www.idpc.net/sites/default/files/library/UNODCEND2008WG33.pdf

A notable exception is Germany, which pursues drug control objectives within wider development strategies under the concept of “development-oriented drug control”. See http://idpc.net/sites/default/files/library/development-oriented-drug-policy.pdf

4.2 Reducing drug market violence

Drug policies and law-enforcement strategies should focus on reducing the violence associated with drug markets rather than their overall scale, and reduce levels of socio-economic inequality in the areas most affected by them.

Why is reducing drug market violence important?

Urban violence and organised crime are some of the most worrying aspects of the global drug market. As those involved in the illicit drug market cannot appeal to legal methods to avoid or settle their disputes, they often engage in violence to protect their reputation, revenues, territory and profits. The extraordinarily high profit margins available to drug traffickers and dealers also provide them with great incentives to take the risks that come with the violent drug trade (see Box 1).

Box 1. Former UNODC Executive Director statement

‘The first unintended consequence is a huge criminal black market that now thrives in order to get prohibited substances from producers to consumers. Whether driven by a ‘supply push’ or a ‘demand pull’, the financial incentives to enter this market are enormous. There is no shortage of criminals competing to claw out a share of a market in which hundred fold increases in price from production to retail are not uncommon.'

Recently, many regions have experienced increased levels of drug market violence. The Caribbean has become the region most affected by lethal violence; murder rates in Jamaica reached 58 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2008, before dropping slightly in 2011. Similarly, Mexico is currently experiencing an explosion of violence related to the drug market – since December 2006, at least 47,000 people have died as a result of drug-related violence, and Ciudad Juarez, on the border with the USA, is the most violent city in the world. In contrast, other Latin American cities have experienced a reduction in murder rates compared to a decade ago. Bogotá (Colombia), which used to be the world's most violent city, has seen its murder rate decline to 21.5 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2011. Similarly, many US cities that experienced spikes in urban violence in the 1990s have seen more recent declines. Despite hosting some of the most lucrative drug markets, European cities are less affected by large-scale urban violence.

Evidence suggests that increases in violence are largely linked to the transit routes of controlled drugs and related drug consumption in areas where poverty is high and governance is weak. Puerto Rico had a very low murder rate until it became a trans-shipment point for drugs en route to the USA. Traffickers...
paid the local middlemen with drugs, which led to a surge in drug use and violent crime in the 1990s. The same phenomenon is now occurring in West Africa, which has become a new transit area for drugs en route to Europe.

Thus far, governments have believed that implementing tough drug laws against drug traffickers and users would automatically reduce violence by removing drug markets. However, these measures have not succeeded in reducing the scale of the global drug market and related violence. In practice the opposite has often happened and the use of law enforcement by the police and sometimes the military has tended to exacerbate levels of violence. An approach focusing on shaping the illicit market to make it less harmful, coupled with socio-economic development and strengthening of justice institutions and community ties are more effective in reducing violence, and reducing the reach of powerful organised criminals. Some experts have recently started to promote such an approach as the application of ‘harm reduction for the supply side’.  

Examples of drug-related violence
There are various stages in the journey of drugs from their cultivation to their consumption, and each is associated with different forms of violence.

Drug production
Violence may be employed to control the crops destined for the illicit drug market. This includes the use of violence by individuals and groups wanting to protect their crops from seizures or destruction by state authorities or criminal rivals. In Colombia, clashes often occur between farmers and factions of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. Violence is also commonly employed in Afghanistan. In 2001, the Taliban severely restricted the production of opium through threats of violence to farmers who grew opium poppy. North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) soldiers are also engaged in ongoing deadly operations to control Afghan opium fields. In the Andean region, less direct forms of violence include poisoning food crops and water supplies and displacement of farmers because of aerial herbicide fumigation campaigns.

Crops destined for the illicit market also tend to proliferate in areas affected by conflict. In Colombia, for example, coca and poppies are cultivated in areas where both left-wing guerrillas and right-wing paramilitaries fight for territorial control or control of the various stages of the illicit drug industry. Violent incursions by the Colombian army add to the pressure on the local population and the abrogation of their human rights.

Drug trafficking
Significant levels of violence are associated with trafficking of drugs en route to Europe and North America, especially in Central America and the Caribbean. Mexico is particularly affected by drug-related violence because of intense conflicts among heavily armed trafficking gangs and between drug-trafficking organisations and state authorities, especially since the Calderón government intensified its war on the drugs cartels. In 2003, following the imprisonment of several leaders of the Gulf cartel, the Sinaloa cartel aggressively attempted to seize control of their lucrative smuggling routes. The government responded with a major crackdown against drug cartels in 2006. The conflict unleashed an upsurge of violence in border cities (see Figure 1).
Recently, tough law enforcement in the Caribbean has forced drug traffickers to find alternative trade routes. Drugs trafficked into Europe are now shipped via West Africa, which is currently experiencing an increase in drug use and drug-related violence. This is a result of the so-called ‘balloon effect’ (for a definition, see Box 2 in Section 2.2: Effective drug law enforcement).

**Retail markets**

High levels of violence and intimidation are associated with street-level dealing. However, retail markets are not necessarily and continually violent, and co-operative relations can develop between street drug dealers. However, this requires that the government or local authorities realise that there will always be some level of drug dealing and that the new focus should be on targeting those retail markets that cause most harms to society, while implicitly tolerating other forms of less harmful retail markets.

**The nature of drug markets**

Several factors influence the levels of violence associated with drug markets:

- **the degree to which the wholesale drug trade has infiltrated the institutional structure of a city** – cities in Latin America, the Caribbean and West Africa, where drug markets have become entwined with competition between local businesses, bureaucracies and politicians are, for example, highly vulnerable to violence

- **the type of retail drug market** – open-air, street-based drug markets tend to be violent, as dealers compete for cash, customers, territory and reputation. By contrast, delivery-style markets are associated with lower levels of violence, as dealers consciously avoid violence so as not to attract the attention of rivals and the police. Even though the overall prevalence of drug use in the two types of drug markets is usually comparable, hidden markets avoid some of the negative effects of open street dealing, with important implications for community safety, neighbourhood reputations and motivations for young men to aspire to criminal lifestyles. Delivery-style markets are also more mobile, with dealers often switching delivery points to avoid the police and rival dealers. This means that the reduction in violence is accompanied by a reduction in the spatial concentration of problems related to the drug market in economically vulnerable neighbourhoods.
• **socio-economic conditions** – cities and neighbourhoods that are socio-economically vulnerable, suffering from lack of employment opportunities or urban segregation, are most vulnerable to drug markets and violence. Deprivation also causes low community cohesion, reducing the potential for informal social control of drug use and violence

• **state violence** – when law-enforcement agencies increase the intensity of their operations against drug markets, rates of urban violence can soar. In some cases, the state can become one of the main sources of drug market violence. Even if we leave aside those countries that still use the death penalty for drug offences, there are others (including at various times Thailand [see Box 2], Mexico and Brazil) where drug control policies have led to high levels of urban violence.

**Box 2. Thailand's 2003 war on drugs**

In February 2003, the Thai government launched a 'war on drugs', which resulted in the extrajudicial killing of approximately 2,800 people, the arbitrary arrest of several thousand more, and the use of extreme levels of violence by government officials. In August 2007, the military-installed government of General Surayud Chalanont appointed a special committee to investigate the extrajudicial killings during the 2003 war on drugs. The committee's report, which has never been made public, found that of the 2,819 people killed between February and April 2003, more than 1,400 were not involved in the drug market, and that there was no apparent reason for killing them.

• **the availability of firearms** – drug markets flooded with automatic and semi-automatic weapons are naturally more lethally violent than other markets. Once guns are introduced into a drug market, it is exceptionally difficult to eliminate them. This provides an incentive both to prevent the development of violent drug markets and to limit the availability of firearms among the general population.

**Promoting a harm reduction focus for the supply side**

The challenge for policy makers is to design law-enforcement strategies that create incentives for drug dealers to avoid the worst aspects of violence, intimidation and corruption.

There has recently been a shift in focus from several local governments that have experimented with new policies seeking to shape the illicit drug market in order to reduce its associated harms and violence. These policies have primarily focused on tackling the underlying causes of drug-related violence and involvement in organised crime, through a combination of law-enforcement efforts and socio-economic programmes that seek to:

• promote good governance and the rule of law

• fight corruption within police forces and government institutions

• provide health and socio-economic services to communities that had so far been outside of the reach of the state; this includes the construction of healthcare facilities, the promotion of education with the provision of scholarships, the construction of libraries, parks and community centres, creation of life-skill programmes, etc

• strengthen community ties and the involvement of community representatives in the design and implementation of programmes seeking to reduce drug market violence

New policies have focused on tackling the underlying causes of drug-related violence through a combination of law-enforcement efforts and socio-economic programmes.
• involve local policy makers in the co-ordination and support of local strategies.

The new policy adopted in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, has attracted much attention in Latin America and elsewhere (see Box 3). Another interesting case study, presented in Box 4, is that of city of Santa Tecla, El Salvador. The final example in Box 5 explains the principle of ‘focused deterrence’ law enforcement adopted in some US communities to reduce drug market violence.

Box 3. Rio de Janeiro's ‘Pacifying Police Units’

Rio de Janeiro has a long history of violence associated with controlled drugs, organised crime and police repression. In Rio, the drug trade remains concentrated within economically and socially vulnerable communities living in the city’s favelas (slums). Since the 1970s, Rio became an important transit point for cocaine exports to North America, Europe and South Africa. Newly established drug factions quickly settled in the favelas, where they became important figures in the socio-political life of the community, providing them with health and social services and opportunities for employment in the drugs trade – services that were not offered by the government itself. In the 1980s and 1990s, divisions within and between drug factions, the increasing availability of high-calibre weapons, and violent police interventions in the favelas led to increasing levels of violence. High numbers of deaths (in 2010, the murder rate in Rio reached 46 per 100,000 inhabitants), an overcrowding of Brazilian prisons with drug offenders, high levels of corruption, and an ever-expanding drug market led the local government in Rio to review its drug policy.

Launched in 2008 in the favela of Santa Marta, UPPs (‘Unidades de Policía Pacificadora’, Pacifying Police Units) consist of a new public security policy that combines law enforcement with actions seeking to tackle the social, economic and cultural aspects of the drug market. A key element of this policy is that it should focus on those areas where the market is most harmful, while acknowledging that some level of trafficking will be tolerated elsewhere. The pacification process consists of four steps:

- **invasion**: this step aims to retake control of the territories under the influence of a drug cartel; it involves the intervention of the military

- **stabilisation**: while the military used to invade problematic favelas only to withdraw a few hours later, this new strategy now entails that the military remain in the pacified territory until the UPPs take over

- **occupation**: the UPPs start to operate in the favelas and seek to restore the rule of law through a system of community policing

- **post-occupation**: the UPPs develop a strong relationship of trust with the community and establish socio-economic programmes to boost education and employment opportunities.

Since 2008, 17 favelas have been retaken by the UPPs. Several concerns were raised about the policy. First, some have criticised a feeling of militarisation of the communities, with the military remaining in the favelas for an extended period of time, leading to tight police control, arbitrary search and seizures and harassment. Others have raised concerns about the capacity of the UPPs to tackle drug-related violence extensively. Indeed, out of the 1,000 favelas in the city, only 17 have been pacified so far. This may lead organised criminal groups to migrate to those neighbouring favelas that have not yet been pacified and resume their violent activities. Nevertheless, the UPPs have been well received by favela residents. A study in eight pacified favelas found that 83% of the residents considered that their security situation had improved as a result of the programme.
Box 4. The example of Santa Tecla, El Salvador

With a national homicide rate of 66 per 100,000 in 2010, El Salvador has one of the highest murder rates in the world. During the 1980s, El Salvador suffered a bloody civil war that led to massive internal migration from the countryside to the major cities. A devastating earthquake in 1986 left a further 100,000 people homeless. Today, El Salvador suffers from high levels of violence, predominantly in urban areas. In a 2010 survey, 24.2% of Salvadorans reported having been the victim of crime in their neighbourhoods.

Throughout the 1990s, El Salvador also experienced a rise in gang culture. The government principally used security forces and the criminal justice system to tackle the problem. This policy did little to reduce crime rates and resulted in driving these criminal organisations underground. It also led to thousands of arbitrary arrests and a greater gang presence in the country’s prisons.

In the face of this problem, the municipality of Santa Tecla, a satellite city of San Salvador, developed a different approach, focusing on a social-oriented strategy, to combat drug-related violence. The municipality undertook long-term plans that prioritised social development, community-building capacity, and co-ordination among local government agencies. The municipal government analysed city infrastructure and connectivity, land use demographics, employment, access to basic services and other factors crucial to development. Other policies such as ‘school scholarships’ were devised, offering financial incentives to stay in school and projects to ‘recuperate’ public spaces. The municipal government also created a local Observatory for the Prevention of Crime, which gathered data on violent crimes, in order to fine-tune local decision making, based on standardised evidence and information.

A model of community policing focused on prevention was implemented, including joint patrols between the municipal police and the national police. Mechanisms were also implemented to co-ordinate violence-prevention activities amongst local, state and national actors; this also allowed local citizens to participate in the design of policies, an important factor in the more socially oriented response to violent crime. The policy evolved thanks to civic participation, and the objective shifted to ‘strengthening peaceful community coexistence in the city through interagency co-operation and co-ordination and the promotion of responsible citizen participation in a way that is civic-minded and democratic’. This community-orientated style of policing, combined with long-term social projects, has been very popular with citizens who see it has achieved results. Indeed, since the initiation of the programme, although other security problems persist today, Santa Tecla has seen a significant reduction in its homicide rate. In 2007, Santa Tecla was removed from the list of the 20 most dangerous municipalities.
Box 5. The US ‘focused deterrence’ law-enforcement strategy

In the US context, ‘focused deterrence’ law-enforcement strategies have achieved notable successes in reducing violent crime in numerous localities, from Boston, Massachusetts (see Box 4 in Section 2.2: Effective drug law enforcement), to High Point, North Carolina.

One of the central insights of ‘focused deterrence’ is that, at any given time, enforcement capacity is limited and clear priorities must therefore be set. Regardless of the country and circumstances, reducing crime understandably rises to the top of the priority list. By implication, other enforcement objectives take a back seat, at least temporarily. ‘Focused deterrence’ strategies arise from key insights about how law enforcement can shape criminal behaviour in ways that discourage violence – if the consequences of a certain type of criminal conduct (e.g. murder) are clearly communicated to the potential offenders, and the promised consequences are quickly brought to bear should such crimes be committed, there will be an important disincentive to engage in violence. That is, violence will be understood to be bad, rather than good, for business. Targeted enforcement has impressed upon drug dealers that flagrant violence makes them less competitive than their less violent rivals, and violent crime has fallen to a lower, more manageable equilibrium.

The successes achieved through variants of focused deterrence in US communities do not mean that illicit sales have been eliminated, but rather that the illicit drug market has shifted into modes of conduct that generate less mayhem in the streets.

Other cities that have suffered extremely high levels of drug market violence and have so far implemented policies primarily focused on law enforcement (sometimes involving the military), are also turning to this new approach. This includes, for example, Ciudad Juarez.

As these policies essentially involve long-term socio-economic development and community-strengthening strategies, time will be needed to truly assess their impact on drug-related violence. In addition, as each local drug market and its historical, political and cultural contexts are unique, it will often be difficult to apply one strategy in another context. However, important lessons have been learned from each of these policies, and available evidence shows promising results in areas where the policies have been implemented.

Recommendations

1) Law-enforcement efforts need to focus more on reducing the violence associated with the illicit market rather than attempting to reduce drug availability itself.

2) Policy makers need to recognise that social, political and economic exclusion form the context in which crime and violence take root, and that programmes that aim to reduce drug-related violence will require a long-term commitment based on socio-economic development, community strengthening, and citizen participation in policy-making processes.

3) Drug law-enforcement strategies must be based on a clear understanding of the structure and dynamics of specific illicit drug markets. Which drugs are more popular? What form does the market take? Is violence directly related to the drug market? Who is most likely to participate in and suffer from the drug market?

4) Where compromised by corruption, law-enforcement agencies and criminal justice systems need to be overhauled. Reforms are needed to generate an environment that is suitable for implementing policies aimed at reducing drug-related urban violence. These should include higher salaries, and better oversight and control mechanisms to root out corruption and prosecute those who engage in it.
5) Government agencies should always stay within the frame of the rule of law when intervening in drug markets.

6) Efforts should be made to reduce the availability of firearms in cities affected by drug markets. This involves a tighter regulation of the registration of firearms, campaigns to encourage the handing in of illegally held weapons (such as firearms amnesties), and other measures that make it harder for organised criminal groups to acquire weapons.

7) At the local level, the policy makers should set up integrated inter-agency partnerships, including law-enforcement, educational, social and health sectors, as well as communities, in order to design and implement strategies aimed at reducing drug market violence.

Key resources


Endnotes


19 Ibid.
4.3 Promoting alternative livelihoods

The cultivation of crops destined for the illicit drug market is an essential part of shadow survival economies. Crop eradication in the absence of viable alternative licit livelihood options is a violation of human rights and a costly initiative that impacts negatively on marginalised and vulnerable farmers. An alternative livelihoods approach can more successfully reduce the cultivation of these crops.

Why is the promotion of alternative livelihoods important?

Reducing crops destined for the illicit drug market is a central component of supply-side drug control policies. The South American countries of Colombia, Peru and Bolivia are the primary source of coca, the raw material for cocaine. Cultivation of the opium poppy, the raw material for opium and heroin, has shifted over time. The Golden Triangle of Thailand, Lao People's Democratic Republic, and Burma/Myanmar once produced more than 70% of the world's opium, most of which was refined into heroin. Since 1998, dramatic decreases in opium cultivation have taken place in the Golden Triangle and it is now concentrated in what is known as the Golden Crescent, the poppy-growing areas in and around Afghanistan. Nevertheless, Myanmar remains the second largest opium poppy grower in the world after Afghanistan and still produces 23% of the global opium supply.

Supply reduction efforts have typically been measured according to the areas of crops cultivated, the amounts of cocaine and opium produced, and the number of hectares eradicated. However, determining how much coca and poppy is cultivated today remains elusive. Differences in the US government and UNODC statistical estimates provide ample evidence of the degree of uncertainty in the measurements. According to the US government, coca cultivation has remained relatively constant over the last two decades in the Andean region, at approximately 200,000 hectares, although as a result of the 'balloon effect' (see Box 1 in Section 2.2: Effective drug law enforcement), there have been significant shifts in the amount grown in each country. By contrast, UNODC reported a decrease in production.

The development of higher-yield crops that can be planted at greater density levels mainly explains this reduction, which means that more cocaine can be produced from smaller plots of coca. UNODC reports a similar trend with regard to poppy cultivation and opium production. Between 1994 and 2010, global poppy cultivation decreased from 272,479 to 195,700 hectares (but had increased from 150,000 to 195,700 hectares between 2005 and 2010). However, between 1994 and 2007, potential opium production increased from 5,620 to 8,890 tonnes, subsequently dropping to 4,860 tonnes in 2010. In Afghanistan, although poppy cultivation declined by 22% between 2007 and 2009, opium production decreased by only 10%. Similarly, the 7% increase in Afghan poppy cultivation between 2009 and 2010 resulted in a 52% increase in potential opium production.
Efforts to reduce the cultivation of crops destined for the illicit drug market have mainly consisted of forced crop-eradication campaigns – the physical destruction of the crop on the ground. Over time, crop-eradication campaigns have become associated with violence and conflict, and a number of health and socio-economic harms, in particular destruction of the only means of subsistence of farmers involved in the cultivation of these crops, therefore exacerbating their vulnerability to poverty, conflict and forced migration.

The idea of ‘alternative development’ – i.e. rural development programmes in areas where drug-linked crops are grown – was developed in the late 1960s as an integrated approach to improving community livelihood options to address the underlying factors that drive farmers to grow opium poppy and coca. The concept subsequently evolved towards the principle of ‘alternative livelihoods’, moving from isolated, project-specific interventions to broader, multi-sectorial development-oriented policies aimed at reducing farmers’ reliance on the cultivation of opium poppy and coca, by addressing the structural and institutional factors that shape their decisions to grow these crops.5

In most recent cases, crop eradication and development of alternative livelihoods have been carried out simultaneously. However, a growing number of experts have demonstrated that forced eradication can result in more harm than good, especially if alternative livelihoods programmes have not been properly sequenced – for crop reductions to be maintained, alternative sources of income must be put in place before the farmers’ primary source of income is eliminated. Additional reasons for rethinking crop-eradication policies will be explained below.

Farmers will only be able to reduce their dependence on income from coca and poppy crops if they are provided with alternative livelihoods through long-term multi-sectorial development programmes.

**Forced crop eradication – a counter-productive approach**

Crop eradication consists of manual eradication, the use of aerial fumigation of chemical agents on coca fields, and biological methods. Crop-eradication campaigns are conducted without the consent of coca and opium poppy farmers, although they are sometimes encouraged to participate in the campaigns in return for compensation or development assistance.

Over the years, forced crop eradication has been associated with a number of negative consequences.

- It is a very expensive approach, which has not led to desired result of reducing the cultivation of crops destined for the illicit market. For example, manual fumigation requires approximately 20 days of work per hectare for coca and 3 days of work per hectare for opium poppy.6 In the case of aerial fumigation, coca farmers tend to wash the chemical off their crops or immediately replant new crops to replace those that have been damaged.

- Small farmers involved in coca and poppy production usually do so for lack of viable economic alternatives. It is estimated that farmers earn only 1% of the overall global illicit drug income – most of the remaining revenue being earned by traffickers within developed countries.7 As farmers involved in coca and poppy cultivation often tend to be marginalised and vulnerable, implementing forced eradication programmes before providing them with alternative sustainable livelihoods

‘Alternative livelihoods’ programmes aim to reduce farmers’ reliance on cultivation of crops destined for the illicit drug market by addressing the structural and institutional factors that shape their decisions to grow these crops.
pushes them deeper into poverty. The abrupt cut-off in income can impact negatively on the health and nutrition of those affected. Families may be forced to migrate to more remote areas and children may be taken out of school in order to supplement the household income, creating greater difficulties for escaping poverty in the future.

• In some parts of the world, such as Colombia, aerial fumigation campaigns have led to health problems among farmers, sometimes forcing them to migrate to other parts of the country. Aerial fumigation techniques can be devastating for the environment, including those lands used to grow licit food crops.

• Price incentives sometimes counter the impact of a ‘successful’ eradication campaign. If successful in the short term, eradication drives up farm-gate prices, making it more lucrative for farmers to continue cultivation, and encouraging newcomers to the market.

• Eradication tends to move the cultivation of illicit crops to new and more inaccessible areas. In the Andean countries, forced manual and aerial eradication programmes spread coca and poppy production to new regions, including national parks, resulting in even greater damage to fragile local ecosystems. This makes cultivation more difficult to detect and eliminate, and spreads the problems associated with these crops to new areas.

• Forced eradication increases opportunities for corruption and organised criminal networks. It enhances the revenue base of irregular forces that take advantage of, or depend on, the income generated by the illicit drug trade. In Afghanistan, crop-eradication efforts and strict implementation of opium bans have contributed to an increase in poppy production in provinces with high levels of conflict and a significant Taliban presence. This has bolstered, rather than depleted, their funding base. It also stimulates corruption and undermines the rule of law, as government forces in these areas tend to profit from the illicit trade.

• More generally, forced eradication fuels conflict. Security forces carrying out crop eradication or combating insurgents are often the only state presence in these areas, where public services and infrastructure are non-existent or woefully inadequate. These conditions, together with the violence and human rights abuses that often accompany eradication campaigns, alienate the local population and further undermine the legitimacy of the state. In turn, this can boost political support for the insurgents.

• Even when conducted hand-in-hand with alternative development programmes, eradication campaigns undermine co-operation with the local community, which is needed to carry out effective development programmes. It causes distrust between donors, state agencies and recipient communities, and undermines the very development efforts needed to wean subsistence farmers off the cultivation of crops destined for the illicit drug market (see Box 1).

Box 1. Forced crop eradication in Bolivia and its consequences on alternative development assistance

Prior to the signature of an agreement between the Bolivian government and coca growers in 2004, forced eradication in Bolivia led to protests, violent confrontations and attacks on alternative development installations. This occurred in part because alternative development assistance was conditioned on the eradication of all coca, which left families with no income. In 2008, Chapare coca growers announced that they would not sign any further agreements with the US Agency for International Development for alternative development projects. In all three coca-producing Andean countries, the US subcontractors that carry out alternative development projects are viewed with suspicion and distrust by the local community.
Finally, it is necessary to remember that not all cultivation is destined for the illicit market, and therefore not all coca and opium poppy should be eradicated.

First, indigenous people in the Andean region have consumed the coca leaf for centuries, and coca chewing is an integral part of religious and other ceremonies. Similarly, opium has long been used in Asia for medical, social and recreational purposes. Chewing or drinking coca tea has beneficial attributes, such as helping to alleviate the symptoms of high altitudes, cold and hunger. Coca consumption is spreading to new geographic areas and among the middle classes. Opium is used in some traditional Asian societies to ward off the symptoms of gastrointestinal illness, and in this context can be a life-saver in infants. Such cultures are often among those most acutely lacking essential medicines such as morphine. However, national and international drug control systems prohibit traditional uses of these plants, leading to violation of the social, economic and cultural rights of indigenous communities (see Section 4.4: Protecting the rights of indigenous people).\(^{10}\)

Second, the licit cultivation of coca and opium poppy continues to take place in countries such as Australia, India, Turkey and France, for medical and culinary purposes, especially for the pharmaceutical production of morphine, codeine and thebaine (paramorphine). An increase in licit uses of these substances should be considered, in order to decrease the share of cultivation currently destined for the illicit market and respond to the needs of millions of people living in moderate or severe pain because of lack of essential medicines.

**Promoting development in a drugs environment**

Programmes for alternative livelihoods, or programmes aimed at promoting ‘development in a drugs environment’ are intended to address the underlying structural conditions faced by coca and opium poppy farmers and provide them with legal and economic opportunities in order to reduce their dependence on the cash income these generate. This approach is also designed to improve the overall quality of life of farmers, including: improved access to health care, education (see Box 3) and housing; the development of infrastructure and other public services; and income generation, such as the industrialisation of agricultural produce and off-farm employment opportunities.\(^{11}\)

**Box 2. Abstract from Inputs for the draft – International Guiding Principles on Alternative Development\(^{12}\)**

‘Alternative development should be mainstreamed into a larger socio-cultural-economic development context with emphasis on the need to address poverty, inadequate enforcement of the rule of law in some areas, and other related social injustices reflecting also the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, and as part of sustainable strategies for the control of illicit crops.’

Alternative livelihoods programmes are no longer purely focused on reducing the production of crops destined for the illicit drug market, but are incorporated, or mainstreamed, into comprehensive strategies for rural development and economic growth. Specifically, they call for embedding strategies for reducing coca and poppy crops in local, regional and national development initiatives.

**The importance of sequencing**

Forced eradication, or demanding the elimination of crops before providing economic assistance, may be successful in the short term. However, over the medium to long term, as long as alternative livelihood options are not sufficiently in place, farmers replant to secure income or move into new areas where it is easier to avoid detection. It will only be possible to successfully reduce or eliminate the cultivation of crops destined for the illicit market once the overall quality of life and income of the local population...
has been improved. In areas where poppy farmers receive advances from traffickers to buy poppy seeds and fertiliser, or to bridge family income gaps until harvest time, farmers need to be offered micro-credit schemes to enable them to switch from illicit to licit sources of income. At that point, crop reduction should be voluntary and conducted in collaboration with the local community. It is therefore crucial that alternative livelihoods programmes are properly sequenced (see Box 3).

Box 3. The Thai alternative livelihoods model

Beginning in 1969, the Thai government sought to integrate highland communities into national life and therefore carried out sustained economic development activities over a 30-year period. Over time, it became clear that agricultural alternatives alone were insufficient. As a result, increasing emphasis was placed on providing social services such as healthcare services and schools, as well as infrastructure development such as roads, electricity and water supplies. Alternative livelihoods programmes were integrated into local, regional and national development plans. This led to steady improvement in farmers’ quality of life, and increased opportunities for off-farm employment. The Thai approach evolved over time. Initially, international donors defined the strategy with little participation from the local communities or even the local government. The second phase fully involved the local government (with the King’s public backing, which was politically significant). Eventually, a focus on local community participation emerged.

The Thai experience underscores the importance of local institution building and community involvement in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development efforts. Community-based organisations, such as women’s and youth groups and rice banks, were important in ensuring a successful outcome. Local know-how became the basis for problem solving, and local leadership was fully integrated into project implementation.

The Thai experience also points to the importance of proper sequencing. Efforts at crop reduction only started in 1984, after about 15 years of sustained economic development. While some forced eradication did take place initially, proper sequencing allowed farmers to reduce poppy production gradually, as other sources of income developed, avoiding the problem of re-planting that inevitably frustrates crop-eradication efforts. Although the entire process took about 30 years, the results of the Thai strategy have proved sustainable, as only very small pockets of poppy cultivation now persist. However, on the negative side, there has been an increase in methamphetamine use and production in the region since the 1990s.

Some caution is advised about how far this model can be replicated elsewhere. First, in Thailand farmers grew poppy in fertile areas where other crops could easily be produced, which is not necessarily the case in other parts of the world. Second, steady economic growth in the 1980s and 1990s allowed for government investments in infrastructure and other programmes. Third, there was a strong relationship between local demand and production. Much of the opium produced was consumed locally, so demand reduction programmes could work in tandem with alternative livelihoods efforts, meaning that both demand and production declined together. Finally, global market dynamics were not much affected, since the relatively insignificant exports of Thai opium and heroin could easily be replaced from other sources. Although these particular factors may make it difficult to replicate this experience in other regions, this experience does provide useful guidelines for designing alternative livelihoods strategies elsewhere.
Promoting good governance and the rule of law

Nation building and promoting good governance and the rule of law are also essential components of an alternative livelihoods approach. These are particularly necessary to foster the legitimacy and credibility of the government in areas where state presence is often limited to security and/or eradication forces. A growing body of academic literature now points to the absence of violent conflict as a pre-condition for sustainable development and drug control efforts.\(^5\)

Linking alternative livelihoods to the protection of the environment

The lack of accessible natural resources can be one of the driving factors leading to the cultivation of crops destined for the illicit drug market. The use of natural resources must be recognised as a means for subsistence for communities that are dependent on them to meet their livelihood needs. A multi-sector approach towards alternative livelihoods requires the adoption of measures that create incentives for rural communities to refrain from engaging in other illicit activities that would harm natural resources. This should not simply consist of incentives to stop growing crops used in the illicit drug market, but should also include incentives for conservation of the environment, allowing communities to improve their livelihoods while caring for their environment. For example, reforestation programmes that allocate land as a mix of conservation forest, economic forest and sustenance forest can assist in balancing the community’s survival with environmental protection (see, for example, Box 4 in Section 4.1: Controlled drugs and development).\(^6\)

Including coca and opium farmers as key partners in alternative livelihoods programmes

Alternative livelihoods programmes require that coca or poppy farmers should no longer be considered as criminals but should instead be viewed as key stakeholders in the design and implementation of the development programmes that affect them.\(^7\) The involvement of farmers is necessary, both because local farmers have a better knowledge and understanding of the local geographical conditions, and in order to protect the rights and cultural traditions of local communities (see Section 4.4: Protecting the rights of indigenous communities). This principle was included in the draft version of International Guiding Principles on Alternative Development recently drawn up by a group of experts and government officials during a workshop in Thailand.\(^8\) Additional UN reports have also underscored the importance of community involvement in such efforts.

Moving from indicators of crops eradicated to broader indicators of human development

So far, most crop-eradication and alternative development projects have primarily evaluated their success by reductions in the cultivation of drug-linked crops. However, in an evaluation report to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in 2008, UNODC stated that, ‘there is little proof that the eradications reduce illicit cultivation in the long term as the crops move somewhere else’, adding that, ‘alternative development must be evaluated through indicators of development and not technically as a function of illicit production statistics’.\(^9\) While reductions in cultivation are not an adequate measure of progress or impact in drug control strategies, there is a direct relationship between improved social and economic conditions of an area and the sustained reduction of illicit cultivation (see Box 4).
Box 4. The promotion of alternative livelihoods in Lao People's Democratic Republic

The Alternative livelihoods project in Lao People's Democratic Republic targets village communities that are dependent on opium poppy cultivation because of high levels of poverty. The project resulted in the expansion of road networks, improved farming technologies, the generation of alternative sources of income, and social leadership and empowerment of villagers to help them respond to changing socio-economic conditions and benefit from emerging improvements in government services and economic opportunities. Significant improvements in economic opportunities and the provision of social services to these communities, along with greater security, improved infrastructure and increased access to markets have correlated with reductions of opium poppy production from 26,000 hectares in 1998 to 2,000 hectares in 2009.

Experience has demonstrated that successful alternative livelihoods programmes have a limited effect on the global illicit drug market, as production tends to shift elsewhere to meet global demand, but they have, nevertheless, proved to be successful at the local and national level. Expectations about what alternative development programmes can achieve concerning reducing illicit supply to the global drug market should be modest and realistic, as the effectiveness of any strategy for supply reduction depends on the market dynamics of supply and demand. This demonstrates the need to adopt a balanced approach towards the global drug problem, tackling both supply and demand at the same time, with evidence-based policies and programmes. A successful policy also needs to include the recognition that poverty is a multidimensional problem that requires a multidimensional approach. It further needs to acknowledge the important role of sustainable resource use and management and the provision of social services, and address issues of conflict, crises, lack of good governance, violence, the rule of law and security – all elements that characterise most areas where opium poppy and coca are cultivated.

Promoting preventive alternative development

Some countries, in particular Ecuador, have promoted the concept of ‘preventive alternative development’ in areas where cultivation of crops destined for the illicit drug market could start, or in areas that offer a pool of available workers for harvest. Although such programmes have so far failed to attract sufficient international donor interest, especially in current times of budget restrictions, this concept should be kept in mind and experimented by governments whenever possible.

Recommendations

1) Decades of experience in promoting alternative development show that reducing the cultivation of coca and poppy crops is a long-term problem that needs a long-term solution, involving broader nation-building and development goals. Government strategies need to be based on promoting economic growth and providing basic services; democratic institution building and the rule of law; respect for human rights; and improved security in the impoverished rural areas where coca and poppy cultivation flourishes.

2) The potential impact of development policies and programmes on the cultivation of coca and poppy crops should be taken into account, and steps taken to maximise positive impacts and minimise negative ones. A range of ministries and agencies, as well as civil society groups, and representatives of coca and opium poppy farmers, should be involved in the decision-making process.
3) Proper sequencing is essential. Alternative livelihoods and improved quality of life must be achieved before crop reductions. An alternative livelihoods approach should also incorporate the concept of ‘preventive alternative development’ in areas that could be conducive to producing crops for the illicit market.

4) Development assistance should not be conditional on meeting prior targets for crop reduction. With proper sequencing, farmers are more likely to collaborate with efforts to reduce the cultivation of coca and poppy. Once economic development efforts are well under way and bearing fruit, governments can work with local communities to encourage reduction, and in some cases elimination, of crops destined for the illicit market.

5) Local communities must be involved in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development efforts. This includes community leadership, and the involvement of local organisations such as producer groups and the farmers themselves. Government officials can play a key role in mobilising, co-ordinating and supporting community participation.

6) Results should not be measured in terms of hectares of crops eradicated. Rather, alternative livelihoods programmes should be evaluated using human development and socio-economic indicators – indicators that measure the well-being of society.

**Key resources**


Endnotes


17 EU Presidency Paper (2008), Key points identified by EU experts to be included in the conclusion of the open-ended intergovernmental expert working group on international cooperation on the eradication of illicit drug and on alternative development, presented to the open-ended intergovernmental working group on international cooperation on the eradication of illicit drug crops and on alternative development (2-4 July 2008).


4.4 Protecting the rights of indigenous people

Many aspects of drug policy, including the blanket prohibition of the traditional cultivation and use of certain plants, violate indigenous peoples' rights that are enshrined in United Nations conventions.

Why is protection of the rights of indigenous people important?

For generations, people worldwide have used psychoactive plants such as coca, cannabis, opium poppy, kratom, khat, peyote and ayahuasca for traditional, cultural and religious purposes. In Latin America, for example, the coca leaf has long had a wide application in social, religious and medical areas for indigenous people, and is now used by the general population. Similarly in India, cannabis and opium have been bound to faith and mysticism in Hindu and Islamic traditions for centuries, and are enshrined in countless cultural practices. Other plants, such as khat in Eastern Africa and kratom in South East Asia, have also been used for traditional and social purposes for centuries. Some of these substances have also been employed medicinally, especially for the treatment of rheumatism, migraine, malaria, cholera and other gastrointestinal complaints, and to facilitate surgery.¹ They can also provide food grain, oil seed or fibre for manufacturing products.

The UN drug conventions have classified some of these plants (i.e. cannabis, the coca leaf and opium) as harmful and subject to controls that limit their production, distribution, trade and use to medical and scientific purposes. The premise behind this policy was that it was considered difficult to achieve effective reduction of the production of controlled drugs to amounts required for medical and scientific purposes as long as large-scale local consumption of raw materials for these drugs continued in the main producing countries. This led to pressure on producing countries to end traditional uses of the plants used as raw materials for controlled drugs. Opium, cannabis and the coca leaf were therefore placed under the same strict levels of control as extracted and concentrated alkaloids such as morphine and cocaine (Schedule I of the 1961 Convention).²

The value of traditional use of controlled plants is recognised in the 1988 Convention.
and have placed strict control mechanisms on cannabis, the coca leaf and opium, but also on traditional psychoactive plants that have not been classified by the UN, such as khat and kratom.

**International law and the rights of indigenous people**

The 1989 Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries defines indigenous people as those who, 'on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country at the time of conquest, colonisation, or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some, or all, of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions'.

In addition to the universal human rights recognised in international conventions (see Section 1.2: Ensuring compliance with fundamental rights and freedoms), indigenous people enjoy certain specific rights that protect their identity and defend their right to maintain their own culture, traditions, habitat, language and access to ancestral lands.

UN bodies such as the United Nations Economic and Social Council and the Human Rights Council, have made significant progress in promoting, protecting and consolidating indigenous peoples' rights and freedoms. Several declarations and conventions, signed and ratified by a large number of governments, now endorse these achievements.

The 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples notably recognises indigenous peoples' right to:

- self-determination and autonomy
- maintain, protect and develop cultural manifestations of the past, present and future (article 11)
- maintain their traditional medicines and healing practices (article 24)
- maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and manifestations of their science, technology and culture (article 31).

The declaration is not binding under international law, but represents an important advance in the recognition of indigenous rights and provides governments with a comprehensive code of good practice.

**National levels of control for traditional plants**

National governments have applied varying levels of control for traditional plants. These controls have been associated with a number of consequences for the rights of indigenous people.

**Full prohibition of traditional plants' cultivation and use**

Some governments have sought to prohibit the cultivation, trafficking, distribution and use of traditional plants, both for plants that have been scheduled at the international level, and also for other mild plant stimulants. These policies have often focused on crop eradication on the supply side and/or on the criminalisation of people who use these plants on the demand side.

For instance, although the UN drug conventions do not compel signatory states to control kratom production, trafficking, distribution and use, Australia, Malaysia, Burma/Myanmar and Thailand (see Box 1) have decided to ban kratom, despite little evidence that the use of this plant impacts negatively on the health of users. Kratom can also have beneficial medicinal properties for the digestive system and in reducing pain from opioid withdrawal symptoms.
Box 1. Kratom prohibition in Thailand

Kratom has been used for medicinal and traditional purposes in Thailand for centuries, in particular in the southern part of the country. The plant was scheduled in 1943 under the Kratom Act, and was then included in the Thai Narcotics Act in 1979. Over the past 10 years, the application of kratom laws and policies has become increasingly rigid, leading to widespread arrests of kratom users and eradication campaigns to destroy kratom trees. This policy has had a limited effect on levels of kratom use and has led to a number of negative consequences for the right of communities to use kratom as an integral part of southern Thai culture.7

In the Andean region, while Bolivia and Peru have protected a domestic legal coca market, crop-eradication campaigns have caused widespread damage to the health, habitat and traditions of coca-growing indigenous communities. In countries where violent clashes take place between armed groups fighting for control of the drug trade, or where conflicts have erupted between coca farmers and law-enforcement agencies, forced eradication has militarised coca-producing areas, placing the local rural population (and especially indigenous communities) in the middle of the battlefield.

Plan Colombia, for instance, a counterinsurgency and counter-narcotics strategy that launched a massive crop-eradication campaign initiated in 1999, has not only had disastrous consequences on the lives and economy of indigenous people and farmers, but has also put them in the crossfire between government forces, insurgent groups and paramilitary gangs fighting to control the territory. The plan did not lead to an overall reduction in cocaine production in Colombia, but has led instead to a serious humanitarian crisis, leading to the displacement of 3.6 to 5.2 million people8 and resulting in increased levels of poverty and insecurity.

In instances when alternative development programmes were implemented, these did not always incorporate local knowledge, know-how and cultural traditions, leading to further alienation of the indigenous populations. It is necessary that these programmes are developed in collaboration with local populations after a careful assessment of the local cultivation possibilities and market access, and with full respect for the rights and traditions of indigenous people (for more information, see Section 4.3: Promoting alternative livelihoods).

On the consumption side, the coca leaf has been used for thousands of years in the Andean region for traditional and religious purposes. The international prohibition introduced by the 1961 Convention demonstrates a clear misunderstanding of indigenous customs and traditions. Andean and Amazonian coca consumers often feel ignored, insulted and humiliated by the international community and the UN call to abolish what they consider to be a healthy ancestral tradition. Allegations that chewing coca was a form of drug addiction causing malnutrition in indigenous people and that it was a degenerative moral agent helped justify its classification as a controlled substance. Since then, scientific research has convincingly proved otherwise, including a 1995 WHO study that concluded that the ‘use of coca leaves appears to have no negative health effects and has positive therapeutic, sacred and social functions for indigenous Andean populations’.9 Box 4 illustrates how the Bolivian government has remedied the issue raised by the international ban on coca leaf chewing.

Special legal and constitutional provisions to protect the rights of indigenous people

Some governments have developed provisions within their national legal system to allow for the traditional use of certain psychoactive plants under special circumstances. This is the case, for example, in Canada, with Section 56 exemption of the Canadian Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (see Box 2), and in the USA for peyote use among indigenous communities (see Box 3).
Box 2. The case of Santo Daime in Canada

Section 56 of the Canadian Controlled Drugs and Substances Act provides that: ‘The Minister may, on such terms and conditions as the Minister deems necessary, exempt any person or class of persons or any controlled substance or precursor or any class thereof from the application of all or any of the provisions of the Act or the regulations if, in the opinion of the Minister, the exemption is necessary for a medical or scientific purpose or is otherwise in the public interest’.

In practice, this exemption is rarely exercised. It has usually been granted for medical and scientific purposes, for instance to some physicians to prescribe methadone as part of OST, to conduct specific research trials for a supervised injection site in Vancouver, and for heroin prescription in Vancouver and Montreal. In 2001, for the first time, Section 56 was used with the aim of protecting the right to use a controlled substance for traditional and cultural purposes (i.e. using the ‘public interest’ provision).

In 1996, Jessica Williams Rochester returned to Canada after a visit to Brazil and established Ceu do Montreal, based on the Santo Daime religion. From the time of its founding until 2000, Ceu do Montreal leaders imported Daime sacrament (i.e. ayahuasca) into Canada with Brazilian agricultural export documents and practised their religion according to church doctrines. In 2000, the Canadian customs intercepted a shipment of Daime and sent it for chemical analysis. Ceu do Montreal was informed that possession of Daime constituted an offence under the Canadian criminal code, but was advised to apply for a legal exemption for their Daime sacrament under Section 56 of the Canadian Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, which it did in 2001. In this particular case, the government concluded that ‘in principle’, the case could benefit from an exemption under Section 56, pending receipt of documentation from the government of Brazil allowing legal export of Daime.

Although this policy is limited in scope, as an exemption only applies to a particular group of individuals for a specific substance, this example remains useful as it provides for a possibility to protect the right to use a plant for cultural and traditional purposes.

Box 3. Peyote use among indigenous communities in the USA

Peyote is a small, spineless cactus containing psychoactive alkaloids. In the USA, the religious use of peyote is allowed for members of the Native American Church, a pan-tribal religion derived from the practices of native Americans who inhabited what is now southern Texas and northern Mexico.

This exception is inscribed in Title 21, Section 1307.31 of the US Code of Federal Regulations, which states that: ‘The listing of peyote as a controlled substance in Schedule I does not apply to the nondrug use of peyote in bona fide religious ceremonies of the Native American Church’.

These provisions effectively enable Native Americans to perpetuate their religious traditions and rituals by using peyote without fear of prosecution.

Bolivia is no doubt the country that has gone furthest in this domain, by recognising the traditional use of the coca leaf as a cultural heritage within its constitution, and therefore ensuring that the rights of Bolivian indigenous communities to chew the coca leaf be protected. While Peru, Colombia and Argentina also have domestic legal exemptions for coca leaf consumption, Bolivia is the first country to acknowledge that such exemptions and practices represent breaches of drug control treaty obligations.
In doing so, Bolivia decided to denounce the 1961 Convention to re-accede to it with a reservation on the coca leaf to ensure that its national laws and practices are in line with its international obligations (see Box 4).

**Box 4. Bolivia, coca leaf chewing and the protection of indigenous culture**

Coca has been sacred to the indigenous peoples of the Andean region for thousands of years. In Bolivia, the Quechua and Aymara peoples make up the majority of the rural population, and use of the coca leaf is widespread among them. The practice is associated with social and cultural solidarity, economic activity and work, medicinal factors (such as adding nutrients to the diet and providing protection against altitude sickness), and spirituality, restoring the balance between natural and spiritual realms. As in Britain, where people might invite friends around for a cup of tea, or for a coffee in the USA, Bolivia’s indigenous people will say, ‘Come around for a chew’ (aculli). This gives some indication of how thoroughly embedded traditional practices of coca consumption are in Bolivia.

The first Western attempts at prohibiting coca came with colonisation in the 16th century, when the Catholic church became aware of the plant’s role in native religious ritual. An informal accommodation with coca was achieved, however, which lasted until the 20th century and its disastrous ‘war on drugs’. Following the Second World War, the UN led a drive for ‘modernisation’, which identified the practice of coca chewing with the primitive and outmoded. The 1950 report of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Coca Leaf Inquiry Commission, led by a US representative, supported the assumption that the use of coca was harmful, and resulted in the scheduling of the coca leaf along with cocaine and heroin in the 1961 Convention and its provision that coca chewing had to be abolished within 25 years. Though the 1950 report has often been criticised for being biased, scientifically flawed, culturally insensitive and even racist, it remains the prime UN reference document on the coca issue.

These historical factors are becoming increasingly understood as the main shapers of the present international drug control regime and were accused of ‘drug control imperialism’ by the Global Commission on Drug Policy. The fact that the UN drug control regime still fails to recognise the rights of Andean indigenous communities to chew the coca leaf today stands symbol to the embarrassing inability of the regime to stay in touch and in line with developments in the UN system, and more broadly with international human rights.

As a result, in June 2011, Bolivia withdrew from the 1961 Single Convention, announcing its intention to re-accede with a reservation allowing coca leaf chewing in the country. Some of the reasons for Bolivia’s move, in addition to those already stated above, are that:

- coca is regarded by the Constitution of the Plurinational State of Bolivia as a cultural patrimony. The international drug control treaties make repeated allowance for the fundamental constitutional principles of member states to be respected
- coca is central to the cultural life & sense of identity of the indigenous peoples of Bolivia
- coca is at the core of the forms of sociability developed within their culture
- coca has important medicinal and therapeutic uses
- coca has highly significant spiritual associations and functions
- coca is at the heart of a subsistence economy, and many attempts to substitute alternative crops have failed in the Andean region.
Bolivia’s withdrawal from the 1961 Convention, submitted in June 2011, came into effect on 1 January 2012. A few days before that, on 29 December 2011, in a letter to the UN Secretary-General, Bolivia presented the reservation it requires to reconcile its various national and international legal obligations before becoming a full treaty member again. Bolivia expresses that it reserves the right to allow traditional coca leaf chewing in its territory, but also the consumption and use of the coca leaf in its natural state in general, as well as the cultivation, trade and possession of the coca leaf to the extent necessary for these licit purposes. At the same time, the reservation clarifies that Bolivia will continue to take all necessary measures to control the cultivation of coca in order to prevent the illicit production of cocaine. In the letter, Bolivia also made clear that its effective re-accession to the 1961 Convention was subject to the authorisation of this reservation. The treaty procedure establishes that all members have one year to express any objections and that the reservation will be accepted unless one-third or more of the states object to it during that period. In this case, ‘the 12-month period for objections will expire on 10 January 2013’.

Legal regulation of traditional plants

As explained before, some mild plant stimulants have not been included in the UN classification system, leaving governments responsible for deciding on their status. This is the case, for example, for kratom and khat. As observed earlier, kratom was prohibited under national laws in several Asian countries, while the national legal status of khat varies considerably from country to country.

Khat has been used for hundreds, if not thousands, of years, in the highlands of Eastern Africa and Southern Arabia. Traditionally, khat has been chewed communally, after work or on social occasions, in public spaces or dedicated rooms in private houses. Global khat markets have been driven by demand from diaspora populations settling in Europe, particularly from Somalia. So far, there has been little cross-over from migrants to the mainstream European population. A number of studies have demonstrated that the potential for dependence associated with khat, and the physical and mental health risks of khat use, remain very low. Evidence suggests that prohibiting khat use has led to a number of negative consequences, including expanding the isolation and vulnerability of immigrant populations, and impacting negatively on livelihoods and economic development in producer countries. In countries where khat is legally regulated, none of these unintended consequences have occurred (see Box 5). Khat use remains concentrated among Eastern African migrant communities who consume khat safely in commercial establishments, and communal centres where social and community bonds remain strong. This enables consumers to control the quality of the khat they use and to perpetuate cultural and social traditions among their community.

Box 5. Khat regulation in the UK

In the UK, khat chewing remains legal. There has been substantial research on the social harms associated with khat. In 2005 the Advisory Commission for the Misuse of Drugs advised against regulating khat under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, concluding instead that educational and awareness campaigns should be implemented.

Khat retails in the UK at £3 to £6 per bundle. VAT is now imposed on khat imports, raising £2.9 million in 2010 when around 3,002 tonnes of khat entered the UK, a large increase since the late 1990s. The fresh product is mainly imported from Kenya and Ethiopia for the consumption of mainly East African and Yemeni communities in the UK.

In the UK, khat is mainly consumed in commercial establishments, which act as local communal
centres where food and drinks are served. These establishments are subject to local health and safety laws, ensuring that there is no nuisance for local residents. Studies of khat use in the UK imply that it is of cultural importance among diaspora communities, enabling them to maintain their identity. Immigrant communities often gather to chew khat and discuss politics in their country of origin, as well as giving advice on problems they experience and on job opportunities.

There is little evidence to connect khat chewing, crime and public disorder in the UK. In fact, khat is seen as preventing people from offending, as it strengthens social bonds and relaxes users. Some members of diaspora communities have, however, raised some concerns associated with khat chewing, such as income diversion, family breakdown and unemployment. It should be noted that these social harms would be highly exacerbated if khat were to be controlled as an illicit drug.

Recommendations

1) International obligations, particularly those arising from human rights legal instruments that are at the heart of international law, need to be fully respected at the national level.

2) Governments should address the discrepancies between the UN drug conventions and international human rights agreements, to ensure that the rights of indigenous peoples are upheld.

3) The historical, cultural and traditional character and potential benefits of plants controlled at the national and international level should be recognised. At the national level, new laws and regulations are needed to provide for the controlled cultivation of these plants for traditional use.

4) The participation of indigenous communities should be promoted in the design and implementation of policies and regulations that affect them.

Key resources


Foro Mundial de Productores de Cultivos Declarados Ilicitos (2009), Political declaration, http://idpc.net/sites/default/files/library/Political_Declaration_FMPCDI.EN.pdf


Endnotes


5 The declaration reached universal endorsement after the Obama administration announced its support for it in December 2010. Four countries, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand initially voted against the declaration in 2007, but all four have since revised their position, the USA being the last one to drop its objections.


7 Ibid.

8 Although the government estimates that 3.6 million people were displaced as a result of Plan Colombia, the independent Observatory on Human Rights and Displacement (CODHES) estimated the figure to be as high as 5.2 million people.


11 Department of Justice Canada (2007), Controlled Drugs and Substance Act, http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-38.8/
Ayahuasca – an infusion or decoction prepared from two different plants, the *Banisteriopsis* spp. vine and leaves or shrubs from the *Psychotria* genus containing dimethyltryptamine – has traditionally been used for divinatory and healing purposes by indigenous communities of the Amazon. Canada's 1996 Controlled Drugs and Substances Act prohibits three alkaloids found in the ayahuasca brew (N,N-dimethyltryptamine, harmalol and harmaline).


Article 384: ‘El Estado protege a la coca originaria y ancestral como patrimonio cultural, recurso natural renovable de la biodiversidad de Bolivia, y como factor de cohesión social; en su estado natural no es estupefaciente. La revalorización, producción, comercialización e industrialización se regirá mediante la ley.’ (The State protects coca in its original and ancestral form as a cultural patrimony, a renewable biodiversity resource in Bolivia, and a social cohesion factor; in its natural state, it is not considered as a psychoactive substance. Its revalorisation, production, commercialisation and industrialisation will be governed by the law.)

Peru has always maintained an internal legal coca market under State monopoly control of the National Coca Enterprise, ENACO; Colombia introduced specific exemptions for coca use of its indigenous peoples; and in 1989 Argentina introduced in its Criminal Law, N 23.737, Art. 15: ‘The possession and consumption of the coca leaf in its natural state, destined for the practice of “coqueo” or chewing, or its use as an infusion, will not be considered as possession or consumption of narcotics’. See: International Drug Policy Consortium (2011), *IDPC Advocacy note – Correcting a historical error: IDPC calls on countries to abstain from submitting objections to the Bolivian proposal to remove the ban on the chewing of the coca leaf* (London: International Drug Policy Consortium), http://idpc.net/sites/default/files/library/IDPC%20Advocacy%20Note%20-%20Support%20Bolivia%20Proposal%20on%20coca%20leaf_0.pdf


Her Majesty’s Revenue & Customs (HMRC) data, 2011.

