03

Undermining development

The war on drugs is actively undermining development in many of the world's most fragile regions and states. The impacts of drug market-related corruption and violence are undermining governance, exacerbating existing problems and throwing vulnerable producer and transit regions into permanent underdevelopment. This chapter overlaps with, and should be read with, chapter 2, which explores the security impacts of the drug war.

Introduction

Development is one the three pillars of the United Nations' work, alongside peace and security, and human rights. Wars always undermine these three pillars; indeed, the emergence of the UN in the post-World-War era was, in significant part, an effort by the global community to reduce and ultimately prevent precisely these harms from occurring again.

Yet under the auspices of the UN, the war on drugs' punitive, enforcement-led model, based on police and military suppression of drug markets and punishment of drug users, has dominated the global response to drugs over the past half century. As described in the preceding chapter, this is the result of taking a "threat-based" approach to drugs, in which drug use is presented as an existential threat to society to justify the imposition of increasingly extreme enforcement measures while evidence-based policy, human rights, health, and development norms are marginalised.

In both its execution and outcomes, the war on drugs is not a rhetorical construct - it is often indistinguishable from more conventional conflicts. The similarities may be most obvious in its militarised supply side interventions, but they are also evident in the uneven burden of the drug war's cost across the global population. Like all wars, this burden invariably falls most heavily on the marginalised and vulnerable, who are the primary targets of development efforts. This includes the poor, children and young people, women, minority and indigenous populations, and people who use drugs.

It is a terrible irony for the UN that the drug policy model it champions is actively undermining peace and security, development and human rights, when these are its raison d'être.

Given the cross-cutting nature of development, there is inevitably considerable overlap with themes explored in the other chapters of this report.

Drugs and development

It is important to be clear from the outset that the various development costs created or exacerbated by the war on drugs are separate from very real health costs (and any related development impacts) associated with drug misuse *per se*, such as overdose and dependence. The "unintended" costs of the war on drugs specifically result not from drug use itself, but from choosing a punitive enforcement-led approach that, by its nature, abdicates control of the trade to organised crime, and criminalises and punishes people who use drugs, or who are involved in drug production or drug markets.

At the root of these problems is a dynamic in which rising demand for drugs has collided with prohibition, inevitably creating growing profit opportunities for criminal entrepreneurs, and pushing production, supply and consumption into a parallel illicit economy.

Drug trafficking organisations (DTOs) and transnational criminal organisations (TCOs) can be more confident of a cheap and reliable supply of key drug crops (coca leaf, opium poppy or cannabis) if state institutions are weak, authorities can be kept at bay, and if local populations have few viable alternatives to working in the illicit drug economy. As a result, DTOs and TCOs often gravitate to already underdeveloped areas with little economic infrastructure and weak governance, targeting geographically remote regions and already fragile or failing states to produce and transit drugs. In the absence of formal market regulation, they then protect and expand their interests using violence, intimidation, and

What is "development"?

Development is one of the "three pillars" of the United Nations, alongside human rights, and peace and security, but is a broad and poorly defined concept that encompasses a range of overlapping analysis and disciplines.

These include economic development (improving economic health and standard of living) and social development (socio-cultural evolution, and development of civic institutions). International development (often closely related to economic development) stemmed from post-Second World War international institution building. However, it now often includes not just a country's gross domestic product or average *per capita* income, but life expectancy, human rights and political freedoms, or areas such as literacy and maternal survival rates, in a holistic and multi-disciplinary context of human development.

This is a newer concept that incorporates elements of economic and social development into a focus on personal and community wellbeing, defined by the United Nations Development Programme as "the process of enlarging people's choices", allowing people to "lead a long and healthy life, to be educated, to enjoy a decent standard of living", as well as "political freedom, other guaranteed human rights and various ingredients of self-respect".[1]

Sustainable development is the concept of achieving human development whilst preserving and protecting natural resources and ecosystems – most prominently in the context of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.[2]

corruption. The resulting instability and criminalisation of the economy has a series of knock-on effects that further undermine development.

Despite the obvious and profound development implications of global drug policy, historically there has been a lack of engagement in the drugs issue by the development community, at civil society, government and UN level. This is now changing, with some substantive NGO work being undertaken, notably by Health Poverty Action and Christian Aid within the development field (see box, p. 54). At the UN level, important work on drugs as a development issue has also now emerged in the form of a groundbreaking report from the United Nations Development Programme (see p. 57).

> "Evidence shows that in many parts of the world, law enforcement responses to drug-related crime have created or exacerbated poverty, impeded sustainable development and public health and undermined human rights of the most marginalized people."
>
> **United Nations Development Programme**
> 2015

The war on drugs is undermining development in already fragile regions and states

"Drug cartels are spreading violence in Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean. West Africa is under attack from narco-trafficking. Collusion between insurgents and criminal groups threatens the stability of West Asia, the Andes and parts of Africa, fuelling the trade in smuggled weapons, the plunder of natural resources and piracy."

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
2009

The UNODC has highlighted that the current approach has created a criminal market "of staggering proportions" which undermines governance, and creates violence and insecurity. It has noted the "right to development" in its annual World Drug Report, and has recognised the "vicious cycle" of drug production, trafficking and poverty. The UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has identified illicit drugs and related crime as a "severe impediment" to achieving sustainable development, as well as to securing human rights, justice, security and equality for all, urging Member States to ensure "that drug control and anti-crime strategies are sensitive to the needs of development".[3]

The development costs of the war on drugs

1. Fuelling conflict and violence

Any form of development is undermined by conflict and violence and, particularly in key producer and transit regions, the concept of a drug "war" has moved from political rhetoric to bloody reality. The abdication of control of the lucrative and growing illicit drugs market to adaptable and ruthless criminal entrepreneurs – and subsequent police and militarised responses to them – are the core dynamics by which the drug war fuels violence.

Calls for the development field to engage in the drugs issue

"While law-enforcement agencies and the UN have set out on a one-dimensional quest to tackle the illicit drugs trade, development agencies have tended to ignore the problem altogether. Reluctant to engage in the 'war on drugs', we have tended to view the illicit economy as something entirely separate from the work of development. That is no longer possible. Like it or not, the drugs trade and other illicit activities are now part of the lives of millions of the people we aim to support"[4]

– Christian Aid (2015)

"Just like tax dodging, climate change and unfair trade rules, current global drug policies undermine global efforts to tackle poverty and inequality. Yet, unlike with these issues, the development sector has remained largely silent when it comes to drug policy. If, as international NGOs, we are serious about dealing with the root causes of poverty and not just the symptoms, we cannot afford to ignore drug policy. It's time we recognised the threat that unreformed global drug policy poses to our attempts to tackle poverty worldwide. The sector can no longer be absent from debates on drug policy reform"[5]

– Health Poverty Action (2015)

In the absence of any formal market regulation, violence becomes the default regulatory tool in the illicit trade, and the means by which DTOs secure and expand their business. State enforcement interventions against organised crime groups can then turn drug policy into a very real battle zone. As state responses intensify, DTOs naturally fight back with ever increasing ferocity – and particularly when state enforcement becomes increasingly militarised, these clashes can precipitate a terrifying spiral of violence. Drug-related profits are so high this can even include equipping private armies, or financing insurgent or terrorist groups powerful enough to defeat state enforcement.

Police and military "crackdowns" against lower level players in the drug trade and people who use drugs can often involve significant violence in themselves. For example, there were 2,819 extrajudicial killings under the banner of the Thailand government's war on drugs in 2003 (a 2007 government committee investigation found that 1,400 of the killings were either non-drug dealers or no reason could be found for their death).[6]

> "To deal with drugs as a one-dimensional, law-and-order issue is to miss the point ... We have waves of violent crime sustained by the drug trade, so we have to take the money out of drugs.
>
> "The countries in [Latin America] that have been ravaged by the armed violence associated with drug cartels are starting to think laterally about a broad range of approaches and they should be encouraged to do that. They should act on evidence."
>
> **Helen Clark**
> Head of the United Nations Development Programme
> 2013

While perhaps counterintuitive, research suggests that enforcement responses against drug markets have tended to increase rather than decrease violence.[7] Even nominally successful enforcement actions against one organisation can create spikes in violence as other groups fight to take over the market. Similarly, high profile "decapitation strategies" that target the cartel bosses can destabilise criminal organisations and fuel internecine violence as different factions battle to assume control. In the longer term, endemic violence can traumatise populations for generations, in particular fostering a deeper culture of violence among young people.

It is invariably the poor, marginalised and vulnerable who suffer the most on the frontline of such conflict, and the negative development implications of pervasive violence are huge. Of low-income fragile or conflict-affected countries, not one has achieved a single Millennium Development Goal.[8] According to the World Bank, on average, countries where violence takes root have poverty rates more than 20 percentage points higher than in other countries. In addition, people in fragile and conflict-affected states are:

- More than twice as likely to be undernourished as those in other developing countries
- More than three times as likely to be unable to send their children to school
- Twice as likely to see their children die before age five[9]

The burden of drug-war violence on civic institutions, the undermining of the rule of law, the corrosive impact on community relations, and the economic burden it imposes have a disastrous combined impact on development, including acting as a block to future progress.

2. Increasing corruption and undermining governance

Good governance and robust institutions are key requisites for long-term development. The war on drugs and the huge criminal profits it has fuelled have led to the corruption of institutions and individuals at every level in affected countries blighted by poverty and weak governance. (See preceding chapter for more detail.) This is the inevitable result of the huge funds high-level players in the illicit trade accrue, combined with their readiness to threaten violence to force the unwilling to take bribes (as they put it in Mexico "plata o plomo"

Colombia: a case study in drug war conflict as an obstacle to social and economic development

Since the 1970s, Colombia has been at the epicentre of illicit cocaine production. The vast profits generated have fuelled a disastrous expansion of the already problematic internal armed conflict between the government and guerrilla movements, most significantly FARC, and has driven corruption at all levels of police, judiciary and politics. Despite recent progress towards a peace settlement, the nexus of drug money, internal conflict and corruption continues.

- Colombia's armed conflict and related human rights abuses had, by 2010, displaced over 4.9 million people[10]

- US funding for anti-drug operations has become increasingly militarised and largely indistinguishable from counterinsurgency. The US has also pushed aerial crop eradication that has had little impact on coca cultivation, but serious impacts on human health, indigenous cultures and the environment (aerial crop spraying with glyphosate in Colombia was suspended in 2015 after WHO declared it was probably carcinogenic)

- Transparency International has described how Colombia has suffered underdevelopment and lawlessness as a result of the illicit drug trade, reporting that: "A World Bank survey released in February 2002 found that bribes are paid in 50 per cent of all state contracts. Another World Bank report estimates the cost of corruption in Colombia at US $2.6 billion annually, the equivalent of 60 per cent of the country's debt."[11]

– "cash or lead"). Corruption can have a dire impact on social and economic development – distorting economies, further undermining the functioning of institutions, and creating obstacles to development aid.

Transparency International note:[12]

> "Corruption not only reduces the net income of the poor but also wrecks programmes related to their basic needs, from sanitation to education to healthcare. It results in the misallocation of resources to the detriment of poverty reduction programmes …"

And as the UN Drug Control Program described as far back as 1998:

> "The magnitude of funds under criminal control poses special threats to governments, particularly in developing countries, where the domestic security markets and capital markets are far too small to absorb such funds without quickly becoming dependent on them. It is difficult to have a functioning democratic system when drug cartels have the means to buy protection, political support or votes at every level of government and society.
>
> "In systems where a member of the legislature or judiciary, earning only a modest income, can easily gain the equivalent of some months' salary from a trafficker by making one 'favourable' decision, the dangers of corruption are obvious."[13]

3. Economic underdevelopment and opportunity costs

The progressive shift of labour and capital into the unregulated criminal sector creates a range of macroeconomic distortions that fundamentally undermines key foundations of sustainable economic development. As the economy and institutions of a country become progressively more criminalised, other illegal businesses under the ownership or protection of criminal cartels can gain preferential treatment, making it more difficult for legal enterprises to compete. They are forced to either bear a greater burden of taxation and regulation, or be drawn into corruption or payment for protection.

Rising levels of drug market related violence can compound such economic destabilisation by deterring inward investment from both indigenous and external businesses. High-profile spikes in drug-market violence

can also deter visitors, devastating established tourist industries, as has happened even in high-flying resorts such as Acapulco.[14]

While any approach to drugs requires funding, the current scale of expenditure on a policy that is not even delivering its intended goals represents a huge opportunity cost for other areas of development and social policy. As a result, many of the poorest areas of affected countries are being further impoverished by wasting money on counterproductive enforcement that could have been invested in public health and education programmes, infrastructure and institution building – or any number of vital development initiatives.

As the UN Development Programme has noted:

> "The international drug control system seems to have paid less attention to consequences for human rights and development than to enforcement and interdiction efforts. Evidence shows that the economic, human and social costs of the implementation of drug policy have been enormous. Current drug policies have also diverted public institutional and budgetary resources away from development priorities. As an example, globally, the budget for drug-related law enforcement exceeds $100 billion annually, almost the net amount of bilateral Official Development Assistance (US$134 billion) disbursed by Member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2013"[15]

Health Poverty Action have contextualised the $100+ billion annual drug war spend by noting that "the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) estimates that the additional financing needed to meet the proposed Sustainable Development Goal of universal health care is US$37 billion a year". The Harm Reduction International 10 by 20 campaign has similarly observed that the UNAIDS estimate of resources needed for comprehensive harm reduction coverage for low- and middle-income countries is just $2.3 billion per year – but current international spending is $170 million.[16]

Development aid itself can also become distorted. The US, and other countries, have diverted aid budgets from where it would be most effective, blurring it into military spending for its allies in the war on drugs – most significantly in Latin America.[17]

4. Criminalisation: adding to the burden of poverty and marginalisation

Drug crop production is concentrated in socially and economically marginalised populations that are not made rich by their involvement in the trade. Farmers earn only around 1% of the overall global illicit drug income. Most of the remaining revenue is earned by the traffickers, and most of the mark up occurs once drugs have reached consumer market destination countries.

The problem with "alternative development"

A cornerstone of the international response to the illicit drug trade has been 'alternative development' (AD), where drug crop producers are supported in shifting to the legal economy by growing licit crops such as wheat or fruit. When undertaken appropriately, AD can help illicit crop growers make the transition to non-drug livelihoods, and support localised development and infrastructural growth. But there are major problems with many AD programmes. A critique of AD produced by the Global Drug Policy Observatory notes:

> "Evidence from thirty years of AD programming demonstrates limited success in supply reduction and that poorly monitored and weakly evaluated programmes cause more harm than good; there has been little uptake of best practice approaches, cultivators rarely benefit from AD programmes, the concept of AD is contested and there is no shared understanding of 'development'"[18]

But there is also a bigger issue. Like eradication efforts, in the long term AD does not impact on overall drug crop production. Localised impacts merely displace production (and the accompanying problems) to another region or country; another dimension of the "balloon effect". So there is no overall development benefit, and there may be a net cost from drawing other populations into the illicit trade. Even the UNODC – a leading champion of AD approaches – has noted that:

> "Alternative development projects led by security and other nondevelopment concerns were typically not sustainable – and might result in the spread or return of illicit crops or in the materialization of other adverse conditions."[19]

> "Governments devote ever increasing resources to detecting, arresting and incarcerating people involved in illicit drug markets – with little or no evidence that such efforts reduce drug related problems or deter others from engaging in similar activities ... Subsistence farmers and day labourers involved in harvesting, processing, transporting or trading, and who have taken refuge in the illicit economy purely for reasons of survival, should not be subjected to criminal punishment. Only longer-term socio economic development efforts that improve access to land and jobs, reduce economic inequality and social marginalisation, and enhance security can offer them a legitimate exit strategy."
>
> **Global Commission on Drug Policy**
> 2014

Most drug crop farmers have only small landholdings, and face high transport-to-market costs from isolated areas, and significant wastage of perishable crops. Adaption to grow alternative legitimate crops would require high levels of investment and exposure to volatile markets in products that offer small and vulnerable profit margins. Most have only limited access to credit. For example, in Myanmar and Lao PDR, drug-growing households are estimated to earn just $200 cash per annum, and drugs are grown in areas where poor health and illiteracy prevail, where physical and social infrastructures are negligible, and populations find themselves marginalised and discriminated against by the dominant ethnic group.[20]

Involvement by poor farmers in drug crop production can therefore generally be seen as resulting from a lack of options; the "migration to illegality" driven by "need not greed", as the Transnational Institute describes it.[21]

Drug control responses in these areas usually take the form of crop eradication, alternative development (see box) and punitive enforcement targeting growers and traffickers. The results, in terms of sustainable reductions in poverty, have been mainly negative and there has certainly been no reduction in total drug production – which has more than kept pace with rising global demand. Opium bans and crop eradication programmes in South-East Asia, Colombia and Afghanistan have been linked with increasing poverty among farmers, reduced access to health and education, increased indebtedness, large-scale displacement, accelerated deforestation, and social discontent. They have also resulted in an increase in young ethnic minority women entering the sex trade, often through human trafficking. Drug control measures can also drive sections of the population to support insurgent groups, or seek employment with criminal gangs, further undermining security and governance, and with it the prospects for development.

Criminalisation of poor and indigenous communities for involvement in the illicit drug trade also exacerbates the stigma and resulting discrimination they face more broadly in society. This results in a range of negative impacts explored in chapters 1 and 7 of this report, on health, and on stigma and discrimination, including reduced access to health care and education, disproportionate imprisonment, and targeting by police and security forces.

5. Increasing deforestation and pollution

An often overlooked cost of the war on drugs is its negative impact on the environment and sustainable development – mainly resulting from eradication and aerial spraying of drug crops in ecologically sensitive environments, such as the Andes and Amazon basin. Eradication not only causes localised deforestation, but has a devastating multiplier effect because drug producers simply deforest new areas for cultivation – the "balloon effect" in action again. This problem is made worse because protected areas in national parks – where aerial spraying is banned – are often targeted. Colombia announced a suspension of aerial spraying in 2015 following a WHO report stating that glyphosate (the chemical used) was "probably carcinogenic"[22] – but manual eradication is ongoing, and glyphosate eradication continues elsewhere, including in South Africa.[23]

The past 20 years have seen the bulk of coca cultivation shift from Peru and Bolivia to Colombia, and then from region to region within Colombia, or more recently, back to Peru. In an example of this futility, the US Office of

National Drug Control Policy admitted that despite record aerial spraying of over 1,300 km² of coca in Colombia in 2004, the total area under coca cultivation remained "statistically unchanged". Recent official claims of reduced areas under cultivation are likely to have been compensated for by increased productivity following selective breeding (also now allowing cultivation in lower lying regions), and more sophisticated farming techniques.

Illicit, unregulated processing of drug crops is also associated with localised pollution as toxic chemicals used in crude processing of coca and opium are disposed of in local environments and waterways. Concerns have also been raised about the myco-herbicides (killer fungi) engineered to attack opium poppies and coca bushes; scientists fear they may affect food crops, wipe out entire plant species and seriously harm ecosystems.

> "Developed countries – the major consumers – have imposed harmful policies on the drug-producing countries. These policies have had dire consequences … for the economic development and political stability of the producer countries. The 'war on drugs' strategy did not have a significant impact on its goals to increase the street price of drugs and to reduce consumption. Instead … prohibition created economic incentives for traffickers to emerge and prosper; crop eradication in the Andean region helped increase the productivity of the remaining crops; and the fight against the illegal heroin trade in Afghanistan mostly hurt the poor farmers and benefited the Taliban."
>
> **Fernando Henrique Cardoso**
> 34th President of Brazil
> 2010

6. Fuelling HIV infection and other health impacts

The war on drugs creates or exacerbates a number of health-related harms that inevitably impact on development – creating human costs for individuals and communities, and avoidable burdens on scarce health and social care resources. Firstly, levels of drug use and the associated direct health harms tend to rise in the vulnerable and marginalised countries and areas used for producing and transiting drugs, as availability rapidly increases, including from employees being paid in drugs.

Secondly, criminalising people who use drugs increases health risks; pushing use into unhygienic marginal environments and encouraging risky behaviours such as sharing injecting equipment, whilst simultaneously creating practical and political obstacles to proven health interventions, including prevention, harm reduction and treatment. These factors have fuelled epidemics of HIV and hepatitis B and C among people who inject drugs in many developing countries. Roughly, one tenth of new HIV infections result from needle sharing among people who use drugs, with this figure rising to just under a third outside of Sub-Saharan Africa, and approaching or exceeding a half in some regions, including many former Soviet republics.

7. Undermining human rights, promoting discrimination

The protection of human rights is central to the achievement of human development. Human rights abuses, and unaccountability for those who perpetrate them, fundamentally undermines development more broadly. The UN is tasked with both promoting human rights and overseeing the international drug control regime, yet human rights abuses in the name of drug control are commonplace. State violence, including corporal punishment, executions and extrajudicial killings are frequently associated with drug enforcement. In direct contravention of international law, over thirty countries maintain the death penalty for drug-related offences with estimates of 1000 such executions taking place annually.[24] China is the worst offender, even marking UN International Anti-Drugs Day with mass public executions of drug offenders.

The widespread use of disproportionate punishments for minor drug offences can overwhelm criminal justice systems, draining scarce resources, and fuelling prison

overcrowding and related health and human rights harms. People who use or grow drugs are also easy targets for ill-treatment by police, subject to violence, torture or extortion of money using threats of detention, or drug withdrawal to coerce dependent users into providing incriminating testimony.

Criminalisation of drug treatment and harm reduction activities also remains widespread. Established opiate substitution therapy such as methadone remains illegal in some countries, such as Russia, despite methadone being on the WHO list of essential medicines, and its use defined as best practice in WHO, UNAIDS and UNODC guidelines. Similarly, criminal laws banning syringe/needle provision (and possession) create a climate of fear for people who use drugs, driving them away from life-saving HIV prevention and other health services, and encouraging high risk behaviours. People who use drugs are also often discriminated against when accessing healthcare, such as antiretroviral and hepatitis C treatment.

In China and South-East Asia, those arrested for possession and use of illicit drugs are often subject to arbitrary detention without trial in the form of forced or compulsory "treatment" in facilities where further human rights abuses are common, for periods from a few months to years.[25] Estimates of numbers detained in such 'treatment' centres in China alone are as high as 500,000.[26]

As the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has observed: "millions of people worldwide who require essential medicines for pain, drug dependency and other health conditions find that availability is often limited or absent". The Special Rapporteur on the right to health has also noted that access to these medications is often excessively restricted for fear that they will be diverted from legitimate medical uses to illicit purposes.

Crop eradication efforts, as well as having the environmental costs already mentioned, can also impact basic rights. Chemical spraying can lead to health problems, for example the glyphosate sprayed by US planes over coca fields has caused gastrointestinal problems, fevers, headaches, nausea, colds and vomiting. Legal food plants are additional casualties. The spraying has sometimes forced whole villages to be abandoned and the rapid elimination of farmers' primary source of income results in economic and social harm.

Are there benefits?

The claims that the war on drugs can reduce or eliminate drug production and availability are simply not borne out by the experience of the past half-century. Production and supply of key drug crops and related products have more than kept pace with demand, with a long term trend of falling prices and rising use and availability. As already noted, localised enforcement "successes" simply displace production and related problems geographically.

The key beneficiaries of the war on drugs are those who use it for political ends, whether for populist political reasons, or to justify military interventions, as well as the military and suppliers of military/police hardware, and the criminals who end up in control of the trade.

Drug production and trafficking does, however, represent real economic activity, and illegal earnings also feed into local economies when spent in legal markets. For certain populations and individuals with limited options, drug production, or involvement in the criminal supply chain, offers one of the few sources of income, albeit with substantial risks attached.

The intersection of licit and illicit economies has become increasingly complex and entrenched. Christian Aid has highlighted how, in many developing regions:

> "… the licit and illicit economies are no longer two separate entities: they are often one and the same thing. Mafias provide much-needed jobs, investment and stability; drug lords are elected into government office; criminals are given sanctuary by the poor people they are supposed to prey on; criminal syndicates serve as shadow subcontractors of state security."

Getting to grips with these new realities presents a profound challenge for both drug policy and development discipline – and how the two need to work together in future. Clearly any change in drug control policy must consider the development impacts – particularly for the majority of individuals involved in the illicit economy, who do not fit the stereotype of the billionaire drug barons.[27]

Inadvertent benefits? Heroin and stability in Tajikistan

De Danieli's case study for Christian Aid of the illicit opiate economy in Tajikistan[28] – an important transit route from Afghanistan to Russia and Western Europe – forces the development field to reconsider many assumptions and policy responses.

When state institutions were too weak to impose order, government actors realised it was easier to obtain through working with, rather than against, local strongmen. So compromises were sought with the organised criminal organisations in effective control of parts of the country and economy. Informal agreements were made in the "shadow bargaining" of the 1997 peace talks, giving warlords financial incentives to disarm and become legitimate actors in the post-conflict political system. The lucrative illicit drugs trade – which had funded different sides in the civil war – was 'allowed' to continue as long as local drug traffickers pledged their political loyalty. Collusion, in return for a share of the business, became widespread. But more importantly, drug mafias helped preserve order.

Tajikistan President Emomali Rahmon. The illicit opiate trade consolidated the Tajik state's coercive apparatus

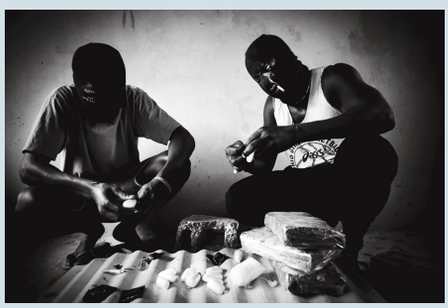
This led to the creation of an oligopoly of 20 to 30 groups in the drugs trade, and more stable local political economies. Poor local communities found a steady source of income, and criminal organisations became *de facto* subcontractors of security, relieving the government of the burden of governing remote and unruly areas of the country. Cash-rich criminals – who wanted more efficient and predictable supply chains – became the only effective source of investment in a cash-starved, infrastructure-poor and unstable economy.

Over time, these symbiotic relationships consolidated. In 2007, a group of scholars concluded that opiates trafficking added at least 30% to the GDP of Tajikistan, and that "The leaders of the most powerful trafficking groups occupy high-ranking government positions and misuse state structures for their own illicit businesses." These important actors – warlords or criminals turned statesmen – are often missed in development or peacebuilding analysis. Such figures operate in the grey area of crime and business, often as legitimate entrepreneurs enjoying protection from authorities. But their main interest is the control of illegal markets, and they can resort to violence to settle disputes in what is a risky business.

When there is competition without agreement on who controls the wealth a commodity brings – whether drugs, gold, diamonds, or oil – disorder often follows. But when different groups can arrive at a settlement, even illicit drugs can provide the basis for stability. So in Tajikistan's fractured society, mafias now fulfil the role of social glue.

But not only has the opiate trade consolidated the Tajik state's coercive apparatus, so has counter-narcotic assistance, designed to combat drugs related insecurity, because the drug-control "results" delivered were largely the elimination of smaller competitors in illicit enterprises. So stand-alone attempts to destroy drugs trafficking without considering the context, and how the various players are involved, may have unintended consequences.

Guinea Bissau: an unwanted new challenge to an already struggling state



Growing demand for cocaine in Europe, combined with the increased policing of Caribbean drug transit routes has displaced transit routes to West Africa – yet another example of "the balloon effect" in action.

Guinea Bissau, already experiencing weak governance, endemic poverty and negligible police infrastructure, has been particularly affected - with serious consequences for one of the most underdeveloped countries on Earth.

In 2006, the entire GDP of Guinea-Bissau was only $304 million, the equivalent of six tons of cocaine sold in Europe at the wholesale level. UNODC estimates approximately 40 tons of the cocaine consumed in Europe passes through West Africa each year. The disparity in wealth between trafficking organisations and authorities has facilitated infiltration and bribery of the little state infrastructure that exists. Investigations show extensive involvement of police, military, government ministers and the presidential family in the cocaine trade, the arrival of which has also triggered cocaine and crack misuse.[29]

The war on drugs has turned Guinea Bissau from a fragile state into a failed narco-state in less than a decade, creating an institutional environment in which nascent development processes are curtailed or put into reverse. Other countries in West Africa are also being impacted or under threat, as are all fragile states with the potential to be used as producer or transit countries.

How to count the costs?

Governments and international bodies have failed to properly assess the impacts of global drug control policies, including on development, for decades - let alone meaningfully explore the alternatives. But the real obstacles to proper evaluation are political not practical; the emotive and highly politicised nature of the debate around drugs has led to the war on drugs becoming largely immune from scrutiny. Worse still, as underlined repeatedly by the evidence in this report, harms caused by the drug war itself are routinely conflated with those from drug use, to bolster the apparent "drug menace" narrative then used to justify continuation of the same failed approach.

The Global Commission on Drug Policy, comprised of former world leaders and UN luminaries, has noted how "official government and UN evaluations of drug policy are preoccupied with metrics such as arrests and drug seizures. These are process measures, reflecting the scale of enforcement efforts, rather than outcome measures that tell us about the actual impacts of drug use and drug policies on people's lives. Process measures can give the impression of success, when the reality for people on the ground is often the opposite."[30]

Citing the commission and building on this narrative, the UNDP has made it clear that "the development of a comprehensive set of metrics to measure the full spectrum of drug-related health issues, as well as the broader impact of drug control policies on human rights, security and development would be an important contribution to the discussion on the development dimensions of drug policy".[31] The UNDP goes further, outlining the range of metrics related to goals, targets and indicators needed to count the costs of current policy models, and evaluate alternative approaches.

There have also been discussions and proposals relating to the drugs-specific Sustainable Development Goal, and the relevance of the SDGs more broadly to assessing impacts of drug enforcement. As Health Poverty Action has stated:[32]

> "The dominant prohibitionist approach to global drug policy is significantly impacting on progress to achieve sustainable development. It is time the development sector engaged seriously with the issue of drug policy to address these impacts by rectifying the policy incoherence between a 'war on drugs' approach and sustainable development. The SDGs and UNGASS 2016 present key opportunities to ensure that development policies and drug control efforts work side by side

> "If development agencies want poor communities to lift themselves out of poverty, then the causes and consequences of the continuing expansion and resilience of the illicit economy, as well as the intended and unintended consequences of programmes associated with the war on drugs, need to be fully understood. And if new cures are needed, development agencies need to be fully involved in finding them"
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> **Eric Gutierrez**
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to meet common goals, but if the development community remains silent on these issues, they will at best limit their efforts and progress towards meeting a number of the SDGs and at worst render them unachievable."

Conclusions

All developing countries face major challenges, including lack of resources, poor governance, conflict and corruption. The last thing they need is to have these problems made still worse by a futile and counterproductive war on drugs.

For example, UNODC analysis in Afghanistan clearly links localised incidence of opium poppy production with lack of access to basic development facilities (such as child education, and access to the power grid),[33] and insecurity. Yet the UNODC also acknowledges that the drug control system itself is having the unintended consequence of creating insecurity, corruption and violence. So, by its own analysis, it is overseeing an enforcement led policy to reduce opium production that is creating conditions in which opium production becomes more likely. And in doing so, the UNODC is helping to lock the region into a spiral of underdevelopment.

There are other options (explored in Chapter, 10, Options and alternatives) that move away from the war mentality of the past, that can be explored at national, regional and international scale. These options should be debated and explored using the best possible evidence and analysis. Because if there is one thing development experts agree on, it is that development in a war zone is next to impossible, and the issues outlined in this report are neither unclear nor hidden.

There are signs in the NGO sector, and at the UN, that the drugs issue is finally moving towards the mainstream of the development discourse. Key forces within the development sector now have a responsibility to seriously engage with far more than the shallow analysis and calls for alternative development that have characterised the discourse to date. If they fail to do so, they will stand guilty of neglecting the marginalised populations they claim to represent.

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