

Forum:	Advisory Panel on the Question of Drugs and Crime
Issue:	Encouraging a Shift to the Alternative Development Approach in Crop Management
Chair:	Laura Hwa

Introduction

In impoverished countries, many farmers often seek out illicit crop cultivation as means to generate more income to deal with immediate economical issues. However, making money through this unlawful method proves to be detrimental in the long term. The revenue made from the drug trade is not a part of a nation's mainstream development, and governments maintain the right to force shut opium and coca plantations, exacerbating conditions for both farmers and middlemen. Though drug crop cultivation has become better contained in the past decade, the World Drug Report assessed that opium growth is likely to continue increasing in main opium growing regions and that coca cultivation in the Andean region (including countries like Bolivia, Peru, and Venezuela) will continue to remain unchanged.

Understanding this, the alternate development method in crop management becomes key to fighting illicit crop cultivation. The alternate development approach recommends nations to address underlying socioeconomic causes of why nations have a significant population running illicit crop plantations. This includes implementing strategies such as developing infrastructure and increasing citizens' accessibility to education. By striving to amend poverty and underdevelopment, which are common characteristics of nations relying on the drug trade to generate income, the issue of illicit crop cultivation can be overcome.

Definition of Key Terms

Alternative Development Approach

A process to prevent and eliminate unlawful cultivation of plants through specific developments. This includes having nations able to identify and target groups susceptible to drug usage and addressing other underlying socioeconomic problems contributing to the world drug problem. From the past few decades, this has proven to be an effective program that helps crop management.

Narcotic and Psychotropic Drugs

An addictive drug that affects normal mood or behavior. Narcotic drugs include morphine and heroin, and recreational psychotropics include marijuana and cocaine, which are considered illegal to take, possess, or deal, if not medically prescribed. Continued use of both drugs can entail dependence, presenting harsh withdrawal symptoms if drug use is stopped. Users may also develop tolerance to opioids, making it so their doses must increase to reach the same high.

Opium Poppy

A herb can appear gray-green with large cup-shaped flowers. The opium poppy contains narcotic components like morphine, codeine, and thebaine, cultivated both legally for medicinal use and illegally as part of the drug trade. Currently, Afghanistan is the world's largest illicit cultivator of the opium poppy and fuels opioid drug manufacturing.

Coca

Coca plants are small shrubs with a reddish-brown bark which come in different varieties. Mainly, the coca bush is grown in Andean countries, like Colombia and Peru. The cocaine that gets produced from this plant includes alkaloids like cocaine and nicotine. Having cocaine in one's body system provides temporary muscle relaxation and a "rush" effect. However, the nicotine content makes this substance highly addictive.

Cannabis

A plant with a distinct palm shaped leaf pattern, which is often used to produce marijuana. Many chemical compounds are found in cannabis, but it is mainly the THC cannabinoid that creates various psychoactive effects when entering the bloodstream. There are both licit and illicit cannabis cultivations.

Illicit Crop Cultivation

Growing crops such as cannabis, coca, or the opium poppy, to produce narcotic drugs for the illegal drug trade. The illegal drug trade is a global black market that encompasses the cultivation, manufacturing, distribution, and sale of drugs that are against drug prohibition laws.

Background Information

The World Drug Problem

Nations with prevalent drug issues typically also have unstable or corrupt governments. This leads to a lack of control and security of drug cultivation. Poor farmers may seek to begin growing drug crops because there are limited employment opportunities, access to markets, and education. These factors

contribute to the poor socioeconomic conditions, and continues a vicious cycle. Growth in licit economic sectors is reduced, more people resort to drug production, and organized crime/violence is increased. These effects are all worsened governments do not take preventive measures.

Rising Illicit Drug Production

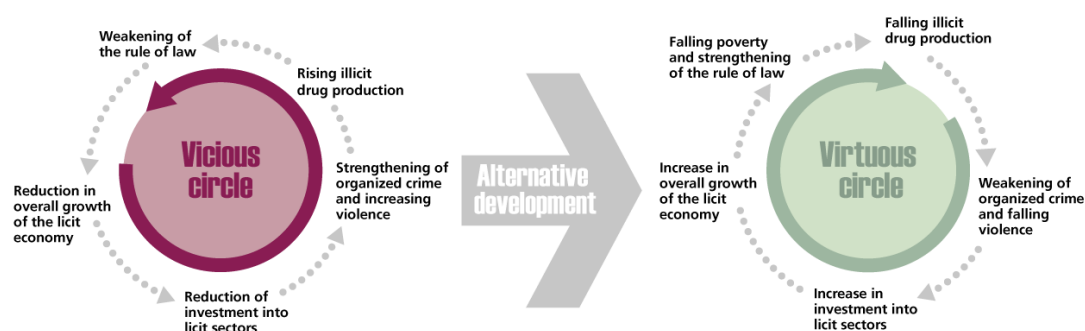
As of 2018, many Afghans still rely on the drug trade to make a living. Drug crop cultivation has accounted for 354,000 full time jobs, and investigations have found that the largest amount of hectares for opium cultivation is found in impoverished regions. These drug crops can still be grown in rugged conditions and can be stored for long periods of time, making this industry seem appealing to farmers who seek to increase their income. When observing cocaine production, Colombia, Bolivia, and Peru have been found to account for almost all of the global cocaine supply, and Colombia is the main producer for heroin in the US. In 2001, approximately 552,763 acres were dedicated to coca plantations but has been reduced to approximately 464,558 acres in 2017.

Organized Crime Strengthens and Violence Increases

Not only do recreational drugs make users prone to being in a more violent or aggressive state, the disagreement between members of the illegal drug trade has caused many deaths and other forms of harm. Drug related violence statistics are alarming in Central and South American regions as the number of deaths continues rising, despite local law enforcement efforts to counter this. In 2017, “El Chapo”, an immensely powerful drug lord, was arrested, causing an increase in homicides as rivaling drug cartels vie for power. Much of the drug crops these countries cultivate are manufactured into heroin, cocaine, and cannabis, and these illegal substances are then trafficked into the United States, a profitable drug market. This causes drug related organized crime violence to spread, resulting in the United States providing consistent aid to these nations as a counter-drug initiative.

Implementing the Alternative Development Approach

The UNODC has found the alternative development approach to be the most effective method to counter illicit drug crop cultivation. This process involves addressing the other underlying socioeconomic factors which drive people to resort to growing illegal crops like marijuana, opium poppies, or coca. In Peru, the UNODC has worked with over 8000 families who used to rely on cultivating coca for income towards beginning licit farming enterprises. The outcomes of this approach was certainly beneficial as these families generated greater revenue and no longer had concerns of being caught engaging in illegal activity.



Vicious Cycle and the Alternative Development Approach

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Afghanistan

Afghanistan's opium production reached a record high in 2013 of 209,000 hectares, hindering the overall progress of the nation. Counter-narcotic efforts have already been put in place, with an increase in available services to deal with drug addiction problems and more arrests of prominent figures in the drug trade.

Colombia

Opium poppies in Columbia are typically grown along with other crops to reduce chances of being caught during government investigations of region. This makes it so herbicides, a fungus based treatment, are used to eradicate a specific drug crop. Along with assistance from the United States, anti-narcotic agencies appoint helicopters to spray the herbicide on plantations. Though this method helped successfully eradicate marijuana in the 1980s, there have been concerns of whether or not other crops sprayed with herbicides have adverse effects on the human body.

Peru

Peru is one of top three coca bush producers in the world with 62,500 hectares of its land used for coca cultivation in 2011. However, Peru has been working with UNODC for more than 25 years with an implemented alternative development approach in place. USAID has also been assisting Peru's development by helping provide more economic opportunities, suggesting other profitable licit crops for farmers to grow on their land, and greater access to markets. As a result of these strategies, more than 27,000 families have voluntarily eradicated their land for illicit crop cultivation.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
June 8th to 10th, 1998	General Assembly's Twentieth Special Session, recognizing alternative development approaches should be used
November 6th to 11th, 2011	International Seminar Workshop on Sustainable Alternative Development
October 24th, 2018	The Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) Intersessional Meeting on Alternative Development and Crop Control Strategies

Relevant UN Resolutions and Treaties

- The United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development, 18 December 2013 (**A/RES/68/196**)
- Commission on Narcotic Drugs Resolution, 20 March 2009 (**A/RES/52/6**)
- International Cooperation Against the World Drug Problem, 23 April 2013 (**A/RES/67/193**)

Possible Solutions

To further reduce the cultivation of illicit drug crops, **multiple nations should combine efforts to tackle this issue**. This includes being active participants in meetings related to the matter so nations can share information about the outcomes of alternative development program evaluations, receive support from one another, and stay updated as matters develop. Nations should also utilize the information accessible through this collaboration so appropriate strategies, which are within the agreement of the local government, can be implemented. Once a viable plan is set in place, **ensuring enforcement becomes crucial for progress**. This will likely include both local government affiliated organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to begin programs guiding farmers to be more economically successful. Steps to achieve this goal include encouraging farmers to grow licit crops, providing guidance for them to aptly enter the market, and assist them in becoming stakeholders of their own farming business.

As there is progress on this issue, **nations should work towards tackling poverty and other socioeconomic causes** of why small rural farming families resort to drug-crop cultivation as a means of generating income. Socially inclusive education should be strengthened, as education is the most

effective way of breaking away from a cycle of poverty and should be available to as many citizens as possible. Laws on corruption, drugs, human rights, and violence should also be implemented and enforced as these countries shift towards becoming more self-sustainable. When governments have the means to do so, **developing better infrastructure** is also beneficial to increase a nation's prosperity and help local businesses become more efficient. However, this solution will not be effective if corruption remains an issue.

Raising awareness about the alternative development approach through holding conventions and providing information about this issue through media are also ways people or organizations can help this cause. With more awareness, funds are more likely to be donated to aid nations in need of development and programs targeting specific groups prone to engaging with drugs or suffer from the effects of drug usage can be developed. This solution has been proven effective in working towards eradicating drug cultivation altogether, instead of simply shifting the issue from one region to another, and therefore should be supported.

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