



Briefing Note

Development-oriented Drug Policy (EOD)

Background

The illegal cultivation of drug crops such as opium poppy and coca mostly occurs in conflict and post-conflict regions or in fragile states (cf. Briefing Note 'Rural Development in Fragile States'). The poorer and more isolated a region is, the more favourable are the conditions for illegal drug production. Opium poppy is traditionally grown in Asia, predominantly in Afghanistan, Burma/Myanmar and Laos. Opium is extracted from the poppy seed pods and processed into heroin. Coca is farmed mainly in the Andean countries of Colombia, Peru and Bolivia. Coca paste is made from the fresh leaves of the coca plant and is then processed into cocaine and crack. A lesser proportion of the narcotic substances produced is consumed in the producing countries themselves; the largest proportion is smuggled into the illegal consumer markets for drugs in Europe and North America, even though consumption of organic drugs has sharply increased in producer and transit countries as well.

The production costs for drug crops and for the drugs themselves are comparatively small; it is not until they reach the illegal wholesale and retail markets that the prices are driven upwards. The production of and trade in illegal drugs is a highly organised business. The destructive dynamics of the lucrative drug economy is driven by violent actors and transnational criminal networks. Drug-trafficking organisations are able to react flexibly to control mechanisms and price fluctuations: they change production areas, types of drugs and trafficking routes according to changing circumstances. Nowadays, for example, more synthetic

drugs are produced in former poppy growing areas (South-east Asia) due to opium bans and repressive controls, and the main area for opium poppy growing has shifted from the 'Golden Triangle' in Southeast Asia to the 'Golden Crescent' of Afghanistan (the so called 'balloon effect'). Not only crops are shifting in response to increased control and interdiction efforts, but also trafficking routes, as indicated by changing patterns of the cocaine business. Transatlantic trafficking routes have constantly moved southbound; rather direct routes through the Caribbean have been substituted through new ones, even involving Western Africa as a trafficking hub for cocaine destined to Europe. With the emergence of new trafficking hubs, new consumer markets originate, corruption increases and market-endemic violence is generated along the new routes.

Most people in drug crop cultivating regions make their living principally from agriculture. The cultivation of coca, opium poppy and cannabis is often the farmers' main source of income in the absence of adequate access to legal means of production and capital and given the poor provision of social and productive infrastructure. However, cultivating drug crops does not enable farmers to make any lasting improvement to their working and living conditions. Instead, they are vulnerable to the pressure exerted by violent actors and to the risk of prosecution and having their crops eradicated by state authorities. Economic and ecological risks include the loss of soil fertility, soil erosion, as well as large price fluctuations for raw opium and coca leaves and paste.

The cultivation of drug crops in particular highlights the way in which drug-related problems and obstacles to development are linked. Poverty, a dearth of economic options, weak public institutions and armed conflicts provide favourable conditions for the cultivation of and trafficking in drugs and increase the risk of consumption. Drug production and drug trafficking in turn play a key role in the emergence and persistence of violent conflicts in many countries – all but one of the main opium and coca producing countries are in a conflict or post-conflict situation. Drug-related problems often reinforce poverty, health problems, fragile institutions and other challenges to development. They destabilise cultivation and transit regions through organised crime, endemic violence, environmental damage, migration, corruption, money laundering and an underground economy. The drug economy penetrates politics, the economy, and society, and weakens the state. Drug-related problems thus pose a severe impediment to sustainable development.

GIZ's position

The aim of international drug policy is to reduce the illegal cultivation of drug crops over the long term as well as the production, trafficking and consumption of illegal drugs. The global drug regime is based on three UN conventions from 1961, 1971 and 1988, which were further elaborated by resolutions at the 20th UN General Assembly Special Session on the World Drug Problem in 1998 (UNGASS). UN Member States are supported in this work by the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which is tasked with coordinating all drug control measures, promoting adherence to international treaties, and ensuring the exchange of information and experience by means of programmes on drug control.

In March 2009 the aims and principles of international drug policy as well as the three drug conventions were confirmed at UN level by the central policy guideline body of the UN in the field of drugs, even though the objectives aimed at containing the global drug problem had not been achieved.

Despite some progress at local, regional and international level, the negotiations concluded that there were still considerable challenges to be met before any notable reduction in the illegal production, trafficking and consumption of drugs could be achieved. In addition, the production of and trafficking in opium, cocaine, cannabis and synthetic drugs, as

well as the diversion of drug precursors, has shown a steady and marked increase. International drug policy has called for the illegal cultivation, production and trafficking in drugs as well as the diversion of drug precursors and money laundering to be eliminated or clearly and measurably reduced during the decade leading up to 2019, in order to safeguard the health and well-being of humanity.

The debates and negotiations at UN level demonstrate time and again that international drug policy is caught in tension between divergent national interests and highly diverse practical approaches, being only rarely based on academic research or experience on the ground (evidence-based). For example, whereas the US government has so far put huge efforts into eradicating drug crops as a means of reducing supply, the countries of the EU are attempting to ensure that farmers in producing countries grow alternative crops instead of opium poppy and coca. The EU's fundamental position on this is that drug crop eradication should take place only once sustainable legal livelihood systems are available for those affected. The EU has also declined to make its development cooperation conditional upon specific drug control stipulations.

GIZ supports the EU's position. With regard to controlling supply in particular, it speaks out against certain repressive measures – such as aerial crop spraying – because these frequently destroy the very bases of life of the farming families affected, leaving them with no means of securing an income. In addition, crop eradication and cultivation bans often fail to take into consideration the traditional, socio-cultural and nutrition-related aspects of these crop plants for certain sections of the population.

GIZ advocates and supports an approach of a development-oriented drug policy (EOD). The aim of the latter is to reduce the negative individual and societal consequences of drug cultivation, drug trafficking and drug consumption, as well as to minimize the unintended adverse effects of drugs ('harm reduction'). Respect for human rights, human dignity and equal treatment for farmers are fundamental principles of this approach. The aim of development-oriented drug policy is to promote peace and security in a drugs environment and to permanently reduce people's poverty and their dependence on the illegal drug economy. Development cooperation on its own, however, cannot prevent the cultivation of drug crops. Development-

oriented drug policy is a complex and politically sensitive task involving domains of action that go beyond those of the conventional programmes and projects of rural development and governance support. Accordingly, GIZ sees development-oriented drug policy as an extensive field of consultancy and advisory services. This ranges from offering policy advice at international and national level up to planning, implementing and evaluating programmes and projects underway in a drugs environment. The broader political, social, economic and legal conditions crucial to lasting disengagement from the drug economy are examined. Development-oriented drug policy requires close cooperation between the state, private enterprise and civil society. Since it is a transregional – indeed a global issue – it is important to work together across regional and national borders.

Despite the global challenge and the broad and varied development policy dimension, the drugs issue is far too rarely acknowledged and taken into account in development and international cooperation as a key point of departure for rural development, poverty and conflict reduction as well as addressing state failure. This applies both to the drugs-sensitive design of programmes and projects as well as to international advisory work with partner countries and collaboration in international drug policy decision-making bodies.

Action required

One important field of action for development in a drugs environment is the identification and creation of alternative sources of income. Such development is triggered by strengthening and diversifying livelihood systems (cf. Briefing Note ‘Rural Development in Fragile States’). The idea is that farmers are enabled to secure their basic needs and natural resources in the long term without engaging in the illegal cultivation of drug crops. A number of measures are required to support the goal of replacing the illegal drug economy with legal economic structures and to reduce levels of dependency. These include, alongside those for agriculture, the consolidation of the social and physical infrastructure (e.g. irrigation facilities, road networks, health care, education and social welfare institutions). They also include the support of a stable and accountable institutional setting, the promotion of participatory land use planning systems (access to land, land use rights) and of non-agricultural sources of income. Introducing appropriate

measures that have a good prospect of success presupposes knowledge of the socio-cultural, economic, political and ecological conditions at regional and local level as well as the active participation and support of the affected population. This knowledge can be gained through a thorough and evidence-based analysis of livelihood systems in project area as a means of project planning and evaluation. At the same time, the livelihood analysis model as designed by the development-oriented drug policy approach promotes the ownership of the target groups due to their participation in systematic livelihood surveys.

In order for rural development activities to deliver positive results in a drugs environment, measures need to be implemented simultaneously with means of conflict reduction and the development of peace and security. These include, among others, programmes relating to state consolidation: police and security sector reform, strengthening the rule of law, and support for processes of decentralisation.

Drug substitution strategies and isolated Alternative Development projects have only partially contributed to reducing the drug cultivation problem in the past and have made barely any inroads regarding lasting improvements to the quality of life of rural populations. Given this experience, partner governments and institutions in countries and regions with (severe) drug-related problems must be made aware of the need to integrate development-oriented drug policy into national development programmes and poverty reduction strategies (mainstreaming). The ‘drug issue’ must be mainstreamed as a cross-cutting topic and development measures designed accordingly (e.g. in programmes and projects of rural development, development-oriented emergency and transitional aid, land management and economic assistance).

The implementation of development-oriented drug policy demands political commitment, confidence-building measures and large-scale financial resources over a long period of time. It encompasses development assistance in former as well as current drug cultivating regions. Important aspects of production, trade and consumption as well as potential displacement effects need to be borne in mind as well.



Drug policy is a politically sensitive and unwieldy issue. The ‘war on drugs’ is still the predominant global drug policy paradigm. Introducing innovative, evidence-based approaches that take adequate account of the side effects of drug policies is still hampered by ideological prejudices. In the long term, the task at the international level is to establish an alternative discourse regarding development-oriented drug policy, in which the voices of civil society actors should be heard as well. Policy-makers should be advised to design drug policy in a way that further development is oriented towards the needs of the target groups at both the producer and the consumer ends of the value chain. Drug policy in the areas of cultivation should not ‘purely’ be seen as a drug control strategy but as a contribution to the long-

term transformation of drug economies into legal economies. The success and progress of national and international drug policy should therefore be measured against social and poverty-related indicators. On the consumption side, health issues and harm reduction measures should be brought to the fore.

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