

Alternative Development: Towards Implementation

Background Paper

International Seminar Workshop on the Implementation of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development

**International Conference on Alternative Development 2
(ICAD-2)**

**19 – 24 November 2015
Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai and Bangkok, Thailand**

1. Introduction: The ICAD Process

The history of Alternative Development (AD) goes back several decades and has gone through several stages of conceptual as well as technical improvements. The concept of AD has evolved from a focus on implementing crop substitution projects to a broader understanding of AD as an integrated and holistic concept that deals with the root causes of illicit cultivation and as a programme that is part of a national development plan.¹ Nowadays, AD is generally understood as undertaking “rural development in a drug environment”. While the first crop substitution development projects can be traced back to the 1970s in Thailand, alternative development only became fully recognized as an important pillar of global drug policy at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on the World Drug Problem in 1998 where AD was defined as “a process to prevent and eliminate the illicit cultivation of plants containing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances through specifically designed rural development measures in the context of sustained national economic growth and sustainable development efforts in countries taking action against drugs, recognising the particular socio-cultural characteristics of the target communities and groups, within the framework of a comprehensive and permanent solution to the problem of illicit drugs.”²

In order to share lessons learned from the implementation of AD for over four decades and to promote strategic discussions on the way forward for AD, the governments of Thailand and Peru, together with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), hosted the International Workshop and Conference on Alternative Development (ICAD-1) in November 2011 in Thailand.³ ICAD 1 brought together over 100 policy makers, experts, practitioners, members of international organizations, and civil society from all continents to exchange good practices on AD with the aim of addressing the problem of illicit cultivation of crops used for the production of narcotic drugs⁴ through alleviating poverty and ensuring sustainable alternative livelihood opportunities. They carried out field visits to AD projects in Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai provinces – once Thailand’s main opium producing areas and part of the infamous ‘Golden Triangle’ – and took part in workshops to exchange experiences and develop recommendations for the future direction of AD.

The final workshop outcome fed into the drafting of the International Guiding Principles on Alternative Development, which were adopted at the High Level International Conference on Alternative Development in Lima, Peru, in November 2012, mainly attended by senior government representatives and policy makers. Later, the International Guiding Principles on Alternative Development were endorsed by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) at its fifty-sixth session in March 2013 and subsequently adopted as the United Nations Guiding Principles on AD by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the United

¹ Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), *Rethinking the Approach of Alternative Development, Principles and Standards of Development in a Drugs Environment*, Sector Programme Development-Oriented Drug Policy, Eschborn 2011.

² A/RES/S-20/4, *Action Plan on International Cooperation on the Eradication of Illicit Drug Crops and on Alternative Development*, United Nations General Assembly, 8 September 1998. <https://www.unodc.org/documents/alternative-development/UNGASSActionPlanAD.pdf>

³ Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) resolutions 52/6 of 20 March 2009; 53/6 of 12 March 2010; 54/4 of 25 March 2011; and 55/4 of 16 March 2012.

⁴ The 1998 Action Plan referred to “illicit cultivation of plants containing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances” and the 2009 Political Declaration used the terminology of “illicit cultivation of crops used for the production of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances”. However, contrary to the control logic applied in the 1961 Single Convention, plants containing psychotropic substances are not placed under control by the 1971 Convention. Therefore, this paper only refers to “illicit cultivation of crops used for the production of narcotic drugs” or “cultivation of crops with illicit uses” or “illicit cultivation of opium poppy, coca and cannabis”, deliberately leaving out any references to psychotropic substances.

Nations General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session in December 2013.⁵ The Guiding Principles are based on years of good practices and accumulated knowledge on alternative development across regions. Their aim is to serve as a set of guidelines that interested member states can adopt and modify to specific national characteristics. It is expected that the guidelines, together with renewed commitments from governments and other stakeholders, will result in more effective and sustainable AD programmes in the future.

In order to promote the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on AD, the Thai Government, the German Government, and UNODC have decided to organize a second International Workshop and Conference on Alternative Development (ICAD 2) in Thailand during 19-24 November 2015. ICAD 2 intends to underscore the need to integrate AD interventions into the larger national rural development agenda and to link the UN Guiding Principles on AD with broader discussions around the post-2015 development agenda as well as the upcoming United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on the World Drug Problem on 19-21 April 2016. ICAD-2 furthermore hopes to contribute to increased political and financial support for AD programmes by strengthening global alliances among (potential) international donors and countries implementing AD programmes.

This background paper for ICAD 2 highlights three main points.

First of all, the debate on AD over the last decade has resulted in a large body of work and knowledge containing important lessons learned and key principles. Several of these documents were instrumental as inputs for the development of the UN Guiding Principles on AD and remain an essential part of discussions guiding AD policies and practices today. These include for instance the 2005 UNODC Thematic Evaluation of AD,⁶ the 2008 report of the open-ended intergovernmental expert working group on AD,⁷ the 2008 report 'Developing a Strategic Approach to Alternative Development',⁸ the CND paper in 2010 on sharing best practices,⁹ and the workshop report from ICAD 1.¹⁰ Important recent additions to the collection of key materials are the report from the UNODC-GIZ Expert Group Meeting Outreach to new Stakeholders in the Field of Alternative Development' in November 2013 in Berlin,¹¹ and the substantive chapter devoted to AD in the 2015 UNODC World Drug Report.¹²

⁵ A/RES/68/196, UN General Assembly, *International drug control, Report of the Third Committee, Sixty-eighth session*, Agenda item 109, 5 December 2013.

⁶ UNODC, *Thematic Evaluation of UNODC Alternative Development Initiatives*, Independent Evaluation Unit, November 2005.

⁷ UNODC/CND/2008/WG.3/2, *Open-ended intergovernmental expert working group on international cooperation on the eradication of illicit drug crops and on alternative development (Vienna 10-14 March 2008)*, Commission on Narcotic Drugs, 7 March 2008.

⁸ E/CN.7/2008/CRP.11, *Developing a Strategic Approach to Alternative Development, Summary Report of the second Global Workshop*, European Commission, FAO, UNODC and GTZ, 27 February 2008.

⁹ E/CN.7/2010/7, *Promoting best practices and lessons learned for the sustainability and integrity of alternative development programmes*, Commission on Narcotic Drugs, 13 January 2010.

¹⁰ International Workshop and Conference on Alternative Development (ICAD), *Report from the Workshop portion of the International Workshop and Conference on Alternative Development (ICAD)*, Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai Provinces, Thailand, 6-11 November 2011.

¹¹ E/CN.7/2014/CRP.7, *Outreach to new Stakeholders in the Field of Alternative Development, UNODC-GIZ Expert Group Meeting, 11-12 November 2013, Berlin, Germany*, Commission on Narcotic Drugs, Fifty-seventh session, Vienna, 13-21 March 2014.

¹² UNODC, *World Drug Report 2015*, United Nations publication, Sales No. E.15.XI.6, 26 June 2015, pp. 77-118.

Secondly, as pointed out in some of these key documents, until now implementation of AD programmes had limitations- in terms of coverage, funding, and proper application as guided by the UN Guiding Principles on AD. For many communities involved in the illicit cultivation of opium poppy and coca bush, AD remains elusive. Conspicuously absent are AD programmes supporting households involved in the illicit cultivation of cannabis. As outlined in this paper, inadequate funding levels represent one of the main obstacles for AD programmes. Another key obstacle is that in many countries the lessons learned and principles outlined in this document are simply not implemented on the ground. In many places, improper sequencing has led to forced eradication of opium poppy and coca fields of small-holder farmers who have no other means to secure their livelihoods.

A third challenge for ICAD 2 is to reshape the AD agenda and the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on AD in order to utilize them as part of the broader development agenda. This involves going beyond reconfirming the UN Guiding Principles on AD and discussing their practical implementation. It also requires revisiting a fundamental debate about several yet unresolved dilemmas that have surfaced in the AD discourse and practice over time, especially in the new context of the post-2015 development agenda and recent shifts in the international drug policy landscape.

This background paper will outline the key elements of the UN Guiding Principles on AD, followed by a discussion of the diversity of current AD policies and practices around the world and a review of the present donor support and funding landscape. It will then discuss AD as part of the broader sustainable development agenda in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the relevance of AD in the agenda of the upcoming UNGASS 2016.

2. The UN Guiding Principles on Alternative Development

The UN Guiding Principles on AD are an important tool to guide the international community in addressing the problems related to illicit cultivation of opium poppy, coca bush and cannabis. The report from ICAD 1 defined AD as: “undertaking rural development in opium poppy and coca growing areas — an integrated approach to improving community livelihood options that addresses all of the key factors that drive opium poppy and coca cultivation. Experience shows that AD is more effective and more sustainable when integrated into a broader development scheme that aims to improve the livelihoods of marginal rural populations. Through strengthening licit livelihood opportunities, AD also aims to reduce the cultivation of crops used for the production of narcotic drugs.” Below are some of the key lessons learned on AD that from the core of the UN Guiding Principles on AD.

A development-led approach

There is a strong correlation between poverty and the illicit cultivation of opium poppy, coca bush and cannabis. Those involved in illicit cultivation are mostly poor subsistence farmers who grow poppy, coca or cannabis as cash crops in order to buy food, clothes, and access to health and education. Opium, coca and cannabis also have a long history of traditional uses and in areas with little or no access to health care and essential medicines. These plants are often used to treat various ailments. Andean peoples, for example, have consumed the coca leaf for many centuries. Coca chewing is an integral part of indigenous cultural and religious ceremonies and it has many beneficial attributes, such as helping to alleviate the effects of high altitude, cold and hunger. Similarly, opium is used by communities in Asia as a painkiller and to treat gastro-intestinal and other sicknesses as well as being provided to guests at weddings and funerals and used in spiritual ceremonies. There are also ancient medicinal uses and widespread religious uses of

cannabis in Hindu, Sufi and Rastafari ceremonies and traditions in India, Pakistan, the Middle East, Northern Africa and Jamaica. For many communities in these regions, opium, coca and cannabis have important positive connotations.

Political support for a development-led approach to address problems related to opium and coca cultivation (less so in the case of cannabis) has grown over the last decade. The debate has very much focused on achieving more sustainable outcomes centred on a holistic development approach. The ICAD 1 workshop concluded that: “In short, poverty remains one of the key factors driving opium poppy and coca cultivation. The focus of alternative development programmes should be oriented to addressing the underlying causes of poverty and improving the socio-economic conditions of these communities. Illicit cultivation should thus be treated primarily as a development issue.”¹³ This was reaffirmed at a GIZ-UNODC expert meeting on AD in Berlin, where participants concluded that “poverty is one of the main driving factors of illicit crop cultivation. Small-scale subsistence farmers in South America and Asia grow coca bush and opium poppy frequently as a cash crop to address food shortages.”¹⁴

Poverty is not defined as just a function of income but in a wider sense, involving a whole range of livelihood, socio-economic and security related factors that define the ability of people to live a life in dignity. The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has defined poverty as: “A human condition characterized by the sustained or chronic deprivation of the resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights.”¹⁵ Similarly, according to a UNDP National Human Development report on Afghanistan “human poverty is a multidimensional problem that includes inequalities in access to productive assets and social services; poor health, education and nutrition status; weak social protection systems; vulnerability to macro- and micro-level risks; human displacement; gender inequities and political marginalization.”¹⁶

In addition to poverty there may be additional common conditions that foster illicit cultivation including violence, weak political and judicial systems, absence of public institutions and infrastructure, control by non-state armed groups and the presence of criminal networks. If illicit cultivation is able to be cultivated due to weak rule of law and lack of security, it may be necessary to consider appropriate mechanisms to strengthen the rule of law and security when designing and implementing alternative development programmes with national development strategies. Because weak governance can impede the efforts by countries plagued by illicit drug crop production to achieve sustainable alternative development, thus depriving people of their legal rights and the opportunity for socio-economic advancement. Thus, to address human poverty, the rule of law may also need to be strengthened. This can be done by promoting respect for human rights, equality, inclusiveness, accountability and justice for all; by enhancing legal frameworks for fair laws and policies; and by strengthening institutional capacity and providing legal empowerment to affected populations.

As the ICAD 1 workshop concluded: “[Critical pillars] of a successful policy need to include the recognition that poverty is a multidimensional problem that requires a multidimensional approach. They also need to include the important role of sustainable resource use and management, the provision of social services,

¹³ ICAD 2011, op. cit.

¹⁴ E/CN.7/2014/CRP.7, op. cit.

¹⁵ United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2001), *Poverty and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, 10 May 2001, E/C.12/2001/10.

¹⁶ UNDP (2004), *Afghanistan, National Human Development Report 2004: Security with a Human Face: Challenges and Responsibilities*.

and addressing the problems of conflict, crises, lack of governance, violence, rule of law and security that characterizes much of the areas where opium poppy and coca is cultivated.”

There is a growing body of research and evidence suggesting that in the long run AD can help to achieve both drug control and development objectives in certain geographical areas, provided the interventions adhere to a number of key principles and best practices.¹⁷ Key lessons learned in the AD field include the need for proper sequencing of policy interventions and the non-conditionality of aid. In 2008, the intergovernmental expert group established by the CND recommended to ensure “that eradication is not undertaken until small-farmer households have adopted viable and sustainable livelihoods and that interventions are properly sequenced” and to “not make development assistance conditional on reductions in illicit cultivation.”¹⁸ Moreover, according to the report, “the association of eradication with development interventions aimed at reducing illicit cultivation alienates the wider development community”.

The UN Guiding Principles on AD note that the final outcome document of ICAD 1 and the 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action “represent a significant advance, as they promote alternative development within the framework of broad national rural development, emphasize the need to address poverty, inter alia, as a driver of illicit crop cultivation and suggest the coupling of both human development and crop reduction indicators to measure the success of alternative development efforts.”

In relation to this, the UN Guiding Principles on AD reaffirm the need for proper sequencing of interventions, and in particular stipulate that there should be no eradication of opium poppy, coca bush and cannabis unless smallholder farmers have access to alternative livelihoods. They call on governments “To ensure, when considering crop control measures, that small-farmer households have opportunities for viable and sustainable licit livelihoods so that measures may be properly sequenced in a sustainable fashion and appropriately coordinated”.

Part of a national development strategy with a long-term view

While in the past AD was sometimes understood solely as a crop reduction strategy, today AD is defined as a holistic and programmatic approach to address the drivers of illicit cultivation. AD programmes should be integrated into the broader national development strategy, involving all stakeholders, including local communities, civil society organizations, development organizations, donors, and government agencies.¹⁹

The UN Guiding Principles on AD reaffirm that it is “crucial to provide, within a holistic and integrated development approach, essential basic services and legal livelihood opportunities to the communities affected by, or in some cases vulnerable to, illicit crop cultivation; To recognize that alternative development, including, as appropriate, preventive alternative development, requires the implementation of articulated short-, medium- and long-term plans and actions from all relevant stakeholders to promote positive and sustainable socioeconomic changes in the affected and, in some cases, vulnerable areas.”

Related to this is the importance of international cooperation and a long-term commitment from Member States and international donors to support AD interventions. In order for AD strategies to achieve wider impact and sustainable results, it is crucial for interventions to look beyond short-term illicit crop

¹⁷ Mansfield, David, *Development in a Drugs Environment: A Strategic Approach to Alternative Development*, a Discussion Paper by the Development-oriented Drug Control Programme, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Eschborn, 2006.

¹⁸ UNODC/CND/2008/WG.3/2, op .cit.

¹⁹ E/CN.7/2014/CRP.7, op. cit.

substitution projects and put greater emphasis on broader and long-term rural development programmes and strategies. The final report of a GIZ-UNODC organized expert meeting on AD in Berlin also recognized that AD should not be expected to have significant impact on overall illicit crop cultivation levels in the short-term. Participants agreed that “rural and agricultural development requires extended project operational times and continuous human and financial support and that these considerations must be built into the programme at the stage of design.”²⁰

The UN Guiding Principles on AD call on Member States “to undertake to increase long-term investment in sustainable crop control strategies targeting the illicit cultivation of crops, in coordination with other development measures, in order to contribute to the sustainability of social and economic development and poverty eradication”, and recognize that “long-term cooperation, coordination and the commitment of multilevel and multisectoral stakeholders are essential to a holistic and integrated approach to the effectiveness and sustainability of alternative development programmes”.

Human Development Indicators (HDI)

Global illicit drug markets have demonstrated considerable resilience to any supply-side intervention, eradication, interdiction or alternative development. Local and national reductions in the illicit cultivation of coca bush or opium poppy thus often proved to be short-lived and unsustainable, with global supply and demand forces encouraging either the resumption of cultivation or its displacement to other areas. Discussions on what AD can realistically achieve have focused on other indicators of success, looking beyond short-term reductions in illicit cultivation towards long-term development outcomes, which will, in the long run, also contribute to decreasing cultivation levels.

According to a 2008 UNODC progress report, “there is little proof that the eradications reduce illicit cultivation in the long term as the crops move somewhere else.”²¹ The report also concluded that “alternative development must be evaluated through indicators of human development and not technically as a function of illicit production statistics”. As the participants of the ICAD 1 workshop in Thailand stated: “While reductions in cultivation – and impact measurement based on that objective – are not an adequate measure of real progress or long-term impact in drugs control, a direct relationship exists between improved social and economic conditions of an area and the sustained reduction of illicit cultivation.”²²

The ICAD 1 workshop also concluded that “control of illicit cultivation needs to be based on a human-centric development approach to address the underlying causes and insecurities that enable and encourage cultivation, and need to be distinct from (though coordinated with) law enforcement. Under such an approach, impact measurement of AD programmes should take into account human development indicators, in addition to coca and opium poppy cultivation estimates.” The Lima Declaration stressed that the assessment of quantitative and qualitative impacts of alternative development programmes should reflect the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) - a set of eight targets set by the international community in 2001 with a focus on reducing global poverty by 2015.

²⁰ Ibidem.

²¹ E/CN.7/2008/2/Add.2, *The World Drugs Problem, Fifth Report of the Executive Director, Thematic debate on the follow-up to the twentieth special session of the General Assembly: general overview and progress achieved by Governments in meeting the goals and targets for the years 2003 and 2008 set out in the Political Declaration adopted by the Assembly at its twentieth special session; Addendum - Action Plan on International Cooperation on the Eradication of Illicit Drug Crops and on Alternative Development*, Commission on Narcotic Drugs, Fifty-first session, Vienna, 10-14 March 2008.

²² ICAD 2011, op. cit.

The UN Guiding Principles on AD state that it is important to “apply, in addition to estimates of illicit cultivation and other illicit activities related to the world drug problem, indicators related to human development, socioeconomic conditions, rural development and the alleviation of poverty, as well as institutional and environmental indicators, when assessing alternative development programmes in order to ensure that the outcomes are in line with national and international development objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals, and that they reflect accountable use of donor funds and truly benefit the affected communities.”

As a follow-up to the MDGs, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a new set of 17 goals and 169 targets were agreed upon by the international community in 2015 to guide policies and development programmes for the next fifteen years. The SDGs are broader than the MDGs and include, amongst others, specific objectives to achieve gender equality, promote human rights, and stress the need for holistic development. Among 17 goals and 169 targets, several are highly important for AD including: end poverty in all its forms everywhere (Goal 1); end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture (Goal 2); promote access to quality health (Goal 3) and education (Goal 4); ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all (Goal 6); and promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels (Goal 16). Other Goals are relevant for discussions on AD and it is important that AD programmes and strategies, as well as indicators of success, are linked to the SDGs.

Access to markets

Lack of access to agricultural markets under favourable terms is one of the drivers of illicit cultivation. The discussions on AD have stressed the importance of ensuring access to licit markets for AD products. AD interventions among others should be based on a careful examination of existing market demands, exploring options of high-quality products for competitive markets that are integrated into well-defined value-chains. Furthermore, AD should be firmly rooted in local knowledge and benefit from existing skill-sets and experiences of the local population. The creation of international market links cannot be the sole focus or target of production; the potential of local, national and regional markets should be considered, also to contribute to food security. Adequate infrastructure such as roads, collection and processing facilities must be provided, otherwise the costs to bring the products to the market become unbearable and the sustainability of interventions are greatly diminished. As most illicit cultivation of coca and cannabis is carried out by small-holder farmers, it is also important to cater to their specific needs and develop the kind of support that will improve their livelihoods.

The focus on market mechanisms, however, does not relieve the state from its duties. A demand-driven approach requires market research as well as adequate public policies, institutional frameworks and financial support. It is important to provide resources and technical assistance to identify market niches, establish new markets, facilitate financial support and marketing, and encourage participation of the private sector and civil society. In addition, the position of farmers should be strengthened by stimulating local ownership and responsibility through associations and cooperatives and by promoting the entrepreneurial abilities of farmers. These are all important steps with regards to the question of how to measure the success of AD.²³

²³ 2014, E/CN.7/2014/CRP.7, op. cit.

The UN Guiding Principles on AD call on member states to “combine local wisdom, indigenous knowledge, public-private partnerships and available resources to promote, inter alia, a legal market driven product development approach when applicable, capacity-building, skills training of the involved population, effective management and the entrepreneurial spirit, in order to support the creation of internal and sustainable commercial systems and a viable value chain at the local level, when applicable.” This addresses the common challenge of producers being seen simply as the providers of raw materials and assists in removing the “middleman” thereby ensuring that producers receive a fair share of the earnings.

The UN Guiding Principles on AD also encourage “alternative development in rural associations or cooperatives and support their management capacity, in order to maximize value from primary production and to ensure the integration of areas affected by, or in some cases vulnerable to, illicit cultivation into national, regional and, as appropriate, international markets.” In this context, the UN Guiding Principles on AD also stress the important role of member states to “promote local ownership and participation of the involved parties in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of alternative development programmes and projects”.

Access to land

Communities involved in coca and opium cultivation have faced serious problems related to land rights and land tenure security, compounded by the fact that local laws often do not protect them but tend rather to benefit ‘outsiders’ – either the population from central parts of the country or foreign investors. In some areas, government policies and agricultural investment have led to ‘land grabbing’, turning communities in poppy and coca growing regions into landless wage labourers after losing their land to debt failure and land grabbing, or compelling them to find remote fields to cultivate licit or illicit crops, depending on circumstances.

When people can no longer grow licit cash crops because they lack access to land, they may turn to growing illicit cash crops in remote areas where they face less immediate competition or pressure. Many alternative cash crops, for example coffee or rubber, require long-term engagement of farmers since they require several years to produce yields. Without access to land, farmers are not willing to engage in cultivating long-term cash crops, and experience from the field shows that there is clearly a higher prevalence of illicit cultivation by farmers without access to land. In its 2013 Southeast Asia opium Survey, UNODC stressed the importance of access to land and the link with opium cultivation: “Of all the elements examined in the survey, land availability is possibly the most important factor behind the continuing existence of opium poppy cultivation in the country”.²⁴

Among the most salient points that arose from the ICAD 1 discussions in Thailand were that “land tenure and other related resource management issues are also key components of building licit and sustainable livelihoods”, and that “monoculture generates a number of risks for the local communities including environmental degradation, dependence on market demands and prices, and reduction in agricultural areas affecting food security and other livelihoods”. Furthermore, the ICAD 1 workshop report called on stakeholders “to take into account land rights and other related land management resources when designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating alternative development programmes, including internationally recognized rights of the indigenous peoples and local communities”.²⁵

²⁴ UNODC, *Southeast Asia Opium Survey 2012, Lao PDR, Myanmar*, Vienna, 2012.

²⁵ ICAD 2011, op. cit.

There are various negative social and economic impacts of promoting monoculture as an approach within AD as this often leads to the dispossession of farm and grazing lands for local communities, limits access to communal spaces, such as community forests, negatively impacts on biodiversity and ecosystems, including water quality and availability, and makes farming communities vulnerable to price fluctuations and plant diseases.²⁶

The importance of these issues was also reinforced at a GIZ-UNODC expert group meeting on AD in Berlin, where participants emphasised that “land tenure and land property rights are a fundamental principle for the long-term commitment of the community and the success of AD programmes, especially in areas where small-scale agriculture is prevailing”. The group also underlined that AD interventions “should include proper land tenure rights and operate within a clear legal framework that benefits and protects the rights of smallholder farmers”, and that decisions on the allocation, use and management of land “must have the participation and consent of local communities”.²⁷ A commitment to land rights and land tenure security should prioritise and privilege rural poor people and their land tenure security and related rights as well as their aspirations for the future. Communities should not only have access to land but should also have the power to use it in the way they see fit and should be advised on the responsibilities of land ownership

The UN Guiding Principles on AD affirm therefore that it is important to: “Take into account land rights and other related land management resources when designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating AD programmes, including those of indigenous peoples and local communities, in accordance with national legal frameworks.”

Involvement of affected communities and civil society

Communities involved in opium, coca and cannabis cultivation and organizations that represent them have often been excluded from the decision-making processes on drug control policies and alternative development programmes that have a direct impact on their lives and livelihoods. While drug users and people living with HIV have conquered ground as legitimate participants in drug policy debates under the slogan “nothing about us without us”, on the production side, farmers growing opium poppy, coca and cannabis have until now hardly been offered the space to fully express their views. Local communities and civil society organisations can contribute significantly to the formulation of effective and sustainable alternative development programmes and their active participation should be encouraged in all phases of AD programmes in order to truly reflect the needs of targeted communities.

Therefore, the UN Guiding Principles on AD call upon member states to apply their utmost efforts to “promote local ownership and participation of the involved parties in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of alternative development programmes and projects”, as well as to “foster empowerment, including articulation, communication and participation, of the community and local authorities and other stakeholders, to sustain the achievements of the projects and programmes.”

²⁶ E/CN.7/2014/CRP.7, op. cit.

²⁷ Ibidem.

3. Regional and National Policies and Practices

According to the UNODC's World Drug Report 2015, 23 countries reported to the UNODC had implemented AD programmes during the period 2010 – 2013. Those include coca producing countries, (Bolivia, Colombia and Peru), main opium producing countries (Afghanistan and Myanmar), countries with illicit opium production (including Egypt, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Pakistan, Thailand and Viet Nam) and cannabis producing countries (including Morocco, Indonesia and the Philippines).²⁸

The number of countries implementing AD programmes included countries in South America (Ecuador, Venezuela) which reported mostly "preventive alternative development", Central America (El Salvador, Guatemala), the Caribbean (Trinidad and Tobago), Asia (Malaysia) and few countries in Africa. Other countries planning to implement alternative development activities include Albania, Côte d'Ivoire, India, Mexico and Nigeria.²⁹

Alternative development policies and practices vary considerably between regions and countries. Below is an overview of existing policies and practices in different regions.

Europe

Europe is an important donor for AD programmes in Latin America and Asia, and the European Union (EU) set of policy principles can be regarded as the outline for successful AD interventions. Germany has been the driving force in promoting alternative development as a key pillar for the EU drugs strategy. An important moment was the adoption in 2006 of an EU common position on alternative development.³⁰ The EU policy principles became an important reference point that led to the adoption of the 2009 Political Declaration. In negotiations over issues such as eradication, proper sequencing and conditionality of AD assistance, the EU took a holistic view, emphasizing that "development assistance in illicit drug crop producing areas should be undertaken in full compliance with the overall aims of human rights protection, poverty alleviation, conflict prevention and resolution, peace building and human security."³¹

The EU view is that alternative development initiatives do not exist to provide short term solace to farmers or to compensate them euro for euro for their losses when they stop illicit cultivation. On the contrary, alternative development is a long-term strategy, based on a comprehensive approach to rural development, which seeks to establish the foundations for sustainable development and thereby reducing dependence on illicit cultivation in the long run.

The EU also underscores the importance of access to markets as a general principle within AD policy and practice as well as for affected countries to take ownership of sustainable approaches and to integrate AD objectives into their national development programmes and policies. The EU policy also makes

²⁸ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *World Drug Report 2015*, United Nations publication, Sales No. E.15XI.6, June 2015, p.81.

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ Council of the European Union, *The EU Approach on Alternative Development*, EU Horizontal Working Party on Drugs, 9597/06, Brussels, 18 May 2006.

³¹ UNODC/CND/2008/WG.3/CRP.4, *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*, EU Presidency Paper, 4 July 2008.

fundamental notions such as respect for human rights, empowerment, accountability, participation and non-discrimination of vulnerable groups an integral part of its AD approach.

The Americas

In the Americas, the political parameters for AD have traditionally been determined by the United States, particularly through the US Agency for International Development (USAID). All the cocaine, most of the heroin, and a decreasing but still not insignificant amount of cannabis on the US market comes from Latin America and the Caribbean. Most of the AD assistance from the US has been directed to the Andean region in support of eradication and interdiction efforts, and with the aim to make reductions in coca cultivation more sustainable.

According to the 2015 UNODC World Drug Report, among the Andean coca producing countries, Bolivia follows the AD model of gradually reducing dependence on illicit cultivation through rural development in accordance with the 2009 Political Declaration and the UN Guiding Principles. The drug policy context in Colombia and Peru currently does not allow for the implementation of ‘properly sequenced’ AD projects: “In the strategies of Colombia and Peru it is specified that prior (voluntary or forced) eradication is a precondition to participation in alternative development programmes. In the strategy of the Plurinational State of Bolivia it is mentioned that no prior eradication or reduction is necessary, and that public investment in infrastructure and social development come first, before alternative development programmes are started.”³²

Asia

In 1998, at the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, the regional grouping decided to aim for a drug-free ASEAN by 2020. Two years later, in July 2000, the target date was brought forward to 2015, and all member states developed national plans to meet the deadline, although they did not agree on a common strategy on how to do so.³³ Only three ASEAN member states have significant levels of illicit opium poppy cultivation: Myanmar, Laos and Thailand (often referred to as the ‘Golden Triangle’). ASEAN does not have a specific AD strategy and its overall approach is focused on deadline oriented thinking. In 2008, the ASEAN status report to review its strategy to become drug-free by 2015 reported “an overall rising trend in the abuse of drugs” and acknowledged that “a target date of zero drugs for production, trafficking and consumption of illicit drugs in the region by 2015 is obviously unattainable”.³⁴ ASEAN’s drug policy is currently being reviewed but the outcome is yet unclear. The ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Drugs (ASOD) is the key regional drug policy decision-making body. This grouping of senior officials meets once a year to discuss drug policy issues and approves plans and reviews progress made. The ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta plays an important role in supporting the ASEAN member states in their activities. Lately, during the ASOD 2015 in Singapore, ASEAN members stressed that “The AD Programme is based on the idea that illicit drug supply can be successful if illicit drug crop cultivation is addressed through poverty reduction within a framework of sustainable development”. Moreover, ASEAN member states declared that “the implementation of AD Programme must emphasize on its sustainability, the importance of high-level political commitment and convergence of all ASEAN member states.”³⁵

³² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *World Drug Report 2015*, United Nations publication, Sales No. E.15.XI.6, June 2015, p. 103.

³³ *Joint Communique of the 33rd ASEAN Ministerial Meeting Bangkok*, Thailand, 24-25 July 2000.

³⁴ UNODC, *Drug Free-Free ASEAN 2015: Status and Recommendations*, Bangkok 2008.

³⁵ *36th ASOD Alternative Development Working Group Report*, Singapore, 24-26 August 2015.

In the region, Thailand has been the pioneer in AD policies and practices. Since 1969, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand has initiated the Royal Project to improve the well-being of hill-tribe people, to diminish their opium growing and to revive the forests and water resources through crop replacement for narcotic plants, the strengthened cohesiveness of the locals and their respective communities, and the rehabilitation of forests and water resources in highland areas in Thailand. Subsequently, the country has developed a clear policy and strategy and has hosted international events on AD and facilitated exchange programmes to visit AD projects in the country. Thailand has actively promoted good AD practices and lessons learned at the national, regional and international level. It has implemented at home and promoted abroad, a development-first strategy that refrains from eradication and strict law enforcement until smallholder farmers have achieved sustainable livelihoods. The Royal Project Foundation and the Mae Fah Luang Foundation (MFLF) have implemented AD programmes in the north of the country. The Royal Project Foundation of Thailand has also implemented AD programmes in Lao PDR, Myanmar and Bhutan while the MFLF has implemented programmes in Afghanistan, Indonesia and Myanmar.

Myanmar is the largest opium producer in the region and remains the second largest in the world after Afghanistan. The discussion on AD however has gained momentum only recently. In 1999, the Myanmar government adopted a 15-year plan to make the country drug-free by 2014. In mid-2013 the deadline was postponed to 2019 because of the threat posed by amphetamines and the increase in opium poppy cultivation in the country since 2006.³⁶ In order to meet the 2019 deadline, the Myanmar government carries out eradication of poppy fields, while a limited number of AD programmes are implemented by international organisations. Currently only a few AD programmes are being implemented in the country, mainly by joint efforts of the UNODC and the Thai Mae Fah Luang Foundation as well as the joint project of UNODC and the Royal Project Foundation of Thailand in Tuanggyi, Shan State, due to lack of resources and international support as well as the continuing conflict.

Lao PDR was declared “opium free” (defined as less than 1500 ha) by the government in 2006 but poppy cultivation has increased again since, though still at much lower levels than Myanmar. The Government of Lao PDR has also used eradication and the strict implementation of opium bans in order to reduce poppy cultivation. Several international organisations implement development programmes in the northern part of the country where most of the opium poppy is being grown. The Royal Project Foundation of Thailand and UNODC have also collaborately implemented AD projects in Oudomxay Province. China’s opium substitution programme in Myanmar and Laos consist primarily of promoting Chinese companies to invest in large mono plantations in (ex)poppy growing regions.

Afghanistan is by far the largest illicit opium cultivating country in the world. The international community has played a significant role in shaping Afghanistan’s national drug control strategy, and has put great pressure on the government to reduce the high poppy cultivation levels. However, there has been disagreement among the international community on how this can best be achieved. While the US and, more recently, the Russian Federation have pushed for an eradication-led approach, most European nations, led by the United Kingdom, have promoted a development-first approach instead. As a result, several drug control and AD strategies are being implemented in parallel in Afghanistan. Both Europe and the US have supported AD programmes as well as other rural development projects in poppy growing regions. The Royal Project Foundation of Thailand used to organize trainings on alternative crops for farmers from Afghanistan a few years ago. While significant amount of resources have been allocated, the armed conflict and instability have complicated the introduction of traditional methods of both rural and

³⁶ Bangkok Post, *Myanmar delays ‘drug-free’ target*, 6 May 2013.

alternative development. The illicit opium economy has become not only a funding source for all parties in the conflict but also an essential refuge for survival for many people that cannot be just taken away.

Africa and the Middle East

Illicit cultivation of cannabis is widespread across the African continent and the Middle East but only Morocco managed to attract foreign funding for AD. Several other countries, including Nigeria, Zambia and Algeria, have called for AD assistance at CND sessions. While the African Union Plan of Action on Drug Control (2013-2017) emphasises four key priority areas, including management, monitoring and evaluation mechanism, addressing health and social impact of drug use, supply reduction, enhancing research and data collection and facilitating illicit movement of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes, there is no specific reference to alternative development.³⁷

5. Donor Support and Funding Landscape

Current global support for AD is limited, especially when compared to the scale of the problems AD is supposed to address. Accurate data of available funding for development interventions in areas with illicit cultivation is hardly clarified. Some – or perhaps many - of these are also not listed as AD interventions but rather as rural development programmes. However, it is clear that a majority of households that are engaged in illicit cultivation do not receive any support from AD programmes. ICAD 2 aims to contribute to increased political and financial support for AD programmes and interventions by forming and strengthening global alliances among (potential) international donors and countries implementing AD programmes.

According to the 2015 World Drug Report, about 60% of global support for AD was spent in South America and less than 40% in Asia, with most of the funds (36%) ending up in Afghanistan.³⁸ Support for AD programmes in the main opium cultivation areas in Southeast Asia, Myanmar and Laos, by international donors and national governments has been low. Traditionally, the main recipient countries of AD assistance have been Afghanistan, Colombia, Peru and Bolivia. More recently, Colombia and Peru have allocated significant support for AD programmes from national funds. It is also important to note that AD programmes only receive a small proportion of global development spending. In the four main recipient countries, for instance, AD funds related to agriculture made up only 3% of all development assistance these countries received.

Overall, most of the funding for AD programmes has come from the US, the European Union, and Canada, followed by individual EU member states, especially Germany and the Netherlands.³⁹ The 2015 UNODC World Drug Report estimates that the commitment for AD programmes by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries was on average 219 million US dollars a year during the period 1998-2013. However, global funding for AD programmes decreased in that period, while national budgets allocated to AD by the countries with illicit cultivation themselves, notably Colombia, Peru and Bolivia, increased. Furthermore, Thailand has a substantial national AD programme and also funds some AD programmes abroad, in neighbouring Myanmar, in Afghanistan and – for a brief period - in Aceh, Indonesia.

³⁷ *AU Plan of Action on Drug Control (2013-2017)*, Submitted for consideration by the 5th Session of the Africa Union Conference of Ministers of Drug Control (CAMDC5), CAMDC/EXP/2(V).

³⁸ UNODC, *World Drug Report 2015*, United Nations publication, Sales No. E.15.XI.6, 26 June 2015, pp. 77-118.

³⁹ *Ibidem.*, p. 85.

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) previously supported crop substitution projects in northern Myanmar for several years. During 2005-2008, the Chinese government spent over 175 million USD on its opium substitution programme in Laos and Myanmar. Most of this was spent on providing special benefits and privileges to 135 Chinese companies to start agricultural concessions, mostly mono cropping plantations with rubber; by 2009, the number of companies involved had grown to 198.⁴⁰ The Chinese authorities have presented this programme as 'Alternative Development', but, as noted above, the scheme is controversial as it mainly benefits local authorities and Chinese businessmen instead of the local opium growing communities.

Obstacles for increased support for AD programmes include the fear among many development actors and donors of becoming engaged in drug policy discussions, and they are often reluctant to link development programmes to drug policy outcomes. This reluctance occurs among donors, international financial institutions, and international and local NGOs alike. It has contributed to rather low levels of interest and support by donors for AD programmes. Efforts to reach out to the wider development community have until now not had significant success, though there may well be more interest if the relatively narrow AD agenda is broadened to a 'drugs and development' perspective.⁴¹

There are many large and small scale development interventions supported by international donors in areas with illicit cultivation that are not referred to or listed as AD interventions. Several large donors, such as DFID, USAID, the World Bank and the Asia Development Bank have a variety of programmes operating in areas with illicit cultivation – including large programmes in Afghanistan - that in some way address the different root causes of illicit cultivation, sometimes explicitly, sometimes implicitly. This situation has also led to development interventions and rural development strategies being implemented in areas with illicit cultivation without taking into account the specific conditions and problems that these pose. It has also limited opportunities to share lessons learned and discussions on ways forward on how best to operate in such complicated areas. As a result, many actors in the development community, for instance those working in areas with poppy cultivation in Afghanistan, prefer not to talk in terms of AD. This has further contributed to the lack of clarity about what distinguishes AD from regular rural development, and the divide between the two.

There is little data available on what kind of AD programmes are currently being supported, and to what extent these are taking into account the lessons learned, best practices and guiding principles that have been developed over the past decades. For instance, it would be useful to gather data about whether or not currently running AD programmes are carried out in tandem with forced eradication; whether the provision of funding has been made conditional on prior eradication of illicit crops; whether certain traditional cultural, religious or medicinal uses have been respected; and to what extent local communities have been involved in developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating AD programmes.

6. Alternative Development on the UNGASS 2016 agenda

The UNGASS 2016 provides an important opportunity to advance a UN system-wide, coherent view about the interconnections between drugs and development. This would mean ensuring that the current AD

⁴⁰ TNI 2012, op. cit.

⁴¹ See for example: United Nations Development Program, *Perspectives on the Development Dimensions of Drug Control Policy*, UNDP March 2015.

framework is fully compliant with human rights principles (including indigenous rights) and aligning the UN Guiding Principles on AD with the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals.

The CND, in its capacity to prepare the UNGASS 2016, proposed to the General Assembly to organise its special session around five thematic round tables running parallel to the plenary where political statements will be made and the main outcome document will be adopted. One of those round tables will be devoted to “alternative development and regional, interregional and international cooperation on development-oriented balanced drug control policy”.⁴² The other four themes will be: drugs and health; drugs and crime; drugs and human rights; and ‘cross-cutting issues’ including “new challenges, threats and realities in preventing and addressing the world drug problem in compliance with relevant international law, including the three drug control conventions”.⁴³

A High-level Thematic Debate in support of the process towards the 2016 Special Session of the General Assembly on the World Drug Problem, convened on 7 May 2015 in New York, emphasized the links between drugs and development. The socio-economic phenomenon of drugs should be addressed by empowering communities, reducing their vulnerabilities by identifying opportunities for alternative livelihoods. It was stressed that AD measures tackle the root causes of drug cultivation. Only by addressing poverty and the lack of opportunities can such problems be addressed in a sustainable manner.⁴⁴

The High-level Thematic Debate also called for the strengthening of regional and international cooperation and the promotion of comprehensive policies based on international commitments by Member States. Similarly, greater coordination between UNODC and entities of the UN, including, among others, UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, UNAIDS, is underlined.

According to UNDP, the “complex links between drug use, drug control policy, and development, and the impact of drug markets on development, have been recognized as well as documented for more than a decade. Yet drug control and development institutions have tended to operate in isolation from each other and in some cases, at cross-purposes.”⁴⁵

UNDP says in its contribution that “UNGASS 2016, and preparations thereto, provide important opportunities for a comprehensive discussion of successes and challenges around drug control policy. It also provides an opportunity to widen the discussion to include UN organisations that approach issues of drugs and crime from health, sustainable development, human rights, and peace building perspectives, and ultimately, to promote system-wide coherence with respect to global drug control strategies.”⁴⁶

One of the mechanisms established by the UN Secretary-General to improve a coordinated, system-wide approach to drugs and crime is the UN System Task Force on Transnational Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking, led jointly by the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA) and UNODC. Originally, the Task Force was set up to improve a comprehensive UN response to crisis situations with high levels of drug-related crime and violence, and to produce guidance on how to include drugs and crime issues into conflict-

⁴² Commission on Narcotic Drugs, *Special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem to be held in 2016*, Draft resolution, March 2015.

⁴³ Ibidem.

⁴⁴ http://www.un.org/pga/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2015/06/080615_Thematic-Debate-on-the-World-Drug-Problem-Summary-by-the-President.pdf

⁴⁵ UNDP 2015, op. cit., p.3.

⁴⁶ UNDP 2015, p. 3.

resolution and development strategies. More recently, the Task Force also has been given the mandate to develop a strategy for inputs from all relevant UN agencies into the UNGASS 2016.⁴⁷

The 1998 UNGASS placed alternative development firmly on the agenda of the international community while the 2009 Political Declaration and Action Plan refined several of its principles. According to the 2015 World Drug Report, the UN Guiding Principles on AD “have pushed the international agenda further, emphasizing a multidimensional approach and the need to focus on improving land governance, strengthening the justice and security sectors, promoting human development and protecting the environment.” In the post-2015 era, the report continues, the SDGs “could provide the framework for developing such initiatives further and provide a new impetus for alternative development, adding elements of rule of law and governance to the ‘traditional’ pillars of socioeconomic development”.⁴⁸

7. The Way Forward

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon wrote in his Synthesis Report on the Post-2015 Agenda that the “new framework provides a much-needed opportunity to integrate the broader United Nations agenda, with its inextricably linked and mutually interdependent peace and security, development, and human rights objectives.”⁴⁹ The UNGASS 2016 on the World Drug Problem is the opportune moment to try to integrate alternative development into that broader UN perspective. The role of ICAD 2 is to reshape the AD agenda and the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles accordingly. That requires beyond reconfirming the UN Guiding Principles on AD and discussing the technical details of their implementation to revisiting some of the fundamental debates that have surfaced in the AD discourse and practice over time, in the new context of the post-2015 development agenda and recent shifts in the international drug policy landscape.

The disconnect between rhetoric and reality

The course alternative development has taken over these past decades, both in theory and in practice, seems to have followed two different tracks. On the one hand, the AD discourse developed from an oversimplified crop substitution model towards a more sophisticated model of alternative livelihoods tailored to specific local circumstances. The discourse also developed from a ‘band-aid’, legitimising and softening the pain of eradication and loss of illicit income, to a properly-sequenced gradual transition away from a dependency on the illicit drugs market for survival towards a better licit future designed with full community participation. On the other hand, the reality of eradication and repression for the vast majority of subsistence farmers involved in illicit cultivation stayed the same and – as noted above - significant funding for alternative development never really materialized and has decreased in recent years. As the World Drug Report confirms, “there is a disconnect between international rhetoric and funding. Alternative development features prominently in documents of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the special sessions of the General Assembly on the world drug problem, but the funding for it has decreased considerably in the last few years”.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Secretary-General, *Decision No. 2013/3 – Update on Transnational Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking*, 12 February 2013.

⁴⁸ UNODC, *World Drug Report 2015*, p. 118.

⁴⁹ United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, *The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet*, Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General on the Post-2015 Agenda.

⁵⁰ UNODC, *World Drug Report 2015*, p. 118.

Although the multitude of international conferences and UN resolutions have created hopes for an inclusive and humane alternative development approach; many farmers involved in illicit cultivation of coca, opium and cannabis are yet to receive the benefits. The disconnect between rhetoric and reality not only exists in terms of funding, but also with regard to the implementation in practice of basic AD principles. Therefore, there is a strong need for increased international cooperation and support on AD projects as well as the sharing of good practices by countries with experiences in implementing successful AD programmes according to the UN Guiding Principles.

Improving access to international markets for AD products is another yet unresolved dilemma. It was already brought to the attention of the first UNGASS on drugs in 1990 by Colombian President Virgilio Barco after the 1989 collapse of the International Coffee Agreement which prompted many small Colombian coffee farmers to shift to opium poppy cultivation. “We cannot afford to talk idealistically of crop substitution in the case of the coca leaf while sabotaging Colombian farmers’ main cash crop and the country’s largest export”. His argument at the time was that alternative development projects were of course welcome, “but even more important is the adoption of commercial and trade measures which allow our economy greater access to markets in the industrialized countries and fair prices for our exports”.⁵¹

And the situation in that regard has not improved since then. To the contrary, as the 2015 World Drug Report mentions, the WTO has “further limited the possibilities for giving special market treatment to countries affected by illicit drug cultivation”. “Market access for alternative development products is essential”, according to UNODC, “and free trade agreements may have an impact on the marketing of alternative development products.”⁵² In fact, the impact of free trade agreements on small farmers in developing countries can easily push the amounts involved in alternative development projects to insignificance.

AD and the changing global drug policy landscape

In recent years significant changes have taken place in drug policy, most prominently in the Americas, but also clearly visible in Europe, some African and Asian countries, and at the UN level. In the lead-up to the UNGASS 2016, shifts towards a more health, development and human rights based drug control approach are more and more broadly supported. In some countries, policy developments seem to have already gone beyond the flexibility allowed under the UN drug control conventions, especially with regard to the legal regulation of coca and cannabis markets.

Conclusion

After decades of learning from the field, the outcomes of discussions around AD have produced significant insights, and principles have been developed to guide members states, donors, international agencies, civil society organisations and other stakeholders on how best to implement AD strategies and programmes. There is an impressive body of studies and declarations, all of which have provided input into the UN Guiding Principles on AD.

⁵¹ A/44/PV.13, *Discurso de Virgilio Barco Vargas, Presidente de la República de Colombia*, Asamblea General Session 44, Acta literal provisional de la decimotercera reunión, celebrada en la Sede, Nueva York, viernes 29 de septiembre de 1989, a las 3.15 p.m.

⁵² UNODC, *World Drug Report 2015*, p. 117-118.

However, in order to move forward, commensurate financial, political and social resources will have to be made available to provide real alternatives to communities involved in illicit cultivation of opium poppy coca bush and cannabis But first of all, such interventions need to follow the many lessons learned and apply the basic guiding principles developed over time, and turn the rhetoric into reality on the ground. Ignoring the lessons learned and guiding principles will hamper any progress in the field, no matter how much funding is made available.

Implementing the UN Guiding Principles on AD needs to be incorporated into the broader global development agenda. This will require more than just discussing the practical details about the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on AD. It will need an honest debate about several yet unresolved dilemmas that have surfaced in the AD discourse and practice over time. The 2016 UNGASS provides an important opportunity to reposition the AD concept in the context of the post-2015 development agenda.
