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# Development Dimensions of Drug Policy: Innovative Approaches

June 2019

United Nations Development Programme

HIV, HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT



Cover: **Selling coca leaves in the market, Cochabamba, Bolivia.**

*Photo: Douglas Anderson.*

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Women incarcerated in Buen Pastor Prison, Costa Rica.

*Photo: Jessamine Bartley-Matthews/WOLA.*



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The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) contain a number of important commitments made by 193 UN Member States. These include ending poverty and hunger, ensuring health and well-being, fighting gender and societal inequality, protecting the environment and promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, as well as the pledge to leave no one behind. In the Outcome Document of the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on the World Drug Problem (UNGASS 2016), UN Member States acknowledged that efforts to achieve the global goals and to address the ‘world drug problem’ were ‘complementary and mutually reinforcing’.<sup>1</sup>

Illicit drug markets and efforts to address them cut across almost every one of the SDGs and the commitment to leave no one behind. Ensuring that drug policy and the 2030 Agenda are coherent is essential to the achievement of the commitments made by UN Member States.

The United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP’s) Strategic Plan 2018–2021<sup>2</sup> and its HIV, Health and Development Strategy 2016–2021<sup>3</sup> highlight the role UNDP can play in supporting governments to attain the SDGs. This includes addressing the structural barriers and discriminatory laws, policies and practices that marginalize vulnerable population groups, including people who use drugs. In June 2015, UNDP released a discussion paper reviewing the impacts of drug enforcement policies on public health, safety and security, and human rights of poor and marginalized populations. These include indigenous peoples, people who use drugs, including for drug dependence or pain treatment, poor farmers who cultivate illicit drug crops, and people who live in the communities where drugs are trafficked or sold.<sup>4</sup> In April 2016, UNDP published a report describing initiatives undertaken by a range of countries and by civil society to address the harmful consequences of certain drug policy approaches, particularly for the poor and marginalized individuals and communities mentioned above.<sup>5</sup>

In November 2018, the United Nations system adopted a common position committing to support Member States in developing and implementing ‘truly balanced, comprehensive, integrated, evidence-based, human rights-based, development-oriented and sustainable responses to the world drug problem, within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’.<sup>6</sup> In March 2019, the UN system coordination Task Team, of which UNDP is a member, issued its first report. The common position and the Task Team report echo the UNGASS 2016 Outcome Document position that the international drug control conventions are sufficiently flexible to allow countries, consistent with international law, to design and implement national drug policies according to their priorities and needs. The publication of the Task Team report coincided with the launch of the International Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Policy, co-sponsored by UNDP, the World Health Organization, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the International Centre on Human Rights and Drug Policy. With 27

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1. UN General Assembly, *Resolution S-30/1: Our Joint Commitment to Effectively Addressing and Countering the World Drug Problem*, UN Doc. A/RES/S-30/1 (2016) [hereinafter 2016 UNGASS Outcome Document], annex, preamble.
  2. Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services, *UNDP Strategic Plan, 2018–2021*, UN Doc. DP/2017/38 (2018).
  3. United Nations Development Programme, *HIV, Health and Development Strategy 2016–2021: Connecting the Dots* (2016).
  4. United Nations Development Programme, *Addressing the Development Dimensions of Drug Policy* (2015).
  5. Ibid.; United Nations Development Programme, *Reflections on Drug Policy and Its Impact on Human Development: Innovative Approaches* (2016).
  6. United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, *Summary of Deliberations*, UN Doc. CEB/2018/2 (2019), annex 1.

principles capturing the expansive human experience of drug control, the Guidelines are a critical resource to advance the common position at the international, regional and country levels.<sup>7</sup>

This discussion paper reviews some of the ways that countries throughout the world continue to use the flexibility available in the drug conventions to promote inclusive development, human rights and public health-driven, evidence-informed approaches. In this context, this discussion paper presents innovative steps taken by UN Member States in implementing commitments undertaken at the 2016 UNGASS, and with respect to the 2030 Agenda.

7. International Centre on Human Rights and Drug Policy, United Nations Development Programme, UNAIDS and World Health Organization, *International Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Policy* (2019).



Farmers collecting opium seeds after the harvest, Loilem Township, Myanmar.  
Photo: Tom Kramer.

### Towards sustainable livelihoods

Drug cultivation in many areas is driven by lack of secure land rights and lack of access to arable land, among other factors.<sup>8</sup> Conversely, having secure land rights and access to arable land facilitates access to credit and income and, in turn, the capacity to transition to other crops and to earn a sustainable livelihood.<sup>9</sup> Women in many crop-cultivating areas can obtain legal land titles only through husbands or male relatives.<sup>10</sup> As a result, women are disproportionately disadvantaged in gaining access to land and, in turn, securing credit and earning income.

The UNGASS 2016 Outcome Document encourages the development of viable economic alternatives, particularly for communities affected by or at risk of illicit cultivation of drug crops. It recommends that States consider development-oriented interventions, 'ensuring that both men and women benefit equally from them, including through job opportunities, improved infrastructure and basic public services and, as appropriate, access and legal titles to land for farmers and local communities.'<sup>11</sup> The SDGs also promote access to land tenure as key to meeting targets to eliminate poverty and achieve gender equality.<sup>12</sup> Goal 5 to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls includes a specific commitment to '[u]ndertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property.'<sup>13</sup>

### Women and land tenure in Bolivia

Bolivia continues to make progress in addressing the gender gap in land tenure as part of its efforts to ensure sustainable livelihoods for subsistence farmers in areas that previously had been targeted for crop eradication.

The country's innovative 'coca yes, cocaine no' policy formalized a cooperative cultivation programme initiated in 2004. The programme has been in place since 2006. It permits registered farmers in certain established areas to grow coca over a limited amount of land, a cato equal to 1,600–2,500 square meters, for the legal market as a means to ensure subsistence income. Bolivian law permits 22,000 hectares of coca to be legally cultivated in these 'traditional growing zones' to be sold in legally authorized markets.<sup>14</sup>

In 2008, with funding from the European Union, Bolivia designed and implemented a 'community coca control' programme that engages coca-growing communities to monitor and restrict coca planting, and pursue integrated rural development. Coca grown in excess of the authorized amount is subject to eradication. The programme features land titling for coca-growing families and a registry of the cato, the legally authorized

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