



### *Emerging trends and concerns*

- Myanmar remains a major source of methamphetamine pills and opiates in South-East Asia, most of which are manufactured in Shan State in the eastern part of the country.
- For the first time, a crystalline methamphetamine manufacturing facility was seized in 2012.
- Large amounts of methamphetamine in pill and crystalline form originating from Myanmar continue to be seized in neighbouring countries.
- Precursor chemicals are trafficked from neighbouring countries to methamphetamine manufacturing centres located near Myanmar's eastern border, where Government control remains limited.
- Preliminary data for 2012 suggests that seizures of illicit drugs and their precursor chemicals have increased significantly.
- Opium poppy cultivation has increased in Myanmar for six consecutive years.

### *Overview of the drug situation*

For the past decade and a half or so, Myanmar has been one of the key sources of methamphetamine for a number of illicit drug markets in the region. Most methamphetamine manufacture in Myanmar takes place in the mountainous and remote terrain of eastern Shan State, a region affected by drug trafficking, and political instability for much of the past six decades. There are also indications of methamphetamine manufacture and trafficking in Kayin and Kayah States, adjacent to Thailand's western border.

Since the mid-1990s,<sup>1</sup> billions of methamphetamine pills manufactured in Myanmar have been used by drug users in the Greater Mekong Subregion, particularly in China and Thailand. Significant quantities of crystalline methamphetamine are also being manufactured in Myanmar to supply markets in the Greater Mekong Subregion (Cambodia, China,

Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam) and some quantities being trafficked beyond. Whereas the use of methamphetamine pills has increased continually in Myanmar during the past decade, no use of crystalline methamphetamine in the country has been reported so far. Heroin and opium remain the primary drugs of use in Myanmar, but the use of these drugs has shown a decline in recent years.

Opium poppy cultivation is at far lower levels than in the mid-1990s but has increased in each of the past six years. The total area under opium poppy cultivation in Myanmar in 2012 was estimated at 51,000 ha, a 17% increase from the 43,600 ha under cultivation in 2011. In 2012, potential opium production increased by 13% to 690 mt. During the year, an estimated 300,000 households were involved in opium poppy cultivation in Myanmar (UNODC 2012b).

### *Patterns and trends of drug use*

**Drug use** – Heroin and opium remain the primary drugs of use in Myanmar but the use of these drugs has

<sup>1</sup> Myanmar reported its first seizure of methamphetamine pills in 1996 and its first seizure of crystalline methamphetamine in 2001 (CCDAC 2012d).

Table 56. Rank of use of selected drugs in Myanmar, 2007-2011

| Drug type             | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Heroin                | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    |
| Opium                 | 2    | 2    | 2    | 2    | 2    |
| Methamphetamine pills | 3    | 3    | 3    | 3    | 3    |
| Cannabis              | 4    | 4    | 4    | 4    | 4    |

● = Not reported  
Source(s): DAINAP

Table 57. Trend in use of selected drugs in Myanmar, 2007-2011

| Drug type             | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Heroin                | ↔    | ↓    | ↓    | ↓    | ↔    |
| Opium                 | ●    | ↓    | ↓    | ↓    | ↔    |
| Methamphetamine pills | ↑    | ↑    | ↑    | ↑    | ↑    |
| Cannabis              | ↔    | ↔    | ↔    | ↔    | ↔    |

↑ = Increasing, ↓ = Decreasing, ↔ = Stable, ● = Not reported  
Source(s): DAINAP

shown a declining trend during the past seven years (CCDAC 2012a). Of the 1,550 registered drug users in Myanmar in 2011, the majority (83%) identified themselves as heroin users (1,282 persons) and opium users (13% or 204 persons)<sup>2</sup> (CCDAC 2012a). Methamphetamine use is indicated to have increased each year in Myanmar since 2005 albeit from a low level. In 2011, less than 4% of all registered drug users identified themselves as methamphetamine users (57 persons).

Beginning in 2011, the Myanmar Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control (CCDAC) conducted a study<sup>3</sup> of 698 methamphetamine users who came into contact with drug treatment services in Myanmar in 2011.<sup>4</sup> The study showed that 58% of users reported occasional methamphetamine use with 42% reporting regular use. Most methamphetamine users are poly-drug users (69%) and 30% said they use methamphetamine only. Smoking<sup>5</sup> was found to be the most common mode of administration (96.8%) for methamphetamine pills. Some 0.6% of methamphetamine users said they inject the drug (CCDAC 2012b). Most methamphetamine users are

between the ages of 25-34 years. A large portion of all methamphetamine users responded that they have used methamphetamine for a duration of 1-4 years (CCDAC 2012b).

Whereas in previous years, ATS use was found to be similar in poppy-growing and non-poppy-growing villages, in 2012 a statistically significant<sup>6</sup> higher use rate was reported in poppy-growing villages (0.6%) than in non-poppy-growing villages (around 0.2%). Prevalence of recent (within the last month) use of opium and heroin in poppy-growing villages in the Shan and Kachin states in 2012 was estimated at 1.8% and 0.2% respectively. In non-poppy growing villages, the prevalence was 0.2% for both drugs (UNODC 2012b).

### *Injecting drug use*

The injecting use of methamphetamine in Myanmar was reported for the time in 2011, although most methamphetamine users continue to smoke the drug (CCDAC 2012b). Injection is also the primary route of administration for heroin. Overall, the number of injecting drug users (IDUs) in Myanmar was estimated at 75,000 (range: 60,000-90,000) in 2007, the latest year for which estimates are available (SACP 2011). In 2011, HIV prevalence in the adult population (aged 15 and above) in Myanmar was estimated at 0.53% (NAP Myanmar 2012). Surveillance data for most-

<sup>2</sup> In addition, five persons were cannabis users and two persons were users of 'other' drugs.

<sup>3</sup> The study was conducted jointly by the CCDAC, Myanmar Ministry of Health, the UNODC Global SMART Programme and local NGOs.

<sup>4</sup> Of the 698 methamphetamine users surveyed in 2011 and early 2012, 313 had visited drug treatment centres and 385 had visited drop-in-centres. The vast majority (95%) of methamphetamine users were men.

<sup>5</sup> The pills are typically crushed and the vaporized in glass pipes or on aluminum foil heated by a flame underneath so that the user can inhale the resulting fumes.

<sup>6</sup> Significant at the 0.01 level.

at-risk populations in 2011 showed HIV prevalence in the sentinel groups was highest in male injecting drug users, at 21.9%, followed by 9.6% in female sex workers and 7.8% in men who have sex with men. Prevalence has shown a considerable decrease among all sentinel groups during the past few years, however HIV transmission among IDUs through the sharing of contaminated injecting equipment remains comparatively high (NAP Myanmar 2012).

Harm reduction services are reaching an increasing, albeit still limited, number of injecting drug users in Myanmar. In 2010, some 13,368 people who inject drugs registered in drop-in centres during the year (a 40% increase from 2009), of which about 4% were female (NAP Myanmar 2012).

### Drug treatment

Most drug treatment admissions in Myanmar continue to be related to heroin and opium use. In recent years, however, there have been an increasing number of admissions to the Yangon Mental Health Hospital for psychiatric problems related to ATS use (INCB 2012a). Most ATS users do not voluntarily seek treatment, and there are no evidence-based treatment facilities specifically focusing on ATS dependency in the country. However, compulsory drug treatment

is required for persons arrested for drug possession in Myanmar, which means that a drug user must be registered and admitted to one of the 69 drug treatment centres (DTCs) operated by the Ministry of Health throughout the country. The Myanmar Anti-Narcotics Association operates nine drop-in-centres (DICs) and there are an additional 16 DICs operated by the United Nations and non-governmental organizations. Most of the DICs are located in Shan State (CCDAC 2012b). In addition, the Social Welfare Department operates eight rehabilitation centres for former drug users located in Yangon, Mandalay, Phekon, Namlat, Kyaing Tong, Lashio, Myitkyina and Wet Hti Khan (CCDAC 2011).

As of 2012, the Ministry of Health operates 18 methadone maintenance therapy (MMT) centres in Myanmar, at which more than 2,500 opiate users have received opioid substitution treatment (CCDAC 2012d).

### Drug-related arrests, seizures and prices

**Drug-related arrests** – Of the 3,691 total drug-related arrests in Myanmar in 2011, 1,249 arrests involved methamphetamine pills. This figure represents about one-third of all drug-related arrests during the year and an increase of 24% over the number of persons arrested for methamphetamine pills in 2010. The

Table 58. Drug-related arrests in Myanmar, 2007-2011

| Drug type                          | 2007         | 2008         | 2009         | 2010         | 2011         |
|------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Methamphetamine pills              | 740          | 933          | 1,307        | 1,008        | 1,249        |
| Crystalline methamphetamine        | 0            | 9            | 6            | 0            | 18           |
| Methamphetamine powder             | 5            | 1            | 4            | 0            | 2            |
| Ecstasy                            | 8            | 6            | 0            | 0            | 0            |
| Cannabis herb                      | 217          | 240          | 490          | 146          | 275          |
| Heroin                             | 1,084        | 1,040        | 1,067        | 981          | 1,008        |
| Opium (raw & prepared)             | 675          | 760          | 1,107        | 708          | 566          |
| Opium (low grade)                  | 252          | 250          | 439          | ●            | 355          |
| Opium (brown opium / heroin No. 3) | 4            | 9            | ●            | ●            | 4            |
| Kratom <sup>7</sup>                | 89           | 120          | 323          | ●            | 211          |
| Not identified/other drugs         | ●            | ●            | ●            | 622*         | 3            |
| <b>Total</b>                       | <b>3,074</b> | <b>3,368</b> | <b>4,743</b> | <b>3,465</b> | <b>3,691</b> |

● = Not reported. \*Includes arrests related to precursor chemicals. Precursors are categorized as drugs under the Myanmar Narcotics Control Law. Source(s): DAINAP

<sup>7</sup> A plant indigenous to South-East Asia that contains the alkaloid mitragynine. The most frequent mode of administration is making tea out of the dried leaves. It is a controlled substance in several Asian and European countries.

number of women arrested for offences related to methamphetamine pills in 2011 (202) accounted for about 16% of all arrests related to the drug, compared with 27% in 2010. During the past five years, methamphetamine pills have accounted for about 29% of all drug-related arrests in Myanmar. The number of arrests related to other ATS in Myanmar remains low, with 18 persons arrested for crystalline methamphetamine (in 11 separate cases) and two persons arrested for methamphetamine powder in 2011. No persons have been arrested for ecstasy in Myanmar since 2008. Women accounted for about 17% of all drug-related arrests in 2011.

The number of arrests related to heroin has remained stable during the past five years. In 2011, heroin accounted for about 27% of all drug-related arrests. One fourth of all drug-related arrests in 2011 were related to all forms of opium (raw and prepared, low grade, and brown opium).

**Drug seizures** – In 2011, approximately 5.9 million methamphetamine pills were seized in Myanmar, nearly three times higher than the previous year and the second highest total reported during the past five years. However, methamphetamine pill seizure figures reported from Myanmar do not reflect the full extent of manufacture, as most methamphetamine pills are trafficked short distances across the border to neighbouring countries.

Most of the crystalline methamphetamine seized in Myanmar has reportedly been destined for

international markets rather than for local use (UNODC 2010). The largest amount of crystalline methamphetamine seized in Myanmar was in 2001 when 518 kg were seized (UNODC 2010). In July 2012, Myanmar recorded its largest ever crystalline methamphetamine seizure when 73 kg were seized along with 274 kg of liquid methamphetamine and various equipment used in methamphetamine manufacture from a clandestine laboratory in the Kokang Special Region in eastern Shan State (CCDAC 2012c).

Whereas the amount of heroin seized in Myanmar in 2011 (42 kg) is less than half of the amount seized during the previous year (89 kg), the 148 kg of heroin seized during the first nine months of 2012 represent the second highest seizure total during the past six years. Seizures of opium (high-grade) showed a slight (10%) decline in 2011 compared with the previous year but were indicated to have increased significantly in the first nine months of 2012, to 1,342 kg (CCDAC 2012d).

The quantity of precursor chemicals seized in Myanmar increased in 2011 but remain considerably lower than the quantities seized in previous years. In 2011, total seizures of ephedrine more than tripled, to 110 kg compared with 34 kg seized in 2010, which is the lowest total reported in the past decade. Pseudoephedrine seizures (primarily pharmaceutical preparations containing pseudoephedrine) more than doubled, from 766 kg in 2010 to approximately 1.7 mt in 2011. Preliminary data indicate a further significant increase in 2012, with 313 kg of ephedrine

Table 59. Seizures of selected drugs in Myanmar, 2007-2011

| Drug type                   | Measurement | 2007      | 2008      | 2009       | 2010      | 2011      |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| Methamphetamine pills       | pills       | 1,666,141 | 1,102,199 | 23,899,156 | 2,192,263 | 5,894,188 |
| Crystalline methamphetamine | kg          | 3.4       | 15.9      | 124.3      | 226.1     | 33.4      |
| Methamphetamine powder*     | kg          | 470.8     | 3.9       | 339.0      | 0         | 20.2      |
| Ecstasy                     | pills       | 2,690     | 108       | 5          | 0         | 0         |
| Heroin                      | kg          | 68.4      | 88.2      | 1,076.1    | 88.5      | 42.4      |
| Morphine                    | kg          | 1,121.0   | 206.1     | 325.7      | 98.2      | 36.9      |
| Opium, high grade           | kg          | 1,173.8   | 1,463.4   | 752.0      | 922.0     | 828.3     |
| Opium, low grade            | kg          | 10,972.0  | 2,453.0   | 465.0      | 148.0     | 281.6     |
| Opium oil                   | kg          | 56.3      | 80.1      | 27.5       | 35.5      | 60.0      |
| Cannabis**                  | kg          | 104.3     | 170.2     | 284.6      | 205.6     | 196.4     |
| Kratom                      | kg          | 407.0     | 308.5     | 597.5***   | 375.0     | 969.5     |
| Ketamine                    | kg          | •         | •         | 1,500.0    | •         | 1.4       |

• = Not reported. \*Intermediary form to process into methamphetamine pills. \*\*Combined herb and resin. \*\*\*Plus two litres of liquid speciosa. Source(s): DAINAP; CCDAC 2012a

Table 60. Precursor chemical seizures in Myanmar, 2007-2011

| Precursor type   | Measurement | 2007  | 2008    | 2009    | 2010  | 2011    |
|------------------|-------------|-------|---------|---------|-------|---------|
| Acetic anhydride | lt.         | 595.0 | 1,142.0 | 699.0   | 14.0  | ●       |
| Ephedrine        | kg          | 530.0 | 751.0   | 1,646.0 | 33.6  | 110.0   |
| Pseudoephedrine  | kg          | ●     | 7.8     | 3,272.0 | 766.2 | 1,660.0 |

● = Not specified

Source(s): DAINAP; CCDAC 2012a

Table 61. Retail prices of selected drugs in Myanmar (USD), 2010 and 2011

| Drug type                   | Measurement | 2010            | 2011            |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Methamphetamine pills       | per pill    | 3 – 6           | 3 – 7           |
| Crystalline methamphetamine | per kg      | 8,500 – 10,000  | 10,000 – 11,000 |
| Ecstasy                     | per pill    | 70 – 80         | 58 – 68         |
| Cannabis herb               | per kg      | 150 – 250       | 235             |
| Heroin                      | per kg      | 75,000 – 90,000 | 95,000          |
| Opium                       | per kg      | 2,000 – 2,500   | 2,350           |

Source(s): DAINAP; CCDAC 2011; CCDAC 2012a; CCDAC 2012d

and almost 3.5 mt of pseudoephedrine seized during the first nine months of the year (CCDAC 2012c).

Seizures of kratom reached approximately 970 kg in 2011, the highest total reported in Myanmar during the past five years.

**Drug prices** – Street retail prices of methamphetamine are generally much lower in Shan State than in cities such as Yangon and Mandalay which are located further away from methamphetamine manufacturing centres. In 2011, the retail price of one methamphetamine pill in Yangon and other urban areas was approximately USD 6-7, while prices were lowest in North Shan (USD 2.2) and East Shan (USD 3.4) (CCDAC 2012a). Prices for other drugs remain largely unchanged from the previous year.

### *Sources of illicit drugs*

In Myanmar, eastern Shan State continues to be a key source of methamphetamine being trafficked in the region. Most illicit methamphetamine manufacture in Shan State takes place in small, mobile facilities located in border areas near China and Thailand, primarily in territories controlled by active or former ethnic insurgent groups, many of which now operate as criminal syndicates rather than politically motivated insurgents (INCSR Myanmar 2010). However, most of the inputs required for illicit methamphetamine manufacture – chemicals, equipment, chemists and in-

vestment – are sourced from neighbouring countries. In July 2012, Myanmar officially reported its first ever seizure of a clandestine crystalline methamphetamine manufacturing laboratory, in the Kokang Special Region of eastern Shan State (CCDAC 2012c). In addition, in 2011, authorities in Myanmar seized a small number of pill pressing machines and related equipment used to make methamphetamine pills from two separate clandestine methamphetamine manufacturing facilities (CCDAC 2012a).

In 2011, the estimated 610 mt of opium produced in Myanmar accounted for about 9% of total global production (UNODC 2012b). During the 2006-2010 period, a total of 24 illicit heroin facilities were seized in Myanmar (CCDAC 2011).

As Myanmar does not produce ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, the main precursor chemicals required for the illicit manufacture of methamphetamine, these chemicals are trafficked into the country from India and China. While most precursor chemical seizures are made in the central part of Myanmar, along routes which run from the northwestern border with India (CCDAC 2012a), precursors are also often smuggled in the form of pharmaceutical preparations containing these substances from the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Thailand and Viet Nam, transiting Thailand and Lao PDR (RTP 2011).

**Trafficking** – Methamphetamine in pill and crystalline forms – as well as heroin – manufactured in the

Shan State is trafficked overland and via the Mekong River, primarily to illicit drug markets in China, Thailand and, to a lesser but possibly increasing extent, Bangladesh (UNODC 2010). Methamphetamine is also smuggled from Myanmar into Yunnan province in southwestern China (NNCC 2012b). Some methamphetamine is also trafficked within Myanmar to supply the domestic drug market (UNODC 2010).

Significant amounts of methamphetamine manufactured in Myanmar are trafficked through Lao PDR to Thailand, Cambodia and Viet Nam (UNODC 2011b). There is also some maritime trafficking of methamphetamine from ports in southern Myanmar into southern Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia as well as to markets beyond the region (RMP 2011c). Some methamphetamine originating from Myanmar is trafficked to Bangkok for further trafficking to, *inter alia*, Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore (ONCB 2012a; CCDAC 2012a).

A large portion of the ephedrine smuggled from India is smuggled directly to Myanmar through Chin State, in the western part of the country (CCDAC 2012a).

### *Forensic data*

In 2011, the Chemical Examiner's Office in Myanmar conducted qualitative analysis only on 189 large (greater than 5 grams) and 150 small (less than 3 grams) methamphetamine samples, which contained unspecified amounts of methamphetamine. Myanmar lacks the technical capacity to conduct quantitative analyses. In previous years, methamphetamine pills found in Myanmar were typically composed of 25% methamphetamine and 75% caffeine and other substances.

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