

Report from

Third Myanmar Opium Farmers' Forum

Pyin Oo Lwin, 11-12 September 2015

The Third Myanmar Opium Farmers' Forum was held in September 2015 in Pyin Oo Lwin, Myanmar. It brought together around 30 representatives of local communities involved in poppy cultivation in Myanmar's major opium growing regions: Chin State, Kachin State, northern and southern Shan State and Kayah State. Farmers and community representatives from Chin, Kachin, Kayah, Kayan, Pa-O, Shan and Ta-ang (Palaung) ethnic communities took part in the forum.

Current drug control policies in South-east Asia are repressive and criminalise opium farmers, greatly affecting the lives of communities cultivating opium. Most policy responses – including from some armed opposition groups – focus on eradication of poppy fields and the implementation of strict bans on opium cultivation. As these communities depend on opium as a cash crop to solve immediate food security problems and sustain their livelihoods, such repressive policies are driving communities further into poverty. Currently only very few Alternative Development (AD) programmes are offered to opium-growing communities to address these problems. Furthermore, opium cultivation often takes place in conflict-affected areas, and links between drugs and conflict affect local communities.

Until now these communities have had little or no influence on the design of the drug control policies that have great impact on their lives and livelihoods. They have also had little participation in the design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of AD programmes that are supposed to help them. The forum's aim was to identify the main concerns of opium farmers, and formulate alternative policy options that respect the rights of producer communities and involve them in the decision-making processes. To this end the forum adopted [a statement](#) with recommendations to policy makers nationally and internationally.

The meeting was held under Chatham House rules¹ because of the sensitivity of the subject, and the names and places of origin of the participants remain confidential. This report reflects participants' views and captures the main conclusions and recommendations that emerged from the forum.

PREVIOUS ACTIVITIES OF THE OPIUM FARMERS' FORUM

¹ "When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed." See more at: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/about/chatham-house-rule#sthash.bMxCbaDq.dpuf>

First South-east Asia Opium Farmers' Forum

During the first South-east Asia Opium Farmers' Forum organised in Yangon in July 2013, participants supported each other to share their views on a range of issues, including: why people grow opium; the diverse uses of opium (including its positive and negative aspects); the negative consequences of the rapidly changing environment in which they live; and what they perceive as harsh drug control and law enforcement by the government. The forum was intended as a regional forum, and great effort was made to include representatives from communities involved in opium farming from the region's key poppy cultivating countries: Myanmar, India, Laos and Thailand. And while the forum was also attended by some participants from north-east India, practical reasons as well as security issues (opium cultivation is illegal in all these countries) made it impossible to get participants from Laos and Thailand, where cultivation is low-level and mostly in remote areas. The outcomes of this first forum were published in a report² which included a number of key recommendations:

- Government policies to reduce opium cultivation should focus on providing assistance to address the basic needs of the people, as well as to develop infrastructure such as irrigation, electricity and roads.
- Governance should be improved, and problems related to corruption of government officials and army units as well as informal taxation should be addressed. Opium farmers should not be criminalised and arrested. Instead the government should develop policies that support local communities in consultation with them.
- Local communities should have the right to decide on and manage natural resources in their area and receive the benefits from these.
- There should be a forum for communities growing opium to exchange ideas and advocate for policy change.
- Part of the opium cultivation should be legalised to help families meet their basic needs, and to preserve the medicinal value of opium and its traditional and veterinary use.
- There is a need to establish services for drug users to protect their health, including harm reduction services as well as rehabilitation and treatment centres.

Second South-east Asia Opium Farmers' Forum

The second Myanmar Opium Farmers' Forum took place in June 2014 at the Inlay Lake in southern Shan State. This time it proved too difficult to get participants from opium cultivating areas outside Myanmar, including north-east India, and the forum only had participants from the key opium growing regions in Myanmar. The participants revisited some of the topics discussed at the first forum, and reiterated their commitment to its main conclusions and recommendations. After that, discussions focused on

² Transnational Institute (TNI) & Paung Ku, 'Report from The First Southeast Asia Opium Farmers Forum Yangon 2-3 July 2013', <https://www.tni.org/en/briefing/first-southeast-asia-opium-farmers-forum-yangon-2013>.

coordination and future activities. Regional coordinators were appointed to facilitate communication and organise future activities. For security reasons, all regional coordinators are representatives of communities involved in opium cultivation, but not opium farmers themselves. These coordinators also agreed to act as spokespersons for the forum. Finally, the forum agreed to engage with national and international policy makers, provided their security was guaranteed. As most of the forum was spent on coordination issues and follow-up activities, no forum statement or report was released.

Meeting of 'heaven and earth'

In a groundbreaking meeting in January 2015, nine representatives of the Myanmar Opium Farmers' Forum (including six opium farmers and three representatives of communities involved in opium cultivation) participated in a workshop called 'Opportunities for Development-Oriented Drug Control in Myanmar' where they were able to raise their concerns and make recommendations in a special session dedicated to them. The meeting was attended by high-ranking members of the Myanmar Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control (CCDAC).³ Representatives of the CCDAC present at the meeting listened carefully to all issues raised by the farmers and acknowledged the difficult situation of opium farmers in Myanmar. They also commented that a development-led approach would be better to address problems related to illicit opium cultivation in the country. As one opium farmer stated: "It was if heaven and earth met." Participants at the workshop concluded that present support for Alternative Development programmes in Myanmar is limited, and insufficient to address the scale of the problem. At the same time Myanmar is under political pressure to pursue eradication of poppy cultivation by the international community, including ASEAN, which pledged in 2010 to make the region drug free by 2015.⁴

THE 2015 FORUM

The Third Myanmar Opium Farmers Forum started with an introduction of the participants and a sharing of their individual expectations of the forum. Participants updated each other on outcomes of the previous forum and other activities. After that, they broke into groups by region to discuss trends in opium cultivation; reasons for growing opium; traditional uses of opium; existing policies of local authorities and armed groups in their area; and the effect of these existing policies and practices on their lives.

Why do farmers grow opium?

Participants stressed that most farmers grow opium because of poverty, and to sustain their livelihood and address food security problems. Few crops can compete with opium in terms of market value, added to which buyers come to the village, which is a big advantage because in farming

³ Workshop 'Opportunities for Development-Oriented Drug Control in Myanmar' organised by CCDAC and Transnational Institute (TNI), funded through a GIZ grant in Nay Pyi Taw during 21-22 January 2015.

⁴ TNI, Bouncing Back, Relapse in the Golden Triangle, June 2014, p. 60-61.

communities often lack transportation to bring crops to market. Participants said they use the cash income derived from selling opium to buy food, household essentials and access to health and education for their children. Opium can be stored for a relatively long period of time compared to other farm products. In many areas it is hard to cultivate other crops, and poppy is a crop they know how to grow. Lack of access to land is also a reason why farmers resort to growing opium. The continuing conflict in the country is also a factor driving opium cultivation (see section below).

According to a farmer from southern Shan State: “Legal crops have no market value, and very few farmers own land to grow other crops. For landless farmers, opium is easy to grow. It is also easy to store and sell since the buyers purchase door to door.” A Kachin poppy grower from eastern Kachin State added: “We grow opium to make ends meet. Opium could provide income within a short period of time.” A Ta-ang (Palaung) farmer from northern Shan State stated: “We grow opium to make a basic living. We cannot cultivate other crops other than opium in our area, as these have very little market value. Opium poppy is our traditional crop and we are familiar with the techniques to grow it. Armed groups in our area also allow us to grow it if ‘tax’ is paid.”

A poppy farmer from Kayah State added: “We grow opium to support our living, it is our main source of income. We have no other work to get enough income besides growing opium. Other crops could not be grown on our land and climate.” A farmer from northern Shan State stated: “We could easily solve our basic needs because of opium. It is also easy to store, carry and sell compared to other crops. Many local people also secure their livelihood by working in opium fields. In northern Shan state, a labourer could get 10,000 kyats per day to work in an opium field which is more than double the income of a normal labourer.”

Apart from that, the cash income earned from opium is used to buy access to other basic needs. “Opium supports our living,” said opium farmers from northern Shan State. “With the cash earned from opium, we use it for our health, social welfare, education, and developmental needs of our communities such as repair of roads, bridges, schools, water and electricity supply.” According to a Ta-ang opium farmer: “We grow opium to make income to support our living, education of our children, and to solve our health problems. Opium supports 90% of our household income.”

Traditional uses of opium

During discussions participants described several traditional uses of opium in their communities. Apart from being a cash crop that can help solve livelihoods problems, for poppy growing communities’ opium is a solution to address other challenges in life they face, and opium has many positive connotations. Participants from many regions said that opium can be used as traditional medicine, and has various other cultural and traditional uses.

According to a farmer from southern Shan State: “It is used as a traditional medicine to cure minor ailments such as diarrhoea, cough, aches and pains, cuts and wounds. It is also used for curing sick animals.” A Kayah

poppy grower added: “Opium is used for health problems such as diarrhoea and dysentery. It is also used for animals to make them fat. And it is also used for protection of sickness in buffalo, cows, pigs and chickens. Hunters use it for protection against dangerous animals. It is also used as an antidote for insect bites and some snake bites.”

According to a Pa-O farmer from southern Shan State: “Opium is used as traditional medicine for diarrhoea, dysentery, cough etc. We eat grilled garlic with opium to relieve minor ailments. It can also be used to treat sick animals. Opium can be used as lucky charms in hunting, snakebite, and protection from evil.” A Ta-ang farmer from northern Shan State added: “Opium can relieve the symptoms of diarrhoea and dysentery. It could reduce the ‘heat’ (fever) of humans, buffalo and cows. It also reduces blood pressure.” According to a poppy farmer from Kachin State: “Opium can relieve minor health problems. Wild animals could be tamed with opium.”

Participants also discussed some negative impacts of opium. These included issues related to cultivation, including erosion of the soil and environmental damage because of deforestation and clearing of upland fields for poppy cultivation. Some farmers mentioned inflation of land prices and labour costs because of opium cultivation, as well as some farmers getting into debt. Others mentioned an increase in using opium and the presence of more drug dealers, causing social problems and escalating theft. As a participant from Chin State warned: “Opium can relieve diarrhoea, common cold, cough and other minor ailments. However overusing it causes serious problems.”

Opium cultivation trends

After almost 10 years of rising opium cultivation levels, farmers from many areas reported reductions in poppy growing this year because of reduced demand and falling prices for raw opium. Said one poppy farmer from Kayah State: “The economy of the opium farmer is becoming unstable.” According to a Pa-O farmer from southern Shan State: “Opium cultivation has decreased, as the selling price does not cover the cost of cultivation. We cannot pay our taxes, and the punishment is stricter: there is more frequent eradication of poppy fields, and the areas that are destroyed are [ever] bigger.” A Shan opium farmer from southern Shan State stated: “There is also less production because of reduction in quality of soil and because poppy cultivation is illegal and farmers need to pay tax to armed groups.”

In some cases cultivation has decreased because of eradication and strict enforcement of opium bans by ethnic armed opposition groups. According to participants, in northern Shan State the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) and the Ta-ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) have both launched opium eradication campaigns. These are the result of widespread drug-use related problems among the local population, including opium but especially its derivative, heroin. Religious groups such as the Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC) have also spearheaded such campaigns among local communities. These campaigns have also targeted drug users, who have been arrested and put into closed settings for cold-turkey detoxification.

According to a Ta-ang farmer from northern Shan State: “Armed groups have centres for detoxification of drug users. There are poppy eradication campaigns from [ethnic armed opposition] groups like the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) and the Ta-ang National Liberation Army (TNLA). There are no other programmes like crop substitution in our area.” In these areas, armed groups also impose fines on people cultivating opium. “They also fine people if opium is found on them,” said another Ta-ang farmer. “If they arrest drug users, they punish them, and take them to their camps where they are asked to do manual labour and kept until they stop using drugs.”

In Kachin State similar campaigns have been carried by the KBC and the KIO, and as a result opium cultivation in the Sedun area has decreased. Farmers from the area report that cultivation also fell because of reduction in the price of raw opium, but add that some people are still growing opium to make ends meet. However, overall opium production may not have been affected, as poppy cultivation has moved to other areas, especially to Kampaiti and Sin Kyaing, which are under the control of the Myanmar army-controlled Border Guard Forces (BGFs)⁵ and the central government.

Ta-ang farmers also reported a decrease in cultivation in Nam San and Man Tong townships in northern Shan State, following an announcement by the TNLA that it would not allow poppy growing and subsequent eradication campaigns in areas under its influence. Participants from the area said that, as a result, cultivation has almost disappeared. However, Ta-ang participants also stated that in the Mine Yaw region in northern Shan State (not under TNLA control), opium cultivation has increased. “In our region the economy is not good and it is difficult to support a living, and there is no market for other substituted crops,” says one Ta-ang poppy farmer. “On the other hand, the living cost is increasing.”

Representatives from Chin State stated that opium cultivation has increased in recent years. They say a large part of the opium crop is bought by buyers from India. However, because of heavy flooding this year, which caused landslides and destroyed houses and infrastructure, poppy cultivation will probably be less this year as some fields were destroyed.

Decriminalisation and Development First

Participants stressed that opium farmers should not be regarded as criminals, and called on the government to revise the law so that it can protect the rights of the farmers. They also feel that problems related to opium cultivation should first and foremost be tackled with a developmental approach rather than through a focus on eradication of

⁵ Formerly New Democratic Army – Kachin (NDA-K), which separated from the KIO in 1968 to join the Communist Party of Burma (CPB). The group was the last to break away from the CPB in 1989, and formed the NDA-K. The NDA-K was forced to accept BGF status by the Myanmar army in 2009, and transformed into BGF 1001, BGF 1002 and BGF 1003.

poppy fields. According to a poppy farmer from Kachin State: “Opium farmers are not criminals. We don’t grow opium as a big business to become rich. We grow it as a means of supporting our families.”

“Without proper alternative development programmes, there should be no eradication of opium,” said a poppy farmer from Hsihseng township in southern Shan State. “Otherwise, opium farmers are suffering from the destruction of opium fields by different government departments and ethnic armies.”

A Kayan farmer from Pekhön township in southern Shan State reiterated that opium farmers are not criminals: “We grow opium to make ends meet. We are just like other farmers, but we don’t own land to grow other crops.” He also pointed out that other crops in the area do not produce good yields because fields are situated in the uplands. “Transportation costs of other crops are very high so we don’t have a profit from it. The market value of substituted crops also is not strong and not stable. The government should tackle opium through a development approach. Eradication cannot be successful and it creates fear in the community, and also bribery.”

Representatives from Chin State expressed similar concerns: “We grow opium to make families’ living. It also helps in supporting household income. There should be livelihood and social assistance if opium fields are to be destroyed or eradicated. We are not criminals but we are forced to deal with criminals.”

According to an opium farmer from Pekhön Township in southern Shan State: “We heard that US President Obama said the Myanmar government should enforce its drug eradication programmes. We think it would be better if he urges the government to emphasise developmental approaches rather than eradication.”

Access to alternative development (AD)

Representatives from all regions agreed that currently very little development aid is provided to address the problems of communities involved in opium cultivation. They also stated that the few AD programmes that are taking place often have been planned and implemented without proper consultation of local communities, and are unfit to local circumstances. They called for a holistic development approach, addressing all key drivers of opium cultivation. Several participants stressed the need for land rights and land tenure security. They also stated that non-opium growing communities need support as well. The introduction of mono-plantations, mostly by local militia groups as part of China’s opium substitution programme, has caused several problems for local communities, including loss of land and livelihoods.

According to a Kayah opium farmer: “Substituted crops programmes should be relevant with local context and should be accepted by the local people. These programmes should support the economic development of the farmers. Other developmental sectors of our local areas should not be neglected such as roads, water, electricity, health and education.” A Pa-O poppy cultivator stated that: “The government crop substitution

programmes are not at all relevant to our context. The substituted crops have neither standard quality nor quantity.” Added an opium farmer from southern Shan State: “Alternative Development should be a long-term plan. Effective agricultural techniques and support should be provided so that farmers have more interest in growing substituted crops. Garlic and ginger have been suggested as alternatives but there is no market for these crops.”

A participant from northern Shan State said: “Techniques, equipment, costs, loans and market surveys should be provided before actually growing substitution crops.” Farmers also called for reparation of infrastructure and improvement in health and education services. Said one poppy farmer: “There should also be a hospital in place. Schools should also be improved and only qualified teachers should be in place.” A farmer from Kachin State added: “Our area-development sectors such as roads and transportation should be improved.” According to a Ta-ang opium farmer: “The land rights of farmers should be protected. Tea plantation techniques should also be taught. Roads should be repaired. Farmlands should be developed.”

Participants also discussed the impact of China’s opium substitution programme. According to farmers from northern Shan State: “Some [Tatmadaw backed] militias make policies to grow long-term mono-crops, which is not good for local community. Instead, there should be life skills training programmes for opium farmers as well as drug users (such as carpentry), and substituted crops should be relevant to the local situation. Techniques, equipment, costs, loans and market surveys should be provided before actually growing the substituted crops.”

Pa-O poppy cultivators stressed that: “Development programmes should be planned with the participation of opium farmers. The needs of our region and communities should be thoroughly researched. A community development committee should be composed with representatives from community. The government should permit the formation of such committee and should also protect its safety. The government should also intervene/negotiate in conflict situations between the committee and other armed groups.”

Farmers from northern Shan State made similar statements: “The government should enact policies and laws, which protects the human rights of opium farmers and drug users. Like farmers who grow other crops, opium farmers should have the same rights and protection. We should also get rights such as to form opium farmers’ unions. For farmers who stop growing opium, there should be some assistance to support their economic and social development.”

Drugs and conflict

Many opium growing regions are located in conflict affected areas. Participants in the forum talked extensively about the many links between drugs and conflict. There are many different kinds of armed groups in Myanmar: the Tatmadaw (national army) as well as ethnic armed opposition groups striving for self-determination and more autonomy. Some of these armed opposition groups also have an anti-drug policy.

Apart from that, there are also a large number of militia groups and Border Guard Forces (BGFs) backed by the Myanmar army, who are stimulating and taxing opium cultivation and also involved in heroin and amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) production. All participants stressed the need for a just peace agreement.

According to a farmer from eastern Kachin State: “The [Myanmar army controlled] BGFs under Sakhon Ting Ying⁶ encourages opium cultivation to support their army, and they also grow by themselves.” A Ta-ang farmer from northern Shan State said: “In some areas, [Myanmar army backed] militias protect the poppy fields. There are frequent fights between ethnic armed groups on the one hand with the Myanmar army and militias. Because of low security in the area, communities are living in fear. They lose their buffalo, cows, horses, pets, and other household properties. Because of conflict and fighting, people also become unemployed.”

During discussions, opium farmers stated that they have to pay taxes and bribes to various kinds of local authorities, depending on the area they live in. These include representatives from the Myanmar army and from government agencies including the Myanmar police. Opium farmers from various regions report that they received letters from the government telling them not to grow opium or face eradication of their fields.

According to a Kachin opium farmer: “The Myanmar army takes bribes and allows opium cultivation. They only destroy one field and ask bribes for leaving the other fields alone. The Myanmar army did not destroy drugs [confiscated] from dealers. Instead they are making income by selling it back to local people. They did not arrest the dealers.”

According to a Kayah farmer: “Opium farmers were threatened by notification letters warning them not to grow opium, as their fields would be destroyed and eradicated. Some were told to sign an agreement not to grow opium. However, often this was not implemented, and farmers were asked to pay bribes and unofficial taxation.” According to a Pa-O poppy grower: “Farmers need to pay monthly fees or taxation during the six months of poppy cultivation. However, farmers are also threatened with arrest, and are asked to pay a bribe. In some cases the opium fields were destroyed, and the farmers were forced to pay the cost of eradication, host the government eradication team and also need to pay presents.” A representative from Chin State said: “Even though the government destroys the opium fields every year their effort is not effective. The government officials do not dare to go to the fields because armed groups guard them.”

Added an opium farmer from northern Shan State: “There are fights among different ethnic armed groups. The safety and security of opium farmers is always challenged. Different groups levy unofficial tax on opium.” A Ta-ang representative added: “There are many ATS and heroin dealers in our area. Big dealers are armed groups so it is difficult to prevent the influx of drugs into the country.” According to Ta-ang farmers, the Myanmar army – and local militia groups supported by them – join

⁶ See footnote 4.

forces to protect the opium fields from being destroyed by the Ta-ang National Liberation Army (TNLA).

Poppy farmers from southern Shan State also stated that government departments and armed groups ask for bribes or unofficial taxation from opium farmers. "If not given, the farmers are threatened." Conflicts arise among farmers who live in the same village, especially at the time of eradication when it is determined which fields will be targeted. At the time of the opium harvest, which is followed by selling and dealing, some participants reported cases of fraud and farmers being cheated by traders. Family conflicts because of opium money are also reported, as well as conflicts among opium farmers about access to land.

Poppy farmers from Kayah State said that armed groups use unofficial tax from opium to fight the government. Conflicts exist among armed groups competing for territory. According to one of them: "There are conflicts between communities and ethnic groups. Because of opium, crime rates such as theft have increased." A participant from Kachin State said that "because of drug trading by people from other countries, there are many people who use drugs and deal drugs in our areas. The government is not taking effective action."

Drug-use related problems

Several participants stated that there are serious drug-use related problems in their communities. This has caused many social problems, yet there are very few services available to address these problems. Communities feel the government is not doing enough to stop these problems. According to a participant from southern Shan State: "Drug use has caused problems such as theft, marriage and other social problems in the community. It also degrades cultural practices and the living standard of society. There are no services to help drug users."

A farmer from Kachin State said: "The problems related to drug use include theft, family problems, and death. We could only help with moral support, and there are no other effective support mechanisms." According to a farmer from Kayah State: "There is an increased use of ATS tablets, heroin and alcohol in our area. There should be programmes such as rehabilitation, awareness raising, income generation and job-creation opportunities for youths. There should also be a drug user union."

According to a farmer from southern Shan State: "Drug use causes debts, fraud, theft, joblessness, and family problems. ATS makes people crazy and wild, and there are related cases of violence, theft and robbery. There are no services for drug users. Sometimes the local armed groups control them. Sometimes village authorities or religious leaders give them guidance. There should be awareness-raising programmes, and a rehabilitation programme supported by the government."

According to a farmer from southern Shan State: "Drug use causes lots of problems such as land issues, family, social, health and legal problems. There should be a regular forum in our areas to discuss these issues. For drug eradication programmes, assistance such as money, manpower and technical assistance is needed."

CONCLUSION

At the end of the forum the farmers issued a statement (see below) with recommendations to policy makers nationally and internationally. The forum also agreed on follow-up activities that would help draw attention to the challenges they face.

Statement of Third Myanmar Opium Farmers' Forum 12 September 2015

We, opium farmers and representatives of opium farming communities from Kayah State, Shan State, Kachin State and Chin State, came together in Upper Myanmar to discuss the drug policies affecting our lives and to make the following recommendations:

We grow opium in order to ensure food security for our families and to provide for our basic needs, and to have access to health and education. We grow opium because of poverty and because we live in isolated and mountainous and high elevated areas, where it is difficult to grow other crops, infrastructure is weak and we face difficulties in transporting crops and accessing markets. We also have little access to land to grow other crops. The large majority of opium farmers are not rich and grow it for their survival. Therefore, they should not be treated as criminals.

Opium has many positive values for us. As there are few health facilities in our areas, and we use opium as a traditional medicine for diarrhoea, coughing, as a painkiller and to keep us safe from poisonous insects. For some of us, we believe it protects us from evil and if offered to spirits it will bring good luck. We also use it to treat sick animals.

Many of us live in areas with armed conflict. We have to pay opium tax to many armed groups. Some local representatives of government agencies, the police and the Myanmar army also come to our village, especially during harvest time, and demand money from us and threaten that if we do not pay they will destroy our crop. Some armed groups ban opium cultivation and carry out eradication. In some places the government also carries out eradication.

While we face many problems in feeding our family, we also face the risk of eradication of our poppy fields. We feel there should be no eradication until we have access to alternative sources of income. Some of us mainly rely on opium cultivation for our livelihoods.

At the moment, very few of us have benefitted from development projects and there are very few alternative development programmes in our areas. These programmes should be designed with our involvement, and should be suitable for our local environment and climate. The efficiency of the few programmes that are operating could be much improved.

In our areas there are also many problems related to drug use, especially ATS and heroin. This is causing problems in our families and our society. We feel threatened by these problems. But until now there are very few services and programmes available to address these problems. We hope these programmes can be improved.

In conclusion, we do not want to be regarded as criminals. We demand to be involved in decision-making processes about drug policies and development programmes that are affecting our lives.