



# ***Poisoned Hills***

Opium cultivation surges under government control in Burma

*by the Palaung Women's Organization*

## Acronyms

ALTSEAN	Alternative Asean Network on Burma
INGO	International Non-Government Organization
LIB	Light Infantry Battalion
MNDAA	Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army
PSLA	Palaung State Liberation Army
PSLF	Palaung State Liberation Front
PWO	Palaung Women's Organization
SHAN	Shan Herald Agency for News
SPDC	State Peace and Development Council
TSYO	Ta'ang Student and Youth Organization
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UWSA	United Wa State Army

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## Executive Summary

Community assessments by the Palaung Women's Organisation during the past two years reveal that the amount of opium being cultivated in Burma's northern Shan State has been increasing dramatically. The amounts are far higher than reported in the annual opium surveys of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and are flourishing not in "insurgent and ceasefire areas," as claimed by the UN, but in areas controlled by Burma's military government, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC).

Between 2007-2009, PWO conducted field surveys in Namkham and Mantong townships, and found that the total area of opium cultivated increased almost fivefold over three years from 964 hectares in the 2006-7 season to 4,545 hectares in the 2008-9 season.

Namkham and Mantong are both fully under the control of the SPDC. The areas have an extensive security infrastructure including Burma Army battalions, police, and pro-government village militia. These militia are allowed to engage in illicit income-generating activities in exchange for policing against resistance activity, and are being expanded in the lead up to the regime's planned 2010 elections.

Local authorities, in "anti-drug teams" formed by the police in each township, have been systematically extorting fees from villagers in exchange for allowing them to grow opium. During the 2007-8 season in Mantong township, at least 37 million kyat (US\$37,000) in bribes in total were collected from 28 villages.

PWO data shows that the "anti-drug teams" are leaving the majority of opium fields intact, and are filing false eradication data to the police headquarters. PWO found that only 11% of the poppy fields during the 2008-9 season had been destroyed, mostly only in easily visible places.

The fact that authorities are profiting from drug production is enabling drug abuse to flourish. In one village surveyed in Mantong, it was found that the percentage of men aged 15 and over addicted to opium

increased from 57% in 2007 to 85% in 2009. Around the town of Nam-kham, heroin addicts flock openly to “drug camps,” and dealers sell heroin and amphetamines from their houses.

PWO’s findings thus highlight the structural issues underlying the drug problem in Burma. The regime is pursuing a strategy of increased militarization in the ethnic states to crush ethnic resistance movements, instead of entering into political negotiations with them. For this, it needs an ever growing security apparatus, which in turn is subsidized by the drug trade. The regime’s desire to maintain power at all costs is thus taking precedence over its stated aims of drug eradication.

Unless the regime’s militarization strategies are challenged, international funding will make little difference to the drug problem in Burma. A negotiated resolution of the political issues at the root of Burma’s civil war is urgently needed to seriously address the drug scourge which is impacting the region.

**PWO therefore makes the following recommendations:**

***To the Burmese military regime:***

- To cease forcibly recruiting militia in the ethnic states.
- To immediately implement a nationwide ceasefire and begin tripartite negotiation with ethnic leaders and the National League for Democracy as a first step towards establishing genuine peace and democracy in Burma, as this is the only way to begin addressing the deep-rooted drug problem in our country.

***For the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime:***

- To improve data collection methods for the annual opium survey in Burma to ensure that the data is more accurate; in particular to independently verify data provided by the Burmese military regime before publishing it in the survey; and to make sure that the political analysis is not erroneous and misleading.
- To consult with independent community-based organizations when carrying out surveys and evaluation of programs, for more accurate triangulation of data.

- To bear public witness to human rights violations committed by the regime and its allies in UNODC program areas, especially when drug eradication is given as a pretext for these violations; and to suspend support for these programs if the violations continue.

***For donor countries supporting UN and other official INGO programs aimed at eradicating drugs and assisting drug-affected communities in Shan State:***

- To carry out independent evaluations of these programs, to assess their sustainability and effectiveness in addressing the drug problem, particularly in light of the regime's recent attacks and grave human rights violations in the Kokang area, which was supposed to be a model drug eradication project area; and to review funding for programs that are ineffective.

***To the international community:***

- To challenge Burma's military regime for its failure to seriously address problems of opium production and addiction in areas under its control.
- To question the regime about its strategy of building up militia in ethnic areas, as this is promoting "warlordism" instead of democratic governance, and will thereby fuel the drug problem in Burma.
- To pressure the regime to implement a nationwide ceasefire and begin tripartite dialogue as a first step towards establishing genuine peace and democracy, as this is the only way to begin addressing the deep-rooted drug problem in Burma.

## Introduction

In 2006, the PWO published a report *Poisoned Flowers*, which exposed the impacts of spiralling drug addiction on women in Palaung areas of Burma. Following the publication of the report, we saw a continuing increase in opium production and drug abuse in our areas, with no sign of an effective response from the military authorities or international agencies. Noticing the discrepancy between the official reports of successful drug eradication, and our own experience, we felt it necessary to conduct our own assessment of opium cultivation and addiction in our areas. Therefore, between 2007 and 2009, we organised community members to monitor the drug situation in the townships of Namkham, Mantong and Namhsan. This report details the results of our research.



We have been motivated in this research by the suffering of women in our communities whose lives are continuing to be devastated by the addiction of their husbands, sons and fathers. But we know that the drugs being grown in our areas are being exported far and wide, to the rest of Burma, China, Thailand and other parts of the world, where they are inflicting the same suffering. We hope that the spotlight we can shine on our isolated area will better inform efforts of all stakeholders to address the drug scourge in Burma that is affecting communities both at home and beyond our borders.



## Community assessment method

Data was collected for this report by local field researchers between July 2007 and September 2009. Opium surveys were carried out for three consecutive seasons in villages in Mantong and Namkham townships. Villages which were known to be in opium growing areas and which could be accessed by our researchers were chosen. Our field researchers travelled to each village after the end of the opium harvesting season and interviewed local village leaders and farmers about the acreage of poppy grown and the acreage destroyed by local authorities that season. The researchers were all from the local area and in most cases knew the respondents personally.

The researchers also interviewed village leaders in Mantong, Namkham and Namhsan townships to find out trends in opium addiction and to find out the changing patterns in tea growing compared to opium. Internal police reports regarding opium eradication were also made available to us.

For security reasons, we have not included the names of villages, or the real names of any of the people interviewed. The maps give only the approximate locations of villages growing opium.





**Background**

## The War on Drugs in Burma: success or failure?

According to official accounts, Burma is a drug eradication success story. In the 1980s, Burma was the world's largest illicit producer of opium poppy. Opium production continued to soar until the mid 1990s, when, according to the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), measures to reduce opium poppy cultivation by the "Government of Myanmar and local authorities" led to a huge decline in potential opium production. The acreage of opium poppy cultivation in the UNODC's 2009 Myanmar Opium Survey, despite a gradual increase over the past three years, was a mere 29% of the acreage reported in 2000.

Burma's military regime thus appears to be successfully carrying out its 15-year plan to eliminate opium cultivation by 2015. In a recent drug burning ceremony on October 31, 2009 in northern Shan State, Burma's Chief of Police Brigadier General Khin Yi told foreign diplomats about the achievements under this plan, and the regime's resolve to carry on its "fight against the illicit production and traffic of narcotic drugs."

The UNODC has urged more international development assistance in order to sustain the regime's drug eradication achievements. Accordingly, various UN agencies and international NGOs have been increasing amounts of aid in opium-affected areas of Shan State.

However, the decline in official SPDC and UNODC figures of opium cultivation has been offset by massive production of amphetamine type stimulants (ATS), also known as methamphetamines or the Thai phrase yaa-baa (crazy medicine), since 1994 and for which Burma is now the largest producer in Asia.<sup>1</sup> Neighboring countries continue to criticize the SPDC for the flow of heroin and ATS across their borders, particularly China which has a low tolerance for drug traffickers.<sup>2</sup>

Long-time analysts of the drug situation in Burma have also criticized the regime's "War on Drugs." The Shan Herald Agency for News (SHAN), an independent media and research group which has decades of experience covering the drug issue on the ground in Shan State, challenges the claimed success of the regime's War on Drugs. They

describe how, far from being contained, opium growing has now spread throughout Shan State and to other parts of Burma where it had never been grown before. They have written several reports documenting how the Burmese military regime is relying on the drug trade to fund its army and local security militia in the ethnic states, and stressed that only a political solution to the civil war can bring an end to the drug problem in Burma.<sup>3</sup>

SHAN also questions the UNODC's claim of a huge reduction in opium production since the 1990s. They quote insiders in the drug trade who say that the opium figures in the 1990s (compiled by the US government) were hugely inflated, and therefore the massive "drop" never happened. They also question the reliability of UNODC drug surveys, which rely on eradication reports and "ground truthing" of satellite imagery by Burmese military and police personnel.

The 2004 report *A Failing Grade* by the Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma, contains a comprehensive critique of the Burmese regime's drug eradication efforts, and argues against increasing international assistance for drug eradication programs unless the regime radically changes its policies. It concludes that "A drug eradication policy in Burma must be pursued alongside political and economic reform, not before it."<sup>4</sup>

## **Recent drug-related developments**

### ***Regime starting to smear ceasefire groups as drug villains***

In preparation for its planned 2010 elections, Burma's military regime has been putting pressure on ethnic ceasefire groups to become Border Guard Forces under their control. These groups had entered into ceasefire agreements up to 20 years ago, which allowed them to control their own territories and conduct business, but granted them no political rights. Many of them have therefore resisted the demand to come under the Burma Army, realizing that this will mean capitulating fully to the regime, and giving up their original political demands for autonomy and equal rights.

One of the groups that had refused to conform was the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), based in the Kokang area on the Chinese border. This group was well-known for drug production and trafficking. However, the regime had long turned a blind eye to its involvement in drugs, calling the Kokang territory a “Drug Free Zone,” and inviting international agencies to carry out development projects as part of its successful drug eradication program there.

This all changed in August 2009, when the regime used the pretext of raiding a drugs factory to launch an assault on the Kokang area. The fighting and widespread abuses against civilians by the regime’s troops, including extrajudicial killing and rape, drove over 37,000 refugees into China.<sup>5</sup> The regime subsequently seized control of the territory, and has since announced the capture of huge amounts of drugs and drug making equipment used by the former Kokang leaders.

Clearly, the regime had tolerated the drug involvement of its ally while it was politically expedient, and then used this issue to crack down as soon as the Kokang showed signs of dissent.

There is now strong speculation that the regime will use the same tactics with other ceasefire groups that are refusing to become Border Guard Forces, particularly the United Wa State Army, which has long had a reputation for drug involvement.

### ***Regime’s expansion of militia gives green light for continued drug production***

With ceasefire agreements unraveling, and the possibility of renewed fighting in formerly peaceful areas, during 2009 the regime has been organizing an expansion of local pro-government militia to secure areas under its control in Shan State.

The regime has long had a policy of recruiting local villagers as paramilitary forces to assist its regular army in rural areas. These militia units are relied on to suppress any rebel activity, and in exchange are permitted to operate as local “warlords,” profiting from local

businesses, legal or illegal. The most lucrative of these businesses is drugs. As pointed out by SHAN in 2006, many influential militia are now becoming the “new face” of the drug trade in Shan State.<sup>6</sup>

Thus ironically, while the regime is seeking to paint its maneuvers against the ceasefire groups as a crusade against drugs, it is simultaneously building up security units that are just as notorious for drug production. During 2009, it has been transforming militia units into battalions. For example, the influential Lahu militia group headed by Ja Seu-bo, which operates in eastern Shan State, between Kengtung and Tachilek, and which is notorious for drug involvement, has recently been transformed into a battalion by the SPDC.

Since the start of 2009, village headmen in townships throughout Shan State have been ordered to recruit young men between the age of 18 and 40, to be trained either as new militia units, or to join existing militia forces. Hundreds of young men in each township have been given basic military training, and equipped with old army weapons.

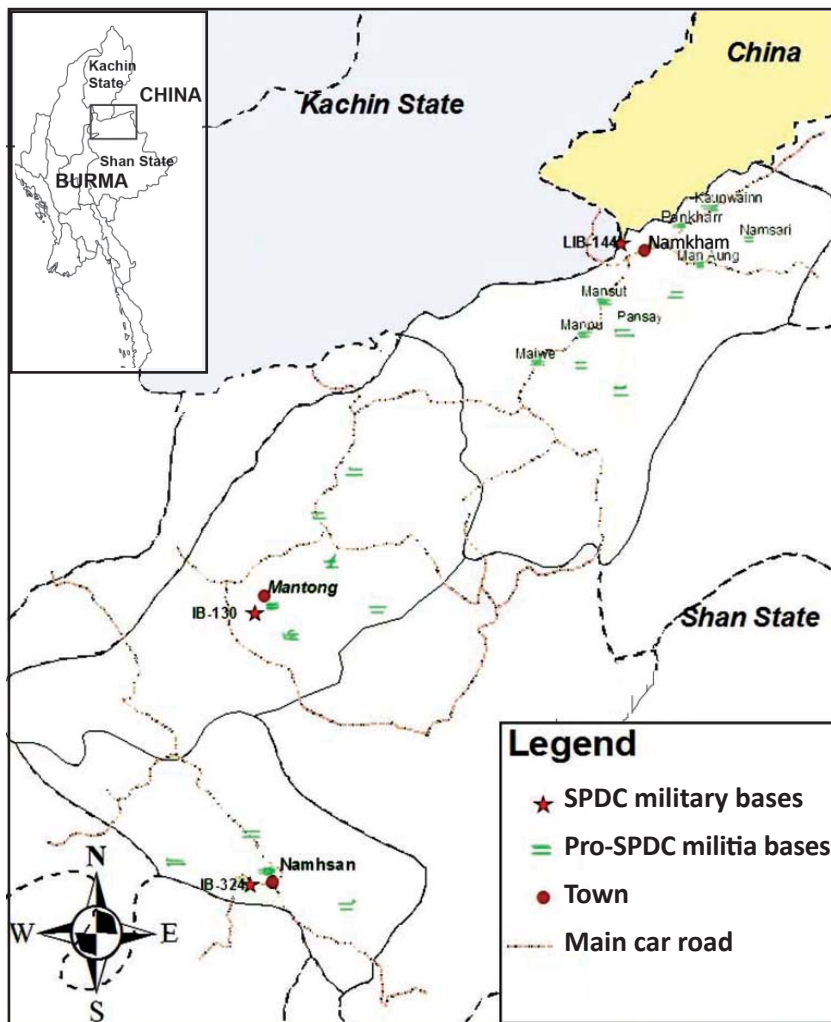
Given the existing militia’s well-known involvement in the drug trade, their expansion is only likely to lead to greater drug production and trafficking.

### ***Drug business as usual in Palaung areas***

The main townships inhabited by Palaung in Northern Shan State are Namkham, Mantong and Namhsan. They are all fully under government control, with Burma Army battalions set up in the main towns, and pro-government militia controlling the rural mountainous areas.

In Namkham, there are eight influential militia groups. These include the ethnic Chinese Pansay militia, based in the hills south of the town of Namkham, who are well-known for opium production and trafficking. In Mantong and Namhsan, there is only one main militia which controls most of the villages in each township.

## SPDC military and militia bases in PWO survey areas







*Burma Army soldiers perform drills in Namkham Township*

Formerly, Mantong and Namhsan were under the control of the ceasefire group, the Palaung State Liberation Army (PSLA), which tried to curb opium growing. However, since the disarming of the PSLA in 2005, opium cultivation and addiction has surged in Mantong, as falling tea prices have driven Palaung farmers to plant opium instead of cultivating their traditional crop of tea. Even though opium is not cultivated in Namhsan, which remains a tea producing area, local drug addiction has been rising with the increased availability of opium.

PWO's 2006 report *Poisoned Flowers* raised concerns about the involvement of the Burma Army and local pro-government militia in the drug trade. However, no serious measures have been taken against any of the main drug actors in the Palaung areas since the publication of the report. A raid conducted on the house of Pansay militia leader Kyaw Myint on May 18, 2008 netted 20 packs of methamphetamine, 20 kg of heroin, and other drugs. He and four other family members were jailed, but were then released after paying a bribe of two million kyat (approx US\$2,000). A few months later, on July 13, 2008, police



caught Kyaw Myint's younger brother Kyaw Htwe and assistant Kyaw Than transporting drugs to the village of Pansay but they were released immediately after paying one and a half million kyat (approx US\$1,500).

Since early 2009, the regime has been ordering new militia to be set up in the Palaung areas, particularly in Namkham. On February 2, 2009, village headmen and tract chairmen from different areas of Namkham were summoned to a meeting in Namkham town and told that an order had been given by Major General Than Maung from the military headquarters at Burma's capital Naypyidaw for new militia to be set up throughout the township.

In each village tract, headmen and chairmen were ordered to collect 100 men, preferably single and under 30 years old to be militia members. One hundred men from three villages, Salu, Man Aung and Parli, were then selected to attend the first training from September 27 to October 2, 2009, given by Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) 123. A follow-up training was held from October 7 to 13, 2009, again by LIB 123, for 100 participants from the same villages. It was claimed that the training was for "fire-fighting," but in reality it was a military training. The new militia recruits were subsequently issued with rifles and ordered to take security in their areas.

The organizing of new militia while existing militia are still given free licence to deal in drugs has led to fears among local Palaung populations that lawlessness and drug production is set to increase.

# Findings



## Opium cultivation soaring in Mantong and Namkham

Field assessments were conducted of opium growing over three seasons in two main areas: Mantong and Namkham. A set number of villages were targeted in each township, and village leaders interviewed after the opium growing season to find out the total estimated acreage grown by villagers in their area. They were also asked whether any authorities had destroyed any poppy fields, and the acreage destroyed.

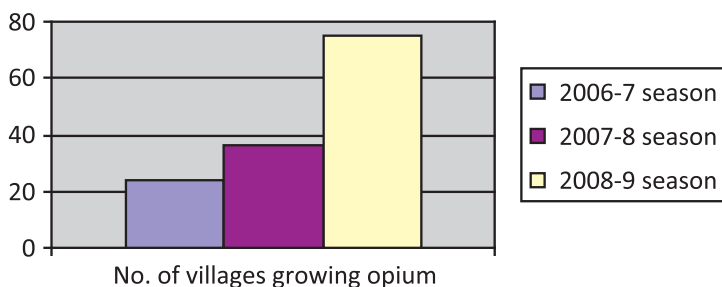
Both townships showed an increase in opium cultivation each year, but the increase was far more dramatic in Mantong. Ironically, both townships were targeted to be “opium-free” by 2004 under the Burmese regime’s 15-year master drug elimination plan.

### ***Mantong***

#### ***Number of villages where opium is grown triples***

It was found that the number of villages growing opium in the targeted survey area of Mantong township has tripled from 2006 to 2009. PWO surveyed 75 villages in Mantong. During the 2006-7 season only 24 of these villages grew opium. This increased to 35 villages in the following season. By the 2008-9 season all of the villages were growing opium.

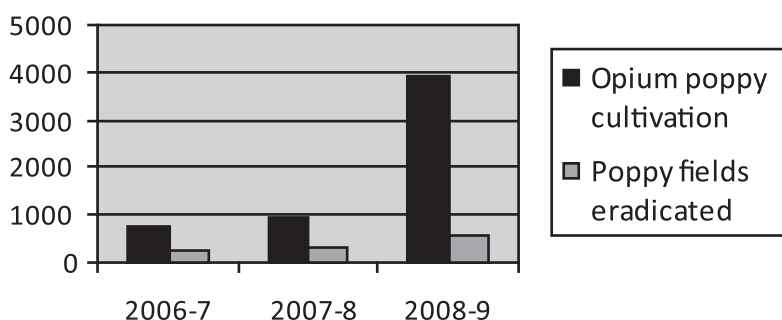
#### **Number of villages where opium is grown in Mantong survey area**



### ***Area under opium poppy cultivation increases six fold***

The area of opium poppy cultivation (not including fields that were destroyed) has increased six fold from 2006 to 2009, from 1,568 acres (635 hectares) to 9,707 acres (3,928 hectares). At the same time, the percentage of opium fields destroyed by the authorities has been decreasing each year, from 28% of the total grown in the 2006-2007 season to only 12% in the 2008-2009 season.

#### **Opium cultivation in Mantong survey area (hectares)**



#### **Opium cultivation in Mantong survey area (hectares)**

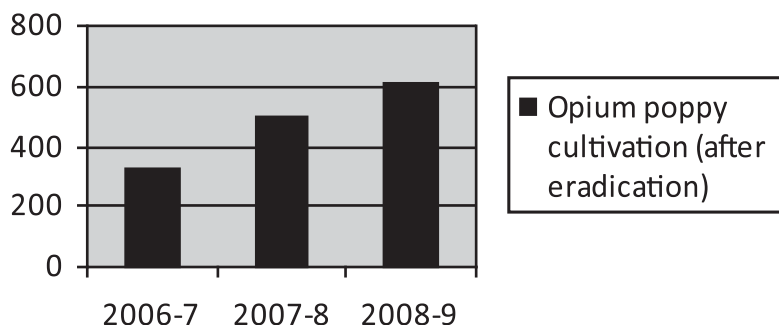
	2006-7	2007-8	2008-9
Opium poppy cultivation (after eradication)	635	962	3,928
Acreage of poppy fields eradicated	248	288	557
Percentage of poppy fields eradicated	28%	23%	12%

## Namkham

### *Area under opium poppy cultivation doubles*

The 16 villages surveyed in Namkham were all found to have grown opium during the past three years surveyed. The total acreage under cultivation almost doubled from 812 acres (328 hectares) to 1,535 acres (617 hectares) over the three years. Very few poppy fields were destroyed by the authorities: only 1 acre in the 2006-7 season, none in the 2007-8 season, and only 10 acres in the 2008-9 season.

**Opium cultivation in Namkham survey area (hectares)**

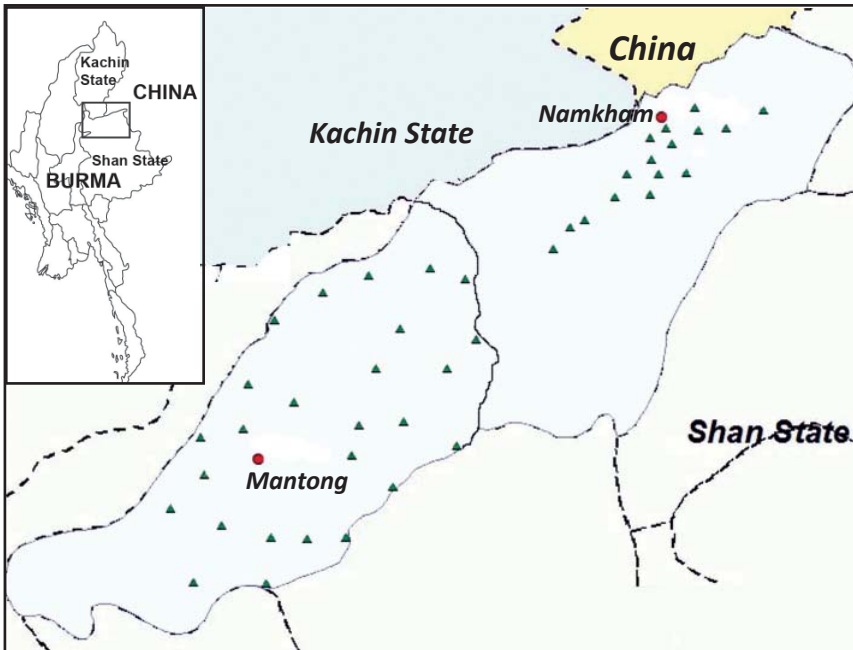


**Opium cultivation in Namkham survey area (hectares)**

	2006-7	2007-8	2008-9
Opium poppy cultivation (after eradication)	328	496	617
Poppy fields eradicated	0.4	0	4

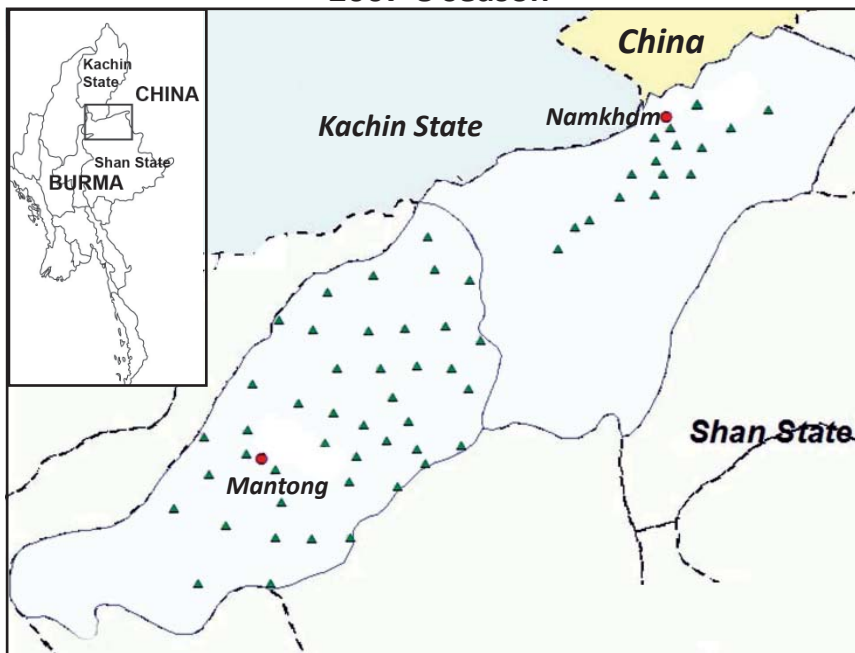
# PWO Assessment of opium cultivation

2006-7 season

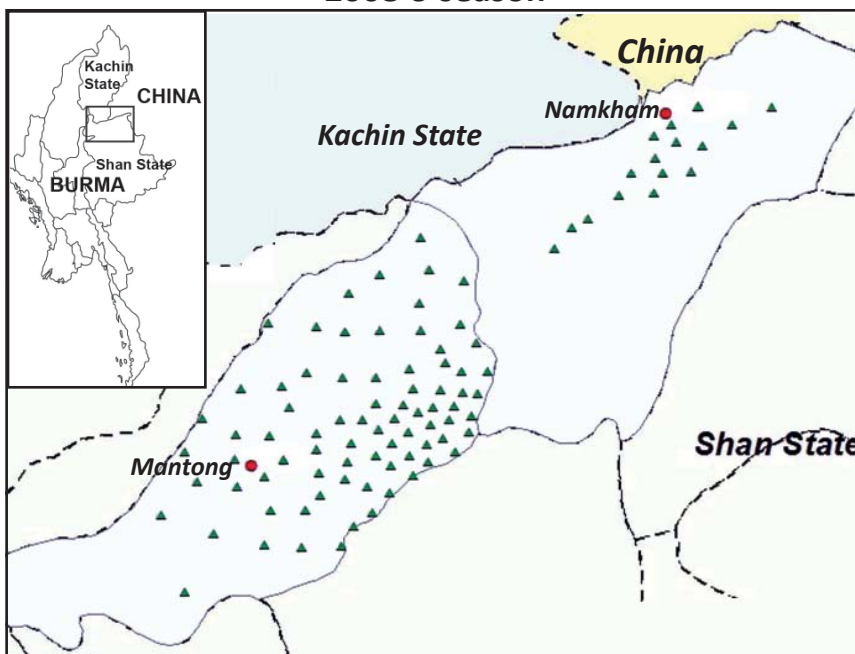


▲ Villages growing opium poppy

## 2007-8 season



## 2008-9 season





## Extortion of opium farmers by authorities

Opium farmers gave consistent reports of extortion by local authorities after the start of the opium growing season, from about November to January. Bribes or “taxes” for opium growing were demanded by “anti-drug teams” in each township.

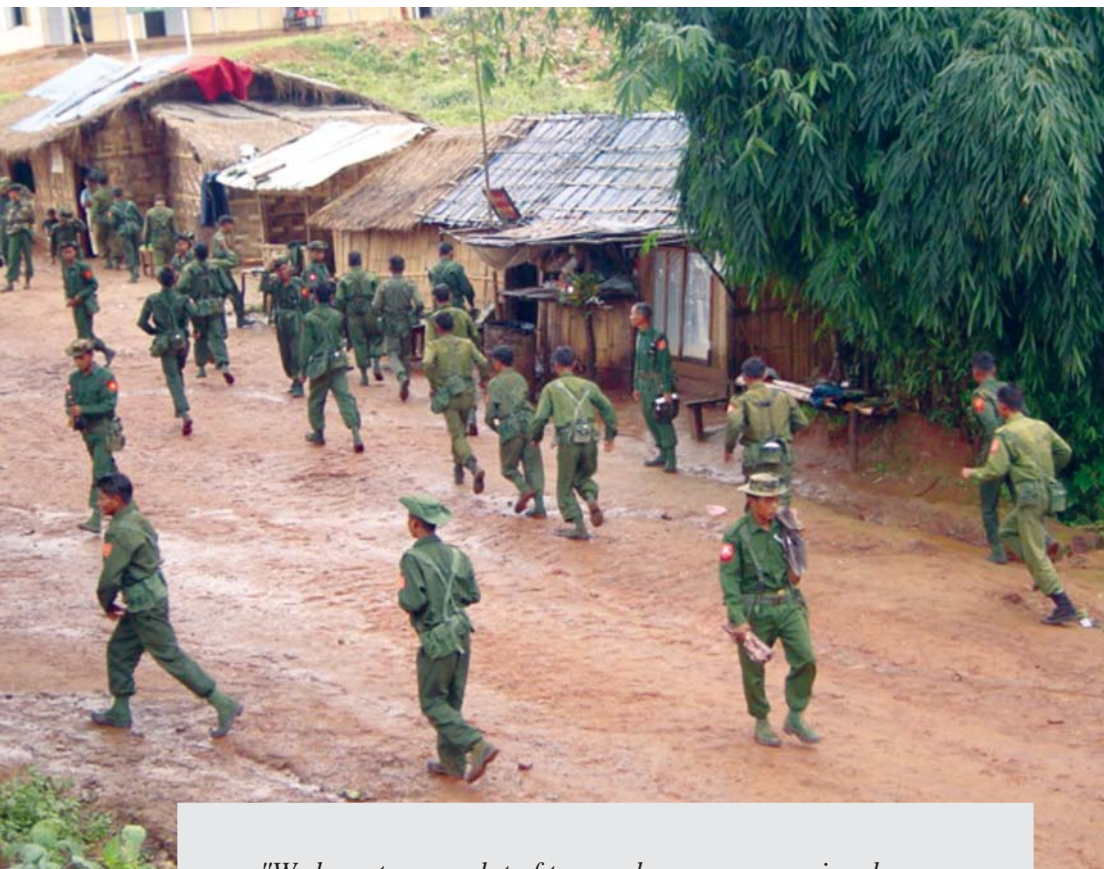
These teams are usually comprised of local police, military personnel, pro-government militia, and members of the local fire brigade. The teams are tasked to travel out to villages, destroy any poppy plants they find, and then send wireless reports of the acreage found and destroyed back to the police headquarters. In reality, the teams usually just travel out to a village, and negotiate with the local headman the amount of payment or “tax” to be paid by villagers in return for leaving poppy fields intact. When payment is given, the team may leave all the poppy fields intact, or may destroy some of the easily visible fields for show.

The chart in Appendix 1 shows the amounts of money that were paid by villagers to various local authorities in Mantong during 2007-8. A total of 37,030,000 kyat (approx US\$37,000) was reported to have been paid to the authorities. Bribes paid per village varied from 50,000 kyat (approx US\$50) up to 4,800,000 kyats (US\$4,800). In some cases the bribes ensured that no fields were destroyed, but in other cases, in spite of the bribe, up to 40% of the fields were destroyed.

Villagers reported not only paying the “anti-drug teams” but also individual authorities who came to collect bribes at different times during the opium growing season. For example, in 2008, soldiers from Infantry Battalion 130 in Mantong and Infantry Battalion 45 in Maiwe, police officers and the Maiwe village militia all came to the same opium farmers in villages in Mantong Township to collect taxes at different times.

Apart from the bribes that the villagers have to pay, they are also expected to provide food, including chicken and pork, to the eradication teams who come to their villages. They often also have to provide their vehicles or horses to transport the teams.





*"We have to pay a lot of taxes when we grow opium because the SPDC soldiers and militia do not come at the same time to take taxes. Sometimes, the soldiers come, the police come, and then the local militia comes to take taxes. The amount of taxes we have to pay depends on the group. If we are not familiar with the groups that come, we worry because they will often charge us more. Occasionally, they even destroy our farms even though we have already paid taxes to other groups earlier. It is a waste of our money and time."*

*- villager from Mantong*

## **Majority of poppy fields being left intact by authorities**

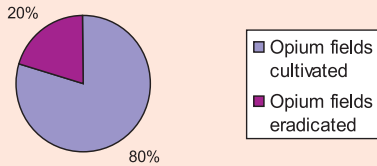
PWO assessments of percentages of opium fields eradicated by local authorities differ greatly from the official police data. PWO found that in Mantong and Namkham combined, only 21% of opium fields were destroyed in the 2006-7 season and only 16% were destroyed in the 2007-8 season. However, according to police data (quoted in the UNODC Opium Survey) the majority of fields in Northern Shan State had been destroyed (70% in 2006-7, and 53% in 2007-8). In the 2008-9 season, the police reported destroying only 25% of opium fields, but this was still over twice the percentage found by PWO (11%) (see charts at right).

PWO was able to obtain the internal report for 2006-7 sent by the Northern Shan State Anti-Narcotics Police to their headquarters in Naypyidaw, which listed in detail the acreage of poppy fields found, and acreage of poppy fields destroyed. In every area, the acreage found and destroyed was reported as exactly the same; in other words, the police were claiming that they destroyed every field they could find (see Table 1 on on pages 24-25 and Appendix 2).

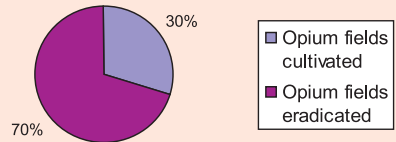
PWO found that in at least one of the villages included in the SPDC eradication list, a large acreage of opium was not reported at all (see comparison example in Table 2). Given the consistent evidence of bribery during eradication operations found by PWO, this appears to confirm that the authorities just destroyed a token amount of fields, usually those easily visible from the road, and demanded a bribe in return for not destroying the rest (see Table 2 on following page).

## PWO assessments and SPDC police data

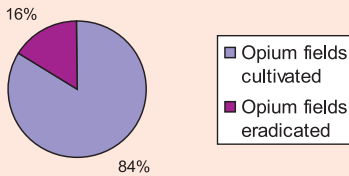
**PWO Assessment in Mantong and Namkham 2006-7**



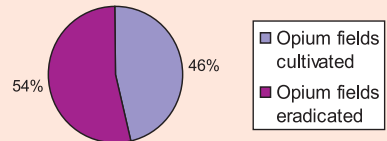
**SPDC police data for Northern Shan State 2006-7**



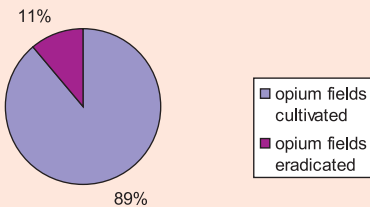
**PWO Assessment in Mantong and Namkham 2007-8**



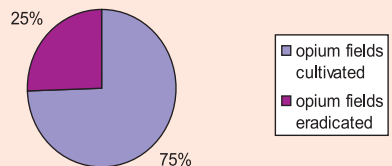
**SPDC police data for Northern Shan State 2007-8**



**PWO Assessment in Mantong and Namkham 2008-9**



**SPDC police data for Northern Shan State 2008-9**



**Table 1: Translated excerpt from SPDC police report**

No.	Township	Village	Map location	Date of eradication
41	Mantong	Man Byaing	T-003927	28.11.06
42	Maing Ye	Man Pyat	H-865822	15.12.06
43	Namkham	Man Pu	O-436064	9.12.06
44	Tangyan	Lway Se	D-269053	18.12.06

**Table 2: Comparison example of opium found and destroyed during 2006-7 season**

	SPDC police report	
Village	Acreage found	Acreage destroyed
Man Pu	2	2

Eradication group	Acres found	Acres destroyed	Total acres	Wireless report no.
Army/police combined	3.7	3.7	3.7	50 people 4/111700
Army/police combined	2	2	2	60 people 4/161720
Army/police combined	2	2	2	1 person 4/051330
Army/police combined	3	3	3	2 people 4/211515

PWO assessment	
Total acreage	Acreage destroyed
30	1.5

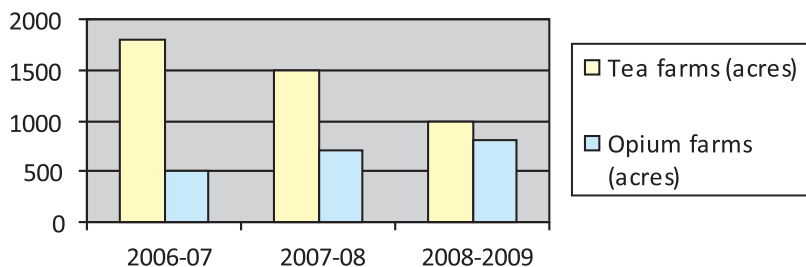
## Opium cultivation replacing traditional Palaung tea growing

PWO's earlier report *Poisoned Flowers* had described how Palaung villagers in northern Shan State have been increasingly turning to opium rather than their traditional livelihood of tea-growing, as a result of military controls on tea prices and excessive taxation. Over the past few years, tea farmers have continued to suffer not only from these problems, but also the rising price of commodities throughout Burma, and new restrictions on trading of agricultural goods between townships in northern Shan State. This has been further incentive for them to cultivate opium.

We surveyed one village "LK" in Mantong township to compare acreages of opium and tea being grown by the villagers over the past three years. "LK" is a village of 180 households, with approximately 1,080 villagers. It was found that out of the original 1,800 acres of tea farms that were formerly cultivated by the villagers in 2006-7, the acreage of tea that was actively cultivated (i.e. the tea plants were tended and the tea leaves picked) decreased by almost half to 1,000 in 2008-9. Meanwhile, the acreage of opium increased over the same period from 500 to 800 acres.

In March 2009, the SPDC Ministry of Health suddenly announced the banning of all tea products containing the chemical dye "Auramine O," which had been used in fermented tea. Troops, police and other local authorities confiscated and destroyed large amounts of tea products, without checking whether they actually contained the chemical. This caused huge losses for local tea traders and farmers, many of whom have since been forced to abandon their tea farms and migrate to find work.<sup>7</sup> This is also likely to push increasing numbers of Palaung farmers to turn to opium growing for survival, and result in increased opium production in the 2009-2010 season.

## Tea and opium cultivation in “LK” village, Mantong township



*“The economy is not reliable, and the price of tea is very cheap. The people cannot survive on such a low price of tea, so they resort to growing opium. Opium only takes a short time to grow, and they get a huge profit from it. If they grow opium for one year, it can cover the cost of their food for the whole year.” U Aik Yai (Man Pu village, Namkham township)*





## Increasing opium addiction in Palaung villages

PWO's report *Poisoned Flowers* had detailed the devastating impacts of increasing addiction on Palaung communities, particularly women. Already suffering from severe gender discrimination, Palaung women face multiple hardships when their husbands become addicted. Husbands not only stop providing for their families, but sell off property and possessions, go into debt, commit theft and deal in drugs to pay for their addiction. Subjected to verbal and physical abuse from their husbands, wives must struggle to bear the entire burden of supporting and caring for up to 10 or 11 children in villages with scarce access to health and education services.

To find out recent trends in drug addiction, PWO carried out interviews with leaders of villages where there was known to be an addiction problem. One village was chosen in each of three townships: Mantong, Namkham and Namhsan. In Mantong and Namkham the villages chosen were also opium growing villages. The village in Namhsan was not an opium growing village.

The percentage of male addicts over 15 had increased year by year from 2006 to 2009 in each of the villages. The highest rates of addiction were found in Mantong.

### ***Mantong***

The sample village in Mantong had a total population of approximately 360 people. An estimated 160 were males, and of these about 100 were males over 15.

**Mantong rates of addiction**

	Number of male addicts aged 15+	% of males aged 15+ that are addicts
2007	57	57%
2008	70	70%
2009	85	85%



### ***Namkham***

The sample village in Namkham had a total population of approximately 3,500, people. An estimated 1,500 were males, and of these about 900 were males aged 15 and over.

#### **Namkham rates of addiction**

	Number of male addicts aged 15+	% of males aged 15+ that are addicts
2007	115	12%
2008	250	27%
2009	400	44%

### ***Namhsan***

The sample village in Namhsan had a total population of approximately 1,500 people. An estimated 650 were males, and of these about 400 were males over 15.

#### **Namhsan rates of addiction**

	Number of male addicts aged 15+	% of males aged 15+ that are addicts
2007	45	11%
2008	90	22%
2009	108	27%



## **Authorities feed off rampant heroin abuse in Namkham**

In the town of Namkham, there is a thriving market for drugs among the many young migrant men from other parts of Burma who come to find work at the China border.

Two makeshift camps in fields just outside the town of Namkham are the source of the cheapest drugs for hardened addicts. It is estimated that about 100 addicts a day come to each camp to take drugs. Of the addicts coming, most are heroin addicts, and about 30% of these are injecting drug users. In the camps, heroin is sold in small amounts for as little as 500 kyat a time. Addicts come as many as three times a day to get their fix.

In the town itself, dealers operate from their homes selling mainly heroin and amphetamines, but do not sell in amounts less than 2,000 kyat. PWO learned of at least 15 houses where drugs were sold in this way.

The fact that drug-taking locations are an open secret shows the collusion of local authorities in the drug trade. Instead of going after the drug dealers, local authorities appear to be targeting addicts as a source of easy income.

On April 10, 2008, the Burma Army camp commander of Light Infantry Battalion 144 in Namkham and the local anti-drug group, including militia, carried out a coordinated raid against drug addicts in some of the villages near the town of Namkham. They were able to arrest 12 addicts. Each addict was charged 200,000 kyat (US\$200). Those that were able to pay, were released. The remaining 10 were sentenced to two years in prison.

On May 20, 2008, police officer U Aung Myo went to Pout Nay Quarter in Namkham town, a well-known drug-taking area for addicts. He did not make any arrests, but confiscated 15 motorbikes from the drug users. He then sold them in another location. The owners did not dare complain because they were addicts.



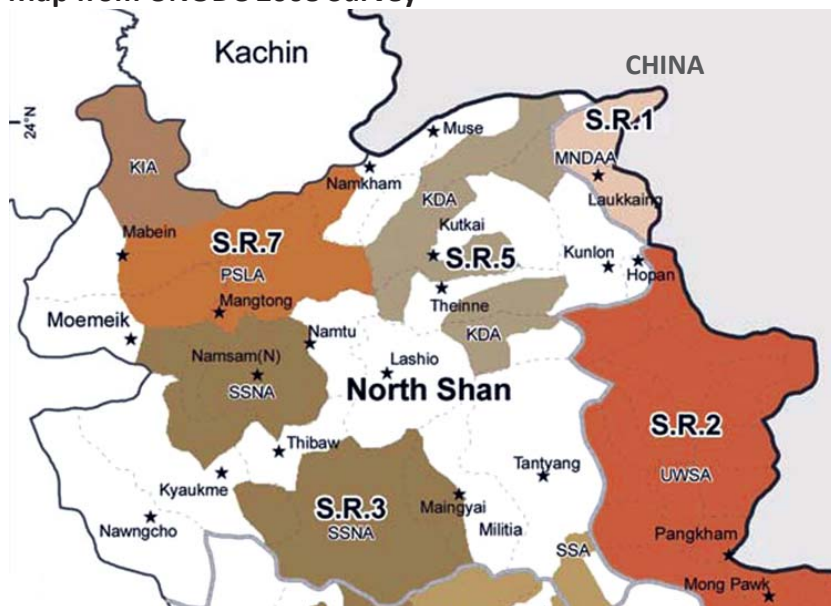


*A drug camp near Namkham town*





Map from UNODC 2008 Survey



Map corrected to show actual areas under control of ceasefire groups



*Note: white areas are under government control*

## **PWO findings and official UNODC surveys**

There are clear discrepancies between the findings of PWO's community assessments and the UNODC annual opium surveys, related to the acreage under cultivation and the amounts eradicated. The political mapping of opium growing areas is also inaccurate.

PWO has the following concerns about the UNODC surveys:

### ***1. UNODC is failing to acknowledge that opium growing is taking place in government-controlled areas***

The 2008 UNODC Myanmar Opium Survey lays the blame for continuing drug production in Burma entirely on non-state actors: "The survey found that opium poppy cultivation took place in areas controlled by insurgency and by ceasefire groups."

In another section, it states: "Manton Township is a highly intensive opium growing area. Opium cultivation was carried out in the areas under the control of PSLA (Palaung State Liberation Army)."

Yet none of the opium growing areas surveyed by PWO in Namkham and Mantong townships are under the control of insurgent or ceasefire groups. They are entirely under the control of the Burma Army, and their local proxy militia since the disarming of the PSLA in 2005.

The 2009 UNODC Myanmar Opium Survey, released in December 2009, uses the same outdated map of the ceasefire territories. In the press release for the report launch, the UNODC continued to lay the blame for opium cultivation on the ceasefire organisations and not the government. UNODC Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa was quoted as saying "the rise in the opium market is largely due to the increased instability in north-eastern Myanmar, with militia ceasefire groups selling drugs to buy weapons."



## ***2. UNODC is relying on data from SPDC***

PWO assessments have documented that the actual area of opium cultivation in Northern Shan State is much higher than the area given by the UNODC in their recent opium surveys (see table below). During the 2008-9 season, the acreage found by PWO for only two townships out of the total of 23 townships in Northern Shan State was nearly three times the total recorded by UNODC for all the 23 townships.

PWO is concerned that the UNODC is relying on data from SPDC police both for eradication as well as for “ground truthing” surveys, when PWO assessments have shown that the SPDC township-level police are vastly underreporting to their superiors the acreage of opium found.

		2006-7	2007-8	2008-9
UNODC Opium Survey	North Shan (23 townships)	390	800	1,600
PWO survey	Mantong and Namkham survey areas alone	963	1,458	4,545

In August 2008, the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services Internal Audit Division conducted a review of UNODC’s performance in Burma. The report concluded that while the UNODC Country Office achieved its opium survey requirements, it failed to achieve all its objectives in alternative development in the Wa special region, or in regards to drug use reduction. The report also cited poor management, possible risks of misuse of UN funds because “administrative and financial internal controls were weak”, and government restrictions on communications by UNODC staff raised security concerns.<sup>7</sup> In this light, the performance of the UNODC in Burma cannot be fully relied on to provide an accurate and comprehensive assessment of the opium production, cultivation, and consumption patterns.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

PWO's research has shown a significant increase in opium cultivation and addiction in Palaung areas since the publication of *Poisoned Flowers* in 2006.

The regime is allowing drugs to be grown in areas under their control, and allowing authorities to extort from growers and addicts. It is also in the process of expanding militia security units which are known to be involved in drugs.

PWO's findings thus highlight the structural issues underlying the drug problem in Burma. The regime is pursuing a strategy of increased militarization in the ethnic states to maintain control and crush ethnic resistance movements, instead of entering into political negotiations with them. For this, it needs an ever growing security apparatus, which in turn is subsidized by the drug trade. The regime's desire to maintain power at all costs is thus taking precedence over its stated aims of drug eradication.

This shows that unless the regime's militarization strategies are challenged, international funding will make little difference to the drug problem in Burma. A negotiated resolution of the political issues at the root of Burma's civil war is urgently needed in order to seriously address the drug scourge that is impacting the region.

**PWO therefore makes the following recommendations:**

### ***To the Burmese military regime:***

- To cease forcibly recruiting militia in the ethnic states.
- To immediately implement a nationwide ceasefire and begin tripartite negotiation with ethnic leaders and the National League for Democracy as a first step towards establishing genuine peace and democracy in Burma, as this is the only way to begin addressing the deep-rooted drug problem in our country.

***For the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime:***

- To improve data collection methods for the annual opium survey in Burma to ensure that the data is more accurate; in particular to independently verify data provided by the Burmese military regime before publishing it in the survey; and to make sure that the political analysis is not erroneous and misleading.
- To consult with independent community-based organizations when carrying out surveys and evaluation of programs, for more accurate triangulation of data.
- To bear public witness to human rights violations committed by the regime and its allies in UNODC program areas, especially when drug eradication is given as a pretext for these violations; and to suspend support for these programs if the violations continue.

***For donor countries supporting UN and other official INGO programs aimed at eradicating drugs and assisting drug-affected communities in Shan State:***

- To carry out independent evaluations of these programs, to assess their sustainability and effectiveness in addressing the drug problem, particularly in light of the regime's recent attacks and grave human rights violations in the Kokang area, which was supposed to be a model drug eradication project area; and to review funding for programs that are ineffective.

***To the international community:***

- To challenge Burma's military regime for its failure to seriously address problems of opium production and addiction in areas under its control.
- To question the regime about its strategy of building up militia in ethnic areas, as this is promoting "warlordism" instead of democratic governance, and will thereby fuel the drug problem in Burma.
- To pressure the regime to implement a nationwide ceasefire and begin tripartite dialogue as a first step towards establishing genuine peace and democracy, as this is the only way to begin addressing the deep-rooted drug problem in Burma.

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>5</sup> Storey, Ian, "Emerging Fault Lines in Sino-Burmese Relations: The Kokang Incident", *China Brief*, 9, (18), September 10, 2009.
- <sup>6</sup> SHAN, Hand in Glove, 2006.
- <sup>7</sup> Ta'ang Student and Youth Organization, Palaung Women's Organization, and Palaung State Liberation Front, *Tea Crisis*, available in Burmese at [www.palaungland.org](http://www.palaungland.org), August 2009.
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## Appendix 1: Detailed opium cultivation assessment data

### *Mantong*

#### 2006-2007 Season

No	Village	Total acres of opium grown	Total acres destroyed	Amount not destroyed
1	PK (MM)	Over 80	-	Over 80
2	LSK	15	-	15
3	LK	10	-	10
4	HH	30	-	30
5	HoT	80	30	50
6	KT	100	-	100
7	KS	150	100	50
8	Htong	Over 80	-	80
9	LK	Over 500	-	500
10	PT	20	-	20
11	LMT	20	-	20
12	LM	5	-	5
13	NS	Over 40	-	Over 40
14	HoS	20		20
15	MHJ	200	150	50
16	KK	200	100	100
17	KM	30	-	30
18	LKT	300	150	150

No	Village	Total acres of opium grown	Total acres destroyed	Amount not destroyed
19	NS	40	-	40
20	PKG&PKT	150	60	90
21	TM	10	6	4
22	SL	Over 40	6	34
23	MM	Over 30	10	20
24	MM	30	-	30
	<b>Total</b>	<b>Over 2,180 acres = over 882 hectares</b>	<b>612 acres = 248 hectares</b>	<b>Over 1,568 acres =over 635 hectares</b>

### Mantong 2007-2008 Season

No	Village	Total acres of opium grown	Total acres destroyed	Amount not destroyed	Total bribes paid to authorities (in Kyat)
1	PK	100	50	50	
2	LSK	15		15	
3	LK	15		15	
4	HH	50	10	40	600,000
5	HoT	50		50	50,000
6	KT	100		100	
7	KS	100	30	70	250,000
8	Htong	100	40	60	3,600,000
9	LK	700	300	400	4,600,000
10	KK	200	50	150	4,000,000
11	KM	50	20	30	1,000,000
12	NS	50		50	
13	PKG&PKT	200	160	40	
14	PK	40		40	3,500,000
15	MM (TT)	100		100	4,800,000
16	MM	35	16	19	2,500,000
17	KM (LK)	30		30	
18	SL	60	10	50	800,000
19	HL	20		20	800,000
20	JP	2		2	400,000
21	WP	2		2	450,000
22	LS	30	10	20	1,100,000
23	NOL	30		30	250,000



No	Village	Total acres of opium grown	Total acres destroyed	Amount not destroyed	Total bribes paid to authorities (in Kyat)
24	MS	120		120	
25	MK	-	-	-	100,000
26	NP	-	-	-	80,000
27	LK	15		15	
28	NOG	-	-	-	50,000
29	MM	40	10	30	250,000
30	TK	-	-	-	250,000
31	TK(LS)	-	-	-	60,000
32	SL	15		15	290,000
33	PC	3		3	
34	MT (LK)	30	5	25	3,500,000
35	PKN	37		37	300,000
36	MW	150		150	3,300,000
37	MW	-	-	-	50,000
38	MhoJ	100		100	
39	LKT	400		400	
40	TM	90		90	
41	TN (PS)	10		10	100,000
	Total	3,089 acres= 1,250 hectares	711 acres = 288 hectares	2,378 acres = 962 hectares	37,030,000

### Mantong 2008-2009 Season

No	Village	Total acres of opium grown	Total acres destroyed	Acres not destroyed
1	PK (MM)	270	100	170
2	LSK	15		15
3	LK	20	-	20
4	HH	70	-	70
5	HoT	65	-	65
6	KT	130	-	130
7	KS	350	100	250
8	Htong	68	26	42
9	LK	800	-	800
10	LMT	25	-	25
11	MHJ	560	160	400
12	PT	30	-	30
13	KK	470	100	370
14	LKT	570	100	470
15	LM	30	-	30
16	HS	80	-	80
17	NS	75	-	75
18	PKG&PKT	850	300	550
19	TM	190	-	190
20	PK	80	-	80
21	MM	110	-	110
22	SL	100	-	100

No	Village	Total acres of opium grown	Total acres destroyed	Acres not destroyed
23	HL	30	-	30
24	JP	30	-	30
25	WP	40	-	40
26	LS	160	60	100
27	NOL	100	-	100
28	MS	150	-	150
29	MK	40	-	40
30	NP	30	15	15
31	LK	15	-	15
32	NOG	90	-	90
33	MM	50	-	50
34	TK	180	100	80
35	TK(LS)	90	40	50
36	HT	170	-	170
37	SL	40	-	40
38	PC	10	-	10
39	MT(LK)	50	10	40
40	HoP	47	-	47
41	NK	85	-	85
42	PK	125	-	125
43	NS	75	-	75
44	KY	88	-	88

No	Village	Total acres of opium grown	Total acres destroyed	Acres not destroyed
45	PKN	130	-	130
46	MW	627	30	597
47	WK	130	-	130
48	KKY	560	-	560
49	KLS	280	-	280
50	MS	420	-	420
51	PS	210	-	210
52	TN(PS)	400	-	400
53	PY	250	-	250
54	TL	30	-	30
55	WK	30	-	30
56	PK	15	-	15
57	PL(NJ)	85	30	55
58	TP	65	40	25
59	LS	75	6	69
60	TP	45	-	45
61	TK	85	5	80
62	TH	25	25	0
63	MW	10	-	10
64	LN	80	30	50
65	NR	120	50	70
66	LK	30	-	30

No	Village	Total acres of opium grown	Total acres destroyed	Acres not destroyed
67	HoH	5	-	5
68	NKL	70	50	20
69	ML	39	-	39
70	LK	80	-	80
71	KM	85	-	85
72	HoL	120	-	120
73	MS	250	-	250
74	JK	30	-	30
75	PHL	50	-	50
	<b>Total</b>	<b>11,084 acres =4,486 hectares</b>	<b>1,377 acres = 557 hectares</b>	<b>9,707 acres = 3,928 hectares</b>

**Namkham****2006-2007 Season**

No	Village	Total acres opium grown	Total acres destroyed
1	PS	Over 500	-
2	SK	Over 60	-
3	TG	30	-
5	NSR	10	-
6	MW	30	-
7	MS	20	-
8	NS	10	-
9	MP	30	over 1 acre
10	TH	10	-
11	SK	Over 30	-
12	WLu	10	-
13	KK	15	-
14	PY	7	-
15	Upper ST and Lower ST	30	-
16	PP	20	-
	<b>Total</b>	<b>812 acres = 329 hectares</b>	<b>Over 1 acre =0.4 hectares</b>

### Namkham 2007-2008 Season

No	Village	Total acres opium grown	Total acres destroyed
1	PS	700	-
2	SK	Over 80	-
3	TG	60	-
5	NSR	Over 40	-
6	MW	50	-
7	MS	Over 30	-
8	NS	Over 15	-
9	MP	Over 50	-
10	TH	Over 25	-
11	SK	50	-
12	WLu	Over 20	-
13	KK	20	-
14	PY	15	-
15	Upper ST and Lower ST	40	-
16	PP	30	-
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,225 = 496 hectares</b>	<b>-</b>



### Namkham 2008-2009 Season

No	Village	Total acres opium grown	Total acres destroyed
1	PS	Over 800	-
2	SK	100	-
3	TG	80	-
5	NSR	60	-
6	MW	Over 70	-
7	MS	Over 60	-
8	NS	30	-
9	MP	60	10
10	TH	Over 40	-
11	SK	60	-
12	WLu	30	-
13	KK	30	-
14	PY	15	-
15	Upper ST and Lower ST	Over 50	-
16	PP	50	-
	<b>Total</b>	<b>Over 1,535 = 621 hectares</b>	<b>10 acres =4 hectares</b>

[illegible]

၅၆:ပြည်နယ်(မြောက်ပိုင်း)ရဲတပ်ဖွဲ့

၂၀၀၆-၂၀၀၇ ခုနှစ် ဘဏ်စာချုပ်ချုပ်ချယ်မှု အစီရင်ခံစာ

စဉ်	မြို့နယ်	ကျေးရွာ	မြေပုံညွှန်း	ဗျက်ဆီးသည့်နေ့	ဘိန်းခင်းဗျက်ဆီးသည့်အဖွဲ့အစည်း	ဆေးကုသမှု
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၉ မန့်တုံ

၁၀ မိုင်ဇော်

၁၁ နမ့်ခမ်း

၁၂ တန့်ယန်း

၁၃ တန့်ယန်း

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၁၆ မန့်တုံ

၁၇ တန့်ယန်း

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၁၉ ကွတ်ခိုင်

စဉ်	မြို့နယ်	ကျေးရွာ	မြေပုံညွှန်း	ဗျက်ဆီးသည့်နေ့
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၂၁	နမ့်ခမ်း	ပန်ရွှေ	O-၄၇၁၃၆၂	၂၂. ၁၁. ၀၆

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စဉ်	မြို့နယ်	ကျေးရွာ	မြေပုံညွှန်း
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၃၉	မန့်တုံ	မန့်ပြန်	O-၂
၄၀	မန့်တုံ	မန့်ပြန်	T-၀
၄၁	မန့်တုံ	မန့်ပြန်	T-၀
၄၂	မိုင်ဇော်	မန့်ပြန်	H-၀
၄၃	နမ့်ခမ်း	မန့်ပူး	O-၀
၄၄	တန့်ယန်း	လွယ်ဆေး	D-၂
၄၅	တန့်ယန်း	လွယ်ဆေး	D-၂
၄၆	တန့်ယန်း	လွယ်ဆေး	D-၂
၄၇	တန့်ယန်း	လွယ်ဆေး	T-၂
၄၈	ကွတ်ခိုင်	နမ့်ခမ်း	E-၂
၄၉	မန့်တုံ	မန့်ဟူး	
၅၀	မိုးမိတ်	ဟင်းခတ်	S-၆
၅၁	တန့်ယန်း	ဟင်းခတ်	D-၂
၅၂	နမ့်ခမ်း	ဟူးမန်	S-၂
၅၃	တန့်ယန်း	နောင်ဖား	J-၂



၁

တိုင်းရင်း	စုစုပေါင်း	နရခသို့ပေးပို့သည့်
ကဏ္ဍ	ကဏ္ဍ	ကနဏ္ဍ

၂

တိုင်းရင်း	ဆောင်ရွက်ချက်	စုစုပေါင်း	နရခသို့ပေးပို့သည့်
သည့်အဖွဲ့အစည်း	တွဲရှိကဏ္ဍ	ကဏ္ဍ	ကနဏ္ဍ
တပ်/ရဲစုပေါင်း	၀. ၂၅	၀. ၂၅	၀. ၂၅ ဦး ၄/၂၇၁၇၀
တပ်/ရဲစုပေါင်း	၃. ၂၅	၃. ၂၅	၃. ၂၅ ဦး ၄/၃၀၁၀၀

၃

ဗိုလ်ချုပ်	ချက်ဆုံးသည့်နေ့	တိုင်းရင်း	ဆောင်ရွက်ချက်	စုစုပေါင်း	နရခသို့ပေးပို့သည့်
		သည့်အဖွဲ့အစည်း	တွဲရှိကဏ္ဍ	ကဏ္ဍ	ကနဏ္ဍ
၂၃၄၂၆	၂၃. ၁၁. ၀၆	တပ်/ရဲစုပေါင်း	၂. ၂	၂. ၂	၂. ၂၅ ဦး ၄/၁၁၁၇၀
၂၁၁၂၇	၂၁. ၁၁. ၀၆	တပ်/ရဲစုပေါင်း	၂၆. ၇	၂၆. ၇	၂၆. ၇၅ ဦး ၄/၁၁၁၇၀
၂၃၁၂၉	၂၃. ၁၁. ၀၆	တပ်/ရဲစုပေါင်း	၆၄	၆၄	၆၄၅၅ ဦး ၄/၁၁၁၇၀
၆၇၈၈၅	၂၇. ၁၁. ၀၆	တပ်/ရဲစုပေါင်း	၃. ၅	၃. ၅	၃. ၅၅ ဦး ၄/၁၁၁၇၀
၀၁၉၂၇	၁၁. ၁၁. ၀၆	တပ်/ရဲစုပေါင်း	၃. ၇	၃. ၇	၃. ၇၅ ဦး ၄/၁၁၁၇၀
၆၇၈၂၂	၁၅. ၁၂. ၀၆	တပ်/ရဲစုပေါင်း	၂	၂	၂၆၀ ဦး ၄/၁၆၁၇၀
၃၆၀၆၄	၉. ၁၂. ၀၆	တပ်/ရဲစုပေါင်း	၂	၂	၂၁ ဦး ၄/၀၅၁၃၀
၆၉၀၇၃	၁၈. ၁၂. ၀၆	တပ်/ရဲစုပေါင်း	၁၀	၁၀	၁၀၂ ဦး ၄/၂၁၁၇၅
၇၃၀၇၆	၁၉. ၁၂. ၀၆	တပ်/ရဲစုပေါင်း	၃	၃	၃၂ ဦး ၄/၂၇၀၉၅
၂၈၂၇၈	၂၀. ၁၂. ၀၆	တပ်/ရဲစုပေါင်း	၆	၆	၆၂ ဦး ၄/၂၇၀၉၅
၂၇၅၇၅	၂၁. ၁၂. ၀၇	တပ်/ရဲစုပေါင်း	၅	၅	၅၂ ဦး ၄/၂၇၀၉၅
၂၇၆၆၈	၂၇. ၁၂. ၀၆	တပ်/ရဲစုပေါင်း	၃. ၅	၃. ၅	၃. ၅၅ ဦး ၄/၂၇၁၂၅
	၂၈. ၁၂. ၀၆	တပ်/ရဲစုပေါင်း	၃. ၀၅	၃. ၀၅	၃. ၀၅ ဦး ၄/၀၂၁၃၀
၆၇၅၂၂	၃၁. ၁၂. ၀၆	တပ်/ရဲစုပေါင်း	၁. ၈	၁. ၈	၁. ၈၅ ဦး ၄/၀၄၁၄၀
၃၁၉၂၂	၂၇. ၁၂. ၀၆	တပ်/ရဲစုပေါင်း	၃	၃	၃၅ ဦး ၄/၀၇၁၄၅
၂၅၆၉၅	၃. ၁. ၀၇	တပ်/ရဲစုပေါင်း	၁. ၅	၁. ၅	၁. ၅၅ ဦး ၄/၀၇၁၄၅
၂၇၄၂၄၇	၈. ၁. ၀၇	တပ်/ရဲစုပေါင်း	၅	၅	၅၂ ဦး ၄/၁၁၁၇၀
၆၆:			၁၄၅. ၉၅	၁၄၆	

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## **Palaung Women's Organization**

*PWO believes that recognizing women's rights and women's participation at different political and social levels is one of the processes of building a just society.*

### **Organizational Profile**

The Palaung Women's Organisation (PWO) was established in 2000 in response to the dearth of women actively participating within other Palaung organizations. Cultural factors determined that men had greater access to training, better English language and computer skills, greater self-confidence and more leadership opportunities.

PWO was formed with the intention of educating and empowering women so that they could develop and strengthen their own self-determination and achieve equality of participation.

### **Mission**

PWO is an organization to empower and advance the social status of Palaung women towards equality, peace and a just society.

### **Objectives**

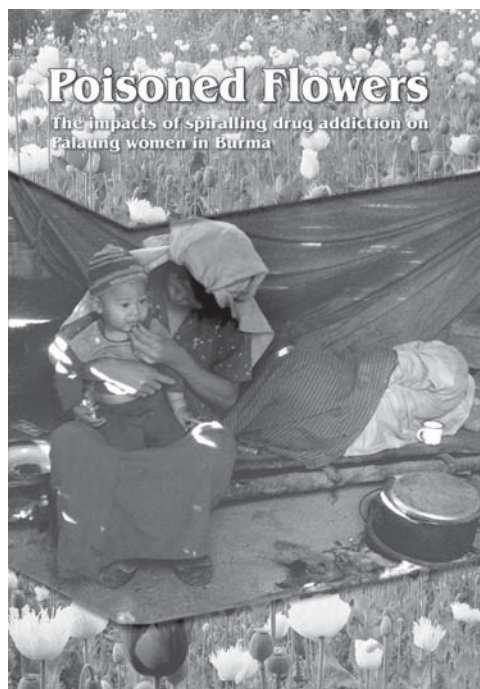
- To develop the status of Palaung women and encourage more female participation at all decision making levels.
- To maintain the literacy and culture of Palaung people.
- To participate in the democratic, peaceful and human rights movement for Burma.
- To advance and promote gender equality and women's rights by co-operating with other women's organizations.

### **Contact**

P.O Box 98  
63110, Tak  
Mae Sot, Thailand

### **E-Mail**

[pwotaang@gmail.com](mailto:pwotaang@gmail.com)



This report follows our 2006 report *Poisoned Flowers* which examined the devastating impacts of spiralling drug addiction on women in Palaung areas of Burma. It can be found at [www.womenofburma.org](http://www.womenofburma.org)



***“In our area, if we don’t marry a drug addict, we have no one to get married with because everyone is a drug addict here. The only men who aren’t using drugs are the monks who stay in the monastery.” E Kaw, Namkham Township***

