

No Quick Fix

Curbing Opium Poppy Cultivation in Afghanistan

December 2006



In Afghanistan, five years after the fall of the Taliban, the economy remains hooked on opium. In September, the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) confirmed what leading officials had been warning for some time: from 2005 to 2006, opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan increased a staggering 59 percent, accounting for an estimated 92 percent of the world market.¹ In testimony before the U.S. Congress, the Executive Director of UNODC, Antonio Maria Costa, bluntly delivered his assessment of the crisis:

“Opium has become Afghanistan’s largest employer, income-generator and source of capital—as well as its biggest export: in simple words, Afghanistan is a narco-economy, with over half of its national income due to drugs. Now Afghanistan is in danger of becoming a narco-state, where drugs determine power, rot society and fund terrorism. There is no rule of law in Afghanistan: in the south the insurgents’ bullets rule, while everywhere else is the rule of the bribe. Last December President Karzai warned: either Afghanistan destroys opium or opium will destroy Afghanistan. We are coming dangerously close to this second option.”²

While this account is sobering, it is not particularly surprising. And neither was the response from policymakers. Immediately, U.S. officials called for a more aggressive approach to the problem. As US Representative Jim Kolbe, a leading member of the House Appropriations Committee, put it:

“What are we doing to pressure the Afghan government to participate more in the eradication programs: specifically, to have an aerial eradication program as a backup?”³

Indeed, under pressure from the international community, the Government of Afghanistan seems to be softening its resistance to aerial eradication, possibly looking at it as a “last resort”.⁴ Now, as in the past, the desire for rapid reductions in illicit crop cultivation is leading to the demand for and adoption of heavy-handed, quick fix strategies. Such

Recommendations

1. The Government of Afghanistan, with donor support, must apply a comprehensive, pro-poor approach to reduce opium poppy cultivation, including sustained efforts to expand access to markets, land, and credit and diversify on-, off-, and non-farm income. Counter-narcotics should be mainstreamed in development programs and in the relevant institutions of the state, and poor communities must be enabled to participate effectively in the development process.

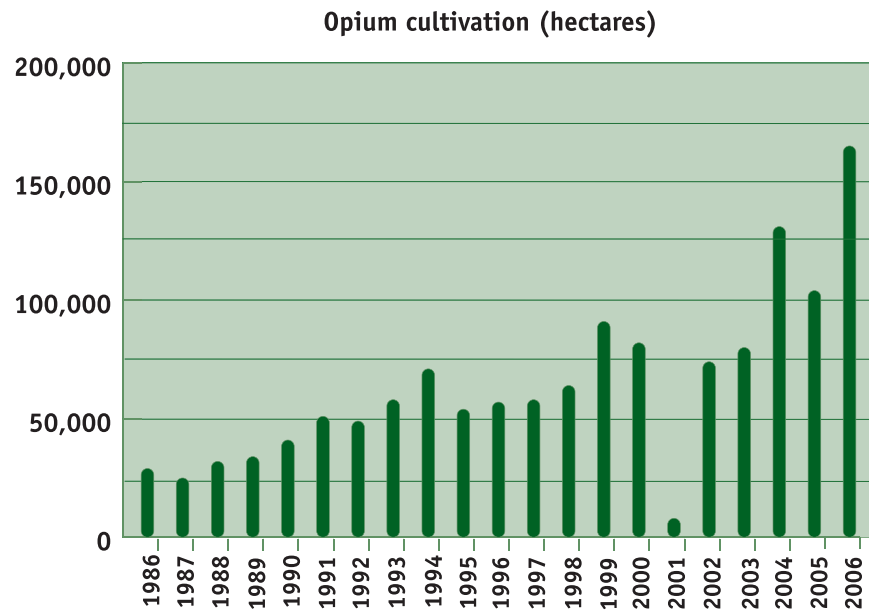
2. The Government of Afghanistan, with support from the international community, must strengthen police and judicial institutions while promoting the rule of law and, more generally, transparent, participatory and accountable governance. Government reform needs to be accompanied by the prosecution of not only refiners and traffickers but also corrupt officials. All three are the real beneficiaries of the lucrative opium trade and the most likely to undermine efforts to build a strong state.

3. Conditions on development assistance or unrealistic elimination schedules should not be pursued. Eradication should only be implemented when the state is capable, trust in communities has been built, and poor people have access to economically attractive, legal livelihoods.

4. The international community must live up to its commitments—most recently under the Afghan Compact—and provide strong and consistent support to the Government of Afghanistan and Afghan civil society through multi-year funding of broad-based economic development and state-building. The first measure of success for programs dedicated to fostering alternatives to opium poppy cultivation must be the quality of life of poor farmers and their families.

Afghanistan's Opium Economy

Figure 1



Source: UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2006, p.3.

The national opium economy and corresponding counter-narcotics efforts in Afghanistan should not be judged by annual upswings or downswings. As can be seen clearly in the bar graph, in the last twenty years, Afghanistan has steadily grown from a relatively small-time opium supplier to being virtually the world's sole provider. This thriving opium economy was a long time in the making and will require time and resources to dismantle and replace. Pointing to the dramatic decline in area under cultivation in 2001, some are under the illusion that the Taliban were especially effective in addressing the opium problem; yet the Taliban's ban on cultivation in areas under their control set the stage for the subsequent surge.⁵ Shortages in supply led to dramatic increases in farm-gate prices, thereby increasing incentives for people to grow opium poppy, and the absence of crops led to a humanitarian disaster,⁶ including dramatic increases in household debt.⁷ In addition, the Taliban ban contributed to opium poppy's spread to previously opium-free areas.⁸

short-term strategies, however—including outright bans, forced eradication and aerial spraying—do not address the drivers behind the planting of opium poppy and have often proven to be ineffective, expensive and even counterproductive. The centrality of opium to the national economy, as well as to many rural livelihoods, favors restraint.

If there is one lesson that the decades of counter-narcotics and development efforts in Afghanistan and elsewhere have taught, it is that tackling Afghanistan's opium economy will require consistent and comprehensive support, including a robust commitment to strengthening the Afghan state and promoting the kind of sustainable rural development that offers real alternatives to millions of poor families. As international attention focuses on reining in Afghanistan's burgeoning opium and heroin industries, desires for a quick fix must be put aside.

Background

Across the globe, illicit drug crops are cultivated in areas that have poor soil, limited irrigation and constrained access to agricultural inputs. These areas are characterized by their proximity to international borders, difficult terrain,

and poor physical infrastructure. In addition, government administration, provision of social services such as education, health and welfare, and initiatives aimed at promoting economic development are typically weak to nonexistent. Often, the state's economic policies fail to penetrate, markets are fragmented, and the price of food items, basic commodities and agricultural inputs are considerably higher than in neighboring regions. As well, the absence of the rule of law and the potential for violence suppress long-term investment by the public and private sector. The cumulative impact of this socio-economic, political, and administrative isolation is that many households in these areas pursue livelihood strategies that are largely independent of both the nation state and the national economy, including illicit crop cultivation.

Compounded by decades of war, nowhere do the above conditions apply as much as they do in Afghanistan. Afghanistan ranks in the bottom six countries in the world in human development⁹ and remains on the top ten list of fragile states.¹⁰ Under these conditions, Afghanistan's opium economy has boomed. In fact, Afghanistan's economic dependency on opium is unparalleled. Activities related to opium production absorb a major proportion

of the workforce (roughly 3 million farmers and day laborers¹¹, in addition to landowners and traders, or 13 percent of the national population)¹² and account for around one-third of the country's estimated gross domestic product (GDP).¹³ And the dependence on opium for many local economies, communities, and households is even greater. According to the World Bank, "Afghanistan's drug economy...constitutes an enormous injection of income into Afghanistan's battered rural economy...[A]n abrupt shrinkage of the opium economy or falling opium prices without new means of livelihood would significantly worsen rural poverty."¹⁴

"Afghanistan produces good apples and once exported them to many countries. Now in the markets we see apples from Pakistan that are very cheap and have improved quality. We can't sell our apples for this price. The money won't pay for the fertilizer... We need help from our government. If this continues, the farmer will burn his orchard and grow opium."¹⁷

—Elder from Logar Province

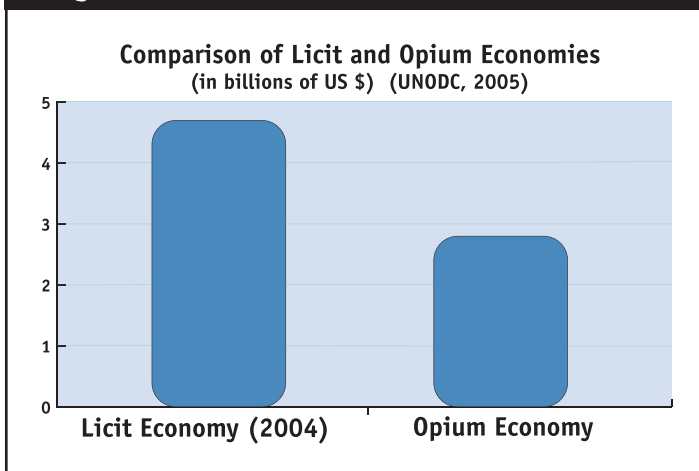
Legal Livelihoods: How can they be built and sustained?

As stated above, many rural communities in Afghanistan depend heavily on opium cultivation. The (legal) rural economy is vastly underdeveloped, with households dependent on farm and off-farm activities to make ends meet in the face of local 'taxes', drought and insecurity. On farm activities are hampered by a lack of access to markets and agricultural inputs like land, water and credit. Some communities find it impossible to compete with imported wheat, vegetables and fruit. Off-farm opportunities are also limited locally, and many men are increasingly forced to travel to larger cities and other countries for seasonal labor.

Within this environment, opium thrives. Its high profits, relatively easy transport, and storage capability put it at a major advantage over other products. As the profits can be vastly superior to other crops, those willing to plant opium poppy have much greater access to land and credit. A labor-intensive crop, it also provides opportunities to hundreds of thousands of migrant workers. Despite great social and religious opposition¹⁸, many farmers faced with immediate survival needs and an unknown future, choose to grow opium. As part of the 2006 UNODC survey, farmers were asked why they were currently growing opium. The answers varied somewhat but 90 percent mentioned economic reasons. Only 2 percent of these same farmers stated that they would prefer opium to an alternative source of income.¹⁹

Calls for immediate bans or eradication in such an environment are potentially devastating to poor families in rural Afghanistan. In 2005, data

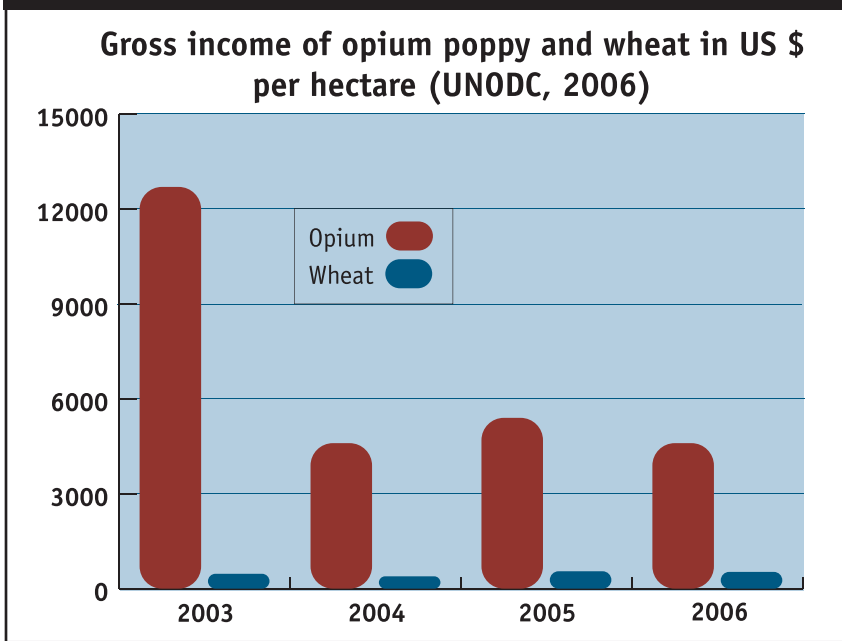
Figure 2



Longstanding efforts to develop legal livelihoods for Afghans engaged in opium poppy cultivation have a checkered past.¹⁵ After more than a decade and a half of implementing discrete projects aimed at reducing opium poppy cultivation, none have delivered the desired drug control and development outcome.¹⁶ Without the enabling environment necessary to establish the institutions for formal governance and civil society, as well as promote lawful economic growth, these interventions were destined, at best, to have limited impact and, more likely, to fail.

This briefing paper seeks to go beyond the headlines and provide a more nuanced analysis of Afghanistan's opium economy and ways to curb it. Much can be learned from current data and the cumulative experience of counter-narcotics efforts in Afghanistan and other source countries over the past 35 years.

Figure 3



from the eastern Province of Nangarhar indicate as much as a 70 percent decline in some local economies due to a cultivation ban.²⁰ The impacts of such bans are felt by the lowest rung in the opium economy—the families of farmers and sharecroppers. Often compounded by poppy-related debts, families are left to choose between out-migration or risking opium, the only crop that can get them out of their precarious financial situation.

“[Afghanistan is] an environment where choices for legal income are limited... If [households] refrain from planting opium poppy and plant wheat, their family will go hungry; if they do plant opium poppy and it is destroyed, their family will also go hungry. In this context the opportunity cost of opium poppy cultivation is very low even with the risk of eradication.”²¹

[Mansfeld and Pain]

Afghanistan’s traditional system of credit, *Salaam*, allows farmers to borrow money but on terms that are skewed heavily in favor of creditors. Farmers must promise a large percentage of future crop yields in return for a loan. A poor harvest—due to drought, disease or eradication—makes it impossible for a farmer to make good on the loan. The only way out is either to sell off assets or find higher profit activities. Common results in Afghanistan include abandoning school and health services, migration to other areas in search of employment opportunities, selling off livestock and land, and growing

opium.²² Most alarmingly, there are reports every year of farmers forced to sell off their daughters (see text box, below).²³

The role opium poppy plays in rural life cannot be eliminated through discrete projects that seek to ensure some minimum level of income. There is no magic bullet that will compensate farmers for the loss of a relatively lucrative livelihood. While a “cash-for-work” or crop replacement program, with or without the threat of eradication, might compensate for forgoing opium poppy cultivation for a period of time, what happens when the cash is no longer forthcoming or the new crop cannot sustain a family?

The planting of opium poppy begins anew.

Although its strong economic development in recent decades makes it a very different context from Afghanistan, Thailand is considered the most successful example of eliminating poppy and opium production, as well as their domestic use; today the country is virtually opium free. Beginning in 1969, the Thai government sought

The High Price of Indebtedness in Rural Afghanistan

Some of the worst situations of indebtedness have come about as a result of forced eradication, as occurred with the bans imposed by the Taliban, in 2001, and in Nangarhar Province, in 2005:

“Faced with the ban [imposed by the Taliban], farmers were unable to repay in opium the advance payments that they had received on their crop. Traders swiftly converted these opium denominated debts into cash at the prevailing market price of US\$ 500 per kilogramme. For these farmers an advance payment of just US \$50, agreed prior to the planting season of 2000/01, in return for two kilograms of opium at harvest time had suddenly become a significant debt of US \$1,000.”²⁴

Farmers in Nangarhar Province reported that “the forced loss of their poppy crop left them unable to repay debts to drug traffickers who lent them money to buy seeds. In desperation, they have had to turn to a traditional Afghan practice in which a family can pay off its debt by handing over a daughter to a relative of the creditor. Usually, there is a marriage ceremony for the sake of propriety—but the woman is treated as property.”²⁵



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to integrate highland communities into national life and eventually into development planning, which led to sustained economic development initiatives over the next three decades. Early on, the lesson was learned that agricultural alternatives were in and of themselves insufficient. Increasing emphasis was put on the provision of roads, electricity, water supply facilities, health clinics, and schools. This led to overall improvements in the quality of life and increased opportunities for off-farm employment and income-generating activities.²⁶

After implementing some eradication in the early years, which generated considerable resistance, the Thai Government waited until more than a decade of development efforts had produced sufficient economic alternatives to opium poppy cultivation before resuming eradication efforts.²⁷ Law enforcement also played a role as a negative incentive: households in one Thai study cited fear of arrest as one of the main reasons they abandoned opium poppy cultivation, but again, this was instituted only after viable alternatives existed.²⁸ Over time, Thailand's poppy cultivation—and the accompanying need for eradication—slowed and then practically ceased altogether.

A participatory approach was also essential to Thailand's success. Evaluations underscore the importance of securing the involvement of the target community in project design, implemen-

tation and monitoring: "Acquiescence by the villagers gave way to acceptance, then agreement," as empowering local communities became a government priority.²⁹ Keys to success included: promoting new organizations such as "village communities, youth groups, women's groups, credit funds and rice banks;" treating villagers as intellectual equals and recognizing their expertise from working and living in the region; building fa-

miliarity with and respect for the communities; involving local communities in project monitoring, evaluation and problem solving; and promoting the development of local leadership.³⁰ In short, the active involvement of the people in the development process was crucial. Such a participatory approach necessitates accepting poor, small-scale drug crop farmers as partners in development, rather than as criminals.

As with Thailand, the multi-sectoral nature of the current task in Afghanistan suggests an approach that looks more like a transformation of the rural economy and rural institutions than alternative development projects per se. No single project can address the myriad motivations and factors that influence illicit drug crop cultivation, even at a local level.

Lesson: *Successful alternative livelihood strategies must go beyond short-term, single sector initiatives. Investments in infrastructure and agricultural inputs alone are often necessary, but not sufficient. A comprehensive development approach, with a particular focus on integrating remote areas, provides the best model to date of a sustainable strategy to reduce both poverty and drug crop cultivation. For the majority of farmers, diversification of on-, off-, and non-farm income, as well as better access to assets such as land and credit, will be essential for them to make a sustainable shift to legitimate liveli-*



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The Role of the State: Will It Deliver?

The weakness of the Afghan state is one of the main factors behind the country's opium problem. Without a strong central government—one that can provide security, establish accountable law and order, rein in warlords and corrupt officials, and win the people's trust—meaningful reductions in opium poppy cultivation are unlikely. Likewise, the thriving opium economy undermines the government's authority and breeds insecurity, compromising efforts to promote economic development, facilitating corruption, and contributing to ordinary Af-

ghans' increasing alienation and frustration.³²

Detailed data related to the 2006 opium harvest highlights the direct relationships between weak governance, insecurity, and the illicit economy. Figure 4 shows opium cultivation over the past five years in Afghanistan's six regions. The Southern region accounts for both the vast majority of opium cultivation, as well as the significant increase in 2006 (Helmand province alone accounted for 70 percent of the increase). In fact, cultivation only increased by roughly 5 percent in Afghanistan's five other regions.³³

These striking differences reveal the linkages between opium cultivation and the broader political and economic context. The region with the greatest cultivation is that with the lowest degree of state presence—where communities face the greatest insecurity and opium traffickers not only prosper, but find common cause with insurgents in opposing the government. A recent analysis carried out by the U.S. and NATO indicates that local tribes in parts of Helmand were siding with the Taliban in frustration over poor local governance.³⁴ Farmers in this region have also reported being encouraged or even threatened to cultivate opium poppy by elements opposed to the Afghan Government.³⁵

hoods. Successful strategies also must involve poor communities as central players in the development process.

Recommendation: The Government of Afghanistan, with donor support, must apply a comprehensive, pro-poor approach to reduce opium poppy cultivation, including sustained efforts to expand access to markets, land, and credit and diversify on-, off-, and non-farm income. Counter-narcotics should be mainstreamed in development programs and in the relevant institutions of the state, and poor communities must be enabled to participate effectively in the development process.

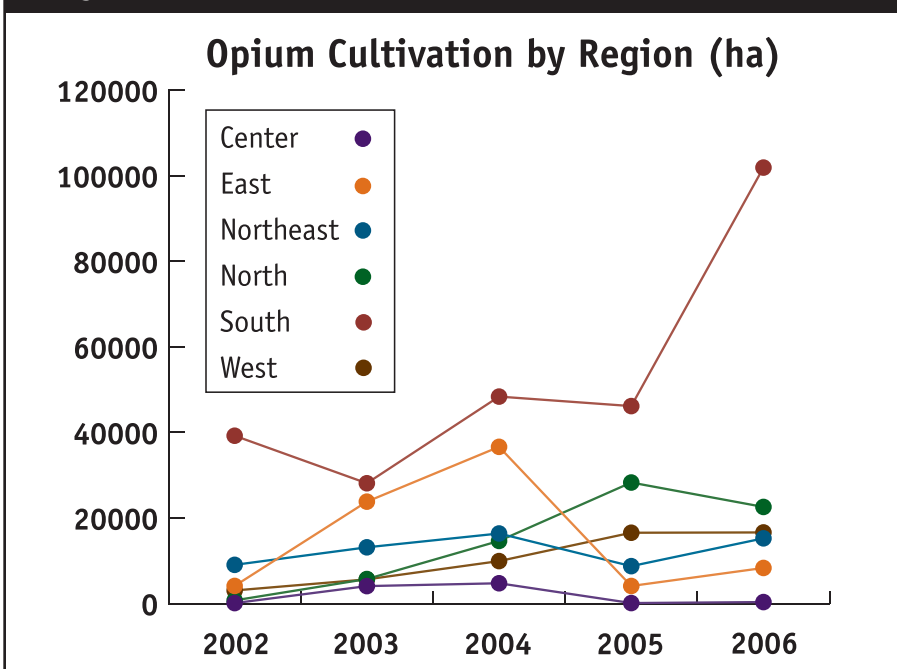
"People are starting to wonder about this Government. At least there was law and order under the Taliban."³⁰

—Elder from Ghazni

"At no time since the fall of the Taliban regime in late 2001 have the prospects for security in Afghanistan been more bleak."³¹

—Tom Koenigs, Special Representative to the UN Secretary General, 26 July 2006

Figure 4



Such variation can be found within regions as well. In 2005, officials in Nangarhar Province imposed an opium ban throughout the province, and cultivation was minimal. In areas close to the provincial capital, where access to markets and other sources of income were greater, farmers and agricultural workers realized losses but were able to adapt. In more remote areas, local economies plummeted (by 70 percent in some areas). In 2006, the ban continued and, in areas around the capital, people were able to invest in other economic

beyond presence, a state that serves and answers to the people, supports the expansion of (licit) economic opportunities, and enforces law and order (i.e. cracks down on those profiting from the illicit economy) is key. These characteristics of good governance are sorely missing in present-day Afghanistan. An elder from Kunar Province captured the sentiments of far too many rural Afghans, “[We] don’t trust any of the people in government offices.”³⁸

Lesson: *Efforts to strengthen rural economic development, necessary for any transition from opium poppy cultivation, will fail without a state that is able to assert control and govern responsibly. Counter-narcotics efforts that alienate communities and weaken the state could set Afghanistan back even further.*

Recommendation: **The Government of Afghanistan, with support from the international community, must strengthen police and judicial institutions while promoting the rule of law and, more generally, transparent, participatory and accountable governance. Government reform needs to be accompanied by the prosecution of not only refiners and traffickers but also corrupt officials. All three are the real beneficiaries of the lucrative opium trade and the most likely to undermine efforts to build a strong state.**

A Narco-fueled Insurgency?

There are many ways in which the opium economy promotes insecurity. Although the majority of Taliban funding is believed to come from international sources, drug revenue is an additional source of funding. Potentially more dangerous, however, is the Taliban’s ability to tap into rural communities’ growing discontent with the current Afghan administration. If counter-narcotics strategies are not carefully thought out, they could exacerbate this already precarious situation.

“Eradication drives the local population into the hands of regional warlords...strengthening the centrifugal forces that historically have weakened Afghanistan as a state...in the absence of large-scale rural development, eradication is politically explosive.”³⁷

[Felbab-Brown]



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Conditionality: Arbitrary, Unrealistic and Inflexible

“The reduction in area set out in the Drug Control Action Plans were highly arbitrary. A time limit of four years was adopted with zero production as the end result. A series of steps were written in the document with no consideration given to what might be needed to enable farmers to meet these goals. No such goals will be achieved unless they represent a practical possibility to the households who must reduce their poppy area. How the project actions will impact on the economy of the various poppy producing household groups should be thought-through so that project activities support the ways in which these households can respond positively to any poppy reduction goal”³⁹

[UNODC]

Attaching conditions to development assistance has long been a favored response to illicit drug crop cultivation in Latin America. It also has a history in Afghanistan. With this past year’s surge in production, the temptation to get tough on Afghan farmers is only growing, as evidenced by one Congressional representative’s remarks during a recent hearing on Capitol Hill:

“The only reason why a farmer would sign on to alternative development is that there was a mandatory spraying program in place that said to the farmer, you will lose all of your profits if you do not...take alternative development money.”⁴⁰

Yet the premise that farmers need to be strong-

armed to abandon opium cultivation is off-base. In a recent survey, cited above, only 2 percent of Afghan respondents said they would continue growing opium poppy if viable alternatives were available to them.⁴¹ In other words, the vast majority would prefer to grow other crops, but, without viable alternative livelihoods in place, they grow poppy. There is little evidence that conditionality works.⁴² All too often, conditionality has been attached to short-term, easy-to-deliver interventions that have not yielded lasting change in people’s living conditions. Achieving impact requires a longer time frame than conditionality-based programs typically allow.

Moreover, conditionality-based approaches require all farmers to reduce illicit cultivation at the same pace, regardless of the degree to which they are dependent on the crop for their livelihood or the scale and nature of the assistance provided. One review of conditionality-based efforts in Afghanistan found that: “Poppy conditionality clauses which are not based on livelihood analyses and are not based on the reality of the most opium dependent socio-economic groups cause more harm than good. They are observed in breach.”⁴³

Think Twice

In Afghanistan and elsewhere, conditionality, especially when combined with aggressive eradication timetables, has been accompanied by a deterioration in relationships between implementing agencies and local communities.⁴⁴ There are examples of Afghan communities threatening to grow poppy if promised development assistance is not forthcoming, or of neighboring communities starting to grow poppy to attract assistance.⁴⁵

In Afghanistan, the conditions that led to the failure of past elimination schedules still prevail. The Afghan state is weak, and many communities do not regard it as legitimate, nor put much stake in its future. Security in many of the rural areas in which opium poppy is cultivated continues to be a severe problem, and the threat of enforcement is currently limited. More needs to be done to establish trust between the state and communities.

Lesson: *Making assistance contingent on reductions in opium poppy cultivation at this stage—*

Should Afghanistan Resort to Aerial Eradication?

As we expressed in our March 2005 policy brief about counter-narcotics policy in Afghanistan entitled, “Too Early to Declare Success,” CARE continues to support the Afghan Government’s opposition to aerial eradication. Aerial eradication in Afghanistan would focus extensive resources on the wrong end of the value chain, i.e. the raw material, as opposed to areas where the “bang for the buck” is bigger —arresting traffickers, destroying heroin labs and removing corrupt government officials. It also risks pushing one of the most vulnerable segments of Afghan society—rural farmers and their families—even deeper into poverty and further away from the Afghan state. This is especially true in light of the fact that opium poppy is planted in valleys next to (and even inside) villages and intermixed with legitimate crops, thereby increasing spraying’s likely damage to people’s well being and playing into the hands of anti-government elements.

... tied to an arbitrary timeline, rather than first focusing on sustainable improvements in rural livelihoods—may well deter communities from engaging with government agencies or encourage those not cultivating opium poppy to do so merely to attract development assistance.

Recommendation: Conditions on development assistance or unrealistic elimination schedules should not be pursued. Eradication should only be implemented when the state is capable, trust in communities has been built, and poor people have access to economically attractive, legal livelihoods.



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Competing Global Priorities: Have We Taken Our Eye Off the Ball?

In late 2001, with the formation of Afghanistan’s Interim Administration and subsequently, at the 2002 Ministerial Pledging Conference in Tokyo, when donors committed to providing substantial amounts of assistance, it was clear that a traditional approach to curbing opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan—outright bans and forced eradication of opium poppy combined with short-term, single sector alternative development interventions—would not be appropriate in light of the nature and scale of the problem.

The U.S. Government rightly supported an approach emphasizing the integration of efforts to reduce opium poppy cultivation with broader reconstruction and development goals.⁴⁶ Yet this approach has not been sufficiently put into practice over the intervening years to the detriment of Afghanistan’s future prospects. Other priorities have pushed Afghanistan to the side and undercut longer-term, broader reconstruction and development strategies. Moreover, political pressure in Kabul and western capitals following the dramatic increase in opium poppy cultivation between 2003 and 2004 and again, this year, means that the demand for rapid results—and for more “sticks”—is beginning to win out over the best of early intentions and approaches that will ultimately prove more effective and sustainable.

As the former Afghan Finance Minister, Ashraf Ghani wrote in 2004:

“[The international community] believes that urgent action is essential. But lessons from other nations show that today’s quick wins can sow the seeds of future poppy harvests. Afghanistan’s war on drugs will not be won quickly—nor can it be won without economic growth and political stability. Crop destruction “victories” will prove pyrrhic if Afghan farmers cannot find other ways to make a living and do not understand why drugs threaten their future.”⁴⁷

Recommendation: The international community must live up to its commitments—most recently under the Afghan Compact—and provide strong and consistent support to the Government of Afghanistan and Afghan civil society through multi-year funding of broad-based economic development and state-building. The first measure of success for programs dedicated to fostering alternatives to opium poppy cultivation must be the quality of life of poor farmers and their families.

Notes:

- 1 U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2006. October 2006. p.6
- 2 Costa, Antonio Maria, *The Afghanistan Opium Situation*. Submitted as written testimony to the House International Relations Committee Hearing, September 20, 2006. p.2
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- 8 Fitzherbert, Anthony, "FAO/WFP/NAAH/MRRD Crop Output Assessment Mission. May 5th to May 20th 2003", 2003. As cited in Favre, Raphy. Exploring the Roots of Opium and Illicit Economy In Afghanistan. November 2005.
- 9 United Nations Development Program. **Afghanistan: A Country on the Move**, March 2005, p. 5. www.undp.org/af/home/afg_on_the_move.pdf
- 10 Failed State Index 2006. See www.foreignpolicy.com or <http://www.fundforpeace.org/programs/fsi/fsindex2006.php>.
- 11 Opium is a labor-intensive crop estimated to require over five times as many man working days as wheat (350 man days per hectare for opium vs. 65 man days per hectare for wheat). This information was taken from Favre 2005 based on UNODC 1999 and Fitzherbert, 2003.
- 12 Many traders previously worked with legal crops and livestock but markets for these, lawful commodities have been interrupted by conflict and drought. As such, traders are key supporters of the opium economy and, along with local commanders, have encouraged the drug trade. Traders are also credited for contributing to the rapid spread of opium production across Afghanistan given their role in delivering quality seeds and incentives to farmers in numerous provinces. For more information on the role of traders, see Pain, Adam. *Opium Trading Systems in Helmand and Ghor*. Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit. January 2006.
- 13 UNODC, **Afghanistan Opium Survey 2006**. October, 2006, p.1.
- 14 Rogers, Paul. **The Afghan Summer of War. International Security Monthly Briefing**. Oxford Research Group. September 2006. <http://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/publications/paulrogers/Sept06.htm>. No other country comes close to such dependency. For comparative data, see Rubin, Barnett. *Road to Ruin: Afghanistan's Booming Opium Industry* (Center for American Progress and Center on International Cooperation), October 7, 2004, p. 8.
- 15 *Afghanistan—State Building, Sustaining Growth and Reducing Poverty* (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, February 2005), p.118-119.
- 16 'It is a disturbing fact that as yet there is insufficient evidence to state positively that the programme of alternative development had made any reduction to opium production... Projects undertaken in the provinces have been scattered and cannot be linked to any specific reduction.' UNDCP, **Assessment Strategy and Programming Mission to Afghanistan**, May-July 1995, p. 23-24. 'Opium poppy reduction was significantly reduced in all project target districts in the 1999-2000 winter season, particularly in Qandahar. However, it is the severe drought in these areas which has been the major influence on the fall in planted area and yield.' Sloane, Peter. 2000, p.3. For a detailed review of the experience of Alternative Development in Afghanistan in the 1990s see '**Alternative Development in Afghanistan: the Failure of Quid Pro Quo**'. A Paper prepared for the International Conference on Alternative Development in drug control and cooperation, Faldafing, 7-12 January 2002.
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- 19 UNODC, **Afghanistan Opium Survey 2006**. October 2006, p.8.
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- 21 Mansfield, David and Adam Pain, *Opium Poppy Cultivation: How to raise risk when there is nothing to lose*. Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit. August, 2006. p. 7
- 22 *Downward Spiral: Banning Opium in Afghanistan and*

- Burma, Drugs and Conflict Debate Papers, no. 12*, The Transnational Institute, June 2005, p. 3. Concerning farmers further reliance on opium cultivation after a crop has been eradicated, see: Mansfield, David and Adam Pain, *Opium Poppy Cultivation: How to raise risk when there is nothing to lose*. Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit. August, 2006. p.2
- 23 Mansfield, David. **Exploring the ‘Shades of Grey’: An Assessment of the Factors Influencing Decisions to Cultivate Opium Poppy in 2005/06**. A report for the Afghan Drugs Inter Departmental Unit of the UK Government. P. 1.
- 24 Huggler, Justin, **“Opium Farmers Sell Daughters to Cover Debts to Traffickers.”** *The Independent*. October 3, 2005. http://news.independent.co.uk/world/middle_east/article316683.ece
- 25 Renard, Ronald D. **Opium Reduction in Thailand 1970-2000** (Vienna: UN International Drug Control Program, 2001).
- 26 UNODC, **Opium Poppy Cultivation in the Golden Triangle: Lao PDR, Myanmar and Thailand**. October 2006. p.123
- 27 UNODC, **Alternative Development: A Global Thematic Evaluation**. New York, 2005. p. 14
- 28 Renard, p. 135.
- 29 Ibid., pp. 139, 140, 142, 143 and 148.
- 30 Interview conducted by Scott Braunschweig (CARE) in Kabul, July 2006.
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- 32 In some areas, the government itself is seen as a source of insecurity. See Pain, Adam. *Opium Trading Systems in Helmand and Ghor*. Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit. January 2006, p. 1 (“A common thread running through the study is the engagement of key provincial authorities in the opium economy: both interdiction and eradication measures may have contributed to these actors gaining tighter control over distribution and trade”). See also Pain, Adam. **Opium Poppy Cultivation in Kunduz and Balkh. Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit Report**. June 2006, p. 23.
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- 45 Field visit by Michael Kleinman (CARE) to Nangarhar, March 5-7, 2005 and Field visit by Scott Braunschweig (CARE) to Paktika, January 2005. Over the past few years, numerous tribal elders in the southeast have considered cultivating opium poppy. Ironically, some of this has been in response to national counter-narcotics programs. As more insecure areas with opium poppy cultivation have received—or are perceived to have received—more aid, many leaders have suggested they too should get involved.
- 46 Comments by Rand Beers, Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, U.S. Department of State, in counter-narcotics meeting in Brussels. December 10, 2001.
- 47 Ghani, Ashraf, **“Where Democracy’s Greatest Enemy Is a Flower,”** *New York Times*, 11 December 2004.



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CARE International, which first started working with Afghan communities in 1961, is a non-governmental organization committed to doing our part to end extreme poverty, defend human dignity, and advance social justice. We pursue this primarily through longer-term development, emergency response, and rehabilitation programming in a range of sectors. Many of the underlying causes of poverty and conflict in Afghanistan are beyond our own mandate and capacities to address; therefore, CARE strives to bring these causes and related community concerns to the attention of decision-makers at local, national, and international levels.

This brief is intended to put forth, after extensive research and consultation, our chief concerns about the opium economy, its integration into Afghanistan's political and economic systems, and potential counter-narcotics strategies. We have prioritized this theme because of its major impact on the Afghan people—particularly poor, rural Afghans with highly limited livelihood options—and on the future of the entire country. Getting counter-narcotics efforts right will be essential in building a peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan.

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