Drug Policy Briefing Nr. 38
October 2011

USAID's Alternative Development policy in Colombia

A critical analysis

By Ricardo Vargas Meza [1]

The Alternative Development (AD) policy of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Colombia was developed in 2000 within the context of Plan Colombia. Of the US$869 million originally allocated for the counternarcotics program, US$123.5 million went to USAID in Colombia, and US$42.5 million of the USAID funds were earmarked for alternative development programs in the country. The purpose was to create legal income and employment opportunities for small farmers through small projects. The funding was conditioned on the eradication of farmers' illicit crops and their commitment not to plant such crops again in the future.

The programme has gone through several phases. In the first (2001-2004), a crop-substitution model was used to create alternative employment opportunities based on private-sector investment. This model established a prior condition of "zero coca" in the areas of intervention. Putumayo was the pilot area for the program, which was accompanied by a military offensive in the southern part of the country. But while military action and eradication advanced in the area, the same was not true of Alternative Development.

In the second phase (2005-2008), USAID decided to change its approach, moving from a focus on crop substitution to working with communities to create a culture of legal economic practices. This was the basis

KEY POINTS

• Alternative development must not be part of a militarised security strategy, which is the predominant approach in Colombia. Instead of simply attempting to reduce the area planted with illicit crops, Alternative Development programmes should operate within the framework of a rural and regional development plan.

• Alternative Development programmes must foster social processes in which the community participates and is empowered throughout the entire project cycle, from formulation to evaluation.

• Before intervening in conflict zones, such as drug crop-growing areas or transit corridors, international cooperation agencies should carry out detailed assessments of factors such as: changes in land tenure structures as a result of the armed conflict; existence of emerging powers related to drug trafficking, paramilitaries or other armed actors; situation of legitimate community organisations (Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities).

• International cooperation agencies should analyse in depth the role of Alternative Development, examining the process of territorial control by organised criminal groups.

• The role of Alternative Development must be redefined, examining the process of territorial control by organised criminal groups and carrying out an analysis of the counterinsurgency approach and the way it links 'development and security.'

for the programs, 'More Investment for Alternative Development' ('*Más Inversión para el Desarrollo Alternativo*,' MIDAS), aimed at strengthening the productive sector, and 'Municipal Alternative Development Areas' ('*Áreas de Desarrollo Alternativo Municipal*,' ADAM), which focused on institution building and good governance. But USAID maintained the prior condition of 'zero coca' for the areas in which it intervened. In addition, USAID's concept of community as a social construct - involving processes of individualisation and incorporation of private enterprise - did not reflect the structure and customs of traditional smallholder communities in the intervention areas. The third and current phase (2009-2013) is a reformulation of the policy of phase two.

Before examining the key aspects of USAID's alternative development policy and its implementation throughout these phases, it is necessary to describe the context in which these programs were executed in Colombia. In particular it is important to note that Alternative Development as practised by USAID and the Colombia government was always guided more by security rather than development considerations.

THE URIBE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY ON ILLICIT CROPS

The Alternative Development Programme officially established during Álvaro Uribe's first term in office (2002-2006) was based on an assessment that the armed conflict was worsening, largely because armed groups had access to resources from drug trafficking. The government therefore proposed in its development plans that "the fight against terrorist, drug-trafficking and transnational organised crime groups will focus on attacking their financial structures."[2]

The focus of the National Development Plan 2002-2006, entitled "Toward a Communal State," described a symbiosis between illicit crops and insurgency, that directly affected guerrillas' power to control territory. It also located the drug problem in the areas of production, focusing on illicit crops and their relationship with the conflict. Tackling the socio-economic factors behind illicit crop production were eclipsed by actions aimed at solving the security problem. Alternative development thus became a component of President Uribe's so-called democratic security strategy.

The priority placed on the reduction of illicit crops tied Alternative Development closely not only to the agencies responsible for controlling production, but also to the Counternarcotics Police, Defence Ministry and Armed Forces. It was also placed in a context of control of trafficking (interdiction and control of money laundering and trafficking in precursor chemicals), in which other security forces, such as the Navy, and criminal investigation agencies, such as the national prosecutor's office, were also involved.

This emphasis is very different from that of international cooperation agencies, which believe Alternative Development should focus on tackling problems caused by poverty and marginalisation in certain regions. This approach sees drugs control as a tool for promoting human development and the reduction of illicit crops as the result of an integral development process.[3]

The 'democratic security' policy (military cooperation and regaining territory) implemented during President Uribe's first term combined the use of dissuasive force (traditionally in the hands of state security agencies) with Alternative Development programmes. The inclusion of Mobile Eradica-

tion Groups (*Grupos Móviles de Erradicación*, GME)[4] in Alternative Development policy is a clear signal that the main goal of the process, rather than development in itself, was to decrease the area planted with coca. The use of force and requirement of prior eradication therefore predominated, along with policies that treated producers as criminals.

During this period, there was also little Alternative Development in the areas of greatest spraying of illicit crops. Then as now, the main approach was the use of force, through forced manual eradication or aerial spraying. There was a serious imbalance between the intensse use of force and the weak provision of livelihood alternatives for communities.

President Uribe did take a step in the right direction with a proposal to establish an alternative development program that would specifically take into account the environmental problems caused by the illegal coca economy. When it was designed and structured, however, the strategy was flawed. The Forest-Warden Families Programme (*Programa de Familia Guardabosques*, PFGB) did not offer sustainable production alternatives in the poorest and most marginalised areas, because it failed to address the complex interrelationship of political, economic and environmental problems in these areas. PFGB provided only temporary relief (lasting only as long as subsidies were in effect) for the country's agrarian problems. Afterwards, the crisis of the PFGB model meant smallholders were likely to replant coca and face criminal prosecution again.

The Integral Action Coordination Centre (*Centro de Coordinación de Acción Integral*, CCAI) was created in 2004 to bring together the Colombian government agencies that implemented social and economic programmes to complement and support the military's recovery of control over territory. Social actions became part of the strategy for legitimising the Armed Forces in areas that they entered "with support from the U.S. Southern Command."[5] Between 2002 and 2006, the cost of expanding public security forces was some US$1.1 billion, not counting the equipment originally delivered for counternarcotics activities under Plan Colombia. This equipment was later used, without restrictions, for the main goals of the democratic security strategy.

In late 2006, a government evaluation of Alternative Development programmes in the previous four years concluded that linking Plan Colombia and the democratic security strategy had been successful. The Armed Forces had been modernised, had more troops on the ground, and had greater combat capacity and ability to accompany aerial eradication operations. The same policies were therefore continued to consolidate the progress made in combating illicit drug trafficking and organised crime and to reinforce the restoration of Colombia's social fabric. The government believed that this would result in better governance, stronger institutions and a consolidated democracy.[6]

Colombia in the hemispheric context – The United States is concerned about areas that are not under state control in Colombia, because of the possible expansion of insurgent power and coca crops in those regions. This concept of 'lawless areas' or 'ungoverned territories,' developed by well-known U.S. think tanks, has become a key component of security strategies supported by Washington in countries with territory controlled by forces perceived as a threat to state power. Lack of security is also related to risks to transnational investments

in those areas and obstacles to access to strategic resources.[7]

In Colombia, the United States recommends strengthening governance to counteract guerrilla action, emphasising the need for security cooperation . As a result, during President Uribe's first term, the vision for Plan Colombia shifted from a counternarcotics strategy linked to counterinsurgency efforts, to embracing the idea that "terrorism and drug trafficking constitute a single criminal enterprise." With that strategy, "military forces will have the mission of carrying out shock operations where concentrations of illicit crops and illegal armed groups persist."[8]

This phase, which advocated consolidation of control over territory, underpinned the Uribe Administration's Integral Action Doctrine (*Doctrina de Acción Integral*, DAI). This doctrine mainly targeted areas where there were still illicit crops and insurgent groups, and areas where paramilitaries had been demobilised. The DAI combined the use of force with social action by the government and the community, with members of state security forces applying principles and protocols for coordination with representatives of other state institutions.[9]

USAID ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT WITH NO IMPACT ON COCA-PRODUCING AREAS (2005 – 2008)

One of the most important characteristics of USAID's alternative development policy for Colombia between 2005 and 2008 was the targeting of the agricultural frontier. The first Uribe Administration (2002-2006) used the same criterion. USAID also divided this large area into sub-regions, designating some as Productive Economic Corridors (see Map No. 1). USAID used a model based particularly on areas with

favourable conditions for agriculture (soil and climate), proximity to urban centres, infrastructure and commercialisation.

In practice, the traditional criterion of operating in areas with a greater concentration of illicit crop production was abandoned. A comparison of Maps 1 and 2 shows this: the white area of the USAID/MIDAS map corresponds to the Amazonia-Orinoco area, where there was a large amount of illicit crops in 2007. This fundamentally contradicts the established goal of Alternative Development of having an impact on areas that produce the greatest amounts of raw materials for illicit substances.

Comparing these areas with security zones and the Colombian government's action strategies also shows that USAID's work is located in areas of paramilitary demobilisation: Catatumbo, the middle and lower Atrato, and Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. These regions comprise 25 of the municipalities where USAID intervened with the *Cimientos Program*, a USAID-funded programme to consolidate regional governance, implemented in strategic partnership with the government's Social Action (*Acción Social*) agency and the Integral Action Coordination Centre (*Centro de Coordinación de Acción Integral*, CCAI).

Southern Colombia border areas, such as Amazonia/Orinoco, are still considered a bastion of insurgency and, therefore, 'lawless areas.' Although most are areas of drug crop production and armed conflict, USAID did not commit to intervening in these regions. Instead the focus in Southern Colombia is solely on a military counterinsurgency offensive and a strong intensification of spraying and forced manual eradication. The 'social' role in such areas (for example, the lower Putumayo) is

played by the CCAI with greater intervention by the Armed Forces.

By focusing efforts on the rural economy in the agricultural frontier, the programmes mainly played a preventive role, sacrificing a more direct influence in the coca-producing areas. And by incorporating its programmes into a framework of government zoning that was based on the state's military advances, USAID took an approach that underestimated the social and economic roots of the illegal economy of illicit crops and ran the risk of becoming part of the continuation of the war by other means.

Acknowledgement of the serious social and economic marginalisation of much of the coca-growing area and strengthening of avenues for consensus-building between the central government and regional and local institutions and communities should have been the basic building blocks for Alternative Development in the region. The experience gained through programmes such as ADAM[10] and MIDAS[11] could have contributed ideas and methodologies for developing a new strategy aimed directly at areas with illicit crops.

USAID'S NEW ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (2009 – 2013)
The *'macarenización'* of the model

Under USAID's new strategy in Colombia, most resources are used to support the goals defined in Presidential Initiative 001 of 20 March 2009, the Colombian government's so-called 'Strategic Leap,' which is aimed at consolidating security gains in certain areas of the country. The purpose of the 'Strategic Leap' is to create a mechanism for meeting the goals of the 'democratic security consolidation policy.'[12] Those goals, however, run counter to other development interests stated by USAID.

For example, in this new phase, USAID categorically states that successful development initiatives require full participation by and coordination with civil society and the private sector. It says that Colombian organisations will lead each activity, because the goal of this approach is to build local capacity and strengthen people's trust in local institutions.[13] But an intervention within the framework of the Strategic Leap, with the conceptual and institutional approach taken by the CCAI and the Intelligence Fusion Centres (*Centros de Fusión de Inteligencia*, CFI), makes it practically impossible for organised communities to participate, not as subordinate objects of coordination, but as subjects involved in developing and implementing a regional development plan.

If communities are to have an impact with decision-making power, the regional strategy should promote integral, participatory rural development. It should also include the building of social capital,[14] with horizontal and vertical networks that facilitate joint action, enabling people to work together as a group to benefit their communities.[15]

Such an approach assumes building the state from the bottom up, beginning at the local level, with communities managing their own development. The 'Strategic Leap' is based on an approach in which a central state is imposed on the existing social, economic and cultural forces in a region. It also assumes a militarised security state that ultimately determines how socio-economic investment is directed, giving priority to security and legitimising state agencies that control the use of force.

In this approach, development initiatives fail to take into account the specific nature of regional problems and the socio-cultural characteristics of their inhabitants. Instead,

Map 1 - MIDAS-USAID Productive Economic Corridors Programme
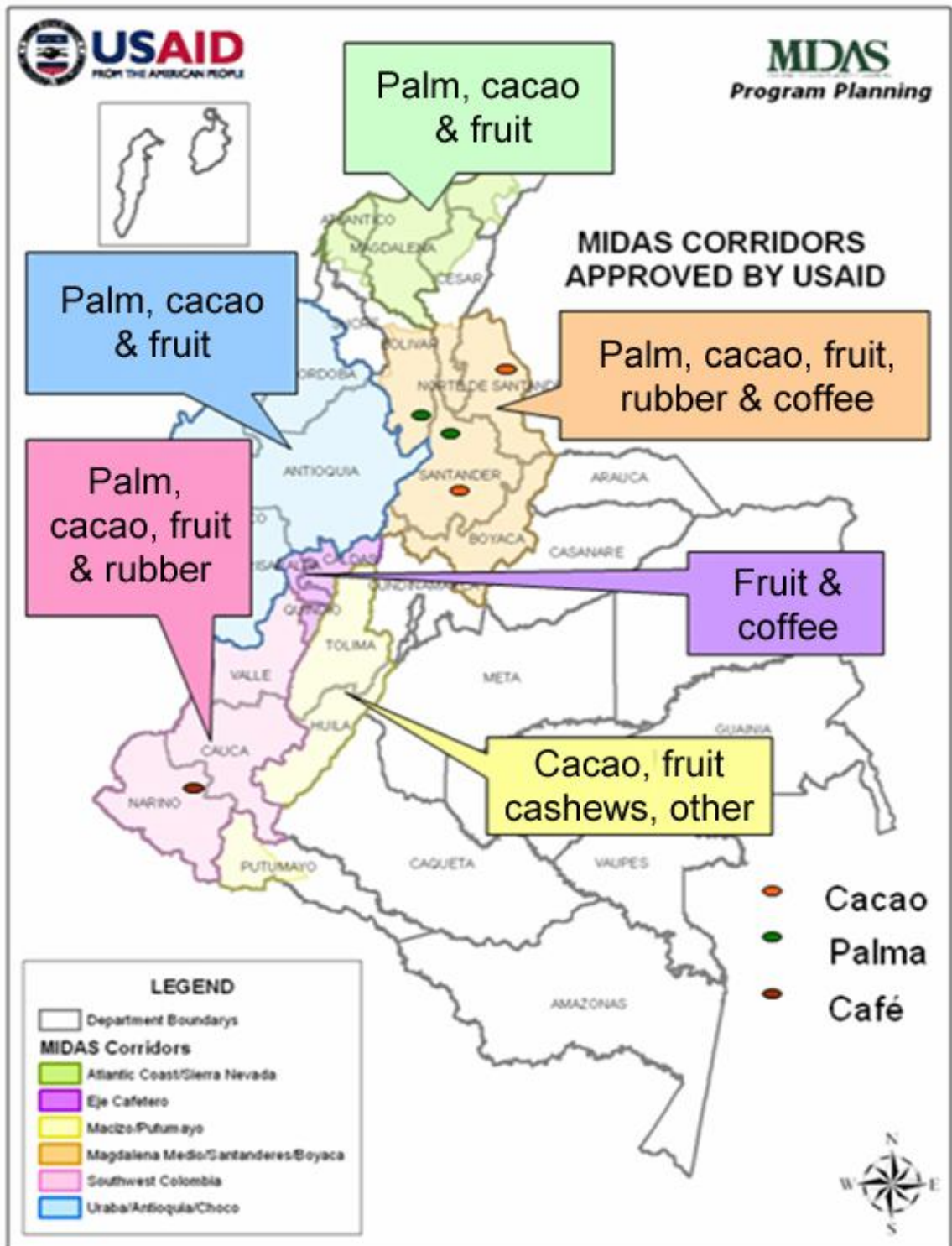
the strategy uses uniform criteria for measuring progress such as "the reduction of production of illicit crops, the number of legal employment opportunities created, the number of displaced persons who return, the number of ex-combatants who have been reintegrated adequately, improvement in the standard of living in the region, transfer of security operations from the military to the police, and the number and quality of services provided by the Government."[16]

Map 2 – Coca crops in 2007 - UNODC

Map 2 – Coca crops in 2007 - UNODC

Cultivation density (ha/km2)
- 0.1 - 1.0
- 1.1 - 4.0
- >4.0

International boundaries
Department boundaries

Source: Government of Colombia - National monitoring system supported by UNODC
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used in this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations

This uniform treatment creates new elements of insecurity for communities, not just from guerrillas, but also from large economic interests, often involved in illegal activities, who harm the smallholder economy, ignore requirements for environmental protection, use private force to settle conflicts, and strive for hegemonic political control at the local and regional levels. That is happening now, for example, in the southern part of the Department of Córdoba and around the Gulf of Morrosquillo, where grassroots leaders have been murdered for demanding the return of land appropriated by traditional powers merged with illegal groups.

The nature and scope of threats to communities are different from the way insecurity in the 'Strategic Leap' is conceptualised. That strategy's vision overemphasises the insurgent threat, almost to the exclusion of other factors; simplifies the complex social and economic context of the communities; and downplays the existence of criminal groups, or powers that move in the grey area between legality and illegality, which pose a real threat, especially to rural communities.

The relationship between the USAID programmes and CFIs in the selected areas is particularly problematic. USAID sees the fusion centres as "the principal clearing house to ensure integration, coordination and synchronisation of security, eradication, livelihood, and governance activities, both between sectors and vertically with national-level initiatives."[17] But these centres are actually a means of state dominance (especially for security), rather than the outcome of a process of building state legitimacy based on local people's interests.

Drug-trafficking corridors - USAID tried to correct the limitations that the economic

corridors suffered during the preceding period, refocusing them and targeting more closely areas where the conflict is linked with the illegal drug economy. One new concept is that of 'drug-trafficking corridors.' The goal is to control transit from drug-producing areas to international shipment points. Five corridors were originally chosen:

- Putumayo-Nariño toward the Pacific.

- La Macarena toward the Pacific via Buenaventura.

- Southern Córdoba-lower Cauca toward the Gulf of Urabá, and Catatumbo toward the border with Venezuela.

- Montes de María (corridor toward the Gulf of Morrosquillo).

- Lower Atrato (via the border with Panamá and the Gulf of Urabá).

But the USAID concept paper does not include clear criteria for defining the relationship between producer zones and transshipment routes, or for the role of other entities involved in law enforcement. Beyond the problem of crops for illicit use, the paper does not specify an approach for other phases of the drug business in those corridors. There is no approach for areas where there is a convergence of warehousing, supply of inputs for processing, the role of urban centres and the presence of organisations that link the various phases leading up to shipment points.

In other words, USAID did not begin with a specific assessment of each region chosen as a target for investment, but appears to use a general overview applicable to all. The experience of the military offensive in areas under insurgent influence, such as La Macarena (a historical FARC military and

political centre), and the need to consolidate the Uribe Administration's security initiative determined the structure of the CCAIs and CFIs operating in the corridors. But the other areas that were chosen are not comparable to La Macarena, where the FARC has carried significant weight and had geopolitical control for decades. The other areas have a much broader range of actors and interests and are unlikely to be suitable for replication of the La Macarena model, which is specific to areas of guerrilla influence.

A good example of a region very different to La Macarena is the Biogeographic Chocó region, which is strongly controlled by drug traffickers, but also has a large Afro-Colombian and indigenous community population in certain areas, such as the middle and lower Atrato. In such an area, the dynamic of the conflict and the existence of multiple dissimilar interests require innovation from a security standpoint.

Another very distinct region is the southern Córdoba and lower Cauca region. In this area, the existence of illegal economies is due less to a supposed absence of the state than to a 'co-opted reconfiguration of the state,' or criminalisation of the state. In these cases, illegality is not related solely to drug trafficking; there are many sources of enrichment in which the line between the legal and the illegal has become blurred.

There are also ill-named 'emerging bands' operating in nearly all the regions identified as corridors. Besides providing security to drug traffickers, they also are seeking access to multiple legal and illegal resources, and operate not only as armed actors in the conflict, but as violent protection structures that enable organised crime elites to gain a stronger foothold.

Against this backdrop, the sense and scope of USAID's programmes in support of the Colombian government's strategy for social consolidation of its territory raise many questions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

• Alternative development must not be part of a militarised security strategy, which is the predominant approach in Colombia. Alternative Development must be holistic. This requires developing socio-economic strategies and innovative proposals for income generation and employment that go beyond agriculture, and strategies to strengthen governance and security for people living in areas involved in illegal markets.

• Instead of simply attempting to reduce the area planted with illicit crops, Alternative Development programmes should operate within the framework of a rural and regional development plan. This demands coordination and planning among the many national, regional and local entities that specialise in sustainable rural, social and institutional development.

• Alternative Development programmes must foster social processes in which the community participates and is empowered throughout the entire project cycle, from formulation to evaluation. This enables the community to take decisions about project implementation, and to make verifiable commitments regarding crops for illicit use. This requires ongoing oversight aimed towards building up social capital.

• Before intervening in conflict zones, such as drug crop-growing areas or transit corridors, international cooperation agencies should carry out detailed assessments of factors such as: changes in land tenure structures as a result of the armed conflict;

existence of emerging powers related to drug trafficking, paramilitaries or other armed actors as well as legitimate community organisations (Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities); the state of local governance, interference by illegal powers, existence of legitimate venues for bringing the community together, and existence of mechanisms for oversight by citizens.

• The role of Alternative Development must be redefined, examining the process of territorial control by organised criminal groups and carrying out an analysis of the counterinsurgency approach and the way it links 'development and security.' International cooperation agencies should analyse these issues in depth.

_____

NOTES

1. Ricardo Vargas Meza is a sociologist and Associate Fellow of the Transnational Institute (TNI). This report summarises the main critiques of USAID's work in Colombia, which are further detailed by Ricardo Vargas in the briefing paper: *"Desarrollo Alternativo, seguridad y conflicto en Colombia: análisis crítico y perspectivas,"* Transnational Institute, April 2011.

2. Departamento Nacional de Planeación, Plan Nacional de Desarrollo *"Hacia un Estado Comunitario,"* 2002-2006, Bogotá.

3. GTZ, 2001 "Drugs and development in Latin America: Strategies, experiences and Project examples from the work of GTZ," Eschborn, Germany, September 2001.

4. See this paper by the Colombian government's Social Action Agency, justifying the creation of the GMEs: http://www.accionsocial.gov.co/documentos/Justificacion.pdf

5. See, for example, the paper by the Departamento Nacional de Planeación (DNP) – Dirección de Justicia y Seguridad (DJS), *"Balance del Plan Colombia,"* September 2006, p. 26.

6. DNP, *Ibid.*, p. 35.

7. On this specific point, see Eric Larson et al., 2004, "Assuring Access in Key Strategic Regions," RAND, Arroyo Center.

8. See Presidencia de la República de Colombia, *"Estrategia de Fortalecimiento de la Democracia y el Desarrollo Social 2007-2013".*

9. Colombian Ministry of Defence, *"Política de Consolidación de la Seguridad Democrática,"* (PCSD) 2007, Bogotá, p. 12.

10. See the programme Web site: http://www.adam.org.co/ The fact that ADAM was based on acknowledgement of social conditions, that aimed to address a community's illiteracy levels, the education of local officials, formal identity as citizens, etc., suggests a realistic vision rooted in the deeper characteristics of a community.

11. See the programme Web site: http://www.midas.org.co/newweb/midas/index.html

12. Office of the President of Colombia, Presidential Order No. 01, 20 March 2009.

13. See USAID, 2009, *"Concept paper: Strategic Development and Enhanced Livelihood Initiative."* http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADO962.pdf

14. Chacón Castillo, Benjamín, "La sociedad civil y su participación en las políticas de desarrollo rural." http://www.fundacionpreciado.org.mx/biencomun/bc152/benjamin.pdf

15. Manuel Humberto Vera Medina, "Estructura dinámica para una participación comunitaria." http://www.ine.gob.mx/descargas/cuencas/cong_nal_06/tema_02/19_manuel_vera.pdf

16. USAID, 2009, *Concept Paper.*

17. USAID, 2009, *Concept Paper.*

TNI Drug Policy Briefings

Amphetamine Type Stimulants and Harm Reduction
Experiences from Myanmar, Thailand and Southern China
TNI Drug Policy Briefing 37, October 2011

Alternative Development from the perspective of Colombian farmers
TNI Drug Policy Briefing 36, July 2011

On the Frontline of Northeast India
Evaluating a Decade of Harm Reduction in Manipur and Nagaland
TNI Drug Policy Briefing 35, March 2011

The 'miracle of San Martín' and symptoms of 'alternative development' in Peru
TNI Drug Policy Briefing 34, December 2010

Alternative Development or Business as Usual?
China's Opium Substitution Policy in Burma and Laos
TNI Drug Policy Briefing 33, November 2010

The Statistics Bazaar
Statistics are another front of combat in the war on drugs in Colombia
TNI Drug Policy Briefing 32, March 2010

The security approach to the drugs problem
Perpetuating drugs and conflict in Colombia
TNI Drug Policy Briefing 31, December 2009

Redefining Targets
Towards a Realistic Afghan Drug Control Strategy
TNI Drug Policy Briefing 30, December 2009

From Golden Triangle to Rubber Belt ?
The Future of Opium Bans in the Kokang and Wa Regions
TNI Drug Policy Briefing 29, July 2009

Crops for illicit use and ecocide
Are illicit crops really the main cause of damage to the ecosystem in Colombia?
TNI Drug Policy Briefing 28, December 2008

Alternative Developments, Economic Interests and Paramilitaries in Uraba
TNI Drug Policy Briefing 27, September 2008

Rewriting history
A response to the 2008 World Drug Report
TNI Drug Policy Briefing 26, June 2008

Crop spraying: A déjà vu debate
From the Andean strategy to the Afghan strategy
TNI Drug Policy Briefing 25, December 2007

Missing Targets
Counterproductive drug control efforts in Afghanistan
TNI Drug Policy Briefing 24, September 2007

Coca, Petroleum and Conflict in Cofán Territory
Spraying, displacement and economic interests
Drug Policy Briefing No 23, September 2007

Colombia coca cultivation survey results
A question of methods
Drug Policy Briefing No 22, June 2007

Sending the wrong message
The INCB and the un-scheduling of the coca leaf
Drug Policy Briefing No. 21, March 2007

The politicisation of fumigations
Glyphosate on the Colombian-Ecuadorian border
Drug Policy Briefing No. 20, February 2007

The Sierra de la Macarena
Drugs and armed conflict in Colombia
TNI Policy Briefing 19, September 2006

International Drug Control: 100 Years of Success?
TNI comments on the UNODC World Drug Report
TNI Policy Briefing 18, June 2006

HIV/AIDS and Drug Use in Burma/Myanmar
TNI Policy Briefing 17, May 2006

Political Challenges Posed by the Failure of Prohibition
Drugs in Colombia and the Andean-Amazonian Region
TNI Drug Policy Briefing 16, May 2006

Aerial spraying knows no borders
Ecuador brings international case over aerial spraying
TNI Drug Policy Briefing 15, September 2005

The Politics of Glyphosate
The CICAD Study on the Impacts of Glyphosate and the Crop Figures
TNI Drug Policy Briefing 14, June 2005

The United Nations and Harm Reduction - Revisited
TNI Drug Policy Briefing 13, April 2005

The United Nations and Harm Reduction
TNI Drug Policy Briefing 12, March 2005

Broken Promises And Coca Eradication In Peru
TNI Drug Policy Briefing 11, March 2005

Plan Afghanistan
TNI Drug Policy Briefing 10, February 2005

Colombia: Drugs & Security
TNI Drug Policy Briefing 9, January 2005

Super Coca?
TNI Drug Policy Briefing 8, September 2004

The Re-emergence of the Biological War on Drugs
TNI Drug Policy Briefing 7, May 2004

Measuring Progress
Global Supply of Illicit Drugs
TNI Drug Policy Briefing 6, April 2003

Coca, Cocaine and the International Conventions
TNI Drug Policy Briefing 5, April 2003

The Erratic Crusade of the INCB
TNI Drug Policy Briefing 4, February 2003

Peru: From Virtual Success to Realistic Policies?
TNI Drug Policy Briefing 3, April 2002

Conflict Flares in the Bolivian Tropics
TNI Drug Policy Briefing 2, January 2002

New Possibilities for Change in International Drug Control
TNI Drug Policy Briefing 1, December 2001

Transnational Institute

Since 1996, the TNI Drugs & Democracy programme has been analysing the trends in the illegal drugs market and in drug policies globally. The programme has gained a reputation worldwide as one of the leading international drug policy research institutes and as a serious critical watchdog of UN drug control institutions, in particular the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB).

TNI promotes evidence-based policies guided by the principles of harm reduction, human rights for users and producers, as well as the cultural and traditional uses of substances. The project seeks the reform of the current out-dated UN conventions on drugs, which were inconsistent from the start and have been surpassed by new scientific insights and new pragmatic policies that have proven to be successful.

For the past decade, the programme has maintained its main focus on developments in drug policy and its implication for countries in the South. The strategic objective is to contribute to a more integrated and coherent policy where illicit drugs are regarded as a cross-cutting issue within the broader development goals of poverty reduction, public health promotion, human rights protection, peace building and good governance.

Drug Law Reform Project

The project aims to promote more humane, balanced, and effective drug laws. Decades of repressive drug policies have not reduced the scale of drug markets and have led instead to human rights violations, a crisis in the judicial and penitentiary systems, the consolidation of organized crime, and the marginalization of vulnerable drug users, drug couriers and growers of illicit crops. It is time for an honest discussion on effective drug policy that considers changes in both legislation and implementation.

This project aims to stimulate the debate around legislative reforms by highlighting good practices and lessons learned in areas such as decriminalization, proportionality of sentences, specific harm reduction measures, alternatives to incarceration, and scheduling criteria for different substances. It also aims to encourage a constructive dialogue amongst policy makers, multilateral agencies and civil society in order to shape evidence-based policies that are grounded in the principles of human rights, public health and harm reduction.

Transnational Institute (TNI)

De Wittenstraat 25
1052 AK Amsterdam
The Netherlands

Tel: -31-20-6626608
Fax: -31-20-6757176
E-mail: drugs@tni.org

www.tni.org/drugs
www.undrugcontrol.info
www.druglawreform.info