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Time to Move on:

Developing an Informed Development Response to Opium Poppy Cultivation in Afghanistan

Publication Announcement

November 01, 2016

On 22 October 2016, the United Nations Office on Drug Control (UNODC) and the Ministry of Counter Narcotics (MCN) published their annual Opium Survey containing estimates of the amount of opium cultivated and produced in Afghanistan. While UNODC and the media headlines focused on the estimated 43% rise in the level of production at the national scale, the more important story is to be found in the shifting levels of cultivation at provincial, district and local levels.

Production, often a function of changing yields due to weather and other agronomic factors, is largely a distraction, particularly in 2016 when the 10% rise in cultivation could be considered within the margin of error of the current survey methodology. Shifts in cultivation at provincial, district and local levels can tell us much more about the rural population's perception of the state of the economy, governance and security in their area, and thereby much about the trajectory of the state building project across Afghanistan.

Of even greater importance is what to do about these changes in cultivation, something on which the Survey and UNODC are typically silent. The best we are offered by the drug control community is a return to the "alternative development" model of the past - where development assistance is explicitly

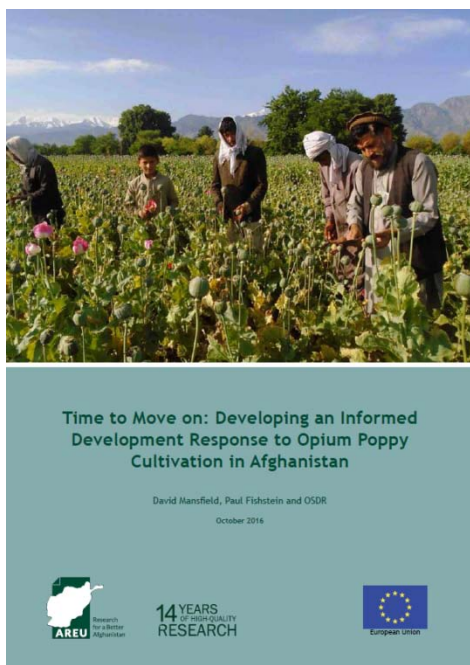
linked to the threat of eradication and communities committing to a timetable for reductions in cultivation. This is a broken model that has been tried in Afghanistan many times before, and that has failed.

AREU's latest report **“Time to Move on: Developing an Informed Development Response to Opium Poppy Cultivation in Afghanistan”** suggests a new way forward for both analysis and policy; a response that is steeped in an in-depth understanding of livelihoods in rural Afghanistan and the multi-faceted role that opium poppy plays, rather than viewing opium production in isolation of the conditions and circumstances in which it is grown.

The study utilized multiple methods, such as survey of farmers in the field, high-resolution imagery: geospatial mapping: visualizing changes over time in settlements, cropping patterns, livelihoods framework, politics and power and effect on farmers’ decision-making, cropping systems approach, and comprehensive household livelihoods.

“Time to Move on: Developing an Informed Development Response to Opium Poppy Cultivation in Afghanistan” is ready for download at:

<http://areu.org.af/EditionDetails.aspx?EditionId=946&ContentId=7&ParentId=7>





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About AREU:

The **Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU)** is an independent research organization based in Kabul. AREU's mission is to inform and influence policy and practice through conducting high-quality, policy-relevant research and actively disseminating the results, and to promote a culture of research and learning. To achieve its mission AREU engages with policymakers, civil society, researchers, and students to promote their use of AREU's research and its library, to strengthen their research capacity, and to create opportunities for analysis, reflection, and debate. AREU was established in 2002 by the assistance community working in Afghanistan.

For more information, please contact:

The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU)

3rd street on the left, Chahrah-e-Haji Yacoub toward Chahrah-e-Shaeed

House no. 218, first gate on the right

Shahr-e-Naw, Kabul

<http://www.areu.org.af>

**About European Union (EU):**

The EU Delegation to Afghanistan aims at enhancing relations between the EU and Afghanistan. Despite progress in recent years, Afghanistan still faces security, economic, and political problems. This why the EU remains committed to helping the country flourish in the longer term.

The EU Delegation to Afghanistan:

- Presents, explains and implements EU policy
- Analyses and reports on policies and developments
- Negotiates following its given mandate.

The EU office in Afghanistan comprises two parts:

- The Office of the EU Special Representative to Afghanistan (EUSR)
- The EU Delegation

Both are led by Ambassador Franz-Michal Mellbin, who is the EU Special Representative to Afghanistan as well as the Head of the EU Delegation to Afghanistan.

The main [EU priorities for Afghanistan](#) are set out in the European Union Strategy 2014-2016.

For more information, please contact:

Delegation of the European Union to Afghanistan

Postal address:

Delegation of the European Union to Afghanistan
Charahi Sedarat, Shahr-e-Naw (Opposite the Ministry of Interior),
Kabul, Afghanistan

Phone number:

+93 20 2200443

+93 20 2200453

Email:

DELEGATION-AFGHANISTAN-PRESS@eeas.europa.eu

Questions/Enquiries:

With questions and enquiries on the report, contact Deputy Director of Communications and Advocacy of AREU, Mr. Mir Ahmad Joyenda on the following contact details:

Phone: +93 (0)700276637

Email: joyenda@areu.org.af

Website: www.areu.org.af