Stable governance and good security conditions have a considerable impact on the decision of farmers to cultivate opium poppy, according to a report released today by UNODC, at the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre. The report " [Evidence for Enhancing Resilience to Opium Poppy Cultivation in Shan State - Implications for Alternative Development, Peace and Stability](https://www.unodc.org/documents/southeastasiaandpacific//Publications/2017/2016_Myanmar_Shan_Opium_Poppy_web.pdf%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)" is the first of its kind dedicated to Shan State, highlighting reasons farmers engage in the opium economy, as well as some implications for Myanmar's ongoing peace process.

A total of 591 villages in 39 opium poppy growing townships in Shan State were surveyed for the report, and the findings show that while many factors affect farmers' decisions regarding whether or not to cultivate opium poppy - including the condition of infrastructure and access to markets for other goods - governance and security considerations are significant factors. On average, fewer opium poppy villages are in areas under government control (76 per cent) than non-opium poppy villages (88 per cent). At the same time, more opium producing villages have the perception of being "unsafe" or "very unsafe" (11 per cent) than in non-opium poppy villages (2 per cent).

The governance and security connection is also found in other parts of the world where illicit crops are cultivated on a large scale, and where isolation, ethnic and other conflicts impact public safety, the economy and opportunity. In this respect, the ongoing peace process may, over time, bring improvements to governance and security, which can have a tangible impact on local communities and reduce the need to engage in opium poppy cultivation.

"The connection of conflict and poppy cultivation means that interventions will need to take into account mitigation or resolution. Depending on the context, this may mean that strategies and programmes to help households and communities move away from the opium economy may also need to address some causes and consequences of conflict," said Jeremy Douglas, UNODC Regional Representative for Southeast Asia and the Pacific. "This is particularly relevant for the ongoing peace process and cease-fire commitment to stop drug production and trafficking in the conflict areas of Shan State where the majority of opium cultivation takes place".

"Villages not engaged in opium poppy cultivation typically have better access to government services and perceptions of safety and security," said Pol. Brigadier General Kyaw Win, Joint Secretary of Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control. "Opium poppy cultivation often happens in villages that are isolated and that cannot get other products to market. We need to expand our work with development partners like UNODC to scale-up sustainable alternative development programmes to reach more communities."

The report also confirms the importance of opium poppy to the economy of Shan State. About 1 in 10 households in the villages surveyed are directly involved in opium poppy cultivation, with many depending on money earned from poppy for food and basic essentials.

"The report really illustrates the complexity of the challenge," said Mr. Douglas. "In addition to considering the political and security dimension, well thought out development responses will need to be supported to ensure the move towards alternative livelihoods and the legal economy is sustainable."

The issue of land title is also significant as farmers that own land were found to be less involved in opium poppy cultivation.

The report helps establish a unique evidence base to understand the needs of opium poppy and non-opium poppy villages in Shan and Myanmar, and it is expected that it will help as a foundation for national plans and development programmes.

"Further field work is needed to understand what is happening and why, and how we can progress towards sustainable development outside the illegal economy", said Troels Vester, UNODC Country Manager in Myanmar. "The data from our village surveys can be used as powerful evidence for analysis, but is also being used as the basis for programmes we are in discussions with the government about scaling up, and can be helpful for other development partners as they consider how to help the country" he added.

**Further Information:**

[Evidence for Enhancing Resilience to Opium Poppy Cultivation in Shan State - Implications for Alternative Development, Peace and Stability](https://www.unodc.org/documents/southeastasiaandpacific//Publications/2017/2016_Myanmar_Shan_Opium_Poppy_web.pdf%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

[UNODC in Southeast Asia and the Pacific](https://www.unodc.org/southeastasiaandpacific/en/2017/02/goodwill-ambassador-hrh-princess-bajrakitiyabha-mahidol/story.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

[UNODC Regional Office in Myanmar](https://www.unodc.org/southeastasiaandpacific/myanmar/index.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

[UNODC and illicit crop monitoring](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/crop-monitoring/index.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)