

2026 SJTUMUNC

SHANGHAI JIAO TONG UNIVERSITY
MODEL UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE



上海交通大学 南洋模拟联合国大会

背景文件

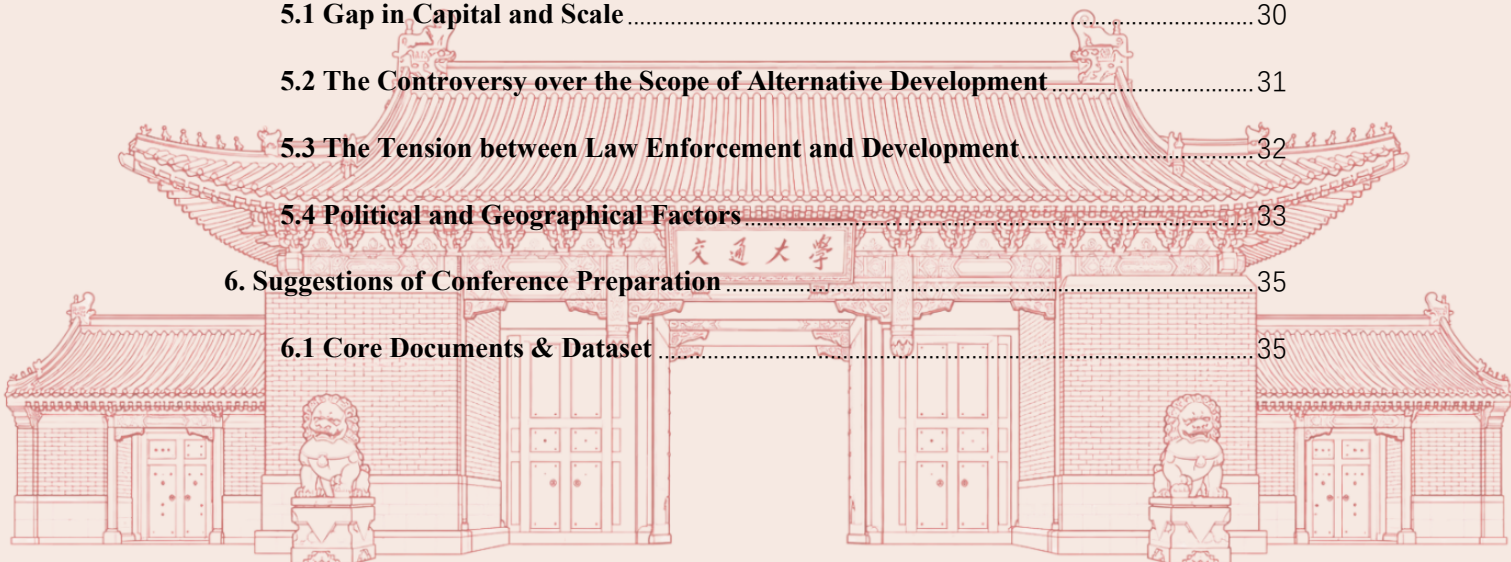
BACKGROUND FILE





United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
Background Guide

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Welcome Letter

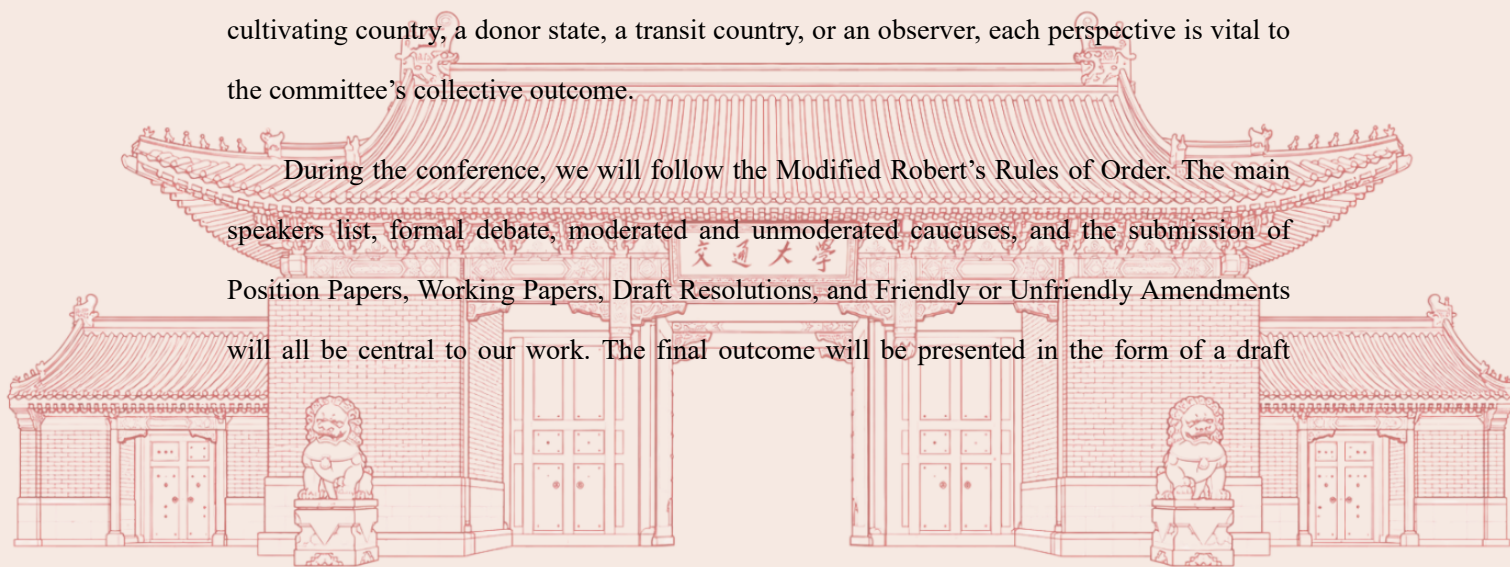
Dear Delegates,

On behalf of the Dais Team, it is our pleasure to welcome you to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) committee at Shanghai Jiaotong University Nanyang Model United Nations Conference. Your participation will contribute to what promises to be an engaging, challenging, and rewarding debate on one of the most pressing and evolving issues in international drug policy.

Alternative development stands at a critical crossroads. For decades, it has moved beyond simple crop substitution to become a comprehensive, people-centred, and increasingly environmentally conscious strategy. Today, the international community is actively supplementing the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development to address new challenges—from climate change and biodiversity loss to urban drug economies and the persistent funding gap that leaves hundreds of thousands of families dependent on illicit crops. As delegates, you will have the opportunity to shape a forward-looking vision that balances drug control objectives with sustainable development, environmental protection, human rights, and social inclusion.

This committee serves as a forum for substantive dialogue, careful negotiation, and innovative problem-solving. Delegates are encouraged to prepare thoroughly by reading the Background Guide, researching their assigned country's position, and arriving ready to defend national interests while seeking consensus. Whether representing a major illicit crop cultivating country, a donor state, a transit country, or an observer, each perspective is vital to the committee's collective outcome.

During the conference, we will follow the Modified Robert's Rules of Order. The main speakers list, formal debate, moderated and unmoderated caucuses, and the submission of Position Papers, Working Papers, Draft Resolutions, and Friendly or Unfriendly Amendments will all be central to our work. The final outcome will be presented in the form of a draft





resolution. We expect all delegates to engage in diplomatic language, respect the rules of procedure, and contribute constructively to the committee's deliberations.

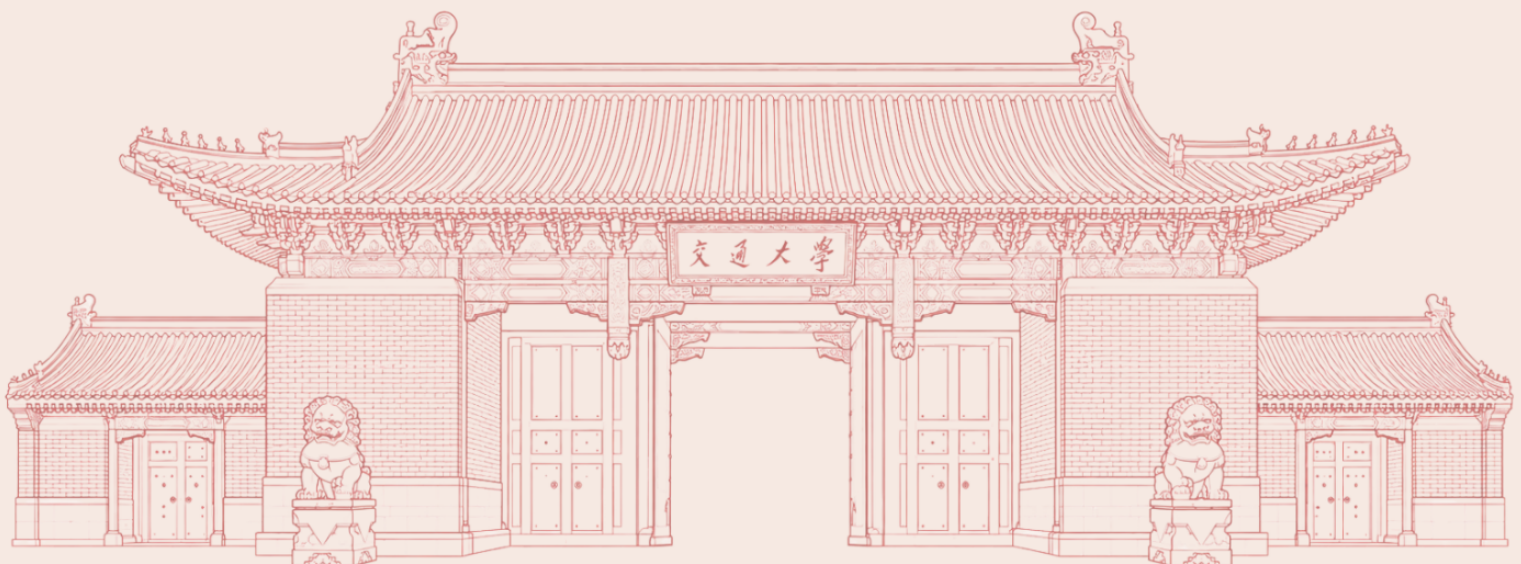
Delegates are encouraged to approach the conference with curiosity, openness, and a collaborative spirit. The challenges of alternative development require shared responsibility, mutual trust, and innovative thinking; no single country can address them in isolation. Your engagement and insights will contribute to a meaningful and memorable committee experience.

If you have any questions before or during the conference, please contact any member of the Dais Team. The team is available to provide support throughout the event.

We look forward to meeting you and witnessing the excellent work you will accomplish as a committee.

Warm Regards,

Tian Youjia, Chen Letian, Fujiang Yu-yu



1. Introduction to the Committee

Established in 1997, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is a global leader in the fight against illicit drugs, transnational organized crime, terrorism, and corruption, and is the guardian of most of the related conventions. It was established as a result of the merging of the United Nations Centre for International Crime Prevention and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, aiming to enable the Organization to focus and enhance its capacity to address the interrelated issues of drug control, crime, and international terrorism in all its forms.¹

As the only UN office dedicated to preventing and addressing drugs and crime, UNODC helps Member States to develop and implement comprehensive, evidence-based solutions to complex and interconnected drug and crime threats at the national, regional and global levels.

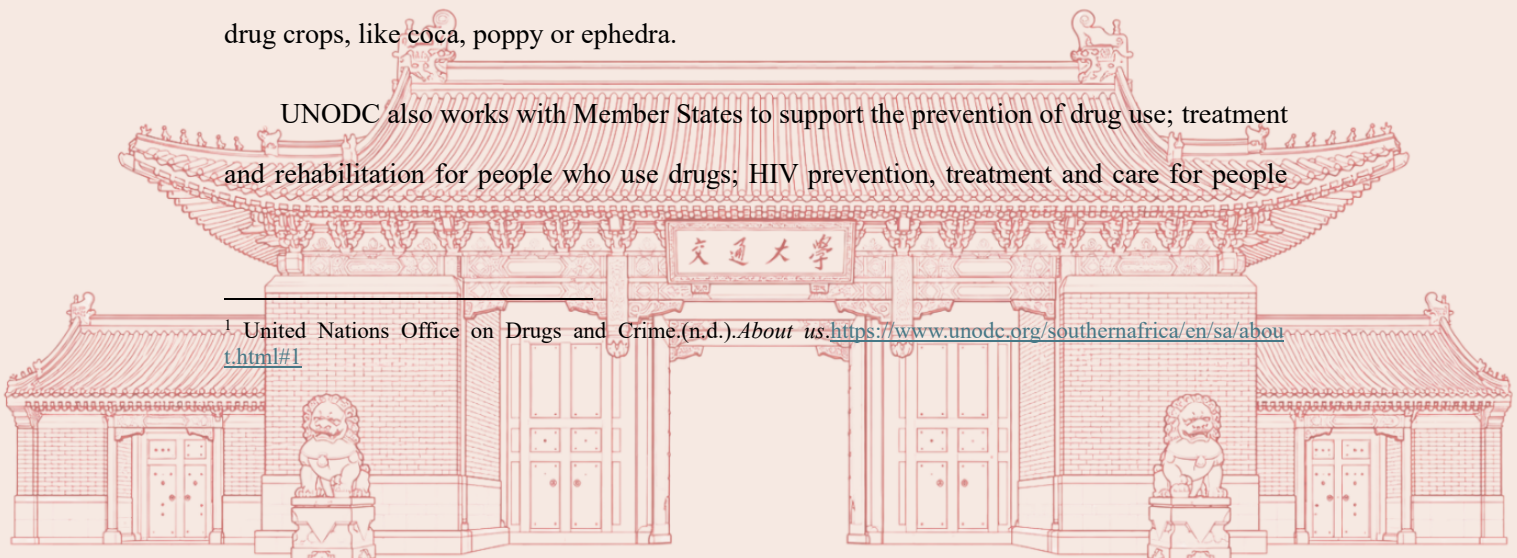
UNODC mainly conducts its work in the following areas:

World Drug Problem

Tackling the illicit drug problem worldwide is the main agenda of UNODC. By strengthening States' ability to detect and intercept illicit drug flows at borders and equipping frontline officers with testing equipment, UNODC bolsters countries' national security by disrupting the operations and profits of organized drug trafficking groups. Making borders and key shipping routes less vulnerable to exploitation also fosters a safer environment for legitimate business and trade, contributing to a more stable and resilient global economy. UNODC also seeks to provide alternative livelihoods to people vulnerable to growing illicit drug crops, like coca, poppy or ephedra.

UNODC also works with Member States to support the prevention of drug use; treatment and rehabilitation for people who use drugs; HIV prevention, treatment and care for people

¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(n.d.).*About us*.<https://www.unodc.org/southernafrica/en/sa/about.html#1>



who use drugs and people in prisons; and access to controlled drugs for medical purposes.²

Transnational Organized Crime

From the illicit drug trade and wildlife crime to migrant smuggling and online scams, trafficking and more, transnational organized crime can be found in all corners of the globe.

Improving detection of victims of online child exploitation or trafficking in persons. Supporting operations seizing thousands of weapons and ammunition. Facilitating the repatriation of trafficked wildlife. Helping to draft new laws to effectively deter migrant smugglers. These are all examples of how UNODC supports governments and criminal justice networks to prevent, investigate, and prosecute transnational organized crime and support victims.³

Preventing Terrorism

Terrorism remains, in the words of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, a clear and present danger, one from which no country is immune. Across the globe, terrorist groups are extending their reach, spreading hateful ideologies, and growing their networks with more fighters, funding and weapons.

UNODC works with Member States to prevent and counter the evolving threats of terrorism and violent extremism. It promotes international legal instruments, aids domestic implementation, and facilitates global cooperation. Grounded in legal and human rights norms, and aligned with the UN Secretary General's Common Agenda, it empowers communities, reduces vulnerabilities, and ensures no one is left behind. Its inclusive strategies prioritize people's safety, striving for a terrorism-free world.⁴

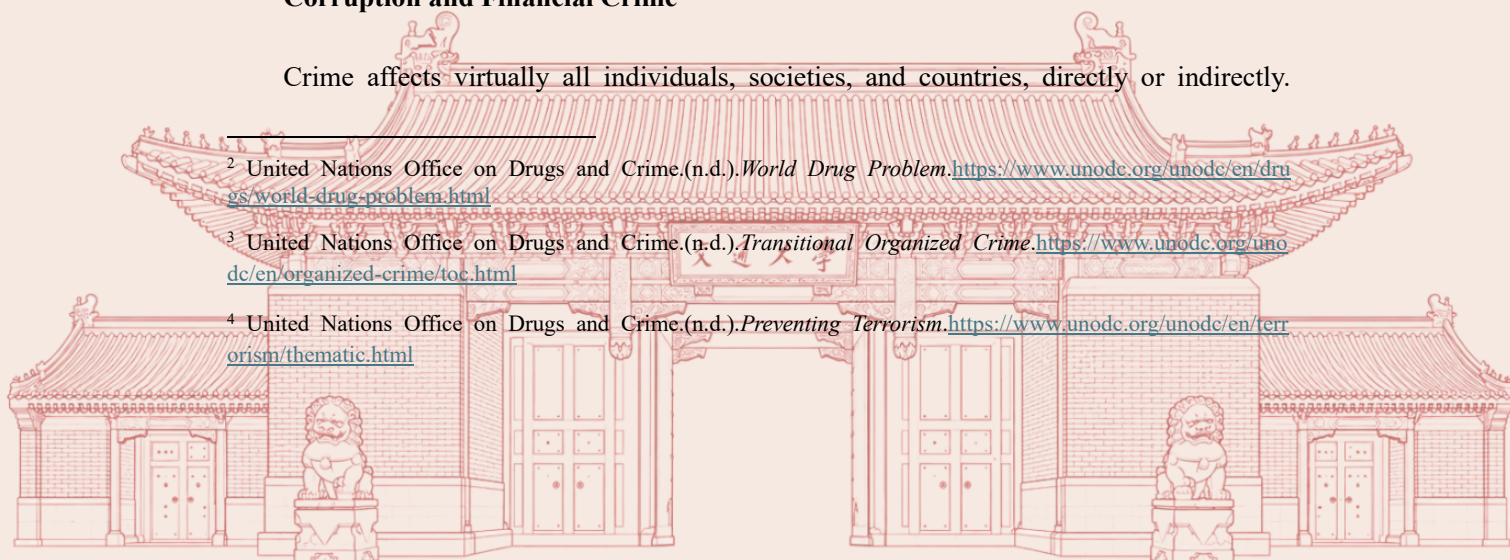
Corruption and Financial Crime

Crime affects virtually all individuals, societies, and countries, directly or indirectly.

² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(n.d.).*World Drug Problem*.<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/drugs/world-drug-problem.html>

³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(n.d.).*Transitional Organized Crime*.<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/organized-crime/toc.html>

⁴ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(n.d.).*Preventing Terrorism*.<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/terrorism/thematic.html>



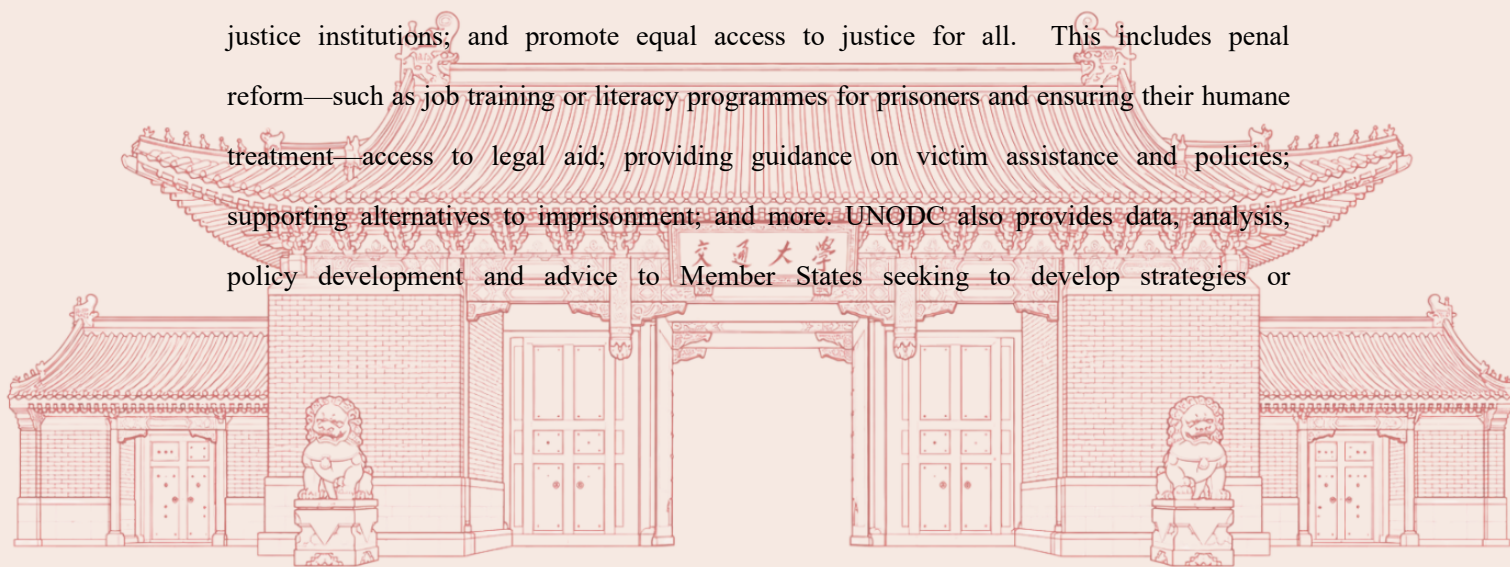
Wildlife trafficking may disrupt your local ecosystem or harm your livelihood. Corruption may make it difficult for you to access the health, administrative, or educational services you need. Organized crime or gang violence may have led to an increase in homicides in your country. Or perhaps a family member is among the 3.7 million people held worldwide in pre-trial detention. At the same time, criminal justice systems worldwide are overstretched, resulting in delayed court proceedings, increased impunity, and a weakened rule of law.

UNODC works with countries to identify risks and gaps in implementation of their international obligations and to strengthen laws, institutions and capacities to prevent, detect, investigate and prosecute corruption and financial crime.

Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

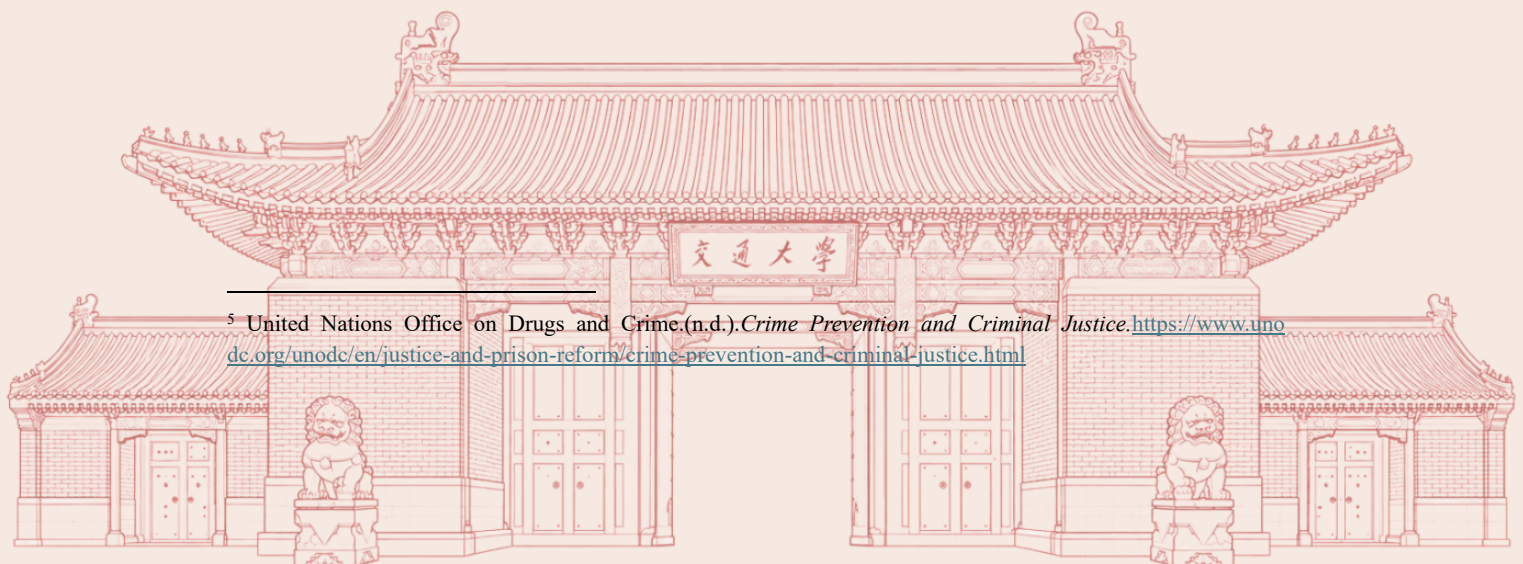
Directly or indirectly, crime affects virtually all individuals, societies, and countries. Wildlife trafficking may be disrupting your local ecosystem or hurting your livelihood. Corruption may be making it difficult for you to access the health, administrative or educational services you need. Organized crime or gang violence may have led to an increase in homicides in your country. Or perhaps your family member is one of the 3.7 million people being held worldwide in pre-trial detention. At the same time, criminal justice systems across the world are overstretched—resulting in delayed court proceedings, increased impunity and a weakened rule of law.

UNODC serves as Secretariat to the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ, or Crime Commission), the UN's main policymaking body addressing crime prevention and criminal justice issues. UNODC works with Member States to help reduce crime; ensure the operation of fair, effective, inclusive, transparent and accountable criminal justice institutions; and promote equal access to justice for all. This includes penal reform—such as job training or literacy programmes for prisoners and ensuring their humane treatment—access to legal aid; providing guidance on victim assistance and policies; supporting alternatives to imprisonment; and more. UNODC also provides data, analysis, policy development and advice to Member States seeking to develop strategies or



programmes to prevent crime.⁵

This section provides a concise summary of the committee's relevant background information. Its purpose is to assist delegates in understanding the committee's scope and capabilities, thereby facilitating comprehension of the issues and the Background Guide. Delegates are expected to supplement this overview with additional, detailed background research.



⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(n.d.).*Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice*.<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/justice-and-prison-reform/crime-prevention-and-criminal-justice.html>

2. Background & Key Concepts

2.1 The Definition and Evolution of Alternative Development

Alternative development (AD) is a core strategy within the international drug control system. Its formal definition was established by the United Nations General Assembly at its twentieth special session (UNGASS) in 1998. Resolution S-20/4 defines “alternative development” as “a process to prevent and eliminate the illicit cultivation of plants containing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances through specifically designed rural development measures in the context of sustained national economic growth and sustainable development efforts in countries taking action against drugs, recognizing the particular sociocultural characteristics of the target communities and groups, within the framework of a comprehensive and permanent solution to the problem of illicit drugs.”⁶

The evolution of AD has been accompanied by a progressive integration of environmental consciousness. Over the past two and a half decades, the international community has moved from merely acknowledging the environmental risks of illicit drug economies to actively positioning AD as a proactive driver of environmental protection and sustainability. This trajectory can be traced through a series of key policy milestones:

Phase One: Initial Recognition and Foundational Principles (1998–2005)

The environmental dimension of AD was formally recognized at the earliest stage of its conceptualization. In 1998, the UNGASS Political Declaration called for “special attention to the protection of the environment,” embedding ecological considerations into the foundational framework of drug control strategies. This marked a crucial first step in acknowledging that drug policy interventions have environmental consequences.

⁶ United Nations General Assembly.(1998,October 21).*Resolution S-20/4.* (A/RES/S-20/4) .<https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n98/775/15/pdf/n9877515.pdf>

By 2005, the UNODC Global Thematic Evaluation advanced this understanding by explicitly stating that AD should play a pioneering and catalytic role by “avoiding environmental harm.” This evaluation emphasized that AD projects must not only replace illicit crops but also serve as models for sustainable land use, setting the stage for more robust environmental standards in subsequent years.

Phase Two: Institutionalization and Mainstreaming (2013–2016)

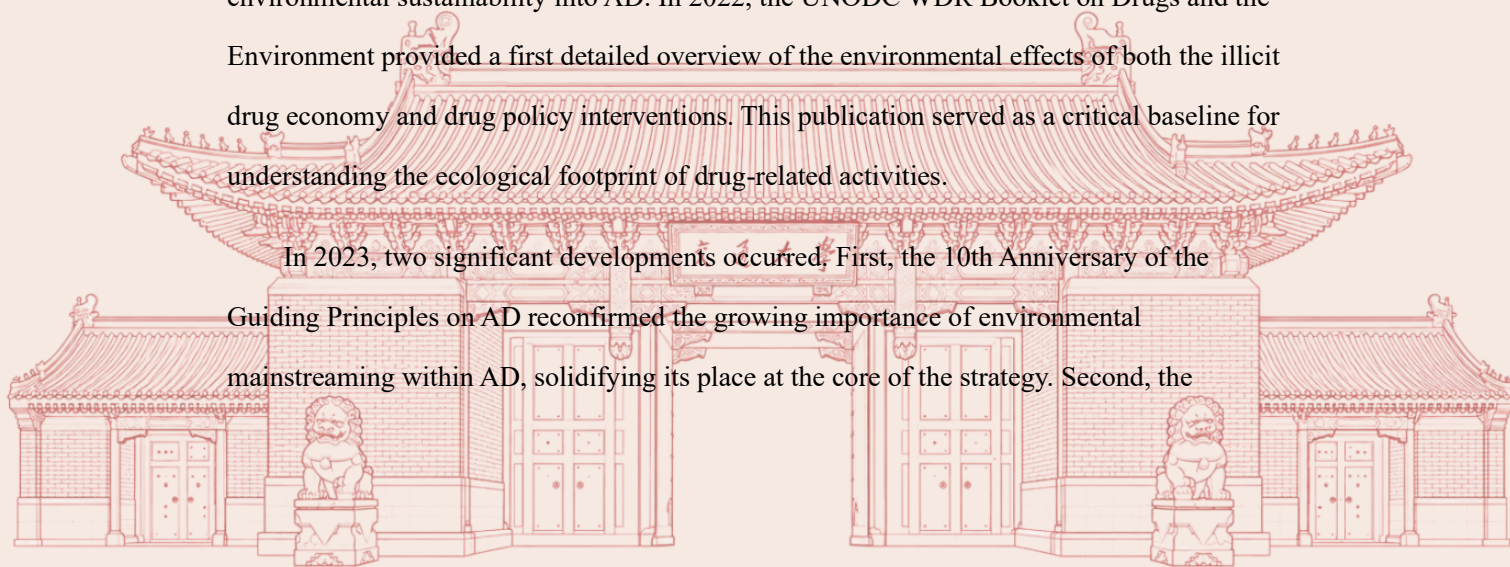
The next decade witnessed the rapid institutionalization of environmental concerns within AD frameworks. In 2013, the UN Guiding Principles on Alternative Development stated that alternative development “should include measures to protect the environment at the local level,” elevating environmental protection from a general principle to an operational requirement.

This was followed by a series of analytical developments in UNODC’s flagship reports. In 2015, the UNODC World Drug Report (WDR) Thematic Chapter on AD highlighted the proactive role of AD to (in)directly contribute to environmental protection and sustainability. A year later, in 2016, the UNODC WDR Section on Environmental Sustainability described how the illicit production of drugs and the drug control response can have adverse effects on ecosystems. This dual focus—examining both the harms of the illicit economy and the potential harms of enforcement—represented a mature, evidence-based understanding of the complex relationship between drugs and the environment.

Phase Three: Deepening Analysis and Comprehensive Assessment (2022–2024)

Recent years have seen an accelerated and increasingly sophisticated integration of environmental sustainability into AD. In 2022, the UNODC WDR Booklet on Drugs and the Environment provided a first detailed overview of the environmental effects of both the illicit drug economy and drug policy interventions. This publication served as a critical baseline for understanding the ecological footprint of drug-related activities.

In 2023, two significant developments occurred. First, the 10th Anniversary of the Guiding Principles on AD reconfirmed the growing importance of environmental mainstreaming within AD, solidifying its place at the core of the strategy. Second, the



UNODC WDR Case Study on the Amazon Basin offered a deep dive into the region's convergence of drug trafficking and various other crimes that are accelerating environmental and social devastation, highlighting the urgent need for integrated, environmentally conscious interventions in fragile ecosystems.

By 2024, the Mid-term Review of International Drug Policy Commitments assessed progress, including on tackling the environmental impact of drugs and drug policies. This review underscored that addressing environmental harm is no longer a peripheral concern but a central metric of success in international drug policy.⁷

2.2 The Core Objectives and Principles of Alternative Development

2.2.1 Guiding Principles

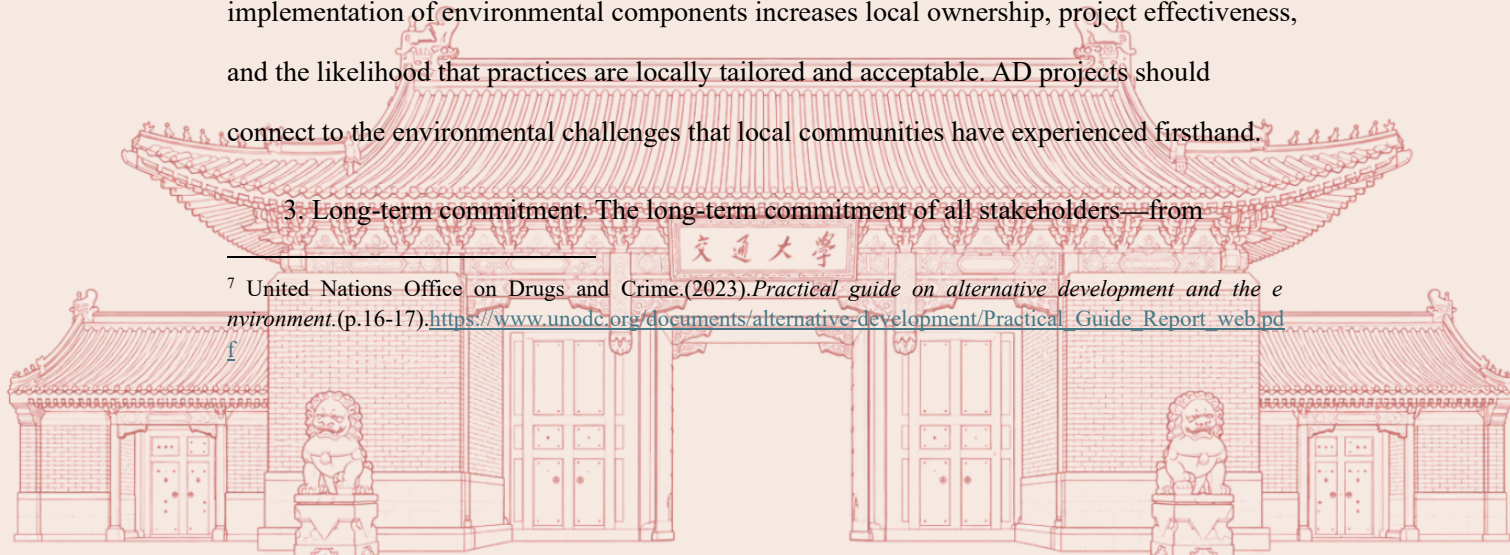
The Practical Guide on Alternative Development and the Environment distills a set of general success factors for policy design that can also be understood as core principles of AD. These principles are mutually reinforcing and should guide the design, planning, and implementation of AD interventions.

1. People at the heart. Environmental concerns, policies, and practices cannot be detached from the individuals and communities involved in AD. Environmental mainstreaming will not be effective without taking the legitimate needs and concerns of those people into account. The starting point of any environmental initiative should be the perspective of the farmer.

2. Helping people to help themselves. Involving local communities, landowners, and other stakeholders in the research, experimentation, and discussions about the design and implementation of environmental components increases local ownership, project effectiveness, and the likelihood that practices are locally tailored and acceptable. AD projects should connect to the environmental challenges that local communities have experienced firsthand.

3. Long-term commitment. The long-term commitment of all stakeholders—from

⁷ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2023).*Practical guide on alternative development and the environment*.(p.16-17).https://www.unodc.org/documents/alternative-development/Practical_Guide_Report_web.pdf



communities to governments and donors—is vital for achieving sustainable developmental and environmental gains. Reforestation, carbon sequestration, and the transition from illicit cultivation to licit alternative livelihoods are long-term processes. Benefits may take years to become evident.

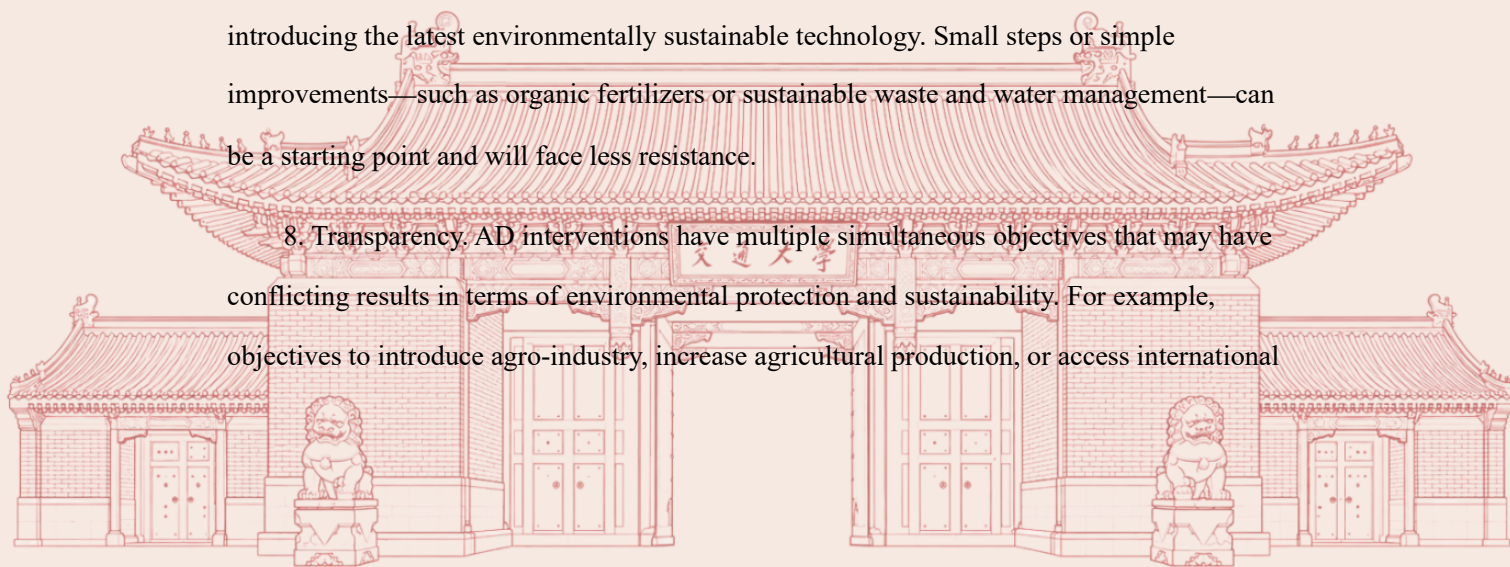
4. Access to land, land rights, and ownership. The granting and enforcement of individual and collective land titles has proven a successful AD strategy. It can also benefit the environment indirectly by strengthening commitments to the conservation of local lands and ecosystems and by reducing migration and pressure on the agricultural frontier. Land ownership also facilitates participation in payments for environmental services or carbon credit projects, which rely on transparent land rights to function properly.

5. Local adaptation and flexibility. Environmental mainstreaming requires flexibility and agility. Projects should be adaptable to changing contexts and allow for adjustments based on lessons learned, unforeseen challenges, or new information. Interventions that consider local climate, soil types, and agricultural systems are more likely to succeed. Organic fertilizers and pesticides, for example, tend to be regionally specific.

6. Realistic expectations. It is important to be realistic about what can and cannot be achieved. Expectations should be managed at the local level, especially given the adverse starting conditions of many communities dependent on illicit crop cultivation, which may be characterized by isolation, marginalization, extreme poverty, fragility, or conflict. There are often no perfect results.

7. Keeping it simple. Given the starting conditions of local communities and the fact that they are already making important transitions, it is important not to jump too far ahead by introducing the latest environmentally sustainable technology. Small steps or simple improvements—such as organic fertilizers or sustainable waste and water management—can be a starting point and will face less resistance.

8. Transparency. AD interventions have multiple simultaneous objectives that may have conflicting results in terms of environmental protection and sustainability. For example, objectives to introduce agro-industry, increase agricultural production, or access international



markets may be at odds with environmental objectives. It is important to be transparent about such tensions. Over-promising on environmental gains will, in the longer term, benefit nobody.

9. Finding the right incentive. Successful environmental mainstreaming of AD is about finding the right incentives for communities and other stakeholders to adopt sustainable practices. This often involves creating win-win scenarios in which environmental gains are combined with economic or social benefits. At a minimum, projects should consider that individuals and communities may lose some financial gains from less sustainable practices or may need to spend additional time on more labour-intensive approaches.

10. Partnering with the private sector. Involvement of the private sector can improve quality and access to markets for AD products and can also advance environmental goals. Private sector partners can provide technical assistance—for example, on composting or organic fertilizers—and can finance fair trade or organic certification processes. However, project participants, including farmers, cooperatives, and local government entities, should also increase their capacity to engage proactively with the private sector.

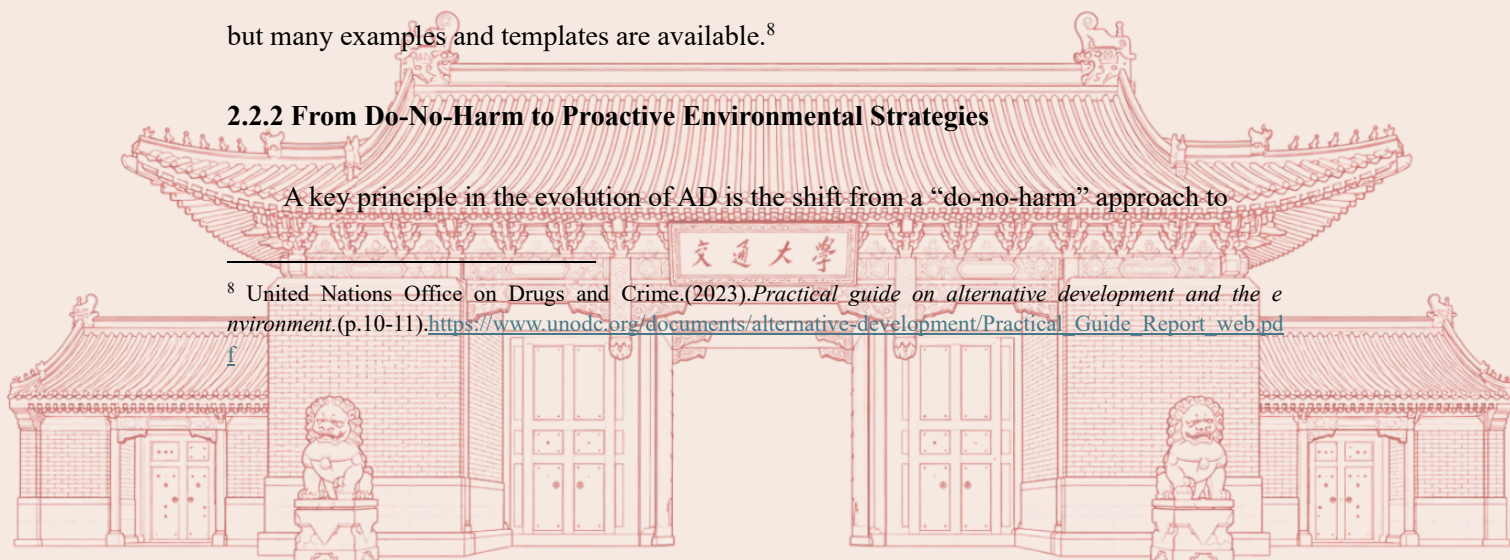
11. Establishing a proper baseline. A solid baseline at the start of the project is crucial for effective planning, monitoring, and evaluation. It allows for an in-depth assessment of the environmental impact of interventions, helps set realistic objectives, and quantifies progress. Impact monitoring also provides evidence essential for payments for ecosystem services.

12. Developing environmental management plans. A standard tool is an environmental management plan, which details both the positive impacts expected from the project and the measures taken to mitigate any negative environmental impacts. There is no standard format, but many examples and templates are available.⁸

2.2.2 From Do-No-Harm to Proactive Environmental Strategies

A key principle in the evolution of AD is the shift from a “do-no-harm” approach to

⁸ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2023).*Practical guide on alternative development and the environment*.(p.10-11).https://www.unodc.org/documents/alternative-development/Practical_Guide_Report_web.pdf



proactive environmental strategies. In 2005, the International Narcotics Control Board mentioned the environment as a concern that has become virtually inseparable from illicit crop cultivation. In the same year, UNODC's Global Thematic Evaluation listed “avoiding environmental harm” as part of the “pioneering and catalytic role” of AD.

In addition to reducing harm, many AD projects have directly or indirectly contributed to the protection of the environment, biodiversity, and climate change mitigation—for example, through agroforestry, reforestation, or watershed management. In some cases, such as the Doi Tung Development Project in Thailand, environmental concerns were among the key drivers of the project from the start.⁹

This broader environmental role was captured in the 2013 United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development, which state that AD programmes should include measures to protect the environment at the local level, according to national and international law and policies, through the provision of incentives for conservation, proper education and awareness programmes so that the local communities can improve and preserve their livelihoods and mitigate negative environmental impacts.¹⁰

2.2.3 The Three Dimensions of Sustainability and Just Transition

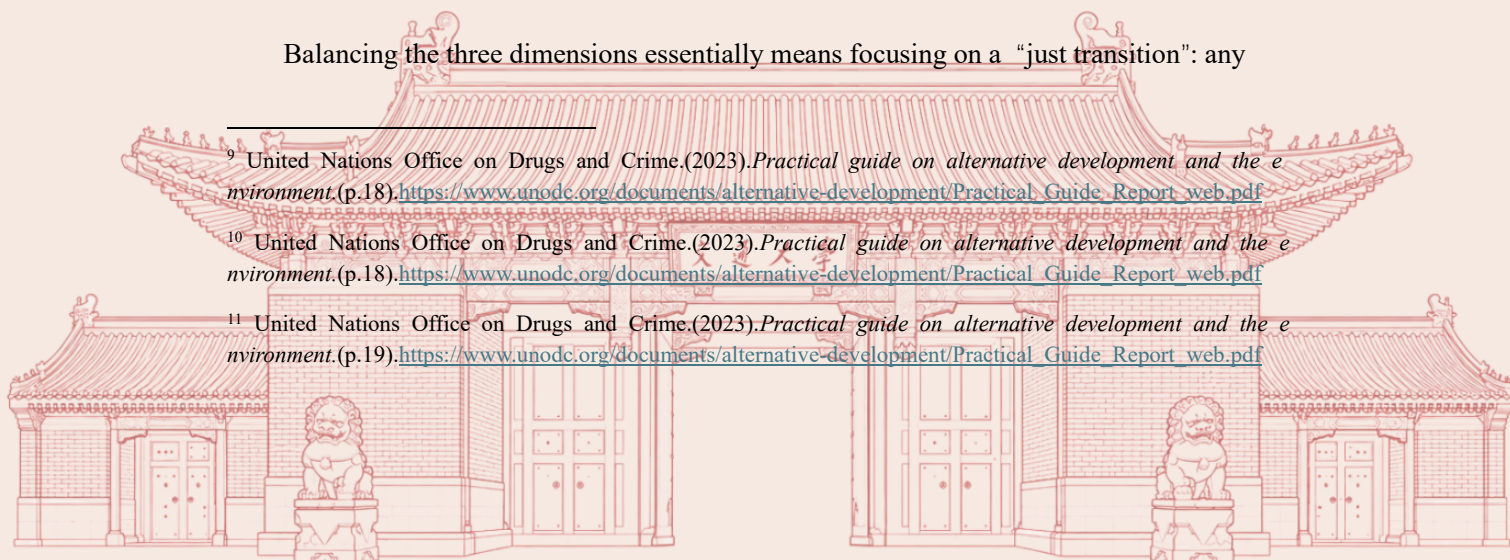
Sustainability is the central concept in AD. It includes all three dimensions: social, environmental, and economic—often referred to as people, planet, and profit. Taking these dimensions into account simultaneously means that AD must navigate both synergies and trade-offs. The promotion of practices that contribute to environmental preservation or restoration can neither ignore the well-being of people and communities nor the economic value-added needed to ensure long-term sustainability.¹¹

Balancing the three dimensions essentially means focusing on a “just transition”: any

⁹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2023).*Practical guide on alternative development and the environment* (p.18).https://www.unodc.org/documents/alternative-development/Practical_Guide_Report_web.pdf

¹⁰ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2023).*Practical guide on alternative development and the environment* (p.18).https://www.unodc.org/documents/alternative-development/Practical_Guide_Report_web.pdf

¹¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2023).*Practical guide on alternative development and the environment* (p.19).https://www.unodc.org/documents/alternative-development/Practical_Guide_Report_web.pdf



shift towards more sustainable and environmentally friendly livelihoods should be equitable and fair for all stakeholders involved, from individual farmers to local communities, companies, and governments. Just transition means working towards the twin goals of improving the lives of local communities significantly and fairly while reducing carbon emissions at the same time. For AD, this entails taking into account the needs and concerns of all stakeholders while ensuring that the positive and negative social and economic consequences of environmental mainstreaming are shared equitably. Without such a granular approach, interventions may have very different outcomes for women, youth, or specific ethnic or indigenous groups. Failing to create a just transition is likely to generate resistance to change, opposition to new projects or innovations, and may even result in social tensions and conflict.¹²

2.2.4 Conclusion

The core objectives and principles of AD reflect a mature understanding of drug control as a development challenge. AD is not simply about replacing illicit crops; it is about transforming livelihoods, empowering communities, protecting the environment, and strengthening governance. Its guiding principles—people-centredness, local ownership, long-term commitment, land rights, local adaptation, transparency, incentive-based design, public-private partnership, evidence-based monitoring, and environmental mainstreaming—provide the normative foundation for delegates at this conference. They also frame the central tension that will animate debate: how to balance drug control objectives with sustainable development, environmental protection, and social justice in a rapidly changing world.

¹² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2023).*Practical guide on alternative development and the environment*. (p.20).https://www.unodc.org/documents/alternative-development/Practical_Guide_Report_web.pdf



3. International Framework & Policy Evolution

AD begins with a practical question: how can communities that rely on illicit crops make a living legally, and continue to do so once outside support ends? International drug policy has gradually made more room for the conditions behind cultivation, including poverty, market access, community participation and environmental pressures. The drug control conventions remain the legal foundation, but later policy documents have put development alongside enforcement as a way of pursuing their aims.

3.1 International Drug Control Convention System

Three conventions underpin international drug control. The Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961, as amended by the 1972 Protocol, regulates narcotic drugs and their production and distribution. Subject to the Convention's provisions, Article 4(c) generally confines the production, manufacture, trade, possession and use of controlled drugs to medical and scientific purposes. Its rules on opium poppy, coca bush and cannabis explain the prominence of those plants in discussions of AD. The treaty does not, however, prescribe a programme of rural development or a particular replacement crop.¹³

The Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971 extends international controls to another group of substances, including many manufactured drugs. It is a reminder that illicit agriculture is only one part of the drug problem. Helping a household leave coca or opium cultivation does not address every stage of manufacture, distribution or consumption. AD belongs within a wider response that also includes prevention, treatment and appropriate measures against trafficking. The 1971 Convention itself offers no detailed plan for replacing illicit crops.¹⁴

Article 14 of the 1988 United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances provides the clearest treaty basis for linking drug control

¹³ Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, March 30, 1961, 520 U.N.T.S. 151 (as amended by the 1972 Protocol). https://www.unodc.org/pdf/convention_1961_en.pdf

¹⁴ Convention on Psychotropic Substances, February 21, 1971, 1019 U.N.T.S. 175. <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%201019/volume-1019-I-14956-English.pdf>

and development. Paragraph 2 calls for appropriate measures against illicit cultivation, while requiring respect for fundamental human rights and due regard for environmental protection and traditional licit uses supported by historical evidence. Paragraph 3(a) allows cooperation in integrated rural development to establish economically viable alternatives, taking account of markets, resources and socioeconomic conditions. These qualifications bring the circumstances of farming communities directly into the legal framework.¹⁵

The conventions leave much of the work of implementation to governments. Agencies must coordinate, households need support while new activities become productive, and proposed livelihoods must make economic sense. Seedlings alone are of little use to a farmer who cannot afford to wait for a harvest or take produce to market. At the same time, development assistance does not replace action against trafficking networks. Lasting change depends on both credible legal opportunities and public institutions that can act effectively without compromising rights.

3.2 Overview of Core Policy Documents

The 1998 action plan and the move beyond crop substitution

The General Assembly's twentieth special session in 1998 gave AD an influential definition. The Action Plan on International Cooperation on the Eradication of Illicit Drug Crops and on Alternative Development, set out in section E of resolution S-20/4, described it as a process using specially designed rural development measures to prevent and eliminate illicit cultivation. It situated those measures within sustained national development and recognized the social and cultural characteristics of affected communities. Calling it a process mattered: the aim was to change the conditions that sustain cultivation, rather than simply exchange one crop for another.¹⁶

That approach brought infrastructure, social organization and economic opportunity into the discussion. A remote farmer may grow an illicit crop because buyers come to the village, informal credit is available, or a legal crop will not cover transport costs. A viable programme

¹⁵ United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, December 20, 1988, 1582 U.N.T.S. 95 (art. 14, paras. 2-3). https://www.incb.org/documents/PRECURSORS/1988_CONVENTION/1988Convention_E.pdf

¹⁶ United Nations General Assembly. (1998). *Action Plan on International Cooperation on the Eradication of Illicit Drug Crops and on Alternative Development* (A/RES/S-20/4, sect. E, preamble). <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/261586>

has to examine the livelihood as a whole. The 1998 framework made these concerns explicit in international policy while retaining the prevention and reduction of illicit cultivation as the programme's particular purpose.¹⁷

The 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action

The 2009 Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem reaffirmed AD as part of a balanced response. Its attention to development interventions and their coordination reflected a growing recognition that short projects and agricultural inputs alone would not produce lasting change. It encouraged governments to connect AD with broader development efforts and to improve cooperation, financing and implementation.¹⁸

The timing of support is especially important. A household needs a credible path to legal income, while the government wants illicit cultivation to fall. Those aims can come into conflict if assistance arrives late or stops before a new activity begins to pay. Planning should cover the transition itself: immediate household needs, agricultural cycles and continuing access to services. No single timetable will fit every location.

The 2013 United Nations Guiding Principles

The United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development, adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 68/196 on 18 December 2013, brought earlier experience together in a common policy reference. International discussions in Thailand and the 2012 high-level conference in Lima helped shape them. The Principles link AD to poverty reduction, sustainable livelihoods and national development strategies. They also emphasize national ownership, international cooperation and the participation of affected communities.¹⁹

In practice, participation means allowing communities to help identify feasible activities and shape the projects that affect them. Legal livelihoods also need markets and support that lasts beyond the first delivery of assistance. Environmental effects cannot be left until later: a

¹⁷ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2023). *Practical guide on alternative development and the environment* (pp. 10–15). United Nations. https://www.unodc.org/documents/alternative-development/Practical_Guide_Report_web.pdf

¹⁸ United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs. (2009). *Political declaration and plan of action on international cooperation towards an integrated and balanced strategy to counter the world drug problem* (E/2009/28, chap. I, sect. C). <https://documents.un.org/api/symbol/access?l=en&s=E%2F2009%2F28&t=pdf>

¹⁹ United Nations General Assembly. (2013). *United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development* (A/RES/68/196, pp. 2–10). <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/765771>



programme that reduces illicit cultivation but depletes soil, water or forests weakens the basis of future income. The Principles set a common direction, though they are a General Assembly policy instrument, not a new treaty requiring the same directly enforceable programme in every State.²⁰

The Principles are useful at the negotiating table because they establish shared terms without dictating a single method. States can agree on participation and long-term support yet differ over crops, finance or the institutions that deliver assistance. Rather than restating those principles, a committee resolution could identify what forms of support would help States put them into practice.

The 2030 Agenda and the 2016 UNGASS outcome

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015, broadens the criteria by which these programmes can be judged. AD can support poverty reduction, food security, gender equality, decent work, environmental protection and inclusive institutions. The link to illicit drug economies remains essential; not every rural development project falls under this label. The Sustainable Development Goals nevertheless make clear why measures of success should include living conditions alongside drug-related indicators.²¹

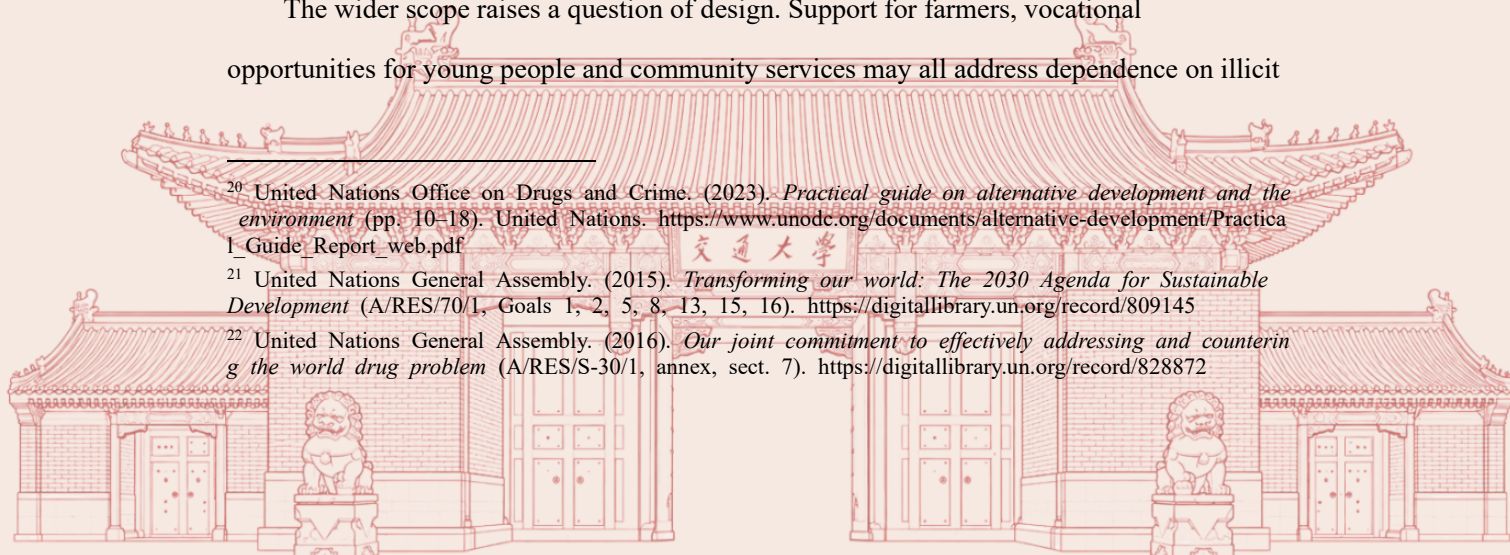
The 2016 General Assembly special session on the world drug problem took this approach further. Its outcome document, resolution S-30/1, offers operational recommendations on AD and cooperation at regional, interregional and international levels. Section 7 discusses socioeconomic conditions and sustainable livelihoods, including development-oriented measures in affected rural and urban areas. This widened the scope of discussion while retaining the established concern with communities engaged in illicit cultivation.²²

The wider scope raises a question of design. Support for farmers, vocational opportunities for young people and community services may all address dependence on illicit

²⁰ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2023). *Practical guide on alternative development and the environment* (pp. 10–18). United Nations. https://www.unodc.org/documents/alternative-development/Practical_Guide_Report_web.pdf

²¹ United Nations General Assembly. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (A/RES/70/1, Goals 1, 2, 5, 8, 13, 15, 16). <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/809145>

²² United Nations General Assembly. (2016). *Our joint commitment to effectively addressing and counterin g the world drug problem* (A/RES/S-30/1, annex, sect. 7). <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/828872>



economies, but they involve different beneficiaries, institutions and measures of progress. Proposals should therefore specify the connection to the drug economy and identify the resources and expertise needed to carry them out.

3.3 Recent Policy Developments

Environmental protection has become more visible in recent CND discussions. Resolution 65/1 of 2022 promoted AD as a development-oriented drug control strategy while taking environmental protection into account.²³ Resolution 66/4 of 2023 placed further emphasis on sustainability and inclusion.²⁴ Both point to an interest in how programmes operate and who benefits from them, as well as whether cultivation declines.

UNODC's 2023 Practical Guide on Alternative Development and the Environment turns that policy interest into options for project design. It discusses sustainable farming, forest conservation, carbon credits and payments for environmental services. The guide cautions against assuming that any legal replacement activity is environmentally sound: it may still put pressure on forests, consume scarce water or expose households to new financial risks. Environmental choices should be assessed locally and built into projects from the outset.²⁵

Work is also under way to complement the 2013 Guiding Principles. CND resolution 68/3 initiated the process in March 2025,²⁶ and the tenth Expert Group Meeting on Alternative Development, held in Lima from 5 to 7 November 2025, contributed to it. The CND's report on its sixty-ninth session records the recommendation for General Assembly adoption of the Appendix to Complement the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development in March 2026.²⁷

²³ United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs. (2022). *Promoting alternative development as a development-oriented drug control strategy, taking into account measures to protect the environment* (Resolution 65/1, E/2022/28). <https://documents.un.org/api/symbol/access?l=en&s=E%2F2022%2F28&t=pdf>

²⁴ United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs. (2023). *Promoting alternative development as a development-oriented drug control strategy that is sustainable and inclusive* (Resolution 66/4). https://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CND/Drug_Resolutions/2020-2029/2023/Res_66_4_2305857E.pdf

²⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2023). *Practical guide on alternative development and the environment* (pp. 8–11, 13, 18–21). United Nations. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/alternative-development/practical-guide.html>

²⁶ United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs. (2025). *Complementing the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development* (Resolution 68/3, E/2025/28, chap. I, sect. B). <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4082961>

²⁷ United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs. (2026). *Report on the sixty-ninth session* (E/2026/28-E/CN.7/2026/12, chap. I, sect. A; chap. V, sect. B, para. 142). <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4115447>

The Appendix calls for climate-sensitive, gender-responsive and community-driven approaches to a sustainable transition away from illicit economies. It builds on the 2013 framework while giving newer concerns more explicit attention. This recommendation is a policy milestone, not evidence that national programmes have already implemented its recommendations or achieved measurable results.²⁸

For this committee, the question is how to make these commitments workable. Environmental safeguards require funding and local expertise; meaningful participation takes time; and wider goals call for suitable indicators. A resolution might ask UNODC to support voluntary pilots, share experience across programmes and help States develop measures that fit local circumstances. Such cooperation would allow testing and adjustment without imposing a uniform model.

3.4 Overview of Key Actors and Positions

Member States set national policy, allocate resources and coordinate the agencies responsible for agriculture, development, security and the environment. The CND is the intergovernmental forum for drug policy; UNODC provides research, technical assistance and support for cooperation.²⁹ Those roles matter in this simulation. Proposals directed at UNODC can address assistance, coordination and knowledge-sharing, but the Office cannot independently change a State's land laws or amend the drug control conventions.³⁰

States with experience in AD bring different priorities to the table. Thailand's programmes show the importance of long-term livelihood support and of linking economic activities with forest management. Colombia's framework for voluntary substitution addresses the poverty and marginalization of affected rural families.³¹ Peru's conservation projects illustrate ways to combine forest protection with local income.³² These experiences can inform negotiations, but none amounts to a fixed national position across every programme.

²⁸ United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs. (2026). *Report on the sixty-ninth session* (E/2026/28-E/CN.7/2026/12, chap. I, sect. A, annex). <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4115447>

²⁹ United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs. (2026). *Report on the sixty-ninth session* (E/2026/28-E/CN.7/2026/12, chap. I, sect. A). <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4115447>

³⁰ Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, March 30, 1961, 520 U.N.T.S. 151 (as amended by the 1972 Protocol, arts. 5, 8, 47). https://www.unodc.org/pdf/convention_1961_en.pdf

³¹ Presidencia de la República de Colombia. (2017, May 29). *Decreto-Ley 896 de 2017: Por el cual se crea el Programa Nacional Integral de Sustitución de Cultivos de Uso Ilícito (PNIS)* (art. 2). https://www.cancilleria.gov.co/sites/default/files/Normograma/docs/decreto_0896_2017.htm

³² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2023). *Practical guide on alternative development and the*

Germany, Peru and Thailand have also helped sustain international exchange on AD.³³

After the CND's March 2026 recommendation, the European Union reaffirmed its support for people-centred, human rights-based and development-oriented drug policies, including implementation of the complemented Guiding Principles.³⁴ Donors and market countries can influence what programmes can finance and sell. Decisions about domestic policy, however, remain with the countries implementing them.

Community organizations, Indigenous Peoples, women's groups and producer cooperatives know how livelihoods and land use work locally. Businesses can offer buyers and processing capacity, though contracts must account for prices, risk-sharing and bargaining power. Environmental and development institutions bring other expertise. These actors do not form fixed negotiating blocs. States may agree on the goal of sustainable livelihoods while disagreeing about timing, finance, scope or evaluation. Delegates should build national positions from official statements and domestic policy, then use the cases below to test what a proposed partnership could realistically achieve.³⁵

environment (pp. 43–48). United Nations. https://www.unodc.org/documents/alternative-development/Practical_Guide_Report_web.pdf

³³ United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs. (2026). *Report on the sixty-ninth session* (E/2026/28-E/CN.7/2026/12, chap. V, sect. B, paras. 142–150). <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4115447>

³⁴ European External Action Service. (2026, March 13). *EU statement at CND69 after adoption of resolution on Alternative Development, 13 March 2026*. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/vienna-international-organisations/cu-statement-cnd69-after-adoption-resolution-alternative-development-13-march-2026_en

³⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2023). *Practical guide on alternative development and the environment* (pp. 10–11, 20–24, 31–34). United Nations. https://www.unodc.org/documents/alternative-development/Practical_Guide_Report_web.pdf

4. Global Practices

Alternative development takes different forms across countries and communities. The cases below show how public authorities, producers and international partners have tried to build legal livelihoods. They also show the limits of transferring a model from one setting to another. Security, land rights, climate, market access and institutional capacity affect what can be done. The useful question is which parts of an approach travel well, and what conditions they need to work.

4.1 UNODC's Alternative Development Work

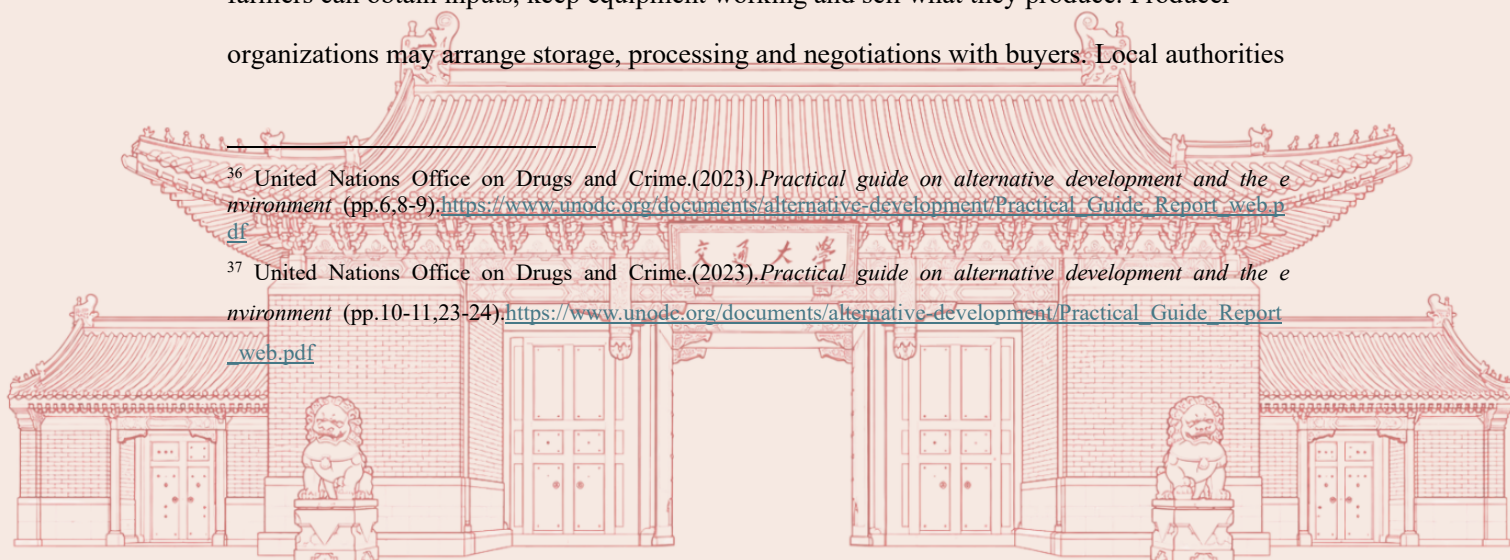
UNODC's work consists of country and local interventions, not one uniform global project. It helps public authorities and communities develop legal sources of income, organize producers and reach markets. Its 2023 Practical Guide draws on experience from Afghanistan, Bolivia, Colombia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Peru and Thailand, as well as environmental practices elsewhere. An example appearing in the guide should not automatically be described as a UNODC-funded alternative development project.³⁶

Projects generally begin by learning how participating households live. Income and food needs, debt, access to land and services, and relationships with buyers all affect what a family can take on. Improved farming may be the right answer in one place; processing, small businesses, paid services or a mix of activities may work better in another. This assessment prevents a programme from treating households as interchangeable or assuming that a profitable crop can by itself overcome exclusion.³⁷

The different forms of support then have to reinforce one another. Training helps when farmers can obtain inputs, keep equipment working and sell what they produce. Producer organizations may arrange storage, processing and negotiations with buyers. Local authorities

³⁶ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2023).*Practical guide on alternative development and the environment* (pp.6,8-9).https://www.unodc.org/documents/alternative-development/Practical_Guide_Report_web.pdf

³⁷ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2023).*Practical guide on alternative development and the environment* (pp.10-11,23-24).https://www.unodc.org/documents/alternative-development/Practical_Guide_Report_web.pdf



can improve services or clarify land-use rules; international partners may supply finance and expertise. In the end, communities and national institutions must be able to sustain the arrangements. The number of training sessions held or seedlings delivered says little on its own about whether household income is secure.

Environmental measures can be introduced at farm and community levels. Better soil management, more careful chemical use and water conservation may help individual producers. Communities can agree on forest management and land use, while conservation payments may add income where the rules and partners are credible. The guide favours gradual changes suited to local conditions. A complicated certification or financing scheme can become another burden if households are still struggling to meet basic production and income needs.³⁸

4.2 Country Case Studies

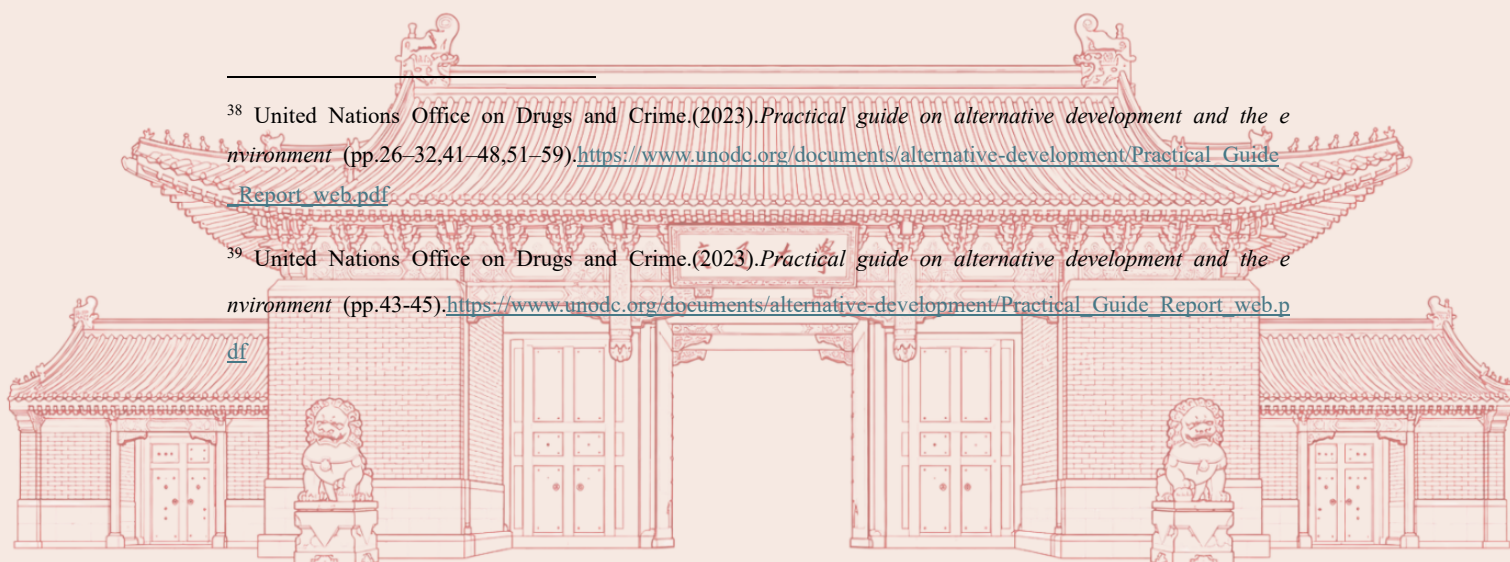
Thailand and the integration of livelihoods with forest management

Thailand's Doi Tung programme shows what a long-term approach can look like in an area once associated with opium cultivation and environmental damage. UNODC's Practical Guide describes how the Mae Fah Luang Foundation combined livelihood development with reforestation and agreed land use. Land was differentiated for conservation, economic activity and community subsistence. Coffee and macadamia were introduced in already deforested areas, while forest recovery supported the wider landscape.³⁹

The arrangement gave people a way to earn a living while protecting forests. A conservation rule is difficult to sustain if it simply removes access to food, fuel or income. Differentiated land use instead makes those needs part of the negotiation: communities and authorities must agree who may use each area, for what purpose and under what conditions.

³⁸ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2023).*Practical guide on alternative development and the environment* (pp.26–32,41–48,51–59).https://www.unodc.org/documents/alternative-development/Practical_Guide_Report_web.pdf

³⁹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2023).*Practical guide on alternative development and the environment* (pp.43-45).https://www.unodc.org/documents/alternative-development/Practical_Guide_Report_web.pdf



Forest management can then be planned with the local economy, rather than imposed after production choices have been made.

The guide describes the sequence in Doi Tung as survival, sufficiency and sustainability. Basic needs and income came first; more demanding economic and environmental commitments followed as households gained stability. Trees, processing facilities and market relationships take time to produce returns, which is why the transition had to be managed over years. That principle may travel more readily than the specific programme: reproducing Doi Tung's trajectory would require patient finance, capable institutions and trust, particularly difficult to secure in an insecure area or a short project.⁴⁰

Community forest carbon projects offer a related example from Thailand. In the model described by the guide, private funding helps pay for measurement, registration and village development in return for forest protection. The example shows how conservation might benefit communities, though it does not establish that every participating village previously cultivated illicit crops. Nor should carbon revenue be treated as a main household income stream without careful assessment: monitoring costs, long time horizons and changing market prices can make returns uncertain.⁴¹

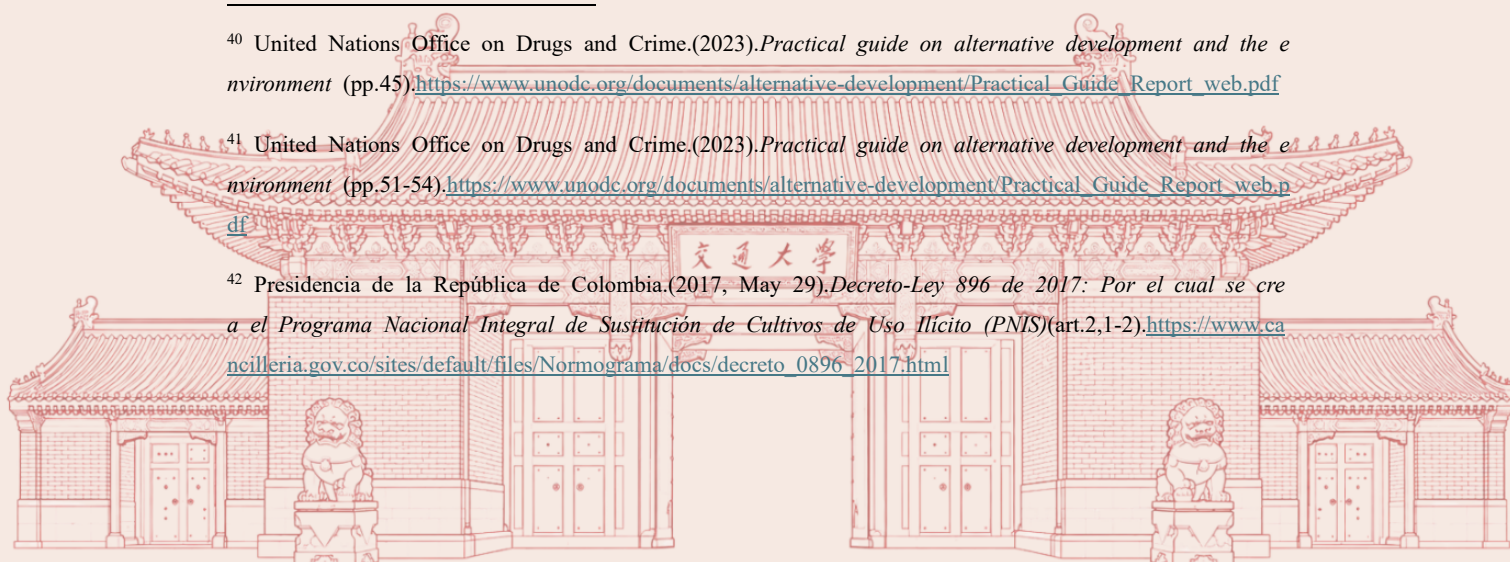
Colombia and voluntary substitution within wider rural development

Colombia's National Comprehensive Programme for the Substitution of Crops Used for Illicit Purposes, or PNIS, was established by Decree-Law 896 of 2017. Its stated purpose connects voluntary substitution with projects that address poverty and marginalization among rural families whose subsistence depends on illicit crops. The law thus treats a family's economic circumstances as central to substitution. Participation entails a broader development commitment, not simply an agreement to remove a crop.⁴²

⁴⁰ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2023).*Practical guide on alternative development and the environment* (pp.45).https://www.unodc.org/documents/alternative-development/Practical_Guide_Report_web.pdf

⁴¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2023).*Practical guide on alternative development and the environment* (pp.51-54).https://www.unodc.org/documents/alternative-development/Practical_Guide_Report_web.pdf

⁴² Presidencia de la República de Colombia.(2017, May 29).*Decreto-Ley 896 de 2017: Por el cual se crea el Programa Nacional Integral de Sustitución de Cultivos de Uso Ilícito (PNIS)*(art.2,1-2).https://www.cancilleria.gov.co/sites/default/files/Normograma/docs/decreto_0896_2017.html



That commitment needs to be credible to the families asked to join. They must know what assistance will arrive, when it will arrive and how a new activity can begin to pay. Temporary support can carry a family through the transition; lasting income depends on viable production, buyers and public services. If those pieces do not come together, the household may sign a substitution agreement without escaping the insecurity that led it to cultivate the illicit crop. This is a risk inherent in programme design, not a claim that all participating families have experienced the same outcome.

Land rights also matter. The UNODC guide describes cooperation with Colombia's National Land Agency on land and use rights in areas including Antioquia, Magdalena and Cesar. It reports that greater clarity supported legal agroforestry and stronger commitments to sustainable land management. Farmers can more readily invest in activities with delayed returns when they can expect to use and benefit from the land. These examples do not show that land-tenure problems have been resolved throughout Colombia.⁴³

Colombia's case links voluntary participation to the State's ability to deliver. A resolution on substitution would be stronger if it addressed coordination, predictable assistance and the monitoring of livelihoods. Environmental commitments also depend on workable rights and incentives. The lesson is less about copying PNIS than about providing the institutional and economic support needed to honour agreements with communities.

Peru and the connection between forest conservation and income

Peru offers examples of production and conservation being planned together. The UNODC guide describes agroforestry in landscapes around Tambopata and Bahuaja Sonene, including fine aromatic cocoa grown with banana and timber trees. Agroforestry combines trees with crops or livestock; where conditions are suitable, it can diversify output while helping maintain soil and habitat. Production must still comply with the rules for protected areas and surrounding land. A conservation project does not grant unrestricted permission to farm inside a national park.⁴⁴

⁴³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2023).*Practical guide on alternative development and the environment* (pp.20).https://www.unodc.org/documents/alternative-development/Practical_Guide_Report_web.pdf

⁴⁴ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2023).*Practical guide on alternative development and the environment* (pp.42-46).https://www.unodc.org/documents/alternative-development/Practical_Guide_Report_web.p

A mix of products can spread risk and bring returns at different times, but it may also demand more labour and skills. Project planners need to consider what households can manage and what local buyers want. Cocoa, for example, is not a dependable alternative simply because it fits a conservation narrative. Quality, processing, transport and buyers must all be in place. The commercial and environmental sides of the project have to work together.

The guide also describes REDD+ projects associated with Peru's protected natural areas. REDD+ supports reductions in emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, along with forest conservation and sustainable management. In these examples, public authorities and implementing organizations use arrangements linked to carbon markets. They may offer financing ideas for alternative development, but a REDD+ project is not necessarily a drug control intervention. Any claimed alternative-development benefit needs a demonstrable connection to affected communities and their livelihoods.⁴⁵

What matters is how the benefits reach local people. Carbon revenue can be uncertain once administration, monitoring, prices and the distribution of proceeds are taken into account. Restrictions on conservation land can also affect access to resources. Transparent agreements and community participation are therefore important before such mechanisms are expanded. Peru's experience suggests that environmental finance can complement production and public investment, provided the costs are not shifted onto the households the programme is meant to help.

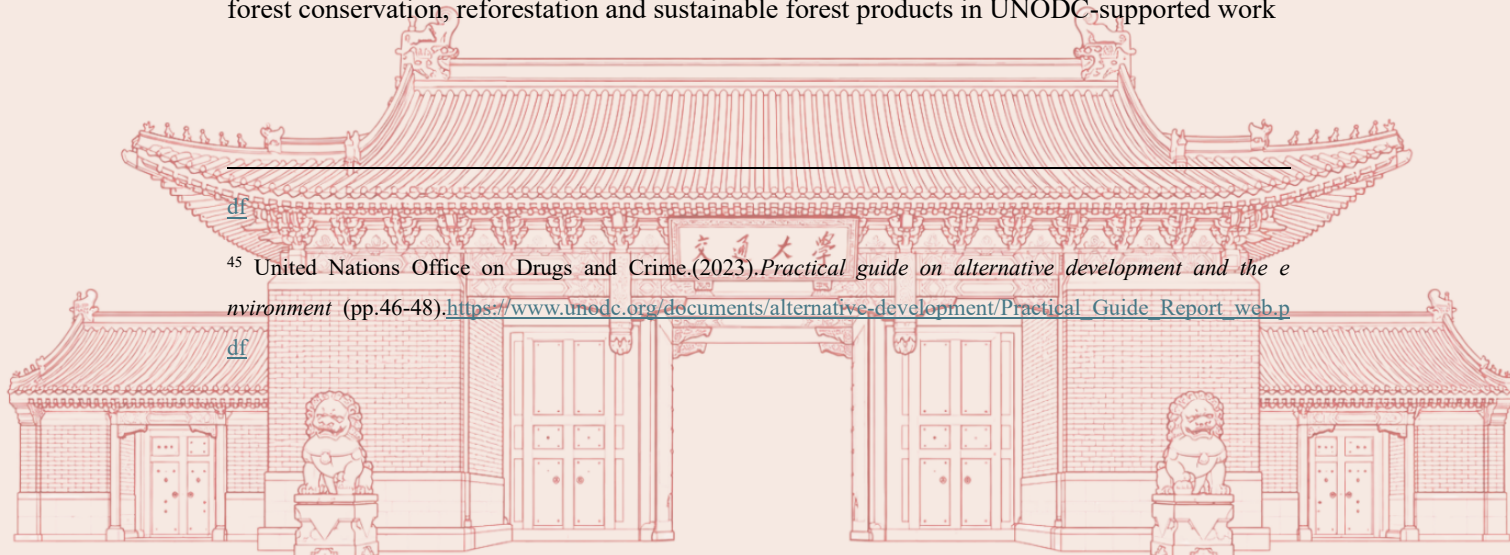
Myanmar and producer cooperatives as a route to markets

Myanmar's Green Gold Cooperative connects a move from opium cultivation to coffee with collective organization. UNODC's 2023 guide describes a cooperative of more than 1,000 farmers in Shan State and notes women's participation in its leadership. It also discusses forest conservation, reforestation and sustainable forest products in UNODC-supported work

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⁴⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2023).*Practical guide on alternative development and the environment* (pp.46-48).https://www.unodc.org/documents/alternative-development/Practical_Guide_Report_web.p

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in Myanmar. Coffee planting is thus one part of a wider set of economic and environmental activities.⁴⁶

In November 2025, UNODC reported that the cooperative's central coffee processing plant had been completed after a decade of work. The plant gives farmers more capacity to turn their crop into a marketable product. It is an important project milestone, though it does not establish that every member now earns a secure income or that cultivation has declined across Myanmar. The scale of any outcome claim should match the evidence available.⁴⁷

Cooperatives can help small producers combine output, meet quality requirements and negotiate with buyers. Processing can allow them to retain more value if the facility is well managed, maintained and supplied with enough demand. None of this follows automatically from collective ownership. Financial rules need to be understandable, and members, including women, need genuine opportunities to influence decisions that affect their livelihoods.

Afghanistan and the difference between reduced cultivation and livelihood security

Afghanistan shows why cultivation figures alone cannot measure development.

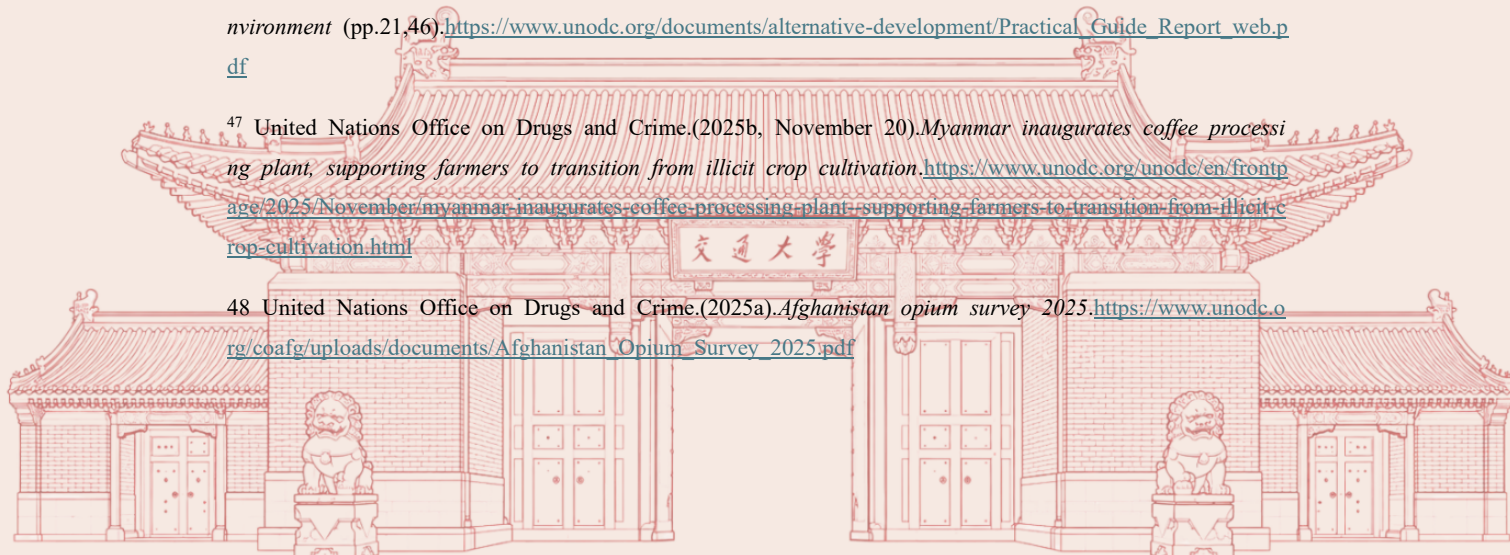
UNODC's 2025 Opium Survey estimated 10,200 hectares of opium poppy, down from 12,800 in 2024 and 232,000 in 2022. Cultivation has fallen sharply from its level before the ban announced in 2022. Those figures do not tell us whether affected households have found comparably secure legal incomes. Changes in cultivation and changes in welfare must be examined separately.⁴⁸

UNODC's 2023 Practical Guide describes options relevant to Afghanistan, including water and pest management, renewable energy and livestock activities. The range reflects the need to work with local production systems rather than select one replacement crop for every

⁴⁶ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2023).*Practical guide on alternative development and the environment* (pp.21,46).https://www.unodc.org/documents/alternative-development/Practical_Guide_Report_web.pdf

⁴⁷ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2025b, November 20).*Myanmar inaugurates coffee processing plant, supporting farmers to transition from illicit crop cultivation*.<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2025/November-myanmar-inaugurates-coffee-processing-plant-supporting-farmers-to-transition-from-illicit-crop-cultivation.html>

⁴⁸ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2025a).*Afghanistan opium survey 2025*.https://www.unodc.org/coafig/uploads/documents/Afghanistan_Opium_Survey_2025.pdf



district. It also notes a possible trade-off with solar-powered pumping: cheaper energy can encourage greater use of scarce water. Each proposal needs to be assessed for effects beyond the problem it is intended to solve.⁴⁹

The case separates a short-term enforcement result from a durable change in livelihoods. Assistance should account for food security, access to productive resources and a family's ability to sustain new activities. Monitoring cannot stop at one locality, since drug markets can shift across borders. The fall in cultivation matters, but evidence of stable legal livelihoods is needed before it can be called a successful development transition.

4.3 Factors Contributing to Success and Lessons Learned

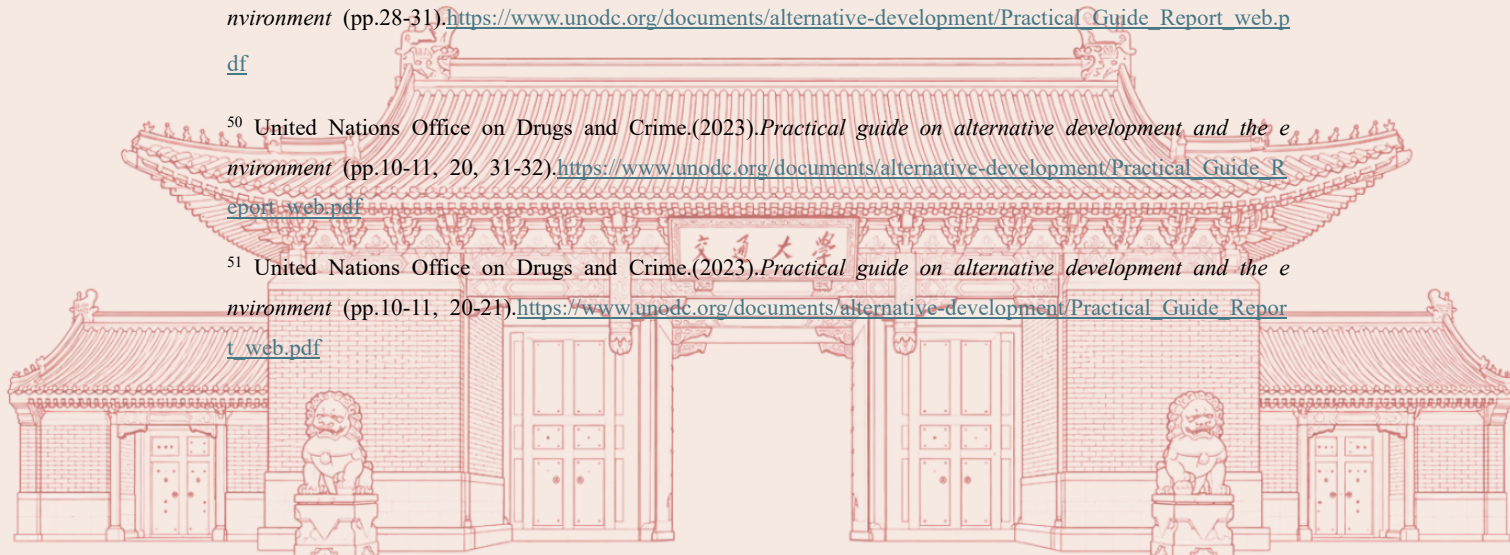
Across the cases, a first requirement is economic credibility. Households need help with immediate expenses while they develop activities that will keep earning. A market assessment, transport, processing or a producer organization may matter as much as the replacement crop. Programmes should also ask who bears the loss if a harvest fails or a buyer withdraws. An arrangement that looks efficient to an agency may be too risky for a family with little savings.⁵⁰

Participation is equally important, but it has to affect decisions and benefits. Communities should have a say in the activities chosen, understand the conditions of assistance and be able to raise problems during implementation. Women, Indigenous Peoples, tenants and households with fewer assets may not face the same barriers. Land and eligibility rules can determine who receives support. Benefits to a village or cooperative should not be assumed to reach all its members equally.⁵¹

⁴⁹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2023).*Practical guide on alternative development and the environment* (pp.28-31).https://www.unodc.org/documents/alternative-development/Practical_Guide_Report_web.pdf

⁵⁰ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2023).*Practical guide on alternative development and the environment* (pp.10-11, 20, 31-32).https://www.unodc.org/documents/alternative-development/Practical_Guide_Report_web.pdf

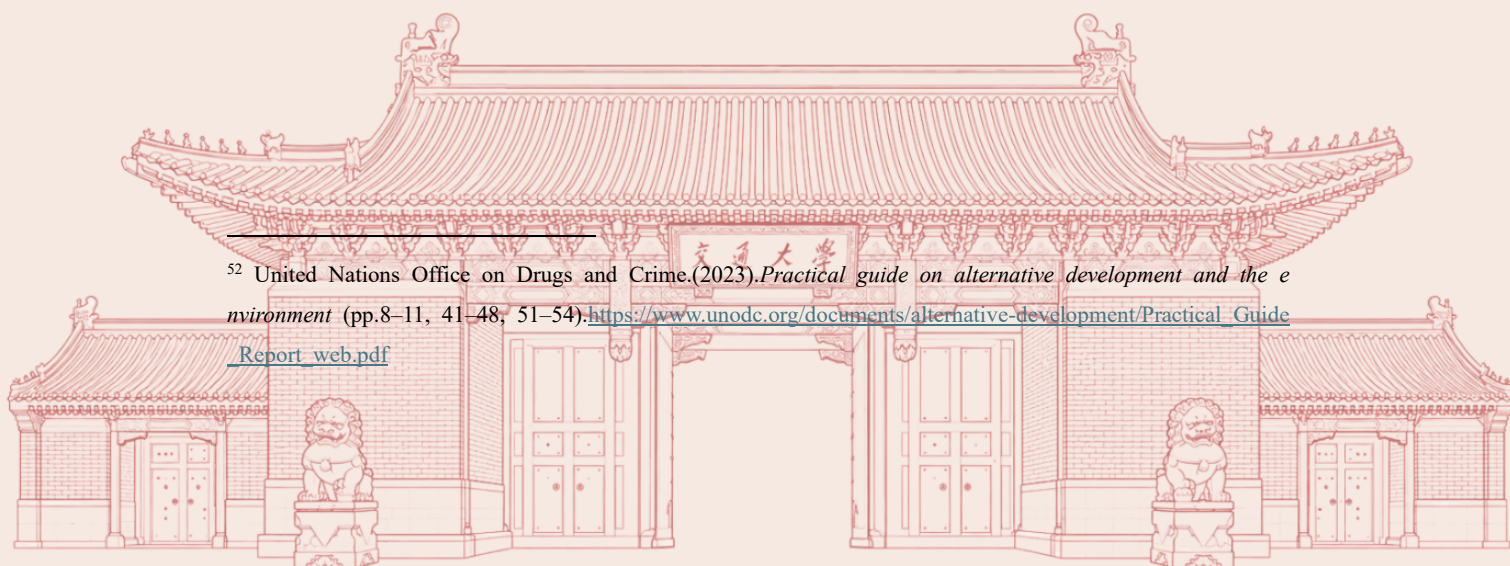
⁵¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2023).*Practical guide on alternative development and the environment* (pp.10-11, 20-21).https://www.unodc.org/documents/alternative-development/Practical_Guide_Report_web.pdf



Environmental goals work best when they are reflected in ordinary production choices. Land-use agreements, soil and water management, and appropriate combinations of trees and crops can protect the resources on which legal livelihoods depend. Certification and carbon finance may help in some settings, but only after costs, local capacity and likely returns have been assessed. As the UNODC guide suggests, practices from elsewhere are possibilities to investigate, not ready-made solutions.⁵²

Evaluation needs to follow households and landscapes over time. Do incomes become more reliable? Does food security improve? Do participants remain in legal activities, and are environmental gains maintained? Baselines and follow-up observations help distinguish what a programme delivered at the outset from what endured. Local progress should not be presented as a change in national or global drug markets without evidence. Cooperation that funds long-term support, leaves room for local choices and measures results transparently would give States a better basis for learning from these programmes and for answering to the communities they affect.

⁵² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2023).*Practical guide on alternative development and the environment* (pp.8–11, 41–48, 51–54).https://www.unodc.org/documents/alternative-development/Practical_Guide_Report_web.pdf



5. Current Challenges & Controversies

5.1 Gap in Capital and Scale

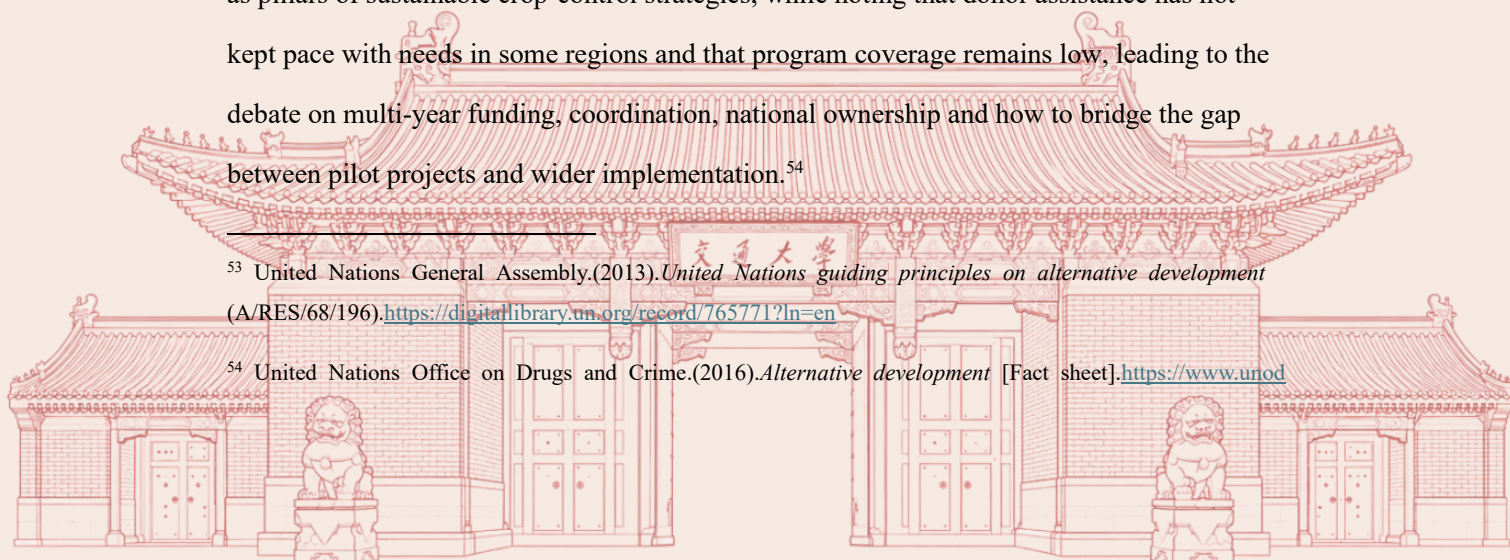
AD requires more than distributing seeds or introducing a replacement crop. A sustainable transition may depend on roads and transport, storage and processing facilities, agricultural extension, access to land, public services, producer organizations, credit and reliable buyers, which to some extent all relating to the costs. These interventions often require coordination among multiple public agencies, international organizations, donors, civil society and private sectors.

The United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development recognize that programs need adequate financial support, technical assistance and investment. They also call for viable market access, local participation and long-term international cooperation. The Principles describe AD as a long-term commitment whose results may take time to achieve. This creates a practical tension: governments are under pressure to reduce illicit cultivation, while livelihood programs may take years to establish productive capacity, infrastructure and dependable buyers.⁵³

Therefore, funding continuity is as important as the initial amount committed. A short grant cycle can end before local enterprises reach commercial scale or before roads, storage and processing facilities become operational. Another challenge lies in whether funding support is coordinated. Separate projects may fund training, infrastructure and market development on different timelines. If one component ends before the others are in place, the intended transition can stall. UNODC's 2016 fact sheet identifies financing and market access as pillars of sustainable crop-control strategies, while noting that donor assistance has not kept pace with needs in some regions and that program coverage remains low, leading to the debate on multi-year funding, coordination, national ownership and how to bridge the gap between pilot projects and wider implementation.⁵⁴

⁵³ United Nations General Assembly.(2013).*United Nations guiding principles on alternative development* (A/RES/68/196).<https://digitalibrary.un.org/record/765771?ln=en>

⁵⁴ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2016).*Alternative development* [Fact sheet].<https://www.unodc.org>



Earlier UNODC evaluations documented limited program coverage in illicit-crop areas and cautioned that aggregate cultivation statistics can conceal shifts between provinces or regions. A program may improve conditions in a particular district, while illegal cultivation, processing or trafficking remains active in neighboring locations. This makes it difficult to determine whether an intervention has reduced illicit activity overall, displaced it elsewhere, or improved livelihoods for only a small share of affected households.⁵⁵

Market access affects whether alternative livelihoods remain viable after external assistance ends. Farmers in remote areas may face high transport costs, limited storage, weak bargaining power and strict product standards. Illicit buyers may offer convenient farm-gate purchasing, whereas lawful crops may require transport to distant markets and compliance with high-quality standards. UNODC's earlier lessons-learned publication describes poor transport infrastructure in opium-growing areas of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand as a barrier to bringing legal products to market. It also notes that developing market opportunities and value-added products requires long-term investment and private-sector engagement.⁵⁶ The UNODC Practical Guide notes that private-sector partners can contribute technical knowledge, financing and market access, including support for certification. It also cautions that certification and other environmental measures may require additional work and resources. Projects therefore need to consider whether the anticipated price premium or market access is sufficient to justify those costs for participating farmers.⁵⁷

5.2 The Controversy over the Scope of Alternative Development

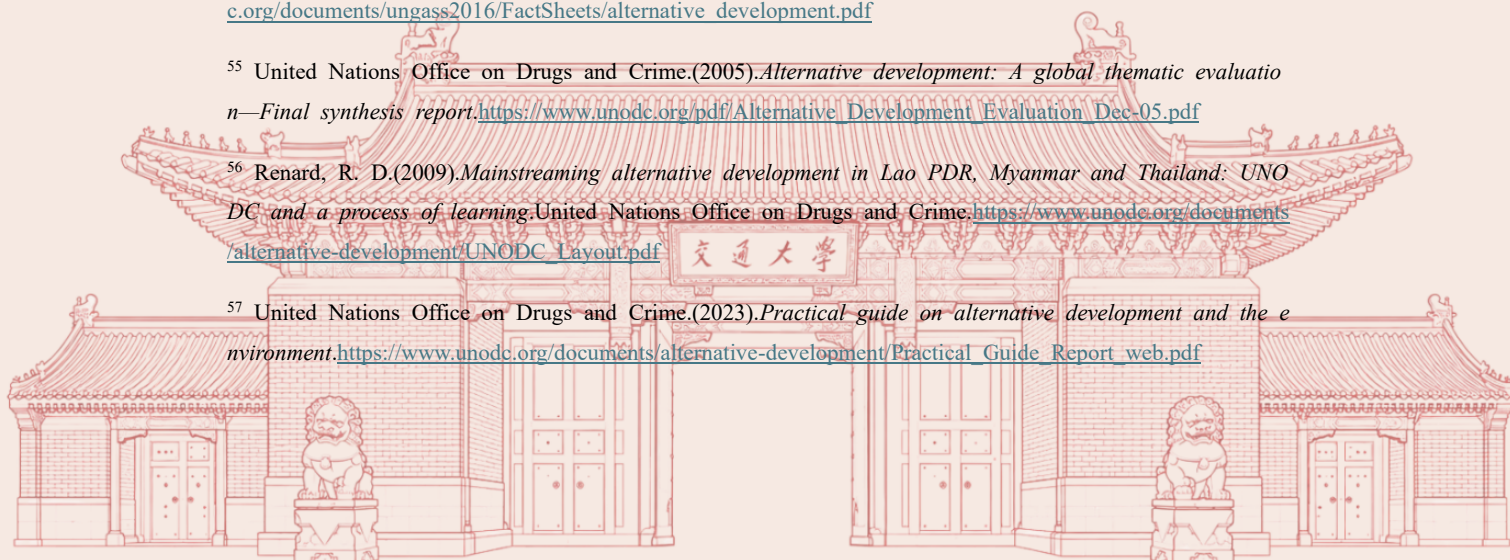
A central question is whether AD should be understood primarily as an intervention to reduce illicit crop cultivation or as part of broader rural development. The United Nations

[c.org/documents/ungass2016/FactSheets/alternative_development.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/ungass2016/FactSheets/alternative_development.pdf)

⁵⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2005).*Alternative development: A global thematic evaluation n—Final synthesis report*.https://www.unodc.org/pdf/Alternative_Development_Evaluation_Dec-05.pdf

⁵⁶ Renard, R. D.(2009).*Mainstreaming alternative development in Lao PDR, Myanmar and Thailand: UNODC and a process of learning*.United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.https://www.unodc.org/documents/alternative-development/UNODC_Layout.pdf

⁵⁷ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2023).*Practical guide on alternative development and the environment*.https://www.unodc.org/documents/alternative-development/Practical_Guide_Report_web.pdf



Guiding Principles support an integrated approach. They call for AD to be implemented alongside broader drug-control policies and to promote comprehensive development, social inclusion, poverty alleviation, rule of law, security and stability. They also call for environmental protection and attention to human rights.⁵⁸

The integrated approach suggests that a crop-substitution project alone cannot address other related issues, such as a lack of roads, public services, land security or market access. UNODC's survey material also notes that falling coffee prices slowed the impact of alternative crops in some areas, while violence prevented development activities from being implemented in another area.⁵⁹

At the same time, the broad scope raises questions about program boundaries, agency mandates, limited budgets distribution and further evaluation. The Guiding Principles call for environmental measures and conservation incentives in AD programs. Yet environmental outcomes can be difficult to attribute to one crop or one intervention. The UNODC World Drug Report 2016 reviewed research on coca cultivation and deforestation in Colombia and reported mixed findings: some analyses identified localized associations, while one model found coca cultivation was not a significant determinant of deforestation after accounting for other variables. This is a useful reminder that environmental claims should be supported by context-specific evidence and should distinguish direct crop impacts from broader factors such as land tenure, roads, population movement and illicit economies.⁶⁰

5.3 The Tension between Law Enforcement and Development

International law, such as the 1988 United Nations Convention, provides a framework for addressing illicit cultivation, requiring attention to human rights, traditional licit uses and environmental considerations.⁶¹ The United Nations Guiding Principles further appeal for

⁵⁸ United Nations General Assembly.(2013).*United Nations guiding principles on alternative development* (A/RES/68/196).<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/765771?ln=en>

⁵⁹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2005).*Peru coca survey for 2004*.https://www.unodc.org/pdf/andean/Part4_Peru.pdf

⁶⁰ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2016).*World Drug Report 2016*.https://www.unodc.org/documents/colombia/2016/WDR/WORLD_DRUG_REPORT_2016_web.pdf

⁶¹ United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, Decree

proper sequencing of development interventions alongside law enforcement and crop elimination.⁶² If eradication takes place before households have access to credible alternatives, affected families may lose income while infrastructure, services and markets are still absent. If development support is offered without addressing coercion, insecurity or the role of organized criminal groups, programs may be unable to operate or may not produce lasting change.

UNODC's Practical Guide adds that transitions can take place in marginalized areas with weak state presence, insecurity or armed conflict. It cautions that changes may expose community and indigenous leaders to risks, and that guarantee requirements can impose additional work or income costs.⁶³

UNODC's evaluation describes an early project phase in which some farmers viewed the program with suspicion because they associated it with forced eradication. Later phases they placed more emphasis on local organizations, community needs and productive and social infrastructure. Transparent agreements and meaningful consultation remain specific to that program and context.

5.4 Political and Geographical Factors

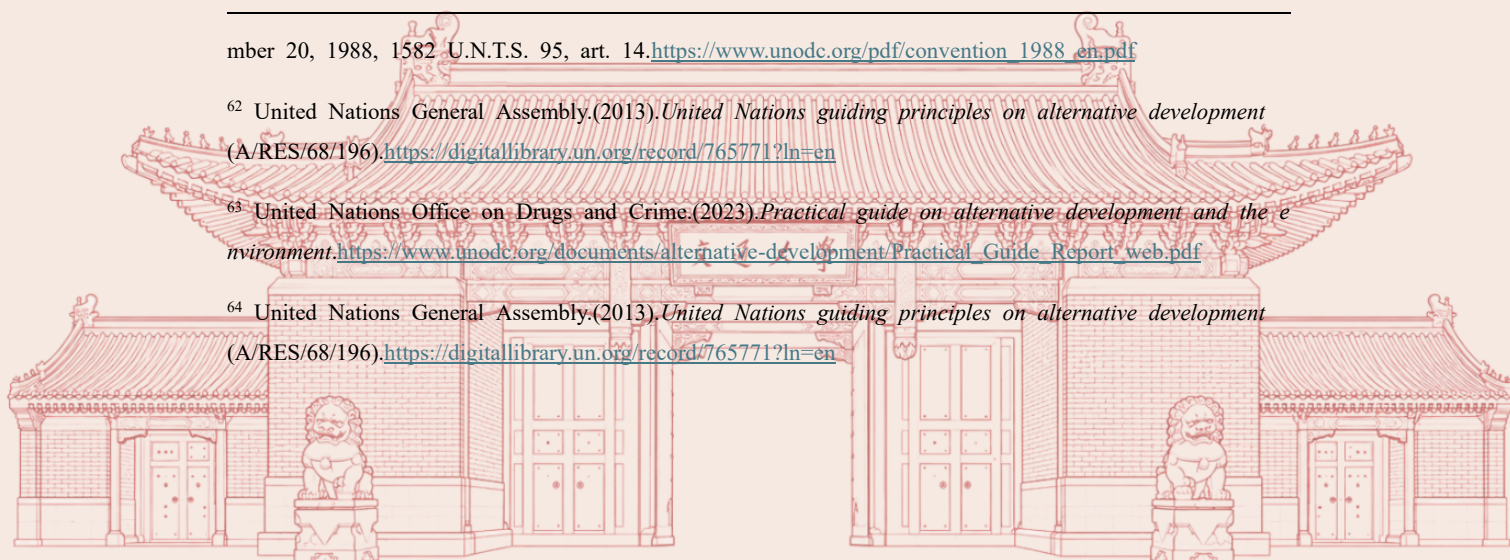
AD is implemented in places that may be remote, mountainous, forested, borderland or affected by conflict. These conditions affect transport costs, access to public services, the delivery of technical assistance and monitoring. The United Nations Guiding Principles specifically call for programs to consider geographic, demographic, cultural and social conditions, including climate, market access and political support.⁶⁴ The UNODC Practical

mber 20, 1988, 1582 U.N.T.S. 95, art. 14.https://www.unodc.org/pdf/convention_1988_en.pdf

⁶² United Nations General Assembly.(2013).*United Nations guiding principles on alternative development* (A/RES/68/196).<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/765771?ln=en>

⁶³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2023).*Practical guide on alternative development and the environment*.https://www.unodc.org/documents/alternative-development/Practical_Guide_Report_web.pdf

⁶⁴ United Nations General Assembly.(2013).*United Nations guiding principles on alternative development* (A/RES/68/196).<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/765771?ln=en>



Guide identifies local adaptation and flexibility as success factors, emphasizing that approaches should reflect local climate, soil, agricultural systems and community needs.⁶⁵

Changes in government priorities, weak coordination, delayed services or unstable funding can interrupt the transition. Programs may also operate in places where state institutions have limited reach or where insecurity restricts access. The Practical Guide also cautions against assuming that local people will adopt new environmental practices without incentives. It highlights the importance of fair prices, external technical support, local participation and realistic expectations.⁶⁶ In Peru, UNODC's global thematic evaluation documented how some oil-palm farmers faced an income gap after eradication because their newly planted trees had not yet matured.⁶⁷

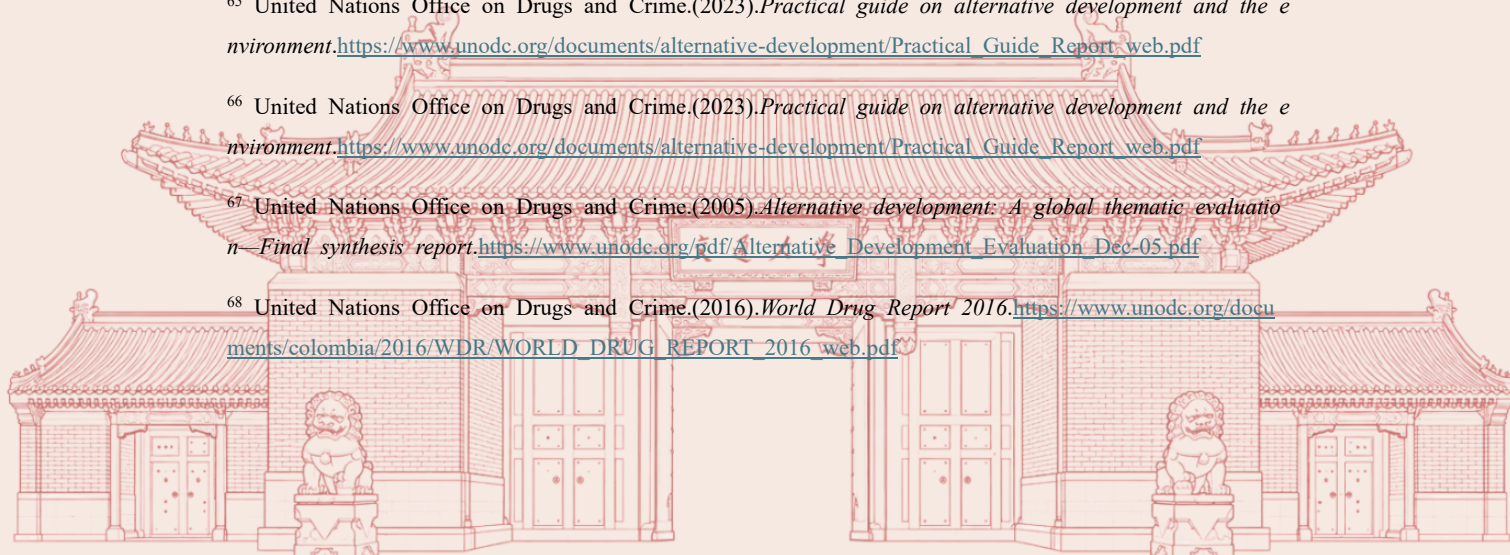
Where cultivation or associated activities move into forest or protected areas, programs need to consider land tenure, conservation rules, community rights and the economic incentives that shape land use. The UNODC analysis of coca and deforestation in Colombia found that relationships varied by location and model specification and cautioned against treating coca cultivation as the sole explanation for forest loss.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2023).*Practical guide on alternative development and the environment*.https://www.unodc.org/documents/alternative-development/Practical_Guide_Report_web.pdf

⁶⁶ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2023).*Practical guide on alternative development and the environment*.https://www.unodc.org/documents/alternative-development/Practical_Guide_Report_web.pdf

⁶⁷ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2005).*Alternative development: A global thematic evaluation—Final synthesis report*.https://www.unodc.org/pdf/Alternative_Development_Evaluation_Dec-05.pdf

⁶⁸ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2016).*World Drug Report 2016*.https://www.unodc.org/documents/colombia/2016/WDR/WORLD_DRUG_REPORT_2016_web.pdf



6. Suggestions of Conference Preparation

Delegates should prepare to negotiate proposals that connect development, drug control, human rights and environmental protection. The appropriate design of AD depends on each country's legal framework and on conditions in the communities concerned. And because country circumstances vary, delegates should distinguish between general international commitments and nationally specific policies.

6.1 Core Documents & Dataset

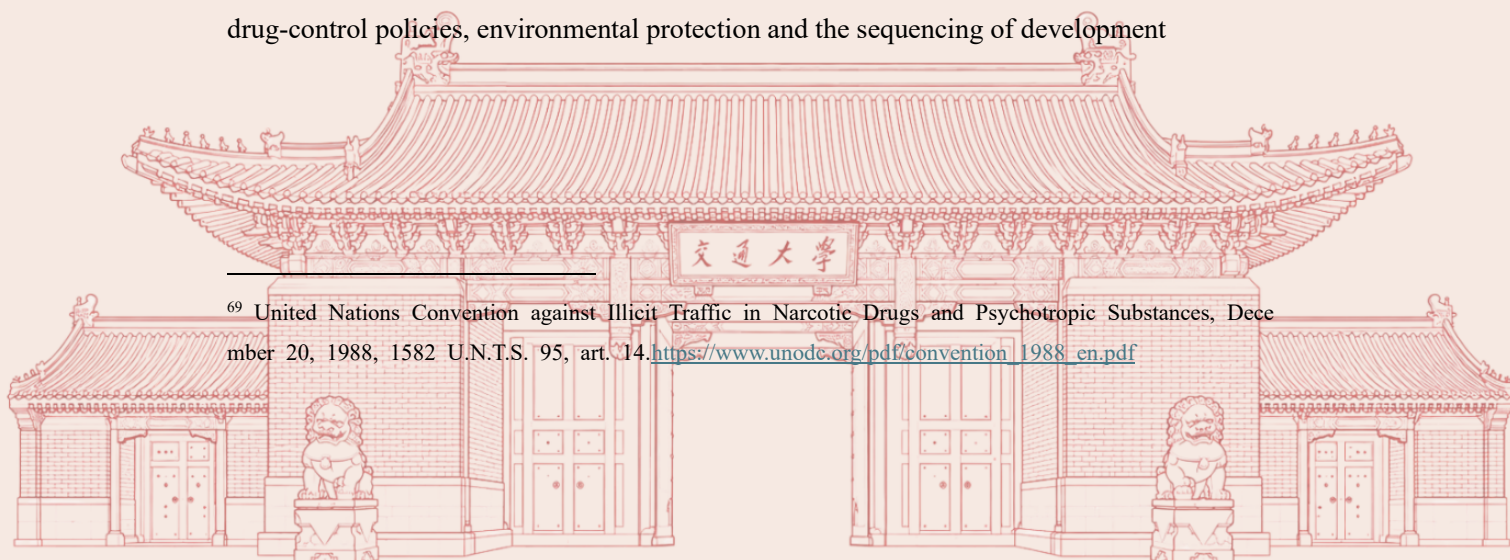
United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1988)

Under Article 14, parties are to take appropriate measures to prevent and eradicate illicit cultivation. Those measures must respect fundamental human rights and take due account of traditional licit uses where there is historical evidence, as well as environmental protection. It also suggests that cooperation on eradication may include support for integrated rural development leading to economically viable alternatives. It specifically identifies access to markets, available resources and prevailing socioeconomic conditions as factors to consider before such programs are implemented.⁶⁹

United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development

Adopted through General Assembly resolution 68/196, these principles center on community participation in program design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, as well as adequate financing and technical assistance, market access, coordination with broader drug-control policies, environmental protection and the sequencing of development

⁶⁹ United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, December 20, 1988, 1582 U.N.T.S. 95, art. 14. https://www.unodc.org/pdf/convention_1988_en.pdf



interventions. They provide international policy framework guidance rather than treaty obligations.⁷⁰

Practical Guide on Alternative Development and the Environment (2023)

It offers tools for examining how a proposed livelihood program might affect land, water, forests and biodiversity. It recommends placing community needs at the center of planning, adapting interventions to local conditions, establishing a baseline and being transparent about trade-offs. The Guide discusses options such as sustainable agriculture, agroforestry, forest conservation, certification, carbon credits and payments for environmental services. Its examples should be adapted to local conditions rather than treated as universal solutions.⁷¹

World Drug Report 2026 dataset

It provides a common statistical reference for discussing the scale and distribution of illicit cultivation and drug markets. Every figure should be cited with its crop, location and reference year. Cultivation trends alone do not demonstrate the effect of a particular AD program.⁷²

6.2 Seat research

Relative legal and policy framework

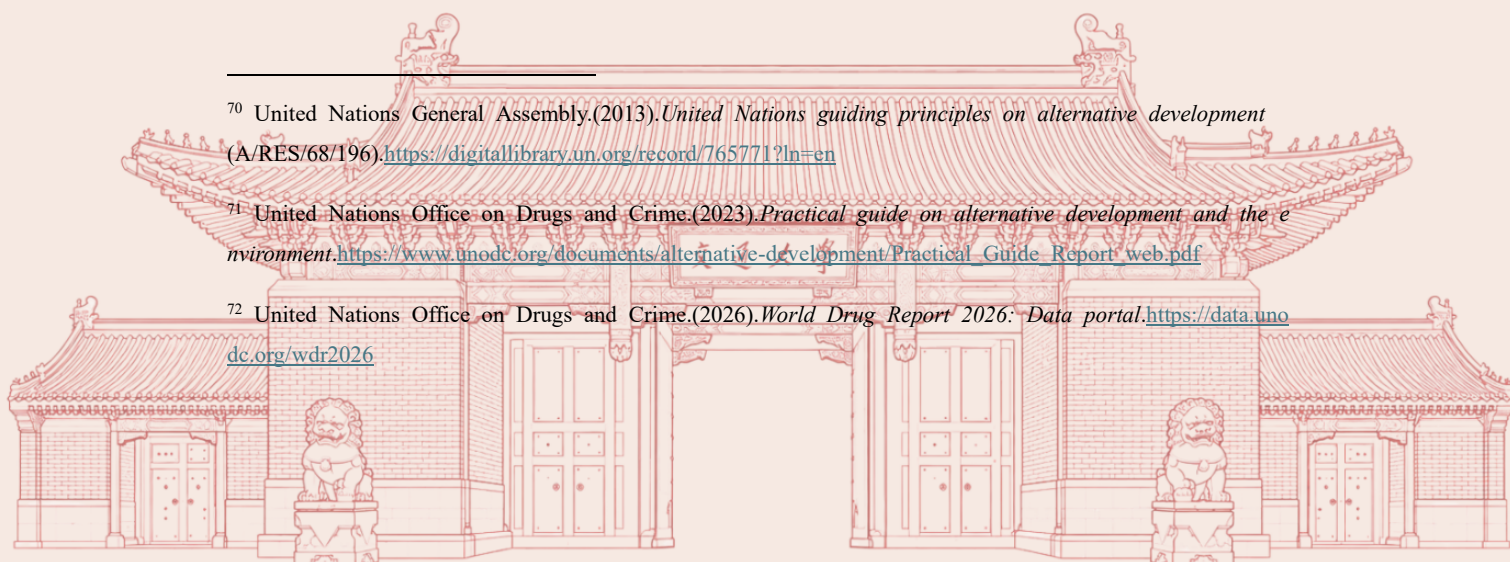
Examine its current drug-control laws, rural-development strategies, environmental policies and any national AD program. Determine which national institutions are responsible for implementation. Examine how national policy addresses traditional licit uses, land rights and relevant community participation.

Geographic and social context

⁷⁰ United Nations General Assembly.(2013).*United Nations guiding principles on alternative development* (A/RES/68/196).<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/765771?ln=en>

⁷¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2023).*Practical guide on alternative development and the environment*.https://www.unodc.org/documents/alternative-development/Practical_Guide_Report_web.pdf

⁷² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.(2026).*World Drug Report 2026: Data portal*.<https://data.unodc.org/wdr2026>



Locate affected communities and examine distance, transport, public services, land tenure, security and local community needs. National averages may conceal substantial differences between regions.

Livelihood and market conditions

Research the income opportunities available to affected households and the obstacles facing legal producers. Assess access to land, credit, training, storage, processing facilities and reliable buyers. Consider whether legal products can provide income that remains viable after project support ends.

Environmental baseline

Identify available information on forests, soil, water, biodiversity and current farming practices. Assess the possible environmental effects of proposed legal livelihoods as well as those associated with illicit cultivation. Replacing an illicit crop does not automatically prevent monocropping, excessive chemical use, water stress or agricultural expansion.

National priorities and constraints

Determine what the country has officially prioritized and what may limit implementation. Relevant issues may include the availability of national funding, dependence on external assistance, institutional capacity, competing development needs, security conditions and access to export markets.

Case study

Study documented example, explaining its context, activities, results and limitations. Pay attention to associate an observed outcome with complex cause of it.

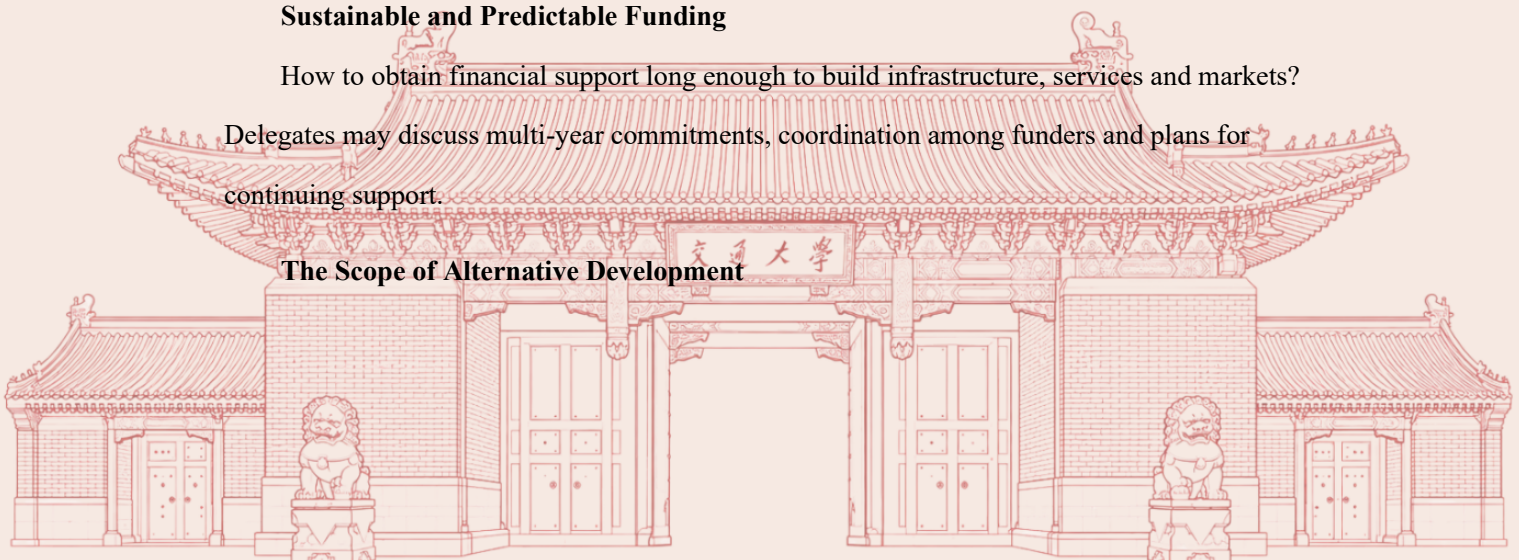
6.3 Possible discussing topics and directions

Sustainable and Predictable Funding

How to obtain financial support long enough to build infrastructure, services and markets?

Delegates may discuss multi-year commitments, coordination among funders and plans for continuing support.

The Scope of Alternative Development



Should AD concentrate on crop replacement, or also address land access, public services and employment beyond farming? Delegates may also consider when preventive AD is appropriate and how broader programs should be evaluated.

Market Access and the Competitiveness of Legal Livelihoods

What support would help producers reach buyers and earn a viable income? Discussion may cover cooperatives, transport, processing, quality standards and the risks of changing market prices.

Environmental Protection and Livelihoods

Which practices suit local ecology and farmers' needs? Delegates should consider both the benefits and costs of measures such as agroforestry, soil conservation and certification.

Geographic, Security and Political Conditions

How can programs operate in remote or insecure areas and continue across changes in government? Delegates should also consider how development assistance and enforcement can be coordinated consistently.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Data Quality

Which indicators should be used alongside cultivated area? Delegates may propose baselines and measures of household income, market access, participation and environmental change, together with regular review of the findings.

Regional and International Cooperation

How to organize assistance, improve lawful market access and respond to cross-border challenges?

