

## Documentation

### Dataset M11. Drug use and health interviews, Myanmar, 2021

Collection of interviews with drug users and stakeholders working in harm reduction programs and organisations, to explore the health implications and associations of drug use in Waingmaw and Bhamo townships in Kachin state. Interviews with drug users explore the daily life, health implications and access to harm reduction programmes with heroin injecting drug users and non-injecting opium and methamphetamine users. Interviews with people who implement harm reduction programs in Myanmar explore the impacts and innovations related to COVID-19 and the practicalities and negotiations involved in implementing harm reduction interventions in complex settings.

This research aligns with the new National Strategic Framework on Drugs and Health which was released by the Myanmar government in December 2020. The interviews seek to respond to evidence gaps related to how to enhance access to health services for people who inject/use drugs in Myanmar.

Dataset owners: London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) and the Asian Harm Reduction Network (AHRN) in Myanmar

#### Context

Myanmar is the second largest producer of illicit opium in the world, after Afghanistan. It is also a major manufacturer of methamphetamines, known locally as yaba. Drug production is concentrated in Shan State and Kachin State. The drug economy has become deeply embedded in the social histories and political economies of Myanmar's borderlands. Drug use has caused huge damage to local communities, through increasing levels of heroin-injecting and methamphetamine use.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the coup d'état by the Myanmar military in February 2021 affected the originally planned research on drug use and health. The LSHTM researchers teamed up with AHRN for them to carry out interviews in Myanmar, recruiting interviewees through the AHRN clinics.

#### Methodology

Qualitative semi-structured interviews were carried out using an interview topic guide. Drug users were recruited through the AHRN clinics. Interviews were carried out in Burmese, audio-recorded, then transcribed and translated to English.

Thirty-three interviews with drug users have been carried out, 19 in Waingmaw and 14 in Bhamo; of these 31 are heroin injecting drug users, 1 non-injecting opium user and 1 non-injecting methamphetamine user. Eight interviews with stakeholders working in harm reduction programs and organisations have been carried out.

#### Location

Waingmaw and Bhamo, Kachin state, Myanmar.

**Time period**

Interviews were carried out during June – September 2021.

**Anonymisation steps**

Transcripts have been anonymised by removing names of people, locations and names of organisations.