

Documentation

Dataset M3. Key informant interviews in Kachin state, 2019

Data collection resulting from face-to-face semi-structured interviews with 194 interviewees in Kachin State, northern Myanmar. Interviews have been carried out in Jinghpaw or Burmese and were audio-recorded when interviewees allowed this; else notes were taken. Summaries in the interview language have been written out for 189 interviews and in English for 188 interviews. A selection of 20 interviews have been transcribed and 39 translated to English (25 as text and 14 as audio recording).

The dataset consists of summaries, transcripts and translations, a data list providing demographic characteristics and context information for the interviews.

Dataset owner: Kachinland Research Centre (KRC) and SOAS.

Context

The upland areas of Kachin and Shan are perfectly suited to the cultivation of opium poppy, which has provided livelihood security in impoverished rural areas but also became a financial pillar to sustain armed conflict. In recent decades, the relationship between drugs and conflict has become more complex. The issue has extended beyond opium cultivation to the manufacture and supply of other drugs, such as methamphetamines. Local communities are some of those most vulnerable to the harms related to changing patterns of drug use, including increasing levels of heroin-injecting and methamphetamine use.

Both Shan State and Kachin State are regions of significant ethnic and linguistic diversity. The majority of research conducted has been with Shan-identifying and Kachin-identifying populations

The interviews were framed to enable better understanding of the key meta-narratives that have developed around drugs across and within different communities; and focus on history, political economy, health and livelihoods, and ethnography with respect to local drug problems in Kachin State.

The overarching question that frames the research is what the role is of borderland drug economies in relation to wartime and post war political orders, thereby exploring how illicit drug economies in borderland regions:

- interact with the dynamics of violence and armed conflict
- shape livelihoods and broader processes of economic development and social change
- shape structures of borderland governance and forms of political order and disorder

Methodology

The aim of the Year 2 research was to conduct in-depth fieldwork on a selected number of key research themes. These themes were selected based on emerging findings from the Year 1 interviews.

The interviews focused on the themes:

1. Drugs and processes of political and economic change

- Why has drug production and consumption increased in the period since the 1994 ceasefire?
 - How are drugs related to systems of political (dis)order and economic change?
2. Drugs and social change
 - How have drugs impacted on families and communities?
 3. Responses to drugs
 - What have been the responses to drugs?
 - What has been the impact of interventions?

A set of questions to guide interviews was developed.

Interviews were carried out by researchers of Kachinland Research Centre (KRC) in Myitkyina, Kachin State.

Location

Kachin State, Myanmar.

Interviews were conducted during a series of fieldwork trips with teams of researchers to:

- Hpakant township
- Monyin township
- Waimaw township
- Chipwi and Pangwa townships
- Sadon Township
- WoeMoe Township
- Hugawng Township
- Bhamo Township
- Putao Township
- Northern Shan

Time period

Interviews were carried out during March – May 2019.

Sample selection

The field research has focused on interviewing family members of drug addicts (non-drug addicts, parents, children, siblings and relatives), neighbours, Pat Jasan members (a social drug eradication movement), church leaders and pastors/priests. Interviewees were selected through snowball sampling.

The question whether and why Kachin people are more affected by drug use compared to other peoples was asked of religious leaders, authorities (government, police officers, village and ward administrators), youth organizations, rehab centres, prisons officials and Kachin scholars.

Anonymisation steps

The dataset has been anonymised by leaving out names and direct identifiers for all interviewees.