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Annual Opium
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United Nations
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AFGHANISTAN

2001 Opium Poppy Pre-Assessment Survey

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Executive Summary

The UNDCP Country Office for Afghanistan has been conducting annual ground-based surveys since 1994, covering the totality of the opium growing villages and forwarding to the Member States a report with the results of the level and extent of opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan.

Specifically for the 2001 survey UNDCP was concerned with the possible consequences of the decree issued on 27 July 2000 by the Supreme Leader Mullah Mohammed Omer, which determined a total ban on poppy cultivation in Taliban controlled areas. In order to verify the actual impact of the implementation of the ban, and thus compile vital information needed to carry out the actual 2001 survey, UNDCP decided to conduct from 31 January to 10 February 2001 a more extensive analysis of the probable extent of this year's opium poppy cultivation by carrying out a pre-assessment survey.

Two survey coordinators, 17 surveyors and the Head of UNDCP's Vienna-based Illicit Crop Monitoring Programme – ICMP, all led by UNDCP's Regional Representative, visited a total of 2,770 villages in the main opium poppy cultivating areas. This included all the districts of the provinces of Helmand and Nangarhar, which accounted for 76% of last year's cultivation, and also the main districts in the provinces of Oruzgan, Qandahar, Farah, Laghman and Kunar, which together were responsible for an additional 10%.

Based on the information compiled and then analysed one can conclude that there is a definite potential for the reduction of the total extent of opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan during the current growing season by at least 70,000 hectares. Having covered in this pre-assessment 80% of the known poppy areas within the 51 districts visited the surveyors were able to find only an aggregate amount of 27 hectares of opium poppy, scattered in various fields in the province of Nangarhar. Considering that within these 51 districts 86% of last year's opium poppy for Afghanistan had been cultivated, this pre-assessment clearly does show the extent of the impact of the ban.

One can conclude that the ban has been implemented successfully in the Taliban controlled area visited by the surveyors, resulting in virtually no cultivation of opium poppy. Whereas last year during the flowering season one could observe a blanket of poppy flowers, this year the farmers have been planting wheat and to a lesser extent other licit crops.

2000 Opium Poppy Pre-Assessment Survey

Objectives

Afghanistan in 2000 remained the largest opium producer in the world, with a total of 3,275 metric tons of opium produced from 82,172 hectares of opium poppy cultivation, with the provinces of Helmand, Qandahar, Nangarhar and Oruzgan reaching 84% of the total extent of cultivation. Helmand by itself was responsible for 52% of the national total cultivation while Nangarhar contributed to 24% to the national total.

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Specifically for the 2001 survey UNDCP was concerned with the possible consequences of the decree issued on 27 July 2000 by the Supreme Leader Mullah Mohammed Omer, which determined a total ban on poppy cultivation. Various reports received up to January 2001 had indicated that indeed the Taliban authorities had been taking a number of significant steps to effectively implement the ban with a possible substantial decrease in the total area of poppy cultivation in Taliban controlled areas.

Mainly because of this factor, the need for a pre-assessment survey was identified in order to refine the information on the probable extent of this year's cultivation, which in turn would help define the villages that have to be visited by the surveyors during the actual survey, and also the resources that need to be made available.

Thus the objectives of this reconnaissance survey were the following:

- To obtain an early estimate on the extent of opium poppy cultivation in the main opium poppy growing provinces.
- To assess the degree of implementation of the opium poppy ban announced by Taliban authorities.
- Based on the above, determine the optimal use of the available resources for conducting the 2001 Annual Opium Poppy Survey.

Methodology

The pre-assessment as designed aimed at briefly visiting the top opium poppy cultivated areas as ranked by the 2000 Opium Poppy Survey and which had been seeded since last November/December 2000. This area coincides roughly with the Taliban controlled area where the ban is being implemented. Additional important areas were added, including areas where eradication efforts had been reported recently. The table below summarises the extent of the districts covered. All together the pre-assessment covered a total of 86% of last year's cultivation extent.

Province	Districts Covered	Extent of Cultivation in these districts in 2000
<u>Helmand</u>	All districts	42,853 ha 52% national total
<u>Nangarhar</u>	All districts	19,749 ha 24% national total
<u>Oruzgan</u>	Following districts: Tirin Kot, Chora, Char Chashma and Dehrawud.	4,201 ha 5% national total
<u>Qandahar</u>	Following districts: Maiwand, Ghorak, Arghandab, Nesh and Khakrez	2,742 ha 3% national total
<u>Farah</u>	Bakwah district	259 ha < 1% national total
<u>Laghman</u>	Following districts: Qarghai, Alishang and Mehterlam.	576 ha < 1% national total
<u>Kunar</u>	Following districts: Chawki, Khas Kunar, Mazar (Nur Gul), Narang, Sarkani.	476 ha < 1% national total
Total	51 Districts in 7 Provinces	70,856 hectares 86% of national total identified in 2000

In addition, from the known main cultivating areas a 10% sample of the top cultivating villages in the provinces of Nangarhar and Helmand, as ranked by last year's survey, were chosen to be visited for sure by the surveyors. In order to avoid any bias in the choice of these villages they were randomly selected. Thus thirty out of the top 300 opium poppy villages were randomly selected for Helmand and twenty out of the top 200 were randomly selected for Nangarhar. These 50 villages formed the core of the areas to be covered and subsequently each survey coordinator determined the routes to be traversed in each district by the individual surveyors and the additional villages to be included in the survey, in addition to the initial 50 random villages.

Two survey coordinators were responsible for coordinating the work of a team of 17 surveyors. One coordinator and 10 surveyors covered Nangarhar and the surrounding provinces and the other coordinator working with 7 surveyors covered the surrounding area of Qandahar and Helmand. Each coordinator prior to the dispatching of the surveyors to the field conducted a detailed session to brief the surveyors on how to conduct the assessment and subsequently determined with each one the route to be traversed, including in this route any of the previously randomly selected villages. Each surveyor followed routes that passed through the agricultural areas in order to maximise

the observation of the agricultural land under cultivation and for each village traversed along this route the surveyor compiled the following information:

1. Visual estimate of the number of jeribs/hectares of observed poppy fields;
2. Information on eradicated poppy fields;
3. Number of people arrested in violation of the poppy ban;
4. Any other information related to the implementation of poppy ban.

As this pre-assessment was a reconnaissance field visit, no standard questionnaires were used. The surveyors recorded all the observations made on the summary sheets provided and also on notepads.

To ensure the Taliban full-fledged support to carry out the survey in safety pre-clearance was obtained from the Head of the Emirate High Commission for Drug Control on 22 January 2001. The Drug Control Coordination Units (DCCU) were also consulted in the respective regions in terms of security arrangements and also to obtain information regarding eradication and implementation of the ban.

Survey Constraints and Reliability

There were concerns during the design of the methodological approach that indeed relevant and trustworthy conclusions could be drawn from what was basically going to be a quick and sample-based reconnaissance overview of the present status of opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan.

As the pre-assessment was planned for a total of 11 days (31 January – 10 February 2001) there was the need to ensure that the maximum amount of information was obtained. This was made possible by focusing mainly on the top-ranked cultivating villages and by employing the same surveyors that had already been involved in previous surveys (specifically last year's survey) all of whom would be in a position to compare what they would be observing on the field with what they had seen last year.

There were also concerns that the pre-assessment ended up only visiting villages that were of easy access or that there were outside pressures guiding the surveyor's decision of which villages to traverse. That is why 50 villages were randomly selected and included in the pre-assessment survey and then furthermore the actual route to be taken was defined by each survey coordinator.

The results of this pre-assessment as presented must be viewed from the perspective of a reconnaissance survey. The strength of the findings are grounded on the total area covered and the involvement of experienced surveyors that have the needed knowledge of the previous extent of opium poppy cultivation in each one of the districts that were covered. However one must have in mind at the same time that the conclusions to be drawn are based on the observations made along specific routes and not on an exhaustive

evaluation of each and every single field, which will only be done during the upcoming survey.

International Control

To ensure an additional transparency to the pre-assessment survey UNDCP prompted an international control during the time of the fieldwork. Led by UNDCP's Regional Representative, the international control team was present during the whole duration of the pre-assessment, specifically covering the provinces of Nangarhar and Helmand.

In addition to the UNDCP Representative, the international team was composed by the Head of the Illicit Crops Monitoring Programme, UNDCP-Vienna, two Islamabad-based drug liaison officers, from Canada and Norway, and a Pakistani agricultural expert attached to the narcotic affairs section of the US Embassy in Islamabad.

Pre-Assessment Survey Findings

Poppy Cultivation

Annex 1 presents a summary of all cultivated areas covered and the total quantity of opium poppy fields observed within each district, enabling one to compare what was observed during this pre-assessment with the findings of last year's survey. The data included in this Annex was summarised from the totality of the data compiled for each observed village during the survey which can be made available to those interested in having a deeper perspective.

The team of 19 surveyors (including here also the 2 coordinators who also observed opium poppy cultivation in certain districts while at the same time cross-checking a sample of the villages covered by the surveyors) observed fields known for opium poppy cultivation in a total of 2,770 villages within the 51 districts. On average each surveyor covered 14 villages each day. This compares to the average of between 3 and 4 villages during the actual survey.

It had not initially been foreseen that this pre-assessment would have covered such an extensive number of villages. During the development of the work plan the aim was to reach the 50 randomly villages and the villages along the route, covering between 1,000 and 1,500 villages. But with virtually no opium poppy to observe the surveyors were able to cover more ground.

The following table further summarises for each province the information provided in Annex 1.

Province	Total Number of Villages (within Pre-Assessed area) (1)	Poppy Cultivation 1999 (ha)	Poppy Cultivation 2000 (ha)	Pre-Assessment 2001		
				No. of Villages Assessed	Poppy Observed (ha)	% of Poppy Area Covered (2)
Farah	65	129	259	42	0	92%
Helmand	1,403	44,552	42,853	1,024	0	81%
Oruzgan	295	4,479	4,201	156	0	63%
Qandahar	608	5,023	2,742	296	0	72%
Kunar	172	168	476	102	0	83%
Laghman	207	226	576	109	0	63%
Nangarhar	1395	22,990	19,749	1,041	27	83%
TOTAL	4,145	77,567	70,856	2,770	27	80%

(1) Includes growing and non-growing opium poppy villages - (2) Refers to the percentage of last year's known poppy areas that were covered during this year's pre-assessment survey.

Based on the information compiled and then analysed during this pre-assessment one can conclude that there is a definite potential for the reduction of the total extent of opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan during the current growing season by at least 70,000 hectares. Having covered in this pre-assessment 80% of the known poppy areas within the 51 districts visited the surveyors were able to find only an aggregate amount of 27 hectares of opium poppy, scattered in various fields in the province of Nangarhar. Considering that within these 51 districts 86% of last year's opium poppy cultivation had been cultivated, this pre-assessment clearly does show the extent of the impact of the ban.

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Enforcement of the Ban

The Taliban authority has involved various leaderships in order to guarantee the full implementation of the ban. Provincial representatives, district administrators, Ulemas (religious scholars) and village elders were all made aware of the ban and were made responsible for the full implementation within their area of jurisdiction.

Each DCCU was then responsible for monitoring the implementation of the ban. Identified fields were either eradicated by the authorities or by the farmers themselves. There were a number of reported arrests made; basically farmers that had violated the ban and that were released after 2 or more days in prison if they agreed to eradicate at their own cost their field(s) cultivated with opium poppy. Sometimes if the ban was being violated the Taliban would first meet with the village elders making them responsible for ensuring that the fields were eradicated.

Further Areas to Be Assessed

The Annual Opium Poppy Survey will begin in March 2001. This pre-assessment has clearly indicated the need to allocate less resources in last year's main cultivating areas, as surveyors will be able to cover more villages in less time, and focus on the remaining opium poppy growing provinces and possible new areas according to the information received.

In the provinces already assessed further monitoring will be needed, in particular in the areas of Baghran in Helmand and Nurgal and Dara-e-Noor in Nangarhar which were still under snow during the pre-assessment period.

Conclusions

The facts and numbers by themselves demonstrate that the ban has been effectively implemented. Considering that opium poppy is a winter crop one can definitely say that for this growing season no more poppy will be cultivated in the area covered by this pre-assessment survey. Even the few fields observed in the Nangarhar province have a high probability of being eradicated once identified by the Taliban. This means that this year there is a potential for a reduction of the total extent of cultivation in Afghanistan of at least 70,000 hectares.

There will be cultivation in the Northern Alliance region which last year accounted for a total of 3,105 hectares. As this area is presently being seeded one can speculate some increase in the extent of cultivation due to the incentive caused by the present higher prices for opium gum. However, as the extent of available land in this region is limited one can expect that the increase in cultivation should not be significant.

There will also be cultivation in the areas of more difficult access and where opium poppy was observed last year. These areas at the time of the pre-assessment, many of which were observed, were covered under snow. There is also the possibility that there will be some displacement into new areas. Even if there is some displacement of the cultivation of opium poppy to more remote areas, previous studies conducted by UNDCP have demonstrated that the extent of cultivation into new areas is low during the first year.

The actual 2001 Opium Poppy Survey will be refocused to increase the surveying of the areas where opium poppy was identified last year, and which were not covered by this pre-assessment, and also in the areas of possible displacement based on the information obtained by the surveyors and other sources of data.

2001 Pre-Assessment Survey - Districts Covered

