

Documentation

Dataset M14. Key informant interviews in Shan state, 2020-21 Youth and Drugs

Data collection resulting from 10 face-to-face interviews / life stories in southern Shan State, eastern Myanmar, exploring the theme of “Drugs and youth”.

Interviews have been carried out in Shan or Burmese and were audio-recorded when interviewees allowed this. Else notes were taken. Interviews have been transcribed and a selection of six transcripts have been translated to English.

The dataset consists of 16 Word files and a data list providing demographic characteristics and context information for the interviews.

Dataset location: 10.5255/UKDA-SN-855623

Dataset owner: Shan Herald Agency for News (SHAN) 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 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 Shan State.

Methodology

These interviews carried out during Year 3 and 4 of the research project follow on from the interviews in previous years to explore the key research theme of “Young people’s lives amidst drugs and disorder”, including its gendered dimensions, further and deeper. The same question list as for Year 2 interviews was used.

Interviews were carried out by researchers recruited by Shan Herald Agency for News (SHAN). They were selected because they are active members of their community and engaged in addressing social issues, have prior experience of conducting research and are enthused by the project. Many are active within the Tai Youth Network.

Location

Southern Shan State, Myanmar: Taunggyi, Laikha

Time period

Interviews were carried out during June – August 2020 and January 2021.

Sample selection

The field research has primarily focused on interviewing youth leaders, community leaders, civilians (including women, youth, elders), Shan Nationalities League for Democracy members, organisations working on drug issues and (ex) drug users and their family.

Interviewees were mostly selected by snowballing, starting from connections SHAN already had with local media networks and youth groups. In addition, they also reached out to people and organisations such as school teachers, government administrators and local harm reduction organisations.

Anonymisation steps

The dataset has been anonymised by leaving out names and direct identifiers for all interviewees or other persons mentioned, and by using pseudonyms for place names and organisational names.