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Innovative Alternative Development Approaches in Latin America and the Caribbean

Emerging opportunities for development-oriented
responses to illicit drug supply activities

STUDY REPORT





Innovative Alternative Development Approaches in Latin America and the Caribbean STUDY REPORT

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

Abbreviation or Acronym	Full name
AD	Alternative Development
BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (German acronyms for <i>Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung</i>)
CICAD	Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission of the Organization of the American States
CONAPRED	National Commission for the Study and Prevention of Drug-Related Crimes – Panama (Spanish acronyms for <i>Comisión Nacional para el estudio y la Prevención de los delitos Relacionados con Drogas</i>)
COPOLAD	Cooperation Programme between Latin America, the Caribbean, and the European Union on Drugs Policies
CNA	National Anti-drugs Commission – El Salvador (Commonly used Spanish acronym for <i>Comisión Nacional Antidrogas</i>)
CND	Commission on Narcotic Drugs of the United Nations
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAIS	Comprehensive and Sustainable Alternative Development (Commonly used Spanish acronym)
DAP	Preventive Alternative Development (Commonly used Spanish acronym in Ecuador)
DEVIDA	National Commission for the Development and a Life without Drugs – Peru (Commonly used Spanish acronym for <i>Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo y Vida sin Drogas</i>)
EMCDDA	European Monitoring Center for Drugs and Drug Addictions
EU	European Union
FIIAPP	International and Ibero-American Foundation for Administration and Public Policies (Commonly used Spanish acronym for <i>Fundación Internacional y para Iberoamérica de Administración y Políticas Públicas</i>)
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
HRG	Human Rights and Gender
IADA	Innovative Alternative Development Approach



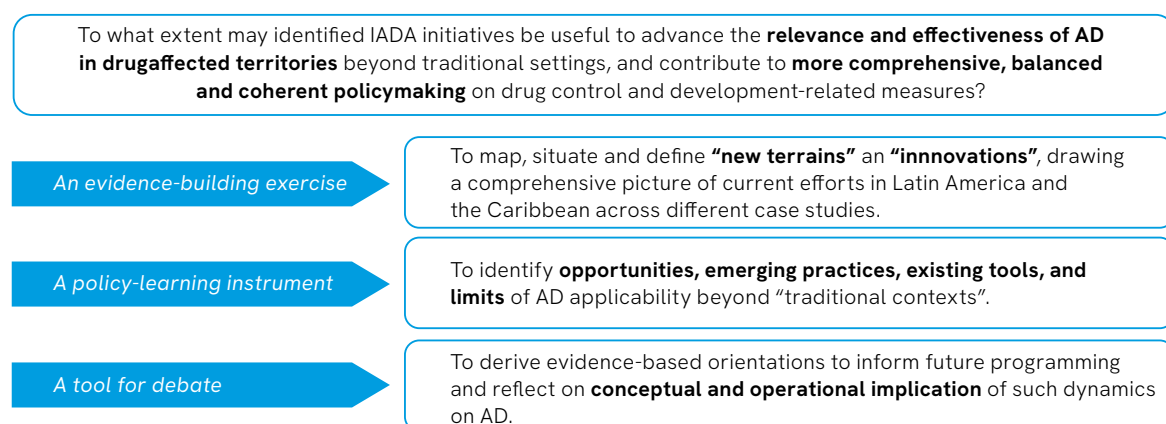
Abbreviation or Acronym	Full name
IILA	<i>Organizzazione Internazionale Italo-Latino Americana</i>
JND	National drug board – Uruguay (Commonly used Spanish acronym for <i>Junta Nacional de Drogas</i>)
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LNOB	Leaving no one behind dimension
MS	Member State
MCA	Medicinal Cannabis Authority – Saint-Vincent and the Grenadines
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OECD DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal of the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda
SENAD	National Anti-drug Secretariat – Paraguay (Commonly used Spanish acronym for <i>Secretaria Nacional Anti-Drogas</i>)
SENAD	National Secretariat for Drug Policies – Brazil (Commonly used Portuguese acronym for <i>Secretaria Nacional de Políticas Sobre Drogas e Gestão de Ativos</i>)
SERFOR	<i>Servicio Nacional Forestal y de Fauna Silvestre – Peru,</i> national Environment and forest protection authority
SVG	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
SUNAD	National Anti-Drug Superintendency – Venezuela (Commonly used Spanish acronym for <i>Superintendencia Nacional Antidrogas</i>)
ToC	Theory of Change
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNGASS	United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Drugs 2016
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
VCDI	Vice Ministry of Coca and Integral Development – Bolivia (in its commonly used Spanish acronym VCDI)

Executive Summary

Why a study on Innovative Alternative Development Approaches (IADA)?

A dynamic, yet composite concept and tool, Alternative Development (AD) relies very much on trials and evidence-building to nurture and advance. Introduced as a niche supply-reduction tool in drug control policy, AD has grown into a pillar of international drug policy, recognized for addressing the root causes of drug supply activities through a development-based approach. Several countries, mainly in Latin America and the Caribbean, express growing interest in exploring new applications of AD beyond traditional rural settings, terrains and drug policy settings (rural to urban, border areas, territories affected by conflict, ethnic and indigenous territories etc.). Innovative Alternative Development approaches (IADA) have been emerging, yet with limited knowledge capitalization and funding.

IADA Study scope and foreseen utilizations





Among the 17 countries of the COPOLAD III ¹ Working Group on “Sustainable and Integrated Alternative Development”², there has been an explicit demand for the systematization of IADA experiences upon which an operational and conceptual reflection could be founded.

Following this proposal, the GIZ Sector Project Rural Development with COPOLAD III partners and interested parties commissioned this exploratory study to identify and reflect on the opportunities, challenges and stakes of innovative Alternative Development beyond traditional models and rural contexts of illicit cultivation. The study builds on existing knowledge and focuses on the relevance, adaptability, and viability of AD across various terrains and more diversified social contexts affected by illicit drug supply activities.

The study’s analytical framework combines socio-political tools of public policy analysis, and policy evaluation instruments based on the main OECD-DAC criteria of development interventions evaluation. Conducted between September 2023 and March 2024, it looks at the different cases of AD emerging terrains across LAC region to refine the understanding of IADA, and unpack as far as possible existing challenges, added value and emerging features of operationalization.

IADA Study Data collection and information sources



Desk review of 120+ documents (specialised literature and participating countries project documentation)



IADA policy workshop following 2nd COPOLAD III Intraregional Dialogue Forum on Alternative Development (27-28th September 2023, Mexico City)



116 semi-direct interviews and consultations with key learning partners and informants across 15 participating countries



3 field visits: selected projects in Peru, Columbia, and Uruguay (Oct.-Nov. 2024)

Exploratory mapping of the “new terrains” of Alternative Development

IADA collected information shows an evolving map of AD interests and experimentation in the LAC region, reflecting a growing need to bringing about more inclusive, development-based solutions to territories and communities most vulnerable to the illicit drug supply economy. In addition to historic AD countries (i.e., mainly Andean countries with high levels of illicit cultivation of coca), IADA interest now extends to countries where emerging illicit cultivation is observed, whether a monitored priority or not, like in Mexico or to some extent, Guatemala and Venezuela. Nevertheless, IADA appetite is no longer circumscribed to rural settings of illicit cultivation and is further observed in:

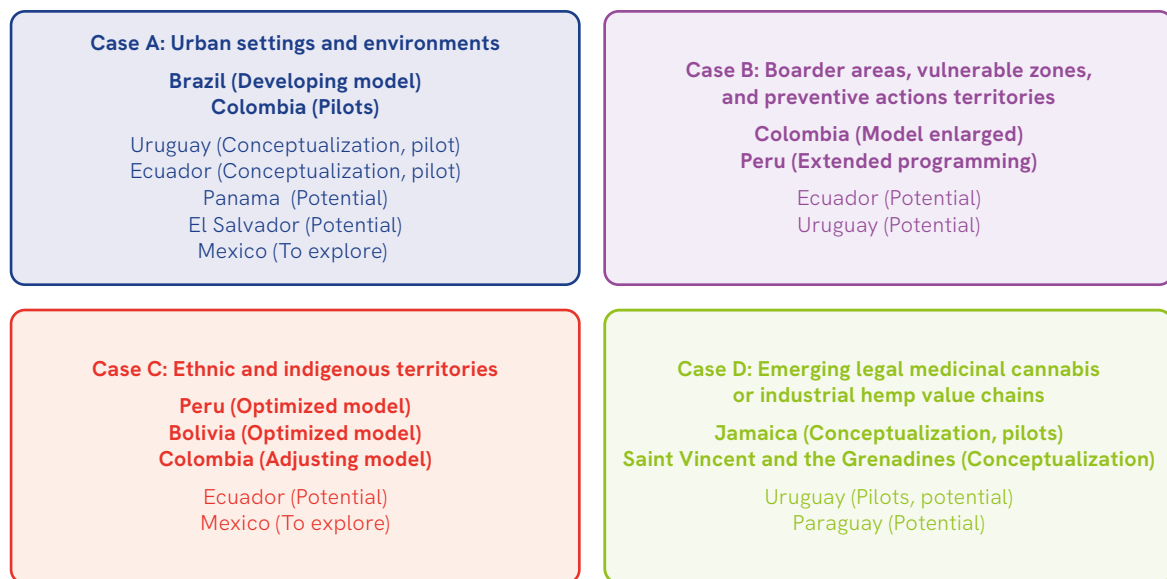
1 Cooperation Program between Latin America, the Caribbean and the European Union on drug policy or COPOLAD III COPOLAD III is a delegated cooperation programme funded by the European Union and led by FIAPP (*Fundación Internacional y para Iberoamérica de Administración y Políticas Públicas*) and IILA (*Organizzazione Internazionale Italo-Latino American*). The *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ) GmbH on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) as well as the European Monitoring Center for Drugs and Drug Addictions (EMCDDA) are implementing partners in COPOLAD III. GIZ is responsible for Sub-component 3.1 on “Alternative Development”.

2 The working group gathers: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, México, Panamá, Paraguay, Perú, Uruguay, Venezuela (LA), Guyana, Jamaica, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago (C) and is led by GIZ.



- Urban zones of countries affected by (micro-) trafficking such as Brazil, Uruguay, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador or Panama;
- Countries affected by illicit cultivation within areas of instability, or within ethnic and indigenous territories mainly in Peru, Colombia and Bolivia;
- Countries with emerging regulated cannabis and hemp markets such as in Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Paraguay and to some extent Uruguay.

Observed cases of IADA applicability



While still emerging and limited in scope and volume, IADA initiatives across the LAC region translate various paths and forms of implementation and commitments, delineating diverse apprehensions of innovations: from the recognition of past limitations of AD towards more inclusive, multi-sectoral and integrated models of AD and territorially-tailored tools; and to the exploration of operationalization modalities in more diverse territories and socio-environments of illicit activities and policy settings. Across observed terrains, the IADA debate revolves around:

- Building socio-economic and preventive actions to counter the expansion of illicit cultivation or trafficking;
- Addressing the socio-economic drivers of illicit drug supply related activities, particularly among youth;
- Leveraging regulated cannabis markets to create inclusive economies for most vulnerable populations previously or still involved in illicit activities.

Within the new IAD geography, the Alternative Development rationale and schemes of interventions are being (re)considered, tested and adapted to better respond to the specific challenges attached to the illicit drug supply chain.

Terrain A: Urban settings and environments *Translating AD lessons into recontextualised approaches*

The evolution of drug markets, including the shift from plant-based to synthetic drugs, prompts a reappraisal of the global drug and development nexus central to AD in the context of urban drug



situations. Building resilience largely lays in building bridges across drug control, crime prevention, and urban peace and inclusive development sectors. Different IADA paths emerged in areas of illicit drugs micro trafficking or transport in countries of illicit cultivation, production, and transit. Two different, yet dynamic and non-exclusive lines of action are explored:

- **A restorative, problem-solving line**, oriented towards addressing existing socio-economic shortcomings driving illicit activities, and repairing the harms such phenomena have induced, such as violence and criminalities. This approach is observed mainly in Brazil and Colombia, and to some extent in Uruguay so far.
- **A preventive, social-oriented line**, to anticipate and prevent potential drivers or identified symptoms of illicit drug supply activities, mainly in Ecuador, Panama, El Salvador and to some extent Uruguay.

Existing initiatives converge around the recognition that structural and socio-economic factors as in traditional AD, also drive urban drug markets. IADA is understood as a complementary feature to law enforcement and health-centered approaches to achieve a broader set of drug control, social development, and urban stability objectives. Emphasis is placed on the economic, structural and social exigencies of drug affected communities, as well as the broader implications of illicit drug supply activities for social cohesion and peace, urban development and territorial stability. Instruments are being adapted to urban contexts affected by drugs, so cities can be reappropriated as hotspots of resilience and socio-economic integration. IAD tools include educational and entrepreneurial development support, gender-tailored approaches, and support-systems and psychosocial focused measures.

Terrain B and C: Boarder areas, vulnerable zones, and preventive actions; Ethnic and indigenous territories *Learning from the past: Shifting from a substance-based to a territorial and people-centered narrative of change.*

Illicit cultivation and illicit transiting zones in Colombia, Peru and Bolivia (traditional AD implementers) but also in Ecuador (engaged in preventive action), Mexico and more recently Uruguay (for border regions) are still very much constrained by high levels of marginalization, poverty and structural fragilities that both impede development and nourish further dependences on illicit activities. Terrains of multifaceted social realities, they require territorially tailored approaches that address their specific challenges, resources and features.

A pivotal emphasis has been observed, from a substance-based rationale to system-change and people-centered approaches. IADA initiatives invite to turn the issue upside down, so to speak, i.e. not to take the drug issue as a starting point of the change to impulse, but rather the territory in which it develops. This shift entails a heightened awareness of the structural vulnerabilities and needed enabling environment to accompany a sustainable “transition” to a licit economy. Learning AD lessons, implementing agencies are optimizing AD good practices and principles. Mid- to long-term market-driven instruments are favored, such as the diversification of quality AD products, private sector engagement and commercialization plans. Operationalization mechanisms emphasize local levels and bottom-up approaches, although most of IADA still very much depend on centralized models of decision making and poor institutionalization within national policy streams. Community participation is becoming fundamental and is achieved in various ways. More broadly, the imperative of sustainability is being slowly introduced with the development of more inclusive practices, considering cross-cutting issues such as gender, human rights and the environment. These alignments further open opportunities for policy coherence, cross-sectoral cooperation, and smart financing, while also demanding strategic and organizational readjustments.



Terrain D: Emerging legal medicinal cannabis or industrial hemp value chains and inclusive measures

Calibrating the “alternative”

This terrain challenges the original notion of Alternative Development. AD being an instrument supporting more viable and inclusive transitions outside the illicit drug economies, there are still doubts and questions around where alternatives would fit, and who would benefit from it in the case of emerging regulated licit cannabis or hemp markets. Where some might see a conceptual alteration, others anticipate a reorientation of AD, focusing not on the crops to be substituted, but rather on the people involved in or surviving the illicit economy.

The recent wave of policy shifts and the burgeoning cannabis sector may offer new prospects for interested small farmers to shift away from illegitimate activities to legal cannabis or other types of supported income generating activities. Nevertheless, to fit this purpose, IADA in such terrains would still request interested parties to clarify and/or construct a territorial-based theory of change that would revolve around overcoming the challenges people involved/formerly involved in the illicit drug supply face. Observed debates, mainly in Paraguay, Jamaica, Saint-Vincent-and-the Grenadines, and to a limited extent in Uruguay, take two directions:

- Ensuring cannabis and hemp regulated markets generate *inclusive economic opportunities, in particular for people who were or are involved in illicit cannabis or other drug supply related activities* (traditional cannabis cultivators and farmers, micro-sellers, communities benefiting from the (past) illicit economy).
- Exploring *new models of market development with cannabis and hemp* as vehicles for inclusive economic transformation and sustainable, equitable growth.

A turning tide for AD: Emerging lessons and avenues for IADA future policy reflections

While its fragmentation into various interpretations could have been problematic in the past, AD conceptual malleability also explains some of the concept’s enduring relevance and adjustability to evolving and emerging drug-related challenges and terrains. The IADA study shows potentials to adjust and update AD conceptual and operational contours to a wider array of terrains and settings affected by or at risk of being affected by illicit drug supply activities.

Across studied terrains, IADA can fit for purpose and provide an extended umbrella for:

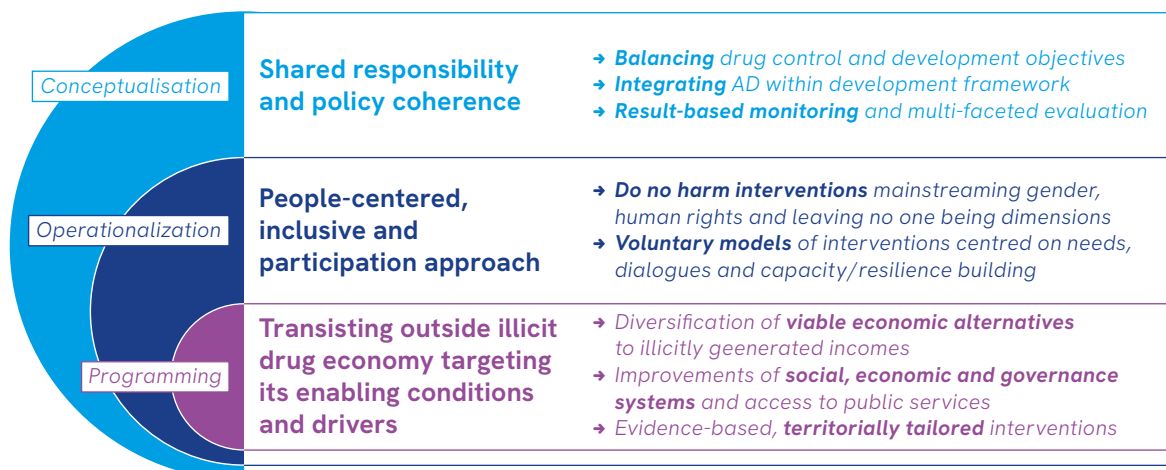
- expanding the available toolbox for addressing the root causes and enabling drivers of illicit drug-supply activities in a territorially based manner, and;
- building inclusive, tailored opportunities for territories and for populations involved or at risk of being involved in the illicit drugs (supply) economy so the motives and/or harms attached to the illicit drug economy can also be addressed, and drivers of resilience strengthened.



Some emerging IADA practices, lessons and potentials in terms of relevance, coherence and effectiveness can be considered to further inform future reflections of AD adaptability, including the following:

- IADA requires a recategorization of “drug problems” focusing on the multifaceted role of illicit drug related activities in the socio-economic, political economy and governance systems of concerned terrains.
- There is a need to calibrate IADA to specific links of the illicit drug chains and reappraise the notion of “vulnerability” and “alternatives” to those specific links in given territories notably in urban and emerging cannabis market terrains. Observed shifts toward a people-centered approach in vulnerable zones could inform this discussion.
- IADA design and viability in new terrains raises conceptual and operational challenges that cannot be tackled without minimal political opportunity, support, and sufficient resourcing.
- IADA encourage breaking policy silos, and increasing space for complementarities across different policy domains, and corresponding rationale of change, goals and funding frameworks.
- Echoing existing difficulties of traditional AD, IADA challenges are numerous and multifaceted, and need to be further documented, monitored, and evaluated. This would require concerted and sustained national, regional and international efforts.

While neither AD nor IADA can do it all, the added value finally lies in the drug lenses applied to specific development contexts. In a number of emerging terrains, AD can become a viable, innovative policy entry point or phase of inclusive, integrated, development-oriented option to areas and communities affected or at risks of being (re)affected by illicit drug supply activities, given a set of core dimensions and principles of action are respected and developed in a territorially tailored manner. Indeed, innovations and new terrains do not go without risks. A main one being the dilution of the concept or the multiplication of derived notions and unsuitable programming. To minimize those risks and nourish AD conceptual and operational debates, this study delineates a set of core aspects and critical dimensions that are common across terrains and can serve to explore further IADA adaptability across terrains. The following scheme simplifies them.





Why a study on Innovative Alternative Development Approaches (IADA)?

Introduced as a supply-reduction instrument in international drug control policy in the late 1980s, the concept and intervention modalities of Alternative Development (AD) have evolved from mixed results and errors to success stories, good practices and lessons learned. Once a niche intervention of international drug control focused on rural areas of illicit cultivation of crops used in the illicit production of narcotic drugs, AD has evolved into a more integrated and inclusive development-led approach to drug-related issues. It has gained political momentum as a legitimate pillar of global responses to the world drug situation in particular within the lead up to the 2016 UNGASS.

Being a dynamic approach and tool, AD relies very much on trials and evidence building to nurture and advance. Innovative programming, policy initiatives and pilot projects have been emerging, venturing “new terrains” to explore and operationalize a broader AD approach. Several countries, mainly in Latin America and the Caribbean are expressing interest to extend AD approaches beyond illicit cultivation schemes and contexts. AD measures are not only envisioned to address the root causes of entry into the illicit drug economy in then-called “traditional” settings of rural territories of illicit cultivation. They are now also deployed to provide viable economic alternatives to communities and individuals affected by or at risk of entering the illicit drug economy in various settings (rural to urban, border areas, territories affected by conflict etc.), at different points of the illicit drug supply chain (beyond illicit cultivation) and under differentiated drug policy regimes (notably on cannabis).

Among the 17 countries of the Cooperation Program between Latin America, the Caribbean and the European Union on drug policy COPOLAD III³, Working Group on “Sustainable and Integrated Alternative Development” (DAIS in its Spanish abbreviation)⁴, there has been an explicit demand for the systematization of such AD experiences in new terrains understood as innovative Alternative Development approaches (in short IADA), in order to establish best practices that can be used as a reference in future projects and policy development.

3 [Reduction of the illegal drug market – Copolad.](#)

4 The working group gathers: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, México, Panamá, Paraguay, Perú, Uruguay, Venezuela (LA), Guyana, Jamaica, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago (C) and is led by GIZ.



Innovative Alternative Development Approaches in Latin America and the Caribbean Why a study on Innovative Alternative Development Approaches (IADA)?

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Following the proposal from 12 COPOLAD Member countries and in a context of an increased demand for evidence-based Alternative Development and drug policy, the GIZ Sector Project Rural Development launches with COPOLAD III partners and interested parties, this study on “Innovative Alternative Development Approaches (IADA)”.

Based on ongoing efforts, case studies and emerging initiatives in Latin America and the Caribbean, this exploratory study ambitions to identify and outline innovations and so-called “new terrains” of Alternative Development. One aim is to explore how far AD interventions could be scaled up across various types of territories of illicit cultivations (borders areas, emerging cultivation areas, ethnic and indigenous territories). By doing so, it appreciates how far the AD concept can also be extended to other contexts of the illicit drug supply chain (such as micro-trafficking, small-scale production or transit activities) and used under different drug control and regulation regimes.

Looking at the potentials to advance development-oriented drug policy measures in so-called “non-traditional” AD contexts, this study looks at the applicability of the AD approach in various innovative contexts and gathers emerging practices to derive policy recommendations on how to adjust the AD approach in “non-traditional”/innovative contexts. More broadly, providing an optimistic assessment for the advancement of development-oriented drug policy measures and the construction of a more comprehensive, coherent, and integrated approach to drug-related realities, the results of this research will feed into global debates on AD concept and on the complex and sophisticated synergy opportunities between sustainable development and drug control objectives and responses.

The following sections detail the contextual background for this study, as well as its main objectives and scope.

Enhanced Alternative Development relevance

This study takes place in **a context of an increased international momentum around Alternative Development and increased demand for its conceptual and operational enhancement**. The concept of Alternative Development was introduced as a supply-reduction instrument in international drug control policy in the late 1980s. It has evolved “in constant flux” (UNODC 2015; Me and Kamminga 2017), from trials and errors to success stories, good practices and lessons learned along a fragmented implementation path mainly in countries with the highest levels of illicit crop cultivation (mainly Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, Thailand and later on Afghanistan, Laos and Myanmar). The 1988 Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances initially foresaw AD as “economically viable alternatives to illicit cultivation to increase the effectiveness of eradication efforts” (art. 14, 3.a)⁵, while the United Nations General Assembly Special Sessions on the World Drug Problem (UNGASS) 1998 formalized and defined the approach “as a process to prevent and eliminate the illicit cultivation of plants containing narcotic drugs [...] through specifically

5 [UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION AGAINST ILLICIT TRAFFIC IN NARCOTIC DRUGS AND PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES, 1988 \(unodc.org\)](https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/convention-against-illicit-traffic-in-narcotic-drugs-and-psychotropic-substances-1988.html).



designed rural development measures in the context of sustained national economic growth and sustainable development efforts in countries taking action against drugs⁶.

Largely focused on rural areas, Alternative Development in international drug control has however drastically evolved over the past decade. Once a niche intervention of international drug control suffering from a blurry, composite and fragmented conceptual trajectory (Alimi 2017), Alternative Development has evolved into a recognized and broadened development-led approach to drug-related issues, while gaining political momentum as a legitimate pillar of global responses to ‘the world drug problem’ (Brombacher & David 2020). Research has grown, documenting the impact of the illicit drug trade on the socio-economic, governance and sustainable development of affected populations and territories. Institutional disparities, poverty, lack of access to licit markets and/or land, insecurity, poor infrastructural and public services landscape and access, governance and rule of law, environmental changes, have proven to be push factors across different territories affected by illicit drugs economy (Garzon 2019; Sagredo 2018; Gaviria & Mejia 2016; Thoumi 2003). Such interlinkages underline further the need to move away from siloed drug control approaches towards increased coherence on drugs and sustainable development as defined through the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It also encouraged some adaptations and expanded operationalizations of AD that could be more in line with the multifaceted social realities of illicit-drug supply.

Along this way, there has been growing appetite for AD scaling up and innovations in the field. Active policy and knowledge brokers, including the governments of Germany, Thailand, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Uruguay and most recently the whole Latin American and the Caribbean region through COPOLAD and CICAD, as well as an increasing number of non-governmental organizations in the field, play key roles in refining programming, building evidence, and sharing lessons on AD. For the period 2010-2013, 23 countries reported having implemented Alternative Development at the national level. UNODC latest data⁷ identified a total of 53 Alternative Development projects implemented between 2013 and 2017, intended to target 550,000 households. As experiences are unfolding and more comprehensive approaches develop, lessons are being learned and channeled to highest policy-making bodies: twice as much of side events and exhibits on AD experiences and evolutions were held at the UN Commission on Narcotic drugs sessions since 2012. At the field level, innovative programming and pilot projects slowly venture to explore and operationalize a broader AD approach. Interventions aimed at fostering socio-economic development in urban areas, border areas, and other “non-traditional” contexts are emerging (Diskul et al. 2019, 2020; UNODC 2015, 2017; Brombacher and Westerbarkei 2019).

A decade of AD conceptual adjustments

When it comes to drug policy, and moreover with Alternative Development, language matters. Across the globe, especially in countries not drastically affected by illicit cultivation of crops used in the illicit production and sale of narcotic drugs, gaps remain in articulating a common AD discourse and, more specifically in precisely renewing the discourse on AD, traditionally attached to rural territories of illicit cultivation. These initial debates were rather poorly defined in conceptual terms, at times creating more confusion than guidance⁸ (Collins et al. 2021; CND 2019/CRP.2).

As Brombacher and David (2020) however point out, “AD was for decades the only socio-economic development element within the global drug control system that was considered legitimate and

6 [1998-Political-Declaration_A-RES-S-20-2.pdf \(unodc.org\)](#).

7 [unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Research_brief_Overview_of_AD.pdf](#).

8 While some countries argued that alternative development would need to be redefined, others proposed a declination of appreciation (urban AD being the most prominent), others again opposing unrealistic prospects for a well-established concept defined within global drug control normative framework expressly to the rural setting.



even had passed the clearing of an UN drug control convention” (para. 5). Momentum has grown and there is a sense that, in complement with other drug policy tools, “finding innovative solutions and public-private partnerships to support alternative livelihoods” can constitute another “chance in this Decade of Action to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals (...) to make a decisive contribution to peaceful, safe, prosperous and inclusive societies”⁹. This was recently acknowledged by *UNODC Executive Director Ghada Waly* at the 63rd CND Session in 2020.

Amidst recent open critiques and debates of the viability of a strictly repressive drug control approach (Collins 2017; Alimi 2022; Csete et al., 2016; Jelsma & Bewley-Taylor 2016), several global and regionally-led policy and political milestones have contributed to enlarge the AD approach (Box 1). Among those, one may highlight the *UN United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development* (2013)¹⁰, the adoption of the UNGASS 2016 Outcome document¹¹, the OAS-CICAD Reference Framework for the Understanding of the Concept of Comprehensive and Sustainable Alternative Development (DAIS) (CICAD/doc.2502/19), the 2006 EU Approach on Alternative Development¹², the 2018 EU Council Conclusions on Alternative Development¹³ and EU Drugs Strategy 2021-2025¹⁴, and also at least one resolution a year by Germany, Thailand and Peru on Alternative Development adopted since 2012 by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) as presented in Annex 1. The number of co-sponsors has grown steadily (between 12 and 15 per year, up to 18 in 2013, and skyrocketing up to 50 sponsors in 2024)¹⁵ demonstrating growing support. These resolutions jointly contribute to refine a more holistic and inclusive policy concept that address human vulnerabilities, (poverty, unemployment, a lack of opportunities, discrimination and social marginalization), environmental protection, gender equality, the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in drugs affected areas as well as human rights.

Parallely, the adoption of the 2030 *Agenda on Sustainable Development*¹⁶ translated a shift in global thinking that repositioned the drug-related phenomenon at the heart of a holistic, interconnected, and complex system of action. Drug-related phenomena are understood to both impede development in countries of all income levels and find some conducive conditions of emergence in environments with lower levels of development. To some extent, the SDGs encourage to apprehend those phenomenon also as cross-cutting issues against which responses can also be enablers for development. It invites to policy coherence and multi-faceted approaches rather than binary reading (security and/or health) and siloed interventions. In this line, AD appears as a pivotal element in laying the foundation for more sustainable responses to illicit drugs. Encompassing food security and poverty reduction measures, AD offers specific measures to support access to land and land tenure, basic public services (education, health, infrastructure) (SDGs 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 2.4, 8.3), while helping maintaining ecosystems, and preventing deforestation and soil and water pollution with hazardous chemicals and materials used for illegal drugs production (SDGs 6.3, 12.2, 13b & 15.2).

The *2019 Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening our Actions to Accelerate the Implementation of our Joint Commitments to the World Drug Problem* reiterates that “efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and to effectively address the world drug problem are complemen-

9 Ghada Waly, UNODC Executive Director, „Opening of the 63rd session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs 2 March 2020 – Executive_Director.pdf (unodc.org).

10 [United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development.](#)

11 [Outcome document of the thirtieth special session 19-21 April 2016 \(unodc.org\).](#)

12 <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9597-2006-INIT/en/pdf>.

13 Council conclusions of November 2018 on Alternative Development: “Towards a new understanding of Alternative Development and related development-centered drug policy interventions - contributing to the implementation of UNGASS 2016 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals” (14338/18) - pdf (europa.eu) and <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%209597%202006%20INIT>.

14 [eu-drugs-strategy-booklet.pdf \(europa.eu\).](#)

15 As observed at the CND sessions by Author and GIZ Members of Germany delegation and AD resolution sponsor.

16 [Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development | Department of Economic and Social Affairs \(un.org\).](#)



tary and mutually reinforcing”¹⁷ as already stressed in the *2016 UNGASS Outcome document*¹⁸. In its seventh Chapter, the UNGASS Outcome document (§ h, j, k) encourages further Member States to consider “comprehensive development-oriented approaches” and the creation of “alternative sources of income” for communities affected by or at risk of illicit cultivation of drug crops and other illicit drug-related activities in urban and rural settings. In this line, and at the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda, studying the relevance and opportunities of AD beyond its traditional realms would also contribute to better understand the potentials of AD as a development-based drug control tool, or as some policy framework underlines, the potentialities and accuracy of broader “drugs-oriented development policies”¹⁹ (BMZ 2013).

Box 1: International and regional political milestones for Alternative Development

Marking its 10th anniversary in the framework of 2023 Thematic Discussions on the Implementation of All International Drug Policy Commitments, following-up on the 2019 Ministerial Declaration (23-25 October 2023), the **2013 United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development** translate an unprecedented consensus towards more effective and sustainable AD. While the conditionality aspect of interventions is left at each States discretion, the *Guiding Principles* emphasize the importance of proper sequencing of AD within both a comprehensive drug control framework and “an overall development strategy” (68, paras. 9 and 16): pushing for multi-stakeholder, inclusive and voluntary participation (para. 18 (b)), the Principles encourage interconnections with macro-level strategies such as strengthening rule of law (para. 10), ensuring environmental protection (para. 11) and advancing tailored, market-driven approaches (para. 18 (gg)). This is also reflected in the need for impact evaluation (para. 18 (w)) and monitoring metrics including both human development and crop-reduction indicators (para. 17).

The CICAD Group of Experts on Comprehensive and Sustainable Alternative Development (GE-DAIS), coordinated under the chairing of the Government of Uruguay the Government of Peru, integrated AD into a more comprehensive and sustainable vision in 2018-19 Recognizing the economic and technical limitations of an AD strategy solely based on the physical substitution of illicit crops (para. 27-28), the OAS-CICAD *Reference Framework for the Understanding of the Concept of Comprehensive and Sustainable Alternative Development (DAIS)* (CICAD/doc.2502/19)²⁰ stresses the need to better adapt to realities on the ground. It invites to consider urban centers of drug production and trafficking, as appropriate, as possible relevant areas of intervention, and to focus on sustainable development objectives without prejudice to its use as a strategy to control and/or debilitate illicit economies (para. 31). Two multi-sectorial components are proposed: territorial, local development (economic, social, cultural, and environmental) combined with social welfare strategies as appropriate at national levels including in a preventive manner (para. 34).

17 [Ministerial_Declaration.pdf \(unodc.org\)](#) preamble.

18 [Outcome document of the thirtieth special session 19-21 April 2016 \(unodc.org\)](#)

19 [Alternative Development | BMZ](#)

20 [DAIS Framework \(oas.org\)](#)



Across the Atlantic, **the European Union** plays a key role in AD conceptual refinement, visibility and effectiveness. The introduction in 2011 of the first bi-regional COPOLAD along with the work undertaken under the *EU-CELAC Coordination and Cooperation Mechanism on Drugs* offers unprecedented mechanisms of horizontal exchanges. The European Union developed a long-term vision of AD. In the *2006 EU Approach on Alternative Development* and later the *EU Drug Strategy 2013-2020*, AD interventions start considering wider issues of human security, governance, human rights, and food security. On these grounds, the 2018 Council Conclusions on Alternative Development (*“Towards a new Understanding of Alternative Development and Related Development-centered Drug Policy Interventions - Contributing to the Implementation of UN-GASS 2016 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals”*) introduce considerations of the sustainable use of natural resources as well as the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services, the promotion of gender equality and human-rights based approaches (op1). It further acknowledges “other development-centered drug policy interventions as legitimate means of addressing phenomena such as drug trafficking and urban drug markets in developing countries”. Most recently, in a spirit of effective and result-based cooperation, the *EU Drug Strategy 2021-2025*²¹ sets to direct efforts to “strengthen the commitment to development-oriented drug policies and Alternative Development measures in adherence with the OECD Development Assistance Committee’s (DAC) guidelines and standards” in addition to “principles of non-conditionality, non-discrimination, and proper sequencing” (strategic priority 9.6).

A resource and knowledge gap

Despite increasing interest and appetite for Alternative Development and development-oriented policy innovations in territories affected by illicit drugs, AD implementation experiences in so-called “non-traditional” contexts remain quite limited as well as understanding, knowledge and data collected around such innovative initiatives. The specificities on so-called “non-traditional” terrains are still to be defined. These limitations have further hindered the systematization of best practices and lessons learned, and with it, peer-learning and nuanced conceptual thinking on AD and development-led responses to drugs. As part of a regional effort to better grasp the opportunities for IADA, notably in the framework of the Second COPOLAD *Intraregional Dialogue Forum* on Alternative Development held in Mexico City on 27-28, September 2023, COPOLAD Members pointed out to initial and persisting difficulties attached to this debate and the diversity of viewpoints on the feasibility, operability, or else the desirability of such expansion beyond rural settings of illicit cultivation. Some arguments sought to understand how Alternative Development could be used as a tool to address changing dynamics, for example learning from social integration programmes to provide alternative socio-economic options to people, especially youths, living in low-income marginalized urban areas, and most vulnerable to joining drug-dealing criminal gangs. However, others pointed out the unrealistic prospect of such endeavor, and expressed reluctance to further expand the definition of Alternative Development, given the already low levels of funding for existing AD programmes, and the risks of political bottlenecks attached to any political negotiations.

In addition to the data and conceptual quandaries, one should note existing resources and financing challenges. Considered as the “poor cousin” of Official Development Assistance, Alternative

21 [eu-drugs-strategy-booklet.pdf](https://europa.eu/eu-drugs-strategy-booklet.pdf) (europa.eu)



Innovative Alternative Development Approaches in Latin America and the Caribbean Why a study on Innovative Alternative Development Approaches (IADA)?

Development financing accounts on average for only 0.2% of total international engagements for development cooperation (Alimi 2019, w. Hynes 2015; UNODC 2015). Despite some increase at certain times, AD financing has largely depended on geopolitical interests and external support. While the AD concept had been formalized, between 1998 and 2008, donor commitments were predominantly focused on “narcotics control” over the 1998-2008 period, and 97% of these commitments were made by the United States (with minimum ODA amounting to almost one thousand million dollars per annum over the 2000-2008 period). Further, between 2013 and 2017, a total of 15 countries provided financial contributions to Alternative Development initiatives. Notably, the United States of America; funding almost two-thirds of the projects during this period, followed by Germany financing approximately one-quarter of the projects, while the European Union funded one in ten projects²². According to UNODC, in 2013, the gross disbursement of Alternative Development funds in the six main opium-producing and coca-producing countries totaled close to \$150 million²³.

This figure represented approximately 6% of the total income earned by farmers from opium and coca production, which amounted to \$2.6 billion in those six countries during that year. The distribution of these funds varied significantly across countries, ranging from 0.1% in Myanmar to as high as 25% in Colombia. This data underscores the importance of alternative development initiatives in providing income opportunities beyond illicit crop cultivation, particularly in regions heavily dependent on opium and coca production. It also remains largely directed to short-term projects which gains remain difficultly sustained. In this context, studies have emerged on the need to reflect on better resource optimization. Greener AD for example also opens interesting prospects for smart climate finance and optimized resourcing (UNODC 2023; GPDPD 2016).

This study thus responds to timely concerns and increased appetite for the most relevant, effective and sustainable AD interventions that could respond to both drug control exigencies and sustainable development ambitions, within and beyond its traditional terrains of application.

22 United States of America (Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs - INL and US Agency for International Development - USAID) - Germany (German Development Agency – GIZ) - European Union (EU) - Japan (Japan International Cooperation Agency – JICA) - Thailand (Mae Fah Luang Foundation under Royal Patronage – MFLF) - United Kingdom (Department for International Development – DFID).

23 [Research_brief_Overview of AD Projects 2013-2017](#).



Study purpose and approach

This study is a direct response to COPOLAD interested countries to fill a knowledge gap on innovative Alternative Development approaches. It proposes to reflect on the **opportunities, viability and stakes of innovative Alternative Development beyond traditional models** and rural contexts of illicit cultivation. Considering the contextual background and emerging AD initiatives and debates, the study has been framed around the following **overarching analytical question**:

To what extent can identified IADA initiatives (in their design features, instruments, and implementation modalities) be useful to advance the relevance and effectiveness of AD in drug-affected territories beyond traditional settings, while contributing to more comprehensive, balanced and coherent policymaking on AD, drug control and development-related measures?

Rather than apprehending IADA in terms of conceptual expansion or redefinition, that could produce fuzzy notions or sterile duplications, the narrative preferred in this study is one of knowledge and policy transfer²⁴ that focuses on **the relevance, adaptability and viability** of AD across various terrains. This means that, based on IADA observations, some avenues of intervention or policy development that seek to make sense of existing AD sets of processes will be highlighted. It invites to use accumulated knowledge and practices in one “traditional” terrain, context or level of implementation in the development of adapted processes in another setting, sector or level of governance. Rather than focusing on a precise (re)definition or declination of a concept, such perspective emphasizes positive emulation of ideas, knowledge building, lessons or tools transfer, and policy inspiration or overlaps that favor the construction of IAD approaches across social contexts affected by illicit drug supply.

It thus ambitions:

- To **situate new “terrains” and define “innovations”**;
- To identify **opportunities, practices and limits** of AD expansion to “non-traditional contexts” and so-called new “terrains”;
- To reflect on the possible **conceptual and operational implications** of such dynamics on AD.

More broadly, the study hopes to contribute to global discussions on the AD concept and to serve as:

- **An evidence-building exercise** focused should be on Alternative Development interventions in various settings and local contexts, their programmatic architecture and implementing structure, their instruments, and intended results.
- **A policy learning instrument** to identify emerging practices and opportunities for innovations, as well as lessons for AD applicability in specific innovative contexts/cases category and possible overlaps with other development-related agendas at international level. This would serve as a basis for operational recommendations to inform future AD conceptualization and programming in the region, and more broadly on inclusive, human-centered, and development-oriented approaches to drug responses.
- **A contribution to conceptual thinking around AD contours**, potentials, and applicability as a more nuanced development-oriented tool to drugs, beyond its illicit crop cultivation aspects.

24 Policy transfer refers to the process by which policies, practices, or ideas are adopted, adapted, or transferred from one political or social context to another. This process involves the circulation of ideas, movement of knowledge, experiences, and expertise across different jurisdictions, often driven by a variety of factors such as perceived success, necessity, or emulation of best practices. See in particular Evans (2004) Policy Transfer in Global Perspective, Routledge; Dolowitz, D. P. and Marsh, D. (2000) 'Learning from Abroad: The Role of Policy Transfer in Contemporary Policy Making', Governance, 13 (1), 5–24 or else, Stone, D. (2004) 'Transfer Agents and Global Networks in the “Transnationalization” of Policy', Journal of European Public Policy, 11 (3), 545–66.



Objectives

The study builds on existing so-labeled innovative initiatives across interested countries in Latin American and the Caribbean region, the work of the COPOLAD III Working group on AD, its Member States and interested partners and development-oriented approaches to drugs. Doing so, it specifically aims at:

- **Providing a comprehensive picture of the current efforts in Latin America and the Caribbean**, in the development and understanding of IADA, including the evolution of the AD concept.
- **Mapping and defining innovations and “new terrains” or “non-traditional” settings**, and studying within each defined category, key country, projects or initiative cases at local/national level in the Latin American and Caribbean region to learn from their design, implementation experiences, and record of achievements.
- **Identifying and assessing innovative tools, emerging practices, and lessons learned in the course of the IADA initiatives** and/or implementation in non-traditional areas that can be used to adjust the AD approach and advance development-oriented drug policy measures in so-called “non-traditional” contexts.
- **Deriving evidence-based orientations** that could be used to inform AD programming in “non-traditional”/innovative contexts and development-oriented approaches to drug-affected territories, and more broadly to reflect on AD conceptual contours and context-tailored and development-oriented responses to drugs in all settings.

The results of this study are intended to be useful to COPOLAD III working group on AD, Member states and partners, national governments, and drug control agencies in Latin America and the Caribbeans. Its audience also includes regional organizations and agencies working in South-South cooperation and learning on drug policy across Latin America and Europe, as well as other drug control and development actors concerned by illicit drug trade consequences on societies and communities. As part of that community, donors, international organizations specialized in drugs control, such as UNODC, or other national governments are targeted. The study would finally contribute to evidence building efforts also pursued by academia and civil society organizations interested in advancing policy coherence and development-oriented approaches to drugs in all settings.

Scope and analytical framework

Weighting the merits, viability, and possibility for IADA beyond traditional AD contexts, this exploratory study is articulated around two main questions:

- What is “innovative” in emerging AD initiatives in LAC and how can “new terrains” be defined?
- What are the opportunities and stakes for IADA in LAC, and beyond for AD conceptual and operational frameworks?

To that end, the study analytical framework combines a set of mixed criteria of appreciation: socio-political tools of public policy analysis, and policy evaluation instruments based on the main OECD - DAC criteria of development interventions evaluation²⁵ (relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability, as well as human rights, gender equality and leaving no one behind). It thus hopes to better align with the spirit of the *EU Drug Strategy 2021-2025* (see box 1 above). The developed analytical and methodological frameworks, as well as the empirical strategy deployed to collect information are detailed in the Annex 2.

25 <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>.



Innovative Alternative Development Approaches in Latin America and the Caribbean

Why a study on Innovative Alternative Development Approaches (IADA)?

Both the implementation modalities and the substantive outcomes and outputs of IADA are meant to be captured as far as possible. Within that framing, progress made but also remaining gaps and challenges for adjusting AD approach in specific innovative contexts are observed. This implies a **case-based approach**, identifying across LAC COPOLAD participating countries relevant examples of initiatives and/or projects within each “terrains” or “contexts” of intervention categorized so far as follows:

- Terrain A: Urban settings and environments
- Terrain B: Boarder areas, vulnerable zones, and preventive actions
- Terrain C: Ethnic and indigenous territories
- Terrain D: Emerging legal medicinal cannabis or industrial hemp value chains and inclusive measures (notably of traditional farmers or small-scale farmers involved in illicit drug crop cultivation)

Conducted between September 2023 and March 2024, this study adopts a **phase-based and qualitative approach**, to refine the understanding of IADA, attached needs/challenges, and unpack existing and emerging features and mechanisms of operationalization and their added value. A participatory and inclusive data collection and analysis have been preferred as detailed in the Annex 3. Data and information were collected through desk review of more than 120 documents (existing literature and relevant project documentation), a dedicated policy workshop discussion organized in the follow up to the 2nd COPOLAD III Intraregional Dialogue Forum on Alternative Development (27-28th September 2023, Mexico City), 116 semi-direct interviews and consultations with key learning partners and informants across 15 participating countries, and 3 field visits to selected projects and initiatives in Peru, Colombia and Uruguay between October and November 2024. The data collection approach and tools are presented in the Annex 2 and 3.

Limitations and mitigation measures

As comprehensive as possible, this study relies very much on available information shared by COPOLAD Member States on emerging and limited experimentations of IADA. As such, it cannot be an in-depth research analysis for each country nor an exhaustive catalogue of all the efforts deployed in the region. It has limitations as presented in the following table. It consists mainly of an exploratory study based on a scoping review of current initiatives and reflections in LAC as identified by implementers as “innovative”. Rather than an impact assessment or in-depth evaluation of existing initiatives or a policy manual, this study explores the added value of AD beyond traditional rural areas of implementation and responses to illicit crops cultivation, and its (possible) operationalization within a wider range of contexts and terrains. It does not provide any specific in-depth project evaluations nor result analysis of identified and selected initiatives. It rather lays some grounds for future in-depth studies, comparative research and policy debates.



Innovative Alternative Development Approaches in Latin America and the Caribbean

Why a study on Innovative Alternative Development Approaches (IADA)?

Limitations	Mitigations measures
1. Variations of contexts and progress of IADA policy reflection and implementation and related availability and accessibility of information in a limited timeframe. Some data sources are limited in coverage and scope by nature.	The research team mixed different methods of data collection and revised the proposed report structure so a key finding can be drawn from a wider basis of information and pool of informant.
2. Positive narrative and implementers' perspective of IADA (flagship activity, tool, project, or success story) and related comparability gaps.	Literature review and exploration of contemporary debates and challenges around IADA add perspective to identified IADA. The study adopts an overarching perspective, weighting the merits of IADA as a whole and not based on terrain types.
3. Representativity of interviewed stakeholders, beyond interested IADA parties.	Literature review and exploration of contemporary debates and challenges around IADA were integrated to highlight these perspectives and situate IADA into broader policy and research debates.
4. Security concerns may hamper access to sites of observations.	Travel was limited to specific projects as advised by relevant national authorities. Remote tools were used where relevant and appropriate, and triangulation of data collection tools were used.
5. Exploratory nature of the research, comprehensiveness of the study and comparability gaps across the different case studies.	The study is summative and comprehensive, building on both case studies, and available knowledge across the region and COPOLAD member countries. It looks at the broader picture, engaging with existing thematic literature.

Chapter 1 – Mapping Alternative Development new terrains?

As recalled in the Introductory chapter, by its globally accepted definition and subsequent policy documents and guidelines, Alternative Development has historically and traditionally referred to development-oriented drug supply control interventions targeting and implemented in rural areas of countries where illicit cultivation on plants used in the production and manufacture of illicit narcotic and psychoactive substances. Those have been also known in drug policy debates as the so-called “traditional settings” or “terrains” of Alternative Development. By default, any “non-traditional” settings or terrain would fall in a blurry acceptance, outside or beyond either rural settings or illicit cultivation, or both (i.e., illicit cultivation in rural settings). Reflecting on the importance and possible added value of IADA, it is first needed to delineate more clearly what one can understand by the notion of *terrain* and identify pertinent dimensions for observation. This endeavor also supposes to look at how IADA country participants are using and apprehending the notion of “terrain”. This chapter proposes to first delineate the different layers of understanding of “new terrain”. In the light of these clarifications, it subsequently maps them out and explores the emerging extended geography of Alternative Development in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean.

I. Delineating *non-traditional* terrains

Collected information on IADA initiatives and experimentations in the region conveys various, yet intertwined layers of understanding of IAD terrains. Alternative Development is gaining traction outside historic countries of AD implementation (i.e., mainly countries of the Andean region with high and record levels of illicit cultivation of coca). This interest spread across countries where illicit cultivation is observed and may constitute a monitored priority or in countries with no official record of illicit cultivation. When asked about the pertinence of AD for their respective countries, COPOLAD IADA Study workshop participants proposed concise and appealing mottos capturing the relevance of AD renewal. Shared mottos applied to different contexts of implementation, from countries and territories affected by illicit cultivation to urban zones of (micro) trafficking as well as markets for new regulated substances such as cannabis. Although in practice AD programming remains mostly operationalized within rural contexts, most participants envisioned IADA as a proactive and transformative development-oriented measure applicable, in theory, to different stages and territories of the illicit drug chain. Interestingly enough, a good share of participants coming from so-called non-traditional AD countries, identified AD as an innovation per se. Examples of possible mottos shared during IADA Workshop around the added value and essence of AD, from Peru to Ecuador, Mexico, El Salvador, and Jamaica, included “produce, share and prevent”, “from a vulnerable territory to a land of opportunities”, “Building opportunities for all”, “The way to generate economic options to start anew”, “Transform territories” and “Making regulated cannabis the new green gold”.



The role of international and regional platforms of knowledge and information exchange pushing for more innovative policy thinking has been essential. Several consulted stakeholders stressed the value of intra-regional field visits and working groups, bilateral study visits and international events to share experiences, and to adapt the lessons learned elsewhere in the region to national realities and needs. In this regard, the COPOLAD III Study trip to Peru in September 2022²⁶, with a specific focus on Alternative Development initiatives in Ucayali and Tingo Maria was particularly welcome. Special attention was given to producer organizations and cooperatives, women’s enterprises and empowerment, that strongly inspired consulted stakeholders to embrace and adapt the concept of Alternative Development to what each territory offers and allows.

“We saw what was happening in Peru and we found relevant similarities with what is happening in our cities, especially for women: people are dragged to the illicit drug activities for similar reasons, because of marginalization, lack of opportunities and lack of access to basic services.”

IADA Study Interview, Uruguay Learning partner, October 2024

In this dynamic, drawing from the *UN Guiding Principles on Alternative Development* (para.14; 12), South-South exchanges of best practices and lessons learned in AD programs open policy dialogue spaces to consider how AD could be an innovative common way to address similar urban challenges. Interviewees stressed the role of COPOLAD field trips and bilateral exchanges of information in favoring positive emulation of ideas, mainly in non-AD countries such as El Salvador, Panama, or Uruguay. As a learning partner from El Salvador shared: *“several similarities could be identified with Uruguay, Ecuador, and Panama: the problem of micro-trafficking that invades urban public spaces and poor neighborhoods. We need to be working now at ‘recovering the urban territory’ and taking it back from the gangs. And this can only be done through more comprehensive approaches and testing alternatives”²⁷. Furthermore, “looking and jointly discussing what is happening in El Salvador, Guatemala, Uruguay and in Panama, we clearly saw the possible advantage of focusing on urban development to provide economic alternatives for those who engage in illicit drug activities in our cities. We need now to find a way to promote a form of AD that is more social and established within our communities”²⁸.*

AD rethinking is becoming important in countries that face more diverse illicit drug supply phenomena: drug transiting, urban macro and micro-trafficking, and incursions of new psychoactive markets and substances such as fentanyl, but not necessarily illicit cultivation or production. This is the case notably in Brazil, Ecuador, Paraguay, Panama, El Salvador or Uruguay. However, traditional AD implementers such as Colombia, Peru or Bolivia are also gaining experience in optimizing and innovating their AD approach, notably through a diversification of their AD intervention’s schemes, in terms of objectives, activities proposed, partnerships or else beneficiary groups and targets of specific territories such as ethnic and indigenous territories, borders area or conflict zones.

In this context, the notion of “terrains” can be broken down into four intertwined layers of understanding as summarized in the following figure 1.

26 Copolad organizes study trip to Peru to learn about alternative development initiatives – Copolad.

27 IADA Study interview, El Salvador Learning partner, January 2024.

28 IADA Study interview, Panama Learning partner, January 2024.



Figure 1: Understandings of “new terrains” according to observed IADA developments in LAC



As such, it is possible to observe advancement under each understanding, starting with an updated mapping of IADA territories and developments, and considering all the above-mentioned layers of terrains categories.



II. IADA “Territories”: An evolving geography for Alternative Development

The map of Alternative Development interventions across the global has been a tricky picture to draw. A few attempts have been made to grasp the scope, volume and number of AD at the international level. While the so-called traditional AD countries have long been identified as reiterated in the 2023 World Drug Report (i.e. Afghanistan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Colombia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Peru), there is limited information on other countries where AD is being considered as a potential policy option to enable sustainable livelihoods outside the illicit drug economy. Recent efforts were directed to update existing global drug-related data collection tools such as the Annual Report Questionnaires (ARQs), to better ameliorate data collection. A new rotating module (R08 Alternative Development) has been added to the ARQs that would need to be administrated every two years starting 2022 to collect quantitative and now more qualitative information on Alternative Development projects conducted or financed across the world, and their implementation modality, including with regards to eradication and socio-economic indicators of targeted households²⁹. Nevertheless, the instruments still very much rely on national responses and attached availability and access to quality data. By nature, they also provide little insights into implementation disparities and policy processes evolutions. As such, recording innovative initiatives outside commonly accepted policy categories remains even more challenging. As underlined during the IADA Policy workshop in Mexico and across interviews with national AD implementers and international donors, there is room for more systematic and evolutive reporting on AD. Interrelated issues in data processes, evolving AD interpretations and administrative constraints make it still quite challenging to provide such complete mapping, to gauge and compare the levels of AD engagements and investments.

Considering the first layer of understanding of IADA terrains as territories, this study tries to contribute to this mapping effort. Sourcing mainly qualitative information from IADA key informants and learning partners, official national and institutional internal documentation, and observations of a selected number of projects and initiatives, an exploratory mapping of IAD extended territories and new terrains can be drawn as proposed in the figure 2. While it does not represent an official geography of AD or IAD interventions, this exploratory map provides an updated status of where LAC stands in terms of IADA interests and engagements. It situates regional evolutions, including self-designated interested countries – whether this interest has been officially formulated within national, regional, or international drug policy fora such as CICAD, COPOLAD or CND, and/or materialized by pilot initiatives and conceptual workstreams and developments. It thus considers the various paths and forms of IADA implementation and commitments to adjust the approach to more diverse sets of terrains (understood in its four dimensions).

29 [Annual Reports Questionnaire \(unodc.org\)](https://www.unodc.org/).



The region demonstrates a clear, growing appetite for bringing about more inclusive, development-based solutions to territories and communities most vulnerable to remain and/or enter the illicit drug supply economy. In addition to traditional AD countries of the Andean region (in dark beige on the map) exploring new features of AD in specific types of territories in rural areas, like borders or indigenous lands (as marked by purple stars on the map), an increased number of countries affirmed their interest in adopting AD-based interventions. Those are highlighted in lighter beige and light green colors on the map, depending on the scope of national efforts. In those new interested countries, Alternative Development captures the following dimensions:

- Building socio-economic and/or preventive actions to mitigate the risks of and/or counter illicit crop expansion or threats related to illicit trafficking. Countries such as Mexico and to some extent Venezuela and Guatemala adopt that perspective.
- Addressing socio-economic drivers like those facilitating illicit drug cultivation in the context of micro-trafficking and transiting of illicit drugs, notably among youth. This utilization of AD is envisioned in countries such as Brazil, Ecuador, Uruguay, El Salvador, or Panama, as shown by blue stars on the map.
- Taking advantage of emerging licit cannabis markets and hemp value chains to create more inclusive economies for most vulnerable populations involved in the past in illicit cultivation or illicit drug-related activities. This is a debate ongoing notably in countries such as Jamaica, Saint-Vincent and the Grenadines and to some extent Paraguay and Uruguay, marked by a green star on the map.






This policy appetite is materialized in various forms, scope and rhythms. Drug coordination agency teams brainstorm the elaboration of policy roadmaps to initiate “an internal change of discourses and mindset towards AD” beyond a solely rural context instrument. Others engage in local pilots and scaled up programming “to demonstrate the added value and possible results of IAD”³⁰ at national and inter-institutional levels.



Figure 2: Exploratory mapping of IADA in LAC



Legend

-  Terrains as Territories: Amplitude of IADA interested countries (darkest being traditional AD implementers)
-  AD project with optimized/new features
-  IAD initiatives in urban settings
-  IAD initiatives oriented towards specific ethnic and indigenous groups
-  IAD adaptation to emerging cannabis/hemp value chains



III. Turning enthusiasm into action: New interested countries in Alternative Development frameworks

Alternative Development is gaining traction across an increasing number of countries of the Latin American and Caribbean regions. In most of those new terrains, the resort, or else the consideration of Alternative Development constitutes an innovation per se, given that their drug policy strategies did not previously include Alternative Development provisions. When so, as in Ecuador, AD areas of interventions were concentrated to illicit cultivations in rural areas and are now ventured into more diverse settings and on various links of illicit chain.

In countries with emerging and/or aggravating illicit crops cultivation with no prior AD experience, such as in **Mexico** or to some extent, Venezuela, AD has manifested some positive advancements. In the case of Mexico, a country of little AD experience³¹ and now host of the Second COPOLAD III Intraregional Dialogue Forum on Alternative Development in October 2023, a “new Mexican scenario” is being imagined at the initiative of drug policy and rural development experts within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Welfare. Based on the positive results and lessons of the national rural development *Sembrando Vida* program, a working group of practitioners and policy-makers gathering policy-makers and agents from the Ministry of Welfare (*Bienestar*), the UNODC’s MEXK54 programme of illicit crop monitoring of the Global Illicit Crop Monitoring (ICMP), the UNODC Alternative Development Programme and the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SRE) are developing a pilot approach to better link the fight against drugs with territorial economic development. Adapting the rural development *Sembrando Vida* program to territories of or at risk of illicit drug cultivation in Guerrero as monitored by the UNODC Monitoring program MEXK54³², the pilot intervention would develop agro-productive systems to favor alternative legal cultivation of alternative crops and market-driven products.

Participating in the regional collective efforts towards more comprehensive responses to drugs, notably through COPOLAD III, **Venezuela**, through the *Superintendencia Nacional AntiDrogas*, Sistema de Información Nacional de Drogas (SUNAD), develops a National Strategy for the Study of Illicit Drug Trafficking. In this framework, “priority zones” are being identified through geo-referencing of “regions vulnerable to new threats linked to drug trafficking to guide integrated defense plans”. In a context of increased activities of transport, distribution, and sale of drugs, which is understood as transiting and/or micro-trafficking, consideration is given to better identify and prioritize vulnerable populations in the illicit drug value chain to offer alternatives in terms of licit economies and prevent illicit drug trafficking. In this line, “AD could be a way to break the dependence on this illicit economy in a context of difficult socioeconomic conditions”³³.

31 The fight against expanding opium poppy cultivation in the country mainly focused on eradication efforts. In the 1990s, Mexico attempted to develop a project of “Rural Development to discourage opium poppy cultivation in Oaxaca, Guerrero and Michoacan” conducted by FAO (UNODC 2019).

32 [Mexico-Monitoreo-Plantios-Amapola-2019-2020.pdf \(unodc.org\)](#).

33 IADA Study Interview, Venezuela learning partner, January 2024.



Preventive AD actions are being expanded beyond rural areas of traditional intervention. A key example under this category is Ecuador. The Andean country has been developing preventive Alternative Development measures for the past decades. In recent years, in a context of institutional precariousness for drug policies, the *Ecuadorian Comité Interinstitucional de Prevención Integral del Fenómeno Socioeconómico de las Drogas y de Regulación y Control del Uso de Sustancias Catalogadas Sujetas a Fiscalización* (CID) hosted under the Ministry of Health, conceptualizes a hybrid innovative AD approach. Gathering lessons from relevant alcohol and drug use prevention, urban development and AD preventive interventions in the country, the Committee has been developing a follow up strategic roadmap to its “*Sin presión, hay diversión*” campaign in partnership with the foundation PrevenSud. First specifically developed to prevent alcohol and drug use, the strategy now integrates IAD components for most marginalized youth in urban centers identified in situation of vulnerabilities to prevent and influence micro-trafficking. Articulated around three areas of work – integrating arts, trainings and reappropriation of public spaces – the strategy aims at reinforcing the capacity of self-protection and emancipation from illicit drug activities of youth between 10 and 18-year-old.

Interestingly enough, **countries with no illicit cultivation nor experience or past political interest in AD** are also considering the approach as an innovative way to develop more comprehensive drug policies. In this line, although **El Salvador** has not yet formulated or implemented any AD programs as part of illicit crop control and reduction strategies, preventive, urban and inclusive initiatives are being devised at both national and local levels to complement strict law enforcement responses and support mainly young people living in the most violent urban areas of the country. The *Comisión Nacional Antidrogas* (CNA) of El Salvador is developing a new drug strategy recentered around a problematization of drugs-related activities in its interconnections with existing “social fabrics”. “We combat organized crime, but at the same time we should not leave a void and we need to create an alternative to drug trafficking if we want the good results to persist”, underlined a learning partner. In this framework, as consulted stakeholders highlighted, complementary to the current special drug control regime, AD is seen as “an opportunity to reach out to communities involved or connected to micro-trafficking and building opportunities to turn and move on to a path away from trafficking and reproducing the patterns existing in their communities or parents”. In this context, AD would support the transition to “a different economy that produces sufficient wealth so micro-trafficking and drug use appears less valuable”³⁴. While still in progress, the reflection within the CNA Treatment Unit was informed by developments of drug use prevention and drug supply reduction programs such as – Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) Program and the Drugs Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) Program – Community Police Program that integrated crime prevention initiatives that address social and economic risk factors, in partnership with civil society and social actors³⁵.

34 IADA Study interview, El Salvador Learning partner, January 2024.

35 MEM, 2022. Respuesta a “Acción Prioritaria 9.5: Apoyo a los programas de reducción de la oferta con iniciativas de prevención del delito, en colaboración con la sociedad civil y otros grupos de interés, según corresponda y que aborden los factores de riesgo sociales y económicos.”



More challenging, **countries of emerging regulated cannabis markets or industrial hemp value chains** are considering AD as a way to include traditional farmers or small-scale farmers (past involved in illicit drug crop cultivation into the regulated cannabis economy. In those contexts, AD-based interventions would also be a means for a wider audience to use the emerging legal cannabis economy and derived products as economic development opportunities. Exploring the option of ‘Alternative Development with cannabis’, **the Paraguayan government’s**³⁶ perspective has been one of greater inclusion of farming communities that survive by growing cannabis for the illicit market. Some initiatives were presented during the IADA Study workshop. The Chamber of Industrial Hemp of Paraguay (CCIP) collaborates closely with the Ministry of Agriculture to advance sustainable cultivation practices for industrial hemp across the country. In particular, a test project has been designed for indigenous producers to embrace hemp cultivation as a means of diversifying their income. Currently, eight families are actively involved in the project³⁷, viewed as a promising alternative for generating revenue. An “Industrial hemp safety protocol” for cultivation has been prepared, requesting each participant producer to place an authorization sign on their hemp cultivation. The CCIP and the Ministry of Agriculture (MAG) acknowledge the potential of hemp cultivation to provide economic empowerment for indigenous communities while promoting economic efforts and environmental sustainability. The project is at its early stage but hopes to build on projects gains and expand to other families. Despite limited concrete programming so far, the Paraguay National Anti-Drug Secretariat (SENAD) also mentioned intentions to use the lessons of gender-sensitive rural development programs to consider options of similar approach in the hemp industry development. Exploiting emerging cannabis markets as an opportunity for innovative Alternative Development is also particularly considered in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Jamaica and to some extent Uruguay, as will be further elaborated later on in this study.

While emerging, the resort to Alternative Development across the LAC region is also at different levels of conceptualization and implementation. In their elaboration, LAC countries intend to “innovate” by showing a greater flexibility in AD apprehensions. The next chapter will focus on the other apprehensions of “new terrains” in terms of contexts, features and social environments and observe the current efforts across the different cases of AD applicability.

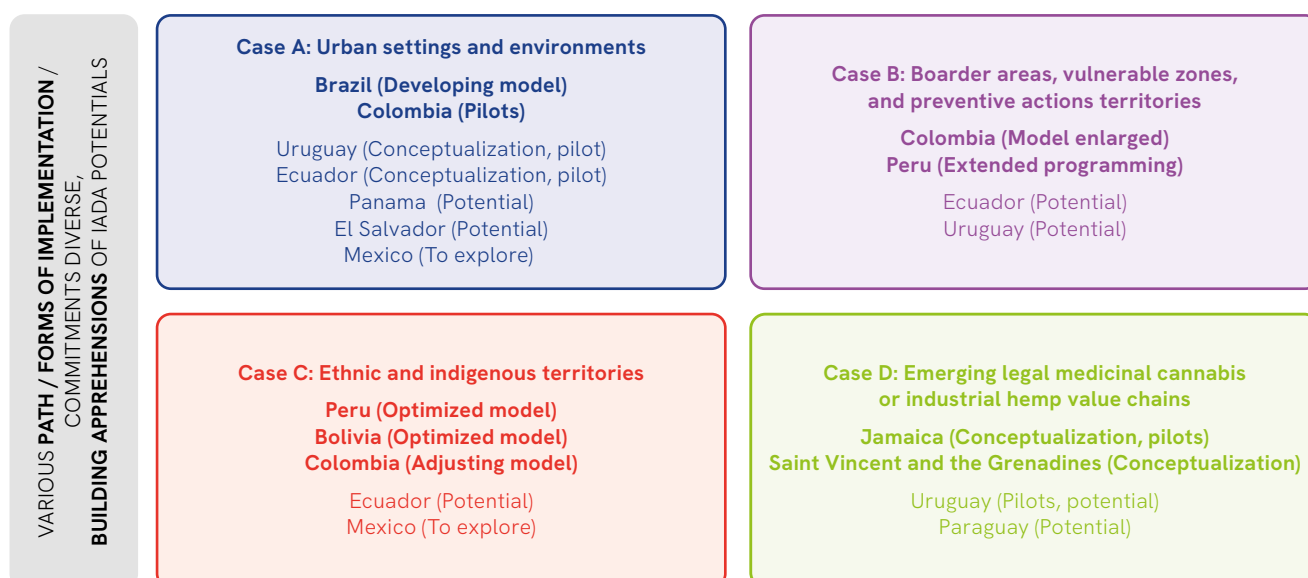
36 Decree 2725/2019, allowing for the development of a cannabis industry with low THC content was approved by the government in October 2019.

37 CCIP Project presentation film, COPOLAD IADA Policy Workshop, September 2024.

Chapter 2 – Situating Innovations Explored cases of IADA applicability

Within this new IAD geography, the Alternative Development rationale and schemes of interventions are being (re)considered, tested and adapted to better respond to the specific challenges attached to the illicit drug supply chain. Representing the actual status quo of emerging initiatives and existing projects based on the IADA study corpus, Figure 3 proposes a typology of IADA applicability as observed in the region. Whereas some countries have already engaged in model development and programming, others are reflecting on possible conceptualization, while others present, according to the research team, potentials or enabling conditions to try out IADA. While not reflecting official positions, this figure gives an idea of where countries stand so far and could fit across the different cases of applicability. This typology is not set in stone. It is dynamic and evolves as projects and initiatives change across countries.

Figure 3: Proposed typology of IADA applicability.





Based on available data and a scoping review of IADA initiatives in the region, this section details this typology and categorizes observed initiatives into possible cases of IADA applicability. Looking at “terrains” in terms of “context” and “social environments” (refer to chapter 1 – figure 1), it presents the multiple settings of IAD emerging operationalization outside traditional rural areas of illicit cultivation (incl. urban settings, borders areas, conflict zones, various policy models) and responding to diverse sets of socio-economic environments vulnerable and/or favoring illicit drug supply activities (incl. collection, supports, transit, micro-trafficking...). For each case, it situates how and where IADA fit in terms of relevance: it asks whether IADA fits for purpose and is consistent with territorial priorities, beneficiaries needs and AD rationale. As far as possible, parallels and similarities between non-traditional settings and AD traditional terrains will be sought in an attempt to better understand how the existing *United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development*³⁸ could be leveraged or transposed to tackle the illicit drug supply-related challenges in other contexts. It then presents selected projects and initiatives based on this study available corpus.

Terrain A: IADA in Urban settings and environments *Responding to risks and root causes of illicit drug supply activities*

1. Relevance – How does IADA fit in urban settings and environments?

The inclination to broaden the scope of AD towards urban settings and environments, while not totally new, has posed critical conceptual and operationality challenges to interested stakeholders. Largely the terrains of law enforcement and often repressive control measures of illicit drug supply activities, the characteristics of urban settings may also appear to oppose those of traditional AD rural intervention frameworks in many aspects. While presenting socio-economic particularities, urban settings are terrains of a large variety of illicit drug supply activities, with no or extremely limited cultivation. As many interviewees in newly interested AD countries framed it, notably in Uruguay, Ecuador and El Salvador, the obvious quandary for governments and project teams alike resides in the very relevance and applicability of a framework expressively designed to tackle the root causes of cultivation of plants used in the production of illicit substances.

Among learning partners’ key questions were the following: how should effective AD interventions in urban contexts be designed without a clear conceptual framework at hand? What should be the target beneficiary group of such interventions? How to approach drug supply related activities, including (micro) trafficking, production, transport, with development-oriented tools designed for rural alternative cultivation, and in coherence with urban security policy framework largely based on law enforcement, violence management and drug control goals? Despite these doubts, the relevance of IADA in urban contexts is clear for many, in terms of contextual needs and emerging priorities.

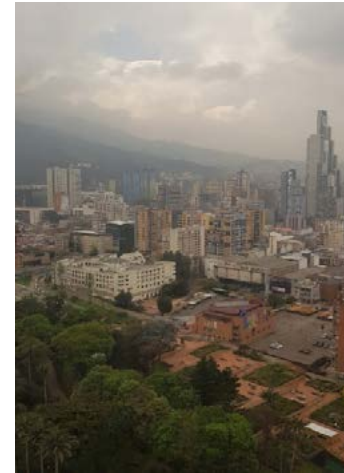
38 [United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development.](#)



1.1 Contextual relevance: pressing needs to reappraise the “urban drug problem”

The evolution of drug markets, including the shift from illicit plant-based drugs to the production of illicit synthetic drugs, enhances leeway to reappraise the shaping of the global drug and development nexus at the core of AD rationale. It further invites to reappraise the “urban drug problem” in a global context of “converging crises” as illicit drug markets continue to expand (UNODC 2023). As per latest UN scenarios of urban futures, the global city population share, which doubled between 1950 and 2020, is projected to slowly increase to 58% over the next 50 years. Over the same period, growth in urban areas will mostly take place in low-income (141%), lower-middle-income (44%) and high-income countries (34%)³⁹. Such urbanization growth may not only pressure urban planning and development, but is also likely to generate vulnerabilities, economic shocks, and social stress nourishing further violence, conflict, insecurity, informal dynamics, illicit and criminal groups to name a few. In the LAC region, (urban) drug markets are often a **corollary of violence and homicide rates** – mainly documented by judicial data. In Mexico, according to the Institute for Economics and Peace’s Mexico Peace Index 2023, murders associated with organized crime have nearly tripled since 2015, rising from 8,000 to 23,500 annually against relatively stable figures of homicides not linked to organized crime (ranging between 10,000 and 12,000 per year). The report maps out the concentration of high levels of violence in small numbers of urban centers: in 2022, half of all homicides occurred in just 50 out of Mexico’s 2,478 municipalities, most of which are major cities (see Map 1). It raises further alarm to the trafficking of synthetic drugs as one of the primary drivers of criminal violence in the country. Colombian authorities and media also regularly report urban waves of murders and of extreme violence as micro-trafficking gangs are reorganizing to respond to an important local demand notably in the capital Bogota. According to El Tiempo’s recent investigations, from April 4 to mid-May 2023, authorities discovered 15 bodies scattered across the capital, all allegedly linked to a settling of scores related to micro-trafficking activities in disputed territories in southern and central Bogotá⁴⁰.

Picture 1:
City center of Bogota,
Colombia



Source: IADA study field trip, Nov. 2024

39 UNHABITAT, [World Cities Report 2022](https://unhabitat.org/world-cities-report-2022) (unhabitat.org).

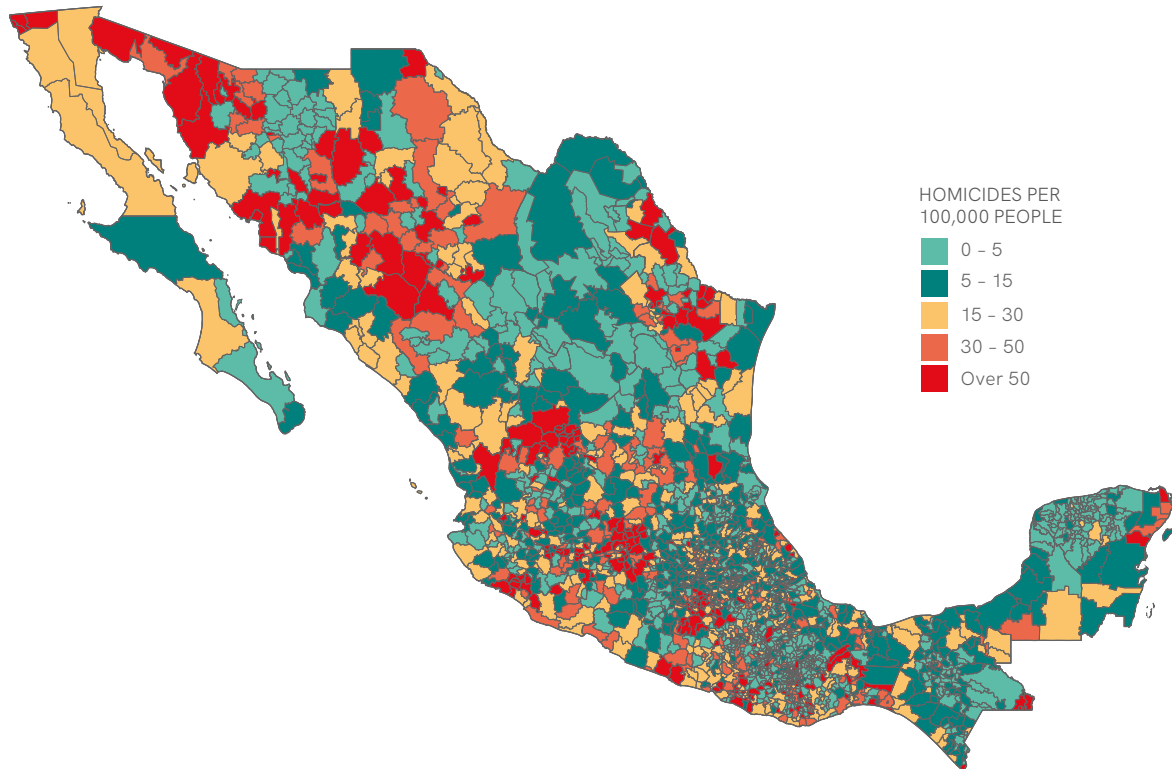
40 [Bogotá’s Microtrafficking Gangs Fuel Killings and Torture in Post-Pandemic Boom Bogotá, Epicenter of Microtrafficking Violence](https://insightcrime.org/bogota-microtrafficking-gangs-fuel-killings-and-torture-in-post-pandemic-boom-bogota-epicenter-of-microtrafficking-violence/) (insightcrime.org).



Map 1: Concentration of violence in urban centers of Mexico

Municipal Homicide Rates, 2022

In 2022, about one in nine municipalities had a homicide rate of at least 50 deaths per 100,000 people.



Source: [IEP-Mexico-Peace-Index-English.pdf \(insightcrime.org\)](#), p. 27.

Now, with **“poverty and inequality likely to become the new faces of cities”** (UNHABITAT 2022; Kemp 2020)⁴¹, the multidimensional factors at play in sustaining or favoring urban drug markets can no longer be ignored. In this line, IADA study interviewees highlight that research and evidence needs to fully grasp risk factors for increased crime and violence at the community and the impact of illicit drug activities on an urban territory. Interviewees expressed concerns over the extent to which urban drug markets not only favor the development of cultures of violence and criminality, mainly among youth, where illicit activities are prevalent. They also referred to the broader implications for social cohesion, development of municipalities, and national or regional stability. This is also observed in traditional AD countries where the population of illicit cultivation is changing, favoring the installation of semi- to urban population coming from neighboring towns to work in the plantation. While the destabilizing effects of the illicit drug economy and the associated challenges of organized crime and protection services are recognized, there is growing common analysis on the need for drug control supply reduction actors to reappraise the “urban drug problem” and considering the “root causes” as in traditional AD, and the systemic factors and socio-economic causes influencing it. Across the region, there have been several attempts to collect more comprehensive and multi-sourced data to better understand the phenomenon of micro trafficking and commercialization of illicit drugs in urban centers.

41 See also Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums*, New York: Verso, 2017; John de Boer et al, *Conceptualizing city fragility and resilience*, United Nations University Centre for Policy, Working Paper 5, October 2016.



1.2 Documenting the drug-development nexus in urban contexts

While building evidence of that nexus remains difficult, recent efforts to collect multi-sourced data and use more qualitative-based methods can help to document further existing correlations between social system breaches and illicit or criminal activities. While neither the size of a city, nor presence of an urban drug market nor drug use necessarily determine the level of vulnerability of a city, particular driving factors distinguish certain urban settings as more prone to illicit drug economies than others (Wennmann 2020, 2016; Kemp 2020). In addition to socio-economic vulnerability factors including lack of economic opportunities, limited territorial control or poor quality of infrastructures and basic public services – voids for organized criminal groups to fulfill (Felbab-Brown 2011, 2014), three common structural features of cities under stress can be identified as favoring the development of illicit flows and criminal activities:

- socio-economic and spatial marginalization (segregation between extremely poor and rich neighborhoods for example);
- demographic and geographic changes (rapid population growth, climate change and corresponding diasporas or population movements);
- and suboptimal governance systems⁴².

Some correspondences across structural features of cities under stress and the development of illicit drug supply activities can be drawn. While not the focus of this study, a few can be referenced for illustrative purposes. In terms of demographic changes, for example, Kemp shows (2020) how the reach and influence of the Mara Salvatrucha gang, or MS-13, cannot be understood without looking at inner city fragility factors but also at the role of demographics and diasporas, notably the links between affiliates in the United States, El Salvador, Honduras and Mexico, particularly as a result of migration and deportation.

In Colombia, in the run up to UNGASS 2016, the Ministry of Justice with the Colombian Observatory on Drugs and the Fundación Ideas para la Paz (FIP) proposed a conceptual framework for understanding the functioning of micro-trafficking and the commercialization of illegal psychoactive substances in urban territories. An *Atlas of Micro trafficking and commercialization of psychoactive substances in small quantities* (2016)⁴³ was developed to better grasp the role of spatial organization and governance settings in the development of micro-trafficking including in Bogota and Medellin. Spatial concentration of marijuana, cocaine, and basuco markets in those cities were examined across three types of variables:

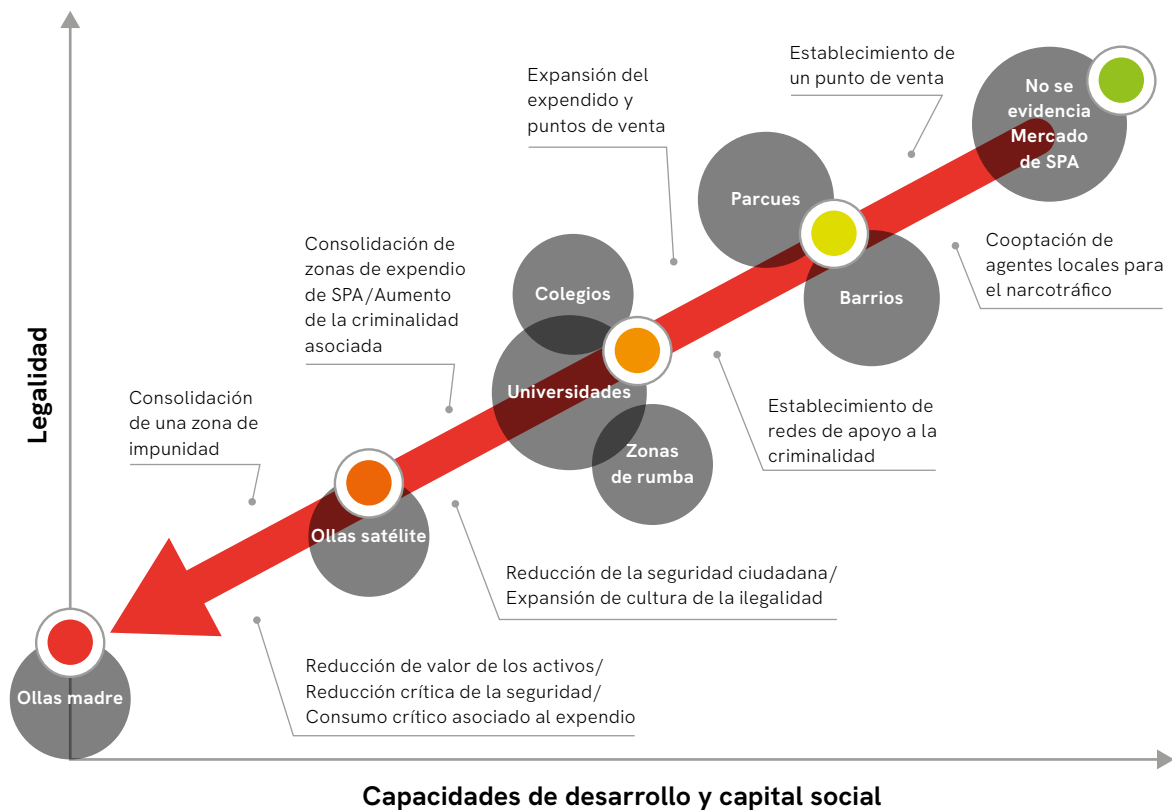
- Crime-related variables: homicide, personal injury, motorcycle theft, vehicle theft, commercial theft, and theft against individuals.
- Environment-related variables: ATMs, banks, bars, bus stops, casinos, schools, mass transit stations, hospitals, parks, restaurants, and universities.
- Drug market variables: seizures of marijuana, cocaine, and basuco.

42 Francesco Mancini and Andrea Ó Súilleabháin (eds), *Building resilience in cities under stress*, International Peace Institute, 30 June 2016. Salahub, JE, Gottsbacher, M, de Boer, J and Zaaroura, MD. 2019. *Reducing urban violence in the global south: Towards safe and inclusive cities*. London: Wennmann, A and Jütersonke O, 2019. *Urban safety and peacebuilding: New perspectives on Sustaining Peace in the City*. London: Routledge; António Sampaio, *Illicit order: The militarized logic of organized crime and urban security in Rio de Janeiro*, GI-TOC, September 2019.

43 <https://www.minjusticia.gov.co/programas-co/ODC/Publicaciones/Publicaciones/CR112015-microtrafico-sustancia-psicoactivas-pequenas-cantidades-pasto.pdf>.



Figure 4: Modeling example of the relation of between illicit micro-trafficking, social capital, and vulnerabilities of urban territories in Colombia.



Source: *Microtráfico y comercialización de sustancias psicoactivas en pequeñas cantidades en contextos urbanos, Guía metodológica, 2016, p. 24*

As part of this attempt, the relation between certain phases of urban deterioration and development of illicit commercialization and use of drugs was modelled (see above Figure 4). The model highlights how the development of selling spots also pertains to governance issues – some of them, in their initial stage, could relate to protection buy-in and bribery tactics targeting local authorities and law enforcement within a city.

In this context, building resilience for a sustainable and optimistic urban future largely lay in a new social contract that would integrate linkages of the multidimensional pillars of the global sustainable development agenda, focusing on SDG 11, and demand to broaden the scope of development and security policymaking (UNODC 2016). Against a “one-size-fits-all” approach, interviewed IADA learning partners followed this step. They largely expressed demand for policy creativity and coherence, drawing more nuanced drug policy responses that are tailored and adjusted to the different socio-economic realities of both territories and communities on the ground. In that reflection, IAD constitutes a preferred response to an emerging policy priority.

1.3 Aligning urban drug-related realities with key provisions of Alternative Development

Several countries of the region, notably Peru, Colombia, Bolivia, Brazil, and Uruguay have long advocated to engage a global reflection on IADA pertinence and to venture a transposition of AD from rural contexts to urban ones. Discussions in the 2016 UNGASS preparative process, Expert Group meetings on Alternative Development (EGM), regional CICAD-led discussion around AD and



UNGASS CND thematic discussions⁴⁴ had the merit to highlight within regional and global agenda the commonalities of root causes and risk factors of drug crop cultivation and drug trafficking in both rural and urban settings. Among those, were identified “poverty, lack of services, lack of access to land and capital, unemployment, lack of licit value chains, weak or inexistent infrastructure, drug-related violence, exclusion, marginalization and social disintegration” (CND 2020/CRP7).

Each COPOLAD member participating in this study has engaged in this discussion at different points and under different forms in an attempt to translate these policy debates into practice and “test what can be possible or not”⁴⁵. Discourses have changed and AD adaptability aligns with AD specialized units’ emerging priorities within drug policy coordination agencies mainly in Brazil, Uruguay, and to some extent in Ecuador, El Salvador, and Panama. Field level initiatives are underway in Colombia and clear potentials could be explored in Mexico or Central American countries given the social realities of illicit drug trafficking and transiting. This is not only a matter of illicit drug supply specialists, but also of national policy agents specialized in drug prevention and treatment, as well as crime and violence prevention. Interviewed experts notably in Ecuador, Brazil, Panama, and El Salvador were particularly keen to recalibrate policy lenses, so urban drug markets can also be tackled as a social and development issue. Interviewees stressed notably the need to respond to “a reality of drugs far more complex, and align responses to territorial vulnerabilities and needs, whether rural or urban”.

In this spirit and based on the initiatives that shall be described in the next section, Box 2 lays out some pertinent UN Guiding Principles on Alternative Development to consider and applied so far in observed urban settings and environments. Now, despite increased policy relevance, the vision still needs to be drawn and shared among a larger pool of policy makers. As put by several interviewees, there is still a “need to convince” decision-makers, and to “show potentials and results” to make the case for positive adaptability of AD in urban settings. Some countries have thus started to transform current reflections into more concrete actions.

Box 2: Pertinent UN Guiding Principles on Alternative Development as applied in observed IADA initiatives in urban settings and environments.

While not expressly referred to as such, a number of UN Guiding Principles on Alternative Development turned out to be quite pertinently transposed throughout observed IADA initiatives in urban settings and expanded to situations of drug micro-trafficking. Here are some of the most significant that emerged from observed efforts (Highlighted wordings are of authors’ suggestions):

44 CRP Room documentation prepared by AD champions supporters around Peru, Colombia, Germany, and Thailand for the CND between 2017 and 20230 traces these evolution and growing implications. See notably: [E/CN.7/2020/CRP.7](#). Conference Room Paper submitted jointly by Germany, Peru, Thailand and UNODC titled, „Advancing Alternative Development and Development-oriented Drug Policies“; [CN.7/2019/CRP.2](#). Conference room paper submitted jointly by Germany, Peru, Thailand and UNODC, titled: „The Future of Alternative Development“; [E/CN.7/2023/CRP.7](#) Conference room paper submitted jointly by Germany, Peru, Thailand, and UNODC titled, “Towards more inclusive Alternative Development”.

45 IADA Study interview, Uruguay Learning partner, October 2024.



General provisions

4. *Alternative Development, which includes, as appropriate, preventive alternative development strategies and programmes, should be **formulated and implemented by taking into account the vulnerability and specific needs of the communities and groups affected by illicit cultivation of crops used for drug production and manufacture, within the broader framework of national policies.***
7. ***Civil society can contribute significantly to the formulation of effective and sustainable Alternative Development programmes, and its active participation should therefore be encouraged in all phases of alternative development programmes.***
14. *International cooperation programmes aimed at Alternative Development should **take into account the experiences of different countries, including with regard to South-South cooperation, should draw on best practices and lessons learned in alternative development programmes and projects** and should take into account the available financial and technical support provided by donors.*

Specific provisions

- (g) *To address with specific measures the situation of women, children, youth and other high-risk populations, including, in some cases, dependent drug users, owing to their vulnerability and exploitation in the illicit drug economy;*
- (h) *To provide, within a holistic and integrated development approach, **essential basic services and legal livelihood opportunities to the communities affected by, or in some cases vulnerable to, illicit crop cultivation;***
- (i) *To recognize that Alternative Development, including, as appropriate, preventive Alternative Development, requires **the implementation of articulated short-, medium- and long-term plans and actions from all relevant stakeholders to promote positive and sustainable socioeconomic changes in the affected and, in some cases, vulnerable areas;***
- (q) *To **promote increased coordination and cooperation between relevant governmental agencies, when appropriate, and adopt an integrated approach to drug control that involves all relevant stakeholders;***
- (r) *To ensure that the implementation of Alternative Development programmes is conducted in a manner that **helps to enhance synergy and confidence among national Governments, regional authorities and local administrations and communities** with regard to building local ownership and coordination and cooperation;*
- (y) *To **utilize data and conduct analysis to identify areas, communities and affected populations that are vulnerable to illicit cultivation and its related illicit activities, and tailor the implementation of programmes and projects to address identified needs;***
- (jj) *Foster **empowerment, including articulation, communication and participation, of the community and local authorities and other stakeholders, to sustain the achievements of the projects and programmes.***



2. How is IADA advanced in practice? Selected initiatives across the region

Different paths, and models of intervention design, and operationalization are observed, mainly in areas of illicit drugs micro trafficking or transport in countries of illicit cultivation, production, and regional, and international transit. In a bottom-up logic, pilots and projects have been tested across several urban municipalities of Brazil since 2015, and most recently in urban or semi-urban centers of Colombia mainly at the initiative of local governments, civil society organizations, and international partners. In a more theory-based and two-level stream approach (top/down feedback), countries such as Ecuador, Uruguay, Panama and El Salvador explore the complementarity and compatibility of AD-based interventions within their drug policy strategic framework.

While still niched and limited in scope and volume, existing initiatives and projects all converge around the recognition that structural and socio-economic root causes also drive drug markets. Innovative AD is understood as complementary to achieve a broader set of drug control, social development, and urban stability objectives. Emphasis is thus placed on the economic, structural and social exigencies of drug affected communities. Study initiatives all revolved around a similar testing rationale:

Case A: Urban settings and environments

Brazil (Developing model) Colombia (Pilots)

Uruguay (Conceptualization, pilot)
Ecuador (Conceptualization, pilot)
Panama (Potential)
El Salvador (Potential)
Mexico (To explore)

Providing urban communities (at risk of being) involved or affected by illicit drug supply activities, living in areas under stress conducive to illicit activities, with socio-economic options and/or capacity-building measures for income generation opportunities, or measures contributing to a more peaceful social space, may lead to a reduction in illicit activities and related (social and physical) violence.



Nevertheless, the way this rationale of change may apply to different social environments varies across the region. While the objectives and intended impacts might be similar from a country to another the observed logic of intervention of IAD design can be analyzed along two different lines:

- **A restorative, problem-solving line**, oriented towards addressing existing socio-economic shortcomings driving illicit activities, and repairing the harms such phenomena have induced, such as violence and criminalities. Complementing law enforcement and control measures, IAD interventions aim to address the specific (structural) needs of people and areas affected or at risk of being affected by illicit activities, with the goal of promoting violence management and crime prevention, sustainable social integration and accountability, and urban peace and development. This approach is observed mainly in Brazil and Colombia, and to some extent in Uruguay so far.
- **A preventive, social-oriented line**, to anticipate and prevent potential drivers or identified symptoms of illicit drug supply activities. Innovative AD-based interventions are foreseen as complementing social packages (education, awareness, personal support, community engagement) to effectively promote “protective factors” of communities involved or at risk of being involved in illicit drug practices. The goal is to reduce the likelihood or seriousness of (re)entrance into the illicit economy, by promoting social integration and well-being for individuals and communities. This line seems prominent Ecuador, Panama, El Salvador and to some extent Uruguay.

Again, this delimitation remains dynamic and non-exclusive. Under each line, one observes resorts to more inclusive and participatory approaches, bottom-up processes, women empowerment, and youth engagement to support people who entered or are at risks of entering illicit drug supply related activities (trafficking, collecting, transporting...) at micro-levels. The following table (table 1) presents an overview of observed and selected initiative of IADA in urban settings in Latin America. Such initiatives are detailed in the following sub-sections.



Table 1: Overview of observed IAD initiatives in urban settings in LAC

Country	Stage	Selected observed initiatives	Current main stakeholders	IAD dimensions	Target groups
Brazil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Model development → Pilot programming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Lessons learned of crime prevention and violence management programs for alternatives to micro-trafficking → Pilot projects of 'To de Boa!', Violence prevention in Pernambuco and Pronasci Pilot Project, Rio de Janeiro 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Local governments and municipalities → Federal states → Civil society organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Integrative/restorative → Crime prevention → Violence management → Reduction of harms → Urban development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Micro-trafficking/smuggling → Drug resellers/user-resellers → Youth, migrants, women → People in situation of deprivation of liberty/rights for drug-related offences
Colombia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Pilot programming → Integrated vision into national policy frameworks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Vision integrated under the pillar "Oxígeno" of the Política Nacional de Drogas de Colombia 2023-2033 <i>Sembrando vida</i> → Inclusive economic empowerment in the Alternative Development Program with a gender focus – Pilot project in Medellín. → Productive projects program, follow up to the national PNIS, <i>Inclusive Business for Women Harvesters Project, Putumayo</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Central government – inter-ministerial cooperation → Local governments and municipalities → International partners → Civil society and community-based organizations → Private sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Integrative/restorative → Crime Prevention/violence management (criminal recidivism) → Inclusive and participatory → Urban development → Personal development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Micro-trafficking → Former small-scale workers in illicit coca cultivation → People in vulnerable socio-economic situations in urban/semi-urban areas → Women → Youth
Uruguay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Theoretical conceptualization → Pilot design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Development of a "national agenda of AD" as part of the National drug strategy 2021-2025 renewal → "Proyecto DAIS en territorios vulnerables" in the framework of a COPOLAD Social Innovation Lab with Agirre Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Central government, Drug Policy coordination agency → Sectoral ministries → Civil society organizations → Regional partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Restorative → Preventive (incl. criminal recidivism) → Inclusive and participatory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Micro-trafficking/smuggling → People in situation of deprivation of liberty or rights for drug-related offenses → Women and Youth



Country	Stage	Selected observed initiatives	Current main stakeholders	IAD dimensions	Target groups
Ecuador	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Policy brainstorming → Pilot project design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Introduction of IAD-based interventions into the extension of drug prevention campaign <i>Sin presión, hay diversión</i> → IAD-based self-managed pilot project design and programming: <i>Sin presión, hay diversión, Quito</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Central drug policy entity → Local authorities and municipalities → Civil society organizations → Education-, community-based centers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Preventive → Community-based → Inclusive and participatory → Personal development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Drug resellers/ user-resellers → Micro-trafficking → Youth
El Salvador	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Policy brainstorming → IADA framework design planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Drafting of the National Drug Strategy 2024-2029 → Proposal of a comprehensive and sustainable Alternative Development plan design over 4 years as key strategy activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Central government – inter-ministerial cooperation → Local authorities and municipalities → Schools and educational centers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Preventive → Community-based 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Micro-trafficking/ resorts to drug-related use and practices → Youth
Panama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Policy brainstorming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Drafting of a new National Drug Policy → Consideration of integration of IADA components into prevention goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Central government → Civil society organizations → Faith-based, community organizations and leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Preventive → Community-based 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Micro-trafficking/ resorts to drug-related use and practices → Youth



A. A restorative, problem-solving line to IADA in urban settings and environments

Organized criminal groups may bring significant survival benefits notably to communities who have limited access to state services, but they mainly contribute to weaving a social fabric tied by coercion, violence, and impunity. A growing body of research invites to rethink the impact of organized crime and illicit drug trafficking chains on social fabrics in terms of “harms” (UNODC 2016; Shaw 2019), looking at i) the harms respectively caused by violence associated with illicit drug markets, ii) those caused by the distorting impact of illicit activities to urban economic development and social cohesion, and iii) those caused on local governance dynamics and rule of law.

This framework might here be interesting when it comes to observing IAD initiatives that preferred a restorative, problem-solving line. As per this study available corpus, IAD initiatives in urban areas i) provide legitimate and viable livelihood alternatives to repair the shortcomings of uneven urban development; ii) strengthen local communities’ economic and social development prospects so cities can be reappropriated as hotspots of resilience and socio-economic integration. Integrated into broader urban development and crime management packages, it can be argued from existing initiatives that restorative IAD prioritizes identified harms and links security and development issues, not in order to ‘securitize’ development, but in an attempt to protect development interventions from criminal (re)exploitation – and to deliver services where they once failed to be available. This is rather visible in Brazil, Colombia and to some extent in Uruguay.

The rapid and intense urbanization experienced in **Brazil** is symptomatic of the drug urban markets evolutions depicted earlier in this section. Unregulated and chaotic expanding cities have led to the emergence of vulnerable areas lacking fundamental infrastructure, public services, and effective governmental presence. *Favelas, morros, and periferias*⁴⁶ have become hotspots of violence, witnessing alarming rates of homicides and other violent crimes. Alongside other criminal syndicates, primarily engaged in drug trafficking, the PCC now stands as a predominant source of urban crime and violence in Brazil’s largest cities, notably Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Their history, operations, and conflicts with rival factions largely account for the escalation of violent fatalities and heightened homicide rates within the city (Feltran 2023; de Paiva and Garcia 2020; Migraglia 2015).

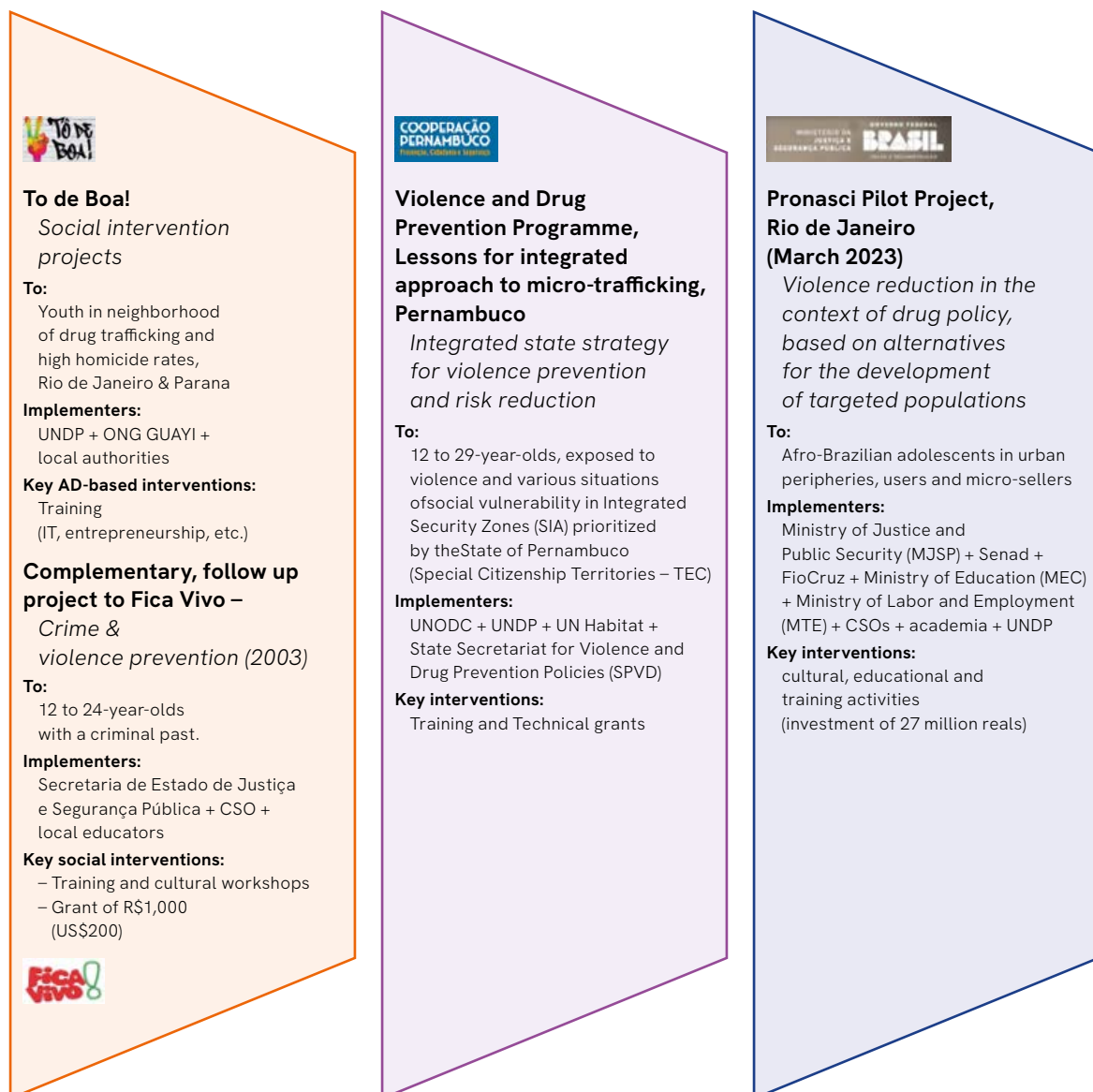
With crime as one of its “urban fabrics” (Feltran 2020), Brazil has also become a fertile ground to experiment innovations in urban drug markets. As a fierce advocate to expanding the notion of AD to urban settings in the run up to UNGASS preparations, Brazil has become the terrain of multiple pilot projects, carried out at the initiative of states and local governments, municipalities, and civil society organizations. These initiatives adopt integral approaches, mixing up good practices and intervention logics of crime prevention, Alternative Development, and harm reduction programs. One of the pioneer initiatives labelled as such was the ‘Braços Abertos’ (Open Arms) program, a multidisciplinary urban policy in São Paulo, Brazil. Started in 2014, the harm reduction-based program was first directed towards people who use drugs in the pejoratively named ‘Cracolândia’ (Crackland) in São Paulo – a place of in flux, people who buy, sell and use crack-cocaine with brief interruptions after some highly politicized, massive police interventions. The novelty was to provide the frequenting community with housing and relocation, supported employment (employment program within the city administration and food vouchers) and connection with health and social services. Designed and implemented with the direct involvement of its intended recipients, the program was grounded in the idea that reducing the social harms caused by illicit drugs

46 “Favelas”, “morros”, and “periferias” are all Portuguese terms commonly used in Brazil to refer to different types of urban areas. Favelas designates informal settlements or slums, found mainly in or around major Brazilian cities. They are characterized by densely populated, impoverished neighbourhoods with inadequate infrastructure and housing. Morros, or “hills” in English often refers to neighbourhoods built on or around hillsides, which can sometimes overlap with favelas. Periferias or peripheries generally refers to the outskirts of a city where lower-income communities often reside. These areas may include both formal and informal settlements, such as favelas and housing projects.



and attached repression could also minimize the adverse effects of violence and rebuild social cohesion. The regular presence of health and social workers in the area was a test in that sense. Politically polemical and highly mediatized, the programme fell short of its intended outcomes but paved the way for a more integrated vision of urban drug policies. The idea to work on socio-economic reintegration to reduce crime in areas affected by drugs took ground and nourished several initiatives across the country, yet not directly labelled as IAD. Some are presented in the following figure 5.

Figure 5: Examples of innovative pilot projects to bring alternatives to youth in urban areas affected by drugs in Brazil



Source: Based on internal documentation, IADA study interviews and consultations with Brazil IADA learning partners.



Colombia is neither at its first experience with innovation when it comes to Alternative Development. This time, a more integrated approach of AD is proposed, with urban settings becoming a privileged terrain of interests and development. The **National Drug Policy of Colombia 2023-2033, *Sembrando vida***⁴⁷ integrates as part of its ‘Oxygen pillar’, a restorative and preventive vision. While not labelling it as such or referring to “Alternative Development” for urban territories, the preferred territorial approach prioritizes the challenges faced by vulnerable populations in urban drug markets. Spanning over ten years, it includes “protecting individuals in poverty, displacement, marginalization, or facing social vulnerability, who are often exploited and recruited by criminal networks involved in drug trafficking and related crimes”⁴⁸.

Echoing some of the essential vision and principles of AD, the policy seeks to tackle these challenges by “addressing the underlying causes of vulnerability and promoting equity, inclusion, and well-being in urban communities”⁴⁹. It proposes an integrative vision of AD, combining socio-economic support to transit towards licit ways of living within a holistic and cohesive base of assistance and services. Aligned with strategies outlined in the National Development Plan to prevent youth recruitment/recidivism into criminal activities, illegal economies, and violence, *Sembrando vida* defines as one of its strategic objectives “to prevent vulnerable populations from engaging or reengaging in illicit drug-related economies”. In this framework, State responses will include support to licit income generation, community strengthening, and infrastructure development within an integral support package of education, healthcare, human rights, promotion of peace culture, substance abuse prevention, and cultural promotion. Zones of Peace and Hope for the Transformation and Renewal of Opportunities (*Zonas de Paz y Esperanza para la Transformación y Renovación con Oportunidades*) will be established to better prioritize interventions.

47 Política Nacional de Drogas 2023-2033 ‘*Sembrando vida, desterramos el narcotráfico*’.pdf (minjusticia.gov.co).

48 Ibid, p. 70.

49 Ibid.



Box 3: Meet SJ Recuperar SAS, Comuna 16, Medellín.

Niched into the backyard of the local Church, the workshop of SJ Recuperar is a place of development and resilience. Managed by Xiomara and her husband, the recycling wood family enterprise is now selling recycled wood-made furniture and decorative objects throughout the region. It has also developed partnership with local artists and created wooden styled purses that are sold on Instagram and other social media. Xiomara is a mother of 2, the oldest aged 15 used to be involved in micro-trafficking of Comuna 16 of Medellín, with two of his best friends. The three of them, also drug users, struggled to pursue their education and find employment.



Source: IADA Field trip, with the family's permission

As an active participant of the UNODC *supported Inclusive economic empowerment in the Alternative Development Program with a gender focus* project along with 314 other female entrepreneurs, Xiomara benefits from Medellín municipality-funded entrepreneurship initiatives, participating in financial education training, marketing classes and social media development. This “empowerment journey” has not only improved the economic prospects of her enterprise, but also contributed to her own and her family’s personal growth and social integration. *“Not only do I manage to provide for the needs of my family, but through this, I dignify my children. I mention my children because my son’s friends are like mine. I see them grow. I have seen them be taken away from us. I helped them find a way back home. They carry a stigma, not only for what they did in the street [*micro-trafficking], but also to themselves [*drug use], which makes it for them absolutely quasi-impossible to aspire to a “normal” professional and social life. It is important now to show them, but also to show the community who rejects them, that yes, it is possible to start anew.”* (Xiomara, IADA field visit, Medellín, Colombia, October 2023).

Learning and helping out at the workshop, the three adolescents have worked their way out of micro-trafficking groups thanks to their family support and the reintegration and employment opportunity provided by SJ Recuperar. As shared during our meeting, their working routine also influenced their use patterns and their consumption had dropped. In their own words, SJ Recuperar provided them with a future: *“My home used to be a battleground. Now, I have a purpose. I help here. I work. I’ve learned new skills with D... He teaches me woodworking. It’s not easy, but it’s something I can focus on. A home where I feel I can progress. They treat me with trust, with respect, like a real person. I want to make music. This dream seems a little more achievable now.”* (Friend of Xiomara’s son, employed by SJ Recuperar. IADA field visit, Medellín, Colombia, October 2023). Giving them first and foremost self-confidence, the project had positive ricochet effects as they are now considering enrolling in a social-media training program directly, without Xiomara’s intervention.



While the new national policy provides a long-term vision, projects and pilots have already been in place in Colombia, testing innovative approaches to AD and adapting to urban contexts. A few could be observed as part of this study, most of them being implemented at the local level, with the support of international partners. In those cases, urban settings not only serve as target territories for intervention, but also as environments of solutions.

“I didn’t have an easy life. I have been displaced many times, because of violence, drugs, also because of my pregnancy. I had nothing. I had access to nothing. And yet, I wanted to learn. I wanted to change this life. For me. For my kid. (...) When I heard about this program, it was a chance. Of course, it was not easy every day, but it changed everything. I was heard. I was trusted. I had personal support. I was given access to education (...) With this English class, I really hope to grow my chocolateria and open it up to new markets (...) I also try to give back to the community because I know how hard it can be not to receive any help. I often show to my neighborhood catadores how to make chocolate. Maybe it will give them new visions for themselves.”

Final beneficiary met as part of the observation of an English course of the Inclusive economic empowerment Programme with a gender focus at the facilities of the Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia, Medellin, October 2023

In the first case, one innovative example is the UNODC supported *Inclusive economic empowerment in the Alternative Development Program with a gender focus*⁵⁰. Benefitting over 300,000 families in 380 municipalities of interventions (mainly villages), the program has expanded across urban or semi-urban areas, with a first pilot project in Medellín with the support of the Municipality of Medellín, the *Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia*, and District Banks. Initiated in mid-2023, it aims at empowering women living in areas of or involved in drug-supply activities, to create their own socio-economic opportunities. The objectives are to accompany women, including youth, in the creation, operationalization and promotion of a “productive project” (beauty salon, jewel, tourism, artisanries...) so it becomes a central licit source of revenue. This is done through:

- The creation of learning spaces to help participants develop relevant skills and new techniques according to market trends, promoting innovation and the creation of attractive products for the market.
- The development and implementation of marketing strategies for the commercialization of products, allowing them to reach broader national and international markets (fairs organization and support in preparing their participation).
- The promotion of supportive environments and network development to raise awareness about the importance of women’s entrepreneurship and the significant contribution that women make to the economy. Support is offered to better understand and use social media and networks with the view of generating income and developing social capital.

50 IADA Study, Field trip, Colombia, Nov. 2024.



Picture 2: English courses offered as part of the Inclusive economic empowerment Programme with a gender focus at the facilities of the Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia, Medellin.

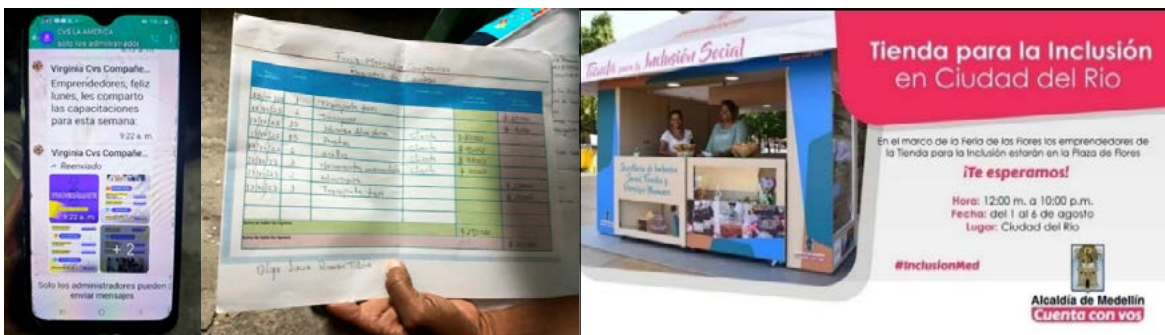


Source: IADA study Field trip, October 2023, Medellin, Colombia

The programme presents three key innovative features:

- **Gender-focused tailored approach**, including social analysis of area of intervention, and personalized mentoring mechanisms of identified target population (residence, state of vulnerability, motivation, commitment). The stories of the visited class beneficiaries (see quoting box above) and of Xiomara’s SJ Recuperar workshop (box 3 above) are quite inspiring in that regard. Focusing on women as agent of change is intended to have a multiplier positive effect on the new generations and the whole community.
- **Education-focused entrepreneurial development** through the provision of financial education, business model, and marketing, training to support participants acquiring technical skills to successfully develop their businesses. Partnership with universities and the private sector have been instrumental, as well as regular communication and socialization of all existing vocational training opportunities through social networks and dedicated apps as illustrated in Pictures 2 and 3.

Picture 3: Socialization and capacity-building tools: selected programme outputs and activities, Medellin.



Source: IADA study field trip, Medellin, Colombia, October 2023. Meetings with final beneficiaries of the UNODC supported Inclusive economic empowerment in the Alternative Development Program with a gender focus. Illustrations of the Social media weekly bulleting of available training; Registration of accounts for participation in Mercados Campesinos; Promotion of Programme participant productive project at the local feria, Municipality of Medellin.



- Psychosocial approach. Psychosocial support is offered to the beneficiaries during the training period through specific interventions, socialization spaces and personal follow up. Interviewed participants highlighted how such support was useful to identify and generate one's life skills and tools to build their life project and combat demotivation.

On the other hand, urban and semi-urban settings may also be terrains of solutions. In the follow up of the National Integral Program for the Substitution of Illicit Crops (PNIS)⁵¹, a project with UN-ODC's support, seeks to strengthen the economic autonomy of women harvesters linked to the programme. The innovation here is in the proposed alternative. As learning partners in the field emphasized: *"In the history of AD, we tended to take for granted and obvious that everyone wanted to continue in the rural sector. But a lot of people involved in illicit cultivation have never been really interested by rural activities, but for survival. This is the case of women harvesters: they are not farmers; they don't want to go back to harvesting. They often come from surrounding villages and small towns. It was time to ask them directly what they wanted to do and offer more tailored support."⁵²*

Implemented within the United Nations Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Peace in Colombia mechanism (MPTF)⁵³, the *Inclusive Business for Women Harvesters Project* (or *Negocios Inclusivos para Mujeres Recolectoras*) takes as a starting point individual projections and tailors assistance to individual skills, productive projects and absorption capacities. Based on a thorough sociological analysis and regular monitoring surveys, the gender-mainstreamed project accompanies women in the departments of Caquetá, Cauca, Meta and Putumayo to transit to the licit economy via the construction of inclusive business in semi-urban areas, in complementarity with the strategies implemented by the Government in neighboring rural settings. Here, urban settings are used as resources of entrepreneurship, social integration, and income generation. Through comprehensive technical assistance with psychosocial, technical, and business components, it seeks to identify individual, collective and territorial vocations and to generate endogenous capacities and economic empowerment. As part of this study, former harvesters in Puerto Caicedo Municipality- Vereda Villa Flor shared positive feedback and hopes for their nascent businesses. They shared how they quit rurality for the main commercial axe of the area to expand their restaurant, install their hardware store and grow their grocery shop (picture 4).

Picture 4: When semi-urban areas are parts of the solution: Inclusive business alternatives in Puerto Caicedo Municipality- Vereda Villa Flor, Colombia



Source: Flor del Campo, the hardware enterprise running project of Ana and her partners and La esquina store, the grocery shop of Sandra and Milena, Puerto Caicedo Municipality- Vereda Villa Flor, IADA Study field trip, Colombia, Nov. 2024

51 Led by the Directorate for the Substitution of Illicit Crops – DSCI of the Colombian national Agency for the Renewal of the Territory – ART.

52 IADA study Field trip interview, Learning partner, Local office of International organization, Putumayo, Colombia, November 2023.

53 [Fondo Multidonante para el Sostenimiento de la Paz | ONU \(fondoonuol.org\)](https://www.fondoonuol.org/).



The evolution of the illicit drug situation in **Uruguay** (box 4) has also motivated the Secretariat of the *Junta Nacional de Drogas* to draw on AD potentialities.

Box 4: Uruguay's evolving drug situation: effects on vulnerabilities.

Drug trafficking and violence present major challenges for law enforcement and justice authorities in the country. The redistribution of regional cocaine trafficking routes strongly impacted the country⁵⁴. In addition to increased violence levels, with a record of 426 murders in 2018 down to 382 last year⁵⁵, Uruguay internal trafficking situation has also evolved. According to openly accessible information based on official sources, authorities dismantled more than 1,150 micro-trafficking points, and 1,465 people were convicted for drug-related crimes (2021). Micro-trafficking has become a “major concern”. Predominantly situated in ten main zones of Montevideo city's outskirts⁵⁶, distribution hubs appear mainly run by groups of young individuals aged between 22 and 30, controlled by 17 families⁵⁷. Besides, as per IADA study consultations, resort to the illegal cannabis black market is observed, mainly due to the lack of registration of variety offered in the legal market, or cheaper available products in the illicit market coming from Paraguay. Pioneering insofar in the development of a comprehensive health-oriented regulation of the cannabis market, the country has maintained a strict control and repressive position when it comes to illicit drug trafficking and grey markets. The Ministry of Interior recently adopted an “*Integral and Preventive Security Strategy*” (2023) that aims at rebalancing control with a more preventive approach. It also proposed a draft law to reduce the unexpected consequences⁵⁸ and sanctions of the 2017 polemical Law of Urgent Consideration or *Ley de Urgente Consideración* (LUC)⁵⁹. In addition to increasing penalties for micro-trafficking cases, the LUC established a 4-year minimum sentence for the introduction of substances into the penitentiary establishment (art. 74) – mainly committed by women, and drastically reduced alternative sanction possibilities. Among its effects, higher rates of incarceration and a feminization of prison populations: while the number of women deprived of liberty was slightly over 200 in 2000, today it reaches almost 1,000⁶⁰. This also resulted in increased marginalization of vulnerable groups, especially youth and women involved in and/or incarcerated for drug-related offenses (micro-trafficking).

54 [Monitor de seguridad | Abril 2023 | Ceres.](#)

55 [Delitos denunciados en el Uruguay – Homicidios dolosos consumados – Catálogo de Datos Abiertos \(catalogodatos.gub.uy\).](#)

56 Located in areas such as Casabó, Cerro, La Teja, Peñarol, Borro, Casavalle, 40 Semanas, Maroñas, Jardines del Hipódromo, Villa Española, and Ciudad Vieja.

57 [Monitor de seguridad | Abril 2023 | Ceres and Estrategia de control de microtráfico en Uruguay está en entredicho \(insightcrime.org\).](#)

58 Documento de posicionamiento político y análisis sobre el capítulo de seguridad pública de la Ley de Urgente Consideración Servicio Paz y Justicia – Uruguay, and Informe sobre la cuestión de las drogas en el proyecto de ley con declaratoria de urgente consideración. Colectivo IMAGINARIO9.

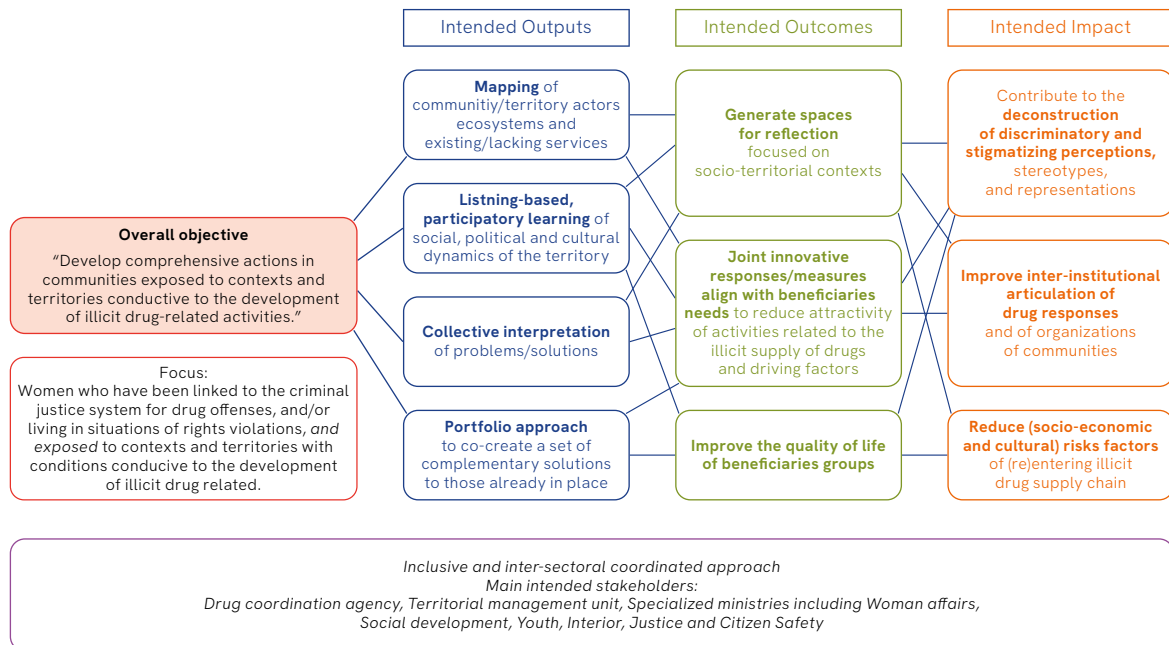
59 [Microtráfico: Ejecutivo envió un proyecto de ley para bajar las penas por ingreso de drogas a cárceles | La diaria | Uruguay.](#)

60 [Monitor de seguridad | Octubre 2023 | Ceres.](#)



As underlined in previous sections, the *National Drug Strategy 2021-2025*⁶¹ already paved the way for such considerations. A key entry point for IADA interested stakeholders is to seek to develop more comprehensive actions in communities that are exposed to urban contexts and territories with conditions conducive to the development of activities related to the illicit supply of drugs. Special emphasis is given to preventive interventions targeting most vulnerable populations that also play a role in community support systems. In this case, women incarcerated for drug-related offenses and released from the prison system with children and adolescents in their care. *“There is a vicious circle to break. When training is organized in prison, it is linked to employment while incarcerated. There are limited options of socio-economic reintegration after the time served. The temptations to reenter into illicit drug activities are big. They are most likely to start trafficking again, retail smuggling including drugs, some act as mules, and the children are left in the care of third parties. If the father and mother are arrested, how to break the dynamic of precariousness and ensure a better future for their kids and themselves?”*⁶² To test possible innovations, a pilot project *“Proyecto de DAIS en territorios vulnerables”* is being designed in the framework of a COPOLAD Social Innovation Lab and in partnership with the civil organization Agirre Center⁶³. The Social Innovation Lab aims to identify innovative Alternative Development approaches from a territorial perspective. In the specific case of Uruguay, the aim is to offer alternative livelihood options and integral development in urban and peri-urban areas, to prevent vulnerable populations from engaging or reengaging in illicit drug-related economies. No specific geographical territories have been defined yet⁶⁴, but key actions lines are being considered. The following figure reconstructs the pilot project intended change rationale and its key components based on internal documentation, field trip observation and IADA study interviews.

Figure 6: Reconstructed Theory of Change, Pilot IAD Project in Vulnerable Territories, Uruguay



Source: Based on internal documentation, IADA study interviews and consultations with Uruguay IADA learning partners.

61 [Estrategia Nacional de Drogas 2021-2025 | JND \(www.gub.uy\)](#).

62 IADA Study Interview, Uruguay, INMUJERES, Octubre 2024.

63 Laboratorios de innovación social en el marco del programa COPOLAD III – Agirrecenter.

64 Considering the prevalence of micro trafficking in cities, and the role of incarcerated women, the research team proposes to categorize the initiative under the “Urban setting terrain”. However, depending on the social environments and geography of the target groups, such initiative could also be understood as one of “Vulnerable zones Terrains”.



B. A preventive, social-oriented line to IADA in urban settings and environments

As part of IADA study corpus, a few initiatives have been identified in Ecuador, Panama and El Salvador that are shaped by notions of community integration and social protection. Existing drug prevention programs are used as a basic conceptual framework to generate interventions that would integrate the development of personal skills and productive projects, targeting the so-defined “most vulnerable” populations to drug related practices and activities in urban areas. AD-based interventions are being recalibrated and expanded to a broader set of vulnerabilities to drug-related activities and blended in an integral vision of prevention. These initiatives are mainly found at the conceptual level, with a few taking the form of pilot project design and strategic planning. In the latest case, IADA conceptual initiatives responds to the current political moment where closing national drug strategies are being renewed or revised, and where general elections are likely to influence the future of the proposals.

In **Ecuador**, as highlighted in Chapter 1, efforts are underway to transpose the lessons of the country’s Preventive Alternative Development (DAP) Policy⁶⁵ and include AD components within urban-based programming, mainly in the form of capacity-building and technical support for productive initiatives and economic integration. As part of the alcohol and drug use prevention campaign, *Sin presión, hay diversión*⁶⁶, the Secretariat of the Interinstitutional Drug Committee (*Proyecto de Desarrollo de la Estrategia de Abordaje Integral del Fenómeno Socioeconómico de las Drogas y Salud Mental*) has proposed to expand the campaign and use AD-based interventions within a broader set of preventive tools to enhance personal and social capital of most vulnerable youth in the country’s cities to drug-related phenomena. Initially developed by *Fundación PrevenSud and Empresa Pública Metropolitana de Logística para la Seguridad y la Convivencia Ciudadana (Emseguridad)*, the *Sin presión* campaign over its 4 years of implementation reached out to 5,000 high school students from the 20 municipal educational institutions, mainly through awareness workshops and art-based activities. Such activities resulted in a better access to vulnerable target groups, with whom trust building foundations were laid. Building on those experiences and campaign gains, the Committee Project and *PrevenSud* developed a pilot project that would target both drug use and more general vulnerabilities to the socio-economic phenomenon of drugs as defined by the Ministry of Public Health⁶⁷, including those driving micro-trafficking.

In this framework, the innovation lies in the reappropriation of preventive actions towards illicit drug supply activities: AD-based interventions are introduced as a complementary element of an “integral prevention model”. The institutional arrangement as hosted under the Ministry of Health also influences this preventive turn. The model favors pluri-disciplinary features, including creative activities for both social and personal development, including arts and educational-communication messages, that are planned to target 256 communities identified as being in a critical state of vulnerability to illicit drugs⁶⁸. The pilot program would include a set of financial training and entrepreneurial measures to best equip youth at risks with the necessary tools to develop and engage in productive initiatives. The intended outcome is to transform so-defined “socially vulnerable young people” because of gangs or family issues, into leaders and community messengers of prevention. This approach targets the multidimensional factors that increase the risk of consumption (social,

65 Emerging in the mid-2000s, the Preventive Alternative Development (DAP in its Spanish acronym) is a strategic component within an alternative development program, pursued by Ecuadorian public institutions that, through the development of productive projects, educational and technical assistance (training, seed capital...) to tackle the poverty and public absence factors facilitating illicit activities. Targeting vulnerable populations in rural areas, initially in the south and north borders zones of the country, the approach has been promoted as a central instrument to prevent the risks of illicit cultivation, and illicit traffic of drugs and chemical precursors.

66 [Resumen BTL ¡SIN PRESIÓN, hay diversión!](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...) (youtube.com).

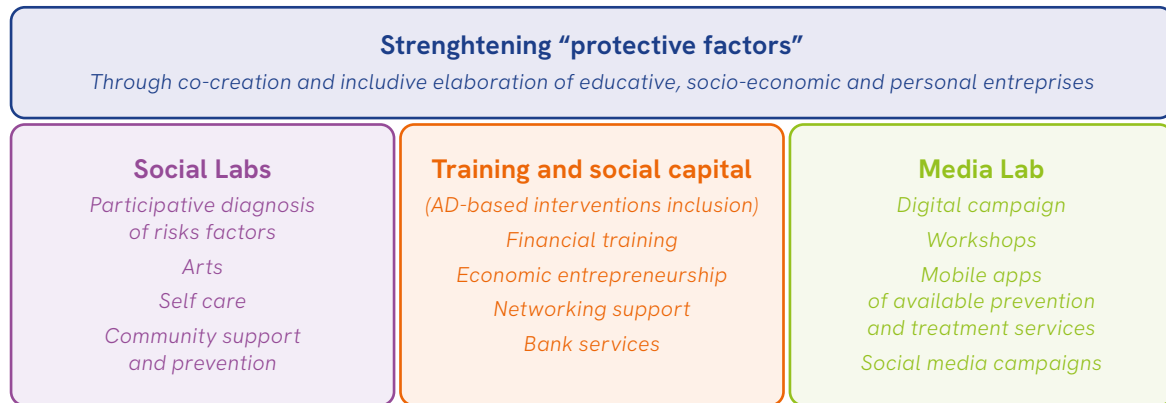
67 [Abordaje integral del fenómeno Socio Económico de las Drogas – Salud Mental – Ministerio de Salud Pública.](https://www.minsp.gub.ec/)

68 As defined in [Rendición de Cuentas IGM – 2022 – Instituto Geográfico Militar \(geograficomilitar.gob.ec\).](https://www.igm.gub.ec/)



psychological, personal, cultural...) by strengthening “protective factors”⁶⁹. AD would thus act as the supplemental piece of an intersectoral prevention puzzle, so to speak, based on the co-responsibility of all social actors as materialized in figure 7. While pending resourcing, a self-managed pilot project is currently being programmed in Quito in the upcoming year to start compiling evidence of the added value of innovations and AD beyond illicit cultivation.

Figure 7 : Key dimensions of IADA Pilot Project in Ecuador



Source: Based on internal documentation, IADA study interviews and consultations with Ecuador IADA learning partners.

“We want to propose another type of development. We want people to be able to have a choice and to say, ‘if I am here, it is because I chose to be here.’”

IADA Study interview, El Salvador Learning partner, January 2024

A resembling logic applies to **El Salvador’s** emerging efforts, tempted amidst the application of a strictly security-oriented and repressive drug policy line. As underlined earlier in this study, El Salvador IADA learning partners are trying to apprehend drug responses from a “more comprehensive social fabric” perspective. Greater consideration is also given to the socio-economic and demographic features of territories where drugs are easily accessible or used. A new terminology has been coined to designate most vulnerable publics to organized crime. The National Drug Report (2022) identified the “NINI” group (*ni estudio, ni trabajo* in Spanish)⁷⁰. It refers to 15/24-year-old young people, who neither study nor work, and could be “easy targets” for recruitment by organized crime groups. Available data of people arrested for crimes related to drug trafficking and possession shows a higher incidence of drug-related crimes among those groups⁷¹. Considering these elements, and learning from regional experiences, IAD-based interventions represent “an opportunity to change one’s life” and “break the facilitating dynamics of criminalities”⁷². Considering the results of the State of Emergency strategy on reduced gang presence, learning partners in the country further acknowledged that “despite the perception of security, something is still missing to make sure the dynamics of insecurity and crime does not start again (...) new rules of

69 IADA Study, Internal meeting with Ecuador learning partner, March 2024.

70 At the national level, 26.3% of the population of 15–24-year-old neither study nor work (NINI) and belong mainly to low-income households.

71 [El-Salvador-Informe-Nacional-Drogas-2022-E-Book-pdf.pdf \(seguridad.gob.sv\)](#), p. 21.

72 IADA Study interview, El Salvador Learning partner, January 2024.



coexistence need to be established so that the same problems do not grow again⁷³. As such, some reflection might be further needed to reconcile the policy objectives and coherence of an emergency-based drug strategy and long-term needs of a human-centered approach as advanced in IADA brainstorming efforts.

The National Anti-drug Commission's (CAN in its Spanish acronym) treatment area and the National Direction for the Reconstruction of Social Cohesion (*Dirección de Reconstrucción del Tejido Social*) submitted a proposal to design within a 4-year period a comprehensive and sustainable Alternative Development plan (DAIS) to integrate the next *National Drug Strategy 2024-2029* currently being drafted. Strongly oriented towards drug use reduction and prevention, the draft Strategy mainly apprehends drug trafficking at its macro level. Interestingly, it however considers as two of its Guiding Principles for action, human-rights based consideration, "social inclusion", "integral development and access to equal opportunities"⁷⁴. The DAIS Plan proposal falls under one of the pillar goals of the Strategy to reduce drug use through access to prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and social reintegration programs. Targeting mainly youth in urban areas, the plan would serve the strengthening of actions aimed at developing opportunities for the social inclusion of vulnerable populations and improve their quality of life⁷⁵, and thus reducing their vulnerability to drug-related activities and practices.

This proposal also counts on lessons learned from a community-based universal prevention program *Con Vida, Objetivos y Sueños* or "*Con VOS*". Launched in 2022 by the Executive Directorate of the CAN, through the Demand Reduction Area, *Con VOS* targets adolescents between 10 and 14 identified as "at risk". It supports them to develop their skills to make decisions in an analytical, autonomous way, based on scientific information and questioning existing beliefs⁷⁶. It also relies on evidence built notably by the Secretary of Integration (including the former National Institute of Youth) which conducts a territorial-based census and diagnosis of youth occupations and opportunities across the country. Such census would help developing more adequate activities and target most relevant groups. Local authorities and municipalities are foreseen to play a critical role in the elaboration of territorial diagnosis and tailored plans of action related to drugs. In 2020, the CAN already developed a *Manual for the Elaboration of Municipal Drug Projects*⁷⁷ that provides interesting tools to move forwards.

In **Panama**, the recent review of the national drug policy opened in the last semester of 2023 also provides an unprecedented opportunity for conceptual reflection around AD applicability in urban settings of the country. These efforts are led by the National Commission for the Study and Prevention of Drug-Related Crimes (*Comisión Nacional para el estudio y la Prevención de los delitos Relacionados con Drogas* – CONAPRED) – the main technical and administrative body on drugs of the Public Ministry of Panama, and the Panama Observatory on Drugs. In this line, national working groups have been constituted and keen to imagining more comprehensive goals and strategies to address the issue in the country⁷⁸. For interviewed learning partners, Panama finds itself in "an opportune moment to make proposals and be creative as the time is for policy brainstorming and not political opposition"⁷⁹. Within this dynamic, proposals are being formulated to integrate AD

73 Ibid.

74 IADA Study consultations and internal documentation.

75 Comisión Nacional Antidrogas, *Estrategia Nacional Antidrogas 2024-2029*, 2024, Internal documentation, Draft version pending presidential approval.

76 The training-based program was designed with an experiential methodology, based on the International Standards for Drug Use Prevention, Second Updated Edition (UNODC, 2016). IADA study consultations, internal documentation "Informe Desarrollo Programa Con Vos 2023"; [Inicia el programa de prevención "Con Vos" – Comisión Nacional Antidrogas \(seguridad.gob.sv\)](#) and

77 [Proceso de validación del Manual de Proyectos Municipales sobre Drogas – Comisión Nacional Antidrogas \(seguridad.gob.sv\)](#).

78 A first workshop took place in January 2024 to draw a first diagnosis of emerging needs and possible collaboration mechanisms across the entities members of the Commission, [Conapred llevó a cabo el taller sobre Nueva Política Nacional de Drogas - Procuraduría General de la Nación \(ministeriopublico.gob.pa\)](#).

79 IADA Study Interviews, Panama learning partner, January 2024.



components into national policy. One proposed vision is based on two streams of lessons learned: i) those from community projects targeting drug use prevention in schools, involving parents, religious-based and community organizations, and providing sensitization tools such *Toma Mi Mano* Project⁸⁰; and ii) those from traditional AD technical support interventions in rural settings in the region to empower communities to maintain licit economic revenues. The idea is now to imagine a more “social approach of AD”⁸¹ in urban communities, focusing on partnerships with civil society, community and religious organization leader’s support.

Terrains B–C: Border areas, Vulnerable zones, and Ethnic and Indigenous territories *Towards a human-centered approach to AD*

Given the overlapping and often blended nature of territories affected by illicit drug-supply activities, the innovative AD approaches to the terrains of Border areas, Vulnerable zones (Terrain B) and Ethnic and Indigenous territories (Terrain C) are studied together. Highly vulnerable to illicit coca cultivation mainly in the Andean region, these areas have been historically difficult to access. Alternative Development programmes, when possible, achieved rather mixed results as largely documented. As such, these zones mainly in Colombia, Peru and Bolivia (traditional AD implementers) but also in Ecuador (engaged in preventive action) or else Mexico and more recently Uruguay (for border regions) are still very much constrained by high levels of marginalization, poverty and structural fragilities that both impede development and nourish further dependence of the illicit economy.

Despite their specificities, those areas present overlaying features, demanding more policy creativity, risks, humility and patience. Here, the innovative character to be observed is not so much in the application of AD on new drug-supply links or environments such as in urban terrains, but rather in the very operationalization of AD in territories and with populations that have been either invisible, extremely remote, or else neglected or disillusioned by AD interventions. As such, this section shall look at how AD has been aligned to the specificities of these terrains, and at the features and modalities proposed to optimize AD potential, effectiveness, and impact.

1. Relevance – How does IADA get fit for purpose in border areas, vulnerable zones and Ethnic and Indigenous territories?

1.A A must-do shift towards a territorially tailored approach to AD

All learning partners agreed: Acting in border areas, vulnerable zones and Ethnic and Indigenous territories like the VRAEM region of Peru, in the Putumayo province of Colombia or in the provinces Yungas de la Paz and Cochabamba of Bolivia means facing and hopefully, addressing in symbiosis multiple challenges. These related to the dependence on illicit crops, or the development of the illicit economy, (such as violence, insecurity and the presence of criminal organizations or illegal

80 This project conducted under the auspices of CONAPRED with the Catholic Church’s St. John Paul II Center for Orientation and Integral Care, aims at strengthening knowledge about substance use disorders by training pastoral agents, counselors, teachers and spiritual guides to help prevent substance use in schools. [CONAPRED participó del acto del lanzamiento del Proyecto Toma Mi Mano – Procuraduría General de la Nación \(ministeriopublico.gob.pa\)](#).

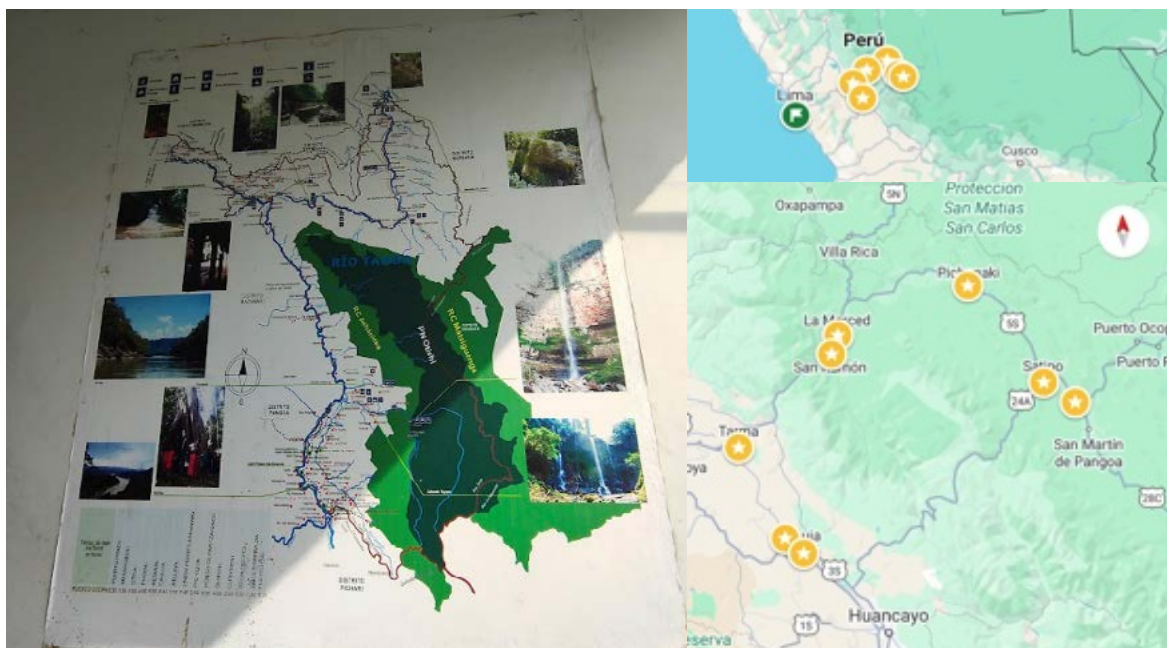
81 IADA Study Interviews, Ley learning partner, Panama, January 2024.



armed groups). But they are also associated the difficulties attached to working with a diversity of populations, geographical environments (jungle, highlands...), territorial control and governance systems and social realities, sometimes only a few kilometers away.

While it would be out of scope of this study to characterize each terrain specifically, some general traits could be drawn. The common denominators across those remote terrains are often the limited or intermittent presence of a “protecting state”, a fragile if not fragmented social fabric with limited means for socio-economic development and a general mistrust of any external actors, especially linked with a state-authority or service. More specifically, as rural territories, their agriculture has rapidly been discouraged by a fragile, local market, making it even more difficult for traditional AD programming to take root and ensure a fully-fledged transition to licit economies. Needless to recall the direct and indirect impact of drug crop cultivation and related drug responses on the populations, territories, and the environment (including deforestation, soil erosion and degradation, the loss of endemic species, contamination of the soil, groundwater and waterways, and the release of greenhouse gases).

Picture 5: Maps of IADA study visited sites, Junin Peru (right) and Map of Rio Tambo District displayed in main productive site of Central Ashaninka de Río Tambo – CART community



Source: IADA Study field visit, October 2023

Beyond drug-related considerations and economic characterization, these territories demand to navigate multifaceted social realities. Home of the Amazonian indigenous Ashaninka, Andean Quechuas, and Nomatsiguenga peoples, the VRAEM region of Peru (Valley of the Apurímac, Ene and Mantaro rivers) for example gathers multiple agricultures, traditions, and cultures. Moreover, their governance and organizational systems differ from a territories to the other, depending on the level and type of collective structuration of each communities living in these areas (from loose organization to, disincentivizing membership or else “plebiscitary” organizations coordinated by charismatic leaders (often men)). The Satipo area, terrain of a IADA Study field visit and main zone of intervention of the Peruvian DEVIDA Alternative Development Programme – or DAS-SATIPO (2012-2018) (in its Spanish acronym) illustrates quite well such canvas (box 5).



Box 5: The territorial canvas of Satipo, Peru

The Satipo region is one of the few to have entered the institutional memory of AD in DEVIDA, not only for the challenges it posed, but also as an example of systematization of good practices. Shaped by migrations, political violence, and economic sustained national growth, the 2012 Satipo of the early DEVIDA Alternative Development Programme Satipo or DAS (in its Spanish abbreviation) had been a land of high levels of coca cultivation but also a land of resilience. As per information gathered during the IADA study field trip, it presented the “paradoxical panorama” where it is difficult to discern how much of the economic strength visible in urban centers was due to the effect

of a sustained national growth, and how much of it was impulsed by informal and illicit businesses. Thriving on agricultural development and forestry exploitation, highly dependent on the prices of coffee and fine wood, the region’s economic dynamics nevertheless have often left behind Amazonian indigenous Ashaninka and Nomatsiguenga peoples. Illegal timber trafficking and the cultivation of illicit crops have been the other side of the province’s history since the late 1970s, following parallel paths of other Amazonian regions with similar geography and social composition, such as Alto Huallaga. The significant presence of drug trafficking also related to the presence of the successor of the Shining Path group in the regional border area with the regions of Ayacucho and Cusco, at the confluence of the Ene, Apurímac and Mantaro rivers. As such, the region was soon placed as a high-risk priority zone not only for militarized interdiction and eradication strategies, but also for social programs with yet, limited long term impact.

As diagnosed by learning partners, the DAS Program team encountered multifaceted vulnerabilities among which: i) diverse population (more than 250 communities) loosely organized in incipient, “dormant”, or short-term associations (of producers, women, youth) and with very limited land tenure; ii), important gaps between rural and urban development, inertia in the local agricultural market, largely disconnected from global transformations, opportunities and demands; iii), personalistic local public governance disconnected from the institutional framework with short-term visions of development; and iv) conflicting visions of local identity and developments. And yet, thanks to the resilience of a few Indigenous communities, Satipo was also resisting illicit coca cultivation and armed group violence and retaliation as a few examples will show in this report.

See: Devida, *La EXPERIENCIA DAS, Desarrollo alternativo, gobernanza local y empoderamiento de la sociedad civil en la Amazonía peruana* (2017) and DAS, *Memoria institucional* (2018).

Picture 6:
Surroundings of Satipo capital,
Junin region, (early VRAEM), Peru



Source: IADA Study field visit, October 2023



Priority terrains of security strategies, social interventions have historically been built in parallel and have often isolated and disarticulated from broader national development plans, with little consideration of the multi-functional role that drug-related activities play in the socio-economy of a territory, a community or a household. The gaps between the drug control short term need of results and long-term investment for sustainable development objectives have long remained the difficult balance AD struggled and often failed to achieve (Mansfield 1999). A difficult balance interviewed donors' representative and government learning partners also start to acknowledge. As an EU learning partner stressed: "Anything that contributes to generate silos can be inefficient and ineffective, even more counterproductive in complex territories affected by drugs." Interviewed AD implementers, notably in Peru and Colombia, underline further the need to tie together patchy actions into a coherent well-resourced public policy stream, and to align AD interventions with broader national and global agendas.

As largely stressed by learning partners, these contexts call for realism, patience, and humility. The remaining question being how to evidence the need for a public and investment agenda that would ensure that these territories can be developed in all dimensions. Some initiatives invite to turn the issue upside down, so to speak, i.e. not to take the drug issue as a starting point of the change to be impeded, but rather the territory in which it develops. In this line, NGO-based initiatives in the VRAEM led by *Agronomes et vétérinaires sans frontières* (AVSF)⁸², a French NGO, have been developing a land management approach to the region, mainstreaming an intercultural perspective. Without using the AD terminology AVSF's actions however aim at the same objectives, and offer some inspiring options from broader, overlapping sectors of intervention. Gathering professionals in agriculture, livestock farming, animal health and local development, AVSF assist small-holder communities and organizations with technical advice, training, and financial support, while promoting their traditional knowledge and rights and improving their living conditions. Not being drug-related specialists or implementers, they however intervene in areas with illicit cultivation, working at overcoming the critical challenge of territorial access and community trust. In this context, drugs and coca cultivation are a variable of land management and rural development strategies, and not a direct target itself. To that end, as shared during COPOLAD meetings dialogue and co-construction of interventions have been key: instruments to favor and support the participation and organization of a "local consensus building forum" has been favored in Satipo for example as a way to jointly find the most adequate role and relevant tools to support local development. Co-constructed design allows for increased collaborative processes across decision makers, implementers and final beneficiaries; that all contribute in theory to create and refine project plans, designs, and solutions. It emphasizes inclusive decision-making and fosters a sense of ownership and accountability among all involved parties. As underlined during several field discussion in Peru and Colombia, increasing stakeholder buy-in and commitment: When stakeholders are involved in shaping the project from the outset, they are more likely to be invested in its success and actively support its implementation.

Rather than implementing a one-size-fits-all solution, a territorially tailored approach appears to be increasingly relevant to address the specific challenges and distinct features of those contexts.

82 [Homepage – AVSF – Agronomes & vétérinaires sans frontières.](#)



By developing interventions that would be customized to the specific characteristics, unique circumstances and needs but also resources existing in these terrains, it is believed that more effective and sustainable outcomes can be achieved. This would be notably visible through:

- A data-driven decision making and a deeper understanding of the local context, including the socio-economic conditions, cultural norms, environmental factors, and infrastructure of the specific territory or region.
- Evidence-based and co-constructed targeted interventions, demanding higher levels of flexibility and adaptability to adjust strategies based on changing circumstances and to align them to feedback from local stakeholders.
- A focus on local participation and ownership.

This is the direction towards which some observed initiatives tend to hint, recontextualizing traditional AD lessons learned, and designing more optimized and adaptive models carefully shifting from a substance-based to a territorial and people-centered narrative of change.

1.B Learning from the past: toward more optimized design and adaptive models of AD in the traditional AD implementing countries

At the policy and design level, the observed tendency in traditional AD implementers is one of change of rationale. Efforts to recontextualize AD lessons into more tailored approaches are underway, emphasizing a nuanced translation of key principles and policy orientations. By aligning with established principles such as those outlined in UN Guiding Principles, the UNGASS 2016 and other regional AD frameworks, initiatives seek to ensure greater coherence with global strategies and agenda, while also being responsive to national drug control priorities and the evolving landscape of illicit cultivation and its associated challenges in each terrain. This reimagining involves not only adapting traditional AD programming but also generating increased complementarities with other agendas and national plans, such as food security and rural development but more and more, also with peace building, conflict resolution, sustainable development and environmental protection agendas. A dynamic already underway in the run up to the UNGASS 2016.

There has been a notable shift in the design of the rationale of intended change AD claims to bring along. One notes a pivotal emphasis from a substance-based only rationale to system change and people-centered approaches, recognizing the intricate interplay of socioeconomic, cultural, and geographical factors. This shift entails a heightened awareness of structural vulnerabilities, acknowledging the various societal, economic, and systemic factors that contribute to involvement in the illicit drug trade. Moreover, the model of action has evolved, aiming at a “transition” towards fostering a licit economy and nurturing a more enabling social environment across the region. By redirecting attention towards these aspects, efforts are being made to dismantle the foundations upon which illicit drug networks thrive, ultimately striving towards more holistic and community owned solutions, and opening paths towards sustainable development. This is notably visible in the development of an “intersectional approach” in Colombia, a change of economic model logic in Peru and an “integral development” model in Bolivia.

In **Colombia**, based on a more disaggregated appreciation of the geographical specificities of coca cultivation⁸³, the new national drug policy framework *Sembrando Vida* (2023-2030), is oriented towards a “progressive[ly] and sustainabl[e] transition to licit economies, through a process of productive reconversion”. To that end, the Colombian Directorate for the Substitution of Illicitly Used

83 65% of illicit coca cultivation concentrated in Nariño, Norte de Santander and Putumayo, of which 49% is located in special management zones (national natural parks, Indigenous reserves, forest reserves, community council territories).



Crops had proposed an “integral model of intervention for the transition to licit economies”, while the “Drug Policy recognizes that the process of transition to legality must be a State-wide commitment and, therefore, much of its success will depend on coordinated and inter-institutional action”⁸⁴. This model conjugates crop-substitution interventions, territorial planification and provision of public services and goods (see following document 1). It embeds substitution interventions within the exigency of a productive model of economy, and cross-cutting action for creating enabling conditions for security, peace, and productivity. The implementation of these actions is foreseen as associated with a “progressive/gradual reduction of illicit crops by the communities”, and within a combined territorial and population approach). The novelty is the emphasis given to the incorporation of the intersectional approach coupled with ethnic, gender, and generational mainstreaming which constitutes “not so much an accessory”, specify learning partners, “but rather a constitutive part” of the new strategy.

Document 1: Schematization of Colombian Integral and Intersectional Approach



Source: *Sembrando Vida*, p. 54

This approach is hoped to overcome past limitations. The territorial approach chosen for the National Illicit Crop Substitution Programme (in its commonly used Spanish acronym – PNIS), for example, presented some important limits, largely acknowledged by learning partners across the board. In its focus on “territorial vulnerabilities”, the program was intended to include not only coca growers, but all the people present in target territory who require a process of support to generate development or transformation in that territory. Despite a welcome ambition, its under-resourced and highly challenging implementation led at best to the productive development of some families but had the unintended effect to recreate disparities within territories and to widen the state-citizen trust gap.

84 [Política Nacional de Drogas 2023-2033 'Sembrando vida, desterramos el narcotráfico'.pdf \(minjusticia.gov.co\)](#) p. 54.



Built on the emblematic models of San Martín and the Monzón Valley, the **Peruvian approach** to Alternative Development as developed by DEVIDA also stresses the importance of a territorially based transition model, hinting at new areas of interventions. A revised grid of appreciation of the illicit *crop cultivation* is proposed, placing it within a broader *illicit economy* framework. In addition to the socio-economic vulnerability, it is the “business model” of narcotrafficking that is taken as a counter-model of AD. From a crop-substitution rationale, the AD equation shifts levels and entails an “economic or business model transition”⁸⁵. As per DEVIDA policymakers, AD interventions need to create sufficient and enabling conditions to renew the territorial business model.

Integrated into a development continuum of four angles of intervention – social, economic, environmental and governance, the chosen strategy has been articulated around key main steps, built across Peruvian AD experiences.

- Rapid intervention post-eradication – inspired from the Monzón combined model of eradication and post-eradication economic support, coordinated by DEVIDA, providing the population with social and economic-productive support through food security and self-sustainability instruments⁸⁶. Most recently in Putumayo for example, only four months lapsed between the entry of armed forces in July 2023 and the start of the socialization process by DEVIDA in September. Socialization and concertation process with targeted communities, are concluded by an act of understanding, where communities engaged in leaving illicit cultivation, which conditioned in the Monzón model the pursuit of the socio-economic intervention.
- Elaboration of a community development roadmap.
- Technical assistance to strengthen chosen value chains.

Within Ethnic and Indigenous terrains, and to some extent borders areas, several evolutions are to be noted. The first one is the prioritization of strategic zones of interventions, designated not only for their vulnerability to illicit drugs, but also for their resilience capacity. In the framework of the National Policy against Drugs 2030, the *Decreto Supremo* (086-2021-PCM) delimits eight Strategic zones of intervention (“*Zonas Estratégicas de Intervención*”)⁸⁷ within which the frontier region of Ucayali with Brazil, and the Putumayo region have been added following an amelioration of the state access and security situation. Less formalized, ethnic and indigenous Peoples resilient to illicit cultivation have also been prioritized in an effort to containment and precedent building. This has been particularly exemplified through the DAS-Satipo programme. DAS-SATIPO (2012-2018), implemented in four districts of the region by DEVIDA, with technical assistance from the EU, prioritized a direct implementation modality and fostered greater ownership of the proposed development project. The DAS-experience pursued a narrative of change based on community buy-in and direct working relationship with beneficiaries.

Secondly, the direct implementation schemes enable to overcome the challenges attached to budgetary allocation to municipal authorities with limited technical expertise, capacities of implementation and isolated visions as mentioned in box 5 above. Finally, the focus on socialization, materialized by a Memorandum of Understanding with each community, would ensure trust-based access to the terrain is granted, but also buy-in and sustainability of the productive project. As

85 IADA Study interview, Peru Learning Partner, October 2023.

86 This model was developed in a context of increased law enforcement presence and militarization of the fight against trafficking in the region, with the decision of President Ollanta Humala, to recover order and security in the Huanuco valley. This led to the capture of Florindo Flores Hala (a) “Artemio” (February 12, 2012), and the establishment of more than 20 police stations in the area. See: Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo y Vida sin Drogas (DEVIDA). *Recuperando el Monzón*. Lima, Observatorio Peruano de Drogas, 2015.

87 *Decreto Supremo N.º 086-2021-PCM – Normas y documentos legales – Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo y Vida sin Drogas – Plataforma del Estado Peruano (www.gob.pe)*. Characterized by a high concentration of illicit drug trafficking activities, (illicit crop cultivation, illicit production and illicit drug trade), they include a) Corredor Amazónico; b) Corredor Sub-Tropical Nororiental; c) Franja Costera; d) Huallaga; e) La Convención – Kosñipata; f) Sur Amazónico; g) Triple Frontera; y, h) Valle de los Ríos Apurímac, Ene y Mantaro (VRAEM).



emphasized by both the field team and final beneficiaries met during IADA field visits, meaningful connections with communities and a multifaceted approach to implementation are paramount in this endeavor. This involves active engagement with field teams, technicians preferably native to the region, and ensuring that diverse perspectives are “heard and valued”⁸⁸. While the presence of armed forces can be problematic in some contexts and reaction to state interventions varies across communities, regular visits from the personal from the capital are also essential, recognizing the significance of personal interaction in building rapport and understanding of local dynamics. Moreover, effective communication entails not only listening attentively but also proactively responding to identified needs and absorption capacities.

In **Bolivia**, the *National Strategy for Sustainable Integral Development with Coca* (EDISC) 2021-2025, overseen by the Vice Ministry of Integral Development (in its commonly used Spanish acronym VCDI) and FONADIN, defends an “integral development and social control model”. Applying to authorized coca production zones as well as areas at risk of unauthorized expansion, this strategy is guided by five principles: the revaluation of coca, harmony and balance with Mother Earth, promotion of technological innovation, Sustainable Integral Development with Coca (DISC in its Spanish Acronyms), and the promotion of gender and generational equality. Led by the Ministry of Lands and Rural Development, in coordination with law enforcement actors, the approach has been based on the observation that “hoping for a cycle of change from the eradication of coca leaves without consideration for traditional peoples and communities, who rely on them as a source of livelihood, is illusion”⁸⁹. As such, the strategy integrates coca as an essential part of community and territorial development. It aims at developing agricultural and where relevant fishery production potential and capacities while revaluing yet controlling and regulating the production and commercialization of coca leaf. This is combined with the strengthening natural resources management and improved gender-sensitive provision of basic and educational services. The evolution here lies in the introduction of “social control” support mechanisms to ensure the communities and coca producing social organizations have the necessary tools to enforce an internal control system based on their own uses, customs, norms and procedures. This entails support to a mapping of cultivated areas, register of producers, cadaster development and capacity-building.

Certainly, no single framework is desirable or possible, and each country advances strategies as seen appropriate to its context and political priorities. Limitations, nuances, variations, and dissenting views exist, notably around the normative framework of coca cultivation and the linkages, conditions and sequencing of AD and security-based drug supply reduction interventions and eradication measures. However, some parallels could be drawn and evolutions in AD models show greater consideration of the realities and the diversity of engaged terrains.

2. How is IADA advanced in practice? Selected initiatives across the region

Across visited and observed initiatives in vulnerable zones and Ethnic and Indigenous territories, a set of tools and instruments could be identified, contributing to greater program and project effectiveness and results basis. Aiming for impact, implementing agencies and partners are engaged in a more systematized manner in the optimization of mid- to long-term instruments such as diversification and commercialization of AD products. More broadly, the imperative of sustainability is being slowly introduced with the development of more inclusive instruments taking into account cross-cutting issues such as gender, human rights and the environment. While an exhaustive, in-depth presentation would go beyond the scope of this study, some key instruments can be highlighted, and a few illustrative initiatives showcased.

88 IADA Study, field visit, Peru, October 2023.

89 IADA Study Interview, Bolivia, VCDI, Ministerio de Desarrollo Rural y Tierras, January 2024.



2.A Aiming for impact: Optimization of AD good practices and principles

While AD implementation remains project-based, some instruments are concomitantly converging towards the operationalization of mid- to long-term visions. Building on trials and more and more on result-based experiences, traditional AD implementers are working at translating and ameliorating the application of AD identified good practices and lessons to extended contexts of interventions. In the terms of learning partners in the field, AD shall not promise to “change everything in a heartbeat”, but with “patience”. Based on a long-term vision, it can “work at building a more enabling environment to do so: AD needs to have a start and an end to support that transition toward licit economy. Yet, it also needs to be result- and impact-oriented”⁹⁰. Across interviews, with both government representatives, field experts and final beneficiaries across Colombia and Peru a series of positive implementation practices were identified.

For AD specialized state agents at design and programming levels, one such practice involves honest inclusion and cooperation with communities in targeted territories: dialogue, communication and socialization mechanisms should come first in the design of any AD intervention. “Negotiating without imposing” turned out to leverage increased buy in and later on, ownership of productive projects implementation sessions. Although challenging and time demanding, building trust can be the key to more successful implementation and results. At the technical level, combining direct subsidies with technical assistance, while encouraging the integration of production projects with different cycles have proved to ensure more sustained income streams. Tailored assistance (from equipment provision to fair preparation, to microfinancing, and financial inclusion) and intermediation with marketplaces, platforms and actors have finally been flagged as strengthening economic resilience within these communities.

Compliance, accountability and sustained and trusted engagement have also been central notions shared by interviewed AD beneficiaries. Aiming to grow and achieve autonomy in their endeavors, interviewed stakeholders also seek to be competitive. Their determination to reach for quality products, respect international standards and develop a know-how embedded in the respect for the environment and inspired by their own value, traditions and cultures were also central. The cooperation experience with the *Central Ashaninka de Río Tambo – CART of Río Tambo District* was particularly illustrative of this desire of autonomy. During an IADA field visit meeting, the community leader shared his key lessons of this cooperation. Mapping out his communities’ main challenges for self-sufficiency, he shared the community’s past struggle to secure land tenure and to develop a trusted partnership with local authorities. Although the technical assistance provided was perceived as insufficient and resources deviation had been claimed, the CART leader located the added value of DAS program in the sequencing of assistance and diversification of productive endeavors brought to the community. First focusing on the production of handicrafts and textiles based on the community know how, the program supported the formation of young leaders through “schools of leaders”. The second phase focused on the construction of a secured value chain, from capacitation to equipment, up to marketing and commercialization support of cacao-based products. The training, communication and mutual learning were particularly emphasized as generating autonomy at each step of the program.

90 IADA Study field visit, Colombia, UNODC Field office, Implementing partners, November 2024.



→ Diversification of AD supported products

More broadly, across the Andean region, AD orientation towards beneficiary self-sustained autonomy and ownership of project gain had been well advanced. Three workstreams concentrated the bulks of the efforts: i) diversification of alternative products, ii) market-driven productive projects, and iii), commercialization and market visibility, and outreach. In Colombia, the story of some farmers, former participants of PNIS and now enrolled in UNODC-supported AD productive development projects, signify the change

brought about by diversification. This is notably the case of the farmers of several veredas⁹¹ along the Municipio of Puerto Caicedo, whose productions of coca was progressively abandoned notably thanks to the pluri-production of poultry, fruits, pepper or pisciculture⁹². The story shared by one farmer of the Vereda Remolino highlights it.

Picture 7: Sample of diversification of final AD products (Peru)



Source: IADA Study field visit, October 2023

"I am not growing coca because it is easy, you know. It can be quite a journey. Forced into growing coca under guerrilla control, my plants were eradicated several times. I tried to switch to legal crops many times, like sugar cane once, but I did not find help and labor, so I couldn't keep up on my own. Coca prices went up again back then, not like today, so I went back to it. I tried again with cacao, but again, aerial spraying ruined it. And then came the PNIS program. We are still struggling with it, but things also got a bit better. The subsidies helped to leave coca behind, and were first invested in cattle, which had a rapid return on investment. This also means we had something to eat. That paid off, slowly. Then, I went into bananas, fruits, and fish farming."

(IADA study field trip, Colombia, November 2023)

→ Commercialization and competitiveness efforts

Observed initiatives and field learning partners emphasized the importance of commercialization support and developing partnership with the private sector. This would empower emerging productive businesses to bridge their access gaps and navigate from local to international markets and maximize their chance to sustain. This includes market-driven productions, marketing assistance, intermediation, and network building to facilitate access to and visibility on markets, technical assistance such as equipment to improve the quality and efficiency of their products, or else regulatory support to meet export and quality compliance standards. A few illustrations of provided support in Colombia and Peru are presented in box 6.

91 Mountain paths or lanes that traverse and connect several farms. Without constituting a village per se, these farms are organized in a scattered way along those paths.

92 Several factors and motives can explain the abandonment of coca cultivation. While AD projects in this case have supported such process, they cannot be understood as constituting the only reason. Illicit market evolutions, personal motivation, community engagement are also among explanatory factors.



Box 6: Illustrations of commercialization efforts in Peru and Colombia

Marketing assistance: In Peru, each indigenous community was assisted by an external enterprise in designing their own brand and visual identification.

Here is a sample of marketed products encountered during the IADA Study field trip in Peru in October 2023: Products of Central Ashaninka de Río Tambo – CART, Cooperativa Agraria Ashaninka y Nomatiguenga; Cooperativa Agraria Kemito Ene. Cooperativa Agraria APROSAROCH Mazamari; Chanchamaya Highland Coffee, Productores y exportadores



Certification support

Agrarian Cooperative APROSAROCH Mazamari.

Ltda for example in Peru, brings together natives and settlers, established in 2002 as an association for banana production, and then cacao. Fair trade certified in 2010, the Cooperative benefited from DEVIDA support to meet with the requirement for organic cocoa certification. Beneficiary of DAS for almost 4 years, they also received production equipment that enables them to increase their standards and volume. Now exporting to Italy, the association became a cooperative in 2023 and gathers now 208 partners for 1000 tons of cocoa production. Along the way, synergy was created by private actors such as RUTCAPITA, which offered cheaper credits than the bank, and the REACTIVA Program that financed them during the pandemic

Market visualization and intermediation



Visualization of AD products thanks to the creation of dedicated seals – *Ruta Alternativa* in Peru, and *Producto para la Paz* in Colombia. In the new Colombian national drug policy, – *Sembrando Vida*, distinctive brand will be created to identify the origin of products and services derived from the economic reconversion. It is planned to develop collaborations with the trade, industry, tourism, and private sectors, to increase access to national and international markets and promote the sustainability of the economic transition.



Market driven creativity the Sacha Inshi bet

From seed to derived from sachá inchi seed, oil and flavored snacks



Source: IADASTudy field visits, Sacha inchi drying area, ASPROAMAZONICAS, Putumayo and Sacha inchi based product (snacks, oil) displayed at UNODC Putumayo field office.

Sacha inchi is a nutrient-rich Amazonian seed, highly competitive on the cosmetic market notably in Asia. Based on the lessons of past experiments, in 2020, with the financial support of Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), UNODC and the regional government of Putumayo have launched the project “*Strengthening the agricultural economy in the department of Putumayo, through the planting and marketing of alternative crops*”. The project seeks to diversify and improve the agricultural economy of the department and bet on the niche markets of sachá inchi, complemented with plantain and cocoa cultivation in 7 municipalities in the department.

To overcome the population’s first distrust of sachá inchi due to past unsold production, the project started out by securing a market as the production started off. “The objective is not only to be growers but also to be entrepreneurs – stresses UNODC Field agents learning partner – to be able to transform the product into derivative products in order to gain autonomy and make their products stand out in different markets.” The competitiveness unit of the UNODC office – a first for AD programme teams – has been working with a food engineer to develop attractive by-products such as snacks and oil. The project reached adhesion of 700 beneficiaries, including the visited Association of Amazonian Producers of Puerto Asis (association attached to the Cooperativa Multiactiva de Agronegocios del Putumayo – COOMULTIAGROP) presented in the pictures.



2.B Introducing sustainability: More inclusive, cross-cutting operationalization instruments

As already stressed while observing the development of AD policy frameworks and operationalization plans, **final beneficiaries buy-in** turned out pivotal not only for efficient and owned implementation, but also for long-term and sustainable results. The DAS-Satipo Peruvian experience showed that the political space built between communities' leaders and members, DEVIDA field offices, and coordinating units gradually contributed to build trust. As emphasized by learning partners: "if from the outset, an attempt is made to establish non-instrumentalized relationships, i.e. working relationships "between" and not only "with" or "for" communities, projects are more likely to bring results."⁹³ A recent experience in Colombia demonstrated a thorough attempt to break away from family-centered mechanisms of cooperation with more territorially based and collective partnerships. As such, the new national policy was developed through a participatory and proactive methodology: 27 territorial fora were created and held in order to gather contributions and inputs from strategic actors of civil society for the formulation and implementation of this public policy. On January 30, 2023, the Ministry of Justice defined, together with representatives of peasant, indigenous, and Afro-descendant communities, the roadmap for the development of these forums and identified the municipalities that, due to their location and characteristics in relation to the drug phenomenon, were most relevant for the collection of inputs. Each of the territorial spaces was developed in working sessions with the participation of around 130 delegates from society representing the territories visited. Delegates from the most relevant entities in the formulation and implementation of the National Policy also participated. This inclusive approach did not go without difficulties and opposition from various actors, including from the communities, but had the merits to advance mechanisms of greater participation of most concerned parties into the decision-making of drug-related interventions.

Inclusion of gender dimensions has also progressed. Women play a key role in the family's decision to shift their economy from illegal processes to another livelihood in the legal sector. Women are often the ones who take the initiative to make this change, and in many cases, they are the ones who push their partners to abandon coca cultivation, citing reasons that benefit the family, such as the reduction or elimination of the use of violence, more security, and the potential to create medium- and long-term well-being for the family. This role is being increasingly recognized. Not only are more tools available to support a gender-based approach to AD, but project design becomes more gender-sensitive.

An increasing number of tools are now available to consider and mainstream a gender perspective to AD. This effort aligns with the EU strategy for 2021-2025, specifically focusing on Priority I: Strengthening Alternative Development measures with a commitment to gender equality. Additionally, initiatives such as the *BMZ Feminist Development Policy*⁹⁴ underscore the importance of gender mainstreaming in development efforts. COPOLAD study tours, such as the recent one in Ucayali and Huanuco in 2022, highlight a focus on women's cooperatives, recognizing their vital role in the alternative development landscape⁹⁵. Furthermore, *COPOLAD Practical Guide on Addressing Gender in Alternative Development projects*⁹⁶, reflects increased commitment to inclusivity and gender-responsive approaches.

93 IADA Study Field visit, Interview, DEVIDA Field office agents, October 2023.

94 [Feminist Development Policy – For Just and Strong Societies Worldwide \(bmz.de\)](#).

95 [Copolad organizes study trip to Peru to learn about alternative development initiatives – Copolad](#).

96 [Guide Addressing Gender in Alternative Development Projects – Copolad](#).



In addressing historical gender gaps, gender-sensitive projects emphasize the meaningful inclusion of women as both beneficiaries and active actors of change in AD project development. Recognizing the emergence of women's leadership, particularly evident in community-level activism such as the *cocalero* marches in Colombia in the Peace framework, measures are taken to amplifying the voices and roles of women. This is visible notably when establishing a territorial diagnosis – survey and analysis integrate more systematically gender disaggregated data than in the past. At the operationalization level, women-led structures are supported and encouraged such as the *Committee of women of Sonomoro Agrarian Cooperative of the VRAEM* (picture 8). The recognition of the differentiated impacts of illicit cultivation on women, and the need to build gender-based responses has also gained traction in Colombia, notably since the adoption of the “Protocol for the incorporation of the gender approach in the diagnosis, development, implementation and monitoring of the PNIS”⁹⁷. This technical and operational document of mandatory compliance enables to attend 2,094 women harvesters through the “Immediate Attention Plan for harvesters” feature that link them to rapid temporary employment options and food security cash payments to enable them to engage into the implementation of productive projects for the benefit of 689 female-headed households.

Picture 8:
The Committee of women of Sonomoro Agrarian Cooperative of the VRAEM, Pangoa district



Source: IADA study field visit, Peru, October 2023

Working on mainstreaming environmental considerations into Alternative Development initiatives presents numerous challenges but also some interesting opportunities. The nexus has gained traction has underlined during the 2024 Commission on Narcotic Drugs, notably since the adoption of a 2022 resolution unprecedentedly focused on the environment⁹⁸ and most recently, as part of the side event “Drugs and the environment: Towards more environmentally sustainable drug policies” co-organized by Germany, Australia, Brazil, France, Peru, Thailand and the UNODC Research and Trend Analysis Branch. In addition to the Sustainable Development Agenda, increasingly considered in AD elaboration, complementary initiatives are also becoming relevant to bridge AD with development-led efforts such as those within the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2020-2030) led by UNEP and FAO. This effort aims to halt the degradation of ecosystems and restore them to achieve global environmental goals. As recently put forward in the UNODC *Practical Guide on Alternative Development and the Environment*⁹⁹, mainstreaming environmental consideration into AD also favor project effectiveness and sustainability. Typically, marginalized and isolated borders and vulnerable terrain have endured decades of social fragility, chronic underdevelopment, insecurity, or, in some cases, armed conflict. As highlighted in UNODC Practical Guide, a prevailing culture of lawlessness and the absence of state presence have often hindered the implementation or enforcement of environmental policies, while any attempt of change promotion may have ended in harsh opposition and resistances. For many communities, mainstreaming environmental considerations represented a secondary or tertiary transition, following the complex process of shifting away from illicit crop cultivation and drug production, or other significant changes like integration into the state's administrative framework or obtaining land titles.

97 [Protocolo-de-Genero-del-Programa-de-Sustitucion-de-Cultivos-Illicitos.pdf \(portalparalapaz.gov.co\)](#).

98 [65/1 - \(E/CN.7/2022/14\)](#) - Promoting alternative development as a development-oriented drug control strategy, taking into account measures to protect the environment.

99 [Practical_Guide_Report_web.pdf \(unodc.org\)](#).



Nevertheless, climate change and environmental damages are now pressing increased consideration of the environment in any development-based project, and place AD within a broader practice and policy framework. Such efforts are not new but are now translated into an increased systematization of the AD-environmental nexus. Since 2013, Colombia, Germany, Norway, and the UK, with UNODC support have collaborated on several programs to achieve zero-net deforestation in the Colombian Amazon by 2020¹⁰⁰. For example, the Colombian Amazon Vision Program and national REDD+ strategy have been developed to incentivize policies for reducing deforestation and promoting development, notably in coca cultivation areas. With a USD 100 million budget, the program integrated components into the agri-environmental development pillar, focusing on environmental zoning and land-use planning to improve community well-being and productivity. It encourages sustainable practices across productive chains, aiming to enhance market access and alternative livelihoods while preventing deforestation. The initiative prioritized local actors, with 60% of funds allocated accordingly, guided by the “do-no-harm” principle. More recently, UNODC supported the project *Sustainable and integrated management of natural resources in the tropics of Cochabamba and the Yungas of La Paz*¹⁰¹ that supports Bolivia’s National Plan for Alternative Development and the Integrated Strategy to Counter Drug Trafficking, focusing on sustainable resource use in the Cochabamba tropics and the Yungas of La Paz. It generates income and employment through forest utilization and agroforestry, with farmer and local entity involvement. Activities include forest development, soil and watershed conservation, and institutional capacity building. The project benefits approximately 4,500 families and 50 local organizations, enhancing income, employment, and resource access. Similarly in Peru, in the framework of “*Alternative Development with an environmental approach in Apurimac-Ene and south-eastern valleys, and in Pichis Palcazu, Aguaytia and Huallaga*”, the Office also works at integrating AD projects into broader local and regional development initiatives, ensuring that all agricultural activities are carried out in an environmentally friendly way.

The objectives of environmental protection and sustainability in Alternative Development are now intertwined mainly at the policy and programming level, demanding strategic and organizational readjustments. In that perspective, in Peru, the national environment and forest protection authorities – SERFOR and DEVIDA. signed an agreement to promote forestry, agroforestry and sustainable forest management activities that strengthen alternative, integral and sustainable development¹⁰² and agreed on joint action to advance on the national *Restoration Strategy Goals 2021-2030*¹⁰³. So far, the work that has been carried out to articulate the roles between CORAH¹⁰⁴, SERFOR and DEVIDA centers around mapping of cultivation in special management zones, and information sharing about regulations and rights of territorial exploitation.

As such, AD can now benefit from guidelines and best practices developed in other domains, such as organic agriculture, carbon credits or payments for environmental services. Further, such mainstreaming could also constitute an opportunity for increased financing leverage and resources. Climate finance, including mechanisms that combine scaling up of climate change adaptation with agricultural support are flourishing. Payments for environmental and Ecosystem Services (PES) tools like the Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation initiatives (REDD+), or carbon credit schemes offer clear incentives and financial rewarding to farmers, landowners and governments in beneficiaries’ countries that take remedial actions to protect or manage their land in a way that effectively reduce degradations. Furthermore, new regulations urge that mainstream-

100 See for example: REDD++ Colombia, COCA Y DEFORESTACIÓN: Mensajes de acción para la planeación del desarrollo, March 2017 accessible at [Policy_Brief_Coca_deforestacion.pdf \(unodc.org.co\)](#) and [Protection of forests and the climate \(REDD+\) – giz.de](#).

101 [Bolivia \(unodc.org\)](#).

102 [Convenio Marco de Cooperación Interinstitucional entre el SERFOR y DEVIDA.pdf \(www.gob.pe\)](#).

103 [ProRest. Estrategia Nacional de Restauración de Ecosistemas y Tierras Degradadas.pdf.pdf \(www.gob.pe\)](#).

104 Special Project for Control and Reduction of Illegal Crops in Alto Huallaga (CORAH, in Spanish): [Nosotros – MIN. INT. PROYECTO ESPECIAL CORAH \(corahperu.org\)](#).



ing. In 2023, the EU introduced the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR)¹⁰⁵ as part of its EU Green Deal to protect global forests. Targeting seven key commodities including coffee, cocoa, soy, palm oil, rubber, wood, and cattle, along with related products like chocolate and leather, it may expand to other items. Relevant to Alternative Development, the EUDR mandates rigorous supply chain due diligence for operators and non-SME traders in the EU market. It came into force on June 29, 2023, with main obligations effective from December 30, 2024, allowing 18 months for compliance, and an additional six months for micro and small enterprises. This regulation will certainly impact AD design. Yet it is still uncertain how this regulation will be feasible to follow at the level of final beneficiaries, who are already struggling to align with international standards, prices, and norms.

Terrain D: IADA in emerging regulated cannabis markets and hemp value chains *Calibrating AD theory of change*¹⁰⁶

1. Relevance – How does IADA fit in emerging legal cannabis markets and hemp value chains?

Emerging cannabis legal reforms around the globe have led to various forms of regulated medicinal, recreational cannabis and hemp industrial markets and value chains. Often still work in progress, these groundbreaking legislations and emerging markets give some leeway to imagine creative entrepreneurial and economic opportunities, exploiting the potentials of the newly regulated commodities. This debate is not only about personal adult uses of cannabis and the impact of their legalizations but includes broader economic debates exploring the cannabis and hemp plants' social and economic potential in their many uses. Yet, despite the decision in December 2020 by the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs to remove cannabis and cannabis resin from Schedule IV of the 1961 Convention, industrial hemp and cannabis remains controversial. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) recently published a special issue of its Commodity-at-a-glance series, *Trade in Industrial Hemp: The Missing Link*¹⁰⁷ to inform and raise awareness amongst policy makers and the general public about the development of industrial hemp. According to the report, the global hemp market, by value, is projected to grow and reach about US\$18.6 billion by the end of the decade, despite very limited world production and trade compared with any other crops¹⁰⁸. One of the findings highlights how regulations and legislations in vigor in most countries however tend to impede the full exploitation of the commodity's potential.

The Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region has seen a surge in interest to seize the opportunities the emerging cannabis markets could bring about. With Uruguay pioneering the cannabis reforming movement, several Latin America and Caribbean countries are exploring the possibilities and forms of regulated cannabis markets: Jamaica, Saint-Vincent and the Grenadines, Para-

105 Regulation on Deforestation-free products – European Commission ([europa.eu](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-communications/infographic/infographic_eudr_deforestation-free-products.pdf)).

106 A theory of change (ToC) is a project conceptualization method outlining how a particular intervention or series of interventions are anticipated to bring about a specific/targeted development change, utilizing a causal analysis rooted in existing evidence. It can be instrumental in shaping the formulation of result-based and evidence-driven program strategies, with thorough analysis and transparent delineation of intended impact, beneficiaries, assumptions and risks. It is also often used to guide projects/programs evaluation and monitoring. A vast literature exists on ToC. For a comprehensive overview, please refer to: United Nations Development Group, Theory of Change, UNDAF Companion Guidance, UNDG.

107 [Commodities at a glance: Special issue on industrial hemp | UNCTAD](#).

108 Worldwide hemp is estimated to cover 0.01-0.02 % of primary crops harvested areas; in the EU about 0.05% (about 10 times less than rice or seed cotton within the EU). Trade figures are also low: estimates between US\$ 50 million and US\$ 250 million. [Commodities at a glance: Special issue on industrial hemp | UNCTAD](#), Chapter 4.



guay, Colombia and Mexico. To navigate legal aspects, and to balance between promoting social justice while ensuring market development and substance access regulation raise debates. The discussion around innovative Alternative Development approaches in such terrains can be challenging, as it involves exploring methods and objectives that might not be immediately apparent or straightforward, both in theory and when put into action.

Apart from the drug regulation and control aspects, many reformers also question the role of traditional cannabis farmers¹⁰⁹ or former sellers of then-illicit cannabis in those new regulated economies. Besides, Alternative Development being an instrument supporting more viable and inclusive transitions outside the illicit drug economies, there are still doubts and questions around where alternatives would fit and who would benefit from it in the case of emerging cannabis or hemp licit markets. Uncertainty, even in some cases confusions, arises in the debate and across observed IADA participating countries around the very relevance of the AD concept in such contexts. Considering the various forms of cannabis and hemp created markets and value chains, this is even more complex to set. Observed debates take two directions:

- Ensuring that reforms and emerging regulated economies generate inclusive economic opportunities, in particular for people who were or are involved in illicit cannabis or other drug supply related activities (traditional cannabis cultivators and farmers, micro-sellers, communities benefiting from the (past) illicit economy).
- Exploiting new models of market development with cannabis and hemp as vehicles for economic transformation for all.

Analysts have warned of the risks of corporate captures of the emerging industries (Pereira 2022) and risks of new and deepened inequalities. Thus far, models tend to advance export-oriented production, and a profit-centric approach prioritizing production standardization, product patenting, and indoor cultivation favoring large corporations and capital-intensive stakeholders. The overall tendency across observed countries is to start reflecting, yet not without challenges, around “inclusive emerging cannabis or hemp markets”, that would include the actor of yesterday’s illicit market, assuming their interest in remaining in that sector. A few years after initial reforms, efforts are made towards developing public policies or interventions to support the entry into the legal market of small and traditional growers while considering anti-monopoly provisions. Interviewed IADA learning partners recognize that structural inequalities in capital, land, technology, and technical/scientific knowledge make it exceedingly challenging and risky for small and traditional cannabis growers to capitalize on new legal market opportunities. While benefiting in terms of know-how and creativity, traditional cannabis cultivation practices often lack the traceability and accountability necessary for high-quality products and trade standards. Some other initiatives, still very scattered and limited in scope, imagine how most marginalized groups could also take part and benefit in the new value chains. Normative frameworks, targets and assumptions design, technical barriers, and resource traps, often appear to challenge innovations.

Picture 9:
Legal cannabis
production facility,
Uruguay



Source: IADA Study field trip,
Nov. 24

109 “Traditional cannabis farmers” is used as a generic term to identify farmers who were or are still involved in illicit cultivation of cannabis prior to or despite cannabis reforms in relevant countries, such as Uruguay, Paraguay, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Jamaica.



2. How is IADA advanced in practice? Selected initiatives across the region

While Paraguay is exploring how to make licit cannabis cultivation valuable for most vulnerable indigenous families as depicted in Chapter 1 of this study, emerging cannabis markets offer a strategic entry to fostering sustainability and equitable growth, mainly in the Caribbeans. In Jamaica and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, conceptualization efforts are underway on how to leverage their economic, social and control aspects. In Uruguay, the debate is not so obvious, considering that the reform has been thoughts mainly in terms of health-oriented and preventive objectives.

Since the development of a normative framework for the establishment of a medical cannabis industry, Jamaica and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines have explored further how Alternative Development approach could also serve the advancement of more inclusive, fair and sustainable cannabis regulated markets and hemp value chains, including for traditional farmers. Contrary to other countries of emerging markets, they are reflecting on a more comprehensive vision of the possible benefits of regulated cannabis, which makes the objectives of possible IAD rather clear, even if their operationalization modalities remain to be fine-tuned and resourced.

**Case D: Emerging legal medicinal cannabis
or industrial hemp value chains**

Jamaica (Conceptualization, pilots)
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (Conceptualization)

Uruguay (Pilots, potential)
Paraguay (Potential)

In Jamaica, since the 2015 cannabis reform, the government has moved ahead with the establishment of a medical cannabis framework based on a ‘closed loop’ licensing system (trade with licensees), revolving around international exportations and tourist sales. Early initiatives were trialed with a view of laying some basis for the development of an inclusive medicinal cannabis industry. Special provisions for “traditional small ganja farmers” in the legal regulated industry were discussed starting 2019. Two significant one-year pilot projects, namely the ‘Orange Hill’ project in West Moreland and the ‘Accompong’ project involving the Maroon community, have garnered attention, despite some setbacks in securing the necessary conditions to be launched (land tenure and bureaucratic hurdles mainly). Geared towards transitioning current illicit ganja farmers into the legal regulate market, these projects were expected “to ensure no one is left behind” and “that the small farmers in the sector are protected as the global marijuana industry expands. [...] because it is a real fear that as that industry emerges, becomes more corporatized, that the original ganja man, the original farmer, could very well be left out of the gains and the benefits”¹¹⁰. Despite initial challenges, the Jamaican government has engaged follow up efforts with the design of an ‘AD 2.0’ program across 14 parishes. While the exact details and outcomes of this initiative remain in the design stage, the project encompasses the development of clearer production licensing criteria that would facilitate the inclusion of farmers in the cannabis production market. Learning partners highlighted the progress made in this area in the new program design. Responding to small farmers lobbying mobilizations, this second attempt includes greater consultations with farmers groups. Among progress noted by learning partners: farmers would be required to organize and present “a community development plan” while measures would be defined to reduce the costs of entry into the legal market.

¹¹⁰ Sterling, N. (2019) ‘Ganja Cultivation Project for Small Farmers to Begin by March – PM’, Jamaica Information Service, 8 January; Ferguson, A. (2019) ‘Accompong ready to plant 10 acres of ganja - Minister says small farmers won’t be left behind’, The Gleaner, 29 April. As referred in TNI 2021.



In **Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG)**, in addition to the drafting and enactment of an amnesty law for cannabis producers¹¹¹, efforts are also underway to better integrate them into the legal production chain. Back in 2019, series of training sessions on Good Agricultural and Collection Practices (GACP) conducted by the Medicinal Cannabis Authority (MCA) of St Vincent and the Grenadines were proposed to farmers to familiarize licensees with global standards and best practices for export target markets including European countries¹¹². Those did not however include explicitly traditional farmers who struggled with the licensing regime. With a view of ensuring high-quality products to be sold in national, regional and international market, the MCA created to implement the cannabis reform, has detailed a recent proposal “*Towards an Alternative Development Programme and a High Quality-Intensive Cannabis Cultivation Zone*”. Two options are being proposed under the Lashum / Top Hill Model replicable to other areas of the island.

- Alternative agricultural diversification option or **GALI – General Alternative Livelihood Initiative** is geared to assisting traditional cultivators to diversify out of cannabis production while remaining within the agriculture (food production) and tourism industries. Former traditional cultivators will be given lease/rental options for a parcel of land to develop a cultivation plan based on a set list of suitable crop and livestock options, and environmental protection rules. This diversification initiative will concentrate on retraining and providing the necessary factors of production to enable interested farmers to establish profitable livelihoods (fishing, livestock, cocoa and other tree crops, vegetables) and secure sufficient living income. Tourism and eco-tourism related services are expected to attract private investors and international partnerships.
- Legal medicinal cannabis alternative option or **CALI – Cannabis Alternative Livelihood Initiative** aims to develop and enhance the existing skills, traditional experiences and knowledge of traditional cannabis farmers by providing them with technical assistance and productive equipment that would positively impact their production skills and prospects. Licensed Cannabis would here be the alternative cultivated crop (vs. illicit cultivation) around which potential innovative practices could also be cross referenced with other crops to improve its quality.

Under both models, access to training (compliance with global standards, business management, banking) and to a tool bank is foreseen to support the mechanization of cultivation and the production of high-quality products. A Public-Private-Partnership platform, a Land bank and technical committees shall be established along with six liaison officers, all growers themselves, to act as a bridge between growers from different regions and the government, and to discuss relevant concerns with the MCA. Technical support provided would help the growers form cooperatives. First land titles have been assigned to former illicit growers. Learning partners highlighted the capacity-building opportunities the emerging industry could bring in that sense.

Despite efforts to develop a comprehensive strategic plan, a number of operationalization challenges raise concerns within the MCA working group. A central one remains land access and tenure against which several alternatives are envisioned. Model 1 involves the MCA securing suitable lands in Lashum-Top Hill area and placing them in a Community Land Bank (CLB) for potential (small) rental or leasing to former cannabis farmers lacking land. Model 2 entails establishing an Intensive Cannabis Cultivation Zone through a Public Private-Partnership with traditional cultivators’ groups and licensed company as an investor. Model 3 is more ambitious and expands private sector engagement, with a larger licensed marketing company concentrating its investments and production around a larger cultivation zone to which an additional area would be earmarked for

111 [Cannabis Cultivation Amnesty Act – Medicinal Cannabis Authority \(mca.vc\)](#).

112 [Traditional cannabis cultivators to receive best practices training – Medicinal Cannabis Authority \(mca.vc\)](#).



alternative livestock and tree crop farming or other major tourism activities. A second critical challenge to advance IADA remains access to financial resources and support to fine-tune and operationalize existing proposals.

In **Uruguay**, the IAD debate, while lively within the Junta Nacional de Drogas Secretariat, is not framed in those same terms. were found at first quite ambiguous. Since the coordination of the elaboration of 2019 OAS-CICAD Reference Framework for the Understanding of the Concept of Comprehensive and Sustainable Alternative Development (DAIS)¹¹³ as then chair of the Group of Experts on Comprehensive and Sustainable Alternative Development (GE-DAIS)¹¹⁴, Uruguay has kept intact its engagement to pursue a national reflection on Alternative Development applicability within its territories. An endeavor all the more promoted after the **National drug strategy 2021-2025**¹¹⁵ already paved the way for such considerations. As part of its “Justice and coexistence” pillar, the DAIS reference framework, and the need for implementation of social and economic promotion and development programs are recognized to respond to the “fragility of communities affected by illicit drug trafficking, particularly micro-trafficking”¹¹⁶. Among its priority lines of action, the national strategy foresaw the development of specific intervention strategies and programs in communities identified as most at risk due to the culture of illegality and exposure to the commission of drug micro-trafficking crimes. It seeks to establish socio-labor and educational integration programs, directed towards the most vulnerable, including women, in complement to alternative measures to imprisonment (Uruguay national priority lines 3 and 6). It is in this framework that the *Proyecto Dais en territorios vulnerables* has been proposed, as described in Chapter 2, section Terrain A.

“The future AD agenda has the potential not only to work on vulnerabilities in a territorially tailored manner, but also to encourage institutional cooperation and joint implementation.”

IADA Study Interview, Uruguay SNG, Territorial management unit, October 2024

As part of those efforts and nurtured by regional and bilateral exchanges taking place in COPO-LAD or CICAD OAS settings, the *Junta Nacional de Drogas*, and in particular the Territorial Management Unit of its secretariat has endeavored to deepen this approach further and elaborate a “national agenda for DAIS” in the country. However, learning partners are still very much struggling with the absence of a clear conceptual framework for AD in countries with no cultivation, and siloed institutional and policy-making routines to broaden the scope of AD and adapt it to the specificities of the territory. As underlined in interviews, “Uruguayan vulnerabilities to illicit drug supply activities are very territorially segmented. This segmentation has had some backlashes. It somehow also resulted in an institutional fragmentation of drug policy operationalization with limited cross-sectoral thinking and implementation”¹¹⁷. However, the Junta’s institutional framing would allow to overcome these constraints and open opportunities for intersectoral dialogue with interested ministries. As echoed by learning partners, drug coordination agencies have been designed to facilitate coordinated and balanced actions across the board of ministries it brings together. “There are still bridges to be made, and it also depends on each members interests. But there is a need for these bridges to be built and for us to continue our efforts to do so”¹¹⁸.

113 [Download.aspx \(oas.org\)](#).

114 [Comprehensive and Sustainable Alternative Development \(oas.org\)](#).

115 [Estrategia Nacional de Drogas 2021-2025 | JND \(www.gub.uy\)](#).

116 *Ibid*, p. 31.

117 IADA field trip, Uruguay, Meeting with JND Territorial Management Unit team, Montevideo, 27/10/23.

118 IADA Study Interview, Uruguay Learning partner, JND, Territorial management unit, Octobre 2023.



When it comes to IAD applied to cannabis regulated economy, the definition of vulnerabilities and potential target groups turn out unclear, or else contradictory to some of the country policy stances. Uruguay's regulatory scheme is articulated around an integrated health-centered approach, with strict state control of the entire cannabis industry chain, from production to consumption. In that sense, the cannabis industry has not been framed as a possible economic alternative per se, while the prioritization of actors previously engaged in drug sales and micro-trafficking has not been prominently emphasized by reform advocates in its early time. Nevertheless, slight adjustments are being carefully weighted, also in a context of increased demand for more flexibility in the cannabis club regulation and a more inclusive market. New avenues are being examined around cannabis plant-based products such as hemp production and derived products. As detailed in box 7, the alternative of such a niche market is at a very early stage and certainly participates to the prospect of a more sustainable emerging market that could benefit socio-economic growth. It however appeared that this approach has not been fully strategized yet, neither in terms of commercialization nor inclusion of the most vulnerable groups. As such, it aligns with key AD principles in a somewhat limited manner.

**Box 7: A women only micro-enterprise hemp bioeconomic project –
“Sativa. Uy Project”**

With the recent legalization of cannabis opening up new avenues beyond medicine and biology, two determined Montevidean entrepreneurs – a skilled industrial designer and a passionate academic researcher – have joined forces to explore the vast potential of hemp fabric. Together, they recently established *Sativa.UY Project*, a micro-enterprise dedicated to revaluing industrial hemp stalks and exploring its potential in the textile and construction sectors. In its inception phase, the project is developing fabrics and crafting clothing and decorative items, partnering with women's collective renowned for their textile and weaving expertise. Developing bioeconomy aspects, the two interviewed entrepreneurs defend a sustainable approach: “Hemp cultivation requires significantly less water than cotton and produces 2.5 times more fiber, while also occupying less land area. One hectare of hemp can yield the same amount of paper as four hectares of trees, with its paper being recyclable 7 to 8 times, making it three times more sustainable than wood pulp paper. We cannot be wrong with choosing this path. The only concern is the sustainability of the market: there is very limited national demand and so far, support and resources are insufficient to pretend to reach higher.” (Meeting with Sativa entrepreneurs, IADA Field trip, Uruguay, October 2023)

**Picture 10:
SATIVA project
hemp-based products**



Source: IADA Field trip, Uruguay, Oct. 23



With support from the Khem incubator, the Pando Technological Pole, the National Research and Innovation Agency (ANII), and the National Development Agency (ANDE) grant, Sativas.UY pioneer in the creation of one-of-a-kind hemp-derived products¹¹⁹. By leveraging social media visibility and fostering smart partnerships, they are striving to develop a robust market for their offerings. Falling outside the JND sphere of intervention, this initiative sought the support of the agency that helped with its visibility and search for partnership. The project was presented to Uruguay XXI (agency for the promotion of exports, investments and country image) and platforms like the Cannabis Business Hub (platform connecting entrepreneurs for business opportunities in the cannabis marketplace) and Expo Cannabis.

In this IADA terrain, the original notion of Alternative Development, which entailed transitioning to other legal crops and income streams, is nuanced, if not recentered, not around the nature of the substitute crop, but the people involved in the past or surviving illicit economy. Where some might see a conceptual alteration, others might rather anticipate a reorientation, already engaged in other IAD terrains where the people-centered approach to AD tends to be better enacted. The recent wave of policy shifts and the burgeoning cannabis sector may offer new prospects for interested small farmers to shift away from illegitimate activities to legal cannabis or other types of supported income generating activities. Nevertheless, to fit this purpose, the IAD approach in terrains of emerging cannabis markets and hemp value chains would still request interested parties to clarify and/or construct a territorial-based theory of change that would revolve around overcoming the challenges people involved/formerly involved with illicit drug supply face. A basic SWOT analysis is proposed below (figure 8) to help clarify the terms of a much needed, yet still sensitive and politicized debate for drug policy stakeholders.

Figure 8: SWOT Analysis of Observed IAD options in emerging cannabis and hemp markets (Jamaica, SVG, Uruguay, Paraguay)

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Inclusive vision → Increased consultative mechanisms → Option-based models → National brainstorming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Definition of the purpose and nature of the « alternative » → Delimitation and consultation of beneficiaries and target groups of the defined alternatives → Legislation loopholes → Land access, high standard technical expertise and equipment needs
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Legal cannabis and hemp as socio-economic alternatives → Farmer organizations mobilization and engagement → Inter-sectoral cooperation – Ministries of Agriculture, Trade, etc. → International research and economic interests → Investments and Public Private Partnership → Auto-financing potentials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Corporate capture → Limited financial resources and support → Limited pluri-partite management mechanisms → Stakeholders buy in → Assumptions with limited consultations of desired socio-economic/professional reconversion perspectives of former actors of the illicit cannabis economy → Diversion and grey cannabis markets

119 Similar initiatives like HEMPA use imported hemp.

Conclusive chapter – Emerging lessons and avenues for IADA future policy reflections

Despite a commonly agreed definition, the concept of Alternative Development has never been really settled. While AD is acknowledged as a legitimate and viable development-oriented framework for drug-policy formulation and referenced in drug-policy documents as presented in the introductory chapter, it has come to mean and offer different things from one country to another, but also to different stakeholders, from policymakers to practitioners in the field, from donors to final beneficiaries. While its fragmentation into various interpretations could have been problematic in the past, its conceptual malleability also explains some of the concept's enduring relevance and possible adjustability to evolving and emerging drug-related challenges.

Whereas innovation may result in increased effectiveness and pertinence, it also brings about numerous uncertainties and risks, including:

- **Conceptual approximation:** expansion and/or adaptation of an AD policy framework and related measures can certainly create opportunities for positive overlaps and synergies, but also risks duplications of efforts and distorted application of existing instruments if not done correctly.
- **Resourcing trials:** innovation often requires substantial investment in research, development, and implementation, with no guarantee of return on investment. It can further divert resources, political attention, and focus from core activities, potentially impacting short-term drug control performance and long-term impact potentials.
- **Operational challenges:** new instruments and tools may encounter unexpected technical difficulties, such as scalability issues, trust barriers, compatibility problems, or security vulnerabilities.
- **Policy coherence and regulatory risks:** Innovations, especially within and across differentiated drug policy and regulation schemes may face policy hurdles, compliance issues, or normative challenges, especially when it comes to applying AD without a clear (drug) policy framework and/or within emerging legal cannabis markets and hemp value chains.
- **Credibility damage:** Failure in innovation initiatives, notably in terms of meeting policymakers' and beneficiaries' expectations, can damage the AD reputation and credibility outside the AD like-minded community, leading to possible resistance to change, loss of partner's/donor's trust and beneficiaries' confidence.



Venturing IADA thus implies to consider and navigate these risks with careful innovation design, result-based planning, and management systems, but also with transparency, flexibility, and a humble willingness to take those risks and learn from both successes and possible failures.

It is thus critical to situate first possible and opportune terrains for innovations, without dismantling the core dimensions and theory of change attached to “traditional AD”. As presented in the introductory chapter, this study sought to find some elements of answer to the following overarching question:

To what extent can identified IADA initiatives (in their design features, instruments, and implementation modalities) be useful to advance the relevance and effectiveness of AD in drug-affected territories beyond traditional settings, while contributing to more comprehensive, balanced and coherent policymaking on AD, drug control and development-related measures?

This chapter draws some emerging lessons from IADA study observations and provides some perspectives on how to navigate those risks. It then provides some orientations to consider how IADA could be useful to advance development-oriented drug policy measures in “non-traditional” contexts for more comprehensive, efficient and impactful interventions and programming in the future.

I. Emerging lessons and challenges of IADA experiences in LAC

This section attempts to systematize emerging lessons, practices, and challenges of IADA as developed and experienced so far in LAC, and as per key OECD DAC criteria that help to determine the merits and worth of an intervention. Solely based on this study’s observations, these are evolutive as experiences in the field grow, their results become visible and further in-depth evaluations are conducted. It thus serves as a first basis for reflection.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR ADAPTABILITY:

“How could IADA fit for purpose?”

- **As implemented in observed terrains, IADA suppose a multidimensional reassessment and recategorization of the “drug problem” across terrains demanding increased considerations of the multifaceted role of illicit drug related activities in the socio-economic, political economy and governance systems of concerned territories.**

Emerging IADA notably in urban settings, ethnic and indigenous territories and vulnerable zones demonstrated greater appreciation of drug-related realities within their territorial, cultural and social contexts. This supposed shifting policy focuses from the illicit market dynamics to its enabling conditions – including the institutional and governance fragilities that may favor its continuity. As it was the case for traditional AD, it requires considering structural inequalities, social relations, and (urban, ethnic, communities...) culture to better grasp the vectors of illicit drug related phenomenon and their attached challenges (violence, traditional uses...), their political economy, and potential policy leverage points. Increased uses of tools such as direct project implementation, socio-economic diagnosis, regular sociological surveys, and geo-referenced mappings underscore efforts to better grasp the socio-realities attached to drug-related activities. Efforts towards more “integral” frameworks of action, notably in vulnerable zones, tackling the multiple dimensions of development (social, economic, political and environmental) further point to the development of more territorially tailored approaches towards which new terrains engage.



- **However, there is still a lack of clarity on IADA target groups, notably when applied beyond illicit cultivation terrains. There is a need to calibrate IADA to specific links of the illicit drug chain and reappraise the notion of “vulnerability” as per those specific links in given territories notably in urban and emerging cannabis market terrains. AD cannot do it all: neither replace any social integration programs nor be used as a label of any drug use prevention program with an economic component.**

As per the observed cases, IADA in urban settings involves examining not just traditional markers of vulnerability, but also considering broader governance, cultural, and systemic influences that contribute to people’s exposure to illicit drug supply risks. This redefinition emphasizes understanding vulnerabilities in a more nuanced and comprehensive way, acknowledging the role of urban areas in shaping individuals’ experiences but also its possible prospects of transitioning to the licit economy. While the two lines of restorative and preventive action pursue a more integral and complementary approach to AD in urban settings, they also risk confusion of IAD target groups. The integration of AD within a harm-reduction and preventive approach presents the advantage of ensuring more comprehensive actions. However, AD remains a supply-oriented instrument through which socio-economic development assistance is tailored to the specific drivers and conditions of illicit drug markets. Similarly, in emerging cannabis market terrains, the focus on the inclusion of people who were/are at risk of being involved in the illicit drug chains into the socio-economic opportunities in emerging cannabis or hemp value chain or into other types of alternative activities remains essential for AD principles not to be lost in the way. Further the definition of “alternatives” in terms of socio-economic options, products, objectives, and beneficiaries also needs to be carefully considered. The observed shift toward more people-centered approach in vulnerable zones could serve as a starting point to undertake this reflection on vulnerability delimitation.

- **IADA design and viability in new terrains raises conceptual and operational challenges that cannot be tackled without a minimum of a window of political opportunity and political support, also translated into sufficient resources.**

The Brazilian early experiences suffered initial opposition from public security agencies, city authorities and fueled reactionary political discourses. More recently, initiatives in new interested countries (El Salvador, Panama, Uruguay, Mexico) and traditional AD countries like Colombia show the importance of political moments – several learning partners waiting out the results of upcoming elections for smooth operationalization of their proposals. Challenges persist, as exemplified by Jamaica and SVG’s stalled progress due to funding constraints. Ecuador’s proposal for a self-managed pilot showcases a different approach to overcome resource constraints, while in the conceptualization phase, policy plans in new interested countries remain unclear, especially regarding decision-maker’s support and financing. In Uruguay, the Junta Nacional working group still struggles to make their case across other ministries. Experiences, such as the PNIS in Colombia, have left doubts and distrust among beneficiaries about the state’s capacities to fulfill commitments. If IADA exploration is to be pursued, it is clear that it will require better funding, but also efforts to build like-minded support within governments. The Medellin experience and the role of municipalities could here be inspiring, given the governance system allows for transparent and accountable engagement.



COHERENCE AND OVERLAPS –

“How does IADA contribute to synergies and complementarity across relevant policy frameworks and sectors?”

- **Strategic IADA conceptualization and piloting in urban settings, vulnerable zones and to some extent emerging cannabis regulated markets demonstrate increased space for synergies and complementarities across different policy domains, sectors, and corresponding rationale of change.**

IADA further demonstrates how far achieving policy coherence and realistic articulations of policy goals is paramount in addressing the multifaceted challenges of drug policy. It involves aligning various strategies with the needs but also absorption capacity of beneficiaries to ensure their effectiveness. This entails a careful balance between supply-reduction tools, conditionalities, law enforcement measures, and development initiatives. It also requests a comprehensive and integral approach to illicit supply and demand objectives, as illustrated in urban terrains. Furthermore, such policies must also consider the converging criminalities that impact the rule of law.

Conjugated policy goals, lessons, and practices becomes essential for sustained, coherent and comprehensive efforts: from drug control to (urban)development as in traditional AD, up to crime prevention, violence management, and community empowerment (urban terrain); peace building, conflict resolution and up to environmental protection (vulnerable and ethnic and indigenous terrains). IADA encourages thus a step further into breaking policy silos. There is however little information so far on how policy coherence aspects are addressed beyond policy framework alignment, pilot programming level and institutional organigrams of drug specialized agencies. Besides, it is also rather unclear how far supply-reduction tools, conditionalities, and law enforcement efforts are being balanced with development initiatives in urban areas, notably.

Such complementarities could however also open new avenues for AD funding. Linking AD within broader sustainable development frameworks, including the environmental dimensions, also hints at smarter and more innovative funding frameworks and portfolios.

- **In turn, such integral and cross-dimensional approaches require strong cross-sectoral and pluri-actor coordination mechanisms and partnership architectures, both at the programming and operationalizing levels.**

The mapping of IADA efforts so far reveals diverse levels of institutionalization, with varying degrees of integration and alignments across national development strategies and institutions. In many cases, IADA is still conceptualized, or else envisioned within the confines of drug specialized actors, with limited involvement of other key sectors. The need for multi-stakeholder structures and partnerships is underscored by contrasting examples. In Brazil, first experiences of AD-based interventions’ lack of coordination resulted in adverse consequences. Each police operation disrupted diagnostic and treatment plans of public health professionals, eroding trust in the program. These findings echo the importance of coordination emphasized in frameworks like the United Nations System-Wide Guidelines on Safer Cities and Human Settlements (UN-Habitat 2020). In Colombia, the challenge lies in harmonizing visions as the peace agenda invites to do so. Yet, AD and IADA framework remains very much in the responsibility of regalian ministries with little openness towards other development actors.

Existing initiatives at field levels however emphasize the role of pluri-actor systems, showcasing pragmatic cooperation architectures involving municipalities, the private sector, civil society, and universities. However, breaking sectoral silos at policy and programmatic levels remains a challenge. For instance, Uruguay or Jamaica’s IADA ambitions face inconsistencies in other ministries support, despite some emerging opportunities of cooperation with gender- and inclusion ministries.



The allocation of dedicated teams, time, and structures for IADA's exploration and activities remains also inconsistent, with resources often spread thin or niched within existing drug control frameworks, if they exist at all. This limited integration poses challenges in effectively addressing drug-related issues at a broader societal level, as IADA invites so, highlighting the need for greater cohesion and strategic alignment within national governance frameworks.

INNOVATION EFFECTIVENESS –

"What features facilitate and/or hinder IADA application?"

→ **Across new terrains, the resort to people-centered approaches and more inclusive interventions and activities have been instrumental in enhancing beneficiaries' resilience systems. Those entailed focusing on individual empowerment, existing protection and support systems of people involved or at risk of being involved in illicit drug supply activities (community, family, parents, schools ...).**

In urban terrains, emphasis is placed on the importance of education, proximity, and support systems of people involved or at risk of being involved in illicit drug supply related activities (Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador). The social and psychosocial approaches (network building, socialization, personal mentoring, personal development, arts, psychological support) are seen particularly relevant to prevent dropouts. This is also translated in vulnerable and ethnic and indigenous terrains where interventions focus on community autonomy and ownership of project gains, combining market-driven approach, capacity-strengthening activities, local knowledge and experiences. Yet as per historic, access and political factors, consultations mechanisms remain challenging and not always fully-fledged across terrains, despite increased efforts to develop them across the region.

→ **The optimization of Alternative Development (AD) lessons learned, good practices and principles have been instrumental in shifting IADA focus from a substance-based to people-centered approach that aims at supporting longer-term vision of a transition to a licit economy and more enabling social economy across terrains.**

Certainly, challenges remain, notably in terms of land tenure. Yet, increased focus on market-driven initiatives in illicit cultivation areas, diversification of alternatives and commercialization efforts, connecting AD beneficiaries to more diverse markets participate to strengthen intervention effectiveness, relevance and to some extent ownership. Looking at the opportunities urban and semi-urban terrains may also offer leeway to align alternatives with beneficiaries needs. In emerging regulated market terrains, the use of newly regulated commodities as alternatives also opens some perspectives for former cultivators to evolve into the new economy. In this line, AD very much aligns with development imperatives and practices, yet applied to drug-affected territories.

→ **Echoing existing difficulties of traditional AD, the challenges facing IADA are also numerous and multifaceted, and need to be further monitored and evaluated. This would require concerted national, regional and international efforts to be addressed.**

IADA experiences are still rather limited in scope, volume, and long-term sustainability. While it is too early in the process to really gauge its results, the need for integrated monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that encompass multi-dimensional impact assessments, including social, economic, environmental, and political outcomes is already visible. In order to thrive, long-term visions and building trust across political actors, sectors, and within beneficiary communities are key. Additionally, unexpected technical difficulties, such as scalability issues and compatibility problems, further complicate implementation efforts. To overcome these challenges, resourcing trials are crucial, involving funding, human resources, and expertise. Despite some efforts, notably in Peru and Colombia, AD institutional memory and its systematization of knowledge acquired from the ground are limited and do not necessarily fuel decision-making.



INCLUSIVENESS AND PEOPLE-CENTERED ASPECTS –

“How does IADA make sure no one is left behind?”

- **There is a clear appetite, positioning and availability of tools to mainstream inclusion, gender and rights-based aspects in IADA initiatives, including with respect to rights to education, health and well-being. There is however room for improvement in their operationalization.**

Some efforts have been visible in placing communities and people involved or at risks of being involved in the illicit drug economy as agents of change and resilience. Examples of resilience strengthening included arts, training, and entrepreneurial grants, promoting sustainable development strategies rooted in community and social development. Interestingly, the logic of supporting women as pillars of economic, community and family development and cohesion also impacted indirectly people involved in micro-trafficking. The rationale resides in strengthening resilience actors to restore a social equilibrium and allow a positive ricochet effect on the family and communities: children, neighbors, friends, or else target female population that are/ have been/would be involved in the illicit economy otherwise. Nevertheless, there have been some limitations in explored cases notable in terrains of new, regulated markets in the definition of vulnerabilities and most relevant targeted population, risking to leave behind those who were/are at risk of being the most vulnerable to the illicit drug economies.

II. Avenues for future IADA policy reflection

Given emerging lessons, the following orientations are intended to nourish the policy reflection of the future of IADA, and further inform the development of conceptual, programmatic, and operational frameworks for IADA. As such, interested stakeholders are encouraged to consider the following measures:

- **At the conceptual level, being clear and realistic about the potential and limitations of IADA.**

A set of core criteria could serve as a basis for defining the contour of AD across terrains affected or at risk of being affected by illicit drug supply activities. The emphasis being given to the provision of viable alternatives to the resources and support illicit economy may bring, and to the attached challenges and violence it nourishes. A deep understanding and delimitation of targeted vulnerabilities should be considered.

- **In a given territory, invest (time, resources, expertise) and broaden the technical and research agendas for IADA.**

Addressing multidimensional root causes of drug-supply related issues requires a comprehensive approach that includes a socio-economic and political economy analysis, with a particular focus on governance aspects that may contribute to illicit economy continuity. Understanding the intricate relationships between these factors is crucial for developing effective interventions. Furthermore, the intersection of drug-related activities with other forms of crime is also central to better address the challenges of most vulnerable zones and complex terrains.

In this endeavor, the involvement in research and planning of technical experts, field project team, beneficiary groups (experiential knowledge), academia, civil society organizations (CSOs), and other stakeholders is indispensable. Their diverse perspectives and expertise can contribute to the formulation of more holistic strategies that address not only the symptoms but also the underlying drivers of drug-related challenges, fostering more sustainable solutions and societal resilience.



Additionally, national capacity building initiatives are essential for strengthening the skills, knowledge, and resources of government agencies and local stakeholders involved in IADA design and implementation.

→ **At the operationalization level, build on advancing further relevant AD principles and optimize AD good practices.**

As already ongoing across some terrains, refining and improving existing AD tools, guidance, methodologies, including evaluation and monitoring efforts, pave the way to better outcomes. It entails identifying areas for enhancement, streamlining processes, and maximizing efficiency while maintaining or enhancing effectiveness. This optimization may involve a mapping of other interventions from other sectors or actors that had positive results, a delimitation of good practices across sectors that could be mutualized and adapted to changing circumstances or contexts (here to territories affected by drug-related phenomenon). The goal is to continuously improve and refine practices to ensure AD tools remain relevant, impactful, and sustainable over time, but could also serve to increase the relevance of AD in a broader set of terrains.

→ **At all levels of policy-making, encourage and foster institutionalization of IADA into public policy streams while encouraging inter-sectoral knowledge and dialogue building.**

The creation of inter-sectoral multistakeholder organizational platforms may facilitate the sharing of best practices, lessons learned, and instruments and methodologies that are not necessarily known by drug agencies specialists. Respectively, it would also be an opportunity to understand how drug related situations can also affect other (development) sectors of policy making, and how far adopting “drug lenses” could also foster effectiveness in other domains. These exchanges could enable interested stakeholders to leverage each other’s experiences to enhance their own programs, and build greater coherence of interventions, tailored to a given territory.

Moreover, bringing development actors in (or else crime prevention, (urban) peace building ones etc..) could not only fosters cross-fertilization and synergies between AD and broader development agendas, policy tools and financing options, but would also ensuring that AD interventions are integrated into larger national and regional development strategies for maximum impact and sustainability.

International and regional exchanges platforms such as COPOLAD can play a vital role in conveying such efforts, and opening the debate to actors in Europe that may face similar challenges (urban instability related to drugs for example) or have funding interest in AD portfolio.

→ **At the programmatic level, adopt a co-production approach to IADA that breaks with institutional automatism and sectoral silos.**

The creation of inter-sectoral organizational platforms may be instrumental in that endeavor. As a first step, the creation of working groups, social innovation laboratories such as those proposed in the framework of COPOLAD workstreams, or else civil society organizations, researchers and mixed research symposium could also be considered to advance pilots, reflect on most appropriate evaluation metrics and design, evaluate ongoing initiatives and monitor results to inform evidence based IADA.

→ **Keep the momentum alive and elevate IADA relevance onto national, regional, international agendas (Copolad, CND, EU, sectoral forums ...) and funding priorities.**

The mobilizations for the adoption of the 2024 CND resolution “Celebrating the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development: effective implementation and



the way forward” represent a promising milestone in that sense and demonstrates increase support reaching up to 50 co-sponsors, including all 27 EU-Member States (including Belgium, Brazil, China, Colombia, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, France, Germany, Guatemala, Honduras, Italy, Malaysia, Malta, Netherlands (Kingdom of), Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Thailand).

III. Conceptual and operational implications for AD

From observed initiatives, it appears that there is thus some leeway to apply Alternative Development beyond illicit crop cultivation and its attached traditional rural settings. Across observed terrains, AD-based approaches and interventions are fit for purpose and provide **an extended umbrella for expanding the available toolbox for dealing with the root causes and enabling drivers of illicit drug-supply activities in a territorially based manner**. Whether it is through broader agendas of peace building or urban development, IADA experiences so far hint at more integrated programming in coherence with a comprehensive, balanced approach to drug control and sustainable development efforts.

Now, as suggested at the beginning of this conclusive chapter, considering innovations and new terrains does not go without risks. One being the dilution of the concept or else the multiplication of the derived notion that, if it might gain in nuance, might also blur and loose the initial approach incarnated by Alternative Development. It seems now critical to focus on common grounds to advance further both the conceptual and policy debate on IADA.

As often highlighted in interviews with IADA informants, **if innovation criteria are not clearly defined and delimited, there is a risk for IADA to encompass too many different dimensions and lose its coherence, and as a result its credibility, relevance, and intended effectiveness, as already being tested across the region**. As such, venturing innovation demands to identify some core AD criteria and aspects that may be translated from one context to another, or one “terrain” to another. It also implies to delimit what one understands by “terrains” and determine to what extent the key dimensions and lessons of so-called traditional AD could be applied to these terrains, arguing that many of the underlying principles and referential of actions can be the same.

This study also brings along critical dimensions that are common from one terrain to the other. **While described initiatives also show still unequal advancement and various interpretations of what AD could be, there is also an emerging common sense around what AD should be.**

In this perspective, a **set of core aspects** can be derived from existing commonly agreed definition of AD, operational provisions of the UNGASS Chapter 7, UN Guiding Principles or DAIS framework as summarized in the Introduction. In recent years, the approach is also acknowledged as a positive development towards meeting the “human rights challenges in addressing and countering all aspects of the world drug problem” as underlined in a recent Report of the Office of the United



Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the matter as reported to the Human Rights Council Fifty-fourth session in October 2023¹²⁰. More attention is notably being given to the rights of Indigenous Peoples in the design and implementation of drug policies, while the focus is being put on the needs of the global South, and improving living conditions of communities that depend on the drug economy.

Building on these, as well as IADA informants' interviews, field visits and available documentation, here are proposed some **core aspects and principles that could be useful for future consideration of innovative Alternative Development approaches**, so that the risks of innovations deforming or diluting the very nature and added value of the Alternative Development can be minimized.

These core aspects and principles **facilitating AD adaptation to a more diverse set of terrains of the illicit drug supply chain** (beyond yet including illicit cultivation in rural areas) would typically include:

- **Programming level: Encouraging transiting outside the illicit drug economy by addressing the socio-economic root causes, existing vulnerabilities, and enabling conditions within designated territories** that favor or risk to favor the entrance of communities and/or individuals into illicit drugs production activities. This encompasses:
 - ⇒ **Provision and diversification of economic alternatives to illicitly generated incomes** in areas affected or at risks of being affected by illicit drug supply activities, mainly illicit cultivation so far and production.
 - ⇒ **Improving social, economic and governance (infra)structures and systems, and access to public services** including food security, land tenure, markets, education, healthcare, transports and roads, water supply, and other essential services to enhance the overall well-being of communities and increase their resilience to economic shocks.
 - ⇒ Applying as far as possible **an evidence-based, tailored approach to territories**, using inter alia a socio-political economy analysis of terrains of intervention, including conflict prevention and peacebuilding lenses to drug-affected territories to ensure that the drivers of illicit economy, and their possible attached instability and violence are considered and integrated into design, programming, and risk mitigation (governance aspects, economic opportunities, social cohesion).

- **Operational level – Adopting a people-centered approach that ensures concerned individual's/communities' participation and empowerment** to maximize their chance to exit the illicit economy and transit to the licit economy in a sustainable manner through inclusive, and dialogue-based mechanisms of intervention.
 - ⇒ **Gender-responsiveness, human-rights-based approaches and leaving no one behind principles** being more and more included. Such aspects aim to ensure interventions align with their needs and priorities and foster ownership of interventions outcomes.
 - ⇒ AD as a hybrid instrument of development-based drug control is evolving towards **more voluntary and participatory models of intervention**, including regarding the reduction threshold of illicit cultivation.

120 Human rights challenges in addressing and countering all aspects of the world drug problem Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Human Rights Council Fifty-fourth session 11 September–6 October 2023 Agenda item 3, A/HRC/54/53. Accessible here: [g2315603.pdf \(un.org\)](https://www.un.org/press/en/2023/09/230903-hrc54-53.pdf).



- **Conceptualizing level – Shared responsibility and a balanced, coherent approach:** Achieving effective Alternative Development requires policy coherence and coordination among various stakeholders, including government agencies, international organizations, civil society groups, and local communities. It also encourages harmonizing policies across sectors such as agriculture, trade, social integration, education, security, peace building and development with the view of ensuring a comprehensive and integrated approach to tackling the complex challenges of illicit drug supply activities. This includes:
 - ⇒ **Careful balancing of short-term objectives of illicit drug supply control and reduction and the longer-term objectives of sustained development.** As long highlighted, the objective gaps and attached limited scope and size of AD schemes of intervention have tended to create missed opportunities and disaffections. Incorporating Alternative Development into broader development, including in rural areas, has clear benefits, but the more it becomes embedded in wider approaches and strategies, the more it can also lose the specificity of development efforts needed in areas with (or at risk of having) illicit drug cultivation.
 - ⇒ **Integrating AD within broader development-based strategic frameworks** along with comprehensive and balanced drug strategies. What Alternative Development now offers to development strategies is a set of specialized thematic and operational development interventions that need to be aligned not only to drug control priorities, but also address the multiple challenges associated with the illicit economy, and its drivers.
 - ⇒ **Result-based monitoring and comprehensive evaluations** for adaptive management and learning, enabling that interventions are responsive to evolving socio-economic dynamics and local contexts, and using a set of evaluation indicators related to human and sustainable development to ensure impacts are assessed and followed up on.

The following graphic summarizes them.

Figure 9: Simplified modeling of proposed Alternative Development core dimensions across terrains of implementation



IADA learning partners and countries highlighted most of these aspects throughout interviews and IADA policy workshop discussions as depicted in the study. Considering the novelty of IADA and the yet challenging conceptualization beyond AD traditional scopes and territories of implementation, consulted stakeholders converged around one key idea: **building new, inclusive, and tailored opportunities for territories and for populations involved or at risk of being involved in the illicit drugs (supply) economy.**



While being still strengthened along trials, errors and success stories, IADA and already **AD's added value lies in the "drug lenses"¹²¹ applied to the intended development interventions** to ensure that engagements respond to the specific challenges and needs of drug-affected areas. It does so through the identification of challenges and drivers attached to the (illicit) context, potential impacts of the illicit drugs activities/economy on the intervention, and the impact that the intervention could have on the illicit drug economy and the people involved or at risk of being involved. All dimensions being transversal to IADA explored cases. While AD cannot do it all, as underlined in many examples, this study also highlights that in a number of emerging terrains, Alternative Development has the potential to be used as a viable, innovative policy entry point, sequence or else phase of inclusive, integrated, development-oriented option to areas and communities affected or at risks of being (re)affected by illicit drug supply activities.

121 To adopt a fully-fledged approach, interested parties may draw inspiration from current practices within the fragility and conflict prevention sector where "fragility lens" is encouraged in all programming and operations to help identify targeted entry points for resilience-based interventions. Such lenses integrate the in-depth analysis of key drivers of fragility as defined in the OECD Fragility Framework and corresponding principles and indicators for action as proposed in OECD (2011) [Conflict and Fragility : International Engagement in Fragile States \(oecd.org\)](https://www.oecd.org/fragility/).



Annex 1 – CND Resolutions on AD (2012-2024) A decade of growing momentum

Year	Resolution
2024	E/CN.7/2024/L.2/Rev.1 – Unedited revised Celebrating the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development: effective implementation and the way forward
2023	66/4 – (E/CN.7/2023/11) Promoting alternative development as a development-oriented drug control strategy that is sustainable and inclusive
2022	65/1 – (E/CN.7/2022/14) Promoting alternative development as a development-oriented drug control strategy, taking into account measures to protect the environment
2021	64/2 – (E/CN.7/2021/10) Promoting alternative development as a development-oriented drug control strategy, including in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its consequences
2020	63/5 Promoting alternative development as a development-oriented drug control strategy
2019	62/3 Promoting alternative development as a development-oriented drug control strategy
2018	61/6 Promoting the implementation of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development and related commitments on alternative development and regional, interregional and international cooperation on development-oriented, balanced drug control policy addressing socioeconomic issue
2017	(E/CN.7/2017/L.5/Rev.1) Promoting the implementation of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development and related commitments on alternative development and regional, interregional and international cooperation on development-oriented, balanced drug control policy addressing socioeconomic issues
2016	(E/CN.7/2016/L.10/Rev.1) Promoting the implementation of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development
2015	58/4 – (E/CN.7/2015/L.7/Rev.1) Promoting the implementation of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development
2014	57/1 – (E/CN.7/2014/L.2/Rev.1) Promoting the implementation of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Alternative Development and proposal to organize an international seminar/ workshop on the implementation of the Guiding Principles
2013 II	56/15 – (E/CN.7/2013/L.17/Rev.2) Follow-up to the Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem with respect to the development of strategies on voluntary marketing tools for products stemming from alternative development, including preventive alternative development
2013 I	(E/CN.7/2013/L.16/Rev.1) International Guiding Principles on Alternative Development
2012	55/8 – (E/CN.7/2012/L.11/Rev.1) Follow-up to the Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem with respect to the development of strategies on special marketing regimes for alternative development, including preventive alternative development



Annex 2 – analytical and methodological frameworks

2.1 Analytical framework and matrix

As presented in the Introductory chapter, this study is based on the following overarching question:

To what extent can identified IADA initiatives (in their design features, instruments, and implementation modalities) be useful to advance the relevance and effectiveness of AD in drug-affected territories beyond traditional settings, while contributing to more comprehensive, balanced and coherent policymaking on AD, drug control and development-related measures?

To gather information, it has been broken down into key **analytical dimensions and attached assessment questions** that guided the research and helped structuring the report and research findings. The analytical matrix aims to serve both the descriptive and prescriptive aspects of the study. It aligns with raising interest among COPOLAD Members states for result-based interventions and interested EU partners to direct efforts to “strengthen the commitment to development-oriented drug policies and alternative development measures in adherence with the OECD Development Assistance Committee’s (DAC) guidelines and standards” in addition to “principles of non-conditionality, non-discrimination, and proper sequencing”, as per EU strategic priority 9.6 for 2021-2025¹²². This matrix has been thus designed to further serve the usefulness of this study among potential interested implementers and donors.

In this line, the study analytical matrix combines a set of mixed criteria of appreciation, socio-political tools of public policy analysis, and policy evaluation instruments notably the main OECD – DAC criteria of development interventions evaluation¹²³ (relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability, as well as human rights, gender equality and leaving no one behind) as described in the following table. Considering existing design and operationalization variances across the region, as well as different levels of data accessibility, the study broaches IADA focusing on the relevance, coherence, effectiveness and inclusiveness aspects, and consider to a lesser extent impact and sustainability, looking at what difference does IADA make in terms of likelihood of immediate gains and more sustainable results.

122 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/49194/eu-drugs-strategy-booklet.pdf> (europa.eu).

123 <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>.



Annex Table 1: Proposed Analytical Matrix

Analytical dimensions	Assessment and guiding analytical questions
<p>Relevance and adaptability</p> <p><i>“Is IADA doing the right thing?”</i></p>	<p>To what extent have IADA in non-traditional context (initiatives, projects, pilots ...) been developed in consistency with regard to identifying clear, achievable and measurable objectives, beneficiary’ needs and territorial priorities as well as key stakeholders’ requirements (including state authorities, implementers, and partners and donors)?</p> <p>To what extent IADA’s features and design align with or differ from traditional AD approaches, standards and principles as agreed at national, regional and/or international levels? *</p> <p>Are IADA fit for purpose in the context of the drug control priorities and growing recognition of development-centered drug policy interventions as legitimate means of addressing illicit drug phenomena in various settings, and including with regards to the 2030 Development Agenda, relevant local/national/regional/international development frameworks and “international commitments to address and counter the world drug problem”?</p>
<p>Coherence and overlaps</p> <p><i>“How well does IADA fit?”</i></p>	<p>To what extent IADA encourage multisectoral and pluri-actor drug policy-making processes and cooperation mechanisms (i.e. institutional, implementation and partnering/cooperation settings including national authorities and agencies, ministries, regional partners, donors, relevant UN agencies, CSOs, community representations, academia, etc.)?</p> <p>To what extent IADA are compatible with other types of drug control and development-centered interventions and vice versa in given settings? Namely, which approaches and methods/instruments from other sectors (e.g. urban development, humanitarian aid, climate finance, migration policy, etc.) can be useful to inform and optimize innovative AD interventions?</p> <p>To what extent IADA designs and interventions can contribute to increased synergies and complementarity across relevant policy and sectors to best respond to illicit-drugs related issues within differentiated affected territories?</p>
<p>Innovation Effectiveness</p> <p><i>“To what extent and how IADA is achieving its objectives?”</i></p>	<p>What are the main instruments, innovations and tools of IADA as implemented so far in observed settings?</p> <p>What potentials and challenges are associated with the assessed innovative Alternative Development approaches?</p> <p>Which features or factors facilitated or hindered a timely, cost-effective and effective operationalization of IAD in observed contexts?</p> <p>What are the (local) contexts/framework conditions that seem best suited for implementing innovative Alternative Development approaches? What are key success factors?</p>
<p>Inclusiveness and people-centered design (Human rights, gender equality, vulnerabilities and leaving no one behind)</p> <p><i>“How IADA make sure no one is left behind?”</i></p>	<p>To what extent was equal access to Alternative Development projects/programs guaranteed for beneficiaries and in which way?</p> <p>To what extent have IADA initiatives and interventions mainstreamed human rights, gender and inclusion aspects in its development and implementation, including with respect to aspects of environmental protection, human rights and the rights of Indigenous people?</p>
<p>Lessons learned and good practices</p>	<p>What good practices can be identified to expand and scale up AD in “non-traditional” settings in the future?</p> <p>What lessons can be learned from innovative AD experiences for future of drug policy, AD and development-centered interventions addressing drug-related phenomenon?</p>



2.2 Methodological approach

This study adopts a **phased-based, case-study and qualitative approach**, to refine the understanding of IADA. The following figure presents its main stages over a rather short research period of 6 months.

Annex Figure 1: IADA study development



Based on initial consultations with interested and key partners, a set of flagship projects and ongoing initiatives have been selected to showcase IAD initiatives and interventions under each country case study:

- Case study/Terrain A: Urban settings and environments – Colombia/ Brazil
- Case study/Terrain B: Boarder areas, vulnerable zones, and preventive actions – Colombia/Peru
- Case study/Terrain C: Ethnic and indigenous territories – Peru
- Case study/Terrain D: Emerging legal medicinal cannabis or industrial hemp value chains and inclusive measures – Jamaica, Saint-Vincent and the Grenadines

Data collection instruments and sources of information

The study adopted a **participatory and inclusive data collection and analytical approach** to ensure as far as possible that all voices and perspectives of parties interested in and/or beneficiaries of IADA, are considered¹²⁴.

Sources of information and triangulation of data

This study is based on evidence collected and gathered through a set of various **instruments and tools** as follows and detailed in the following annex (3).

¹²⁴ Process-wise: examining how, and to what extent, human rights, gender and considerations of vulnerable groups, are integrated and mainstreamed in the project design and process. Result-wise: assessing the extent to which the programmes have taken specific measures to address the needs and priorities of human rights, gender and vulnerable groups. Data-wise: adapting and ensuring culturally sensitive and tailored tools, while in close cooperation with case study stakeholders, ensuring the research “do no harm” to IADA developments, stakeholders, and beneficiaries.



Mapping, desk and literature review of available scientific literature, relevant policy documents on AD and related interventions at national, regional and international levels, and where possible, of available national and regional documentation on IADA specific project developments and/or initiatives have been conducted to collect information on the:

- Evolution of the AD concept and scope as a whole, with a focus on the region and where possible national levels, and understandings of “non-traditional contexts”
- Territorial contexts of IADA elaboration and policy environments of IAD initiatives at relevant levels (drug policy approaches and development frameworks where appropriate).
- Mapping of existing IADA to identify relevant initiatives and/or experiences across the LAC region, to ensure a comprehensive basis of analysis and relevant case study projects
- Case study project/initiative frameworks, country/local context of implementation, (where possible main objectives, target groups, partnering and institutional setting, activities, type of assistance, instruments and tools)

About 90 policy, project and external documents have been reviewed for this study. A comprehensive list is provided in Annex 3.

Policy Workshop discussion gathered more than 15 COPOLAD Working Group on AD participants and learning partners (from Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panamá, Paraguay, Perú, Uruguay, Jamaica and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) as well as international partners (UNODC, FIAPP, GIZ), within the framework of the 2nd COPOLAD III Intraregional Dialogue Forum on Alternative Development (27th 28th September 2023, Mexico City). At the initiative of the GIZ Rural Development Sector Project Team and with the support of the IADA research team, a 4-hour session gathered under the Chatham House rules, experts and practitioners of the region on September 29th 2023 in Mexico City to have a candid exchange on IADA challenges and opportunities. The policy workshop had been planned as a:



- **Information sharing exercise** to collect information on stakeholders and key informants’ understandings, experiences, and expectations for IADA and this study.
- **A brainstorming exercise** to jointly generate a broad and common understanding of the key issues and challenges of designing and advancing IADA in non-traditional contexts.
- **A peer-learning/exchange exercise** to encourage a positive emulation of ideas and exchange of perspective so participant can engage in more innovating policy thinking.

The agenda of the discussion is available in Annex 3.

Interviews with key stakeholders and learning partners

A total of 116 consultations including 20 semi-direct remote interviews took place (M= 7, F= 14) with key learning partners at local, national, regional and partners levels identified after an initial stakeholder mapping and in consultation with GIZ Sector project Rural Development team and interested COPOLAD members. A purposeful sampling has been preferred, as relevant as per the type of stakeholder, level of knowledge and interest, and relationship to the selected case study interventions/countries. The interviews were instrumental in providing in-depth qualitative information on all aspects of IADA initiatives, experiences, expectations, and interventions.

The mapping, list on consulted stakeholders and the interview grid are available in the Annex 3.



Field visits and site observation

Further to agreements with the GIZ Sector Project team and in close consultation with Key Learning Focal points, the research team conducted three field visits in each of the case countries to:

- collect information on the context of IADA mainly through direct observation and interviews with key informants to assess the applicability and viability of AD approaches in such non-traditional contexts.
- conduct site visits to gather elements of knowledge on short term contribution of IADA activities and describe how they have been designed and/or operationalized
- Identify innovations, lessons learned, and good practices to serve as a basis and means to offer recommendations on policy and programming implications, future design and strategic orientation on AD.

Interviews and meetings took place with national actors (drug control agencies, AD implementers, relevant ministries [territorial and rural development, environment, education, health...]), international partners (EU delegations, UNODC field offices) as well as CSOs. Sites visits to specific projects and with representatives of projects' final beneficiaries were organized with the support of national drug agencies and/or international partners. A detailed presentation of field visits is available in Annex 3.

Table 2: IADA Field missions

Dates	Visited country	IADA Terrains
03-10/10/2023	Peru	<i>Ethnic and indigenous territories</i>
23-29/10/2023	Uruguay	<i>Inclusive cannabis markets and urban context</i>
30/10-07/11/2023	Colombia	<i>Urban contexts; Borders areas; Ethnic and indigenous territories</i>

Visits were instrumental to observe the following dimensions:

- Socio-economic and political economy assessment of national and local contexts of project implementation, territorial specificities and communities/beneficiaries needs.
- Integration of projects within both drug control and development agendas and strategies, including the specific understandings and evolutions of the AD concept and tools in each context of implementation in light of relevant scientific and policy debates and achievements.
- Relevance, use, institutional arrangements, resources, and as applicable adjustments of the project' products/activities according to implementation areas, existing challenges, and targeted beneficiaries.
- Impact and sustainability of results, including from a gender and human rights perspective, and in light of progress against SDGs, national development objectives, and drug control priorities.
- Comparability of collected data at the national and regional level, taking into account the local specificities and institutional systems of implementing actors and concerned beneficiaries.
- Cooperation and partnership mechanisms in place across sectors, countries, and partners to develop and operationalize projects under study in non-traditional contexts, and share lessons learned.



Annex 3 – Data collection tools and instruments

3.1 Mapping, Desk and Literature review

A literature and desk review along with a mapping of existing IADA has been conducted based on the following sources:

- Specialized international, regional, national academic and scientific literature on AD, development-oriented approaches to drugs
- International, regional, national drug policy frameworks, strategies, action plans, guiding principles, norms and standards, and where relevant, programming existing projects
- Programmatic and development frameworks, mainly at territorial level (case study)
- Available statistics on drug-related situations as well as relevant socio-economic and governance aspects of “non-traditional” contexts studied; mainly open access open access information resources (international/regional databases, national authorities and observatories, governmental agencies and ministries, CSOs where relevant).
- For selected IAD experiences, inter alia and where relevant and possible, after agreement with GIZ Sector Project team and key learning focal points: project document, context assessments, (financing)reports, evaluation, workplans, activity description and reports, monitoring internal documents.

3.2 IADA Policy Workshop

This policy workshop gathered 19 COPOLAD working groups participants and learning partners (from Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panamá, Paraguay, Perú, Uruguay, Jamaica and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) interested in contributing to this learning efforts on IADA and share their experiences, innovation but also doubts and interrogations on how to best advance IADA.

The session was held under the Chatham House rule and moderated by the Study research team, so participants could feel freer to share perspectives, using their experience and expert knowledge, in a non-partisan way and detached from political or institutional representation obligations and constraints. Both, Spanish and English were used as working languages, with non-professional interpretation on a need basis.

The content and results of the discussions fed into the empirical corpus constituted for this study and were treated in a confidential manner.

The program of work is available below.



Time	Session titles and descriptions
9h – 9h30	<p>INTRODUCTION SESSION</p> <p>Introductory remarks: Objectives of the Policy workshop and participation rules Deborah Alimi and Lisbeth Gasca, IADA Study Research Team</p> <p>Short exercise “Elevator pitch”: Why should we try IADA? Please reflect on one sentence/motto type of presentation to speak about the importance and/or added value of IADA from your organizational/country perspective.</p>
9h30 – 10h30	<p>SESSION 1: IADA, Starting from scratch?</p> <p>Brief presentations: Development-oriented interventions in non-traditional setting: Examples from the region. This session aims at learning from existing initiatives and efforts to and to draw critical reflection and first lessons learned around the feasibility, relevance and potentials of IADA.</p> <p>On a voluntary basis, key learning partners from the region are invited to share a brief presentation of ongoing initiatives and/or pilot project in the following non-traditional “terrains”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Terrain A: Urban settings and environments → Terrain B: Boarder areas, vulnerable zones, and preventive actions → Terrain C: Ethnic and indigenous territories → Terrain D: Emerging legal medicinal cannabis or industrial hemp value chains and inclusive measures <p>Tour de table and open discussion: From Design to implementation, how IADA can be advanced?</p> <p>All participants are encouraged to engage into the discussion, sharing their perspective on the key following session questions and/or pursuing the conversation based on the Presentation exchange.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → What do we understand by “non-traditional” terrains? → What instruments (legal, strategic, technical...) would be needed at local/national/regional/global levels for AD to be developed in an relevant and efficient manner in non-traditional areas? → To what extent IADA designs and interventions present challenges? → How IADA can contribute to increased synergies and complementarity across relevant policy and sectors to best respond to illicit-drugs related issues within differentiated affected territories?
10h30 – 11h	<p>Peer-learning exercise: In a brave new (perfect?) world...</p> <p>All participants are asked to reflect for 15 min on the following questions. The moderators will then open the floor and ask volunteers to present.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → If you could make three changes to IADA as it is conceptualized and envisioned today (design, activities, partnering, resources...) to improve results /overcome discussed challenges, what would they be?
11h – 11h30	Coffee and stretching break
11h30 – 12h30	<p>SESSION 2: Brainstorming stations</p> <p>What’s next? How to move IADA further at national, regional, international levels?</p> <p>Based on what has been shared and learned in the previous session, participant will be invited to reflect on future opportunities and challenges to advance and design IADA. In 2 to 3 smaller groups of participants, moderated by the Research team and GIZ, participants are encouraged to reflect on the following themes and choose one or two questions to explore and discuss. Results of the discussion are presented to the entire group at the end of the session and collected by the Research team.</p> <p>Design and diagnosis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → What is the importance of concepts, legislation and/or sector specific standards, policies and tools? Which need to be taken into consideration? → How to establish priorities? <p>Implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → How to build bridges among relevant implementing actors/sectors? different challenges and mechanisms for engaging in cooperation? → Where to find resources? → What are the modalities/key principles for operationalization? <p>Sustainability and monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → What metrics and indicators will be used to track progress? /What are the evaluation mechanisms? → How to ensure usefulness and ownership so alternatives prevent the return/entrance into the illicit economy?
12h40 – 13h	<p>Peer-learning exercise: In a brave new (perfect?) world...</p> <p>In a short (10min) exercise, a most significant change approach will be used here to collect success story and examples of an observed/expected/in process significant change produced by IADA as per participant experience and expertise.</p>



3.3 Interviews with key stakeholders and learning partners

In close consultation with the GIZ Sector Project team and COPOLAD key learning focal points for this study, a mapping of key stakeholders and learning partners was conducted to identify key informants (i.e. people knowledgeable, expert and or specialized in AD, IAD or interested in initiating IAD) and IAD initiative and interventions stakeholders. The mapping is proposed in the table below.

Annex Table 3: Key informant type – initial mapping

Type of Learning Partners	Type of Stakeholder	Organizations
Key Learning Focal Points	Study implementing team	COPOLAD GPDPD COPOLAD WG national focal points
Key Learning Partner National/local (Case study)	Governmental authorities	Ministries National drug control agencies and institutions
	Implementing Organization	National development agencies and organisations International and regional partners
	Funding Organization/donors	Donors CSOs
	Recipient government	Community/district representatives, leaders or members (farmers, district associations, cooperatives ...)
	Target groups/ Project Beneficiaries	
Key informant	Specialized entities and organizations	UNODC National/regional observatories such as EMCDDA
	International organizations	In country - European Union Delegations (EUD)
	Donors	International donors, UN-entities and development agencies
	Regional organizations	European Union OAS CICAS (WGs)
	Experts	Academia, CSOs

Interviews were held in English and/or Spanish according to interviewees preferences, and last between 40-60 min based on interviewees availability. They took place face-to-face during field missions in case countries and at the margins of regional events, and where appropriate, in a remote manner using online platforms such as MS Teams and Google Meet. Interviews are kept confidential and anonymous. Agreement to participate were understood as consent to the interview modalities and use of results.

Much of this information is subjective in nature, but also serves to provide factual information once triangulated through other data collection methods.



Stakeholders contacted during this study.

The following table presents the list of consulted learning partners during this study

Country	Number	Institutional affiliation of consulted learning partners
México	3	Dirección para temas de Drogas y Corrupción de la Dirección General de las Naciones Unidas, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores
Perú	37	
	1	DEVIDA – Presidencia
	2	DEVIDA – Dirección de Articulación Territorial
	1	DEVIDA – Dirección de Compromiso Global
	2	SERFOR
	3	Ministerio de cultura Dirección de los Pueblos en Situación de Aislamiento y Contacto
	4	DEVIDA, Fiel office VRAEM
	6	Central Asháninka de Río Tambo – CART
	2	Cooperativa Agraria Asháninka Kemito Sankori Ltda
	2	Central Asháninka de Río Ene – CARE
	1	Cooperativa Agraria Kemito Ene
	4	Cooperativa Agraria Sonomoro del VRAEM Ltda. COAS
	2	Cooperativa Agraria Ashaninka y Nomatsiguenga con criterios ambientales Ltda.
	2	Cooperativa Agraria APROSARROCH Mazamari
	2	Asociación de productores agroindustriales y servicios múltiples Huayna Picchu APASEM FOODS
	1	Asociación de productores agropecuarios de Cultivos Tropicales, ASPRAC
	2	Chanchamaya Highland Coffee, Productores y exportadores
Uruguay	28	
	2	Secretaría Nacional de Drogas
	2	Observatorio Uruguayo de Drogas
	1	Relaciones Internacionales y Cooperación de la JND
	2	IRCCA
	3	Empresas autorizadas para la producción de Cannabis
	1	Ministerio del Interior
	3	Fiscales
	5	Gestión Territorial JND
	1	Evaluación y Monitoreo JND
	2	INMUJERES
	3	Miembros del club cannábico Utopía
	1	Farmacia autorizada en la venta de cannabis
	2	Emprendedoras individuales
Colombia	29	
	1	Ministerio de Justicia y del Derecho
	3	Dirección de Sustitución de Cultivos



Country	Number	Institutional affiliation of consulted learning partners
	4	UNODC regional and local offices
	12	Beneficiarios programa de formación y fortalecimiento económico
	8	Beneficiarios programa proyectos productivos
	1	Fundación Ideas para la Paz
Bolivia	1	
	1	Proyectos de Desarrollo Integral del Viceministerio de Coca y Desarrollo Integral y del Ministerio de Desarrollo Rural y Tierras
Brasil	1	
	1	Secretaria Nacional de Políticas Sobre Drogas e Gestão de Ativos
Ecuador	4	
	1	Comision Nacional de Drogas, Secretaría del Comité Interinstitucional de Drogas - Proyecto de Desarrollo de la Estrategia de Abordaje Integral del Fenómeno Socioeconómico de las Drogas y Salud Mental
	1	Comisión Nacional de Drogas, Secretaría del Comité Interinstitucional de Drogas
	2	PREVENSUD, "Sin presión hay diversión"
El Salvador	1	
	1	Dirección Ejecutiva Comisión Nacional Antidrogas
Jamaica	2	
	1	Office of Commercial relations, Ministry of Industry, Investment & Commerce
	1	Cannabis Licensing Authority
Panamá	1	
	1	CONAPRED Secretaria Ejecutiva
Paraguay	1	
	1	SENAD
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	3	
	1	Medicinal Cannabis Authority
	1	Profesional del equipo de Desarrollo Alternativo
	1	Inspector en la Autoridad para el cannabis experto en equipamiento y reforma rural
Venezuela	1	
	1	SUNAD
UE	4	
	1	EU Commission DG INTPRA
	1	Delegación UE Bolivia
	1	UE technical assistance team, DEVIDA Delegación UE Perú
	1	Agregada de la Cooperación y Desarrollo de la Delegación de la Unión Europea en Perú
TOTAL	116	



Indicative Interview Questionnaire

The present guide is indicative. It is structured around key assessment questions. Questions, follow up and their order have been specified, refined and adapted according to the conditions of interview, the context (national information or case study), and the type of informant.

RELEVANCE AND COHERENCE

What is your definition of Alternative Development? Where to you see its added value? In which contexts? How this vision has been built and can be adapted? In which ways do the AD approaches in non-traditional context differ from previously?

¿Cuál es la definición de desarrollo alternativo que maneja su organización? ¿Como se ha ido construyendo esta definición? ¿En qué medida difieren los proyectos enfocados en el IADA con el enfoque anterior?

What strategic/policy/guiding principles you feel would be best relevant in the context of IADA efforts (providing example from drug control policy, 2030 Development Agenda, relevant local/national/regional/international drug/development strategies)?

Qué principios estratégicos/políticos/orientadores cree que serían más pertinentes en el contexto de los esfuerzos de la AID (ejemplos de la política de control de drogas, la Agenda 2030 para el Desarrollo, las estrategias locales/nacionales/regionales/internacionales pertinentes en materia de drogas/desarrollo)?

What are the (local) contexts/framework conditions that seem best suited for implementing innovative Alternative Development approaches? Can you give a concrete example?

¿Cuáles son los contextos, condiciones o circunstancias que parecen ser desde su experiencia las más favorables para aplicar un enfoque de desarrollo alternativo?

To what extent do IADA respond to the changing and emerging regional and national/local priorities and needs?

- a. Is there any IADA initiatives and/or programmes being designed or implemented in your countries? Including any programme (that might not be labeled as IAD) that actually contributes to the same goal as AD?
- b. In your view, how does the programme respond to the real needs of the country/ region?
- c. How do the project objectives, outcomes and outputs respond to present circumstances?
- d. Have those circumstances changed – was the project able to adjust to the new circumstances?

¿En qué medida el proyecto responde a necesidades y prioridades identificadas a nivel territorial/nacional/regionales que no estaban siendo tomadas en cuenta hasta entonces?

- a. ¿Existen iniciativas y/o programas de IADA que se estén diseñando o aplicando en sus países? ¿Incluyendo algún programa (que pueda no estar etiquetado como IAD) que contribuya de hecho al mismo objetivo que la IAD?
- b. ¿Desde su experiencia, como responde el proyecto a las necesidades reales del territorio, del país?
- c. ¿Hay circunstancias nuevas que implican nuevas necesidades o que visibilizan necesidades ya existentes?
- d. ¿Cuáles son estas circunstancias que el proyecto permite encarar?



OPERATIONALIZATION AND RESULTS

What are the main components and objectives in those new contexts in your country/or project? Which approaches and methods/instruments from other sectors (e.g., urban development, humanitarian aid, climate finance, migration policy, etc.) have been applied to innovative AD interventions or can be identified as such?

¿Cuáles son los principales elementos y objetivos y como se ha venido aplicando en su país? ¿Cuáles enfoques, métodos, instrumentos, herramientas de otras áreas de desarrollo se han empleado en la implementación de los proyectos con enfoque de desarrollo alternativo?

Who are the main partners in the IAD or related projects?

¿Quiénes son sus principales aliados (comunidades, ministerios, etc)? ¿Tiene usted ejemplos de alianzas exitosas con el sector privado que hayan favorecido el desarrollo alternativo? ¿Tiene usted ejemplos contrarios?

To what extent are the programmes effective in strengthening and promoting cooperation and collaboration across relevant entities?

¿En qué medida el proyecto ha logrado reforzar o promocionar la colaboración con entidades relevantes para alcanzar metas en términos de desarrollo alternativo?

To what extent were the objectives and outcomes achieved?

- Do you consider the project successful?
- What were the facilitating factors in achieving results?
- What were the hindering factors in achieving results?
- What are the indicators used to measure success?

¿En qué medida se han alcanzado los objetivos que el proyecto se fijó?

- ¿Considera usted que el proyecto ha sido exitoso?
- ¿Qué factores facilitaron el desarrollo del proyecto? ¿su éxito?
- ¿Qué factores resultaron ser obstáculos al desarrollo del proyecto?
- ¿Cuáles fueron los indicadores utilizados para medir el éxito o fracaso del proyecto?

To what extent have human rights and gender priorities and principles, including the needs of vulnerable groups, guided programme design and activities (reference framework, planning structure)? What specific measures have been implemented in this regard?

¿En qué medida las prioridades y las necesidades propias a las dimensiones de género, derechos humanos y poblaciones vulneradas han guiado el diseño, la implementación, la financiación y la evolución del proyecto?

Were the resources converted to outputs and outcomes in a timely and cost-effective manner? Could you share some information on the funding structure/opportunities?

¿Considera usted que se lograron convertir de manera eficiente los recursos y aportes en resultados y metas alcanzadas? ¿Podría facilitarnos información sobre la estructura y las oportunidades de financiación?

How progress have been monitored and measured?

¿Cómo se han seguido y medido los progresos?

To what extent can long-term sustainable results be expected? Against the SDGs?

¿En qué medida se puede esperar que los resultados de la implementación del proyecto sean duraderos? ¿En qué medida el proyecto contribuye a alcanzar las metas del desarrollo sostenible?



How have the programmes developed capacity to generate sufficient resource/benefits so target groups do not rely on illicit economy revenues/benefits? support sustainability of effort and benefit?

¿Como ha contribuido el proyecto a las capacidades a generar suficientes recursos/beneficios para que los recipientes no dependan de los ingresos/beneficios de la economía ilícita? ¿apoyar la sostenibilidad de los esfuerzos y los beneficios?

What lessons can be learned from the implementation of the project in order to improve performance, results and effectiveness in the future?

¿Qué lecciones quedan de la implementación del proyecto útiles para mejorar los resultados y la efectividad de proyectos similares en un futuro?

The research team partnered with relevant expert meetings and study missions from other COPO-LAD partners such as the EMCDDA, the EU or other GIZ projects, to mutualize efforts and optimize available resources.

3.4 Field visits per IAD terrains

The following annex presents the different stakeholders and final beneficiaries representative consulted and met during the IADA study field mission. It also presents the different projected observed and discussed with direct implementers.

Field visit A (03-10/10/2023)	Peru
Visit summary	Lima and Junín area 3 national institutions, 1 regional office (Devida), 10 productive organizations and their installation
Relevant IADA Terrains	<i>Ethnic and indigenous territories</i> <i>Boarder areas, vulnerable zones, and preventive actions</i>
Facilitating organization	DEVIDA, Dirección de Articulación Territorial (DATE)
Consulted stakeholders and project site visits	<p>Governmental institutions and regional coordination offices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → HQ DEVIDA, Presidencia and Dirección de Articulación Territorial → SERFOR → Ministry of Culture, Management of Communities in situation of isolation Unit → DEVIDA Regional Office - Oficina de coordinación Chanchamayo, Zonal LA MERCED (Distrito de Mazamari) <p>30+ representatives of final beneficiaries' communities of 11 productive organizations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Central Ashaninka de Río Tambo – CART (Distrito Río Tambo) → Cooperativa Agraria Ashaninka Kemito Sankori (Distrito Río Tambo) → Central Ashaninka de Río Ene – CARE (Distrito Río Tambo) → Cooperativa Agraria Kemito Ene (Distrito Río Tambo) → Cooperativa Agraria Sonomoro del VRAEM Ltda.COAS (Distrito de Pangoa) → Cooperativa Agraria Ashaninka y Nomatsiguenga con criterios ambientales Ltda. (Distrito de Mazamari) → Cooperativa Agraria APROSARROCH Mazamari. Ltda (Distrito de Mazamari) → Asociación de productores agroindustriales y servicios múltiples Huayna Picchu APASEM FOODS (Distrito de Perené) → Asociación de productores agropecuarios de Cultivos Tropicales, ASPRAC (Distrito de Pichanaqui) → Cooperativa agroindustrial Kivinaki (Distrito de Perené) → Chanchamaya Highland Coffee, Productores y exportadores



Field visit B (23-29/10/2023)	Uruguay
Visit summary	Montevideo 4 national institutions, 3 production companies, 2 associations of producers and sales, 1 public sales site, 1 project enterprise
Relevant IADA Terrains	<i>Inclusive cannabis markets</i> <i>Urban settings and environments</i>
Facilitating organization	Junta Nacional de Drogas (JND) European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) – COPOLAD Working group on Cannabis
Consulted stakeholders and project site visits	<p>National and governmental institutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Junta Nacional de Drogas y Secretaría → Observatorio Uruguayo de Drogas → IRRCA → Ministerio del Interior → Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres → Fiscalías <p>Site visits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → 3 main national production sites of legal cannabis → Authorized pharmacies → Club cannábicos → SATIVA enterprise project and founders of Floralia brand

Field visit C – (30/10-07/11/2023)	Colombia
Visit summary	Bogota; Medellin; Puerto Asis area, Putumayo 2 national institutions, 1 independent institution, 4 AD programs and productive projects (UNODC/National implementers)
Relevant IADA Terrains	<i>Urban settings and environments</i> <i>Boarder areas, vulnerable zones, and preventive actions</i> <i>Ethnic and indigenous territories</i>
Facilitating organization	UNODC Country Office Colombia Agencia de Renovación del Territorio, Dirección de Sustitución
Consulted stakeholders and Projects site visits	<p>Governmental institutions, international partners and CSOs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Ministerio de Justicia y del Derecho, Dirección de Política de Drogas → Agencia de Renovación del Territorio, Dirección de Sustitución de cultivos → UNODC regional office → UNODC local offices Puerto Asis, Putumayo. → Fundación Ideas para la Paz <p>+ 20 beneficiaries of AD and IADA programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Medellín – Programa Proceso de formación en fortalecimiento económico con enfoque de género → Universidad cooperativa de Colombia instalaciones → Program beneficiaries, including youth involved in micro-trafficking → Putumayo – Visita familias beneficiarias de componente de Proyecto Fortalecimiento productivo → Municipio de Puerto Caicedo – participantes PNIS → Vereda Comuna Dos, participantes PNIS → Municipio de Puerto Caicedo – Vereda Villa Flor, mujeres ex recolectoras de coca, proyecto MPTF (Fondo Multidonante para el sostenimiento de la paz). 3 negocios: Agro ferretería, Restaurante, and tienda → Vereda Agua Negra – Sacha inchi producer



Annex 4 – References and documentation

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BOLIVIA		
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	Modelo de Carta de respuesta a la Comunidad para determinar reuniones de información y coordinación	
	Acta de Reunión y listado preliminar de participantes	
	Padrón sincerado para la prospección de campo	
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