



AREU wins partnership within a prestigious international research coalition

Kabul, 26 July 2017: Leading experts from the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), a top Afghan research think-tank and the UK academia are joining forces to tackle one of the most serious global challenges (Drug Wars and Wars on Drugs) in a new multi-disciplinary research project launched on 21st of July 2017.

This is part of an ambitious international research programme ever created globally, with £225 Million having been invested across 37 interdisciplinary projects to address challenges in fields such as health, humanitarian crises, conflict, the environment, the economy, domestic violence, society, drugs policy and technology.

“The research aims to reframe illicit drugs production as a development issue – to do this we need a stronger evidence base, generated by researchers from drug producing regions who can become advocates for change within their countries and beyond,” said Professor Jonathan Goodhand from School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) who leads the project.

David Mansfield from the London School of Economics (LSE) said that this research will examine the role that illicit drugs and drugs policy play in the development of conflict affected states. “It will provide data and knowledge on the use, production and trade of drugs from those areas most affected, and derived from a research agenda identified by local researchers and communities,” he added.

Meanwhile Dr. Orzala Nemat, Director of the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit ([AREU](#)) said: “This research will build a new generation of Afghan researchers and an independent evidence base on illicit drugs. These are essential to develop a new approach to the challenges of drugs and development in Afghanistan.”

Wars on Drugs have been declared by leaders in wealthy and poor countries who are concerned about the impacts of illicit drugs on security, development and health. But fighting drugs production and trafficking can also inflict deep wounds – whether it’s on the poor who were growing the drugs and lose their livelihoods or on public health campaigns to rehabilitate drug users. These policies are

particularly contentious in countries recovering from war. They can threaten an uneasy peace and may



lead to renewed conflict, particularly when the lives and livelihoods of so many are tied to the drug economy. Navigating a path that reconciles peace-building with tackling the illicit drugs trade is hard.

Researchers argue that a new approach is needed, one that is based upon evidence about what works and what doesn't, that is defined by the drug producing countries themselves, and recognizes what the trade-offs are and who bears the costs and benefits of policies.

Working with researchers in Afghanistan, Colombia and Myanmar -- three of the world's largest drug-producing countries – the collaboration aims to build a research base that will help transform illicit economies.

Jo Johnson, UK Minister for Universities and Science, said: “The UK’s research and innovation system is world leading, and at a time when the pace of scientific discovery and innovation is quickening, we are placing science and research at the heart of our Industrial Strategy to build on our global leadership and ensure the UK continues to be a nation of science and technical progress.

AREU, as a highly reputable and professional research institution, has a history of working on drug policies since its establishment. Entering into this global partnership will help further strengthen AREU’s research capacity, global reputation and contributions to global drugs policy reform.

For full list of GCRF projects see <http://bit.ly/GCRFgrowbrochure>

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