Some thoughts and experiences of measures of supply reduction

Paul Turnbull

ICPR

Birkbeck, University of London
• “The field in general has been weighed down with conjecture, misinformation, and limited methodology” Browne (2003)
• “...confounded by the wide geographical arena involved and the various levels of drug markets” Dorn (2003)
• Amorphous and dynamic
Why develop indicators?

- Major focus of drug policy
- Continued massive investment
- Better assessment of effectiveness
- Need for continued theoretical development
- Informing approaches to law enforcement
- Informing drug policy
Defining supply reduction

• Minimize supply, increase the price and reduce availability to illicit markets

• Aim to achieve this via:
  – International/foreign policy (source country control)
  – Interdiction
  – National and local enforcement
  – Most activity is focused on making drug transactions difficult
Defining supply reduction

- In order to assess the impact of supply reduction activity we need to understand the interaction between enforcement activity, price and availability (Moore 1990)
Enforcement

• Various agencies involved with different aims and approaches
• Seizures and arrests provide an overview of ‘successful’ enforcement activity
• Most activity is reactive – indicative of customs/police activity and reported crime?
• Most activity is directed at couriers/users – not supply reduction?
Enforcement

• Need to understand the context of specific operations – criteria for selection, resources used and outcome

• Reports of activity on their own are difficult to interpret – double counting, quantity/value definitions
Enforcement activity on cultivation

• Requested information for activity for 07/08
  – 50/58 forces ‘discovered’ cultivation
  – 5719 production offences were recorded (1,400 charged or convicted - no information on nationality)
  – 3032 farms were identified (94% in domestic premises)
  – 501,905 plants were seized – 20.1 tonnes
Enforcement activity on cultivation

• Offence = 1 or 2 plants to hundreds
• Many offence not ‘crimed’ therefore not recorded (no victim or offender)
• Unless plants are found can be recorded as another type of offence
• Crime reports ‘poor’
SOME CONCLUSIONS

• Trends in use, supply and production appear to have little to do with local laws, enforcement or policing practices
• Imperfect measures; the key to improving measures is to spend more money on measurement
• Closer working between enforcement agencies and research/academic communities
• Increase usefulness of enforcement data with outside periodic auditing
SOME CONCLUSIONS

• Closer analysis of supply and distribution – network analysis with a ‘bottom up’ approach?
• Detailed longitudinal work on markets (established/ new markets/ adaptations)
• User panels/Expert panels
• Uncertain about individual sources – triangulation (drug treatment demand data can help?)
• Consider the role of harms associated with markets
• Basic research needed to inform how we monitor
Thoughts about SUPMAP

• Static measures of a dynamic and changing market – how might the indicators look in order to detect change?
• Look beyond criminal justice data?
• Access to (old) police intelligence data?
• Prisoner/ police informant interviews?
• Network analysis?
• Be selective and focus on case studies – develop typologies?