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# POST-2021 NARCOTICS CODE: SPATIAL RISK ASSESSMENT FOR DRUG CONTROL IN CHIANG RAI, THAILAND

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## Abstract

This research aims to analyze and develop risk assessment criteria for spatial management in drug prevention and suppression following the enforcement of the Narcotics Code 2021, with a case study focusing on Chiang Rai Province of Thailand. The study employed a qualitative research methodology, collecting data through (1) in-depth interviews with 40 experts involved in drug prevention and suppression policies and strategies in Chiang Rai, (2) a focus group discussion with seven specialists, and (3) documentary research. Data were analyzed using content analysis, and triangulation was employed to verify accuracy. The findings revealed that Chiang Rai had conducted drug-related problem assessments at the village/community level through the Chiang Rai Provincial Narcotics Control Center. The results were utilized in the planning and executing drug policies in the area. However, due to limitations in integrated spatial management and the complexity of the causes and solutions to drug problems, developing risk assessment criteria for spatial management in drug prevention and suppression became necessary. These criteria were designed to assess the severity of the situation based on dimensions of risk, impact, and the complexity of problem-solving.

**Keywords:** Drug-Related Issues, Assessment Criteria, Risk Situation, Chiang Rai Province

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## Introduction

In 2021, the Thai government implemented a major policy shift in drug prevention and suppression by enacting the Narcotics Code 2021. This legislation consolidates 13 previously separate Thai drug-related laws into a comprehensive code, ensuring the legal framework is up-to-date and aligned with current circumstances. Additionally, four international drug conventions have been incorporated into the revised Thai Narcotics Code, including (1) the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961, as amended by the 1972 Protocol; (2) the Convention on Psychotropic Substances, 1971; (3) the United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1988, and (4) the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, 2000, which the Thai government has ratified (Mullikamal et al., 2016).

The changes in drug laws and policies have led to the development of a conceptual framework and direction for Thailand's drug problem management, aligning with global principles and strategies for addressing drug issues. These include the outcomes of the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Drugs (UNGASS 2016), the Global Drug Policy Index, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These global frameworks serve as guiding principles for sustainably addressing drug-related problems, adapted to fit the context of Thailand. The key conceptual approach is as follows: "Adopting a public health-led strategy for problem-solving, ensuring the justice process based on human rights principles, ending the criminalization of drug use, focusing on dismantling major criminal networks, enhancing international cooperation across all dimensions, and embracing the principle of shared responsibility," as detailed in the National Policy and Plan for Drug Prevention, Suppression, and Problem-Solving 2023-2027.

Thailand's drug problem management mechanism is implemented through various projects and programs under a four-level integrated structure. First, the policy level is overseen by the Narcotics Prevention and Suppression Committee, which is responsible for formulating national policies and measures to combat drugs. The Prime Minister chairs this committee with 36 members, including ex officio members and other qualified experts. Second, the executive level involves the Narcotics Control and Suppression Operations Center, tasked with implementing the policies, strategies, and measures set by the aforementioned committee. It oversees the creation of action plans and supervises, directs, monitors, and evaluates the work of government agencies and organizations related to drug prevention, suppression, and treatment. The Minister of Justice chairs the committee and includes 34 members, such as ex officio members and other specialists. Third, the operational level is managed by the Central Operations Center for Narcotics Control and Suppression. This level involves various ministries, departments, and the Thai military, ensuring each unit has a dedicated structure for addressing drug-related issues. For example, the Ministry of Interior focuses on research, analysis, and proposals for drug prevention and solutions involving the public and private sectors. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Public Health promotes prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and harm reduction policies, strategies, and measures—a senior official from the respective ministry chairs each unit. Fourth, the regional level covers regions, provinces, Bangkok, districts, and local administrative organizations, with regional integration committees established in each area. For instance, the Northeastern Border Province Narcotics Control Center is directed by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army Region Commander. There is a Provincial Narcotics Control Center at the provincial level, led by the provincial governor. In contrast, at the district level, the District Narcotics Control Center is chaired by the district chief. Local administrative organizations also have their own narcotics control centers led by local executives. Fourth, the regional level covers regions, provinces, Bangkok, districts, and local administrative organizations, with regional integration committees established in each area. For instance, the Northeastern Border Province Narcotics Control Center is directed by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army Region

Commander. There is a Provincial Narcotics Control Center at the provincial level, led by the provincial governor. In contrast, at the district level, the District Narcotics Control Center is chaired by the district chief. Local administrative organizations also have their own narcotics control centers led by local executives.

The structure and mechanisms of relevant agencies in Thailand's drug management system have revealed significant challenges to local policy integration. For example, the Chiang Rai Provincial Narcotics Control Center, led by the Governor of Chiang Rai, oversees operations at the provincial level. This structure extends to district and local administrative levels, connecting to village committees, where the headmen or sub-district chiefs serve as the heads. This approach follows the "White Zone Drug-Free Sub-district" program, which operates under the command structure of the Ministry of Interior. The ministry's role is crucial in driving drug prevention and suppression measures across local areas. However, the Narcotics Control and Suppression Operations Center operates at the executive level to drive national drug policies and is under the Ministry of Justice. This organizational separation often leads to issues when directives from the central executive level are communicated to local operations. The disconnection between the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Interior, which oversees local governance, creates challenges in coordination and implementation at the local level. Additionally, there are frequent issues with unclear or inconsistent drug-related data, further complicating the execution of policies in the field. Although the Office of the Narcotics Control Board (ONCB) conducts annual assessments of target areas at the village and community levels, it has been found that the responsibility for data collection lies primarily with the administrative departments of the Ministry of Interior. This situation creates a "delegated responsibility" dynamic, where the quality of data collection may be compromised. Furthermore, the evaluation forms used for data collection lack standardization, as they primarily focus on individuals involved in drug-related activities—namely, users and dealers. Village headmen are tasked with gathering this data, which may lead to inaccuracies and an incomplete representation of the situation. Thus, revisiting and improving the evaluation tools may be necessary, as the current data does not adequately reflect the real drug-related issues (Office of the Narcotics Control Board, 2023).

The aforementioned issues highlight the necessity for the analysis and development of guidelines for assessing risk situations in spatial management for drug prevention and suppression following the implementation of the Narcotic Drugs Code 2021. This initiative aims to enhance data collection and operational effectiveness among agencies responsible for driving various drug policy projects. By establishing a coherent framework that integrates policy directives from the national level to local implementations, stakeholders can formulate policies and action plans based on a thorough risk assessment of drug-related issues. This approach will ensure that the measures related to prevention, suppression, and resolution of drug issues are standardized and provide accurate information, facilitating effective problem-solving strategies.

The case study of Chiang Rai Province is particularly suitable for this research because assessments from security agencies indicate that the current drug problem in Thailand is primarily linked to production sources in neighboring countries. Chiang Rai, with its border areas adjacent to two countries—Lao People's Democratic Republic and the Republic of the Union of Myanmar—serves as a significant hotspot. It is connected to the Golden Triangle region, which remains a central illicit drug production area. Chiang Rai has a border stretch of over 308 kilometers, encompassing land and waterways, passing through seven districts. Each district exhibits different management capabilities and varying levels of drug-related issues. Some areas have challenging geographical conditions that make them accessible only with difficulty, making them prime targets for drug trafficking networks seeking to smuggle drugs into Thailand via Chiang Rai before distributing them to other regions or third countries.

Moreover, Chiang Rai is recognized as a critical strategic area for Thailand's drug prevention and suppression efforts. There has been ongoing collection of data regarding the drug situation in the region, as well as reports on the activities of relevant agencies. This information has been summarized to categorize the local drug-related issues, facilitating the analysis and development of risk assessment criteria for managing drug-related challenges in the area. This initiative aims to enhance drug prevention and suppression strategies following the Narcotics Code of 2021 enforcement.

### **Objective**

This research study uses Chiang Rai as a case study to analyze and develop risk assessment criteria for spatial management aimed at drug prevention and suppression following the enforcement of the Narcotics Code 2021.

## **Related Concepts and Theories**

### **The Formulation of Thailand's Narcotics Code**

The formulation of Thailand's Narcotics Code is based on the following theoretical concepts (Sukharom et al., 2014):

1) Decriminalization refers to reclassifying certain drug-related offenses from criminal to non-criminal ones. Individuals committing such offenses typically face imprisonment or detention; however, under decriminalization, alternative measures are implemented instead of punitive actions. These alternatives may include community service, rehabilitation, or treatment programs. The rationale behind this approach is that incarceration for specific offenses does not effectively resolve the issue of recidivism.

2) Harm reduction refers to strategies aimed at minimizing the risks and dangers that may affect drug users or those involved with them, even when immediate cessation of drug use is not feasible. This concept applies public health principles to reduce the harm associated with substance use by educating users on safer consumption methods, thereby gradually decreasing their drug intake. It also includes measures to prevent potential side effects and minimize the risk of transmitting infections, such as HIV and hepatitis B and C. Ultimately, harm reduction supports drug users in reducing their consumption to the point where they can quit entirely and avoid a relapse into substance use.

3) Public participation refers to the involvement of all sectors of society in the prevention and resolution of drug-related issues. This includes participation from government agencies, the private sector, and the general public, as well as various mechanisms at the community level, such as educational institutions, religious organizations, families, communities, and local administrative organizations. The aim is to foster collaboration among these groups to address and mitigate drug-related problems effectively.

4) Alternative criminal justice refers to managing the high volume of cases entering the justice system, which has been increasing and often cannot be resolved promptly. This backlog results in many unresolved cases, leading to many individuals facing criminal penalties. Alternative approaches aim to alleviate the burden on the criminal justice system by exploring different case resolution methods, focusing on efficiency and the timely administration of justice.

### **Concepts for Formulating Policies and Coordinating Drug Prevention and Suppression Efforts in Thailand**

The Office of the Narcotics Control Board, as the central agency responsible for formulating policies and coordinating drug prevention and suppression efforts in the country, has developed an operational or strategic plan for the agency. This plan serves as a framework for addressing the country's drug problems in alignment with various national plans and master plans as follows (Panichakarn & Hanchaithai, 2019):

1) The national strategy for addressing drug problems is encompassed within the broader national security strategy, issue on the prevention and resolution of issues that affect national

security, sub-issue on addressing current challenges to ensure that existing problems are dealt with effectively and comprehensively, preventing them from adversely impacting the nation. The ultimate goal is to facilitate ongoing governance and development, achieving stability across all dimensions and levels of society.

2) The master plan is under the national strategy on security issues and a subsidiary plan for preventing and resolving problems affecting national security. In maintaining internal security and national development, it has a comprehensive approach to preventing and suppressing drug-related issues, adhering to the concept of addressing drug problems systematically from upstream to midstream to downstream. The implementation of this plan is structured as follows:

2.1) In areas outside the country where drugs are produced, international cooperation is employed to pressure and eliminate the role of foreign production sources. This is achieved through intelligence operations, information management, and developing living conditions for communities along the border. Additionally, efforts are made to intercept precursor chemicals, production equipment, and chemists to prevent them from entering production sites.

2.2) The interception of drug trafficking through land, maritime, and air routes relies on technology as a supporting tool for enforcement at checkpoints and interception points along transportation routes and within inland areas.

2.3) The crackdown on drug trafficking organizations focuses on dismantling the drug trade infrastructure, targeting influential figures and negligent officials involved with drugs. This approach involves integrating intelligence operations, technology-based investigations, financial and cryptocurrency investigations, and eradicating drug caches within the country.

2.4) Strengthening the resilience of border communities involves implementing strategies aligned with alternative development approaches to enhance areas and the lives of people in border regions facing drug issues. This includes dismantling the underlying problems and integrating solutions related to drug issues, thereby improving the quality of life for residents based on the principles of sufficiency economy as advised by the monarchy, the operational strategy known as " Understanding, Accessibility, Development," along with the King's teachings, serving as a framework for addressing drug problems, reducing structural issues associated with drugs, and fostering volunteerism to prevent the misuse of drugs within border villages.

2.5) Preventing drug abuse among each target group requires practical approaches that involve instilling appropriate values and knowledge. This will positively impact their mindset and persuade them to adopt a correct and supportive perspective.

2.6) Adjusting the ecosystem (environment) appropriately involves enhancing factors that discourage each target group from engaging with drugs. This includes influences such as family, schools, and communities.

2.7) Providing care for drug users and people with an addiction to access treatment and reduce the dangers or impacts of drugs involves effective screening, assessment, and diagnosis. This also includes developing comprehensive care plans, providing appropriate treatment that meets standards, and ongoing support for rehabilitation across all dimensions. Additionally, community involvement and partnerships are essential in enhancing the quality of life, enabling individuals to coexist peacefully and equitably within society and their communities.

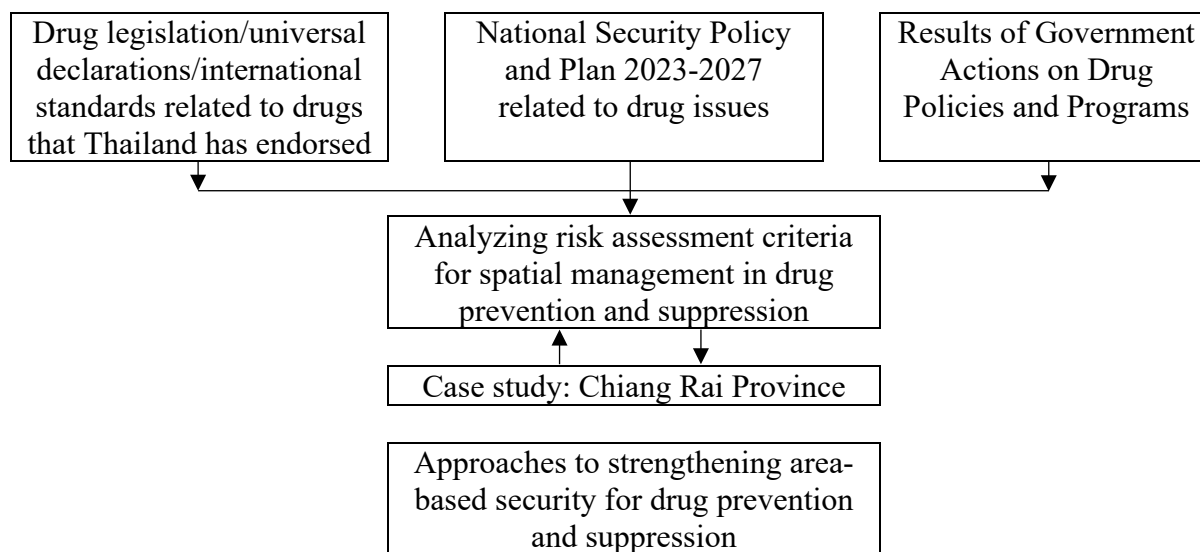
3) In the national reform plan regarding the justice process, addressing drug problems falls under Reform Issue 4, which focuses on transforming justice management to ensure societal safety and fairness. The desired goals and outcomes related to this issue include reducing recidivism. The relevant indicators include Indicator 2 on public satisfaction with safety in life and property; Indicator 5 on the number of drug-related offenses that result in arrests; Indicator 6 on the number of drug users and people with an addiction receiving rehabilitation; Indicator 8 on statistics regarding recidivism within one year for individuals released from prison,

probationers after the end of their probation period, individuals released from training centers, and those complying with conditions of special measures instead of prosecution; and Indicator 11 on the number of community social institutions participating in crime prevention and reducing recidivism.

A framework for an action plan for drug prevention and suppression has been established from the national plan related to the prevention and resolution of drug problems mentioned above. This framework aims to lead to the development of projects and activities at the local level focused on prevention, suppression, rehabilitation, and management of drug issues.

### Conceptual Framework

The study has established the research conceptual framework as shown below.



**Figure 1** Conceptual Framework

### Methodology

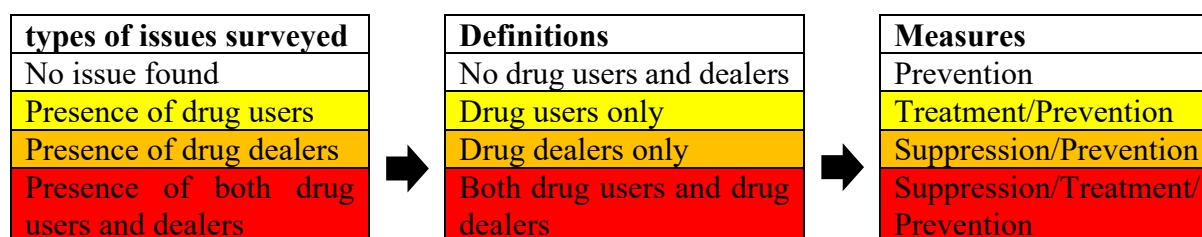
This study employs a qualitative case study approach to analyze the situation and synthesize factors related to developing criteria for risk assessment in drug prevention and suppression following the enforcement of the Narcotics Code 2021, focusing on Chiang Rai. The data collection methods include: (1) In-depth interviews were conducted with 40 participants involved in drug prevention and suppression policies and strategies at the local level in Chiang Rai. The goal was to gather detailed information about past operations and discuss ways to develop criteria for assessing risk in drug prevention and suppression after enforcing the Narcotics Code 2021. The participants included representatives from government agencies (both civilian and security at the national and regional levels) and individuals from the private sector, civil society, and academia who could provide relevant insights for this study. (2) To gather their opinions, A focus group discussion was held with seven selected experts who play important roles in the agencies mentioned in (1). (3) Documentary research involves reviewing relevant literature and analyzing the environments and situations related to local drug issues. This is done using documents from government agencies, the private sector, research studies, and credible analyses to examine and assess the feasibility of developing criteria for evaluating the risk of drug-related security problems at the local level. The data were analyzed using content analysis, where sub-issues were identified from the findings to describe the information based on our research objectives. The validity of the findings was verified through triangulation, ensuring reliability across different data sources.

## Research Findings

### Assessment of Local Drug Issues

Currently, criteria for assessing drug-related issues have been established using tools for drug issue surveys at the village/community level, developed by the Provincial Narcotics Control Center in collaboration with the Office of the Narcotics Control Board, Ministry of Interior. The purpose is to implement a nationwide national drug issue survey project at the village/community level. The process encourages all sectors within the area to unite as an organization to jointly think, act, take responsibility, and solve drug issues within their communities. This process emphasizes participation, with civil society playing a central role and government agencies serving as supporters. This initiative has been in operation since 2013 and continues to the present day.

For data collection, village heads and community leaders are responsible for reporting information on drug issues within their respective areas. Data are categorized into three groups: (1) drug users, (2) drug dealers, and (3) individuals involved in both drug use and dealing. Detailed information regarding these individuals is collected using standardized forms, and the survey is conducted twice a year. This frequency is necessary as the drug situation in villages and communities may sometimes change. After collecting the survey data, they are analyzed to assess the local drug situation, which leads to the classification of drug-related issues at the village/community level, as shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2** Classification of Drug-Related Issues in the Area Based on Survey Data

From Figure 2, drug-related issues in the surveyed villages/communities are classified into four categories as follows: (1) no issue found-villages/communities with no drug users and no drug dealers, (2) presence of drug users-villages/communities with drug users only, (3) presence of drug dealers-villages/communities with drug dealers only, and (4) presence of both drug users and dealers-villages/communities with both drug users and dealers. Once the drug issues in the villages/communities have been classified, appropriate measures can be applied to each area based on the specific nature of the issue, aligning with the severity of the situation.

Although drug-related issues are being surveyed using the aforementioned tools at the village/community level, the Office of the Narcotics Control Board and the Provincial Narcotics Control Center under the Ministry of Interior have introduced new criteria for assessing drug security in villages/communities. These criteria are aligned with the three key pillars of drug suppression policy. (1) The source, which refers to drug production sites, involves fostering international cooperation to block precursor chemicals and materials inflow into production areas. It also aims to dismantle key production and trafficking networks that operate both internationally and domestically in order to curb the smuggling of drugs across borders into inner regions of the country. (2) The midstream involves drug prevention efforts and environmental adjustments tailored to each target group. (3) The downstream emphasizes providing drug users, people with an addiction, and traffickers with appropriate treatment and rehabilitation based on individual needs. These have led to the classification of drug-risk areas in villages/communities into five types: (1) Import Villages-villages located along the border that are involved in the smuggling of drugs from outside the country into the domestic market, (2) Storage Villages-border or inner villages used as drug storage sites before distribution to

other areas, (3) Transit Villages-villages used as transit points for the transportation of drugs to their final destination, (4) Bypass Villages-areas used as routes to evade drug checkpoints or interception points set by authorities, and (5) Outbreak Villages-areas with widespread drug problems, including the presence of at-risk individuals (users), drug users, and dealers (Drug Prevention and Suppression Action Plan, 2022).

Based on the assessment of drug-related issues using the drug situation survey tool at the village/community level, by the drug security assessment criteria for villages/communities in Chiang Rai in 2023, the results can be summarized as follows:

**Table 1** Summary of Drug-Related Issues Survey and Problem-Solving Efforts in Chiang Rai

Survey Results	Target Area (Villages/Communities)	Results of Implementation (Villages/Communities)	Percentage
(1) Import Villages	21	15	71.43
(2) Storage Villages	23	13	56.52
(3) Transit Villages	86	70	81.40
(4) Bypass Villages	30	27	90.00
(5) Outbreak Villages	256	203	79.30
<b>Total</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>80.92</b>

Source: Chiang Rai Provincial Narcotics Prevention and Suppression Center (2023)

### Analysis of the Drug-Related Risk Situation in Chiang Rai

Drugs are considered a type of spatial security threat that has widespread impacts on public health, social order, personal safety, property security, and the livelihoods of citizens. From the data collected through interviews and a focus group discussion aimed at gathering opinions on the drug situation in the area, representatives from various sectors provided diverse viewpoints on the causes and circumstances contributing to the severity of the drug problem, as follows:

1) Representatives from drug enforcement agencies believe that the root causes of drug problems lie with the drugs themselves, as well as the producers and traffickers. They assert that if one of these causes can be eliminated, the drug problem will cease to exist. Specifically, if drugs can be removed from the community or if measures are taken to prevent drugs from entering the community, the issue will be resolved. Alternatively, if decisive action can be taken against producers, traffickers, or those who bring drugs into the community, the problem will also be eliminated. For this reason, it is crucial to establish supply reduction measures as a key objective, mainly focusing on combating domestic and international production sources, intercepting drugs to prevent their entry into the country, and targeting major drug traffickers and significant networks, among other actions.

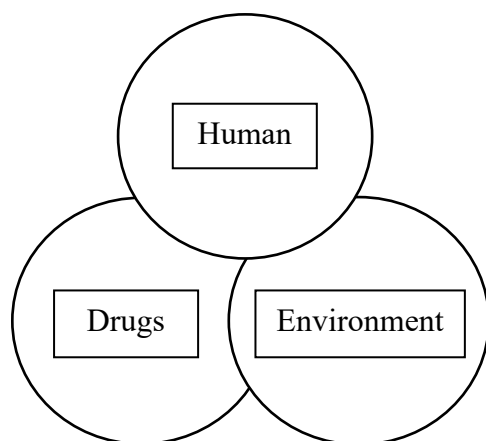
2) Representatives from community leaders in the area believe that while drugs may exist in the community, along with producers and traffickers, if there were no demand for drugs, the problem would not arise. They also contend that even with the presence of drugs, producers, and traffickers, the issue can only develop if there are users of those drugs. Therefore, addressing the drug problem requires a comprehensive approach that includes combating and eliminating drugs, producers, and traffickers while also bringing users into treatment programs. At the same time, it is essential to prevent new users from emerging. For this reason, there should be an emphasis on supply and demand reduction measures.

3) Representatives from the administrative and preventive sectors strive to understand the psychology of individuals involved with drugs. They believe that drug use is a behavior that deviates from usual standards of human conduct. Therefore, it is essential to create awareness and understanding within the community to foster acceptance and enable individuals to coexist



with those involved in drugs in a usual manner. This perspective is often summarized by the notion that "users are patients."

Therefore, when analyzing the key components of the drug problem based on the collected data to assess the risk situation of drug issues in the area, it is found that the drug problem consists of three components: people, drugs, and the environment. These components interact circularly, overlapping one another. If they move toward each other toward the center, it indicates that the area of the problem will increase, as illustrated in the following Figure.



**Figure 3** Relationship of Key Components of the Drug-related Issues

### **Actions to Address the Situation to Reduce Risks from Drug-related Issues in Chiang Rai**

From the survey results on drug-related issues at the village/community level, the Chiang Rai Provincial Narcotics Control Center has implemented strategies according to the guidelines set forth by the Ministry of Interior's Narcotics Control Center in collaboration with the Office of the Narcotics Control Board. The results of the drug-related issue surveys in the villages/communities are used to formulate strategies, measures, and guidelines for effectively preventing and addressing drug issues in the area. This involves developing drug prevention and suppression strategies annually, serving as a guideline for relevant agencies in the area to utilize as a foundation for driving their operations according to their mandates. In the past, the Chiang Rai Provincial Narcotics Control Center has proposed projects to request budgets from central funds and operational budgets from Chiang Rai, in line with the annual budget cycle, to address significant drug issues in the following areas:

- 1) The Chiang Rai Creative City Project for Job and Property Security is a training activity to expand the "Roi Jai Rak" project in 26 targeted villages. These areas face issues related to drug abuse, including storage villages, outbreak villages, and transit villages for drugs according to the data from the Office of Narcotics Control Board. The project aims to create jobs, enhance skills, and improve the quality of local products. The underlying concept is that if the community members have a good quality of life, secure infrastructure, and sustain themselves according to the sufficiency economy principles, they will be less likely to turn to drugs, leading to a sustainable solution to drug problems in these areas.
- 2) The project to establish the TO BE NUMBER ONE youth network aims to serve as a model and a leading force in the campaign against drugs at the child and youth levels. It also creates opportunities for children and youth to showcase their talents as a preventive measure to keep them away from drug involvement throughout the fiscal year.
- 3) The project to train and review village security teams in at-risk areas aims to enhance skills in collaboration with local officials for drug prevention and suppression. This includes training in setting checkpoints, reviewing relevant laws, and practicing weapon handling.

4) The project to assist drug users/people with addiction by the Social Rehabilitation Center of Chiang Rai aims to support individuals who wish to rehabilitate and reintegrate into society without returning to drug involvement. This is achieved through vocational training, fostering national and royal awareness, and educating individuals to live according to sufficiency economy principles. The project also coordinates with relevant agencies in Chiang Rai to promote a shift in public attitudes towards drug addicts, reducing stigma and increasing opportunities for recovery and reintegration into society without reliance on drugs.

In addition, the Chiang Rai Provincial Command Center for Drug Prevention and Suppression has the mission of collaborating with relevant agencies to conduct urine drug tests as requested by the Chiang Rai Social Order Task Force. This is aimed at preventing and combating drug-related offenses by service providers, establishments similar to service providers, and drug trafficking groups in Chiang Rai regularly.

### **Development of Risk Assessment Criteria for Spatial Management in Drug Prevention and Suppression Post-Implementation of the Narcotics Code 2021: A Case Study of Chiang Rai**

Based on interviews and a focus group discussion on developing risk assessment criteria for spatial management in drug prevention and suppression following the enforcement of the Narcotics Code 2021, using Chiang Rai as a case study, key components of drug-related risks were identified. The criteria aim to analyze approaches for determining the severity levels of drug problems using data from Chiang Rai, a province significantly impacted by drug-related issues. This severity is attributed to its border location, which facilitates drug trafficking into other regions of the country. Additionally, the local population has encountered issues related to drug users, dealers, and involvement in networks linked to production bases located in neighboring countries that share borders with Chiang Rai.

**Table 1** Components for Risk Assessment Criteria in Spatial Management for Drug Prevention and Suppression Based on a Case Study in Chiang Rai

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<b>Components for Prioritization and Severity Assessment</b>
<b>Considerations in the Risk Dimension</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Characteristics of High-Risk Areas for Drugs: How is the location of communities experiencing drug problems classified as a risk area? (Import Village (Border Village), Transit Village, Bypass Village, Storage Village, or Outbreak Village.)</li><li>• Environment of Drug-Risk Areas: What are risk areas' social and economic characteristics? (For example, in Chiang Rai, risk areas are identified based on the following factors: ethnic communities, urban communities, predominant occupations of the residents, connectivity between communities and the broader society, and level of cooperation with government authorities.)</li><li>• Demand for Drugs: The number of adolescents, the workforce, the number of establishments, commercial areas, and industrial sources, which are groups or areas at risk of drug outbreaks</li><li>• Supply of Drugs: The detection of chemical substances or compounds suspected to be used in drug production in neighboring countries</li><li>• International Cooperation and Politics: International intelligence, establishing partnerships with neighboring countries for drug prevention and suppression, and the political situation in neighboring countries.</li></ul>
<b>Considerations in the Impact Dimension</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Physical Characteristics of the Area: The distance of risk areas used as transport routes along the border, as well as the characteristics of the transportation routes within the area that must be monitored (which are also routes for drug trafficking)</li></ul>

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- Number of drug dealers and users as well as individuals requiring mental health treatment (a higher number indicates a severe impact on society)
  - Increasing number of communities involved in various drug-related processes (such as import village (border), transit village, bypass village, storage village, and outbreak village)
  - Frequency of arrests related to drug-related crimes in the area
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#### **Considerations in Problem-Solving Difficulty Dimension**

- Establishment of social rehabilitation centers in the province that cover district-level branches and local administrative organizations, tailored to the specific context of the area, as well as operations that meet standards consistent with relevant regulations and the guidelines of the provincial social rehabilitation center task force
  - The number of successful implementations of measures for raids, crackdowns, and searches, leading to the arrest of drug dealers
  - Effectiveness and adequacy of tools used for detecting drugs
  - Collaboration among community leaders, village heads, and relevant state officials involved in mechanisms for preventing and suppressing drug-related issues, including the rehabilitation of social functioning due to drug problems
  - Responsibility and integrity of state officials involved in mechanisms for preventing and suppressing drug-related issues, as well as in the rehabilitation of social functioning affected by the drug problem
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### **Conclusion and Discussion**

Analyzing the criteria for assessing risk situations for spatial management in the prevention and suppression of drugs following the enforcement of the Narcotics Code 2021 reveals alignment with current drug policy circumstances in Chiang Rai. This alignment is framed within the changes introduced by the Narcotics Code 2021, which emphasizes key concepts outlined by Sukharom et al. (2014), such as (1) Decriminalization, (2) Harm Reduction, (3) Public Participation, and (4) Alternative Criminal Justice as well as the National Policy and Plan Framework for the Prevention, Suppression, and Resolution of Drug Issues 2023-2027, which adapts international principles and ideas from global drug policy discussions, such as the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS 2016), the Global Drug Policy Index, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These are customized to fit Thailand's context under the key principle of "leading with public health in addressing issues, implementing justice processes based on human rights, ending the notion of drug-related crime, targeting significant trafficking networks, enhancing international cooperation in all dimensions, and adhering to the principle of shared responsibility," as studied by Mullikamal et al. (2016).

The findings on the development of assessment criteria for spatial management in drug problems reveal the three key components of drug-related issues. First, "people" refers to individuals involved with drugs, including producers, dealers, and users. Second, "substances" refers to narcotics, controlled substances, and volatile chemicals that are classified as drugs. Third, "environment" refers to the conditions that lead to drug use, trafficking, and the resultant violence affecting life, body, property, or personal freedom, reflecting criminal offenses observed within community contexts. These components align with the studies conducted by Carter (2008) and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (2022). They provide a beneficial framework for assessing situations and interpreting the definition of "drugs" according to the Narcotics Code 2021, which defines "drugs" as narcotic substances, controlled substances, or volatile chemicals. The term "narcotic substances" refers to any chemicals, plants, or materials that, when used, significantly affect the body and mind, leading to an increased need for consumption, withdrawal symptoms when not used, and an intense physical and psychological craving. Additionally, general health deteriorates as a result. The definition

also includes chemicals used in the production of narcotic substances but excludes certain common household medicines that contain narcotic ingredients as specified in the drug laws (Narcotics Code Act, 2021).

### **Suggestions**

- 1) There should be defined indicators for assessing the severity of drug-related issues, and the evaluation of the severity of drug problems in each area should be aligned. This will enable all relevant agencies to set directions and goals and create project plans for addressing drug problems by each agency's roles and responsibilities. Such alignment will enhance the effectiveness and continuity of drug problem-solving efforts at the local level, ensuring the cost-effectiveness of allocated budgets and maximizing benefits for the local population.
- 2) There should be a restructuring of managing drug-related situations or issues in Chiang Rai to ensure unity. A command center should be established to coordinate the involved agencies so that they can operate effectively. In the past, various agencies have collaborated to address drug issues. However, these agencies have had different lines of command, which has hindered the continuity of drug problem-solving efforts in the area.
- 3) Support should be provided for drug-related data from each local agency to enable full operational capacity. These data are crucial for each agency to share and exchange effectively, allowing for better integration of their work.
- 4) There should be financial support, materials, equipment, and modern technologies provided to enhance the capabilities of officials in preventing, suppressing, healing, rehabilitating, developing, and reducing drug issues in the area according to local needs. Previously, resources were limited, which restricted operational effectiveness.

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**Data Availability Statement:** The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

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