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News on the fight against drugs and crime
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Former street children, many of them with drug addictions, and teenagers at risk of becoming drug users are learning vocational skills at the Ruam Mit Bakery in Chiang Mai, Thailand (story on page 8).



UNITED NATIONS
Office on Drugs and Crime
Regional Centre for East Asia and the Pacific

“YOUNG PERSONS Are a

Interview with the Swedish Minister for Justice, Mr. Thomas Bodström

What are the current drug trends in Sweden? Is Sweden facing an increase in the abuse of amphetamine type stimulants (ATS) in line with the global trend?

An obvious trend observed in national surveys during the 1990s is the increase in lifetime prevalence of drugs among Swedish teenagers. Among younger teenagers, especially young girls, this increase has come to a halt during the most recent years. However, the upward trend continues among older teenagers. Recent use (last year, last 30 days prevalence) has also increased among teenagers and younger adults during the 1990s, even though the figures have not reached the magnitude of the early 1970s.

Drug abuse levels are lower in Sweden than in other EU countries but is still worrying, mainly because youth prevalence has risen over the last ten years. Today, 15 % of our teenagers have tested drugs, mainly cannabis. Most persons having tried drugs, both younger people and adults, have tried cannabis, and the majority have tried cannabis only. The second most commonly experienced drug is amphetamine, followed by other synthetic drugs and heroin. Around 0.3% of the population are daily abusers, however most of them use cannabis. It is considered that around 0.1 % (10,000 persons) are injecting heroin or synthetic drugs.

During the 1990s there has been an increase in the availability of drugs, particularly of amphetamine and heroin. This is reflected in multiplied seizures by the police and customs and in price decline. The drug production in Sweden is insignificant. However, minor production sites have been dismantled. Synthetic drugs, mainly ecstasy and amphetamines are produced in other EU countries or countries candidate to the EU.

What is the Swedish drug policy and the philosophy behind? Could you describe some concrete measures taken to counter drugs from the law enforcement angle?

The Swedish drug policy remains unchanged and the overall visionary aim is to shape a drug-free society. This objective was set up already during the early 1980s. During the late 1990s three limited, finite and measurable sub-objectives were set up in order to make the overall visionary aim more concrete. The three goals are (i) to reduce experimental use and the recruitment of new drug users, (ii) to induce more drug users to give

up their habit, and (iii) to reduce the supply of drugs.

Preventive measures are used in order to stop young people from experimenting with drugs, care and treatment help active users to kick the habit and, finally, various control measures reduce supply and also strengthen the restrictive policy as a whole. We believe that the overall objective, a society free from drugs, can only be achieved if these three pillars are equally balanced in our national policy. Public opinion strongly supports the policy operated in Sweden.

Furthermore, the Swedish drug policy is recognized as part of the social policy and should also be an important and well-integrated factor in the general welfare policy in the future. Recently, this view has been established in a National Action Plan on Drugs.

One precondition of a successful drug policy is for people of all ages to reject the non-medical use of drugs. An important challenge is to sustain and reinforce the negative attitudes existing in Sweden where drugs are concerned. Other chal-

The Swedish drug policy is recognized as part of the social policy and should also be an important and well-integrated factor in the general welfare policy in the future

lenges are to develop cooperation with authorities, municipal and county councils, NGOs and more, to develop local strategies, and to develop

methods and research in the area of prevention and treatment.

How is Sweden targeting youth at risk in its drug control efforts?

Great efforts are directed to combat the drug problem at all levels of the Swedish society. Young persons are a key group in this connection. Schools, the police, municipal leisure activities and social services cooperate on preventive measures addressed to juveniles. Many local authorities have set up special teams of social workers for outreach work with young persons in the risk zone of drug abuse.

For outreach and therapeutic work with young persons living in high-risk circumstances, many municipalities have set out special youth groups, i.e. teams of social workers, which actively contact young persons in various environments where young people tend to meet. The groups provide support to families and individual youngsters, they often play a dynamic role and serve as intermediaries between youngsters and other authorities. For example, the youth groups assist young persons in relations with the Employment Service.

Key Group...”

What are the current developments within the European Union on the drug issue?

All EU countries are of the opinion that the fight against drugs must be intensive and effective. Since 1990, the European Union has recognized the need for a comprehensive, multidisciplinary and integrated strategy for tackling drugs, based on four main elements: (i) reducing demand, (ii) reducing supply and combating illegal trafficking, (iii) international cooperation and (iv) coordination at national and EU level.

As a part of this comprehensive anti-drug strategy and in order to tackle illicit drug trafficking, a proposal from the European Commission on a legislative framework (framework decision) laying down minimum provisions on the constituent elements of criminal acts and penalties in the field of illicit drug trafficking, is currently negotiated within the Council of the European Union. This instrument is the single most important EU-instrument being negotiated at the moment in this field.

The aim of the instrument is to target illicit trafficking, the source of supplies of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in our societies. All Member States agree that close cooperation is needed between the various judicial, police and customs authorities in the Member States to tackle the problem of illicit drug trafficking. And, if it is to be effective, such cooperation must be based on a common set of principles and aims, so that illicit drug trafficking is recognized as a criminal offence and is subject to effective, proportionate and dissuasive penalties in all Member States. Hopefully, the Member States can reach a political agreement on this instrument by the end of November this year, although some provisions are still under discussion.

Sweden is a striving force in EU negotiations when it comes to law enforcement cooperation. I would like to mention that our national scientific police laboratory is currently carrying out a EU-wide study on impurity profiling of amphetamines. This project started in January this year and some promising results have already been achieved.

With emphasis on Southeast Asia, what are the characteristics and aims of the Swedish contribution to international drug control?

Sweden is one of the largest donors to the Drug Programme under the UN Office on Drugs and Crime. The Swedish contribution amounts to SEK 38.5 million (approx. USD 4.2 million) for 2002. As non-earmarked funds, Sweden will allocate a maxi-



mum of 8 % of the total general-purpose funds received by the Drug Programme. The remainder, which makes up about 70 % of the Swedish contribution, is softly earmarked as follows: 40 % to Africa, 35 % to Latin America and Asia, and 25 % for advocacy.

Further, Sweden contributes to a project in Vietnam, dealing with prevention and focusing on youth, which has been going on during 2000-2001 and has now been

extended for an additional period of 4 years. The Swedish contribution for the extended period amounts to SEK 3.59 million (approx. USD 390,000).

During 2000-2002, Sweden has been contributing with SEK 2.6 million (approx. USD 290,000) to a similar project in the Golden Triangle area (Myanmar and northern Thailand). The overall objective of the project is to decrease the negative impact of illicit drug production/consumption on individuals, as well as on the society. The project consists of four local sub-projects: three in Thailand and one in Myanmar. The objective of these four sub-projects is to strengthen individuals and social structures that risk being affected by the negative impact of production, trafficking and consumption of drugs. This will be achieved through activities aiming at strengthening the cultural identity and democratic values of individuals and societies, increasing the knowledge of narcotic drugs, and providing counseling and rehabilitation services to drug addicts.

—Patricia M. Budiyanto, UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Bangkok

Kofi Annan in China calls for full mobilisation against HIV/AIDS

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan visited China on 13-16 October and, speaking at the Zhejiang University in Hangzhou, told students and faculty that “today China stands on the brink of an explosive AIDS epidemic.”

Needle-sharing by drug users is known to have been a significant factor contributing to the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in China. During his trip, Secretary-General Annan met with Razali Ismail, his Special Envoy for Myanmar, and together they met with President Jiang Zemin and Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan. Secretary-General Annan also met with Vice-President Hu Jintao, who emphasised that all levels of society must get engaged in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Kofi Annan also underlined the need to mobilise Chinese society, including youth, and to remove the stigma attached to HIV/



AIDS. During his visit, the Secretary-General also met with various NGOs and other active forces working in this field in China, including the China Foundation for AIDS

Prevention and Control.

–Lise Bendiksen, UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Bangkok

Formula One team “Sauber Petronas” and UN join forces against HIV/AIDS

The Formula One team “Sauber Petronas” has proudly joined for the first time with two UN institutions (UNDP and UNAIDS) to bring HIV/AIDS awareness messages to a broader public and to mobilize resources for AIDS projects in countries worst affected by the disease.

This event ran in the three Grand Prix races on three continents – Monza, Italy



(15 September), Indianapolis, USA (29 September) and Suzuka, Japan (13 October).

Formula One is one of the most watched sporting events in the world. In 2001 alone, Formula One races and related news coverage were watched by a cumulative total of 54 billion viewers. Therefore, this partnership aims to increase the number of people who will learn to protect themselves from HIV infection as well as to care for and support those infected and affected.

Also, by giving UNAIDS and UNDP the space to brand its racecars with the slogan “STOP AIDS” and the red ribbon symbolizing the mobilization against the HIV virus, this initiative supports fundraising for two projects that provide housing and care to AIDS orphans in Botswana, Africa.

–Patricia M. Budiyanto, UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Bangkok



The *Time* bomb?



"As they lay dying." Thus starts the story in *Time Asia*, the issue of 30 September 2002. It is a grim tale that puts the spotlight on the looming AIDS crisis in Asia, where, UNAIDS suggests, 2,658 people become infected with HIV every day. The authors point to the AIDS epidemic in Africa and warn that, though the Asian problem so far is on a smaller scale, this is a fragile status quo as the transmission mechanisms are more numerous in Asia. Asia has more people, greater mobility of people between countries and, while transmission by sex is the driving force in Africa, Asia "is hit by the double whammy of sexual transmission and infection among intravenous drug users."

While intravenous drug use has so far been a major force in driving up the HIV infection rate in the region, the article warns that the fatal catalyst for HIV in Asia could be the combination of sex and drugs. Strands of the virus have been traced along major heroin trafficking routes where long-distance truckers, at the various truckstops, give and take with them the virus on the road. Thus they describe the spreading of HIV infection along transport routes in East Asia as almost visible to the naked eye, a message that is strengthened by strong photos from the region.

In 2001, 1.07 million new cases of HIV were reported in Asia, an increase of 17% from the previous year. As noted in this feature, there is an imminent need to further improve public acknowledgment and commitment in the region.

—Lise Bendiksen, UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Bangkok

Towards better coordination of HIV/AIDS relief efforts in Myanmar?

A conference on HIV/AIDS in Myanmar organized by the Burma Center Netherlands was held in Bangkok on 17-18 October 2002. The objective of the meeting was to gather a variety of HIV/AIDS relief organizations to discuss coordination and cooperation and exchange views and opinions. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime presented its work in Myanmar over the past 2 years, one of advocacy and policy dialogue with



the drug control agency of Myanmar and with national and international NGOs for improved HIV prevention targeting injecting drug users. In the end, the conference strayed towards a political debate, diminishing opportunities for building networks and cooperation among those active in providing HIV/AIDS relief in the country. Myanmar has the third-highest rate of HIV infection in Asia after Cambodia and Thailand, where about 2% of adults are afflicted (according to the recent HIV/AIDS in Asia feature in *Time* magazine).

—Guillaume Le Hegarat, UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Bangkok

Methadone on the AGENDA in the region

The United Nations Regional Task Force on Drugs and HIV/AIDS Vulnerability is organising a workshop on harm reduction through substitution treatment in Hong Kong.

International experience demonstrates that prescribing substitution medicine under medical supervision to opioid-dependent injecting drug users (IDUs) reduces the risk of transmitting HIV infection, the risk of overdose and frequency of injecting, and the tendency to criminal behaviour. It improves physical and mental health, as well as social and occupational functioning. It attracts and sustains the drug users to treatment. However, substitution treatment and maintenance are not very developed in the region and often operate on a pilot scale. The UN Regional Task Force on Drugs and HIV/AIDS Vulnerability is dedi-

cated to addressing this issue by organising a technical workshop next year.

The main objective is to build regional capacity to deliver substitution treatment as a harm reduction measure to contribute towards HIV prevention in South East Asia and the Pacific, focusing on the use of methadone maintenance.

While technical training remains the main focus, supporting inter-country networking and advocacy are additional possible outputs.

The workshop is scheduled on 2-4 April 2003 in Hong Kong. These dates will allow participants to attend the International Harm Reduction Conference scheduled for 6-10 April 2003 in Chiang Mai immediately after the workshop.

The working assumption is that there would be no more than 100 participants in the workshop. All participants have med-

ical or paramedical background and are involved or planning to establish methadone programs in their respective country. Two tiers of countries are defined:

- The first tier includes the priority countries China, Indonesia, Nepal and India, which are invited to send participants to the workshop in order to build expertise in methadone maintenance.
- The second tier includes Vietnam, Myanmar, Malaysia and Thailand. The focus for the second tier would be more on information sharing, networking and advocacy.

Agencies interested in attending the workshop or willing to sponsor participants for the workshop are invited to contact the UN Office on Drugs and Crime Regional Centre's Programme Officer on Drugs and HIV/AIDS, Guillaume Le Hegarat (guillaume.lehegarat@undcp.un.or.th).

An excellent step in the right direction, but many more are needed

Questions and answers with Mr. Jean-Luc Lemahieu, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (ODC) Representative in Myanmar

According to the 2002 opium survey, cultivation in Myanmar has dropped by an astonishing 50% since 1996. Is the UN Office on Drugs and Crime here overly enthusiastic in praising the government of Myanmar for its drug control progress?

The Office on Drugs and Crime (ODC) aims to be an objective voice in a difficult debate surrounding Myanmar by measuring and monitoring the drug situation on the ground. In contrast to most other monitors in Myanmar and the many so-called experts, we have a finger on the pulse through our presence in the field and the annual opium poppy surveys. Today the data are positive but tomorrow, should our data show differently, we would not refrain from saying so to the international community. By the way, ODC's praise is qualified – the reduction we are talking about today is an excellent step in the right direction, but many more are needed. Consolidating the gains is the next challenge.

Can the UN Office on Drugs and Crime engage in drug control efforts in Myanmar while at the same time the regime is widely accused internationally for human rights violations?

The ODC activities are an integral part of the wider UN efforts in Myanmar. They range from UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Special Envoy facilitating the political transition, to the UN Rapporteur looking into human rights issues, to the humanitarian issues dealt with by the UN Country Team. The UN acts very carefully and in a strongly coordinated manner in order to avoid contradiction. ODC, for example, voluntarily limits its law enforcement and judiciary assistance to the country for the same reasons.

Is the UN Office on Drugs and Crime calling for an end to the international sanctions?

The ODC has neither the authority nor the intention to do so. The UN Country Team (UNCT) in Myanmar has asked for an increase in humanitarian assistance - the need for the latter has never been doubted by anybody and falls outside any boycott called for. The UNCT has indicated three priority areas for immediate humanitarian action: HIV/AIDS, illicit drugs and food security. In all three issues, ODC has a clear stake. Drugs were included as a separate priority because of the need to provide poor opium farmers with an alternative. In Myanmar our data is obvious: opium is related to poverty.

Many observers believe that Myanmar is structurally involved in drugs, harboring notorious drug traffickers



while having its economy fuelled by the illicit profits?

On the first part of your question, no, the Myanmar Government as an institution is not involved in drugs. If it were, ODC would not be active in Myanmar. ODC, like the International Narcotics Control Board and the US State Department, shares the viewpoint that we can work with this government as an institution. Our presence is based on tangible and measurable results. This does not mean that there are no rotten apples though. There is still more work ahead for ODC. And this brings us to the second part of your question. We do fully recognize that much more needs to be done in Myanmar and that we are far away from having reached the ideal situation. If the situation were ideal, our presence would not be required. ODC is active in fields of trouble, not in fields of tranquillity and peace.

Is ODC's assistance delaying the political transition? Do you think that by working with the regime the Office on Drugs and Crime might hinder the transition process?

No, on the contrary, the UN is of the opinion that drug control is part of the transition process. In discussing drug policy in Myanmar, it is important to recognise that the current drug situation actively hinders the transition process. In fact, the drug business strengthens those sectors of society with the least interest in establishing effective mechanisms for the rule of law or democratic governance. Just think about basic notions such as transparency and anti-corruption. Or think about those opium-growing ethnic minority groups who, through centuries of isolation, are still living along feudal lines. If you want to bring them democracy, you need to expose them to the concept. Why would they opt for something they don't even know exists? Therefore, working to address the drug problem lays important foundations for future political change.

—Giovanni Gallo, UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Yangon

IS CAMBODIA a major drug trafficking route FROM THE 'Golden Triangle'?

Recent drug seizures in Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam are leading some experts to conclude that suspicions about Cambodia being a major trafficking route from the 'Golden Triangle' to the international marketplace may have credence.

In early June, Vietnamese police arrested a drug trafficking group of 11 people in Ho Chi Minh City and the border province of Long An that smuggled heroin from Cambodia to Vietnam inside dead fish and toothpaste tubes. On June 26 – ironically the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking – a Taiwanese woman was arrested by customs officers at Pochentong International Airport in the Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh, in possession of 1.9kg heroin whilst attempting to board a flight to Taiwan.

In early July, police in the northwestern town of Battambang arrested a husband and wife with 1kg opium purchased in Stung Treng province, close to the Cambodian border with Laos. In mid-July, a Thai police seizure of 430,000 methamphetamine pills – worth some USD 244,000 – north of Bangkok is believed to have originated in Cambodia. Later, 63,000 yaba pills were seized in the northwestern province of Banteay Meanchey, the largest seizure of this drug to-date.

Individually, these cases – and others – are not spectacular in relation to seizures made in certain neighbouring countries. However, when taken as a whole, together with the extremely limited human and resource capacity of the law enforcement community in Cambodia, an interesting – if somewhat disturbing – trend in organised drug trafficking is emerging.

Law enforcement authorities in Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam have indicated for some time that the Mekong River,

which flows from Southern China through Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, together with its associated road network, is being used to traffic illicit drugs, especially heroin, ecstasy and methamphetamine, to regional and global markets.

Cambodia is particularly prone to being used as a 'back door' out of the notorious 'Golden Triangle' due to its relative lack of law enforcement capacity, especially in the remote areas of the country where the Mekong River flows. For example, police lack equipment such as speedboats, binoculars, cameras and drug testing kits and have only very limited knowledge of drug identification, investigative techniques, risk



The main drug trafficking routes into, through and out of Cambodia.

profiling and surveillance methods. In addition, the low salaries paid to Cambodian law enforcement officers are a major factor in the widespread corruption and high-level protection that make it easy for drug traffickers to get their products through the country unhindered. As other countries of the region strengthen their drug business interdiction, traffickers are seeking easier options and Cambodia offers an attractive alternative.

In his keynote address at the first Greater Mekong Subregion Program Summit, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen identified human trafficking and trafficking of illicit drugs and arms as major concerns and areas where there is a strong need for the countries in the subregion to work together to find common solutions.

Cambodian media have reported sources in Thai security saying that operations on Thailand's border with Myanmar were forcing drug smugglers to find new avenues out of the region. Law enforcement officials in Cambodia have indicated that anywhere up to several hundred kilos of heroin are being shipped every month from the 'Golden Triangle' into Cambodia and then overland to Vietnam, by air from Phnom Penh or by boat from Sihanoukville and Koh Kong provinces on the Gulf of Thailand.

Until large-scale seizures are made by the Cambodian authorities, the jury remains out on the extent to which Cambodia is one of the principal routes used by drug traffickers to get illicit drugs from the 'Golden Triangle' to markets in the region as well as those further afield, such as the US, Japan, Australia and Europe.

However, there are already clear indications from officers at the frontline of the war on drugs that, if the international community fails to support Cambodia in developing its drug control programme, the drug traffickers will further accelerate their efforts to use the country as a main conduit to get illicit drugs onto the streets of developed countries. Not only will Cambodia suffer, but so will its neighbours as well as developed countries that fail to support the closure of one of several 'back doors' to the infamous 'Golden Triangle'.

–Graham Shaw, UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Phnom Penh

RUAM MIT BAKERY HELPS TO KICK DRUGS

What's so special about the Ruam Mit bakery in Chiang Mai, Thailand? Not just a normal bakery, it was set up in August 2000 to provide vocational training and social rehabilitation services to adolescents with funding support from DOH International and technical assistance from the German Development Service (DED).

Most of the concerned adolescents are former street children who became addicted to heroin or amphetamine and teenagers at risk of becoming drug users. This bakery is not only raising bread, but also raises the life expectations of young adults trying to kick drugs.



The reason behind the amazing success story of Ruam Mit, a Chiang Mai-based NGO, is that many ex-substance users are unable to find work because they are not equipped with marketable skills. This project

helps the youngsters to acquire skills to earn a living and at the same time prevent them from slipping back into drug use. With a strong potential market and help from some professional bakers, the business is able to expand successfully.

Moreover, Ruam Mit intends to provide basic computer courses as well as Thai reading and writing classes to its trainees in the future. Its ultimate objective is to become self-sufficient and generate enough income to fund its drug-prevention and training programmes.

*—Patricia M. Budiyanto, UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Bangkok
Source: Bangkok Post, September 24, 2002*

Going to scale – in our way

A participatory process: a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources, which affect them

As the ASOD (ASEAN Senior Officials on Drug Matters) members were closing their 23rd ASOD Meeting in Kuala Lumpur (14–16 October 2002), their Chinese ACCORD partners landed in Malaysia to join them for a one day Informal Consultative Session on ASOD – ACCORD integrated future actions (17 October 2002). After three days of drug-talks, the atmosphere should have been right for a fourth day on substantive exchanges on how to move forward in the ACCORD regional drug control cooperation. Yet, before entering into some forward-looking discussion on the ACCORD future, some time was devoted to straightening the dots on the “i”, probably a necessary one-time exercise to re-confirm the basics once and for all.

Consultations were held on the progress of the ACCORD Plan of Action and on the project “Regional Cooperative Mechanism to monitor and execute the ACCORD Plan of Action”; on the status of the ACCORD Business Plan funding and on a possible mechanism to manage ACCORD funds; on the next ACCORD meeting to

be held in January 2003; and on common fund-raising strategies. When talking about funds, some participants stressed the need for a common donor-approach for advocating funds for the ACCORD Business Plan, making reference to what had been stated by all ACCORD partners in the 2000 Bangkok Declaration. The creation of a common front, however, remained subject to future discussions - probably to some sort of consensual agreement to recognise that national working styles and methods, and national action and reaction timeframes, vary from country to country. Thus, and as time goes by, the “question” of how to reconcile national work plans with other national, regional and international differing policy-planning, policy-making and policy-executing environments remains unanswered. As one participant put it “we need to learn how to work not only with our own national timeframes, but especially with those of the rest of world”. Corollary issues were also discussed, such as how commitment, prompt reaction, seriousness and business-style approaches to

the drug problem are perceived by non-ACCORD partners.

The session was good and certainly set the tune for more open and constructive consultations in the future. The ACCORD Secretariat is already working on the next meeting and its agenda and will shortly inform all interested partners. Given the increasing prominence of the drug problem not only in the region but in the entire world, and given the numerous sides and ramifications of the drug debate that have not yet been addressed, the biggest challenge will be how to prioritise between different urgent calls, which do not always respect national timetables.

—Martina Melis, UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Bangkok

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For a summary of the discussion at the ASOD-ACCORD Informal Consultative Session, please visit:
www.undcp.un.or.th

Survey suggests **declining** opium production in Myanmar

Earlier this year, capitalizing on a pilot exercise conducted in 2001, the first ever comprehensive opium survey was staged throughout the whole Shan State in Myanmar.

This region covers 155,000 km² making it roughly equal in size to Bangladesh. It is home to some 5 million individuals but is best known for its bleak record. The Shan State accounts for almost 90% of Myanmar's opium production.

Aiming at assessing the real magnitude of the problem, 169 surveyors visited 1,861 villages, measured 5,687 opium poppy fields and 37,061 opium capsules. The extensive fieldwork went on from January to March 2002. A combination of low and high-resolution satellite imagery to secure minimal margin of error was added to the results. The study unveiled a



number of interesting findings.

Opium cultivation for the 2001-2002 growing season was estimated at 81,400 hectares (ha), against 105,000 ha one year before. Similarly, the opium output plummeted from 1,097 tons to 828 tons. This indicates that cultivation and production levels have fallen by 15% and 25% respectively in one year.

While Myanmar retains the largest surface of opium-cultivated land in the world, the average opium yield was determined at 10 kg/ha, one third of the productivity in Afghanistan. This difference in yield can be attributed to the employment

of different crop watering regimes. Over 98% of Myanmar's poppy fields are in fact rainfed, whereas the fields in Afghanistan are extensively irrigated.

A high variety of field size was observed, ranging from 0.01 ha to 3.41 ha. The study also indicates that the household opium poppy area averages at 0.3 ha. Ancillary data on opium farm-gate prices was also collected and the average value of one kilo of raw opium was determined at USD 151. This would project the total 2002 farm-gate value of opium in Myanmar at some USD 125 million. Population statistics for the Shan State are very limited, but assuming a total population of 5 million and an estimated 241,700 households growing opium, the average annual income from opium would set an overall mean value of USD 500 per household.

To no surprise, extensive opium production fuels relatively high levels of domestic consumption. The analysis revealed that 1.6% of the Shan State population or 2.4% of the population aged 15 and above was smoking opium on a daily basis. Assuming an average consumption of 1.1 kg per addict per year, it is believed that the annual local consumption of opium in the Shan State could reach as high as 90 tons.

The study also helps to shed some light on socio-economic consequences of



opium, about which little was known. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime is planning to replicate such an exercise every year, in order to garner comparative data and identify emerging trends. The remarkable value of this survey lies in the fact that it constitutes a precious tool when designing adequate responses to the opium problem in Myanmar.

—Giovanni Gallo, UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Yangon

The 2002 Myanmar Opium Survey can be accessed on the UN ODC Myanmar website: www.undcp.org/myanmar/reports.html

DEA teaches interdiction techniques to Cambodia's anti-drug police



In a week-long training seminar, agents of the United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) gave Cambodia's anti-drug police in-depth guidance on the DEA approach to the interdiction of illicit drugs and drug traffickers.

DEA agents based in Thailand provided a comprehensive range of information and practical skills together with question and answer sessions on subjects ranging from the global and regional trends in drug trafficking to self-defence and investigative methods.

At the conclusion of the workshop, John Callery, one of the DEA Special Agents closely involved in the training, told the gathering of over 40 officers from the anti-drug police and the National Authority for Combating Drugs (NACD) that Cambodia needed to develop its own methods to tackle the burgeoning illicit drug problem



in the country.

"What you have learned is how the DEA tackles illicit drug trafficking", Callery said in his closing remarks. "However, we understand that Cambodia has a long way to go in developing its interdiction capacity. But we hope that at least some of the things that the DEA do in the fight against

drugs will immediately be of use to Cambodia's law enforcement community."

The DEA hopes to be able to undertake further training activities in the future, including some based in the provinces.

—Graham Shaw, UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Phnom Penh

Troubling success: regional project identifies new high-risk drug abuse

Promising new techniques addressing distressing trends are the subject of five groundbreaking Regional Centre publications. Compiled by the national drug agencies of Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam, these reports show how innovative approaches can make a difference in dealing with the region's changing drug patterns.

Arising out of a regional project enhancing institutional capacity to deal with high-risk groups, these techniques target the spread in abuse of new substances, as well as increased use by groups, populations and geographical areas with few previous drug problems. In particular, these techniques seek to counter the extension of ATS use into urban areas of many MOU countries where many users are starting drug use at young ages.

Responding to increased drug use

by schoolchildren, school drug use surveys were conducted in Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam. The surveys were conducted in several major urban areas in each country to reflect local ethnic and cultural diversity. Reports on each of these countries detail the results and how the questionnaires were devised. All three surveys report increased ATS use by youth making it the most abused substance in the region. Other findings included the unexpected such as in Laos where young women are using prescription drugs in non-prescription ways to excess.

Just conducting the survey in Myanmar was a success. In a country where even the admission of drug use can result in the person being placed on the drug register for life, obtaining the confidence of the school authorities and the students represented a major breakthrough. After a

pre-test when almost no students admitted drug use, the entire approach was overhauled. The teachers were integrated into the process from the beginning, a disclaimer was included exempting from prosecution students who responded positively to questions asking whether they had taken drugs, and the government officials agreed to wear civilian or local clothes. The result was the first comprehensive drug use survey of students in the country's history. In Vietnam, the survey was conducted in cooperation with the Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Action and reached some 20,000 school students.

Thailand adopted a different approach because it had already conducted school surveys. The project has provided a forum for teachers in Thailand to develop drug demand reduction work in schools as part of a package aimed at all forms of devi-

Thailand's highland projects inspire in Afghanistan

Highland development projects initiated in Thailand by the Royal family are setting an example for Afghanistan, a country which is currently facing a great challenge with regard to illicit opium poppy cultivation.

A UN-sponsored international meeting convened in Kabul in July 2002 to discuss anti-narcotic assistance to Afghanistan invited M.R. Disnadda Diakul, Secretary-General of the Mae Fah Luang Foundation and head of the Doi Tung Development Project, to talk about the experiences of Doi Tung in Thailand. Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai held an inaugural speech at the conference, where he focused on crop substitution as the major challenge ahead.

Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra noted the event in his weekly radio



address, where he emphasised that marketing support and processing techniques must be provided to the relevant areas if crop substitution is to be successful. The farmers must have viable alternatives to opium.

Prime Minister Thaksin had in a recent meeting with President Bush, Prime Minister Blair and UN Secretary-General Annan taken the opportunity to mention the role played by royal projects in improving the life of northern hilltribe people in Thailand.

Adapted from the website of the Doi Tung Development Project: <http://www.doitung.org/>

ant behavior. ONCB reported that initial results were so positive that it would like to expand the work initiated under this project to establish learning centers in each province in the country.

Work in Vietnam also included surveys of so-called non-captive populations (not located in a place such as a school or factory where ready access is available). Studies surveyed school youth, commercial sex workers, and street children. Using a technique known as snowballing (known users identify others who in turn identify yet other more users to be surveyed), a remarkable array of candid responses were obtained both in group surveys and in one-on-one questioning of some afterwards. Findings here again point to rapidly increased use of ATS among the many mobile people found on the margins of urban life in Vietnam.

New projects are now being devised to create interventions to deal directly with the people and their drug use habits identified by the techniques utilized in this project.

The project "Subregional Development of Institutional Capacity for Demand Reduction among High Risk Groups" (AD/RAS/97/C75) is currently finalizing its implementation.

Thailand accedes the 1988 Convention



As of 1 August 2002, Thailand is party to the 1988 UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. This is a very significant development: Thailand is too important a country and drug control player in this region to be left out of the international regime.

There has been a lot of advocacy in favour of Thailand joining the 1988 UN Convention, which is the most important international instrument for drug control. But the credit goes above all to the Thai

authorities, who did want to accede to the Convention all along but not before completing the painstaking task of over-seeing domestic legislation and upgrading its relevant parts, so that the country could be in perfect conformity with international standards right from the start.

Thailand has made one reservation regarding the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice.

—Gerassimos Fourlanos, UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Bangkok

DRUG EXPERTS: ATS abuse is second only to opiates in South East Asia



National drug experts attending the launch meeting of the new Regional ATS Data and Information Systems Project in Bangkok, Thailand agreed that regional drug problems are led by the prevalence of opiate abuse followed by amphetamine type stimulants (ATS).

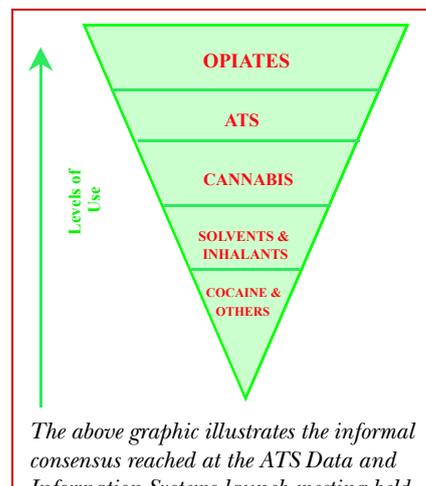
The same experts confirmed that ATS abuse is showing the greatest increase of all drug categories in the region. These views were provided at the inception and training meeting to launch the new regional project for improving ATS data and information systems.

The project intends to develop more accurate and comparable data for understanding patterns of ATS use in the

region and for exchanging data relevant to ATS abuse programmes. As an important and long-awaited project agreed to in the Sub-Regional Action Plan by the MOU countries, the outcome of the project will be an improved prioritization and coordination of strategies related to the regional ATS situation and a more united effort toward the decline in ATS abuse.

Delegates and observers from Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam, met in Bangkok on November 4 –7 2002. The attendance at the meeting of so many participants clearly signalled regional recognition of the growing ATS abuse problem and the need for more urgent responses.

The launch meeting was successful



The above graphic illustrates the informal consensus reached at the ATS Data and Information Systems launch meeting held in Bangkok on November 4 – 7. National experts agreed that opiate abuse has the highest regional prevalence, but that the trend toward ATS abuse is showing the most rapid increase and could soon replace opiate abuse as the number one regional drug abuse problem.

as participants openly discussed the ATS situations in their countries and agreed on common indicators for reporting and contributing to the development of national and regional project plans. The meeting was arranged and managed by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime with funding provided by the Government of Japan.

–Jeremy Douglas, UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Bangkok



PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND ACADEMIA – AN EXAMPLE OF HEALTHY SYNERGIES

On 22 - 28 September 2002 a national course in the Law of Drugs was conducted in Beijing, in close cooperation between NNCC, People's Public Security University, and UN Office on Drugs and Crime Regional Centre, namely the project "Strengthening of Judicial and Prosecutorial Drug Control Capacity in East Asia".

The course was very successful and rose a lot of interest and attention. Pleased with this event, university staff asked the Project Coordinator from the Office on Drugs and Crime to arrange an ad hoc seminar in international judicial co-operation for post-graduate researchers at the university.

WORTH NOTING

• Drug control cooperation between the US and China reached a new level on 29 October 2002, when officials from relevant authorities in both countries met in China to discuss strategic intelligence sharing with reference to drug control. This came out of agreements made at a meeting between the two countries on law enforcement cooperation held in March this year. Issues on the agenda included drug production and trafficking in the region, money laundering and proposals for China-US cooperation on drug control.

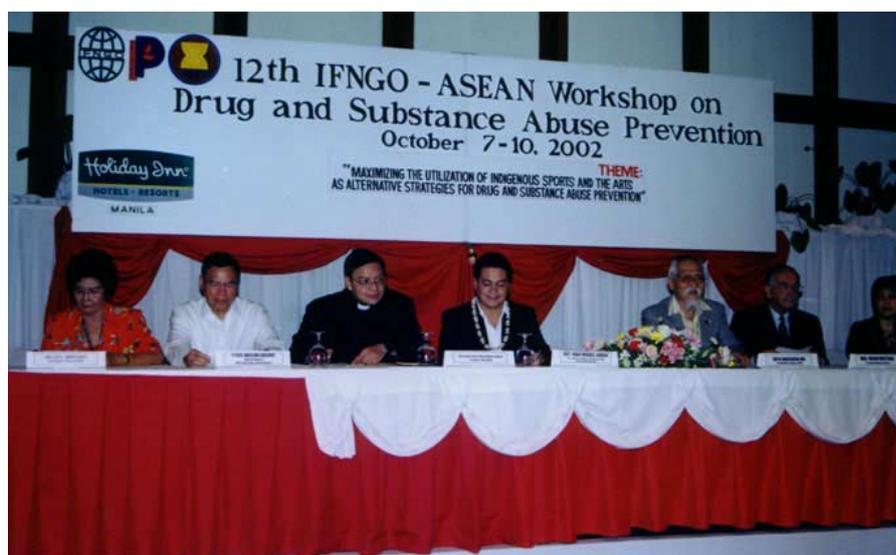
• The government response to child exploitation and trafficking in Cambodia has recently been restructured, with two special units under the Ministry of Interior merging into one: the Department of Juvenile Protection and Anti Human Trafficking. Increased arrests and rescue actions and use by the public of the police hotline to report cases (60-70 cases reported every month) are noted as indicators of an appropriate and functioning response.

• The Secretariat of the Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO) has moved from Brisbane to its new location in Noumea, New Caledonia, where it is scheduled to remain until late 2005. The OCO Secretariat can be reached online at www.ocosec.org, and in Noumea by tel: +687 25 38 38 and fax: +687 25 23 25.

• The US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in Bangkok has reported the emergence of "black heroin" in the region. Awaiting testing, the substance is described as a mix of methamphetamine and heroin, and the street price in Bangkok is in the region of 800 Baht per tablet.

The theme for the 2003 International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking (26 June) is "Let's talk about drugs".

Indigenous sports and arts for drug abuse prevention



The 12th IFNGO-ASEAN Workshop on prevention of drug abuse was held in Manila, Philippines, on 7-10 October.

It was organized and hosted by the Philippines' Council of NGOs Against Drug and Substance Abuse (PHILCADSA) in cooperation with the Philippines' Dangerous Drug Board (DDB) and the International Federation of NGOs Against Drug and Substance Abuse (IFNGO) under the theme "Maximizing the Utilization of Indigenous Sports and the Arts as Alternative Strategies for Drug Abuse Prevention".

The workshop was opened by Hon. Teofisto L. Guingona, Jr., Vice President of the Philippines, and attended by 165 participants from national NGOs of seven ASEAN countries plus 10 delegates representing other national/regional/international organisations including the UN Office on Drugs and Crime Regional Centre. The meeting adopted recommendations to utilize indigenous sports and arts for drug abuse prevention as follows.

1. There must be a specific policy statement by ASEAN NGOs on the issue of the utilization of indigenous sports and arts as alternative strategies for drug and substance abuse prevention.
2. The involvement of members of the community is critical, whether they

be community or political leaders or famous personalities such as artists. Strategies employed must be creative and able to attract youth. These programs and strategies must be monitored, evaluated and documented.

3. The programmes developed must contain the elements of socialization, recreation and discipline. The implementation needs to be holistic in nature.
4. Publicity is essential to create public awareness. Public and government support can be garnered through adequate publicity.
5. NGOs must be involved and the will to succeed must prevail if the relevant and accredited programmes are to be successfully implemented.
6. The ASEAN region must deliberately support and promote ASEAN indigenous sports and arts through annual festivals at national and ASEAN levels.
7. ASEAN NGOs must promote and provide opportunities to involve the youth in indigenous sports and arts. In future deliberations, the participation of the youth and their views need to be taken into consideration.

—Narumi Yamada, UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Bangkok

Law, its enforcement, and the international trade in people

Those who have ever worked in or even visited the developing world will relate to aspects of John Pilger's concept of 'unpeople' – a massive but quite voiceless 'underclass' of people who are largely invisible, forgotten and, in almost every catastrophe and war of the last half century, treated as disposable.

In this region, these unpeople include the poor, the disenfranchised, the illiterate or uneducated, ethnic minorities, those without citizenship, and the victims of modern phenomena such as globalisation and the digital divide. The victims of human trafficking are just such unpeople. They are susceptible to the most serious crimes such as murder, rape and kidnapping, as they are a truly marginalised group, existing largely outside the regularized structure of law enforcement, and in many cases have little or no protection under the law. These invisible people end up as women slaving in sweatshops to stitch designer clothing, men losing fingers in ramshackle timber mills, girls prostituted to more than 20 men a day in derelict and padlocked buildings, or boys forced into military service under threat of death.

What is happening to the victims of human trafficking in this region is outrageous, but who will protect them? Structures in some societies exist to support the vulnerable and provide them a voice - medical insurance, unemployment benefits, universal suffrage, childcare, minimum wage – and a criminal justice system that is equal to the task of meting out justice for all.

The answer to who could and should protect the victims of human trafficking could rest in the law. What role the law might play in protecting these innumerable, invisible people is one of the more pressing questions of our time. And there are signs that help is on the way – but we as members of civil society must not rest until this help is signed, sealed and delivered.

Demanding action on what was seen as

an urgent criminal threat, the international community overwhelmingly supported the UN Transnational Organized Crime Convention and its two Protocols. The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (the "Trafficking Protocol") represents a new beginning in addressing the problem of human trafficking in several respects.

Firstly it proffers a long-awaited and internationally agreed definition of "trafficking in persons". Secondly, it combines traditional crime control measures for investigating and punishing offenders with measures for protecting trafficked persons. Thirdly, the Protocol is an instrument that will serve as a model for national legislation, detailing provisions on conduct

These invisible people end up as women slaving in sweatshops to stitch designer clothing, men losing fingers in ramshackle timber mills, girls prostituted to more than 20 men a day in derelict and padlocked buildings, or boys forced into military service under threat of death.

that should be sanctioned, the severity of punishment, and effective measures to combat as well as prevent trafficking.

So in terms of helping the victims of human trafficking, international agreement is in place. This is the starting point. There remain two absolutely critical steps beyond this. The first entails every signatory state bringing into effect the range of laws required by the international covenants. And remembering that the covenants provide only a minimum agreed standard, each state should look into its collective conscience and particular situation to be sure their laws go beyond these minimums and form an effective legal cordon around the problem. Governments must take this first step. If the lawmakers in every jurisdiction are serious about protecting these marginalised populations, an effective regime of anti-trafficking legislation must be introduced in the most timely manner possible.

The second step involves invoking the

power of that law, and ensuring the law is understood by, and accessible to, those most in need of its protection. Written law is about a form of words – innumerable laws exist on the books round the world that are not acted upon. There are at least three things we must do to give law a chance. We must act to improve the level of understanding of the nature of the problem, and the understanding of the law that exists to protect people from trafficking. We must strive to ensure that those who most need protection by the law have access to it. And we must ensure that there is effective enforcement of the various laws in favour of the powerless victims, not against them - effective law enforcement against trafficking starts with political will backed up by resources. It also requires action

by civil society to identify and highlight instances of abuse, based on a consensus that we will not tolerate this modern day slavery in our midst.

All that we do against human trafficking should be done with a clear goal in mind. If we are serious about protecting these so-called 'unpeople' from trafficking we have to look into the heart of the crime. The essence of trafficking, one that serves to distinguish it from people smuggling, is the extent to which people lose control over their own situation. In trafficking, victims lose almost total control and are stripped of their capacity for self-determination. Signing and ratifying international covenants, enacting national laws, and devoting rights-focused enforcement resources to this issue should all be done with the goal of restoring to those victims some control over their own destiny. Until we use the law to restore some control to trafficking victims, arguably despite all our words and good intentions, they will continue to be victims.

Article by Brian Iselin, UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Bangkok, published in the Bangkok Post 9 October 2002.



Seminar says development is the **key** to **combating trafficking** in persons

"We must unite to form a human chain to break the inhumane trafficking chain" was the call of those who attended the seminar "Promoting Gender Equality to Combat Trafficking in Women and Children," co-convened by UNIFEM and the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bangkok on 7-9 October 2002.

The seminar, held with the support of ESCAP, was attended by over 150 high-level experts and state representatives from ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) countries, NGOs, and United Nations and other international development agencies. The seminar was the first international meeting of ASEM countries to focus specifically on the issue of, and possible responses to, trafficking in persons.

UNIFEM Regional Programme Director, Ms. Rosa Linda Miranda described the seminar as a "landmark initiative" and welcomed the focus on gender equality. Speaking at the seminar, Ms. Miranda said that broad cooperation was needed, given the increasing magnitude and global dimensions that trafficking had acquired,



and that she hoped the ASEM initiative to combat trafficking would be "the beginning of a more substantive cooperation among the countries of Asia and Europe" on the issue.

The conference called upon states and governments to reinforce trafficking as



Course in International Crime at the University of Adelaide

The Law School at the University of Adelaide in Adelaide, Australia, is offering a course in Transnational Crime and International Criminal Law, recognising the globalisation of contemporary crime and criminal justice. The course focuses on the growing body of international criminal law, more specifically the criminalization of transnational criminal activities, and national, regional and international efforts to investigate cases and prosecute offenders. Thematic areas to be



covered include drug trafficking, trafficking in firearms, migrant smuggling, human trafficking, terrorism, corruption and bribery, money laundering and law enforcement. More information can be found on the website of the University of Adelaide: www.law.adelaide.edu.au.

a priority development issue, recognizing that poverty reduction and sustainable livelihood options for women and girls are essential in combating trafficking. It urged those developing and implementing anti-trafficking strategies to emphasize a gender and rights-based approach to trafficking. Recommendations were made in six key areas, namely migration, livelihood development, legal strategies, social attitudes, education and social security protections.

The recommendations will be presented at the next ASEM meeting in March 2003 to be hosted by Thailand. Complementing this seminar's focus on prevention, the focus of next year's seminar will be on rehabilitation, repatriation and reintegration of the victims of trafficking in persons.

For more information please go to www.unifem-eseasia.org or contact Nikki Jecks at nikki@unifem-eseasia.org

Money Laundering and Marlin in the Republic of the Marshall Islands

July 2nd is the heart of a New Zealand winter and my departure from my home in Hamilton city was on a crisp morning of 10 degrees Celsius. Just a few months earlier, a telephone call from an associate had opened the door for an opportunity to work for the United Nations, providing technical assistance in the field of financial investigative work, proceeds of crime investigations and anti-money laundering compliance.

Twenty six hours later, after a few hours in Honolulu en route, we were landing on the atoll of Majuro, one of many hundreds of islands in the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) situated in the north Pacific. My lasting impression of the view from the aircraft as we approached was the narrowness of the land mass, surrounded on the one side by the beautiful deep blue waters of the Pacific ocean, and on the other by a lagoon in which a dozen or so ships were at anchor. Stepping out on to the tarmac and encountering the heat of a 28 degree day in Majuro was in stark contrast to the city I had left just a day earlier.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands is one of 15 jurisdictions included in a

list prepared by the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF), known as the Non-Cooperative Countries and Territories (NCCT) list. The NCCT process aims to identify critical weaknesses in anti-money laundering systems that serve as obstacles to international cooperation, thereby helping to reduce the vulnerability of the financial system to money laundering by ensuring that all financial centres implement internationally recognised standards. The Global Programme Against Money Laundering (GPML), based at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime headquarters in Vienna, offers countries and jurisdictions technical assistance in reaching those standards.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands

had made a request to the Office on Drugs and Crime for technical assistance, as it worked towards complying with the FATF requirements, and it was in response to this request that GPML decided to identify a law enforcement official who could spend several months there working side-by-side with RMI officials to put new financial investigations systems in place. I was to join GPML's successful Mentor Programme, as one of the several law enforcement and legal experts working for extended periods with jurisdictions all over the world.

Administrative arrangements were supervised by the RMI's Banking Commissioner, Alfred Alfred Jr., and office space was provided in the capitol building where the greater majority of government ministries are housed. The Banking Commissioner is the Head of the financial intelligence unit (FIU), which also has as its members the Police Commissioner and the Chief of Taxation and Revenue. A small jurisdiction like the RMI – where only the

I found a financial community very aware of its anti-money laundering responsibilities and absolutely committed to the principle of playing its role within the RMI's anti-money laundering regime.

Bank of the Marshall Islands, the Bank of Guam and the Bank of Hawaii have a presence (and the Bank of Hawaii is closing its operations at the end of November) – can not usually sustain a full-time FIU.

A reporting scheme is in place, that requires currency transaction reports (reports of all transactions exceeding \$10,000) and suspicious transaction reports to be submitted to the Banking Commissioner's office. The principal law enforcement agency in the RMI is the National Police. The Police undertake investigations, which are then passed to the Office of the Attorney General for prosecution and further direction, if necessary.

At the start of my Mentorship in the RMI, I spent a four-week period working in

the Banking Commissioner's Office, providing assistance in the preparation of operating procedures, Guidelines for Financial Institutions, the selection and training of an additional staff member, and other administrative functions. Later, I moved on to devote my time to assisting both the Police and the Prosecutor in the Office of the Attorney General.

Those of us who are so very fortunate to have come from jurisdictions with healthy law enforcement operating budgets marvel when we share the experience of law enforcement in jurisdictions that are not so financially well off, and where facilities are so limited. There was no absence, however, of the characteristics I have become used to in the law enforcement environment, and the sense of humour of the Marshallese investigator does not differ from the very same sense of humour present in every other law enforcement agency with which I have been associated. This unique law enforcement culture ensures the bonds

existing within one investigative agency are soon shared with strangers of a similar background, and I was grate-

ful that my history as an investigator in the New Zealand Police enabled me to be welcomed into the brotherhood of the Marshallese Police.

Coinciding with my presence in the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Comptroller of an educational institution had been arrested and charged with misappropriating the institution's funds. At the request of the Attorney General's Office, I worked with local Police to collate the required evidence, to prepare the evidence for presentation at trial, and to trace the funds totalling US\$641,000, misappropriated over a 2-year period. I was indeed fortunate to be able to use the investigation as a teaching exercise as we attempted to reconstruct the financial activity of the

Team-building: UN Financial Investigations Mentor Bruce Russell (left) and colleagues from the Marshall Islands anti-money laundering community celebrate with their prize-winning marlin.



offender and trace what was, by Marshalese standards, a vast amount of money. Never in the history of the RMI had there been a case of such magnitude. Indeed, in almost every respect, the case contained components of each of the requirements of the “terms of reference” for my Mentor assignment, and there was no better way of demonstrating practical application of the investigative needs than with a case such as this. At the time of writing, the offender had been committed to trial following a preliminary hearing.

An FATF “onsite” examination took place during my assignment and I was fortunate to accompany the team throughout their deliberations. The RMI now eagerly awaits the outcome of the FATF plenary meeting in October 2002 to determine whether they will remain on or be removed from the NCCT list . *

As the end of this three-month assignment nears, it is to some extent with a degree of sadness that I prepare for my departure, as there is so much one can do in a tiny nation such as this to contrib-

ute towards the development of investigative skills. With some degree of confidence and with the benefit of having been able to review a broad range of banking transactions, I can say that I found a financial community very aware of its anti-money laundering responsibilities and absolutely committed to the principle of playing its role within the RMI’s anti-money laundering regime.

As for the beautiful waters of the Pacific, they were not wasted on me, and on many of my weekends I spent time diving both the crystal clear lagoon and the open sea. The abundance of fish life is startling and I will never forget my underwater time with giant barracouda, sharks, tuna, trevally, eagle ray, grouper, spiny lobster, turtle and the many hundreds of species of reef fish. Nor will I forget my first experience of bill-fishing, landing two marlin and capturing first prize in the September tournament of the Marshall Islands Billfishing Club.

Thank you, GPML, for providing me with an opportunity to spend time in a part of the world I would otherwise have

never known, and for, in some small way, the feeling that I have been able to make a difference by contributing to the improvement of skills and the development of anti-money laundering standards in a jurisdiction other than my own.

—Bruce Russell, Global Programme against Money Laundering, UN Office on Drugs and Crime
Email: gpmi@odccp.org

Bruce Russell has now left the Republic of the Marshall Islands. He continues his role as a UN Financial Investigations Mentor in the Pacific region under a joint initiative co-funded by the United Nations Global Programme against Money Laundering and the Commonwealth Secretariat. Based at the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Bruce will be working with Fiji, the Cook Islands, Nauru, Samoa and Vanuatu in the coming year. The United Nations Global Programme against Money Laundering would like to thank its partners, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, for their commitment and support in developing this unique venture.

* The RMI was removed from the FATF list of Non-Cooperative Countries and Territories in October this year (editor’s note).

Opening of **ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING** project office

On 31 October 2002, the new ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) Anti-Money Laundering Project Office was inaugurated at the headquarters of the Thai Anti-Money Laundering Office (AMLO) in Bangkok. AMLO



provides the UN Office on Drugs and Crime with office space for this new three year project aiming to develop sustainable institutional capacity in Asia to address money laundering at a national, regional and international level. The Office on Drugs and Crime has been responsible for equipping the office to a suitable standard and will be maintaining it throughout the duration of the project.

One of the main activities of the project is to provide properly coordinated and prioritized training and technical assistance to the Asian countries and, thereby, developing or improving the countries' anti-money laundering programmes. In particular, joint and separate training is required for legal, financial and law enforcement personnel. The first stage of the delivery of this training involves an analysis and assessment of the training and technical assistance needs for the selected ASEM Asian countries. The priority countries are Indonesia, the Philip-



pines, China, Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia. Technical experts will be hired during the project's first phase to prepare and deliver a needs analysis report on anti-money laundering efforts in various countries.

Based on these results, course outlines and work programs for training and technical assistance will be developed. The first two countries to be assessed are Thailand and Malaysia, where the needs assessment will be carried out during November and December this year. The remaining priority countries will thereafter be visited and assessed at the beginning of 2003.

–Claire Smellie, UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Bangkok

New from Indonesia:

“**HEALTHNEWS**”: a magazine for a better life style

HealthNews was first published on 26 June 2002, on the occasion of the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, with the unique purpose of covering health topics with a significant focus on drug issues to educate people, especially youth, on the dangers of illicit drugs.

Celebrated as the first “media against drugs” in Indonesia, this publication is pioneering the concept of a magazine entirely devoted to promote a better and healthier lifestyle. The third issue is expected to be published in English as well.

The HealthNews magazine meets the need to collect and present information and voice opinions on topics related to health and drugs. The publisher of this

magazine is the RIDMA Foundation, an Indonesian NGO. Support comes from partners such as the National Narcotics Board (NNB) and the NGO LSM Bersama that help distributing HealthNews to all provincial police offices, governors and ministries, finally reaching the desks of decision-makers in the country.

HealthNews supports the national campaign “Indonesia Healthy 2010” and monitors current topics and trends among



decision-makers in the country. The magazine tries to give an insight into the issues of drugs and health by collecting accurate information that is discussed with medical experts in an entertaining fashion. It covers the lifestyle of the middle and upper classes, especially men and women between 25 and 45 years old.

Moreover, HealthNews also aspires to contribute to the ACCORD (ASEAN and China Cooperative Operations in Response to Dangerous Drugs) process by measuring and discussing the impact of drug abuse.

–Patricia M. Budiyanto, UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Bangkok

Globalization, **drugs** and the **stimulant** society

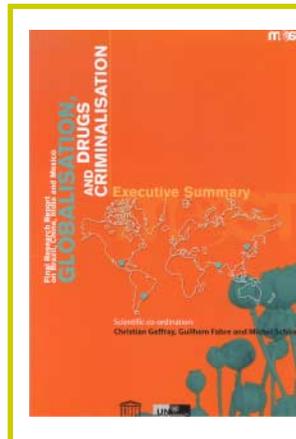
Think global. Act local. The interactive process of globalization and community has become embedded in our everyday life.

Cheeseburgers, cappuccinos, and mobile phones are everywhere and within reach of those touched by the global economy. Globalization has presented communities with far more opportunities to increase personal income and spending. It is this capacity of globalization, to extend to all corners of the world, which is often hailed as the force driving the modern world toward a truly egalitarian and democratic state. Indeed globalization has resulted in the dismantling of borders and allowed for broader access to products previously restricted to particular segments of the population in particular locales.

One of the most striking examples of this trend is the greater availability and consumption of illicit drugs. This global dimension of the drug market was the focal point of a recent international conference on "Drug Trafficking and Economics in a Comparative Perspective" held in Hong Kong on 23 September 2002.

Among the key issues of the conference were the production and use of amphetamine type stimulants (ATS) in recent years. The latest report on Global Drug Trends documents the worldwide rise in ATS use. According to estimates by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (ODC), there are currently 33 million people using amphetamines and seven million people using ecstasy. One of the most discerning aspects of the growth of ATS production and consumption is its concentration within Asia. The ODC figures indicate that two-thirds of the 33 million users are in the region, especially in Thailand, the Philippines, Japan and Taiwan.

Yet, in many ways, it should be no surprise that with the increase in economic opportunities and cultural demands, individuals, particularly youth, turn to stimulants to step up their speed and energy. In essence, globalization and society demand it. In many places across the world, research consistently shows that ATS users come to



At the conference in Hong Kong, the Research Report on Globalisation, Drugs and Criminalisation, a joint publication of UNESCO and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, was launched. The research report covers Brazil, China, India and Mexico, and is divided up into four separate parts, namely (i) drug trafficking and the state, (ii) drug trafficking, criminal organisations and money laundering, (iii) social and cultural dimensions of drug trafficking, and (iv) methodological, institutional and policy dimensions of the research on drug trafficking.

The research forms part of the Management of Social Transformations (MOST) Programme of UNESCO.

rely on its energizing effects. In many parts of Asia, transportation drivers, entertainers, and even office workers find amphetamines and methamphetamines help them to stay awake for long hours. Construction workers find it helps them to cope with labor intensive, physically demanding work. Teenagers are resorting to it as an aid for studying long hours. Young people perceive ecstasy as providing them with the real possibility of transcending the demands of education and work without any perceived negative consequences.

This is an attractive feature and alternative for young people who have lived in societies where heroin has traditionally

zures were concentrated in South and East Asia. As noted at the conference, China has been a source of ATS in East Asia and Myanmar and Thailand in Southeast Asia.

Given the global culture in which we live in today, what are the optimum strategies for addressing the drug market? One option described at the conference involves a policy which is rooted in public participation and visionary leadership. It must also be rooted in reducing the cultural demands placed on young people such that they no longer feel the need to transcend their daily lives.

The conference was hosted by the Centre for Criminology, University of Hong

It should be no surprise that with the increase in economic opportunities and cultural demands, individuals, particularly youth, turn to stimulants to step up their speed and energy.

In essence, globalization and society demand it.

been dominant. Hong Kong is a case in point as it has experienced a dramatic and rapid shift in youth drug consumption. The number of reported heroin users among young drug users in Hong Kong fell from 73 percent in 1995 to 14 percent in 2001. By contrast, while there were no reported cases of ecstasy use in 1995, young ecstasy users accounted for over one-half of the total reported drug users in 2001. In the last three years, ketamine has become popular as well among young users and is often used as a cocktail with ecstasy.

These trends in consumption are matched by production. The ODC reports that over 80 percent of global ATS sei-

Kong along with the French Centre for Research on Contemporary China. Speakers included policy

officials and researchers such as Dr. Sandro Calvani, Representative and Head of the UN ODC Regional Centre for East Asia and the Pacific and Dr. Michel Schiray from the National Centre of Scientific Research, Dr. Guilhem Fabre from the University of LeHavre/EHESS China Centre and representatives from the Hong Kong Police and Narcotics Division.

For further details about the event or the Centre, please visit <http://www.hku.hk/crime>

—K. Joe Laidler, Associate Professor of Sociology and Research Fellow of the Centre for Criminology at the University of Hong Kong.

A Hearing on Death Penalty and Drug Crimes

Today's drug problem, resulting from complex and interconnected causes, cannot be solved only through governmental intervention. There is a real need to search for more comprehensive and participatory drug control measures, especially by interacting with civil society. Drug control should take a more balanced and integrated approach, applying a methodology of adaptive change. Such an approach is relevant for the issue of capital punishment in cases of drug offences, by many considered a very controversial question.

Against this background, the idea developed to organise a forum where a wide range of civil society representatives would take part to discuss the issue. On 28 October 2002, "the Hearing on Human Rights in the Framework of Punishment of Drug Crimes" was co-hosted by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (ODC) Regional Centre and the UN Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) at the UN Conference Center in Bangkok. The hearing was convened with about 50 participants and speakers from international NGOs, academia, and law enforcement institutions, with the opening address of Dr. Sandro Calvani, Representative of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime Regional Centre in Bangkok.

Death penalty has been culturally consistent in many places in the Asia Pacific region, where only three countries have hitherto abolished the death penalty: Australia, Cambodia and the Philippines (the latter however, reintroduced it recently). The other countries in this part of the world are retaining the death penalty, at least on paper. With particular focus on drug offenses, only Cambodia and Japan do not impose the death penalty on any offenses in drug control laws, while five MOU countries – China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam – and the Republic of Korea prescribe the imposition of death penalty on certain offenses of serious nature (such as trafficking of certain amounts of drugs or



involvement of organized criminal groups and use of firearms).

Starting from this reality, the opinions expressed at the hearing were split between justifying the need for capital punishment and arguing against its enforcement for drug-related crimes.

The justification of death penalty imposition is often triggered by the public's sen-



timents of insecurity. As the example of Thailand shows, sentencing and execution can be two completely different matters, where sentencing alone is argued to provide a significant degree of security among the public (as few of the sentenced executions are actually carried out). People may thus feel safer by the retention of the death penalty, but based on such recognition, some argue, it could be counterproductive because root causes of crimes tend to be left unaddressed. Moreover, since the deterrent effects of the death penalty have not been proved yet, rehabilitation, rather than punishment should be

recommended, according to some observers. Also, many contend that severe penalties cannot necessarily deter people from committing offenses, since in many cases offenders expose themselves to the risk of being killed when they commit offenses. The rationale in this case is that efficient law enforcement, rather than the deterrent effects of the penalty, would better prevent crimes.

The defenders of death penalty imposition also have to acquiesce to the pertinent points raised in the human rights debate. A fundamental view here is that the right to life is the most basic human right of every individual, which cannot be conveyed or removed, that is not alienable. Thus the director of Amnesty International Thailand pointed out that there are some aspects that cannot be ignored: the death penalty is a violation of the right to life; it is a form of cruel, inhumane treatment and, contrary to other forms of punishment, it is irreversible; every justice system is fallible and the imposition of death penalty often involves discrimination (by for example race or economic status). Within the human rights approach, an important point is also the view that any right can be denied if such a basic human right as the right to life is not safeguarded.

A course of fruitful discussion was concluded by the end remarks of Mr. Nicholas Howen, Regional Representative for OHCHR Asia-Pacific, that this event should be the starting point rather than the destination for the probing into this issue.

–Fumio Ito, UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Bangkok.

Is engagement per se constructive? UN-private sector partnerships through the global compact

The Global Compact is a UN-sponsored platform for encouraging and promoting good corporate practices and learning experiences in the areas of human rights, labour and environment. It proposes business involvement in the promotion of sustainable growth to ensure that the benefits of globalisation are more evenly shared and the negative effects of globalisation reduced.

Engagement per se, however, is not always constructive. For example, the positive effects of engagement may be corrupted or usurped by undemocratic and/or kleptocratic regimes. The need for companies to choose a responsible approach with regard to all effects of their operations – direct and indirect, wanted or unwanted, predictable or unpredictable – is as important as it is difficult to define and frame. That corporations ought not to be directly involved in human rights abuses is evident, but how far does a company's responsibility reach when it comes to abuse by the hands of others? To what extent should the business of business advance the quality of life of those touched by its dealings?

The second principle of the human rights section of the Global Compact initiative contends that corporations should "make sure they are not complicit in human rights abuses". Understanding and clarifying the ramifications of this principle – particularly when it relates to zones of violent conflict – is a task of major importance and of considerable interest, practically as well as academically. The International Peace Research Institute in Oslo (Norway) and the United Nations University have taken up this challenge and are implementing a

collaborative project on business engagement in conflict zones, with special emphasis on indirect responsibility/complicity. Of particular interest is the revisiting of the international relations concept of "just war" (a theoretical tradition concerned with identifying situations of ethically justifiable war and forms of warfare) and its adaptation to a new concept of "just business" with the aim of presenting a theoretical framework where the just war tradition can serve as a model for legislation on international business practices.

For the purpose of understanding indirect responsibility, the Doctrine of Double Effect (DDE) appears particularly interesting. DDE assigns responsibility for negative and/or unintended side effects and demands that they are prevented or minimised. A revised corporate DDE could provide a viable assessment framework and a practical tool for decision-makers in the corporate world.

While there will always be uncertainties attached to whether engagement will turn out to be constructive, expectations should be that at least business engagement is genuinely responsible and morally acceptable.

–Martina Melis, UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Bangkok

The above is based on the article "Corporate Social Responsibility: Developing a Framework for Assessment of Indirect Responsibility and Complicity", by L. Bomann-Larsen, G. Reichberg, H. Syse and O. Wigen in "Work in Progress", vol.16, n.3/Summer 2002, pg 27, United Nations University, Tokyo.

On 1 October 2002, the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention changed its name to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. This simplified name is hoped to facilitate recognition of the institution as a single entity, while also underscoring that it will continue to carry out its different mandates in the areas of drugs and crime.

PERSONALIA



Mr. Tun Nay Soe (Myanmar) joined the Regional Centre as a Data Analyst for the project Regional Cooperative Mechanism to Monitor and Execute the ACCORD Plan of Action. The project aims to contribute to the execution of the ACCORD Plan of Action by improving regional coordination on drug control issues among ASEAN countries and China on the basis of mutually shared information and monitoring. He will assist in this project by establishing the computerized information gathering and networking system on a turn-key basis.



Mr. Jeremy Douglas (Canada) joined the Regional Centre as the Regional Project Coordinator for the new Amphetamine Type Stimulant (ATS) Data

and Information Systems project. His specific tasks are to coordinate with relevant professional and regional interests, to participate in the preparation and design of country-based information assessment and collection activities, and to conduct regular ongoing reporting according to the requirements of the project. Jeremy has previously worked with the Government of Ontario Canada, the UN in New York, and he has also worked in the Caribbean. He has a Masters degree from the London School of Economics.

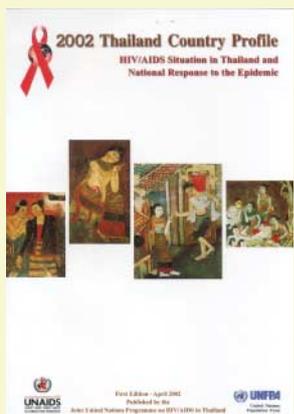


Ms. Melanie Adams (UK) has recently joined the Regional Centre as an Intern to work in the area of human trafficking. Melanie comes from

London and has a degree in American Studies and Spanish as well as post-graduate qualifications in law. Her main role will be to assist Brian Iselin, Regional Legal Expert, in researching and reporting on legal tools and assistance against human trafficking in the region. She has recently moved to Bangkok permanently.

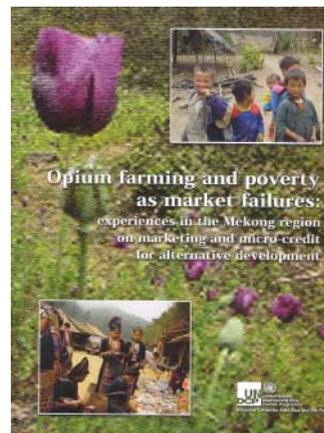
2002 Thailand Country Profile: HIV/AIDS Situation in Thailand and National Response to the Epidemic. Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS in Thailand, Bangkok, April 2002.

This is the first edition of what aims to become a reference document for all concerned with the HIV/AIDS issue in Thailand. To be regularly updated, it provides a detailed overview of the HIV/AIDS situation in the country and the countermeasures taken by national and international partners, focusing on education/prevention and care/support. The Country Profile warns that, while Thailand is generally considered to be successful in fighting HIV/AIDS, indifference and complacency could cause great harm. HIV prevalence remains relatively high in the country.



The Country Profile is available from the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS in Thailand in Bangkok, tel: (+66 2) 288 1882, fax: (+66 2) 280 1414, email: unaids.thailand@un.or.th.

Opium Farming and Poverty as Market Failures: Experiences in the Mekong Region on Marketing and Micro-Credit for Alternative Development. UNDCP Regional Centre for East Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok 2002. Meeting in Lao PDR in March 2002, practitioners and experts working in alternative development in the region discussed experiences in marketing products that can replace opium as a cash-earner and the role of micro-credit in promoting local production of alternative products. This regional seminar was the first opportunity to discuss systematically these issues which had been felt closely by people in the field for some time. It was organised under the project Alternative Development Cooperation in East Asia, which is implemented through the UN Office on Drugs and Crime Regional Centre in Bangkok. The publication is a collection of papers presented at the seminar, both country, regional and technical papers, and also provides an overview of key issues surfacing in the discussions and recommendations suggested by seminar participants.

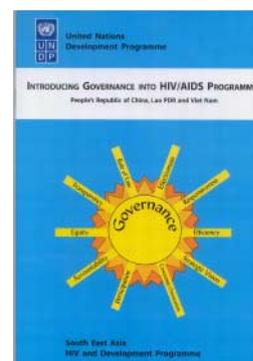


The book is available from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime Regional Centre in Bangkok, tel: (+66 2) 288 2091, fax: (+66 2) 281 2129, email: rcdcp@undcp.un.or.th. It will also be available on the internet: www.undcp.un.or.th.

Introducing Governance into HIV/AIDS Programmes: People's Republic of China, Lao PDR and Viet Nam. UNDP South East Asia HIV and Development Programme, Bangkok, 2002. UNDP has identified good governance as a critical element in the reduction of HIV vulnerability. During the last few years, several national AIDS programmes have thus introduced good governance features into their programmes.

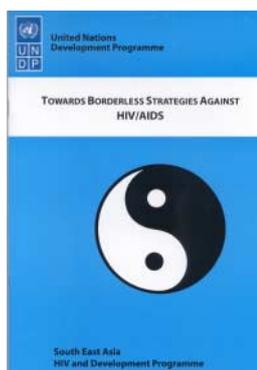
The publication is the first compilation of practical examples from the region in applying good governance principles to reduce HIV vulnerability. While good governance often is promoted and spearheaded by NGOs and community-based organisations, this publication sheds light on efforts by governments and national AIDS programmes.

The publication is available from UNDP South East Asia HIV and Development Programme in Bangkok, tel: (+66 2) 288 2165, fax: (+66 2) 280 1852, and internet: www.hiv-development.org.



Towards Borderless Strategies against HIV/AIDS. UNDP South East Asia HIV and Development Programme, Bangkok, 2002.

This publication focuses on the issues of population movement and mobility in the HIV/AIDS context, and the need to address these beyond the national level. It covers important milestones in the development of a regional awareness on the issue of mobility, and argues that, in operationalizing this awareness, programmes have to expand their activities from interventions on migrants to more complex and holistic interventions on mobility systems. The publication is available from UNDP South East Asia HIV and Development Programme in Bangkok, tel: (+66 2) 288 2165, fax: (+66 2) 280 1852, and internet: www.hiv-development.org.



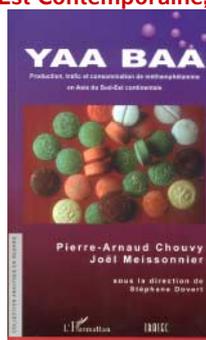
2002 Hong Kong Narcotics Report. Narcotics Division, Security Bureau and Action Committee Against Narcotics, Hong Kong, 2002.

This report, written in English and Chinese, covers the work of the Hong Kong Narcotics Division during 2001 in several areas. Covered areas include policy-making and coordination, research, suppression of production and trafficking in drugs, efforts against money laundering and terrorist financing, preventive education/publicity, and treatment/rehabilitation. It also reports on the activities of the Beat Drugs Fund, which promotes community efforts in the fight against drugs.

The report comes with a CD-ROM and is available from Narcotics Division, Government Secretariat in Hong Kong SAR, tel: (+85 2) 2867 2748, fax: (+85 2) 2810 1790, internet: www.info.gov.hk/nd/.



Yaa Baa: Production, Trafic et Consommation de Méthamphétamine en Asie du Sud-Est Continentale. Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy & Joel Meissonnier, Institut de Recherche sur l'Asie du Sud Est Contemporaine, Bangkok, 2002. "Yaa baa, 'the crazy drug'. In Thai, the street name for methamphetamine sounds like a warning, a warning that has not prevented hundreds of thousands of Thais, mostly youth, from using it. Hard work drug or leisure drug, it is a real social phenomenon that is closely linked to the economic evolution and cultural changes that the Kingdom has experienced over the recent years" (translation of back cover). This 300-page book covers extensively the yaa baa epidemic in Thailand. The book is published in French by the Bangkok-based Research Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia, tel: (+66 2) 260 2800/260 2798, fax: (+66 2) 260 2800, email: irasec@anet.net.th, internet: www.irasec.com.



Bulletin on Narcotics Vol LIII, Nos 1 and 2, 2001: Dynamic drug policy: Understanding and controlling drug epidemics. United Nations International Drug Control Programme, Vienna, 2002. This issue of the Bulletin consists of papers from a symposium on drug epidemics. Main topics addressed include the use of dynamic models for drug markets, modelling drug abuse and controlling and estimating costs of IDU-related health problems. Implications of findings for policy-making are also discussed. Being a UN publication, it is available in all six official languages, including Chinese. The publication is available from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Vienna, tel: (+43 1) 26060 0, fax: (+43 1) 26060 5866, email: odccp@odccp.org, internet: www.odccp.org.



Best Practices on Drug Abuse Treatment and Rehabilitation in Asia: A Guidebook. The Colombo Plan, Drug Advisory Programme, Colombo, 2002.

This book provides an overview of guiding principles for effective drug abuse treatment and rehabilitation, and documents various model programmes that have been found effective in Asia. The final chapter reviews issues and challenges across four domains: treatment research, institutions, modalities and social acceptability. The publication is available from the Colombo Plan Secretariat, tel: (+94 1) 564 448, fax: (+94 1) 564 531, email: cplan@slt.lk.



Sport: Using Sport for Drug Abuse Prevention. Performance: Using Performance for Substance Abuse Prevention. Equal Partners: Involving and empowering youth in youth events. These three publications are published by UN/ODCCP Global Youth Network, Vienna, 2002. These publications are "how to" guides written by young people for youth and youth workers, under the UN Office on Drugs and Crime Global Youth Network Project. They focus on ways to use sport, performance and youth involvement for drug abuse prevention. In the booklet on sport, various ways to use sport to prevent drug abuse are covered, and there is also a longer section on the practical steps involved in starting up a programme. These publications are available from United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Vienna, tel: (+43 1) 26060 0, fax: (+43 1) 26060 5866, email: odccp@odccp.org, internet: www.odccp.org. They can be downloaded directly from the internet and the publication on sports is also available in Chinese.

Enhancing Life Skills in Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation: A Manual for Practitioners and Trainers. The Colombo Plan, Drug Advisory Programme, Colombo, 2002. This book is a practical guide to the application of life skill approaches to drug abuse treatment. It provides a short background on the importance of various skills and practical exercises that may be used by practitioners. It also has sections on family therapy, basic skills in drug counseling, and methods for implementing life skills training. The publication is available from the Colombo Plan Secretariat, tel: (+94 1) 564 448, fax: (+94 1) 564 531, email: cplan@slt.lk.

List of documents recently distributed by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime Regional Centre (Bangkok)

- 18/2002 Drug Use of the Marginalized in Vietnam
- 19/2002 Assessment of Computer Based Training in Turkey (AD/RAS/87/C51)
- 20/2002 Eastern Horizons No.11, September 2002
- 21/2002 Opium Farming and Poverty as Market Failures: Experiences in the Mekong Region on Marketing and Micro-credit for Alternative Development

The above documents can be obtained through the website of UN ODC Regional Centre for East Asia and the Pacific (<http://www.undcp.un.or.th>)

HIV in Asia Is Everybody's Business

By Kim Hak Su, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and Sandro Calvani, Chairperson of the United Nations Asia-Pacific theme group on HIV/AIDS

Let's get the bad news over with quickly. Last week's "AIDS Epidemic Update 2002" from UNAIDS highlighted a harrowing reality for Asia: over 7.2 million people now have the HIV virus. That's 600,000 more people who are HIV positive now than when the last Global AIDS Report was released six months ago.

An estimated 490,000 Asians have died of AIDS-related illnesses in the last year. Projections indicate that another eleven million Asians will contract HIV in the next five years.

Those numbers raise a grim question: can Asia avoid the devastation HIV has brought to Africa?

Now for the good news: Despite the spread of the virus in Asia and HIV's continuing decimation of sub-Saharan Africa, some countries have begun to check the rise in HIV infection.

By de-stigmatizing HIV and ending discrimination against HIV positive individuals and those most at risk, Asia still has a chance to contain its epidemic. Breaking the barriers of silence and ignorance that stand in the way of pragmatic interventions is crucial to halting the spread of the disease.

Success stories in HIV work are scattered across the globe: HIV infection rates in Uganda, Ukraine and the Dominican Republic have slowly begun to fall. South Africa is seeing a falling infection rate in young mothers, a population which is an indicator of HIV rates in the population at large. In Ethiopia's capital city of Addis Ababa, infection rates in young women have fallen by one-third.

Asia, too, has its success stories. Thailand's number of HIV cases has been brought down from nearly 143,000 new cases per year in the early nineties to 25,000 today. Cambodia, which has the highest HIV rates in Asia, decreased the prevalence rates in pregnant women from 3.2% in 1996 to 2.8% in 2001.

Generalized epidemics can still be prevented in China, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam if action is taken now. A concerted campaign to address stigmatization of and discrimination against HIV positive individuals and those at greatest risk is key to successful HIV/AIDS prevention.

As AIDS researcher Alan Whiteside of the University of Natal pointed out in a recent Financial Times article, "In every country in which there has been success in dealing with the epidemic, AIDS has been destigmatized [by the government]."

Stigma and discrimination are HIV's best friends. They are created by and thrive on fear. Because of stigma and discrimi-

nation, people fear being tested. They may refrain from using a condom because they fear their partner will think they are suggesting it precisely because they are HIV positive. Stigma and discrimination mean that HIV positive people are often afraid of losing jobs, of being ostracized by their communities or afraid that their children will be denied schooling because other parents won't want the child of an HIV+ person playing with their child.

There cannot be too many messengers--be they governments, rock musicians or religious leaders--carrying this news: discrimination and stigma against HIV positive individuals and those at greatest risk harms us all.

In some instances, individuals who are already ostracized to some degree by society are stigmatized yet a second time by HIV. Currently Asia's epidemic is fueled in many countries by injecting drug use, commercial sex work and men who have sex with men. Yet individuals involved in these activities are often considered outside normal society rather than people who are part of that society but who have behaviors that may not be socially acceptable to everyone.

Anyone who thinks those behaviors only affect limited parts of society is wrong. Many men who have sex with men marry or have sexual relationships with women. The sexual networks of intravenous drug users extend into the wider community. Commercial sex work is a fact of life throughout Asia.

Marginalized populations are part of all societies. Discrimination against these groups inhibits a truly effective response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Work in India and other countries has shown that effective HIV prevention programs target both marginalized and general populations.

To save Asia from the tragedy which has enveloped parts of Africa, governments, civil society, businesses and individuals must work to end stigma and discrimination against HIV positive individuals. HIV positive people are most often fully contributing members of society, and among the most powerful and effective voices in HIV prevention.

In addition, government officials need to put aside biases against behaviors that may not meet their own personal norms and target interventions, without judgment, where they are most needed. Only by combating stigma and discrimination and replacing prejudices with prevention programs will Asia successfully counter the spread of HIV.

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