South-East Asia and the Pacific
India

The UNODC Regional Office for South Asia in New Delhi, India, covers six countries: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka. The region is home to a quarter of the world’s population and flanked by two of the three major illicit drug-cultivating regions of the world.

Drug-related HIV

South Asia has 70 per cent of Asia’s HIV/AIDS cases. After South Africa it has the largest absolute number of people living with HIV/AIDS, approximately 10 per cent of the world’s affected population. India alone has an estimated 5.1 million cases. Responding to this immense challenge, UNODC devoted two out of every three dollars it spent in South Asia in 2005 to efforts to head off the drug-related HIV epidemic.

UNODC has incorporated HIV-awareness into its drug-demand reduction programmes in South Asia. In 2005, it launched a pilot national awareness programme and a school-based prevention programme to drive home the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS through drug abuse.

As treatment of drug abuse is an effective way to keep HIV in check, UNODC delivered outreach services for street drug users. In 2005, UNODC continued with projects in which “peer volunteers”—former or recovering drug users—participated at 24 sites throughout South Asia to reduce high-risk behaviour among young drug users. UNODC focused on vulnerable groups such as street children, sex workers and migrant workers. Following a nine-month trial in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka, UNODC expanded the initiative to 120 sites across South Asia.

The experience of the Regional Office demonstrated that it was possible to reach out to current drug users who are not receiving treatment by using peer volunteer groups. In general, there was a reduction in drug consumption. Even where there were no significant changes in the prevalence of injecting drug use, there was a marked reduction in the sharing of needles—a major HIV-risk factor. Equally important, the target groups adopted safer sexual behaviour and both their awareness of HIV/AIDS and their willingness to undergo testing increased significantly. Low-cost community-based care and support was also further developed.

The north-east of India contains two of the six Indian states currently witnessing an HIV/AIDS epidemic driven by drug-abuse, Manipur and Nagaland. A third, Mizoram, bordering heroin-production sites in Myanmar, may soon suffer the same fate. UNODC operations in north-eastern India expanded to focus on treatment demand, peer outreach and support to the partners of HIV-positive injecting drug users. In 2005, UNODC was designated lead United Nations agency to manage implementation of a new HIV-prevention project aimed at building capacity, promoting cooperation between agencies, raising awareness of HIV and providing risk-reduction services through non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Combating human trafficking

Law-enforcement agencies in the region lack the capacity to prevent trafficking of human beings, especially of women and children. The level of awareness of the
issue is low and the law-enforcement response is inadequate. Some countries do not have dedicated national agencies to deal with the problem.

In addition to national awareness-raising efforts, UNODC started a global project in 2004 to fund local NGO initiatives, 12 of which are in India. The Regional Office continued to coordinate this work in 2005, helping to ensure that victims of any violent crime, including human trafficking, are provided with safe shelters, psychological care and legal assistance. These successful ventures could be replicated in other parts of India.

In 2005, the Government of India also laid the groundwork for a two-year UNODC training project to raise the awareness of law-enforcement officers about human trafficking and build their capacity to investigate and prosecute offenders. The project will be carried out in partnership with the Government of India, state governments, training institutions and NGOs. This will be the largest single anti-human trafficking project undertaken by the Regional Office and the largest such initiative funded by the Government of the United States of America.
UNODC continued to support the extraordinary progress made by Laos where opium poppy cultivation has dropped by 93 per cent since 1998. In order to ensure the sustainability of opium poppy eradication, UNODC and the Government of Laos devised a new national programme strategy for a balanced approach to sustaining opium eradication in Laos (2006-2009), comprising four main components: alternative development, demand reduction, law-enforcement and civic awareness. Laos is poised to be declared virtually opium-free in 2006.

A key aim of UNODC’s alternative development projects is to prevent former opium poppy farmers from returning to opium poppy cultivation by providing them with other livelihoods. Projects in the provinces of Phongsaly and Hua Phanh improve the capacity of communities to resolve their own drug problems with activities that include support for local institutions, infrastructure development, social services, sustainable livelihoods and access to micro-credit schemes. New partnerships were forged with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Food Programme. More than 50 per cent of opium produced was previously consumed locally, making the treatment of opium users in Laos crucial to the success of opium eradication. Community-based treatment approaches proved to be very successful in managing local demand for illicit substances. Some 500 healthcare practitioners were trained to provide treatment to over 9,160 opium abusers in 2005. A new treatment procedure using tincture of opium capsules was developed. UNODC produced drug-counselling handbooks and provided training to prevent addicts from relapsing. Provincial health authorities reported relapse rates of under 25 per cent for treated opium abusers.

UNODC conducts annual opium surveys to assess the state of the opium-based economy. In 2005, UNODC and the National Agricultural Forestry Research Institute carried out the first socio-economic impact study of former opium-growing villages and incorporated those findings into the opium survey. UNODC’s annual Opium survey and impact study 2005 found that, while the country was on course for the total eradication of opium, more than half of the opium-growing communities did not yet have the means to grow new cash crops or staple food crops. Opium eradication was proceed-
ing faster than the provision of alternative development and there was an urgent need to continue the treatment and rehabilitation of some 15,000 remaining opium addicts, as well as preventing relapse.

Women, in particular, voiced unequivocal support for opium eradication because they could now earn money from non-opium-related activities, such as rice and maize production and rearing livestock. That brought many women a direct income and empowerment in a traditionally male-dominated society. Combined with treatment for addicted spouses, the result was greater household productivity, the reduction of poverty and less domestic violence.

UNODC gave legal advice to the Government on ratifying and implementing eight international conventions, including the important United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and legal instruments related to terrorism.

UNODC formulated the Strategic Programme Framework for 2006–2009, which focuses on the critical need for support after opium is eradicated in Laos, and on the alarming increase in trafficking in and abuse of heroin and amphetamine-like substances (ATS). Tighter law-enforcement in China and Thailand has contributed to the country’s rapid emergence as a key transit and storage country for amphetamines and heroin from Myanmar. UNODC is assisting the Government in strengthening legislation and judicial processes.

Surveys conducted on 14,260 students in 17 provinces showed that 27.6 per cent of students had used ATS in 2005 compared with 3.7 per cent in 2003.

In response to these problems, UNODC supported the development of a national drug-abuse data collection and reporting system. UNODC also provided support for the launching of a nationwide awareness campaign on ATS. Media spots were broadcast on television and radio. This resulted in many provinces developing their own action plans to address the problem and mobilize communities against illicit drug abuse and trafficking.
Opium poppy was cultivated mainly by ethnic minorities living in some of the poorest, most remote and mountainous regions in the country. Houaphanh province had the highest absolute number of poor villages and highest opium production in 2003. Some 2,280 villages cultivated opium poppy in the northern provinces of Laos. UNODC has been supporting alternative development projects in Laos since 1989. Village development committees play a key role in ensuring development and the eradication of illicit drugs and poverty.

Tabong village in the Sam Nuea district of Houa Phanh Province is a successful example of opium elimination, poverty reduction, inter-agency partnerships and community initiatives.

In Tabong, 91 of the 96 families were classified as poor and there were 32 opium addicts. A pilot project jointly funded by UNODC and the Asian Development Bank enabled villagers to create a 5-kilometre track, which gave them access to markets and enabled traders to visit the village. The villagers also established a clean water supply. They received assistance for activities ranging from weaving textiles, to raising small livestock and planting cash crops and fruit trees. The average family made some 800,000 kip (about US$ 80) net profit per month through weaving. As a result of assistance with veterinary training and livestock vaccination, some families made over 2.5 million kip (about US$ 250) per year from the sale of chickens and pigs. This compared with annual incomes for some households of around US$ 100 in the past from the production of opium. As a result, 76 families were able to receive "Out of Poverty" certificates. The project assisted with treatment of the 32 opium addicts who are now healthy and productive members of the community. The village has declared itself drug-free.

In recognition of the importance of good village leadership, strong community participation and self-help, the Village Development Committee and villagers of Ban Tabong were selected for the 2005 United Nations Development Award.

**Thao Khan, a former opium farmer,** is a model farmer from Ngai Neua village in Boun Neua district of Phongsaly province, one of the poorest regions of Laos. He used to make 2 to 3 million kip per year (US$ 200 to 300) from opium. Thanks to assistance from UNODC he has given up opium production and now raises cattle, pigs and chicken and has a small fruit orchard. Last year, he earned a total of 26 million kip, nearly US$ 2,600, from selling cattle, pigs and plums. In addition, his family produced 7 tons of rice from their irrigated rice paddy.

Ms. Nang of Tabong village receives money for textiles she has woven. This and other sources of income have helped to empower women—a welcome change in a traditionally male-dominated society.

Thao Khan feeding his cattle

Photos: UNODC Laos
In Myanmar, the world’s second-largest opium producer after Afghanistan, opium production fell by more than a quarter in 2005 compared with 2004. Concerted efforts by the Government, in partnership with the UNODC Country Office, to eradicate opium cultivation through community-based alternative development efforts brought about that landmark achievement. The Office also prepared the 2005 *Myanmar Opium Survey* and conducted a survey among farmers in the important Shan state.

**Drug supply reduction**

Myanmar has made headway with its national plan to become opium-free by 2014. In June, an opium ban imposed by the Government in conjunction with local authorities came into effect in the Wa region, which accounted for about one third of Myanmar’s opium production. While the ban raised hopes that inroads could be made into the regional market for heroin, it also posed immediate problems for subsistence farmers dependent on opium for survival. Despite the climate of insecurity that led key partners to withdraw from Myanmar, UNODC pressed on with its work. It extended community-based assistance to the most vulnerable areas, focusing on small-scale irrigation systems, paddy rice field development, agricultural technologies, and basic education and health care.

The Kokang and Wa initiative is a broad UNODC-led partnership designed to meet the humanitarian needs of poor farmers and their families deprived of income as a result of the opium bans. This partnership includes United Nations agencies and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that provide pre- and post-emergency aid to affected communities. In 2005, 22 partners participated in the initiative. A UNODC Technical Coordination Unit established in Wa Special Region 2 assisted in coordinating activities, collecting, analysing and sharing data, monitoring projects, serving as a contact point for dealing with the local authorities and government, and providing logistical support.

In 2005, cross-border cooperation with neighbouring countries resulted in successful law-enforcement operations, including a joint effort by China, Myanmar and Laos in September, when officials seized nearly 500 kg of heroin in Shan state. This was Myanmar’s second-largest heroin seizure to date.

**Myanmar Opium Survey**

Myanmar is part of the notorious Golden Triangle of opium-producing countries. The UNODC 2005 *Myanmar Opium Survey*, published in October, documented a significant fall in the area of opium poppy cultivation, from 44,200 hectares in 2004 to 32,800 in 2005. Rapid assessments were conducted in non-traditional opium-growing areas after the ban to determine if it had driven cultivation elsewhere. Encouragingly, only Kachin state registered a slight increase. Until the Government proscribed opium in Wa, Shan state accounted for 94 per cent of total cultivation, 42 per cent of which took place in Wa Special Region 2. The Survey, published in December, showed that the ban was working but that farmers’ incomes in 2006 would plunge to 31 per cent of what they had been in 2005. Adequate strategies for

*Some rural communities depend on opium production for survival*

Photo: UNODC Myanmar/X. Bouan
coping with mounting food insecurity and debt were not yet in place. A more comprehensive assessment will be made in 2006 to gauge the effects of the ban in Wa and other areas of the country. Activities for the 2006 Survey got underway when 150 staff were sent to Shan and Kayah states to monitor the extent of illicit crop growth.

**Human trafficking**

UNODC provided assistance to the Government of Myanmar in drafting an anti-human trafficking law, which was finalized in June and implemented in September. The Government continued to collaborate in multilateral efforts to reduce the number of people trafficked in Myanmar, where human trafficking is a major problem. UNODC approved an anti-trafficking project to improve victims’ access to assistance by setting up drop-in and referral centres at border liaison offices. The project will also provide technical support to law-enforcement officials on human trafficking and raise awareness among NGOs.

**HIV/AIDS and drug demand reduction**

UNODC is the lead organization for initiatives related to injecting drug use and HIV/AIDS in Myanmar under the Joint United Nations Programme for HIV/AIDS. A one-year UNODC project targeted at 500 police officers raised awareness of HIV/AIDS and provided training to trainers. A community-based drug-demand reduction project in northern Shan state continued in 2005 and 290 heroin and opium addicts received drug treatment.

A project to reduce injecting drug use and its harmful effects was launched in partnership with two NGOs: CARE and Médecins du Monde. Four mobile treatment teams were established and nearly 250 addicts were treated during 2005. Nearly 700 addicts were placed in drug treatment centres and hospitals, while rehabilitation and after-care services were provided to more than 800 former addicts. Relapse prevention training was conducted for the benefit of rehabilitation centres and NGOs.

UNODC fostered coordination among organizations working to prevent HIV/AIDS and injecting drug use. It launched information campaigns, drew up culturally appropriate guidelines and helped with the procurement of medical and other materials. UNODC also produced a manual of operational procedures and organized workshops for government departments on UNODC’s drug-demand reduction efforts and HIV/AIDS projects in Yangon and Shan states.

UNODC provided policy and administrative support to outreach programmes of the Asian Regional HIV/AIDS Project and Myanmar’s Anti-Narcotic Association working in Lashio, northern Shan state. It piloted the Muse outreach programme in March 2005 and began to set up a similar project in eastern Shan state.

Both the Lashio and the Muse projects developed a wide range of activities, gaining widespread support among farming communities. Over 400 injecting drug users visited the projects’ drop-in centres in 2005, where they were offered prevention education, counselling, care and treatment. The mobile medical team of the Lashio project reached over 900 drug users. Under the Muse project, UNODC began a youth-led programme to counter drug abuse and prevent HIV/AIDS.
The UNODC Regional Centre for East Asia and the Pacific, based in Thailand, is responsible for over 30 countries in East Asia. It addressed major challenges in drug control as the region witnessed a rapid rise in the manufacture and abuse of amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS). The Office promoted international efforts to control the flow of precursor chemicals for the production of heroin and ATS and continued to tackle the clandestine production of heroin.

The UNODC Regional Centre helped to organize and host the Eleventh United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, which took place in Bangkok in April. Some 2,370 participants, including Ministers of Justice and other high-level officials, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and expert observers attended the gathering.

The Government of China and UNODC signed an agreement paving the way for the establishment of a UNODC Programme Office in Beijing in 2006. China and UNODC have been cooperating for many years to counter illicit drug production and trafficking and other criminal activities, as well as to prevent drug addiction. The new Programme Office will focus initially on the threat of HIV/AIDS, which is spreading via injecting drug use and commercial sex. The Beijing Office will also address the fast-expanding trafficking and consumption of amphetamines, control of precursor chemicals, illicit manufacture and trafficking in drugs, as well as drug prevention, treatment and rehabilitation.

**Regional initiative on amphetamine-type stimulants**

East Asia now has the most serious ATS problem in the world. Methamphetamine is a new drug threat spreading throughout the region. Fujian and Guangdong provinces in southern China are major manufacturers of this drug. Almost 60 per cent of global consumers are in East and South-East Asia.

The UNODC Regional Centre worked with the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), as well as China, Japan and Australia, to develop accurate, standardized drug-abuse information and the national infrastructures needed to compile data. UNODC opened an on-line Asia Pacific Amphetamine-Type Stimulants Information Centre (www.apaic.org). UNODC produced a practitioners’ prevention tool kit for ATS in South-East Asia, which was used in high-risk locations in Thailand and Philippines.

UNODC developed a novel computer-training programme and handbook for law-enforcement personnel to combat the growing illicit manufacture of amphetamine-type substances. The training tool allows poor countries to carry out efficient training on a large scale, at minimum cost and without the need for trainers. The programme helps officials to detect precursor trafficking and clandestine drug laboratories. It also helps the chemical industry to stamp out the manufacture of illicit drugs. Thousands of DVDs and handbooks in national languages were produced for nine countries and more than 20,000 law-enforcement personnel were trained. Several countries also included the computer-based programme in the standard curriculum of their law-enforcement training academies.

**ACCORD**

The Governments of ASEAN and China are responsible for the ASEAN and China Cooperative Operations in...
Response to Dangerous Drugs (ACCORD) Plan of Action, whose ultimate aim is a drug-free region by 2015. This is the sole regional drug control framework for ASEAN and China. UNODC and ASEAN serve as the joint Secretariat for ACCORD. In 2005, UNODC supported ACCORD by developing a sophisticated regional online Drug Abuse Information Network for Asia and the Pacific to monitor and exchange information and analysis on drug control trends in the region. UNODC supported the ACCORD States in improving their forensic capability to identify amphetamine-type stimulants and precursor chemicals.

Countries endorsed a Plan of Action at the second ACCORD International Congress, which will serve as a framework for regional drug control efforts and lay the foundation for many national initiatives. Another important initiative—the Regional Joint Action against ATS-related Crime, which involved a joint law-enforcement operation on amphetamine-type-stimulants—was the first of its kind in the world. A further step forward was taken when law-enforcement agencies of the ACCORD countries discussed the establishment of Standard Operating Procedures.

**Fighting drugs**

In 2005, the Regional Centre helped countries to maintain the decline in illicit production, supply and consumption of drugs. Six countries covered by the Office are signatories to the 1993 Memorandum of Understanding on Drug Control. These countries—the Kingdom of Cambodia, the People’s Republic of China, Laos, Myanmar, the Kingdom of Thailand and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam—reaffirmed their commitment to declaring the region drug-free at Ministerial Meetings held in May in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

The Governments also agreed on areas of collaboration with UNODC. These included greater regional cooperation in the form of enhanced information exchange, control of the precursor chemicals needed to produce drugs and amphetamine-type stimulants, strategies for drug treatment and prevention, cross-border cooperation and training, mutual legal assistance, sustainable alternative development and technical and financial assistance. The Governments pledged US$ 10.6 million for projects under a Subregional Action Plan.

**Precursor control**

Some countries in the subregion still do not adequately control precursor chemicals. UNODC supported the ACCORD States in improving their forensic capability in the identification of ATS and precursors.

A DVD training programme and handbook on *Supressing Illicit Drug Manufacture—Role of the Chemical Industry* was prepared. UNODC organized advanced training on clandestine drug laboratory investigations to equip investigators with basic knowledge about precursors and drug synthesis and demonstrate standard inspection procedures and safety measures. Workshops in China and other countries were conducted to promote partnerships between the pharmaceutical industry and Governments to prevent the diversion of precursor chemicals from legal trade.

**Cross-border cooperation**

Porous borders and barriers to communication across borders are major handicaps to law enforcement. UNODC-supported border liaison offices operate at strategic border crossings in the Golden Triangle area of opium-producing countries to facilitate information exchange. In 2005, more than 500 drug seizures and several high-profile arrests were made thanks to the 42 high-risk border liaison offices, where more than 250 border liaison officers were deployed.
Increasing public awareness

A well-informed public is important in the battle against drugs. The Regional Centre supported preventive education through a region-wide project to assist national drug control agencies in expanding awareness of the risks of drug abuse. UNODC promoted "youth-for-youth" projects in Thailand to help young people to say "no" to drugs. In 2005, to mark the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, the UNODC financed workshops to allow young people to share their ideas on national development plans focusing on drug prevention.

HIV/AIDS and prisoners

The Regional Centre addressed the prevention of HIV/AIDS among drug users, in juvenile detention centres and compulsory drug treatment facilities. Projects focused on drug prevention, treatment and rehabilitation as well as HIV/AIDS prevention and community policing models. UNODC developed guidelines on drug-abuse treatment and rehabilitation, as well as alternatives to incarceration.

National working groups on drug abuse and HIV/AIDS, an effort that UNODC has led since 2003, became operational. UNODC undertook a regional review of HIV/AIDS and injecting drug users and assessments of countries’ capacity to deal with HIV/AIDS. It produced public-awareness materials, including a website http://www.unodc.un.org.th/drugsandhiv/. Strategic partnerships were established with the European Network on Drug and Infection Prevention in Prison and the Asia Harm Reduction Network, among others. The Regional Centre trained national programme officers from Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam on issues surrounding drug abuse reduction and related HIV transmission. The training addressed epidemiological trends in drug abuse and drug-related HIV transmission, as well as strategies and effective practices for the prevention and treatment of substance abuse.

Action against terrorism

Relatively few South-East Asian and Pacific countries have ratified and implemented the universal legal instruments against terrorism, due to a lack of understanding of those instruments. The Regional Centre, as well as country and project offices, provided technical assistance to strengthen countries’ legal frameworks and gave substantive support to anti-terrorism work. Efforts were underway to develop a regional approach in promoting international cooperation on crime and anti-terrorism issues.

Human trafficking

The Regional Centre continued to support the Government of the Philippines in its efforts to meet its obligations under several new international conventions, particularly on the protection of victims and witnesses of trafficking in persons. Rehabilitation centres provided victims of trafficking with comprehensive support including shelters, counselling, vocational training and social reintegration, in cooperation with local communities.

UNODC helped to boost the capacity of rehabilitation centres to support victims and witnesses of trafficking in persons. It continued regional cooperation on human trafficking and the smuggling of migrants with the International Organization for Migration and the International Labour Organization and other partners.

Sustainable livelihoods

With opium production declining steeply in the region, alternative livelihoods and crop eradication hold the key to preventing farmers from returning to opium cultivation. UNODC promoted collaboration among national drug control agencies and projects in the Greater Mekong subregion. These included capacity-building activities, economic impact studies and the drafting of training manuals.

The Regional Centre’s efforts to promote alternative livelihoods were expected to contribute to a further decline in opium production in the region and help countries to achieve their targets of a significant reduction or total eradication of illicit drug crops by 2008.
The UNODC Viet Nam Country Office focuses on three main areas: supporting drug law-enforcement, strengthening the legal framework and judiciary system in drug control and crime prevention, and reducing drug demand by promoting the prevention of drug abuse.

In 2005 the Office provided law-enforcement and legal assistance and carried out drug prevention projects directed at Viet Nam’s ethnic minorities and young people. Immediate effects were felt in other areas too: UNODC assistance to law-enforcement officials resulted in large drug seizures while its training programmes helped Vietnamese authorities to build up their capacity to combat human trafficking.

The UNODC Viet Nam anti-money laundering decree was approved in June and came into force in August 2005.UNODC, in cooperation with the World Bank, started advisory and capacity-building assistance through a UNODC mentor/adviser based in Hanoi. UNODC provided technical legal advice to the Government to help it finalize a draft anti-corruption law, which was approved by the National Assembly in November 2005, just before the United Nations Convention against Corruption came into force on 14 December. UNODC launched a campaign with the Government to draw public attention to the new law. The Office provided comments on a new law on HIV/AIDS, which was prepared for adoption in 2006.

**Drug abuse and HIV/AIDS prevention among ethnic minorities**

The number of people known to be HIV-positive more than doubled between 2000 and 2005. Community-based UNODC projects tackled the dual problems of drug abuse and HIV/AIDS among Viet Nam’s ethnic peoples, with promising results.

Although poppy cultivation has been eradicated in the northern highland areas, local drug demand continued to grow. Drug use in the highlands was rapidly changing from the smoking of opium to the injection of heroin but knowledge of the risks posed by HIV/AIDS among ethnic minorities was poor.

The lack of treatment facilities in the highlands meant that the relapse rates for addicts released from treatment centres and other informal treatment facilities were around 95 to 100 per cent within six months. UNODC supported initiatives to reduce drug demand in the highlands. It conducted detailed drug-use assessments followed by local consultations to create culturally appropriate drug use and HIV-prevention materials delivered by teams of peers, consisting mainly of former drug users.

The village-run treatment programme included education, and vocational and health training, along with...
post-treatment support and counselling groups, micro-credit loans, poverty-reduction schemes and technical support to reduce the supply of drugs.

Consequently, the situation in the areas where UNODC was active began to improve. The total number of drug users declined significantly and there was a marked decrease in drug-related crimes and transition among drug users to heroin injection. Knowledge of HIV/AIDS increased and the stigma and discrimination suffered by drug users lessened as a result. Many programme participants became respected members of the community. Average household incomes among former drug users rose and relapse rates after a year remained at a very low 6 per cent. The programme is not only changing lives, it is rebuilding whole communities.

Drug prevention

Working with the media

UNODC helped to develop a training package for journalists on subjects such as factors contributing to drug use among young people, media guidelines on drug reporting, communicating prevention messages effectively and targeting different audiences. Over 60 journalists took part, learning how to contribute to drug-prevention efforts and shape public opinion. A training manual on drug prevention for the media was produced.

Community-based activities

UNODC undertook five community-based projects: in Vinh Phuc, Ninh Binh and Hoa Binh in northern Viet Nam, Khanh Hoa in central Viet Nam, and Kien Giang in the south. Traditional drug prevention efforts have relied on scare tactics and “just-say-no” campaigns. UNODC’s new project aimed to help communities to design and implement alternative activities and educational possibilities for young people, including through sports and music. Drug-prevention messages were integrated into the activities of clubs run by young people. Special efforts were made to attract high-risk individuals in danger of becoming social outcasts, such as the unemployed or school dropouts.

Drug seizures

Drug abuse continued to increase. The vast majority of the 170,400 registered drug takers in Viet Nam used heroin, while young people in the cities increasingly used amphetamine-type stimulants. UNODC helped the Government of Viet Nam to boost its ability to carry out major drug seizures. UNODC continued to assist the Government in combating drug traffickers. In 2004, it set up a project to establish interdiction task force units in six hot-spot provinces in Viet Nam—two on the Chinese border, and two on the border with Laos and two on the Cambodian border.

The Counter-Narcotics Police Department, the border army and the Department of Customs worked together to establish the task force units, standardize systems to ensure accurate reporting and develop basic intelligence systems and procedures to share information. The units received vehicles, motorcycles, video cameras, precursor- and drug-testing kits, and telecommunication equipment from UNODC. A training manual on drug investigations was also prepared.

Eleven drug-law enforcement training courses and two train-the-trainer courses were carried out in collaboration with international consultants. Some 300 officers from the police, border guard and customs from the national and provincial levels were trained in drug-investigation techniques including intelligence collection and sharing, methods of concealment, and knowledge of the three United Nations drug control conventions and surveillance.

All members of the units and other drug-law enforcement staff in the implementing agencies took a com-
puter-based training programme entitled “Detecting Precursor Trafficking and Clandestine Drug Laboratories,” developed under a regional UNODC project. The Drug Testing Laboratory in Hanoi established a database of information on seized heroin and amphetamine tablets.

UNODC assistance contributed to more arrests and seizures in all six provinces. In fact, one province (Son La) seized more heroin than the rest of Viet Nam’s 63 provinces combined in 2005.

**Combating trafficking in persons**

Human trafficking is increasing in Viet Nam. The main thrust of UNODC’s work is to target the traffickers while other agencies deal with the victims. UNODC continued its crime-prevention projects and helped to strengthen the law-enforcement institutions responsible for preventing and combating trafficking in persons.

Human trafficking focal points were designated within the police, border army (including its training school), the prosecution, the courts, university law faculties, the Police Academy, and the ministries of Public Security and Justice.

A training manual was developed that included the definition of human trafficking, information on trafficking methodology, investigation principles, victim and witness issues and international cooperation including mutual legal assistance. A specific chapter covered these subjects from a Vietnamese perspective. Other practical tools such as role-plays and questionnaires were developed in English and Vietnamese.

Thanks in large part to UNODC support, Viet Nam reported more than 100 convictions of human traffickers and increased cooperation with neighbouring countries. Viet Nam is expected to ratify the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its supplementing Protocol on Trafficking in Persons in 2006.

**Giang Thi Chi**, a 30-year-old Giay woman, says a unique community-based drug-treatment programme implemented by UNODC in her small highland community has transformed her family’s life. Her husband, who had rejected previous offers of help to overcome his opium addiction, agreed to participate. Most of the residents of this remote mountainous outpost are from ethnic minority groups, which have a long tradition of both opium cultivation and consumption.

After the establishment of the pilot programme in Chi’s community, things began to change as fathers, husbands and sons began to take action against their addictions. “My husband never wanted to seek treatment before,” she said. “We tried to convince him but the only centre was so far away. He was scared because he’s never been away from the village before. But when we heard of the new centre here, he said ‘yes, I am ready’. The place is so close. We can still see each other every week. He’s doing so well now, and he’s happy too. And it is much better for our family. No more money or things such as livestock and household goods go to pay for his pipe”.

**Quang Van Hinh** relates another side of the treatment story. He lives in a small highland village in Dien Bien province on the Viet Nam-Laos border and has been drug-free now for nearly 5 years. He is of Black Thai ethnicity and has spent his entire life in his small, remote commune. For the last year Hinh has been active in spreading the anti-drug message throughout his highland community. He cannot watch others fall into the same trap that he tried so desperately to escape.

"Treatment can work", he states matter-of-factly. "Quitting the pipe was one of the best things I have ever done for myself and for my family. I’m much stronger now. My family is not so poor. I’ve just started a new job in my village as a policeman, and I’m also working with UNODC to try to educate others in my village on the dangers of drug use, especially HIV/AIDS. People know I used to smoke, so they know that I know what I’m talking about".