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Alternative Development within a balanced approach to opium elimination in the Lao PDR

The National Program Strategy:

The balanced approach to opium elimination in the Lao PDR includes 3 main components:

- Alternative Development (AD) to replace socio-economic incentives to produce opium.
- Drug Demand Reduction (DDR) to eliminate the need of addicts for opium.
- Law Enforcement to stop trafficking.

AD in the Lao PDR is based on a strong community centred approach that builds on existing community skills and assets while promoting and ensuring local ownership and self help. AD projects respect and involve elders and leaders, promote gender mainstreaming and incorporate environmental concerns in their interventions.

AD efforts enhance local capacity to improve infrastructure, providing access to health, education, village water supply, micro credit, etc., while emphasizing the improvement of existing non-opium based livelihoods.

The UNODC/LCDC Program Facilitation Unit enables AD efforts to take place both at the village micro level through AD projects and local institutions, and on policy decision making processes at the macro level.

Emphasis is placed on seeking

synergistic alternative development partnerships as well as mainstreaming AD objectives with the National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy.

Coping strategies of farmers who stopped opium production include increasing rice, maize, livestock production and harvesting of non-Timber forest products (NTFP). Farmers report income levels similar to those



they used to receive from cultivating opium.

Opium farmers are very poor and addressing the issues related to eliminating opium culture and poverty is a long term process that requires long term financial and political commitment which must continue even after opium cultivation has stopped.

Concerns regarding the sustainability of opium elimination:

Only 50% of former opium farmers received AD assistance.

The concern is that elimination will not be sustainable unless AD and provision of treatment services for the many addicts can keep pace with the rate of elimination. There is an urgent need to source more funds for both AD and DDR efforts.

Distribution of cash income in opium growing households:

