

REPORT ON PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION IN DIEN BIEN PROVINCE

Presentation at the Mid-term Tripartite Review Meeting

At Sofitel Plaza Hanoi – 19 December 2005

I. Drug abuse AND HIV situations

Dien Bien province is in the north-west of the country and has a population of 440,000 people. The province covers an area of 9,554 square kilometres and shares a 3600 km-long border with the Laotian provinces of Phongsaly and Luang Phrabang, and a 38.5 km-long border with China. Dien Bien's population is approximately 35 percent Thai, 20 percent Hmong, 17 percent Kinh, and a variety of other groups such as Dao, Kho Mu, and Ha Nhi. Administratively, Dien Bien is divided into six districts: Dien Bien, Dien Bien Dong, Muong Cha (formerly called Muong Lay), Muong Nhe, Tua Chua, Tuan Giao. Dien Bien district has approximately 100,000 inhabitants from 20 ethnic groups, among which half are Thai, and ten percent are Hmong.

The province's economy has grown firm over the last few years, thanks to the Government's investment. The people's living quality has been gradually improved; however, social vices continue to be of great concern. Specifically, the number of drug users recorded is on the rise; the relapse rate high, and the drug users existing in all walks of the society, and in all localities. Especially, drug use has recently been seen among pupils, students (who are still very young) and state employees. Drug use is now changing from smoke into injection, inhalation of heroine, methamphetamine, and ecstasy, etc. Several large drug trafficking rings operated in the province are organized by foreigners. Moreover, some places of constant and serious drug use and trafficking have not been eradicated thoroughly. Accordingly, these indicators weakened the results and quality of drug abuse treatment and prevention implemented by the province over the last years.

The province identified there are 5,464 drug users in the province. Of this number, 5102 drug users are men, accounting for 93.7%, while 362 women or 6.3%; 56 percent (3064 drug users) are aged between 31 and 50 years old; 0.01% (56 drug users) between 12-18 years old; 27% (1516 drug users) between 19 and 30 years old; and 15% (828 drug users) above 50 years old. These included as follows:

- State employees: 59 people
- Pupils/students: 10 people
- Workers: 57 people
- Laborers: 190 people
- Farmers: 4,672 people
- Businessmen: 43 people
- Unemployed: 433 people

While traditionally opium was the most-commonly used drug in the province in the 1009s, behaviour is changing dramatically; most of them become heroin users. Ethnically, almost all drug users are Hmong (43.77%), Thai (28.47%), Kinh (16.78%) others (11.01%).

November 2005 survey identified 1070 people living with HIV in the province, 1016 people are men, 54 women.

II. Project results in Dien Bien

1. Project implementation in Na U and Muong Nha

a. Information and communications

- Identification of number of drug users in the project communes
- Training workshops for local government officers, village chiefs on drug use treatment, prevention; interpersonal communications with drug users, their families and communities.
- Information spreading and awareness raising through mass media alongside interpersonal communications

b. Treatment

- There are 126 drug users recorded in Muong Nha, of this number 116 are treated. 10 remain untreated due to their age and health.
- 33 out of 40 drug users identified in Na U commune was treated. Other seven drug users include 5 under treatment in the provincial treatment center, 2 absent from the commune.

c. Drug control activities

- The project supported the installation of 20 letter boxes in villages to encourage residents to report on drug crimes and trafficking, as well as drug users.
- Police conducted 30 training sessions on laws and the legal environment around drug use, cultivation, and trafficking. These were attended by 1260 people, many of whom committed not to growing opium, trafficking in drugs, or using drugs.
- Results:
 - o The program of information and communications is acknowledged and accepted by the community.
 - o The commune police officers, in cooperation with border army officers, arrested eight traffickers, seized 200 grams of opium, and four grams of heroin.

d. Aftercare activities

The aftercare drug users in two aftercare clubs of Na U and Muong Nha meet on weekly (for groups) and monthly (for the whole club) basis. The Aftercare Clubs have resulted in close relationships between many drug users and are a venue for discussion and support. It is an important part of support for drug users to prevent relapse. Drug users and traffickers are sometimes identified and informed by aftercare drug users through the club's meetings and discussions. It is useful for the aftercare drug users in building up trust with community.

2. Construction of treatment center in Muong Phang and Na Tau

The construction of treatment centers in Muong Phang and Na Tau was approved by the provincial government, but was delayed.

3. Impacts

- The local government and community's knowledge and acceptance of project activities have been significantly improved, thanks to the outreach programs, including information and communications on drug use, cultivation, trafficking, drug prevention and treatment, and HIV prevention
- Local officers, village chiefs were trained in drug treatment, aftercare management
- Best practices and experience from the project activities in Dien Bien have been duplicated to other communes in the province. The project's aftercare club model was also applied, gaining positive results in Dien Bien.

III. Barriers and constrains

1. Barriers

- Project implementation monitoring by members of the project steering board, particularly at the district level, was not done very regularly.
- The government officers at both provincial and district levels reported being extremely busy and the added burden of the project made their jobs and project implementation difficult.
- The detoxification of drug users remained not long enough for both health recovery and vocational trainings. Aftercare management of and support for the treated drug users stayed limited.
- Support for those in charge of the project activities such as treatment, aftercare management remained low. Locally-available resources have not been fully mobilized to support the project implementation.

- Lack of financial and human resources, lack of infrastructure for treatment and aftercare management made it impossible for meeting the rising demands of drug treatment and aftercare management in the province.

2. Constrains

- Drug use, trafficking continues to be on the rise and more organized; many places where drugs are used and sold have not been eradicated, which may affect the project results.
- Lack of knowledge and involvement of local government officers, agencies and community resulted in low efficiency and involvement in the project activities. Coordination among agencies in drug use treatment and aftercare treatment was reported to be poor and inefficient.
- Lack of infrastructure for treatment, aftercare club house, and equipment leads to low efficiency in treatment and aftercare management activities.
- There is limited personnel for the large number of drug users and there needs to be a large number of people working on the project, but there are only a few.

IV. Future difficulties

1. Inadequate funds for future activities: Dien Bien is a poor province, with high rate of poor households. There are limited internal funds for treatment programs while the large number of drug users is in deed of treatment. It is impossible for the drug users to contribute for their treatment as almost all of them are extremely poor.
2. Lack of infrastructure for drug treatment at both provincial and district levels results in the fact that drug use treatment program had to be done in schools in summers while the treatment programs need to be continuously conducted at any time.
3. Lack of qualified and experienced staff in drug treatment at all levels results in low efficiency of treatment programs.
4. The excellent progress in reducing opium poppy cultivation, the lack of local opium supply result in increased drug trafficking. The reduction of drug trafficking and eradication of places where drugs are sold and used has not been thoroughly done. All of these may result in great potential for increasing drug use and recidivism in the province.
5. Lack of knowledge, acceptance and involvement by local governments at all levels and community of the project activities may result in low efficiency in project activity implementation. Lack of a strategic treatment, aftercare management, and supply and demand reduction program will not ensure a efficient implementation of the project activities.

V. Measures recommended

1. Information and communications

- To conduct regularly information and communications programs both through mass media and community outreach workers to raise awareness of and involvement in by local governments, agencies and community, especially the young, the project activities.
- A school-based education programme to be designed and conducted in all schools located in the project sites; the community information and communications programs implemented in all villages in the project sites.
- Maintenance of aftercare activities to reinforce the results of treatment and avoid recidivism among the treatment drug users.

2. Community-based drug use treatment strengthened and consolidated

- To utilize locally available resources for drug use treatment with the aim of reducing the drug use and trafficking

3. Management Arrangements

- Restructuring the management committees at provincial, district and commune levels; the reporting system from the commune to district and to provincial levels and vice versa needs to be improve.

4. Treatment and aftercare management

- To make the governments and agencies at all levels and the community more involved in the project activities; special attention to be paid to support and management, and income generation activities for the treated drug users.
- Community involvement in the activities and integration of the ex-drug users into the community to reduce stigma and discrimination, including:
 - o Coordination and support by enterprises to offer jobs for former drug users
 - o Further training in job skills for the treated drug users
- Strengthening the management of the treated drug users in the community, the immigration monitoring.
- To work out a strategic plan for maintenance and consolidation of aftercare activities; to make the club environment inviting and useful to the treated drug users.

5. Monitoring

- Regular monitoring activities to be maintained by the governments and agencies in charge at all levels to ensure the effectiveness of treatment and aftercare management activities.

VI. Recommendations

1. A six-month rather than a three-month treatment program should be considered by the project H61 to ensure the drug users to have enough time for both health recovery and trainings.
2. The extension and expansion project in Dien Bien should be seriously considered by the project H61.
3. The project should consider the support for construction of treatment center in Na Tau and upgrading the center in Muong Phang in order to provide treatment for drug users in Na Tau, Na Nhan, Muong Phang.
4. Continued support for reduction of drug trafficking and places of drug use and selling, drug control activities should be considered by the project. And,
5. Lastly, the project activities should be expanded into other districts of Dien Bien province to provide treatment for the large number of drug users in the province.

Deputy Director of Dien Bien DOLISA

Mr. Ha Van Tan

(Signed)

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