

Making a difference through sustainable alternative development

Over the last 25 years, UNODC has played a leading role in assisting Member States to develop and implement drug control policy, including alternative development. Alternative development continues to be the principal method utilized by Member States and UNODC to address illicit drug crop cultivation within the framework of poverty reduction and sustainable development.

UNODC works in partnership with the affected countries, other UN agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector. Currently, UNODC supports and promotes sustainable alternative development programmes and projects in six countries: Afghanistan, Bolivia, Colombia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Peru. The focus is on helping small farmers with licit income generation activities to reduce their dependency on income from opium and coca cultivation. Efforts are also centred in the sectors of health, education, basic infrastructure, community development and food security. Special attention is given to environmental protection and improved markets for alternative development products. UNODC-supported alternative development also empowers communities while ensuring that both men and women equally benefit from development interventions. What follows is a snap shot of selected activities in the six project countries.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan is the world's largest illicit opium-producing country, accounting for 95 per cent of global output. Illicit opium cultivation is a major obstacle for the reconstruction of the country that has suffered from over 20 years of conflict. UNODC assists the Afghan Government in the rebuilding process including with alternative livelihoods-related activities.

Capacity building for alternative livelihoods

Over the last years, UNODC in cooperation with the Ministry of Counter Narcotics has been providing capacity building on alternative livelihoods at central and provincial levels. Training on needs assessment, monitoring and evaluation of alternative livelihoods programmes for civil servants are provided to increase general awareness and promote the institutional strengthening of the Afghan Government. The participation of major development agencies and non-governmental organizations at these training sessions foster cooperation amongst the stakeholders.



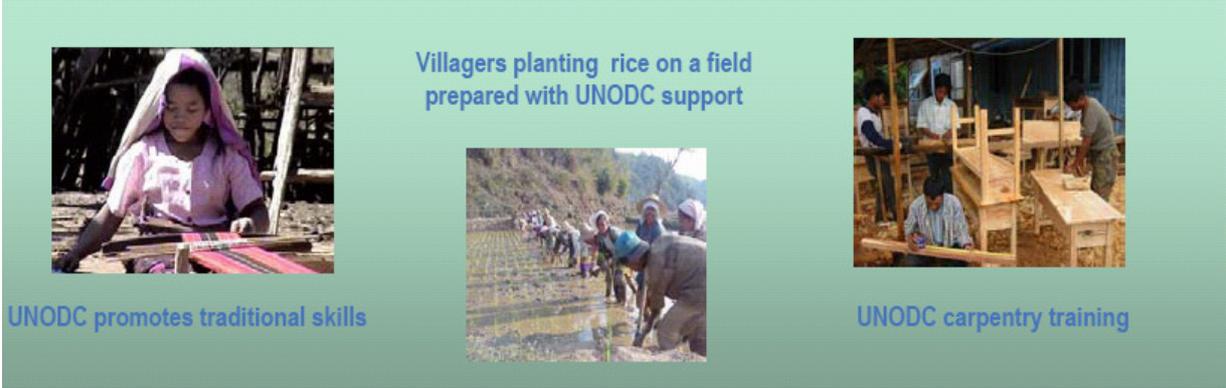
Mapping of alternative livelihood projects

The economic and political importance of opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan has prompted efforts by both the Government of Afghanistan and the international community to find solutions by enacting a combination of strategies including identifying livelihood opportunities for small opium poppy farmers. UNODC contributes to these efforts through a team of highly qualified alternative livelihood experts based within the Ministry of Counter Narcotics in Kabul and five provinces (Badakhshan, Balkh, Herat, Kandahar and Nangarhar). The Alternative Livelihoods experts support the Ministry's provincial offices in a variety of tasks focusing on programme coordination and knowledge management. This support builds on the assistance provided through the UNODC designed Alternative Livelihood Donor Database provided to the Afghan Government in 2005.

Myanmar

Myanmar, the world's second largest opium producer, continues to witness a significant decline in opium poppy cultivation. The Government's plan is to make Myanmar opium-free by 2014.

UNODC has led initiatives to provide poor farmers, who suffered as a result of rapid opium eradication, with food security and alternative livelihoods. The impoverished rural communities require renewed support to cope with the loss of income from opium, and the frequent shortages of rice. This loss of income has also brought with it a host of related issues such as human trafficking and increased drug use.



Coordination framework

UNODC's Wa Project in the Mong Pawk District under the Kokang and Wa Initiative (KOWI) facilitates the engagement of new partner organizations into the region. The KOWI partners include government departments, United Nations organizations and national and international organizations. Notably, Aide Medical International and Malteser International have supported health activities while the World Food Programme has provided emergency food relief. The Government of Myanmar, UNODC and other UN organizations have agreed on a framework for the transition from emergency relief to sustainable development in the Wa region covering the 2008-2011 period.

Lao People's Democratic Republic

The Lao PDR Government's commitment to eradication efforts helped the country to become virtually opium-free. This is an enormous success considering that as recent as 1998 Lao PDR was the third largest illicit opium producer in the world.

UNODC works closely with the Lao PDR Government to ensure the sustainability and continuation of alternative development projects in order to promote food security, manage the fragile environment and provide livelihood opportunities to small farmers to prevent the resurgence of opium poppy cultivation.

Addiction treatment and rehabilitation

Community-based treatment approaches proved to be successful in reducing local demand for opium and contributing to the overall achievement of opium eradication in the country. UNODC and the Government collaborate in support of treatment and rehabilitation programmes in all ten northern provinces. In the last years, over 8,000 opium abusers have received treatment and the programme has a relatively low relapse rate.

Gender equality

Women greatly benefited from opium elimination as they used to perform most of the labour-intensive duties associated with opium poppy cultivation. Today, these women are involved in licit income generating activities such as rice and maize production and rearing livestock. In addition, communities report an increase in the enrolment of girls in schools and a decrease in domestic abuse cases.



Par Xay Thorr, a 42 year-old Hmong man and ex-opium user has cured his addiction through a community based treatment program. He is now in good health and a productive member of his community, helping his family to increase its income by growing rice and maize and raising goats.

Par Xay Thorr standing to the right of UNODC Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa

Post-opium period

UNODC’s socio-economic impact survey showed that half of the former opium-producing communities need urgent assistance in the post-opium period. UNODC-supported ‘National Programme Strategy for the Post Opium Scenario’ will target 1,100 priority villages. UNODC is assisting with the mapping of these villages in order to identify development partners and prioritize development interventions.

Colombia

The Government of Colombia, the world’s largest coca producer continues its efforts against illicit drug cultivation. Experience shows that eradication of illicit crops alone is insufficient to bring about a lasting solution to illicit drug cultivation. UNODC thus supports the Government’s efforts to assist farmers, who gave up coca cultivation, through alternative development to ensure that they earn adequate incomes legally.

Alternative Development Products or “Peace Products”

The Colombian Government and UNODC support farmers’ associations engaged in alternative development products including beans, cacao, palm hearts, coffee, honey, coconuts, dairy products and gourmet sauces. Many of these enterprises produce organic products in environment-friendly systems making them profitable and competitive in domestic and international markets including supermarket chains and airline industry. *Café la Tienda de la Paz* at the UNODC office in Bogota also promotes alternative development products by selling coffee from five regions of the country.

Forest Management

Currently, UNODC is implementing phase II of the *Monte Bravo* initiative in coordination with the Social Action Plan of the Presidency of Colombia. Phase I (2004-2006) improved the lives of 433 families through forest management, agro-forestry and food security activities. Three forest management plans secured over 22,000 hectares free of coca plantations and the rehabilitation of more than 390 hectares of cacao crops. The participatory approach promoted by the project resulted in the empowerment of the involved communities. The initiative helped to create and strengthen community councils and women's associations.

Forest-Warden Families Programme

UNODC monitors the achievements of the Forest Warden Families Programme with respect to voluntary eradication, forest recovery and socio-economic development. The Programme, created by the President of Colombia, has as its main objective the incorporation of farmer families into a process of voluntary eradication of illicit crops and the recovering of forest in ecologically and socially vulnerable areas. UNODC supports the publication of *El Bosque*

periodical, which explains the challenges of becoming a Forest Warden. In 2006, UNODC's data showed that 80 per cent of the area under the programme was free of illicit crops.



Familias Guarda Bosques

Support from the departmental government

In 2007, UNODC launched a new initiative in the Antioquia Department in line with the national and departmental strategies on alternative development. The project is the first of its kind to receive a substantial financial contribution from a departmental government. The main objective is to strengthen the productive capacities of at least 200 families and community enterprises in the municipalities of Anorí and Briceño through support to agro-forestry including coffee and cocoa, as substitutes to illicit coca crop cultivation.

Peru

UNODC's alternative development programme in Peru, the second largest coca producer in the world works closely with the Government and farmers to provide viable alternatives to coca cultivation. To date, UNODC worked directly with over 6,000 farming families – or 30,000 people – who have previously been dependent on coca cultivation.

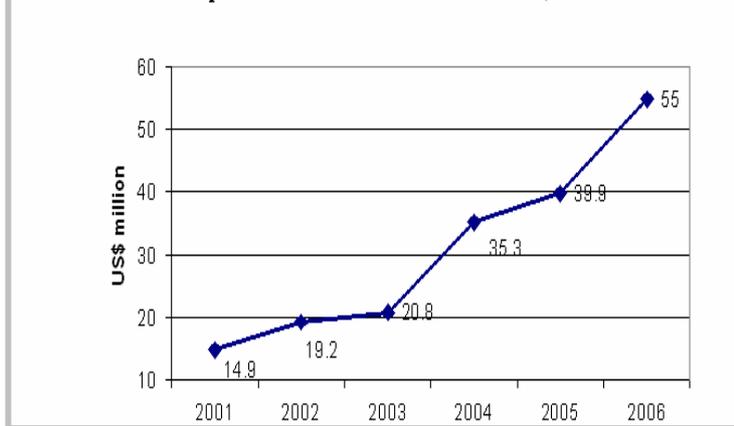
The alternative development programme in Peru includes support for tree-planting, protecting ecosystems in indigenous communities, raising livestock, harvesting rubber, and developing palm oil industry.

Commercial performance of farmer enterprises

UNODC's alternative development programme in Peru supports farmer enterprises to implement modern management practices, meet international quality control and environmental protection standards, and open new national and export markets for their products. The products supported include coffee, cacao, palm heart and palm oil. These farmer enterprises have been extremely successful witnessing a steady yearly increase in their sales performance.

In 2006, the combined sales of the top 13 UNODC-supported enterprises accounted for US\$55 million where 90 per cent of the sales were made in Europe, North America, Asia and Australia. Domestically, these enterprises also profited from positive marketing developments.

Sales of farm enterprises linked to UNODC in Peru, 2001-2006



Bolivia

UNODC together with the Government of Bolivia, the third largest coca-producing country, collaborate in alternative development programmes, which focus on poverty alleviation through income generation activities and environmental protection.

Since the early 1980s, UNODC has been supporting grass-roots alternative development projects to help farmers to develop licit farming alternatives to coca cultivation in the Cochabamba Tropics and the Yungas of La Paz regions.

Agro-forestry and forest management

Between 1997 and 2005, UNODC and the Food and Agriculture Organization through the *Jatun Sach'a* project jointly developed forest management and agro-forestry systems that benefited over 10,000 households. In 2006, building on the achievements and experiences of the *Jatun Sach'a* project, a new four-year phase of the agro-forestry programme was launched, which will benefit 4,500 families. These projects enable farmers to earn decent incomes through products such as cocoa, coffee, *camu-camu* (a tropical plant) and rubber. Produced under environment-friendly conditions, these products are commercially viable and obtain competitive prices in export markets. Producers' capacities for quality improvements and for meeting international standards were upgraded. As a result, the project-supported coffee is now among the best coffee produced in Bolivia.



Camu camu production

Vocational training and support for small businesses

Since 2001, UNODC in collaboration with the International Labour Organization has supported vocational training to young people and increased their employment prospective. To date, over 1,000 vocational training courses ranging from agriculture to computer science and business administration benefited 23,000 young persons. The project has also supported

the setting up of 90 new micro-enterprises and the strengthening of 122 existing ones, which employed over 2,000 individuals.

The highlights of the project impact on employment and income generation include the following:

- Out of 23,000 young people, 24 percent (or 5,544) who were trained in different skills currently have a productive job. Of these, 744 young people were placed into the labour market through direct project support, while 2,722 found employment as result of the acquired skills provided by the project. Additionally, 2,028 earn their income through self-employment in their micro-enterprises, which received support from the project.
- The percentage of non-qualified labour among project participants was reduced from 57 percent to 23 percent.
- The income of project beneficiaries has increased by 31 percent; from a monthly income of US\$73 to US\$96.
- The project successfully ensured gender equality where 49 percent of trainees in vocational training and 46 percent of participants in micro-enterprise support programme were women. Furthermore, many women trainees received help establishing small businesses, which in turn made them self-reliant.

Global Partnership on Alternative Development

Cognizant of the need to increase the scope and reach of the development assistance reaching the areas and populations affected by illicit drug cultivation, in 2007, UNODC launched the project 'Global Partnership on Alternative Development.' The objective is to strengthen the capacities of relevant line ministries and key national and international development actors to mainstream alternative development objectives into broader development plans and programmes. The project will achieve this objective through specially designed training, networking, and activities in support of institutional coordination and resource mobilization. In the first year, the project will operate in Southeast Asia (Lao PDR and Myanmar). It is envisaged that activities will be extended to Latin America in the project's second phase.

Challenges ahead

The success of quality alternative development interventions is undeniable; however, many challenges still lie ahead. The gains made in reducing illicit cultivation in key countries over the past decade could come undone if poverty does not abate. Poverty alleviation and sustainable development should continue to be the main goals of alternative development. Food security and income generation programmes should be strengthened to support farmers courageous enough to switch to licit crops. UNODC, together with the affected countries and the international community need to continue their combined efforts to design appropriate and sound policies and programmes to ensure sustainable alternative livelihoods for small farmers and their communities.



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