India: Promoting safe and regular migration in Tamil Nadu

UNODC visited a district situated 80 kilometers from Chennai, India, to learn about community initiatives on prevention of smuggling of migrants. Despite the establishment of the Kalpakam atomic power station, many of the traditional fisher folk are forced to seek work abroad. Both men and women in the age group of 20 to 35, head mostly for the Middle East and Southeast Asia to work as domestic help, masons, sweepers, tailors, welders and construction workers, sometimes as long as for three years.

Arunodhaya Migrant Initiatives (AMI), a non-governmental organization in Tamil Nadu works with UNODC to spread awareness on safe migration and the prevention of smuggling of migrants, - through street theatre targeting future migrants, returnees, youth and children. Every Saturday at 5 pm, young volunteers beat drums and call the people out to assemble at the community centre. Through interactive street theatre and folk songs, AMI volunteers and returnees illustrate the realities and vulnerabilities of families that can lead to unsafe migration and inform them about safe migration. AMI carries out community based re-integration initiatives, promotes and participates in the village level watch dog committee and sets up women self help groups. Another aspect that AMI is planning to address is ‘reverse migration’. According to AMI, the global economic recession forced over 200,000 Indian workers to return to Tamil Nadu, who were left stranded with no job opportunities.

South Asia: Combating illegal wildlife trade

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The first South Asian Expert meeting on illegal wildlife trade held by the Government of Nepal (GoN) kicked off in Kathmandu, Nepal on 17 May 2010. The three days meeting was attended by experts from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Pakistan as well as by “Traffic”, the Wildlife Trade Monitoring Network of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), World Customs Organization, Interpol, UNODC, USAID and the US State Department. South Asia accounts for 15 per cent of biodiversity, including iconic species such as the tiger and other big cats. Poaching and illegal trade have contributed to bring some of these species on the brink of extinction making more effective law enforcement a must. With this aim and based on the good practices of the ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement network, South Asian experts decided to set up a regional wildlife law enforcement network in South Asia, including the location of a regional coordinating unit.

Environmental crime: a new form of organized crime

Environmental crime is often transnational in nature and involves organized criminal groups. In 2007, the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice adopted the resolution “International cooperation in preventing and combating illicit international trafficking in forest products, including timber, wildlife and other forest biological resources”. This resolution calls upon Member States to cooperate at bilateral, regional and international level to prevent and control environmental crime by fully implementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the United Nations Convention against Corruption, of which UNODC is a guardian.

UNODC Maldives: with two new staff from Maldives, Mr. Abdul Malik and Ms. Aishath Arufa, UNODC has now a project office in Maldives! Mr. Malik and Ms. Arufa have joined UNODC working for the project - “strengthening the national response to combat drug abuse in the Maldives’. Mr. Malik is a Technical Officer and in this capacity, provides technical guidance and policy advice implementing the technical activities. Ms. Arufa, as the Programme and Finance Assistant, provides administrative and financial support.

UNODC bids farewell to Mr. Jayant Chopra who has been working with the office since 2003 providing administrative and financial support to UNODC projects on prevention of drug use, anti human trafficking and drug law enforcement. He shares, “my long stay with UNODC was an invaluable learning experience for me. I think UNODC mandates are unique and impact directly the lives of people. I take with me seven years of experience and a wealth of information as I move on to my new assignment with UNDP in New Delhi, India.”