

Executive Summary

The market for amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) in the Asia and the Pacific region continued to expand in 2012. Seizures of methamphetamine in pill and crystalline forms reached record highs while methamphetamine use increased in most countries in East and Southeast Asia, according to government expert perception. Illicit methamphetamine manufacture continued to spread throughout the region and new markets emerged for a variety of other synthetic substances. Ecstasy use, which had been in decline over the past several years, increased in a number of countries in 2012 while ecstasy seizures more than tripled compared with the previous year. Moreover, the range of new psychoactive substances (NPS) found in the region continued to increase.

This report highlights the most current patterns and trends of amphetamine-type stimulants and other drugs of use in East and Southeast Asia and provides overviews for the neighbouring regions of South Asia and the Pacific Island States and Territories. This is the latest in a series of reports prepared under the Global Synthetics Monitoring: Analyses, Reporting and Trends (SMART) Programme. The Programme seeks to enhance the capacity of Member States and authorities in priority regions to generate, manage, analyse and report synthetic drug information, and to apply this scientific evidence-based knowledge to design effective responses. A primary objective of this report is to help in improving the ability of states to respond to the growing human security and public health threats posed by the illicit manufacture, trafficking and use of synthetic drugs in the Asia and the Pacific region.

The findings of this report are based on primary information submitted by the drug control agencies and designated institutions in Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam, via the Drug Abuse Information Network for Asia and the Pacific (DAINAP) established through the Global SMART Programme. Information from DAINAP is supplemented with data from other government sources such as national reports, the UNODC Annual Reports Questionnaire, and through primary and secondary research. Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the Republic of Korea also provided data to the Global SMART Programme for this report.

Significant levels of ATS use continued to be reported

from all 15 countries that contributed to this report, with 13 countries reporting methamphetamine as the primary or secondary drug of use. In 2012, six countries reported the use of methamphetamine pills, while all but two countries (Lao PDR and Myanmar) reported the use of crystalline methamphetamine. In addition, the market for new psychoactive substances continued to grow.

In 2012, methamphetamine seizures in East and Southeast Asia continued at record high levels, and a number of countries reported significant increases. Illicit ATS manufacture also continued at high levels. Most of the ATS illicitly manufactured in East and Southeast Asia are used within the region. Precursor chemicals used in illicit methamphetamine manufacture are often easily obtainable, and a large share of these, often in the form of pharmaceutical preparations, are produced in the region and in the neighbouring region of South Asia. Meanwhile, transnational organized criminal groups continue to be involved in the illicit ATS trade.

The increasing pace of regional integration in East and Southeast Asia is positively facilitating the free flow of goods, services, investment, capital and labour. Unfortunately, it is also being exploited by transnational organized crime in order to expand its activities in the region. The misuse of economic integration for the illicit trafficking of drugs and other contraband will continue to pose a significant threat to security, good governance, human rights and sustainable development in the region.

Governments in the Asia and the Pacific region continue to make notable efforts in responding to the threat posed by illicit drugs at the national and regional levels, and improvements continue to be made in terms of data generation, analysis and sharing as well as forensic capacity. However, numerous challenges remain in assessing the full extent of the security and health implications of the illicit manufacture, trafficking and use of ATS and other synthetic drugs in the region.

Based on the data submitted for 2012 and part of 2013, the following observations are made in the report:

- **Methamphetamine use continued to increase in most countries in East and Southeast Asia.** ATS have ranked among the top three drugs of use in

all countries in the region since 2009. In 2012, reported use of methamphetamine increased in Cambodia, China, Japan, Lao PDR, Myanmar, the Republic of Korea, Thailand and Viet Nam, according to experts in those countries. Methamphetamine pill use continues to rise while crystalline methamphetamine use has rapidly become more prevalent throughout the region. Methamphetamine use, primarily in powder form, appears to be on the decline in Australia and New Zealand.

- **The manufacture of illicit amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) continued at high, albeit slightly declining levels.** In 2012, some 385 illicit synthetic drug manufacturing facilities were dismantled in East and Southeast Asia, most of which were manufacturing methamphetamine. Large quantities of ATS continued to be illicitly manufactured in China, Malaysia, Indonesia, Myanmar the Philippines and Cambodia, as well as in Australia and New Zealand. Methamphetamine pill pressing operations and small-scale crystalline methamphetamine manufacture facilities continued to be seized in Thailand and there were indications that large-scale clandestine methamphetamine manufacture is taking place in Viet Nam.
- **Methamphetamine seizures reached record highs in 2012.** A total of 227 million methamphetamine pills were seized in East and Southeast Asia in 2012, a 59% increase from the 142 million pills seized in 2011 and a more than seven-fold increase since 2008, when 31.1 million pills were seized. Most pills were seized in China (102.2 million), Thailand (95.3 million), Myanmar (18.2 million) and Lao PDR (10.1 million), which together account for 99% of all pills seized in 2012. The total amount of crystalline methamphetamine seized increased by 12% to 11.6 tons. Record level seizures were reported in a number of countries. Crystalline methamphetamine seizures increased significantly in Myanmar, Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia, Japan, Brunei Darussalam and Hong Kong (China).
- **There has been a resurgence of the ‘ecstasy’ market in East and Southeast Asia.** Ecstasy use in the region had been on the decline over the past few years. In 2012, however, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam reported increasing ‘ecstasy’ use. The number of ‘ecstasy’ pills seized in the region more than tripled, to over 5.4 million pills, from about 1.6 million pills seized in 2011.

This is the highest total reported since 2007. Many of the seized drugs sold as ‘ecstasy’ on the street contain psychoactive substances other than MDMA.

- **The market for new psychoactive substances (NPS) is growing rapidly in the region.** In addition to the growing number of substances such as synthetic cathinones, ketamine, piperazines, and phenethylamines, sold pills purported to be ‘ecstasy’, ketamine and kratom continue to be used throughout the region. NPS have been found in ‘ecstasy’ pills or preparations in Australia, China, Indonesia, Japan, New Zealand, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam and ketamine has been reported in all but one country (Lao PDR) in the region. While the use of most of these substances is not as widespread as the use of traditional illicit drugs, data available on seizures, use and forensic analysis suggest increasing availability of these NPS.
- **Transnational organized criminal activities in the region’s illicit drug trade continued to diversify.** Drug trafficking syndicates from Africa and the Islamic Republic of Iran continue to traffic methamphetamine and other drugs into East and Southeast Asia. The most common destinations for methamphetamine trafficked from or through Africa, primarily by air passenger couriers, appear to be Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Thailand and Viet Nam. Drug trafficking groups, mostly from Iran, continue to traffic methamphetamine to various countries in the region by air transportation. However, in 2012 there were numerous significant seizures of methamphetamine discovered in sea cargo containers in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. Indian drug trafficking networks continue to play a role in smuggling precursor chemicals to methamphetamine manufacturing locations in East and Southeast Asia.
- **Demand for drug treatment related to methamphetamine remains high in East and Southeast Asia.** ATS were the primary drugs of use for a large majority of persons who received drug treatment in 2012. However, a large number of arrested drug users continue to be sent to compulsory drug treatment facilities, most of which do not provide ATS-specific treatment services.
- **The neighbouring regions of South Asia and the Pacific Island States and Territories** are being tar-

geted for illicit ATS manufacture and trafficking. International drug trafficking groups have sought to use South Asia as a major base, given the high availability of precursor chemicals used for manufacturing illicit synthetic drugs, as well as technical expertise on ATS manufacturing. Transnational organized criminal groups continue to use the Pacific region as a transit point for trafficking methamphetamine and precursor chemicals to and from Asia. However, the lack of quality data and information related to drug trafficking and drug use continues to impede the development of an effective evidence-based response in these two regions.