Social and economic rehabilitation of opium-growing communities:
Alternative livelihood development

UN Trust Fund for Human Security

BACKGROUND

Lao People's Democratic Republic’s Oudomxay province is located in the northwest of the country near the borders of Thailand and Myanmar. The province is mountainous, predominantly rural, ethnically diverse and economically poor. Prior to 2004, opium production had been an important source of income generation for impoverished rural farmers in the province. Subsequent to the Government’s eradication efforts, the province was declared opium-free in 2004. These efforts however did not provide farmers with alternative means of economic support nor did they provide sufficient opportunities for rehabilitation to opium addicts. To shore up the Government’s drug eradication efforts and to address the economic insecurity faced by rural farmers in the province, alternative sources of community income coupled with education were required in order to enable the participating communities to take advantage of these opportunities.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

By assisting farmers to secure sustainable livelihoods, the project aimed to contribute to the Government’s efforts to reduce personal and economic dependency on illicit drugs. Specifically, the project enabled communities and individuals, including rehabilitated opium addicts, to engage in income generation through education and access to resources, enhanced access to social services and improved community infrastructure, as well as improved greater market access to goods produced by the beneficiaries.

BENEFICIARIES

The project’s target beneficiaries were vulnerable rural communities dependent on opium production for their livelihoods. These communities benefited from retraining opportunities while drug users were provided with treatment and rehabilitation centers. At the same time, the project trained 150 villagers as local trainers in order to ensure the sustainability of the project’s activities.

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