

**Outline and Agenda for  
“Drug Control Initiatives In the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) : Sharing of  
Lessons for Future ADB Partnership”, Regional Consultation Workshop,  
Kunming, PRC, 14-15 August 2001**

**Venue :** Bank Hotel Kunming

**Principal Facilitator :** Myo Thant, Sr. Regional Cooperation Economist, GMS  
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**Background and Rationale for the Workshop :**

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has since 1992, supported a comprehensive program of economic cooperation (the “GMS Program”) among the countries that share the Mekong river, namely, Cambodia, Yunnan Province of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam, collectively referred to as the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS). The onset of peace in the GMS in the last decade, has offered tremendous opportunity for the subregion’s economic and social development, and today, the peoples of GMS are experiencing rapid changes and improvements in their living standards and conditions.

With ADB’s support, major steps have been taken by the GMS countries to strengthen economic linkages between them. The GMS Program has succeeded in fostering joint development projects, enhancing trade and investment among GMS countries, and meeting common resource and policy needs. Recently however, there have been growing concerns about social and environmental problems emanating from the opening of borders and closer economic interaction among GMS countries. The response of the GMS Program, since the latter half of 1990s, has been to give greater emphasis to cooperation in environment and human resource development (HRD) which includes initiatives on HIV/ AIDS and lately, on drug eradication.

The production and consumption of opium based narcotics is an illegal activity in the GMS countries. More to the point, it is a socio economic issue, which development agencies that are active in the region cannot ignore. Drug production and its use leads to heavy costs at all levels of society; the individual, the household, the community and the nation state. Preventive activities are a major element in the fight against drugs but need to be complemented by efforts to greatly reduce the production of opium as well as provide treatment for habitual users. These activities require a great deal of political commitment, the mobilisation of adequate financial resources and their use in a cost effective and sustainable manner. Effective interventions also require the active involvement of many different entities which need to have a clear idea of their respective roles as well as coordinate their activities.

As the experience of Thailand has shown, progress in eradicating opium-based narcotics is possible. Progress has been achieved through national efforts, which have been strongly supported by foreign assistance. While foreign assistance can play an important role, its full potential can be realized only if it is used in a cost effective manner and it is sustained by domestic efforts. Ownership of interventions by countries is

important in achieving progress in drug eradication, as is the formulation of technically appropriate project designs.

In addition to national problems, the drug problem in the GMS has at least three (3) regional dimensions, as follows:

- i) With the opening of borders and improvement of transport infrastructure, the drug problem is increasingly becoming a regional issue which requires region-wide solutions, and cooperation and coordination among countries;
- ii) Region wide solutions are needed to minimize the possibility of negative externalities such as increased narcotic trafficking arising from economic corridors which are currently being built; and
- iii) Regional cooperation complements national efforts, particularly in the sharing of ideas concerning best practices and cost effective interventions. Opportunities for exchanges of ideas exist given different approaches, many of them still at pilot stage, among the different countries. There is also opportunity for the advanced and experienced countries to help others.

Regional efforts to deal with drug problems are almost wholly funded by international development agencies but they are no less affected by the need to have proper technical designs as well as secure adequate financing to ensure that projects are sustained. An added problem of regional efforts is that in contrast to national efforts, their coordination difficulties are greatly compounded by differences in language, political outlook and imperatives and levels of development.

This workshop is being held as part of a small scale Regional Technical Assistance project (RETA 5970) funded by ADB. This RETA follows from a series of in-house consultations within the ADB, as well as ADB's subsequent discussions with the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) and the participating governments of Thailand, Lao PDR, People's Republic of China (Yunnan province) and Myanmar, beginning in early 1999.

The focus of the present work is on alternative development and demand reduction. While the importance of law enforcement activities is acknowledged, this activity has not been included since it is felt that it can be more appropriately handled by specialised agencies. Given this focus, the study includes four (4) geographically contiguous GMS countries whose drug problems as well as eradication efforts are in many ways similar and linked to each other.

This workshop provides an opportunity for many of the individuals and groups engaged in the war against drugs, to come with an open mind and learn about what has worked and what has not in the areas of alternative development and demand reduction. The knowledge gained in this workshop will hopefully lead to the design of cost effective and sustainable interventions: especially those with a regional focus. The knowledge is particularly important to an organization such as the Asian Development Bank, which has recognized the magnitude of the problem and looks forward to financing appropriate interventions either by itself or with partners. The workshop will also strengthen the basis for regional cooperation in drug eradication through establishing networks and personal

ties as well as in encouraging international agencies to work harmoniously according to their institutional comparative advantages.

**Objectives:**

Specific objectives of the workshop are:

1. To provide opportunities for the GMS countries to take stock of drug eradication practices in the subregion, share lessons on best practices and arrive at a common understanding on what has worked, and what has not worked.
2. To develop project concepts with regional/ cross border themes, incorporating the best practice elements that will be discussed by the GMS countries during the workshop.
3. To foster networking and develop working relationships between GMS country focal points on drug eradication for future regional initiatives on drug eradication.
4. To generate adequate appropriate material for a policy paper intended for senior policy makers, which will encourage them to support drug eradication efforts and particularly those which have a regional focus.

**Duration of Workshop :**

The workshop will be conducted over a two-day period on Tuesday and Wednesday, 14-15 August 2001 in Kunming, PRC.

**Participants :**

The participants comprise the following :

- Three (3) representatives from governments of each of the four (4) participating GMS countries (PRC, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Thailand) involved in alternative development/ crop substitution, demand reduction and overall planning and development coordination (12 persons).
- One (1) representative each from Viet Nam and Cambodia (2 persons).
- One (1) or two (2) representatives from UNDCP Thailand Regional Centre, one (1) from Lao Country Office and another from Myanmar Country Office (3-4 persons)
- One (1) representative each from two (2) local non-governmental/ civil society groups active in drug issues in the GMS ( 2 persons)
- One (1) representative each from bilateral agencies with either active drug control programs in GMS, or prospective programs in the subregion (2 persons)
- Two participants from ADB Manila (2 persons)

**Prerequisites :**

The government representatives, donor and NGO participants are requested to bring to the workshop two (2) short case studies of best practices, by filling up the attached form provided for the purpose. The size of the project is not important; what is important is the impact and the process of the project, i.e., that it involves alternative

development/ crop substitution and demand reduction. Other possible useful examples are drug control projects which have regional/ cross border elements, including purely national projects with potential for cross border expansion for better effectiveness. This will be a topic of presentation at the seminar as indicated in the attached agenda. Appropriate handouts and reference materials will be distributed to the participants before and during the workshop.

Participants are encouraged to bring with them printed/ video material which help illustrate their activities.

**Pre and Post Evaluation:**

The participants will be requested to state their expectations about the workshop. This will be assessed against a post-evaluation to be conducted at the conclusion.