

ADB, UN JOINTLY IMPLEMENTING PROJECTS IN LAO PDR TO HELP POOR FARMERS

MANILA, PHILIPPINES (8 July 2008) – The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) have joined forces to implement projects in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) to help poor farmers adopt sustainable livelihood programs.

ADB and UNODC have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to strengthen cooperation in implementing an alternative livelihood project for upland ethnic groups and an alternative development project for poor former poppy farmers in the Houaphanh Province.

"This joint effort will greatly enhance both projects, giving the people of Houaphanh a stronger chance of successfully adopting sustainable livelihoods," said Gil-Hong Kim, Country Director, ADB Lao Resident Mission.

Leik Boonwaat, UNODC Representative to the Lao PDR, said: "By providing these communities with alternatives to poppy cultivation and developing treatment programs to help those addicted to opium and heroin, the projects will help lift thousands of people from the grip of poverty."

A \$1.82 million grant from the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction (JFPR) is funding the alternative livelihood project while the Government of Luxemburg is partially contributing \$1 million for the alternative development project. ADB is managing the JFPR grant money and UNODC is managing the funds contributed by Luxemburg.

The Alternative Livelihoods for Upland Ethnic Groups will support village planning and capacity strengthening, construction of rural infrastructure, and strengthen capacity of Government extension services in support of livelihood development activities. The Alternative Development Project to Help Poor Former Opium Poppy Farmers in Houaphanh Province will provide former opium-producing communities and drug abusers in the target districts with community-based treatment, income generation and micro credit opportunities emphasizing an integrated alternative development approach linking social, technical and economical aspects.

ADB and UNODC will capitalize on synergies between the two projects to jointly address the poverty in the region of about 12,215 people living in the districts of Xam Neua and Xamtai.

The Government of Houaphanh Province is the executing agency for the ADB project with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry providing technical support on agriculture-related issues while the Lao National Commission for Drug Control and Supervision is serving as the main counterpart for UNODC project.

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