

### DRUG ABUSE AND HIV/AIDS PREVENTION PROJECT IN BRAZIL

Deivez passed the syringe to Vera. Unknowingly, he also passed her HIV. Vera, Deivez's wife, died from AIDS in June 2001 at the age of 36.

The situation of Vera and Deivez illustrates a difficult cycle at work in Brazil. Drug abuse — HIV/AIDS — premature death. The result is an economy drained further by drug abuse, and a national GDP that dropped by eight per cent in 1996 due to reduced productivity and a weakening of the workforce. Additionally, over 40,000 homicides occur annually, further taking a toll on human resources, and estimates are that drug trafficking accounts for 60 per cent of the violence.

"If I had known about this (HIV/AIDS) at that time, I would have acted differently", said Deivez.

Brazil's National AIDS Programme and the UN International Drug Control Programme's (UNDCP) prevention project are helping Deivez give others that chance by improving societal attitudes towards injecting drug users, reducing social stigmas and increasing access to health and social welfare services, education and HIV and drug abuse treatment and prevention.

Government officials and civil society representatives are trained to monitor ongoing projects and to develop new activities for high-risk populations based on trends in the HIV/AIDS epidemic — such as the increase in infected women. The project promotes the participation and empowerment of injecting drug users, people living with HIV/AIDS, sex workers, prison inmates, street children and other vulnerable populations.

Deivez, 41, is one of the peer educators working with UNDCP to share his experience with at-risk audiences. Vera had also been a peer educator beginning in 1997. Deivez works in one of the poorest areas of Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul State, and visits places where injecting drug use is common. He makes contact with users and informs them of the risks of drug abuse and about risk reduction practices. The injecting drug users are also given more information on how to get treatment and social assistance.

Prior to working with UNDCP, Vera and Deivez had lost their house and the custody of their son to "vein injecting", as they call it. Because of their efforts to turn their lives around, in 1999 Vera and Deivez won back the custody of their son, who is healthy despite both parents being HIV-positive. Since Vera died, his project work has allowed Deivez to have a home where he now lives with his 5 year old son.

UNDCP's specialized projects have been credited with helping to stabilize the annual number of new HIV/AIDS cases, achieving a 50 per cent drop in the mortality rate among AIDS infected persons. The projects have also led to a significant drop in AIDS cases among injecting drug users from 26% in 1991 to 12% in 2000.



Peer educator Deivez informing users of the risk of drug abuse and about risk reduction practices.  
Photograph: UNDCP Brazil  
Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul State

### ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT IN PERU

"Since the destruction of the Agricultural Bank in 1995, we were left without jobs and possibilities to educate our children. We had no alternative but to work for the drug traffickers", said Armando del Arca Huamani, a local farmer.

"Because our community had a runway available for small planes, the 'narcos' (drug traffickers) paid us to extend the runway and to transport the drugs from the production centres to the planes. They offered us 50 soles for 50 kilos of drugs", said Armando. "In 1994 I was arrested for drug trafficking and spent one year in prison, being mistreated and ill-fed. I left behind my wife and children, who had to stop their schooling to support the family".

Cultivating legal crops or growing coca — for years the choice faced by farmers in Peru. A list of pluses and minuses did not always come out in favour of legal crops. Legal agricultural production in Peru faces a multiplicity of challenges, including difficult market access, a lack of agricultural services and processing facilities, little private sector investment and weak government support. Coca production for illicit markets, on the other hand, is supported by intermediaries — well-paid by drug traffickers.

The United Nations International Drug Control Programme's alternative development project in Peru is working to increase farmers' legal options. The project focuses on the needs of small farm families — their present situation, their potential and the obstacles they face for re-entering legal production. Essential in this work is support for local community-based farm organizations and their development into modern farm companies that know how to sell products in local, regional, national and world markets.

UNDCP's alternative development project is helping to boost production of traditional and new export crops such as organic coffee, tea, rubber, tropical fruit, palm heart and palm oil. As a result of UNDCP's alternative development programmes for Peru, farmers' yearly income from agricultural products is US\$1,600-3,500 with potential for growth.

Today, Armando is one of the many beneficiaries of UNDCP's alternative development project focusing on rubber production. His story is similar to that of many farmers and villagers in Peru, who fall prey to the exploitative work of drug traffickers. "After my release [from prison] in 1995, my family and I could no longer bear the situation in our home village, so we moved to San Carlos de Cajonari, where we still live. But the soil here is poor, and there is little water available. Our government has forgotten this zone for many years", said Armando. "I am thankful for the United Nations for studying the potential of rubber production in the area and for advising us on the possibilities and risks. Today they tell us that the rubber will be sold at 3 soles per kilo. This is the correct way to work. We are very happy now, because our family has a safe type of work that also preserves our forests and homes".



Armando Deivez at work.  
Photograph: UNDCP Brazil  
Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul State

### THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR DRUG CONTROL AND CRIME PREVENTION

ODCCP is comprised of:

- The United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP)
- The Centre for International Crime Prevention (CICP)

ODCCP:

- Strengthens international action against drug production and drug trafficking and promotes cooperation in crime prevention and control;
- Educates and raises public awareness about the dangers of drug abuse, and works to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS through prevention and by providing opportunities for treatment and social reintegration to injecting drug users;
- Provides new economic opportunities to regions that are transitioning from opium poppy, coca and cannabis cultivation through alternative development assistance;
- Assists countries in confronting criminals who launder money;
- Works with States to implement drug control treaties by helping to draft legislation and train judicial officials;
- Provides information, analysis and expertise on drug and crime-related issues, highlighting potential dangers so that preventive action can take place;
- Supports the development of criminal justice systems and assists Member States in addressing challenges and threats posed by transnational organized crime;
- Promotes anti-corruption measures and helps make public sector actions more transparent;
- Assists countries in developing joint strategies and practical action against human trafficking; and
- Enhances international cooperation and government response to terrorism.

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