

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



UN Trust Fund for Human Security



## Fast Facts

**Country:** Lao People's Democratic Republic

**Duration:** February 2007 to September 2010

**Implementing UN Agencies:** UNIDO; UNODC

**Other Implementing Partners:** Lao National Commission for Drug Control and Supervision

**Key Words:** Alternative livelihoods; sustainable development; empowerment

## BACKGROUND

Lao People's Democratic Republic's Oudomxai 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 re-training 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.