



ASEAN INTER-PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

THE 11th MEETING OF THE AIPA FACT-FINDING COMMITTEE
(AIFOCOM)

TO COMBAT THE DRUG MENACE

12th – 16th May 2014, Landmark Mekong Riverside Hotel
Vientiane, Lao People's Democratic Republic

*THEME: "Enhancing Parliamentary Cooperation for a Drug Free ASEAN
Community"*

Report on Drug Situation in Lao PDR 11th AIFOCOM, Vientiane Capital, 12-14 May 2014

I. Background

Lao PDR is located in the central of Greater Mekong Sub-region sharing borders with 5 countries namely China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand. Given such geographic location, drug traffickers have exploited Lao territory as a transit route for moving and transporting drugs from one country to another.

At the present, all countries around the world are facing threats from drug, a common issue world-wide, a huge threat to humankind, an obstacle to socio-economic development, a cause of crimes, corruption, and catastrophes to the lives of drug users and their families.

Therefore, Lao PDR has always put in efforts to control, prevent and combat drug. The government has given the top priority in tackling drug menace, and instructed line sectors, local administrations and general public to focus on the successful implementation and the elaboration of various legal instruments such as Law on Narcotics and the National Drug Control Master Plan.

II. Implementation of Drug Control Work-plan in Lao PDR

In the past year, in order to translate the resolutions of the 10th AIFOCOM, the 2nd ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Drug Matters (AMMDM), and the 34th ASEAN Senior

Official Meeting on Drug Matters (ASOD) as well as of the 56th Commission on Narcotic Drugs into actions, and to make Lao PDR a drug-free territory as a contribution to realize the ASEAN's vision of drug-free community, Lao PDR has undertaken some important tasks as follow,

1. Drug control policy and legislation

The National Assembly approved the first ever law on narcotics and the revised criminal law, article 146 on drugs, as well as other legal instrument under the national laws with an aim to put in place stricter and more comprehensive legal measures and penalties against drug-related offenders.

2. Law dissemination and awareness-raising on drug harms

The National Assembly, its committees and honorable members from all constituencies have carried out their roles by collaborating with concerned parties at different level to disseminate regulations and laws on drugs in respective constituency.

In addition, concerned parties have undertaken educating effort and civic awareness campaign through various means at schools, factories, departments, and local administrations in order to raise awareness and understanding of laws and regulations, and harms from drugs. With those efforts, changes can be seen in poppy cultivation areas in some localities going down, more admissions of drug users by aware parents and guardians at treatment and rehabilitation centers, and more apprehension of retail drug dealers. If compared to the previous year, more people are made aware of not buying into deceptions of bad people, and preventing quite a number from exposing to drugs.

3. Treatment and Rehabilitation, and vocational training for drug users

Currently, there are 11 standard and non-standard rehabilitation and vocational training centers while 2 are under construction and additional 3 are in the pipeline. A number of drug users who received the rehabilitation and vocational training services at those centers, outside centers and at the community level are 7,000-7,500 persons last year. After being discharged by centers, a number of beneficiaries are healthy and able to reintegrate into the society.

4. Promotion of sustainable employments among poppy growers

After the declaration of poppy cultivation abolition since 2006, Lao PDR has put in a lot of efforts to introduce alternative livelihoods to replace poppy cultivation by assigning concerned parties to collaborate with local administrations to implement rural development projects to address people's poverty through product commercialization. In addition, investment opportunities have been made appealing for rubber plantation and cultivation of other commercial crops.

International organizations, non-governmental organizations have also mobilized funds to finance development projects in order to replace poppy cultivation in a number of provinces. Local administrations and other concerned parties at all levels of northern provinces have paid attention to educating and disseminating relevant legislations and harms of drugs, and signed MOUs with people in hot spot areas to prevent poppy cultivation. All those aforementioned efforts are to help former poppy growers with alternative employments, income generation, and gradual improvement to their livelihoods. As a result, ten thousands of households have shifted from poppy cultivation to other alternative sustainable employments.

5. Developing a drug-free environment for families, villages and educational institutions

We have paid attention to developing a drug-free environment for families, villages, and educational institution by mainstreaming the effort with 3 levels of decentralization strategy known as 3 Builds. Currently, nation-wide, there are 2655 drug-free villages or about 30.97% of total villages, in which Vientiane Capital has developed 302 drug-free villages accounting for 62.79% of total villages in Vientiane Capital. In addition, education and sports sector has actively developed 543 drug-free secondary schools accounting for 37.90% of total number of secondary schools nation-wide. Generally speaking, a family or any given place with a drug-free environment, there will be more solidarity, security and order.

6. Developing Anti-drug Fund

In order to implement drug control, prevention and combating as defined in the law on narcotics, some localities have piloted the anti-drug fund and a number of provinces are doing the study and considering establishing such fund. The fund financed by the national budget and other sources has enabled the drug prevention and addressing efforts at the provincial level in more effective manner. It is also found that the successful case tackling and apprehension numbers are also rising.

7. Results of law enforcement

Drug prevention and combating police officers and concerned parties have undertaken their duties responsibly and been successful despite threats posed during operations. 2013, we addressed 1,434 cases, apprehended 1,943 suspects with a number of prosecutions with justice, seized 15,211,387 tablet of ATS, 291.19 kg of heroin, 98.97 kg of crude opium, 5,581 kg of dry marihuana, vehicles, weapons and some equipment; and those figures are on a rising trend as compared to previous year figures. On the commemoration of the annual International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, drug burning ceremony is held for the amount seized from the cases with final decisions by People's Courts; 2013, types of drug being burnt included, 5,224,505 tablet of ATS, 2,212.5 kg of dry marijuana, 307.6 g of Ice, 18 kg of heroin bar, 1.4 kg of heroin powder, 3.2 kg of fake heroin with the total cost of USD 18 million.

8. International relation and cooperation

We have always paid attention to the active implementation of conventions, agreements, and MOUs that Lao PDR has accessed to. We have rotated to host meetings with neighboring countries to share experiences and information. Furthermore, we have participated in the Joint Operation “Safe Mekong” to fight drug-related crimes with 4 countries within the GMS region namely, Lao PDR, China, Myanmar and Thailand. We have also sought external financial support to compliment the national budget in undertaking those tasks.

III. Challenges

Apart from the achievements gained from the drug threat control and prevention efforts over the last year, there are also some following challenges in need of attention,

1. Drug-related regulation and law dissemination still lacks scope, depth and breadth. There is also low legal awareness among some population. Besides, the existing legislations are yet comprehensive and have some gaps;
2. Negative social phenomena fueled by drug are on the rising trend in a number of localities. The same applies to poppy and other additive crop cultivation, drug use among students, the youth, workers and various groups of people in the society, distribution and trafficking of drugs and precursor chemicals. In addition, the rising trend can be seen on drug-related crimes accounting for the majority of crimes committed nation-wide;
3. Drug user rehabilitation in a number of rehabilitation centers and communities still lacks the outreach and effectiveness. After treatment program completion, some former drug users relapse and become more addictive;
4. It is also reported that there is a lack of strict law enforcement on drug offenders in some localities. Moreover, the public outcry to take actions against major offenders on drug trafficking cannot be addressed;
5. Monitoring and prevention of poppy cultivation in a number of localities lack early focus causing the cultivation areas on the rise.

IV. Future direction

In order to realize ASEAN’s vision of drug-free community, Lao PDR will focus on the following tasks,

1. Enhancing the roles, rights and duties of the National Assembly on oversight, approval of legislation development and amendment, support to the implementation of laws and policies on drug control and prevention;
2. Strengthening the collaboration with concerned parties on educating, civic awareness campaign through various means to sensitize the general public on relevant laws and drug harms;

3. Gradually promoting the implementation of policy on developing a drug-free environment for families, villages, educational institution, production units and health-care facilities, and supporting poppy growers with alternative legal employments;
4. Improving treatment and rehabilitation centers at the local level to better serve, establishing more rehabilitation centers in areas where needed and conditions allowed, and applying strict measures by law to drug-related offenders;
5. Continuing the cooperation with AIPA state members, friendly and neighboring countries, and international organizations on sharing information, experiences and best practices on undertaking the roles, rights and duties of a legislature in order to contribute to the vision of developing drug-free ASEAN community.