



Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki-moon receives a gift from STC Peer Advisor Mr. Phanthavy Bounmay.

Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki-moon visited the Vientiane Youth Centre on the 11th of April 2009 part of his visit to the Lao PDR on an official invitation from the Lao Government. The Secretary General met with President Choummaly Sayasone, as well as the United Nations country team and also took part in the official inauguration of the U.N House, as well as the launch of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) progress report.

At the Vientiane Youth Center, Mr. Ban Ki-moon was introduced to UNODC activities in the Somsanga drug Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre (STC). He also met and spoke with former ATS users who underwent treatment and are currently partaking in vocational and rehabilitation activities. Of the numerous vocational activities showcased were food processing -with freshly baked pizza available on the premises, T-shirt printing, showcased by

the STC patients and UNODC staff who wore them, as well as a number of handicrafts ranging from ornamental scented candles, to wood art etchings and food containers.

Amphetamine Type Stimulant (ATS) use has become one of the fastest growing issues of regional concern throughout East Asia and the Pacific. Globally there are 24.7 million people who use ATS, of which 55% reside in Asia. Of this figure, 97% of the Asian ATS users are concentrated in East Asia and the Pacific.

During his visit the UN SG Mr. Ban Ki Moon was briefed on the drug situation in Laos during a UN country team meeting. The issue of drugs was also raised with him during his talks with senior Government officials. The Lao PDR geographical location at the hub of the greater Mekong Sub Region has made it vulnerable to transnational trafficking of opium, heroin and ATS. The vast

profits generated out of the drugs trafficked estimated at more than 10% of the 4 billion GDP of the country contributes to significant increases in crime, violence and corruption in the country. Reports indicate a 100% increase in drug related petty crime during the last year in Vientiane Capital.

51% of the 5.6 million population of Laos is below 20 years. This young population is particularly vulnerable to ATS and other substance abuse. There are some 1.4 million youth within the at-risk-age group. The Government reports there are some 40,000 ATS abusers in Laos. UNODC is supporting the Lao Government to develop and implement a new Drug Control master Plan (2009-2013) to address both old and new threats from drugs and crime to the socioeconomic development of the country.

Mr. Ban Ki-moon took particular interest in the displayed



Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki-moon inspects fresh pizza with U.N. Lao PDR Resident Coordinator Ms. Sonam Yangchen Rana And UNODC food processing consultant Mr. Jad Abu Hlayel.

statistics concerning the growing ATS problem in the country, especially in regards to the youth, and discussed this sensitive issue in person with Mr. Phantavy Bounmany, a former ATS user who has been fully re-integrated after being treated at the STC and is now a peer educator there.

There is currently a number of activities at the centre that aim to focus on the physical and mental well being of the patients. Some of these activities include football, volley ball, table tennis as well as Taekwando. In addition, there is a gym project currently in the pipeline. Activities like painting, drawing and sculpting have also been implemented and are producing marketable products. Vocational and occupational rehabilitation training activities at the

Somsanga Centre include Information Technology and English classes, projects that have been in effect since 2008 with the collaboration of the German Development Service (DED). Concrete construction-brick- making has also been implemented in 2008 and has proven very productive for the patients.

Food processing proved to be a successful activity with the female patients of the centre who account for approximately 5% percent of the patients. Ms. Latda Sannilath was the subject of a case study done by UNODC CO Lao and is a former ATS user who has successfully completed the food processing course and who says that she wants to open a restaurant with her family once reintegrated back into society.

One of the recent and most visible activities is the T-shirt printing course that began in January 2009 where a consultant was flown in from Berlin, Germany to build a small T-shirt printing workshop at the Somsanga Centre and to teach the patients involved in the project a skill set ranging from building the machines to the principles and applications of screen printing. The techniques learned from this workshop can also for a variety of other commercial printing purposes. Mr. Somphavanh Boupha was a former ATS user who participated to the screen printing workshop and who become the first assistant to the consultant. He can now use screen printing techniques to print any design on t-shirts, stickers and other media.