



**UNODC**

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

The background of the cover features a close-up of several white, round pills. Overlaid on this is a semi-transparent world map composed of small white dots. The text is centered over the map.

# **Patterns and Trends of Amphetamine-Type Stimulants and Other Drugs**

## **Asia and the Pacific**

### **Executive Summary**

**Global SMART Programme**

**2011**



# Executive Summary

The East and South-East Asia region, which is home to about one-third of the global population, has one of the most established amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) markets in the world, primarily for methamphetamine. Since the late 1990s, the illicit manufacture, trafficking and use of ATS have expanded significantly in the region. These trends continued in 2010.

The present report highlights the most current patterns and trends of amphetamine-type stimulants and other drugs of use in East and South-East Asia and provides overviews for the neighbouring regions of South Asia and the Pacific. This is the latest in a series of reports prepared under the Global Synthetics Monitoring: Analyses, Reporting and Trends (SMART) Programme. The objective of the Global SMART Programme is to enhance the capacity of Member States and relevant authorities to generate, manage, analyse, report and use synthetic drug information, in order to design effective, scientifically-sound and evidence-based policies and programmes.

The findings of the report are based on primary information submitted by the drug control agencies and designated institutions in Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam, via the Drug Use Information Network for Asia and the Pacific (DAINAP) established through the Global SMART Programme. Information from DAINAP is supplemented with data from other Government sources such as national reports, the Annual Reports Questionnaire, and through primary and secondary research. Australia, Japan, New Zealand and Republic of Korea also provided data to the Global SMART Programme for this report.

All 15 countries that contributed to this report reported significant levels of ATS use. In several of those countries, ATS drugs, particularly methamphetamine (in pill or crystalline form), have emerged as the primary drug threat in recent years, in some cases displacing traditionally used plant-based drugs such as heroin, opium or cannabis. It is estimated that between 3.5 and 20.9 million persons in East and South-East Asia have used amphetamines in the past year.

ATS are used because they are perceived to enhance work performance; they are affordable; and many users

perceive them as not being very harmful to health. On the supply side, ATS are attractive because of their high profits – with little investment, hugely profitable quantities of drugs can be manufactured; they can be made from a variety of starting materials or precursor chemicals; they can be manufactured in any geographic location and require minimal space.

The manufacture of ATS is not geographically limited, and most ATS laboratories tend to be located close to the illicit ATS market. East and South-East Asia has become a centre for the illicit manufacture of ATS, particularly since 2006. Precursor chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of methamphetamine are often easily obtainable. Trafficking routes for ATS continue to evolve, and new players, many from organized criminal groups based outside of the region, are becoming increasingly involved in the ATS trade.

Although improvements have been made in the region in terms of data generation, analysis and sharing as well as forensic capacity, considerable challenges remain in order to assess the full extent of the security and health implications of illicit manufacture, trafficking and use of ATS in the region.

Based on data submitted for the years 2009 and 2010, the following observations are made in the report:

- **Increasing ATS use was reported from most countries in East and South-East Asia.** Since 2009, ATS have ranked in the top three drugs of use in all countries in the region. Reported use of methamphetamine showed an increase in ten countries, whereas methamphetamine use was reported as stable or declining in Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Philippines and the Republic of Korea.
- **The illicit manufacture of ATS continued at high levels in the region.** In 2010, some 442 ATS-related manufacturing facilities were seized in East and South-East Asia, most of which were manufacturing amphetamines-group substances. Significant quantities of ATS continued to be illicitly manufactured in China, Myanmar and the Philippines. Illicit ATS manufacture continued to expand in countries which were previously primarily transit countries for ATS, such as Cambodia, Indonesia and Malaysia. Limited and small-scale illicit ATS

manufacture was reported from Japan, the Republic of Korea and Thailand.

- **Diversion of pharmaceutical preparations containing pseudoephedrine for the manufacture of methamphetamine continued in the region.** Since 2008, significant quantities of pharmaceutical preparations have been seized in Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand. Thailand's Office of the Narcotics Control Board estimates that at least 100 million pseudoephedrine preparations destined for illicit methamphetamine manufacturing sites in Cambodia and Myanmar transited the country in 2010.
- **Transnational organized criminal groups from Africa and the Islamic Republic of Iran continue to be involved in the trafficking of methamphetamine to East and South-East Asia.** The trafficking of methamphetamine by African groups has been officially reported by China, Cambodia, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam. Similarly, nationals of the Islamic Republic of Iran have been arrested for their involvement in the trafficking of crystalline methamphetamine in several countries in the region, including Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand.
- **Seizures of methamphetamine pills increased again in 2010.** The number of methamphetamine pills seized in the region increased substantially for the second consecutive year in 2010. A total of nearly 136 million pills was seized in 2010, representing a 44% increase from the 94 million pills seized in 2009 and a greater than four-fold increase compared with 2008 (32 million). Most pills were seized in China (58.4 million), Thailand (50.4 million) and Lao PDR (24.5 million), which account-

ed for 98% of the total number of methamphetamine pills seized in the region in 2010.

- **Lao PDR is vulnerable to international drug trafficking networks.** Increasing quantities of methamphetamine appear to have been trafficked through Lao PDR to neighbouring Cambodia, Thailand and Viet Nam in recent years. Lao PDR's remote and sparsely populated mountainous borderlands (adjacent to major ATS manufacturing sites in Myanmar) where law enforcement capacity is limited, make the country vulnerable to the displacement of methamphetamine manufacturing facilities from Myanmar.
- **Ecstasy manufacture and use** in East and South-East Asia is declining, reflecting the global trend.
- **Arrests and drug treatment demand** related to methamphetamine continued to show an upward trend.
- **The transmission of blood-borne diseases, including HIV,** through the injecting use of methamphetamine remains a risk in the region.
- **The neighbouring regions of South Asia and the Pacific Island States and territories** are vulnerable to the expansion of illicit ATS manufacture, trafficking of ATS, and the diversion of precursor chemicals, particularly ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, often in the form of pharmaceutical preparations. Moreover, in the absence of formal drug surveillance systems or comprehensive illicit drug assessments, either nationally or regionally, the nature and extent of the ATS situation in these two regions are not fully understood.



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