



Evaluation of the Global Assessment Programme on Drug Abuse (GAP)

Introduction: Programme Background

The Global Assessment Programme on Drug Abuse (GAP) was launched in August 2000 as part of UNODC's overall response to the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on the World Drug Problem in 1998. The purpose of GAP is to assist Member States in compiling internationally comparable data on drug consumption and demand reduction responses in order to guide and evaluate national, regional and global drug abuse prevention policies and programmes. Through training and technical support, GAP has sought to increase the capacity of Member States to collect, process and report such data, and has facilitated

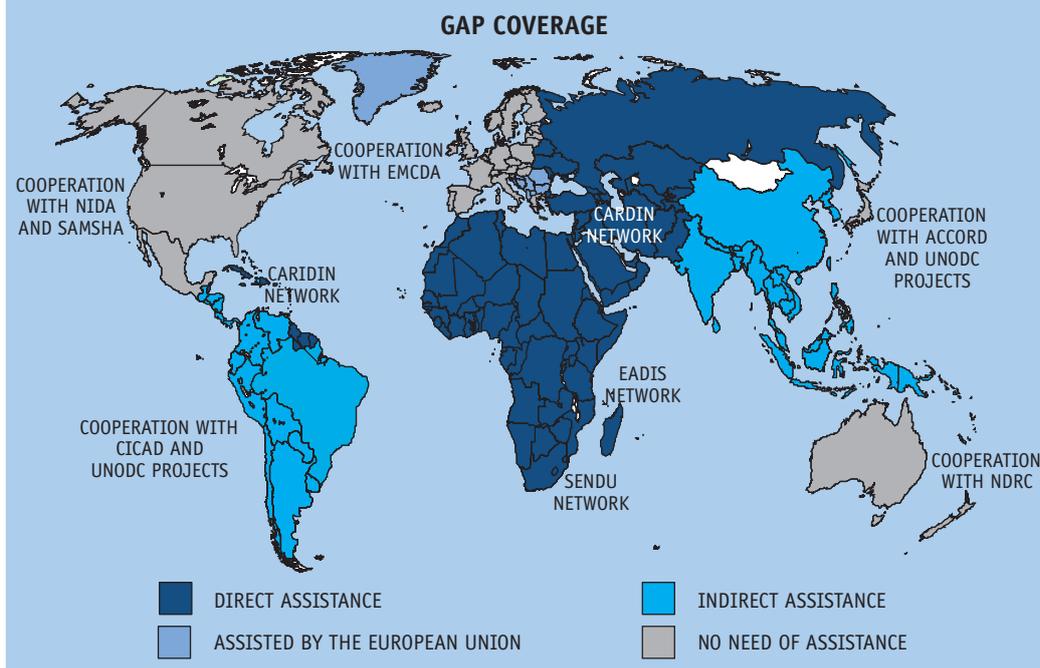
the completion of projects that have generated new information on the nature and prevalence of illicit drug use in some countries. UNODC has also developed, apart from GAP, projects at headquarters and in the field for the purposes of data collection and capacity development.

GAP is the responsibility of the Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation Unit (PTRU) of the Global Challenges Section in the Division of Operations. The Unit is a repository of technical expertise for programmatic functions and policy development in the area of drug abuse data collection, and in the assessment of the extent, patterns and trends in illicit drug consumption and drug-related problems in the population.

GAP has been successful in developing resources that promote, support and facilitate the reporting of comparable drug consumption data.

Figure 1. GAP's main objectives

- To assist Member States in developing the capacity to monitor patterns and trends in drug abuse;
- To encourage the adoption of methodologically sound and comparable indicators of drug abuse;
- To support the development of expert networks at both national and regional levels; and
- To facilitate evidence-based demand reduction responses.



Evaluation purpose and objective

The primary purpose of this thematic evaluation was to assess the relevance and appropriateness of GAP's concept, design and implementation, and the extent to which it has achieved its objectives so far. The evaluation also aimed to identify best practices and options for improving the programme. The evaluation used the objectives set forth in the official GAP programme document as a basis for assessment. The stakeholders of this evaluation were UNODC, beneficiary countries, donors and GAP's collaborating partners at the national, regional and international levels.

Evaluation methodology

The evaluation focused on the assistance provided by GAP and its achievements in the five regions where there were at least some significant GAP activities during 2000-2004: Caribbean, Southern Africa, East Africa, Central and South West Asia, and North Africa and the Middle East. The evaluation methodology was based on a holistic evaluation framework, which guided the analysis of information from documents, person-to-person and telephone interviews, and field visits to 12 selected countries. In general, countries visited were those that had received significant attention from GAP. A questionnaire was sent to key informants in countries that did not receive a site visit, with a response rate of 42 per cent.

The evaluation did not aim to produce a definitive, quantitative assessment of GAP, but rather to use a qualitative, case-study approach to help identify factors that influenced GAP's implementation and effectiveness. Three consultants with no prior involvement with the GAP Programme were contracted to plan and conduct the evaluation with the assistance and support of the IEU team.

Major findings

- GAP, in collaboration with various regional and international agencies, has developed and promoted standardized indicators of drug use, data collection methods and associated toolkits.
- The programme has helped Member States to report data on the magnitude and trends in illicit drug use and has revised common reporting instruments, such as the Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ).
- GAP has provided training and technical support to 62 countries to increase local capacities for the collection, processing and reporting of epidemiological data on the demand for illicit drugs.
- GAP's training activities and advocacy efforts, particularly those facilitated by Regional Advisors, have contributed to the establishment and/or improvement of data collection systems and networks in some countries.
- The programme has facilitated the implementation of separate field projects that have generated new information on the nature and prevalence of drug use in some countries (e.g. rapid assessment studies, focus studies, and school surveys).
- Under GAP, five regional epidemiological networks were established or supported, however the sustainability of these networks is a concern. Two established networks, the Caribbean Drug Information Network (CARDIN) and the East African Drug Information System (EADIS), for example, are no longer very active.
- The selection of regions and countries, and the types and levels of GAP activities are the result of a compromise between an ideal strategy and the realities of funding, needs and opportunities. Different regions and countries received different types and levels of attention, and many countries and regions with significant needs have received little or no attention.
- GAP lacks a global strategic plan, and the programme document should be revised to include a clear logic model and an updated vision, which indicates objectives that are clear, achievable within specified time frames, and measurable.

Figure 2. GAP findings from South West and Central Asia

- In all countries visited in the region, the assignment of a qualified Regional Advisor on a full-time basis was a key success factor in coordinating GAP activities and in promoting the use of evidence emanating from assessment studies in a judicious manner.
- Well-conceived national assessment studies, done with the support of multilateral organizations such as UNODC, can lead to a better understanding of the drug situation in countries and to changes in decision-makers' attitudes.
- Initial studies conducted to assess national drug situations provided a clear picture of a country's drug problem for the first time, triggering a change in attitude towards the seriousness and impact of drug problems, and towards interventions to address these.
- The mobilization of expert resources and the establishment of effective partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders helped ensure success.
- Well-targeted training assistance greatly contributed to the success of GAP implementation in the region.

- Overlapping mandates and lack of clarity on responsibilities for collecting drug abuse data within UNODC have created some problems in relation to coordination and duplication of efforts, hoarding of information, and caused organizational friction.
- Funds available for GAP fell far short of expectations, however the programme, particularly through the assignment of qualified Regional Advisors, capitalized on opportunities created by other data collection projects.
- At the country level, it is difficult to disentangle the influence of GAP from other projects, activities and events.
- UNODC should recognize the essential role of GAP Regional Advisors and devise a strategic plan that ensures more attention is given to regions and countries where little is known about illicit drug use.

Outcomes, impacts, sustainability

- According to figures reported in the 2005 World Drug Report, the number of countries reporting expert assessments of drug use was much higher in 2005 than in 1992 (102 versus 52, against a possible total of 197), and this increase appears to have followed revisions to Part II of the Annual Report Questionnaires (ARQs) under GAP.
- The 2005 World Drug Report also indicates there has been "some improvements" in epidemiological data in recent years, and includes some data generated by studies done with technical support from GAP.
- GAP has supported the development of international standards for monitoring the demand for illicit drugs and facilitated the reporting of data. It has also

developed relevant methodological toolkits and other materials.

- In the long term this could be expected to lead to improved data on drug use at the global level. However, it may be too early to expect any substantial changes in the data submitted by most GAP targeted countries or countries exposed to GAP materials.
- There are indications that new data, directly or indirectly generated with help from GAP has contributed to policy and programming in some countries, such as Barbados, the Bahamas, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkey.
- Resources available during the first four years fell far short of those originally envisioned (\$3.5 million vs. \$11 million). Additional funds will be required for GAP to continue and to expand its efforts to other regions and countries, and to maintain the sustainability of the regional networks.
- The sustainability of country structures promoted by GAP will depend on the capacity and willingness of local governments and agencies to provide and secure appropriate resources.

Recommendations

- UNODC management should give urgent attention to adopting a comprehensive response to the UNGASS information request based on an inventory and assessment of current and past efforts, preferably within the ambit of a multi-year strategic plan aimed at encompassing 85-90 per cent of the world's population.
- Continue to support GAP as a capacity building programme setting realistic and measurable outcomes for specific regions.
- Place greater emphasis on the recruitment and long-term

support of qualified Regional Advisors with local knowledge.

- Use a combination of implementation strategies that include advocacy, training and capacity building.
- Consider developing a horizontal information management strategy with a view to looking at information as an essential resource, on the same level as people and money.
- Clarify the roles of all those involved in GAP-related activities both at headquarters and in the field.
- Consider linkages with other networks with an online presence and develop an internet-based peer and expert support system for stakeholders in GAP regions/countries.
- Continue to promote the need for data on key indicators and the completion of Part II of the Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ).
- Continue to improve and promote the GAP toolkits and complete their translation into Russian and Arabic.
- Review fund raising options and consider ways to make the programme of greater interest to donors.
- Update the programme document and website, and develop a programme logic model.
- Develop a database to monitor activities and progress at the regional and country level drawing on a revised programme document that clearly indicates short and long-term objectives, and includes indicators of success.
- Develop a system of time tracking for all UNODC activities to accurately report on resource utilization, and use such information judiciously for management purposes.



Lessons learned and best practices

- The long-term assignment of a qualified GAP Regional Advisor with local knowledge is essential for country-level data collection capacity development;
- The influence of technical support for data collection capacities, programmes and policies is greatest when this is directly relevant to stakeholder needs or provided in the context of well-conceived studies with clear results and implications for policies and programmes;
- Advocacy work is needed to promote the use of epidemiological data and the development of enhanced monitoring systems; and
- Where resources are limited, it is essential to capitalize on opportunities created by other capacity development and data collection initiatives.

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About IEU

The Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU) is an independent unit within UNODC.

The Unit provides feedback to the organization and its stakeholders on the efficiency, effectiveness, relevance and impact of UNODC projects and programmes.

IEU provides substantive guidance and support to other UNODC units in evaluation issues and promotes the use of evaluation results to improve programme performance, outcomes and impact

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