



EVALUATION OF THE UNODC SUPPORT MECHANISMS FOR TECHNICAL COOPERATION

Introduction: Programme background

In 2002, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) undertook an exercise to re-examine its operations and released a plan of action and guidelines. Since 2003, a number of operational priorities have been identified and guidelines have been developed to enable UNODC to pursue its priorities fully, rapidly and in an integrated manner. The guidelines are intended to provide UNODC governing bodies with guidance to help them prioritize actions.

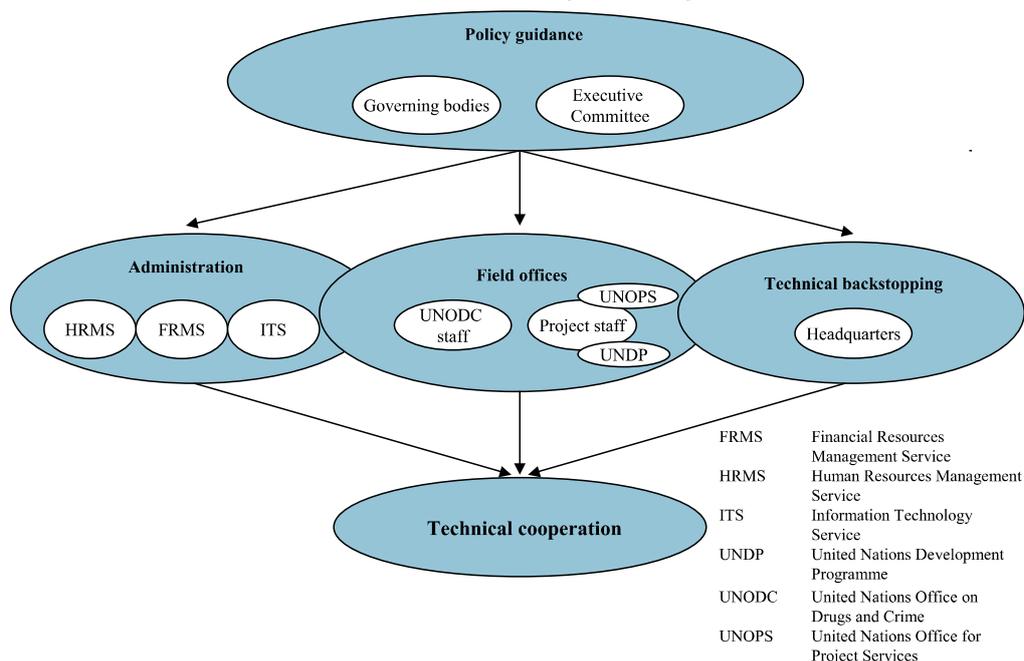
The report entitled "Evaluation of UNODC Support Mechanisms for Technical Cooperation" focused on the administrative and substantive support mechanisms that UNODC had in place at headquarters and in field offices, as well as on the administrative support mechanisms provided by other entities, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Office of Project Services

(UNOPS). It aimed to find ways of strengthening those mechanisms in order to guarantee a more efficient and effective system for delivering technical cooperation. The support mechanisms included, but were not limited to, headquarter substantive backstopping, management, strategic planning, information and communication technology and financial and human resources services.

The evaluation examined UNODC structures and mechanisms, including the way in which the Office's systems, strategies, practices and procedures affected the implementation of technical cooperation initiatives. The aim of the evaluation was to contribute to improving organization within UNODC. Furthermore, the evaluation assessed the effectiveness, efficiency and quality of UNODC initiatives beginning in 2004 with a view to identifying lessons learned and best practices that could be used to improve organizational operations, as well as to make recommendations for concluded, ongoing and new initiatives.

*UNODC's
commitment to
provide
integrated
technical
assistance on
issues related to
drug control,
crime prevention
and terrorism*

Support mechanisms for technical cooperation:
services to technical cooperation providers



Purpose and objectives of the evaluation

The main purpose of the Evaluation of UNODC Support Mechanisms for Technical Cooperation was to identify systemic and institutional constraints on the efficiency and effectiveness of the delivery of technical assistance to field offices, which are the main vehicles of UNODC for delivering such assistance to Member States. The evaluation aimed to help UNODC identify the constraints and their causes and to suggest ways of resolving them. It also aimed to give management information, ideas and suggestions that would enable them to make informed decisions and to develop and amend policies. In turn, that would enable UNODC to become more efficient and effective in fulfilling its mandates and, ultimately, to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of field offices.

The objectives of the evaluation included improving governance, funding, operations, relations between managers and other staff members and communications. Those objectives were to be achieved in an efficient, coherent and credible manner. Such governance initiatives reflected the desire of UNODC to reorganize itself in order to increase its productivity and effectiveness. The issues addressed included substantive or programmatic backstopping, management of human and financial resources, provision of information and communication technology services and strategic planning. The evaluation also assessed how administrative and financial issues, as well as information technology, influenced technical units and experts in their

endeavours to provide technical expertise to field offices and to deliver technical assistance to Member States.

Methodology

The evaluation was carried out through an interactive and participatory process. External consultants conducted in-depth discussions with staff members of the Independent Evaluation Unit in order to get a clear interpretation of the terms of reference, on which senior UNODC officials were then invited to comment. After having built consensus on the terms of reference, an extensive review was conducted of various relevant documents on the operations, programmes, organizational set-up and management of UNODC headquarters and field offices.

Together with lead consultants, the Independent Evaluation Unit prepared detailed questionnaires for staff based at headquarters and in field offices. The evaluation team conducted in-depth face-to-face interviews with 155 people, 127 of whom were UNODC staff members, 22 were UNDP staff members and 6 were UNOPS staff members. A further 80 UNODC staff members replied to a questionnaire that was sent electronically. In total, 235 persons provided information for that evaluation.

Site visits were made and staff from the following UNODC field offices were interviewed: Brazil, Colombia, Egypt, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kenya, Mexico, Myanmar, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Thailand and Uzbekistan. Thirteen of 21 field offices were visited during the course of the evaluation. UNOPS

and UNDP staff members in the field offices were also interviewed.

Main observations

The evaluation recognized that the structure of UNODC could be adapted to better accommodate the evolution, operations and growth of field offices and to ensure the inclusion of field offices in the overall culture of UNODC headquarters.

The evaluation revealed that the sustenance and development of human resources were two of the challenges faced by UNODC field offices, which is why it was deemed crucial that the field offices retain a critical mass of administrative and programme expertise. The tendency to fund initiatives on a project-by-project basis was, however, considered to be hindering the retention of staff in the long term, in other words beyond the duration of specific short-term projects. Programme staff in field offices were on short-term contracts that were often valid for one year, renewable subject to the availability of funds. The short-term contracts and lack of adequate information on renewals of contracts caused uncertainty and anxiety among staff.

The evaluation team noted that UNODC would benefit from a coherent strategy for supporting field offices to develop projects and raise funds for their implementation. It also observed that divisions at headquarters and field offices tended to compete for funds from the same group of donors and realized that a better synergy was needed between the fund-raising efforts of field offices and those of headquarters.

The evaluation team observed that UNODC offices at headquarters and in the field had good information and communication technology infrastructure. Staff in the field offices were very satisfied with the support services offered by headquarters and, in particular, with the training they received on the Programme and Financial Management Information System (ProFi). The Information Technology Service had also been proactive in providing training on how to manage the content of field office websites and in enabling field office staff to upload and update relevant information on their respective websites.

The evaluation team acknowledged that the Financial Resources Management Service and Information Technology Service had been proactive in identifying the needs of field offices and in ensuring that they had the necessary systems and staff in place. The approaches adopted by the Financial Resources Management Service and the Information Technology Service to backstop field offices can be considered best practices in UNODC.

Implementation by UNODC of accepted recommendations

UNODC management has undertaken a series of actions to improve communication and coordination between divisions in headquarters and between headquarters and field offices, including through weekly Executive Committee meetings and weekly divisional meetings, the minutes of which are distributed electronically to all staff.

Recommendations

The evaluation team made 10 recommendations. UNODC management agreed on and accepted the following six recommendations:

- UNODC should review and reform its organizational communication and coordination mechanisms in order to better support field offices in the delivery of technical assistance and cooperation to improve communication and coordination between divisions at headquarters;
- UNODC should articulate more clearly the strategy for fund-raising and make it known to all who are involved in fund-raising in order to secure stable and predictable funding;
- UNODC should develop a clear policy on opening bank accounts for field offices in order to facilitate the handling and transfer of money;
- UNODC should promote the use of videoconferencing and other modes of communication to build strong links between field offices and headquarters, as well as among field offices, in order to improve communication throughout the Office;
- UNODC should implement in full the recommendations of the project cycle management diagnostic study in order to streamline the procedures of the Programme and Project Committee and to increase efficiency and effectiveness in project development;
- UNODC should consider undertaking an exercise that the Information and Technology Service used in developing the existing Information and Technology Service systems in order to assess the perceived needs and identify specific types of information available at the country and field office levels.

UNODC management is committed to implementing those six recommendations given the availability of resources. With respect to the other four recommendations, however, UNODC management was of the opinion that not only had the Independent Evaluation Unit developed its conclusions on a systematically inadequate basis, it also had failed to provide constructive and useful recommendations for management to act upon.

The strategy for the period 2008-2011 for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and biennial budgets provide the strategic framework for the resource mobilization activities of UNODC. Based on enhanced mandates, UNODC continues to seek an increase in its regular budget with the overall aim of securing predictable funding.

The Co-financing and Partnership Section has initiated, together with the Partnership in Development Branch and the Financial

Resources Management Service, a process to streamline working procedures and methods at headquarters and in field offices. A regional workshop for all field office representatives in Latin America was held in Bogotá and resulted in a practical pilot scheme designed to promote local fund-raising by increasing the financial authority and accountability of field offices.

A management instruction on project approval introduced a decentralized system of authority



and accountability with the aim of increasing efficiency and effectiveness. The authority granted by that management instruction covered all project documents, as well as project revisions, regardless of the budgetary value.

In terms of special purpose or programme funding, UNODC is pursuing a systematic and comprehensive resource mobilization approach towards the groups of major donors and of emerging and national donors (including through local fund-raising efforts) and by establishing strategic partnerships with the European Commission, international financial institutions, the private sector and foundations. That initiative, which has resulted in an increase in funding and a more diversified resource base, will continue, with increased emphasis on thematic fund-raising.

Conclusion

The Evaluation of UNODC Support Mechanisms for Technical Cooperation demonstrated that such mechanisms can be improved if specific structural reforms are made to better integrate field offices. UNODC management has undertaken a series of actions to

implement the recommendations listed above, which provide suggestions on appropriate ways to strengthen such support mechanisms and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of field offices. The proactive engagement of the Financial Resources Management Service and the Information Technology Service continues to have a positive impact on the quality of the work of field offices and is improving working relations between field offices and headquarters. Positive outcomes are also being achieved as a result of the innovative approaches adopted by some field offices to fund-raising, which have led to a significant increase in financial resources. The development and adoption of the strategy for the period 2008-2011 is having a positive effect and continues to provide for a coordinated approach to programme and project development and fund-raising. The report concludes that in undertaking those reforms to ensure management support for support mechanisms for technical cooperation, executive leadership and an open, inclusive participatory process in UNODC as a whole, as well as the support of donors and Member States, are pivotal to the success of UNODC.

The Evaluation on UNODC Support Mechanisms for Technical Cooperation was prepared by John Mugabe, Consultant (lead author) and Backson Sibanda, team leader and Chief of the Independent Evaluation Unit

About IEU

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

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

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

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