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Office on Drugs and Crime

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

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AFG/T21

Project Title:
Developing Post-Release Opportunities
for Women and Girls Prisoners
Extension to the Provinces

Thematic area:
Criminal Justice

Country:
Afghanistan

Report of the Independent Evaluation Team

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Abbreviations and acronyms

ANDS	Afghanistan National Development Strategy
AGO	Attorney's General Office
AIHRC	Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission
AWEC	Afghan Women Education Centre
AWSE	Afghan Women Services and Education Organization
AREP	Afghan Rehabilitation and Education Programme
CPD	Central Prison Department, Ministry of Justice
CSSP	Correction System Support Programme
COAFG	UNODC Country Office for Afghanistan
FJDC	Female and Juvenile Detention Centre
GDI	Gender Development Index
HDI	Human Development Index
HOSA	Humanitarian Organization Supporting Afghans
HQ	Headquarter
IC	International Community
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ISISC	International Institute of Higher Studies in Criminal Science
MAHARAT	formerly Afghan Women's Vocational Skills Learning Center (AWVSLC)
MCDRO	Development and Rehabilitation Organization
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MoA	Memorandum of Agreement
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MoLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
MoPH	Ministry of Public Health MoWA Ministry of Women's Affairs
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NPAW	National Plan of Action for Women of Afghanistan
NPC	National Project Coordinator
PWG	Prison Working Group
SCP	Supreme Council of Prison
TAG	Technical Advisory Group
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women

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About the authors

Jan van den Brand, currently the President of the Dutch Union of Prison Governors, is a former General (Regional) Prison Governor. Prior to joining the Dutch Prison Service in 1976, he gained significant professional experience working at the Ministry of Justice and at the University of Amsterdam, where he served as Secretary of the Board of the Faculty of Philosophy. In preparation to the appointment as Prison Governor, Jan underwent over 8 years a number of training, most of which focusing on management. His career as Governor and Regional Governor began in 1983. In this capacity, he particularly focused on two projects: the development, within the correction system, of rehabilitation programs for prisoners and capacity building and strengthening for penitentiary staff. In January 2006, after retirement, he was nominated Head of the international activities ran by the Dutch Prison Service. Prior to this, and in parallel to his professional engagements, he had already been involved in EU-funded international development projects for about 12 years. He was active mostly in Eastern European Countries like Estonia, Poland, Czech Republic, Romania, Hungary and the former Yugoslav States. In addition, he has gathered extensive experience in a number of other Countries, namely Albania, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan on behalf of organizations such as the Council of Europe, the OSCE and SIDA. On a bilateral basis he was involved in international projects related to the penitentiary system in China, Nigeria, Ghana and Suriname.

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The authors would like to acknowledge the support and assistance received from UNODC staff in Kabul in preparation and during the conduct of the exercise, including provision of valuable comments to the draft Report.

Summary matrix of findings, supporting evidences and recommendations

FINDINGS: IDENTIFIED PROBLEMS/ISSUES	SUPPORTING EVIDENCE/EXAMPLES	RECOMMENDATIONS
<p>1. UNODC, particularly through the Vienna-based Criminal Justice Reform Expert that had already been working under Project S47, producing most of its outputs, was able to create synergies with local actors and maintain a good level of communication and sharing of information with the major representatives of the IC (namely CSSP) involved in training of female staff.</p>	<p>Evidence supporting the opinion on the good level of communication and sharing of information is provided mainly by the reports and correspondence between UNODC and CSSP.</p> <p>An example of the capacity of the organization to create synergies is represented by the initiative that UNODC took to invite the NGO HAWCA to participate in the TAG and the subsequent technical support that was given to it for the presentation of a project proposal aimed at the establishment of a transitional house for former inmates are to be praised, just like the systematic coordination with CSSP during the drafting of the curriculum for female correction staff.</p>	<p>As it appears that this coordination was uneven during the project-life and mainly personality-drive, the evaluators recommend that in future projects UNODC pays particular attention that the training on project management that newly recruited staff receives emphasises the need for constant coordination efforts are in place.</p> <p>In order for such indications not to remain dead letter during the project design phase UNODC should ensure that resources needed to put in place such efforts are taken into full account and reflected accordingly.</p>
<p>2. The project invested resources in the development of psycho-social material and curriculum which does not represent value for money.</p>	<p>To date there are no indications that the manual and curriculum developed by UNODC under this project are in use. Their translation has not been completed, making it even less likely that it will be put to use in future.</p> <p>Conversely, the manual developed on virtually the same topic by a group of Afghan NGOs under the leadership of local NGO HOSA (with the support of an international consultant) in close cooperation with the MoPH and MoLSA proved to be a rather successful exercise,</p>	<p>Before commissioning original work the organization must verify the availability of existing resources and ensure that, at least at institutional level, no activities such as the one planned are in place.</p>
<p>3. Project design did not properly identify assumptions and lacked risk analysis</p>	<p>The inability of TAG to perform its functions was not listed amongst the risks.</p> <p>The project erroneously included "lack of support from members of the judiciary" as one of the risks hindering the adoption of specific policy on women and girls in prison and for post-release support for women. In practice, however, the judiciary plays no role in this respect.</p> <p>UNODC's unspoken assumption that Kabul University would be ready to collaborate in the development of a social work curriculum, eventually did not happen, thus affecting the project's sustainability.</p>	<p>UNODC (and its donors) should be realistic about the results that technical assistance efforts can produce. Projects involving and/or requiring social and cultural changes should aim at little immediate results and it should be clear to all involved that absence of visible changes does not equal failure of the project.</p> <p>Full appreciation and analysis of social and cultural constraints should be emphasised during project planning.</p>
<p>4. The project was overly ambitious and, therefore, destined not to fully succeed.</p>	<p>Immediate Objectives were too numerous and, most of all, involved cultural changes that could not be realistically achieved in such a short period of time.</p>	<p>UNODC (and its donors) should be realistic as to what can be achieved in a limited amount of time, particularly considering the human resources and environmental constraints affecting implementation of projects in Afghanistan. UNODC, therefore, should avoid, within one project, to disperse its efforts into too many directions.</p> <p>In the present case the evaluator believe that it would have been sensible to build the project around the capacity building activities foreseen under Immediate Objectives 1 and 4 only.</p>
<p>5. Monitoring and feedback obligations of some implementing partners did not prove to be up to standards, making it difficult to assess real impact of activities.</p>	<p>Reports submitted by ISISC, UNODC's main implementing partner for training were below standards, particularly considering the international nature of the NGO, as opposed to local NGOs implementing vocational and literacy training. ISISC reports provided</p>	<p>UNODC should pay more attention to implementing partners' reporting obligations, so as to ensure that they effectively contribute to the overall project management and monitoring.</p>

FINDINGS: IDENTIFIED PROBLEMS/ISSUES	SUPPORTING EVIDENCE/EXAMPLES	RECOMMENDATIONS
	<p>narrative description of activities, rather than substantive analysis of their critical aspects. Such reports do not sufficiently provide the organization with inputs and elements to improve its capacity building endeavours and their improvement should have been requested by UNODC, especially in the light of the fact that ISISC is their main training partner.</p>	
<p>6. Internal project monitoring was neither systematic nor accurate, thus hindering correct understanding of project implementation, proper assessment of activities and results, and timely identification of flaws.</p>	<p>The evaluators found the Internal monitoring and reporting on the project carried out by the NPC unsatisfactory. Reports were inaccurate and imprecise and often confusing as to the outputs produced under the project as opposed to those developed under Project S47.</p> <p>The inability of the NPC to provide continuity in the project management almost nullified the comprehensive, thoughtful and inspiring reports provided by the Vienna-based Criminal Justice Reform Expert.</p>	<p>UNOD should ensure that staff has full knowledge and command of internal monitoring tools and standards and that they are being used properly and fully adhered to.</p>
<p>7. UNODC's ability to embody a capacity building component in its project processes is still unsatisfactory.</p>	<p>The 2008 Rule of Law Thematic Evaluation criticized the COAFG's lack of understanding that "the process is a product" in project design and recommended the organization to fully incorporate the development of national technical expertise into its institution development works. The evaluators, however, were rather surprised to learn that UNODC's International expert was, with the input of local professionals, developing a curriculum for social workers and educators working in corrections. At the same time at the Governmental level, a group of NGOs, with the input and guidance of an international expert (note the inversion of roles) were developing very similar material which local professionals felt truly theirs. At the end of the day, considering the practical obstacles that prevented UNODC material from being first translated and subsequently disseminated, it seems to the evaluators that UNODC once again launched a (relatively expensive) comet which passed through the sky and then left, leaving very little behind.</p>	<p>In 2008 the thematic evaluators recommended that UNODC ensure that local actors be full partners in project planning and implementation so that they can both learn and provide input. All this with the objective of developing local skills and experience, ensuring cultural appropriateness of interventions, through proper infusion of local skills and knowledge, and favour sense of ownership of results. It seems to the present evaluators that the above mentioned recommendation has not yet been implemented, as the example of the development by an international trainer of the psycho-social curriculum showed.</p>
<p>8. Project T21 was not able to capitalize UNODC's resources, particularly those produced under phase I of the project.</p>	<p>The handbook and curriculum for female prison staff developed under Phase I of the project were not used, though specifically meant for the training to be conducted under the present project..</p>	<p>UNODC should ensure that newly recruited staff gain full awareness of project and activities carried out by the organization in the related problem area and that they familiarize with the relevant material already available in-house.</p>

FINDINGS: IDENTIFIED PROBLEMS/ISSUES	SUPPORTING EVIDENCE/EXAMPLES	RECOMMENDATIONS
<p>9. The training targeting female inmates lacked capacity to create long-term impact</p>	<p>In relation to the activities implemented by UNODC in favour of former female inmates' socio-economic reintegration, one of the evaluators' interlocutors made the following comment: "UNODC must stop thinking in terms of activities and start thinking in terms of programmes". This comment, fully subscribed by the evaluators, clearly underlines the main deficiency of UNODC's interventions in the framework of Project T21: the project was more a collection of activities than a reasoned attempt to comprehensively address the obstacles and constraints to post-release socio-economic reintegration of former female inmates. Lack of follow-up on the impact of the training provided, of the situation actually faced by women upon release, lack of continuity in the support are all elements that support such conclusions. What the project missed was exactly the holistic and sustainable approach (as quoted at the opening of this Report) that came out as recommendations under the Project S47.</p>	<p>When planning technical assistance interventions UNODC should ensure that they fit into a strategy able to produce results in the long term.</p> <p>UNODC should advocate about the need to have a long-term vision allowing for interventions which are not just production of results which end with the completion of project.</p>
<p>10. The project suffered from lack of micro-finance perspective which hindered its long-term impact.</p>	<p>Professional training delivered to female inmates was not linked to real-life opportunities outside the bars either during imprisonment or after release.</p>	<p>The recommendation issued by the evaluators of Project S47 in 2007, that is that UNODC should explore the possibility to collaborate with a private, profit-oriented firm in this kind of training exercise, not only for commercialization purposes, but also to ensure employment opportunities for some of the trained inmates after their release, is still valid and awaits implementation.</p> <p>In order to increase the impact of training delivered to female inmates and genuinely facilitate their socio-economic reintegration, the evaluators suggest that preparation for release also include mediation with inmates' families. This also having in mind that cultural stigma, in most cases taking the form of the woman being abandoned and rejected by her family, is one of the most problematic obstacles that former inmates find on their way out. Support in this endeavour from the CPD (for instance issuing invitation letters to family members) should be foreseen as a possible way to ensure that the mediation process at least starts.</p>
<p>11. Trainers working in prisons should receive appropriate preparation on the specific aspects that their role entails and they should be fully aware of UNODC's mission and approach to sensitive issues.</p>	<p>The evaluators had the impression that not all the NGOs contracted by UNODC to perform training in prisons were aware of the position of the organization vis-à-vis imprisonment and reintegration issues, nor that all of their trainers were fully equipped (also from a psycho-social perspective) to work with prisoners.</p> <p>The evaluators do not have objective data to sustain that the situation depicted above negatively affected the training. Worldwide experience in the penitentiary field, however, show that all those working with prisoners, must possess special qualifications and knowledge (which goes beyond "common sense") in order for their interventions not to be counterproductive. In the present circumstance the evaluators gained the impression that certain dynamics were not known by NGO workers contracted to performs training in prison, nor that the position of UNODC on</p>	<p>UNDOC should make sure that NGO trainers providing vocational and literacy classes to inmates are fully equipped with all the needed psychological and social tools to perform such interventions and operate according to standards aligned with UNODC's. Any such lack should be re-dressed by the project itself. This does not mean that trainers must benefit from a full training package. A one/two-day activity with them, however, should be envisaged as to ensure that UNODC's approach and position vis-à-vis imprisonment and reintegration issues are known and consistency insured.</p>

FINDINGS: IDENTIFIED PROBLEMS/ISSUES	SUPPORTING EVIDENCE/EXAMPLES	RECOMMENDATIONS
	certain sensitive issues was known and share. Therefore they believe that the credibility and professionalism of UNODC might have been undermined.	
12. The evaluation of training carried by implementing partners was not always satisfactory.	The standards evaluation forms used by implementing partners were rather scholastic and simple.	UNODC should request implementing partners that evaluation mechanisms of training delivered are embodied into the training programmes and should not accept that evaluation is carried out through simple forms providing barely any substantive feedback. If the compilation of forms is not sufficient to gather substantive information, other tools (discussion group, reporting obligation) should be used.
13. Training of prison staff was not tailored to the specific needs of recipients	The impression transpiring from the assessment of the project activities related to training of correction staff is that both UNODC and its main training partner ISISC paid limited attention to the function of training. It appeared to the evaluators that ISISC applies the same training techniques (including trainers) to whatever training it delivers. This means that the various function that a training can have (transfer of knowledge, awareness raising, acquisition of skills, modification of attitudes), each requiring different tools, have not been taken into account.	UNODC should avoid recourse to standardized training and should make sure that implementing partners do the same. The organization should pay particular attention to the specific training needs of the audience and ensure that the training delivered fully respond to such needs.

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Project planning		
1. Project design did not properly identify assumptions and lacked risk analysis	The inability of TAG to perform its functions was not listed amongst the risks. The project erroneously included "lack of support from members of the judiciary" as one of the risks hindering the adoption of specific policy on women and girls in prison and for post-release support for women. In practice, however, the judiciary plays no role in this respect. UNODC's unspoken assumption that Kabul University would be ready to collaborate in the development of a social work curriculum, eventually did not happen, thus affecting the project's sustainability.	UNODC (and its donors) should be realistic about the results that technical assistance efforts can produce. Projects involving and/or requiring social and cultural changes should aim at little immediate results and it should be clear to all involved that absence of visible changes does not equal failure of the project. Full appreciation and analysis of social and cultural constraints should be emphasised during project planning.
2. The project was overly ambitious and, therefore, destined not to fully succeed.	Immediate Objectives were too numerous and, most of all, involved cultural changes that could not be realistically achieved in such a short period of time.	UNODC (and its donors) should be realistic as to what can be achieved in a limited amount of time, particularly considering the human resources and environmental constraints affecting implementation of projects in Afghanistan. UNODC, therefore, should avoid, within one project, to disperse its efforts into too many directions. In the present case the evaluator believe that it would have been sensible to build the project around the capacity building activities foreseen under Immediate Objectives 1 and 4 only.
3. UNODC, particularly through the Vienna-based Criminal Justice Reform Expert that had already been working under	Evidence supporting the opinion on the good level of communication and sharing of information is provided mainly by the reports and correspondence between UNODC staff	As it appears that coordination was uneven during the project-life and mainly personality-drive, the evaluators recommend that in future projects UNODC pays particular attention on

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<p>Project S47, producing most of its outputs, was able to create synergies with local actors and maintain a good level of communication and sharing of information with the major representatives of the IC (namely CSSP) involved in training of female staff.</p>	<p>and CSSP.</p> <p>An example of the capacity of the organization to create synergies is represented by the initiative that UNODC took to invite the NGO HAWCA to participate in the TAG and the subsequent technical support that was given to it for the presentation of a project proposal aimed at the establishment of a transitional house for former inmates. These initiatives are to be praised, just like the systematic coordination established by the Vienna-based Criminal Justice Reform Expert with CSSP during the drafting of the curriculum for female correction staff.</p>	<p>the provision of timely training on project management that newly recruited staff receive.</p> <p>In order for the emphasis on coordination to be realistic UNODC should ensure that during the project design phase resources needed to put in place such efforts are taken into full account and reflected accordingly.</p>
Project management and implementation		
<p>4. Monitoring obligations and feedback of some implementing partners did not prove to be up to standards, making it difficult to assess real impact of activities.</p>	<p>Reports submitted by ISISC, UNODC's main implementing partner for training were below standards, particularly considering the international nature of the NGO, as opposed to local NGOs implementing vocational and literacy training. ISISC reports provided narrative description of activities, rather than substantive analysis of their critical aspects. Such reports do not sufficiently provide the organization with inputs and elements to improve its capacity building endeavours. Increased reporting standards should have been requested by UNODC, especially in the light of the fact that ISISC is their main training partner.</p>	<p>UNODC should pay more attention to implementing partners' reporting obligations, so as to ensure that they effectively contribute to the overall project management and monitoring.</p>
<p>5. Internal project monitoring was neither systematic nor accurate, thus hindering correct understanding of project implementation, proper assessment of activities and results, and timely identification of flaws.</p>	<p>The evaluators found the Internal monitoring and reporting on the project carried out by the NPC unsatisfactory. Reports were inaccurate and imprecise and often confusing as to the outputs produced under the project as opposed to those developed under Project S47.</p> <p>The inability of the NPC to provide continuity in the project management almost nullified the comprehensive, thoughtful and inspiring inputs and recommendations provided by the Vienna-based Criminal Justice Reform Expert.</p>	<p>UNOD should ensure that staff has full knowledge and command of internal monitoring tools and standards and that they are being used properly and fully adhered to.</p>
<p>6. The project invested resources in the development of psycho-social material and curriculum which does not represent value for money.</p>	<p>To date there are no indications that the manual and curriculum developed by UNODC under this project are in use. Their translation has not been completed, making it even less likely that they will be put to use in future.</p> <p>Conversely, the manual developed on virtually the same topic by a group of Afghan NGOs under the leadership of local NGO HOSA (with the support of an international consultant) in close cooperation with the MoPH and MoLSA proved to be a rather successful exercise,</p>	<p>Before commissioning original work the organization must verify the availability of existing resources and ensure that, at least at institutional level, no activities such as the one planned are in place.</p>
<p>7. UNODC's ability to embody a capacity building component in its project processes is still unsatisfactory.</p>	<p>The 2008 Rule of Law Thematic Evaluation criticized the COAFG's lack of understanding that "the process is a product" in project design and recommended the organization to fully incorporate the development of national technical expertise into its institution development works. Having to develop psycho-social training for social workers and educators working in prison UNODC's approach was to task an International Expert who, after having collected inputs from local professionals, would draft a curriculum and related manual. Such a decision goes in the opposite direction of the recommendation issued by the 2008 Thematic Evaluators but</p>	<p>In 2008 the thematic evaluators recommended that UNODC ensure that local actors be full partners in project planning and implementation so that they can both learn and provide input. All this with the objective of developing local skills and experience, ensuring cultural appropriateness of interventions, through proper infusion of local skills and knowledge, and favour sense of ownership of results. It seems to the present evaluators that the above mentioned recommendation has not yet been implemented. They would therefore recommend that, for the future, it receives full implementation.</p>

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	<p>was also take at the time at Governmental level, a group of NGOs, with the input and guidance of an international expert (note the inversion of roles) were developing very similar material which local professionals felt truly theirs. At the end of the day, considering the practical obstacles that prevented UNODC material from being first translated and subsequently disseminated, it seems to the evaluators that UNODC once again launched a (relatively expensive) comet which passed through the sky and then left, leaving very little behind.</p>	
<p>8. Project T21 was not able to capitalize UNODC's resources, particularly those produced under phase I of the project.</p>	<p>The handbook and curriculum for female prison staff developed under Phase I of the project were not used for the training offered during Phase II, though specifically meant for such activities.</p>	<p>UNODC should ensure that newly recruited staff gain full awareness of project and activities carried out by the organization in the related problem area and that they familiarize with the relevant material already available in-house.</p>

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Training		
9. The training targeting female inmates lacked capacity to create long-term impact	In relation to the activities implemented by UNODC in favour of former female inmates' socio-economic reintegration, one of the evaluators' interlocutors made the following comment: "UNODC must stop thinking in terms of activities and start thinking in terms of programmes". This comment, fully subscribed by the evaluators, clearly underlines the main deficiency of UNODC's interventions in the framework of Project T21: the project was more a collection of activities than a reasoned attempt to comprehensively address the obstacles and constraints to post-release socio-economic reintegration of former female inmates. Lack of follow-up on the impact of the training provided, on the situation actually faced by women upon release, lack of continuity in the support are all elements that support such conclusions. What the project missed was exactly the holistic and sustainable approach (as quoted at the opening of this Report) that came out as recommendations under the Project S47.	When planning technical assistance interventions UNODC should ensure that they fit into a strategy able to produce results in the long term and not only during the life of the project. UNODC should advocate with donors about the need to have a long-term vision allowing for interventions which are not just production of results which end with the completion of project.
10. The project suffered from lack of micro-finance perspective which hindered its long-term impact.	Professional training delivered to female inmates was not linked to real-life opportunities outside the bars either during imprisonment or after release.	The recommendation issued by the evaluators of Project S47 in 2007, that is that UNODC should explore the possibility to collaborate with a private, profit-oriented firm in this kind of training exercise, not only for commercialization purposes, but also to ensure employment opportunities for some of the trained inmates after their release, is still valid and awaits implementation. In order to increase the impact of training delivered to female inmates and genuinely facilitate their socio-economic reintegration, the evaluators suggest that preparation for release also include mediation with inmates' families. This also having in mind that cultural stigma, in most cases taking the form of the woman being abandoned and rejected by her family, is one of the most problematic obstacles that former inmates find on their way out. Support in this endeavour from the CPD (for instance issuing invitation letters to family members to attend mediation sessions) should be foreseen as a possible way to ensure that the mediation process at least starts.
11. Trainers working in prisons should receive appropriate preparation on the specific aspects that their role entails and they should be fully aware of UNODC's mission and approach to sensitive issues.	The evaluators had the impression that not all the NGOs contracted by UNODC to perform training in prisons were aware of the position of the organization vis-à-vis imprisonment and reintegration issues, nor that all of their trainers were fully equipped (also from a psycho-social perspective) to work with prisoners. The evaluators do not have objective data to sustain that the situation depicted above negatively affected the training. Worldwide experience in the penitentiary field, however, shows that all those working with prisoners, must possess special qualifications and knowledge (which goes beyond "common sense") in order for their interventions not to be counterproductive. In the present circumstance the evaluators gained the impression that	UNDOC should make sure that NGO trainers providing vocational and literacy classes to inmates are fully equipped with all the needed psychological and social tools to perform such interventions and operate according to standards aligned with UNODC's. Any such lack should be re-dressed by the project itself. This does not mean that trainers must benefit from a full training package. A one/two-day activity, however, should be envisaged, also to ensure that UNODC's approach and position vis-à-vis imprisonment and reintegration issues are known and consistency insured.

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	<p>certain dynamics peculiar to detention were not known by NGO workers contracted to perform training in prison, nor that the position of UNODC on certain sensitive issues was known and shared. Therefore they believe that the credibility and professionalism of UNODC might have been undermined.</p>	
<p>12. The evaluation of training carried by implementing partners was not always satisfactory.</p>	<p>The standards evaluation forms used by implementing partners were rather scholastic and simple.</p>	<p>UNODC should request implementing partners that more sophisticated evaluation mechanisms of training delivered are embodied into the training programmes and should not accept that evaluation is carried out through simple forms providing barely any substantive feedback.</p> <p>If the compilation of forms is not sufficient to gather substantive information, other tools (discussion groups, reporting obligations) should be used.</p>
<p>13. Training of prison staff was not tailored to the specific needs of recipients</p>	<p>The impression transpiring from the assessment of the project activities related to training of correction staff is that both UNODC and its main training partner ISISC paid limited attention to the function of training. It appeared to the evaluators that ISISC applies the same training techniques (including trainers) to whatever training it delivers. This means that the various function that a training can have (transfer of knowledge, awareness raising, acquisition of skills, modification of attitudes), each requiring different tools, have not been taken into account.</p>	<p>UNODC should avoid recourse to standardized training and should make sure that implementing partners do the same.</p> <p>The organization should pay particular attention to the specific training needs of the audience and ensure that the training delivered fully respond to such needs.</p>

Executive summary

Summary description of the project including project objectives

Project T21 forms part of UNODC's criminal justice reform programme. The latter has been ongoing in Afghanistan since 2003 with the overall aim to address the long-term and operational aspects of criminal justice. Project S47, implemented by UNODC from mid-2006 to December 2007 was conceived as Phase I of a larger intervention tackling the situation of women in prison. Project T21 was launched upon its completion, as Phase II. In the intentions of UNODC, this project was meant to build upon the results achieved and the experience gained in the first phase, extending the concept of creating post-release opportunities to women and girls prisoners in selected provinces. Empowerment of women in conflict with the law and the creation of bridges to facilitate their socio-economic reintegration into society after release were the two key ideas around which Project T21 was conceived, together with increased capacity and professionalism of correction and social work staff working with female prisoners.

Project T21 aimed to extend the activities previously conducted mainly in Kabul to three additional selected provinces, where the presence of women in prison is significant (e.g. Mazar, Herat, Kandahar). In order to achieve its goal, the project was refined into the following general objectives, as identified in the final original project document dated May 6, 2008:

Immediate Objective 1 - To increase the capacity of criminal justice officials to identify and respond to the needs of detained women in preparation for their release back into society and to enhance the operational capacities and professionalism of penitentiary staff.

Immediate Objective 2 - To provide technical advisory services to all Afghan institutions (MOJ, MOLSA, MOWA, MOE, MOPH) responsible for developing a specific policy on women and girls in prison, including the development of the policy and management mechanisms for post-release support for women with NGOs currently providing shelter for women

Immediate Objective 3 - To promote social and psychological support provided by social workers identified and selected among Afghan professional individuals, establishment of training for social workers. Implemented by a qualified Local Afghan NGO.

Immediate Objective 4 - To consolidate the educational and vocational training for detained women and girls in Kabul and in three selected prison provincial premises.

Major findings of the evaluation

The expected end-of-project situation anticipated an improvement in the life of female detainees and a facilitated socio-economic reintegration of former female inmates thanks to the vocational and literacy skills acquired and/or developed during imprisonment. Although it is undeniable that improved professionalism of correction and social staff serving in female facilities and increased availability of adequate material resources (all provided through Project T21) have had a positive impact on the daily-life of prisoners, the evaluators reached the conclusion that this project represented a lost opportunity for the organization to effectively impact on the life of female prisoners after their release and/or after the completion of the project. Indeed, Project T21 was not able to introduce long-term, sustainable rehabilitative opportunities for former female inmates, nor to introduce permanent changes in their penitentiary routine. As far as socio-economic reintegration of former inmates is concerned, it is not possible to draw any conclusion based on objective data, as no comparison between the situation of female prisoners before and after the project could be carried out. The picture provided by the evaluators' interlocutors; however, show that to date no relevant difference has been recorded.

The reasons behind the partial failure of the project are well rooted, touching its very outset and cannot be imputed only to its daily management. At the heart of the occurrence lies imperfect project planning: namely incorrect identification of risks and assumptions, erroneous definitions of the preconditions applicable to the situation and the setting of unrealistic, multiple objectives. Such weak foundations, coupled with deficient project management and external factors such as current cultural obstacles stigmatizing females in conflict with the law, the absence of professional judicial and correctional culture, lack of understanding of the rehabilitative function of punishment, and of adequate legal tools made it impossible for the project to reach its ambitious objectives.

Professional support of staff working with female inmates did not, in the eyes of the evaluators, reach the desired impact due to use of "teaching" rather than "training" techniques.¹ Lack of ownership of material developed for the various capacity building also hindered an impact which, with different choices, would have been higher.

¹ According to scholars (Mel Silberman, Garry Mitchell, and Karen Lawson just to name a few) whilst teaching is conducted with the aim of imparting knowledge and guide recipients on the study and

With regard to the vocational and literacy training offered to inmates, the main criticism concerns the lack of continuity in the services provided, which is the result of absence of strategy. In this respect, continuity between Project S47 and T21 was not insured, as the practical implementation of the latter was not able to fully capitalize the valuable resources, outputs, and suggestions that Phase I left as its legacy.

On a positive note, however, the evaluators were happy to learn about the good level of coordination and cooperation that UNODC was able to establish with international and national actors operating in the area of penitentiary, particularly through the Vienna-based International Criminal Justice Reform Expert who, for instance, was also able to create conditions for a local NGO dealing with former female inmates to reinforce its role and services. Unfortunately, lack of support at field level of the initiatives taken by the Expert almost nullified the valuable inputs and recommendations coming from Vienna.

Lessons learned and best practices

If lessons learned are to be defined as knowledge gained through experience, the evaluation of Project T21 revealed two main points. The first relates to the existence of deeply rooted prejudices that women who have entered in conflict with the law encounter, particularly, but not only, upon release. In the eyes of the evaluators UNODC underestimated the strength of such cultural and traditional obstacles, thus causing the inability of the project to reach its stated, unrealistic end results.

The second aspect that the evaluators would like to highlight is the importance that international actors establish strong relationships, on an equal footing and not only as donors and recipients, with civil society organizations involved in the relevant fields. In this respect the recommendation contained in the 2008 Thematic Evaluation that “process is a product” remains valid and, as this evaluation tried to highlight, should be applied to the letter in order to maximize impact of interventions.

Recommendations, conclusions and implications to UNODC

The recommendations the evaluators wish to formulate at the end of this exercise pertain to three main areas. The first one is project planning, the second project management and the third training (as part of project implementation).

Project planning

Project planning was, in the opinion of the evaluators, not up to standards: risks and assumptions were not properly identified and/or stated, duplications of activities from previous projects, namely S47, were present and overambitious Immediate Objectives were set. A more realistic approach to the problem would have made it understood that the latter involved cultural changes that could not be achieved in such a short period of time.

Project management

In terms of project management, the evaluation shows that UNODC paid too little attention to the enforcement of implementing partners’ reporting obligations. Accepting reports from the main training partner providing mere narrative description of activities, rather than a substantive analysis of their critical aspects is a clear example of weak project

comprehension of a given theme, (professional) training aims at enhancing a person’s skills and competence, inducing a change in attitude, and increasing problem-solving abilities, so to improve one’s overall performance.

management. Similarly, the non-application of the organization's set standards for internal monitoring and reporting by the National Project Coordinator (NPC), its inability to follow-up with the practical implementation of the highly valuable inputs and recommendations coming from the International Criminal Justice Reform Expert, lack of capitalization of findings from previous projects and material already available all negatively affected the project impacts and results. Last but not least, the project was not able to implement one of the 2008 Rule of Law Thematic Evaluation recommendations, that is to ensure that local actors be full partners in project planning and implementation so that they can both learn and provide input. UNODC, in other words, was not able to ensure that processes become products themselves.

Training

In relation to the training component of the project, the evaluators note that the support given to former inmates lacked sustainability, in that it mainly revolved around activities rather than a comprehensive reintegration programme that could leave some legacy after its completion. Lack of links between knowledge and skills acquired in prison and life outside bars and lack of follow-up on the impact of the training provided were also issues of concern. With regard to the activities benefitting prison officers and staff, the evaluators underline the importance that training is fully tailored to training needs and that comprehensive, more sophisticated evaluation mechanisms (not limited to evaluation forms to be filled out at the end of a course) are embodied into each programme.

I INTRODUCTION

“[...] prison-based and post-release support activities need to be regarded as part of a comprehensive package of measures to address the issue of social reintegration [of former female prisoners] in a holistic and sustainable manner”.

(UNODC, Afghanistan: Female Prisoners and their Social Reintegration, 2007)

A. Background and context

Following the fall of the Taliban's regime in 2001 and the entry on stage of the International Community (IC), Afghanistan's formal criminal justice system underwent significant changes. The end result set by the IC, however, is yet to be achieved: Afghanistan is still far from being the stable and sustainable State² which is the ultimate goal of the Bonn Agreement. Afghanistan committed itself to the achievement of the UN MDGs (Millennium Development Goals). Two major vehicles have been devised for championing and monitoring the relevant progresses: the Afghanistan's Compact³ and the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS)⁴. Goal no. 3 of the ANDS (Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women) is the one relevant to this project. Among the most significant results achieved, which are relevant to Project T21, are the attainment of the Compact's Objective no. 4, which stipulates, among others, that by end of 2010, justice infrastructure will be rehabilitated and prisons will have separate facilities for women and juveniles. In spite of the tremendous efforts undertaken by national and international actors since 2001 in this area, the situation of Afghan women in general, and of female prisoners in particular, remains dramatic. According to statistics published by UNIFEM, females in Afghanistan account for 48,9% out of a population of 23.6 million people. The Country's Gender Development Index (GDI) is the second from last in the world and the maternal mortality is the second highest worldwide. The estimated literacy rate for women stands at 15.8% (compared to 31% for men).

Out of 15,666 persons currently detained and imprisoned in Afghanistan⁵, 479 are women, amounting to 3.06% of the prison population.⁶ Most of the women currently incarcerated are

2 From 2007 to 2009 Afghanistan lost a few positions in UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI, a composite indicator that measures education, longevity, and economic performance), dropping from no. 174 out of 178 Country to no. 181 out of 182.

3 The Compact is a political agreement between the Government of Afghanistan and the IC reached during the London Conference of 2006. With this document, the parties committed themselves to jointly achieve specific five year benchmarks of progress across the three pillars of the I-ANDS, namely security, governance, rule of law and human rights, and economic and social development.

4 The Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) is a comprehensive national action plan to promote progress towards achieving the Afghan MDGs and all dimensions of human development.

5 Figures as of Jan. 23, 2009, provided by CSSP.

6 According to the information provided by CSSP, the percentage of female prisoners has been rather stable in the last 4-5 years, setting itself at 3-4% of the total prison population.

aged between 18 and 25. The presence of underage girls amongst them cannot be excluded. The majority of women are jailed with their children⁷.

Most of the offences women are charged with are non-violent and, generally speaking, very few of them could be regarded as posing a threat to public safety. According to statistics⁸ over 50% of females imprisoned in Afghanistan serve a conviction are imprisoned for what are loosely described as "moral, behavioral or religious crimes", such as adultery and elopement. In most instances these women would qualify as victims rather than criminals under any legislation complying with international human rights laws, including those to which Afghanistan is a signatory to. In this Country, female prisoners not only are in most cases victims themselves, but they are further victimized by the criminal justice process⁹. It is possible to say that women are penalized disproportionately for crimes, also as they are punished on evidentiary, discriminatory standards. Customary laws often applied to women charged with crimes also allow for them to be used as barter for settling other disputes, debts and feuds. Rape, for instance, may be treated as adultery and punished accordingly if a settlement cannot be reached between the two families concerned. Having in mind the causes of the vulnerability of women in conflict with the law (i. e. disproportionate victimization from sexual or physical abuse prior to imprisonment, mental problems or existing mental conditions exacerbated by imprisonment, distress, high risk of sexual abuse and violence during detention, children living with their mothers in prison, limited opportunities for family visits, gender specific health care needs, post-release stigmatization, victimization and abandonment by families), it is obvious that in the absence of special consideration and target programmes, imprisonment will constitute a disproportionately harsh punishment for most women, and make their post-release socio-economic reintegration impossible.

On release from prison, women face victimization for a third time. Almost always, former female prisoners are rejected by their family and left to fend for themselves: their (and their children's) chances of survival are very low. It would fit into normality that a woman who has been released from prison becomes the victim of a so-called honor killing.

Up to recent days, virtually with no exception, women prisoners and detainees were inserted in a system which was built around the needs and requirements of male inmates. This applies, just to mention a few, to the architectural structures of facilities, security, prison activities and medical services. Provisions specifically targeting or related to women, including special training for women staff and gender-specific social reintegration needs were (and partly still are) seen as an addendum to the regular provisions. Awareness that women (and children) in prison represent a vulnerable group deserving a comprehensive approach by institutions responsible for detention is yet to be consolidated. The situation has improved, at least in parts of the country, also thanks to the advocacy efforts and interventions by the International Community, which includes UNODC. Its

7 According to estimates by CSSP the current number of children in prison with their mothers is around 300.

8 UNODC, Afghanistan: Female Prisoners and their Social Reintegration, 2007

9 Women in jail are in many cases victims of their own personal circumstances and the broader socio-legal context relating to gender in the country, rather than being hardened perpetrators of crime. According to the information gathered on the occasion of the earlier mentioned study commissioned by UNODC in 2005 on detained women and their relationship with their family, among the reasons for which women end up in conflict with the law are illiteracy, economic and social problems, cruelty, conflicts between families, intervention of other relatives in relations between husband and wife, forced marriages or divorces, violence or inappropriate claims from the husband, family pressure. As a corollary, females charged with crimes often do not obtain any support from their families during and/or after imprisonment.

contributions to the establishment of Kabul's new Female and Juvenile Detention Centre (FJDC), for instance, has proved to be pivotal in this process. In most provinces, however, the situation is still totally unacceptable, reaching low standards as having facilities where female and male detainees share the same premises.

Even where appropriate correction facilities for women have been set up, however, very few steps have been taken to ensure the socio-economic reintegration of women after release. The few shelters available to women not only do not have the capacity to absorb a large demand, but most importantly for our purposes, do not accept former prisoners. Mediation with the family, local elders or religious leaders could enhance the chances of re-acceptance of former prisoners into their families: the system, however, receives little or no support at all from either the institutions invested with the women and prisoner issues or the IC.

Project structure

Project T21's stated general objective is to support the development of relevant policies in support of female prisoners and to provide assistance to vulnerable groups within the criminal justice system for their rehabilitation and reintegration based on their specific needs. In order to achieve this result, the project is divided into the following general objectives, as identified in the final original project document dated May 6, 2008:

Immediate Objective 1 - To increase the capacity of criminal justice officials to identify and respond to the needs of detained women in preparation for their release back into society and to enhance the operational capacities and professionalism of penitentiary staff.

Immediate Objective 2 - To provide technical advisory services to all Afghan institutions (MOJ, MOLSA, MOWA, MOE, MOPH) responsible for developing a specific policy on women and girls in prison, including the development of the policy and management mechanisms for post-release support for women with NGOs currently providing shelter for women

Immediate Objective 3 - To promote social and psychological support provided by social workers identified and selected among Afghan professional individuals, establishment of training for social workers. Implemented by a qualified local Afghan NGO.

Immediate Objective 4 - To consolidate the educational and vocational training for detained women and girls in Kabul and in three selected prison provincial premises.

Each of the immediate objectives is accompanied by a list of planned outputs, activities and inputs. For each of them, the logical framework defines outcome and activities, the assumptions and risks, the objectively verifiable performance indicators, as well as the means of verification.

Risks and assumptions related mainly to the lack of participation of women and detainees in the vocational training activities, non availability of professional correction staff, deterioration of the security situation, difficulties in reintegration upon release into society and lack of endorsement by the judiciary of the use of social reintegration programmes for women and girls detainees. In literature, assumptions are events, conditions or decisions outside the control of the project which are necessary for the start, the production of outputs and achievement of the purpose, in which prevail the goal of the project. Assumptions, however, need to exist at the time of the project's conception. What the

project does is to take the risk of them changing during its life, thus affecting its implementation and results and not putting in place alternatives in order to re-establish the balance when a change in the circumstances occur. Of the assumptions listed by the project the evaluators have two major reservations. These concern the statements that “The judiciary does not endorse the use of social re-integration programmes for women and girls detainees and therefore does not refer to the educational and vocational training programmes envisaged under the project” and “Difficulties in reintegrating upon release into society”. The (wrong) identification of such circumstances as assumptions provides, in the eyes of the evaluators, an easy escape in case of failure of the project in reaching its results. Indeed, socio-economic exclusion of female prisoners is a cultural issue and is part of the common thinking of Afghans. Moreover, the Prison Law does not allow the obligation (or opportunity) for the judiciary to identify rehabilitation programmes for detainees. Inability of the judiciary to endorse the social-reintegration programmes for women and girl detainees is, therefore, a false assumption as it is ill-founded.

The work and monitoring plan, included in the project document, links a time frame to the specific milestones, identifies the expenditure involved, and the body responsible for activities. The plan also includes a column for achievements, responsibilities and divisions of tasks and responsibilities among the various actors involved in the implementation.

Despite being an interesting project, the evaluators have reservations on the capacity of the envisaged activities to effectively contribute in a sustainable manner to the socio-economic reintegration of former female prisoners. This theme, which has already been the object of specific recommendations issued in the 2008 Evaluation Report of Project S47, will be elaborated more into depth in the next pages.

B. Purpose and scope of the evaluation

The overall purpose of this evaluation is to determine what the project has achieved and if it has attained its objectives successfully and efficiently, taking into account the often difficult conditions on the ground in Afghanistan. In this regard, the extent to which the needs of the beneficiaries are being met as well as what has been achieved in terms of impact and sustainability should also be assessed.

The evaluation will seek to draw lessons learned and best practices from the project implementation which will be used to improve future project planning, design and management. Furthermore, the evaluation seeks to measure the project’s achievements, outcomes and impacts, both positive and negative. Progress achieved will be examined against the above-stated objectives, but also in relation to the wider impact of the project on the justice reform process in the country, taking into account the conditions under which implementation occurred.

The terms of reference for the evaluation are attached as Annex II A list of the visits and interviews conducted in the course of the evaluation is attached at Annex I. The evaluation covers the period of implementation of the project that is from June 2008 to December 2009. As indicated by the attached terms of reference, the evaluators' task covered the assessment of two different projects, both of which had been completed. Consequently, the transition of some of the comments and observations, particularly those of a general nature, made with respect to one project to another is inevitable; particularly as the UNODC staff, interlocutors, counterparts, stakeholders, co-implementing

international agencies and institutions, and beneficiaries of the two projects in most cases coincided.

In line with the attached terms of reference, the evaluation of Project T21 focuses on the project's concept and design, the project's partial implementation, results, outputs and outcomes. In respect of project concept and design, this evaluation analyses whether and how the project has contributed to a priority area for UNODC. The evaluation reviews the problems identified by the project and the corresponding strategies chosen by UNODC to address those problems. In particular, the evaluation assesses the relevance and the attainability of the objectives and planned outputs, activities and inputs, as compared to other cost-effective alternatives. At a more fundamental level, the evaluation analyses the clarity, logic and coherence of the project. In respect of objectives, outputs, impact and sustainability, the evaluation seeks to determine whether, at this stage, results have been achieved in line with the work plan. In this regard, the likely sustainability of results and benefits, as well as this project's contribution to human and institutional capacity building, will be addressed, though only to a limited extent, as clarified earlier. Furthermore, the evaluation will assess how effectively and efficiently programme planning and implementation have been carried out. In this regard, the evaluation assesses the extent to which the organizational structure, managerial support and coordination mechanism used by UNODC so far can be considered appropriate for the support and implementation of the project. Finally, the evaluation will identify the lessons learned and best practices from the concept, design, and implementation of the project.

C. Executing modality of the project

Project T21 was executed by UNODC COAFG in coordination with UNODC's Europe and West/Central Asia Section, and with substantive support by Vienna-based Criminal Justice Reform Expert. All project activities fell under the overall supervision of the Country Representative and the Crime Programme Coordinator (now Programme Manager). The COAFG's Criminal Justice Reform Unit provided the needed technical advice. UNDP was associated to the project, in respect of the financial and administrative components, such as issuance of contracts to consultants and other subcontractors. The cross-cutting nature of the themes present in Project T21 imposed cooperation with a number of different Ministries (MoWA, MoPH, MoI, MoJ). UNIFEM and UNICEF advised UNODC on children and gender-related issues. For the implementation of the project UNODC subcontracted with a variety of NGOs and relied on a number of historical counterparts and partners such as the AIHRC, the NGOs AWEC, MAHARAT, HOSA, MCDRO, AWSE, AREP, and ISISC.

Project T21 was launched in June 2008 under the International Prison Reform Coordinator's oversight and guidance. According to the CJP Status Report dated July 2008 the start of the project was delayed by lengthy negotiations with the Government of Afghanistan on the scope, identification of appropriate and effective partners for the execution of some components (NGO experts in psychological counseling), the selection of provinces, as well as some re-budgeting exercise due to the volatile exchange rates and the new scales/estimates on national staff salaries and national subcontracts. Periodic project reports submitted to the attention of the evaluators, however, contain no mention of such delays and issues.

D. Evaluation methodology

The evaluation methodology involved a review of existing documents, such as project documents and progress reports. The final Report on Project T21's predecessor, that is Project S47, represented an important reference tool, particularly with regard to the implementation of the recommendations it contained. The rule of law Thematic Evaluation conducted by the UNODC's IEU in 2007 (issued in 2008), though not directly related to the project, was also examined and used as a benchmark to assess the extent to which the organization has been able to internalize lessons learned and recommendations. Primary data was collected through interviews with stakeholders and from observations made during the mission. Qualitative and quantitative indicators were used to assess the project. The main qualitative indicators were obtained during the interviews conducted with national and international UNODC staff, national and international stakeholders (including donors), and on site observation.

E. Limitations to the evaluation

Fieldwork in Afghanistan had initially been scheduled for the first quarter of December 2009, so to allow the evaluation to take place before the formal completion of the project. Security constraints, however, made it impossible to organize the visit at the scheduled time and, therefore, the mission was rescheduled at the beginning of the new year. Eventually, field activity was conducted over a period of 13 days, in the first half of February 2010. The period was used to cover all activities related to the evaluations the evaluators had been tasked with, including a) desk review of all major document related to the project, namely project documents, progress and monitoring reports, terminal narrative reports, as well as assessments reports and manuals developed under the project; b) meetings with relevant representatives of the MoJ, CPD, MoWA, MoPH, UNAMA, ISISC, CSSP, AIHRC and other relevant stakeholders and interviews with key national¹⁰ and international UNODC staff, including a telephone conference with the Vienna-based Criminal Justice Reform Expert c) site visits to Kabul's Female and Juvenile Detention Center and to Pol-e-Charki male Prison.

During the fieldwork, the independent evaluators were accompanied and assisted by staff of the UNODC's COAFG, which provided logistical support and expert advice throughout the evaluation. During the mission, security was always an important consideration. Movement of United Nations personnel in Afghanistan was conducted only in official United Nations vehicles driven by trained drivers. The security situation had an impact on the evaluation preventing free movement. All visits, therefore, were confined to Kabul.

One of the main obstacles encountered by the evaluators in the performance of their staff was represented by the staff turnover that the project recorded during its life. As during the field mission, the last NPC in charge of the project was no longer in place, evaluators could only review the documents the NPC had produced during the life of the project, without any possibility to gather direct feedback, also with regard to the quality of the backstopping provided by the HQ.

¹⁰ Unfortunately at the time of the evaluation the NPC had resigned and therefore the evaluators could only rely on the Coordinator's knowledge of the project to perform their functions.

Failure in the internal project monitoring at field level meant that the evaluators learned about much of the reports produced within the project by the Vienna-based International Criminal Justice Reform expert only at a late stage of the exercise, when they had already expressed their dissatisfaction with the way internal monitoring and reporting of the project had been carried out¹¹.

Provision of documents to the evaluators was not timely and, at a certain point, it became clear to the evaluators that many of UNODC staff was not able to properly locate final project documents and reports in PROFI, as opposed to provisional/not official copies kept in officers' personal folders. Reports produced by the NPC were inaccurate and imprecise, chaotically filed and denominated, often confusing as to the outputs produced under the project as opposed to those developed under Project S47. Quantitative indicators, when provided and/or available, were often fragmentary and existed primarily in relation to indicators of inputs, process and outputs (e.g. input costs, output indicators of numbers trained, amount of furniture and extent of construction).

Contrary to previous experiences, in the course of the mission the evaluators had to resolve a number of annoying administrative/financial issues which had not been taken care of properly in advance by the COAFG. The Agenda was revised on a daily basis and in most cases interlocutors were requesting meetings at a very short notice, a situation with which the evaluators felt rather uncomfortable.

¹¹ For the sake of transparency, it should be acknowledged that during the mission the Evaluators did not schedule a telephone conference with the Vienna-based Programme Coordinator who, during the first revision of this Report, provided some of the information the Evaluators could not gather at the level of the COAFG.

II. MAJOR FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

A. Relevance of the project

It is very clear from an objective perspective that the project is of very high relevance to Afghanistan, as it addresses a need to build the capacity of the prison system to manage and care for the women committed to its custody. Even though the Project has, in the view of the evaluator, not delivered its full potential (see below), it is undeniable that any effort addressing the problem of gender equality and opportunities in the justice field is relevant. This is even more so, as is the fact that it has been implemented by UNODC, the leading agency in the area of justice reform.

In this respect the project fitted in perfectly with UNODC's criminal justice reform programme, which has been ongoing in Afghanistan since 2003. The programme has 3 interrelated components addressing the long-term normative and operational aspects of criminal justice. These are: a) penitentiary reform, touching on the reform of the legal framework related to prisons, their rehabilitation, and training of correction staff; b) criminal justice capacity-building, aimed at strengthening the capacity of key justice institutions. This includes legislative reforms, capacity-building of judicial professional, legal aid; c) reform of the juvenile justice sector. All projects launched under the above mentioned areas share a common feature in that they combine capacity-building activities (so called "software" component), with the provision of buildings, equipment and infrastructure ("hardware"). Such twofold approach has been identified by UNODC as the best tool guaranteeing effectiveness and sustainability of projects and results.

At the outset of Project T21 and its predecessor, Project S47¹², both falling under the area of prison reform and its related problems, as stated in UNODC's Strategic Program Framework for Afghanistan, was a joint UNODC and UNIFEM assessment mission conducted in the Country in October 2005. The object of the exercise, which touched both

¹² Under Project S47 more than 286 female prisoners benefited from vocational, health and basic literacy training in Kabul and selected provincial prisons with large female population (Herat, Balkh, and Kandahar). A needs assessment of female prison staff's capacity building was also conducted and, in coordination with national and international agencies, training of selected officials responsible for the supervision and care of women prisoners completed. As a result of the project, a training handbook and curriculum for female prison staff and staff of the juvenile rehabilitation centre were developed. Both tools were to be adopted as reference material for prison staff throughout Afghanistan. The above mentioned activities were undertaken in parallel with the reform the prison system administration of Afghanistan. These included the restructuring of the prison administration and sector strategy as well as the reform of the legislation related to female prisons and detention centers. As part of the restructuring process, plans were put in place to establish a Central Prison Department for women offender facilities, with a Deputy Commissioner for Women supporting the Commissioner General of Prisons. An action plan for the rehabilitation and reintegration of women and girls prisoners was also jointly promoted with UNAMA and UNIFEM at ministerial level through dedicated workshops. Awareness-raising activities took the form of a short documentary on the conditions of women and girls prisoners jointly produced with UNAMA, and a booklet (with narrative and cartoon) on the rights of women developed by UNIFEM with UNODC's funds. Consultations were held regarding the need of establishing transitional houses and other facilities to address the difficulties hindering the reintegration of former inmates. The transitional house concept was endorsed by concerned authorities, (MoJ/MoWA/MoLSA) during one day workshop held by UNODC in September 2007 on women in prison and their post release opportunities. The outcome of the event was a shared action plan approved by consensus. A follow-up mechanism involving relevant international agencies was established under the Technical Advisory Group (TAG).

Kabul and the provinces, was to identify general gender issues associated to imprisonment and, more specifically, to identify the most effective and appropriate way to provide technical assistance to female inmates, with a view to facilitate their post-release.¹³ That of women in conflict with the law was identified as being a critical and sensitive area, as no national strategy included among its objectives the facilitation of the socio-economic reintegration of women and girls prisoners. At the time of the assessment, there was no dedicated correctional institution for women, nor the correction staff that had the required cultural and operational equipment needed to facilitate post-release opportunities of whatever nature. A lot of changes have occurred since, many of which are directly or indirectly attributable to the work of UNODC. As a result, the general situation of female prisoners has registered a significant improvement: legislation has been enacted, either directly or indirectly targeting and/or benefiting female prisoners, adequate and suitable infrastructures, such as the FJDC in Kabul have been created, the Afghan Government is increasingly conscious of the need to reform its corrections system giving particular attention to the needs of vulnerable groups, such as detained women and children, thus moving forward in the peace-building process.

Project S47, implemented by UNODC from mid-2006 to December 2007, was conceived as Phase I of a larger intervention tackling the situation of women in prison. Upon its completion, Project T21 was launched. In the intentions of UNODC, this project was meant to build upon the results and experiences achieved in Phase I, extending the concept of creating post-release opportunities to women and girls prisoners in selected provinces. Empowerment of women in conflict with the law and the creation of bridges to facilitate their socio-economic reintegration into society after release were the two key ideas around which Project T21 revolved. In addition, the intervention also sought to increase the capacity and professionalism of correction and social work staff working with female prisoners, also through a psycho-social counseling training provided by Afghan NGOs.

Project T21 aims to extend the activities previously conducted mainly in Kabul to three selected provinces, where the presence of women in prison is significant (e.g. Mazar, Herat, Kandahar). The project develops and implements practical short-term interventions in order to address the social reintegration needs of women and girls in prison. This is coupled, on the long term, with the support to a comprehensive national policy and strategy for the effective resettlement of female offenders.

B. Attainment of the project objectives

Evaluation of the production of outputs and implementation of activities precedes the assessment of the attainment of objectives and overall performance assessment. The objectives, outputs, and activities considered and listed below for easy reference are those

¹³ The issue of gender is universally known as being particularly critical in Afghanistan. The Government of Afghanistan made strong commitments to promote the equal status of women in all spheres of life. One of the main vehicles for the implementing gender specific policies and advance the status of women is the National Plan of Action for Women of Afghanistan (NPAW) adopted for the period 2007-2017. Recalling the obligations stemming in this respect from national and international law (the Constitution of Afghanistan in the first place), the Plan also states the commitment of the State to pursue 9 major goals under the MDG framework up to the year 2020. These include women-specific targets in the fields of education, economics, health, and political participation. All such goals were used as the basis for framing the benchmarks of the ANDS. To date, due to cultural and material impediments, the reforms which have been adopted in relation to women have been successful only on paper.

resulting from the original project document. In general, activities are examined individually. At times, however, activities appear to be strongly intertwined: in such case, therefore, they have been assessed jointly. In all circumstances, readers must keep in mind that the effects of activities are often cross-cutting.

Immediate Objective 1 – To increase the capacity of criminal justice officials to identify and respond to the needs of detained women in preparation for their release back into society and enhance the operational capacities and professionalism of penitentiary staff.

Outcome – Increased capacity of criminal justice officials and professional penitentiary staff.

Output 1.1 – Selected officials are trained on the special needs of detained women and girls in order to improve their post-release opportunities and ensure that project activities became sustainable.

Activity 1 Based on the handbook, curriculum and lessons learned during phase I of this project, training will be provided to female penitentiary staff in Kabul and three selected provinces.

Achievements: The first capacity building activities for female prison staff took place on 5-9 October 2008 in Kabul, that is only 3 months after the inception of the project, in the form of a five-day training programme for female prison staff. A total of 18 participants from 7 provinces (Kunduz, Kapisa, Kabul, Panjshir, Parwan, Takhar, and Wardak) attended the training. Staff from Herat, initially invited to join the session, declined the offer due to the difficulties related in organizing a chaperoned road travel. The option of coming to Kabul by air was not implemented due to the impossibility for staff to be released from duty.

Training was jointly delivered by UNODC, UNIFEM, UNICEF, ICRC, and the AIHRC. It covered a wide range of topics, from applicable legislation to human rights, from professional conduct to social, health and hygiene. The approach followed was that of providing correctional staff with the competences and skills required to identify and respond to the need of female inmates. The training also represented the opportunity to reinforce the cooperation between prison staff and the NGOs working in prisons. The activity received wide coverage by Afghanistan National TV and received nationwide exposure.

Though meant to be based on the lessons learned, the Handbook for Female Prison Staff and the related curriculum founded on the results of the work Afghanistan: Capacity Building of Female Prison Staff, Needs Assessment produced during Phase I of the project (that is under Project S47), it appears that neither tool was in fact used and that the only UNODC-funded resource utilized was the Basic Information Booklet for Detainees and Prisoners.¹⁴ The Booklet, also an output of previous Project S47, produced by UNIFEM, available in Dari, full with catchy and immediately understandable illustrations, was particularly appreciated by all participants and resulted in beneficial materials for all those with literacy deficiencies. To the knowledge of the evaluators, each organization contributing to the training used their own material.

14 According to the Report on the activity, the training was also meant to provide adequate input to UNODC so that a handbook for female officers on the special needs of detained women and girls is produced. This seems, to the evaluators, a contradiction in that the training was supposed to be based on the material successfully developed, on the same topic, by UNODC in 2007!

The non-use of most of the material (namely the Handbook and the curriculum mentioned above) that UNODC had purposely produced under Project S47 was discovered only in November 2008, following a mission of the International Criminal Justice Reform Expert. Then, it turned out that neither the curriculum nor the handbook had been translated into local languages (although reports issued under S47 suggest that translation was completed). Through the Prison Working Group (PWG) both training tools were put on the Agenda of the CPD for review and consideration. Eventually, in May 2009, the CPD gave verbal approval for their use as training tools in the 1-week training delivered to female officers after the 6-week training common to all perspective prison officers. Upon request of the evaluators, CSSP was not able to confirm whether the material they used to provide this 1-week dedicated training was the one produced by UNODC. According to the data provided by CSSP on the institutional training of prison staff they provided as per the agreement of the CPD, the number of female staff they trained to date is 53¹⁵. The response received from CSSP, however, stands in stark contrast with the information and evidence provided, on this point, by the Vienna-based Criminal Justice Reform Expert. According to the latter, UNODC shared with CSSP in various occasions the handbook it developed. CSSP, in turn, shared with UNODC its curriculum for women staff training. The coordination also encompassed the exchange of the list of people trained to avoid duplications, even though UNODC and CSSP's training were touching on different topics.

16

On 11-22 October 2009 a new round of training for female penitentiary staff was conducted.¹⁷ The activity took place in Kabul. Two 5-day training sessions, each for around 40 officers from Kabul and other provinces were organized.¹⁸ ISISC provided the training on the basis of the handbook and curriculum developed by UNODC under Project S47. It seems that this workshop has only been coordinated with CPD (who gave the relevant authorization) and not with the other actors directly involved in providing training to prison staff (CSSP in the first place).

Output 1.2 – The operational performance of the penitentiary staff working at the Kabul female detention facility newly constructed by UNODC is strengthened.

Activity 1 Assess the training needs of penitentiary staff working in the new detention facility for women and juveniles constructed by UNODC in Kabul.

15 No female staff received the gender-specific training in 2006, 2 did it in 2007, 43 in 2008 and 8 in 2009.

Considering the fact that UNODC's Handbook for female prison staff was only translated in 2009, the evaluators doubt that the material was actually ever used for the institutional training.

16 Evaluators have reasons to believe that at the time of the evaluation no institutional gender-oriented training is incorporated into the general training delivered by the CPD to all prison staff. Indeed, the one-week additional training focusing on gender that the Final Narrative Report on Project T21 refers to might have been, in fact, an ad-hoc "Training for Female Penitentiary Staff Working with Women Prisoners" delivered on 5-9 Oct 2008, which repeated the pilot training carried out for other prison staff in May 2007.

17 Very confusingly, the Final Report on Project T21 drafted by the NPC before resignation and dated Nov. 24, 2009 indicates that "at the time of writing UNODC had concluded an agreement with the International Institute of Higher Studies in Criminal Sciences (ISISC) to conduct the training, based on the UNODC handbook and curriculum, for 40 female staff in Kabul and 20 each from three zones of country". The local representative of the ISISC, however, was not in a position to confirm this.

18 Initially the activity was meant to provide training to around 100 prison staff. Although Project T21 project reports suggest that this happened, ISISC confirmed that the total number of participants was 40 and that three new rounds of training, covering provinces, are expected to take place in 2010. This piece of information conflicts not only with the content of reports, but also with the definition of Project T21 as operationally completed.

Achievements: The final project report states that such activity has been carried out but provides no evidence.¹⁹

Activity 2 Develop and conduct intensive and comprehensive on the job training programme for penitentiary staff working in the new detention facility for women and juvenile constructed by UNODC in Kabul.

Achievement: According to the periodic project reports submitted to the evaluators for review, UNODC staff regularly visited the FJDC “observing the officers and giving advice”²⁰. Evaluators were rather surprised to read such statements in the Reports, as it clearly indicates that whoever visited the FJDC (or drafted the Report) overestimated their role whilst underestimating the value of institutional, professional training and project management rules.

Admittedly, UNODC was not able to perform activity no. 2 as originally envisaged. Due to the limitations of the evaluation, as illustrated in the previous pages, no reason was given to justify such inaction. UNODC, however, kept close links with CSSP's female mentor in the development of the material to be used by them for the training of female correction officer.

Immediate objective 2 – To provide technical advisory services to all Afghan Institutions (MoJ, MoLSA, MoWA, MoE, MoPH) responsible for developing a specific policy on women and girls in prison, including the development of the policy and management mechanisms for post-release support for women with NGOs currently providing shelter for women.

Outcome – Adoption of specific policy on women and girls in prison and for post-release support for women.

Output 2.1 – Coordination mechanism established between the Ministers and institutions represented on the Supreme Council of Prison to be matched with coordination between international agencies and donors to assist with the capacity building of these Ministries in relation to their responsibility for female prisoners and former prisoners.

Activity 1 Make an assessment of activities undertaken under initial project (AFG/S47) and lessons learned as well as of initiatives needed and prepare a draft strategy.

Achievements: UNODC undertook at the beginning of the project an assessment of activities undertaken under Phase I²¹ and evaluated the 6-week training currently being delivered to prison staff by CSSP and CPD (plus an additional week for female staff only). The evaluation, however, was more the collection of data on the training rather than an in-depth qualitative and quantitative evaluation. The superficial approach is reflected, in the eyes of the current evaluators, in the main finding of the exercise, which was that illiteracy is one of the major obstacles to training of prison staff, particularly acute when it comes to female officers.²²

19 This statement conflicts with the information provided by the Criminal Justice Reform Expert, whose Mission Report dated Dec. 2008 states that as the capacity building needs assessment carried out in 2007 is sufficient for the purpose of Project T21, no such activity has been undertaken in this respect.

20 Quote from the 2008 Annual Report.

21 Something went obviously wrong, as the review did not fully consider the material produced under the previous project, particularly in the area of training of female prison staff.

22 This finding, however, was already included in the Needs Assessment of Female Prison Staff completed in 2007.

Activity 2 Convene a working group with representatives of all relevant ministries (e.g. MOJ, MOWA, MOLSA, MOPH etc.), other UN organizations (UNAMA, UNIFEM, UNICEF, UNFPA) working with females in prisons as well as relevant NGOs, to discuss the draft strategy and ways to implement it.

Achievements: Together with UNAMA, UNICEF and UNIFEM, just to mention a few, UNODC is a member of the Technical Advisory Group on Women and Children (TAG). The aim of the Group would have been to advise both participants and Governmental counterparts on prison policies relating to women and girls, improving at the same time coordination of the activities implemented in favor of vulnerable groups present in prison. Unfortunately the TAG, after its establishment, was not able to convene regularly, nor to perform its functions in a meaningful way. No particular reason, apart from a general disinterest, was ever brought to the attention of the Evaluators to explain the failure. Inability of TAG to perform its functions negatively affected the project in that its monitoring role was carried out discontinuously, with obvious limited results. TAG, moreover, was incapable of ensuring that the preconditions and inputs listed in the project document be provided. The possibility that TAG be inefficient, however, was not listed in the Project Document's Logical Framework among the risks and assumptions.

During the period under review, Project T21's NPC represented UNODC at meetings of the Gender Working Group (GWG), a forum gathering inputs and discussing issues affecting women prisoners.

Activity 3 Formulation of agreement between ministries and institutions represented on the Supreme Council of Prisons to support the corresponding departments of the prison Administration.

Activity 4 Arrange a series of workshops at central and provincial levels with all identified members of the institutions mentioned above aimed at developing a coordination mechanism enable to promote a series of interventions.

Activity 5 Organize regular meetings to strengthen the coordination among UN organizations, NGOs, social services etc. in order to facilitate the implementation of the mechanism.

Activity 6 Establish mechanisms of cooperation between MOJ/AGO and AIHRC to ensure the effective protection of women detained from any form of violence and develop gender sensitive classification and assessment methods.

Achievements: Due to the constraints listed in sub-section E of the Introduction, none of the evaluators' interlocutors was in a position to provide substantive information as to any progress achieved by UNODC under the present activities.

Activity 7 Establish a "transitional houses network" among all NGOs that receive support and are under the supervision of MOWA, which can offer support to released women and girls prisoners.

Achievements: In 2007 in Kabul there were only 4 shelters for women. Only one of them received some former inmates in need of support during the so called "transitional period" elapsing from formal release until actual reintegration into society. Women released from prison, therefore, could not (and still cannot) count on any institutional structure or support

programme favoring their social rehabilitation and acceptance. Under Project T21 UNODC continued its advocacy efforts in support of the establishment of transitional houses for former female inmates. UNODC's Report "Afghanistan: female prisoners and their social reintegration", produced under the phase I of the Project (Project S47) continued to be used as a tool to mobilize the social and institutional conscience in a number of occasions. Unfortunately the transitional house whose establishment was proposed by the MoWA, with the support of UNIFEM, never saw the light due to lack of funds. Although the management of the house was to be shared among MoWA, MoJ, and MoA, Ministries alone could not afford to cover the running costs for such project. Despite such institutional failure, UNODC has continued to support the idea of transitional houses.

Eventually, on the occasion of the UNODC Workshop on Capacity Building of Women Prison Staff and the Social Reintegration of Women Prisoners (also discussed below, in relation to Activity 10), participants were able to reach consensus on a position paper on the issue. Signatories to this paper also agreed that, in addition to providing secure accommodation, transitional shelters should also provide legal, social, practical, and psychological support services.

Following the workshop, UNODC undertook the task of initiating discussions with UNIFEM, MoJ, MoWA, AIHRC and various NGOs in order to reach tangible results, including the development of a policy. According to what appears to be Project T21 Semi-Annual Report dated January 2009²³, UNODC was not able to pursue this activity further due to lack of funds and limitation in the length of the project. Evaluators find such justifications unsatisfactory. The MoWA was not able to illustrate to the Evaluators any tangible development in this area.

In the course of 2009 UNODC was able to put the issue of post-release support of female prisoners into the agenda of TAG and extend the invitation to attend the TAG meetings also to local NGO HAWCA who proved to be particularly interested in establishing shelters for former inmates. As a result of this action, UNODC provided technical advice and support to HAWCA in drafting a project proposal for the creation of a transitional house to be later submitted to external donors. UNODC fully shared with the NGO its information and data and substantially contributed in the drafting of the project proposal, where its role is that of a partner providing technical assistance. .

During the life of the project UNODC attended meetings organized by Medica Mondiale for representatives of Government, NGOs and the IC aimed at facilitating coordination among relevant actors providing psycho-social support within prisons.

Activity 8 Coordinate and facilitate the development of a mechanism between the MOJ, MoWA, MOLSA, and UNIFEM and other international and national organizations, such as the Afghan Women's Business Council, to assist women released from prison to entry the labor market.

Activity 9 Support MoWA and for NGOs running the transitional houses shelter, and providing counseling and basic education.

Achievements: Meetings with MoWA did not unveil any particular progress (either run or promoted by UNODC or other international organizations) as far as Activity 8 was

23 Confusion is due as the footer of the documents states "Final Project Report Format".

concerned. Project Reports only refer to advocacy activities conducted by UNODC in this respect in 2007 and during the workshop, mentioned below, that took place in December 2008 to launch the two publications produced under Project S47. No tangible results, however, have been achieved. Lack of action was also confirmed by the interlocutors met during the evaluation mission.

Activity 10 Development of workshops and meetings for government authorities and civil society organizations to adopt general policies for community based programmes developed to allow women and girls inmates to be released from custody in order to work and conduct an independent and sustainable existence in a secure, stable, and prejudices less environment.

Achievements: In December 2008 UNODC organized in Kabul a workshop to launch the two publications produced under Project S47, that is the Handbook for Female Prison Staff and Prison Staff Needs Assessment. The workshop was also the occasion to present the UNODC-funded Basic Information Booklet for Detainees and Prisoners developed by UNIFEM (also produced under Project S47). The Booklet, as mentioned earlier, had already been used for training of prison staff in October 2008.²⁴ The workshop registered high attendance, with national and international agencies and Embassies representatives present, as well as delegations from CPD, MoWA, AIHRC, UNAMA, and national NGOs. It also received wide media coverage. The outcome of this workshop was a consensus paper including action points on capacity building needs of female prison staff, a mechanism for the social reintegration and post release support of female prisoners and transitional houses. According to the information gathered by the evaluators during the mission no progress has been registered ever since.

Activity 11 Facilitate the signature of a MOU between MOJ and MoLSA with division of responsibilities for social workers to be appointed to work in prison rehabilitation and in post release programs.

Achievements: As per the information gathered by the evaluators during the mission, no such MoU was signed nor UNODC conducted specific activities towards its finalization. As a matter of fact, interlocutors working in prison reported that the only social workers working in the correction facilities are those belonging to NGOs.

Immediate objective 3 – To promote social and psychological support provided by social workers identified and selected among Afghan professional individuals, establishment of training for social workers implemented by a qualified local NGO.

Outcome: Professional social and psychological support

Output 3.1 – A curriculum for social workers developed and training provided for social workers placed in selected female detention centers.

²⁴ According to the CJP Status Report of July 2008, under Objective 2 UNODC finalized a booklet on the rights of female prisoners in coordination with UNIFEM. The work was then approved by the MoJ and eventually used during the October 2008 training for prison staff. The CJP Status Report seems to suggest that the work is an output of the present project, whereas it was financed by UNODC under Project S47. The Semi Annual Project Report of T21, dated January 2009, also indicates the two publications amongst the objectively achieved results.

Activity 1 Develop a curriculum for correction officers and social workers, in collaboration with the University of Kabul.

Activity 2 Support the MoJ in selecting professional staff to be assigned as social workers to detention and female prison facilities.

Activity 3 Identify, in consultation with MoJ and selected NGO, female penitentiary staff to attend training course on psycho-social support for female detainees and to be in charge of ensuring the in-house training courses for penitentiary staff.

Activity 4 Draft appropriate training tools and provide appropriate training to social workers being selected with specific focus on the sensitive classification and assessment methods developed under objective 3.

Achievements: The Evaluators were surprised, after having read the Project Document, to find out that the present activity was built on no foundations. It appears that only after the launch of the Project UNODC found out that the University of Kabul does not have a course of study for Social Workers nor is a School of Social Work present. Though appreciating the effort to adopt one of the recommendations included in the Evaluation Report of S47, dealing with the need to ensure a “bottom-up” approach, it is obvious that there was a major mistake during the conception of the project, which could have very easily been avoided by collecting relevant information. The only (limited) national resource present was, in the view of UNODC, the MoLSA who, however, was identified as the beneficiary of the activity!

Eventually the obstacle was overcome by opening a position for an international consultant. The selection was finalized in early 2009 and the consultant started its work in March and lasted for six months. The assignment encompassed the development of a comprehensive training curriculum, manual and guide targeting correction officers and social workers dealing with prisoners in consultation with MoLSA and MoHE and with inputs from national and international counterparts, as well as the identification of suitable participants amongst female penitentiary staff and social workers in consultation with MoJ, MoLSA, MoHE, and selected NGOs. All outputs were to be published and translated into Dari and Pashto. To date, only partial translation into Dari was completed.²⁵

In addition to meetings with stakeholders, two sessions for “Curriculum Scoping Discussions” and three Focus Group Discussions were held. Whilst the former saw the participation of all relevant national and international partners and stakeholders, the latter took place in prison and gathered around a table prison officers, women, and children²⁶.

In order to finalize the activity a joint CPD-MoJ Curriculum Development Working Group was established for a period of four weeks, with a view to ensure that relevant ministerial offices have a say in the psycho-social curriculum and to foster their commitment to the activity.

According to Project Reports, meetings with national NGOs providing psycho-social training in Afghanistan had been held as early as July 2008. UNODC prompted civil society organizations to present their work plan and illustrate the nature of their

²⁵ Apparently, the Consultant submitted its work for translation at very short notice before the training. UNODC COAFG's Translation Unit tried to complete the work, but due to the tight deadline, coupled with the amount of work required, made it impossible.

²⁶ Interestingly, the Semi Annual Project Report dated January 2009 already contains indications about such activities which, according to other information gathered by the evaluators, only took place from March 2009.

contribution and expertise. It is perhaps worth noting that HOSA was selected as the implementing partner for psycho-social training well before the recruitment of the international consultant even began! Eventually, psycho-social training was conducted by UNODC's consultant over a period of eleven days (June 27 – July 2, 2009).²⁷ The 26 participants, from all over the Country, belonged to either the CPD or the MoLSA. CPD Head Office, CPD Training Unit and MoLSA (Social Work Department) joined different sessions as observers. This event received wide TV coverage.

Immediate objective 4 – To consolidate the educational and vocational training for detained women and girls in Kabul and in three selected prison provincial premises.

Outcome Improved educational and vocational training is provided to detained women and girls.

Output 4.1 Establishment of educational and vocational facilities in selected detention centers

Activity 1 Conduct an assessment on the feasibility of setting up premises for rehabilitative work (production) activities in two selected provinces

Activity 2 Selection of facilities

Achievements: Selection of the provinces where activities envisaged under Immediate Objective 4 ought to take place was the result of assessment missions carried out in Kandahar and Mazar-e-Sharif in June 2008 and in Herat in July 2008.²⁸ Prisons existing in both cities proved to be suitable to host the envisaged rehabilitative work. The female unit of Sapoza prison in Kandahar was stricken out of the list of possible locations due to the damage it suffered following the June 13, 2008 insurgency attack. Given the strategic importance of having a presence in Kandahar, the option was left open but eventually it was not possible to implement it. Having discarded Balkh prison for lack of adequate space, UNODC's attentions were redirected to Kunduz and Takhar, where the significant presence of 20 female prisoners in each structure and the availability of adequate, already existing facilities to accommodate training activities was considered decisive. Eventually, the following prisons were selected as recipients of UNODC's activities under Project T21: Kabul (97 prisoners), Herat (67), Kunduz and Takhar (20).

Activity 3 Set-up a system to ensure that penitentiary rehabilitative work is offered

Achievements: A MoA between MoJ and UNODC was signed in 2008. The document identified the institutions where vocational and educational training would be offered. Apparently, no significant achievement have been reached in this area.

Activity 4 Refurbish the centers with the equipment needed to ensure the implementation of the rehabilitation programmes

²⁷ This information is contained in the Semi Annual Project Report dated January 2009! In the same document, however, it is written that the psycho-social training lasted 6 months.... The Interim Report submitted to UNODC by the NGO HOSA in relation to the implementation of the psycho-social training under Project T21 refers to training conducted over a period of 2 months (November and December 2008) for correction staff and social workers working in Kabul (15), Kunduz (4), Kunduz (7), Herat (7), and Takhar (7) detention centers. As the above mentioned conflicting pieces of information show, confusion reigns.

²⁸ The original project document does not identify the prisons where vocational training activities would take place, thus allowing for a certain flexibility.

Achievements: No refurbishment activity was implemented directly by UNODC under Project T21. NGOs running training courses ensured the necessary (basic) interventions, such as painting and refreshing of the rooms (sometimes chosen amongst cells, as it was the case in Kunduz) selected to host training activities. In Kunduz and Takhar UNODC provided the institutions, through the implementing NGOs, sewing machines and other material needed to conduct tailoring classes. In Kabul's FJDC provision of material ranged from desks and chairs to computers, from books to sewing and embroidery machines. Herat had received the needed equipment already under Project S47.

Output 4.2 Detained women and girls complete vocational skills training and basic education.

Activity 1 Sub-contracted NGOs to identify skill training needs, including equipment requirements and to run vocational training programmes and basic educational programmes (i.e., literacy courses) in prisons and juvenile rehabilitation centers.

Achievements: According to the CJP Status Report, by July 2008 UNODC had started vocational activities at Kabul's FJDC through two local NGO's (Maharat and AWEC), the bidding process for sub-contracting the implementation of project activities in selected provinces (initially Mazar-e-Sharif, Herat, and Kandahar and later Herat, Takhar, and Kunduz) had started, and assessment missions to Kandahar and to Mazar-e-Sharif to assess the female prisoners' situation and the feasibility of setting up premises for rehabilitative work (production) activities in these provinces had been carried out. The desk review of the projects documents, however, indicates that educational and vocational training commenced in Kabul only in August 2008, for a period of 7 months. Around 80 female inmates in the capital benefited from 7 months of vocational and literacy training (including computer training) provided by experienced NGOs AWEC²⁹ and Maharat.

Activities in Herat and Takhar provinces started in September 2008, when NGOs MCDRO and AWSE were sub-contracted to provide educational and vocational training. The selection of the implementing partner proved to be rather difficult in Kunduz, where the request for proposal had to be issued three times before the NGO AREP was selected. Eventually, vocational and educational training there started in April 2009 for 6 months. In Kunduz AREP delivered literacy and vocational training to 20 inmates. A similar package was offered by AWSE to 25 female prisoners held in Takhar, whereas in Herat training for 40-45 inmates was provided by MCDRO.

Activity 2 Lessons learned from the training are included in the elaboration of the training curriculum, for social workers and educators.

Achievements: The evaluators believe that this activity was actually performed under Immediate Objective 3 via the participatory approach adopted by the consultant hired by UNODC to develop a psycho-social curriculum. Considering that the focus and curriculum development group took place after the training activities had been completed and saw the involvement also of representatives of the NGOs tasked with training, it is reasonable to conclude that relevant lessons learned from the training were taken into account in the development of psychosocial curricula for social workers and educators.

²⁹ During the same period AWEC continued to provide health education and day care activities for the female prisoners and their children. This service (not funded by UNODC) has been on-going on a permanent basis since 2003. The NGO has been committed to a long-term prisoner support strategy which has produced an outstanding example of success.

C. Achievement of the project output

Immediate Objective 1

Output 1: Selected officials are trained on the special needs of detained women and girls in order to improve their post-release opportunities and ensure that project activities became sustainable.

Output 2: The operational performance of the penitentiary staff working at the Kabul female detention facility newly constructed by UNODC is strengthened.

The evaluators believe that despite the many deficiencies mentioned in the previous pages, the outputs foreseen under Immediate Objective 1 were partly achieved. The satisfactory remark, however, must be correctly interpreted: although it is undeniable that a change in the mentality, professionalism, and performance of criminal justice officials has started and that penitentiary staff has improved operational capacities and professionalism, the ultimate goal of an entirely functioning penitentiary system where rights of detainees, also in relation to gender, are fully guaranteed is still far from being achieved. The impact of the activities carried out to achieve the present outputs under this Immediate Objective have been hindered by the lack of continuity between project T21 and its predecessor S47: the non-capitalization of the outputs produced under the so called Phase I of the project was only partly corrected by the coordination that the Vienna-based International Criminal Reform expert was able to foster with the CSSP, that is the main partner in training of penitentiary staff. The flaws in the project management illustrated elsewhere in this Report, are also to be regarded responsible of this partial achievement: as internal monitoring of the project was de facto non existent, it was virtually impossible to detect the errors and put in place redressing measures.

Immediate Objective 2

Output 1: Coordination mechanism established between the Ministers and institutions represented on the Supreme Council of Prison to be matched with coordination between international agencies and donors, to assist with the capacity building of these ministries in relation to their responsibilities for female prisoners and former prisoners.

Apart from a few relevant activities, UNODC was not able to make significant progress towards the attainment of the foreseen output. The coordination efforts and the synergies that the Vienna-based International Criminal Reform Expert was able to create, facilitating the establishment of transitional houses for former inmates, though extremely valuable, did not prove sufficient to boost the stagnation recorded by the project under this Immediate Objective which, for the well known internal monitoring deficiencies denounced elsewhere in this Report, were not detected in time.

Non-attainment of the present Immediate Objective is illustrative of the excessive ambition of the project, which could have been much better build around a more limited number of goals and of poor project planning, which did not take in due account the resources needed to achieve such output.

Immediate objective 3:

Output 1: A curriculum for social workers developed and training provided for social workers placed in selected female detention facilities.

Contrary to the previous output, the present one has been almost fully achieved. A highly valuable curriculum was developed and though not timely translated into local languages, the material produced by the International Consultant was used to provide relevant training. The evaluators, however, have reservations as to their effectiveness and, partly, their relevance. The objections concern the “top-down” approach adopted by the International Consultant in the development of the material and the duplication of efforts it represented, since at the time UNODC was busy with the achievement of this Immediate Objective, the civil society and the Government of Afghanistan were working on a similar output, which eventually was put into practice immediately after completion. In the light of the above, it is clear that the achievement of the present Immediate Objective is merely formal and, therefore, can be regarded as one of the reasons for the failure of the project.

Immediate Objective 4

Output 1: Establishment of educational and vocational facilities in selected detention centres

Output 2: Detained women and girls complete vocational skills training and basic education

In the eyes of the evaluators the present output has not been fully achieved. Although vocational and educational training was delivered in the selected prison facilities to female inmates UNODC was not able to institutionalize the offer of penitentiary rehabilitative work and the various activities performed under the project appeared to lack vision and depth. Activity reports submitted to UNODC by the NGOs subcontracted to conduct such activities show that the trainings were very much welcomed by female inmates. Certainly they had an immediate impact on the life of inmates, in that they offered female prisoners the possibility to read and write, enhance their self-esteem and develop manual skills, thus giving a meaning to their reclusion. How much of this will go in the outside world once the female prisoners have served their sentence is yet to be known, although some interlocutors expressed their skepticism as to the long-term impact of the activities offered by UNODC under this Immediate Objective. Whilst the main obstacle to socio-economic reintegration of former female prisoners, that is cultural resistance, could not be overcome within the life of the project, it is a fact that UNODC paid too little attention to creating bridges between the women in conflict with the law and the society, for instance by introducing a mediation component.

The evaluators also have reservations about the professionalism of the NGO workers who implemented the foreseen training. Indeed, whilst there are no doubts about their exceptional commitment, it is a fact that working in prison requires that the person possess special qualifications and knowledge (which goes beyond “common sense”) in order for their interventions not to be counterproductive. In the present circumstance the evaluators gained the impression that certain dynamics which are peculiar to the penitentiary environment were not known by NGO workers contracted to perform training in prison. Despite their good faith, therefore, it is very likely that the NGO trainer committed errors in their relationship with inmates and institutions which could have been quite easily avoided with the provision of a general training-of-trainer course. Such an approach, moreover, would have allowed for an empowerment of the NGOs themselves, thus implementing the recommendation already issued by the thematic evaluators in 2008 that the “process is a product itself”.

Similarly, the evaluators believe that the credibility and professionalism of UNODC could have been reinforced if, within the activities performed to achieve this output all

professionals involved had full knowledge of understanding of the position of UNODC vis-à-vis penitentiary issues, which did not seem to be the case.

Partial achievement of the present output also resulted from the limited refurbishment activities of the prison facilities that had been carried out by the NGOs contracted to conduct the training which, for financial constraints, had to limit their intervention to the cleaning and painting of one cell. The impact of the provision of material for vocational course, though timely, was negatively impacted by the fact that the tools often left the prison facility upon release of the person who used them during the course. Whilst this choice of the NGOs is to be lauded, it is true that lack of material tools means non-duplicability of trainings.

III OUTCOMES, IMPACTS AND SUSTAINABILITY

A. Outcomes, their impact and sustainability

The outcomes of AFG/T21 will be examined in the order in which they appear in the project document. Whilst assessing the attainment of outcomes and objectives, reference will be made to the objectively verifiable indicators as identified by the project document.

Immediate Objective 1 – To increase the capacity of criminal justice officials to identify and respond to the needs of detained women in preparation for their release back into society and to enhance the operational capacities and professionalism of penitentiary staff.

Outcome:

Improvement of professional capacity and skills of penitentiary staff to assist vulnerable groups to effectively address the social reintegration of women and girls in prison

Achievements: From a strict project perspective, no doubt that in the last couple of years, professionalism and operational capacities of prison staff dealing with women in conflict with the law have increased tremendously, though not evenly across the country. According to our interlocutors, for instance, the situation in Kunduz is way below the level that can be found in Kabul. UNODC can rightly claim to having contributed towards this and from various perspectives: first of all, by providing (for instance under Projects R41 and R87) the necessary physical infrastructure and material equipment needed to perform correction functions, but also conducting a thorough training needs assessment of women prison staff and developing tailor-made material both for prisoners and for staff (Project S47), eventually used (at least partly) to deliver the relevant training under the current Project. The various activities conducted by UNODC under the current project were able to provide specific training on various issues (ranging from health and hygiene issues to social themes, including reintegration of former inmates, case and sentence management, professional conduct applicable legislation, human rights standards...) to about 120 correction staff involved with female prisoners. Unfortunately, there are no objective indicators available to assess the increased operational performance of staff. Although all interlocutors met in the course of the mission confirmed that the operational capacity and professionalism of correction staff have improved, no qualitative conclusions could be reached. This was due not only to lack of objectively verifiable indicators (for instance, trainees were never involved in follow-up activities) but also because the opinions listened to could differ significantly as to the standards used. In this respect it appears opportune to anticipate one major objection that the evaluators have in relation to Project T21: that is the lack of a comprehensive system able to actually assess the impact of project activities. The project's logical framework, for instance lists amongst the objectively verifiable indicators to be used to review project progresses "the increased knowledge [of penitentiary staff] on how to respond to the needs of detained women in preparation for their release back into society". In practice, however, the project failed to embody in the project suitable mechanisms to ensure that such assessment could be carried out. In the eyes of the evaluators UNODC implemented training activities which focused primarily on the transfer of knowledge. In this respect, the training tools used were probably the right ones. UNODC, however, did not sufficiently address the needs of staff to learn how to change their attitude when dealing with female prisoners. What the staff needed was to learn how to transpose concepts and knowledge into daily, practical routine. This is clearly a long process to which a "knowledge-based training" can only be a part to. More sophisticated training tools would have been necessary to progress further and put in place a system suitable to provoke behavioral and cultural changes. UNODC and its

implementing partners in training, however, were not able to move this step forward and limited themselves to facilitate transfer of knowledge.³⁰ This, eventually, lowered the impact of the activities and eventually hindered the sustainability of the outcome, as correction staff was not equipped with all tools needed to increase their professionalism.

Immediate Objective 2 - To provide technical advisory services to all Afghan institutions (MOJ, MOLSA, MOWA, MOE, MOPH) responsible for developing a specific policy on women and girls in prison, including the development of the policy and management mechanisms for post-release support for women with NGOs currently providing shelter for women

Outcome: Adoption of specific policy on women and girls in prison and for post-release support for female detainees.

Achievements: The project's limited time frame, incapacity of TAG to effectively perform its functions, political changes in the Ministries, as well as the issue of female prisoners not being amongst the priorities of the political agenda, did not facilitate UNODC's endeavors in the attainment of the present objective. Apart from a few activities listed above, UNODC was not able to reach any tangible result in this respect. Despite the advocacy and awareness raising activities that UNODC organized in the period under review, at policy level no initiatives have been undertaken. The position of female inmates after release remains unchanged. Few, laudable initiatives have been put in place by private individuals or NGOs: they have, however, limited scale and so far have not been able to impact on the overall situation. All in all, the evaluators believe that this objective was too ambitious and multifaceted to be achieved during the limited time frame of the project. Inclusion of such unrealistic objectives amongst the deliverables and imprecise identification of risks and assumptions³¹ denote poor project planning which, eventually, was the main cause for non-achievement of the stated objective.

Immediate objective 3 – To promote social and psychological support provided by social workers identified and selected among Afghan professional individuals, establishment of training for social workers implemented by a qualified local NGO.

30 Illustrative, in this respect, is the use by ISISC of trainers who have a background/experience as judges or prosecutors. Whilst highly respected when delivering “knowledge”, such trainers lose authority when dealing with operational aspects of correction staff's daily routine. Trainees are in general reluctant to accept to learn “how to...” from trainers who, in the case of prison officers, have never worn a correction uniform and, for instance, never faced the dilemmas and difficulties staff encounter in prisons and with inmates whilst performing their duties. Other training techniques which could have been used to address the training need of staff could have been to break the “how to” training into various thematic sessions to be held at a reasonable distance in time (for instance once a month). During each of the sessions trainees would discuss the difficulties of implementing, in practice, the information gained during the “knowledge sessions of the training” over the preceding period. In such way, for instance, trainee would have the possibility to understand, under the guidance of a practitioner, reasons for failure or success, identify and discuss the obstacles encountered, elaborate strategies applied to specific circumstances and environments and so on.

31 Incapacity of TAG to perform its function was not listed in the logical framework among the risks and assumptions which, on the other hand, referred to lack of support from members of the judiciary as one of the possible obstacles to the adoption of specific policy on women and girls in prison and for post-release support for women. Considering that at policy level the judiciary plays no role, it is not clear to the evaluators how lack of support from the latter could have hindered progresses related to female prisoners.

Outcome: Professional social and psychological support provided by social workers identified and selected among Afghan professionals support the national policy for the effective resettlement of female offenders.

Achievements: Similarly to what is written in relation to Immediate Objective 1, the assessment of the attainment of the present objective by UNODC is twofold. In relative terms, it can be said that UNODC tangibly contributed to the improvement of the professionalism and preparation of those deputed to the provision of psycho-social support to inmates. Although none of the evaluators' interlocutors were able to confirm the presence in prisons of ministerial social workers, no doubt that a number of professional figures benefited from the activities carried out under this Immediate Objective. Their awareness raising component, moreover, cannot be denied. Whether the process chosen by UNODC to pursue its objective was the most reasonable and whether there was a need for UNODC to become involved as it did are issues attracting different considerations. Indeed, it appeared that UNODC invested massive resources (human capital, time) in the development of psycho-social training material through a predominantly top-down approach (recourse to an international consultant, even though it has to be recognized that the latter favored participatory processes) to produce material very similar to the one that Afghan actors, lead by the local NGOs HOSA (with the support of an international consultant – note the inversions of roles which eventually impacted on capacity building of subjects involved, ownership of final product, cultural compatibility of output) were in the process of developing in close cooperation with the MoPH and MoLSA. This, eventually, turned into a useless duplication able to obfuscate the quality of the material produced by UNODC which, we are afraid, will end up lying, not even in the translating version, on the shelter where outputs produced by the IC often are put to gather dust. UNODC, in other words, concentrated more on the quality of the product itself, rather than facilitating the process of ownership by final beneficiaries and local experts. Under the present circumstances there is no doubt that tasking an internationally renowned expert to produce training material is a less time-consuming process than identifying local resources able to pursue the same objective (maybe on a more limited scale). Probably the quality of the results would not be exactly the same. Very likely, though, the output produced “in house” will be more representative and, most of all, will not be perceived as the result of a cultural imposition. In the eyes of the evaluators UNODC took a shortcut to produce, in a limited period of time, a product of outstanding quality which will never be regarded as “produced by Afghans for Afghans”. The box “achieved” was ticked, but the evaluators have doubts as to the sustainability of the approach.

Immediate objective 4 – To consolidate the educational and vocational training for detained women and girls in Kabul and in three selected prison provincial premises.

Outcome Improved educational and vocational training is provided to detained women and girls.

Achievements: Once again, prior to coming to their conclusions, the evaluators need to mark a clear distinction between implementation of activities on the one hand, their impact and sustainability on the other. Similarly to what has been recorded in the previous pages, under this Immediate Objective too there is dissociation between the former and the latter. No question that the training courses organized by UNODC and implemented in the various correction facilities by selected NGOs were numerous and have reached significant number of beneficiaries. But if one asks whether such trainings were able to impact on the life of prisoners no answer is available. As a matter of fact, no mechanism is currently in place (nor was embodied into the Project, at least at a tentative level) to track

down the whereabouts of women after release, their social and economic situation, the obstacles faced in practice after gaining freedom and the solutions (if any) devised to overcome the situation.³² Apart from the FJDC in Kabul where training activities such as those financed by UNODC under Project T21 have been ongoing since 2003, their continuity being ensured by the local NGO AWEC, in all the other correction facilities vocational and literacy courses organized by UNODC appeared to be comet-like: after they took place, there was nothing left but memories. Not even the equipment remained, as the implementing NGOs, adopting a laudable micro-finance approach, delivered the equipment used for the vocational classes (mainly sewing machines and sewing kits) to each participant who will take them with them upon release. The situation is different in Kabul, where even without UNODC the proposed activities would have been conducted – and actually will continue to be offered to inmates in the future. UNODC's intervention under this Immediate Objective lacked depth and had no impact in terms of institutionalization of rehabilitative activities or introduction of training routines in the correction system³³.

B. Institutional and management arrangements and constraints

Originally conceived to last 12 months, from June 2008 to April 2009, in the course of its life, Project T21 was the object of a non-substantive revision aimed at extending its duration of an additional 7 months, until December 2009, so as to allow for the completion of the activities. Accordingly, the initial budget of USD 356,400 was increased by USD 33,000, eventually reaching the amount of USD 389,400.³⁴

From project management perspective the project was meant to be implemented by a NPC with the supervision of the International Criminal Justice Expert. Apart from flaws in the design, the project's only partial success can also be attributed to the turnover in human resources that it suffered during a relatively short period. The first NPC was contracted as of July 1st, 2008 and left in December 2008, together with the International Prison Reform Coordinator. The second NPC resigned in November 2009, when the project had not yet come to a substantive completion. Then, it became the responsibility of the National Project Assistant to oversee the project's last activities. As for the overall management of the project, evaluators had some reservations about the adoption (better, implementation) of adequate standards and procedure. A systematic filing system did not seem to be in place and retrieval of documents proved to be difficult and time consuming. Neither the former NPC nor project assistant seem to have a full understanding and command of the project cycle management. All activities are performed by staff to the best

³² Although this is not easy, also having in mind the reluctance of former female inmates, who might be exposed to a prolongation of the stigma they have been marked with, there seems no other way to truly measure impact. In future projects benefiting female prisoners, therefore, UNODC will need to address this issue.

³³ In June 2009 the Criminal Justice Reform Expert discussed this need in relation to both projects R87 and T21 with the National Skills Development Programme. The goal was to explore ways in which to include prison based vocational training in the national programme and thereby to institutionalize it. Due to the absence of an International Prison Reform Programme Coordinator, however, the talks had no follow-up.

³⁴ During the field mission evaluators were informed that, based on the Atlas financial system, the project still had a positive balance of USD 45,000. In May 2010, after reconciliation, the remaining positive balance was USD 22,000 circa. The only explanation given to justify such difference was the variation in the Euro/Dollar exchange rate. This justification, however, did not sound reasonable to the evaluators, considering that the rate has been rather stable at least in the last 6 years.

of their knowledge: although UNODC personnel have showed exceptional personal dedication to projects and activities, loyalty and commitment to the organization, this cannot guarantee standards which can be regarded as acceptable for an institution of the nature of UNODC. Considering the relatively high turnover that UNODC, like all other international organizations working at field level experience, lack of adequate management standards also hinder smooth transfer of institutional memory and continuity in project activities.

Periodic on-going monitoring represents a pivotal element conducive to success. This activity was carried out unevenly by the NPC with the assistance of support staff and in coordination with UNODC Vienna. In addition to poor internal monitoring, the project also suffered from the inefficiency of the monitoring mechanism that had been identified at project design stage: indeed, as the TAG did not achieve the expected functionality, it was not was not able to provide the inputs foreseen, negatively contributing to the project's end result.

IV. LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

A. Lessons learned

Cultural resistance to reintegration of former inmates

If lessons learned are to be defined as knowledge gained through experience, the evaluators believe that the main lesson coming from the present project is how deeply rooted are the resistance and prejudices that women who have entered in conflict with the law encounter, particularly, but not only, upon release. Although listed amongst the risks and assumptions, the evaluators have had the impression that such strong cultural and traditional barriers hindering reintegration into society and their families of former female inmates (and often of their children) have been underestimated by UNODC. This, in turn, has affected project planning and implementation, leading to setting unrealistic objectives and not including mechanisms facilitating reintegration, such as mediation or micro-finance aspects, amongst those proposed.

Increased involvement of civil society organizations sought

During the mission the evaluators were positively surprised by the number of NGOs providing support to vulnerable groups. The evaluators did not have the feeling that such resources have been duly taken into account during the implementation of the project. Apart from a donor/recipient relationship, it seems that UNODC did not fully appreciate the capital in terms of knowledge and skills that the Afghan civil society can express. In this respect, they believe that a deeper cooperation between UNODC and the local NGOs (not limited to the implementation of ad hoc activities but starting from project conception - and possibly even before that) could represent an important tool to maximize results, favoring ownership of outputs, avoid overlapping and foster sustainability.

B. Best practices

Communication and synergies

UNODC, particularly through the Vienna-based Criminal Justice Reform Expert that had already been working under Project S47, producing most of its outputs, was able to create synergies with local actors and maintain a good level of communication and sharing of information with the major representatives of the IC (namely CSSP) involved in training of female staff. UNODC's invitation to the NGO HAWCA to participate in the TAG and the subsequent technical support that was given to it for the presentation of a project proposal aimed at the establishment of a transitional house for former inmates are to be praised, just like the systematic coordination with CSSP during the drafting of the curriculum for female correction staff. Unfortunately, this kind of coordination took place unevenly during the life of the project.

C. Constraints

In the opinion of the evaluators smooth, effective implementation of the project has been affected by the following factors:

Inefficiency of TAG

According to its statute, the TAG is a forum where international actors and Governmental counterparts discuss prison policies and ensure coordination of the activities implemented in prison, particularly those in favor of vulnerable groups. Within the time frame of the project the TAG was not able to convene regularly, nor to perform its functions in a meaningful way. This affected the implementation of Project T21 in that the group was not able to perform the monitoring role functional to the attainment of objectives, nor to support UNODC in the various activities performed under the project, particularly those related to creation of policies and introduction of institutional changes in favor of women in conflict with the law, both during detention and after release. Inefficiency of TAG had not been identified by the Project Document's Logical Framework among the risks and assumptions: this was clearly a deficiency in the project planning that did not favor timely redress interventions.

Fragile security situation

The constantly deteriorating security situation in the Country represented a big obstacle to the implementation of the project, particularly with regard to activities in the provinces, not only for international actors but also for local partners.

Lack of adequate infrastructures

Despite UNODC's massive construction efforts in the prison sector, the dilapidation of the correction system is far from being resolved and, inevitably, affected the end results of the project.

Inadequate management of project by the NPC

Lack of continuity in the implementation of the project

Although the evaluators understand that in a Country like Afghanistan it is difficult to recruit suitable personnel (particularly when it comes to women and work in the prison field), it is nonetheless opportune to underline how the project suffered due to the second NPC's non-proactive approach. After the departure of the first NPC in December 2008, the new NPC in charge of the project, though dedicated and committed, did not undertake follow up actions as requested by the circumstances and needed daily guidance to implement project activities. Unfortunately, as the Prison Reform Programme Coordinator position remained vacant since the departure of the first NPC and until the end of the project, the support that T21's NPC received from the Criminal Justice Programme Manager (COAFG) and the Vienna-based UNODC staff, did not prove sufficient to fill the gaps. Indeed, this evaluation exercise showed what can probably be regarded as the main drawback to the project implementation. The comparison between the project reports and documents produced by the NPC and those submitted to the evaluators, though at a later stage, by the Criminal Justice Reform Expert³⁵, showed clear lack of continuity between the activities undertaken by the Expert on the occasion of her missions to Kabul and those carried out on a daily basis by the NPC. In many occasions the follow-up actions envisaged or recommended by the Expert never saw the light or were unduly postponed.

35 Significantly, the Criminal Justice Reform Expert's mission report were not included, with one exception, among the T21 project documents provided to the evaluators. The latter, therefore, learned about them only after the first draft of the present Report had been submitted to UNODC.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Actions recommended

Flowing from the findings recorded in the previous pages the evaluators, whilst recalling the applicable recommendations contained in the 2008 Rule of Law Thematic Evaluation, would like to put forward the following suggestions.

Project planning:

Identification of assumptions and risks during project design should be more accurate

UNODC should refine its project design skills and pay particular attention to the correct and precise identification of assumptions and risks that the intervention entails.

More realistic approach to be adopted

Full appreciation and analysis of social and cultural constraints should be emphasised during project planning. UNODC (and its donors) should be realistic as to what can be achieved in a limited amount of time, particularly considering the human resources and environmental constraints affecting implementation of projects in Afghanistan. UNODC, therefore, should avoid, within one project, to disperse its efforts into too many directions.

In the present case the evaluator believe that it would have been sensible to build the project around the capacity building activities foreseen under Immediate Objectives 1 and 4 only.

Resources needed to ensure coordination must be accurately planned

As it appears that this coordination was uneven during the project-life and mainly personality-drive, the evaluators recommend that in future projects UNODC pays particular attention that the training on project management that newly recruited staff receive. The need for constant coordination efforts should be emphasized. In order for such indications not to remain dead letter during the project design phase UNODC should ensure that resources needed to put in place such efforts are taken into full account and reflected accordingly.

Project management and implementation

Reporting obligations of implementing partners should be enforced more stringently

UNODC should pay more attention to implementing partners' reporting obligations, so as to ensure that they effectively contribute to the overall project management and monitoring, which was not the case under the present project, particularly in relation to the organization's main implementing partner ISISC.

Internal monitoring of the project must be carried out regularly and in line with the Organization's standards

UNODC should ensure that staff has full knowledge and command of internal monitoring tools and standards and that they are being used properly and fully adhered to.

Before commissioning original work the organization must verify the availability of existing resources and ensure that, at least at institutional level, no activities such as the one planned are in place.

Duplication of activities must be avoided

Before commissioning original work the organization must verify the availability of existing resources and ensure that, at least at institutional level, no activities such as the one planned are in place.

UNODC's ability to embody a capacity building component in its project processes must be enhanced

UNODC should ensure that local actors be full partners in project planning and implementation so that they can both learn and provide input. All this with the objective of developing local skills and experience, ensuring cultural appropriateness of interventions, through proper infusion of local skills and knowledge, and favour sense of ownership of results.

Capitalization of internal available resources (particularly outputs) and previous project results must be ensured

UNODC should ensure that newly recruited staff gain full awareness of project and activities (and their evaluations) carried out by the organization in the related problem area and that they familiarize with the relevant material already available in-house.

Training

Training conducted in prisons:

Long-term training strategy must be adopted

When planning technical assistance interventions UNODC should ensure that they fit into a strategy able to produce results for the beneficiaries also in the long term and not only during the life of the project. UNODC should advocate about the need to have a long-term vision allowing for interventions which are not just production of results which end with the completion of project

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UNODC should advocate about the need to have a long-term vision allowing for interventions which are not just production of results which end with the completion of project.

Links between knowledge and skills acquired in prison by inmates and life outside bars should be created

The recommendation issued by the evaluators of Project S47 in 2007, that is that UNODC should explore the possibility to collaborate with a private, profit-oriented firm in this kind of training exercise, not only for commercialization purposes, but also to ensure employment opportunities for some of the trained inmates after their release, is still valid and awaits implementation.

Introduction of mediation component should be considered

In order to increase the impact of training delivered to female inmates and genuinely facilitate their socio-economic reintegration, the evaluators suggest that preparation for

release also include mediation with inmates' families. This also having in mind that cultural stigma, in most cases taking the form of the woman being abandoned and rejected by her family, is one of the most problematic obstacles that former inmates find on their way out. Support in this endeavour from the CPD (for instance issuing invitation letters to family members) should be foreseen as a possible way to ensure that the mediation process at least starts.

UNODC should ensure that trainers delivering literacy and vocational courses are adequately equipped to work with prisoners

UNODC should make sure that NGO trainers providing vocational and literacy classes to inmates are fully equipped with all the needed psychological and social tools to perform such interventions and operate according to standards aligned with UNODC's. Any such lack should be re-dressed by the project itself. This does not mean that trainers must benefit from a full training package. A one/two-day activity with them, however, should be envisaged as to ensure that UNODC's approach and position vis-à-vis imprisonment and reintegration issues are known and consistency insured.

In depth-evaluation mechanisms of the training delivered should be embodied into training programmes

UNODC should request implementing partners that evaluation mechanisms of training delivered are embodied into the training programmes and should not accept that evaluation is carried out through simple forms providing barely any substantive feedback. If the compilation of forms is not sufficient to gather substantive information, other tools (discussion group, reporting obligation) should be used.

Training offered must respond to the specific training needs of recipients

The impression transpiring from the assessment of the project activities related to training of correction staff is that both UNODC and its main training partner ISISC paid limited attention to the function of training. It appeared to the evaluators that ISISC applies the same training techniques (including trainers) to whatever training it delivers. This means that the various functions that a training can have (transfer of knowledge, awareness raising, acquisition of skills, modification of attitudes), each requiring different tools, have not been taken into account. This forms part of the basic understanding of function of training that those delivering it must have. For instance, a training aimed at acquisition of skills cannot be delivered by trainers who do not share the same background of the trainees. Having a judge or prosecutor explaining to prison officers how to deal with a female inmate (which is what happened with the training conducted by ISISC) is not credible, despite the huge knowledge on the subject matter that the trainer in question might have. In such circumstances the trainer's authority is simply not recognized and the training loses impact. Standard interactive techniques, as used by ISISC, are not sufficient to modify attitudes: in order to achieve such specific learning results different methods should be put in place. For instance, training could have been spread over a number of months and divided into a number of sessions, each of which also dedicated to the review and discussion of the way officers were able/not able (and why) to apply in practice the standards learned in the previous session. One of the advantages inherent in such a system (which is one of the many that the specialized literature has identified) would be that there is a constant follow-up and feedback on the training, which was totally absent (evaluation forms at the end of a training cannot be regarded as sufficiently meaningful) under the present project.

In the light of the above the evaluators recommend that UNODC avoid recourse to standardized training and ensure that implementing partners do the same.

VI. OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

In the light of the considerations exposed in the previous pages the evaluators, whilst acknowledging that UNODC's intervention did make a change in the daily life of the direct beneficiaries, particularly women serving their conviction, have reached the conclusion that this project represented a lost opportunity for the organization to effectively impact on the life of female prisoners either directly (providing genuine rehabilitative opportunities and truly preparing the ground for their release) or indirectly (increasing the professionalism of correction staff and social workers serving in female facilities). The incapacity of the project to reach its overall objectives has deep roots, touching the very outset of the project and cannot be imputed only to its daily management. At the heart of the occurrence lies imperfect project planning: incorrect identification of risks and assumptions, erroneous definitions of the preconditions applicable to the situation, the setting of unrealistic and multiple objectives are all elements which hindered the successful completion of the project. As far as the number of objectives is concerned, the evaluators believe that, given the circumstances and the time frame foreseen for the implementation, it would have been sensible to develop the project around the capacity building activities listed under Immediate Objectives 1 and 4. Such a choice would have also been in line with recommendations issued by previous evaluations related to different UNODC's project, which criticized the organization for its tendency to engage in too many directions at the same time, thus eventually losing momentum and wasting energies and resources without getting adequate results.

Such weak foundations coupled with the current cultural obstacles stigmatizing females in conflict with the law, the absence of professional judicial and correctional culture, lack of understanding of the rehabilitative function of punishment and of adequate legal tools made it impossible for the project to reach its ambitious objectives.

With regard to the practical implementation of activities, the evaluators believe that two factors hindered the impact of the training of staff working with female inmates (correction officer and social workers/educators). These are: a) the use of training techniques favoring the transfer of knowledge rather than the development of skills and modification of attitudes; b) modalities of development of training material not favoring their ownership by Afghan professionals and, therefore, putting their future use at almost total risk.

As for the vocational and literacy training offered to inmates, the main criticism concerns the lack of continuity, which is a result of absence of strategy. For most of the inmates such trainings were a genuine comet: they came from nothing and after them, nothing was left. Whilst not underestimating the importance that, on the very moment of delivery, such training had for the inmates (not only in terms of skills gained but also at level of self-esteem), it is sad to think that, for instance, in Kunduz UNODC was not able to leave any legacy or tangible impact.

The expected end-of-project situation anticipated an improvement in the life of female detainees and a facilitated socio-economic reintegration of former female inmates thanks to the vocational and literacy skills acquired and/or developed during imprisonment. On the basis of the impressions gathered during the mission, the evaluators are in a position to conclude that, in general terms, increased professionalism of correction staff and availability of more adequate material resource have had a positive impact on the life of prisoners. Such results were also reached as a result of activities conducted under Project

T21. As far as socio-economic reintegration of former inmates is concerned, it is not possible to draw any conclusion, as no comparison between the situation of female prisoners before and after the project could be carried out. In this respect, it is a pity that the envisaged “community based follow up activities conducted upon release at central and provincial level” were either not available, looked for nor carried out. Such activities, listed in the project document amongst the “objectively verifiable indicators” on the basis of which assessing the attainment of objective, could have been an important instrument to give the project the depth it lacked. The truth is that, at present, UNODC can only speculate on the practical importance of its training for the socio-economic reintegration of former inmates whereas, for instance, the creation of a moral obligation to update the NGO delivering the training, at least for the time period of the project, could have supported more effectively the socio-economic reintegration or, in the worst scenario, provide clear data about the situation, to be used for advocacy purpose.

Last but not least, although the current project was meant to represent the continuation of its predecessor S47, the evaluators had the impression that Project T21 failed in that it did not fully capitalize the valuable resources, outputs, and suggestions that Phase I left as its legacy.

The criticism raised in the previous pages, however, should not be interpreted as a recommendation that UNODC stops implementing projects in the prison reform area, particularly those empowering female inmates and increasing the professionalism of staff. As mentioned elsewhere, actions aiming at empowering women in conflict with the law and creating bridges to facilitate their socio-economic reintegration into society after release require cultural and social changes that can reasonably be achieved only after the lapse of a significant amount of time and change in generations. Should UNODC stop its interventions in the prison reform area Afghanistan would lose one of the Government’s most authoritative counterparts? As a corollary, the pace of progress would be seriously undermined and the few results achieved could be lost.