

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

EVALUATION SUMMARY

Project title, number:	Enhancement of Capacity to Gather and Exchange Information by East Asia Law Enforcement Agencies (AD/RAS/97/C46)
Thematic area:	Law Enforcement
Region:	South East Asia (Thailand, Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam)
Project budget:	US\$ 1,127,200
Project duration:	3 January 1999-31 December 2001
Executing agency:	UNODC
Type of evaluation:	Terminal Evaluation
Date of evaluation:	January – February 2003

Project description

The project will facilitate an increased capacity for law enforcement agencies of the countries that are party to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on drug control and the Sub-regional Action Plan to reduce illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs and controlled chemicals by gathering, analysing and exchanging drug law enforcement information in a systematic and complementary manner. The key components are workshops and specialised training to define and implement systems for the collection, analysis and distribution of drug enforcement intelligence to support major drug and precursor chemical investigations.

Findings and conclusions

Concept and design

There was a great underestimation of the complexity of organizing and managing sophisticated projects in 6 disparate countries such that the successful outcome was questionable from the outset. This project was one of 6 law enforcement initiatives and whilst the aims and objectives were highly relevant the method of addressing the problem was inappropriate and grossly over-ambitious. Pitfalls were not properly addressed and it was too much to expect one person to achieve the desired outputs. Some successes are apparent but there is much more that needs to be done. The introduction of Human rights was properly introduced by the co-ordinator. Country representatives felt and were largely excluded.

Project Implementation and Management

Overall the project was not as well managed as it should have been because of unreasonable expectations at the outset and the co-ordinator was asked to cope with 6 different countries without a deputy. This lesson has been learned. It would have been valuable to have consulted the co-ordinator at the project design stage.

Project Results

The projects (B65 and C46) have produced a degree of regional unity, which was unlikely to have occurred without this MoU initiative. There is networking, particularly in the border areas. Trust has developed amongst people/agencies, and there is certainly awareness, if not a complete application of many of the lessons learned from the workshops. Relationships and operational benefits tend to be informal rather than formal and some officers contact their counterparts in some other countries when the need arises with requests for mutual legal assistance, mostly on a “case by case” basis - (B65-Annual Project Progress Reports Jan-Dec 2001/Jan/June 2002). Much more needs to be done to achieve the original objectives and to ensure sustainability.

There are some positive outcomes as follows: ~

- i. The training/study tour, and experience offered by the Australian Federal Police, was praised and appreciated by the participants.
- ii. The AFP offered some very valuable suggestions that should be taken seriously and implemented if possible.
- iii. The training/policy manuals were welcomed and have become a touchstone for knowledge and future national training.
- iv. There are indications that the programme (in conjunction with other initiatives) has had a positive effect in countering the illicit production and trafficking of drugs in the sub-region although the overall problem is increasing.
- v. Emphasis on Human Rights awareness was a proper addition to the Projects by the Project Co-ordinator and seems to have been recognized as being important by some countries.
- vi. Intelligence officers have been appointed to many (but not all) field investigation units.
- vii. Central Drug Intelligence Units (CDIU) have been established in each country
- viii. Project concepts were ambitious but there appears to be widespread (if not all-embracing) awareness of the need to gather, analyze and share intelligence/information. This has not been fully translated into operational practice.
- ix. The need for international and inter-agency co-operation has been recognized and some progress in this respect has been made but more needs to be done if the MoU countries are to be able to play an effective part in addressing the global drug problem
- x. There are indications/reports that a greater professionalism and competence is emerging in some areas/agencies where they were seriously deficient before the start of these (and other) projects and influences (ILEA, Interpol, WCO and other country training inputs).
- xi. Successes have been achieved against important criminals as a result of better international co-operation.
- xii. The importance of precursor chemicals has been established in the sub-region and there have been successes in identifying and closing some clandestine laboratories and preventing the diversion of some chemicals. Much more remains to be done.

- xiii. Progress has been made in recognizing/implementing some of the recommended law enforcement activities defined in the 1988 Convention – in particular, asset seizure.
- xiv. Liaison officers have been exchanged between Thailand and China.

Recommendations and lessons learned

Lessons learned are listed in the report but the primary lesson is that it is unwise to attempt projects in multiple countries with different language, professional competence and financial abilities. If this project and the others associated with it, particularly C46 were to be considered today it would be sensible to manage it in a much better way with clearer project documents and specific requirements of participating countries. The outcome of this project was questionable almost from the beginning. Each country should have been dealt with in the following way: ~

- **Year 1 - Foundation** could have been devoted to developing the law enforcement skills in each country so that a clearer understanding of the requirements was secured and levels of professional ability enhanced;
- **Year 2 Co-operative development** could have been devoted to regional workshops for all, emphasising the importance of gathering and sharing intelligence for a common operational purpose;
- **Year 3 Consolidation** could have consolidated and built on lessons learned with simulation exercises and validation.

With the benefit of hindsight, many lessons have been learned and implemented in subsequent projects. It has to be remembered that this project was designed 10 years ago at a time when the MOU was regarded as a groundbreaking achievement. Whilst it is true that the project would not have been designed in this way today and already changes have been made in more recent projects, nevertheless this was a valuable experience from which there have been positive outcomes and in that regard it was a useful exercise which has resulted in progress being achieved in all of the countries.