Independent project evaluation of the

Strengthening the Capacity of Civil Society Organizations in Africa to Combat Corruption and Contribute to the UNCAC Review Process

“Looking Beyond: Towards a Strategic Engagement with Civil Society on Anti-Corruption, and Drugs and Crime Prevention”

GLOU68
Global

Independent Evaluation Unit
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

According to Kofi Annan, former Secretary General, United Nations, corruption “undermines democracy and the rule of law, leads to violations of human rights, distorts markets, erodes the quality of life and allows organized crime, terrorism and other threats to human security” (preface, p.1, of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, UNCAC). The fight against corruption is a collective responsibility with Member States leading the process in partnership with other stakeholders. Consequently, Civil Society Organizations have a vital role to play in fighting corruption. They provide checks and balances for improving accountability in the public and private sector and therefore need support to strengthen their voice.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) regards Civil Society engagement as an integral part of the fight against corruption. With UNCAC coming into force in 2005 and the start of the review mechanism, the ensuing role of civil society took on a different dimension, indicating the need to strengthen their capacity to participate in and contribute to the review process. This led to the development and implementation of a number of capacity building initiatives with support from major stakeholders/donors. Accordingly, one such project that UNODC is implementing is: “Strengthening the Capacity of Civil Society Organizations in Africa to Combat Corruption and Contribute to the UNCAC Review Process” which is a part and parcel of the anti-corruption module of UNODC Project “Looking Beyond: Towards a Strategic Engagement with Civil Society on Anti-Corruption, and Drugs and Crime Prevention” (GLOU68) which aims to strengthen UNODC partnership with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

Since its inception in 2010, the anti-corruption module of the project received funding from the Department for International Development (DfID), United Kingdom, the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), Austria, and the Australian Government Overseas Aid Program (AusAid), Australia, that totalled US$ 1,709,7433 with additional contributions from the Federal Department of Switzerland and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway, totalling US$ 21,837 and US$ 70,605 respectively (the latter contribution is not only for the anti-corruption module) ADA remains the largest donor with a contribution that exceeds 60% of the total to support UNODC’s programmes with Civil Society in Africa as a priority area according to ADA’s mandate and strategic plan.

This mid-term evaluation focuses on the following specific objectives of the anti-corruption module:

(a) Increased CSO knowledge of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, UNCAC, and its review mechanism and ability to contribute meaningfully to the on-going peer review;

1 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) refers to a wide array of non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community groups, labour unions, indigenous groups, charitable organizations, faith-Based organizations, professional associations, and foundations. Business is not included in this category.
(b) Increased dialogue between CSOs and their government focal points to discuss contributions to the process and controversial issues in an open and constructive manner and build CSO capacity for replicating the training in their own country or region;

(c) CSOs gaining skills and resources to work closely with the private sector in the UNCAC review mechanism and raise awareness at the local, regional and international level. This includes a small grants programme that will allow qualified CSOs to engage directly with the private sector and sensitise small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) on UNCAC and the prevention of corruption.

Commissioned by UNODC, this mid-term evaluation aimed to “measure the results achieved so far by the project in bringing CSOs up to speed with UNCAC and its review mechanism, and how it has facilitated engagement between CSOs and the respective governments on the prevention and fight against corruption”. It also sought to “identify strengths and weaknesses of the project and to provide guidance on how to optimize effective cooperation with the main project partners going forward”. To achieve this, the evaluation focused on relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and lessons learned as well as coordination mechanisms and partnerships. In doing so, the methodology combined a desk review, formal/informal meetings with semi-structured interviews addressing the programme’s strategic as well as operational aspects to ensure linkages between the international and national contexts and triangulate information about results. The key findings, recommendations and lessons learned are summarised below.

Key Findings

The key findings, evidence to support them and recommendations to address them are captured in the matrix below according to the sequence in the body of the report.

Strengths and weaknesses

A SWOT analysis based on formal and informal meetings and interviews with stakeholders determined significant strengths which attest to this project’s relevance and results. Two key strengths relate to the: (a) creation of a dialogue platform facilitating exchange and engagement between civil society, governments and a wider stakeholder group. This could be used for a knowledge management base (integrating good practices and national context examples); (b) commitment, competence and hard work of the UNODC team which is the project’s backbone while, at the same time, representing a source of confidence amongst the donors that the project is in capable hands.

The SWOT indicated mostly operational weaknesses related to the absence of: (a) a wider stakeholder target group that would engage other essential actors such as governments, the media and the private sector – amongst others; (b) a clear partnership agreement (Memorandum or Understanding, MoU) between UNODC and Transparency International (TI) defining roles and responsibilities on a medium/long-term basis.

Context Setting

The UNCAC is an international instrument regulated by rules and procedures agreed upon through the intergovernmental process. Against this background, this evaluation was drawn into discussions regarding the international context within which UNCAC and, by inference, the role of civil society is discussed. This paragraph therefore refers to elements of those discussions as a “finding” as it might impact the project in terms of civil society engagement in the Commission
on Narcotic Drugs, CND, and related meetings. In fact, respondents to semi-structured interviews as well as representatives of Member States/donors met in March and May 2013 raised serious concerns about the perception of civil society engagement in the CND and related meetings hosted at UNODC headquarters in Vienna. Stakeholders referred to a rather “closed” and almost discouraging environment (as also indicated in the 2009 evaluation of GLOJ37 “Beyond 2008” project) and that such environment needed further consideration by the concerned stakeholders. Notwithstanding these statements, the second Implementation Review Group (IRG) NGO briefing, held on 30 May 2013, was positively viewed by most stakeholders as it was more interactive and considered a step forward in enhancing civil society engagement in international meetings such as CND and related processes.

Relevance

The evaluation concluded that this capacity development programme is relevant because it has strengthened the voice of civil society in the fight against corruption whether when advocating with other stakeholders or when invited to take part in the review process. In fact, many CSOs interviewed during the evaluation credit such invitation to the expert knowledge they have acquired as a result of the training whereby governments consider them as a knowledgeable and credible stakeholder (Ghana, Cambodia). From a global programme perspective, the evaluation demonstrates relevance in terms of CSOs’ ability to use their UNCAC knowledge to guide relevant stakeholders (including governments when invited) and, broadly, to engage and secure other CSOs’ commitment to the fight against corruption with some tangible successes as illustrated below. Notwithstanding that, CSOs called for training that is relevant to national realities and incorporates other skills that will increase their ability to influence processes at national level especially when there is no enabling environment.

Effectiveness

Amongst the compelling direct effect that CSOs credit to the expertise they gained thanks to the training is the fact that many of them:

(a) Have been invited to participate in the review mechanism either as experts and/or members of steering committees (Cambodia, Tunisia, Ghana, Kenya, to name a few);

(b) Have strengthened their voice and acquired/increased their convening power as they have been able to demonstrate that the fight against corruption is legal and have therefore been able to call for collective responsibility and action. This, in turn, has a positive result on the global programme as CSOs can provide leadership on broader anti-corruption activities. In other words, the ultimate result is not just CSOs’ participation in the review mechanism but also that they influence anti-corruption processes at national level;

(c) Experienced a positive interaction with State Parties at the May 2013 IRG briefing that clearly contributed to a sense of mutual trust and a potential breaking of the barriers in the “them and us” attitude (confidence building).

In addition, one of the project’s significant results is the creation of an entry point and a platform facilitating a dialogue between CSOs and governments. CSOs that have been invited to participate in the review process indicated in the interview that there is multiplier effect since the CSO/Government interaction facilitated a sharing of expertise and, more importantly for CSOs, the identification of potential allies to support them.
Impact and Strategic linkages

The potential impact of this training relates to CSOs’ use of the UNCAC knowledge/expertise gained to widen the stakeholder base for anti-corruption activities. Interviews with CSOs indicated that, in their information, education and communication (IEC) and advocacy activities, they draw citizens’ attention to UNCAC provisions, demonstrating that the fight against corruption is legal and that there is witness protection. When analysed further, this comment shows:

(a) relevance for the fight against corruption in terms of breaking the silence and state of complacency thus impacting this programme’s broader anti-corruption objective;

(b) appropriateness since CSOs use advocacy on corruption to call for action to denounce it, thus widening the stakeholder basis and engaging them in the process;

(c) effectiveness as witness protection addresses fears and breaks the wall of silence around corruption;

(d) effect/impact because the feeling of protection almost compels one to take action with a potential for ripple effect – the more people join the fight against corruption, the more would want to do so.

The potential medium/long-term impact can be regarded as people’s empowerment to exercise their rights and call for good governance and an end to corruption. When projected into a potential medium-term impact, empowering people to exercise their rights would lead to the reduction of cases of human rights violation (thanks to whistleblowing, denouncing) and, in turn, the potential crafting of peaceful societies. In this context, potential success stories include:

(a) Acknowledgement and recognition by Government: As a direct result of participation in the project capacity building initiative, many participants from Ghana, Cambodia, Tunisia, etc. were invited to take part in the review mechanism. As the project targeted invitations of CSOs to the review process, this marks a success aspect with a potential for ripple effect if other Member States are briefed about this positive outcome that could encourage them to follow suit;

(b) Leadership on UNCAC: For a participant from Kenya the training has put UNCAC on her mind all the time. In other words, it made UNCAC an integral but systematic part of her daily thinking and anti-corruption activities also with ripple effects. The participant credits being selected as regional coordinator in UNCAC to the expertise she acquired thanks to the training, a position she sees as providing her a strategic leadership role in the fight against corruption in Kenya;

(c) Cross-fertilisation and replication: One success story is the fact that CSOs decided to swap skills, lending their UNCAC expertise to each other with a CSO from Tanzania helping Uganda to replicate the UNCAC training. This is a positive result for the exchange and cross-country partnership building;

(d) Fight against corruption: Two successful perspectives of how this project effectively impacts the fight against corruption include: (i) the encounter of a citizen and a policeman at a traffic light whereby the former was being asked to hand over a bribe. This was witnessed by a trained UNCAC CSO representative from Ghana, which is a State Party to the Convention, who came out of the car and informed the citizen that paying a bribe was illegal according to UNCAC. The citizen was also informed that he had the right to refuse which he proceeded to do, threatening to denounce the policeman. The policeman gave up and both the CSO representative and citizen congratulated each other on the results. If shared with others, this simple but powerful story would empower them to follow suit if faced with similar challenges; (ii) a trained CSO
from Kenya leading demonstrations against what they labelled as “Mpigs” (expression used to replace the term Members of Parliament, MPs, who increased their salaries despite government policy thus spurring massive demonstrations) in May 2013. This CSO representative was interviewed the same day and shared information about this collective action to denounce the Members of Parliament’s corrupt practices. The CSO representative credits their convening power to the UNCAC knowledge imparted by UNODC training and the subsequent empowering effect, knowing that UNCAC protects them;

(e) Private sector: A young anti-corruption CSO from Tunisia is another success story resulting from the UNCAC training. Its leader has been entrusted by the government to: (i) participate in the review process; (ii) support them with anti-corruption work by assessment of the private sector – which is already funded through a small grant - and the development of founding principles to work with and regulate private sector practices to counteract corruption.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Taking the project’s three outcomes into consideration, this evaluation can conclude that it has succeeded in achieving its objectives in relation to:

(a) Strengthening the voice of civil society in the UNCAC review mechanism and, in general, in anti-corruption activities. Interviewed CSOs indicated that the skills and substantive UNCAC knowledge they acquired through the training have elevated them to a different level in their interaction with governments as well as other stakeholders. When, there is an enabling environment at national level, CSOs such as in Cambodia, Ghana, Tunisia are considered as a source of UNCAC knowledge/expertise and are invited by governments to meaningfully engage in the review process. Moreover, this impacts CSOs’ convening power with other stakeholders who consider the government’s invitation as a sign of trust and credibility;

(b) Creating a platform for a dialogue between civil society and governments. The substantive knowledge acquired through the training has contributed to the creation of an entry point for CSOs to interact with governments in order to establish a relationship of trust such as, for instance, in the IRG briefing in May 2013. That briefing was regarded by Member States and CSOs alike as having succeeded in a closer and positive interaction, indicating that its confidence building process was progressing; and

(c) Working with the private sector. Interviews with grantees coupled with observation at the Dakar training emphasize the importance and usefulness of the guidance framework provided at the training. 10 CSOs so far were evaluated as competent through a thorough selection process and were given a grant to work with the private sector. Although limited in scope, these first initiatives have succeeded in strategy development for tackling corruption in the private sector. Nonetheless, CSOs referred to the difficulty in tackling such a complex sector and called for further support and capacity development.

Overall, the programme has resulted in knowledge transfer at the micro level (CSOs) and macro level with a sharing of that knowledge with the government and other stakeholders. Subsequently, CSOs’ increased convening power is translated in the net result of a wider stakeholder engagement in anti-corruption activities and impacting on human rights and good governance.

These conclusions provide the basis for the recommendations outlined in the matrix below as they focus on the project’s strategic direction as well as implementation and management. The main recommendation here is, therefore, for this project to be extended for a further phase of at least 3 years to consolidate these achievements, take charge of the next review chapters—prevention and
recovery, expand the range of countries to extend the fight against corruption to others and, in the process, build a sound knowledge management base.

Lessons Learned

From a strategic perspective, one of the positive lessons is how (a) CSOs have used the UNCAC substantive knowledge to shift their work from advocacy to spur collective action against corruption; (b) UNODC/CST could learn from these results and expand the programme goals and strategic direction beyond capacity development into a wider range of activities to further strengthen the voice of civil society at national level and contribute to the programme’s strategic goals. This project succeeded in facilitating a strategic government/CSO engagement, a lesson to be used to spur similar changes in other countries by sharing the information with engaged Member States.

From a broad perspective, two lessons emerging out of meetings and especially interviews with CSOs that require further attention include the need for UNODC to:

(a) Enhance its knowledge about civil society at national level – at least in countries where there is no UNODC presence. This is not only challenging for the selection of participants to the training but, more importantly, for UNODC Civil Society Team’s (CST) ability to support national CSOs and monitor the anti-corruption environment. The NGO database already established could be utilised to reflect on this aspect. In the same line of thought (although the project provides for the country offices to take on this responsibility), one of the lessons emerging out of the evaluation is the need for a closer monitoring of processes engaged by CSOs after the training to be aware of their good practices which are not visible at headquarters. This could contribute to UNODC’s knowledge management;

(b) Replace the single-stakeholder with a multi-stakeholder approach in project activities. In fact, the creation of a CSO/Government dialogue calls for both stakeholders to undergo UNCAC related processes (including training) together. The potential for them to listen to their respective questions and interact in groups would create entry points for confidence building and dialogue more quickly than in separate sessions. Both stakeholder groups would leave the training with reference points (for government to call on CSOs and vice-versa). In this context, it is understood that parallel capacity building initiatives targeting government officials are implemented by UNODC’s Corruption and Economic Crime Branch (CEB). Bridging between both initiatives would achieve this dual stakeholder perspective. This potential bridging was touched upon during the interview with DfID and was not rejected but was seen as a future possibility when governments would be willing to consider such bridging in a positive manner.

Working with the private sector forms an integral and essential part of this project. Nonetheless, CSOs indicated that this area is both complex and difficult to work on. A lesson to be drawn here is the need for further knowledge, enabling UNODC to lead on this initiative. Such knowledge could be acquired through a sound study of the ‘make up’ of the private sector and its ramifications at national level. In addition, collaboration with international organisations/platforms/initiatives working closely with the private sector could give important input and recommendations. This would allow UNODC to integrate a more accurate private sector perspective and, as a result, well targeted initiatives whether with SMEs or at corporate level.

From a project management and sustainability perspective, the report has integrated lessons learned in the relevant sections. Some of the positive lessons include the: (i) strong partnership between UNODC and TI/UNCAC Coalition in the project implementation; and (ii) internal
partnership between CST and CEB all contributing to effective delivery and management of the training.

In sum, two less positive lessons relate to (i) statements made by some CSOs that the training – on its own does not always enhance their ability to replicate it (due to lack of resources or the absence of an enabling environment) or work with the private sector (due to the complexity of the issue). This would benefit from further investigation in the next project phase to identify ways of addressing this gap; (ii) limited financial capacity of the UNODC project team (CST) and substantive team (CEB) that could affect the level and quality of the training as well as the ability to provide support and leadership to trained CSOs for follow-up activities. In addition, regular exchanges around project planning and monitoring coupled with team building initiatives at the level of the project team as well as with the partners represent management tools for consideration.
## SUMMARY MATRIX OF FINDINGS, EVIDENCE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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<th>Findings²: problems and issues identified</th>
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<th>Recommendations³</th>
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<td><strong>Training: Outcome 1</strong></td>
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| Project effectively increased CSO knowledge of the UNCAC and review mechanism both substantively and methodologically. | Project benefits derived include:  
  - Substantive knowledge about UNCAC and review processes imparted on over 140 CSOs in Africa and beyond.  
  - The creation of entry points for engaging other stakeholders in understanding UNCAC and supporting the fight against corruption.  
  - A clear multiplier effect with briefing sessions at national level and across country training delivered by CSOs (e.g. Tanzania and Uganda) | 1. Adopt a multi-stakeholder approach in the capacity building programme (Member States, UNODC, TI);  
  2. Integrate a national/sub-regional perspective (CST, CEB, TI);  
  3. Carry out regular reviews of training programme to adjust to changing environment (CST, CEB, TI);  
  4. Consider refresher sessions targeting UNCAC next chapters (CST, CEB, TI);  
  5. Create/train sub-regional teams of trainers in partnership with other agencies to increase multiplier effect (UNODC, UN, regional groups, TI). |

² A finding uses evidence from data collection to allow for a factual statement.  
³ Recommendations are proposals aimed at enhancing the effectiveness, quality, or efficiency of a project/programme; at redesigning the objectives; and/or at the reallocation of resources. For accuracy and credibility, recommendations should be the logical implications of the findings and conclusions.
### Training: Outcome 2

**The project resulted in an increased dialogue** between CSOs (when invited to participate in the review process) and their governmental focal points.

This is evidenced through the:
- Invitation of many trained CSOs as experts and/or members of steering committees for the UNCAC review (Ghana, Cambodia, Kenya, Tunisia, etc);
- Creation of entry points that facilitated a discussion and interaction on the UNCAC review with various stakeholders including the government and private sector.
- Decision - as a result of the dialogue - to provide inputs to the national report while others opted for the parallel report when no such opportunity was possible.

1. Ensure that this dialogue becomes systematic and regular and monitor (CST, TI, UNODC local offices, governments);
2. Integrate dialogue, negotiation and coalition building skills in capacity building to further enhance this dialogue (CST, CEB, TI).

### Training: Outcome 3

CSOs indicated that they **gained some skills** and resources to closely work with the **private sector** in the UNCAC review mechanism. Detailed guidelines, videos and discussions provided an opportunity for CSOs to comprehend the magnitude of such task and envision their potential engagement with the private sector.

- The Dakar training provided evidence of CSOs’:
  - Serious engagement in the training sessions on the private sector.
  - Gaining knowledge and the tools to engage with the private sector;
  - However, interviewees pointed to the:
  - Difficulty in applying such knowledge and effectively working with the private sector.
  - Level of engagement considering the magnitude of the private sector, i.e. SMEs or corporate level (despite guidance from trainers to focus on the former).

1. Increase the time allocated to this training component to shift from ‘guidelines” to actual ‘training’ with simulation and/or practical scenario (CST, CEB, TI);
2. Review the different levels for engaging with the private sector (corporate, SMEs) to adjust to CSOs’ national realities. (CST/UNODC)
### Private Sector Grants:
This facility was integrated in the project extension and provides an excellent opportunity for CSOs to engage this important but fairly ‘fluid’ stakeholder in the fight against corruption. The fact that CSOs are encouraged to work with important stakeholders separately hinders CSOs’ chances of sustainable success due to the lack of reciprocal effect that might occur if these actors are brought together to examine issues of common interest.

- The grantees indicated satisfaction with this mechanism which allowed them entry points to work with the private sector. CSOs at the Dakar training expressed strong interest in this facility.
- Most of the grants were used to acquire better knowledge of SMEs (through research) except for Tunisia which adopted a multi-pronged approach to engaging the private sector (both at SME and corporate level).
- Initial results look positive but it is too early to judge the effect of these small initiatives on private sector engagement in good governance and anti-corruption activities.

1. Adopt a double scenario approach for the grant mechanism:
   - Invest in a small (but representative) number of CSOs selected on clear criteria to build a knowledge management feature (to determine best practices for replication) (CST/UNODC);
   - Pursue the current grant-making approach to maintain CSOs’ engagement with the private sector (CST/UNODC);
2. Build CSOs’ capacity to write project proposals (CST/CB/TI).

### Project management:
The project is managed by the Civil Society team with substantive inputs and contributions by CEB – coupled with support by TI & the UNCAC Coalition. This management structure constitutes the backbone of this project’s effective implementation as it engages 3 important stakeholders.

- The evaluation process including observations at the Dakar training indicates that the implementing team is competent, committed, and hard working.
- Interviewees lent their voices to this positive assessment as representing a strength for the project despite severe financial and human resources constraints.

1. Explore funding opportunities to create a balanced project management structure with core and non-core posts to minimize the risk of collapse (UNODC senior management);
2. Include/fund a minimum of 2 main trainers from UNODC to deliver the UNCAC substantive sessions (CST);
3. Establish clearly the position of the Civil Society Team within the organigramme of UNODC so as to enhance its profile within the organisation and demonstrate the importance of civil society to its key stakeholders (UNODC Senior management).

### Partnerships:
This project is implemented by UNODC Civil Society Team with support from

- This is a strong partnership that effectively delivers on all the training objectives;

1. Widen the partnership base to include regional and sub-regional/international
CEB and in partnership with Transparency International and the UNCAC Coalition. As indicated above, this partnership is crucial for project implementation and sustainability and should therefore be framed within a clear partnership agreement.

- Participants’ evaluation coupled with personal observation at the Dakar training strongly support this statement.
- This partnership will continue to be the backbone for this project in the next phase(s).

Partners (UNDP/UN agencies, ECA, SADEC, ECOWAS, African Union, etc). (UNODC – CST/CEB)

2. Engage select governments in the delivery of certain sessions to bring them closer to CSOs and build confidence (UNODC – CST/CEB);

3. Enhance the UNODC/TI partnership agreement with a sound framework around common goals and clear task allocation (UNODC management/legal department/CST & TI);

4. Assess the current UNCAC Coalition set up to address concerns raised during this evaluation (TI, UNODC, UNCAC Coalition Committee)

**Potential medium/long-term impact:**
The project’s direct results are positive in terms of creating entry points and a dialogue platform for CSOs to engage with governments and some CSOs being invited to the review process. From a medium/long-term perspective, the analysis indicates clear linkages to good governance, human rights, peace and security.

Trained CSOs underlined the importance of the training in terms of:
- Putting UNCAC in “‘their minds all the time” (Kenya);
- Strengthening CSOs’ capacity to use UNCAC knowledge as a leveraging tool when calling for collective fight against corruption;
- Supporting them in their advocacy, convincing citizens that such fight is legal and building their confidence to exercise their rights to refuse to engage in corruption when compelled by officials;
- When extrapolated, this would imply a contribution to good governance and, in time, respect for human rights, peace and security.

1. Articulate these linkages in the project’s next phase starting with the situation analysis (CST, UNODC, TI);

2. Include a knowledge management component aimed at collecting good practices for future use, publication and dissemination (CST, IEU).
**Project Design:**
Project evaluability may be affected due to the lack of precision and essential components of project design. This will affect the summative evaluation.

This is evidenced in the absence of:

- SMART objectives, qualitative indicators (which are essential to assess changes in knowledge and behaviour) and a results chain;
- Indicators that are credible: a specific percentage (75%) is used as an indicator throughout without allowing a margin of difference related to analysis.

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<td>1.</td>
<td>Refine project design, differentiating between overall objectives, specific ones and outcomes (<strong>CST with IEU</strong>);</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Include qualitative indicators that would determine knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) changes (<strong>CST, CEB, TI</strong>);</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Integrate a multi-stakeholder approach as project target group (<strong>CST, CEB, TI</strong>);</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Undertake a thorough risk assessment (<strong>CST</strong>).</td>
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