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This publication has not been formally edited.
The UNODC ROCA Annual Report for the year 2020 was prepared by the UNODC ROCA team under the close supervision of Ms. Ashita Mittal, UNODC Regional Representative for Central Asia.

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# Abbreviations

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<td>AML</td>
<td>Anti-Money Laundering</td>
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<td>Antiretroviral Therapy</td>
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<td>BCP</td>
<td>Border Crossing Point</td>
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<td>BLO</td>
<td>Border Liaison Offices</td>
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<td>CAPVE</td>
<td>Central Asian Network on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism</td>
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<tr>
<td>CARICC</td>
<td>Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre for Combating Illicit Trafficking of Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and their Precursors</td>
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<td>CASC network</td>
<td>The Judicial Cooperation Network of Central Asia and Southern Caucasus</td>
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<td>CCP</td>
<td>Container Control Programme</td>
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<td>CFT</td>
<td>Countering the Financing of Terrorism</td>
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<td>CND</td>
<td>The Commission on Narcotic Drugs</td>
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<td>CNS</td>
<td>The Counter Narcotics Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organisations</td>
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<td>DLDT</td>
<td>The Department of Licit Drug Turnover under the Ministry of Health of the Kyrgyz Republic</td>
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<td>DMP</td>
<td>Drugs Monitoring Platform</td>
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<td>E4J</td>
<td>Education for Justice Initiative</td>
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<td>FTF</td>
<td>Foreign Terrorist Fighters</td>
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<td>GBV</td>
<td>Gender-Based Violence</td>
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<td>HIV</td>
<td>The human immunodeficiency viruses</td>
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<td>IFF</td>
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<td>IMT</td>
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<td>INL</td>
<td>The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>MLA</td>
<td>Mutual Legal Assistance</td>
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<td>NPS</td>
<td>New Psychoactive Substances</td>
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<tr>
<td>OHCHR</td>
<td>Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>OSCE</td>
<td>Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe</td>
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<td>PCU</td>
<td>Port Control Unit</td>
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<td>PPE</td>
<td>Personal Protective Equipment</td>
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<td>PWUSD</td>
<td>People who use new psychoactive substances/stimulant drugs</td>
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<td>SCDC</td>
<td>The State Coordination Committee on Drug Control of the Kyrgyz Republic</td>
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<td>SCO</td>
<td>The Shanghai Cooperation Organization</td>
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<td>SFIS</td>
<td>State Financial Intelligence Service of the Kyrgyz Republic</td>
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<td>TADOC</td>
<td>Turkish International Academy against Drugs and Organised Crime</td>
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<td>Technical Assistance Needs Assessments</td>
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<td>TWG</td>
<td>Technical Working Group</td>
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<td>UN Women</td>
<td>The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNCAC</td>
<td>The United Nations Convention against Corruption</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>The United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>The United Nations Population Fund</td>
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<td>UNICE</td>
<td>The United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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<td>The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism</td>
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<td>UNODC</td>
<td>The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime</td>
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<td>UNODC ROCA</td>
<td>UNODC Regional Office for Central Asia</td>
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<td>UNSDCF</td>
<td>The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework</td>
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<td>UTC</td>
<td>The Universal Treatment Curriculum for Substance Use Disorders</td>
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<td>Voluntary National Reviews</td>
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I am pleased to present this Annual Report, a snapshot of the work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Regional Office for Central Asia (UNODC ROCA).

2020 has been a challenging year for everybody across the world. The COVID-19 crisis has reversed development progress for the first time in twenty years; the pandemic has highlighted vulnerabilities and structural inequalities ignored for decades. A world made poorer and more fragile by the pandemic is also more vulnerable to illicit drugs, crime, corruption and terrorism.

The global pandemic has shifted drug markets, patterns of use and trafficking trends, further threatening health, safety, security and development. Organised crime has spared no efforts in taking advantage of the crisis, from selling falsified vaccines, to exploiting those who have lost their livelihoods, and diverting stimulus funds.

UNODC, through the UN Country Teams, supported the national responses to COVID-19 in line with the relevant Socio-Economic Response Plans. We have engaged in a number of activities that fall into different pillars, from protecting health services and people during the crisis, to facilitating social cohesion and community resilience.

UNODC has adapted to the ‘new normal’ and continued providing its support to Member States in the region to address threats to peace and security. In 2020, UNODC delivered around US$ 12 million in technical assistance. A solid and diversified portfolio of initiatives allowed us to make progress in countering traditional and emerging threats of transnational organized crime, drug trafficking and terrorism, including on illicit financial flows, in addition to fostering criminal justice reforms.
and strengthening anti-corruption measures. We have promoted evidence-based drug demand reduction and HIV prevention strategies, improving access to treatment services, and strengthened research and trends analysis capabilities. Putting an emphasis on prevention, we sought to embed interventions to prevent violent extremism in prisons and promote broader prison reform efforts.

UNODC has provided support to strengthen national capacities for effective prevention of drug use, crime and delinquency among children and youth by introducing International Standards on Drug Use Prevention and evidence-based cost-effective family skills training programmes.

Gender equality and women’s empowerment have been an integral part of our interventions. We have engaged in addressing gender-based violence and providing support to vulnerable women, while also promoting gender mainstreaming and better representation of women in law enforcement and justice sectors.

UNODC strived to empower youth to become positive agents of change who foster a culture of lawfulness, resilience and social inclusion in their schools and communities through sports-based skills training and Education for Justice programmes.

While we continue to see security threats emerging and evolving at an astonishing rate, from the proliferation of new psychoactive substances, to cybercrime, corruption and human trafficking, we also note the improved political landscape in Central Asia, with enhanced cooperation between the Member States, strong political will and practical measures undertaken in each country towards tackling common challenges.

UNODC is in the process of developing the new Programme Cycle for the period 2021-2025, which will aim to address the existing and emerging priorities of the Member States, established through the ongoing consultation process. In line with the UNODC’s new Global Strategy 2021-2025, we will strengthen interlinkages in our overall support to Member States, while always putting people at the centre of response, working with and for women and youth, working with most vulnerable populations, investing in partnerships, and enhancing transparency and accountability.

I thank the government counterparts, civil society, the UN sister agencies and other partners for their continued engagement in promoting peace, security and sustainable development.

We are extremely grateful to our donors who have continued to demonstrate their appreciation and trust in UNODC through the growth in voluntary funding for specific activities.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to my colleagues, both at UNODC Headquarters and in the region, for their continuous support, dedication and professionalism demonstrated despite the many unprecedented and unexpected challenges brought by the pandemic.

Sincerely,
Ashita Mittal
UNODC Regional Representative for Central Asia
Kazakhstan

The Republic of Kazakhstan successfully implemented an International Programme on “Countering Financing of Terrorism”.

UNODC, in cooperation with national experts, developed the first national training course aimed at strengthening the capacity of banks in Kazakhstan to counter the financing of terrorism.

Promoting UNODC’s e-learning course on the Nelson Mandela Rules in Kazakhstan.

UNODC launched a project to create a national IT system for professional accreditation and development of AML/CFT specialists in Kazakhstan.
Launch of the UNODC Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters Detention Programme in Kyrgyzstan.

15th Anniversary of the State Financial Intelligence Service under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Kyrgyzstan

Coordination Council on development of Probation Service in Kyrgyzstan.

Side-event on "Modern approaches in countering new challenges and threats in the sphere of illicit drug trafficking in the Kyrgyz Republic" as part of the 63rd CND session.
Handing over new alarm systems to prisons in Khujand and Vahdat, Tajikistan.

Enhanced support to the implementation of the Republic of Tajikistan’s National Strategy to fight against illicit drug trafficking for 2013-2020 and the National Border Management Strategy for 2010-2025.

Launch of prisoner rehabilitation programmes on wood and metal production in Tajikistan.

H.E. Ms. Ghada Fathi Waly, UNODC Executive Director, meets General Sherkhon Salimzoda, the Director of the Drug Control Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan.
H.E. Ms. Ghada Fathi Waly, UNODC Executive Director, meets H.E. Mr. Rashid Meredov, the Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan.

UNODC joined the UN Joint Programme on Social Protection in Turkmenistan.

UNODC, in co-operation with the Ministry of Finance and Economy of Turkmenistan, launch a training programme on CFT in Turkmenistan.
Establishment of a new partnership with the Youth Affairs Agency in Uzbekistan and UNODC under the PBF initiative.

International accreditation of three forensic laboratories under the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Internal Affairs in Uzbekistan.

UNODC launches a project on parallel financial investigations and the disruption of illicit financial flows related to organised crimes and drug trafficking in Uzbekistan.

The Government of Japan allocates US$ 2.3 million to support Interagency Mobile Teams in Uzbekistan.

Opening of three legal aid clinics in the Andijan, Fergana and Namangan regions of Uzbekistan.
The Government of Japan Allocates US$ 4.5 million to support the UNODC Regional Border Cooperation Initiative in Central Asia.

Regional dialogue on strengthening transport connectivity in the SPECA region and beyond in the era of COVID-19.

Online Meeting of the Fifth Steering Committee of the UNODC Programme for Central Asia.

National consultations to inform the new UNODC Programme for Central Asia.
Armenia:

Initiation of the UNODC CCP MOU with the Government of Armenia to support CCP implementation.

On-site CCP Strategic trade and Export Control refresh training.

Technical assessment mission and meetings with relevant Government Agencies on delivery of UNODC CCP Strategic trade and Export Control training.

Georgia:

Mentorship sessions conducted by UNODC and CCP experts.
Technical assessment mission and meetings with relevant Government Agencies on the delivery of UNODC CCP Strategic trade and Export Control training.

Seizure of 1,139 kg of heroin in Astara BCP with Iran.

Annual CCP Regional Steering Committee Meeting.

World Customs Organization Operation “STOP” and training on Illicit medicines.

Azerbaijan:
COVID-19 Response: Building Back Better

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the UNODC Regional Office for Central Asia worked in close partnership with UN Country Teams in Central Asia and South Caucasus, led by Resident Coordinators, as part of the coordinated UN response to support national governments, their strategies, and WHO’s Strategic Preparedness Response Plan. The first line of UNODC’s work included enabling government stakeholders and communities to tackle the COVID-19 crisis; reduce the socio-economic impact on key and vulnerable populations with a health and human rights perspective; and engage in strengthening long-term responses in a recovery process that relates to the UNODC mandate. UNODC’s focus was on working with vulnerable populations, especially with drug users, including people who inject drugs, the HIV infected and affected population; people in detention and in prisons; victims of gender-based violence; victims of human trafficking and smuggling of migrants, children and youth; as well as civil society. One of the major groups that UNODC ROCA worked with in 2020 to tackle the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic was law enforcement agencies/officers, including those in criminal justice systems. UNODC ROCA developed specific guidelines for these stakeholders, which were disseminated at the global level as a best practice. UNODC developed the capacity of these institutions to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Special attention was paid to issues around cybersecurity; corruption; prevention of illicit financial flows; crime prevention for reinforcing the culture of rule of law and ensuring that no one is left behind, duly embedding the principles of equality and equity. UNODC supported the Analytical Unit of the Counter Narcotics Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic to process geospatial and intelligence data during the lockdown period (March-May 2020). This centre was also used to coordinate the Ministry of Internal Affairs and other law-enforcement agencies’ work on providing quarantine measures during the COVID-19 pandemic.

From the onset of the pandemic in the region, UNODC ROCA clearly understood that medical establishments, law enforce-
Throughout 2020, UNODC’s support in response to COVID-19 included the following areas:

- Corruption and Sport in the context of COVID-19
- Law enforcement and the criminal justice system response to COVID-19
- Cybercrime and Misinformation in the context of COVID-19
- Prevention and control measures in prisons in the context of COVID-19
- Drug Markets in the context of COVID-19
- A stay-at-home package about telecommuting in the context of COVID-19
- Falsified Medical Products in the context of COVID-19
- Violence Against Women in the context of COVID-19
- Firearms in the context of COVID-19
- Forensics in the context of COVID-19
- HIV and hepatitis B, C prevention, treatment, care and support for people who use drugs and people with drug use disorder in the context of COVID-19
- Parenting and caring for children in the context of COVID-19
- Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling in the context of COVID-19
- Wildlife and Forest Crime in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic
- A stay-at-home package about telecommuting in the context of COVID-19
ment agencies and their staff are among the frontline responders to the COVID-19 crisis. In order to ensure that these agencies would be able to continue their services and protect people from organised criminals seeking to exploit the crisis, UNODC ROCA provided them with personal protection equipment, including masks, gloves and other personal protection equipment. The total amount of UNODC ROCA’s support to Central Asian countries in response to COVID-19 amounted to more than US$ 500,000.00 throughout the region. To ensure that the demands and access of the vulnerable population to different services were well addressed, UNODC ROCA advocated for ensuring that service providers could continue their services in an accessible manner. At the same time, information materials were developed and disseminated among vulnerable groups to ensure that they were well informed about where to access services, and information on helplines has also been provided during the pandemic. Specific focus was given to ensuring access to services by people who use drugs and people with drug use disorders, as well as the HIV infected/affected population.

Throughout 2020, UNODC ROCA, supported the national response to COVID-19 through the development of technical guidance notes on various areas. These technical notes helped staff in specific areas to be better informed about the COVID-19 risks in their sphere, how to protect themselves, how to handle different situations, and gave guidance on continuing their work in the context of COVID-19. Along with these technical notes, UNODC ROCA also conducted capacity development activities for law enforcement agencies and judiciary, based on the technical guidance notes.

Moreover, to ensure that the general population, law enforcement agencies and judiciary are well informed about the different risks that COVID-19 poses, UNODC ROCA launched a communication campaign on its social media platforms to disseminate key messages. Several sets of guidance notes on parenting and stress management were adopted and translated into local languages to ensure that children and their parents could better cope with the lockdowns and stress caused by the pandemic. Sports challenges among youth and their parents were launched throughout the region, which helped participants to cope better with stress.
Vulnerable groups that UNODC supported during the pandemic:

01 Drug users, including people who inject drugs
02 The HIV infected and affected population
03 Victims of gender-based violence
04 Victims of human trafficking and migrant smuggling
05 Children and youth at risk
06 Returnees from conflict zones
07 People in detention and prisons

Drug users, including people who inject drugs

People in detention and prisons

Returnees from conflict zones

Vulnerable groups that UNODC supported during the pandemic:

Children and youth at risk

Victims of human trafficking and migrant smuggling

Victims of gender-based violence

The HIV infected and affected population

Returnees from conflict zones

People in detention and prisons

Drug users, including people who inject drugs
PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES WITH STRONG INSTITUTIONS
Strengthening Sub-Regional Cooperation for Countering Drug, Transnational Organised Crime, and Terrorism

In an endeavour to comprehensively and holistically counter the threats posed by drug trafficking, transnational organised crime and terrorism, in 2020, UNODC ROCA continued to support regional cooperation. The development of the capacity of targeted law enforcement agencies and their staff, and improvement of interagency cooperation at the regional level contributed to the enhancement and strengthening of sub-regional cooperation in Central Asia. The UNODC ROCA's work to raise awareness and foster regional cooperation on these issues is contributing to the achievement of SDG 16 by building effective, accountable institutions at all levels and promoting just and inclusive societies. In 2020, UNODC ROCA facilitated international cooperation in Central Asia both between governments, and between dedicated agencies. This support included such mechanisms as the deployment of Drug Liaison Officers, facilitating bilateral and multilateral meetings, promoting South-South cooperation, delivering training sessions and bringing in international expertise.

In 2020, UNODC ROCA continued to support and enable CARICC—a premier regional institute, in a position to tackle significantly the threats associated with drug trafficking and related illicit financial flows.
Despite the debilitating influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on the region, CARICC prepared eleven strategic reports for the Member States on the drug trafficking situation at regional and national levels that reflected the impact of the pandemic. The reports related to the latest concealment methods found during drug seizures and from intelligence sources, making use of the 4,000 intelligence information segments that were received from the Member States and entered onto the Central Database, and a further 3,500 from open sources that were analysed and disseminated.

Based on intelligence analysis and operational planning, four counter-narcotics operations were successfully conducted across the region, disrupting and dismantling organised criminal networks, in particular, elements engaged in the production of synthetic drugs in clandestine laboratories within the Central Asian region. Expert advice was provided to CARICC and law enforcement authorities on best international practices in investigative methodology for gathering of evidence, and intelligence for future operations, including effective post-operation debriefs to gather lessons learnt.

UNODC ROCA, in collaboration with CARICC, conducted a series of events in which CARICC experts facilitated sessions on information and intelligence sharing, as well as the organisation of joint operations. Moreover, CARICC experts were involved in other UNODC workshops as resource points for different law enforcement agencies on multi-agency Intelligence collation and dissemination. To better inform law enforcement agencies about the "Law Enforcement Response to the COVID-19 Emergency", a Guidance Note was developed by UNODC ROCA for relevant authorities from Central Asian countries, and a special webinar was organised in collaboration with CARICC.

In a Senior Member States Experts meeting held online on 25-27 September, experts agreed on a compromise document for recommendation to their respective ministries for adoption at a High CARICC Council Meeting. This intelligence agreement document has been pending for the last 5 years, undergoing a series of revisions.

UNODC facilitated discussion among Member States representatives and offered expert advice on reaching an agreement on different issues of a technical nature. Further, UNODC carried out proactive advocacy by reaching out to respective ministries through meetings and presentations on best international practices in the development of formal intelligence agreements and standard operating procedures for operations.

These sustained efforts by UNODC were acknowledged by the main donor, INL (the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs) who expressed gratitude for UNODC's interventions to drive progress.

In 2020, UNODC ROCA supported and contributed to the organisation of five side-events during the 63rd session of the CND. Along with the ROCA organised Strengthening regional cross-border cooperation in Central Asia to prevent drug trafficking on emerging trade and transit corridors side event, UNODC also contributed to the organisation of national side-events by the Drug Control Agency of the Republic of Tajikistan, and the Counter Narcotics Service of the Kyrgyz Republic. Moreover, UNODC, in collaboration with the SCO, presented their collaboration on the fight against the illicit drug threat: Countering drug trafficking via the darknet.
Review
OF THE SITUATION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS
IN THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN IN 2019

Wednesday, 4 March 2020
210 - 3 pm, VIC, Room M6
E-mail: dio@tajikistan.com
Website: http://www.dio.tj
The Head of the delegation of the Kyrgyz Republic, Mr. Zapolsky, said:

"The emergence of so-called "new psychoactive substances", the widespread advertising and distribution of controlled substances through online technologies, the active use of electronic payment systems, the contactless method of selling drugs, and much more, indicates a new phase in the history of drug control systems where we are now."
Border Liaison Offices

The UNODC Initiative on Enhancing the Regional Cross-Border Law Enforcement Cooperation of Sub-programme 1 of the UNODC Programme for Central Asia is designed to enhance the capacity of border crossing points (BCPs) and improve regional cross-border cooperation by promoting the concept of Border Liaison Offices’ (BLOs) and develop information and communication networks for border agencies.

Under this system of cooperation, UNODC assisted with the establishment of 15 BLOs in geographically remote and potentially vulnerable border crossing points on the Kazakh-Kyrgyz (2), Uzbek-Tajik (4), Kyrgyz-Tajik (4), Kyrgyz-Uzbek (2), Uzbek-Afghan (1) and Tajik-Afghan (2) borders. 12 more BLOs located on the Kazakh-Kyrgyz, Kazakh-Uzbek, Tajik-Uzbek, Turkmen-Afghan and Turkmen-Uzbek borders are in the process of being established.

Each of the countries that is participating under the BLO Initiative until 2020 has provided both the premises and staff for the BLOs. UNODC is contributing to new infrastructure development and capacity building through the provision of the high-tech equipment and specialised analytical software needed to enhance data-base analysis and intelligence-sharing and establish sustainable information-sharing mechanisms at the regional level. This will enable joint, proactive and intelligence-driven drug trafficking investigations.

For strategic decision-making in the framework of the BLO Initiative and to streamline its implementation, Steering Committees are being established in each country, consisting of five agencies (Ministry of Internal Affairs, Border Guards, Customs, Drug Control Agencies, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

In 2020, the BLO Initiative established institutionalised platforms to hold regular inter-agency and cross-border training courses at national and regional levels and to standardise information sharing and reporting mechanisms for inter-agency and cross-border communication at the selected border crossing points (BCPs).
In 2020, one of the biggest achievements was the inclusion of Turkmenistan into the BLO Initiative. In August 2020, INL provided funding to support a national initiative under the Cross-Border Cooperation Component in Turkmenistan to enhance the capacities of BCPs at Farap, (adjacent to the Alat BCP in Uzbekistan) and the Serhetabad and Imamnazar BCPs (on the Afghan border).

Within the BLO Initiative, three regional training courses, three national training courses, two webinars, two regional meetings, four national meetings and two assessment missions were conducted in 2020. Over 250 counterparts from different border management and law enforcement agencies of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan took part in these events. These trainings contributed to the enhancement of the capacity of the staff, and in the long run will enhance the integrated border management in the region.

“We thank UNODC for equipping the newly established Border Liaison Office at the Sypatai Batyr border crossing point. We received positive feedback. We are hopeful of receiving the same outcomes concerning the establishment of BLOs on the Turkmen border. We are ready to further enhance our fruitful cooperation.”

Colonel Igor Cherepkov, Head of Department of the Border Service of the National Security Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

“During the course, we received valuable information which will facilitate our challenging work. We are thankful to the organisers of the course and the trainers.”

A representative of the State Customs Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, participant of the training course on processing and analysis of information using the IBM “i2” software application.

“It is very important for me to take part in this training and acquire the necessary knowledge and enhance my skills in intelligence analysis. I want to thank UNODC for arranging this training.”

An officer from the Drug Control Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, participant of the training course on processing and analysis of information using the IBM “i2” software application.

“This is already the 4th analytical training of the series in the last two years, and border officers-analysts are actively using the knowledge and skills gained in their daily activities.”

Colonel Igor Cherepkov, Head of Department of the Border Service of the National Security Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan.
"We have been cooperating with UNODC for many years. We have participated in many events and training courses under the Regional Cross-Border Cooperation Component, including the Border Liaison Offices’ initiative. Under the component, we have strengthened inter-agency and transborder cooperation and intelligence-sharing with neighbouring countries who help us effectively ensure border security, conduct joint operations, and take proactive measures to prevent crime. The component encourages and promotes the meaningful participation of women officers in all its activities, contributing to their empowerment."

Lieutenant Colonel of the Customs Service Zarina Abrorova, Chief Inspector of the Department of Countering Customs Offences, Customs Service under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan.

"Providing security and law and order is a continuous process, and law enforcement agencies must continue to perform their service regardless of the circumstances. We thank the UNODC Regional Cross-Border Cooperation Component for the support to Tajikistan’s law enforcement agencies to perform their duties during the COVID-19 pandemic."

Khurshed Abdullozoda, Head of the International Relations Department of Drug Control Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan.

Since May 2019, the UNODC Cross-Border Cooperation Component, in partnership with the Border Service of the National Security Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan has established computer-based training classes (CBT) for BLOs in the country. CBT classes with an interactive multimedia training programme were inaugurated at the Kordai border-crossing point on the Kazakh-Kyrgyz border in March 2019 and Saryagash town on the Kazakh-Uzbek border in January 2020. Since the inauguration, CBT classes have provided opportunities for uninterrupted law enforcement training. During the reporting period, 330 border officers enhanced their knowledge and skills at the Kordai border crossing point, along with 57 officers representing five border crossing points at Saryagash. Throughout the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, these CBT classes are providing an opportunity for distance learning when travel restrictions limit face-to-face trainings.

Law enforcement agencies are often the first responders to many social crises, even when those crises, such as the current COVID-19 emergency, may not fall under their mandates. UNODC ROCA has supported law enforcement agencies from the onset of the pandemic and helped them to protect themselves from COVID-19, to better serve the community and carry out their duties during the emergency. Personal protective equipment (PPE) and medical devices for border liaison officers in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to a total amount of US$ 114,000 were procured and handed over to support law enforcement agencies in their response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2020, the BLO Initiative provided equipment, furniture and reconstruction services for interactive classes in Kazakhstan, the BCPs of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, and the Situation Centre under the State Customs Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Among others, this included IT and videoconferencing equipment, specialised furniture, uninterruptible power supplies, air conditioners, network, data storage and access control systems to a total amount of US$ 786,000. This technical support is expected to enhance the capacity of BLOs, interagency coordination on monitoring road works, and railway and airport border crossing points, and improve the analytical capacity of the operative units of law enforcement agencies. It will also facilitate the centralised collection, processing and analysis of intelligence as well as cooperation in the area of information exchange based on intergovernmental and interagency agreements on countering transnational organised crime, smuggling and violation of customs regulations. UNODC also finalised the procurement of vehicles for BLOs in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan totaling US$ 180,000.
Law enforcement agencies have endorsed a detailed work plan and a reporting form for BLOs which will serve as the basis for improved joint operations and will further enhance effective coordination between different agencies. These agreed policies enable the agencies to exchange intelligence at BLOs and feed weekly updates into their i2 system. Due to the UNODC’s support, in 2020, BLOs on the Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik and Uzbek border jointly conducted 12 operations; the activities of four organised criminal groups were suppressed; and more than 235 kg of drugs were seized.

“Development and expansion of interagency and cross-border cooperation in the field of combating illicit drug trafficking through strengthening the capacities of the main BCPs and establishing new BLOs is key to achieving our common goals in ensuring effective border control.”

Mr. Sarvar Jabbarov, Leading Expert of the International Relations Department, National Information and Analytical Centre on Drug Control under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

“Through this project, we would like to see greater cross-border cooperation and coordination among the countries in Central Asia to jointly address the challenges of drug trafficking through enhanced border management. This is also expected to lead to an increase in the seizure of drugs and a decrease in related cross-border organised crimes.”

H.E. Mr. Yoshinori Fujiyama, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to the Republic of Uzbekistan.

“The BLO project is something that we have invested in for many years and continue investing. It is a project that has worked.”

Mr. John Dudley, Senior Law Enforcement Advisor, the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), U.S. Embassy in Kazakhstan.
Container Control Programme

The Container Control Programme (CCP), launched in 2004, was developed jointly by UNODC and the World Customs Organization (WCO) to build capacity in countries seeking to improve risk management, supply chain security and trade facilitation in seaports, land-borders and airports to prevent the cross-border movement of illicit goods. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have formally agreed to participate in the CCP Regional Segment for Central Asia launched in 2013. There are well established Port Control Units (PCUs) in Aktau seaport and Altyntol dry port (Kazakhstan), Bishkek dry port and Osh dry port (Kyrgyzstan), Dushanbe-2 dry port, Nizhny Pyanj dry port, Khorog dry port and Khujand dry port (Tajikistan), Turkmenbashy seaport and Ashgabat dry port (Turkmenistan), Chukursay dry port, Angren dry port and Alat dry port (Uzbekistan). The establishment of PCUs/Air Cargo Control Units (ACCU) has been initiated at Almaty International Airport in Kazakhstan, Batken dry port in Kyrgyzstan, Farap dry port in Turkmenistan, Yallama dry port and Ayritom dry port and Tashkent International Airport in Uzbekistan.
In 2020, CCP in Central Asia conducted 29 training activities, including 7 face-to-face and 22 online, on risk management, risk indicators, drugs and precursors, strategic trade and export control, anti-corruption measures, seal tampering, intellectual property rights and counterfeit medicines, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) as well as mentorship programmes. In total, 352 officials have been trained, including 338 men and 14 women.

In addition, CCP facilitated nine coordination meetings, two awareness-raising meetings on CCP Air, three equipment hand-over ceremonies, an assessment mission and an Interregional meeting on Inter-Regional Operation. PCUs in Central Asia also participated in the global Operation STOP, launched by WCO to target falsified medical products in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. All these events contributed to the development of the capacity of relevant Customs and law enforcement agencies so that the trained officials can conduct a risk-based assessment of containers/cargoes on selected sites and key points along the trade routes in the region. CCP training and equipment delivered to PCUs/ACCUs in the region facilitate legitimate trade and contributes to an increase in the number of containers/cargoes profiled/controlled and inspected based on risk management and an increase in the interdiction rates of illicit goods by PCUs/ACCUs.

One of the major achievements for CCP in 2020 in the region became the improvement of practical Customs cooperation within Central Asia and the wider regions through information exchange on high-risk consignments, envisaged by the CCP Inter-Regional Network of Customs Authorities and Port Control Units (IREN). In particular, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Georgia started sharing data through ContainerCOMM and tracking high-risk commodities. The Port Control Unit (PCU) Morport in Aktau seaport started to receive pre-arrival information from shipping companies on imported/transiting consignments across the Caspian Sea. Thanks to regional cooperation, several seizures were made by PCU Osh in collaboration with PCUs of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, including of 127,344 Regapen (Pregabalin) pills. Considering that the abuse of new psychoactive
substances is increasing in the region, these seizures are an indication of how UNODC's support enabled national counterparts to prevent the possible negative impact of these substances on communities.

During 2020, the UNODC supported PCUs in Central Asia made 74 seizures, including drugs, synthetic drugs, cigarettes, counterfeit medicine, military goods, ozone-depleting substances, excise marks, IT equipment, automobile spare parts and other types of consumer goods.

As part of ongoing support to PCUs, UNODC provided computer equipment, furniture, office supplies and detection tools to the Yallama PCU, the Republic of Uzbekistan, the State Customs Service of the Kyrgyz Republic and the Drug Control Agency of the Republic of Tajikistan.

**NATO-UNODC Counter Narcotics Project**

UNODC continued to provide capacity development activities to national counterparts under the **NATO-UNODC Counter Narcotics Project** in 2020. The Project organised and provided three online training courses on Intelligence Analysis, Organised Crime Investigation and K9 in cooperation with the Turkish International Academy Against Drugs and Organized Crime (TADOC) and the K9 Centre under the Latvian Border College. From Central Asia, 45 officers attended these trainings. The Project also cooperated with the law enforcement initiatives implemented by the UNODC Regional Office for Central Asia by organising online Train-the-Trainer trainings and Intelligence Analysis with the participation of TADOC instructors. From Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, 30 officers were trained during these joint initiatives.
The law enforcement strategy is based on current threats in the region and is developed based on the recommendations of the mid-term evaluation of Sub-Programme 1 of the Programme for Central Asia, lessons learnt during programme delivery, and dialogue with Central Asian law enforcement counterparts. The aim is to ensure that UNODC’s support remains relevant and is adaptable to future challenges and risks. This strategy introduces a holistic approach to the provision of assistance by ensuring that UNODC initiatives continue to be delivered in a consultative and coordinated environment. This is meant to imply and reinforce increased cooperation, both internally between various delivery mechanisms, and externally with other international partners.

In 2020, UNODC ROCA continued to work closely with the drug control agencies of Central Asian states to enhance national capacities to counter drug trafficking. These capacity development efforts aimed to enhance national legislation on drug control, strengthen national operational capacities on drug law enforcement, and develop the capacities of other competent authorities to maintain the legal turnover of controlled narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors under the ratified UN conventions.
Interagency Mobile Teams

As a continuation and expansion of the successful initiative on Establishing Interagency Mobile Teams (IMTs) in Uzbekistan, in 2020, UNODC ROCA, in collaboration with the Government of Uzbekistan, extended the initiative, and seven more teams were established to cover additional regions of Uzbekistan to complement the six teams established in 2018. The Government of Japan generously allocated an additional US$ 2.3 million for this initiative. The IMTs consist of officers from the State Security Service, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the State Customs Committee. The work of the IMTs is coordinated by the Operation Coordination Team, which is based in the National Information Analytical Centre on Drug Control, the national coordinating agency. The Department on Combating Economic Crimes under the General Prosecutor’s Office also acts as a focal point for the financial backtracking of significant cases to address money laundering issues.

The IMT Initiative strengthens the counter-narcotics capacities of the law enforcement agencies of Uzbekistan in the face of the evolving drug situation. To date, the number of IMT offices has increased from six to thirteen, so that the network covers all regions of Uzbekistan and strengthens their operational manoeuvring capabilities. The new IMT offices will support Andijan, Bukhara, Jizzakh, Karshi, Namangan, Navoi and Urgench, and will be based at the premises of beneficiary agencies, such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the State Customs Committee.

“Interagency Mobile Teams and Border Liaison Offices initiatives are the outcome of the successful cooperation of UNODC with law enforcement agencies in Central Asia, in particular in Uzbekistan. Technical assistance under these initiatives will focus on developing the legislative and institutional framework, provision of specialised modern law enforcement equipment, as well as improving the capacities of law enforcement agencies through the delivery of training courses, practical workshops and the organization of joint interagency anti-drug operations.”

Mr. Olim Narzullaev, the Director of NCDC.
Interagency Mobile Team offices established in Phase I:
1. Based in Tashkent city - covers Tashkent city and Tashkent region
2. Based in Gulistan city – covers Syrdarya region
3. Based in Fergana city – covers Fergana region
4. Based in Termez city – covers Surkhandarya region
5. Based in Samarkand city – covers Samarkand region
6. Based in Nukus city – covers Republic of Karakalpakstan

New Interagency Mobile Team offices established in Phase II:
7. Based in Urgench city – covers Khorezm region
8. Based in Djizak city – covers Djizak region
9. Based in Navoi city – covers Navoi region
10. Based in Bukhara city – covers Bukhara region
11. Based in Karshi city – covers Kashkadarya region
12. Based in Namangan city – covers Namangan region
13. Based in Andijan city – covers Andijan region

Operations Coordination Team
OCT. Based in Tashkent city – Overall coordination functions
INTERAGENCY MOBILE TEAMS IN UZBEKISTAN
DEPLOYMENT SITES (Phase II)
IMT units have increased the efficiency of interagency cooperation as (i) intelligence sharing within IMT units occurs through simplified procedures; (ii) the planning and organisation of joint operations proceed more quickly and smoothly; and (iii) investigations are carried out based on the particular experience of each agency involved, complementing their work. IMTs aim to enhance the operational capacities of the law enforcement agencies of Uzbekistan with the purpose of promoting a safe, healthy and secure society in line with Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The main challenges related to New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) in the region include prevention, treatment and rehabilitation, access to medicine for regulation, detection and interdiction. The IMT initiative focuses on two of them, detection and interdiction. In the first half of 2020, UNODC supported IMT officers to carry out a range of active measures aimed at suppressing drug trafficking cases. Over 200 operations were conducted, which resulted in the suppression of 223 drug-related crimes. Over 328 kg of narcotic drugs were seized as physical evidence, including: (i) Tramadol and others – 4.896 kg; and (ii) NPS and synthetic drugs – 1.205 kg. This was made possible through the effective communication, coordination, information sharing and cooperation of law enforcement agencies within the IMTs as these are the key elements in countering drug trafficking.

Assessment missions to the seven deployment sites of the new IMTs were completed in October 2020 to examine their technical capacity and provide them with equipment where necessary. Furthermore, the mission participants were able to establish direct partnership relations with the heads of the local analytical units and branches, explain to them the concept of IMT in greater detail and discuss some practicalities of interagency cooperation between the three law enforcement agencies that will help to smoothly and efficiently organise the work of new IMTs. Assessment missions were carried out by UNODC staff and members of the Operation Coordination Team.

Furthermore, the project team organised several meetings of the Working Group established under the IMT component Phase II. The Standard Operating Procedures for Interagency Mobile Teams and the Operations Coordination Team was revised in light of the inclusion of the Department on Combating Economic Crimes under the General Prosecutor’s Office into the second phase of the project, and signed off by all beneficiary agencies on 31 December 2020.

In November 2020, UNODC organised an online Training of Trainers for 12 lecturers from Law Enforcement Agencies’ academic institutions in Uzbekistan, including Operation Coordination Team members. The training was facilitated by experts from the Turkish International Academy against Drugs and Organized Crime (TADOC). The week-long practical training provided useful information on contemporary and efficient teaching techniques with the aim of incorporating these into the curriculum of the respective academic institutions. The training developed the capacity of participants on the principles of adult learning, managing “difficult” students, effective communication and presentation skills, to incorporate these into the curriculum of the respective academic institutions.

Although the global COVID-19 pandemic affected the scheduled delivery time of equipment and caused disruptions to global production, supply and delivery chains, UNODC managed to complete the procurement of vehicles and equipment based on the Work Plan for 2020.
Support to Drug Control in the Kyrgyz Republic

In 2020, UNODC strengthened the institutional and operational capacity of the Counter Narcotics Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic (CNS). Within the initiative “Support to Drug Control in the Kyrgyz Republic”, funded by the Government of Japan, UNODC supported four meetings of the State Coordination Committee on Drug Control (SCDC) under the Chairmanship of the Vice Prime Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic and its working groups. The SCDC brings together all governmental bodies, civil society and the private sector. SCDC is an important and unique body that serves to enable coordination at the national level on issues related to drug control.

In 2020, UNODC actively supported the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic with the improvement of national legislation during the year. The new Counter-Narcotics Programme of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic and its Action Plan for the period of 2021 – 2025, new bylaws and regulatory acts were developed with the support and contribution of the UNODC. Also, UNODC actively supported the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic in its efforts to enhance control over new psychoactive substances. As a result, 26 items of NPS were included in the national list of controlled substances.

Upon request of the CNS to train “drug fighters”, UNODC, with the financial support from the Government of Japan, developed a special course on “The Organisational and tactical foundations of combating drug trafficking” for the Academy of the course on “The Organisational and tactical foundations of combating drug trafficking” for the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic named after Major General of Police E. A. Aliyev. As a result of this course, the cadets of the Academy, as well as officers of other state bodies undergoing retraining and advanced training at the Academy
are able to gain in-depth knowledge on national legislation, the system of international drug control, modern operational measures and investigations of criminal cases on drug-related crimes.

The procurement of equipment and software for CNS was finalised in June 2020 and a handover ceremony of all equipment procured was held with the participation of H.E. Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to the Kyrgyz Republic, Shigeki Maeda. The support provided included 10 vehicles, an IT server, handheld radios, IP phones, action video cameras, IP video surveillance equipment, printers, desktop computers, 15-laptop portable computer-based training classrooms.

To ensure that specialised state bodies and the civil sector have better access to narcotic drugs for the treatment of acute pain, in January of 2020, UNODC organised a study tour to Tokyo, Japan, on the legal turnover of medical drugs. The delegation included representatives from the Department of Medicines Supply, Ministry of Healthcare, Presidential Executive Office and civil sector. The participants met with Japanese experts on the legal turnover of medical drugs, who deal with the legal policy on medical drugs. The delegation also met with the Deputy Director of the Japanese Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and discussed pain relief opioids. The participants also gained knowledge and learnt about best practices and other aspects that the Japanese Government experienced during the adoption of laws regarding the legal turnover of medical drugs.

Furthermore, UNODC supported the Department of Licit Drug Turnover (DLDT) under the Ministry of Health of the Kyrgyz Republic to complete renovation works on their new office. Until 2020, DLDT had no office space, but with UNODC’s advocacy and support, DLDT was offered a new office in very poor condition. To ensure that DLDT can deliver its functions under standard conditions, UNODC contracted a construction company that made a full renovation of the 370 m² office. Along with the renovation, UNODC provided office furniture and new IT equipment including a server so that DLDT can maintain an uninterrupted flow of work. DLDT was equipped by UNODC with two new vehicles for the operational needs of their staff in Bishkek and Osh. The handover and new office opening ceremony was conducted with the presence of the Minister of Health and other representatives from government structures.

Establishment of Mobile Operational Teams in the Kyrgyz Republic

Innovation is crucial to staying on top of policing issues in today’s fast-changing world where criminals are quick to exploit technology and opportunities. One of the UNODC’s innovative initiatives, “Establishment of Mobile Operational Teams in the Kyrgyz Republic”, funded by the Russian Federation, progressed well in 2020, and is now able to monitor a vast ground area, identify suspi-
cious or illegal activities related to narcotic drugs, and track criminals and their vehicles day or night. A multi-terrain vehicle platform, high-tech searching complex, was delivered to national counterparts, and UNODC organized licensed training courses for drivers of mobile operational platform.

In 2020, UNODC conducted a first-of-its-kind training on the use of special software for intelligence analysis (ArcGIS, IBM i2) in the city of Karakol, in the Issyk-Kul region of the Kyrgyz Republic. The uniqueness of this training is in the use of a mobile training class that can be easily delivered and deployed for training purposes in any remote region of the Republic. The first 15 trainees, all operative and analytical officers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, welcomed the training and the way it was conducted. The training aimed to equip operational staff and analysts from the Department of Internal Affairs with new knowledge and skills in processing, analyzing and visualizing information using various analytical software tools.

In 2020, substantial results were achieved in reducing drug trafficking and abuse. In particular, the largest narcotics seizure for the past 20 years, worth more than US$ 2.5 million was achieved as the result of the joint work of the Kyrgyz Law Enforcement agencies, which are supported by UNODC’s ongoing initiatives. On February 1, 2020, CNS officers, in collaboration with the State Committee for National Security of the Kyrgyz Republic, the competent authorities of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Russian Federation, seized the large-scale haul of narcotic drugs with a total weight of 280.62 kgs, including 276 kilograms of hashish and 4.62 kg of amphetamine. This seizure was carried out during a special operation aimed at establishing, identifying and blocking channels for the large-scale trafficking of narcotic drugs of Afghan origin.

The Analytical Unit of the CNS, established by UNODC with financial support from the United States of America, became a driver in increasing the quantity and quality of counter-narcotics investigations and special operations. Equipped with modern computer networks, special servers, and software for the analysis of data and criminal intelligence, it has become the centre of excellence for other Kyrgyz law-enforcement agencies and Ministry of Internal Affairs subdivisions. Because of its high-quality analytical products and evidence-based investigation approach, the unit has become an important part of CNS investigation work.

UNODC strengthened the institutional and operational capacity of the CNS of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic, which contributed to the seizure of more than 1,000 kg of drugs in 2020, including: 486 kg of hashish, 396 kg of cannabis, 9,092 kg cannabis plants, 17 kg of heroin, 10 kg of opium and 4 kg of NPSs. Moreover, CNS participated in three joint operations (at the international level), including one with Afghanistan and two with Russian Federation law enforcement agencies.
From sky-high flyovers to the security of Kyrgyzstan’s borders

"My father was a Derby winner and a Kyrgyz equestrian sport champion in Soviet times. To participate in various equestrian sports competitions anywhere, my father often traveled by train and plane, and my mother accompanied him everywhere, even when she was pregnant. From the very first days of my life I was accustomed to flying by plane, and that’s probably why I later became a military pilot," says Colonel Almaz Maksutov. "I learnt to drive a car professionally much later, only at the age of 40.

In school, I was a good student. I was fond of history, geography. Mathematics was easy for me and I was skilled in drawing and physics. My mathematics teacher persuaded me to enter the physics and mathematics department, as I often used to find unusual solutions in algebra, and participated in school competitions.

It is possible that my analytical mindset began to find its expression at school, was developed in military school, and found realisation later on, in the course of my duties. I wanted to be a lawyer— if not a lawyer, then at least a pilot or a space engineer. In 1986, I entered Balashov Higher Military Aviation School and flew on L-410s, An-24s, An-26s and and studied Il-76s. I started working in military transport aviation in Siberia, applied for the cosmonauts' squadron and underwent preliminary training. I felt in my element while in the sky. If in 1992 I had not been suddenly called back home by the Kyrgyz Defense Ministry, maybe I would have stayed in the Russian Armed Forces and become a cosmonaut", says Almaz Maksutov with a smile.

Almaz Maksutov is today the Head of the Department of the State Border Guard Service of the Kyrgyz Republic, a government agency that is one of the main partners implementing an international project on strengthening cross-border cooperation. Mr. Maksutov has contributed to the project and to cooperation between partners from Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Kyrgyzstan and its Regional Office for Central Asia, and other agencies.
Upon his return to independent Kyrgyzstan, young Almaz Maksutov served in the Ministry of Defense forces, engaged with information reviews and analytical work. In 1995, he started studying terrorism threats and prepared an analytical review on the activities of the Taliban movement. Since 2004, his job was to cooperate with international organisations, engaging in measures to strengthen border cooperation with Central Asian countries, particularly Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Selected to work in the State Service on Drug Control, he has always been successful in using his analytical skills and putting forward proposals. According to Almaz Maksutov, not all of his initiatives used to get approved the first time around, but since cooperation with UNODC began, many of them have been applied, yielded results, and strengthened the partnership.

“Having read about the UNODC XAC/K22 project on 'Countering the trafficking of Afghan opiates via the Northern route by enhancing the capacity of key border crossing points and through the establishment of Border Liaison Offices,' I approached the management with a proposal to create a team to coordinate the work of national agencies with UNODC. I began to coordinate these activities while in the State Service on Drug Control and later in the Border Guard Service. In the past, at the very beginning of the cooperation with UNODC, I also approached representatives of CARICC about opening a branch in Osh, given the need to pay increased attention to the so-called 'Osh Hub' of drug trafficking. In 2014, as part of the development of the Department of Mobile Operative Teams, I developed the Concept of developing mobile operative groups, but it was not fully considered. However, a year later, on the same basis, a Concept to develop this service was approved and started with the support of UNODC”
Experience of cooperation with UNODC and future plans

“We have a well-established and fruitful cooperation with the UNODC Regional Office for Central Asia. One of the first and important outcomes of our joint work in the past has been establishing cooperation with the Drug Control Agency in Tajikistan and its subdivisions in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast,” says Almaz Maksutov. “This work has been implemented with the direct support of Yusuf Kurbonov. He is the UNODC International Coordinator for the programme on strengthening cross-border cooperation in Central Asia between the law enforcement agencies of the countries in the region responsible for combating drug trafficking and border protection. He has made an important contribution not only to the development and implementation of UNODC projects in the region, but also to the establishing warm relations with our colleagues from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, and introduced us to many experts and specialists in these areas from the US, European countries, Russia, Georgia, and Ukraine.

Previously we had worked only with the Border Services of neighbouring countries, then later on, when the UNODC project on strengthening cross-border cooperation began to gain momentum, when other agencies such as Customs Services, Counternarcotic Agencies and Interior Ministries joined as well, we began to expand interagency cooperation and saw all the benefits of this work in practice.”

Almaz Maksutov speaks warmly about his experience of working with the UNODC regional project on strengthening cross-border cooperation in Central Asia:
“I can only give positive feedback on our cooperation. What I am particularly impressed by is the openness to our ideas, proposals and projects, as well as the promptness and real support in promoting and implementing these ideas. We have never been restricted to any limiting frames. This is probably why the cooperation results we have are very good, since both parties are eager to cooperate.”

Almaz Maksutov always welcomes the opportunity to cooperate and is very eager to support various UNODC initiatives.

“The opening of the Centre for the Coordination of the Activities of Border Liaison Offices at the State Border Service Headquarters in Bishkek in 2017 under the above-mentioned UNODC project was probably one of the most important milestones. Our initiative was really appreciated by all parties, including donors and colleagues from other countries in the region. This was the beginning of development in this area.”

The purpose of the Centre is to ensure real-time collection, compilation, processing and analysis of data coming from the Border Liaison Offices in order to plan and develop recommendations on combating transborder organised crime in the areas of trafficking in drugs, weapons and ammunition; international terrorism and religious extremism at borders; and to promptly taking proactive and preventive measures.

At present, there are five Border Liaison Offices (BLOs) operating in Kyrgyzstan: Bordobo Road and Karamyk Road at the Kyrgyz-Tajik section, Dostuk Road at the Kyrgyz-Uzbek section, Akzhol Road at the Kyrgyz-Kazakh section of the state border, as well as Manas Airport. These Offices operate at checkpoints with the highest rates of passenger and cargo flow. In the near future, there are plans to open at least two more BLOs, including at the railway border crossing point. Specialised analytical software products, such as “i2 iBase”, “i2 Analyst Notebook” are used in the Centre's daily activities, offering the possibility to analyse phone traffic, the “ArcGIS” geoinformation system, etc.

“This year we have plans to open a similar office in the city of Osh. Employees who have undergone training courses within the project, including the study of law enforcement on the basis of intelligence collected using specialised software, are able to apply their knowledge and skills in a targeted and efficient manner. These software products have made it possible for us to assess risks and predict at what time of year a challenging situation may emerge at the border. This greatly helps the Service to plan joint actions and increases the efficiency of border cooperation. It is on the basis of this data that we develop interaction and work plans on information exchange with colleagues from other agencies and neighbouring countries. Examples of this cooperation include cases of detaining individuals involved in drug trafficking, members of terrorist groups and internationally wanted persons at the border,” says Colonel Maksutov.
Intelligence-led policing

Four intelligence-led policing (ILP) training courses for 60 law enforcement operative and investigation officers from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan were organised in 2020. These courses were designed to improve intelligence processing and sharing among operative officers, investigators and data analysts. In particular, they enhanced the quality of data analysis and exchange at national and regional levels, as well as making better use of the capacity of the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre (CARICC). The quality, reliability and timeliness of intelligence were among the core aspects of the discussion on the training programme. The courses aimed to increase the potential of law enforcement agencies around intelligence gathering, information management and the development of mechanisms for the exchange, receipt and dissemination of information between analysts and operative officers. The trainings enabled participants to use intelligence to identify hotspots, repeat offenders, threats and risks, as well as to enhance the cooperation of intelligence officers and analysts. The participants were equipped with additional knowledge on their respective strengths to provide intelligence products to agency decision-makers. The ILP concept complements community policing, which aims to build trust and develop communication between the police and the population.

The “Tajikistan Drug Control Agency (DCA) Establishing the Training Academy: Phase II” component of the UNODC Programme for Central Asia is supporting the DCA’s capacity through the provision of the new recruit and in-service trainings, as well as the establishment of a new database system for tracking information flow on DCA capacity building initiatives within a wide range of parameters (schemes, charts, diagrams) and the development of an electronic library system in-line with DCA requirements. The electronic library will be regularly updated with training materials, manuals, and instructions. The component is also intended to focus on tracking results and getting feedback from participants as well as DCA Management. In 2020, this initiative was funded by the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL). The DCA is the Government of Tajikistan’s foremost drug law-enforcement agency and is authorised to coordinate all drug enforcement and prevention activities.

“Intelligence-led philosophy needs to complement and support current investigation practices. It is necessary to identify and gather relevant, timely and accurate intelligence on different parts of the criminal enterprise. Intelligence-led policing assists targeting activities where they are most effective in disrupting, dismantling criminal networks, arresting, and prosecuting the most serious offenders.”

Mr. Simon Ramsden, UNODC international consultant and trainer.
Border outposts and posts along the Tajik-Afghan border

The UNODC Initiative “Strengthening control along the Tajik-Afghan border” continued to provide support to the Government of Tajikistan in the implementation of the National Border Management Strategy adopted by the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan for 2010-2025. Within this initiative, a three-day training course on “Enhancement of information-analytical capacity and analysis of risks, challenges and threats in border management” was conducted for 24 officers from analytical divisions of the Border Troops of the State Committee for National Security of the Republic of Tajikistan. The training course aimed to enhance the information and analytical capacities of border officers to strengthen border management and reinforce the fight against organised crime, in particular, illicit drug trafficking and prevention of terrorism and extremism. During the training course, the participants learnt about data collection and processing, systems of information-analytical activities in border management, risk analysis, information and psychological operations and ways of countering them, use of software to create information modules, situation forecast in border areas and map reading.

In 2020, the law enforcement agencies of Tajikistan seized 2,425 kilograms of narcotic drugs—788 kilograms or 40 per cent more than in 2019. Out of this amount, 183 kilograms of narcotic drugs were seized by the Drug Control Agency, 1,117 kilograms by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 1,097 kilograms by the State Committee for National Security subdivisions, 22 kilograms by the Customs Service, and 5 kilograms by the Agency for State Financial Control and Combating Corruption. Over the reporting period, 700 drug-related crimes were detected and registered by the country’s law enforcement authorities—118 cases more than in 2019. In 2020, the counter-narcotics agency reportedly detected 144 drug-related crimes—13 cases or 9.9 per cent more than in 2019. 5,099 drug addicts were officially registered in Tajikistan last year.
“Women in law enforcement are better at defusing tensions and easily gain the trust of the communities with whom they work”

Zarina Abrorova is a Lieutenant Colonel in the Customs Service. She is Chief Inspector of the Department of Countering Customs Offences under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, and has been working at the customs service for over 20 years.

“The work is challenging and it’s not always easy,” says Ms. Abrorova, “Sometimes, when I reflect on what brought me into the service, I realise that my choice of profession was initially spontaneous, but that, over the years, through gaining more experience and seeing the great importance of this work for society, I discovered that I have a feeling for it, that I belong here, and most of all, here I can be useful to people. Today I cannot imagine being without my work and our amazing team.”

In Zarina’s opinion, it is absolutely critical to have women working in law enforcement, including the customs service.

“It is important that women officers work with women who have been subjected to violence. Communication with women officers will be easier for these women, they will feel much more comfortable sharing their concerns and problems. It can prevent even greater psychological trauma being inflicted on them. In any situation, women often feel more at ease with women officers and prefer to communicate with them,” she explains, adding, “we are not any different in our professional competencies from men, and we are equally successful in our work.”

From Zarina’s observations, women in law enforcement often tend to be patient, persistent and dedicated, which helps them to creatively and effectively fulfill their official duties. As a rule, they
are more inclined to adopt a peaceful approach, they are better at defusing tensions and thereby prevent conflicts. They easily gain the trust of the communities with whom they work.

“For example, during the pandemic,” remembers Zarina, “due to border closures, the decrease in passenger and cargo movements did not lower our workload but rather required us to stay vigilant. We conducted an extensive awareness-raising campaign to prevent the spread of the disease among the population.”

“The Customs Service under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan has been cooperating with UNODC for many years,” says Zarina. “We have participated in many events and training courses under the Regional Cross-Border Cooperation Component, including the Border Liaison Offices’ initiative. Under this component, we have strengthened inter-agency and transborder cooperation and intelligence-sharing with the neighbouring countries that help us to effectively ensure border security, conduct joint operations, and take proactive measures to prevent crime. Even during the pandemic, we took part in a number of trainings conducted by UNODC via videoconferencing in which experienced trainers and experts participated. The component encourages and promotes the meaningful participation of women officers in all its activities, contributing to their empowerment.”

Zarina says that in Tajikistan many women work in the country’s customs service making their contribution to ensuring the further socio-economic development and security of the state. For her personally, it is gratifying to see that, every year, more and more women are joining the customs service.
Anti-money Laundering and Illicit Financial Flows

Combatting organised crime requires the adoption of systemic measures, which include disrupting financial resources. Identifying and confiscating criminal proceeds is considered a highly effective tool for disrupting and containing financial activities in transnational crime. It is also an effective measure to combat illicit drug trafficking, money laundering and terrorist financing. High revenue generated from corruption, organised crime and drug trafficking naturally lead to subsequent attempts by criminals to launder their illicit proceeds. Central Asian law enforcement authorities are countering these threats and UNODC supports their efforts.

Within the Programme for Central Asia and the Global Programme against Money-Laundering, UNODC supports Central Asian countries to strengthen existing AML/CFT systems, and assists them to detect, seize and confiscate illicit proceeds, as required by UN and other international standards. This is achieved through the development of AML/CFT policy, providing in-depth training to government authorities and by developing and sharing AML/CFT information resources, databases and good practices. Specific initiatives are built around institution-building and technical assistance delivery and training at the national and regional levels. In 2020, UNODC ROCA and UNODC Global Programme against Money-Laundering continued to partner with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to implement a multiannual training programme on CFT. UNODC organised and delivered eight trainings for relevant national counterparts on CFT.
aimed at increasing the ability to detect, investigate and disrupt terrorist networks and counter illegal financial flows, including through reinforcing inter-agency cooperation.

In February 2020, UNODC organised a “Disruption course on Countering Financing Terrorism” for 20 specialists from government agencies from Tajikistan, including the General Prosecutor’s Office, the Financial Monitoring Department of the National Bank, the Ministry of the Internal Affairs, and the State Committee for National Security. The course was one of a series of comprehensive capacity-building programmes focused on analysis, investigation, and inter-agency-cooperation and aimed to support the efforts of the Republic of Tajikistan to counter-terrorist financing. As a result of the training course, the participants agreed to put their new knowledge into action and elaborated recommendations on the investigation of cases related to the financing of terrorist activities.

The Republic of Kazakhstan successfully implemented an International Programme on “Countering the Financing of Terrorism”. As a result, the capacity of the country’s law enforcement agency specialists, including six national experts (trainers) was enhanced. Moreover, in 2020, UNODC launched a National Programme on “Countering the financing of terrorism” in Kazakhstan, and throughout 2020-2021, with UNODC support, national experts will implement this programme. In December 2020, the first module on “Countering the financing of terrorism: Foundation course” was delivered in hybrid mode with the participation of specialists from competent authorities. The Foundation course is aimed at national, regional and international threats, the needs of terrorist organizations, and introduces the terrorism financing cycle.

In November 2020, the UNODC Global Programme Against Money Laundering, jointly with UNODC ROCA, OSCE Programme Office in Nur-Sultan, the Agency of the Republic of Kazakhstan for Regulation and Development of the Financial Market and the Committee on Financial Monitoring of the Ministry of Finance, held a training on “Strengthening the capacity of financial organizations and supervisory agencies of the Republic of Kazakhstan to counter money laundering and terrorist financing”. From the Agency, the Committee and the National Bank of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 36 heads of departments and specialists took part in the event. Mr. Gabit Lesbekov, Deputy Chairman of the Committee, highlighted the importance of strengthening the capacity of the relevant authorities of the Republic of Kazakhstan on AML/CFT in anticipation of the mutual evaluation by the Eurasian Group on Combating Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism. The government bodies have initiated preparation for the mutual assessment, which will take place in 2021, and the training seminar was part of this preparatory work.

In December 2020, in line with Resolution 2462 (2019), UNODC, in cooperation with national experts, developed the first national training course aimed at strengthening the capacity of the banks in Kazakhstan to counter the financing of terrorism. From 28 banks, 44 representatives participated in the course. The development of the materials and the training course were supported by the representatives of supervisory authorities from the Republic of Kazakhstan. According to Ms. Ardak Mukasheva, the Chief Compliance Controller of JSC Alfa-Bank, it is the first time that practical training on countering the financing of terrorism has been organised for banks. In this regard, the information provided in the course will be useful for improving mechanisms for information exchange and the prevention of terrorist financing.
In June 2020, UNODC, in co-operation with the Ministry of Finance and Economy of Turkmenistan and OSCE, conducted two stages of a training programme on CFT in Turkmenistan. Considering the situation related to the COVID-19 crisis, and to comply with the current pandemic regulations, the courses were held online. The 24 participants from the Financial Monitoring Service under the Ministry of Finance and Economy, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of National Security, and the Prosecutor’s Office of Turkmenistan obtained the knowledge and skills to conduct operative analysis in the course of financial investigations.

UNODC continued to implement the national CFT programme in Uzbekistan. As the third stage of the training programme, a Train the Trainer course was conducted for law enforcement agencies from the Republic of Uzbekistan. This Course on Countering Terrorist Financing – Investigation is exercise-based, customised to the training needs of the requesting country. This module focuses on CFT investigations and was taught to seven local trainers nominated by the Republic of Uzbekistan. It is expected that this programme will enhance inter-agency cooperation in line with advanced international practices and strengthen national capacity in the field to counter the financing of terrorism.

In January 2020, UNODC conducted training on “Operational analysis of financial information to identify the risks of money laundering and terrorist financing” for relevant stakeholders in Uzbekistan. The event gathered 26 participants from the National and commercial banks, the Academy of the General Prosecutor’s Office and the Department under the General Prosecutor’s Office of the Republic of Uzbekistan, including one appointed national trainer, three international expert trainers from Kazakhstan and Ukraine.

In 2020, all Central Asian countries benefited from a wider UNODC-led training programme on CFT, which trained more than 80 FIU and law enforcement officers, and the pool of national trainers increased by seven national trainers from Uzbekistan.

To enhance cooperation with FIUs, UNODC conducted regular high-level meetings with the heads and top management of FIUs in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. These meetings served to identify current needs and gaps that need expert and technical assistance, as well as agreements on areas for improvement and further cooperation.

UNODC supported the establishment of three working groups in Kazakhstan (on national IT system for professional accreditation and development of AML/CFT specialists), Tajikistan (on enhancing the efficiency of parallel financial investigations), and Uzbekistan (on parallel financial investigations and the disruption of illicit financial flows related to organised crimes and drug trafficking). This resulted in increased awareness among national and international partners of AML/CFT activities and policies promoted by UNODC in the region, establishing critical pathways for AML/CFT related capacity development activities.

UNODC in the Kyrgyz Republic continued to develop the capacities of counterparts on anti-corruption; countering economic crimes; anti-money laundering (AML); combatting the financing of terrorism (CFT) and recovering the proceeds of crime. This was achieved by strengthening legal frameworks, providing professional training and equipment, and enhancing the operational ca-
In 2020, for the first time, SFIS and UNODC conducted six onsite trainings on AML/CFT for 111 participants (27 women) from the private sector and prosecutors in Batken, Osh and Djalal-Abad cities.

In addition to onsite training, on 20 August 2020, the SFIS, under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, with the support of the UNODC, conducted online training on AML/CFT for country law enforcement officers. This training was used as a platform for the exchange of views on the issues of countering money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism. During the events, 12 participants from SFIS, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the General Prosecutor’s Office of the Kyrgyz Republic increased their knowledge on AML and CFT.

The procurement of equipment and software for establishing a secure line of communication between SFIS and banks was finalised in November 2020. Mr. Gulamzhan Anarbaev, Chairman of the State Financial Intelligence Service under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic and other high-level government officials of the Kyrgyz Republic were present at the handover ceremony of IT equipment procured for the SFIS.
Terrorism prevention

UNODC supports the Member States with the international legal instruments that lay the multilateral basis for Member States’ responses to terrorism. These include 19 international legal instruments against terrorism, as well as numerous United Nations Security Council Resolutions.

UNODC delivers comprehensive technical assistance to the Member States on crime prevention and criminal justice, including terrorism prevention and the treatment of children affected by terrorism, in particular by the foreign terrorist fighter phenomenon. This also includes support to implement all UN international legal instruments against terrorism at the normative, policy and operational levels.

Within the UNODC initiative on supporting the Member States in the region to implement UN Security Council Resolution 2396 (2017) and to strengthen their criminal justice response against terrorism through enhanced cross-border cooperation, intelligence sharing, development of Advance Passenger Information (API) and Passenger Name Records (PNR), a range of capacity development activities were implemented in 2020.

In Kazakhstan, UNODC, in partnership with the Law Enforcement Academy under the General Prosecutor’s Office of Kazakhstan, organised a workshop on strengthening the use of advanced investigative techniques and cross-border investigations in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2396 (2017). The workshop enhanced the skills of over 40 law enforcement officers on cross-border investigations, detecting, intercepting and monitoring individuals involved in terrorism-related activities in border areas, as well as cross-border information sharing on counter-terrorism matters. The event also contributed to a discussion on the challenges faced by the
cross-border movement of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) and strategies and measures that states can develop and implement to enhance border security cooperation at the intra-agency and inter-agency levels.

In Uzbekistan, UNODC organised a national training for Uzbek criminal justice practitioners on strengthening the use of advanced investigative techniques, cross-border investigations and crime scene management in the counter-terrorism context. The event gathered 25 participants representing each of the 14 regions of Uzbekistan, as well as academics from the Academy of the General Prosecutor’s Office. Experts representing INTERPOL, IOM, UNOCT, IATA, OSCE, the University of New Haven, UK, USA and UNODC facilitated the workshop by sharing their expertise and international practices. The participants enhanced their knowledge and skills in inter-agency and cross-border cooperation, mutual legal assistance and obtaining electronic evidence located in foreign jurisdictions, leading to increased capacities to respond to terrorism and the FTF phenomenon.

### Repatriation, Reintegration and Rehabilitation of Returnees in Central Asia

International and regional experience in repatriation, rehabilitation and reintegration of women and child returnees from conflict zones showcases the importance of a multisectoral approach to programming, to ensure that the entire range of challenges is addressed. Moreover, for better effectiveness, relevant programming needs both to be rights-based and to promote public safety and security. These interests are in essence mutually reinforcing rather than competitive. The recognition of the mutually complementary nature of these goals is likely to result in the sustainable and long-term achievement of peace and security both at the community level and at the global level; it is also likely to ensure effective rehabilitation and resocialization of these children.¹

In total, Central Asian authorities returned 1,058 returnees (38 men, 237 women, 781 children) within the period 2019 – 2020. In 2020, Uzbekistan authorities within the Mehr - 3 operation returned 25 women and 73 children from conflict zones.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Total returned in 2019</th>
<th>Total returned in 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td></td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The general public, especially at the community level, may be wary of repatriation, reintegration and rehabilitation programming, especially where there is a belief that returnees enjoy “special treatment” compared to other vulnerable groups. Moreover, the general public may have serious concerns and fears related to the presumed threats posed by returnees.

The development of repatriation, reintegration and rehabilitation programmes should be preceded by a detailed situation analysis, including an assessment of capacities and risks, programme priority setting, stakeholder and institutional capacity mapping, gap analysis of available services, etc. It is recommended that targeted communication and outreach strategies be developed in advance to address challenges posed by a potential lack of societal support.2

Taking into account the fact that the majority of returnees are children, in 2020 UNODC focused its support to Central Asian countries on preventing and responding to violence against children by terrorist and violent extremist groups, including children affected by the FTF phenomenon. In Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, UNODC presented both Governments with a broad range of recommendations on the basis of the two UNODC Technical Assistance Needs Assessments (TANA) conducted on the above issue. The TANA reports provided a strong foundation for ongoing technical assistance to the Government of Kazakhstan in support of its efforts to rehabilitate and reintegrate children affected by the FTF phenomenon.

Additionally, in Kazakhstan, UNODC provided legal advisory services on rules related to this issue and delivered three online capacity develop-

2 Id.
ment training events for Kazakh ministerial officials and multi-sectoral professionals involved in supporting the rehabilitation and reintegration of children returned from conflict zones. This new policy document was adopted and incorporated 50 per cent of UNODC recommendations. Attended by a total of 426 participants, the webinars aimed to strengthen inter-ministerial and inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms in order to ensure comprehensive and sustainable prevention and response strategies with respect to children affected by the foreign terrorist fighter phenomenon.

In Tajikistan, UNODC and the Government of Tajikistan held virtual consultations in order to support the Government in its efforts to prevent and respond to violence against children by terrorist and violent extremist groups, including in relation to children affected by the FTF phenomenon. In November 2020, UNODC conducted a national workshop on the rehabilitation and reintegration of children affected by the FTF phenomenon, convening 21 ministerial officials and a broad range of professionals engaged in the rehabilitation and reintegration of Tajik children returned from conflict zones. Building on the strong partnership between UNODC and the Government of Tajikistan, and with financial support from the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), the workshop offered tailored training sessions to build on the extensive work that UNODC, through its Global Programme to End Violence against Children,

Ms. Irina Chernykh, Professor of the Kazakh-German University in Almaty, noted:

"the rich content of the E4J Modules on Counter-Terrorism, which includes a comprehensive overview of the international legal framework, offers a rich bibliography and is supported by video and other materials enabling interactive learning and discussion."

UNODC advocates for children affected by terrorist and violent extremist groups to be treated primarily as victims and supports Member States to ensure this concept is translated into practice.

Mr. Koen Marquering, UNODC Justice Program Coordinator in Central Asia
has undertaken in support of the Member States, including in the Central Asia region. This will ensure that children associated with terrorist and violent extremist groups are treated primarily as victims, and that the rehabilitation and reintegration of children is the primary aim of all interventions.

To support academia in their efforts to shift to distance learning during the COVID-19 outbreak, UNODC conducted two online workshops for academics from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, teaching Counter-Terrorism, Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and Cybercrime related training modules. The event brought together 50 educators from the three countries’ leading universities and contributed to raising their awareness about the University Modules Series on counter-terrorism developed under the framework of the Global Programme for the Implementation of the Doha Declaration and the Education for Justice Initiative (E4J). During the webinars, E4J champions from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan shared their experiences of using the E4J Modules in their educational programmes.

Both events demonstrated the interest and great engagement of Central Asian academia in teaching the rule of law. It also provided a platform for academics to discuss opportunities to use and promote the E4J resources in their respective institutions and countries, and to find innovative solutions that promote the role of education in advancing a culture of lawfulness and achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

UNODC continued to support and consolidate the Central Asian Network on preventing and countering violent extremism (CAPVE), aiming to enhance regional cooperation, facilitate networking and the sharing of good practices and internationally recognised PVE approaches. The Network also encourages a whole of society approach to PVE and better community engagement in PVE efforts. The Network is supported by a dedicated website [www.capve.org] providing access to research, strategies and other relevant resources on PVE related issues. UNODC continued to support the Network’s resources to facilitate knowledge sharing on PVE related matters. An online regional meeting of CAPVE Network focal points took place in December 2020 and was devoted to the issues of community partnerships and multi-disciplinary collaboration.

Three UNODC knowledge products were presented: (i) a Background Paper on Assessing risks and need of VEPs and FTFs prisoners; (ii) Prison Brief: definitions of violent extremism and terrorism offences in Central Asia; and (iii) Prison Brief: procedural frameworks of violent extremism and terrorism offences in Central Asia.

In addition, during the CAPVE online meeting, Kyrgyzstan transferred its chairmanship role to Kazakhstan. The Law Enforcement Academy under the General Prosecutor’s Office of Kazakhstan was identified as a responsible agency for leading the chairmanship.
Strengthening International Cooperation in Criminal Matters

International legal cooperation on criminal matters was enhanced in Central Asia and South Caucasus through the facilitation of direct online communication during the COVID-19 pandemic within the framework of the Judicial Cooperation Network of Central Asia and Southern Caucasus (CASC Network).

Through constant and close communication with its focal points via the available online means, the Network is continuing its operational activities to assist the Member States to provide relevant support for more effective and efficient international legal cooperation. As a result of this operational collaboration, the CASC Network managed to facilitate contacts in 18 operational cases according to requests by the Member States in 2020.

From the CASC Network Member States, 82 mutual legal assistance (MLA) experts (13 women) enhanced their skills during four capacity-building and networking events. Experts from Romania, Portugal, India, Thailand, Turkey, Singapore and the UK took part. Two draft training modules for prosecutors, investigators and judges on mutual legal assistance and extradition matters were elaborated to ensure sustainable and continuous training of these experts on intentional legal cooperation. These modules could be adopted and used in relevant training facilities in the member countries.
The CASC Network Secretariat participated in the development and dissemination of a list of the extraordinary measures adopted by central authorities for international cooperation in criminal matters. The General Prosecutor’s Offices that participate in the CASC network contributed information to this list and it has become a global tool. The list contains information provided by 75 central authorities and has been disseminated among 155 central authorities.

A draft Compendium of the national legal and practical requirements for international judicial cooperation in Central Asia and South Caucasus countries, including the main aspects for requesting MLA, was developed and disseminated among the CASC
Network Member States for further review. The finalised materials will be translated into English and may be displayed on the website of the UNODC or national partners’ websites, to be used by central authorities so that they can more effectively request cooperation in criminal matters.

Further, the Secretariat of the CASC Network started promoting coordination between the Network and CARICC. The centre provides information on the seizure of drugs on a weekly basis to the CASC Coordinator and an alert is sent to concerned national focal points to allow international departments to establish more coherent investigations and find out if judicial cooperation for obtaining evidence abroad or cross-border coordination of investigations is needed.

UNODC facilitated the participation of the General Prosecutor’s Office of the Kyrgyz Republic in the 10th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNTOC. A number of suggested recommendations on effective implementation of the UNTOC TIP Protocol were incorporated into the UNTOC CoP Resolution on countering trafficking in persons, including Kyrgyzstan’s initiative on strengthening international cooperation and mutual legal assistance to improve investigation and prosecution of TIP cases. Moreover, in February 2020, a delegation of two officials from the General Prosecutor’s Office of the Republic of Uzbekistan conducted a bilateral meeting with representatives of the central authorities of Turkey in Ankara to discuss the signing of a bilateral agreement on the transfer of convicts.

Despite restrictions caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, the CASC Network functions as a successful platform for international legal cooperation on criminal matters. The Network aims to ensure effective and efficient inter-regional collaboration to combat transnational organised and serious crime, by facilitating contacts between competent authorities from Central Asia and Southern Caucasus with countries outside the region, and by promoting coordination with other judicial cooperation networks.
JUSTICE AND THE RULE OF LAW
Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment

Gender-based violence against women and girls (GBVAWG), with intimate partner violence as its most common form, is highly prevalent in many societies, and it erodes social cohesion and development. Emergency situations, such as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, aggravate the threat of GBVAWG to individuals, families and societies. Indeed, the risk and consequences of GBVAWG may be exacerbated by the lockdown policies implemented by many countries throughout the world, the disruption of economic, social and protective networks, sudden changes in family functioning, stress, increased substance use and decreased access to services.

Due to the imposition of mass quarantine and travel restriction measures in many countries, women and girls were disproportionately subject to GBVAWG. In light of this awareness, UNODC ROCA worked with national counterparts to better inform women and girls about GBVAWG and supported helplines to ensure that such cases are reported, and that victims have access to necessary services.

In Central Asia UNODC works on developing the capacity of national partners on gender-sensitive evidence-based policymaking, including through enhancing crime statistics systems, conducting victimisation surveys and gender-sensitive budgeting. Women’s rights movements, associations of women in law enforcement and the judiciary, independent gender experts and research institutes were actively consulted and involved in programme delivery during the reporting period.

In Kyrgyzstan, a number of important changes in the legal and policy frameworks were promoted by a team of UN agencies (UNODC, UNDP, UNICEF, UN Women, UNFPA) within the Spotlight Initiative, which aims to eliminate violence against women and girls. Specifically, amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code were endorsed to improve protection for the survivors of domestic
violence and enforce the implementation of protection orders. Provisions were recommended to the new Gender Equality Strategy 2021-2030, integrating innovative approaches that will allow for transformative change and help accelerate the achievement of gender equality in the country. Furthermore, a nationwide holistic review of legislative and policy frameworks on violence against women and girls and women’s rights was conducted in consultation with CSOs and the Government. This review contributed to identifying legal inconsistencies, loopholes and discriminatory provisions related to gender equality, child marriage and violence against women and girls. Moreover, the findings of this review are expected to inform possible legal amendments and improve the legal protection and safety of women and girls and survivors of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV).

A comprehensive assessment of the situation was conducted within the Spotlight Initiative to understand the capacities of relevant actors, the factors that influence the creation of a one-stop crisis centre for victims of violence, ensure high-level support from related state agencies and to sustainably institutionalise violence response. A number of recommendations were developed and presented to the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic.

As part of its capacity development work on gender equality, UNODC provided training for 20 young women from Fergana Valley on gender equality, civic engagement, leadership and professional development. Furthermore, a new function was introduced to a previously developed, mobile application “My community policing officer”, which improved response to gender-based violence and created an interactive communication system between police and citizens. An integrated specific emergency call function facilitates a direct call to police in cases of gender-based violence (GBV), based on an interactive map for urgent responses to GBV cases.

To promote data disaggregation by gender for statistical purposes, UNODC supported the development and introduction of statistical forms in the Unified Register of Crimes and Misdemeanours on gender-related crimes. These forms have been introduced to improve the collection of gender-disaggregated data with an emphasis on a detailed description of the victim and the perpetrator of different types of GBV.

In Kyrgyzstan, within the Spotlight Initiative, technical support was provided to the Ministry of Social development and labour to develop an algorithm for a multi-sectoral response to GBV. Emergency GBV Mobile Groups were established, which include police officers, health, social workers and psychologists. These experts worked together to effectively address gender-based violence cases during the lockdown.

To ensure that UNODC ROCA staff fully understands the basics of gender equality and the empowerment of women, and are better able to mainstream gender issues into thematic areas of work, special training was organised in February 2020. Moreover, staff were introduced to up-to-date information on how the UN is promoting accountability through the UN System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, along with the UNOV/UNODC Strategy for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. The interactive training finished with the development of recommendations on how to further promote gender issues through UNODC programmes and advocate for gender equality and the empowerment of women among different stakeholders.
Healthy and Resilient Youth: Building a Culture of Lawfulness

UNODC ROCA youth initiatives in the region, where youth constitute around 60 per cent of the population, aim to connect young people from around the region and empower them to become active in their schools, communities and youth groups, for crime prevention, substance use prevention, and health promotion. UNODC ROCA establishes different platforms for youth to share their experiences, ideas and creativity, and to get support for creating their own crime prevention, substance use prevention, and health promotion activities. UNODC is committed to empowering youth and ensuring youth engagement at all levels. In its youth initiatives, UNODC consults with the global UN youth strategy, Youth Agenda, as well as UNODC mandate. Close collaboration with UN agencies, international organisations and government institutions has been established in order to complement the ongoing youth activities.

UNODC promoted the year 2020 as the year of healthy lifestyle and sports. Following COVID-19 imposed quarantine measures, UNODC facilitated a series of activities, including a Sport Challenge “Line-Up, Live-Up! Stay Home and Stay with Sports”. This sport challenge aimed to promote sports as a tool to build life skills, instil positive values and build resilience to difficult situations, including anxiety and stress as a result of confinement during the COVID-19 crisis in Central Asia.

In Kazakhstan, UNODC partnered with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Street Law Project of the Public Foundation “Association of Students of Shaikenov” to organise a series of webinars on youth crime prevention and the use of education for justice tools in the daily work of police officers. The three training sessions involved 166 juvenile police officers.

From across all regions of Kazakhstan, 36 teachers participated in a webinar to showcase UNODC’s educational tools which aim to promote a culture of lawfulness. The webinar formed part of a course on human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals led by the Eurasian Centre for Legal and Economic Research of NARXOZ University.

In Kazakhstan, a nationwide TV broadcast of the Zorbs animation cartoon was used to promote E4J educational tools and advocate for a culture of lawfulness among the mass population and reach children from an early age. The broadcast of the Zorbs animation cartoon reached over 500 thousand viewers.

“...such webinars are very important to raise awareness on crimes among youth and adolescents. Despite the general decrease in the crime rate among youth and adolescents for the last few years, there is still a risk of them committing serious and grave crimes. That is why it is necessary to work out additional measures to stabilise the crime situation. I maintain that this will contribute to the enhancement of the professional level and qualification of juvenile police officers. Our officers are interested in the innovations provided by UNODC.”

Mr. Rustem Kuttybaev, representative of the office of juvenile police and protection of women against violence of the Committee of the Administrative Police of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Kazakhstan.
In the Kyrgyz Republic, UNODC’s ‘Line Up, Live Up’ youth life skills training programme was introduced into the secondary school curriculum. Experts and 68 staff from the Ministry of Education completed a training of trainers. UNODC distributed training manuals among 2,000 schools benefitting at least 100,000 school children across the country.

In the context of COVID-19, an online sports challenge reached over 700 girls and boys across the country to encourage sports as a tool to build resilience. A chess tournament with the Chess Federation of the Kyrgyz Republic elicited participation from the most disadvantaged populations, including children with disabilities and those lacking parental care, ensuring that no one is left behind.

In Kyrgyzstan and Armenia, UNODC partnered with the American Councils for International Education to launch a ‘Justice Accelerators’ programme, developed under UNODC’s Education for Justice (E4J) initiative. The programme developed the knowledge of upper secondary students (aged 16-18) on social entrepreneurship and IT to address rule of law challenges.

In Uzbekistan, UNODC partnered with the Academy of the General Prosecutor’s Office to conduct an urban safety governance assessment, focusing on one district of the capital city Tashkent. With a draft report ready by the end of the year, this is expected to lead to the implementation of new crime prevention initiatives and training of practitioners in 2021. The planning of a victimisation survey which targets the Fergana Valley has also been started.

Over 20,000 people in Uzbekistan, young and old, joined a challenge initiated by the Ministry of Physical Culture and Sports and UNODC to show how they use sports and physical activity to cope
with stress during the COVID-19 pandemic. Videos were produced and shared on social media, national television and other media platforms, and these reached an audience of over 1.5 million. This is continuing as an ongoing national initiative.

In Uzbekistan, 42 sports coaches, psychologists and social workers completed specialised training in order to deliver UNODC's "Line Up, Live Up" life skills programme to 440 school students. UNODC launched a public awareness-raising campaign based on five public service advertisements, to prevent crime and build resilience among youth through sports. The videos were included in multimedia applications used as part of the national secondary school curriculum, reaching more than one million young people.

In close cooperation with the Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan, UNODC's The Zorbs video series were introduced into the country's primary school curriculum so that all two million children aged 6 to 12 attending primary school in Uzbekistan will have access to this informative educational tool to promote a culture of lawfulness.

In Uzbekistan, UNODC supported the formation of a team of experts and representatives of the Youth Affairs Agency to coordinate dialogue platforms for youth. Upon relaxation of COVID-19 related travel and meeting restrictions, UNODC facilitated the first dialogue platforms for more than 400 young women and men in the Fergana Valley. These young politicians, civil society activists, young entrepreneurs and students discussed development challenges and their role in addressing these.
In Uzbekistan, UNODC worked with the Youth Affairs Agency, the Youth Entrepreneurship Support Centre and IT Park (an organisation promoting start-ups), to launch online initiatives and promote the use of new technologies for civic engagement. Using the existing U-report digital platform for youth engagement, UNODC conducted a survey among over 6,000 young women and men (39 per cent female). Based on the survey, the project launched a hackathon which gave 64 motivated young women and men the opportunity to learn the basics of programming and receive mentoring support to develop their IT knowledge and skills. They, in turn, used these skills to come up with innovative technology-based solutions to promote social cohesion and rule of law, with a focus on the prevention of violence and corruption and the promotion of entrepreneurship (priorities, according to youth surveys).

Noting the importance of new and innovative ways to reach children in the classroom, the Deputy Minister of Public Education, Dilshod Kenjaev, commented, “Together with UNODC, we are presenting a new educational tool, the Zorbs, which has been included in the primary curricula of Uzbekistan. We hope that the Zorbs will help prevent children from being involved in crime, provide them with an interactive way of learning, and raise their interest in the educational process.”

Following the relaxation of COVID-19 measures and the lifting of restrictions on internal travel, UNODC completed four missions to Uzbekistan’s Fergana Valley to meet with local authorities, representatives of the Youth Affairs Agency and other stakeholders, to discuss the establishment of youth hubs/centres. The agreement was reached to establish a media centre at the youth union’s premises in Fergana city and a new youth hub in Namangan city, with planned facilities to provide youth (including those who are not in education and not in employment) with new opportunities for vocational training.
In Uzbekistan, UNODC met with local authorities, local heads of police, representatives of the newly created Ministry of Mahalla and Family Affairs and other stakeholders to discuss crime prevention priorities in the Fergana Valley. The agreement was reached among main counterparts to support the implementation of the “Safe Mahalla” concept and promote youth participation in related initiatives.

In Tajikistan, UNODC implemented a ‘Choose Sport’ campaign with youth contests and a series of training events to promote understanding of the benefits of sport in building life skills and pro-social behaviour. The campaign engaged over 500 young people, teachers and parents. A roundtable discussion on the use of sport to counter youth violence and promote crime prevention brought together over 20 representatives from the Government, civil society and the UN, as well as trainers, school managers and teachers involved in piloting Line Up, Live Up in secondary schools across Tajikistan.

A webinar for Central Asian practitioners facilitated sharing of experiences on youth crime prevention initiatives, and discussed the role of positive parenting as a tool to prevent violence and crime and support positive youth development.

At least 30 tertiary level educators from 12 universities in Central Asia continued championing UNODC’s E4J modules. Four webinars brought together Central Asian teachers to promote teaching on crime prevention and criminal justice within the education system.

Two regional level awareness-raising campaigns were launched. One encouraged Russian-speaking students of all ages to use their artistic creativity to show how they are overcoming stress and staying positive during the COVID-19 pandemic. Another, for the professional community of teachers/psychologists and educators in Central Asia, helped share best practices in promoting a culture of lawfulness in schools.
UNODC also got youth throughout the region widely involved in the promotion of UN days, World Drugs Day, Anti-Corruption Day and World Day against Trafficking in Persons to raise their awareness on these issues. These campaigns engaged more than 5,500 young people through thematic contests and online events.

An **E4J** campaign engaged primary students in Central Asia with the aim of overcoming stress and focusing on positive future perspectives during challenging times when social and physical distancing forces many people to stay at home for an extended period. The best ten competition entries (out of 25 received) are available on the official UNODC E4J website: [https://www.unodc.org/e4j/ru/primary/fun-corner/thezorbs/competition.html](https://www.unodc.org/e4j/ru/primary/fun-corner/thezorbs/competition.html). UNODC also shared the best works through official social media platforms. The authors of winning works were awarded with an E4J certificate of gratitude and symbolic encouragement prizes. The purpose of the campaign was for students to gain new knowledge about basic human values, sharing their visions of the world after the COVID-19 pandemic and what positive changes they expect in society.

[Link to competition entries.](https://www.unodc.org/e4j/ru/primary/fun-corner/thezorbs/competition.html)
In her childhood, Shakhnoza Mirzayeva was always active: dancing, drawing, knitting – her mom really paid attention to her early development and learning.

“At the time, I used to dream of becoming a doctor,” says Shakhnoza, “however, at the age of ten, I had a serious railway accident and doctors were forced to amputate part of my leg. Somebody told me then that I would not be able to pass the medical examination to become a doctor. Now I know it’s not true, but back then it made me give up on my dream.”

Shakhnoza’s rehabilitation took around one year.

“As soon as I got used to my prosthetic, I wanted to continue my active lifestyle: I went back to school, despite some injuries, learnt to ride a bike again, and played with the neighbourhood kids,” she says.
Stand up and start training

Shakhnoza remembers her physical education teacher from back then with special gratitude:

“I felt odd being back to school, and during my first gym class after the accident and I just sat in the corner trying not to be noticed. But the teacher came up to me saying ‘Why are you sitting down? Go and change and start training’ as if she didn’t even notice the change in me.”

Thanks to that teacher’s support and motivation, Shakhnoza discovered her aptitude for sports and started playing basketball but she didn’t join the Paralympic basketball team, since it was wheelchair only. Later, another teacher suggested to Shakhnoza that she try sport shooting. She liked it and decided to go professional. This lasted for three years.

“Since I had to stand and shoot for ninety minutes in a row every day, it involved a lot of pressure on my legs and I was in a lot of pain. It was too hard,” she explains. “So when someone approached me talking about the paracanoe and offered to let me try out canoeing, I agreed. After some thought and practice, I chose the paracanoe.”

Big sport

“My first big moment was in 2016. I got to participate in the Asian Open Canoeing Championship. There was only one other competitor. I obviously came second, but with a very small time difference. My trainer hadn’t had any expectations from a novice like myself, and he was pleasantly surprised with my result. This first big experience inspired me to go further.

My studies, my family, friends, everything besides sports, was put into the background. A life focused on sport. Ever since then, I have lived at the sports base, I have had to travel from one training camp to another, I have spent all my time training. At first, my mom used to miss me, call me, ask me when I would come home. Now she is just surprised when I come to visit,” says Shakhnoza, laughing.

“In 2017, I went to the Czech Republic for my first World Championship. My trainer assured me again that there were no expectations and it was just a good opportunity to challenge myself. Without a trainer, in a different country, at a big international sport event, I felt a bit anxious, but on the first day, I ended up among the finalists, most of whom were Paralympic Games medalists. During the final race, I came second. It was a good achievement and I realised that this was what I was going to do, and do better,” says Shakhnoza with determination in her eyes. It’s clear that she likes to challenge herself, especially when nobody expects that much of her.

In 2019, Shakhnoza won gold in the Canoe Sprint World Championship in Hungary and started training for Tokyo 2020, which was delayed to 2021 due to the pandemic.
Sports during the pandemic

“It has been frustrating and psychologically difficult for many reasons. I was waiting until after the games to get some surgery for a shoulder injury, plus, I had been training hard for the games and the lockdown situation left that all hanging in the air. Also, obviously, there are not as many opportunities for canoeing in Uzbekistan as somewhere with a bigger water area – which means the time has worked against me. We have had online videoconference communication with a trainer, but it’s not the same, of course.”

What motivates me

“When I feel it is getting difficult for me to wake up and drag myself to a training session, I watch sports movies, or I read ‘Life without borders’ by Nick Vujicic. My big source of inspiration is my mom, who has always been there for me. Though strict at times, she did her best to teach me to stand up every time I fell and to go further ahead.”

What is sport

“Sport has become my life. I have been in sports for 10 years. I even decided to get my bachelor’s degree in sport. It suits me. I know how to persevere. It is what I do.”
Plans

“All my attention, my thoughts, efforts and plans are revolving around the Olympic Games which should take place in September.”

Line Up, Live Up

“This is a wonderful initiative for every young person, especially ones like me searching for meaning. I loved the idea and was happy to be part of the promo campaign. I just wish all kids knew they need to take sport seriously. Sports is like a treasure chest that can give us many skills; it makes us resilient, it makes us strong, it makes us persistent, it forms our character. It positively affects other aspects of life as well. I found my life’s meaning through sport and I am happy about it.”

Message to myself

“During the hardest time of my life, I used to think over and over in my head what my life would be like if my tragedy had never happened to me. But now as I have got older and wiser, I can say with confidence that I do not regret that day a single bit. What happened made me who I am, gave me the right impulse, directed me to the right path, which I am not sure I would have found if I had never had to survive that accident. Sports gave me a second and maybe better chance in life. Today I am honored to be the World Champion. I feel that I have found my purpose and I never look back, only forward.”
Access to Justice and Due Process

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development features access to justice in Target 16.3. This Goal is about promoting the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensuring equal access to justice for all. Access to justice for all is a key element of peaceful, just and inclusive societies and a precondition for substantive equality, human rights and sustainable development.

In the region, UNODC assists the national institutions to develop legislation that will allow the criminal justice system to function independently, impartially, and with integrity, to uphold human rights standards and norms. In particular, UNODC assistance focuses on the adoption of new legislation and revision of existing legislation on criminal justice, anticorruption, penitentiary reform, prevention of violent extremism, trafficking in persons and legal aid.

In 2020, UNODC produced a number of policy papers and supported a range of events and dialogue platforms on criminal justice reform to assist the national authorities to move forward the development of new criminal, criminal procedure and criminal executive legislation. UNODC facilitated expert analysis and expert group discussions on penal legislation to cover the issues of trafficking in persons, corruption, torture, access to defence, plea bargaining and judicial oversight in a criminal investigation.

UNODC cooperated with the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR/OSCE) and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in 2020 to organise an online expert meeting “Criminal Justice in Central Asia: Recent Developments, Challenges and Impact of COVID-19 pandemic”, which gathered some 100 policymakers, criminal justice practitioners, civil society and academia from Central Asian countries to discuss the state of criminal justice reforms in the region.

The Criminal Justice Forum for Central Asia is a recurring event, organised every two years by ODIHR/OSCE together with UNODC, OHCHR and other partners. The Eighth Forum was scheduled to take place in November 2020. However, due to the global pandemic, it was postponed to 2021. The online expert meeting served as a bridge between in-person forums.

In Kyrgyzstan, institutional capacity building of the Bar Association was supported to provide pro-bono (free) legal services to victims of trafficking in persons (TIP) through the establishment of a network of 33 trained lawyers (22 female). It included specialisation in human trafficking cases and strengthening coordination and partnerships with law enforcement, judicial authorities and non-governmental organisations in line with a Memorandum of Cooperation facilitated by UNODC. The network of lawyers trained to specialise in human trafficking cases is expected to serve at least 200 people in 2021, who will be provided with free legal aid related to trafficking in persons.
In **Uzbekistan**, UNODC supported the development of new criminal legislation to promote an effective, fair and accountable justice system. Work advanced on a new draft Criminal, Criminal Procedure and Criminal Executive Code, a total of 10 expert discussions were facilitated, and support was provided to the responsible interagency working group. Moreover, UNODC supported expert discussion on the draft Law on legal aid through a written commentary and a roundtable among relevant stakeholders. The draft Law is going through a government approval process and awaits submission to Parliament. UNODC signed a joint workplan with the Chamber of Advocates and facilitated the work of an expert working group tasked with reforming the bar and developing the legal profession. This resulted in the creation of a strategic concept for the development of the bar, which awaits official endorsement. UNODC coordinated the development of a policy paper that gathered expert input from a wide range of partners, including OSCE, OHCHR and the International Commission of Jurists.

In Uzbekistan, as part of a joint initiative with UNDP and UNESCO to promote youth development and social cohesion under the UN Peacebuilding Fund, UNODC partnered with the Youth Affairs Agency and the State University of Law to train 20 young lawyers on the provision of legal aid to young people in the Fergana valley. As part of this initiative, UNODC opened three new legal clinics on the premises of youth unions in Fergana, Andijan and Namangan cities. With the Department of Justice, the Youth Affairs Agency drafted a memorandum of understanding to facilitate the functioning of the clinics, which will involve university and college law students, giving them the opportunity to support the clinics’ work. Under close supervision, over 60 law students are expected to complete internships at the clinics on an annual basis.
Youth-run legal clinics:
growing by helping others

“Whoever you become, make sure you are helpful to your society. That’s what my father used to tell me” says Abdulbosit Sobirxonov, Head of the Youth Policy Integration Department at the regional section of the Agency for Youth Affairs in Namangan, Uzbekistan. His parents always created the conditions for him and his siblings to learn, recognising the importance of receiving an education and making your own choices.

“My mother used to wake me up saying ‘Wake up, big boss, great deeds are waiting for you’. She gave me the inspiration and energy I needed to grow and try to be helpful to my family, neighbours, my community.”

Abdulbosit holds a Master’s Degree from the Pedagogical University and is pursuing his doctoral degree in Philosophy. Now aged 29, Abdulbosit has worked as a school teacher, in different positions at the Youth Union and now the Youth Affairs Agency. He is currently coordinating the work of a new legal clinic, opened in late 2020 within the framework of the joint UN (UNODC-UNDP-UNESCO) project “Youth for social harmony in the Ferghana Valley” funded by the UN Peacebuilding Fund.

How it works

“Young people turn to our Agency with diverse queries. They need advice on marriage issues, entrepreneurship, credit procedures and so on.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, digital technologies have allowed us to keep in touch with youth online. We use telegram bots through which young people can easily contact us. With the number of queries growing, we felt there was a shortage of capacity to provide legal advice on a range of issues. This is where the joint UN project came in. With support from UNODC and the Ministry of Justice, we launched three new legal clinics - one in each region of the Ferghana Valley: Andijan, Ferghana and Namangan.”

The clinic in Namangan is located in the Youth Center building. Equipped and operationalised with support from UNODC, the clinic’s work is based on a Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Youth Affairs Agency and the Regional Department of the Ministry of Justice. It is open from nine in the morning to six in the evening and accepts visitors regardless of their age, ethnicity or gender on a free-of-charge basis. Queries received in person or online are registered, assessed and processed by staff and volunteers in close consultation with experts from local Justice departments and lawyers.
"Before we opened our legal clinic, the joint UN project gave us an opportunity to learn about the systematic assessment of legal queries in a practical workshop where we were taught the legal ethics and interviewing basics: listening, fact analysis, and identifying the legal issue at hand, as well as client counselling and preparation of documents. This new knowledge and skills is now helping us to organise our work and handle all queries in an appropriate manner," says Abdulbosit.

He adds:

"Since the opening of the legal clinic in late October, we have processed 190 queries. With our help, seven applicants were able to get bank loans, 47 received social assistance, 19 got access to psychological assistance. We received 50 per cent of our clients in person, the other half online. In fact, if clear information on applicable legislation was available and accessible, most of these queries would not come our way. It is a matter of showing people where to find the answers they are looking for. We need to think how to make legal information more widely available and accessible for everyone."

**Personal growth and job satisfaction**

The legal clinic offers young people like Abdulbosit an opportunity to gain valuable work experience and benefit from guidance by experienced lawyers.

"Personally, I have always loved puzzles," he says. "When people come with their issues, you feel that the solution is always out there like the lost piece of a puzzle. In most cases, it is simply the right legal information – it is there, you only need to find and share it, and then the picture comes together. The feeling I get when I find a way to help someone resolve their issue is priceless. No material remuneration can make you feel that good. I believe that this kind of job satisfaction is what should drive leaders in their efforts to meet the needs of the people."

**Future plans**

There are plans to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the newly opened Law Faculty at the Namangan State University. This will allow the legal clinic to serve as a platform for law students to put their knowledge into practice and gain work experience with appropriate quality control provided by the Law Faculty. According to Abdulbosit, outreach campaigns are a good way to disseminate legal information more widely among the population, to make sure they know what to do and who to turn to for help.
The diagram below demonstrates the total percentage of appeals from citizens:

**Diagram 1. The relevance of appeals to the law in %**

- Civil law: 50%
- Criminal law: 10%
- Business law: 5%
- Labor law: 5%
- Other: 10%

The applicants' structure is quite diverse: around one-third are youth, another one-third are unemployed citizens. Single mothers and retired people also make up about one-third of applicants. Ten percent of those who address legal clinic services were people with disabilities (See diagram 2).

Scientific-practical seminar on discussion of the draft Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Free Legal Aid”
Through expert support and policy advice, UNODC contributed to the overarching objective of the 2030 Agenda: to leave no one behind. In particular, assistance was provided in the development of the Law on Free Legal Aid in Uzbekistan, which is expected to be adopted. The Handbook on Ensuring the Quality of Legal Aid Services in Criminal Justice Processes was presented to criminal justice practitioners to serve as another useful resource during the development and further implementation of Uzbekistan’s legal aid law with a view to establishing an independent legal aid body and adopting quality control measures for legal aid.
Corruption is a complex social, political and economic phenomenon that affects all countries. Corruption undermines democratic institutions, slows economic development and contributes to governmental instability. Despite the fact that the Central Asian countries are demonstrating progress in the fight against corruption (Fig.1, 2), significant efforts are required to strengthen the anti-corruption institutional environment, improve the effectiveness of regulatory mechanisms and public services delivery, and to further promote a culture of zero-tolerance to corruption. As a guardian of the UN Convention against corruption, UNODC ROCA focuses on the provision of technical assistance, capacity building and advisory support to law enforcement agencies specialised in prevention and countering corruption.

Within the “Enhancing the capacity of civil society on good governance in Central Asia” UNODC Initiative, funded by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, civil society organisations from Central Asian countries joined the international framework in the fight against corruption.

In November 2020, the first Multi-Stakeholder Workshop on the United Nations Convention against Corruption and its Review Mechanism for Central Asia took place in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. It engaged 108 representatives of civil society organisations (CSOs), including 45 female participants, the private sector and public institutions from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. This workshop contributed to enhancing participants’ knowledge of the Convention and its Review Mechanism, including entry points for CSOs. The Central Asian CSOs and public agencies that participated in the workshop increased their knowledge about the UNCAC and the review mechanism and enhanced their capacity to engage more effectively in the second review cycle.

In December 2020, UNODC was a co-organiser of the VI International Anti-corruption conference, “Towards integrity: increasing transparency, accountability and participation” in Almaty, Kazakhstan. UNODC reinstated its readiness to assist member states to eliminate corruption and other challenges of criminality, such as drug trafficking and terrorism, and to establish a rule of law within its mandates for the betterment of communities.

In Uzbekistan, UNODC in cooperation with the Academy of the General Prosecutor’s Office, gathered 25 CSO representatives and academics in a training conference on the assessment of anti-corruption legislation and its alignment with UNCAC. The event strengthened the participants’ knowledge and skills in these areas and contributed to building a bigger pool of individuals who possess knowledge on the UNCAC and its implementation review mechanism.

Moreover, UNODC supported the newly established Anticorruption Agency of the Republic of Uzbekistan through comprehensive analytical and expert support to establish the Agency’s Public Council. UNODC provided recommendations and guidance on the establishment of the Public Council as a means to engaging civil society and the private sector in anti-corruption activities.
As a part of efforts to increase the engagement of civil society in the fight against corruption, UNODC supported the Academy of the General Prosecutor's Office, Development Strategy Centre and “Yuksalish” National Movement, in the establishment of the Alliance of academic and civic society institutions against corruption. As a result of the consultancy and organisational support provided by UNODC, the establishment of the Alliance was announced on 27 November 2020, at an international conference. The conference, titled “The Role of Applied Research in Anti-Corruption: Issues of Interaction between the Academic Community and Civil Society Institutions” was hosted by the Academy of the General Prosecutor's Office, Development Strategy Centre and “Yuksalish” National Movement. Awareness-raising, corruption monitoring, research and analysis are among the key roles of the Anti-Corruption Alliance, as is uniting academia and civil society institutions against corruption. UNODC remains committed to supporting the work of the Alliance’s Secretariat and CSO initiatives promoted within the Alliance framework.

As part of UNODC’s Global Education for Justice Initiative (E4J), pilot interventions were facilitated to build a culture of lawfulness among children and youth. This initiative provided age-appropriate educational materials on topics related to rule of law and integrity to schools in the Karakalpakstan and Khorezm region of Uzbekistan, and involved 20 police inspectors.
In **Kazakhstan**, overall, 119 criminal justice practitioners and other stakeholders (41 female) took part in webinars to promote a culture of lawfulness. The participants included practitioners from all territorial divisions of the Anti-corruption agency of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The webinars aimed to promote the utilisation of E4J tools in Kazakh schools during “Integrity Hours”.

In **Tajikistan** and **Turkmenistan** UNODC is developing a plan of action on UNCAC implementation and engagement with civic society to fight corruption. In 2021, an anti-corruption advisor will join the UNODC ROCA team to expand analytical and advisory support on UNCAC implementation to all countries in the Central Asian region.
Penitentiary Reform and Prevention of Radicalisation to Violence in Prisons

UNODC is the global custodian of the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners – the Nelson Mandela Rules. In 2020, UNODC promoted its e-learning online course on the Nelson Mandela Rules among the prison administrations of the Central Asian countries. The course consists of an introduction, five substantive modules, and a final assessment. Successful participants are awarded a certificate of accomplishment upon completion of the course. Each substantive module consists of a theoretical and a practical part, the latter exposing the participant to specific prison management scenarios in the form of interactive videos. Resource sections throughout the course provide references to more in-depth technical guidance material.

Central Asian states have expressed strong interest in the UNODC e-learning course on the Nelson Mandela Rules. In Kazakhstan, 2,272 prison and probation officers, as well as members of the National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture, successfully completed the course. Prison authorities in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan asked UNODC to translate the e-learning course on the Nelson Mandela Rules into their local languages to further institutionalise and roll out the course within national prison staff training curricula.

Acknowledging that prisons can serve as potential incubators for radicalisation to violence and terrorist recruitment, UNODC provided technical assistance to Kazakhstan. The assistance aimed to strengthen the capacity of the prison service to effectively manage violent extremist prisoners, including returned foreign terrorist fighters prisoners, to prevent radicalisation to violence in prisons and to implement post-release support and supervision.
To develop the capacity of prison staff, UNODC helped set up a new Prison Staff Training Centre on preventing extremism in prisons. The centre, which is based at the Kostanay Police Academy, will host in-service training on the management of violent extremist prisoners for prison officers from across the country.

UNODC supported training of trainers for national trainers from the Kostanay Police Academy to facilitate a shift to online training during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, in 2020, over 200 prison officers benefited from capacity development activities at the new Training Centre, studying three training modules targeted at prison psychologists, inspectors focusing on prevention, and security officers. These modules, which are derived from UNODC’s Handbook on the Management of Violent Extremist Prisoners and the Prevention of Radicalization to Violence in Prisons, were adapted to the training curriculum for prison officers at the Kostanay Police Academy.

To ensure tailored awareness-raising for prisoners and transparent communication channels with the general public during the COVID-19 pandemic, UNODC organised a three-week online training for some 30 prison officer/media focal points from prison departments from all 17 regions of Kazakhstan. The training will enhance their communication skills and promote openness and transparency in the work of the prison system.

In Kazakhstan, UNODC provided expert support to the development and piloting of a prison security audit framework, including a related checklist and reporting guidelines. In 2020, UNODC also enhanced the capacity of 107 prison officers and other practitioners through webinars on prison security audit, dynamic security and prison intelligence.

In Kazakhstan, UNODC facilitated the development of a new tool for the implementation and operation of an effective, evidence-based and human rights-compliant system of prisoner classification. This resulted in the piloting of a new prisoner classification framework in eight prisons of Karaganda and Pavlodar regions, and included a risk and needs assessment tool. Participants who enhanced their skills on the application of the new tools, which are awaiting official endorsement, included 72 prison staff, other law enforcement officers and trainers of national police training institutions.

In Kazakhstan, UNODC launched a sociological survey on the main reasons for radicalisation to violence in prisons, in partnership with the Prison Committee and Kostanay Police Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Kazakhstan. In addition, UNODC conducted a situational analysis of prison-based rehabilitation and post-release social reintegration programmes for prisoners, including violent extremist prisoners, in eight pilot prisons in Karaganda and Pavlodar regions. Based on the findings and recommendations of the analysis, UNODC will work together with the Prison Committee to promote a multi-stakeholder approach to the social reintegration of prisoners after release, including violent extremist and returned foreign terrorist fighter prisoners. The approach will include active engagement from civil society.

“An objective and evidence-based classification system is a significant factor in protecting the human rights of prisoners and in ensuring transparent and accountable prison management. This is particularly relevant for those convicted of extremism-related offences who may be subjected to very high-security levels as a default in the absence of a structured and valid assessment of their risks and needs.”

Andrea Moser, Ph.D., C.Psych, UNODC Consultant.
“Somebody has to do it, why not me?”

Bibigul’s story

“I am a teacher-psychologist and a lawyer by education. I started my career in the penal system at the age of 30 as an ordinary prison officer, became a junior lieutenant, and now I am a lieutenant-colonel of justice,” says Bibigul.

Bibigul has come a long way in her career: she worked as a psychologist, as a squad head, an inspector of an inmate labour organisation in a secure correctional facility, and as a chief specialist on educational socio-psychological work among prisoners in the Department. Then she took up a senior position in a female prison, as the Deputy head of the prison, responsible for educational work. Now she is Head of Department in the headquarters of the Prison Committee of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Her work experience across various levels of the penal system gives her an in-depth knowledge of all the practical aspects of the penitentiary system, and this helps her to cope successfully with her duties.

“When the pandemic began, I worked in a female prison, and the enormous burden of responsibility for the health of those...
serving their sentences was the greatest challenge. It was encouraging to see that every prison officer felt this responsibility and that sanitary and hygienic norms were carefully followed, which helped to prevent illness and protect prisoners. One of the advantages of the innovations that came with the pandemic is that online working, using video conferencing, is intensively entering our daily activities. The online format means there is no need for passes and other formalities so it has become much easier for us to organise various kinds of educational activities within the prison facilities. Today we are increasingly using video lectures for inmates," Bibigul says.

Bibigul believes that a person should follow their passions.

"I enjoy my work and feel the responsibility and need to pass on my experience to younger prison officers," she comments.

"My family is always supportive; at first they were scared to let me go, but I said: 'Somebody has to do it, why not me?' Now they understand and respect my choice. This is a great credit to my father, who always said: 'Daughter, life is yours, do what gives you pleasure! This is the maxim I follow. One of the challenges of work for me is safety, for example, when working in a maximum-security prison facility (although the issue of safety remains just as important for men). In addition, there haven't been many female predecessors in our system, and every day you feel almost like a pioneer," says Bibigul.

In 2020, the Prison Committee of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, in cooperation with the UNODC, launched an online course on the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, the "Nelson Mandela Rules", upon completion of which an international standard certificate is granted. At that time, Bibigul was working as the Deputy Head of a female prison. She passed the course and explained the importance of the training materials, and the motivation given to prison officers by officially handing out the certificates. To date, 2,562 employees from Kazakhstan's penal system (of whom 32 per cent are women) have successfully completed the online course on the Nelson Mandela Rules. At the Prison Committee's request, UNODC is helping to translate the course into the Kazakh language.

"This is very useful work, which helps share knowledge on the international standards of treatment of prisoners, improve conditions in institutions and motivates prison officers to improve their skills," says Bibigul. "I can note many positive changes in my practice as a result of the online courses on the Nelson Mandela Rules at the legislative level. Respectful treatment of prisoners on a mandatory basis; introduction of an electronic system of appeals/requests; reduction of time spent in solitary confinement; implementation of cell-based confinement practice in eight penitentiary institutions of Kazakhstan, as well as increasing the norms of individual living space for prisoners. Most importantly, this course was relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic, when traditional forms of training for prison staff were rapidly transferred to an online format."

NOTE: The Prison Committee of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan is being implemented jointly with the United Nations' Global Programme on "Supporting the management of violent extremist prisoners and prevention of radicalisation to violence in prisons", which is implemented by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT) in partner-
ship with the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate with the financial support from the European Union, the Government of the Netherlands, and UNCCT. The programme aims to strengthen the capacity of Kazakhstan’s prison system to (i) prevent the spread of violent extremism in the prison context in a timely manner and to (ii) ensure effective management of violent extremist prisoners.

Among her short-term plans, Bibigul mentions the development of new prison-based rehabilitation programmes for violent extremist prisoners, based on new individual risks and needs assessment system format. The results of the risks and needs assessment will allow prison officers to develop individualised sentence planning, taking into account needs for further rehabilitation and social reintegration upon release.

“Within the framework of the joint UN Programme, activities are underway to improve the qualifications of three categories of prison staff, i.e. prison psychologists, prison security officers, and PVE inspectors. They are the ‘main nexus’ in working with violent extremist prisoners. Within the framework of the joint UN programme, we covered eight pilot prison facilities with different security levels (reaching out over 100 violent extremist prisoners), ranging from low to maximum security levels, including a female prison. The prison officers in the pilot prison facilities passed the necessary retraining courses, and their working conditions were improved by renovating and equipping their premises. But it is also important to note that vocational training classes for prisoners in the pilot prison facilities were also supplied with equipment for the employment of prisoners, both within the prison and after release,” says Bibigul.

“Even though I am comparatively new in my current position, I would like to note that the work carried out by the joint UN programme, especially related to education, is already yielding results, for which I express great gratitude on behalf of the Prison Committee. In parallel, we are currently working on several components of the joint UN programme, including a sociological survey on the main reasons for radicalisation of prisoners, a prisoner classification system and a prison security audit. There are many plans for the future, and we will work for results.”
In Kyrgyzstan, authorities adopted a new Law on amnesty, which was developed with UNODC expert support. This law was well-timed to reduce the risk of a COVID-19 outbreak, and in 2020, led to the sentences of 527 prisoners being reduced and 44 prisoners who had been convicted for less serious crimes being released. UNODC also provided the Prison Service in Kyrgyzstan with surgical masks, glucometers, disinfectant liquids, and protective gowns to strengthen COVID-19 preparedness.

In Kyrgyzstan, UNODC launched three new prison-based rehabilitation programmes focusing on shoemaking and sewing. Rolled out as part of the Doha Declaration Global Programme, the new facilities will train 100 female and male prisoners annually, providing them with viable skills and certification ahead of their release.

UNODC continued providing support for the prevention of radicalisation to violence in prisons and probation settings in Kyrgyzstan. More than 350 violent extremist prisoners were engaged in various social rehabilitation programmes including psychological support, legal aid, social and medical services, vocational training and employment opportunities. A call centre previously established by the Prison Service continued to receive approximately 50 phone calls and 20 visits daily, and provided information and legal advice to families of prisoners and other visitors.

In 2020, UNODC launched a Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighter (FTF) Detention Programme in Kyrgyzstan based on a country work plan signed with the Prison Service and Ministry of Justice of the Kyrgyz Republic. Thanks to support provided under this programme, 23 prison officers increased their knowledge of prisoner risk assessment and classification during two webinars. A working group established by the Prison Service finalised and started piloting a new electronic risk and needs assessment and classification system.

A three-day seminar on prison security management, with a focus on violent extremist and FTF prisoners, reached 24 prison officers in the Kyrgyz Republic. UNODC supported the establishment of a CCTV monitoring system in one of the main prisons accommodating violent extremist and FTF prisoners. Another webinar gathered 25 prison officers working with violent extremist and
FTF prisoners, as well as staff from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, to discuss dynamic security and prison-related intelligence sharing.

UNODC supported the capacity development of the newly established Probation Service under the Ministry of Justice of the Kyrgyz Republic. The increased focus on the application of alternatives to incarceration has resulted in a reduction of the prison population, reducing from 10,891 in 2019, to 9,400 as of September 2020. UNODC supported the Coordination Council on probation, which adopted a roadmap for 2020. The Probation Department under the Ministry of Justice established an Expert Working Group to adapt the above-mentioned risk and needs assessment tools to the needs of probation clients.

With UNODC technical support, the authorities opened eight probation offices in Chui, Osh, Zhalal-Abad and Batken regions which employ 48 probation staff, including 31 women. The offices were equipped with modern office supplies, creating a favourable working atmosphere for the probation staff, who serve over 4,200 probation clients registered in these regions. As part of the collaboration with the newly established Probation Service, UNODC trained 83 probation officers in 2020.

In Tajikistan, UNODC handed over new alarm systems to the prisons of Khujand and Vahdat to improve prison security management and ensure a safe and humane prison environment. To support COVID-19 preparedness in Tajikistan, UNODC provided 16 hospital beds to prison-based medical wards.

In 2020, two new prisoner rehabilitation programmes were launched, providing employment opportunities for prisoners in wood and metal production facilities in prisons of Dushanbe and Khujand. Moreover, vocational education was introduced at a new training centre in Khujand’s
prison. These programmes fully comply with international standards and serve to enhance prisoners’ earning capacity, thus improving their ability to better reintegrate into society. The modernised prison-based production facilities are expected to enrol up to 200 male prisoners on an annual basis, offering them vocational courses and certificates that qualify them to work in metalworking and furniture manufacturing upon their release.

UNODC supported the Prison Service of Tajikistan and an expert working group to draft an action plan for implementation of the country’s prison reform strategy 2020-2030, a strategic concept for prisoner rehabilitation and a tool for the risk assessment and classification of violent extremist prisoners, including violent extremist prisoners.

UNODC engaged with an expert working group in Uzbekistan to develop a new Penal Code. The new Code is expected to expand the rights of convicted persons in terms of guarantees for humane treatment, access to social benefits, such as pensions and provision of specialised secondary and higher education, as well as access to sign language interpretation and other services for prisoners with hearing, speech or related impairments. The draft Code foresees the introduction of individualised social rehabilitation programmes for offenders. With the introduction of such new legislation, including the enhanced application of non-custodial sanctions, it is expected that the incarceration rate may reduce further, from 67 to 34 per 100,000 of the national population in Uzbekistan.
Addressing Trafficking in Persons

The countries in the Central Asia region are countries of origin, transit, and destination for trafficking in persons, and investigations relate to trafficking for labour and sexual exploitation. 60 per cent of the reported victims of trafficking were female victims (5 per cent of them were girls) and 40 per cent were male victims (8 per cent of them boys). The main challenge in the region is a low level of detection and investigations relating to trafficking in persons and a low number of prosecuted and convicted traffickers. For example, in Uzbekistan, 66 investigations were conducted and 53 cases were prosecuted as regards trafficking in persons in 2019 (50 of sexual exploitation and 3 of forced labour), compared with 123 investigations and 168 prosecutions in 2018, and 609 investigations and 314 prosecutions in 2017. Only 64 defendants were convicted of crimes involving trafficking in 2019, compared with 230 in 2018, and 405 in 2017.

UNODC will continue supporting the national authorities in their efforts to enhance the capacity to fight against trafficking in persons, with the main focus on developing the professional skills of practitioners to detect and investigate human trafficking crimes for various forms of exploitation.

In this regard, based on a needs assessment mission, UNODC ROCA developed a training concept for law enforcement in Uzbekistan on the effective investigation and prosecution of TIP cases. At the end of July 2020, the report of this scoping mission was presented and discussed at a public event organised by the General Prosecutor’s Office on the occasion of the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons.
In 2020, UNODC continued to assist the national authorities in the region to enhance capacity in the fight against trafficking in persons (TIP) in line with the national priorities and with the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its TIP protocol, and other related international standards and best practices. Counter-TIP activities were implemented in close partnerships with national and international partners, with funding from the U. S. Department of the State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs.

In Uzbekistan, UNODC contributed its expertise to the development of a new Law on Combatting Human Trafficking, which introduced a new TIP definition and clarified the process of rehabilitation and rights of victims of this crime, and to Government Resolutions on the National Referral Mechanism and the Republican Centre for the rehabilitation of TIP victims. In partnership with the National Human Rights Centre and other international development partners, UNODC supported a series of trainings for government officials on a victim-centred criminal justice response to trafficking in persons, as part of a comprehensive national course called “Human Dignity as Supreme Value”.

In Turkmenistan, UNODC provided technical support to national authorities and members of the Technical Working Group against TIP to review national TIP legislation and develop bylaws to effectively implement the Law on Combating TIP. In November 2020, a working meeting was held by the Institute of State, Law and Democracy, State Migration Service of Turkmenistan and Ministry
of Labour and Social Protection of Population of Turkmenistan to discuss the collation of information, training and predeparture materials. The meeting resulted in an expression of interest by the Institute of State, Law and Democracy in using UNODC counter-trafficking materials and toolkits for training purposes at the Resource Centre on Human Rights under the Institute.

In December 2020, UNODC conducted a Countering Trafficking in Persons Technical Working Group meeting dedicated to International Migrants Day. The focus of the meeting was to develop an overview and track the progress achieved by the working group members to implement the 2020-2022 National Action Plan on countering trafficking in persons in Turkmenistan. Participants also discussed further cooperation opportunities for the implementation of the National Action Plan.

The Government of Tajikistan was provided with a legal commentary on anti-trafficking legislation, including a new draft of the Criminal Code, developed by UNODC with a focus on the issue of the illegal adoption/sale of children. This will bring the existing legislation in line with the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and its Trafficking in Persons Protocol, and other related international standards and best practices.

In 2020, a training programme aimed at police officers, prosecutors and judges was carried out for more than 150 criminal justice practitioners, based on four training manuals on the prevention, detection and investigation, prosecution and adjudication of human trafficking. In partnership
with the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the General Prosecutor’s Office Centre of Excellence and Supreme Court Training Center, three training of trainer courses were held to prepare a pool of 30 (6 female) instructors to conduct trainings on the investigation and prosecution of human trafficking.

UNODC contributed to enhanced understanding of data collection on TIP/SOM and the development of a set of recommendations for better international cooperation and mutual legal assistance in TIP and SOM-related cases. Furthermore, UNODC supported the establishment of a Working Group, chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan, to provide expert support to integrate UNODC educational modules on trafficking in persons into the curriculum of law enforcement and judicial training institutions and the educational sector. As a result of a workshop that brought together 20 law enforcement officers, government actors and civil society, an action plan was developed to make sure that public awareness-raising on preventing human trafficking is well planned and carried out.

In Kyrgyzstan, UNODC joined the newly established Council on Migration and TIP at the level of Parliament’s Speaker. UNODC aims to provide expert support to the development of relevant policies and legislation and has contributed to the establishment of a network of lawyers specializing in TIP who will provide pro bono legal services to TIP victims. A total of 14 lawyers and 19 law students have been trained and have joined the network. Furthermore, a new Government Counter-Trafficking Programme and Action Plan for 2021–2024, the Standard Operating Procedures for the implementation of the National Referral Mechanism, were elaborated under UNODC’s advisory support. To further enhance the quality of investigation and prosecution of TIP cases, UNODC facilitated the establishment of a Special Working Group on TIP in the General Prosecutor’s Office. It provided expert advice, and based on an analysis of some 300 TIP cases registered in 2019–2020, contributed to formulating the challenges that law enforcement has faced with regard to TIP cases, and recommendations to overcome them.

UNODC facilitated a number of discussions and workshops and contributed both to the development of training materials and the integration of UNODC educational modules on TIP into the curriculum of educational institutions in the region. A total of 222 (54 women) law enforcement and other specialists were equipped with practical skills to address TIP and smuggling of migrants (SOM) in the region, including a focus on the criminal-legal characteristics of TIP crimes, TIP data collection, management, and analysis; the prevention, detection, investigation, prosecution of TIP cases in Tajikistan, as well as adjudication, international cooperation and mutual legal assistance; the investigation and prosecution of TIP crimes and the rendering of legal services for TIP victims in Kyrgyzstan; and the adjudication and countering of TIP in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic in Uzbekistan. Moreover, practitioners were provided with expert advice and practical assistance on carrying out international TIP investigations as part of the UNODC CASC networking initiative. The responsible agencies in Tajikistan were equipped with four training manuals on the prevention, detection and investigation, prosecution, and adjudication of TIP cases, plus 90 training film CDs on victim sensitive interviewing, prosecution, and the adjudication of TIP cases.

Over 107,000 people in the region had their awareness raised about TIP and SOM. On the occasion of the World Day against TIP, both public and practitioners developed their knowledge on the risks
of TIP and SOM through online discussions and awareness-raising campaigns targeted at youth and potential migrants. In Kyrgyzstan, the awareness of over 105,000 people across the country was raised through a number of online activities, including a webinar on the international and national legal frameworks that regulate the fight against TIP, and through the organisation of the “Open Yourself” rehabilitation and human rights camp for care leavers from residential institutions as part of the nationwide awareness campaign “100 days against TIP”. In Turkmenistan, public interest and discussion about TIP were stimulated through the dissemination of a video spot, developed as part of a public awareness campaign devoted to World Day against Trafficking In Persons and a contest for the best comment on this video on social media. The video was disseminated through UN in Turkmenistan social media accounts on Facebook and Instagram, UNODC Regional Office in Central Asia Twitter and Facebook accounts, and by a local Instagram blogger, reaching over 1,000 social media subscribers. Six of the contest participants were awarded with memorable gifts.

To improve and expand reintegration services to vulnerable TIP victims in Uzbekistan, the NGO “Istiqbolli Avlod” was granted funds from the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Human Trafficking. The grant will be used to further improve and expand reintegration services to vulnerable victims of trafficking in persons in Uzbekistan.
Even small steps are important for a collective contribution

Aylara Hanberdiyeva, 17, is a student at specialised school No.27 in Ashkhabad, Turkmenistan. She’s also one of the winners of a contest for the best comment on a video clip about human trafficking, developed by UNODC in partnership with other UN agencies and International organisations to mark World Day against Trafficking in Persons. The contest was created to sensitise the wider public to what trafficking in persons really is and what threats it poses to people from all around the world.

Aylara lives in a family of five people.

“One of my parents’ main priorities is that all of the children in our family should be well-mannered and educated. That is why my parents did their utmost to ensure that I, my sister and my brother receive a good education. Almost all of my family members are interested in global politics, diplomacy and society,” says Aylara.

“My aunt is aware of my interest in issues connected to politics and society. As soon as she learnt about the video published on the UN official account on Instagram, she advised me to watch it and take part in the contest. After watching the video devoted to the World Day against Trafficking in Persons, which was prepared by UNODC alongside other international organisations, I decided to express my position on this issue. It struck me that human trafficking, such a heinous and a serious breach of human rights, can happen to anyone in the world. Women, men, older people and children – no one can have guaranteed protection. At times, betrayal comes from an unexpected place – neighbours, friends, or even relatives – someone supposed to be trustworthy.”

Aylara told us that she heard about human trafficking from stories that she sometimes comes across on the internet:

“I know that many people in the world are facing it and that many states and International organisations are struggling with this crime, though, thankfully, I have never come across any specific cases. I am sure that the UN and state authorities all over the world are doing their utmost best to address, prevent and eliminate this crime, to support victims of trafficking and bring them back to normal life.”
Aylara believes that the first, simple step that anyone can take to counter such a horrible crime is to be well informed about it, and to be more cautious and careful when travelling. Sharing information with friends and peers is a simple action but at the same time makes a significant contribution to collective efforts to counter trafficking in persons.

“I hope very much that one day that the joint efforts of the UN and states will lead to the elimination of this crime,” says Aylara with passion. “I hope that there will be more campaigns and contests like this conducted on social media in the future, as this is a great tool to attract public attention to such issues, especially that of the younger generation. I stand ready to be part of these campaigns and spread the word among my peers all over the world about people trafficking and the preventive measures they should keep in mind to safeguard themselves from this crime.”

Aylara’s dream is to work for the UN or one of the diplomatic missions, where she could put her strengths to the best use to contribute to positive change among as many people as possible.
UNODC assists countries to implement evidence-based drug use prevention strategies and treatment programmes for drug dependence. This approach is health-centered and is based on respect for human rights, social protection and cohesion, and is consistent with mandates given by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. Prevention, treatment and rehabilitation efforts are anchored to the understanding that a vulnerability to initiating substance use is the result of the interplay of several etiological factors. These operate at the individual, micro and macro-level and the progression to drug dependence is, therefore, a preventable and treatable multi-factorial health disorder. One of the overarching goals of prevention, treatment and rehabilitation interventions is to reduce or eliminate stigma - a major roadblock to the success of prevention and treatment. The initiation of drug use is not due to a lack of willpower, but due to vulnerabilities at a personal or environmental level. UNODC also emphasises that drug addiction changes the brain in a profound way and should be considered a health problem.

Within mandated areas, UNODC continues to assist countries in the region to raise the awareness of communities about the negative impact of drugs. It provides capacity development activities for integrated and evidence-informed drug dependence treatment services and prevention interventions. It also provides technical support to government institutions to address the low quality of treatment and HIV prevention services and increases awareness about alternatives to imprisonment. Moreover, UNODC ROCA closely cooperates with relevant authorities to increase the access and availability of controlled medicines, prevent stigma and discrimination against people who use drugs and people living with HIV/AIDS. Lastly, UNODC ROCA supports governments in the region to produce updated and reliable data on drug use and HIV among the general population, youth and problem drug users, which will serve to develop and enhance integrated, harmonised strategies at the national and regional level.
In 2020, UNODC continued to facilitate regional cooperation and collective actions to prevent drug use, and supported policy/decision-makers to gain the knowledge and skills to develop comprehensive evidence-based drug use prevention programmes in all five countries of the region. Furthermore, UNODC developed the capacities of regional drug prevention professionals by introducing International Standards on Drug Use Prevention and evidence-based cost-effective family skills training programmes.

To provide parents/caregivers with practical recommendations on parenting during the pandemic, UNODC developed a leaflet on “Information on parenting during COVID-19” which was translated into local languages. This information leaflet reached more than 500,000 educators, psychologists and parents along with further electronically disseminated information on “Caring for your child during COVID-19”.

In particular, a Joint Statement of Intent was signed between UNODC, UNICEF Kazakhstan and Nazarbayev Intellectual School (NIS). The overall purpose of the Statement was to join efforts to
strengthen parenting programmes in **Kazakhstan** with the view to preventing drug use, violence against children and support family well-being.

In **Uzbekistan**, a study was conducted with families from selected schools to explore the feasibility and acceptability of the ‘Strong Families’ programme. The results of the study indicate that the programme was culturally acceptable and feasible to implement. The study also demonstrated significant improvements in child behaviour and parental functioning in the families that took part in the programme.

Moreover, UNODC is partnering with UNICEF and UNFPA in Uzbekistan to develop a proposal for the submission to the Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund (MPHSTF) for the Aral Sea Region. This proposal, with a UNODC component on enhancing the capacity of national partners to deliver the evidence-based, cost-effective and open-source family skills training programme “Family United”, was approved by the MPHSTF and endorsed by National partners and participating UN organisations. Building on the successful experience of introducing family skills training programmes in Uzbekistan, UNODC will provide support to the Ministry of Public Education of Karakalpakstan to pilot and scale up the Family United programme. The programme promotes positive parenting and strengthens positive, age-appropriate family functioning and interactions in general. It promotes a warm child-rearing style where parents set rules for acceptable healthy behaviors, monitor free time and friendship patterns and become good role models, while helping their children to acquire the skills to make informed decisions. Such factors are important to prevent drug use, substance abuse and other unhealthy behaviors. Moreover, this programme also teaches valuable life skills, such as resisting social pressures to engage in delinquency, coping with anxiety and communicating effectively with peers, through a set of interactive and fun exercises. Additional supplementary materials address a COVID-19 response, including psychosocial support for parents and children, adolescent engagement in the COVID-19 response and mitigation of the consequences, stigma, discrimination and violence against girls and women during lockdown will be incorporated into the content of the programme.
Kazakhstan

SFP
82 6 90 270

FAST
85 4 250 520

Kyrgyzstan

SFP
62 3 210 420

FAST
84 4 293 521

Tajikistan

SFP
44 4 85 172

FAST
88 4 371 634

- Number of national facilitators
- Number of national trainers
- Number of children
- Number of family members
In Turkmenistan, UNODC launched a new Joint Programme on “Improving the system of social protection through the introduction of inclusive, quality, community-based social services” supported by the Joint SDG Fund on Social Protection. UNODC activities are focused on piloting/prototyping evidence-based family skills programmes for the prevention of drug use and other negative social outcomes for youth. In 2020, this initiative supported the translation, editing and adaptation of the booklet and manual for trainers of the “Family UNited” programme. Furthermore, a comprehensive review of national legislation in the field of social service provision in Turkmenistan was conducted. The review with summary, comments and recommendations was disseminated among UN agencies and national partners for their consideration. UNODC provided expert support to the Working Group on legislation and inventory to analyse the needs of people with substance use disorders and youth in contact with the criminal justice system. The findings of this analysis will be presented to relevant stakeholders for further actions.

UNODC also held a series of meetings and discussions with the Ministry of Education of Turkmenistan to create a pool of educators and develop national higher education standards, curricula and programmes. As a result, the Ministry of Education identified educational institutions for cooperation and nominated three teachers from each educational institution to be involved in implementing this initiative. Moreover, UNODC supported the development of a draft introductory module which contains an outline of the problem, the international framework, principles of prevention and response regarding providing social support to parents with drug/alcohol use problems, and youth at risk.
Central Asia has limited capacity to deliver integrated and evidence-informed drug dependence treatment services. Of all the types of drug dependence treatment, short-term withdrawal treatment is still the main one that is offered in the region. Long-term in-patient care and out-patient treatment are generally hardly available. There is limited access to evidence-informed treatment methods, e.g., pharmacological treatment of opioid dependence and psycho-social interventions. Data on the provision and quality of treatment in Central Asia remain incomplete and difficult to compare across cases; the coverage of national monitoring systems remains partial in most of the region. Having comprehensive, comparable data about the specifics of national treatment systems, including their main features, capacity, quality, and general performance, is a key requirement for the planning and commissioning of treatment.

To address the above issues, in 2020, UNODC’s health-related initiatives continued to focus on the human dimension, especially on the men, women and children affected by drug use and dependence, and the many consequences that illicit drugs have for health and society. UNODC’s goal in drug treatment remained to overcome the prevailing stigma regarding drug use disorders.

As part of its support to Central Asian countries, UNODC developed the capacity of 426 addiction professionals (43 per cent women) on evidence-based drug dependence treatment and care services. In particular, 207 drug dependence treatment professionals completed a series of trainings on the Universal Treatment Training Curriculum for Substance Use Disorders (UTC training
package) with an average knowledge increase of 38.75 per cent. From Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, 42 national trainers (ICAP 1 holders) attended the series of TOTs on UTC training package advanced courses, by enhancing their knowledge and skills during Regional TOTs on UTC 14 – “Working with Families with Substance Use Disorders”, UTC 17 – “Case Management Skills and Practices”; UTC 9 – “Advanced Pharmacology and Substance Use Disorders” and UTC 10 – “Managing Medication-Assisted Treatment Programs”. During 26 echo trainings conducted in Tajikistan and Turkmenistan by the team of national trainers, 165 addiction professionals were trained on UTC 12, 14, 15 and 17. After completion of the trainings, these professionals reached around 1,500 patients in the region.

UNODC also organised an Online Regional Refresher Training for Assessors on UNODC-WHO QA Tools for Drug Dependency Treatment, which aimed to provide refresher training and technical support to the five Central Asian countries that had previously received this QA training. The training also contributed to enabling the countries who had undertaken a pilot of the QA to reflect on the pilot results and plan the next steps. In total 36 members of the team of national expert assessors (42 per cent male, 58 per cent female) as well as specialists directly involved in the monitoring and planning of quality assurance issues in drug dependency treatment services from five countries of the region attended the training: Kazakhstan (six), Kyrgyzstan (ten), Tajikistan (eight), Turkmenistan (five), Uzbekistan (seven). Participants from participating countries noted that the pilot of QA mechanisms in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in 2018/19 was successful. Upon completion of the training, all delegates committed to utilising the QA training in their daily work.
As a follow up to the Regional Refresher Training for Assessors involved in the development of National Standards on UNODC-WHO QA Mechanisms/Tools for Drug Dependency Treatment, 38 participants – the head doctors and chief medical officers of drug dependence treatment facilities of Uzbekistan, including the Chief Narcologist of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Uzbekistan – attended a national webinar organised by UNODC. During the event, participants were provided with detailed information intended to help the drug treatment facility managers understand how they could better organise their work on quality assurance on the ground, and base it on the National QA Standards for medical services provided to patients with drug use disorders.

In Almaty, Kazakhstan, 27 drug treatment specialists participated in a national training on the clinical aspects of new psychoactive substances (NPS) dependency treatment. The participants received up-to-date knowledge on the different types of NPS available on the market, the signs and symptoms associated with acute and long-term use, an increased understanding of the health and social consequences of NPS use, upgraded skills for the identification, management and treatment of people affected by NPS use disorders, including overdose.

A national webinar on “Ensuring the continuity and sustainability of treatment, care and rehabilitation during the COVID-19 pandemic for people who use drugs and Web-outreach as harm reduction tool” was conducted in Uzbekistan to mark International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking (26 June). It was attended by 50 experts involved in providing drug dependence treatment, HIV prevention, care and support services to people who use drugs.

In Kazakhstan, UNODC, in collaboration with the Republican Scientific and Practical Centre on Mental Health of the Ministry of Health, organised a national webinar aimed at creating a forum for national experts. The event was attended by 68 experts who work on providing drug dependence treatment, HIV prevention and care and support services to people who use drugs. The webinar provided a platform to share valuable international experience on how to ensure the continuity and sustainability of drug dependence treatment, HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services for people who use drugs.

To support counterparts to implement the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan #82, dated 3 October 2019 “On measures to improve the system of narcological assistance to the population of the Republic of Uzbekistan”, UNODC collaborated with a team of national experts. Based on the results of piloting UNODC-WHO Quality Assurance Tools, the team developed National QA Standards for Medical Services Provided to Patients with Drug Use Disorders which were approved by the Government in April 2020.

In 2021, UNODC is planning to conduct a Survey of High-Risk Drug Use in Kazakhstan. A related proposal, submitted to a donor earlier, was approved for funding. The survey aims to collect information on the extent, type, patterns, and trends of high-risk drug use and its related social and health problems at selected localities and at the national level. The collected data and evidence are expected to inform policies and programmes in cooperation with relevant national and international stakeholders to further address demand reduction efforts in the country. A series of webinars will be conducted with the donor to initiate the survey in early 2021.
The COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions associated with it have changed people’s lives in almost all countries. However, very few realise how the lives of people with drug use disorders – among the most vulnerable and most in need of ongoing care – have changed. On the one hand, the closure of borders during quarantine has led to a dramatic reduction in access to narcotic drugs. On the other hand, loss of income has become a problem for people with forms of dependence that are accompanied by various diseases. Exposure to COVID-19 can also lead to complications due to their weak immunity.

We interviewed a psychotherapy practitioner in a drug treatment facility, who, since the onset of the pandemic, has adapted to the new constraints posed by COVID-19 in order to ensure continued access to direct psychological and therapeutic care for patients with drug dependence.

What has changed since the pandemic outbreak?

“Since the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, we have lived on a powder keg,” says Tatyana Sobornitskaya, a psychotherapist at the Tashkent City Narcological Dispensary. “Admission of patients with drug and psychotropic substance dependence sharply decreased with the introduction of lockdown. At the same time, an increase in the number of patients admitted with alcohol dependence was observed. Later we discovered that some people with drug and psychotropic substance dependence have switched to alcohol due to drug shortages.”

Challenges associated with the new working regime have included the need to wear protective equipment (PPE) during the day and while working with patients; challenges with identifying whether a patient with drug dependence admitted via ambulance was in contact with anyone infected with COVID-19; and the need to look for symptoms of coronavirus infection in addition to the diagnosis of narcological pathology.

In July, cases of infection were detected in the facility, among patients and some employees, including Tatyana herself.

“It was very hard. I stayed in the department for two weeks,” says Tatyana. “In addition to psychotherapy, I also had to deal with the treatment of patients admitted to the facility, with constant contacts and in close consultation with epidemiologists. On top of that, different kinds of infor-
mation coming from outside made patients scared and anxious. This led to a need for a series of balancing conversations in addition to treatment. Thanks to the support of the Chief Clinician and the well-coordinated work of staff, an appropriate medication-assisted therapy was selected, which helped patients to cope with the disease.

From July to September, 306 patients – including 89 people with drug dependence – were admitted to in-patient treatment.

Silver linings

"Nevertheless, on the bright side, during those two weeks, patients were very receptive to information about their drug dependence, they opened up easily, having come into our contact under such unusual circumstances," says Dr. Sobornitskaya.

Another positive aspect was the convenience of online communication with people with dependence.

"Online communication has turned out to be convenient and simple," says Tatyana. "I run a Telegram channel for patients and they get in touch when necessary."

Following Tatyana’s dedicated work during the pandemic, she was trusted to head up the in-patient drug treatment department of the Tashkent City Narcological Dispensary.

Medico-social rehabilitation

It should be noted that the Rehabilitation Department of the Tashkent City Narcological Dispensary provides qualified free medical and psychological care to those who have found themselves in a difficult situation. If the patient wants to be cured, the Dispensary staff stand ready to provide the care necessary.

Universal Treatment Curriculum for Substance Use Disorders

The UNODC Regional Office for Central Asia, under its Sub-programme “Drug Prevention, Treatment and Reintegration and HIV Prevention” and UNODC Global Project GLOJ71 “Treating drug dependence and its health consequences: TREATNET II”, delivers capacity-building activities in the field of drug dependence treatment and care. It aims to enhance Member States’ capacity on drug use disorder treatment, reintegration and care. This includes related mental and medical disorders. In particular, capacity-building activities are facilitated through the Universal Treatment Curriculum for Substance Use Disorders (UTC) developed with the U.S. Department of State’s financial support. The overall goal of the training activities is to reduce the medical, social, and economic problems associated with substance use disorders (SUD) by developing international treatment
capacity through training, enhancing skills, and expanding the global treatment workforce. The training prepares addiction specialists with professional certification by providing them with the latest information about substance use disorders and treatment. It facilitates hands-on activities to develop their skills and confidence.

Dr. Sobornitskaya, a member of the team of national trainers from Uzbekistan, has successfully completed all nine courses of the Basic Level Universal Treatment Curriculum for Substance Use Disorders (UTC) and received the status of the "International Certified Addiction Professional Level 1" (ICAP I).
HIV prevention

Drug use contributes significantly to regional illness, disability and death. Injecting drug use remains a significant transmission route for serious communicable diseases such as Hepatitis C and HIV and is fuelling the HIV epidemic in the region. The highest HIV prevalence among injecting drug users in the region is reported in Kyrgyzstan (14.3 per cent, 2016), followed by Tajikistan (12.1 per cent, 2018), Kazakhstan (7.9 per cent, 2019) and Uzbekistan (5.1 per cent, 2018). The share of HIV infection contracted by injecting is gradually diminishing. Most new cases of HIV are now sexually transmitted. There are some hints that these transmissions are – at least partially – transmitted by partners who are using psychotropic substances.

Stigma and discrimination towards people living with HIV and key populations remain high. Restrictive and punitive legislation creates barriers for key populations to access HIV services. This also prevents the acquisition of more accurate data on the size of the key population and building evidence-based prevention measures.

UNODC works to advance national dialogues and advocacy for the development of targeted HIV programmes that respond to the needs of people who use drugs (PWUD). In 2020, UNODC ROCA continued to support national counterparts and NGOs to develop their capacity on continuous and sustainable HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services for PWUD, along with policy support to ensure that the right to health for PWUD is protected and respected.

In this regard, in 2020, UNODC developed the capacity of 182 health providers and NGO representatives (42.3 per cent women) on evidence-based HIV prevention and care services.
Series of online trainings on the "Minnesota 12 Steps" for social workers and drug user community members aimed at increasing essential knowledge for working with people who inject drugs (PWID)

- **40 participants**
  - 30 Kazakhstan
  - 3 Kyrgyzstan
  - 4 Tajikistan
  - 3 Uzbekistan

Regional webinar on "Ensuring the continuity and sustainability of HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services for PWUD during the COVID-19 pandemic"

- **8 participants**
  - 3 Kazakhstan
  - 5 Kyrgyzstan

Regional webinar on "Ensuring the continuity and sustainability of HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services in prison settings during the COVID-19 pandemic"

- **29 participants**
  - 22 Kazakhstan
  - 5 Kyrgyzstan
  - 2 Uzbekistan

Regional webinar "Web-Outreach as Harm Reduction Tool"

- **55 participants**
  - 10 Kazakhstan
  - 9 Kyrgyzstan
  - 14 Tajikistan
  - 22 Uzbekistan

Regional webinar "HIV Prevention, Treatment, Care and Support for People Who Use Stimulant Drugs"

- **50 participants**
As a result of UNODC’s continued advocacy for introducing a “take-home methadone approach”, a Technical Working Group (TWG) was established by the order of the Ministry of Health of Tajikistan. All the related documents on the implementation of the home-administered programme in Tajikistan were drafted by members of TWG for submission for approval by the Ministry.

In Tajikistan, UNODC provided support to the Ministry of Health to establish a TWG to conduct a review and analysis of existing policies and legislation concerning services for women who inject drugs. The TWG included various government partners and NGOs who provide HIV harm reduction services in the country. Recommendations from the TWG were included in Tajikistan’s “Plan for combating HIV/AIDS in the Republic of Tajikistan for 2021-2025”.

A pilot study was initiated in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to assess the needs and availability of HIV prevention and treatment services for people who use new psychoactive substances/stimulant drugs (PWUSD). The methodology consisted of semi-structured interviews, and focus group questionnaires aimed to gather primary data. The data, elicited by interviewers from representatives of key populations, were quantitatively and qualitatively analysed. The needs assessment includes a survey of PWUSD from various communities and in-depth interviews with key informants who represent experts/health care managers of medical, social and other governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations providing services to PWUSD. Focus group discussions include PWUSD and other relevant sub-populations, outreach workers, healthcare service providers including addiction professionals and mental health specialists. The assessment study conducted in Uzbekistan revealed a substantial gap in knowledge and understanding of the health risks related to the use of NPS/stimulants as well as a lack of ability to respond to the needs of PWUSD among service providers. Moreover, service providers had no idea how to reach potential clients (PWUSD) and involve them in ARVT and the health recovery process. It is also most probable that PWUSD have substantial health problems – not least mental health problems. The analytical report includes findings and recommendations on improving the quality, accessibility and availability of services for PWUSD and is in the final stages of completion.

To understand better the impact of coronavirus on changing patterns of drug use and the provision of services, UNODC conducted a rapid assessment on the impact of COVID-19 on the drug use situation and services for PWUD in Central Asia. These analyses aimed to better inform national policies to support PWUDs. The study report provided up-to-date information on the drug use and services situation and became a reference document for partners and policymakers. Moreover, UNODC conducted an assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on the Internet trade in psychoactive substances in East Europe and Central Asia. This study allowed for an understanding of the specific impact of restrictive measures on the Internet sales of illegal psychoactive substances in target countries – Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. The report on the assessment was translated and disseminated among national partners in all countries of the region.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, UNODC procured PPE for medical establishments throughout the region. In Kazakhstan following an urgent request from a UNODC key partner, the Republican Scientific-Practical Centre on Mental Health (RSPCMH) of the Ministry of
Health, UNODC provided personal protection equipment (PPE) and bactericidal equipment for health providers working in separate isolations units in the “dirty zone” for new arrivals. In Kyrgyzstan, UNODC, with financial support from the UNAIDS Country Envelop Funds, supported the Republican Narcology Centre with PPE to a total amount of US$ 10,000. All PPE was handed over to Republican Narcology Centre in Bishkek. All Methadone Maintenance Therapy sites were provided with PPE, and some NGOs were provided with masks, gloves and sanitisers. In Uzbekistan, upon the request from the Ministry of Health, as part of UNODC support to the national COVID-19 response in Uzbekistan, PPE was procured and handed over for further dissemination to the Republican AIDS Centre and Narcological Dispensaries. In Tajikistan, upon the request of the Republican AIDS Centres, UNODC purchased PPE for the staff of the AIDS Centre (special glasses and masks N95).

“"We do not stop treatment of people in ‘dirty zones’ so the UNODC-provided reusable protection suits, medical glasses, gloves and masks, shoe covers, and bactericidal irradiators-re-circulators will serve as good protection for our medical workers.”

Mr. Nikolay Negay, Director of the RSPCMH, Kazakhstan.

“Referring to the unexpected rapid increase of the infection in July, we decided not to wait until it became obvious that hospitals were overwhelmed with patients, and reorganised our premises for 200 beds, in order to receive and treat people who got infected with COVID-19.”

Mr. Ruslan Tokubaev, Director of the Republican Narcology Centre, Kyrgyzstan.

“In this difficult time on a global scale, when all medical services are experiencing a shortage of PPE items, UNODC Regional Office for Central Asia extended a helping hand and selfless support to the health care system of Uzbekistan.”

Ms. Nargiza Kenjaeva, Chief Doctor of the Samarkand Regional Narcological Dispensary, Uzbekistan.
PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
Evidence generation for policy dialogue and development

Understanding the impact of COVID-19’s impact on drugs and crime

The unprecedented crisis that COVID-19 has brought to the world in 2020 undoubtedly also impacted on UNODC research and trend analysis priorities at global, regional and country levels. From the onset of the pandemic, UNODC rapidly responded to the demand to develop data on the impact of COVID-19 on crime and drugs, evidence that can underpin national and international responses to the new threats that COVID-19 is bringing to the drug and crime landscape.

UNODC published and disseminated the following research briefs that provided the international community, member states and various stakeholders with observations and analysis on how the COVID-19 crisis impacted on the drugs and crime situation.
Drugs and crime-related data collection, analysis and dissemination

In 2020, UNODC ROCA continued to collaborate closely with Central Asian countries and helped them to fulfil their international reporting obligations. Central Asian states were supported to complete seven questionnaires: the Annual Report Questionnaire (ARQ), Individual Drug Seizure Reports, New Psychoactive Substances (NPS), the UN Crime Trends Survey (UN-CTS), Questionnaire for the Global Report on Trafficking in Persons (GLOTiP), the UN Illicit Arms Flow Questionnaire (UN-AIFQ), and Impact of COVID on crime and drugs.

The current status of questionnaire submission is given below:

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To understand the impact of COVID-19 related restrictions on the situation with drug use, provision of drug dependence treatment and harm reduction services, UNODC ROCA conducted a rapid assessment in four countries in Central Asia. The rapid assessment examined information gathered from publications, reports and other informational materials available on the Internet, data provided by drug treatment services, and NGOs working with people who use drugs in harm reduction programmes in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Moreover, interviews were conducted with several key informants, who work directly with people who use drugs and are familiar with the local drug situation, as well as individuals from the community of people who use drugs. The results of the rapid assessment were presented during an online webinar organised on 25 June 2020. More than 100 participants representing various government agencies, including drug control, law enforcement, customs and border protection and public health institutions, as well as civil society organisation from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan took part in the webinar. Representatives of the international organisations and donors as well as Mini Dublin Group members also joined the online meeting.
In 2020, UNODC ROCA helped to widely disseminate UNODC flagship global reports among government agencies, civil society and other stakeholders in Central Asia. The reports included the World Drug Report (June 2020), the Global Study on Firearms Trafficking 2020 (July 2020), the Wildlife Crime Report 2020 (July 2020).

UNODC ROCA also contributed to a Research Brief on recent developments in the opiate market in Central Asia, the Russian Federation and the Caucasus, providing inputs, sharing data and information, and facilitating consultations with relevant regional and national experts. UNODC ROCA also helped to convene the UNODC expert meeting held in January 2020 in Vienna, Austria. The meeting brought together law enforcement officials and health care professionals from participating countries, as well as four independent experts, to discuss current trends in the use of opiates and opiate trafficking in the region.

UNODC ROCA supported the publication of “The Central Asian Region: Information Bulletin on the Drug-related Situation in 2019”, which was prepared by the National Analytical-Information Centre on Drug Control under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan. This report includes analyses of emerging trends in the drug situation in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

**Drugs Monitoring Platform**

Under the auspices of the Research and Trend Analysis Branch, UNODC’s “Drugs Monitoring Platform” (DMP) serves as a common system for collecting, visualizing and sharing data. The DMP aims to provide access to real-time data on drug trafficking trends, deliver data using interactive visualisations adapted to user-specific needs, and improve early warning drug threat identification. In 2020, the DMP continued to be updated with relevant information collected through different official sources. By 31 December 2020, the total number of drug seizure cases in the DMP reached 434,519 entries. During the reporting period, 80,638 individual drug seizure cases were recorded. The number of unique visits from registered users totalled 1,946, and during the reporting period, 277 new users registered to the DMP.

Through a dedicated database, the DMP also serves as a repository for UNODC counter-narcotics capacity-building interventions taking place in West and Central Asia. As of 31 December 2020, the DMP includes information on a total of 74 trainings provided for 1,315 Central Asian and Afghan law enforcement officers within the framework of the relevant UNODC programme activities. These figures include the 6 trainings that were held for 94 participants in 2020. The Platform also contributes to the goals of Drug Prevention and Health Branch programmes that form part of the UNODC/World Health Organization Substance Use Disorder Treatment Facility Survey. As of 31 December 2020, online treatment facility surveys are in place for 16 countries.
Training

UNODC, jointly with CARICC, conducted two five-day online trainings on “Methods of data analysis and processing with the use of different analytical tools” for 11 border officers in Kazakhstan (23-27 November 2020) and 7 in Turkmenistan (1-4 December 2020). The training participants gained new knowledge and skills on data processing, data analysis and visualisation with the use of MS Office (functions and the creation of a Dashboard). The training was organised within the framework of the Border Cooperation Component of SP1 “Countering transnational organised crime, illicit drug trafficking and preventing terrorism” of the UNODC Programme for Central Asia.

Forensics

Forensic services play an essential role in the fight against illicit drugs and crime by providing accurate, objective and timely information to law enforcement agencies and the criminal justice system, which can be used to bring drug traffickers and perpetrators of crime to justice. From the crime scene to the courtroom, forensic services are an integral part of investigations. They support effective and fair criminal investigations, ensuring objective and transparent criminal justice processes, presenting cases based on physical evidence rather than on confessions and witness testimony.

Law enforcement authorities and other clients of forensic laboratories (such as police, customs, prosecutors and defence solicitors) need results that are reliable, valid, based on standard procedures, compatible with results in other laboratories; compliant with the evidentiary standards of the respective judicial, administrative and legal systems; and obtained in an effective and efficient manner to the required timescale. The quality of forensic laboratories’ analyses and results have significant implications for the justice system, law enforcement, crime prevention and health policy, as well as for harmonising the international exchange and coordination of drug and crime information and data.
UNODC has a range of mandates on drug control and crime prevention, and on reforming and building the capacity of criminal justice institutions. With this unique combination of mandates, and extensive international expertise, UNODC is ideally suited to assist Member States to develop and strengthen integrated and sustainable forensic science services to address the interlinked challenges related to security and justice.

UNODC provides support to laboratories to introduce and implement a Quality Management System (QMS). Initiatives include the provision of reference samples of controlled substances, laboratory manuals and guidelines on recommended methods, training opportunities and the promotion and facilitation of information, material and data exchange. UNODC also offers the International Collaborative Exercises (ICE) programme, a proficiency test for national drug testing and toxicology laboratories.

During the reporting period, UNODC completed a three-year project on “Strengthening Forensic Laboratories of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Justice of Uzbekistan”, which supported the DNA and drug testing labs of the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan to develop and implement quality management systems in line with the requirements of the ISO/IEC 17025 standard. In June 2020, the labs obtained certificates of accreditation issued by the National Centre of Accreditation of Kazakhstan, which is a full member of the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) and a signatory of the ILAC Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA). It is also a member of the Asia Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (APLAC) and a signatory of the APLAC MRA on the accreditation of testing and calibration laboratories (ISO/IEC 17025). The scope of accreditation for the Ministry of Internal Affairs’ forensic lab includes identification of narcotic substances (morphine, codeine, heroin, tetrahydrocannabinol, cannabiniol, cannabidiol) through gas chromatography-mass spectrometric analysis. The Ministry of Justice forensic centre labs’ scope of accreditation includes
identification of narcotic substances (tetrahydrocannabinol, codeine, morphine, heroin), and DNA examination (blood, saliva). Official ceremonies to hand over certificates of accreditation to the labs were held on 23 September 2020 with the participation of high-level officials from the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Internal Affairs, US Embassy, INL and UNODC.

In August 2020, with funding support from INL, UNODC started a new project “Strengthening Forensic Services in Uzbekistan – Phase II”. Under this project, UNODC will support the following laboratories to enhance their capacities, improve quality management systems to meet the requirements of the ISO/IEC 17025:2017 international standard: two additional laboratories of the National Centre of Forensic Expertise of the Ministry of Justice (Handwriting/Document Examination Laboratory and Audio/Phonographic Examination Laboratory), two additional laboratories of the Main Expert and criminalistics Centre of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Chemical Laboratory Tashkent city branch forensic unit and Firearms/Ballistics Laboratory), two laboratories of the National Applied Research Centre of Forensic Medical Expertise of the Ministry of Health (Forensic Chemical and Forensic Biological Laboratories) and the laboratory of the State Customs Committee (Forensic examination of materials, substances and products).

What accreditation means for the managers and laboratory staff of a forensic institution

The Main Expert and Criminalistics Centre of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan has officially received an accreditation certificate for compliance with ISO/IEC 17025 for testing and calibration laboratories and acquired the status of an internationally recognised forensic institution.

I am convinced that this will continue to have a positive impact on the activities of the Main Expert and Criminalistics Centre of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan and will increase its prestige, not only in our country, but also internationally. Among other benefits are:

• Use of internationally recognised scientific and technical approaches and methods in the research process;
• Minimisation of the human factor throughout the scientific and technical methods used in the research;
• Increased international prestige for the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the fight against the cross-border crime of drug trafficking;
• The international recognition of the results of drugs examinations conducted at the Main Centre of Forensic Science of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Mr. Saidolim Nuriddinov, Head of the Main Expert and Criminalistics Centre of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan
“Compliance with the requirements of the international standard ISO / IEC 17025 allows laboratories to demonstrate that they are competently performing work and providing reliable results, thereby increasing the level of confidence in their work both at the national and international levels.

Implementation of the standard also facilitates collaboration between laboratories and other organisations by ensuring wider acceptance of their performance between countries. At the same time, expert opinions can be accepted by courts in different countries without the need for repeated or additional examinations, i.e., the results of examinations performed in an accredited laboratory are valid for all the states participating in the trial, which is most relevant when considering cases related to illicit drug trafficking.

Thus, the international accreditation of the forensic laboratory allows the investigative and judicial authorities to make an informed decision in choosing forensic laboratories for research and issuance of conclusions, since the presence of a certificate of accreditation demonstrates the high competence of the specialists working in the laboratory and their impartiality during research.”

Ms. Nadejda Korablyova, Chief expert of the laboratory for forensic examination of materials, substances and products of the Republican Center for Forensic Examination named after Suleimanova under the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Uzbekistan
On 5-8 October 2020, UNODC in cooperation with the Turkish Standards Institute training centre, delivered an online introductory workshop on the requirements of the ISO/IEC 17025:2017 for 30 staff of the beneficiary labs.

An initial assessment of the current capacity, needs and gaps of the beneficiary labs was completed in November 2020. Key findings and recommendations derived from the assessment were presented during an online meeting of the project’s partners on 2 December 2020. The labs are currently being supported to develop action plans for the implementation of the standard. Outcomes of the assessment and the labs’ action plan will further guide the project work plan and strategy for 2021.
In **Kyrgyzstan**, within the framework of the project: “Strengthening forensic services in the Kyrgyz Republic”, UNODC provided legal expertise, training and support to policy development and inter-agency coordination. This support aims to strengthen both the quality and impact of forensic service and the management capacity at the State Forensic Service (SFS), preparing it for international accreditation in line with the Action Plan endorsed by the Government of Kyrgyzstan. A roadmap has been developed to work towards international accreditation of the SFS based on international standards ISO/IEC 17025. UNODC supported the establishment of the post of a Quality Manager in the SFS to ensure compliance with internationally recognised standards of provision of forensic services.

To ensure continuous monitoring and mentoring in drug analysis, UNODC supported the active participation of the SFS in UNODC International Collaborative Exercises (ICE) for drug testing laboratories. Regulations were drafted for the creation of a Forensics Coordination Council, to determine priority areas for the development of forensic services and to strengthen coordination among all government and non-government forensic laboratories.

Within the framework of the PBF funded project, “Support to the prevention of radicalisation to violence in prisons and probation settings in the Kyrgyz Republic”, methodological tools on conducting psycholinguistic and religious forensic investigations (in compliance with the new criminal legislation) have been translated into Kyrgyz language (now available in Russian and Kyrgyz) and introduced for application by forensic experts in their daily work. The Project is supporting the Forensic Service to promote these tools among forensic experts and other criminal practitioners. A working group was formed at the State Forensic Service to oversee the setting up of a data and analysis system for psycholinguistic and religious forensic expertise on terrorism and extremism-related cases. For this purpose, a psycholinguistic text processing software was developed and an electronic database of materials declared as extremist by courts was launched during the reporting period. The digitalisation efforts of the forensic service will help to minimise technical fails related to human factors, speed up processes and increase the quality of forensic services.

Within the “Strengthening forensic services in **Turkmenistan** – phase II” initiative, in October 2020, UNODC in Turkmenistan organised an Inter-agency coordination meeting on forensic matters. The meeting aimed to bring together all the forensic services’ relevant stakeholders and beneficiaries with the aim of tracking the progress made by the forensic laboratories under the Ministry of Health and Medical Industry and Ministry of Interior of Turkmenistan. The meeting also introduced stakeholders to the remaining steps that must be taken to receive international accreditation.

To ensure continuous monitoring and mentoring in drug analysis, UNODC supported the Central forensic bureau under the Ministry of Health and Medical industry to participate in the UNODC International Collaborative Exercises (ICE) for drug testing laboratories.

In December 2020, UNODC organised training for twenty forensic experts (of whom seven, or 35 per cent were female) from the Centre of Criminological Research under the Ministry of Interior of Turkmenistan and the Central forensic bureau under the Ministry of Health and Medical Industry of Turkmenistan. The training covered the requirements of ISO 17025:2017 towards conducting internal audits and management review.
Delivering better result – UN coherence and cooperation with international organisations

With the mandate to make the world safer from drugs, crime, corruption and terrorism, UNODC ROCA continued to support the Central Asian States to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This support included a comprehensive and forward-looking framework, and explicitly recognised the interrelationship between sustainable development on the one hand, and the fight against drugs and crime, including corruption and terrorism, on the other.

The Office is committed to achieving health, security and justice for all by tackling and preventing crimes and promoting peace and sustainable well-being as deterrents. Considering the scale of the problems to be confronted by individual states, UNODC offers practical assistance and encourages transnational approaches to action in the region.

In 2020, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan signed their United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs) for 2021-2025. In all three countries, UNODC ROCA actively participated in the Common Country Analysis process and UNSDCF development. UNODC ROCA, through in-house analyses, as well as by providing data on the organisation’s mandate, contributed to the finalisation of the Common Country Analysis. All new CCAs now include an analysis of areas related to UNODC’s mandate. UNODC ROCA also committed to supporting national governments in 2021-2025 by actively participating in the UNSDCF development process. UNODC ROCA expressed its commitment by providing inputs to relevant result areas of UNSDCF, with a specific focus on the organisational mandate. The UNSDCFs in all three countries contain relevant information regarding the technical assistance that UNODC is offering to its national counterparts.

In 2020, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan submitted their Voluntary National Reviews (VNR). UNODC actively supported the countries through the VNR preparation process, by attending VNR orientation workshops, supporting drafting the VNR roadmap, facilitating VNR stakeholders’ engagement workshops, contributing to SDG complexity and LNOB analysis, and providing data whenever required.

In 2020, UNODC ROCA initiated the development process of a new UNODC Programme for Central Asia that will cover the period of 2021-2025. In this regard, UNODC ROCA conducted national consultations with all the Central Asian countries, along with the three South Caucasus countries. These consultations aimed to identify the national priorities for 2021-2025, and agree on joint areas of cooperation for the same period. As a result of these consultations, country priorities were compiled, and common priorities for the region were identified. In line with UNODC draft Global Strategy for 2021-2025, with the endorsement of national counterparts and in consultation with UNODC HQ, the following areas were agreed as the main areas of cooperation in 2021-2025:
In November 2020, the Fifth Programme Steering Committee was held in a new online format via the Zoom Platform. It brought together over 150 participants, including representatives from Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Internal Affairs, Justice, Health, Education, Drug Control Agencies, the Supreme Courts, General Prosecutor’s Offices, State Customs Committees, State Security Services and State Border Guard Committees. It also involved other Agencies and Government bodies working in close partnership with UNODC Programme Offices in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, as well as donors, UN Resident Coordinators and the UN Family in the Central Asian States, and UNODC staff. The participants discussed the key achievements over 2019-2020 [Scan QR code for overview video] and agreed to extend the current UNODC Programme for Central Asia 2015-2020 until the end of 2021. 2021 will serve as a bridge year between the two cycles of UNODC Programmes for Central Asia.

In 2020, UNODC, jointly with ESCAP and UNCTAD, started a new initiative aimed at providing direct support to a pool of countries in the Asia-Pacific region to estimate the size of illicit financial flows (IFFs). This initiative seeks to strengthen national capacity to monitor SDG Target 16.4 (By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organised crime). Building on the existing UNODC-UNCTAD Statistical Framework to Measure IFFs and other methodological guidelines, pilot studies on the measurement of IFFs in relation to selected illegal markets/activities will be conducted in pilot countries during 2021-2022. A Call for Expression of Interest was disseminated among all eligible countries and expressions of interest were received from Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. With support from UNODC ROCA, both these expressions of interest have been approved, and Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan will be piloting these tools in 2021-2022.
ADVOCACY, OUTREACH & PUBLIC AFFAIRS
Advocacy and communication campaigns

UNODC uses different communication means to inform its stakeholders about its mandate and the work that UNODC is implementing in the region—these include outreach events, digital, mobile, print and broadcast media. UNODC also engages with bilateral organizations, donors, goodwill ambassadors, NGOs, media outlets and key national partners to better inform stakeholders. To ensure that the communication and advocacy work of UNODC ROCA is conducted effectively, the office has a team of professional communication and public relations officers throughout the region.

In 2020, UNODC ROCA had to adapt its communication and advocacy activities and events to digital platforms in light of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite pandemic-related challenges, UNODC ROCA continued to advocate for peace, security and sustainable development by extending continuous support to government partners, sustaining a continuous dialogue with civil society and constant engagement with young people.

More than 16 publications were produced by UNODC ROCA in 2020, including studies of the COVID-19 impact on various spheres of life, UNODC mandates, guidebooks for the general public and law enforcement agencies during the COVID-19 lockdown, expert commentaries and recommendations on reforms of the bar, legal aid and the penitentiary system.

A series of public service announcements (PSAs) involving the participation of prominent sports-people to promote crime prevention through sports were produced with the close participation of key government partners, officially launched and widely distributed via social and mass media.

The UNODC Regional Representative to Central Asia issued video statements to support digital communication campaigns on the important occasions of International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking International Nelson Mandela Day, World Day against Trafficking in Persons, as well as 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.

UNODC closely worked with youth in the region, empowering and encouraging them to be the agents of a positive change via various online campaigns, forums, contests and street workouts. These aimed to raise awareness around issues such as drugs, corruption, trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants, as well as to increase the participation of young people and involve them in dialogue with decision-makers and relevant processes. For example, the online nationwide awareness-raising campaign “100 days against TIP” held every year in the Kyrgyz Republic was conducted jointly with international and national partners, including the State Migration Service, the State Agency for Youth, Physical Culture and Sport and TIP Coordination Councils in all regions of Kyrgyzstan. The campaign engaged over 5,000 young activists and reached out to over 100,000 people across the country.
UNODC ROCA activities and events were widely broadcast in various formats via Twitter and Facebook social media accounts to inform the general public and other stakeholders about developments and activities both inside and outside of the region (399 tweets and 487 Facebook posts). During the reporting period, the number of followers on Facebook grew from 1,718 to 2,320. The Twitter account gained 695 new followers in 2020, reaching a total number of 1,119.

157 articles, press releases and human-interest stories were published on the UNODC ROCA webpage, with 98 of them replicated in Russian. Multilingualism contributed to diversifying the audience of the website, and ensured that key Russian-speaking stakeholders in the region are informed about the news.

A total of 63 video and animated products were produced jointly with partners and shared across UNODC social media accounts to raise understanding and awareness among key stakeholders about UNODC activities. These 63 videos received more than 10,500 unique views on social media. PSAs produced by UNODC ROCA and Programme Offices were circulated via national TV Channels and school TV channels; these were launched during the lockdown for schoolchildren’s distance learning as well as being screened on public transport, at border posts and in other public spaces.

At least 40 TV/radio reports and online articles were produced thanks to UNODC ROCA activities throughout 2020. Four stories produced by UNODC ROCA were featured on the UNODC Global website.

UNODC also supported the countries in Central Asia in their response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout these activities, all programmes received the communications support they needed.
In 2020, UNODC Regional Office for Central Asia was able to secure around **US$ 15 million** donor funding to support the Member States in the region in their efforts to make Central Asia safer from drugs, crime, corruption and terrorism within the Programme for Central Asia 2015-2021. An additional US$ 5.3 million has been pledged for the activities of UNODC’s other regional and global initiatives in the region. These generous contributions by the donor community provided opportunities to UNODC to further strengthen existing programmes, but also to launch new initiatives to address the immediate and long-term needs of Member States.

UNODC Regional Office for Central Asia expresses its gratitude for the donor contributions provided in 2020 by the Governments of Germany, Japan, Norway, the Russian Federation, the United States of America, as well as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, UNAIDS, UNDESA, UNOCT, UN Peacebuilding Fund, Joint SDG Fund, and the Spotlight Initiative Fund for the implementation of activities in the region. The Regional Office also expresses its appreciation for the in-kind contributions of the Governments in the region to establish the infrastructure for ongoing programmes, without which it would not have been possible to fully operate.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the travel and movement restrictions imposed, UNODC ROCA devoted great efforts towards mitigating the implications of the pandemic on programme delivery and ensuring that financial commitments are honoured in a timely manner and address the needs and priorities of beneficiaries and people in need. The UNODC team constantly monitored pledge duration dates and implemented activities in line with the donor requirements. The Regional Office is grateful to the donors for providing no-cost extensions to a number of grants so that they could be fully utilised despite the pandemic.

UNODC delivered **US $12 million** in 2020 to sustain and strengthen initiatives aimed at countering transnational organised crime and drug trafficking, crime prevention and criminal justice reform, prevention of radicalisation of violence in prisons and drug use and HIV prevention, as well as at initiatives aimed at strengthening urban safety, forensic services, anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism.

UNODC engaged in joint fundraising initiatives with other UN sister agencies. Funding has been confirmed for a joint project on the Establishment of an Integrated National Financing Framework for Sustainable Development in Uzbekistan, supported by the Joint SDG Fund along with ongoing initiatives funded by the UN Peacebuilding Fund in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, Joint SDG Fund in Turkmenistan and the Spotlight Initiative in the Kyrgyz Republic.