



# EVALUATION BRIEF

## Final Independent Project Evaluation of

### ‘Support to the ECOWAS Regional Action Plan on illicit drug trafficking, related organized crime and drug abuse in West Africa’ XAW/Z28

#### Independent Project Evaluation

**Region:** 15 ECOWAS Member States and Mauritania

**Duration:** 1 January 2015 – 31 October 2019

**Donors:** European Union

#### Evaluation team:

Mr. Michel Amiot (team leader), Mr. Segun Afolabi (expert)

#### Full report:

[https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/evaluation/reports\\_year\\_2020.html](https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/evaluation/reports_year_2020.html)

## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) ‘Political Declaration on the Prevention of Drug Abuse, Illicit Trafficking and Organized Crime in West Africa’ (Praia 2008) and the ECOWAS ‘Regional Action Plan to Address the Growing Problem of Illicit Drug Trafficking, Organized Crime and Drug Abuse 2008-2011’ (hereinafter the ECOWAS Regional Action Plan) underpinned the project ‘Support to the ECOWAS Regional Action Plan on Illicit Drug Trafficking, related Transnational Crime and Drug Abuse’ (XAW/Z28). Project XAWZ28 has been part of the UNODC Regional Programme (RP) for West Africa 2010-2014 and 2016-2020. The project started on 1 January 2015 for a duration of 46 months. In 2018, it received a no-cost extension until 31 October 2019. XAWZ28 has been implemented by the UNODC Regional Office for West and Central Africa (ROSEN) in Dakar, Senegal, in close cooperation with the Drug Unit, Directorate Gender, Youth, CSOs, Employment and Drug



Figure 1 Political Map of West Africa

Control of the ECOWAS Commission (hereinafter ECOWAS Drug Unit), seated in Abuja, Nigeria.

The overall **objective** of XAW/Z28 was ‘To contribute to a reduction of drug abuse, illicit drug trafficking and related organized crime in West Africa’. ROSEN was responsible for three of the four outcomes of this EU-funded project: ‘Regional policies and advocacy is informed by evidence-based studies’ (outcome 2); ‘The development and sharing of practices and experiences [that] enable the emerging of more specialized expertise in drug prevention and treatment in West Africa’ (outcome 3); and, ‘Reformed national institutional and legal frameworks and improved sub-regional, regional and international cooperation’ (outcome 4). The ECOWAS Drug Unit covered outcome 1 on coordination, monitoring and advocacy.

## EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation utilized a mixed-method approach, with a gender-responsive evaluation methodology, comprising a desk review, semi-structured interviews, an online survey of the West African Epidemiology Network on Drug Use (WENDU) and observation. A series of short field missions took place over a 3-week period, including visits to UNODC project office in West Africa (ROSEN in Dakar) and ECOWAS Drug Unit (in Abuja), and in four selected countries (Cabo Verde, Senegal, Benin and Nigeria). Active interaction took place with some 30 persons, mostly in person but also by telephone. Of these, 11 were female and 19 were male.

## MAIN FINDINGS

The project was quite relevant, and aligned with global and regional instruments, strategies and policies of the UN, UNODC, the African Union, the EU, ECOWAS Commission and attainment of SDG 3 and 16. The comprehensive approach of the project ensured that drug related issues in the region were tackled holistically in consonance with the ECOWAS Regional Action Plans and the RPs. Project design was initially quite ambitious but was amended subsequent to the midterm evaluation. The project has been effective in achieving the desired objectives in most thematic areas. The Epidemiology component has provided a sustainable platform for availability of data for taking informed decisions. The drug demand reduction component has put in place the mechanism for implementing DDR activities which can be replicated in other member states. The Forensic Network established provides a platform for information sharing and

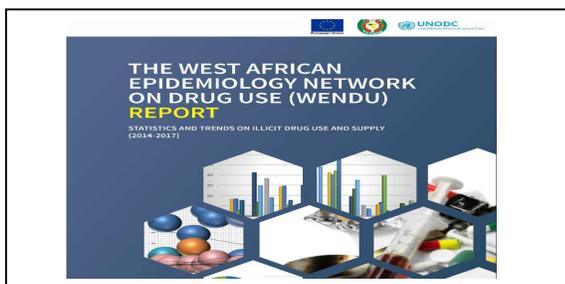


Figure 2 Cover page of the WENDU report

the hubs are able to provide support for other member states in processing their samples, which fosters cooperation. The joint exercises and training have improved effectiveness of the law enforcement entities. The project has engendered a balanced approach to drug issues in the sub-region. The project has fostered cooperation which has improved the effectiveness and efficiency of interventions in the fight against illicit drug trafficking, drug abuse and organized crime. The evaluation found that Human Rights preoccupations are not generally widely understood in the region; yet in the context of Public Health interventions, there is an increasing awareness of the need to treat drug abusers with appropriate curative measures rather than incarceration.

## LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICE

**The management team organization and structure** – Bureaucracy and red-tape often made implementation laborious and difficult. This was in part due to the fact that management was shared between two different organizations – and two geographically separate capitals.

**Standardization of data collection tools** – This greatly improved data quality. It is essential to have access to reliable and verifiable data in order to plan appropriately and to make informed decisions, when programming interventions in a regional or national context.

**The interdependency of the various project components** – The establishment of Inter-Ministerial Committees on drug control provided a platform for the interaction of different stakeholders, which improved understanding of the drug issue and informed the acceptance of a more holistic and balanced approach.

**Project implementation** – The setting up of joint operations improved efficiency and effectiveness. The use of e-platforms for training also enhanced inter-agency cooperation and collaboration. The establishment of country level networks ensured ownership and helped promote sustainability.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Follow-up mechanism:** UNODC ROSEN should incorporate, within its next Regional Programme, scheduled to begin in 2020, a mechanism aimed at providing on-going support with a view to sustaining the gains of the XAW/Z28 project.
- Sustainability:** UNODC ROSEN should advocate to ECOWAS to provide the enabling environment for the assent of Member States to the proposed Supplementary Act on Drugs Control.
- Partnership and Cooperation:** UNODC ROSEN should actively encourage ECOWAS to increasingly focus its powerful internal mechanisms towards ensuring effective political and policy support to the Drug Control issue.
- Funding:** UNODC ROSEN, and UNODC HQ, should embark on a fund-raising drive to mobilize funds in order to support the DDR and harm reduction programme and advocate for both ECOWAS and Member States themselves to provide clear budget lines to support the implementation of DDR and harm reduction.
- Research:** UNODC ROSEN must work in collaboration with ECOWAS to identify and provide an enabling environment for a research-based institution that can host WENDU data and publish such data on an annual basis.
- Reporting on drug control issues:** UNODC ROSEN should advocate that Drug related issues be systematically addressed, and become standing items on the agenda of the meetings of every statutory body of ECOWAS, as a matter of policy.
- Impact monitoring:** UNODC/ROSEN should propose a formal impact evaluation, to be driven by ECOWAS, in order to determine the true impact of project activities.
- Staffing:** UNODC ROSEN should ensure that during design of projects, it makes adequate provisions for local UN support to national beneficiaries.
- Project Design:** UNODC ROSEN, should involve a Monitoring and Evaluation expert in programme planning and implementation to ensure that SMART objectives and outcome level indicators are captured in the project document.
- Institutional Memory:** UNODC ROSEN advocate to ECOWAS to uphold its commitment to the EU, at the signing of the funding agreement, to retain the staff recruited in its drug unit so as to ensure that the technical capacities created are not lost and institutional memory is maintained.



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