EVALUATION BRIEFS

FINAL INDEPENDENT PROJECT EVALUATION

Support to Maldives on Counter-Terrorism

Region: Maldives

Duration: 01 Feb 2020-31 Jul 2021

UNODC Projects: Global Maritime Crime Programme (GLOW63); 'Building Capacity of the Maldives Prisons to Prevent Violent Extremist Ideology' (MDVAB9); Strengthening the Legal Regime against Terrorism (GLOR35)

Implementing partner: Interpol

Donor: European Union

Evaluation team: Ms. Elca Stigter (evaluation team leader), Mr. Kwesi Aning (CT expert)

Full report: https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/evaluation/reports_year_2021.html

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

In order to prevent and respond to terrorism in the Maldives, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) designed the project 'Support to Maldives on Counter Terrorism' (hereinafter the project). Its objective was 'Increased capacity of criminal justice and law enforcement officials to effectively investigate, prosecute and adjudicate terrorism cases in the Maldives, in line with the relevant international legal instruments and human rights norms, standards and good practices'. Funding was provided by the European Union (EU) under its Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP). An independent final project evaluation was undertaken from July to October, 2021, to assess the relevance, efficiency, coherence, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the project.

MAIN FINDINGS

The project has been relevant in view of its alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 5, 16 and 17. Additionally, government counterparts confirmed that, in general, the assistance provided had addressed their needs, although triangulated data also conveyed that the design could have benefited from more consultations for further tailoring. The project has been implemented efficiently, considering the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic with travel restrictions, visa issuance delays, lockdowns and reduced capacity of counterparts. Project management responded creatively, by utilizing online tools among other methods, resulting in expenditures amounting to almost three quarter of the UNODC project budget (as of 25 August 2021). The project management structure had initially too many staff with management responsibilities in different geographical locations, applying different approaches and methodologies, but became more field-centric over time. Synergies were sought within UNODC and with UN bodies, bilateral agencies and CSOs. Nevertheless, the UNODC programming architecture was not conducive to reducing the risk of duplicating efforts without strong management, and a one-UNODC position capturing all programmatic activities was not always available. This occasionally undermined efficiency, coherence and UN risk

Figure 1: Skylight platform - map Maldives

management. Although the project has delivered under all four components, only in some instances have results been used, such as with respect to Mutual Legal Assistance, Skylight (a maritime analytical tool) and prison staff training their colleagues on the Nelson Mandela Rules (NMR), thus contributing to the project's objective. The real-time mentoring by international experts following the attempted assassination of a former president in May 2021 was an unintended

result. Yet results achieved will hardly be sustainable without further follow-up. While human rights have systematically been integrated, a gender equality perspective and the leaving no one behind principle have to a lesser extent been mainstreamed, with exceptions found in prison reform. In conclusion, the relevance of the project's objective was unquestionable, and the overall performance outstanding considering the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. While effectiveness, impact and sustainability have also been impacted by the project's short duration, more attention could have been given to coherence in addition to more consistent SDG framing of the project to contribute to peace and security.

Figure 2: UNODC dynamic security training held for staff of the Maldives Correctional Service, January 2021

LESSONS LEARNED

Lessons learned included the limitations of the Integrated Programming Approach in light of overlapping projects' mandates without appropriate senior management capabilities, and the usage of a security discourse that could undermine peace.

GOOD PRACTICES

Good practices were found in the field-centric nature of the project to support implementation, trust-building, and the consolidation of partnerships. Additionally, the application of human rights principles was not only visible in the training offered to criminal justice actors, but also in initial efforts to integrate human rights due diligence into procurement.

METHODOLOGY

As a field mission was not feasible due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the mixed method methodology therefore included online semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, with a total of 57 consulted persons (34 M; 23 F) in addition to the desk review of 191 UNODC sources and 18 external documents. Quantitative methods have generated descriptive statistics and data, and method and source triangulation was used for qualitative analysis. A gender-sensitive approach was used in all evaluation phases.

INDEPENDENT EVALUATION SECTION

https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/evaluation/
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RECOMMENDATIONS

1. PROJECT PLANNING PHASE II: Continue with designing a phase II of the project.

2. INTERNAL COHERENCE/MANAGEMENT: Strengthen internal coherence, coordination and management by recruiting a senior project coordinator for the Maldives and establishing appropriate reporting lines.

3. EXTERNAL COHERENCE/COORDINATION: Strengthen cooperation with the UN RC Office, with UNDP and civil society, including religious leaders.

4. INTERNAL COHERENCE/PLANNING: Enhance planning capabilities, including by preparing a country strategand work plans.

5. SUSTAINABILITY/CAPACITY BUILDING: Prepare and implement a long-term capacity-building strategy.

6. RELEVANCE/FRAMING: Review project-wide framing and visibility, including with respect to a more inclusive approach to SDGs.

7. GENDER EQUALITY: Advance gender equality principles and strengthen gender mainstreaming in project personnel, data collection for planning, imlementation and monitoring, and strengthen a leaving no one behind approach

8. HUMAN RIGHTS: Continue with the application of human rights standard.

9. MONITORING: Systematize data collection and analysis, such as by setting up a knowledge repository.

10. TRAINING METHODOLOGY: Expand the use of different pedagogical approaches for increased effectiveness.