

EVALUATION BRIEFS

FINAL INDEPENDENT PROJECT EVALUATION

Support to the Prevention of Radicalization to Violence in Prisons and Probation Settings in the Kyrgyz Republic (XACZ61)

Region: Central Asia / Kyrgyz Republic

Duration: January 11, 2018 - July 11, 2021

Donors: United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)

Evaluation team: Ms. Nina Retzlaff (lead evaluator), Ms. Chinara Esengul (national peacebuilding expert) and Mr. Paul English (international prison and probation expert)

Full report:

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

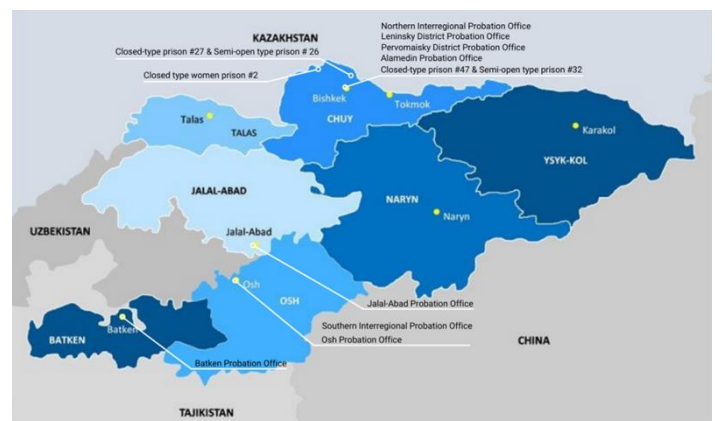
BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The project was jointly implemented by UNODC and UNDP with the aim to reduce vulnerability to violent extremism in the Kyrgyz Republic, focusing on three outputs: 1) Penitentiary staff enhance their expertise on addressing violent extremism in prisons by developing methodologies for the prevention of radicalisation to violence in prisons as well as on disengagement interventions for violent extremist offenders, 2) Probation staff and police officers facilitate the social reintegration of violent extremist offenders into the community and promote community partnerships to prevent violent extremism, and 3) Forensic experts provide high-quality expertise in terrorism and extremism related cases.

MAIN FINDINGS

The project was aligned with priorities of both the UN and the Kyrgyz government and has addressed needs of main beneficiary institutions: The State Prison Service, the Probation Department and the State Forensic Service. In the context of the development of the PBF Peacebuilding Priority Plan 2018-2021 (PPP), project design involved government, UN agencies and civil society, enhancing alignment among project stakeholders. However, the level of coordination among agencies decreased over time and coordination with other international and national organizations working in similar fields has been limited. The set-up of project staffing contributed to a good implementation process, although high workload and staff turnover at UNODC and in state authorities have been hindering factors. Financial planning could have been sounder and there has been fragmented knowledge management, while the key risk to project implementation was Covid-19, making a six-months no-cost extension necessary.

The project brought a degree of innovation to the country by introducing new methods and tools for management of violent extremist offenders (VEOs) in prison and probation. In all three output areas, the project made a positive contribution and laid important groundwork for management of VEOs in prisons aligned with international standards, the institutionalization of the probation system, and the professionalization of forensic expertise for extremism and terrorism related cases. The project has worked with strategic prudence to promote issues related to human rights, though a gender differentiated approach is not observed as integral to outputs and outcomes. The project has contributed to SDG 16, and incipient effects are the humanisation of the justice system and reducing



Map of Kyrgyzstan with regions and project pilot locations

overcrowding in prisons through the promotion of non-custodial sanctions, but it will still take time to register substantial impact. Key results are likely to be sustained although high staff turnover in state authorities (“evaporation of knowledge”), weak financial capacity of the state and political instability are risk factors. Given that impact is still incipient, for results to be sustained and maximized further donor support will be needed.

LESSONS LEARNED

Criminal justice policy, sentencing practice and non-custodial sanctions have been of positive consequence to challenges in the prison system, specifically rates of incarceration. Community engagement for rehabilitation and reintegration of VEOs is challenging and requires complex and systemic approaches.

UNODC Kyrgyzstan has shown a notable long-term commitment to accompany national partners in a difficult and challenging political and social context when it comes to promoting criminal justice reforms compliant with international standards.

GOOD PRACTICES

The project has paid due attention to enabling legislation, policy and regulation being the foundation from which state agencies have the confidence to do things differently and know they are authorised to do so. At the same time, it has recognised that systemic change requires adaptations in practice of staff of beneficiary organisations. Therefore, understanding and responding to staff needs and capacity have been important in this project which has been augmented by a training of trainers approach.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation applied a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. Given the highly sensitive context of the project, the evaluation team paid attention to do no harm approaches to ensure that work is guided by respect, fairness, and transparency. The evaluation adhered to United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards and the UNDOC Evaluation Guidelines. It applied three methods for data collection: desk review of about 200 documents, 63 semi-structured interviews with seven different stakeholder types and online surveys with training participants under all three outputs. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, all data collection took place remotely.



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INDEPENDENT EVALUATION SECTION

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. PROJECT DESIGN:** For future projects, elaborate a more detailed Theory of Change to build a strong intervention logic, in collaboration with partner agencies, experts and counterparts.
- 2. MONITORING AND ADAPTIVE PLANNING:** Strengthen internal quality assurance for application of results-based monitoring and adaptive planning and budgeting for all projects, making use of existing UNODC guidelines and tools
- 3. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT:** Elaborate an Internal Knowledge Management strategy and plan to ensure that information from projects is stored in a centralised way to avoid loss of institutional memory and fragmentation of information, and to foster organisational learning.
- 4. PROJECT DELIVERY:** Consider new/more sustainable approaches to capacity building and actively seek synergies with organisations that work in related areas.
- 5. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:** Continue support for human rights based criminal justice responses in PVE with a minimal disruptive break by developing relevant follow-up initiatives and actively looking for donor support.
- 6. GENDER EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS:** Include a stronger focus on the integration of gender responsive approaches in methodologies and tools, as well as on developing differentiated approaches catered to other vulnerable groups including youth.
- 7. PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT:** Develop mechanisms and tools for a more efficient and effective joint implementation with a true partnership spirit.
- 8. BROADER COLLABORATION:** Build a stronger partnership strategy that includes other UN agencies but also CSOs working