

EVALUATION BRIEFS

FINAL INDEPENDENT PROJECT EVALUATION

STRENGTHENING THE PROCESS OF DATA COLLECTION IN ERADICATION ACTIVITIES OF ILLICIT CROPS IN MEXICO (MEXW34)

Country: Mexico

Duration: 2017-2021

Donors: United States (Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL)).

Evaluation team: Alejandro Tuirán (lead evaluator) and Deborah Alimi (drug policy expert).

Full report: https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/evaluation/reports_year_2022.html

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

MEXW34 aimed at strengthening the Mexican Government's capacity to monitor and collect information on illicit crop eradication activities with the implementation of an automated system that standardizes and systematizes the information collected. With the Secretary of National Defense (SEDENA) and the National Center for Planning, Analysis, and Information for Combating Crime (CENAPI) as its main partners, the project contributes to the development of evidence-based drug control interventions and policies by i) strengthening national capacities on data collection and reporting, and ii) supporting the creation of the first database with geo-referenced information on eradication activities carried out by Mexican authorities. Implemented in

three phases, MEXW34 developed a specific device to facilitate front-liners data collection practices and real-time generation of information. The device was mainly deployed in the states of Durango, Chihuahua, and Sinaloa.

MAIN FINDINGS

The project enabled the Mexican Government to collect and produce reliable, credible, real-time data in line with Mexican government priorities as well as UNODC and donor's strategic objectives. While efforts are still needed to generalize the use of the supported device, the project contributed to creating the enabling conditions to monitor, collect and report information regarding illicit crop eradication activities through the development of a fully-fledged mobile application.

It enhanced demand for, and trust in strong, reliable, and quality evidence-based drug control. The user-friendly application, device, dashboard management, technical support and training were found extensively relevant to achieve that main objective. Building on best practices from UNODC programming in Colombia and Mexico, MEXW34 helped the Mexican Government to standardize data validation processes in line with international scientific standards and national security clearance requirements. It also favored good coordination practices among key stakeholders creating project backing and confidence in data collection processes. MEXW34 has been efficient in the use of economic and financial resources: only 3.4% of the executed budget has been allocated to operating expenses from October 2019 to November 2021.

However, impact remains limited. Due to end-user's high turnover and changes in institutions leadership, the device and application designed by the program is being used only in one out of every ten hectares eradicated. MEXW34 has



Figure 1. Crop eradication process by SEDENA operatives

not explored opportunities to link the data generated with other types of existing institutional and/or scientific information and research. There is no clarity on how the produced data informed drug policy-making processes or was cross-referenced with other sources of information relevant for developing comprehensive, people-centered drug responses.

LESSONS LEARNED

High management rotation in partner organizations strongly impacted project implementation. A constant, honest, and open dialogue has proved necessary, as well as intermediation and coordination efforts with partner organizations to encourage the use of the technological devices, also, advice on proper device maintenance and follow up on the data collection system are needed. The project success was related to the preparation of a well-planned and fully resourced strategy of knowledge, material, and know-how transfer to ensure the recipient Government developed its own capabilities to continue operating the transferred system.

GOOD PRACTICES

MEXW34 is adaptable: the use of the devices and application can be expanded to the collection of data on other illicit activities to improve the information collection process and have more accurate diagnoses to generate more effective public policies. The project design was embedded within UNODC programming best practices and gaps at the country and neighboring country levels.

METHODOLOGY

Through defined frameworks, the evaluation took a mixed-methodology to evaluate the project against OECD-DAC criteria. It focused on its utility, replicability and lessons learned to support evidence basis strengthening in other settings and replicate good practices in future programming. The data collection process was conducted with a non-experimental approach, using both convenience and purposive sampling. Despite important limitations mainly due to national security-related restrictions and important turnover within partner institutions, 13 semi-structured interviews with main project stakeholders were conducted; 2 Focus Groups with operators and members of end-users within the SEDENA; and 3 online surveys for the CENAPI and SEDENA operators.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Relevance/Effectiveness:** Encourage the use of technological devices.
- 2. Follow up/Sustainability:** Institutionalize an open-ended task team or working group structure to ensure project follow up.
- 3. Impact:** Incorporate a more robust triangulation and cross-referencing process in the use of existing data related to eradication activities reported by the system.
- 4. Relevance/Efficiency:** Consider developing jointly a follow-up strategy to implement the next fourth phase of the project nationwide and its expansion/replication to other trafficking activities and illicit drug trade links.
- 5. Relevance/Impact/Use:** Encourage and support the development of a joint outreach strategy to clarify the dissemination channels and limitation of use of the information generated by the monitoring system.
- 6. Relevance/Impact/Use:** Consider replicating the project in other countries as appropriate to encourage systematic documenting of eradication activities of illicit crops using advanced technological devices, an agile and longer-term funding strategy and a diverse pool of donors and resources.
- 7. Effectiveness/Sustainability:** Data ownership and communication strategy should be clarified and designed early in the project conceptualization and operationalization to ensure clear and most optimized storage, dissemination, and use of generated data.
- 8. Coherence/Human Rights/Gender Equality and Leaving No One Behind:** Define a clearer and precise set of key relevant international policy instruments, including related to Human Rights, gender and LNOB dimensions, that will be used to frame the coherence of UNODC programming and project design.

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<https://www.unodc.org/evaluation> unodc-ies@un.org