

# EVALUATION BRIEFS

## FINAL INDEPENDENT PROJECT EVALUATION

# Supporting Minimum Standards for HIV, Health and Rights in Prison Populations of Sub-Saharan Africa - Response to Malawi Prison Crisis Component

**Region:** Malawi

**Duration:** October 2017 – December 2022

**Donors:** Royal Norwegian Embassy, Malawi

**Evaluation team:** Chris Roberts (Evaluation Expert), Dr John Phuka (Public Health Expert)

**Full report:**

[https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/evaluation/reports\\_year\\_2022.html](https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/evaluation/reports_year_2022.html)

## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The ‘Response to Malawi Prison Crisis’ project (a component of the regional project “Supporting minimum standards for HIV, health and rights in prison populations of Sub-Saharan Africa”) was designed to address challenges in Malawi prisons relating to health care, water and sanitation, ventilation, and persistent food shortages, with a focus on immediate, acute, health-oriented crises that affected the existing prison population, and longer-term prison-service-wide systems, strategies, and capacities to contain and/or mitigate the chronic harms related to institutional overcrowding.

## MAIN FINDINGS

**Relevance.** Project design was reflective of beneficiary needs and aligned with the Nelson Mandela Rules. Limited impact was made on the key issue of prison overcrowding. Specific infrastructure and agriculture interventions are likely to have made a meaningful impact on the lives, and general health, of prisoners.

**Efficiency.** Although challenging to quantify, a significant and meaningful scale of delivery was recorded which impacted positively on the lives of beneficiaries. COVID-19 and delays in procurement negatively affected delivery.

**Coherence.** The project cooperated effectively with a wide range of UN, government and CSO partners. Project results could have been improved if governance structures, roles and responsibilities and planning processes were clearer.

**Effectiveness.** The project made a limited contribution to the stated goal, and anecdotal progress against stated outcomes. COVID-19, oversight and coordination, stakeholder buy-in, and funding impacted the level of achievement.

**Impact.** Long-term effect from the project is most likely in relation to infrastructure development. Without sustained support, those interventions which require behavioural change appear less likely to deliver long-term effect.

**Sustainability.** Sustainability and project exit were inadequately considered. No structured sustainability assessment or exit planning was undertaken during the project design or implementation phases.

**Human rights, gender equality and Leaving No One Behind.** Human rights were strongly considered during both project design and implementation. Gender equality needs were well understood, with gender mainstreamed across much of the project. The needs of marginalised prisoner groups could have been more actively considered and addressed.



Banana plantation at Kasungu Prison  
(Source: Evaluator’s own photograph)

## LESSONS LEARNED

This project would have benefitted from consulting earlier, more widely and with greater visibility during the preparation and design phase. Broad and meaningful input from direct and indirect beneficiaries, communities, service providers and CSOs - with divergent interests, knowledge and expertise - enhances a project team's ability to understand the problem to be addressed and therefore design a project most likely to address it. In doing so, the risk of conflating strategic and operational objectives may have been captured - this project initially incorporated a system-wide reform component into a primarily operational intervention which substantially increased implementation risk. As a result, overall project intent was difficult to articulate and project focus was initially unclear. This was compounded by the lack of measurement and reporting framework.

## GOOD PRACTICES

The project took a human rights centred approach to design and implementation, which ensured that interventions – even when difficult to quantify, or where their likely contribution to higher level outcomes was unclear, remained aligned with core principles and supportive on progress against the SDGs. Additionally, there were good examples of engaging multiple stakeholders in project implementation, which reduced total costs and enhanced the sense of ownership by staff within individual prisons, and of targeted advocacy at the local/prison level which is likely to have improved project outcomes despite not being a planned component of the intervention. This represents a positive approach to adaptation.



Health clinic at Mwanza Prison  
(Source: Evaluator's own photograph)

## METHODOLOGY

The evaluation team utilised a mixed-methods approach to data collection and analysis which included structured desk review, quantitative analysis of primary health data, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with a range of stakeholders (M: 23, F: 7), direct observation in five selected prisons and an online survey of Prison Officers-in-Charge and District Prison Health Coordinators.

*For the project team, UNODC Malawi Field Office; UNODC Regional Office for Southern Africa:*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Sustainability:** Conduct a rapid sustainability assessment to determine specific needs, by output, for maximising the prospects of sustainability.
- Strategic Coherence:** Determine future project intent and set a new, realistic project goal which is aligned to needs, available resources and contextual reality.
- Coordination:** Develop a project stakeholder map and stakeholder coordination workplan to ensure clarity over the timing, purpose and ownership of stakeholder engagement activity.
- Monitoring and Reporting:** Develop a monitoring and evaluation plan, incorporating refined Theory of Change and Results Framework.



**UNODC**  
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



INDEPENDENT EVALUATION SECTION  
<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/evaluation/unodc-ies@un.org>