

EVALUATION BRIEFS

FINAL INDEPENDENT PROJECT EVALUATION

Statistics and data for measuring Illicit Financial Flows in the Asia-Pacific region (2023K)

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Region: Southeast Asia and the Pacific (Bangladesh, Nepal, Maldives, Viet Nam, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan)

Duration: July 2020-December 2022

Donors: United Nations Development Account (UNDA)

Evaluation team: Raúl Guerrero (Team Leader) and Aldo Magoga (Substantive Expert)

Full report:
https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/evaluation/reports_year_2023.html

The project aimed to improve the statistical capacity of selected Asian-Pacific countries to measure Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs) and use such metrics for targeted policymaking. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) played key roles in providing methodological support and facilitating coordination in different countries.

The project's objectives focused on enhancing statistical capacity and understanding of IFFs concepts, with outcomes centered around improved statistics and increased knowledge among government officials. The global statistical methodology for measuring IFFs, endorsed by the UN Statistical Commission, was piloted in the Asia-Pacific region as part of this project. Contextual challenges in measuring IFFs in the pilot countries included limited capacity, coordination, data availability, and legal frameworks.

MAIN FINDINGS

The project exhibited strong **relevance** by aligning with the 2030 Development Agenda and SDG target 16.4, addressing emerging priorities and needs related to the COVID-19 pandemic. It effectively enhanced cooperation among national stakeholders and facilitated regional and global collaboration on IFFs.

Despite experiencing delays caused by the pandemic and internal issues, the project demonstrated **efficiency** by adapting effectively and delivering outputs in a timely manner.

It achieved significant **effectiveness** by increasing understanding and capacities to measure IFFs in the pilot countries and producing statistics that contributed to SDG Indicator 16.4.1.

The project's **sustainability** was evident through its engagement with key stakeholders, ensuring their ownership and support, with planned follow-up activities poised to contribute to the 2030 Agenda.

While the project identified relevant **human rights issues** and made efforts for equal participation, the mainstreaming of these elements in the design and implementation was limited.

LESSONS LEARNED

The project aimed to achieve sustainable change through piloting its methodology. However, a more ambitious strategy and adequate resources are needed for lasting transformation. Language barriers and expertise challenges added complexity. The selection of pilot countries showed ownership progress, but further efforts are required for a bottom-up approach and full commitment.

Early involvement of field offices and active engagement of Country Offices are crucial for successful project adaptation. These lessons inform future endeavors in measuring IFFs effectively and sustainably. Comprehensive planning, efficient resource allocation, and stakeholder collaboration are key to addressing the challenges of combating IFFs.

GOOD PRACTICES

The establishment of National Coordination Mechanisms (NCMs) demonstrated its value in engaging stakeholders and ensuring long-term sustainability. Led by National Statistical Offices (NSOs), NCMs facilitated collaboration, coordination, and progress tracking among key institutions.

While the goal is for national institutions to take full ownership, the expertise and support of external consultants played a crucial role in initiating and driving the process of measuring IFFs. Their contributions were instrumental in providing technical knowledge and guidance, enabling national institutions to effectively measure and address IFFs.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation followed a comprehensive and utilization-focused approach, adhering to the norms and principles of the United Nations. Multiple data collection instruments, including desk review, interviews, and an online survey, were used to ensure robust and unbiased findings.

The evaluation methodology emphasized triangulation of information and inclusivity. Findings were based on sound evidence and analysis, aligning with the evaluation criteria. The process aimed to provide an objective assessment, considering diverse stakeholder perspectives and ensuring validity and reliability.

Directed to the Data Development and Dissemination Section (DDDS), Research and Trend Analysis Branch (RAB), Division for Policy Analysis and Public Affairs (DPA, UNODC):

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Follow up:** Organize formal presentations of evaluation findings in each pilot country to share key insights and recommendations.
- 2. Learning:** Develop methodological guidelines and online training modules to enhance the capacity of measuring crime-related iffs.
- 3. Partnerships:** Provide technical assistance and strengthen partnerships with international organizations, governments, civil society, and the private sector to combat iffs effectively.
- 4. Regional dimension:** Disseminate project results and methodology through a formal platform and expert exchange program to foster regional cooperation and harmonized illicit financial flows estimates.
- 5. Ownership and feasibility:** Select future pilot countries through a combination of expressions of interest and stakeholder mapping, engaging key institutions and involving field offices early in the project design.
- 6. Impact and gender:** Strengthen the theory of change and collaborate with civil society to address vulnerabilities of women and girls related to iffs, incorporating gender and vulnerability analysis into the estimation process.



UNODC
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



INDEPENDENT EVALUATION SECTION

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