EVALUATION BRIEFS

FINAL INDEPENDENT PROJECT EVALUATION

Fostering sustainable development by supporting the implementation of the UNCAC in countries along the Silk Road Economic Belt

Region: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, China, Georgia, Greece, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Montenegro, Serbia, Tajikistan, Türkiye, and Uzbekistan.

Duration: January 2020 - September 2022.

Donors: The United Nations Peace and Development Trust Fund (UNPDF).

Evaluation team: Aida Alymbaeva, Evaluation Expert

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

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The project was designed to establish an anti-corruption network of practitioners from countries along the Silk Road Economic Belt (Belt), a land component of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The network was aimed at addressing corruption in international investment projects, and enhancing international cooperation through sharing information, experiences, good practices, and peer-learning. The project, with a total budget of $500,528, was interregional in scope, encompassing 16 countries mainly in Central Asia, South Caucasus, and South Eastern Europe.

MAIN FINDINGS

Relevance: The project was pertinent to the needs of target countries in terms of increasing their knowledge of preventing and combating corruption in international investment projects, improving their national anti-corruption practices, strengthening their capacity, and enhancing international cooperation with their peers from countries across the Belt. The project was also aligned with SDG 16. **Efficiency:** COVID-19 caused substantial delays in project implementation, but the project succeeded in adjusting its interventions to respond to challenges caused by the global pandemic. The project used cost-effective strategies, resulting in cost savings. **Coherence:** The multi-stakeholder approach exploited by the project provided a proper framework for examining the anti-corruption strategies from various angles. The project worked with a diversified group of beneficiaries, such as policymakers, lawmakers, and anti-corruption practitioners from judicial institutions, law enforcement bodies, and public procurement agencies. By doing so, the project promoted a holistic approach to tackling corruption. **Effectiveness:** All planned activities were implemented that contributed to achieving the expected accomplishments and the overall objective. In particular, the Anti-Corruption Network of Practitioners was created. The project produced five knowledge products instead of the two publications planned. The project also created a knowledge-sharing database, the first systemized collection of relevant anti-corruption standards and tools. In addition, two out of sixteen countries were in the process of developing their anti-corruption policies. **Impact:** The project's major effect was that the awareness of anti-corruption practitioners in the area of addressing corruption in investment projects was increased. **Sustainability:** The project's sustainability elements included the acquired skills and capacity, knowledge products, and a knowledge-sharing database. **Human Rights, Gender Equality, and Leaving No One Behind:** By promoting sustainable development through maximizing the positive outcome of international investment projects, the project indirectly addressed human rights. Women were encouraged to participate in

Source: UNODC, PDF-SDG-2019-02.2-2 Project Document

project activities despite the absence of a gender-specific focus in its design.

LESSONS LEARNED

Networking: When the number of in-person events is limited, it is crucial that the same participants from target countries attend to foster a solid network between them. A newly established network also requires continuing facilitation to encourage communications among its members. **Project timeframe:** The original 12-month project duration was insufficient to ensure the adoption of policy guidance. Longer time horizons should be planned for policy components. **Policy outcome:** To assist the target countries in adopting policy changes, the project needs to offer them well-tailored training sessions and support.

GOOD PRACTICES

Multi-stakeholder approach: The project involved a wide range of government agencies, including the prosecution, police, justice, anti-corruption, and procurement offices. Such a multi-sectoral approach enabled beneficiaries to analyse the anti-corruption challenges from various lenses. **Inter-regional approach:** Connecting countries from various regions with different levels of legal and institutional development added value for beneficiary countries. It stimulated learning of diverse practices. It also helped to better understand corruption challenges in various contexts. **Cooperation channels within UNODC:** As the funding scale of this intervention was relatively small, the project established close synergies with other UNODC initiatives to co-fund project activities. This helped to save the costs. **Co-hosting events with national governments**: All project events were organized in partnership with the hosting governments. This resulted in not just smooth logistical arrangements, but in a reduction in costs. **Proactive and inclusive approach by the project team:** Thanks to the proactive strategy, the project staff was able to develop additional outputs with limited financial resources, which were not initially anticipated.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation used two tools to ensure the triangulation of evidence: a desk review and remote semi-structured interviews. A total of 24 individuals (8 female and 16 male) were interviewed, who represented an entire community of project stakeholders, including 11 anti-corruption professionals from 10 target countries. Time constraint was the key barrier to the evaluation as only two months were allotted for the desk review, data collection, and drafting of the evaluation report. To mitigate this, the evaluator focused on the most relevant issues for UNODC. Another limitation was the unavailability of government stakeholders for interviews. To overcome it, the evaluator offered them flexibility in terms of timing (accommodating different time zones) and languages (Russian and English).

Directed to the Convention Support Section, Corruption and Economic Crime Branch, Division for Treaty Affairs, UNODC

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.**Network sustainability and expansion**: To continue supporting the Anti-Corruption Network by facilitating communication between its members, and mobilizing resources for the development of a long-term project.

2.**Disseminiation and presentation of knowledge products**: To develop a plan for dissemination and presentation of publications in order to reach a larger audience.

3.**Directory and communication portal:** To update the directory of designated focal points and submit it to all target countries before the project is over. Consider developing a functional and user-friendly communication platform in the future, subject to the availability of funds and network expansion.

4.**Exit strategy:** To develop an exit strategy for every future project at its onset to maximize sustainability and engage all key project stakeholders in the exit strategy development. They will be better prepared to continue the project on their own after its ends.

5.**Inter-regional project with national focus**: To keep an inter-regional approach in the next projects, but add activities focusing on the national needs. This will promote international cooperation while also addressing national needs and nurturing local ownership.

6.**Formulation of policy outcomes**: To carefully formulate the policy outcomes. The time horizon for attaining a policy outcome should be long enough.

INDEPENDENT EVALUATION SECTION

https://www.unodc.org/evaluation