

EVALUATION BRIEFS

FINAL IN-DEPTH EVALUATION

STRENGTHENING THE JUDICIAL CAPACITIES OF ECCAS MEMBER STATES TO COMBAT WILDLIFE CRIME AND TRAFFICKING IN NATURAL RESOURCES (GPCAE-CA/GLOZ31)

Region: Central Africa (Cameroon, Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Gabon)

Duration: February 2018 – January 2023 (5 years including one year extension)

Donor: European Union

Evaluation team: Deborah Alimi (lead evaluator) and Jonathan Barzdo (substantive expert in environmental crimes)

Full report:

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

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Funded by the European Union (EU) (USD 6M budget), the project implemented by UNODC as a regional segment of its Global Programme on Crimes that Affect the Environment (GPCAE) seeks to enhance governments' capacities in Central Africa to investigate and prosecute wildlife crime and illicit trafficking of natural resources. A key outcome of an interregional peace and security cooperation effort between the EU and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) (PARCIC - *Programme d'appui aux Réformes et au Renforcement des Capacités Institutionnelles de la CEEAC*), the project adopts a "crime scene to court" approach. It aims at: i) reinforcing national capacities to detect, investigate and adjudicate wildlife and forest crimes; ii) promoting regional cooperation; and iii) reinforcing Member States' capacity to address corruption and money-laundering as related to wildlife and natural resources crimes.

MAIN FINDINGS

The project responded to increasing concerns about illegal trade in wildlife and forest products and other natural resources in the sub-region and is aligned with donors' and key partners' priorities. Critical achievements were observed in terms of enhanced national investigative (crime scene management) and wildlife forensic capacities notably through its support to the National Agency for National Parks of Gabon; changes of perceptions of prioritization and needs related to wildlife and natural resources crime prosecution at individual level (70% of surveyed training beneficiaries developed new skills through project activities); strengthened links between first responders/park rangers and judicial authorities. The production of operational tools such as *Rapid Reference Guides (RRGs)* and support to national pool of experts (Train-the-trainer model in Garoua School of Cameroon) was instrumental in transferring skills conducive to the development of a "crime scene to court" approach. In its entirety however, the project presents some mixed results, which were limited in scope and in short-to medium-term impact. Some efficiency and delivery challenges led to delayed and unbalanced implementation, with regional objectives taking time to materialize, including at operational levels. There were several explaining factors, including unusual personnel turnover, external ownership deficits, and miscommunications among project stakeholders. In its second half period, the project nevertheless efficiently recontextualized its action, and caught up on and expanded interventions, highlighting UNODC capacity to adjust, and to develop adequate synergies to achieve results. Preventive measures and cross-cutting issues of gender, human rights and inclusion of vulnerable populations were insufficiently integrated. The results framework did not fully reflect implementation challenges, progress, and impact, e.g. contributions to SDGs.



Launch of IDP Program, Garoua School, Cameroon, April 2022 (UNODC)

LESSONS LEARNED

Key lessons learned pertain to: i) the need for a thorough assessment of implementation context and needs (in-field staffing/presence, partners mapping and enhanced communication, political economy analysis...) to prevent delays and mixed expectations; and ii) the need for multi-sectoral participation in training and proper balancing of institutional and operational capacity strength, to maximize impact and encourage national engagement towards regular, sustainable capacity-building.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Crime scene to court approach. ✓ Capacity development work and focus on ready-to-use tool development. ✓ Pro-active project team with good knowledge of the region in the project's second phase. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Ambitious Theory of Change compared to in-region presence. ✗ Important efficiency gaps, leading to delays and shortcomings in performance. ✗ Inadequate/partial needs assessment in training participant selection. ✗ Partial and activities-focused reporting.
Opportunities	Threats/ Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Nourished interest among national and technical stakeholders for continued effort on W&E crime reduction and prevention. ✓ Structures in place for continued work (forensic, tailored resources and tools, growing pool of national experts...). ✓ Cross-pollination of ideas across UN entities to develop presence and workstreams in the region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Security issues, political instabilities and/or competition that limit the project's reach. ✓ Lack of political will and turnover in leadership. ✓ Uncertain future funding. ✓ Incremental progress of strategic change vs. project requirements of result-for money tensions. ✓ Results and nascent cooperative relationships may not be sustained without continuous attention and support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Take stock and engage in dialogues, including with donors and key partners, to examine project outcomes and clarify best strategic approach on wildlife and environmental crime (W&E) in the subregion.
2. Readjust the scope and framework of W&E programming in the subregion to optimize results, based on lessons learned and identified opportunities, including diversified fundraising strategies, and knowledge tools by major W&E crime priorities.
3. Enrich the capacity-building portfolio and focus interventions at operational levels.
4. Develop a more balanced and comprehensive approach to W&E crime programming, including learning across GPCAE regional segments & specific human rights/gender understanding in this context.
5. Continue strengthening UNODC presence in the subregion, through smart partnerships to increase programmatic coherence, and effectiveness on W&E crime portfolio.
6. Monitoring and reporting for impact.

GOOD PRACTICES

The quality of UNODC expertise and technical assistance, including training and mentorship were key in achieving results. The inclusive, tailored, and participatory approach to achieving outputs, along

with support to national structures (such as those used for the development of RRGs, Train-the-trainer modules, or forensic capacities) increased opportunities for ownership and optimal use of project gains. The project demonstrated positive pairing of expertise and activities across UNODC, that offset efficiency challenges and increased UNODC programmatic coherence on wildlife crime, cross-border security, and anti-corruption.

METHODOLOGY

Using a theory-based, mixed-method and participatory approach, the evaluation developed and validated a theory of change to examine how far the project contributed to a strategic change in the fight against wildlife crime and trafficking of natural resources in partner pilot countries. Data collection and triangulation involved the review of 55 project and external documents, 45 in-depth interviews with core learning partners and project stakeholders, email questionnaires and an online survey of final beneficiaries of training. A field mission took place in Gabon and Cameroon, while three case studies of key project activities were conducted.



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