

EVALUATION BRIEFS

MID-TERM INDEPENDENT PROJECT EVALUATION

Countering Illegal Hazardous Waste Trafficking Through the Container Control Programme (Component of GLOG80)

Region: Cambodia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam

Duration: May 2020 – December 2024

Donors: Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad)

Evaluation team: Aida Alymbaeva (Evaluation Expert) and Gohar Petrossian (Substantive Expert)

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

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

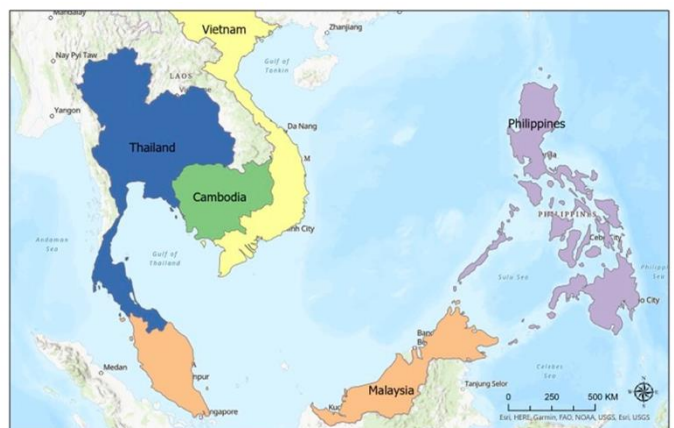
In 2018, shortly after China introduced import restrictions for waste, countries in Southeast Asia faced an influx of illegally trafficked hazardous waste, including e-waste, plastic, and chemicals, putting them at an increased risk for illegal waste dumping. To assist five countries in the region – Cambodia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam – with their efforts to combat illicit shipment of waste through seaports, in 2020, UNODC launched a new project “*Countering illegal hazardous waste trafficking through the Container Control Programme*”. The project aimed to strengthen the capacity of customs and other relevant law enforcement agencies in five target countries to detect, prevent, and suppress illegal hazardous waste trafficking through improved capacity and enhanced inter-agency cooperation nationally and regionally.

The project is implemented by UNODC’s Container Control

Programme (GLOG80) and has overall funding of 1,690,000 Norwegian Krone (approx. USD1,624,435). The project was initially planned to run from May 2020 to December 2023. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it received a no-cost extension until December 2024.

MAIN FINDINGS

Relevance: The project was pertinent to the customs agencies and their Port Control Units (PCUs) in all five target countries in terms of improving their capacity to target, profile, inspect, examine, and repatriate containers. The project also responded to their need to enhance inter-agency cooperation at the national and regional levels. Besides, the project was aligned with SDGs 5, 12, 14, 16, and 17, as well as the Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm, and Minamata Conventions. **Efficiency:** While COVID-19 caused delays in the project implementation, the project was adaptive to the pandemic by changing its implementation mode from in-person to online activities. COVID-19 also resulted in an unspent budget for travel, which was redirected to the procurement of equipment and protective suits for PCUs, which were highly demanded by the target countries. **Effectiveness:** Through workshops and mentorships, the project improved the capacity of frontline customs officers to target, profile, inspect, examine, and repatriate containers. Following capacity-building activities, the



Project Target Countries, Source: Evaluation team, using ArcGIS Pro

target countries seized and repatriated more illegally transported hazardous waste. Yet, the sustainability of the capacity building activities is an issue. The project was instrumental in establishing inter-agency relations between customs departments, environmental agencies, police, and other law enforcement bodies at the national level. To establish close regional interaction, the project has yet to carry out the majority of its regionally significant activities. **Human rights, gender equality, disability inclusion, and Leaving No One Behind (LNOB):** The project's design and implementation aligned with the principles of human rights and gender equality. In particular, 23% of the workshop and 20% of the mentorship attendees were women, which is considerably higher than the national average of women working in law enforcement agencies in the frontline role.

LESSONS LEARNED

Early planning of procurement: Starting the procurement process early in the project can prevent delays in the delivery of equipment. **Proactive approach in external partnership building:** Mapping international organizations engaged in a similar field at the project's onset allows early contacts to be established and prospective synergies to be planned. **Wider stakeholder participation:** Participation of local training institutions (academies and training centers) is necessary to ensure the sustainability of the project's capacity-building efforts.

GOOD PRACTICES

Assessment of a new domain: When projects in a new field start with assessments, it equips the implementing organization with crucial context- and institution-specific background information. This also helps to guide the overall project implementation. **Complementarity of project activities:** When the project activities are interconnected and complement each other, their effectiveness is maximized. **Sub-regional focus:** Bringing countries with similar needs, problems, and comparable environments enables the same project instruments to be equally applied to beneficiaries in multiple countries, effectively reducing project implementation costs. **Combination of national and regional interventions:** When the project design is based on two pillars (national and regional activities), it allows the project to implement nationally tailored activities and expands the geographic (regional) reach of beneficiaries. Combining local and regional locus into a single project is the optimal scheme for addressing problems on multiple levels.

METHODOLOGY

To ensure the triangulation of evidence, the evaluation employed a mixed-methods approach. Specifically, desk review, semi-structured interviews (KIs), and online surveys were used. The desk review involved the examination of 50 internal and 8 external documents. Remote KIs were conducted with 26 respondents (11 women and 15 men), including 10 beneficiaries from Cambodia, Thailand, Viet Nam, and the Philippines. An online survey was carried out using Google Forms, with a total of 47 beneficiaries participating in the survey, of which 79% were men and 21% were women. Evaluators were not in a position to mitigate the lack of participation by Malaysian beneficiaries in KIs, and Vietnamese participants in online surveys. Participants required permission from their government to be able to participate, a timely process that was outside of the evaluation timeframe. This limitation was mitigated by the desk review.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Sustainability of capacity-building interventions:** Take measures to ensure the sustainability of the capacity-building activities through the creation of a Train-the-Trainer module, Training Manual, and online courses for customs officers.
- 2. Regional cooperation:** Implement all regionally planned activities by the project's end.
- 3. External partnership:** Adopt a more proactive approach toward expanding cooperation with external partners, in order to increase synergies for reinforcing one another's efforts and maximizing resource utilization and avoid duplications.
- 4. Active promotion of ContainerComm:** To promote the benefits of ContainerCOMM more widely in order to increase its use by customs officers for information exchange.
- 5. Participation of export countries:** Include waste-exporting (industrialized) countries in future projects to raise their awareness of the effects of waste trafficking and discuss potential joint actions so that law enforcement agencies on both sides find solutions to combat illicit waste trafficking.
- 6. Participation of the prosecutor's offices:** Draw attention to the criminalization, criminal investigation, and prosecution of illegal waste trafficking.



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