



EVALUATION BRIEF

Final Independent Project Evaluation of the project "Support to A.B.1 Interinstitutional and Regional Coordination for Border Security in Central America (XCAX75)"

Final Independent Project Evaluation

Region: Central America (Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Belize, Panama and Dominican Republic)

Duration: April 2016-March 2018

Donors: Government of Canada

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Full report:

https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/evaluation/reports_year_2019.html

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The second phase of the XCAX75 project "Support to A.B.1. Interinstitutional and Regional Coordination for Border Security in Central America" was implemented from 2016 to 2018, and its evaluation was conducted during the second half of 2018.

The project was funded by the Government of Canada and focuses on strengthening border security in the Central American region to prevent and combat human trafficking and migrant smuggling; it also adheres to the "fight against organized crime" component of the Central American Security Strategy (ESCA) of the Central American Integration System (SICA); joint work has therefore been carried out with UNODC and the Central American and Caribbean Council of Public Prosecutors (CCCMP). Also, the project envisages guiding and supporting countries in the region's implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in their short, medium and long-term national policies and plans.

The second phase of the project includes several components: the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) by the Attorney General's Office and Attorney General of the Public Prosecutor's Offices of Central America and the Dominican Republic for the exchange of information on human trafficking.

It also includes the establishment of an information exchange mechanism for better investigation and criminal prosecution of the crime of trafficking in persons in border areas in two pilot countries. Other components include the training of special prosecutors and frontline officers at the border for the detection and combat of human trafficking, including regional and binational events in border areas; and the launch of the Blue Campaign against Trafficking in Persons in four Central American countries: Guatemala, Costa Rica, El Salvador and Honduras.

In addition to linking with ESCA, the project is consistent with UNODC's strategic framework in the area of justice, seeking to improve the capacity of Member States to develop and maintain impartial, humane and responsible criminal justice systems, in United Nations rules and standards on crime prevention, criminal justice and other relevant international instruments, such as the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, known as the Palermo Protocol.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation utilized a mixed method approach, utilizing primary and secondary sources, including face-to-face interviews, telephone and videoconferences, desk review and surveys. Also, field missions to El Salvador and Panama were conducted. Surveys were tailored to different target groups (e.g. focal point, trained official or officer). Moreover, the survey was administered to assess the project's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, partnerships and collaboration, sustainability, learned lessons and good practices. The evaluation was carried out by external consultants and involved 50 people, of whom one represented the regional counterpart; 20 the implementing partner institutions; 25 trained persons from government entities and civil society, plus four UNODC Staff members. Thirty-three of the interviewed stakeholders were female and 17 were male.

MAIN FINDINGS

The evidence obtained shows that the objectives of the project were achieved. There was an increase in the exchange of information on trafficking in persons, with the signing of the MoU as a starting point, which also allowed the participation of Specialized Prosecutors.

The **design** of the project strengthens the Central American Strategy of the Regional Integration System, as it focuses on coordination and improved border security.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Design:** UNODC Project Management should maintain communication with the CCCMP, the Regional Coalition against Trafficking in Persons and Illicit Trafficking in Migrants and other national coalitions to work on the investigation and prosecution of crimes, mainly human trafficking and migrant trafficking. This will allow to optimize resources and efforts that are implemented in the region.
2. **Design:** UNODC Project Management should take into account the approach of actions involving judges, given the important role they play in the process of prosecution and processing.
3. **Training Methodology:** UNODC Project Management should in future training processes, include in the agenda, the development of the ESCA and SDG theme, identifying the contributions that a country provides based on these Objectives.
4. **Strategies:** UNODC Project Management should follow up on the formation of the network of Specialized Prosecutors in the field of human trafficking, since they are part of the Public Prosecutor's Offices and members of the CCCMP. Implementing this strategy will help streamline processes for information exchange, research, persecution and processing, whether at national, binational and/or regional levels.

The project was **relevant** as it addressed an issue of importance to the Central American region. For the CCCMP, the issue of human trafficking remained **relevant** and of interest, specifically for the Specialized Prosecutors dealing with this crime. In addition, work under the project was further of benefit to ESCA and as a result, also to SICA.

The project was **efficient** in using resources in strengthening the capabilities of people involved with the detection, investigation, and prosecution of anti-trafficking cases.

The project was **effective**, as the various actions contributed to the implementation of the MoU, in providing tools to improve cooperation and training of equipment for the research, prosecution and processing of cases, related to human trafficking. It was further evident that the various actions encouraged the exchange of information and cooperation; as well as actions aimed at the rescue, care and protection of victims of crime.

Partnerships were expanded at the binational and regional levels, as a result of improved communication between representatives of institutions investigating and pursuing the crime of trafficking in persons.

Actions implemented are **sustainable**, with evidence of improved procedures in the investigation and prosecution of crime, in addition to the care of victims.

The inclusion of the Sustainable Development Goals was found as the cross-cutting axis of the project, as well as the theme of training by emphasizing gender equality, peace, justice and the establishment of partnerships for the achievement of the objectives. The project further incorporated the transversality of **human rights, gender and inclusion** in compliance with the Palermo Protocol. There remained however a need to increase awareness of these issues.

The **impact** of the project is the beginning of the formation of a network to bring prosecutors together at the regional level. The fact that the objectives were achieved is however not synonymous with having resolved the situation of human trafficking. However, achievements have generated a commitment among individuals and institutions that have acquired new tools to improve procedures focused on research, prosecution, processing and victim care, recognizing that there are many challenges still to be addressed in tackling transnational crime.

LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICE

The main lessons learned and good practices include: Crime investigation requires regional integration, as projects or actions should not be limited to a single country but involve several countries.

The prosecutions for convicting sentences involve investigators, professionals who provide care to victims, as well as judges, who stated that they sometimes underestimate human trafficking cases, because they confuse them with other types of cases (pimping) and/or not knowing the subject matter of human trafficking. The lack of participation of judges may have an effect in the increase in sentences.

Training trainers and replicas enable the sustainability of the process, including workshops on various techniques aimed at improving care for victims and profiling traffickers and potential victims.

The programming of workshops involving prosecutors and police helps improve short-term operational processes by exchanging information.