Meta-Synthesis
of the Work of UNODC
in Mexico 2016–2023
META-SYNTHESIS OF THE WORK OF UNODC IN MEXICO 2016–2023
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Disclaimer

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

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<th>Full name</th>
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<tr>
<td>CAMIs</td>
<td>Centros de Atención a Mujeres Indígenas (Centers for Indigenous Women's Assistance)</td>
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<td>COMEX</td>
<td>UNODC Country Office in Mexico</td>
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<tr>
<td>GEEW</td>
<td>Gender equality and empowerment of women</td>
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<tr>
<td>IES</td>
<td>Independent Evaluation Section (of UNODC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INEGI</td>
<td>Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (National Institute of Statistics and Geography)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPMR</td>
<td>Integrated project management report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAC</td>
<td>Latin America and the Caribbean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOPAN</td>
<td>Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIOS</td>
<td>Office of Internal Oversight Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONUMX</td>
<td>United Nations Office in Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROPAN</td>
<td>Regional Office for Mexico and Central America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDG</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEGOB</td>
<td>Secretaría de Gobernación (Mexican Secretariat for Home Affairs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SINTRA</td>
<td>Sistema Nacional para Prevenir, Atender, Sancionar y Erradicar la Violencia Contra las Mujeres (National System to Prevent, Address, Sanction, and Eradicate Violence Against Women)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMEs</td>
<td>Small and medium-sized enterprises</td>
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<tr>
<td>StAR</td>
<td>Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNCT</td>
<td>United Nations Country Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDA</td>
<td>United Nations Development Account</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNODC</td>
<td>United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNTOC</td>
<td>United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime</td>
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Also see annex 1 for the list of synthesized evaluations and their abbreviated referencing in the report.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Context and rationale

As the current UNODC programming cycle in Mexico comes to an end, the UNODC Country Office in Mexico (COMEX) is developing a new programmatic framework to guide engagement going forward. This meta-synthesis review was commissioned by the UNODC Independent Evaluation Section (IES) to provide useful information and insights to inform the development of future engagement in the country. It provides an aggregated analysis of the work of UNODC in Mexico from 2016 to June 2023, and takes a closer look at efforts related to anti-corruption.

Scope and objectives

UNODC programming in Mexico covers the full spectrum of the organization’s thematic areas, all of which work towards attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 16 which focuses on peace, justice and strong institutions. Therefore, the main objective of the synthesis was to analyse how interventions have contributed to achieving SDG 16 targets, with a focus on anti-corruption efforts aligned with target 16.5. The primary audience for the report is COMEX and Regional Office staff, as well as programme staff at headquarters.

Methodology

The synthesis process entailed the review of 21 primary reports published between 2016 and 2023, including 13 national evaluations, three regional evaluations and five global evaluations covering 32 projects. Additionally, other types of reports – such as the Mexico United Nations Country Team (UNCT) reports, UNODC strategy reports, and Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) audits – were used to understand the operational context of UNODC Mexico. The reports that were analysed cover a range of themes related to the work of UNODC, including trafficking in persons, migrant smuggling, penitentiary systems, countering world drug problems, security strategy, gender-based violence, lawfulness, anti-corruption, illicit financial flows and crime prevention, aligning with the four priority areas identified in the Strategic Vision for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) 2022–2025. A qualitative content analysis approach was used to code and analyse emerging trends, patterns and examples against SDG 16 targets and UNODC cross-cutting commitments including partnerships, project management, gender equality, human rights and leaving no one behind.
Main findings

The reviewed evaluations showed that UNODC programming in Mexico contributed significantly to strengthening foundations for achieving SDG 16 targets, though opportunities exist to sharpen strategic focus, consolidate results measurement and ensure greater sustainability moving forward.

Findings relevant to anti-corruption (SDG 16.5)

The UNODC anti-corruption portfolio was found to have made a strong contribution towards addressing this issue by effectively supporting regulatory framework harmonization, promoting experience sharing and citizen participation, and raising awareness on the topic. UNODC initiatives were highly relevant, pragmatically filling gaps in the regulatory framework and prevention capacities of Mexico through alignment with the principles of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption. Innovative citizen participation mechanisms and peer review approaches effectively promoted the sharing of experience and awareness-raising on anti-corruption measures. However, programming consisted more of an aggregation of activities rather than a cohesive, strategic portfolio. The reviewed documents also pointed to the need for improvements in aspects of project design, monitoring and reporting, and for more involvement from headquarters and regional staff.

Findings relevant to other SDG 16 targets

16.1. Reducing violence

UNODC is actively addressing violence and crime of various types through various means in Mexico, with four evaluations on projects related to this topic included in the synthesis. Gender-based violence is a priority, with projects such as MEXZ93 training law enforcement agencies on topics to identify and adequately address cases of gender violence and help them better channel victims to Women’s Justice Centres, and MEXW78 focusing on improving research capabilities in criminal incidence and femicide, victim care and crime prevention. However, the effects on addressing the everyday institutional challenges encountered by law enforcement agencies have been somewhat restricted, underscoring the potential benefits of having more specialized personnel in police-related initiatives. Ultimately, these efforts emphasize UNODC commitment to addressing violence, crime and gender-based violence in Mexico.

16.2. Ending abuse, exploitation and human trafficking

Five evaluations focused on UNODC efforts related to trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling in Mexico, emphasizing its role in implementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Evaluations highlighted the importance of inter-agency collaboration and information-sharing through systems such as the National Human
Trafficking System, leading to standardized data exchange and improved coordination among anti-trafficking entities. A consistent best practice noted across evaluations was the engagement of a wide range of stakeholders, including government agencies, universities, civil society organizations and Indigenous communities, which significantly amplified the impact of anti-trafficking initiatives by leveraging diverse perspectives and resources.

16.3. Promoting the rule of law

Eight evaluations addressed this topic. Project activities focused on improving justice systems and/or access to official justice mechanisms. This study found that UNODC projects contributed to improving judicial systems by enhancing operational systems (such as automated information systems for law enforcement), creating a peer-to-peer network for judges and providing programmes tailored to the needs of judicial system actors. Several evaluations identified the need for updated resource guides and handbooks for trainers, user-friendly online training tools and for providing in-person training in parallel with remote training. They also highlighted the importance of providing capacity-building and awareness-raising activities to enable justice system operatives and community members to better identify crimes and their victims, and to provide more appropriate responses.

16.4. Reducing illicit financial and arms flows

Two reports centred on this difficult-to-track issue. The most important recommendation highlighted in the evaluations was to ensure that local experts are consulted from the design phase on to guarantee that guidelines and tools developed are locally relevant. Both projects implemented on this topic were found to have done well in incorporating input from local stakeholders which allowed for the customization of activities based on the needs of participating countries and raised awareness among decision makers on how to tackle this challenge.

16.6./16a Transparent institutions (institutional capacity-building)

Across thematic areas, initiatives have contributed to strengthening capacities of institutions through training, tools and networking. Over 8,600 persons were trained, with an average of 95 per cent reporting the use of acquired knowledge, indicating strengthened institutional capacity and delivery on the UNODC mandate. Bringing together diverse stakeholders for experiential learning cultivated relationships and built synergies for addressing complex challenges such as migrant smuggling. However, high government turnover was noted as a significant challenge, disrupting the continuity of such gains in some cases.
16.b Law and policy development

In the work of UNODC, research and policy development play vital roles, and this is reflected in the 17 evaluations that frequently addressed these aspects, encompassing a wide range of projects and initiatives. UNODC efforts in Mexico have focused on enhancing research capabilities in various critical domains, from criminal incidence and detection to femicides and victim care. The projects demonstrated the importance of diagnosis as the foundation for policy development and implementation, utilizing innovative and user-friendly technology and creating national databases and data management processes. By conducting comprehensive assessments and disseminating findings relevant to local contexts, UNODC Mexico has contributed to tailoring policies to address region-specific challenges. Additionally, involvement in research and trend analysis, guided by international conventions and expert consultations, resulted in valuable publications and generated data that have enhanced understanding in areas such as drug-related crimes, trafficking in persons, and the smuggling of migrants. UNODC knowledge transfer efforts were found to have facilitated the harmonization of domestic regulations with international standards, especially in anti-corruption initiatives. While there have been successes in adapting to political shifts, challenges remain, particularly in aligning policies across countries, and addressing evolving issues such as the regulation of synthetic drugs.

Findings relevant to cross-cutting commitments

Inclusivity

The reviewed evaluations found uneven coverage of human rights, gender and disability inclusion. While evaluations assessed inclusivity of processes and outputs, finding that UNODC integrates human rights into project design, training and materials, the evaluations lacked in-depth assessment of longer-term outcomes for vulnerable groups. Despite evidence gaps, good practices were found in the provision of support services for trafficking victims, balanced gender representation in training and accessibility measures in shelters for persons with physical disabilities. Factors that hindered progress included inadequate resourcing, lack of localized training content, scarce sex-disaggregated data and limited coordination with stakeholders specialized or focused on gender equality. Overall, the evaluations recommend developing specific outcome indicators on human rights and gender to further advance results measurement and greater visibility on related impact.

Partnerships

Evaluations underscored the critical importance of collaborations in the work of UNODC, both within Mexico and with international counterparts. The change of Government in 2018 posed challenges as collaborative partnerships needed to be rebuilt with new government counterparts, leading to organizational changes and personnel turnover. However, the establishment of multidisciplinary and multisectoral technical working groups and ad hoc committees proved effective in facilitating collaboration among diverse stakeholders,
including government authorities, academia and civil society. South-South cooperation and multi-country collaboration have also been successful in achieving project objectives, as seen in initiatives such as MEXW34 and the Centre of Excellence on Statistical Information on Government, Crime, Victimization and Justice (henceforth referred to as the Centre of Excellence). Additionally, local-level partnerships and collaboration with the private sector have emerged as vital strategies for enhancing project outcomes and addressing various challenges.

Technology and communications

The integration of technologies – from software that has improved data collection to videoconferencing efficiently delivering training – has furthered project outcomes. Best practices identified in projects such as MEXZ93 included the development of dedicated websites for programme information and the use of software and hardware for data collection, storage and sharing, which has led to improved visibility and streamlined implementation. Also, in MEXKS4, a strategic approach involving cost-effective technological tools, open-source software and essential software updates optimized project outcomes, particularly in statistical and geospatial data analysis.

Findings relevant to UNODC project management

Project design

Several reports noted that logical frameworks and theories of change needed to better link project activities with expected outcomes, while project indicators often concentrated on outputs rather than expected changes or outcomes. Consultation with local stakeholders during the design phase was seen as vital for successful project implementation, but some evaluations highlighted a lack of early stakeholder engagement. Additionally, insufficient research on the issues being addressed, situational analysis and stakeholder assessments led to delays and adjustments in project implementation. Proper identification of risks and the establishment of strong mitigation strategies were recognized as essential, and several reports pointed out the need for exit strategies and sustainability considerations in project design to ensure continued work beyond project completion.

Administrative processes

Evaluations underscored the importance of maintaining flexibility in project implementation to respond to changing circumstances and unexpected challenges. They noted that involving the right experts and local knowledge were crucial for successful project management and that personnel turnover, often associated with changes in government, at times disrupted project continuity and organizational learning. Political will and shifting priorities had significant influence on project implementation, emphasizing the need for mitigation strategies. Cumbersome administrative processes were also identified as a challenge in some projects, highlighting the importance of streamlining bureaucratic requirements for smoother project management.
Resource mobilization

UNODC responsiveness to donor priorities was found to be crucial in securing funding. Diversifying funding sources was recognized as a challenge but worth the effort, with collaboration efforts enabling more efficient resource utilization and reduced reliance on a single funding stream.

Conclusions

It is evident that UNODC efforts align closely with the priorities of Mexico and that programming has strengthened the foundations needed to make progress on SDG 16 through activities ranging from research and assessments tailored to local contexts to institutional training and modernized systems. Victim-centred approaches and empowerment of Indigenous communities represent promising practices for inclusivity. The integration of technology has expanded delivery and impact. That said, a consistent theme of the evaluations was that programming across the portfolio would benefit from a more strategic and results-focused approach with continued emphasis on knowledge-sharing to enhance effectiveness and sustainability. It was also found that partnerships and further use of technologies provide opportunities for greater impact.

Evaluations further underscored the importance of investing the time and resources necessary at the design stage to articulate clear theories of change, refine indicators, analyse risks and match activities with implementation capacity. Dedicating resources and expertise to mainstreaming gender and human rights considerations could also produce more transformative results. In addition, a continued emphasis on strong coordination and information exchanges with national and regional partners could further enhance motivation, alignment on shared expectations as well as sustainability and policy adaptation.

Considerations

The synthesis puts forward considerations to help build on progress made and strengthen strategic focus for greater impact. This includes embracing technologies and private sector partnerships that have proven successful in expanding reach, along with South-South cooperation. Consolidating anti-corruption efforts under a unified portfolio guided by the priorities and recommendations of the United Nations Convention against Corruption would maximize this niche. In addition, further investment in programme design, including in systems to measure outcomes and contributions to SDG targets, would provide additional tangible evidence of the vital role UNODC plays in assisting the institutions and citizens of Mexico to build more just, peaceful and inclusive communities.
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 EVALUATIVE EVIDENCE

The importance of evaluation to inform programming and decision-making has increased over the past years, including through the currently ongoing United Nations reforms. In line with this development, the demand for aggregating the results of individual, independent evaluations has grown and requires new approaches to synthesizing evaluation results for strategic analysis and programming. In addition, the UNODC Strategy 2021–25 is committed to increasing the effectiveness and relevance of future programmes through various streams of evidence, including evaluation and synthesis studies.

As much of the current programming in Mexico comes to an end, the UNODC Office in Mexico (COMEX), along with the Regional Office for Mexico and Central America (ROPAN), will develop a new programmatic framework to guide UNODC engagement in the country going forward. It is recognized that the new UNODC programmatic framework requires input from the current work as well as an understanding of current regional trends and priorities and would therefore benefit from contextualized and relevant evaluative evidence at the aggregate level. In this context, the UNODC Independent Evaluation Section (IES) commissioned this meta-synthesis to provide an analysis of the results of all work, including a more in-depth look at anti-corruption interventions.1 This exercise builds on the expertise IES has in the development of methods for evaluation, norms, standards and tools, as well as meta-evaluations in UNODC mandated areas of work.

1.2 STUDY CONTEXT

The mission of UNODC is to contribute to global peace, security, human rights and development by actively engaging in the establishment of a more secure world in the face of challenges such as drug-related issues, criminal activities, corruption and terrorism. UNODC works collaboratively with and on behalf of its Member States, with the overarching objective of promoting principles of justice, the rule of law and the development of resilient societies.2 In Mexico, UNODC partners with all levels and branches of government, autonomous institutions, the private sector, academia and civil society organizations to fulfil its mission.3

In 1996, Mexico and Central American Governments signed a memorandum of understanding with UNODC to address drug and crime issues, leading to the establishment of ROPAN in 2003. The UNODC Office in Mexico, was established in 2012 to serve as a Liaison and Partnership Office. Its primary role has been to coordinate UNODC collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Attorney General’s Office of Mexico, focusing on developing country-specific solutions for crime prevention and criminal justice.

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1 The rationale for conducting this study as a synthesis review rather than another type of evaluation synthesis is provided in annex 4: Methodology.
2 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), www.unodc.org/
In 2011, UNODC added anti-corruption to its portfolio of work in the country. In 2022, the office was officially designated as the UNODC Country Office in Mexico (COMEX).  

UNODC efforts in Mexico align with and complement the policies, plans and programmes established by the Government of Mexico. They also correspond to the thematic areas identified in the UNODC Strategy 2021–2025 and the Strategic Vision for Latin America and the Caribbean 2022–2025, as well as the six identified catalysts for change. Moreover, UNODC technical cooperation with the country has evolved in response to the national institutions’ changing context and needs. This alignment is directed towards achieving the targets outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the Mexican National Development Plan 2019–2024 and the previous national plan (2013–2018). The UNODC portfolio in Mexico has an impact both at the national and state levels.

1.3 PRIORITY AREAS AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION IN MEXICO

The Strategic Vision for Latin America and the Caribbean 2022–2025 prioritizes four investment areas, which inform the type of projects implemented by COMEX. These projects also align with the thematic areas identified in the UNODC Strategy 2021–2025.

PRIORITY AREA 1: COUNTERING CORRUPTION AND ECONOMIC CRIME

In the context of corruption, Mexico faces a range of underlying issues, including a lack of transparency in public financial planning and execution, resource disparities in auditing and justice institutions, and limited civic engagement. To address these challenges, the Prevention and Fight against Corruption programme aligns with the United Nations Convention against Corruption. It aims to promote integrity in both public and private sectors by enhancing corruption prevention capabilities through technical assistance and training, fostering citizen participation in anti-corruption efforts, and supporting transparency mechanisms in public finance.

Additionally, the programme has focused on education and integrity initiatives, strengthening specialized anti-corruption prosecutor’s offices, and establishing a regional hub in Mexico to coordinate international efforts. Overall, the programme emphasizes shared responsibility, human rights, justice and the rule of law in line with principles of the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

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5 As per the Results Report 2022 and Work Plan 2023, these are the six catalysts for change: 1. Flexible collaboration among countries; 2. Research and evidence-based initiatives; 3. Linkage between security and development; 4. People-centred approach; 5. Strengthening and expanding partnerships; 6. Use of technology and communication.
6 UNODC Mexico Results Report 2022.
7 This section is informed by the data and insights sourced from the UNODC Strategic Vision for Latin America and the Caribbean 2022–2025, as well as the UNODC Results Report 2022 and Work Plan for 2023 on “Security for Sustainable Development”. No external sources were used.
In Mexico, two of the most significant synthetic drugs are methamphetamine and fentanyl. Notably, methamphetamine seizures at the United States southern border surged by a substantial 74 per cent between 2018 and 2019 (UNODC Results Report 2022). UNODC has meticulously documented the involvement of notorious cartels such as Sinaloa and Jalisco New Generation in the illicit production of fentanyl, particularly in pill form, and its smuggling into the United States since 2020. Moreover, the drug landscape in Mexico reveals a complex demand scenario. In 2020, methamphetamine consumption in the country almost matched that of tranquilizers, opioids and cocaine. There was a remarkable spike in demand for treatment related to amphetamine-type stimulant (ATS) abuse, particularly methamphetamines, which surged from 14.5 per cent of cases in 2017 to 30.3 per cent in 2020 (UNODC Results Report 2022). Although the demand for fentanyl treatment remained relatively low, it exhibited an upward trend, increasing from 24 cases between 2013 and 2018 to 25 cases in 2019 and a concerning 73 cases in 2020.

To tackle this multifaceted drug challenge, UNODC and the Government of Mexico are collaborating through the Prevention and Fight against the Global Drug Problem programme. Their strategic approach encompasses several key facets. First, they aim to bolster the country’s capacity to detect, seize and analyse illicit drugs, enabling more effective law enforcement against drug trafficking. Additionally, they are striving to create lawful alternatives for vulnerable populations currently involved in the cultivation of opium poppy and marijuana. A pivotal objective is to establish a robust network of drug treatment services in Mexico, with a focus on gender sensitivity and respect for the human rights of users and their families. These services are designed to adhere to international standards, covering various aspects including intervention methods, infrastructure and human resources. This collaborative effort between Mexico and UNODC signifies a proactive stance in the face of the evolving drug problem, combining prevention, enforcement and treatment strategies to mitigate its impact.

Organized crime poses a multifaceted challenge globally and is particularly pronounced in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), where it intersects with issues of violence and governance. Criminal groups operating across borders have a strong presence in the region, including Mexico, exacerbating various criminal activities, including drug trafficking and gang violence. Paradoxically, these groups often thrive in areas where governance is weak, as they provide communities with a semblance of security and economic opportunities. During the pandemic, these organized criminal entities capitalized on opportunities to expand into cybercrime and consolidate control over territories by supplying essential items to local communities.
The Prevention and Combating of Organized Crime programme supports the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Specifically, it contributes to capacity-building, the development and implementation of technical tools, and the professionalization of criminal investigation and prosecution. The programme also focuses on preventing and combating human trafficking in Indigenous communities, addressing the prevention and combating of migrant smuggling in Mexico, for instance. UNODC plays a crucial role in strengthening the capacity to address these crimes globally, while also mitigating underlying factors such as corruption and the misuse of modern communication technologies for criminal purposes.

**PRIORITY AREA 4: ENHANCING CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

SDG 5.2
SDG 5.2
SDG 8.7
SDG 16.1
SDG 16.2
SDG 16.3
SDG 16.4

In the region, the persistently high levels of violence and homicides remain a significant challenge, despite some positive trends in recent years. Factors such as income inequality, the presence of organized crime groups and the easy access to firearms contribute to this ongoing violence. Gender-related crimes, including intimate partner violence and femicide, continue to be pressing issues in the country. Furthermore, the overwhelming volume of unrecorded crimes strains the capacity of state institutions to investigate and prosecute them effectively, fostering a sense of impunity and undermining confidence in the criminal justice system. This is exacerbated by limited and unequal access to justice, leading to perceptions that justice is arbitrary and inaccessible, especially for marginalized groups.

The Programme for Justice in Mexico aims to strengthen the rule of law and combat impunity by implementing multifaceted projects that prioritize individuals and leverage existing knowledge and best practices within security and justice institutions. Key objectives include generating high-quality information on access to justice, particularly regarding coordinated investigations of high-impact crimes affecting the Mexican population, enhancing the capabilities of justice operators through improved coordination, and promoting gender-sensitive and human rights-based approaches within criminal investigations. Additionally, it seeks to consolidate the Acquisitive Penal Justice System in Mexico, anchoring the assurance of this right to the existence of robust and effective security and justice institutions staffed with personnel trained to manage and coordinate criminal investigation processes in line with applicable regulations and international standards.
1.4 SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

This meta-synthesis provides an aggregated analysis of the work of UNODC in Mexico from 2016 to June 2023, and takes a closer look at efforts related to anti-corruption. The overall objective of the synthesis approach for this study is to provide useful information for UNODC programming in Mexico and to offer insights into current trends stemming from evaluations to inform a new programmatic framework to guide UNODC engagement in the country going forward. A secondary purpose of this assignment is to pilot the UNODC Evaluation Synthesis Guidance document (2022) and provide feedback for its refinement.

In contrast to an evaluation, the primary aim of a meta-synthesis is to discern patterns and cumulative results, particularly within a specific intervention theme or on a cross-cutting issue. These reviews offer insights and considerations for future programming by analysing existing evaluations against specifically defined questions.

The work in Mexico covers the range of UNODC thematic areas of focus, all of which work towards contributing to achieving the SDGs. This is especially the case for Goal 16 (on Peace, justice and strong institutions), and it is noted that UNODC is the designated custodian of 11 SDG 16 indicator targets. Therefore, the main question for this study is as follows:

“In which ways and to what extent has the work of UNODC in Mexico contributed to the achievement of SDG 16 targets?”

The primary intended audience for this report is COMEX and Regional Office staff, as well as programme staff at headquarters in Vienna, including those involved in UNODC anti-corruption work. The report is also intended for organizational learning purposes, and thus for UNODC staff more broadly.

1.5 METHODOLOGY

The study process followed the step-by-step approach for a synthesis review outlined in the UNODC draft Guidance on Conducting Evaluation Meta-Syntheses (which identifies a synthesis review as one of four types of meta-syntheses). The review team employed a systematic process that used the SDGs as a framework for the analysis.

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\(^1\) UNODC serves as the custodian for the following SDG 16 indicator targets: 16.1.1 16.1.3, 16.1.4 16.2.2, 16.2.3, 16.3.1, 16.3.2, 16.4.1, 16.4.2, 16.5.1 and 16.5.2.
The codebook developed for the study focused on SDG 16 targets relevant to the work of UNODC in Mexico:

- **16.1** Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere
- **16.2** End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children
- **16.3** Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all
- **16.4** By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime
- **16.5** Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms
- **16.6** Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels
- **16.a** Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime

The team also coded for cross-cutting categories that are important both within the context of the SDGs and UNODC strategic priorities including:

- **Gender equality, human rights and leaving no one behind**: analysing how evaluations incorporated/addressed the themes of gender equality, human rights, disability inclusion and leaving no one behind
- **Partnerships**: analysing partnerships created by projects evaluated among Mexican institutions and between Mexican institutions and their counterparts in other countries
- **UNODC project management**: analysing information related to how UNODC interventions were designed, managed/implemented and coordinated among project stakeholders, and how resources were mobilized

The team conducted inter-coder reliability testing and met regularly to review and refine the coding process. Data analysis primarily involved qualitative content analysis to identify trends, themes, patterns and examples of good practices and lessons. Dedoose was used for cataloguing and coding the data from the reports.

**Limitations**

The meta-synthesis relied solely on data available from document review, primarily evaluation reports. Even though all evaluations were assessed as meeting UNEG norms and standards in an external quality assurance process, they varied in quality and in the extent to which they captured all the achievements of project activities and results tied to SDG 16 targets. The range of documents reviewed enabled the synthesis team to triangulate data to some extent, although there may be accomplishments or shortcomings that are not reflected in this report due to the nature of a synthesis and its methodological approach. For example, the synthesis review process does not include consultation with key stakeholders on the main findings. However, the draft version of the report was reviewed by IES and the final results were formally presented and discussed with COMEX staff.

More details on the methodological approach are provided in annex 4.
1.6 OVERVIEW OF DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

This synthesis review encompasses the analysis of 21 primary reports: 13 evaluation reports for programmes implemented in Mexico, along with 3 regional evaluations and 5 global evaluations that involved activities in Mexico. These evaluations, published between 2016 and 2023, cover 32 projects (national evaluations covered 22 projects, regional evaluations encompassed 3 projects and global evaluations comprised 8 projects) on diverse topics such as human trafficking, migrant smuggling, penitentiary systems, drug-related issues, security strategies, gender-based violence, law enforcement, anti-corruption initiatives, illicit financial activities and crime prevention; these align with the four priority areas identified in the Strategic Vision for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) 2022–2025.

In addition to the evaluation reports, four UNCT Mexico reports (including a cooperation framework report and a partnership landscape assessment), two UNODC strategic reports from the region, two UNODC Mexico results reports, one voluntary national report, as well as one Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) report and two OIOS audit reports (one of which covered the period from 2015 to 2019) were reviewed.

Figure 1. Documents coded by geographic scope.

As shown in figure 1, national reports accounted for 61 per cent of the coded documents, which included evaluation and results reports. Similarly, global documents (28 per cent) included evaluation and outcome reports, but also encompassed audit reports. Regional documents constituted the smallest portion of coded documents (11 per cent). The latter exclusively comprised evaluations of projects implemented across various countries in Latin America.

There were 15 main themes identified in the evaluation reports. The most recurring ones were those related to drug control efforts (specifically focused on crop eradication) and anti-corruption measures. The second most common were those related to combating trafficking in persons, including of migrant populations. In line

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* The GLOZ99 project was analysed by two separate evaluations (one national and one global).
with the above and as shown in figure 2, nine evaluations were aligned with priority area 4 (criminal justice). Six evaluations were aligned with priority area 3 (organized crime). While priority areas 1 (corruption) and 2 (drugs) each aligned with three projects.

Figure 2. Number of evaluation reports by priority area.

Furthermore, in accordance with what was expressed in the coded evaluations, the projects primarily aligned with 11 out of the 17 SDGs.10 Figure 3 shows that the most frequently mentioned goal was SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions), followed by SDG 5 (Gender equality) and SDG 17 (Partnerships).

Figure 3. Number of evaluated projects aligned with each SDG.

10 Additionally, two evaluations mentioned that the analysed projects had additional impacts on SDGs 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 17.
Collectively, the evaluations reported they had 1,590 survey respondents, consulted with 1,096 individuals through interviews or focus group discussions, and analysed 4,301 documents. Figure 4 provides a summary of gender-disaggregated data available in evaluation reports for those participating in interviews, group discussions and surveys.

Information drawn from the evaluation reports indicated that, collectively, the evaluations covered projects with an approximate total budget of US$ 189,500,000. Global projects accounted for 82 per cent of this figure, while 16 per cent corresponded to the evaluated national projects (figure 6). Of the latter, approximately US$ 6,650,00 was for anti-corruption initiatives.
In terms of the quality of the evaluation reports, 20 have been assessed through the UNODC independent evaluation quality assessment process. These included 12 national evaluations, 3 regional evaluations and 5 global evaluations. Of these, 7 were rated as very good, 12 were rated as good, and one received a fair rating (table 1). As the latter only partially met UNODC expectations for evaluation reports, it was used with caution.

Table 1. Quality of evaluation reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EQA rating</th>
<th>National</th>
<th>Regional</th>
<th>Global</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11The cluster evaluation of the anti-corruption interventions in Mexico has not yet undergone quality assessment as it was recently published.
2. KEY FINDINGS

The findings of this meta-synthesis are presented in three sections. As it is a primary focus of the study, the first section concentrates on aggregated and highlighted relevant findings related to anti-corruption which is addressed by SDG 16.5. It provides details on the background, relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and inclusiveness of UNODC anti-corruption programming based on the analysis of evaluations on this topic. The next section then presents the synthesized analysis for the remaining SDG 16 targets and the third section focuses on findings related to UNODC cross-cutting themes.

Figure 7 shows the total number of excerpts that were coded across the synthesized documents relating to the SDG 16 targets. There were 676 excerpts in total with 530 excerpts from the findings sections of the reports and 59, 18, 16 and 53 excerpts analysed from the recommendations, lessons learned, best practices and conclusions sections respectively.

Figure 7. Excerpts related to SDG 16 targets

![Excerpts related to SDG 16 targets](chart.png)

2.1 FINDINGS RELEVANT TO ANTI-CORRUPTION

SDG target 16.5: Reducing corruption and bribery

The importance of reducing corruption and bribery is commonly referenced in the reviewed documents, and there were four evaluations that specifically focused on UNODC programming that addresses SDG 16.5. Two covered projects implemented solely in Mexico (MEXW44, Cluster Anti-corruption) and two were global evaluations (GLOZ99 and GLOZ82).
Background

The formal beginning of the UNODC anti-corruption portfolio in Mexico was in 2015, and this was based on the 2012 agreement on the country’s partnership with the UNODC Office in Mexico. The first anti-corruption project to be evaluated was MEXZ44, an eight-month joint initiative with UNICEF in 2015 that involved the systemization of good state practices aimed at reducing corruption affecting children. The evaluation notes that the main deliverables, a database and a report, provided useful methodological criteria, aligned with international conventions on human rights, for the development of future corruption prevention programming focused on children. (MEXZ44)

The next evaluation of this work was the Anti-corruption Cluster evaluation (2023) which covered six interventions implemented from 2016 to 2022 solely in Mexico plus the Mexico component of the UNODC Global Programme to prevent and combat corruption through effective implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption in support of SDG 16 (GLOX99). For the most part, each of the interventions focused on different aspects of corruption as can be seen in the box below.12

Interventions included in the Anti-corruption Cluster evaluation:

- MEXW26 was an over-arching programme of technical assistance to the federal and later subnational governments
- MEXAD4 dealt with risks and resource allocation for SDGs
- MEXZ95 provided technical and strategic assistance to corruption prevention in Mexico City
- MEXW72 dealt with awareness-raising and capacity-building against money-laundering
- MEXW41 tackled budget transparency in the state of Nuevo León

This suite of projects set the trajectory of the UNODC anti-corruption portfolio, which culminated with:

- MEXABS, a larger, more strategic USAID-funded project for strengthening corruption prevention capacities in Mexico

A segment of the global programme GLOZ99 allowed UNODC Mexico to test privately funded initiatives in higher education, linking energy and pharmaceutical companies with universities to set the basis for compliance and good practices in the private sector.

The two other evaluation reports covering UNODC anti-corruption work were the 2021 in-depth midterm evaluation of GLOZ99 which mentioned the establishment of anti-corruption advisory posts in various countries including Mexico, and, to a lesser extent, the final In-depth Evaluation of the Implementation of the Doha Declaration: Towards the promotion of a culture of lawfulness (GLOZ82). As part of the latter programme, the report states that 55 activities were implemented in Mexico including the embedding of judicial integrity and prevention of corruption measures at the national level, which was linked to the Global Judicial Integrity Network.

12 Further information can be found in annex V of the Anti-corruption Cluster evaluation report which provides summaries of each project including key results.
Linkages to the Sustainable Development Goals

The anti-corruption work of UNODC most clearly aligns with SDG 16.5, but also with SDGs 16.6 and 16.a – all of which are described in detail in annex 3. Programming supports the foundation needed for progress towards the indicators, particularly for SDG 16.5. The work related to the United Nations Convention against Corruption is likely to be the most substantial contributor, although the capacity-building, advocacy with civil society groups, citizen participation, networking and awareness-raising interventions all play a key role, the level of contribution being commensurate with the scope and scale of activities.

Relevance

Countering corruption and economic crime is one of the four priority investment areas in the UNODC Strategic Vision for Latin America and the Caribbean 2022–2025, with fast-tracking of the implementation of the Convention against Corruption being a main component. The cluster evaluation noted that the Vision reflects most of the components that have been addressed by UNODC Mexico, and that the anti-corruption portfolio is fully aligned with the regional strategy.

Evaluations strongly confirm the high relevance of UNODC anti-corruption work in the country. Among the main findings of the cluster evaluation are that “UNODC Mexico has pragmatically crafted its place in the anti-corruption landscape of the country, by filling specific gaps and adapting to political shifts to support the implementation of the national policy framework.” However, the report also notes that “UNODC Mexico has access to small niches within the National Strategy, focusing on prevention, but this support is not commensurate to the needs and potential demand for support on anti-corruption”. Much of UNODC technical assistance in anti-corruption goes beyond work with the justice sector and law enforcement, the space in which most anti-corruption programming is funded by development cooperation actors. The broader approach of UNODC is particularly valued as, for some stakeholders, UNODC is the only international partner facilitating their area of work.

The cluster evaluation notes that financial constraints and the associated staff turnover have affected to some extent the comparative advantage that UNODC otherwise had over other bilateral cooperation actors due to implementation challenges. That report also suggests that relevance could have been furthered “by structuring the portfolio more strategically and enhancing monitoring, reporting, and learning functions”. The projects were found to be operating more as an “aggregation of activities [rather] than as a structured portfolio, which does not incentivize strategic management and strategic planning”. The theory of change developed as part of the cluster evaluation – which was validated by COMEX staff, and which expanded upon the MEXAB5 theory of change – may be useful in developing a more coherent strategy.
Effectiveness

Anti-corruption programming in Mexico was found to be effective in establishing the conditions for harmonizing the regulatory framework and practices with the United Nations Convention against Corruption, and most notably at the state level. Both evaluations found the work has contributed to the exchange of experiences between federal entities and the forming of networks between emerging groups of stakeholders who are addressing corruption, and that this has increased citizen awareness of anti-corruption interventions and the need for broader societal support for anti-corruption.

UNODC is respected for its anti-corruption work at the global and national level. As a result, the cluster evaluation states that “the role of UNODC Mexico as a respected technical agency on anti-corruption matters in the public and private sector, as well as in civil society, has been strengthened during the past few years”. The GLOZ99 evaluation found the Global Programme to be well known and well regarded for its expertise in the field of corruption and its prevention with partners and donors recognizing the advantages of collaborating with the Programme. The evaluation specifically highlighted

“UNODC capacity to translate technical assistance needs identified as part of the Review Mechanism into concrete actions, strong relationships and engagement with a diverse group of stakeholders, broad technical expertise in anti-corruption, influence and convening power that UNODC has with State parties, knowledge of processes and experience from other regions/countries/cases and providing State parties access to neutral, diverse and well-regarded expertise.”

Evidence was found of agile and responsive programming. An example cited in the GLOZ99 evaluation was the analysis conducted by the Global Programme of the extent to which anti-corruption authorities had been involved in the allocation of COVID-19 economic rescue measures in each region and which was followed up with advice to State parties on COVID-19-related emergency legislation (Kenya and Mexico) that requested legislative assistance on bills for whistle-blower protection. The programming was also lauded for being innovative. The cluster evaluation identified three types of innovative mechanisms that were important in advancing project objectives – the citizen participation mechanisms, peer-to-peer review support among relevant public institutions at the state level, and the networking and exposure of Mexican anti-corruption stakeholders, both nationally and internationally. The Global Judicial Integrity Network created by GLOZ82 also created an opportunity for judicial practitioners to learn from the experiences of their peers and represented an innovative approach to tackling corruption.
LESSON LEARNED

THERE IS THE NEED FOR MORE SYSTEMATIC THEMATIC BACKUP FOR PROGRAMMING FROM HQ

This includes up-front investment in research and portfolio design. Such early investment would help the field office to capitalize on UNODC “products of excellence” in anti-corruption mandates. The scope of the projects must also be carefully considered to match with the project management capacity and administrative infrastructures. (Cluster Anti-corruption)

The evaluations pointed out ways the work could be more effective. Similar to other types of programming, improvements were seen to be needed in project design, monitoring and reporting. The monitoring/reporting systems were found to require laborious processes (GLOZ99). Much of the training was noted to be useful, but it was suggested that one-off activities should be limited if they are not clearly linked to a strategic intervention plan (referring to sporadic presentations, ad hoc trainings, etc.), making them less sustainable and less responsive to beneficiary needs. It was also found that training needs to be reinforced by publications and knowledge products. Opportunities to build upon include the knowledge management function; the cluster evaluation stated that “there was not enough documentation of past project experience, nor easily accessible and searchable evidence to convey good practices and learning, or to connect stakeholders from other UNODC anti-corruption projects in Latin America, to the Mexican counterparts”. There also appear to be opportunities to increase internal collaboration with GAMI (the advisory, monitoring and research group) and with the UNODC regional hub on anti-corruption in Mexico. Although there were some exchanges between the hub and the portfolio of anti-corruption projects in the country, the evaluation did not find evidence of substantial interaction at either the project or strategic level.

The cluster evaluation also highlighted (in annex 5 of the report) recommendations and technical assistance needs identified for each intervention that emerged from the Mechanism for the Review of Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption. A core recommendation was to “conduct a comparative study of federal and state legislation relating to the issues covered by chapters II and V of the Convention and, in case of divergence, establish a space for dialogue between the federal Government and the states in order to ensure that the Convention is implemented at all levels of the State”.

Sustainability

The complex and changing environment, the UNODC business model, the constraints of funding agreements, stretched resources, and uneven levels of ownership of projects’ outcomes were identified as challenges affecting the sustainability of this work. Funding constraints, in respect to tightly earmarked and often short-term contributions, as well as the types of work donors are willing to finance are not just an issue for the Mexico office, but also for global anti-corruption programming [GLOZ99]. However, evaluations also note that the work in developing appropriate partnerships and synergies with multiple actors and initiatives are promising steps in sustaining anti-corruption programming both globally and in Mexico. The private sector partnerships with Siemens and private universities, and the Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative (StAR) are seen as instructive examples to draw upon in guiding more of these types of collaborations.
Human rights, gender equality and leaving no one behind

Although the evaluations focused on anti-corruption mentioned that the issues of human rights and gender equality were considered in anti-corruption programming, evaluators found that the projects could have made more effort to go beyond promoting gender balance in activities to integrating different perspectives in project and training design and adopting a more explicit approach to human rights, gender and vulnerable groups (Anti-corruption Cluster, GLOZ99, GLOZ82). The most advanced project in terms of addressing human rights was MEXAD4 and the most advanced in mainstreaming gender was MEXW41, although these projects were not found to have addressed other cross-cutting areas. The cluster evaluation specifically pointed out that the events and deliverables analysed often failed to consider the distinct needs of women, girls, men and boys, as well as vulnerable groups. The report also mentioned that the initiatives generally did not address gender inequality or related disparities, nor did they aim to tackle the underlying causes of these issues. For example, there was a lack of specific training modules addressing the gendered aspects of corruption or its impact on vulnerable groups. Additionally, the report did not find evidence of a human rights gap analysis regarding the causes and effects of corruption, with projects failing to analyse issues related to access to rights, rights enjoyment, rights violation, or the duty to respect, protect, fulfil, promote or redress these rights. Nonetheless, evaluators did highlight UNODC contributions to promoting gender equality in the field of anti-corruption. For example, the recent publication titled “The Time is Now – Tackling the Gender Aspects of Corruption” (2020) emerged from an expert group meeting on gender and corruption held in Bangkok in 2018.

GOOD PRACTICES

ADAPTING THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION AGAINST CORRUPTION TO THE STATE LEVEL IN A FEDERAL COUNTRY

The transfer of the international peer-to-peer mechanism to the inter-state level had the effect of boosting the implementation of the Convention to Mexico’s in constitutional and legal context.

INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO SUPPORTING ANTI-CORRUPTION

The MEXW41 project was highlighted for its innovative way of supporting anti-corruption while incentivizing pro-active integrity mechanisms.

NETWORKING

The networking of companies with universities and public institutions to set up the United Nations Convention on Organized Crime-inspired basis for compliance and good practices in the private sector. (Cluster Anti-corruption)

2.2 FINDINGS RELEVANT TO OTHER SDG 16 TARGETS

This section examines the aggregated information drawn from findings, best practices and lessons, conclusions and recommendations sections that referenced activities and interventions across the reviewed evaluations related to the themes of the remaining six most relevant SGD 16 targets (Reducing violence; Ending abuse, exploitation and human trafficking; Promoting rule of law; Reducing illicit financial and arms flows; Transparent institutions (institutional capacity-building); and Law and policy development).
SDG target 16.1: Reducing violence

During the period covered by this synthesis, evaluations were conducted for four projects that COMEX initiated with the specific objective of identifying the root causes and risk factors associated with violence and crime (MEXX35 in Global Cluster Drugs Research, MEXZ56 Adolescent justice, MEXW78 Security Strategy, and MEXZ93 Gender-based violence). Additionally, these projects were designed to contribute to the prevention and mitigation of these factors based on data, evidence, national and international best practices, and UNODC technical expertise. As shown in figure 8, a total of 37 excerpts were coded under target 16.1. Addressing the issue of gender-based violence was a common theme across the evaluation reports. Due to the increase in gender-based violence and feminicides in the region, UNODC also identified the need to work on prevention of gender-based violence through a joint approach with governments and relevant United Nations partners (Strategic Vision LAC).

Figure 8. Number of excerpts per section under SDG 16.1

LESSON LEARNED

STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING VIOLENCE REDUCTION

MEXZ56 offered valuable insight into good practices for reducing violence. First, the importance of identified needs: the evaluation highlights that the project was initiated in response to clearly identified needs articulated by the government of the state of Coahuila. These needs were directly related to violence prevention and improvements in the penitentiary system, aligning with the goal of addressing root causes of insecurity. The evaluation also identified the importance of taking a proactive approach aimed at reversing the conditions that contributed to insecurity. Secondly, it emphasized the importance of documenting diagnoses and protocols while solidifying processes. Notably, MEXSZ6 developed an innovative methodology for selecting and reviewing investigation files. This methodology has the potential to identify training and multi-stakeholder coordination needs in the investigation of crimes such as extortion, drug trafficking, intentional homicide and violent robbery across 16 Mexican federal entities. This innovative approach, the evaluation highlighted, can lead to more effective crime-solving and prevention.
GOOD PRACTICES

EXEMPLARY COLLABORATION WITH SPECIALIZED GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS TO DEVELOP RELEVANT CRIME STATISTICS

In terms of relevant data production, the UNODC-INEGI Centre of Excellence on Statistical Information on Government, Crime, Victimization and Justice was identified under the MEXX35 evaluation as an exemplary collaboration with specialized government institutions to develop relevant crime statistics. Since its creation, the Centre of Excellence has become a regional knowledge hub focused on strengthening the statistical capacities of national statistical offices and criminal justice institutions in Latin America. As per the Global Cluster Drugs Research evaluation, the MEXX35 project is unique as it “works as service projects that are output-oriented, but at the same time provide some level of flexibility for undertaking innovative research”.

Gender-based violence

With respect to reducing gender-based violence, MEXW78 and MEXZ93 have incorporated training and sensitization on gender equality and violence against women. This helped sensitize police officers and operators to recognize and prevent gender-based violence. MEXZ93 stands out for its innovation and relevance as it is the first UNODC project to train law enforcement agencies in addressing gender-based violence. Innovative aspects included equipping law enforcement personnel with the necessary skills and knowledge to combat gender-based violence effectively, a critical issue in Mexico.

MEXZ93 aligned with the Government’s priorities, particularly in the context of promoting the existence of Women’s Justice Centres and better informing victims about their rights and the cycle of violence they may face. The programme was also found to have played a pivotal role in sensitizing law enforcement officers and operators to the issue, which is essential for improving victim support and prevention efforts. As such, the programme’s official recognition and integration into training curricula indicate its importance and long-term impact on law enforcement practice. According to the evaluators, “The police officers acknowledged that they now have more tools to better assist the victim and inform them of their rights, as well as what may happen if the violence continues. In this regard, the materials provided to the police officers and operators have proven to be a useful working tool since they are designed to be easily carried and facilitate continuous reference” (MEXZ93).

GOOD PRACTICE

INCLUSION OF SPECIALIZED PERSONNEL IN POLICE TRAINING INITIATIVES

To enhance project outcomes, the evaluators suggested that in projects involving police institutions, the UNODC unit responsible for creating and/or hiring project teams should include personnel with specialized investigative skills or professional experience in the field. This suggestion stems from the finding that police officers tend to be hesitant to accept recommendations from individuals lacking prior experience in police organizations. According to the evaluation, they often perceive such individuals as lacking field experience. This addition would ensure that project deliverables align more effectively with the daily institutional challenges faced by law enforcement agencies, ultimately facilitating the adoption of project recommendations. (MEXW78)
Similarly, MEXW78 made efforts to incorporate a gender perspective and combat gender-based violence. The primary purpose of the MEXW78 project was to enhance security in the state of Mexico, which is the most populous state in Mexico and surrounds Mexico City. Its mission was to fulfill security-related mandates and obligations, ultimately improving the safety and welfare of the state’s population through collaboration with the Office and the Secretary of Security of the state of Mexico (donor and counterpart). One noteworthy innovation identified in its evaluation was the project’s focus on improving the capacity for crime investigation and addressing issues such as femicide. It also emphasized victim support through emergency hotlines and the enhancement of crime prevention programmes. These actions, geared towards creating a more victim-centric approach and respect for human rights, were relevant in the context of security and justice. However, the evaluation acknowledges a constrained impact in terms of tangible outcomes. The ultimate impact of the project remained uncertain due to the absence of a mechanism to monitor the adoption of the recommendations and, consequently, the enhancements made in the Comprehensive Security Strategy of the state of Mexico.

SDG target 16.2: Ending abuse, exploitation and human trafficking

Five evaluations addressed this target (MEXW55 and 64 Human trafficking; MEXZ75, 92 and 98 Migrant smuggling; MEXX48 Human trafficking; MEXZ93 Gender-based violence; MEXX89 Migrant smuggling). The UNODC Programme for Prevention and Combat of Transnational Organized Crime supports the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Specifically, it contributes to capacity development, the creation and implementation of technical tools, and the professionalization of crime investigation and prosecution. It operates in Mexico with a focus on preventing and combating the illicit smuggling of migrants and human trafficking.

Evaluations of MEXX48 and MEXW55 underscored the importance of inter-agency collaboration and information-sharing. The establishment of systems such as the National Human Trafficking System (SINTRA, in Spanish) have played a crucial role in standardizing data exchange and enhancing coordination among various entities engaged in anti-trafficking initiatives. The implementation of centralized information systems was found to have enhanced the availability of reliable data at various levels (municipal, state and federal) and promoted inter-institutional and multi-actor cooperation. This has aided in the identification, prosecution and punishment of human trafficking crimes. Specifically, MEXX48 has made significant strides in fulfilling the mandate of implementing the Protocol on Trafficking in Persons in Mexico and contributed to substantial nationwide progress in ensuring the availability of dependable data across all administrative levels (municipal, state and federal) and engaging numerous institutions and stakeholders, including civil society. The project placed significant emphasis on the sophistication of crimes related to trafficking in persons, highlighting the necessity for specialized police units, such as cybercrime units, to address modern forms of trafficking. The evaluation noted that this data-driven approach acknowledges the dynamic nature of trafficking and underscores the significance of staying ahead of criminals through advanced investigative techniques.
FINDING

SETTING THE GROUNDWORK FOR ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES OF TIP IN MEXICO

MEXX48 conducted a national diagnosis of trafficking in persons in Mexico, serving as a critical foundation for effective anti-trafficking approaches and forming the basis for policy development. It fostered collaboration among federal, state and local authorities, recognizing the nuanced nature of this crime in different contexts. This initial diagnostic laid the groundwork for future, more comprehensive assessments, drawing from diverse sources and involving numerous stakeholders dedicated to combating human trafficking.

The accumulated experience of the project’s implementation team resulted in the development of an intervention model that can serve as a reference for other UNODC offices and States.

A recurring concern highlighted in evaluations is the critical vulnerability of Indigenous communities, with a particular emphasis on the susceptibility of Indigenous women and girls to human trafficking. As identified in the evaluations, projects such as MEXW55 have actively worked to empower these communities with knowledge and tools to detect and prevent trafficking within their local contexts. The evaluation of MEXV27 emphasized the importance of a gender perspective, considering that a significant number of trafficking victims are women and girls. The project incorporated approaches that address various forms of exploitation, such as sexual and labour exploitation, forced labour, forced begging, forced marriages and child labour. A contribution of MEXW64, as expressed in the evaluation, was identifying that there are no shelters for adult male victims of human trafficking in the country.

GOOD PRACTICES

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AMPLIFIES EFFICACY AND IMPACT BY HARNESSING DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES AND RESOURCES

MEXX48 underscored the crucial role of involving a broad spectrum of stakeholders, encompassing government agencies, legislative bodies, judicial authorities, universities, subject-matter experts, civil society organizations and Indigenous communities.

In a similar vein, MEXW55 established collaborative partnerships with an array of organizations and entities, including women’s shelters (Centros de Atención a Mujeres Indígenas, CAMIs), government institutions, civil society organizations and indigenous communities.

MEXV27 collaborated with the government of Mexico City, prioritizing the protection of victims and witnesses at the local level. This project harnessed the strengths of multiple stakeholders and adopted a multisectoral approach to enhance the impact of efforts against human trafficking.
SDG target 16.3: Promoting the rule of law

This section addresses how UNODC projects relevant to Mexico programming contributed to improving justice systems as well as enhancing people’s abilities to access these systems. UNODC has implemented various interventions that support this topic area given that impunity and access to prompt and efficient justice continue to be structural challenges in Mexico (Mexico Cooperation Framework). This target was addressed in eight evaluations (MEXW78 Security strategy; MEXX48 Human trafficking; MEXW55 and 64 Human trafficking, Global Cluster Drugs Research; MEXV27 Rule of law; MEXZ56 Adolescent justice; GLOZ82 Lawfulness; and MEXX89 Migrant smuggling).

Improving justice systems

Improving judicial systems is often achieved through the provision of training programmes tailored to the needs of judicial system actors. Examples of useful capacity-building topics mentioned included training for officers working with adolescents in conflict with the law on understanding the psycho-physiological processes of young people and the development of guidelines for judges on the use of social media (GLOZ82). The training provided during the GLOZ82 project was especially successful with both judiciary training recipients and trainers appreciating the range of training methodologies (scenarios, case studies, discussions, e-learning, etc.). Recommendations for improving training programmes focused on the need for updated resource guides and handbooks for trainers, user-friendly online training tools and not providing e-training alone (follow-up in-person training is also very important) (GLOZ82).

Another element of the GLOZ82 project which was highlighted as especially successful was the Global Judicial Integrity Network. The benefits gained from sharing experiences among judicial peers was highlighted across the report as the most important contribution of the project.

Three evaluation reports emphasized the projects’ contributions to improving operational systems (MEXW78, MEXX48 and MEXZ56) including:

- Enabling state security officers to recognize duplication of activities, improve response capacity and generate more timely information (MEXW78)
- Developing information systems integrating reliable data, standardized across the country (MEXW48)
- Installing a state-wide prison management model for adolescents in conflict with the law that was adapted to the needs and capacities of the state of Coahuila (MEXZ56)

“A common response from all beneficiaries was that the platform is a unique opportunity that has allowed judges from around the globe to meet and forge relationships, work through issues (both existing and emerging) that have a direct impact on their judicial duties and create a programme of work in a meaningful way.” (GLOZ82)
Future programming in Mexico can draw from the experiences of these projects in designing training programmes in collaboration with and tailored to the needs of training recipients, drawing together data to streamline state judicial systems and creating networks for judicial actors to share experiences on enhancing judicial integrity.

**Access to justice**

Two factors that contribute to preventing people from accessing justice systems identified in the reviewed evaluations stood out. Justice system operatives and community members may require capacity-building and awareness-raising activities to enable them to better identify crimes and their victims and provide the correct response (MEXX89, MEXW55 and 64 and MEXZ93). Also, in some cases, it is the victims themselves who hesitate to seek the institutional help offered for reasons such as not wanting their movements restricted if they are housed in shelters, being wary of the conditions of the shelters, fearing the stigma of needing such help, and not seeing themselves as a victim (MEXX48).

The reports also identified several best practices when it comes to improving access to justice systems. The importance of providing shelters beyond providing basic needs was highlighted by MEXW55 and 64 which mentioned that if victims of trafficking in persons are housed in a shelter, it is easier to involve them in the criminal justice process. Also, police officers and operators consulted during the MEXZ93 evaluation considered that the training greatly helped police units and emergency call centres strengthen their capacities to detect and adequately address cases of gender violence as well as to offer a more immediate response. They also reported that their improved knowledge about the existence of the Women’s Centre for Justice, as well as other reference centres, has contributed to improving the proper referral of victims.

**SDG target 16.4: Reducing illicit financial and arms flows**

This topic was sparsely addressed by the documents reviewed beyond the two reports specifically focused on illicit financial and arms flows (1617AL Illicit flows; GLOX34 Organized crime). Only one other document mentioned SDG 16.4 and it was to point out that although the project was conducive to SDG16.4 achievement, contributions towards achieving it were not measured (MEXW34). This absence can be attributed to the reality that it is very challenging to both define measurements and collect data on these highly illegal transactions. The two specific reports did, however, have some valuable insight that can contribute to future programming on this subject.

The project 1617AL, “Developing indicator on illicit financial flows and monitoring them in Latin America”, sought to tackle the challenge mentioned above by bringing a multidisciplinary team of experts together from across the region to define the conceptual framework for measuring illicit financial flows. As a result of the efforts of this project Mexico has now reported the official estimates on drug-related illicit financial flows on the Global SDG Indicators Database.13 The report highlighted this framework as the greatest achievement of

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13 As a result of the efforts of this project Mexico has now reported the official estimates on drug-related illicit financial flows on the Global SDG Indicators Database.
the project. However, establishing a common framework proved far more complicated than initially assumed in the project document, leaving no time or funding to create capacity-building for relevant stakeholders that would enable them to implement the systems developed sustainably (1617AL). It was recommended that future projects focused on illicit financial flows should ensure that local experts are consulted from the design phase so that guidelines and tools developed are locally relevant. The report also pointed out that although national statistics organizations may seem to be a natural implementing partner for this type of project, capturing data on illegal activities is not within their scope of work.

### GOOD PRACTICE

**PUTTING PROJECT METHODOLOGIES AND TOOLS INTO PRACTICE**

The portion of the 1617AL project implemented in Mexico was noted as a good practice as “in Mexico, this new methodology and its tools were completely and successfully transferred to the Ministry of Interior for calculating illicit financial flows relating to the smuggling of migrants”. (1617AL)

One project reviewed in the GLOX34 evaluation focused specifically on supporting data collection and analysis on firearms trafficking and was identified as having effectively delivered activities aimed to raise awareness and engage with decision makers on the issue of firearms and its international responses through data collection, capacity-building and the development of standard operating procedures and tools (GLOX34). Both 1617AL and GLOX34 highlighted that input from local stakeholders were good practices implemented during the projects. According to the GLOX34 report, “Close dialogue with stakeholders of beneficiary countries during implementation is a good practice that allows the customization of activities to the needs of the country and adaptation to changing conditions and priorities”.

### SDG target 16.6/16a: Transparent institutions (institutional capacity-building)

This target, in particular 16.a on institutional capacity-building, was the most frequently addressed SDG with 19 relevant evaluations (MEXW55 and 64 Human trafficking; MEXZ75, 92 and 98 Migrant smuggling; MEXW22 Penitentiary system; MEXW34 Illicit crops; MEXW78 Security strategy; MEXX48 Human trafficking; MEXZ56 Adolescent justice; MEXZ93 Gender-based violence; MEXX89 Migrant smuggling; MEXV27 Rule of law; MEXZ44 Anti-corruption, Cluster Anti-corruption; MEXK54 Illicit crops; GLOJ88 Drugs; UNDA Crime prevention, Global Cluster Drugs Research; GLOZ82 Lawfulness; GLOZ99 Anti-corruption; GLOX34 Organized crime). The evaluated interventions covered three topic areas:

- Training
- Developing management and operational systems and tools
- Putting knowledge into practice
Evaluations confirmed that UNODC Mexico has played a pivotal role in enhancing institutional capacity through a multifaceted approach. Comprehensive training sessions, tools, handbooks and databases, and awareness-raising activities were found to have effectively bolstered the knowledge and skills of personnel across various institutions, encompassing law enforcement agencies, prosecutors’ offices, civil society organizations and the judiciary. Notably, the transfer of knowledge has been a reported success, with 95.5 per cent of trained individuals reporting that they have used the acquired knowledge in their day-to-day work, thereby fortifying institutional capabilities to tackle a wide array of issues. In the evaluations that presented the number of persons trained in areas supporting SDG16, the total is estimated at over 8,600 people (table 2), in which the majority have been male (figure 9).

Table 2. Total numbers trained in evaluated projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluated projects</th>
<th># of people trained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MEXZ93 GBV</td>
<td>7,467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEXZ75&amp;92&amp;98 Migrant smuggling</td>
<td>334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEXW78 Security strategy</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEXX48 Human trafficking</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEXW22 Penitentiary system</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEXW55&amp;64 Human trafficking</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEXX89 Migrant smuggling</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEXW34 Illicit crops</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evaluations found that by convening diverse stakeholders in interactive and experiential training and working sessions, UNODC has helped to facilitate the institutionalization of global good practices while also cultivating regional and inter-institutional relationships and fostering trust and communication among entities which may not have previously worked together (MEXX89, MEXZ75, 92 and 98, GLOZ99, GLOZ82). This heightened awareness of, for example, the intricacies and operational patterns of organized crimes (MEXZ75, 92 and 98, GLOJ88). Newfound synergy has bolstered technical capacity and supported more coordinated efforts to combat complex challenges such as preventing the smuggling of migrants, promoting gender equality and developing and acting on anti-corruption measures.

These efforts were seen to have led to the adoption of international standards, inter-institutional collaboration and the creation of specialized units, ultimately improving the overall functioning of these institutions in their respective domains (Cluster Anti-corruption, MEXZ75, 92 and 98 Migrant smuggling). For example, MEXZ92 was the first intervention specifically focused on smuggling of migrants by sea in Mexico and facilitated collaboration among institutions which resulted in the generation of an inter-institutional cooperation protocol that is likely to have a longer-term positive impact on operational efficiency.

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14 Four evaluations (MEXZ75, 92 and 98 Migrant smuggling, MEXW78 Security strategy, MEXW34 Illicit crops and UNDA Crime prevention) gathered data on respondents from Mexico who reported that training increased their knowledge.

15 Only four evaluations displayed the gender-specific count of individuals who underwent training as part of the project.
MODELLING OF TOOLS FORESEEN IN NORMATIVE FRAMEWORKS

In particular, the MEXAB5, MEXW41 and MEXW72 projects, have supported quality, oversight and transparency mechanisms through:

- User-friendly citizen reporting and whistleblowing tools (e.g., WhatsApp anti-corruption number in Nuevo León, money-laundering hotline)
- Information on the impact of the decisions of public officials so that citizens promote the creation of institutions that help in preventing corruption (e.g., National anti-corruption digital platform, and monitoring and performance evaluation system for projects including IT platform)
- Support to institutions in charge of ensuring and monitoring access to information of public importance, and data protection (e.g., inclusion of Institutes for Transparency and Public Information (ITEIs) such as ITEI Jalisco in the peer-to-peer review)
- Results-based budgeting as a quality and transparency avenue (MEXW41 project)

(Cluster Anti-corruption)

The development of operational tools, particularly for data collection and information-sharing was also highlighted in evaluation reports to further support collaboration and strengthen institutional capacity towards evidence-based policymaking and crime prevention activities (MEXX48, MEXZ98, MEXZ44 and MEXV27). MEXX48 was noted particularly for improving availability and exchange of reliable data across actors, including government of all levels (municipal, state and federal) and among civil society organizations, by installing and providing training on the National System of Trafficking in Persons (SINTRA). Similarly, MEXW34 has contributed to the collection and analysis of data on illicit crops and drug-related information, while MEXAB5, MEXW41 and MEXW72 projects have supported quality, oversight and transparency mechanisms through user-friendly citizen reporting and whistle-blowing tools and information-sharing platforms.
FINDING

LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS TOWARDS IMPROVED TRAINING OUTCOMES AND SUSTAINABILITY

Siemens is currently funding four UNODC projects on anti-corruption and business integrity. One of these is the Global Integrity Education project which informs and sensitizes a global audience of educators and private sector practitioners on lessons and best practices in business ethics, integrity and anti-corruption. The project’s most innovative aspects are: integrity education modules co-created by academics and private sector practitioners; student-focused teaching methods; and graduates who join the private sector as ethics ambassadors. Under this project, private sector experts and academics in Kenya, Mexico and Pakistan were engaged in joint working groups. They contextualized a total of 16 UNODC university modules by integrating real-life examples, role play exercises, local readings and case studies. (GLOZ99 Anti-corruption)

However, evaluations also point to similar constraints which limit the effectiveness of training activities and tools and hinder the long-term sustainability of achieved outcomes. The primary constraints related to operational aspects of training, including the technical expertise of the trainer (MEXW78, Cluster Anti-corruption), the timing and frequency of training (MEXX89, MEXW34, UNDA), the stakeholders targeted by the training, both in terms of functional roles (MEXX48, MEXX89) as well as reach, and the training methodologies and models used. While 8,610 persons\textsuperscript{16} were trained, and in many cases evaluations reported continued use of training content, the high turnover and transfers of staff/officers within law enforcement agencies (MEXW34, GLOJ88, GLOX34) and/or the limited reach in terms of sheer numbers trained, restricts the preservation of institutional knowledge (MEXW22, MEXZ75, 92 and 98 Migrant smuggling). For instance, a noteworthy observation is the limited application of a capacity-building model to only 12 out of 266 prisons in the country (MEXW22). Some evaluations highlighted the one-off nature of the training (GLOZ82, UNDA, MEXW34). As such, evaluations pointed to the need for orienting the focus of training to the train-the-trainer model or institutionalizing training sessions themselves (MEXW55 and 64, GLOJ88, UNDA, GLOZ99, GLOX34). Such actions would help to build national capacity for training.

SDG target 16.b: Law and policy development

Considering that research and policy development are important aspects of UNODC work, it is not surprising that multiple evaluations (17 reports) addressed these topics (MEXK54, GLOJ88, MEXZ93, MEXZ56, MEXZ44, MEXX89, MEXV27, MEXX48, UNDA, MEXW78, MEXW55 and 64, MEXW34, MEXW22, MEXZ75, 92 and 98 Migrant smuggling, Cluster Drugs Research, Cluster Anti-corruption, Cuentas 2020) The evaluated interventions covered three topic areas:

- Research
- Policy development
- Policy implementation

\textsuperscript{16} Total number derived from eight national evaluations, as five national evaluations did not report on number of people trained.
UNODC Mexico project initiatives have aimed to enhance research capacities and knowledge management in various critical domains, such as criminal incidence and detection (MEXX48, MEXW34, Cuentas 2020, UNDA, MEXK54), femicides and victim care (MEXW78, Global Cluster Drugs Research). The emphasis on diagnosis as a foundational element for policy development and implementation is noteworthy, particularly through the use of technology which was seen as both innovative and user-friendly, as well as through the development and institutionalization of national databases and data management and analyses processes (MEXX48, Global Cluster Drugs Research). By conducting and disseminating findings from comprehensive assessments that consider federal, state and local contexts, UNODC Mexico was seen to develop awareness and an enabling environment for the tailoring of policies in accordance with the unique challenges faced in different regions.

Table 3. Projects that led to the enactment of a new policy by Mexican authorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluations which mentioned new policies enacted by Mexican authorities as a result of UNODC initiative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MEXZ56 Adolescent justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEXX48 Human trafficking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, UNODC Mexico involvement in research and trend analysis, guided by international conventions and resolutions and the convening of experts, has resulted in valuable publications and data that enhanced understanding of, for example, drug-related crimes (MEXW34) and human trafficking and the smuggling of migrants (MEXX89, MEXX48). These outputs have contributed to evidence-based decision-making at the national level and international level upon publication. For example, UNODC efforts in transferring knowledge, benchmarks and good practices to its anti-corruption partners have facilitated the harmonization of domestic regulatory frameworks with the United Nations Convention against Corruption, especially at the state level.

While such projects aim to align national regulations with international standards, challenges remain in ensuring consistent alignment across countries in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region and adaptation to political shifts. In the case of anti-corruption, the cluster evaluation noted how the ability of UNODC to align its efforts with the national policy framework and fill specific gaps in anti-corruption initiatives has allowed UNODC to pragmatically adapt to political shifts in the country and remain relevant. However, in other cases, the pace and distribution of generated evidence influenced its ultimate effect on policy development. For example, the need to respond to quickly evolving issues, such as the regulation of synthetic drugs; the regular addition of new synthetic drugs creates a dynamic environment where it is challenging for countries to adapt their legislation to control these substances, leading to frustration among countries due to delays in regulating specific substances (GLOJ88). And in the case of MEX34, information produced on illicit crops and substances was made accessible only to the project’s immediate stakeholders, with limited outreach within the broader community of actors contributing to strengthening the evidence basis on illicit drugs and drug control in Mexico, such as policy experts outside the defence sector.
2.3 FINDINGS RELEVANT TO CROSS-CUTTING COMMITMENTS

Given that the overall strategy of UNODC and its strategic vision for Latin America and the Caribbean share the same cross-cutting commitments, it is useful to analyse how these themes are addressed across evaluations focused on Mexico. This section discusses findings related to inclusivity in UNODC projects and programming (gender, human rights and leaving no one behind, and disability), partnerships created and/or strengthened through UNODC interventions (both among Mexican institutions and between Mexican and international counterparts), harnessing technology and communications to enhance programming, and UNODC project management (project design, administrative processes, coordination between UNODC and project partners, and resource mobilization).

The figure below shows the total number of excerpts that were coded across the synthesized documents relating to the cross-cutting commitments. There were 745 excerpts in total with 510 excerpts from the findings sections of the reports and 90, 50, 38 and 57 excerpts analysed from the recommendations, lessons learned, best practices and conclusions sections, respectively.

Figure 10. Excerpts on cross-cutting commitments

Inclusivity

As per the requirements of the UNODC evaluation report template, all evaluations included a stand-alone section on human rights, gender equality and leaving no one behind. However, their treatment of these cross-cutting areas was primarily uniform, with most evaluations unpacking inclusion and equality broadly based on those most vulnerable or at risk of victimization to specific crimes. As a result, evaluations focused on trafficking in persons were most prominent for their contributions and analysis of gender and inclusion mainstreaming, while other evaluations highlighted more barriers in conducting comprehensive analyses due to the lack of disaggregated and relevant data, such as the absence of outcomes or indicators measuring progress in this regard.
FINDING AND LESSON LEARNED

THE CONTINUED TREATMENT OF WOMEN AND OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS AS PASSIVE VICTIMS LIMITS QUALITY OF RESEARCH AND RESPONSE

- Limited and scarcely comparable age and sex-disaggregated data across countries
- Limited capacity for high-risk group analysis in many Member States
- Recognition of a stereotypical view of women as passive and marginalized victims in various areas, with a call for more transformative perspectives that explore their roles as both victims and agents of change
- Stakeholder demands for enhanced analysis of the differentiated impact on women and marginalized groups in the context of drugs and crime, along with the need for both qualitative and quantitative data

Specific areas of focus and analysis requested by stakeholders, including gender in alternative development responses, youth and crime, femicides/feminicides with firearms, sexual harassment, child pornography as a form of cybercrime, and high-risk group dimensions of wildlife crime and its convergence with other crimes and responses.

(Cluster Drugs Research)

Gender

Thematically, UNODC has demonstrated a commitment to gender equality through, primarily, the projects focused on prevention of and awareness-raising on gender-based violence and its root causes. UNODC initiatives in Mexico also include projects aimed at improving research capacities related to criminal incidence and femicides. Additionally, there is a focus on enhancing victim support services, particularly for vulnerable populations such as unaccompanied children, migrant women and Indigenous migrants, acknowledging intersectionality in identities to some extent.

The evaluation of MEXW64 underscores that the project led to the identification of a significant gap: the lack of shelters for adult male victims of trafficking in persons. This revelation highlighted the critical need for gender-sensitive services for all victims. In response, awareness-raising campaigns were designed to emphasize that both women and men can be victims and traffickers. This inclusive approach contributes to fostering a more balanced perception of gender roles and challenges preconceived notions.

MEXX35 is recognized within the Global Cluster Drugs Research evaluation for its commendable practice of systematically collecting gender-disaggregated data during capacity-building activities. The report underscores that stakeholders involved in the assessed projects agree that effectively integrating human rights and gender principles into capacity-building activities presents challenges in sectors dominated by men and focused on law enforcement, such as crime and drugs.

MEXX35 serves as an exemplary case, not only for its data disaggregation practices but also because its results demonstrate a balanced representation of both women and men in the training organized by the Centre of Excellence. However, a valuable lesson learned from the project is that the Centre of Excellence does not report any discernible effects or impacts, particularly regarding how the training influences institutional practices within national security and justice institutions or how statistical information and victimization survey results are utilized to address the high crime rates prevalent in most countries in the region.
While there have been significant strides, evaluations found there is still room for improvement in terms of resource allocation, coordination with external partners, training effectiveness and deeper integration of gender perspectives into its initiatives.

Firstly, as identified in MEXZ93, despite the insufficient allocation of resources for effectively combating gender-based violence, the programme receives significant social and political support. This support is attributed to the presence of numerous gender-related alerts in the country, widespread recognition in the media and society regarding the severity of the issue, and international pressures.

Secondly, the predominance of English in gender-related initiatives creates a language barrier for some UNODC personnel. As revealed in the strategic evaluation “The Work of UNOV/UNODC to Promote Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (GEEW)”, training initiatives on GEEW had a more substantial impact at HQ than in field offices. As reported by the evaluation, field office stakeholders attributed this disparity to the training content often being unsuitable for diverse contexts, including the absence of translations into languages other than English. Additionally, training initiatives appear to favour HQ personnel, and adapting content to different contexts is challenging. While informative, these programmes may lack the transformative elements and impact needed to effectively change attitudes and behaviours. This aligns with the recommendations in MEXZ93, which suggested the adaptation of training programmes to specific regional contexts, ensuring that the content is relevant and addresses local gender and human rights issues.

Moreover, as presented in the strategic evaluation on GEEW, one general institutional finding identified that there is a lack of formal encouragement for interaction and collaboration with external GEEW stakeholders, such as national mechanisms for the advancement of women or feminist constituencies in civil society. In the context of UNODC work in Mexico, this finding again aligns with the recommendations in evaluations such as MEXZ93, which emphasized the importance of strengthening coordination with external gender equality stakeholders, including national mechanisms for the advancement of women and civil society organizations, and provided a recommendation on the same.

Thirdly, the cluster evaluation on Anti-corruption found an overall scarcity of data related to gender mainstreaming, vulnerability and equity within the anti-corruption context. The evaluation identified minimal gender-based analysis, including factors affecting women, men, girls and boys in terms of barriers and access to anti-corruption mechanisms. Addressing these data gaps is essential for effective anti-corruption efforts with a gender perspective.

**Human rights and leaving no one behind**

Coverage of human rights and leaving no one behind in the evaluations was uneven even though human rights intersects with, or is at the forefront of, all UNODC programming.

It was typically noted that UNODC did well to mainstream human rights and the rule of law into its projects, given this is a fundamental driver within its mission and driver of activities (MEXV27, MEXW22, MEXW78, MEXX48). Examples provided were operational, in terms of having groups more likely to be left behind, such as migrants, engaged in training and activities (MEXZ75, 92 and 98 Migrant smuggling), or by
mainstreaming human rights into UNODC training syllabuses, materials and manuals (MEXZ74, MEXZ56), for example by integrating workshops specifically focused on vulnerable groups, health in prisons, and work for persons deprived of liberty (MEXW22). MEXW22 highlights that the “Advanced UN standards for the Mexican Penitentiary System (UNAPS) Model” aims to ensure respect for the fundamental rights of those deprived of freedom and underscores the inclusion of children living in detention centres.

However, beyond recognizing that it was good to have representation and to engage those most vulnerable to specific crimes, particularly in the case of human trafficking, it was typically not assessed at any length the extent to which activities did contribute to differential or positive outcomes for groups such as Afro-descendant women, adult men and older adult victims of trafficking, LGBTIQ+ populations, people with disabilities and other groups (MEXW55 and 64 Human trafficking). As such, several evaluations recommended that specific outcome-level indicators on human rights and gender be generated in order to further advance results measurement (MEXX89 Migrant smuggling; MEXV27 Rule of law; MEXZ75, 92 and 98 Migrant smuggling).

GOOD PRACTICES

LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

Indigenous groups have historically been characterized by economic and social discrimination and racism, which increases their vulnerability to trafficking in persons, mainly for the purpose of sexual exploitation and forced labour. The creation of a prevention campaign focused on these most vulnerable groups, which has been replicated and adapted from the federal to the state level, represents a leading approach for incorporating human rights, gender and intersectionality at the global level. (MEXX48)

Disability inclusion

Only three evaluations explicitly referenced persons with disabilities, with two noting that there is understanding and demand for greater consideration of persons with disability in both the technical assistance that UNODC offers (MEXZ75, 92 and 98 Migrant smuggling), as well as in state-level institutions’ policies and approaches to anti-corruption (Cluster Anti-corruption). The final joint evaluation of projects related to trafficking of persons in Mexico (MEXW55 and 64 Human trafficking) emphasized good practices in the consideration of accessibility in the design and implementation by building ramps and donating wheelchairs to shelters for victims of human trafficking.

Partnerships

An important aspect of the work of UNODC is to create and enhance partnerships among project stakeholders. The reports reviewed for this study emphasized the importance of collaborations both between Mexican institutions and with international counterparts and partners to enhance project outcomes.

A recurring theme highlighted in various project evaluations was the challenges brought about by the change of Government at the close of 2018, resulting in a transition of political power to a new party in the
administration. Consequently, one of the primary issues encountered in several projects was the need to rebuild collaborative partnerships with the principal governmental counterparts for each intervention. This challenge was exemplified by factors such as internal changes, organizational restructuring and personnel turnover within the National Institute of Indigenous Peoples (INPI for its acronym in Spanish) in the case of MEXW55. Similarly, difficulties arose in establishing a new working relationship with the Mexican Secretariat for Home Affairs (SEGOB for its acronym in Spanish). Additionally, MEXW55 and MEXW64 faced significant challenges in re-establishing collaborative alliances with the primary project partners.

Nevertheless, many of these projects and others discovered effective partnership strategies that facilitated their implementation. The establishment of multidisciplinary and multisectoral technical working groups or ad hoc committees proved to be a successful strategy for facilitating collaboration among partners. These committees and groups included a diverse range of stakeholders, such as authorities from different government levels, experts from academia and representatives from civil society organizations.

For instance, in the case of MEXW22, the inclusion of national, federal and state authorities significantly bolstered the project’s objectives and promoted cooperation and complementarity with other initiatives of the Government of Mexico in the same field. In MEXZ92, the formation of a “technical committee” was considered a best practice as it engaged beneficiary institutions from the outset, provided guidance and training, and fostered ownership of the product developed in collaboration with them.

Additionally, the wise selection of implementation partners, as seen in the case of INEGI (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía) in MEXZ98, was another valuable practice. In MEXV27, the establishment of a Dialogue Forum for Transparency in Legislative Matters in Mexico City, consisting of representatives from the local assembly, and members of the Mexican chapter of the Open Government Alliance, exemplified the creation of new alliances and the strengthening of existing ones to guide and gain buy-in for project development and implementation. Similarly, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs acknowledged the utility of an established monitoring group in creating a shared platform for dialogue with other key institutions in the fight against illicit trafficking of migrants in Mexico under MEXX89.

Overall, the establishment of these collaborative committees and groups has consistently demonstrated its effectiveness in strengthening partnerships, building networks for knowledge-sharing and accomplishing project objectives across various initiatives. However, as highlighted in MEXX48, it is essential to consider a limited but necessary number of participating institutions when forming ad hoc commissions or committees to avoid an excessive number of participants, which could potentially delay or hinder consensus-building.

Another significant discovery pertains to the effectiveness of harnessing South-South cooperation and fostering multi-country collaboration, which has yielded favourable outcomes in the region. For example, MEXW34 was found to serve as a notable illustration of successful multi-country cooperation and South-South exchange, aligning seamlessly with the UNODC Strategic Vision for LAC 2022–2025. Based on the evaluation of MEXX35, the Centre of Excellence’s financial independence, supported by full funding from INEGI, provided the Research and Trend Analysis Branch with the means to expand its mission, enabling a more effective response to the specific needs of the region. However, it’s important to highlight that the OIOS assessment in 2020 revealed that many staff in Mexico reported a lack of a regional approach in dealing
with transnational crimes, such as the trafficking of migrants or drug trafficking, due to limited cooperation with the Regional Office in Panama.

**FINDING**

**CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE AS A ACHIEVEMENT IN COLLABORATION**

The evaluation of MEXX35 underscores the establishment of the Centre of Excellence as a remarkable achievement in collaboration. This endeavour exemplified a fruitful partnership involving various stakeholders, including HQ (providing substance and coverage), Member States (contributing initiative and political will), and COMEX (offering administrative support). This collaboration facilitated the development and maintenance of research capabilities in the region without the need for external resources or headquarters intervention.

Conversely, the enhancement of partnerships at the local level emerged as a recurring theme in various evaluations. One recommendation stemming from the Anti-corruption cluster evaluation in Mexico underscores the imperative need to strengthen partnerships and establish evidence-based, structured modular support for anti-corruption efforts in Mexico, with a primary focus on state-level entities.

In the case of MEXZ56, a noteworthy achievement has been the establishment of a common space at the state level. This space served as a hub for learning and consensus-building regarding local approaches to addressing the adolescent penal system. It has led to the expansion and enhancement of institutional models, as well as the formation of local alliances that support comprehensive inter-institutional management approaches, guided by the highest international standards.

Another significant lesson learned involves the potential for collaboration with the private sector, as exemplified by the experience in GLOZ99 through partnerships with companies such as Siemens. This collaboration has demonstrated its capacity to expand the reach of anti-corruption initiatives and reinforce compliance with ethical standards. A commendable practice observed in GLOZ99 under MEXAB5, entailed forging connections between energy and pharmaceutical companies and universities. This approach proved effective in fostering knowledge exchange and cooperation.

**GOOD PRACTICES**

**INVOLVEMENT OF PROMINENT COMPANIES**

In the case of MEXW64, framed within the UNODC Corazón Azul campaign, the involvement of prominent companies such as Aeroméxico and ADO were instrumental. This campaign has disseminated prevention messages through innovative means, including collaborations with Warner Music, which featured six famous singers delivering supportive messages, engagement with TikTok influencers to reach younger generations via social media, and a partnership with Airbnb to provide lodging for trafficking victims. These agreements and collaborations were characterized as ground-breaking by consulted stakeholders as they represent a highly successful departure from traditional campaign strategies and served to significantly enhance the impact of prevention campaigns while extending the project’s outreach.
In line with the aforementioned and building upon the insights outlined in the 2021 United Nations Mexico Partnership Landscape Assessment, the Alliance for Sustainability led by the Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation takes centre stage, particularly highlighted for its focus on SDG 17 and partnerships with the private sector. Over 60 companies collaborated on projects aligned with the 2030 Agenda. The assessment emphasizes the challenge of aligning small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), comprising 98 per cent of the Mexican economy, with the SDGs. Despite 65 per cent of Mexican Global Compact SME affiliates, some perceive the 2030 Agenda as a distant political framework rather than a means to enhance competitiveness through sustainability.

**Technology and communications**

Technology is increasingly integrated into UNODC work. Evaluations reviewed highlighted how technology can be used to enhance project delivery: from online meetings as a means to make more effective use of project resources to using video technology to ensure the anonymity of victims of gender-based violence.

Although limited findings were identified under this code, some best practices related to technology can be drawn. In MEXZ93, a notable technological advancement involved the integration of both software in the form of an application and hardware to collect quantitative data from the trained police officers. Additionally, a dedicated website was developed to disseminate programme information, materials and various tools. This technological investment proved to be a significant achievement for multiple reasons. Firstly, it enabled the programme to gain substantial visibility and widespread awareness through the creation of the “Policía+” website, all achieved with a relatively small investment. Secondly, it streamlined the implementation process through the development of software that facilitated data collection, systematization, storage and sharing.

**FINDING AND LESSON LEARNED**

**UPGRADING SOFTWARE FOR ONGOING USE AND SUSTAINABILITY**

The project wisely allocated resources towards acquiring essential software updates. These updates were instrumental in diverse procedures, including photointerpretation, delineation, remote sensing, digital image correction and flight planning. The software suite encompassed a range of applications, such as ArcGIS, Erdas Imagine, Global Mapper, Pix4D Mapper and SOCET GXP.
In MEXK54, a strategic approach was adopted to harness cost-effective technological tools, aiming to optimize the project’s outcomes. This approach prominently featured the utilization of open-source software, specifically for statistical and geospatial data analysis, facilitated by programming languages such as R and QGIS.

Another notable technological innovation within the project was the introduction of spectral signature automation. This innovative process assigns unique plant reflectance values, significantly reducing biases in visual image interpretation. It is essential to acknowledge, however, that while this procedure enhances analysis, it does not entirely replace the need for visual inspection. Consequently, the integration of aerial photography alongside satellite imagery has been recognized as fundamental. This combined approach provides an unprecedented level of accuracy and precision due to the high-resolution details captured through aerial photography.

**UNODC project management**

This section will discuss four aspects of project management: project design; administrative processes; project coordination; and resource mobilization.

**Project design**

In all its projects and programming, UNODC strives to ensure a rigorous adherence to results-based management (See “Results-based Management and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”). Consequently, all project evaluations including the ones reviewed for this study provided detailed insight regarding project design and results-based management. This section looks at information from the evaluations reviewed related to how the UNODC projects were designed including an exploration of the logical frameworks used; the involvement of stakeholders (input and participation); risk analysis, focusing on identifying potential risks and devising mitigation strategies, and monitoring and follow-up mechanisms, tracing how progress is tracked and evaluated to ensure the project’s success.

Reports commenting on logical frameworks often pointed out that they focus primarily on outputs rather than on expected outcomes or expected changes as a result of the project activities and outputs (MEXX89, MEXV27, UNDA Crime prevention). It was often found that theories of change needed to link the activity areas of the projects more clearly with expected outcomes (MEXW22, UNDA, MEXZ93, GLOX34). Furthermore, 10 reports indicated a need to improve project indicators (MEXW22, MEXW78, MEXX48, MEXX89, MEXV27, Cluster Anti-corruption, UNDA, MEXZ93, GLOZ99). The most common issue identified was that indicators focused mainly on outputs and did not measure the expected changes or outcomes (MEXW78, MEXX48, Cluster Anti-corruption, UNDA, GLOZ99). Three reports also mentioned that appropriate monitoring mechanisms were not in place to be able to measure the expected impacts of the project (MEXW78, MEXZ75, 92 and 98, GLOZ82). For example, MEXW78 found that it was not possible to know the final impact of the project because the project lacked a mechanism to monitor the adoption of the recommendations issued for the Comprehensive Security Strategy of the state of Mexico (MEXW78).
The most common issue identified was that indicators focused mainly on outputs and did not measure the expected changes or outcomes. (MEXW78, MEXX48, Cluster Anti-corruption, UNDA, GLOZ99)

When it comes to maximizing the impact of an intervention, it was widely recognized that local stakeholders should provide meaningful contributions from the early stages of a project to ensure that activities implemented are relevant and feasible given the local circumstances and capacities. Several project evaluations highlighted how consultation of stakeholders during the design phase of the project was vital in contributing to successful project implementation (MEXW22, MEXW55 and 64, MEXW34). For example, the MEXW34 report stated that, “At the stakeholder level, evidence shows regular consultations contributed to building stronger backing and buy-in to the project, from design to implementation.” (MEXW34) On the other hand, some evaluations noted that there was a lack of early stakeholder consultation in the planning phases of the project (MEXW78, MEXX48, 1617AL, MEXZ56).

Beyond the consultation of relevant stakeholders, evaluations reviewed highlighted the importance of conducting extensive situational analysis and stakeholder assessments to understand capacity of implementing partners both during and beyond project termination. Some pointed out that there was insufficient research on problems being tackled by the interventions evaluated (MEXW55 and 64, Cluster Anti-corruption), situational analysis of the Mexican context (MEXZ75, 92 and 98, MEXZ44), and stakeholder analysis on existing capacities and needs of government counterparts (MEXZ56, UNDA). These issues led to delays in project implementation and sometimes required adjustments to the planned activities which negatively affected potential impact. For example, the MEXW55 and 64 pointed out that the original design of the interventions had to be modified and adapted during implementation, due to lack of previous, more in-depth research, as well as unrealistic goals and indicators, and inadequately assessed risks (MEXW55 and 64).

Several evaluations also pointed out the importance of properly identifying risks and establishing strong mitigation strategies for dealing with them (1617AL, MEXW22, MEXX48, MEXZ44, MEXK54). One best practice identified how a geographic risk assessment contributed to accurate project targeting. According to the MEXK54 report, the crops are dispersed throughout the territory of the Pacific Rim as the areas of greatest incidence and with populations without land access, lacking opportunities and basic services. For
this reason, it was necessary to incorporate in the constitution of the framework and sample design a risk model that identifies by geographical location the probability that illicit crops exist according to their specific conditions in terms of their biophysical and socioeconomic indicators (MEXK54).

Finally, several reports pointed out that there was a lack of an exit strategy or consideration for sustainability that would enable stakeholders and local actors to continue the work the projects once they are completed (MEXX48, MEXZ75, 92 and 98, MEXV27). For example, MEXV27 mentioned that the work scheme enshrined in the design of MEXV27 limited the absorption capacities of the counterpart, which affected the impacts, networks, efficiency and relevance of the project (MEXV27).

**Administrative processes**

This issue centres on the administrative and bureaucratic aspects of managing UNODC projects in Mexico. It includes information about the structures for project management, such as allowing for some flexibility in project implementation, and ensuring the right experts are in place for smooth implementation. Factors affecting smooth project management and how they are addressed are also discussed.

One key to ensuring effective project management that was identified by the evaluations was the importance of maintaining a degree of flexibility in how projects are implemented (MEXW78, MEXX48, MEXZ44, MEXV27, OIOS 2020). Flexibility enabled the projects to respond to changing circumstances (for example, the change in Government greatly affected many of the reviewed projects) or unexpected challenges (such as COVID-19). One evaluation found that flexibility and adaptation to changing environments in the implementation of its activities benefited MEXX48, since it has managed to generate unforeseen results based on good communication and relationship with SEGOB. MEXW78 also reported that the project team knew how to adapt to the situation generated by COVID-19 and the project was flexible to the emerging needs of the counterpart that arose during implementation. It is important however to be mindful of how changes in project planning can affect other project elements. Two reports indicated that adjustments to the activities plan negatively affected other areas of the project, such as implementation of standards and strategic planning (MEXW22) and follow-up tasks and dissemination of best practices (MEXV27).

Another key element of effective project management is to ensure that the right expertise is on board throughout the design and implementation processes. This means both having the appropriate support from UNODC to design indicators and research project subject matter (MEXW22, Cluster Anti-corruption) and ensuring that the people working on each project have the appropriate expertise and local knowledge necessary to enable smooth project implementation (MEXW78, 1617AL, Cluster Anti-corruption, GLOX34).

**GOOD PRACTICE**

**RISK MITIGATION STRATEGY**

Middle management personnel in charge of the transmission area were trained to counteract the high personnel turnover rate, to have the knowledge transmitted by permanent personnel in the military zones and minimize waiting times for the use of the device by new elements, thus reducing the cost of subsequent training. (MEXW34)
The most common factor identified that affected smooth project management was personnel turnover, often in relation to the change in Government in 2018. These turnovers led to a loss of organizational learning and forced many projects to re-establish relations the new administration which affected the continuity of project results (MEXW22, MEXW55 and 64, MEXV27, MEXW34, MEXZ93, OIOS 2020).

Another related factor affecting project implementation was political will. Some planned activities were not fully implemented due to differences and shifts in political priorities (MEXV27, MEXZ93). Multiple evaluations highlighted the strong influence of political will in the work of UNODC and the importance of having mitigation strategies in place and ensuring that donors are aware of the impact politics can have on projects so that partners can be shifted smoothly should the need arise (MEXZ56 Adolescent justice, Cluster Anti-corruption).

Finally, some projects suffered from cumbersome administrative processes and evaluators often highlighted the need to streamline bureaucratic requirements wherever possible (MEXW78 Security strategy; MEXZ75, MEXZ92 and MEXZ98 Migrant smuggling, Cluster Anti-corruption; and GLOZ99 Anti-corruption).

**Coordination between UNODC and project partners**

Throughout its work, UNODC collaborates with various partners and stakeholders to work towards common project goals, ensuring that their expertise and resources are leveraged for optimal impact and sustainability. These partners may include government officials from different ministries or states, representatives from the private sector, academia, non-governmental organizations and other external parties including the support provided by UNODC to facilitate effective cross-sectoral and inter-agency cooperation.

Strong relationships and close collaboration with project partners were seen as vital both for successful implementation during the project and for ensuring sustainability once the projects are completed. Several reports emphasized the importance of good communication and information-sharing among stakeholders (MEXW78, MEXZ75, MEXZ92 and MEXZ98, GLOX34, GLOZ99), which facilitates relevant project design, effective monitoring and follow-up, and timely problem solving and adaptability.

On the other hand, issues with communication can negatively affect project implementation as mentioned in the cluster evaluation on migrant smuggling which indicated that although COMEX showed ample capacity to select and partner with the appropriate counterparts, with whom it directed efforts to achieve the objectives of the interventions, breakdowns in communication with some key counterparts were evident (with financing institutions in the case of MEXZ75 and MEXZ92 and with some counterparts in MEXZ75), generating a lack of interest or participation (MEXZ75, MEXZ92 and MEXZ98 Migrant smuggling).
GOOD PRACTICES

HOW GOOD COMMUNICATION LED TO THE SUCCESS OF THE PROJECT

“Communication between the project team and the counterpart was a success factor for the fulfilment of the planned products in the project and high satisfaction on the part of the counterpart. This communication facilitated the efforts to access the information and actors that the project required for the development of the products. In addition, it allowed us to efficiently resolve the delays that arose due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the hiring of the project team. The development and maintenance of optimal interpersonal relationships facilitated problem solving and the adoption of recommendations.” (MEXW78)

“UNODC has extensive experience in applying flexibility and adapting to changing environments in the implementation of its projects, an element that has benefited MEXX48, since it has managed to generate unforeseen results based on good communication and relationships with the SEGOB” (MEXX48)

Multiple evaluations mentioned the need for a communication strategy (MEXW22, MEXV27, MEXZ56, UNDA). These could include plans for a combination of strategic coordination meetings with timely technical follow-ups ensured comprehensive and regular feedback (MEXW34) as well as clarity about the scope and capacity limitations for all relevant stakeholders, in such a way that legitimacy and trust is built with the different counterparts and their expectations are adjusted (MEXW22 Penitentiary System, UNDA crime prevention).

One aspect of project coordination that was identified as an area for improvement was coordination between HQ/global programming and field. Several reports indicated that there was not enough coordination and communication between HQ and the field offices (Global Cluster Drugs Research, OIOS 2020). They stressed the importance of support from HQ for research and programming design (Cluster Anti-corruption), and for providing expertise and input beyond the initial design phase of the project (UNDA, GLOJ88). This has been a recurring issue for UNODC globally as noted in the OIOS audit on field office management (2020).

GOOD PRACTICES

ALLIANCES AND COLLABORATION BEING KEY TO PROJECT SUCCESS

In the case of MEXW64, for the first time, shelters specialized in trafficking in persons in Mexico were identified, an assessment was conducted of their needs and operating procedures, and those responsible for these spaces were brought together to work in a coordinated manner. However, with the change of government at the end of 2018, significant challenges were faced in re-establishing collaborative alliances with the main counterparts of the two projects. (MEXW55&64 Human trafficking)

The MEXW34 project was an example of good practice in terms of in-country programming complementarity, and inter-office cooperation at the field level, notably with the UNODC Colombia Country Office. The project also established and maintained strong, continuous, and highly valued partnerships with the most relevant defence and judicial authorities engaged in illicit crop eradication efforts in Mexico. (MEXW34 Illicit crops)

The 1617AL project not only delivered its interventions in coordination with relevant stakeholders at the national level, but the work was also complementary to other existing efforts, activities or programmes in their field of work, organizations or institutions. (1617AL Illicit flows)
Overall, coordination among stakeholders was often noted as one of the greatest strengths of UNODC. It is seen as a leading organization in worldwide efforts towards achieving the SDGs particularly those focused on drugs and crime. Several reports highlighted examples of best practice in coordination and communication, and of how this helped to achieved stronger partnerships.

**Resource mobilization**

This issue revolves around the efforts made by UNODC to secure funding and resources for projects in Mexico. It includes information about donor engagement, outlining the strategies employed to present project proposals and attract financial support.

In terms of alignment with donors’ priorities, UNODC responsiveness has been crucial in securing funding. The ability to identify areas of interest for donors and align projects with those interests has significantly increased the likelihood of financial support. This adaptability to donor preferences was underscored in the Cluster Evaluation of Global Research Projects conducted by the Research and Trend Analysis Branch, which includes the MEXX35 project. It highlighted how this approach facilitated the identification of new funding opportunities.

Diversifying funding sources has been a recurring challenge. For instance, in the case of MEXK54, collaboration efforts led to the diversification of funding sources through both voluntary contributions and in-kind support. This diversification strategy enabled more efficient resource utilization and reduced reliance on a single funding stream.

**GOOD PRACTICES**

**PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT – A SUCCESSFUL RESOURCE MOBILIZATION STRATEGY**

The Mexico segment of the GLOZ99 programme was noted to be a remarkable success story in the Partnerships section. Despite the challenges faced by anti-corruption projects, including navigating complex political landscapes, GLOZ99 in Mexico has thrived due to its strong partnerships with the private sector and private universities. This distinguishes it from projects heavily reliant on government institutions, which can be vulnerable to shifting political priorities. Recognizing the private sector as a key funding source for future initiatives, the project was seen to be well-positioned for expansion, thanks to its solid partnerships with dedicated higher education institutions and private firms in the energy and pharmaceutical sectors.
Additionally, the MEXX35 project was highlighted as a good illustration of an innovative funding model. It is primarily operated by INEGI, the Mexican partner, with minor contributions from UNODC. As noted, “According to the information provided by the management of the Centre of Excellence and INEGI itself, such coverage is almost guaranteed in the medium term, and the UNODC/INEGI partnership is mutually beneficial.” The Centre of Excellence in Mexico represents a replicable and sustainable decentralization model. It extends support to multiple countries in LAC by enhancing data quality and providing methodological and logistical assistance for victimization surveys. Despite enjoying widespread appreciation among stakeholders, the Centre of Excellence faces resource and capacity limitations, making it challenging to meet the growing demand across the region. While there is short to medium-term financial support from the new management at INEGI, the long-term sustainability of funding for the Centre of Excellence remains uncertain, impacting its potential for continued growth and expanded presence in the region.
3. CONCLUSIONS

Reducing violence

The work of UNODC in this area has been significant. Evaluations found that project activities have resulted in a methodology for selecting and reviewing investigation files that can lead to more effective crime-solving and prevention. Capacities of national statistical offices and criminal justice institutions to develop crime statistics, including through the use of gender-disaggregated data, have also been strengthened. Projects addressing gender-based violence were identified as being highly relevant and innovative. Law enforcement personnel gained skills and knowledge that have enabled them to address gender-based violence more effectively. Victim support services have been improved including through the establishment of Justice Centres for Women, emergency hotlines and the enhancement of crime prevention programmes.

Ending abuse, exploitation and human trafficking

Project activities have been instrumental in developing national capacities to better address modern forms of trafficking. The introduction of a data-driven approach by UNODC has advanced investigative techniques and helped the Government make strides in implementing the Protocol on Trafficking in Persons. The work was also found to have helped Indigenous communities to detect and prevent trafficking. Furthermore, network building efforts have helped establish a multisectoral approach to combating human trafficking that has substantially amplified the efficacy and impact of such initiatives, including from a gender and human rights perspective.

Promoting rule of law

The most common contribution to improving justice systems noted by the evaluations reviewed was the streamlining and development of operational systems which enabled relevant practitioners to manage and respond to crimes more effectively. Multiple reports also highlighted the importance of being able to properly identify crimes in order to be able to appropriately address them as a first step towards improving people’s access to justice. It is also important to consider that there could be hesitation by victims to seek out justice due to stigmatization or restrictions/conditions of shelters, etc.
Reducing illicit financial and arms flows

While it is challenging to measure illicit financial and arms flows, UNODC has been making efforts to tackle this topic by establishing an international framework for measuring illicit financial flows, raising awareness and engaging with decision makers on the issue of firearms and its international response. Further capacity-building will be needed to assist Member States in monitoring and preventing these crimes.

Reducing corruption and bribery

UNODC work in this area is highly valued. The portfolio as a whole was seen as adaptive and effective in filling gaps in the anti-corruption landscape and particularly effective in establishing the conditions for harmonizing the regulatory framework and practices with the United Nations Convention against Corruption, and most notably at the state level. Evaluations emphasized the importance of having a consolidated strategy for this work going forward, and of up-front investments in the design stage carried out in collaboration with HQ to build on lessons learned and good practices.

Institutional capacity-building

Respondents of the evaluations overwhelmingly agreed (95.5 per cent) that they used the knowledge in their day-to-day work which demonstrates both the relevance of the training provided as well as a strong contribution to strengthening institutional capacity. The value of the training provided also goes beyond the knowledge gained through the exercise to the cultivation of inter-institutional relationships and fostering trust and communication among stakeholder participants, which enables an enhanced and united front when tackling complex issues such as anti-corruption and preventing the smuggling of migrants. Factors that affect successful outcomes from training include the technical expertise of trainers, timing and frequency of training, appropriate targeting of participants (functional roles and reach), and the training methodologies used.

Law and policy development

UNODC emphasis on participatory approaches and in-depth contextual diagnosis develops local awareness and creates an enabling environment for tailoring policies and laws to address local challenges and align with local needs. Overall, UNODC has been able to adapt to changing political circumstances by aligning its work with national policy frameworks. However, some areas of work require a consistent influx of new information (such as emerging synthetic drugs) to ensure that all states are informed automatically when new information comes to light and update laws accordingly. The extensive experience of UNODC in setting up information portals and coordinating information dissemination activities can be put to excellent use in supporting the state of Mexico to set up appropriate information-sharing systems accessible across the country.
Cross-cutting commitments

Overall, the recurring challenge of high government staff turnover and changes in political leadership had far-reaching impacts on UNODC work in Mexico, affecting relationship-building, implementation delays, and the sustainability of training and policy development.

Inclusivity

UNODC programming demonstrates a strong commitment to addressing issues of gender equality through awareness-raising campaigns and by promoting women’s participation in traditionally male dominated sectors, such as law enforcement. The work of UNODC has also helped to challenge gender norms by recognizing that both men and women can be victims, offenders and agents for change. While there has been significant progress in this area, there is still room for improvement in terms of resource allocation, coordination with external partners, tailoring of training to local circumstances and providing materials in local languages, and deeper integration of gender perspectives into its initiatives. UNODC has also made concerted efforts to ensure the protection of human rights and leave no one behind (such as the trafficking in persons prevention campaigns focused on vulnerable Indigenous groups, recognizing the rights of those deprived of freedom), however some evaluations noted instances where outcomes for some vulnerable groups (including LGBTIQ+ populations or people with disabilities) could have been better addressed and where indicators for measuring human rights and gender impacts could be enhanced.

Partnerships

UNODC endeavours in Mexico highlight the pivotal role of partnerships. Collaborations, both at home and on the global stage, played a crucial role in augmenting outcomes across diverse initiatives. The period under review revealed the challenge posed by the change in government administrations in 2018, necessitating the rebuilding of partnerships and underscoring the importance of adaptability in the face of evolving political dynamics. The establishment of multidisciplinary committees and the promotion of South-South cooperation emerged as effective strategies for bolstering collaborative efforts, while engaging the private sector further extended the reach and influence of anti-corruption interventions.

Technology and communications

The integration of technology in UNODC operations is increasingly evident, as it plays a vital role in enhancing project delivery and outcomes, such as online meeting efficiency and safeguarding the anonymity of gender-based violence victims through video technology. Despite limited findings, notable best practices have emerged. A significant advancement involved using both software and hardware to collect quantitative data from trained police officers as well as cost-effective technological tools, including open-source software for data analysis, essential software updates and innovative technologies such as spectral signature automation, enhancing analysis precision when combined with aerial photography and satellite imagery.
Project management

Design and results-based management

Despite the strong commitment on the part of UNODC to ensuring adherence to results-based management principles, multiple reports identified weaknesses in logical frameworks, project indicators and monitoring mechanisms. Some projects were seen to do an excellent job of incorporating stakeholder perspectives into project design which led to project activities that were well adapted to the reality and context of affected populations and built strong backing and buy-in from local stakeholders. Projects that invested less time in consulting relevant stakeholders, conducting research on challenges for project implementation or elaborating sufficient risk mitigation strategies often ended up having to deal with delays in project implementation and sometimes required later modifications to planned activities.

Project administration

While it is important to have some flexibility built in to allow for adaptation of activities to changing circumstances, there were lessons on the need to be mindful of how time-consuming changes in project planning can be so that later project activities (such as follow-up activities or dissemination of good practices) do not suffer. There was also emphasis on the need to streamline bureaucratic requirements wherever possible to ensure that project teams can focus their energies on activities.

Coordination

The evaluations found that UNODC projects mostly demonstrated excellent coordination among key stakeholders which facilitated relevant project design, follow-up, and timely problem solving and adaptability. However, there is room for improvement in coordination between HQ and field offices. It is also important to secure the commitment of project counterparts from the beginning of any initiative to help ensure better communication and motivation throughout the project and sustainability upon its completion.

Resource mobilization

UNODC success in securing funding for projects in Mexico relies on its adaptability to align project proposals with donor priorities. Overall, UNODC responsiveness and collaboration efforts have been key in securing financial support, despite ongoing challenges in diversifying funding sources and ensuring long-term sustainability, and particularly for initiatives such as the Centre of Excellence.

SDG achievement

The main focus of this synthesis review was to provide insight into how UNODC programming and interventions in Mexico have been contributing to achieving the targets set out by SDG 16 and UNODC cross-cutting commitments in the SDGs. Although evaluations (notably at the project level) rarely go into detail regarding
specific contributions of projects towards achieving the SDGs, as this is at too high a level for relatively small projects to directly contribute to, it is interesting to capture the overall contributions of UNODC through the aggregated analysis of this meta-synthesis.

Overall, it is clear that the work of UNODC in Mexico is very well aligned with, and supports the achievement of, SDG 16 targets. UNODC programming has been instrumental, albeit in some cases in ways that need to be scaled, in establishing a firmer foundation for enabling progress through capacity development, the establishment of new policies, human rights-responsive approaches for highly vulnerable groups, and the facilitation of citizen advocacy. Just as importantly, UNODC supports the development of national statistical systems to help Mexico and others in the region to better report on progress in reaching SDG 16 indicators. Going forward, an increased focus on the monitoring and reporting systems at the project level will enable UNODC contributions to SDG targets and indicators to be more evident across its portfolio.
4. CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMMING

The following considerations are put forward by the synthesis review team based on the analysis of the findings, lessons, good practices and recommendations of evaluation reports and other assessments of UNODC programming conducted since 2016. They cover issues that have applicability across the portfolio of programming in Mexico with one specifically addressing the work on anti-corruption. Considerations have been discussed and further developed in collaboration with the UNODC Independent Evaluation Section and shared with COMEX.

Investment in project design

Evaluation reports stressed the importance of increasing the investment of time and resources at the programme/project design stage, and of increasing the involvement of headquarters and regional staff, staff from centres of excellence and hubs, and subject matter experts in planning processes. In addition to ensuring alignment of interventions with the UNODC Strategy 2021–2025 and the Regional Vision, a further area to consider is measuring how progress towards SDGs will be addressed by the portfolio. Focus could extend beyond alignment with the SDG target areas to also include the respective SDG indicators to make sure that the pathway between the work of UNODC and indicator achievement is articulated and that progress towards it can be monitored and reported upon. There was also a call for more participation of internal and external expertise and support beyond the design phase of the projects (for example, the inclusion of professionals with experience in law enforcement areas relevant to the projects’ goals).

Stakeholder mapping and analysis

As part of the design stage, it would be useful to further the depth of stakeholder analysis, ensuring input from local experts. This would help to avoid the experiences of 1617AL which experienced significant delays particularly as it was assumed that national statistics organizations would play a strong role in establishing measurements for illicit financial flows, but this was later found to be outside their scope of work.

Gender equality and increased inclusivity

Further improvements in project design could be achieved by thorough gender and inclusion analyses and disaggregated contextual research. Such processes would help to ensure that activities implemented are mindful of inclusive participation and take into account the potential differences in impact such work may have for men, women and marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities. Through this approach, projects could envisage transformative results from the design stage, developing specific outcome indicators.
on human rights and gender equality to strengthen results measurement and accountability. Additionally, increased coordination with local gender stakeholders and adaptation of training content to the Mexico context would further enhance relevance and impact. As generating this information and mainstreaing a leave-no-one-behind perspective requires adequate resources and staff capacity, such resource allocation should be incorporated into project budgets well in advance of project initiation and targeted efforts to build staff capacity on gender and disability inclusion should be ongoing. Through these measures, the Mexico office can further its advancement of the interlinked mandates of human rights, gender equality and inclusion.

**Partnerships and sustainability**

Given that UNODC operates primarily in collaboration with government partners, it is key that project activities and outputs continue to be designed to maximize the potential of these counterparts to sustain the work and implement the tools and systems developed through project activities once the project comes to an end. Partnership engagement may warrant more attention. Enhancing informal partnerships through the establishment of working groups to define and revisit roles and responsibilities, refine processes, ensure effective follow-up and so forth, would be a valuable step towards maintaining mutual expectations, ensuring seamless implementation and realizing long-term objectives.

**Project monitoring and reporting**

A foundation of effective monitoring is the development of measurable indicators that are relevant to the project, that capture the different levels of results, and that also support reporting on organizational priority areas and contributions to the SDGs. This underscores the importance of engagement with GAMI (the internal advisory, monitoring and research group of COMEX). Consideration could also be given to including in project budgets the engagement of M&E mentors to provide upfront guidance and support in indicator design, the collection of baseline data and the development of more robust M&E systems as has been done in other countries including the UNODC Kenya Country Office.

**Sustainable training mechanisms**

To increase the reach and effectiveness of training initiatives and address the challenges posed by high staff turnover among government officials, consideration could be given to further orienting the focus of training to the train-the-trainer models and to further institutionalizing training activities.

**Knowledge management and dissemination**

Further attention could be given as to how information and knowledge is generated and shared. Strategies include building on the partnership with the Centre of Excellence to expand the accessibility of up-to-date data and research produced (such as illicit crop coverage, emerging synthetic drugs) using web-based information-sharing
tools to increase response time across different states simultaneously and enable fast-tracking of policy and law updates. More focus could also be placed on integrating communication and advocacy strategies into programming, including the work with police officers, operators and relevant institutions to promote the use and dissemination of project content.

Consolidated strategy for anti-corruption programming

This is clearly a niche area for UNODC and there appear to be good opportunities to build upon the diversity of initiatives that have been undertaken. The evaluations suggest that both the Regional Hub on Preventing and Countering Corruption and the Corruption and Economic Crime Branch at HQ work more closely with COMEX in developing consolidated strategy for this work. The recommendations from the Cluster Anti-corruption evaluation warrant consideration, as do the recommendations and technical assistance needs identified for each intervention in the Mechanism for the Review of Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption. The theory of change developed as part of the cluster evaluation of anti-corruption interventions, which expanded upon the MEXAB5 theory of change, may be useful to draw upon for conceptualizing an overall theory for anti-corruption programming.

The design process might also take note of a finding from the Anti-corruption cluster evaluation that the most in-demand need expressed by respondents was citizen sensitization in general, including through the expansion of the GLOZ99 project to reach out to more universities (especially public ones) and private firms (other sectors than energy and pharmaceutical). Another priority could be providing further support to the broad spectrum of state-level anti-corruption systems and normative frameworks (alignment with national and international legal norms, and harmonization within state-level normative frameworks). Continued stakeholder training and convening was also frequently requested for specialized technical topics such as anti-money-laundering in the context of corruption, asset recovery or both public and private integrity schemes.
## ANNEXES

### I. EVALUATIONS REFERENCED

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<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>1617AL Illicit flows</td>
<td>Money-laundering/Illicit financial flows</td>
<td>Research, trend analysis and forensics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>UNDA Crime prevention</td>
<td>Colombia-Mexico-South Africa crime prevention</td>
<td>Crime prevention and criminal justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Global Cluster Drugs Research</td>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Research, trend analysis and forensics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>GLOZ82 Lawfulness</td>
<td>Lawfulness</td>
<td>Combating organized crime; anti-corruption; terrorism prevention; crime prevention and criminal justice; public affairs and policy analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>GLOZ99 Anti-corruption</td>
<td>Corruption</td>
<td>Action against corruption, economic fraud and identity-related crimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>GLOX34 Organized crime</td>
<td>Organized crime and terrorism, and illicit trafficking (firearms)</td>
<td>Education for Justice (GLO-Z82), Research and trend analysis, terrorism prevention, Global E-learning Programme (GLO-U61), Criminal Justice (GLOZ83), Global Programme to combat organized and serious crime (GLOT32), Global cybercrime, Global Programme against Money-Laundering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation briefs: Strategic evaluation – The Work of UNOV/UNODC to Promote Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>Global gender equality</td>
<td>Gender in UNODC programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naciones Unidas México. Reporte de Resultado 2020 (Spanish)/United Nations Mexico. Results Report 2020 (English)</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>UNCT 2020</td>
<td>Results 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN Mexico Partnership Landscape Assessment 2021</td>
<td>2021</td>
<td>MexPartner2021</td>
<td>United Nations Partnerships</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNODC Strategy 2021–2025</td>
<td>2021</td>
<td>UNODC strategy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNODC Strategic Vision for Latin America and the Caribbean 2022–2025</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>UNODC LAC strategy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modelo de Rendición de Cuentas 2020</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>Cuentas 2020</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Voluntary National Review of Mexico 2021</td>
<td>2021</td>
<td>VolRevMex2021</td>
<td>Voluntary review Mexico</td>
</tr>
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</table>
## II. CODEBOOK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main category/code</th>
<th>UNODC relevant strategy</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code definition</th>
<th>Indicators (only applicable to Mexico – specific evaluations or regional/global evaluations specifically covering Mexico)</th>
<th>Notes for coders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Reducing violence: SDG targets 16.1. Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere 5.2. Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation</td>
<td>Strategic Vision LAC 2022–2025 – Priority Area 4: Enhancing crime prevention and criminal justice</td>
<td>1.1. Reduced violence (SDG targets 16.1 and 5.2)</td>
<td>Information related to reducing violence (violent crimes and violence against women) GDG target indicators: 16.1.1 Number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population, by sex and age 16.1.3 Proportion of population subjected to (a) physical violence, (b) psychological violence and (c) sexual violence in the previous 12 months 5.2.1 Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age 5.2.2 Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence</td>
<td>Number of awareness-raising campaigns implemented (disaggregated by thematic area) Percentage of participants in awareness-raising campaigns that increased their knowledge of thematic issues (pre/post-testing)</td>
<td>Although target 5.2 includes trafficking we use this code for gender-based violence only and abuse related to trafficking in the next section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main category/code</td>
<td>UNODC relevant strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Ending abuse, exploitation and human trafficking: SDG targets 16.2 (End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children), and 8.7 (Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms)</td>
<td>Priority areas 3: Combating transnational organized crime, and 4: Enhancing crime prevention and criminal justice</td>
<td>2.1. Human trafficking (SDG targets 16.2 and 8.7)</td>
<td>Information related to how projects contributed to ending human trafficking and the smuggling of migrants SGD target indicators: Indicator 16.2.1: Proportion of children aged 1–17 years who experienced any physical punishment and/or psychological aggression by caregivers in the past month Indicator 16.2.2: Number of victims of human trafficking per 100,000 population, by sex, age and form of exploitation Indicator 16.2.3: Proportion of young women and men aged 18–29 years who experienced sexual violence by age 18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Promoting rule of law SDG target 16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all</td>
<td>Priority area 4: Enhancing crime prevention and criminal justice</td>
<td>3.1. Rule of Law (SDG target 16.3)</td>
<td>Information related to how UNODC projects contributed to promoting the rule of law and access to justice SGD target indicators: 16.3.1: Proportion of victims of violence in the previous 12 months who reported their victimization to competent authorities or other officially recognized conflict resolution mechanisms 16.3.2: Unsentenced detainees as a proportion of overall prison population 16.3.3: Proportion of the population who have experienced a dispute in the past two years and who accessed a formal or informal dispute resolution mechanism, by type of mechanism</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Reducing illicit financial and arms flows SDG target 16.4</td>
<td>Priority areas 3: Combating transnational organized crime, and 4: Enhancing crime prevention and criminal justice</td>
<td>4.1. Illicit financial and arms flows (SDG target 16.4)</td>
<td>Information related to how UNODC projects contributed to reducing illicit financial and arms flows Indicator 16.4.1: Total value of inward and outward illicit financial flows (in current United States dollars) Indicator 16.4.2: Proportion of seized, found or surrendered arms whose illicit origin or context has been traced or established by a competent authority in line with international instruments</td>
<td>In order to draw out more information on anti-corruption, coders will take note of occasions where evaluations of projects focusing in other areas may have contributed to anti-corruption efforts. For example, if there is a paragraph pertaining to reduced corruption and bribery in an evaluation of a human trafficking project, we can code for both in Dedoose. Then, in the analysis phase, we can look at this in a simple pivot table [e.g. showing how many paragraphs were coded to both human trafficking and anti-corruption]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Reducing corruption and bribery SDG target 16.5</td>
<td>Priority areas 1: Countering corruption and economic crime, and 3: Enhancing Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice</td>
<td>5.1. Corruption and bribery (SDG target 16.5)</td>
<td>Information related to how UNODC projects contributed to reducing corruption and bribery Indicator 16.5.1: Proportion of persons who had at least one contact with a public official and who paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials, during the previous 12 months Indicator 16.5.2: Proportion of businesses that had at least one contact with a public official and that paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials during the previous 12 months</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In order to draw out more information on anti-corruption, coders will take note of occasions where evaluations of projects focusing in other areas may have contributed to anti-corruption efforts. For example, if there is a paragraph pertaining to reduced corruption and bribery in an evaluation of a human trafficking project, we can code for both in Dedoose. Then, in the analysis phase, we can look at this in a simple pivot table [e.g. showing how many paragraphs were coded to both human trafficking and anti-corruption].
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main category/code</th>
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<th>Code</th>
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<th>Notes for coders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Institutional capacity-building: SDG targets 16.6 Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels, and 16.a Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime</td>
<td>Priority areas 1-4 1. Countering corruption and economic crime 2. Addressing the world drug problem 3. Combating transnational organized crime 4. Enhancing crime prevention and criminal justice</td>
<td>6.1. Training to strengthen institutional capacity (SDG targets 16.6 and 16.a)</td>
<td>Information related to training provided for institutional strengthening Indicator 16.a.1: Existence of independent national human rights institutions in compliance with the Paris Principles Indicator 16.6.1: Primary government expenditures as a proportion of original approved budget, by sector (or by budget codes or similar) Indicator 16.6.2: Proportion of population satisfied with their last experience of public services</td>
<td>Number of people trained (institutional level): disaggregated by thematic area, year, gender Number of training events: disaggregated by thematic area, year, on-line versus in-person</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6.2. Developing management and operational systems and tools (SDG targets 16.6 and 16.a)</td>
<td>Information related to the development of management systems, operational systems and management tools for improving institutional capacity</td>
<td>Number of interventions targeting institutional development (processes, systems, tools): disaggregated by thematic area, type, year Extent to which new processes, tools and systems were found to be used</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6.3. Putting knowledge into practice (SDG targets 16.6 and 16.a)</td>
<td>Information related to applying knowledge and skills gained through training provided by evaluated UNODC initiatives</td>
<td>Extent to which training increased knowledge (survey responses) Extent to which training was found to be used (survey responses)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main category/code</td>
<td>UNODC relevant strategy</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Code definition</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Law and policy development SDG target 16.b Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development</td>
<td>Priority areas 1–4 Cross-Cutting Commitment #2 (Research and evidence-based initiatives) Implementing the Mission – UNODC Strategy 2021-2025 (Stronger research, Evidence-based policy and data analysis)</td>
<td>7.1. Research (SDG target 16.b)</td>
<td>Information related to conducting research in order to contribute to evidence-based law and policy development</td>
<td>Number of new databases created and operational Number of diagnostic reports published (disaggregated by thematic area)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7.2. Policy development (SDG target 16.b)</td>
<td>Information related to UNODC support for policy development Indicator 16.b.1: Proportion of population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed in the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law</td>
<td>Number of new policies enacted by Mexican authorities as a result of UNODC initiatives Number of new laws passed as a result of UNODC initiatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7.3. Policy implementation (SDG target 16.b)</td>
<td>Information related to UNODC support for or monitoring of policy implementation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cross-cutting commitments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cross-cutting commitment 4: promoting a rights-based, people-centred approach</th>
<th>8.1. Gender</th>
<th>Information related to how projects incorporated/addressed human gender issues</th>
<th>Number of female law enforcement and/or advocates and representatives trained</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8.2. Human rights and leaving no one behind</td>
<td>Information related to how projects incorporated/addressed human rights and leaving no one behind issues</td>
<td></td>
<td>Refer to meta-synthesis findings on challenges related to coding for this. Mainly because most of UNODC work is done through a human rights lens. Also, most evaluations lump these three issues together. Perhaps we can pull info from meta-synthesis to really clarify what is coded under these categories</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table: Main Category / Code

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main category / code</th>
<th>UNODC relevant strategy</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code definition</th>
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<th>Notes for coders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8. Disability</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.3. Disability</td>
<td>Information related to how projects incorporated/addressed disability inclusion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Partnerships for the goals</td>
<td>Crosscutting commitments 1: Flexible multi-country collaboration (including along common borders) and 5: Strengthened and expanded partnerships Implementing the Mission – UNODC Strategy 2021–2025 (Delivering together, Partnerships)</td>
<td>9.1. Partnerships and collaboration (national level)</td>
<td>Information related to partnerships among Mexican institutions</td>
<td>Number of new partnerships at national level created during UNODC initiatives Evidence of planned collaboration beyond the completion of UNODC initiatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9.2. Partnerships and collaboration (international level)</td>
<td>Information related to partnerships between Mexican institutions and their counterparts in other countries</td>
<td>Number of new partnerships created between Mexican and regional or international institutions through UNODC initiatives Evidence of planned collaboration beyond the completion of UNODC initiatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Technology and communications</td>
<td>Cross-cutting commitment 6 – Use of technology and communications</td>
<td>10.1. Use of technology and communications</td>
<td>Information related to using technology in order to accomplish project outcomes</td>
<td>Number of projects incorporating new technology to achieve project objectives Evidence of continued use of new technology after completion of projects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11.2. Project management</td>
<td>Information related to how UNODC projects were managed/implemented (monitoring, administrative processes, follow-up)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main category/code</td>
<td>UNODC relevant strategy</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Code definition</td>
<td>Indicators (only applicable to Mexico – specific evaluations or regional/global evaluations specifically covering Mexico)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.3. Coordination</td>
<td></td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Information related to coordination and communication between UNODC and project partners and stakeholders</td>
<td></td>
<td>Just need to be clear in definition on how to differentiate communication (above) and coordination in coding. This was a challenge in meta-synthesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.4 Resource mobilization</td>
<td></td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Information related to how UNODC mobilizes resources (human and financial) in order to implement its programming</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Additional coding

#### A. Evaluation methodology

- **A.1 Interviews**
  - Information related to data-collection methods used when conducting the evaluations included in the synthesis
  - Number of respondents (interviews, surveys, focus groups) (disaggregated by sex)
  - Number of evaluators (disaggregated by sex)

- **A.2 Surveys**
- **A.3 Focus groups**
- **A.4 Observations**
- **A.5 Innovative approaches**

#### B. Report sections

- **B.1 Methodology**
  - Information related to which section of the report each coded paragraph came from
  - Each code will also be coded for the type of section it came from in the report

- **B.2 Findings**
- **B.3 Recommendations**
- **B.4 Lessons learned**
- **B.5 Best practices**

- **B.6 Conclusions**
  - This section will be reviewed in case it presents additional information but will generally not be included in the core coding process in order to avoid overlap with the findings sections.
III. SDG 16 TARGETS AND INDICATORS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere | 16.1.1 Number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population, by sex and age  
16.1.2 Conflict-related deaths per 100,000 population, by sex, age and cause  
16.1.3 Proportion of population subjected to (a) physical violence, (b) psychological violence and (c) sexual violence in the previous 12 months  
16.1.4 Proportion of population that feel safe walking alone around the area they live after dark |
| 16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children | 16.2.1 Proportion of children aged 1–17 years who experienced any physical punishment and/or psychological aggression by caregivers in the past month  
16.2.2 Number of victims of human trafficking per 100,000 population, by sex, age and form of exploitation  
16.2.3 Proportion of young women and men aged 18–29 years who experienced sexual violence by age 18 |
| 16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all | 16.3.1 Proportion of victims of violence in the previous 12 months who reported their victimization to competent authorities or other officially recognized conflict resolution mechanisms  
16.3.2 Unsentenced detainees as a proportion of overall prison population  
16.3.3 Proportion of the population who have experienced a dispute in the past two years and who accessed a formal or informal dispute resolution mechanism, by type of mechanism |
| 16.4 By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime | 16.4.1 Total value of inward and outward illicit financial flows (in current United States dollars)  
16.4.2 Proportion of seized, found or surrendered arms whose illicit origin or context has been traced or established by a competent authority in line with international instruments |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SDG 16 Indicator</th>
<th>SDG 16.5 Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms</th>
<th>SDG 16.5.1 Proportion of persons who had at least one contact with a public official and who paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials, during the previous 12 months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SDG 16.5.2 Proportion of businesses that had at least one contact with a public official and that paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials during the previous 12 month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.6 Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.6.1 Primary government expenditures as a proportion of original approved budget, by sector (or by budget codes or similar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16.6.2 Proportion of population satisfied with their last experience of public services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.7.1 Proportions of positions in national and local institutions, including (a) the legislatures; (b) the public service; and (c) the judiciary, compared to national distributions, by sex, age, persons with disabilities and population groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16.7.2 Proportion of population who believe decision-making is inclusive and responsive, by sex, age, disability and population group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.8 Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.8.1 Proportion of members and voting rights of developing countries in international organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.9 By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.9.1 Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority, by age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.10 Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.10.1 Number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>16.10.2 Number of countries that adopt and implement constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.a Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.a.1 Existence of independent national human rights institutions in compliance with the Paris Principles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Below are the SDG 16 indicators as reported by the Government of Mexico. The indicators presented here are limited to those for which data was accessible during the assessment period. The data source employed is the Department of Economic and Social Affairs’ Statistics SDG Indicators Database. [https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/database](https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/database)
Progress towards SDG 16 indicators in Mexico during the analysis period

(16.1.1) Number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population, by sex (victims per 100,000 population)

(16.1.3) Proportion of population subjected to sexual violence in the previous 12 months, by sex (%)

(16.3.2) Unsentenced detainees as a proportion of overall prison population (%)

(16.3.1) Police reporting rate for sexual assault, by sex (%)

(16.3.1) Police reporting rate for robbery, by sex (%)

(16.3.1) Police reporting rate for physical assault, by sex (%)

Male
Female
IV. METHODOLOGY

This section provides an overview of the methodological approach and codebook developed by the study team. This meta-synthesis mainly depended on a document review of 21 primary reports including evaluations of projects in Mexico, regional evaluations and global evaluations that included Mexico from 2016 to June 2023. Regional and global evaluations that contained results related to anti-corruption were also reviewed. Other reports were used for understanding the context within which UNODC Mexico operates in order to provide a rationale for the coding inquiries and findings. These documents included Mexico UNCT Reports and UNODC Strategy reports. The documents analysed are listed in annex 1: Evaluations referenced and include:

Primary reports (Total: 21)

- UNODC project/programme evaluations (13)
- UNODC regional evaluations (3)
- UNODC global project/programme evaluations (5)

Secondary reports (Total: 12)

- UNODC strategic reports (2)
- Mexico UNCT report (4)
- UNODC Mexico reports (2)
- MOPAN and OIOS audits (3)
- Other reports (1)

The 21 evaluation reports covered a variety of themes including human trafficking, migrant smuggling, penitentiary systems, countering world drug problems, security strategy, gender-based violence, lawfulness, anti-corruption, illicit financial flows and crime prevention. These themes all fell under one or more of the four priority areas identified in the Strategic Vision for LAC 2022–2025 including: countering corruption and economic crime; addressing the world drug problem; combating organized crime; and enhancing crime prevention and criminal justice,* in addition to cross-cutting themes.

The study approach followed the step-by-step process for conducting a Synthesis Review as elaborated in the Guidance on Conducting Evaluation Synthesis in order to meet the study’s secondary goal of piloting this guidance document.

* According to the LAC Strategic Vision report, the fifth area of the UNODC Strategy 2021–2025 (Counter Terrorism) is included where and when relevant as part of combating transnational organized crime.
Dedoose was used to catalogue reports and code the qualitative data. The aggregated analysis derived from the coded excerpts provided a high-level understanding of information on SDG 16 results stemming from evaluation and OIOS oversight reports focused on UNODC Mexico between 2016 and June 2023.

### Codebook development

The team developed a codebook with insights from the IES team which focused on the SDG 16 targets most relevant to the work of UNODC in Mexico. These targets included:

- 16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere
- 16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children
- 16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all
- 16.4 By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime
- 16.5 Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms
- 16.6 Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels
- 16.a Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime

The team also coded for cross-cutting categories that are important both within the context of the SDGs (e.g., human rights, gender and leaving no one behind) and UNODC strategic priorities (e.g., partnerships, project management) including:

- **Gender equality, human rights and leaving no one behind**: analysing how evaluations incorporated/addressed the themes of gender equality, human rights, disability inclusion and leaving no one behind
- **Partnerships**: analysing partnerships created by projects evaluated among Mexican institutions and between Mexican institutions and their counterparts in other countries
- **Technology**: comparing information in the evaluations related to using technology in order to accomplish project outcomes
- **UNODC project management**: analysing information related to how UNODC interventions were designed, managed/implemented and coordinated among project stakeholders, and how resources were mobilized

The team also extracted data from the reviewed reports on relevant indicators reported on across the documents. For the full codebook including details on code definitions and which indicators were targeted for aggregation from the reports, see annex 2: Codebook.
The synthesis process involved coding the findings, best practices and lessons, conclusions and recommendations sections. The executive summary was excluded as this could otherwise lead to double coding of the same content. The methodology section was also searched to extract information on what data-collection methods were used when conducting the evaluations included in the synthesis. Under the documents reviewed section, the team analysed, when available, the number of interviews, surveys, focus groups or direct observations reported in the evaluations.

Data management and quality control

Before commencing with coding, coders met to discuss the codebook and align perspectives, and intercoder-reliability testing on two pilot documents was conducted using Dedoose. After the pilot, members met to review, iterate and establish consensus on identifying constructs in case there were disparities in coding. The coding and categories were reviewed on a regular basis during the coding process and the study team noted process-level findings on coding so as to inform possible adaptations or approaches to expanding or further streamlining analysis.

Data analysis

Data analysis and synthesis were guided by the research question and used the analytical framework/theory of change/codebook to structure the analysis. Analysis primarily focused on a qualitative content analysis of emerging trends, themes and patterns, as well as drawing out examples of good practice or lessons to illustrate findings. The team also sought to extract some limited pre-existing quantitative data from the reports (though not explicitly required for synthesis reviews) and conducted quantitative analysis on the aggregated data, where possible.

Study team

This study was conducted by a team of four external experts in close collaboration with IES throughout the planning, analysis and reporting process. The team consisted of Ann Sutherland (lead expert), Xiomara Chavez, Ashley Hollister and Elise Wall.

Rationale for conducting a synthesis review

Upon an initial examination of the documents selected for the study, the review team determined that the most appropriate type of evaluation synthesis in accordance with the guidance was a synthesis review. As per the UNODC meta-synthesis guidance document, a synthesis review is appropriate when there is not a time-sensitive need expressed by decision makers or a need for frequency statistics, and when the number of reports to be reviewed is fewer than 30 (the minimum number required for the more resource-intensive types of meta-syntheses). Further review of the evaluations also showed that there was a wide variety of
subject matter with little overlap of consistently applied survey questions and triangulated evidence on certain subjects. This also confirmed a synthesis review as the appropriate choice of meta-synthesis as there was not enough overlapping quantifiable data that would be needed in order to contribute to the development of a testable hypothesis on whether and why certain interventions are working (or not).
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