



INDEPENDENT IN-DEPTH EVALUATION OF UNODC PROGRAMMING IN WEST AND CENTRAL ASIA



COUNTRY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME IN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

INDEPENDENT IN-DEPTH EVALUATION OF :
COUNTRY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME IN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

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INTRODUCTION

The Country Partnership Programme continues to support Iran's (Islamic Republic of) efforts to respond to challenges posed by drugs and crime with the main emphasis being placed on capacity building related to countering illicit trafficking, drug demand reduction, criminal justice, anti-corruption and alternative development. The programme seeks maximum synergy with UNODC's Thematic and Global Programmes, as well as with the Country Programmes for Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Programme for Central Asia and the Regional Programme for Afghanistan and Neighbouring Countries.

PROGRAMME FRAMEWORK

SUB-PROGRAMMES

SP 1: BORDER MANAGEMENT AND ILLICIT TRAFFICKING (IRNZ76)

OBJECTIVE: Promote and support national drugs and precursors control capacities and regional-international cooperation in line with the universally recognised standards and norms.

SP 2: CRIME, CORRUPTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE (IRNZ77)

OBJECTIVE: Promote and support effective responses to transnational organised crime, countering corruption; strengthening rule of law and fair and accountable criminal justice system; and improve capacities to counter terrorism in line with international instruments and UN Conventions.

SP 3: DRUG USE PREVENTION, TREATMENT, REHABILITATION AND HIV CARE (IRNZ78)

OBJECTIVE: Develop and implement effective, comprehensive and integrated drug and HIV Prevention, treatment and care policies and programmes based on scientific evidence.

SP 4: ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOODS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (IRNZ79)

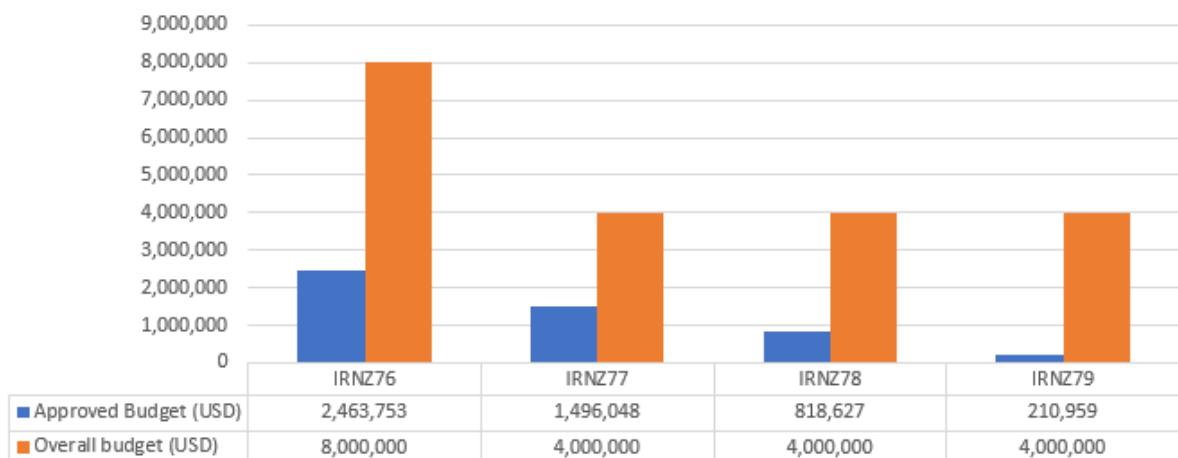
OBJECTIVE: Design, promote, and implement alternative livelihood and sustainable development programmes, based on the international principle of shared responsibility.

PROGRAMME SUMMARY

Project/ Programme number	IRNZ76, IRNZ77, IRNZ78, IRNZ79
Project/ Programme title and duration	Country Partnership Programme in Iran (I.R. of) (2015-2021) ¹

¹ The programme has been extended to the end of 2021.

Approved vs overall budget per project



DISBURSEMENT HISTORY (THROUGH 13 NOVEMBER 2020)

	Total Approved Budget	Expenditure	Exp. in %
CP for Iran (I.R. of) (IRNZ76, IRNZ77, IRNZ78, IRNZ79)	\$4,989,387.16	\$4,788,635.57	96%

FINDINGS

The evaluation had limited access to Government Counterparts (GC) and national documentation, so the assessment in this report derives mostly from the document review and UNODC staff insights and commentary from international organisations and donors. The evaluation team did have access to key national stakeholders from the Strengthening Families Programme, a Regional Programme (RP) funded initiative with a strong relationship with the Country Partnership Programme.

RELEVANCE

The programme document for the Country Partnership Programme for the Islamic Republic of Iran (2015-2020) (Country Programme) does not describe a programme theory of change. There is however an implied theory of change, with significant detail on programmatic context, the preconditions in which programming is undertaken and underlying assumptions of the programme design and implementation work. These include discussions on UNODC's global sub-programme structure, the national development context and key national partners, regional and international cooperation, the UNDAF and UNODC Thematic and Global Programmes. As observed in the 2014 mid-term evaluation, UNODC needs to be present in Iran (I.R. of), and activities undertaken in the country reflect core elements of the UNODC mandate, including, importantly, its custodianship of UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) and UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC). The Country Programme document also provides a clear, logical results framework, with well-defined outputs and outcomes contributing to a set of clear sub-programme outcomes and an overall goal. The defined goal of the Country Partnership Programme in the Islamic Republic of Iran (2015-2020) is *increasing the impact of efforts to counter narcotics and crime across the region, in partnership with governments and other stakeholders.*

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The Country Programme is strongly continuous with previous programming, reflecting a mix of technical needs analysis and objectives agreed with GC. Country Programme design was based primarily on the experience of the previous country programme and through a series of concept notes and technical meetings with GC. This current design was informed by direct consultations with one representative counterpart agency, Drug Control Headquarters (DCHQ), whereas the 2010-2014 programme had inputs from a number of national agencies regarding their specific organisational needs. These negotiations required modification of UNODC programming, particularly as it relates to areas where international norms are not in line with domestic laws and regulations, but also in terms of resulting in rigid delivery frameworks that limit flexibility to adjust to changing needs and circumstances.

What is not so visible in the design document is the longer-term context of UNODC programming in Iran (I.R. of). While the document makes clear that the programme is a continuation of the Country Programme of Technical Cooperation (2011 – 2014), no clear presentation of *change* is visible. There is no detailed discussion and representation of the impact vision for the programme, i.e. the ongoing nature of UNODC engagement over time, how the proposed inputs and outputs contribute to change over time and how this longer-term change is monitored and reported on. This later aspect is particularly important, as there is currently no reporting framework that addresses the accumulation of results/ change across programme cycles.

Iran (I.R. of) shares borders with Afghanistan and Pakistan and remains a major transit country for heroin and opium smuggling out of the region, towards Russia and Europe. Its location on the Persian Gulf also positions it as a transit point for narcotics destined for maritime routes. The country remains vulnerable to the illicit flow of narcotics and all the systemic challenges that follow. Within the context of this programming environment, initiatives responsive to country conditions are visible. The Country Programme has a focus in this area, as well as including new focuses on terrorism and trafficking in antiquities. UNODC is the lead agency in Iran (I.R. of) doing drug supply reduction, drug demand reduction (DDR) and border control initiatives.

GC reported satisfaction with UNODC as a partner for work on corruption, criminal justice and other matters, but noted also the limitations placed on programming through the lack of donor funding. In a national context marked by unilateral sanctions and a situation of drastic funding shortages, the capacity for planning and action has been severely reduced. While the programme is designed to meet GC needs, it is recognised that the limited funding will impact deliverables. It has also revealed a need to optimise and rationalise the Country Programme as it is being implemented, as noted in the 2014 evaluation that recommended a simplification of programme structure through development of an overarching thematic umbrella. The evaluation also recommended a simplification of the reporting matrix and indicators, including a greater focus on capturing progress on change processes that rest on institutional/ cultural/ attitudinal change (such as acceptance of new approaches to the sentencing of offenders) that are not subject to easy quantification in the manner of, for example, drug seizures. These remain important and valid.

The programme is coordinated well and has proven to be flexible. The programme adjusted to challenges, allowing for the redesign of workplans and the restructuring of activities to best respond to GC priorities. The yearly workplan is designed in full alignment with UNDAF, pillar 4 – Drug Control.

COHERENCE

One area of visible coherence is the alignment of the Country Programme and the RP, and the related positive impacts on relationships with GC driven by Iran's (I.R. of) participation in most RP activities. In this, the RP contributes to a forwarding of the Country Programme's objectives in Iran (I.R. of). It was noted that the current political situation means that MS needs can be unique and specific, and the role of the RP can be quite positive in contributing to outcomes for the Country Programme. The importance of partnerships and integration with the international community was recognised by UNODC and GC

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alike. It is also noted in relation to Sub-programme 3, where most activities in Iran (I.R. of) were implemented through funding originally directed to the RP. In this instance, Country Programme objectives and reporting were modified to align with the RP, and most RP-funded activities of, for example, the Strengthening Families Programme (SFP) are considered by stakeholders as Country Programme activities.

Considering this, it is apparent that some adjustments are required in relation to coherence between the Country Programme and the RP. The RP has been a key structure and adds value to country programming, but challenges in coherence, notably overlap, are appearing and a clearer defining of roles and responsibilities seems required. This is true in the evolving role of the RP that was largely focused on regional capacity-building while the Country Programme focused on a combination of projects at both institutional and community level. While the Drug Demand Reduction (DDR) component of the RP is coordinated from Iran (I.R. of), because of the experience of the country in that field, increased coordination between the RP and the Country Programme would ensure increased alignment and complementarity on current initiatives. Another example of initiatives requiring better expressions of alignment is the Triangular Initiative (TI) which was originally created within the programmes of the three participating countries but is now also found in the work plan of the RP. While the RP has placed a focal point in the Country Office, this does not seem to have addressed the developing issues.

The Country Office is a member of the UN Country Team, UN Crisis Management Team and UN Security Management Team. The UNODC Representative serves as an alternative UN Resident Coordinator and Designated Official for Security. The Country Office is recognised by sister UN agencies as an active supporter of the One UN and active participant in all inter-agency working groups and task forces, such as the UN M&E Group, the Joint UN Team on Aids (JUNTA), the ‘UN Cares’ staff support programme, the Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Task Force, the UN Communications Group, and the Operations Management Team. UNODC Chairs the UNDAF Pillar Group on Drug Control and is actively promoting joint approaches and joint programming and South-South and Triangular Cooperation. The Country Office serves as liaison focal point for the UN-International Community Open Working Group established in 2019 to facilitate collective engagement with Iran (I.R. of) in multilateralism, dialogue and collaboration. The EU Multi Agency Programme was recently signed with the UN Resident Coordinator’s Office to respond to emerging needs and to enhance the resilience of the most vulnerable, especially children, youth, and women. UNODC in Iran (I.R. of) is one of four participating UN organisations that under UNDAF Pillar 4 – Drug Control will focus on ‘capacity development, supporting the introduction of needs-based services, improving knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation, and enhancing advocacy and networking as cornerstones for day-to-day practice related to drug use prevention and treatment among children, youth and their families’.

EFFECTIVENESS

It is again noted that the severe funding constraints the programme experiences in Iran (I.R. of) as a result of unilateral sanctions and limited international community engagement with Iran (I.R. of) impacts extensively on the programme. The designed programme found in the Country Programme document cannot be delivered within this context. Interest and engagement in the TI continue to wane, and the Joint Planning Cell (JPC) lacks permanent liaison officers from both Pakistan and Afghanistan. There is cooperation between Border Liaison Officers (BLOs) on the Afghanistan border but mostly at the personal level, and there is no real prospect for training in this field taking place in Iran (I.R. of). The issues with these programmes are based on the trust issues between countries – the Country Programme has built up a high level of trust with GC over the years, but the funding constraints ties the hands of the Country Office in providing initiatives and platforms for greater outcomes in these areas. Sub-programme 3 under the Country Programme has been under-implemented. There is a sense that it has reached a standstill with an important list of unfinished activities identified by Country Office staff that includes work on improving testing and follow-up mechanisms on reducing stigma on HIV and drug

use, as well as developing advocacy and capacity among national stakeholder to develop a fully-fledged Alternative Development vision.

Having said this, some results have been achieved across sub-programmes and should be noted:

- In relation to law enforcement, the role of the Country Programme in provision of training, and in the sharing of technical expertise is noted. GCs note an interest in projects not previously considered as relevant.
- The Anti-Narcotic Police K9 unit has a training curriculum and breeding programme and do their own procurement. The Customs K9 unit is a newer initiative that continues to require UNODC support for the procurement of dogs and equipment.
- The evaluation found that while competition between national law enforcement agencies continues to exist, cooperation between these agencies is being strengthened and is increasing. A related example is work being done with judicial and prosecutorial authorities on the introduction of non-custodial penalties as an alternative to imprisonment.
- UNCAC compliance is progressing, as is the development of national legislation on combatting transnational organised crime in line with UNTOC, and some progress in mutual legal assistance (MLA) is noted.
- A prison-based protocol for tuberculosis and HIV screening has been developed in ten provinces.
- Based on Iranian experience and structures, access to and development of opioid substitution therapies have improved, placing Iran (I.R. of) as a regional model in this field.
- Country Office collaboration with the Eurasian Harm Reduction Network (EHRN) and the Iranian Drug Control Headquarters (DCHQ) on the organisation of several study visits across Central Asia, Afghanistan and Pakistan demonstrated enhanced effectiveness in the way best practices and implementation of lessons can be exchanged and learned.
- While discontinued in 2019 because of a lack of funds, the RP-run SFP was a model of effectiveness (see Appendix XVII). Efforts to adapt an innovative methodology and programme content to the cultural context (language, social representations etc.), targeting of key populations (early prevention public of 10-14 years old), steady funding and a solid number of skilled trainers played a key role in the scaling up of the programme and its receptivity.

EFFICIENCY

The programme is well-structured in terms of logic, i.e., the programme document and its revision documentation include a clear structure of activity, output and objective, within sub-programme areas. Across the design documents of the programme, at the output to outcome level there is a reasonably consistent logic visible, i.e., it is possible to see that the designed outputs will make a strong contribution to achieving the intended outcomes and it is generally possible to see how a set of activities will deliver the intended output. One difficulty with the *structure* of the Country Programme is that the designed result framework does not necessarily link to actual funded programming. This impacts negatively on intervention logic, as delivering a set of outputs and therefore contributing to achieving planned outcomes is fundamentally based on undertaking the activities. Higher level logic – achieving of outcomes – cannot be guaranteed if the design is not actually implemented. This places the so-called ‘programmatic approach’ at risk - it can be questioned if a ‘programme’ exists at all if all components are not funded and implemented.

The Country Programme is not proceeding as expected, with funding shortfalls at a critical level and many proposed activities cancelled due to shortages, despite the best efforts of the Country Office. The Office is small and understaffed, and administrative processes impact on the time available for development of programmes, focusing on counterpart interactions and pursuing possible funding. Procurement of equipment for GCs, related to programming, is severely limited due to the unilateral

sanctions and delays on the acquisition of hard goods which impacts significantly on programme implementation. The role of the RP in the SFP is discussed above and in a detailed case study, found in Appendix XVII. This programme has provided good, useful support at a time of critical funding shortages. Some variation on this type of creativity with funding is noted by stakeholders as something that provides for a minimum of continuity.

Programme documentation gives focus to risk definition and risk management strategies.

Considering challenges facing the Country Programme with regard to data collection in Iran (I.R. of), as well as the actual Country Programme results achieved through continued interactions, education and sensitisation with GC, a more pragmatic approach has been taken regarding reporting. Taking into consideration recommendations from the mid-term evaluation, the current reporting system sustains on a matrix of indicators more quantitatively realistic and output oriented. Nevertheless, it still fails to capture what UNODC has been able to build through forms of soft guidance and dialogue.

There are both strengths and weaknesses in programme reporting. Strengths include the framing of the reports, based on UNODC templates. This approach ensures that areas of priority in reporting are included and also ensures a standard approach that allows comparison across sub-programmes or programmes (sub-programme reporting is structured differently to country programme reporting). The report templates also create links between important components of programme design and reporting, such as the SDGs, UNDAFs and human rights/ gender, although these links are not direct. There is little on specific contributions to SDGs in reporting. There is not always a direct correlation between the SDGs defined at the design stage and what is reported on and reporting is not always detailed in how the sub-programme/ programme is actually contributing. Sub-programme reports do not, apparently, require this analysis and programmed reporting is limited.

IMPACT

The CP for Iran (I.R. of) has contributed to policy change, including amendments to counter-narcotics laws initiated a few years ago to include provisions for controlled deliveries. Concerns from the judiciary regarding the legalities of officer involvement in such activities has required further amendments to these new laws, to prevent further legal challenges. It is anticipated that this process is in the final stages and that the new laws will soon be in force. Data detailing on controlled delivery activities has not been made available to the Country Office, making conclusions about impact more difficult to reach.

Substantial work has been done in the programme with respect to international instruments and norms, reflected in Iran's (I.R. of) progress on UNCAC, and early progression on UNTOC and norms as the UN's standard minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners, known as the Mandela Rules. Whether or not such progress can be sustained into the longer term is moot. Work in advance of these goals is threatened by acute funding pressures within the work of the Country Programme and with Iran (I.R. of) itself, as a result of the unilateral sanctions that have been imposed. In many ways, it is the continuity of UNODC communications and information sharing with GC that is keeping alive the longer-term goals of impact during this period of funding scarcity. In such straitened circumstances, it would appear that the task of bringing forward sustainable progress toward the 2030 Agenda has been a subsidiary focus of the Country Programme, more visible in documentation than activities.

The Country Programme demonstrates clear engagement in developing national ownership of deployed programming to maximize and sustain programme impact. Whether it is through a sequential approach of implementation as in the case of the SFP or through a softer approach of dialogue mechanisms, GC are involved and jointly participate in each sub-programme's development. There are signs that the long-standing support of the Country Programme, as well as the pro-active role the Iranian government has played over time in the development of DDR strategies integrating harm reduction measures such as methadone therapy, have had a positive influence. The RP-funded SFP, a detailed case study of which

is provided in the main Evaluation Report, also demonstrates a clear engagement of the Iranian government in mainstreaming the programme across its national curriculum and expanding it to older audiences (adolescents and families in broader socio-economic settings).

SUSTAINABILITY

One of the greatest success stories in Iran (I.R. of) is the K9 programme which is now completely run and funded by the national police with their own training curriculum, breeding programme and procurement. International programmes within the country resulted in an increase in the knowledge and skills of national stakeholders, particularly the Anti-narcotics Police and those Police departments engaged in border and/or inland drug control. The Joint Planning Cell in Tehran is largely self-sustained, with the Government of Iran (I.R. of) covering the cost of its own officer and through other in-kind contributions.

Considerable work is evident in Iran's (I.R. of) engagement with UNCAC and GC reported motivation to progress work initiated with the sub-programme on UNTOC. Entry into discussion with UNODC by GC in the areas of criminal justice (particularly, alternatives to imprisonment) and in the area of mutual legal assistance (MLA) reflects potential for sustainable outcomes. With respect to visible national capacity, in addition to UNCAC signature and ratification, a more technical level capacity has been developed in MLA and Iran (I.R. of) has adopted for use the UNODC MLA Request Writer Tool. GC have engaged in meetings, knowledge exchange and dialogues with colleagues in support of new processes and procedures even while funding and programmatic activity has been minimal.

Iran's (I.R. of) experience in DDR and quality health structures were important elements in maintaining governmental interest and involvement in the sub-programme. What is agreed by the government is almost certain to be implemented and later on to be integrated and developed within a governmental strategy, on the condition that sufficient funding is found from the beginning and on a regular basis. That was the case with the SFP. Training of trainers is an area where sustainability was facilitated but could not be fully achieved due to lack of national investments in the programme.

LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

There is clear evidence that human rights and gender issues are included in programme design – significant efforts have been undertaken to introduce gender and human rights considerations into programme documents. However, at the implementation stage, the Country Programme faces several significant challenges and the effectiveness of the Country Programme in progressing the UN's cross-cutting goals relating to gender, human rights and vulnerable populations was limited, reflecting the difficult political environment for such discussions. The sensitive cultural contexts of Iran (I.R. of) cannot be ignored when understanding the limits of female participation in law enforcement, and prioritising human rights is more sensitive. Progression of international norms on human rights and gender face political, religious, legal and cultural challenges and programming on these matters is subject to negotiation, where it can be addressed at all. The Country Programme uses the requirements of UNODC and donors to promote human rights priorities but balances this against the importance of maintaining a positive working relationship with the country. Limited feedback from the GC in regard to both issues makes further assessment impossible.

The SFP provides an example of the focus on gender in programming. Although it was not specifically designed to meet the current needs and priorities from such perspectives, the project was responsive to a number of measures that indirectly related to them. For example, the target groups included boys and girls, although in separate settings, module materials were adapted to overcome existing national sensitivities related to gender so some steps could be taken forward in social inclusion processes. It was also made obligatory to have both male and female facilitators/ trainers in each team, to help better deal with parental concerns and needs and to develop an inclusive and participatory prevention

approach. The selection process of pilot areas was also wide enough to include most vulnerable populations. Although targeting most middle-class families, the programme also managed to be diversified in different settings and reach out to families living in more vulnerable conditions, including a number of Afghan refugees and economic immigrants attending Iranian schools in target areas. It must however be noted that limited field observation has made it difficult to assess how extensively gender-related concepts are appreciated.

Over time, human rights issues such as Iran's (I.R. of) use of the death penalty remain. Progress can nevertheless be noted in discussions between UNODC and GC in other areas, such as in relation to the use of less restrictive punishments, examples of which include the development of alternatives to imprisonment. GC reported programming in this area to have found an 'acceptable' level of focus on women and vulnerable groups.

The leave no one behind umbrella provides for a more progressive agenda in Iran (I.R. of), such as including homeless people who use drugs within target populations as well as directing DDR efforts towards prison settings. However, gender and human rights issues are being only indirectly addressed. Activities in this regard are scattered, if not delayed because of lack of governmental support, while language remains careful and politically reworked.

CONCLUSIONS

RELEVANCE

While the Country Programme incorporates both past programming and the engagement of GC in its design, this process would be improved where a wider range of stakeholders were involved in consultations. This wider engagement would ensure relevance across all programming areas.

Given the current status of funding, recommendations from the 2014 evaluation on programme design simplification continue to require a level of consideration. With programme funding as constrained as it currently is, it may be more appropriate for design and implementation to have a greater focus in fewer areas, although this places some areas of intended intervention at risk.

Programme planning and detailed design would benefit from intentionally addressing the longer-term context of the programme. As the engagement of UNODC in Iran (I.R. of) enters into a third, 5-year strategic framework, and does so within what is described as a programmatic framework, it becomes more relevant to consider the longer-term implications, outputs and outcomes of this work, including specific attention on the higher-level outcomes and contributions to impact that result from the Country Programme. This is likely to include a discussion on and representation of the impact vision for the programme, i.e. the ongoing nature of UNODC engagement over time, how the proposed inputs and outputs contribute to change over time and how this longer-term change is monitored and reported on. This later aspect is particularly important as there is currently no reporting framework that addresses the accumulation of results/ change across programme cycles. With the Country Programme entering a third 5-year framework, a need for this longer-term view becomes more important. Such a design approach offers the possibility for addressing the finer details of strategic and structural relationships and interactions with the RP and the other programmes in the region.

COHERENCE

With the ongoing issues related to the engagement of the international community in Iran (I.R. of), the historically positive role the Regional Programme has played in assistance to Country Programme activities and results requires consideration and focus in order to be re-energised for the future. It appears that coherent linkages and coordinated direction-setting have slipped – these should be re-

established and given a new priority as the RP plays an important role for GC in their regional engagement and with regional initiatives such as the SFP.

The Country Programme plays a strong, important role in the UNCT, a role that is encouraged and could be developed further, opening up possibilities for engagement with sister UN Agencies, as evidenced in upcoming participation in the EU Multi Agency initiative.

EFFECTIVENESS

The Country Programme continues to demonstrate a minimal level of effectiveness at a number of levels, across all sub-programmes, with greater effectiveness impacted significantly by unilateral sanctions which cause the severe funding shortfalls the programme is experiencing. At the same time, the Country Office is working on ‘soft influences’, based on staff expertise and availability and guidance that can, at the political and policy level, trigger change.

EFFICIENCY

Funding streams remain the critical aspect of all programming in Iran (I.R. of), and careful planning and creativity in approach will be necessary for there to be any significant results in the foreseeable future. One possible response to the funding constraints would be to give more emphasis to dialogue building and policy guidance efforts, activities that are less expensive and have the added benefit of building on staff expertise and relationships with GC and offer possibilities of longer-term results where policy influences are effective. Another potentially effective approach to funding constraints would be to delimit all efforts in a focus area such as DDR and direct all effort in DDR to that one area. Linking in with sister UN agencies in this approach would ensure a clear perspective on the priority area, add to coherence within One UN frameworks and could possibly lead to additional funding from UNCT resources.

As well as achieving results, careful capturing of these results will be an important aspect of programme delivery and monitoring/ reporting. This is particularly true of initiatives described above as ‘soft guidance’ or ‘soft influence’, as it is important that these soft influences are not lost. Capturing what has been able to be achieved through forms of soft guidance and dialogue. As noted above, the designed result framework is linked to intended programming, not funded programming, which means that activities not undertaken for lack of funding do not contribute to planned outcomes. Capturing all results becomes more significant in this context, particularly as programme engagement lengthens in time.

IMPACT

There are two main areas where impact is visible from programme initiatives as the work of the Country Programme has contributed to policy/ normative change. One is in support provided to the meeting of Iran’s (I.R. of) obligations to UNCAC and two is in relation to UNTOC should new statutory provisions navigate certain hurdles within the Iranian legislative process. It should also be noted that amendments to legislation on counter-narcotics are being implemented that will include provisions for controlled deliveries.

The evaluation is of the view that GC involvement in the SFP and the building of dialogue mechanisms demonstrates a level of impact from the Country Programme, although this will only be able to be confirmed over time.

SUSTAINABILITY

One of the greatest success stories in Iran (I.R. of) is the K9 programme. The Anti-Narcotic Police K9 unit is now completely run and funded by the national police. They have their own training curriculum, breeding programme, and do their own procurement. The programme has identified areas of high GC

engagement and have established a relevant mechanism (heavily dependent on the now-established infrastructure). The breeding programme is implemented, and trainers are prepared.

The discussion on impact above, related to the UNCAC and UNTOC are also demonstrative of sustainable reform.

The sustainability of impact from a programme such as the SFP, as discussed above, will always be dependent on government engagement in the ongoing funding and scaling up of the programme. While there are indications that this is happening to some extent, including references to inclusion of the SFP in the national school curriculum, it is not certain that this will indeed be the case over time.

LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

There is a sense of extreme caution from the Country Programme on these politically risky agendas that deserve increased consideration in the future. As a soft influencer, UNODC does not seem to fully exploit its potential and the trust it has built with the Iranian government to advance more ambitious agendas in this regard. There are examples within the SFP of some influence happening, but it is recognised there are risks involved addressing the priorities of human rights and gender. Further, addressing priorities of human rights and gender are issues on which interactions with GC should be happening at higher levels than with the programme officers implementing initiatives. Engagement with a broader range of ministries at the design stage could open more opportunities, and while it is more complex in Iran (I.R. of), directing support to NGOs/ civil society could increase activities with vulnerable populations.

LIMITATIONS TO THE EVALUATION

The Covid-19 global health crisis impacted significantly on the processes of the evaluation, notably in forcing evaluation enquiry to be undertaken online.

The evaluation did not address questions/ enquiry to the general population nor to indirect beneficiaries – all enquiry is with key stakeholders, including project staff, implementing partners, donors and direct beneficiaries.

GCS in Iran (I.R. of) declined to be interviewed online, which has impacted on the breadth of data available from Iran (I.R. of).

EVALUATION MATRIX – COUNTRY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME IN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

Evaluation criteria	Evaluation question	Sub-Programme 1: Border Management and Illicit Trafficking (IRNZ76)	Sub-Programme 2: Crime, Corruption and Criminal Justice (IRNZ77)	Sub-Programme 3: Drug Use Prevention, Treatment, Rehabilitation and HIV Care (IRNZ78)	Sub-programme 4: Alternative Livelihoods and Sustainable Development (IRNZ79)
Relevance	1. Were the programmes designed based on evidence (research, lessons learned from past programming, evaluations)?	<p>Programme designed in consultation with GC via concept notes. Primary GC input 2015 from DCHQ, representing needs of all agencies. Less direct representation from individual agencies in design stage.</p> <p>Programme design is continuous with previous programme cycles, reflecting a mix of technical needs analysis and agreed objectives with GCs.</p> <p>Programming has introduced initiatives responsive to country conditions, including new focuses on terrorism and trafficking in antiquities, even within a less flexible programming environment.</p> <p>Noted in the 2014 mid-term evaluation and apparently not addressed, the results framework continues to be weak in capturing progress on change processes that are not subject to easy quantification.</p> <p>Sub-programme design has been based on end-of-project evaluations of earlier UNODC projects, as well as feasibility studies for the Alternative Livelihood component.</p>			
	2. To what extent does the defined structure of programmes in the region align with current regional practice and future directions?	<p>The RP and Country Programme are aligned programmatically. The perspective from the Country Programme is that the RP aligns itself with Country Programme activities. There remains however a certain lacking in coordination and synergy between the programmes, as well as a level of competition. A specific example was provided in relation to the Triangular Initiative, activities of which appear under both RP and Country Programme work plans.</p> <p>Government mentoring and continued dialogue were vital in ensuring the continuity of the programme – the role of the RP in extending the ways in which UNODC can engage GCs in regional activities was noted, as was its contribution to flexibility in work with GCs. The RP was described as providing for the Country Programme a ‘bridging of similar colleagues across the region.’</p>			

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	3. To what extent are the objectives of the Programmes aligned with regional priorities and UNDAFs/ UNSDCFs/ SDGs?	UNODC is the lead agency in Iran (I.R. of) under Pillar 4 of the UNDAF, as it related to drug control. The Country Programme's yearly workplan is designed fully in alignment with UNDAFs. UNODC has been and remains active in UN coordination mechanisms in Iran (I.R. of). In this context, the UNDAF programme mirrors UNODC priorities.			
	4. To what extent do the programmes respond to the changing and emerging regional and national (Member State) priorities and needs?	GCs note the successful partnership with UNODC. Programming in response to the needs of government is noted, with particular mention made in reference to corruption, crime, criminal justice and judicial cooperation. The current political environment, i.e. the unilateral sanctions regime and the strong influence of donor priorities, detracts from programme effectiveness, with particular note made of a lack of progress on UNCAC implementation. The rigidity of programming agreements and programming oversight make programming flexibility a challenge. However, Country Office responsiveness and flexibility is noted, including in its efforts to address the conclusions and recommendations of earlier evaluations in relation to programme structure and monitoring (reporting matrix and indicators).			
Coherence	5. To what extent did the programmes develop or strengthen existing and new partnerships at bilateral, regional and international levels?	The Country Programme has developed its relationships with the Government of Iran (I.R. of) with noted and notable participation of Government agencies in RP and Country Programme activities. The developing relationship of the Country Programme team with its GC is noted for its contribution to forwarding the partnership programme. There is demonstrable good cooperation between GC and the Country Programme team. GC note UNODC's provision of opportunities for the Government of Iran (I.R. of) to cooperate with the international community and participate in international meetings. There is a clear focus in activities around the UNCAC. There are clear demonstrations of beneficial exchange through the regional events hosted in Teheran or attended by Iranian experts. Iran's (I.R. of) experience in methadone therapy places the country as an example of good practice, something which can be developed in the region.			

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	6. To what extent do the programmes contribute to the One UN, UNDAF, and other UN system-wide coordination mechanisms (e.g. participation in UN Country Team) and the extent to which UNODC participation in UN activities influences its performance?	The Country Office is a member of the UN Country Team, UN Crisis Management Team and UN Security Management Team. The UNODC Representative serves as an alternative UN Resident Coordinator and Designated Official for Security. The Country Office is recognised by sister UN agencies as an active supporter of the One UN and active participant in all inter-agency working groups and task forces, such as the UN M&E Group, JUNTA, UN Cares, the PSEA Task Force, the UN Communications Group, and the Operations Management Team. UNODC Chairs the UNDAF Pillar Group on Drug Control and is actively promoting joint approaches and joint programming and South-South and Triangular Cooperation. The Country Office serves as liaison focal point for the UN-International Community Open Working Group established in 2019 to facilitate collective engagement with Iran (I.R. of) in multilateralism, dialogue and collaboration. UNODC, through its work on UNDAF Pillar 4, will collaborate with other UN agencies on the EU Multi Agency Programme to respond to emerging needs and to enhance the resilience of the most vulnerable, especially children, youth, and women.			
Effectiveness	7. To what extent were the objectives and outcomes stated in programme documents achieved?	The Country Programme's primary contribution is in the area of soft impacts through continued engagement and support, where possible, under the restrictive financial conditions of the unilateral sanctions. GCs recognise the trusted partnership of the Country Programme, as well as the potential for promising and innovative interventions, but these remain hindered by the unilateral sanctions, limitations to funding, and an inability to fulfil the full logic of the design as a result.			
	8. How effectively did the programmes address national and regional needs and priorities?	The political environment impacts on the Country Programme in a significant way – this fact underlies all other aspects of the programme – with the unilateral sanctions creating complexity across implementation, particularly in relation to procurement of equipment; internal political sensitivities preclude any regional training or meetings in country; addressing recognised needs and priorities is difficult with funding constraints. The RP has mitigated some of these issues, including acting as a financial cushion for the Strengthening Families Programme.			

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	9. To what extent are the programmes effective in strengthening and promoting cross-border cooperation and collaboration with regional entities?	The Country Programme has a clear focus on supporting GCs to be in partnership, particularly in relation to Pakistan and Afghanistan. This type of initiative includes the Joint Planning Cell (JPC), TI and the Paris Pact, including together with the RP. The potential for engagement in CARICC was also discussed, if only initially as an observer. Having said this, there remains the need for strengthening cooperation and trust between Iran (I.R. of), Afghanistan and Pakistan to achieve success in the form of concrete, operational agreement There are examples in Sub-programme 2 of moving forward with judicial and prosecutorial counterparts and in the area of mutual legal assistance (MLA), where matters are of a more technical nature. There are also positives seen in the area of opioid substitution therapies, where Iran (I.R. of) provides key lessons learned for the region , with regional events and study tours across Central Asia, Afghanistan and Pakistan demonstrating enhanced effectiveness in the way good practice and implementation lessons can be exchanged.			
Efficiency	10. Were the resources and inputs converted to outputs and outcomes in a timely and cost-effective manner?	The Country Programme is suffering significantly from funding shortfalls – some programme areas have no activities currently due to the lack of funding. The funding crisis extends across all areas of the programme, including Country Office staffing levels as well as specific programmatic activities.			
Impact	11. To what extent did the programmes contribute to Member State implementation of relevant international Conventions and other instruments?	Iran (I.R. of) has signed and endorsed all conventions and protocols related to drugs and narcotics. There are good examples of work being done by the Country Programme with respect to international instruments and norms, reflected in progression on UNCAC and early progress on UNTOC and the Mandela Rules. The pilot and scattered activities that result from funding shortfalls are insufficient to build ownership and sustainable impact.			

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	12. To what extent can long-term sustainable results be expected for all stakeholders from current programme implementation?	The pilot and scattered activities that result from funding shortfalls are insufficient to build ownership and sustainable impact. As noted above, the current unilateral sanctions regime impacts strongly on results. The activities of Sub-programme 1 are specifically impacted by a lack of funding, and necessary equipment for border controls has not been forthcoming. Having said this, GC note the continued engagement from the Country Programme and point to this engagement as keeping alive longer-term goals. The Country Programme's commitment of development of national ownership is also noted for a contribution to sustainable impact. Further, there are indications in the Strengthening Families Programme and its sequential approach to implementation, as well as an approach to the building of dialogue mechanisms, that GCs are involved and are participating with the Country Office in development of project modules into national education strategy and curricula. Funding issues impact negatively in this area. Unilateral sanctions, lack of political interest to work with Iran (I.R. of). There is a new counter-narcotics law, specific to controlled deliveries, which is likely to overcome previous challenges that existed at the judicial level.			
	13. To what extent did the programmes contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals?	The 2030 Agenda is a subsidiary focus of the programme, more visible in documentation than activities.			

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Sustainability	14. Has national ownership of the programmes been generated? In what ways? What factors have hindered or facilitated this ownership?	The issues with funding for the programme discussed above all contribute to a lack of sustainability of results. There are however some indicators of sustainability: The K9 unit demonstrates long-term sustainable success, notwithstanding consistent requests from the Government of Iran (I.R. of) for additional funding. The JPC is demonstrating a level of support from Government of Iran (I.R. of) funds. Engagement in the UNCAC and to a lesser extent the UNTOC indicate sustainability of outcome. Current engagement by GCs in the areas of criminal justice (alternatives to imprisonment) and MLA are encouraging. There are two major contributors to success in this area: the long relationship in place between UNODC and the Government of Iran (I.R. of) and the tailoring and adapting of the content of the Country Programme to give consideration to the national cultural and political context.			
	15. How have the programmes developed national capacity to support sustainability of effort and benefit?	In line with the programmatic limitations described above, development of national capacity is constrained by funding and implementation limitations. There are also signs that policy and cultural divergences place a limit on the Country Programme's ability to sustain government interest and to make the case for increased engagement on drug use prevention and treatment measures beyond of what has been already put in place in the country. Having said this, GC counterparts have engaged in meetings, knowledge exchange and dialogues in support of new processes and procedures and the Country Programme organises professional workshops, conferences, and study tours in addition to implementation and expansion of international programmes within the country. This has resulted in an increase in the knowledge and skills of national stakeholders, particularly the Anti-narcotics Police and those Police departments engaged in border and/or inland drug control. It is also worth noting the expansion of activities related to sniffer dogs that has been an achievement of DCHQ. Further, technical level capacity has been developed in MLA – Iran (I.R. of) has adopted for use the UNODC MLA Request Writer Tool.			

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Leaving no one behind	16. To what extent have human rights and gender priorities and principles, including the needs of vulnerable groups, guided programme design (reference framework, planning structure)?	Human rights and gender are both a focus of UNODC programming in Iran (I.R. of), visible in the Country Programme and specific initiatives, despite the fact that GC do not welcome explicit programming and/or use of M&E indicators to measure progress towards human rights and gender equality goals. The leave no one behind umbrella provides the Country Programme with a useful tool for advancing the agenda of human rights and vulnerable populations.			
	17. To what extent have specific measures been taken to address the needs and priorities of human rights, gender and vulnerable groups during implementation of the programmes?	Human rights and gender are, however, less visible in programme activities than they are within design documents, although it is clear that this is partly related to funding constraints and partly to cultural sensitivities and national policy. Human rights in particular is a sensitive point of discussion with GC working in law enforcement, and female participation in Policing is very limited. It is clear that the Country Programme encourages inclusion, but practical application is difficult to ensure. There is as well an expressed view that UNODC does not exploit its position and the trust it has built up in addressing these areas with GC. Iran (I.R. of) is well advanced on DDR adaptation to women needs (methadone facilities for women are an example), and training is provided in Teheran for the entire region.			