



UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Survey on the impact of UNODC assistance in the Scientific and Forensic Field

2012

Background

The UNODC Laboratory and forensic science services programme seeks to ensure that Member States have access to, and use quality forensic science services in their fight against drugs, crime and terrorism. A substantial proportion of this service is delivered directly from the Laboratory and Scientific Section (LSS) in Vienna to a large number of institutions in Member States worldwide comprising drug analysis and forensic science laboratories, criminal justice system and law enforcement authorities and regulatory and Health authorities.

As part of its commitment towards continuous improvement, UNODC/LSS carries out a survey on an annual basis to assess the impact/relevance of technical assistance activities provided. Lessons learned and comments received from respondents to these surveys are subsequently built into the implementation strategy of UNODC Laboratory and forensic science services.

The main areas covered by the survey in 2012 are the International Collaborative Exercises (ICE) programme; provision of drug/precursor reference standards to laboratories; provision of drug and precursor field testing kits and the development and dissemination of best practices manuals and guidelines.

The 2012 survey was conducted in June/July 2013 and responses were received from 175 institutions in over 58 Member States. This represents an increase in the number of participants of 27% compared with the survey conducted in 2011.

A summary of the survey responses received are given below.

ICE Programme

The UNODC ICE programme allows drug testing laboratories from both developing and developed countries to continuously monitor their performance on a global scale. Two rounds are offered per year with options for participation in the analysis of drugs in Seized Materials (SM) and/or in Biological Specimens (BS, specifically urine). Of the 175 survey respondents, 90.9% (159) indicated that their laboratory had participated in ICE.

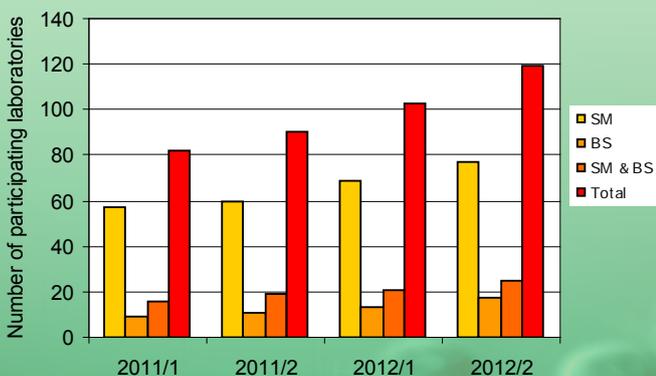


Figure 1: Participation of survey respondents in the ICE Programme in 2011 and 2012.

Figure 1 shows that over the past four rounds of this programme, a continual increase in the total number of participants was observed. A similar increasing trend was also observed in the number of laboratories choosing to analyse either both seized materials and biological specimens, SM only or BS only.

The impact of the ICE Programme on work done in the laboratories was assessed as either very good or good by 93.2% of participants in 2012 (Figure 2) similar to the 2011 survey (93.4%)

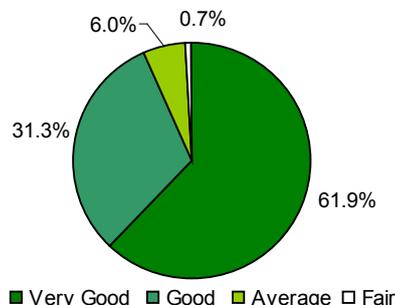


Figure 2: Assessment by participants of the impact of the UNODC ICE Programme on work done in the laboratory.

The information presented in Figure 3 shows the rating of various aspects of the ICE programme from the overall quality of service to the submission of test results.

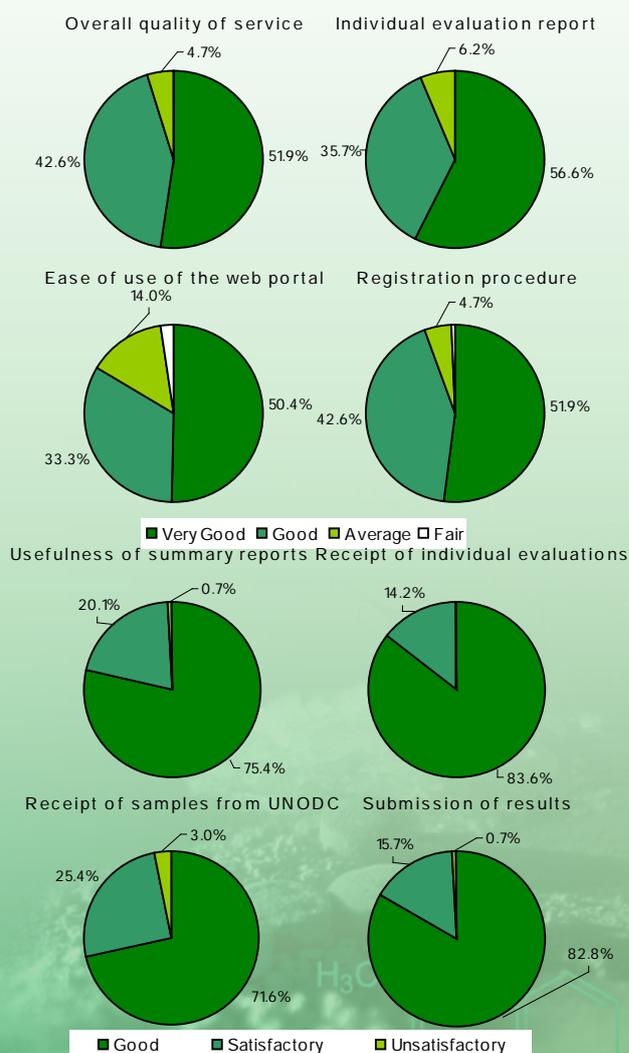


Figure 3: Ratings of various aspects of the ICE Programme by participants in 2012.

The UNODC ICE portal facilitates the submission of participant results and greatly assists in the preparation of summary/yearly reports. The survey showed that use of the ICE portal has increased from 95% of participants in 2010/11 to 98.4% in 2012.

Reference Materials

Reference materials of substances under international control and selected metabolites were provided to all ICE participating laboratories biennially. However, as a result of increasing costs, this aspect of LSS activities has been scaled back to assist laboratories whose needs are greatest. UNODC is developing its reference materials program to suit the needs and specific requests of laboratories, including the introduction of selected new psychoactive substances (NPS). In 2012 a total of 454 reference material samples were provided to 19 laboratories. Figure 4 shows the range of areas in which reference materials are used by recipients.

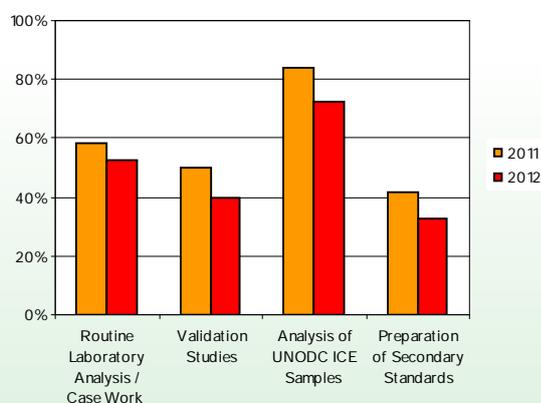


Figure 4: Purposes for which the reference materials supplied by the UNODC/LSS are used by laboratories participating in the ICE Programme (2011/2012).

Drug and Precursor Field Testing Kits

UNODC supplies institutions in Member States with drug and/or precursor field testing kits. In 2012, a total of 572 drug and precursor field testing kits were provided to 15 Member States.

Twenty one (21) institutions who received these test kits responded to the survey. Figures 5 and 6 show that 76.6% of respondents rated the kits very good or good and 71.4% of respondents use the kits regularly or often.

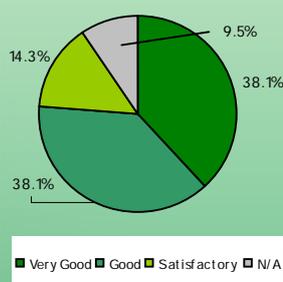


Figure 5: The usefulness of the drug and/or precursor field testing kits in the operational work of laboratories.

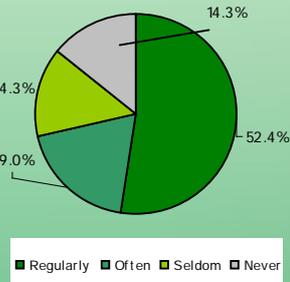


Figure 6: The regularity of use for the drug and/or precursor field testing kits received by laboratories.

UNODC Publications (guidelines and manuals)

In 2012, 83.7% of survey participants indicated that they used UNODC publications (guidelines and manuals) in their work and 91.3% of participants rated the usefulness of the UNODC publications as very good or good (Figure 7). The majority of these institutions obtained the publications either via the internet (97.4%, up from 90.5% in 2011) or by post (53.9% down from 62.1% in 2011).

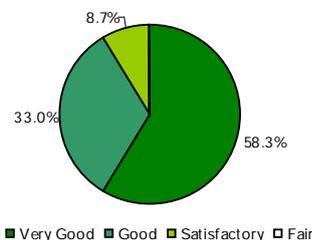


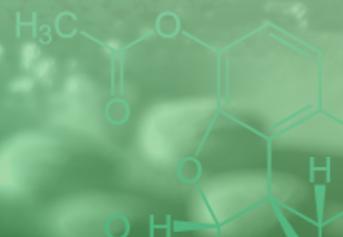
Figure 7: Rating of the usefulness of the UNODC publications received in the work of participating institutions.

Additional Comments

Participants in the 2012 survey were requested to provide additional comments in order to assist UNODC in improving the services it provides to institutions in Member States. Forty (40%) of the comments received were related to reference materials of controlled drugs and NPS in particular. This was also the most common topic mentioned in 2011. In order to address this issue, UNODC has introduced selected NPS in the ICE program and will provide reference materials of these substances to laboratories upon request. UNODC has also created an early warning advisory on NPS (www.unodc.org/nps), which will serve as a resource where laboratories will, among other features, be able to access reference data and analytical methods to assist their identification of NPS. Twenty (20%) of the comments received by survey respondents were related to requests for training and technical assistance. UNODC will reply to each of the comments of participants and issues raised will be addressed in order to improve the quality of UNODC laboratory and forensic science services. UNODC would like to express its gratitude to all survey respondents.

Acknowledgements

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