

## IN-DEPTH CLUSTER EVALUATION:

# Global Research Projects of the Research and Trend Analysis Branch (GLOU34, GLOX64, GLOV44, GLOV20 and MEXX35) JUNE 2018

## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

**Countries:** Global  
**Duration:** 2011-2017  
**Budget:** US\$ 26,439,318  
**Donors:** Austria, Canada, Ecuador, Germany, IAD, Japan, Mexico, Norway, Panama, Russia, Sweden, Turkey, UNDP, UNOPS, and USA.  
**Implementing agencies:** UNODC  
**Independent Evaluation Team:** Punit Arora (Team leader), Deborah Alimi (Drugs expert), Aldo Magoga (Crime expert), Cristina Santillán Idoate (Gender expert), and Emanuel Lohninger (IEU).

**FULL REPORT:**  
<https://tinyurl.com/ResearchCluster>



UNODC's Thematic Programme on Research, Trend Analysis and Forensics (TP) provides the overall framework for research and trend analysis at UNODC. The Research and Trend Analysis Branch (RAB) has the overall responsibility for defining research standards and ensuring quality and consistency across all UNODC research and forensic science products. This evaluation focused on five research projects and their contribution to the implementation of the TP, which delivers key research outputs such as the World Drug Report and the Global Study on Homicide (GLOU34), the Global Reports on Trafficking in Persons (GLOX64), on Wildlife Crime (GLOV44), and the reports related to the Afghan Opiate Trade Project (GLOV20). The MEXX35 project supports the UNODC-INEGI Center of Excellence (COE) and plays a crucial role in the implementation of capacity building activities on crime statistics and victimization surveys in Latin America.

## EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation used a mixed-method, participatory and gender-responsive methodology. All findings are based on triangulation from the results of 116 survey respondents (37% female), 151 stakeholder interviews (65 female, 86 male), extensive desk review and observation during field missions to Mexico, Panama, Uzbekistan and Nigeria as well as UNODC Headquarters.

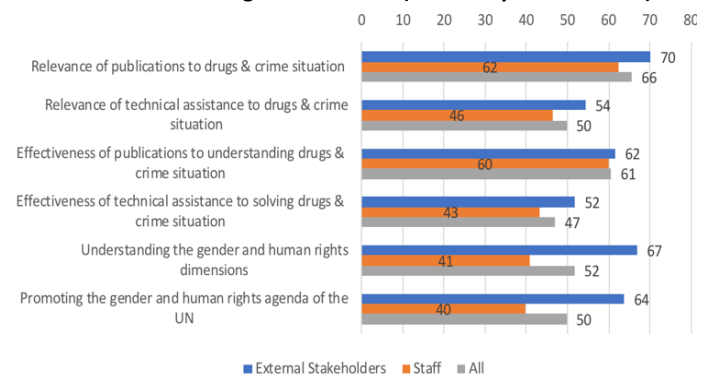
## MAIN FINDINGS

- The Thematic Programme on Research (TPR) has made a substantial contribution towards improving the

effectiveness of stakeholder response to current and emerging challenges in the domain of drugs and crime. Data on citations and user feedback show that its efforts have raised awareness and informed policymaking, however, data is not collected systematically to judge the extent of impact.

- TPR provides necessary information on global trends on drugs and crime as well as essential statistical data to better understand their evolutions, and its work is generally considered relevant. However, UNODC needs to be more proactive in instilling a culture of risk tolerance towards more effective policy debates and formulation.

### Survees' overall rating of TPR's work (Echoed by interviewees)



- While the projects do a very good job of reporting its activities, outputs and some outcomes such as citations, there is a need to improve results-orientation in other aspects of its interventions (e.g., policy use).
- TPR has somewhat weak regional presence, which has an effect on both geographic coverage and understanding of local contexts necessary for optimum effectiveness as well as efficiency.
- RAB collects data for its publications mostly via official channels. It has recently started supplementing this data through other available means. A transparent process is being established to fill data gaps or to substitute national data when these do not meet international methodological standards, and to submit draft national data to Member States for their review. More can be done, however, to further this encouraging development. Data collection could further improve by diversifying data collection channels, establishing direct linkages with concerned technical and partner agencies through and with the collaboration of field offices and making increased use of online reporting.

- While the projects under evaluation have been very successful in developing and leveraging partnerships and collaboration with some organizations (e.g. scientific panels), it has opportunities to further develop partnerships with stakeholders working on similar mandates (a good practice is the joint data collection with some regional organisations).
- TPR mostly succeeded in enhancing collection and dissemination of sex-disaggregated data and gender sensitive information. TPR has recently started to implement Gender focused approach, however, to better respond to UNODC's mission and commitments and an increasing demand by the international community, an enhanced and systematic HRG approach in future programming seems relevant and necessary.

**TPR: Summary of findings at a glance**

<b>Strengths</b>
Flagship publications
High visibility & presence
Skilled researchers
<b>Weaknesses</b>
Results-based monitoring systems
In-depth analysis in publications
Inadequate attention to HRG issues
<b>Opportunities</b>
Building UNODC as a knowledge organization
SDGs and HRG mainstreaming agenda
Decentralization and increased regional integration
<b>Threats/ Challenges</b>
Competition among programmes for funding
Insufficient financial resources

**Project-specific evaluation results:**

<b>Trends Monitoring and Analysis Programme Support Project (GLOU34)</b>
The project is considered relevant and effective, although there was a perceptible lack of awareness on some of the products and services. GSH and WDR are reference documents.
<b>Global Reports on Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants Project (GLOX64)</b>
The project is considered relevant, effective and efficient, but policy change and other impact data is not collected.
<b>Research project on transnational crime threats (GLOV44)</b>
While World Wildlife Crime Report has contributed to raising the profile of wildlife crime on the international agenda, its awareness among external stakeholders could be improved.
<b>Afghan Opiate Trade Project (GLOV20)</b>
This project has reportedly informed policy agenda of international bodies such as Commission on Narcotic Drugs, Paris Pact Initiative and some Member States like the USA.
<b>UNODC COE for Statistics on Governance, Public Security, Victimization and Justice in Mexico (MEXX35)</b>
The Center has been very instrumental in the Latin America for diffusing, harmonizing and transferring best practices on drug and crime measurement methodologies.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The Executive Director/Committee, and the Division for Policy Analysis and Public Affairs (DPA) need to promote and instill a culture that encourages risk-taking, including taking on controversial topics and policies, in

order to realize UNODC's true potential as a knowledge organization.

- DPA and RAB, supported by the Executive Committee, need to gradually build up regional presence and decentralize research work to the extent desirable for making global publications truly global.
- RAB needs to increase use of triangulated and more diversified sources of data, especially where official data is not available or adequately reliable.
- RAB needs to establish direct linkage with relevant national technical agencies – when missing - in addition to Permanent Missions, through and with the collaboration of field offices, for more coordinated/ collaborative data collection efforts.
- RAB needs to collect data on its purported impacts and outcomes more systematically. A Thematic Programme that encourages others to use more evidence-based programming needs to be in a position to demonstrate the long-term impact of its own work.
- RAB management should merge these five projects into one or at most two (crime and drugs) overarching projects to reduce complexity, heavy time investments (e.g. in administrative processes), and at the same time increase efficiency.
- RAB management should develop an overarching roadmap for increased partnerships and collaboration towards the achievement of the SDGs.
- DPA should examine the feasibility of separating technical assistance from actual research work.
- RAB management should promote and support an explicit HRG approach in future programming. This will require even stronger commitment, capacity, resources and strategic partnerships.

**LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICE**

- The establishment of the COE at the INEGI-México - one of the most trusted institutions in the country, technically strong and with good human resources - constitutes an innovating step to anchor simultaneously UNODC presence in the country/region and the empowerment of local partners.
- The Thematic Programme has developed a liaison network at regional level to ameliorate the lack of dedicated research officers in field offices. This practice has the potential to enhance collaboration and better calibrate research to regional needs. Similarly, use of scientific advisory committees and peer review panels that include academics, national experts and field specialists to inform the development of global reports on drugs, trafficking in persons and wildlife crime is an important step in incorporating expert knowledge.

**Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU)**  
 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime  
 Vienna International Centre  
 P.O. Box 500 1400 Vienna, Austria  
 E-mail: [unodc-ieu@un.org](mailto:unodc-ieu@un.org)