

UNAFRI'S TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO MEMBER STATES:
Clusters of Actions, Prospects and Challenges

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INTRODUCTION

UNAFRI, like its sister regional Institutes: HEUNI, ILANUD and UNAFEI; is mandated, inter alia, to promote the United Nations Crime Programme in Africa. UNAFRI is a vital regional mechanism to coordinate regional cooperation and harmonise the provision of needed technical assistance through tailored activities in the field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Systems in Africa. As the window of United Nations Crime Prevention strategies and framework to Africa, the Institute derives its legitimacy for its operations from the needs of Member States in Crime Prevention, particularly as Crime has been noted to be a major impediment to sustained social development.

Areas in which technical assistance is requested by Member States are hereafter summarized. The basis for UNAFRI's effective delivery of technical assistance relates to its affiliation, collaboration and partnership with other Agencies of crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, including the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme Network of Institutes.

The Network is a resourceful medium that has to explore ways of harmonising the technical assistance requested by Member States, by putting together the means at our disposal with a view to offering to the African region the needed technical assistance. The continent appears more vulnerable to the devastating impact of crime on the development of the region, given its low technical capacities. Some parts of Africa are very fertile ground for National and Transnational Organised Crime. The Centre Innocenti (UNICEF) in this respect reveals that the majority of countries are countries of origin, transit and destination for trafficked women and children (UNICEF, Insight Innocenti, 2004); and trafficking in firearms which aggravate armed conflicts and instability in the region. This is a consequence of the low levels of development, which translate into lack of mechanisms for prevention and detection of crime, giving rise to growing trends of criminal activities with near impunity.

The paper intends to briefly describe, from the requests by Member States (See UNAFRI's survey, 2003; and the Programme of Action 2006 – 2007 endorsed by the Round Table for Africa (UNODC, September 2005); the needs expressed by Member States (Section I: UNAFRI and its Member States) and stresses on the need for the United Nations Programme Network of Institutes (PNI) to coordinate the Institutes' programmes of activities in view of maximising the benefit by countries and regions (Section II: UNAFRI and its Sister Institutes of PNI).

I. UNAFRI AND ITS MEMBER STATES

1.1 Needs of Member States

UNAFRI'S survey (UNAFRI and its Stakeholders, 2003) gave an insight on what was perceived as areas of need for technical assistance by 12 Member States (Botswana,

Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Comoros, Djibouti, Guinea Conakry, Mali, Mozambique, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe), which responded to the questionnaire.

1. All the 12 countries have indicated their needs on:
 1. Training of senior officers
 2. Public awareness about UN Conventions
 3. Active cooperation with neighbouring countries
2. Among the above countries, 11 needed:
 4. Assessment in training and research
 5. Innovative crime prevention initiatives
3. Among the same countries, 10 have expressed the need to:
 6. Elaborating training modules
 7. Disseminating relevant Conventions, including specific UN Norms and Standards
 8. Initiating African Conventions
 9. Establishing networks, and
 10. Dissemination of best and promising practises
4. Lastly, 9 of them expressed their concern about:
 11. Harmonisation of laws

1.2 Programme of Action

The expressed needs by Member States led UNAFRI to refocus its Medium Term Strategy and Plan of Action 2002 – 2006 on a Programme of Action clustered around (1) training, (2) sensitisation campaigns and (3) strengthening mechanisms for sub/regional cooperation. UNAFRI's Programme of Action relates largely to the more detailed Programme of Action of UNODC (with 7 clusters of action), endorsed by Member States (See UNODC, 2005). The assistance UNAFRI offers to Member States aims, inter alia, at implementing the United Nations Crime Programme in the Member States, taking into consideration the socio-cultural realities of the region.

1. Cluster I: Training

- 1.1. Training of senior officers
- 1.2. Elaborating training modules
- 1.3. Assessment in training and research
- 1.4. Innovative crime prevention initiatives
- 1.5. Dissemination of best and promising practices (an item related to all the clusters: (1), (2) and (3).

2. Cluster II: Sensitisation campaigns

- 2.1. Public awareness about UN Conventions (and standards)

3. Cluster III: Cooperation

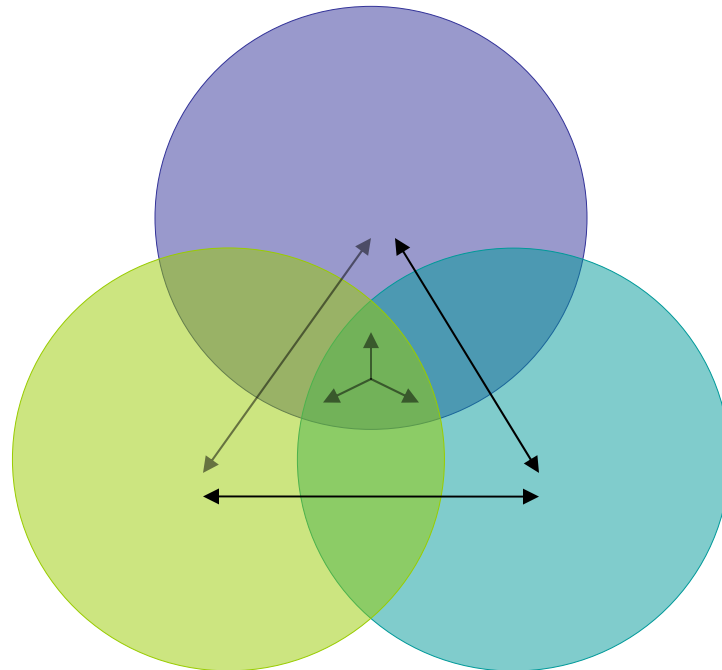
- 3.1 Active cooperation with neighbouring countries
- 3.2. Dissemination of relevant Conventions
- 3.3. Initiating African Conventions
- 3.4. Establishing of networks, and
- 3.5. Harmonisation of laws

It is worthy noting that training activities are a means to (1) developing the capacity of the Criminal Justice System personnel; (2) assisting Member States internalise and implement UN Conventions and Standards; in so doing (3) sensitising the concerned officials and the public; and (4) strengthening cooperation among countries, which should lead to harmonising regional legislations.

Different UNAFRI's activities in Member States cover mainly the three domains of action. This is to say that, in response to the needs expressed by Member States, the offered activity should cover the aspects of training, sensitisation and cooperation with other countries (See Diagram 1 below).

Diagram 1

3. COOPERATION



1. TRAINING

2. SENSITISATION CAMPAIGNS

From the above diagram, it can be noted that a project intended for example to “Disseminate best and promising practices” (1.5), Cluster I, leads, inter alia, to “Public awareness about UN Conventions” and Standards (2.1) in as far as reference is made to these instruments, Cluster II (Sensitisation campaigns); to “Harmonisation of laws in the region” (3.5), Cluster III (Cooperation); to “Dissemination of relevant Conventions” (or Standards), also in Cluster III. UNAFRI’s technical assistance aims at a comprehensive development of the capacity of the Criminal Justice System personnel (sensitising the public and strengthening cooperation among Member States). In achieving this, it is essential that the Institute receives the support from the PNI.

II. UNAFRI AND THE PNI

I would like to seize this opportunity to request the meeting to explore possibilities of backing UNAFRI up in delivering its mandated services to Member States for their maximum benefit in terms of technical assistance offered, without undue

duplication of effort and resources. The Programmes of activities of Institutes are communicated to all the Members of the Network. This should help to avoid duplication of activities in the regions or countries. In need, similar or related programmes or activities in the same countries or regions may be organised as joint activities by concerned Sister Institutes.

Allow me to indicate that any technical assistance by a Sister Institute in the African region or a country, without the involvement of UNAFRI, only weakens UNAFRI's capacity to service the needs of its Member States. The Network will have more to gain if it could coordinate, when and where it would be possible, its activities in Africa, even if this would require involving several members of the PNI. Concerning the African region, this will be a way of strengthening the delivery mechanisms for technical assistance requested by countries, and asserting the importance and relevance of PNI. Fortunately, there is apparent reference and identification of this realisation by the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly as alluded in their Draft Resolution on UNAFRI (A/c.3/60/L.10), whose operative paragraph 8 reads:

“Call upon the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to work closely with the Institute;”

In this respect, I wish to acknowledge with sincere appreciation the support and collaboration received from UNODC and hope that the established working relationship with UNODC and other Sister Institutes in the Network will continue to grow. Allow me to mention that UNAFRI is indebted to United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) for (1) involving the Institute, at different levels, e.g. Intergovernmental Experts Group Meetings, in a number of its activities both for the African region (Crime and Drugs as Impediments to Security and Development in Africa: A Programme of Action 2006 – 2010 (UNODC, 2005)) and for the world (e.g. the Criminal Justice Assessment toolkit).

CONCLUSION

There is a crucial need that the “Network” operates in a more harmonised way to maximise the use of scarce resources at our disposal.

Our proposal in this matter is that the other Members of the “Network” consider and explore ways of involving UNAFRI as a partner in the activities and drawing initiatives with specific reference and benefit to Africa. It is possible and quite realistic for members of the PNI to collaborate and execute or plan to implement a number of activities in the Africa region.

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