

Report on My Experience as a Communication and Advocacy Associate at UNODC ROCA

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Summary

This report outlines my tenure as a Communication and Advocacy Associate at the UNODC Regional Office for Central Asia (ROCA) in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. I contributed to building a robust communication framework to enhance UNODC ROCA's visibility and advocacy impact across Central Asia. My key responsibilities included organizing events, managing digital platforms, creating multimedia content, and fostering strategic partnerships, such as between the Chinese Embassy and UNODC ROCA's new Regional Representative. A significant achievement was establishing a communications team alongside a colleague, leveraging platforms like Telegram to engage journalists and the public. I also represented UNODC ROCA at the GRACE Youth Initiative Against Corruption in Vienna in November 2024. This report details my responsibilities, achievements, challenges, lessons learned, and recommendations for future communication efforts.

Introduction

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Regional Office for Central Asia (ROCA) is dedicated to addressing illicit drug trafficking, organized crime, corruption, and terrorism. As a Communication and Advocacy Associate, I played a pivotal role in enhancing UNODC ROCA's outreach and advocacy to promote evidence-based policies and public engagement.

My role involved a wide range of communication and advocacy tasks to amplify UNODC ROCA's mission:

1. Coordinated events and conferences to strengthen engagement with UN system partners and embassies, including international observances like World Drug Day (June 26) and World Day Against Trafficking in Persons (July 30).
2. Updated UNODC ROCA's website and social media pages, prioritizing recent campaigns and updates to appeal to the general public.
3. Developed a comprehensive digital marketing plan, including website revamp, social media content creation (captions and images for recruitment and event promotion), and monitoring webpage traffic via Google Analytics to optimize content.

4. Produced and edited videos for campaigns like the Blue Heart Campaign against human trafficking and Transnational Organized Crime Day in November, including adding subtitles and clearing background noise.
5. Facilitated connections between UNODC ROCA and external partners, notably assisting with interpretation between the Chinese Embassy and the new Regional Representative, Oliver Stolpe, appointed in August 2024.
6. Represented UNODC ROCA at the GRACE Youth Initiative Against Corruption in Vienna in November 2024, contributing to youth-led anti-corruption efforts.

Several challenges shaped my experience:

1. Communicating across Uzbek, Russian, English, and Chinese posed significant hurdles. Translating technical UNODC content into accessible, culturally relevant messages for Uzbekistan's public was complex. I addressed this by collaborating with local translators and using visual aids like infographics to simplify messages, though this required additional time and resources.
2. Coming from Hong Kong's fast-paced, individual-led work culture, I found Uzbekistan's preference for holistic, consensus-driven planning challenging. Initiatives often required extensive consultation, delaying implementation. I adapted by aligning my proposals with team priorities and building trust through regular coordination meetings.
3. Limited budget and staff for communications activities restricted the scope of campaigns. I mitigated this by maximizing low-cost platforms like Telegram and reusing multimedia assets across campaigns.
4. Communicating complex issues like transnational organized crime to diverse audiences required simplifying without losing accuracy. I used storytelling techniques and visual media to bridge this gap.

Lessons Learned

1. Building relationships with journalists, embassies, and UN partners amplified UNODC ROCA's reach and fostered sustainable advocacy networks.
2. Balancing Hong Kong's fast-paced approach with Uzbekistan's collaborative culture taught me to integrate flexibility into strategic planning.
3. Using Google Analytics to monitor webpage traffic and prioritize high-performing content ensured efficient resource use and maximized campaign impact.
4. Participating in the GRACE initiative highlighted the power of youth as agents of change, inspiring me to advocate for more youth-led initiatives in Central Asia.

Conclusion

My role as a Communication and Advocacy Associate at UNODC ROCA was a transformative experience, allowing me to contribute to global efforts against drugs, crime,

and corruption in Central Asia. By establishing a communications team, leveraging Telegram, revamping digital platforms, and representing ROCA at the GRACE Youth Initiative in Vienna, I helped enhance UNODC's visibility and impact. Despite challenges like language barriers and cultural differences, I adapted and delivered measurable outcomes, including increased website traffic and strengthened diplomatic ties. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with UNODC ROCA and remain committed to advancing its mission through innovative communication strategies.