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Strengthening the Oversight Function and Transparency of the Parliament

UNDP Project

Mid-term Evaluation – Final Report

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17 November 2014

Acronyms and Abbreviations

GOPAC	Global Organisation of Parliamentarians Against Corruption. In the report, GOPAC refers to the local branch which has been established in the National Assembly.
MP	Member of Parliament
NARS	National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia
Project	The Strengthening the Oversight Function and Transparency of the Parliament – The UNDP Project being evaluated.
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation – the Project’s donor organisation.
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme – the UN Agency implementing the Project.

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Acronyms And Abbreviations

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Executive Summary

The Project

UNDP supports parliamentary development in over 60 parliaments globally. The *Strengthening the Oversight Function and Transparency of the Parliament* Project is working with the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and aims to mobilise stronger public engagement in political processes. The objective of the Project is to strengthen the oversight and scrutiny functions, as well as the transparency and efficiency of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia and the representative role of local assemblies, through mobile committee sessions and supports outreach mechanisms and public hearings, as well as enabling two-way communication between assemblies and citizens. The Project is based on an understanding that the monitoring of the Executive by the Parliament is an indicator of good governance. The Project also supports the work of 5 pilot municipal assemblies, in order to transfer good practice from the national level to the local level.

The Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was to provide information on the mid-term results of the Project. The evaluation scope was particularly noted as a mid-term evaluation, with a focus on assessing relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and efficiency. The evaluation provides analysis of findings, conclusions and lessons learned, and develops recommendations. The evaluation team followed standard international practice (OECD/ DAC) and the UN Evaluation Guidelines in developing the approach and methodology to be used in defining the evaluation's detailed enquiry and in developing the related analysis and reporting. The analysis and reporting focus on utility, credibility and relevance/ appropriateness. The intent of the evaluation is that this report is of use to the Project team in its planning and implementation, with a particular focus on strengthening results.

Findings

The Project is working effectively, and creatively, in its work with the Parliament of Serbia. It is developing, and providing examples of the work and function of, a number of scrutiny, representation and outreach mechanisms, within the National Parliament and with a number of piloted local assemblies.

The mobile committee sessions improve representation and scrutiny, and model an effective mechanism of oversight. They are important in how they build trust and encourage contact between MPs and representative organisations and experts on specific initiatives. The sessions are an effective mechanism for feedback on legislation. The mobile sessions improve the logistics of gaining important local knowledge, and bring out local media.

Local scrutiny/ control/ oversight, and two-way communication between assemblies and citizens is demonstrated in the Project's pilot outreach initiative. The public hearing process at the local level addresses the gap in communication between decision-makers and citizens, and opens up possibilities for improvements in decision-making. Public hearings effectively demonstrate how citizens can be involved in the deliberations of the local Assembly. They both motivate citizen participation and build a better relationship between citizens and Parliament.

GOPAC is an important initiative for encouragement and development of the scrutiny role and anti-corruption activities of MPs. GOPAC has wide support in Parliament (and beyond) and has the potential for real impact on anti-corruption initiatives in Serbia.

The capacity, and role of the Parliamentary Service in facilitating oversight mechanisms is improving. In order to further strengthen their role and solidify the change it will be necessary to ensure delivery of the capacity-building programme described in the project document.

The portal initiative, and activities at Outcome 3, are at some risk currently given their political nature and dependence on decisions to be taken by external bodies as to whether or not they will be implemented, and if so the timing of that implementation. The Project team and Board are aware of this risk and are addressing it with direct and indirect strategies.

In its work with and assistance to Parliament's editorial team, the Project is providing effective assistance in development of mechanisms for communication with the public.

At the current stage of implementation, the most likely sustainable Project successes will be with mobile committee sessions and public hearings, although there is limited finance available to Parliament for the committee sessions without external support. Both of these initiatives are recognised at all levels as valuable to citizens, local representatives, civil society and the MPs, and as effective methods of communication and feedback.

The Project is directly contributing to both UNDP and SDC strategic priorities in Serbia.

Recommendations

Scrutiny Mechanisms - There are six keys to the future successes of the scrutiny mechanism initiatives, keys that it is recommended be focused on by the Project in the coming period as a way of solidifying outputs and strengthening future outcomes:

- Involve more parliamentary committees.
- Provide facilitation for MPs who have not been involved with the mobile sessions or public hearings – possibly with 'mentoring' from MPs who have been involved.
- Improve accessibility to the roster of experts.
- Assist Parliament in the more detailed development of the procedures for organising and holding mobile committee sessions and public hearings.
- Inform local self government about the mobile committee sessions and encourage them to approach Parliament requesting involvement.
- Inform civil society organisations about the public hearing procedures and encourage them to approach Parliament requesting involvement.

Local Outreach - There are a number of reasons for strengthening emphasis to the local outreach approaches:

- Further work with municipalities will contribute to the relevance of the Project to the priorities defined in the Swiss Cooperation Strategy.
- The on-going local reform process and decentralisation initiatives of the Serbian government have a clear link to the local outreach focus on Outcome 2.
- Improved local governance through a greater transparency and accessibility of local decision makers and strategic documents to the general public and CSOs.

Initiatives that can assist in this approach could include:

- More local government outreach – e.g. more public hearings.
- More work on the capacities of local self-governments to conduct public hearings.
- Exchange of knowhow among the 5 pilot municipalities.

- Coordinate with SCTM to ensure exchange of knowhow with other municipalities.

GOPAC - It is recommended that the Project, together with GOPAC leadership and with inputs from UNDP and the donor, develop a longer term strategy for GOPAC's development and funding. The key here is undertaking the process of strategizing and planning, as a way of further handing over responsibility of the future of GOPAC to member MPs.

Capacity-building - The key is to focus not on the delivery of training inputs, but on the change in capacity being delivered by these inputs. What is critical is for the Project team to oversee, monitor and evaluate these inputs from the perspective of what *new skills, aptitudes and knowledge* exists in the target groups, based on the analysis of capacity needs done in the early stages of the Project. Some other potential areas of focus in capacity-building include:

- Ensuring staff and new MPs are knowledgeable about their mandate and the functions of the Parliament.
- Working with MPs on the required knowledge and skills for amending legislation, and the importance to legislation of specific, particular wording.
- Assisting members of local assemblies in their basic political knowledge and skills.

Reporting - The Project's results logic is clear, from activity to output and from output to outcome. As well, reporting against outputs and outcomes is clear. What is not so clear, when discussing directions for the coming period, are the links between plans and the Project's intended outputs and outcomes. It is recommended that reporting be tightened in these links, to ensure thinking and planning will deliver the intended outputs/ outcomes, and to assist the Project team, UNDP and the donor in understanding this link to programmed outputs.

Gender Equality And Gender Mainstreaming - In order to strengthen the Project's quite strong potential for addressing gender mainstreaming and gender equality, it is recommended that more focus be put in implementation and in reporting on this area. Donor and UNDP priorities should come through more clearly in the work of the Project team, and, as importantly, in how the Project team analyses its work and outputs and reports on them.

The Portal - The Project has come some distance in addressing the necessary groundwork for the development of the Portal, and the processes as defined in the project document are more or less on track. While recognising the impact that external forces/ decisions have on the successful implementation of this Project component, it is critical for the Project team to ensure that the activities, initiatives, negotiations, etc that are required to bring about the successful implementation of the Portal are a focus of coming period.

Coordination - A focus on establishing clear links between MPs and CSOs and other experts would be welcomed by all parties, and would increase the effectiveness of communication, deliberations and Project results. MPs would benefit from a system or process for establishing, developing and using CSOs and other experts. The Project could assist in the development of such a process. Driving the coordination among donors would be of benefit to the National Parliament as well as to the initiatives of donors and implementers. While some coordination is apparent, it is not focused and requires a 'champion'. The Project could take up this role. Some further, intentional coordination/ collaboration with SCTM would be appropriate, and has the potential for adding value to the outreach initiatives of the Project and the development of more detailed, longer-term initiatives with local self governance in the areas of two-way communication with citizens and the functioning of oversight mechanisms at the local level.

1 Introduction

UNDP supports parliamentary development in over 60 parliaments globally. The *Strengthening the Oversight Function and Transparency of the Parliament* Project (the Project), which is working with the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia (NARS), is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and aims to mobilise stronger public engagement in political processes.

The objective of the Project is to strengthen the oversight and scrutiny functions, as well as the transparency and efficiency of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia and the representative role of local assemblies. The Project is based on an understanding that the monitoring of the Executive by the Parliament is an indicator of good governance. As well as the Parliament's legislative function, it is through oversight that Parliament can ensure a balance of power, and assert its role in representing people's interests.

The Project has three components:

- Parliamentary oversight of the executive.
- Outreach to citizens.
- Strengthening public finance scrutiny.

The Project is also intended to support the work of 5 pilot municipal assemblies, in order to transfer good practice from the national level to the local level; practice such as organisation of public hearings and communication with citizens. The Project will assist the Parliament in engaging citizens, particularly at the local level, through facilitation (organization) of mobile committee sessions and by taking Members of Parliament (MPs) to sites where issues that require further scrutiny are arising. The Project supports outreach mechanisms and public hearings, as well as enabling two-way communication between assemblies and citizens.

UNDP, in partnership with the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, devised this initiative, building on previous project results with the overall objective of strengthening the capacity of the Serbian Parliament to fully exercise its mandate. The methodological approach includes both learning and awareness raising/ advocacy aspects. According to the Project Document¹, Parliamentarians conduct oversight in order to:

1. Ensure transparency and openness of Executive activities. Parliaments shed light on the operations of government by providing a public arena in which the policies and actions of government are debated, scrutinized, and subjected to public opinion;
2. Hold the Executive branch accountable. Parliamentary oversight scrutinizes whether the government's policies have been implemented and whether they are having the desired impact;
3. Provide financial accountability. MPs scrutinize government spending by highlighting waste within publicly-funded services. Their aim is to improve the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of public expenditure;
4. Uphold the rule of law. Parliament protects the rights of citizens by monitoring policies and examining potential abuses of power, and any arbitrary, illegal or unconstitutional conduct by government.

¹ AGORA portal for parliamentary development, <http://www.agora-parl.org/>

The Project was designed to build on results achieved in an earlier project phase, such as the institutionalization of public hearings and the regulation of relations with independent bodies, which created a positive momentum for further strategic reform of the Parliament in improving its oversight role. The Project was also designed to strengthen Parliament's outreach to citizens, particularly at the local level, engaging them in the effort of gathering information and support in the performance of Parliament's oversight role. Mobile committee sessions take MPs to sites where issues requiring further scrutiny arise, and public hearings will invite written witness statements. In addition, outreach mechanisms that enable two-way communication are being introduced in pilot municipalities, in local municipal assemblies. These interventions are intended to lead to greater political awareness and participation of citizens both at the central and local levels, and strengthen the elements of democratic governance in Serbia.

'The greatest space and need for further work and support lies in the strengthening of the oversight role of the Assembly, as well as the relationship between the National Assembly and the independent state bodies.'²

² Vukadinovic S. *Final Evaluation of the UNDP Project: Strengthening the Accountability of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia.*

2 Purpose and Scope of The Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was to provide information on the mid-term results of the Project. The evaluation scope was particularly noted as a mid-term evaluation, with a focus on assessing relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and efficiency. Specifically, the Terms of Reference (see Annex 5 for the Terms of Reference) required an assessment of what is working, and why, with the highlighting of both intended and unintended results, and discussion of lessons which have been learned that can guide decision-makers and inform stakeholders. The evaluation provides analysis of findings, provides conclusions and develops recommendations. The evaluation also provides an assessment of cross-cutting issues, with a focus on gender equality.

3 Approach and Methodology

The evaluation team followed standard international practice (OECD/ DAC) and the UN Evaluation Guidelines in developing the approach and methodology to be used in defining the evaluation's detailed enquiry and in developing the related analysis and reporting. The approach incorporated three stages:

- Inception – Ensuring the evaluation team is fully understanding of the content, intent and plans of the Project design and the work of the Project team, achieved through an analysis of Project documentation (see Annex 4 for a list of documents reviewed) and initial discussions with key Project staff. Inception included more fully developing evaluation criteria, evaluation questions and evaluation approach and methodology. The inception period was finalised with an Inception Report.
- Field work – The field work incorporated a range of semi-structured interviews, tailor-made for diverse interviewees (see Annex 3 for a list of interviewees), and discussions with Project staff and stakeholders. The interviews were designed to assist the evaluation team in its analysis.
- Analysis and reporting – Based on the inception period analysis of documentation and the subsequent field work, the evaluation team prepared its analysis against the evaluation criteria and questions. This analysis forms the basis of this Evaluation Report.

The analysis and reporting focus on utility, credibility and relevance/ appropriateness. The intent of the evaluation team is that this evaluation report is of use to the Project team in its planning and in Project implementation, with a particular focus on assisting the Project team in strengthening its activities with the intent of strengthening outputs and outcomes (results).

The full list of Evaluation Questions can be found at Annex 1.

The evaluation matrix is found at Annex 2.

4 Findings

The Project is working effectively, and creatively, in its work with the Parliament of Serbia. It is developing, and providing examples of the work and function of, a number of scrutiny, representation and outreach mechanisms, within the National Parliament and with a number of

piloted local assemblies. The sections below discuss the Project's design and implementation in the context of the five OECD/ DAC evaluation criteria. The discussion is grounded in the context of a mid-term evaluation – i.e., the intent of this analysis is to analyse the design and implementation of the Project, and to provide inputs to the Project team in how outputs and outcomes can be strengthened between now and the completion of the Project.

4.1 Relevance

The Terms of Reference specify that the focus of the relevance enquiry will be 'in view of democracy and parliamentary development in Serbia. Beneficiary/ stakeholder satisfaction with the content and delivery of the Project.'³

As the Serbian electoral system offers no specific geographic links between MPs and constituents, there is strong support for the Project's outreach mechanisms – mobile committee sessions, public hearings, live streaming. These are seen as important (ie relevant) mechanisms in assisting the representative function of Parliament/ MPs and two-way communication between citizens and local or national assemblies.

The Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, the Law on the National Assembly and the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly define the National Parliament's responsibilities for representation, oversight and legislation.⁴ Both public hearings and mobile committee sessions are included as mechanisms of NARS designed to contribute to fulfilling these responsibilities. The financial, logistical and technical support, and encouragement, provided by the Project enables the Parliament to implement these defined structures. The public hearings and mobile committee sessions in particular contribute to fulfilling perceived and stated needs in representation and oversight, and are clearly relevant in establishing improvements in the transparency and representativeness of Parliament. The mobile committee sessions provide a view of 'Parliament in action' that is able to demonstrate its effective working – and there are specific examples of this effective work. This provides a view of Parliament contrary to the negative views prevalent in the community, which is important for both MPs and citizens.

Similar perspectives exist at the local level.

The idea of a local parliament becoming closer to citizens is a priority for local parliaments. According to the Constitution, local parliaments are the institutions in charge of the establishment of all other local bodies. It does not have an operational role, but is responsible for making all local decisions. In this sense, making the local parliament more accountable and transparent is really important.⁵

Indeed, transparency and good governance are expressed priorities for local self government. There is also a view in local governance that the experience UNDP has in improving these areas with the National Assembly is eminently transferrable to local governance structures. The Project's approach was to discuss the felt needs of the local assemblies while offering potential mechanisms such as public hearings. From this, local assembly sessions that are streamed live

³ Evaluation Terms of Reference.

⁴ Sept 2013. Vukadinovic, S. *Analysis Of The Situation, Capacities And Needs Of Oversight Teams*.

⁵ Field work interview.

and incorporate ‘tweet walls’ for citizen feedback provide an excellent example of how Project initiatives respond to the priorities and perceived needs of local assemblies with regards improvements in local assembly transparency and representation. These local assembly sessions are designed to open up issues of local concern for feedback and comment from the public – with the intention of creating better local accountability.⁶

One municipality has recognised the need to establish the local ‘Committees’ which are necessary as a mechanism for proper functioning of locally-organised public hearings, although they are not yet established.

Finally, discussions on relevance must address the developing role and function of the local branch of the Global Organisation of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC). GOPAC is a non-party-political gathering of MPs committed to higher standards of transparency in parliament and the establishment of systems and approaches that end public corruption. GOPAC’s establishment has been completely supported by the Project, including the processes of education and training that provide member MPs with the knowledge and background necessary to be effective in lobbying for greater transparency. The established relationship between GOPAC and the Ministry of Finance, and the related preparatory work being done in establishment of ‘the Portal’ (which is discussed in detail below) were mentioned a number of times as being particularly relevant to transparency and to the development of oversight functions in the Parliament.

4.2 Effectiveness

4.2.1 Introduction

The Terms of Reference specify that the focus of the effectiveness enquiry to be ‘the degree to which the project activities listed in the Project Document have been successfully implemented and desired outcomes are being achieved in the mid-term.’⁷ Project effectiveness questioning addressed the status of the Project’s activities, as well as the overall status of the implementation process towards achievement of intended outcomes.

4.2.2 Outcome 1 - Scrutiny Teams Established And Capacitated

The Project focus on **analysis** touched upon some key issues such as the need for **systematisation and enhancing capacities** of staff within committees especially in light of its expanding scrutiny role. The Project managed to finalize the analysis of the **portal development** taking a snapshot of the current status of the financial data available in the Treasury. Portal development remains pending political approval by the Ministry of Finance’s Treasury Administration in terms of the level of detailed information on undertaken obligations, payments and receipts the portal could aggregate – namely the level of economic classification for data access. In the coming period this will be subject of accelerated

⁶ There is a difference between public debates and public hearings. The role of public debates is to gather inputs for, for example, draft legislation. Once the draft enters parliamentary procedure public hearings actually provide information on whether the draft corresponds to reality, needs, etc. Public hearings can also be used later on to assess whether an adopted act is being implemented.

⁷ August 2010. Project Document. United Nations Development Programme.

negotiations.⁸

While, per se, scrutiny teams are not being established, i.e., there will not be a formal unit called a 'scrutiny team', the process and intent of establishing informal scrutiny teams is on-going. These teams comprise the Parliamentary Service, specifically staff of Parliamentary Committees, and address the expertise and training gaps required for them to function effectively in providing support to MPs and others in the establishment of oversight mechanisms in and for Parliament. A detailed system analysis⁹ has been undertaken, and forms the basis of the capacity-building for the intended recipients. In conjunction with the analysis, the Project team has overseen their involvement in/ organisation of public hearings in order to see and analyse the processes and related issues. Following these processes the Project has organised consultative workshops as a training process in management of public hearings as an oversight mechanism.

The Project has contributed to Parliamentary Service capacity growth through peer-to-peer workshops, and support by the Project team in organising and facilitating mobile committee sessions and public hearings, will be able to further improve their management of oversight mechanisms. Skills, and the perception MPs have of the Parliamentary Service are already improving. For one MP, this was a key outcome of the Project to date: 'The capacity of the Parliamentary Service has become more expert in a range of areas. They are more responsible and they are more active - when I approach someone from the Service they immediately react to my needs. And, they are better in operational ways - the workshops and seminars have brought visible results.'¹⁰ Improving the capacity of committee heads is critical to the effective use of external expertise as described above.

The emphasis of the Project's anticipated capacity-building is on skills related to the role and function of independent agencies, skills in work with MPs, development of networks and relationships with experts and civil society organisations operating in their field. In this area there is visible change, as the Parliamentary Service now engages external resources to provide specific expertise to public hearings as to operate as expert witnesses for Parliamentary Committees. These experts assist in preparing MPs prior to the committee session and provide further assistance after in drafting the report from the session.

The delivery of this capacity building can now be seen as fundamental to successful delivery of this outcome. The distinction between formal and informal teams is important, and has been a conscious approach of the Project team, as the role of the Project is seen not as focusing on 'changing the system' but on providing assistance for mechanisms of oversight to be initiated so Parliament can carry out its scrutiny/ oversight function.

In any case, it is critical to the 'enhancement, transparency and efficiency' of Parliament's scrutiny functions that the teams are completely conversant with organisation and management of the oversight mechanisms, and are 'putting them in the field' independently. The capacity, and role of the Parliamentary Service in facilitating oversight mechanisms is improving, but in order to strengthen their role and solidify the change it is necessary to ensure effective delivery of the capacity-building programme envisaged in the project document. It is also necessary to ensure the focus is not on the training inputs but on the capacity outputs:

- Training in oversight principles.

⁸ Fourth Progress Report. 1 January-30 June 2014. UNDP.

⁹ Sept 2013. Vukadinovic, S. *Analysis of The Situation, Capacities And Needs Of Oversight Teams*.

¹⁰ Field Interview.

- Training in scrutiny of public finances.
- Capacity of scrutiny teams for effective training of trainers.
- Training in principles of integrity and scrutiny for MPs and staff separately.
- Induction training for new MPs focused on scrutiny.
- Development of guidelines for new MPs with emphasis on the scrutiny function.
- Exposure to comparative examples of good practice in exercising Parliament's scrutiny function.
- Conference/workshop for networking with independent bodies, financial institutions, CSOs and independent experts and Parliament.¹¹

Demonstrated outputs in these capacity areas will add considerable strength to the contribution the Project makes to achieving its aim of 'Enhancement of the oversight/ scrutiny function, transparency and efficiency of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia'.

The GOPAC chapter is indicative of the potential change as a result of the Project's initiatives. All political parties and coalition are represented in GOPAC, and all members have the same perspective – that GOPAC is not about politics, it is about fighting corruption. 10% of all MPs are members, and growth in membership continues to be significant. MPs are taking on GOPAC as their initiative. It may struggle to function without the external financial support it receives, and the technical support it gets from the Project and from Global GOPAC. MPs see the interactions happening with civil society, through GOPAC, as important, and recognise that the effective and efficient work of Parliament will be enhanced with a closer working relationship with civil society. This is also true of Parliaments interactions with Serbia's Independent Agencies (State Audit, Anti-corruption), particularly as GOPAC works on establishing a culture of non-corruption. The Project provides effective developmental support to GOPAC through study tours and peer-to-peer learning with MPs in other countries.

4.2.3 Outcome 2 - Outreach Of The National Assembly And 5 Pilot Municipal Assemblies Strengthened

The main conclusion drawn from these exercises is that direct contact with the citizens, such as public hearings and mobile committee sessions, seem to be the most effective parliamentary outreach.¹²

'The Project influences the transparency of Parliament, and Parliament is the most transparent institution in Serbia. Everything is available on-line in live streaming. This is a huge step forward.'¹³

MPs and other interviewees during field work indicate strongly that while transparency is better today than before, the most important decisions of the Parliament are made 'outside of the Parliamentary hall'. In the context of the change the Project intends to occasion, this reality must always be kept in mind. As will be seen below, there are real positives for Serbia's political functioning in the initiatives of the Project.

¹¹ August 2010. Project Document. United Nations Development Programme.

¹² Field interview.

¹³ Field interview.

Outreach mechanisms are being developed, are being implemented, and are seen as useful tools for communication between the public and the Parliament. Outreach mechanisms incorporate activities at the national level and in municipalities, and involve Parliamentary Service personnel, MPs and representatives of local self government.

At the national level, related to the outreach of the national Parliament, there are two key initiatives, public hearings and mobile committee sessions, as well as initiatives with piloting of outreach mechanisms with local self government and information bulletins. All are discussed below.

4.2.3.1 Mobile Committee Sessions

The Project has supported mobile committee sessions financially, organisationally, technically and through the provision of experts. With regards links with experts (individuals and/ or representative of civil society) processes that will allow and encourage their longer-term involvement are also being developed. Further, while the Project has supported the mobile sessions organisationally, it is also working with Parliamentary Service to upgrade its capacities so the sessions are run independently by the Service, including with the demonstrated live-streaming, and connections with local media.

These mobile sessions are very effective, and important in how they build trust between the Parliament and those it represents, as it encourages direct contact between MPs and representative organisations and experts on specific initiatives, and allows Parliament to track actual issues. They are learning opportunities for local institutions and citizens, as they become more aware of the role, mandate, jurisdiction and ways of working of Parliamentary committees. They see Parliament in a role that is not just a plenary session.

MPs interact with local decision-makers (institutions, local self government, public companies, etc), and both develop a deeper understanding of specific issues, in specific areas of Serbia and are able to improve the effectiveness of legislative responses to these issues. By holding sessions in a specific geography, the logistics of actually getting knowledgeable inputs are simplified, and the qualitative inputs necessary to understand the detail of the local situation are readily available. One example of the effectiveness of this approach is found in a meeting of the Agriculture Committee in Cajetina, in 2013.¹⁴ An intractable problem had arisen with relation to agricultural land for lease, a problem that had not reached any resolution over a significant period. The mobile committee session of the Agriculture Committee found a resolution for this problem at the very moment of its meeting. In this way the session not only dealt effectively with a difficult local issue, but demonstrated the effectiveness of Parliament.

Involvement of the local media assists in disseminating the outcomes of the session, and contributes to this building of trust, and improvement in the relationship citizens take to Parliament as an institution as they see it working effectively.

As well as inputs on specific local issues, the mobile committee sessions provide an opportunity for local feedback on national policy and legislation. It is an effective method for getting feedback on where legislation is not being implemented, or is detrimental to a specific geography. In this sense, both the representative and the oversight/ control/ scrutiny functions of Parliament are improved. Both MPs and local self government recognise and are supportive of the benefits they get from the mobile sessions – MPs are better informed, which is a key for

¹⁴ It is also relevant to the discussion at 4.4.1 Issue Resolution At National And Local Levels.

them, and local self government is able to make qualitatively better comment on the work of Parliament in a circumstance that is logistically beneficial.

4.2.3.2 Public Hearings

The use of the mechanism of public hearings has been an important initiative from the Project. It is a straightforward way of demonstrating how citizens can be involved in the deliberations of Parliament. In this way, it both motivates citizen participation and builds a more respectful relationship between citizens and MPs/ Parliament, as there is interaction/ communication. The public hearing mechanism provides pre-legislation commentary/ input and post-legislation scrutiny/ feedback. Participants can ensure Parliament is better informed on a subject, and can contribute to MP knowledge as well.

The directions indicated by the Project are positive, but there are issues going forward. It is not clear how much the public hearings actually influence MPs and decision-making, and it is important for the links to become more apparent. As well, and related, is that the existing legal framework for public hearings is insufficient, and needs to be developed in more detail (a comment which is also true of the mobile committee sessions). This is an area in which the Project, and other or subsequent initiatives, can have a real impact (see Recommendations).

4.2.3.3 Local Pilots

The participation of citizens in managing local affairs is at a very low level.

Local communities exist in almost all local government units, but their potential for a more direct participation of citizens in local government remains unexploited, partly due to a lack of a legal framework currently in effect, and partly on account of a lack of expert support to local communities.

Communication with citizens is usually carried out randomly, without any plans or strategies determined in advance, and without analysing the best ways of communicating with different target groups.¹⁵

The Project pioneered public scrutiny/ control/ oversight, and two-way communication with citizens in the work it has done with pilot municipalities as part of the outreach initiative. This pioneering approach is demonstrating public participation and parliamentary scrutiny at the local level. Following discussions with the donor and a detailed analysis, this pilot outreach incorporated work in 5 municipalities. The Standing Committee on Towns and Municipalities (SCTM), who were consulted on the Project's design, contributed to the defining of a criteria for selection, and in the selection itself, from a short-list of 25 municipalities. Public hearings were used as an outreach mechanism in the pilot municipalities. This was assisted by specific, tailor-made support to other mechanisms that increase transparency (tweet wall, live streaming of sessions of the local assembly and joint sessions with Parliamentary Committees and that improve citizen accessibility to local decision-makers (the municipal website, direct email communication with local counsellors).

¹⁵ 2013, Josipovic, R; Radic Milosavljevic, I; Jerinic, J. *A Survey of the Functioning of Local Assemblies in Serbia*.

Through the Tweet Wall, we got the most comments related to youth in Zrenjanin. We then had a huge public debate about the status of youth in Zrenjanin. As a result, we will have a public hearing in Zrenjanin on youth, and the education and employment of youth.¹⁶

The public hearing process at the local level improves decision-making. The direct focus is on improving scrutiny and legislative functions, outreach, and addressing the gap in communication between decision-makers and citizens, and pressure is brought on the local assembly to make decisions, where in the past they might have stalled. There is a further positive step in this local process, as Serbia works to widen its decentralisation activities, as strengthening the oversight and participatory decision-making of assemblies, through public hearings, is a step in the direction of decentralisation.¹⁷

4.2.3.4 Bulletins and Other Publications

The Project expanded its work on parliamentary outreach through the targeting of small and underdeveloped municipalities and regions which have no MPs, publishing an insert (*Our Parliament*) in daily newspapers. 170,000 copies were inserted.¹⁸ To measure the impact of this publication, the Project organised a set of focus groups¹⁹ which affirmed the perceptions measured by an earlier public opinion poll. The surveys indicate an overall lack of knowledge and information on how Parliament functions. The analysis of the publication was provided to the editorial board, and this feedback will inform future publications.

The Project has assisted in the design and publication of two bulletins – one for internal consumption (Infobil) and one for external consumption (Quorum). The Project has contributed to the work of the editorial team, directly and with support to their work as a team and the building of their editorial, lay-out and content capacities, and through the feedback they have received. They appear, to the evaluation team, as a sustainable approach from Parliament to informing staff, MPs and the public about the workings of the Parliament.

4.2.4 Outcome 3 - Public Expenditure Scrutinised Through E-Parliament

Necessary system analysis and planning for the portal has been completed. The portal will provide direct access to MPs (and subsequently others) to the detailed financial activities of Government/ Ministries. Financial information (budget and actual) will be available in a way that allows effective querying and analysis. The completed system analysis includes Treasury, in terms of the processes of exporting relevant data and the National Assembly, in terms of the human and IT requirements of the system.

No decision has been made that will allow development of the portal to move forward, and such a decision is required before the Project can implement activities in this area. There is some risk to the Project actually being able to achieve this outcome, given that this is outside of Project control, but there has been a positive political response. Given the importance of public oversight of expenditure to Chapter 32 with the EU, its presence in the National Anti-corruption Action Plan, the direct relationship it has to the National Anti-corruption Strategy, and the

¹⁶ Field Interview.

¹⁷ Fourth Progress Report. 1 January-30 June 2014. UNDP.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ 2014, CeSID, Qualitative Survey of the Perception of the Insert *Our Parliament*

relevance of the portal to all of this, there appears reason to be optimistic that the necessary decisions can be made that will allow work to continue.

4.3 Sustainability

The Committees of the National Parliament, and related MPs, clearly think of the public hearings and mobile sessions as ‘ours’. They see the involvement of UNDP as ‘support’, meaning they see themselves as the drivers and UNDP as supporting this. This support is seen as well as taking into consideration the needs and priorities of local and national stakeholders, meaning the understanding of the Project team’s approach is not on *its* ideas and priorities but on those of beneficiaries and stakeholders. There is a clear sense that this contributes to the ownership of these initiatives by stakeholders – as noted in the field work: ‘Building trust is a long-term process and the only way to achieve sustainable change.’²⁰ The word ‘partnership’ is used to describe the relationship MPs, the Parliamentary Service and UNDP’s Project team have in delivering the Project.

MPs and Committees *like* the response they receive in local communities when they hold mobile sessions; there is positive feedback to Parliament’s welcoming of engagement at the local level – this feeling is conducive to their support for further development of the mobile sessions as an outreach function. MPs are also very responsive to the concrete results, the solutions that have been found with local actors during committee sessions.

This is a huge step forward for the Serbian Parliament – in how MPs work and in the work of the Parliamentary Service. We have changed our way of work and would never go back to the old way of work. We are headed in a new direction.²¹

Further, MPs recognise that there is a qualitative difference in meeting with citizens and local representatives, as there are aspects of understanding and detail that come out in the mobile sessions and public hearings that are not able to be understood in the same way when read in reports. In this way, the mobile sessions and public hearings are seen, experienced *and recognised* as adding value to citizen involvement and to MP/ Parliament understanding.

Subject to on-going issues of funding, both public hearings and mobile committee sessions are seen as having been institutionalised as regular, permanent activities of the Parliament. The mobile committee sessions are more difficult to organise, and fund, given the logistics related to these sessions, but discussions with MPs from the Committees and representatives of the Parliamentary Service, in relation to mobile sessions and public hearings, indicate a strong belief that the clear benefits to Parliament that are visible in these initiatives adds to their likely on-going nature. It is important to note, in this discussion, that the capacity of the Parliamentary Service (those responsible for committees who have actually held mobile sessions) to organise these sessions has reached a level where all aspects of their organisation and management is done independently by the Service. The approaches of the Project team, and the Project’s activities are being taken up by stakeholders.

²⁰ Field work interview – local self government.

²¹ Field work interview – MP.

We should discuss the Rules of Procedure. There is one sentence about sessions of the Parliament outside of the Parliament - only one sentence. It would be good to have clearer guidelines. For Public Hearings there is more detail, but we still need more. We need a more 'internal guide', something that provides us with more detail on the functioning of these scrutiny mechanisms. We have another scrutiny mechanism that needs support to be developed. It exists in the Rules of Procedure but it does not work/ function. This is a process of the control of the Budget. It is within the Budget and Expenditure Committee's framework. It has significant responsibilities and has not started its work on budgetary control and expenditure oversight yet. They have not done any reporting yet to Parliament.²²

As indicated above, the Rules of Procedure for mobile committee sessions require further development, as there is currently only one sentence regarding the sessions. It is felt within the Parliamentary Service that the mobile committees cannot continue independently without greater description of their role and function within the Rules of Procedures. Procedures for public hearings, although more developed than for mobile sessions, also require further development, an area in which the Project can provide specific assistance to the Parliament (see Recommendations).

Sustainability of oversight of public finances is not at a sustainable level. A more detailed description of the process of control of the Budget within the Budget and Expenditure Committee framework is needed - this is an area described by MPs as an oversight function that exists, but does not yet have sufficient description, nor does it function, and no reporting has yet been done to Parliament. There is a relationship to this function and to the development and functioning of the portal, which will allow all MPs to see how public finances are being expended.

From the perspective of MPs, and confirmed by feedback in other field interviews, GOPAC itself is unsustainable in its current form without the direct support (financial and logistic) of the Project. A strong start has been made, and on-going development is interesting, promising and positive. GOPAC is, and for the foreseeable future will be, dependent on international funds. Much more work on development of organisational and financial sustainability is required if GOPAC is to flourish after the Project. The development of a regional GOPAC will contribute to potential sustainability, particularly if this regional initiative incorporates approaches to international donors for on-going support.

The on-going functioning of public hearings at the local level require the establishment of a local structure (Committee) that is responsible for the initiative²³. It is not likely that the Project, with its limited human and financial resources, can oversee or drive the establishment of these local structures. Sustainability of this work will require development of a specific strategy that includes development of and support to appropriate 'drivers of change', and would benefit from a donor-funded project initiative that could evolve from Project pilots.

4.4 Efficiency

The Project team demonstrates an efficient approach to project management, including its relationships with beneficiaries, stakeholders and other projects working in the same field. The Project is delivering a cost-effective example to the Parliament of how it can benefit citizens

²² Field interview – Parliamentary Service.

²³ Field interview - feedback from a local representative.

through oversight, outreach and representation mechanisms. A number of specific areas are important in this discussion.

4.4.1 Issue Resolution at The National And Local Levels

Within a discussion of efficiency, the key aspect of importance in issue resolution, as demonstrated through the Project, is that real progress is being made in making use of human and financial resources (of the Project and of the Parliament). Specifically, issues are being resolved. The mobile sessions of committees provide a number of examples of intractable situations in local communities that, when addressed directly by the mobile committee session, were resolved. Resolved immediately, during the session. As well as being an example of the efficient use of Parliament's resources and time, these examples each demonstrate Parliamentary effectiveness, which is a critical outcome as it changes the perspective citizens have of Parliament and MPs.

The deliberations and recommendations/ resolutions of mobile sessions are communicated to the relevant ministry during, or upon completion of each session. The ministry is obligated to address the recommendation/ issue and report back to the Parliamentary committee. While each mobile committee session will not necessarily bring a quantifiable result, the function of this control mechanism strengthens deliberations and encourages ministries to conduct actions in relation to their obligations in a more accountable manner.

4.4.2 Effective Use of Time

In the traditional systems of the Serbian Parliament, it is extremely difficult for MPs to even know the views of citizens. There is a significant 'disconnect' between local citizens and MPs, not least because MPs are not linked to a specific constituency – they have no specific constituency, rather they all have the same constituency-all of Serbia. 'Representing' their constituency is not possible therefore. Public hearings, which have a very low cost profile, provide a place, time and methodology whereby MPs are able to listen to citizens (interested parties, CSOs, experts), and to develop a detailed, effective knowledge about and perspective on citizen views on a specific topic. In this sense, public hearings are an efficient use of the time of MPs and of the resources of Parliament.

Mobile sessions perform the same function, albeit within a different structure and format. While not providing the same openness of procedure for feedback and comment, the mobile sessions nevertheless demonstrate an efficient use of Parliamentary time and resources in acquiring detailed local inputs and feedback on matters of importance to Parliamentary deliberations. They have also shown to be effective in the timely resolution of situations where local authorities have been unable to remove an impasse.

4.4.3 Effective Use of Financial Resources

Related to this is the specific financial efficiency the Project's activities demonstrate in terms of Parliamentary processes. As indicated above, the bulletins, public hearings (with live streams etc) and mobile committee sessions are relatively inexpensive, and are cost effective ways of bringing Parliament directly into contact with the public. While the two mechanisms have different roles and different participation, together they bring Parliament into contact with constituent individuals, with civil society organisations, with experts and with municipal

representatives. They are also key Parliamentary activities being done to address the lack of links between MPs and citizens.

4.4.4 Project Efficiency in Coordination

The point was made consistently during evaluation field work that there are many international donor initiatives in the Parliament. The point was also made that the Project team is good at:

- Establishing its priority areas delineated apart from the priorities of other donors.
- Coordinating with MPs and Parliamentary Services with regards implementation.
- Collaborating with all stakeholders to improve the efficiency of activities and effectiveness of outputs.

4.4.5 The Project Board

The Project Board provided extensive, detailed inputs and assistance to the Project in the early, formative days of implementation, and continues to advise and assist the effective work of the Project team, although not, generally, in the form of formal, structured meetings. The Board operates on a more ad hoc basis, with regular involvement from a number of Board members, including donor representatives, where advice and input is sought from the Project team.

Where required, the Project Board meets formally, for example to consider changes to the Project's budget. Where required, the Project team and/ or the Project Board can call upon the Project Steering Committee for the higher level assistance that may be required. Upcoming work on the political decisions required for work on the portal to move forward are an example of where the Steering Committee is likely to be involved.

4.4.6 The Project Document

The project document defines the work of the Project, including its overall goal, intended outcomes and outputs and activities. Project reporting is done within the structure of the outcomes and outputs, as defined in the project document - there is a direct correlation between the output statements in the project document and the results of project work as they are described in project reports.

This direct correlation is not as apparent in reports, where there is discussion of planned activities for the coming period. While a need for flexibility is noted, in the context of elections and the Project environment, where detailed planning is difficult, progress reporting would be clearer and more effective if the links between planned activities and planned outcomes were made clear. As an example, the most recent Progress Report²⁴ describes planned activities for the coming period at section 2.4. These activity descriptions do not make it specifically clear how each activity is intended to contribute to Project outputs and outcomes and how each output is intended to be delivered, and to contribute to expected outcomes.

²⁴ 4th Progress Report, 1 January – 30 June 2014

4.4.7 The Contribution of the Project to Expected Outcomes in the UNDP Country Programme and the Swiss Cooperation Strategy with Serbia.

The Project makes a direct, and important contribution to UNDP's Country Programme.²⁵ UNDP has three core areas of its work in Serbia, one of which is 'to strengthen good governance through improved transparency and accountability in the government, legislature, judiciary and independent institutions'. The Project is not only directly in line with this objective, but is making significant contributions in achieving transparency and accountability in the legislature.

The Project is also a direct contributor to achievement of the intended outcomes of the Swiss Cooperation Strategy with Serbia 2014-2017.²⁶ The Project's specific contribution comes in the Governance Domain, as described in the Cooperation Strategy Document, and specifically in relation to 'Building on achievements at local government level, as well as the successful relationships with central and local stakeholders, the overall objective of this domain is to advance democratic, efficient and effective governance in Serbia.' The document also defines two strategic objectives in this area, of which one is relevant to the Project: 'Local governments practice transparency and accountability towards local assemblies and citizens, and manage public resources efficiently.' The Project is contributing directly to achieving this strategic objective.

4.5 Cross-Cutting Issues

The Project design had no direction to the Project team with regards UNDP's designated cross-cutting issues of social inclusion and support to policy dialogue. As a result, implementation did not consider these cross-cutting areas and no enquiry was made regarding them in the evaluation processes. Project design does incorporate a gender focus as a cross-cutting issue. The project document makes three references to gender equality and/or gender mainstreaming:

- Gender is an integral component of UNDP's parliamentary development work. It is mainstreamed in UNDP's legislative, oversight, and outreach activities, as it is vital that deliberations of parliament address the distinct needs of both women and men as well as the differing impacts of policies and the budget on various segments of society.
- Reports will include information regarding activities with focus on gender mainstreaming (e.g. the project will seek to include both men and women on an equal basis in all activities, gender related statistics will be generated from output 3 of the project, the project will seek to cover topics of relevance for both men and women through public hearings).
- To ensure gender equality when establishing the composition of the participants of study visits.²⁷

²⁵ August 2010. *Country Programme Document For The Republic Of Serbia (2011-2015)*. United Nations Development Programme.

²⁶ January 2014. *Swiss Cooperation Strategy with Serbia 2014-2017*, Swiss Agency For Development And Cooperation SDC.

²⁷ August 2011. Project Document. United Nations Development Programme.

As well as these references in the narrative of the project document, included in the project document at Annex 5 is an SDC table called *Gender Equality – An Assessment Tool For Gender Mainstreaming At Project/Program Level For COOFs And A Tool For Reporting To Headquarter*²⁸ which has provided for the donor an assessment of the Project's design in relation to gender mainstreaming.

In implementation, a focus on gender mainstreaming and gender equality is not strong enough. There are elements in the Project on gender equality, such as membership and leadership of GOPAC and the Women's Parliamentary Network, and the potential the Project has in this area is significant (see Recommendations). However, the view of the evaluation team is that the actions necessary to address the project design statement that it is 'vital that deliberations of parliament address the distinct needs of both women and men as well as the differing impacts of policies and the budget on various segments of society' are not apparent enough. Specific, affirmative actions for women beneficiaries, such as the public hearing on CEDAW, or activities related to improvements in gender equality can be more clearly defined, described or emphasised.

In order to better fulfil the priorities and intents of the donor, and of UNDP, a more specific focus on gender equality and gender mainstreaming, per the Project's design, is needed in the Project's activities and, specifically, in its reporting. Some recommendations related to this issue can be found below.

²⁸ Ibid.

5 Conclusions

The mobile committee sessions improve representation and scrutiny, and model an effective mechanism of oversight. They are important in how they build trust and encourage contact between MPs and representative organisations and experts on specific initiatives. The sessions are an effective mechanism for feedback on legislation. They are also learning opportunities for local institutions and citizens on the workings of Parliamentary committees. The mobile sessions improve the ability of MPs to gain important local knowledge, and bring out local media.

Public hearings effectively demonstrate how citizens can be involved in the deliberations of Parliament. They both motivate citizen participation and build a more better relationship between citizens and Parliament. Moving forward, it is important for the links between public hearings and actual Parliamentary deliberations to become more apparent.

Local scrutiny/ control/ oversight, and two-way communication between assemblies and citizens is demonstrated in the Project's pilot outreach initiative. The public hearing process at the local level improves addresses the gap in communication between decision-makers and citizens, and opens up possibilities for improvements in decision-making.

GOPAC is an important initiative for encouragement and development of the scrutiny role and anti-corruption activities of MPs. GOPAC has wide support in Parliament (and beyond) and has the potential for real impact on anti-corruption initiatives in Serbia. There are some expressed concerns about GOPAC's financial sustainability without Project (or other donor) assistance.

The capacity, and role of the Parliamentary Service in facilitating oversight mechanisms is improving. In order to further strengthen their role and solidify the change it will be necessary to ensure delivery of the capacity-building programme described in the project document.

The portal initiative, and activities at Outcome 3, are at some risk currently given their political nature and dependence on decisions to be taken by external bodies as to whether or not they will be implemented, and if so the timing of that implementation. The Project team and Board are aware of this risk and are addressing it with direct and indirect strategies.

In its work with and assistance to Parliament's editorial team, the Project is providing effective assistance in development of mechanisms for communication with the public.

The Project's initiatives have some likelihood for sustainability. At the current stage of implementation, the most likely on-going successes will be with mobile committee sessions and public hearings, although there is limited finance available to Parliament for the committee sessions without external support. Both of these initiatives are recognised at all levels as valuable to citizens, local representatives, civil society and the MPs, and as effective methods of communication and feedback. The publications (Infobil and Quorum) appear sustainable. Certainly, the capacity of the Parliamentary Service to prepare and issue them exists, although further support to and development of the editorial boards is required.

The Project is directly contributing to both UNDP and SDC strategic priorities in Serbia.

The Project's activities on gender, as a cross-cutting issue, need to receive a more direct focus, at least to the extent that the initiatives of the Project in this area are better defined, analysed and described in reporting so the efforts and outputs in this area can be clearly seen.

6 Lessons Learned

The partnership relationship described above has been a key lesson in how to effectively operate a project within (and with) a national institution. Key aspects included:

- External influences. There have been, and will likely continue to be, external influences and impact on the Project, which can affect delivery of Project activities and outputs. The most apparent of these influences are those which impact on the Portal activities. During the life of the Project there have been three separate Ministers of Finance, for example, and what exactly is decided within the Ministry with regards establishment of the Portal is outside of the control of the Project.
- The physical presence of the Project team within the National Parliament (the only international partner with an office in the Parliament). The location facilitates effective communication, and is a way of ensuring the Project team is able to best understand the issues, needs and priorities of the Parliament, the Parliamentary Service and MPs.
- The focus on demand-driven support. As with the physical presence in the Parliament, focusing on the specific, stated needs of intended beneficiaries, at the design stage and during implementation, has ensured the focus and intent of the Project maintain their relevance. Maintaining a balance between the priorities of the Parliament and the strategic focus of UNDP and the donor, and within the constraints of the Project document, is a key function of the Project Board and the Project team.
- Flexibility. The Project team has, within the above-described context, worked on its ability to be flexible with activities and timing. This flexibility has enabled an effective working relationship to develop between Parliament, MPs, the Parliamentary Service and the Project team. The team too must continue to find the balance between external requirements and the immediate needs and priorities of beneficiaries.
- Neutral political position. UNDP's unbiased position allows it to be entrusted with support to highly political and sensitive processes such as are represented in the Project. The Project's neutral position has had a positive impact on project implementation and contributes to results.

7 Recommendations

7.1 Scrutiny Mechanisms

There are four keys to the future successes of the scrutiny mechanism initiatives, keys that it is recommended be focused on by the Project in the coming period as a way of solidifying outputs and strengthening future outcomes:

- Involve more parliamentary committees. Widening the activity will widen the appeal, for MPs, as they experience the positives of the approach. It will also increase the number of locations experiencing a mobile session.
- Provide facilitation for MPs who have not been involved with the mobile sessions or public hearings – possibly with ‘mentoring’ from MPs who have been involved.
- Improve accessibility to the roster of experts – increase the number and type of experts available by increasing ways in which experts can ‘apply for’ and be accepted as experts.
- Assist Parliament in the more detailed development of the legal framework (procedures) for organising and holding mobile committee sessions and public hearings.
- Inform local self government about the mobile committee sessions and encourage them to approach Parliament requesting involvement as a way of widening the knowledge and appeal of the sessions.
- Inform civil society organisations about the public hearing procedures and encourage them to approach Parliament requesting involvement as a way of widening the knowledge and appeal of the hearings.

7.2 Local Outreach

There are a number of reasons for giving greater emphasis to the local outreach approaches:

- Further work with municipalities will further strengthen the relevance of the Project to the priorities defined in the Swiss Cooperation Strategy, and will give impetus to these initiatives in a wider geography over the longer term.
- The on-going local reform process and decentralisation initiatives of the Serbian government have a clear link to the local outreach focus on Outcome 2.
- Improved local governance through a greater transparency and accessibility of local decision makers and strategic documents to the general public and CSOs.

Initiatives that can assist in this approach could include:

- More local government outreach – i.e. more public hearings.
- More work on the capacities of local self-governments to conduct public hearings.
- Exchange of knowhow among the 5 pilot municipalities.
- Coordinate with SCTM to ensure exchange of knowhow with other municipalities.

The study into local assemblies undertaken as part of the Project, provides strong indications of where further work with local assemblies can have good effect. There are three areas of focus:

- Improvement of the representation function related to participation of the citizens in decision making - establishing and promoting broader mechanisms for citizens’ participation in decision-making even outside the possibilities prescribed by law, areas

such as public debates, opinion polls, citizen gatherings, and an 'open door' policy.

- Improvement of the Oversight function - a consistent implementation of the existing legal framework in practice would ensure a more active role of the working bodies of the assembly; Strengthening the capacities of the local services that provide support to the work of the assembly and its working bodies also
- Improving communication with citizens (using IT etc.)²⁹

7.3 GOPAC

Given the expressed view that GOPAC will not survive without external inputs, it is recommended that the Project, together with GOPAC leadership and with inputs from UNDP and the donor, develop a longer term strategy for GOPAC's development and funding. It is critical that discussions about and planning for support not be delayed. The key here is undertaking the process of strategizing and planning, as a way of further handing over responsibility of the future of GOPAC to member MPs.

7.4 Capacity-Building

The building of capacity is a clear focus of the project document, and is discussed in detail in the report. The key to the capacity focus is ensuring that the mechanisms of oversight are initiated so Parliament can carry out their scrutiny/ oversight function, and that these mechanisms are able to function independently, and significant preparatory work has been done to date in laying the groundwork for the Project's capacity-building programme, including the capacity analysis and initial training approaches.

It is recommended that the Project team give significant energy to ensuring that the outputs and outcomes of the capacity-building which was foreseen, and detailed in the Project documents, are delivered. The key is to focus not on the delivery of training inputs, but on the change in capacity being delivered by these inputs. The training programme is the key, of course, and the dot points at section 4.2.2 are appropriate. What is critical through is for the Project team to oversee, monitor and evaluate these inputs not from the perspective of analysing and reporting on what training was delivered, but to analyse and report on what *new skills, aptitudes and knowledge* exists in the target groups, based on the analysis of capacity needs done in the early stages of the Project. Further, this analysis should be used in the development of all subsequent training inputs, so that there is a constant re-thinking of plans and programmes in order that the intended growth in capacity happens, and is apparent.

Some other potential areas of focus in capacity-building include:

- Ensuring staff and new MPs are knowledgeable about their mandate and the functions of the Parliament.
- Working with MPs on the required knowledge and skills for amending legislation, and the importance to legislation of specific, particular wording.
- Assisting members of local assemblies in their basic political knowledge and skills – knowledge and skills related to their mandate, to public institution, to oversight and to procedures. Some focus can also be given to improving their knowledge of and skills in

²⁹ 2013, Josipovic, R; Radic Milosavljevic, I; Jerinic, J. *A Survey of the Functioning of Local Assemblies in Serbia*.

the development and/ or amending of local legislation.

7.5 Reporting

As is discussed above, project reporting lacks a direct correlation between project plans and the Project's intended outputs and outcomes. The Project's results logic is clear, from activity to output and from output to outcome. As well, reporting against outputs and outcomes is clear. What is not so clear, when discussing directions for the coming period, are the links between the re-defined plans and the Project's intended outputs and outcomes. It is recommended that reporting be tightened in this area. Specifically, it is recommended that a clear correlation be made in Project reports between the initiatives, activities, focus of the Project in the coming period and the defined outputs and outcomes. This correlation will assist the Project team in ensuring their thinking and planning will deliver the intended outputs/ outcomes, and will also assist the donor, in making a clear link to programmed outputs.

7.6 Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming

In order to strengthen the Project's quite strong potential for addressing gender mainstreaming and gender equality, it is recommended that more focus be put in this area. There are activities that address gender mainstreaming and gender equality, and there are potential outputs and outcomes as well. There is, however, insufficient focus in implementation and in reporting on this area. It is a key aspect of UNDP's cross-cutting priorities, as well as for the donor, and is clearly an aspect of Project design. This priority needs to come through more clearly in the actual work of the Project team, and, as importantly, in how the Project team analyses its work and outputs and reports on them. This analysis needs to be done in the context of the statements of intent found in the project document. Some areas for potential focus include:

- Strengthening of female MPs on national committees.
- A specific focus on the relevant knowledge and skills of new, female MPs, including on their capacities in the scrutiny function.
- A more detailed focus on gender priorities in local outreach activities – including work with the SCTM's gender department.
- Work with the Women's Parliamentary Network and SCTM on developing a network of local female members of assemblies.

7.7 The Portal

The Project has come some distance in addressing the necessary groundwork for the development of the Portal, and the processes as defined in the project document are more or less on track. Notwithstanding the impact that external forces/ decisions will have on the successful implementation of this Project component, it is critical for the Project team to ensure that the activities, initiatives, negotiations, etc that are required to bring about the successful implementation of the Portal are a focus of coming period. Timing now is very important, as it is not certain that all necessary steps can be addressed effectively in the time remaining in the project.

7.8 Coordination

A focus on establishing clear links between MPs and CSOs and other experts would be welcomed by all parties, and would increase the effectiveness of communication, deliberations and Project results. MPs would benefit from a system or process for establishing, developing

and using CSOs and other experts. The Project could assist in the development of such a process.

Driving the coordination among donors would be of benefit to the National Parliament as well as to the initiatives of donors and implementers. While some coordination is apparent, it is not focused and requires a ‘champion’. The Project could take up this role.

As has been indicated above, some further, intentional coordination/ collaboration with SCTM would be appropriate, and has the potential for adding value to the outreach initiatives of the Project and the development of more detailed, longer-term initiatives with local self governance in the areas of two-way communication with citizens and the functioning of oversight mechanisms at the local level.

8 Annexes

8.1 Annex 1 – Evaluation Questions

The Terms of Reference anticipate assessment of and reporting on project relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and efficiency. The questions to be addressed by the evaluation team in each of these areas are detailed below. Further detail can be found in Appendix 1 - Evaluation Matrix.

8.1.1 Relevance

The Terms of Reference specify that the focus of the relevance enquiry will be ‘in view of democracy and parliamentary development in Serbia. Beneficiary/ stakeholder satisfaction with the content and delivery of the Project.’³⁰ Project relevance questions include:

- Is the Project in line with legal framework and priorities of the Serbian Parliament and Municipal assemblies?
- Are selected activities addressing the real needs of the Project’s intended/ programmed beneficiaries?
- Is the Project different from other donor initiatives with the Parliament? How?
- Does this difference contribute to the relevance of the Project’s activities and programmed results?

8.1.2 Project Effectiveness

The Terms of Reference specify that the focus of the effectiveness enquiry will be on ‘the degree to which the project activities listed in the Project Document have been successfully implemented and desired outcomes are being achieved in the mid-term.’³¹ Project effectiveness questioning will address the status of the Project’s 41 activities (within 10 output statements), as well as the overall status of the implementation process. Questions will include:

Outcome 1 - Scrutiny teams established and capacitated.

- Are implemented activities leading to programmed goals? Which have been most useful/ effective?
- What outcomes have been achieved to date, as a result of these activities?
- What change is being contributed to by the Project (societal, behavioural, institutional)?
- What is the status of the establishment of the scrutiny teams, and the building of their capacity?
- Can it be said that the scrutiny teams are established and functioning?
- Are the scrutiny teams equipped to insist on/ contribute to Government transparency?

³⁰ Evaluation Terms of Reference.

³¹ Ibid.

- Can it be said that MPs and their staff have improved understanding of oversight mechanisms and are better able to make use of these mechanisms?
- Are coaching processes on-going that are increasing the ability of scrutiny teams to perform their functional mandate?
 - Was the NARS scrutiny function analysed?
 - Was the capacity of the scrutiny teams assessed?
 - Did the twinning processes happen?
 - Was training in oversight principles and public finance scrutiny undertaken?
- What is the status of the training being provided for MPs and their staff in oversight mechanisms?
 - How much training been provided: training in principles of integrity and scrutiny; induction training in scrutiny for new MPs?
 - Has the training so far been evaluated (by trainees and external resources)?
 - What further training plans exist?
 - Have guidelines emphasising scrutiny been prepared for MPs?
 - Have MPs and staff participated in processes that demonstrate good practice in the scrutiny function of the Parliament?
- What is the status of the roster of experts and its functional guidelines – is it on track to be completed on time?
- Is the national GOPAC chapter established and operational?

Outcome 2 - Outreach of the National Assembly and 5 pilot municipal assemblies strengthened.

- What is the status of improvements to National Assembly outreach?
- Are public hearing guidelines completed? Used?
- MPs and their staff have been trained in the use of the guidelines? Are they effective in their use?
- Are National Assembly committees being supported in organising public hearings? Have they been supported in organising hearings in the Parliament and in mobile sessions?
- Has the on-line system for inviting witness statements been established? Is it being used?
- Is there a demonstrated improvement in attracting public participation and opinion at both national and local levels – ie, are the outreach mechanisms working? Specific enquiry with regards to public opinion polling; communications strategy development and implementation; website and web portal development, management and assessment; NARS bulletins; surveys of citizen opinion; support to pilot Municipal Assemblies in conducting public hearings?

Outcome 3 - Public expenditure scrutinised through e-Parliament.

- What is the status of system analysis, design and development for the public expenditure tracking system.
- What is the programme for development and piloting, and for training of scrutiny teams, MPs and parliamentary staff?

8.1.3 Project Sustainability

While the Terms of Reference exclude a specific mention of sustainability, the evaluation team will look at this criteria, with the specific intent of understanding, particularly, the views of the Project's beneficiaries on the longer term importance and sustainability of this initiative. Specific questions include:

- Do MPs, Parliament staff and relevant Municipal stakeholders have a clear sense of ownership of the Project's activities and intended results?
- What is the relationship between the Project team and stakeholders (beneficiaries) – is there a clear sense of partnership, with this partnership contributing to the involvement and commitment of stakeholders to the Project's activities and results?
- What has changed in the work of MPs, Parliamentary staff and Municipal assemblies as result of the Project?
- Is this change long-term?
- Do stakeholders see the change continuing into the future? Why?

8.1.4 Project Efficiency

The Terms of Reference specify that the focus of the efficiency enquiry will be on 'the approach to project management, including the role of stakeholders and coordination with other development projects in the same area' and the 'status of the corresponding UNDP Country Programme outcome and progress vis-à-vis the Swiss Cooperation Strategy with Serbia 2014-2017 with an estimate of the degree of Project contribution to achieving this outcome.'³² Project efficiency questions include:

- Does the Project team work effectively in delivering the activities of the Project?
- Does the Project team coordinate/ cooperate with other projects working in related fields? Examples. How does this coordination/ cooperation impact on Project results?
- Does the Project Board provide effective oversight and direction? Does this include linking stakeholder priorities into the work of the Project?
- What 'role' does the Project Document play in Project planning and implementation. Specifically, is the document, and particularly the logic framework, used regularly in the planning, implementation and reporting on the project? Does the Project team have a clear understanding of the logic from activities to outputs to outcomes? Does the logic 'work'?
- What is the status of the UNDP Country Programme in relation to the Swiss Cooperation Strategy with Serbia 2014-2017? Analyse the contribution of the Project to the expected outcomes.

8.1.5 Cross-cutting Issues

As the Project design had no direction with regards social inclusion and support to policy dialogue, and implementation has not been directed in these areas, no enquiry will be made in these areas. The evaluation will provide inputs to and an analysis of the Project's contribution

³² Evaluation Terms of Reference.

to change in and the development of appropriate priorities in gender equality. Specific questions include:

- Are there specific affirmative actions for women beneficiaries or activities related to improvements in gender equality?
- Is the Project's monitoring and evaluation system collecting gender sensitive data?
- Describe the coordination activities of the Project with other relevant stakeholders in the field of gender equality.

8.2 Annex 2 - Evaluation Matrix

Criteria/ Sub-criteria	Questions to be addressed by the evaluation	Findings from the evaluation
Relevance	Is the Project in line with legal framework and priorities of the Serbian Parliament and Municipal assemblies?	Yes. Project initiatives (public hearings and mobile Committee sessions) are part of Rules of Procedures of National Parliament. Local self-governments strategic documents are emphasizing two way communication with citizens
	Are selected activities addressing the real needs of the Project's intended/ programmed beneficiaries?	Yes. Project is tailor made according to specific needs of three main target groups: MPs and their scrutiny role; Parliament staff and their expertise, operational, technical and informative tasks and local self-governments in their both scrutiny and outreach function.
	Is the Project different from other donor initiatives with the Parliament? How?	Yes in 3 specific aspects: Project team way of work – sensitive for the beneficiary needs, flexible, real partnership, knowledgeable (especially knows procedures) and experts role, committed Project team is based in the Parliament building Neutral political position
	Does this difference contribute to the relevance of the Project's activities and programmed results?	Project team is recognised as supportive. And, they have from one side access to the real needs of NARS and also can provide external view and expertise.
Effectiveness – Outcome 1	Are implemented activities leading to programmed goals? Which have been most useful/ effective?	For the most part, yes. Some additional focus is required on the capacity-building component. Oversight mechanisms are being modelled.
	What outcomes have been achieved to date, as a result of these activities?	The establishment of oversight mechanisms is the most effective, together with the specific skill growth within the Parliamentary Service.
	What change is being contributed to by the Project (societal, behavioural, institutional)?	Some parts of the Parliamentary Service has a different perspective on its work.

Criteria/ Sub-criteria	Questions to be addressed by the evaluation	Findings from the evaluation
		The modelled oversight mechanisms contribute significantly to transparency of the Parliament.
	What is the status of the establishment of the scrutiny teams, and the building of their capacity?	A more specific focus is required here. A good groundwork has been laid, and there is strong potential, but certain specific aspects of the planned training programme need to be addressed.
	Can it be said that the scrutiny teams are established and functioning?	No, not completely, but the processes are in place and the development is happening.
	To what extent are staff working on scrutiny being supported by the Project?	The Project provides significant support – technical, logistical, financial. It is effective and welcomed.
	Can it be said that MPs and their staff have improved understanding of oversight mechanisms and are better able to make use of these mechanisms?	Yes. There is a much improved understanding. It needs further inputs and time to become extensive, but the modelling is a very positive development.
	What is the status of the training being provided for MPs and their staff in oversight mechanisms?	A good groundwork has been laid but more work and focus is required.
	What is the status of the roster of experts and its functional guidelines?	A functional group of experts is being developed. It is a positive initiative, with good potential. It requires more time and inputs to be developed appropriately.
Effectiveness – Outcome 2	What is the status of improvements to National Assembly outreach?	The outreach pilots are proceeding effectively.
	Are public hearing guidelines completed? Used?	Not to the extent required. Some guidelines exist, and are used, but further development is needed. Further, guideline development is also required for the mobile committee sessions.

Criteria/ Sub-criteria	Questions to be addressed by the evaluation	Findings from the evaluation
	MPs and their staff have been trained in the use of the guidelines? Are they effective in their use?	Not at this stage of implementation.
	Are National Assembly committees being supported in organising public hearings? Have they been supported in organising hearings in the Parliament and in mobile sessions?	Yes. This is one of the Project's most effective activities and outcomes. It would be of benefit to everyone for this work to be expanded into more committees.
	Has the on-line system for inviting witness statements been established? Is it being used?	Not at this stage of implementation.
	Is there a demonstrated improvement in attracting public participation and opinion at both national and local levels – ie, are the outreach mechanisms working?	Improvements are recognised mostly related to mobile committee sessions and public hearings, since those activities are reaching on the same time decision makers, relevant institutions, MPs and experts/CSOs, as well as media (especially local media).
Effectiveness – Outcome 3	What is the status of system analysis, design and development for the public expenditure tracking system.	The system analysis is complete and design/ development is on-going. The activities are held up by factors (political/ administrative within the Treasury) that are outside the scope of the Project.
	What is the programme for development and piloting, and for training of scrutiny teams, MPs and parliamentary staff?	The process is on hold at this stage of implementation.
Efficiency	Does the Project team work effectively in delivering the activities of the Project?	Yes. Some areas are particularly effective, and there are areas where improvements could be made, but overall the Project is being well delivered.
	Does the Project team coordinate/ cooperate with other projects working in related fields? How does this coordination/ cooperation impact on Project results?	Yes.

Criteria/ Sub-criteria	Questions to be addressed by the evaluation	Findings from the evaluation
	Does the Project Board provide effective oversight and direction? Does this include linking stakeholder priorities into the work of the Project?	Yes.
	What 'role' does the Project Document play in Project planning and implementation. Specifically, is the document, and particularly the logic framework, used regularly in the planning, implementation and reporting on the project? Does the Project team have a clear understanding of the logic from activities to outputs to outcomes? Does the logic 'work'?	There is a clear logic structure to the Project Document. The logic provides a clear results pathway to the Project team. Some aspects of the Project are held up, and as a result the anticipated outcomes are at some level of risk, but the Project team is aware of this and addressing the issues as much as they are able within their powers. The Report details where some improvements can be made that will strengthen outcomes.
	The status of the corresponding UNDP Country Programme outcome and progress vis-à-vis Swiss Cooperation Strategy with Serbia 2014-2017.	The Project is contributing to both.
Sustainability	Do MPs, Parliament staff and relevant Municipal stakeholders have a clear sense of ownership of the Project's activities and intended results?	Yes. Particular reference is made to the mobile committee sessions, the public hearings and GOPAC.
	What is the relationship between the Project team and stakeholders (beneficiaries) – is there a clear sense of partnership, with this partnership contributing to the involvement and commitment of stakeholders to the Project's activities and results?	Partnership is the correct word to use for the relationship between MP, Staff and the Project team. This word is used by MPs and Staff in their discussions about the Project.
	What has changed in the work of MPs, Parliamentary staff and Municipal assemblies as result of the Project?	The scrutiny/ oversight functions are improving. Citizen understanding of and involvement in Parliamentary processes is developing. A better understanding in the mind of the public, about the functions of Parliament, is being assisted to develop. Effective committee work is taking place, and is visible.

Criteria/ Sub-criteria	Questions to be addressed by the evaluation	Findings from the evaluation
	Is this change long-term?	In the view of the evaluation team, yes. It requires further support (time and resources) to become 'embedded' in practice, but the signs are good.
	Do stakeholders see the change continuing into the future? Why?	Yes. They express ownership, and a real sense of the value of the change for themselves and for the public.
Contribution to gender equality	Are there specific affirmative actions for women beneficiaries or activities related to improvements in gender equality?	Yes. In couple of occasions project supported leadership of Women; Parliamentarian Network in their participation to the Conferences. Also project organised public hearing to address CEDAW Report and recommendations.
	Is the Project's monitoring and evaluation system collecting gender sensitive data?	No
	Describe the coordination activities of the Project with other relevant stakeholders in the field of gender equality.	Project team as part of UNCT has regular contacts with UNDP gender advisor and UN Women and through that link, informed about on-going initiatives related to GE.

8.3 Annex 3 – List Of Interviewees

8.3.1 Project Team

Jelena Manic Petronikolas, Programme Analyst Good Governance, UNDP Team

Biljana Ledenican, Portfolio Manager for Parliamentary Development, UNDP Team

Marko Vujacic, Outreach Associate, UNDP Team

Bozena Divjakinja, Portfolio Associate, UNDP Team

8.3.2 Members of Parliament

Aleksandar Senic, Member of Parliament, Chairman of the European Integration Committee

Ljiljana Zivkovic, Secretary of the Committee for Judiciary, Public Administration and Local-Self Government and GOPAC

Dubravka Filipovski, Member of Parliament and member of GOPAC and Women's Parliamentary Network

Marija Obradovic, Member of Parliament and Chair of Committee for Defence and Internal Affairs and Women's Parliamentary Network

Olgica Batic, Member of Parliament and GOPAC Serbia Chair

Snezana Stojanovic Plavsic, ex Member of Parliament and member of GOPAC

8.3.3 Representatives of the Parliamentary Service

Srdjan Smiljanic, Deputy General Secretary

Branko Marinkovic, Deputy General Secretary

Veljko Rackovic, Committee for Agriculture, forestry and water management

Branka Zlatovic, Committee for Agriculture, forestry and water management

Milica Basic, Committee for Environment Protection

Sanja Maksimovic, Editor of *Infobil* and member of info-service

Rodoljub Dinic, Group for Education

Vesna Dujmovic Rosic, Editor of *Quorum* and member of Group for Education

Mirjana Radakovic, Assistant Secretary General and Head of Legislative Sector

Maja Pavlovic, Head of the Finance and Budget Section

8.3.4 Representatives of Independent Agencies

Ivana Tosovic, Advisor, Anti-Corruption Agency

Milica Bozanic, Head of International Cooperation Department, Anti-Corruption Agency

8.3.5 Representatives Of Local Self Government

Oršolja Momčilović, Secretary of the local Assembly in Becej municipality

Radovan Stojanovic, IT Department, Becej municipality

Dusko Radisic, Assistant Mayor of the City of Zrenjanin
Dragana Lazic, Secretary of the Zrenjanin Assembly
Vesna Kopanja, Advisor for Strategic Planning, Zrenjanin
Vojin Marjanski, CSO Zdrav Zivot, Zrenjanin
Miroslav Tubic, President, CSO Zdrav zivot, Zrenjanin

8.3.6 Civil Society Representatives – Service Providers to the Project

Nikola Tarbuk, Assistant Secretary General for representation, SCTM
Vukosava Crnjanski Sabovic, Director, CSO CRTA
Jovana Djurbabic, Communication Manager, CSO CRTA
Ivo Colovic, CESid
Bojan Klacar, CESid
Marko Blagojevic, Director, CESid
Slobodan Vukadinovic, external expert/consultant
Slobodan Markovic, external expert/consultant
Jelena Jerinic , external expert/consultant
Irena Lobodok-Stulic, trainer, CSO Psihokod
Dragan Stojanovic, trainer, SCO Psihokod

8.3.7 Knowledgeable Non-Stakeholders

Fotis Fitsilis, Resident EU twinning project advisor
Marijana Trifunovic, JRGA - USAID
Djordje Nikolic, Government Accountability Specialist, JRGA-USAID
Lidija Prokic, Head of NDI
Jelena Avramovic, Programme Manager, NDI

8.4 Annex 4 – List Of Documents Reviewed

8.4.1 Project Documents

PRODOC, together with Logical Framework Matrix

First progress Report (September – December 2012) with Annexes

Second progress Report (January – June 2013) with Annexes

Third progress Report (July – December 2013) with Annexes

Fourth progress Report (January – June 2014) with Annexes

Final Project Evaluation UNDP Serbia Parliament_DGTTF_2009_2011

Swiss Agency For Development And Cooperation SDC, Swiss Cooperation Strategy Serbia 2014-2017

UNDP Country programme document for the Republic of Serbia (2011-2015)

2005, Inter-Parliamentary Union at United Nations headquarters, New York, Parliament and Democracy in the 21st Century, Preliminary Report by the Inter-Parliamentary Union

2014, February, UNDP Parliamentary Development Newsletter

2012, UNDP Parliamentary Development Newsletter

8.4.2 Project Deliverables

A Survey of the Functioning of Local Assemblies in Serbia 2013, R. Josipovic, I. Radic Milosavljevic, J. Jerinic

Analyses of the Situation, capacities and Needs of Oversight Teams, 2013, S. Vukadinović

Qualitative Survey of the Perception of the Insert *Our Parliament*, CeSID

Training Report from workshop in Vrdnik for Editorial Boards and Education Unit

CeSID Report on Public Debates, *Rec na rec*

Live streaming <http://www.parlament.gov.rs/prenosi/arhiva.2090.html>

Quorum Project bulleting, <http://www.parlament.gov.rs/aktivnosti/kvorum-%E2%80%93-informativni-bilten-narodne-skupstine.1750.html>

Infobil, Project bulleting, <http://www.parlament.gov.rs/narodna-skupstina-/organizacija-i-strucna-sluzba/infobil.2109.html>

Our Parliament, insert for newspapers

Brochures published by the Project, <http://www.parlament.gov.rs/narodna-skupstina-/brosure.2104.html>

Project blog for GOPAC <http://gopacsrbiija.wordpress.com/>

8.4.3 Related Documents

AGORA portal for parliamentary development, <http://www.agora-parl.org/>

CRTA, Open Parliament, Audit of Political Engagement in Serbia 2014

CRTA, 2014, Towards Open Parliament

Mid-term Evaluation - Strengthening the Oversight Function and Transparency of the Parliament – UNDP Project

Annexes

CRTA, 2013, Participation of Citizens in Democratic Changes, research

8.5 Annex 5 – Evaluation Terms Of Reference

Title:	Evaluators for Mid-Term Evaluation: Two positions – one international and one national
Project:	Strengthening the Oversight Function and Transparency of the Parliament
Reporting to:	Portfolio Manager for Parliamentary Development
Duty Station:	Belgrade, Serbia
Duration:	22 September 2014 to 24 October 2014 (output based consultancy)
Contract Type:	Individual Contracts (IC)

Background

a. Purpose

The purpose is to provide information on the mid-term results of the Strengthening the Oversight Function and Transparency of the Parliament project.

b. Objective

The objective is to assess the project's relevance, effectiveness and efficiency and how outcomes were achieved in the mid-term implementation of the project and to provide recommendations for further programming development.

c. Background Information

UNDP supports parliamentary development in over 60 parliaments globally.

The UNDP project with the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) aims at mobilising stronger public engagement in political processes.\

The Objective of this initiative is to strengthen the oversight/scrutiny function, transparency and efficiency of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia and the representative role of local assemblies. The robust monitoring of the executive by the parliament is an indicator of good governance. Besides the parliament's legislative function, it is through oversight that the parliament can ensure a balance of power and assert its role in presenting people's interests.

The project operates under three components:

- parliamentary oversight of the executive power
- outreach to citizens
- strengthening public finance scrutiny

Project is also foreseen to support the work of 5 pilot municipal assemblies in order to transfer the good practice from national to local level such as organisation of public hearings and communication with citizens. The project will help the Parliament to engage citizens, particularly at the local level through facilitation (organization) of the mobile committee sessions and by taking MPs to sites where issues requiring further scrutiny arise. The project will in particular support the outreach mechanisms and public hearings as well as enable two-way communication between assemblies and citizens.

UNDP in partnership with the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia has devised this initiative, building upon the previous project results with an overall objective of strengthening the capacity of the Serbian Parliament to fully exercise its mandate. The methodological approach taken in the selection of particular delivery tools included both the learning and the awareness raising/advocacy aspects. This in turn influenced obtaining of a pro – change environment and identifying champions of transition both among the MPs and standing staff, thus ensuring sustainability and institutional knowledge.

UNDP is hiring one International and one National Evaluator to assess efficiency, effectiveness and relevance with which outcome level of changes: societal, behavioural, institutional are being achieved in the mid-term of the Project implementation.

Duties and Responsibilities

a. Scope of work

UNDP Serbia invites applications from qualified consultants in order to perform the mid-term evaluation of the Strengthening Oversight Function and Transparency of the Parliament Project.

The mid-term evaluation should assess relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the Project. It should assess what works and why, highlight intended and unintended results, and provide strategic lessons to guide decision-makers and inform stakeholders.

The Evaluators will review, analyze and provide conclusions and recommendations on the following:

International Evaluator will be responsible for:

- Evaluating effectiveness (e.g. the degree to which the project activities listed in the Project Document have been successfully implemented and desired outcomes are being achieved in the mid-term)
- Evaluating efficiency (e.g. the approach to project management, including the role of stakeholders and coordination with other development projects in the same area)The status of the corresponding UNDP Country Programme outcome and progress vis-à-vis Swiss Cooperation Strategy with Serbia 2014-2017 and estimate the degree of project's contribution to it.
- Evaluating relevance of the Project in view of democracy and parliamentary development in Serbia.
- Overall conception and delivery of the final report.

National Evaluator will be responsible for:

- Evaluating relevance
- Assessing beneficiary satisfaction
- Preparing inputs for the final report (e.g. background information, chapter on relevance, assessment of external factors affecting the project, and the extent to which the project has been able to adapt and/or mitigate the effects of such factors. Precise division of work between Evaluators will be agreed at the mission outset with UNDP Portfolio Manager.

b. Methodology

- The evaluation approach has to respond to standard international practices in project evaluation. The proposed steps in conducting the evaluation will be conducted by both Evaluators
- Review of project documentation, monitoring records and progress and other relevant reports
- Initial meeting with UNDP to agree the specific design and methods for the evaluation, what is appropriate and feasible to meet the evaluation purpose and objectives. Agree on the evaluation questions that will need to be answered, given limitations of time and extant data
- Discussions with key staff involved and project beneficiaries to assess project's relevance and effectiveness of project implementation take note of their perceptions of accomplishments and potentials for further development and provide suggestions for management response to evaluation findings. Objectively verifiable data should be collected whenever available, to supplement evidences obtained through interviews and focus group discussions.
- Schedule of interviews will be coordinated with UNDP Portfolio Manager.

And the Evaluators will separately be responsible for the following areas:

International Evaluator will:

- Prepare inception report with evaluation matrix*
- Focus on the general evaluation criteria and
- Prepare the Final Report** with the Executive Summary

National Evaluator will:

- Contribution to the preparation of the inception report
- Organization of interviews with key staff involved in the project implementation.
- Writing some chapters (e.g. relevance) and preparing inputs for others (e.g. effectiveness) as agreed with the International Evaluator and UNDP Portfolio Manager
- Focus on the national legislative framework and project possible impact to parliamentary development in Serbia
- Incorporate received beneficiary satisfaction feedback into the Final Report

A following set of information sources about the project will be made available to the Evaluators:

- Project documents
- Progress reports
- Key materials produced by the project

* Inception report and evaluation matrix formats will be provided at the mission's outset

** The final report must include, but not necessarily be limited to the elements outlined in the quality criteria for evaluation reports (Annex I constitutes integral part of this ToR)

c. Deliverables and Timeline

It is expected that the evaluation will be completed within 25 working days, with the following deliverables due:

Deliverables	Deadline
Inception report including work plan and evaluation matrix prepared and accepted	3 days upon signing the contract
Draft Mid-Term Evaluation Report on approximately 6 pages prepared and accepted	15 days upon signing the contract
Draft Mid-Term Evaluation Report presented to UNDP, Implementing Partner and beneficiaries	20 days upon signing the contract
Final Mid-Term Evaluation report (10 pages) with Executive Summary (1 page) prepared and accepted	5 days upon receiving comments from UNDP on the final draft

Payments for the deliverables will be made in one instalment, upon, delivery of final evaluation report and billing by the consultants, subject to quality review, clearance and acceptance by UNDP Portfolio Manager for Parliamentary Development.

The criteria of utility, credibility, and relevance/appropriateness will be used for assessing the quality of the evaluation report:

- The report has to be written in clear and proficient language (English)
- The Executive Summary should be an extremely short chapter, highlighting the evaluation mandate, approach, key findings, conclusions and recommendations.
- The information in the report has to be complete, well structured and well presented
- The information in the report has to be reliable i.e. well documented and supported findings
- The information in the report has to addresses priority or strategic information needs
- Recommendations have to be concrete and implementable
- Human rights and gender equality perspective should be taken into account

The evaluation has to be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation. Code of conduct is enclosed as Annex II and constitutes integral part of this ToR.

d. Skills and Competencies

- Excellent analytical skills
- Displays ability to synthesize research and reach empirically based conclusions on related subject
- Strong writing skills
- Proven capacity to produce reports
- Displays capacity to provide experienced advice on best practices
- Possesses knowledge of inter-disciplinary development issues
- Focuses on result for the client and responds positively to feedback
- Good application of Results-Based Management
- Good communication, coordination and facilitation skills
- Consistently ensures timeliness and quality of work
- Treats all people fairly without favourism

- Displays cultural, gender, religion, race, nationality and age sensitivity and adaptability
- Demonstrates integrity by modeling ethical standards
- Ability to deliver when working under pressure and within changing circumstances
- Consistently approaches work with energy and a positive, constructive attitude
- Excellent interpersonal skills

e. Qualifications and Experience

The below stated criteria shall apply to both Evaluators.

Education:

- Masters or equivalent in relevant field of political science, or another relevant field.

Work experience:

- Minimum 5 years of relevant professional experience at the national or international level in providing consultancy work related to parliamentary development;
- Experience in evaluating and monitoring technical cooperation and development activities and projects

Knowledge:

- Strong knowledge of parliamentary development would be an asset
- Familiarity with the UN(DP) evaluation policy, norms and standards
- Knowledge in the use of computers and office software packages and handling of web based monitoring systems

Language:

- Excellent knowledge of written and spoken English for both Evaluators. Knowledge of Serbian language for International Consultant would be an asset.

Application Procedure:

The following are steps for on-line application:

Submit the application (as listed below) via UNDP web site www.rs.undp.org under the heading “Work with us/Vacancies”:

The application should contain:

1. Proposal:

- (i) Cover Letter – Explaining why they are the most suitable for the work;
- (ii) Provide a brief methodology on the approach to the work and how it will be conducted (max. 300 words);

2. Financial proposal;

3. Personal CV in the form of P11 that includes past experience in similar projects and e-mail contacts of three referees (section 26 & 29 in P11).

The above information should be included in the following documents:

- Offeror’s Letter to UNDP confirming Interest and availability for the Individual Contractor (IC) Assignment. Document can be downloaded from the following: <http://www.rs.undp.org/download/ic/Confirmation.docx> (only PDF will be accepted).

- Updated and signed P11, in PDF format, containing e-mail contacts of three referees (section 26 & 29). P11 can be downloaded from the following:
<http://www.rs.undp.org/download/ic/P11.doc>.

Additional Information:

- Individual Contract (IC) will be applicable for individual consultants applying in their own capacity. If the applicant is employed by any legal entity, IC would be issued upon submission of Consent letter from the employer acknowledging the engagement with UNDP. Template of General Conditions on IC could be found on:
<http://www.undp.org.rs/download/General%20Conditions%20IC.docx>.
- Reimbursable Loan Agreement (RLA) will be applicable for applicants employed by any legal entity. Template of Rith General Terms and Conditions could be found on:
<http://www.undp.org.rs/download/RLA%20with%20General%20Terms%20and%20Conditions.doc>. In the case of engagement of Civil servants under IC contract modality a no-objection letter should be provided by the Government entity. The ‘no-objection’ letter must also state that the employer formally certifies that their employees are allowed to receive short-term consultancy assignment from another entity without being on “leave-without-pay” status (if applicable), and include any conditions and restrictions on granting such permission, if any. If the previous is not applicable ‘leave-without-pay’ confirmation should be submitted.

ANNEX I
(Integral part of ToR)
Evaluation Report

Purpose/Description of the Evaluation Report:

The evaluation report is the key product of the evaluation process. Its purpose is to provide a transparent basis for accountability for results, for decision-making on policies and programmes, for learning, for drawing lessons and for improvement.

a. Format:

The Evaluation Report should contain the following:

- Title Page
- List of acronyms and abbreviations
- Table of contents, including list of annexes
- Executive Summary
- Introduction: background and context of the programme
- Description of the program – its logic theory, results framework and external factors likely to affect success
- Purpose of the evaluation
- Key questions and scope of the evaluation with information on limitations and delimitations
- Approach and methodology
- Findings
- Summary and explanation of findings and interpretations
- Conclusions
- Recommendations
- Lessons, generalizations, alternatives
- Annexes

b. Quality Criteria:

A good evaluation report must be guided by the criteria of utility, credibility, and relevance/appropriateness as defined below.

Utility: An evaluation report is useful when the report is:

- Complete in providing information on the context for the evaluation to allow reader to decide on the value it will derive from the evaluation (i.e evaluability assessment, stakeholder involvement, evaluator or institutional credibility, alignment of evaluators with national institutions, bases for interpretation, budget, timing, national involvement and alignment).
- The presentation of the evaluation process and findings are complete and well structured to provide ease in accessing information needed for decision-making and for assessing how justified conclusions are based on the linkages among the parts of the report.
- The recommendations are clear and actionable.
- Information on expected plans for follow-through with the evaluation by key stakeholders is provided.

Credibility: An evaluation report is credible when there is professional rigor for objectivity, validity and reliability of the procedures and instruments used.

- Evaluators are competent professionals and valid in the eyes of the users/stakeholders.
- There is accuracy and validity (programme content and contextual factors, instruments, information coverage/sampling, external validity or linkage with other development findings).
- There is reliability or consistency in the information provided.
- The bases for making judgments are transparent and based on negotiated agreements.

Relevance, appropriateness and added-value: A report is relevant, appropriate and adds value when information provided addresses priority or strategic information needs, is not duplicative, and is appropriate given institutional goals. The conduct of evaluation is aligned with national systems.

- The purpose and incentives for use are clear.
- There is alignment with national and government demands, harmonization and coherence within UN and organizational lens: human development and human rights.
- Addresses organizational mandate and the Strategic Plan priorities.
- Advances knowledge or priorities for development (equity, capacity, cooperation and others).

The following provides for each criterion, performance indicators which would provide the basis for assessing report quality in an objective and reliable manner.

1. Utility – Enhancing use and impact of information provided

1.1 The title page and opening pages provide key basic contextual information

- Title of the evaluation that includes a clear reference to the project / programme being evaluated.
- Links to the evaluation plan (with information on strategic value, national involvement and alignment, timing, resources and financing).
- Links to UNDAF outcomes and the Strategic Plan priorities.
- Geographical coverage of the evaluation.
- Name and organization of the evaluators and information in annex for assessment of competence and trustworthiness.
- Name of the commissioning organization (e.g. UNDP country office X).
- Date when the evaluation report is completed.
- Expected actions from the evaluation and dates for action.
- Dates for stakeholder meetings and status of meetings.
- Name of UNDP contact point for the evaluation (e.g. evaluation task manager).

1.2 For a joint evaluation or for the evaluation of a joint programme, the roles and contributions of the different UN organizations or other partners, are clearly described. The report should describe who is involved, their roles and their contributions to the subject being evaluated, including:

- Financial and in-kind contributions such as technical assistance, training and logistic support.
- Participation and staff time.
- Leadership, advocacy and lobbying.

1.3 For a country-led joint evaluation, the framework for the leadership, governance, conduct, use and capacity development are clearly described, and norms and standards for the evaluation are delineated if necessary.

1.4 The information in the report is complete, well structured and well presented. The report should provide information on:

- The purpose of the evaluation.
- Exactly what was evaluated.
- How the evaluation was designed and conducted.
- What evidence was used in the evaluation.
- What conclusions were drawn.
- What recommendations were made.
- What lessons were distilled.

1.5 The report should be clear and easy to read with complementary graphics to enhance understanding:

- The report should apply a plain, non-specialist language.
- Graphics, tables and illustrations should be used, when applicable, to enhance the presentation of information.
- The report should not exceed 30 pages, excluding annexes.
- In the case of an outcome evaluation, the related projects should be listed in the annex, including timelines, implementation arrangements and budgets.

1.6 The executive summary of the report should be brief (maximum 2-3 pages) and contains key information needed by decision-makers. It should contain:

- Brief description of the programme.
- Evaluation purpose, questions and scope of evaluation.
- Key findings.
- Conclusions.
- Key recommendations.

The executive summary should not include information that is not mentioned and substantiated in the main report.

1.7 The recommendations are relevant and realistic, with clear priorities for action.

- Recommendations should emerge logically from the evaluation's findings and conclusions.
- Recommendations should be relevant to the purpose of the evaluation and decisions to be made based on the evaluation.
- Recommendation should be formulated in a clear and concise manner and be prioritized to the extent possible.

2. Credibility - accuracy, reliability, and objectivity

2.1 The subject or programme being evaluated is clearly and accurately described.

- The goals and objectives of the programme/project/subject are clearly described and the performance indicators presented.
- The conceptual linkages or logic theory among programme/project strategy, the outputs and the outcomes should be described, explaining their relation to national priorities and goals.

- The context in which the programme/project existed is described so its likely influences in the program can be identified.
- The level of implementation of the programme/project and major divergences between the original implementation plan or approach should be described and explained.
- The recipient /intended beneficiaries, the stake holders, the cost and the financing of the programmes/projects should be described.

2.2 The report provides a clear explanation of the scope of the evaluation.

- The objectives, scope and coverage of the evaluation should be explicit and its limitations should also be acknowledged.
- The original evaluation questions from the TORs should be made explicit as well as those that were added subsequently or during the evaluation and their rationale provided.
- The results of an evaluability assessment are noted for its effects on defining the scope of the evaluation. Evaluability is the extent to which there is clarity in the intent of the subject to be evaluated, sufficient measurable indicators, assessable reliable information sources and no major factor hindering an impartial evaluation process³³.

2.3 The methodology is fully described for its role in ensuring the validity and reliability of the evaluation.

Any description of the methodology should include the following in addressing the questions of the evaluation:

- The universe of data needed to answer the questions and the sources of this data.
- The sampling procedure applied to ensure representativeness in collecting information from these sources (area and population to be represented, rationale for selection, mechanics of selection, numbers selected out of potential subjects, limitations to sampling).
- Procedures applied (including triangulation) to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information collected.
- Bases for making judgements and interpretation of the findings including performance indicators or levels of statistical significance as warranted by available data.
- Description of procedures for quantitative and qualitative analyses.
- Innovations in methodological approach and added value to development evaluation.
- How the evaluation addressed equity in its design and in the provision of differentiated information to guide policies and programmes.
- How a human development and human rights perspective provided a lens for the evaluation and influenced the scope of the evaluation.

2.4 The findings of the evaluation address the following in response to the key questions of the evaluation.

- Cost efficiency and relevance.
- UNDP partnership strategy and the extent to which it contributed to greater effectiveness.
- External factors influencing progress towards the outcome.
- UNDP contribution to capacity development and institutional strengthening.

³³ Norms for Evaluation for the United Nations System, para 7.2.

2.5 Conclusions are firmly based on evidence and analysis.

- Conclusions are the judgement made by the evaluators. They should not repeat the findings but address the key issues that can be abstracted from them.
- Conclusions are made based on an agreed basis for making judgments of value or worth relative to relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability.
- Conclusions must focus on issues of significance to the subject being evaluated, determined by the evaluation objectives and the key evaluation questions.

2.6 Annexes are complete and relevant.

- The original Terms of Reference for the evaluation.
- Details on the programme and its context in development.
- Details of data and analyses.
- Data collection instruments (e.g. copies of questionnaires, and surveys).
- Evaluation plan.

3. Relevance and Added Value

3.1. The purpose and context of the evaluation are described.

- The reason(s) why the evaluation is being conducted should be explicitly stated.
- The justification for conducting the evaluation at this point in time should be summarised.
- Who requires the evaluative information should be made clear.
- The description of context should provide an understanding of the geographic, socioeconomic, political and cultural settings in which the evaluation took place.

3.2 The report includes an assessment of the extent to which issues of equity and gender, in particular, and human rights considerations are incorporated in the project or programme.

The evaluation report should include a description of, *inter alia*:

- How a human development and human rights perspective was adopted in design, implementation and monitoring of the projects or programme being evaluated.
- How issues of equity, marginalized, vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups were addressed in design, implementation and monitoring of the projects or programme being evaluated.
- How the evaluation addressed equity in its design and in the provision of differentiated information to guide policies and programmes.
- How the evaluation used the human development and human rights lens in its defining the scope of the evaluation and in the methodology used.

3.3 The report presents information on its relationship with other associated evaluations and indicates its added value to already existing information.

c. Procedures and Accountabilities:

The primary responsibility for preparing the evaluation report rests with the evaluation consultant or the leader of the evaluation team (if a team is established). Those who commission the evaluation and those who are actually evaluated can also contribute with their inputs. Particularly, key stakeholders should be involved in reviewing the draft report to check if there are any relevant factual errors or omissions, and to highlight any interpretation of the findings that they consider as incorrect. The evaluators should accept changes related to factual errors, but in safeguarding the principle of independence, they should be free to draw their own conclusions from the findings.

To ensure compliance with the criteria noted, a quality assurance and enhancement system at country level will be established and made operational.

ANNEX II

(Integral part of ToR)

Ethical Code of Conduct for UNDP Evaluations

Evaluations of UNDP-supported activities need to be independent, impartial and rigorous. Each evaluation should clearly contribute to learning and accountability. Hence evaluators must have personal and professional integrity and be guided by propriety in the conduct of their business

Evaluators:

- Must present information that is complete and fair in its assessment of strengths and weaknesses so that decisions or actions taken are well founded
- Must disclose the full set of evaluation findings along with information on their limitations and have this accessible to all affected by the evaluation with expressed legal rights to receive results.
- Should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants. They should provide maximum notice, minimize demands on time, and: respect people's right not to engage. Evaluators must respect people's right to provide information in confidence, and must ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source. Evaluators are not expected to evaluate individuals, and must balance an evaluation of management functions with this general principle.
- Evaluations sometimes uncover evidence of wrongdoing. Such cases must be reported discreetly to the appropriate investigative body. Evaluators should consult with other relevant oversight entities when there is any doubt about if and how issues should be reported.
- Should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relations with all stakeholders. In line with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, evaluators must be sensitive to and address issues of discrimination and gender equality. They should avoid offending the dignity and self-respect of those persons with whom they come in contact in the course of the evaluation. Knowing that evaluation might negatively affect the interests of some stakeholders, evaluators should conduct the evaluation and communicate its purpose and results in a way that clearly respects the stakeholders' dignity and self-worth.
- Are responsible for their performance and their product(s). They are responsible for the clear, accurate and fair written and/or oral presentation of study limitations, findings and recommendations.
- Should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.

ANNEX III

Sample Table of Contents for an Inception Report

1. INTRODUCTION*

- 1.1. Objective of the Evaluation
- 1.2. Background and Context
- 1.3. Scope of the Evaluation

2. METHODOLOGY

- 2.1. Evaluation criteria and questions*
- 2.2. Conceptual framework
- 2.3. Evaluability
- 2.4. Data collection methods*
- 2.5. Analytical approaches
- 2.6. Risks and potential shortcomings*

3. PROGRAMME OF WORK*

- 3.1. Phases of work
- 3.2. Team composition and responsibilities
- 3.3. Management and logistic support
- 3.4. Calendar of work

ANNEXES

- 1. Tentative outline of the main report*
- 2. Main responsibilities of evaluation team members
- 3. Associated reference documents

ATTACHMENTS

- 1. Evaluation matrix*
- 2. Document map
- 3. Stakeholder map*
- 4. Project list
- 5. Compact document list
- 6. Project mapping
- 7. Interview checklists /protocols*
- 8. Detailed work plan

ANNEX IV

(To be given to the Evaluator at the mission's outset)

Evaluation Matrix

Criteria/Sub-criteria	Questions to be addressed by evaluation	What to look for	Data sources	Data collection methods
Relevance				
Effectiveness				
Efficiency				
Sustainability				
PROMOTION OF UN VALUES FROM A HUMAN DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE				
Criteria/Sub-criteria	Questions to be addressed by evaluation	What to look for	Data sources	Data collection methods
Supporting policy dialogue on human development issues				
Contribution to gender equality				
Addressing equity issues (social inclusion)				