



EVALUATION REPORT

EXTERNAL END OF PHASE EVALUATION: VOICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT AND PUBLIC SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

August 2018

This report was produced at the request of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. It was prepared independently by Zumrat Salmorbekova, Jens Peter Christensen, and Anara Niyazova, with support from Paul Dalton, for Nordic Consulting Group.

DISCLAIMER

The authors' views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) or the Swiss Government.

COVER PHOTO

2019 Public Budget Hearing in Shark municipality, Osh Oblast. *Photo Credit: Jens Peter Christensen*

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Acronyms

ARIS	Community Development and Investment Agency
ATR	Administrative Territorial Reform
AO	Aiyl Okmotu (municipal administration)
BNF	Beneficiaries
CAMI	Community and Municipal Governance Initiative
CHF	Swiss Franc
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DFID	Department for International Development
DPI	Development Policy Institute
ET	Evaluation Team
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GD	Group Discussion
GIZ	German Development Agency
GoKR	Government of Kyrgyzstan
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting
GSE	Gender and Social Equity
HRD	Human Resource Development
HSI	HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation
IG	Initiative Group
IMC	Inter-Municipal Cooperation
JAP	Joint Action Plan
KII	Key Informant Interview
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoE	Ministry of Economy
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MP	Member of Parliament
LSG	Local Self-Government
NCG	Nordic Consulting Group
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD/DAC	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
PFM	Public Financial Management
PIU	Projects Implementing Unit
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PSI	Public Service Improvement project
SALSGIR	State Agency for LSG Issues and Interethnic Relations

SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SIAP	Service Improvement Action Plan
SPS	State Personnel Service
SSACHCS	State Service for Architecture, Construction and Housing and Communal Services
TA	Technical Assistance
TOC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAP	Strengthening Voice and Accountability project
WB	World Bank
WG	Working Group

Map of Data Collection Sites



Executive Summary

Introduction

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) commissioned Nordic Consulting Group (NCG) to conduct an external end of phase evaluation of the “Strengthening Voice and Accountability” (VAP) and the “Public Service Improvement” (PSI) projects in Kyrgyzstan. VAP is implemented by the Development Policy Institute (DPI). The project aims at more transparent and effective management of local finances by Local Self-Government (LSG) through increased accountability and citizen participation in decision-making processes. PSI is implemented by the Consortium of HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation (HSI) and the Development Policy Institute (DPI). The project aims at improving the system of service management at the local level, responding to the demands of citizens in a timely and efficient manner.

Evaluation Objectives, Use and Main Evaluation Questions

The purposes of this evaluation were twofold: (a) to provide SDC and its implementing partners with an independent and objective evaluation of the VAP Phase II and PSI Phase I projects in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, impact and sustainability, and (b) to provide recommendations for the adjustments of the projects for the remainder of the phases and provide strategic inputs as a basis for planning of potential additional project phases or merger of the two projects in a new project. The evaluation also made efforts to look into whether, and if so how well, the transversal themes were integrated into the projects, and to assess the idea of merging the two projects.

During the in-brief the evaluation team discussed the priority areas with SDC, subsequent to which the following four key questions for consideration were formulated:

1. How to upscale and sustain the projects’ results beyond the projects’ lifetime?
2. To what extent have the projects successfully mainstreamed gender into the implementation?
3. Were the grants-supported equipment procured and purposefully used?
4. What could be the pros and cons of merging VAP and PSI?

Evaluation Findings

Relevance

- VAP and PSI contributions to the local self-government (LSG) development work carried out at both national and local level in Kyrgyzstan have been relevant to a large extent. Both projects have consolidated their relevance by the systematic use of peer learning.
- The evaluation team also noted particular relevance with regard to the piloting of inter-municipal cooperation, which demonstrate considerable potential.
- Governance improvements introduced by the projects in the many pilot municipalities have generated a strong momentum in local participation.

Effectiveness

- Both VAP and PSI have to a large extent been effective in contributing to achieving their stated objectives and targets at local and national levels. Key findings include:
- A trustful environment and cooperation appear to have been built between residents, municipal civil servants and local councils.

- Increased sense of motivation and mobilization of civil society initiatives led to increasing citizen participation in fundraising activities beyond municipal service delivery. VAP's citizen engagement model in the budget process is in place, applied and functioning. Citizens are now participating in budget hearings and there is an emerging understanding among local people about the relationship between tax payment and service delivery.
- In all the visited municipalities, municipality staff, local councils and primary beneficiaries expressed the view that local government processes had improved and that they were now more accountable and transparent.
- Grants are an effective mechanism for promoting participatory budgeting, as well as for increasing LSGs' investment management skills and responsiveness to local initiatives and priority needs.
- Lack of capacity at local council level may prove to be a barrier moving forward.

Efficiency

- Overall, the evaluation found that there was timely implementation of both projects. However, there are apparently challenges in using the state procurement portal to implement grants or tenders, which has led to delays in some grants and other activities.
- Limited PSI staff resources hinder the dissemination of project knowledge and practice. The PSI project is understaffed. Insufficient allocation of staff impedes the project's dissemination of knowledge, practices and lessons learned, as well as advocacy work at the national policy level.

Impact

- VAP has generally achieved its strongest impact in the promotion of transparency and public engagements, while PSI is set to impact on sustainable approaches to municipal service delivery.
- Both projects have also brought positive changes and had impact on the overall LSG legislative framework. Other donors, most prominently the USAID-funded CAMI project, also adopted the VAP and PSI framework.
- The impact of VAP, deepened though PSI, has infused a perception of mutual trust between LSGs and local residents and a change in attitude and behavior on both sides.
- For councilors and staff employed by the LSGs, the projects promote a change of mindset towards serving the public rather than being self-serving or exclusively serving central authorities. In fact, evidence from the field suggests that the participatory approach has gained so much momentum in many municipalities that any rolling back of the new practices will most probably be resisted.

Sustainability

- Factors suggesting sustainability of the project outcomes included ownership of results in the pilot municipalities as well as the likelihood of upscaling these results to other LSGs and nationwide through national partners in Parliament and Government, through the LSG Union and through collaborations with development partners.
- The VAP and PSI methodologies and tools are now being applied by national partners in government and among development partners (MoF, USAID/CAMI, ARIS, GIZ, and the Soros Foundation).
- Both projects have been able to feed the legislative process in parliament and government with substantial legal support, which in essence made it possible to upscale and sustain project results by way of generating incremental improvements in the legal framework for LSGs.
- There still is a case for extending the present pilots by one year as part of the VAP exit strategy. Adding another annual budget cycle to the learning process would help in sustaining VAP approaches.

Transversal Themes

- VAP's citizen engagement model provides a platform and tools for social mobilization and participation. Women and other vulnerable groups participate in activities and identify priorities through an established project mechanism; however, the sophisticated strategy of bringing these groups into decision-making is limited due to the lack of gender mainstreaming strategy.
- The practice of dissemination of written information in Kyrgyz, Russian and Uzbek by some of the southern municipalities indicates that VAP's participatory model in budget processes equally strengthens inclusion of ethnic minorities into local processes, consequently increasing resilience to inter-ethnic conflicts, as access to information and participation are key for equal access to community resources and decision-making.
- In order to ensure GSE mainstreaming into the project's activities, it is important to also include indicators that measure participation of women and other disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in the decision-making process, as well as to measure how well decisions made by LSGs are actually addressed as priority needs of these groups.
- The VAP mechanism of engaging citizens required conducting age-disaggregated FGDs in order to identify the specific needs for each age group. However, the actual use of the data is unclear.
- The prioritization of community needs is widely recognized as legitimate, as the VAP's model includes ranking and voting for priority needs at village, village district and municipality levels. However, from the GSE standpoint, the majoritarian principle in decision-making does not necessarily ensure inclusion of specific needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups into the budget, precisely because they are in the minority.
- VAP missed the opportunity to use existing gender responsive budgeting (GRB) expertise, tools and knowledge.

VAP and PSI Merger Issue

The evaluation team do not recommend a merger of the two projects, for the following reasons: a) the projects are focused on different things as they are at different stages of implementation cycle; PSI is in its pilot stage, while VAP is now focusing on exit phase/replication; b) merging the projects at this stage would not add additional value to any of the project strategies; the most important argument for any merger is already captured by the design of the PSI project, since PSI approaches and its geographical coverage build on the pilot LSG and lessons learned from the first phase of the VAP project; c) the projects are implemented in different geographic regions and a merger would not automatically bring cost savings; d) the conceptual designs of the two projects are already fully integrated, and they operate in mutual coordination and synergy; and e) a merger would lead to a loss of momentum of the projects' progress and achievements made so far.

Conclusions

The evaluation team conclude that SDC and its PIUs play an important role in increasing accountability in municipal budgeting and public participation in the decision-making process, as well as in improving municipal service provision responsiveness to the demands of the local population. Contributions by VAP and PSI toward providing policy support at a national level to advance decentralization, LSG sector reform, and improvement of municipal public services by linking pilot results and lessons learned have been largely relevant and effective.

Recommendations

VAP specific recommendations

1. The VAP project should extend its current support to pilot municipalities by one year in Phase II in order to adequately internalize and sustain project results. This extension should be TA-based only and be rendered without grant support. If SDC's contractual policy does not permit extension of the current VAP Phase II by one year, then consider extending the exit phase by one year.
Timeframe: Current Phase II
Priority: High
2. VAP should continue actively engaging in the Latvian exchange with the Kyrgyzstan government and explore the opportunity to discuss the Latvian ATR with Latvian partners. This is an opportunity to revive discussion on new ATR commitment announced by the President. In preparation for this meeting, review the Danish ATR consultancy report for Latvia, share a Russian translation with national partners and facilitate a thorough discussion of the criteria, policy and reform management guidelines applied during the Latvian reform.
Timeframe: Current Phase II (it might extend into the exit phase)
Priority: High
3. VAP should assess the possibility of supporting a longer LSG Union twinning cooperation with the Latvian counterpart organization. If sufficient funding cannot be mobilized through Latvian support or funded by VAP, an application could be made to the EU Delegation in Bishkek through its Local Authorities/Civil Society Organizations Facility.
Timeframe: Current Phase II (it might extend into the exit phase)
Priority: High
4. VAP should review its gender guidelines on organizing and conducting public events at the local level with the aim of amending them with a simple and applicable checklist.
Timeframe: Current Phase II
Priority: High
5. VAP should improve visualization of achieved results.
Timeframe: Current Phase II
Priority: Medium
6. VAP should assist SPS in increasing its capacity and competence to ensure the quality and effectiveness of LSG trainings delivered by universities. International experience with the use of academia in such trainings is very mixed and not always aligned to the daily challenges met by LSG practitioners. For example, in order to measure quality of training and utilization of knowledge, SPS should introduce a system for conducting surveys and develop a database for further analysis and improvement of modules/curriculum based on trainee feedback.
Timeframe: Exit Phase
Priority: High
7. VAP should advocate engaging practitioners in SPS-offered training for LSG cadres as trainers. However, in order to do so there is a need to establish an LSG practitioner-trainer roster. VAP should assist SPS in developing such a roster from the project's network. This roster could be also used in selecting practitioner-trainers for peer-to-peer learning, in order to scale-up VAP

achievements. VAP could use the Latvian experience in promoting ideas on the engagement of practitioners in supply-driven training.

Timeframe: Exit Phase

Priority: High

8. VAP should foster peer-to-peer learning for replicating and scaling-up its achievements by engaging practitioners from the target municipalities. Peer-to-peer learning should not be conducted only in VAP's neighboring municipalities but also beyond, formalizing it by engaging practitioners.

Timeframe: Exit Phase

Priority: High

9. VAP should promote its approaches through a simple and applicable budget guideline for PFM/budget cycle management published by the Ministry of Finance for national upscale purposes.

Timeframe: Exit Phase

Priority: High

10. VAP should explore an opportunity to link the VAP Model to the e-learning methodology currently tested by the Ministry of Finance (see the sustainability section for details) as cost-effective supplement to the project's achievements dissemination/upscaling.

Timeframe: Exit Phase

Priority: High

11. VAP should continue to work on incremental improvements to the legal framework of LSG mandate; however, given the challenging policy environment, legal assistance should not be considered as an end process, as it is a continuous, open ended activity that will require attention even after the end of the project. Therefore, legal assistance should not be considered a core activity in the exit phase, but rather as a demand-based legal framework improvement assistance that will also help to maintain the established network at the central level.

Timeframe: Exit Phase

Priority: High

12. VAP, together with SALSGIR, SPS and the LSG Union, should explore and advocate training opportunities of newly elected local councils to mitigate the systemic problem of local councils' lack of capacity to fulfill their direct obligations.

Timeframe: Exit Phase

Priority: High

13. VAP should assess the training module to ensure it is conducive to the training needs of locally elected councilors.

Timeframe: Exit Phase

Priority: High

PSI specific recommendations

1. PSI should continue supporting all types of local services. While this will include unfunded mandates, it will leave open all options for service prioritizing to the participatory process.

Timeframe: Phase I and Phase II

Priority: High

2. PSI should raise awareness among LSGs about the option of involving the private business sector in municipal service delivery.
Timeframe: Phase I and Phase II
Priority: High
3. PSI should link up to USAID/CAMI and discuss on a regular basis lessons learned on private business sector involvement in municipal service.
Timeframe: Phase I and Phase II
Priority: High
4. PSI should enhance the SIAP methodology with a local service sourcing strategy option, which calls for local councils to develop such a strategy at the beginning of each election term (see sustainability section).
Timeframe: Phase II
Priority: High
5. PSI should carefully document lessons learned on inter-municipal cooperation with the aim of developing a national guideline for LSGs on inter-municipal cooperation (see sustainability section for details) so that it can be used for peer-to-peer learning for wider replication. The inter-municipal cooperation guideline should be published with the support of the project and disseminated through SALSGIR and the LSG Union.
Timeframe: Phase II
Priority: High
6. PSI should foster peer learning on a regional level through formalized training for disseminating knowledge and wider replication of SIAP and IMC.
Timeframe: Phase II
Priority: High
7. PSI should amend the SPS training package developed by PSI with training curriculums on (a) IMC and (b) private business sector involvement in municipal service delivery, respectively.
Timeframe: Phase II
Priority: High
8. The design of the PSI second phase should carefully consider sufficient allocation of staff for dissemination of good practices, in order to ensure maximum thrust behind upscaling of results.
Timeframe: Phase II
Priority: High

VAP and PSI common recommendations

1. VAP and PSI should continue as separate projects while maintaining maximum coordination and synergy.
Timeframe: VAP exit phase; PSI next phase
Priority: High
2. VAP and PSI should continue operating within their current pilot municipalities and regions in order to put maximum effort into concept developments and scaling-up.
Timeframe: VAP exit phase; PSI next phase
Priority: High

3. Both projects should directly support peer-to-peer learning at the municipal level by encouraging pilot municipalities to mentor non-project municipalities, facilitating in-country study tours, continuing with invitations to public hearings and encouraging direct observations (e.g. of budget hearings).
Timeframe: VAP current and exit phases; PSI next phase (part of deepening and disseminating knowledge)
Priority: High
4. VAP and PSI should promote LSG practitioners well-versed in VAP and PSI approaches to become part of the SPS trainers' roster. LSG practitioners may be selected through the network in the pilot LSGs.
Timeframe: VAP exit phase; PSI next phase
Priority: High
5. VAP and PSI should consistently conduct gender analyses of project products (AO Charters, draft legislation, training materials, modules, guidelines, etc.) and continue updating them based on collected M&E data (gender analysis, case-studies, best practice).
Timeframe: VAP Phase II and exit phase; PSI current and next phase
Priority: High
6. Whether or not the option of adopting the European Charter for Self-Government is followed through on, VAP and PSI should consider supplementing knowledge of the Charter by distributing the Russian version of the UN-Habitat international guideline on 'Decentralization and Access to Basic Services for All' (2009) to enhance discussions on central-local government relations and principles of municipal service delivery.
Timeframe: VAP Phase II; PSI current phase
Priority: High

Recommendations for SDC

1. In the event that additional funding is needed to facilitate longer cooperation between SALSGIR, the LSG Union and their Latvian counterparts, consider actively supporting an application to the EU Delegation and its Civil Society Organizations/Local Authorities Facility.
Timeline: Immediate; however, timeline might depend on the EU call for proposals cycle
Priority: High
2. SDC explore funding opportunity on decentralization and local government reform interventions from the EU delegation.
Timeline: As early as possible
Priority: High
3. Consider a comparative study on USAID/CAMI and VAP and PSI approaches for wider learnings on the added value of the grants mechanism in local governance support projects and good practices to enhance private business sector involvement in municipal service delivery.
Timeline: Next phases
Priority: High
4. Consider inviting donors working in the sectors on municipal service delivery (water, sanitation, infrastructure, etc.) to the donor coordination group on local governance meetings, in order to explore mainstreaming of PSI tools and approaches, share lessons learned and identify synergies and complementarities.
Timeline: As early as possible

Priority: High

1. INTRODUCTION AND EVALUATION PURPOSE

In May 2018, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) commissioned Nordic Consulting Group (NCG) to conduct an external end-of-phase evaluation of the Phase II 4,650,000 CHF “Strengthening Voice and Accountability” (VAP) and the over 10 million CHF “Public Service Improvement” (PSI) projects in Kyrgyzstan. VAP is implemented by the Development Policy Institute (DPI). The project aims at more transparent and effective management of local finances by Local Self-Governments (LSG) through increased accountability and citizen participation in decision-making processes. PSI is implemented by the Consortium of HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation (HSI) and the Development Policy Institute (DPI). The project aims at improving the system of service management at the local level, making it timely and efficiently responsive to the demands of citizens.

This evaluation aims to capture the achievements of the two projects at goal and outcome levels so as to inform decisions on the strategic orientation of the remainder of the current project phases and the possible future merger of the two projects.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 VAP and PSI Background

Strengthening Voice and Accountability (VAP) Project

VAP is a 10-year, multi-phased project intended to strengthen the ability of citizens to participate in the budget process at a local level, and to ensure that local governments perform their responsibilities in using funds adequately for public services.¹ The second phase, which is the focus of this evaluation, was launched in April 2015. It has been operating in 27 selected LSGs in Chui (12), Osh (10) and Naryn (5) *oblasts* (provinces) and will end in March 2019. The Exit phase is planned for April 2019 - March 2021.

Phase II of the project is based on achievements and lessons learnt from Phase I. The second phase is focused on rolling out the Model of Community Engagement in local budgetary processes to ensure that public finances are managed in a more transparent and effective manner through greatly increased accountability and citizen participation in the decision-making process. This phase also concentrates on continuing work at the national level to ensure adequate legal framework and environment for the Model application. Thus, VAP **Phase II has two strategic goals**:

1. To increase the critical mass of LSGs applying the VAP’s Model of community engagement in the budgetary process; and
2. To institutionalize achieved and further decentralization policy improvements.

According to the project document, VAP’s Phase II envisioned the following **expected results**:

- Citizen participation in local decision process will be assured by ensuring that community driven budgetary framework is in place in municipalities of Chui, Naryn and Osh oblasts;
- Citizens of target oblasts assess performance of LSGs and implementation of Joint Action Plans (JAP) on addressing local concerns;
- Chui, Naryn and Osh oblasts LSGs governing and managing capacities will be improved to respond citizens’ needs;

¹ The inception phase was launched in November 2011 and was implemented until April 2012. The first phase of the project was then implemented from April 2012 to March 2015 in selected LSGs in Issyk-Kul and Jalal-Abad oblasts (provinces).

- Local community engagement in local budgetary process will be institutionalized in municipalities as a result of technical assistance (TA);
- Municipal civil servants' knowledge improvement will be systematized and institutionalized through improved municipal civil servants' system, including improvement of municipal civil servants' qualifications;
- Relevant enabling environment will be achieved through improved and promoted national decentralization policy.

The VAP's underlying **Theory of Change** (TOC) is that:

If local government reforms are coupled with citizens participation, **then** higher efficiency, better public service, and greater transparency will be promoted that will eventually result in economic growth and better human development outcomes.

If there is an adequate enabling environment (legislation, enforcement, practices) and **if** LSGs have sufficient capacities (rights, authorities, funds and skilled staff), and **if** accountability is required by local communities willing to participate in the decision-making process, **then** LSGs will become accountable.

Some of the central **underlying assumptions** behind the project include:

- Accountability of LSGs to local communities means that LSGs provide for adequate living conditions in municipalities;
- LSGs should listen to concerns of local communities and respond to them to satisfy needs of residents in any given municipality, since LSGs in Kyrgyzstan represent public officials located closely to local communities in comparison with any other public institution/official governance structure;
- The primary focus of LSGs is to respond to citizens' needs instead of being focused on responses to the central government officials and structures;
- The more local communities participate in the budgetary process, require LSG accountability even under the existing "pro" norms, the stronger the case will be for furthering development of national policy and legislation towards accountability of LSGs and strengthening citizen participation. This in turn should lead to stronger capacity of LSGs and more concerns addressed at the local level, and more communities benefitting from improved living conditions in their municipalities.

VAP Phase II set to achieve **two outcomes** that contribute to the overall project goal:

1. Citizens' engagement and responsibility in local decision-making is strengthened.
2. LSGs' responsiveness to civic initiatives is increased.

Main implementation approaches of VAP Phase II include the following:

- Operations at *micro* (local community level and LSG), *meso* (regional NGOs, regional governmental structures, regional mass media) and *macro* (national policy makers, institutions, NGOs, CSOs, mass media) levels.
- Integration of innovations into the existing system of government, including the "Do No Harm" development principle, and avoiding creation of LSG parallel/duplicating structures.
- Learn, practice and share methodology, which is focused on design of related training modules with obligatory "home-work" assignments, to encourage trainees to apply gained knowledge.
- Inclusivity (gender, ethnicity, social status). VAP will continue communicating to municipalities of importance to include all parties in dialogues they are developing in their communities. VAP

promotes a 30% gender quota in trainings, consultations and all relevant activities and groups; using information tools in different local languages (where applicable); ensuring participation of various age and social groups' participation in PRAs and other public discussions of issues of local importance.

- Various actors' engagement to enlarge the number of drivers of change, which applies to both governmental and non-governmental structures and individual officials, experts, and practitioners.
- Quality control and assurance of high quality expertise to achieve the goal and implement tasks of the VAP Phase II.
- Cooperation with other LSG-related initiatives, projects and programs operating in Kyrgyzstan, with a special focus on synergy with PSI.

VAP Phase II **beneficiaries and stakeholders:**

- Local communities: citizens and civil society organizations
- Local Self-Governments: Aiyl Okmotu and Local Councils
- National policy makers: Parliament, Prime Minister's Office, President's Office, State Agency for LSG issues and interethnic relations under the GoKR (SALSGIR), Ministry of Finance (MoF), Ministry of Economy (MoE), State Personnel Service (SPS), Ministry of Justice and the State Tax Service.

Public Service Improvement (PSI) Project

PSI is also a 10-year project aimed at improving the system of service management at the local level, increasing its efficiency and ability to respond to the demands of citizens in a timely manner. PSI is in its first phase of implementation; the current project period will conclude in April 2019. The project builds on the experience and achievements of VAP and is implemented in selected LSGs from Issyk Kul and Jalalabad oblasts, which served as pilot oblasts during the first phase of VAP. The vast majority of the 30 PSI target municipalities, in Issyk-Kul (11) and Jalal-Abad (19), also took part in VAP Phase I. The main goal of the first phase of PSI is to introduce sustainable, effective, efficient, accountable and responsive management solutions in targeted municipalities that address real needs and demands of citizens and that deliver tangible service improvements. It also aims at better delineating roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders involved in public service delivery at the local level, and to strengthen meaningful citizens involvement mechanisms in service delivery planning and monitoring.

PSI Phase I envisions the following **expected results:**

- Coverage of public services will have improved, so that more citizens have access to services;
- The quality of services will improve to better respond to citizen's priorities and needs;
- Municipalities will be empowered to better interact with their national counterparts and to make their concerns heard at a national level;
- Relevant national actors will be strengthened to gradually take up their assigned roles and responsibilities to facilitate and improve the work of LSGs.

PSI's underlying **Theory of Change** is as follows:

If municipalities and service providers improve their governance and management capacities in public service delivery, and **if** governance mechanisms are improved and strengthened, especially oversight mechanisms on a local level, **then** both quality and quantity of public services increases.

The PSI project focused on achieving the following **two outcomes**:

1. Citizens receive efficient and sustainable public services from local service providers, and
2. Effective stakeholder interaction system for public service improvements is in place

PSI works at two levels: locally (*micro*) and nationally (*macro*). The main focus is at the *micro* level, where the project works with and through local authorities to improve policies and institutional capacities of local authorities and service providers. At the *macro* level, PSI works to strengthen national framework conditions and decision-making processes that support the work of LSGs. Thus, the project has **two main components**:

1. At the local level the project focuses on tangible public service improvements for citizens and supports public service providers, both public and private, to deliver more effective, efficient, and sustainable public services, and
2. Locally and nationally the project tackles the issues of governance structures by strengthening various interaction systems for citizens' input, municipal oversight over public service providers, and interaction systems between local and national stakeholders.

The **main implementation approaches** of PSI include the following:

- Citizen-centered approaches in selection of services to be improved: services selected on the basis of real needs and priorities of the population defined in a transparent and participatory way;
- Practicing service improvement through the Service Improvement Action Plan (SIAP) – a structured technical document, which represents a practical tool building on the Joint Action Plans of VAP and existing socio-economic development documents, with the participation of citizens/users, local self-government, experts and service providers;
- Two-tier grant scheme: municipalities receive two levels of grant support aimed in the first instance to elaborate a solid and comprehensive service improvement action plan (for all partner municipalities) and in the second instance to implement the plan (for a limited number of municipalities chosen through a competitive selection process);
- Clustering of municipalities, both *geographically*: to foster inter-communal knowledge exchanges, creation of inter-municipal working and planning groups, and joint service delivery models, and *thematically*: for technical assistance interventions designed for all project municipalities (strengthening basic managerial capacities, delineating roles and responsibilities etc.);
- Anchoring good governance principles in applied processes and procedures.

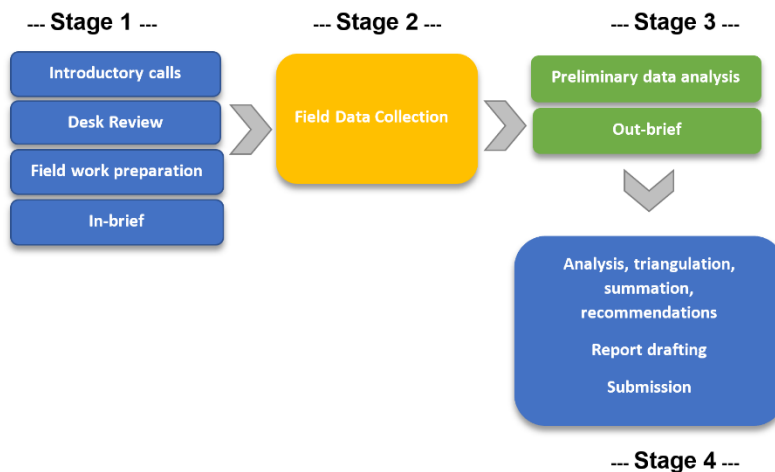
PSI Phase I **beneficiaries and stakeholders**:

- Local communities: citizens will enjoy direct benefits from improvements in public service delivery mechanisms and notable improvement of the municipal communal services, such as water and waste management, garbage disposal, street lightning, etc.
- Local Self-Governments: municipal-level councils and executives of municipalities
- Public and private service providers at local level
- National level: state agency for LSG issues and interethnic relations under the GoKR (SALSGIR), Union of the LSGs, Ministry of Economy, State Service for Architecture, Construction and Housing and Communal Services (SSACHCS) and State Personnel Service (SPS).

2.2 Evaluation Design and Analytical Framework

The evaluation followed a qualitatively-dominant method design. It was guided by an “Evaluation Design Matrix” to provide an analytical framework for systematically capturing and analyzing the results, prospects for sustainability, and lessons learned from VAP and PSI project activities.

The evaluation was implemented in four stages. Stage 1 consisted of a desk review, introductory-conference calls with SDC and the VAP and PSI consortiums (to ensure stakeholder buy-in to the evaluation), drafting the evaluation plan, and developing data collection tools. Stage 2 focused on site visits to the two projects and collecting qualitative data from beneficiaries and key stakeholders. Stage 3 entailed preliminary analysis of qualitative data collected during fieldwork and preparation to out-briefs. Finally, Stage 4 focused on the triangulation of findings, analysis and summarizing of data, and the production of this report with recommendations.



2.3 Evaluation Objectives and Intended Use

The purpose of this evaluation is to provide SDC and its implementing partners with an independent and objective evaluation of the VAP Phase II and PSI Phase I projects. The objectives of the evaluation are:

1. To critically assess the achievements of the project goals and outcomes in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, impact and sustainability; and
2. To provide recommendations for adjustments of the projects for the remainder of the phases, and provide strategic inputs as a basis for planning of potential additional project phases or merger of the two projects into a new project

SDC will use the evaluation findings and recommendations for decision-making on the strategic orientation of the remainder of the current project phases or merger of the two projects.

2.4 Main Evaluation Questions

The evaluation focused on answering evaluation questions structured according to the five OECD/DAC evaluation criteria: **relevance**, **effectiveness**, **efficiency**, **impact** and **sustainability**. Respectively, these reflect how well VAP and PSI interventions were targeted and whether they achieved the projects’ goals and outcomes. The evaluation also made efforts to look into several transversal themes to see whether, and how well, they were integrated into the projects, as well as assess the idea of merging the two projects.

The following are the evaluation questions stated in the terms of reference for this evaluation:

Relevance: to what extent the project activities of VAP and PSI are relevant to local decentralization, service provision reform and governance context in Kyrgyzstan? What do the project stakeholders and beneficiaries think of the projects regarding relevance of their activities regarding the public service sector and in terms of enhancing accountability and transparency in public resources management and increasing citizens’ participation? Do VAP activities contribute to preparing LSGs and local communities

for interventions within PSI? Were risk analysis and mitigation measures solid enough? How did the projects address unexpected challenges?

Effectiveness: to what extent have the project activities of VAP and PSI achieved their objectives and targets at the national and local levels? Is the level of ambition of the set goals and targets appropriate? Were the selected approaches effective (what vs. how)? Is the cooperation with the selected partners leading to the most effective results? What were the major factors influencing the achievements or non-achievements of the objectives? How effective was the VAP grant mechanism for promotion of participatory budgeting and LSG responsiveness to local initiatives?

Efficiency: what is the relation between the inputs and outputs of the projects? Were activities cost-effective? Were objectives achieved in time? Were the applied grant mechanisms adequate to mitigate the risks of corruption, investment sustainability and purposeful use?

Impact: What is the impact of the interventions to the overall situation of the target group or those affected? Are there any unexpected outcomes of the interventions and if so, is there a need to mitigate them or enhance them? Have the projects influenced other donors?

Sustainability: to what extent are the project partners and beneficiaries involved in the project implementation developing ownership? To what extent did the projects contribute to changing attitudes and behavior of partners (especially at the local level)? Who were the champions and those who resisted? How were the resistances overcome? How likely will the benefits of the projects continue after the funding/implementation has ceased? What is the role of the Union of LSGs and other actors in sustaining the projects' results? Does the level of input from the projects allow a scaling up by national partners? To what extent did the project contributions into the LSG system (legal framework) development affect the national policies and promote demand for LSG accountability, improved service management system and citizen engagement in local budgetary processes? To what extent could the methodologies of the projects be simplified to ensure an easier scaling up? Which institution could play the role the projects are now playing? Could the projects become a center of expertise for other projects? How could the methodology and knowledge be shared? Have any efforts been made to inform other donors working at local level such as ADB, EU, WB and to transfer the methodologies of the projects to bigger projects?

During the in-brief, the evaluation team discussed the priority areas with SDC to ensure the evaluation's usefulness. This helped to align the client's expectations since the terms of reference contained 70 evaluation questions, which was not feasible to thoroughly address given the limited allocated time and resources for the entire evaluation. As a result, the evaluation team received specific key priority messages from SDC, which was expressed in the form of the following questions by the evaluation team:

3. How to upscale and sustain projects results beyond projects lifetime?
4. To what extent have the projects successfully mainstreamed gender into the implementation?
5. Were the grants-supported equipment procured and purposefully used?
6. What could be the pros and cons of merging VAP and PSI?

These priority questions were the focus of the evaluation.

2.5 Evaluation Methodology and Limitations

In order to conduct field evaluation, NCG deployed a three-member evaluation team (ET) to Kyrgyzstan during two and a half weeks in July 2018. The evaluation utilized a qualitatively-dominant method to deliver an evidence base to answer the above questions. Key informant interviews and group discussions were used to test assumptions, gauge perceptions, and explore solutions. The ET analyzed qualitative data

by coding descriptive and inferential information collected during the interviews. The qualitative methods and tools used for this evaluation included:

- **Desk Review.** The team reviewed the primary projects’ documents, which informed preliminary judgements on the achievements of the projects’ goals and outcomes. The following project documents were reviewed: project core documents, half-yearly and annual progress reports, logical frameworks, external and midterm reviews, yearly plans of operation, monitoring and evaluation plans, national development programs, PSI end-line surveys, etc.

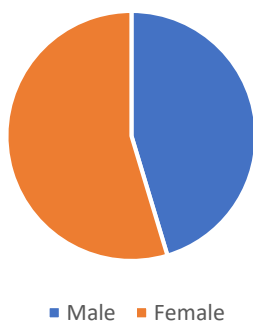
- **Key Informant Interviews (KII).** The team conducted interviews with key stakeholders using four types of semi-structured Interview Protocols to ensure comparability, so that each interview would investigate the appropriate evaluation question. The ET developed four types of protocols tailored to each stakeholder group in order to ensure questions were relevant and easily understood.² Fieldwork involved 47 KIIs, during which 129 (79 male and 50 female) key informants were consulted.³ Where appropriate, several people from the same organization or constituency participated together in interviews. Five categories of key informants served as data sources:

Respondents in KII by sex
n = 129; 47 interviews



- *Donor:* SDC
- *Implementing partners:* DPI and Helvetas staff
- *National partners:* SALSGIR, LSG Union, Ministry of Finance (MoF), Ministry of Economy (MoE), State Personnel Service (SPS), President’s Office, Members of Parliament (MP), employees of parliament, and Government Apparatus
- *Local partners:* Heads of Aiyi Okmotu (local executive body of LSG) and staff, local council members, neighbouring local-self-governments (LSG) and services providers
- *Donor community:* USAID and the WB

Respondents in Group Discussions by sex
n=86 ppl; 22 discussions



- **Group Discussions.** The ET conducted semi-structured group interviews with primary beneficiaries and engaged citizens of the projects. These included members of M&E groups, initiative groups, grant awardees, working groups for developing of Joint Action Plans and/or Service Improvement Action Plans (SIAP), and engaged residents who participated in decision-making, public meetings, and planning sessions. In total, the team conducted 22 group discussions with 86 primary beneficiaries and engaged citizens (39 male and 47 female). The ET developed two types of group discussion

² See Annex E for interview protocols

³ See Annex A for list of people interviewed

guides tailored to primary beneficiaries and engaged active residents to ensure relevance of questions.⁴

- **Observations.** During fieldwork, the ET was able to attend a national forum on the role of local government in the integrated development of the regions in Kyrgyzstan, as co-organized by VAP. This enabled the ET to gather additional information and to gain a deeper understanding of the important context changes, opportunities and challenges in the development of LSGs, including issues related to decentralization. The team was also able to observe the 2019 budget hearings in Shark municipality, Osh *oblast*. In addition, the team visited secondary and specialized schools and kindergartens in project target municipalities in Chui, Issyk-Kul, Osh and Jalal-Abad to observe the purposeful use of project-supported equipment (kitchen equipment, kindergarten and school furniture, computers, printers, and laundry machines, etc.).

Visited municipalities

Despite the limited time available for the field mission, the ET managed to visit eight initially planned VAP and PSI target municipalities in each of the prioritized *oblasts* by SDC, as well as two non-target VAP municipalities in Chui and Osh. The ET visited the following VAP and PSI-supported municipalities based on sampling criteria⁵ developed in consultation with the implementing partners:

VAP Target Municipality	PSI Target Municipality
1. Alexandrovka , Moskovskiy rayon, Chui oblast	1. Bosteri , Issyk-Kul rayon, Issyk-Kul oblast
2. Ak-Bashat , Jaiyl rayon, Chui oblast	2. Jeti-Oguz , Jeti-Oguz rayon, Issyk-Kul oblast
3. Jazy , Uzgen rayon, Osh oblast	3. Bagysh , Suzak rayon, Jalal-Abad oblast
4. Shark , Kara-Suu rayon, Osh oblast	4. Kenesh , Bazar-Korgon rayon, Jalal-Abad oblast
Non-Target VAP Municipality	
5. Pervomayiski , Moskovskiy rayon, Chui oblast	
6. Mady , Kara-Suu rayon, Osh oblast	

Limitations and Mitigation Strategies

The ET faced certain challenges and limitations regarding the evaluation:

- **Time and resource limitation.** The ET had limited time in country, with 10 working days to meet with many stakeholders spread across a wide geography. To mitigate this, the ET with the help of SDC hired an interpreter, which provided flexibility and enabled the ET to increase coverage by splitting the team.
- **Large scope.** The evaluation involved 70 questions to be answered by the team for the two projects. The small size of the ET, limited allocated working days for the entire evaluation and time constraints restricted the team’s ability to cover much breadth or to examine various evaluation questions in more depth. However, to mitigate this and ensure usefulness of evaluation, the ET discussed the priority areas with SDC to align expectations, and gave particular

⁴ See Annex E for group discussion guides

⁵ Overarching sampling criteria included: a) the proximity of locations to each other (to save travel time); b) two different rayons (district); c) history of social, political or interethnic conflicts and tensions; d) ethnic diversity; e) grant recipients; g) innovative service delivery solutions (use of inter-municipal delivery models; PSI municipalities); h) two different types of services (PSI municipalities).

attention to these key priority questions during the data collection. In addition, the team allocated extra days for collecting missing data from national partners after the out-brief.

- **Assessment of impact.** It is challenging to attribute with great accuracy the level of impact of both projects, given that other similar projects were implemented in the visited sites, and the fact that the ET visited only four out of 27 VAP target municipalities and four out of 30 PSI municipalities. This evaluation sought to minimize this challenge by carrying out detailed interviews in order to distinguish VAP and PSI from other similar projects.

7. EVALUATION FINDINGS

The discussions of VAP and PSI projects' evaluation findings are organized around the five OECD/DAC's evaluation criteria: *relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact* and *sustainability*. Transversal themes are also discussed in this section of the report.

3.1 Context Review and Relevance

Overall, the evaluation found that VAP and PSI contributions to the local self-government (LSG) development work implemented at both national and local levels in Kyrgyzstan have been relevant to a large extent. All interviewed stakeholders at the national and local levels praised the contributions of VAP and PSI projects, not only in general terms, but with reference to concrete initiatives and improvements attributed wholly or partly to the work of DPI and Helvetas. According to the respondents none of the significant improvements in the LSG framework in recent years could have been achieved without support from the two projects. Moreover, the interviewed LSGs and engaged citizens agreed that the projects generated strong momentum in local participation and transparent decision making, made a significant improvement in service provision, and generated an LSG-residents nexus. The respondents strongly believe that any attempt to roll back public engagement in pilot municipalities will most probably be resisted and met by local demands for more transparency, involvement and inclusiveness due to the expectation created through the project support.

The VAP and PSI projects support municipal participatory budgeting and service provision in five of seven *oblasts* in Kyrgyzstan, respectively. Per design, the projects also deliver policy support to central level authorities linking pilot results and lessons learned with systemic improvements as part of an iterative development process targeting the local government sector as a whole. Only few development partners currently provide support for decentralization and local governance in Kyrgyzstan and VAP and PSI stand out as prominent projects and points of reference for the Government of Kyrgyzstan. The scale and coverage of the projects is only matched by the USAID/CAMI project, which supplements VAP and PSI in terms of geographical coverage, but which essentially promotes same the local governance innovations developed by VAP and PSI but without the use of a grant mechanism.

Context

VAP and PSI operate in a challenging and sensitive policy environment supporting development of LSG in a post-socialist context, which entails the need to progress from a centralized command and control government system towards a decentralized system conducive to the autonomy of local authorities. According to assessments by the international community, Kyrgyzstan is considered a fragile state that has weak capacity to carry out basic governance functions, hereunder control of corruption and maintenance of rule of law and political stability. Kyrgyzstan has also a history of violent political and social instability, unconstitutional changes of government and interethnic conflicts since its independence. It should be noted that the October 2017 Presidential election in Kyrgyzstan was marked as the first

democratic transfer of power from a sitting president, who has completed a constitutionally defined term of office, to an elected successor. Kyrgyzstan faces a number of systemic constraints and inherent challenges, including competing political interests and threats to reverse decentralization reform.

Despite this, Kyrgyzstan has seen some positive local governance developments since independence, especially compared to its regional neighbors, and several attempts have been made to address systemic constraints, e.g. the newly-adopted Budget Code, which promotes budget hearings and facilitating inter-municipal transfers, and the enlargement of local government own-revenue assignments. Recent initiatives to delineate central and local government service provisions and to 'clean up' the fragmented and often contradictory legal framework for public services have also been implemented, while some work is underway on establishing a more adequate capacity-development framework for local government staff.

International Principles of LSG Practices

Internationally recognized principles of local self-government practices have been outlined by the European Charter of Local Self-Government (1985)⁶ adopted by the Council of Europe and its members, while UN-Habitat in cooperation with United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), stopping short of adopting a global charter, published the 'International Guidelines on Decentralization and the Strengthening of Local Authorities' (2007) and 'International Guidelines on Access to Basic Services for All' (2009) in support of worldwide governance devolution practices.

In accordance with these framework guidelines, a well-functioning local government system is a system in balance, which operates effectively and transparently within all its horizontal and vertical dimensions: governance, functions, funding, administration, accountability, participation and oversight. In order to achieve this, a number of key elements in the local government system are imperative, including strong cross-sectoral coordination and strong intergovernmental arrangements and relations (see Textbox 1).

Local government reforms, and the shift in power balances that inevitably come with them, are often resisted by strong stakeholders such as sector ministries, ministries of finance or Parliamentarians due to an anticipation of anarchy, out of vested self-interests or simply due to traditional thinking and lack of knowledge. While these positions may not be articulated directly, poor local government capacity is a common argument raised against decentralization.

Textbox 1:

Key Elements in a Local Government System

1. Constitutional safeguards and adequate legislation
2. Rational admin-territorial structure with some flexibility for inter-municipal cooperation
3. Democratically elected councils with gender balance
4. Clear functional division between levels of governments
5. Transparent and balanced system of fiscal transfers and local revenues, matching functional assignments
6. Credible and transparent local financial management framework in line with international standards
7. External legal supervision and financial audits
8. Private sector and CSO involvement in local government service delivery
9. Collaborative relations between sectors and local governments
10. Adequate and sustained local government managerial and human capacity
11. Institutional arrangements for local government capacity building, with timely induction of new councilors
12. Sound knowledge management systems allowing for transparency, accountability and public engagements in all local government affairs
13. Strong central government coordination and strong local government associations
14. A platform or mechanism for interaction between local governments and central government

⁶ The original charter was adopted with central-local government relations in mind, while another protocol was added in 2009 in order to supplement the charter with good participatory practices.

There are indeed inherent local problems, especially in poor rural areas (personnel gaps, quality, training, rent-seeking behavior, remoteness, communications, etc.). However, such constraints are often generic and externally imposed upon local governments, and need to be sorted out at regional or national level, e.g.:

- Inadequate or perverse funding arrangements
- Unclear or ambiguous roles, functions and expectations
- Unclear procedures and poor guidance for participation, planning, budgeting, procurement and financial management
- Weak or distorted institutional accountability arrangements and coordination between levels and sectors
- Inadequate arrangements to allow “hiring in” of government or private technical expertise
- Weak or overzealous monitoring, ineffective or counterproductive performance incentives or performance sanctions.

Challenges in reaching key elements of a balanced LSG system in Kyrgyzstan

In Kyrgyzstan, challenges remain in almost all of the key elements of a balanced local self-government system mentioned above. Most notably, a non-exhaustive list of challenges would include:

- The fragmented, ambiguous and unclear division of roles and responsibilities between levels of government, not least with regard to service delivery.
- As a consequence of the former, serious issues of unfunded local government mandates, especially concerning delegated state functions, which are undermining the autonomy of local government planning and budgeting.
- A general need for stronger downward accountability relations between local councils and electorates and for credible frameworks and guidance in public engagements, which can stimulate mutual understanding between councils and local residents of the need for sustainable, cost-effective service delivery.
- Despite several attempts to launch an ATR, the local government territorial structure remains a challenge for LSG functional mandates and further decentralization, whilst a strong tradition of inter-municipal cooperation (IMC), which could compensate for small LSGs and strengthen economies of scale, has yet to be established.
- While SALSGIR was reestablished, there is no strong ownership of local government within central government as there is no presence of a dedicated Ministry with powers to coordinate with sector ministries and the Ministry of Finance. The slow progress of local government development plans and the difficulties experienced in cross-sectoral coordination are symptoms of institutional weaknesses (and resistance) at the central level, leaving behind an urgent need for a general overhaul of the local government framework.
- Poorly defined and ineffective mechanisms for central-local coordination of policy development, legislation and local finance. This also includes a poor understanding among parliamentarians and local councilors alike of the need for a local government association to monitor subnational systems, to ensure that roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders are clear and understood and to advocate for sufficient resources to match local mandates. To this end, the LSG Union seems to operate in relative isolation, with little impact and little legitimacy vis-à-vis its (potential) members.
- Little or no tradition of private business sector involvement in local service delivery, and lack of incentives to promote such forms of cooperation. The promotion of private business sector overall, and the contributions of local government to local economic development by means of outsourcing service delivery, when appropriate and cost-effective, are poorly understood and

incentivized. In addition, no strategic links between the President's Regional Development Strategy and the role and contributions of LSGs have been established.

- Women are very poorly represented in local councils, despite the fact that council decisions have direct impact on the priorities of local governments and delivery of services. If local service delivery fails, women and families are likely to be disproportionately affected and they have no option but to call local councils to action. At present, LSGs appear poorly equipped for gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive budgeting. Weak operational capacities and in some cases potentially conflict-ridden environments may be additional impediments to women's empowerment in local governance.
- There is no systematic induction of newly elected councilors. Unless a development project such as VAP or PSI happens to be targeting the council in question, councilors receive no formal training on their roles and duties as elected representatives.
- Whilst a formula-based local government grant mechanism is in use, it is overly complicated and does not in any systematic way address the need for equitable development and for costing and compensating LSGs when new legislation is adopted. While central government refers to LSGs receiving fiscal transfers to bridge local budget imbalances as 'subsidized', it is the improperly designed intergovernmental fiscal transfer system more than self-inflicted local policies which create these imbalances and promotes fiscal dependence on central support. Fiscal space and properly funded mandates need to be core principles in any LSG Union advocacy. As discussed in the impact section, the evaluation found a growing understanding of tax-local budget-service linkages among the interviewed local residents. The respondents clearly articulated that local taxes are a major revenue source for local government budgets. However, due to economic hardships, the population is not willing to pay higher taxes. According to the interviewed municipal staff and engaged citizens, populist decisions of local councils are another impediment to raising local taxes, as they are key decision makers in local budget distribution and directly elected by local residents.

Assessing the current trajectory in the development of the local government system is difficult, but recent history suggests that incremental improvements of the LSG framework can be introduced on a continuous basis, albeit not embedded in a larger reform masterplan for LSGs. However, SALSGIR has drafted a new development plan for 2018-2023, which awaits adoption and funding. This draft addresses much of the 'unfinished business' left over after the implementation of the previous plan 2013-2018.

Factors of VAP and PSI Relevance

Most of the LSG development work being carried out at both national and local level in Kyrgyzstan is spearheaded by the support from VAP and PSI. Due to their sheer scale and long-term commitment, both projects are strategically well-positioned to pilot and upscale participatory budgeting and to address core challenges in municipal service delivery and demonstrate viable solutions, which address some of the imbalances in the local government system. The core deliverables also reflect priority needs identified in the Local Development Plan 2013-2018 and (presumably) its successor. Core factors of high relevance to both projects are:

- The introduction of a participatory budgeting methodology in Kyrgyz LSGs revolving around Joint Action Plans (JAP) and paving the way for more accountable relations between local councils and the electorates.
- The introduction of concrete measures to improve and sustain municipal service delivery, notably through the promotion of SIAP and the concept of fully cost-based municipal services paid by end-users.

- The strong linkage between piloting at scale in five of seven oblasts and contributions to incremental improvements in the national LSG framework, most notably the Law on State and Municipal Service and the new Budget Code.
- The robust project designs which build on 1) consecutive implementation of VAP and PSI in the same pilot municipalities, allowing for faster implementation of PSI, stronger learning and deepening of participatory measures in the municipalities and 2) on-budget approaches, allocating project grants through the official fiscal transfer mechanism.
- Broad involvement of key stakeholders at central and local level and high visibility in terms of providing credible advice and tangible solutions to critical constraints in public engagement and service delivery.

VAP and PSI projects have consolidated their relevance by the systematic use of peer learning at both levels. At the local level, municipalities adjacent to pilot LSGs gain access to VAP and PSI methods without the grant mechanism, which allow both projects to test their approaches on terms similar to all non-project LSGs in the country. Centrally, SALS GIR and the LSG Union are involved in the peer-learning at national level as part of the support targeted them. This has been supplemented with international exposure visits to Bulgaria and Estonia in order to facilitate learning from post-socialist countries with more advanced experience in decentralization and local governance.

The evaluation team also noted a particular relevance with regard to the piloting of inter-municipal cooperation (IMC) which demonstrates promising potential. Despite the President recently announcing his support for an administrative-territorial reform (ATR) and despite the fact that ATR is mentioned in a new draft of the 2018-2030 National Strategy for Sustainable Development, the extent of committed ATR implementation remains to be seen. Given this context, successful introduction of IMC practices may compensate for poor economies of scale in local services within the current LSG territorial boundaries. It is therefore paramount that IMC remain a key priority area for the second phase of PSI.

The evaluation outcomes suggest that critical reforms continue to be highly contested and promoters of decentralization and local governance in Parliament and in government consistently need to mobilize against initiatives towards more centralization and rolling back of incremental achievements. Initiatives by VAP to improve the intergovernmental fiscal transfer system also found less traction but will now be addressed through the upcoming PFM project, which is implemented by the World Bank and funded by the Swiss Government and the EU Delegation.

3.2 Effectiveness

Overall the evaluation found that both VAP and PSI have to a large extent been effective in contributing to achieving their stated objectives and targets at local and national levels, despite the contextual challenges described in the relevance section. The field data and review of the projects progress reports, external and internal reviews, end-line survey and logframe reports suggest that the projects have been producing stated outcomes foreseen by the project documents.⁷

Identified factors influencing the achievements of the projects' objectives

Analysis of data suggests that the strategic approaches in implementation of these two projects greatly influenced the achievement of the stated objectives and targets. The robust project design builds on a) implementation of VAP and PSI in the same pilot municipalities, and utilization of the VAP project's tried-and-tested approaches and tools by PSI; b) Joint Action Plans (JAPs) promoting local socio-economic strategies for developing specific improvements plans, including SIAPs; c) deepening the participatory

⁷ See Annex C and D for VAP's and PSI's logframe showing progress towards the stated results to date.

process and allocation of project grants through the official fiscal transfer to address priority citizen needs and to improve public service mechanisms; and d) contributing to the improvement of national LSG legal and institutional frameworks. Additionally, the projects' effective strategic approaches include:

- Priority issues and services selected based on real needs and priorities of the population, as identified in a transparent and participatory manner;
- VAP linking downstream results and identifying systemic inefficiencies with upstream advocacy;
- Engaging the existing LSG system and community structures (women groups, rural health, youth and parent committees, *ak-sakal* [elder] courts, water user associations, etc.) to reduce the likelihood of creating parallel structures, eliminate competition and create better-connected local networks. Utilization of existing community structures seemingly also provided key leverage for acceptance and citizen participation in the decision-making process;
- Providing training activities for, and including the above-mentioned community structures in Initiative and M&E groups, as well as ensuring that SIAP working groups are operating alongside LSGs, is the best way to maintain institutional memory and sustain the citizen engagement process;
- Grant programs have been allowing testing and competing between municipalities, as well as helping to develop JAPs and comprehensive SIAPs and implement them; hence actually solving jointly identified priority issues and public service needs, and contributing to increased levels of confidence and trust in local authorities on the part of the local community;
- Strategic partnerships with key national and local partners, and involvement of specialized ad hoc expert support from various specialists was also a factor in effectiveness of the projects.

In addition, municipality staff interviewed, national partners, IG and M&E, and SIAP working groups highlighted that training activities and guidelines and tools provided on citizen engagement were a key factor in achievement of the projects' outcomes. Respondents frequently highlighted the value of interactive citizen engagement methods, focusing on e.g. group discussions (age-disaggregated), mapping exercises, public budget and tariff hearings with presentations, ranking prioritized community needs, voting and the process of identifying the prioritized public service needs. For example, in the municipalities visited by the ET in Chui *oblast* (both target and non-target), these methods and approaches are reportedly still in use even after the decreased VAP intervention.

Identified common outcomes

Analysis of field data indicates that both projects' activities resulted in several important common outcomes.

Trustful environment and cooperation appear to have been built between residents, municipal civil servants and local councils. The holding of public budget and tariff hearings and a process of identifying priority service needs, reported created a formal mechanism for promoting consultative processes and citizen participation in decision-making. This in turn deepened understanding among citizens about the roles and responsibilities of LSGs, increased awareness of the specificities of budgeting and challenges faced by municipalities related to budget deficit, delegated state functions and provided different types of services to the local population. This has seemingly led to increased levels of trust between residents, municipal civil servants and local councils. Prior the projects' interventions, the local population regarded municipal civil servants and local councils as corrupt and uncaring, while municipal civil servants perceived residents as being ungrateful for the hard work performed by municipal employees, according to interviewed primary beneficiaries, IG and M&E group, SIAP working groups and municipal civil servants. As a result of the introduced methods for citizen engagement, a positive shift in the attitudes and behaviors of both residents and LSGs, and a narrowing of the gap between municipal civil servants, local

councils and residents was reportedly observed. The municipal civil servants interviewed conveyed that an increased level of trust between three key actors on the local level is one of the significant successes of VAP and PSI. Trust is considered one of the key factors that unite people for joint actions to solve local concerns and rally around budget and tariff hearings, developing JAPs and SIAPs, monitor these plans implementations, and invest time and resources beyond tax payments.

Improved access to information was highlighted in all visited municipalities by interviewed local residents. In Ak-Bashat, for example, the municipality distributes a quarterly newsletter containing information about local news among residents, including any grants obtained, reports on achievements, announcements about upcoming public events (such as hearings and exchange visits), vacancies, and highlights names of malicious defaulters for public services provided. The ET noticed information boards containing information on budget allocation, spending, announcements about upcoming budget hearings, and services provided in every visited municipality, both VAP and PSI.

Increased sense of motivation and mobilization of civic society initiatives led to increasing citizen participation in fundraising activities beyond municipal service delivery. The evaluation found a few cases in which the local population mobilized its own resources to contribute to service provision. For example, in Jeti-Oguz, the local residents contributed meals to road construction workers, while in Alexandrovka, the population was mobilized by youth leaders (members of M&E team) to contribute funds to successfully install lighting to all its 40 streets. The M&E team reported that in order to mobilize the inhabitants of each street, they used VAP's methods for citizen engagement (conducted street lighting project hearings, discussed budget, timeframe, appointed monitoring team), so that residents could participate in decision-making, feel ownership over the project, become motivated and fundraise to implement the project. Resident contributions toward solving priority issues beyond municipal service delivery indicated increased civic participation as well as longer mileage on limited resources.

An increased sense of ownership over the local budget formation and implementation of developed JAPs and SIAPs was reported by the vast majority of primary beneficiaries interviewed, IG and M&E groups, and SIAP working groups.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) groups are successfully formed and functioning, but they mainly carry out documenting and supervising rather than monitoring. Despite this, M&E groups play an important role in the implementation of JAP, SIAP and beyond activities. The joint M&E groups were found to be nearly gender-and-age balanced, consisting of representatives of various existing community structures (parent, youth, and elder committees, women's groups, and others), local councils and municipal staff. Interviewed M&E teams reported being trained by the projects to keep LSGs accountable in the implementation of JAP and SIAPs, addressing local concerns, being transparent in the budget process, and performing public monitoring of the local service delivery. Specifically, the M&E team reported that they have learned about their roles, when and how to conduct monitoring on provided services, and how to report.

However, during the group discussions with M&E groups, it was revealed that M&E groups were mainly documenting rather than monitoring by taking photo pictures, drafting acts, and being present during e.g. road constructions (Jazy), water pipe installations (Kenes), and construction of adaptation classes for children with special educational needs (Bosteri and Jeti-Oguz). This is understandable, as some of the service provision indicators are challenging to measure given that the members of M&E groups are not specialists or experts in engineering or construction work. Nonetheless, M&E teams are playing a central role in ensuring that materials are there and quality is acceptable. In Jeti-Oguz for instance, during the construction of an adaptation classes for children with special educational needs, M&E members noticed that the wheelchair ramp was too steep and that handrails in bathrooms were missing. The M&E group

brought the matter to the attention of the local administration and community, who ensured that the construction company fixed the issues identified. The interviewed primary beneficiaries and LSGs consider joint M&E groups to be community watchdogs. However, in some municipalities visited, M&E teams revealed challenges such as transport issues or lack of time to travel to monitoring sites.

The evaluation found that M&E groups are also actively involved in reviewing municipality tender announcements and grant proposals to ensure that they are in line with the identified priority needs and local services. In almost all visited municipalities, the evaluation found that joint M&E teams were institutionalized either by Local Council Resolutions or included in adopted Local Community Charters, thereby ensuring sustainable mechanisms for citizen oversight and participation in local decision-making process.

Incremental changes introduced in LSG national legal and institutional framework thanks to VAP and PSI. According to interviews conducted with VAP and PSI project staff and with national partners (President's Office, MPs and parliament employees, SPS, SALSGIR, LSG Union), project interventions have greatly contributed in introducing various measures within the LSG national policy framework to support citizen participation, improve LSG legislation and local government service provision, advocate for advancing decentralization, and provide support to SALSGIR and the LSG Union. To name only a few contributions highlighted by the partners: the new draft LSG development plan 2018-2023, which puts more emphasis on community work and ATR compared to its predecessor; assistance to the SALSGIR on the basic register of municipal services according to the Law on State and Municipal Services, which lists services of local significance regarding the LSG law; adoption of the Law on Delegated Authorities, and the adoption of a Budget Code that promotes obligatory nationwide budget hearings and facilitates inter-municipal transfers.⁸ The specific challenges concerning the LSG sector are discussed in the relevance section below.

Key Findings: Strengthening Voice and Accountability Project

Citizen engagement model in budget process is in place, applied and functioning. In all VAP municipalities visited, the ET found evidence of functioning models of community engagement in the budgetary process through Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), the creation and training of M&E, and Initiative Groups (IG) consisting of community residents, local councils and municipal staff on conducting focus group discussions with local residents to identify priorities, budget processes, and develop and monitor the implementation of Joint Action Plans (JAP). This has created a platform for local residents to participate in the identification of priority needs, and to develop JAPs jointly with LSGs to address local priority issues and residents' needs.

Perceptions of the improved, accountable, and transparent local government processes were conveyed by the interviewed municipality staff, local councils and primary beneficiaries in all visited municipalities (Alexandrovka, Ak-Bashat, Jazy, Shark). Thus, the interviewed primary beneficiaries pointed to an increased availability of municipal civil servants to answer their questions. In Alexandrovka, municipality civil servants stated that VAP taught them not only to plan and engage with citizens in the decision-making process, but also to clearly report using visual materials that are easy for residents to understand (handouts, pictures 'before' and 'after' service provisions, budget 'pie charts,') and to explain each expense item and what it means for regular residents.

Citizen participation in budget hearings and emerging understanding among people about the relationship between tax payment and service delivery. A vivid example of this was observed by the ET at Shark municipality's public budget hearing, which was attended by more than 475 people. During the

⁸ See Annex F for a list of recommendations on amendments and supplements to the LSG legislation

hearing, citizens brought up a number of issues including education, hospitals, road/bridge maintenance, public transportation coverage, road safety, waste collection, and electricity. It should be noted that almost half of the speakers were women. A particularly heated debate was instigated by a female participant around the issue of tax payment and the right to obtain local services. The speaker was not happy with the efforts of LSG to register all taxpayers and was adamant that more must be done to collect taxes from everybody or, alternatively, simply deny new infrastructure to settlements which do not pay taxes. This was a perfect 'civic education moment' for all participants at the hearing on rights and duties as tax payers and members of the local community. Apart from this particular issue, the meeting also made it perfectly clear for everybody that not all of the many relevant issues brought up could be addressed within the 2019 budget envelope.

Grants were found to be an effective mechanism in promoting participatory budgeting, as well as increasing LSGs' investment management skills and responsiveness to local initiatives. The interviewed VAP staff stated that the grant program aims to train both LSGs and communities so that they fully utilize the community engagement model. Specifically, LSGs are trained (a) to plan investments based on local priorities, and (b) to address identified priorities following all transparent decision-making rules and procedures with communities' engagement in oversight. Meanwhile, communities are trained to participate in the decision making, including negotiating on priorities for the public allocation of funds, thereby further sharing ownership and responsibility for results, including participation in monitoring. Similarly, the field data shows that the grant component of VAP facilitated LSGs to fully practice the community engagement model. Thus, the VAP grant mechanism promoted the participation of residents in identifying priorities and including these priorities in JAPs. In addition, LSGs reportedly improved their skills to design, obtain funding and implement grant projects.

The grant mechanism provides an opportunity for residents to solve priority issues in a participatory manner and pushes municipalities to mobilize their own resources. The field data suggests that grants, in addition to promoting participatory budgeting, also reportedly solve long-standing challenges in local service provision and thus have direct impact on the lives of citizens. Thus, in Alexandrovka, municipality civil servants reported that in 2015-2016 the community identified 11 priority issues, in 2017 the list of priority issues decreased to nine, and in 2018 they have only seven issues on the list. In Ak-Bashat, the interviewed school administrators, IG and M&E groups reported that repairing the school's kitchen and obtaining kitchen equipment increased student attendance, particularly of children from impoverished families. Similarly, in visited non-target municipalities (Pervomaiskyi and Mady), the grants also proved to be an effective mechanism for engaging citizens in identifying priorities and adopting JAPs, and in establishing IG and M&E groups. For example, in Mady grant funds have been used for repairing the heating system in a local kindergarten to accommodate more than 200 children, mostly of labor migrants who left the care of their children to grandparents.

In addition, LSG training on project design and implementation positively influenced the ability of municipality civil servants to draft grant proposals and receive grants from other international donors and government stimulation grants, thereby bringing more funds to the local budget. Of note is the fact that interviewed local residents, IG and M&E groups were aware of additional grants attracted by LSG, including their amount and purpose. This indicates that the local population receives transparent information regarding budget sources. Thus, in Ak-Bashat, the interviewed residents were aware of the municipality's success in attracting grant support from the South Korean government of 100,000 som for repairing roads/bridges, ARIS granted 17.5 million som for building a kindergarten, and Chui Oblast Development Fund granted 1.3 million to the municipality for building an internal road.

LSGs' managing and governing capacity to respond adequately to citizen needs seemingly strengthened, and capacity to protect LSG interests gradually increasing; however, lack of local councils' capacity

becoming a barrier for moving forward. Interviews with national partners, projects' staff, and LSGs suggest that VAP has been successful in strengthening capacity of LSGs. Thus, a number of interviewed municipal civil servants of target and non-target visited municipalities highlighted their improved ability to apply gained knowledge through VAP's trainings on management, governance, financial management, community engagement, local needs-based planning, grant and other investment management. Moreover, LSGs stressed that the project increased their understanding on delegated state function, as well as their ability to distinguish between delegated state functions and local authority functions. LSGs admitted that prior to the project they were able to see only problems of their own village, and are now capable of seeing bigger picture and strategic issues. This was evident during the heated debates at the National Forum of LSGs co-organized by VAP, as well as at discussions with stakeholders at the local level. Weak capacity and lack of strategic vision of LCs was expressed as a concern by key informants across stakeholder groups. This reportedly created a barrier for effective LSG budgeting and sustainable work of appointed Heads of AO and other municipal civil servants, as LCs tend to promote their own narrow interests.

Municipal civil servants' qualification upgrade system is introduced and seemingly strengthened. VAP's efforts in support of the municipal civil servants' continuous education system upgrade has been effective as the project worked not only with the state institution responsible for public servant's performance, but also with the government and parliament on refining public service legislation and policy execution. As reported by the project, 13 models for municipal servant training were successfully introduced and institutionalized in partnership with SPS. This training system is expected to strengthen the capacity and qualification of municipal civil servants in a standardized and consistent manner. The new Law on Civil and Municipal Service will apparently provide an opportunity for municipal civil servants to be promoted on the civil service ladder, which is in turn expected to provide incentive to strengthen performance and qualification of municipal civil servants, as well as to reduce the high staff turnover in municipalities.

Key Findings: Public Service Improvement Project

SIAP is widely adopted and used beyond the grant mechanism in the project municipalities. SIAP was described as a tool that showed how LSGs should work; however, many interviewed LCs and municipal civil servants admitted that without grant support, it would be very challenging to implement SIAP due to the lack of municipality resources and limited opportunities to attract other investment. Nonetheless, SIAP is widely adopted and regarded as a useful 16-step tool that helps LSGs to better plan, manage, and provide services based on the priority needs of the local population identified in JAP. As a result of applying SIAP's instrument for inclusion, the needs of vulnerable groups in two out of four visited municipalities are now providing services to children with disabilities. Thus, in Bosteri and Jeti-Oguz, adaptation classes for children with special educational needs were successfully established and are functioning with the support of the project's grant and the municipalities co-contributions.

Overall, feedback on SIAP suggests that this methodology has introduced a new system of municipality operation. Thus, field data shows that pilot municipalities use SIAP for solving priority issues that are not supported by the project's grant. For example, in Jeti-Oguz, two SIAPs were successfully developed to address a street lighting issue and repair a kindergarten, while in Kenesh, SIAP was used to offer a music class and repair a House of Culture. As a result, the House of Culture holds public concerts, and 15 percent of generated income from provided services remains in the House of Culture, while the remainder goes to the municipality budget.

LSG's increased understanding of the service delivery concept. LSGs shared that PSI's capacity building activities and technical assistance (SIAP formation, establishing municipal enterprises, local register) helped to increase their understanding of the service delivery concept. Reportedly, LSGs lacked

knowledge that service delivery entails not merely possession of infrastructure objects (buildings, tractors and other machinery), but also a well-functioning municipal service delivery system and support structures that provide regular, good quality services based on cost-recovering tariffs.

Perceptions of improved living conditions as a result of provided services

Key informants in visited municipalities testified that identified priority issues are gradually being solved, and hence living conditions improving thanks to participation in PSI. For example, in Jalal-Abad, the interviewed residents reported that the issue of access to clean water has been solved for two out of six villages and will soon be solved for the remaining villages as well. Respondents expressed satisfaction with the provided service in terms of paid tariff, water quality and consistent provision. Women stated that with access to clean water their children are not sick, that they are no longer carrying water for great distances, and are now able to install washing machines, which frees up time that they can use for other activities instead. In Issyk-Kul, beneficiaries expressed satisfaction with the PSI support in solving issues of bad road conditions and street lighting. Apparently the resolution of these issues has led to reduced theft of livestock, decreased incidence of hooliganism, and increased safety for children attending evening sport classes.

Emerging experience of tariff calculation and the concept of full cost recovery for provided municipal services. As reported, prior to the project, real-cost pricing of services was rarely applied in municipalities due to a lack of capacity to determine and establish cost-recovery tariffs. Furthermore, setting low tariffs have also been populist decisions, particularly on part of LCs. However, in visited municipalities the evaluation found an emerging experience of tariff calculation and a willingness by municipalities to increase the quality of services within the cost-recovery schemes. Factors such as increased capacity of municipality staff and services providers, received technical assistance and coaching, as well as established municipality legal framework, M&E groups, and public tariff hearings influenced success. For example, in Kenesh, a private service provider stated that training provided through the PSI project and technical expertise provided by accountants, inspectors and technicians had made it possible for the municipality to calculate tariffs for regular provision of clean water. Calculations showed that in order to recover maintenance and provision costs, 20 soms (~0.287 CHF) should be paid one cubic meter of water use. The calculations were presented in detail at a public tariff hearing meeting which was called to inform the local population about the upcoming costs to be paid in order to receive clean water on a regular basis. Interviewed primary beneficiaries, SIAP working group and M&E team members expressed satisfaction with the entire process, in comparison to the situation prior to the project when they were not at all aware where the figure of 700 soms (~10.03 CHF) per month for clean water came from. Given that the service providers installed meters to measure water usage per household and that the municipality explained the importance of timely payments for the use of water during the tariff hearing, the respondents agreed with the calculated cost in the hope that they would receive consistently good quality service, and expressed trust and confidence in the ability of the service provider and municipality to determine and establish a cost-recovering tariff.

Emerging positive experience with various inter-municipal models, which can be used for upscaling. In two out of four visited municipalities, the evaluation found positive experiences of inter-municipal cooperation in provision of services. This is a very promising outcome for introducing effective inter-municipal cooperation practices, improving service provision for small LSGs and strengthening economies. Interviewed LSGs of pilot and neighboring municipalities, municipal and private service providers highlighted that the newly adopted Budget Code, introduced community engagement model (budget and tariff hearings, SIAP WG, M&E teams) and PSI grant mechanism are the key factors for facilitating inter-municipal transfers and the enlargement of LSG revenue. Thus, in Jeti-Oguz the evaluation found a successful inter-municipal cooperation case on internal road repairs. This case demonstrates a) effective

nurturing of citizen engagement, including conducted internal municipal and inter-municipal public hearings, b) successful drafting of a grant proposal and obtaining PSI grant in the amount of 5 million soms (~71,685 CHF), c) effective drafting and signing inter-municipal agreement between participating municipalities, d) calculation and approval of tariff for roads maintenance and repairs, e) transfer of funds on horizontal level, so that each of the five participating neighboring municipalities contributed 100,000 soms (~1,433 CHF), f) establishing joint M&E team, g) purchasing of grader through tender, and other activities. Having a successful pilot experience with inter-municipal cooperation on road repairs, Jeti-Oguz municipality and its five neighboring LSGs are planning to prepare a waste dump place and improve waste collection. As reported, tariffs for waste collection were already calculated with the help of PSI.

It should be noted that the remainder of the PSI grant – a sum of 400,000 soms (~5,734 CHF) - was topped up with the municipality's own funds to purchase a mid-size bus for 750,000 soms (~10,753 CHF), in order to transport students with disabilities attending an adaptation class for children with special educational needs. The anticipated provision of a free transport for children in the upcoming academic year is a great help for parents (particularly those who reside in remote villages), as was highlighted during the group discussion with parents.

Service providers also see inter-municipal cooperation as an opportunity to increase service subscribers, which consequently might decrease tariffs and reduce the economic burden on subscribers given the general low solvency. At the same time, concerns regarding lack of a sense of responsibility and ignorance on the part of some local residents, particularly in wasteful use of water, electric power and dumping garbage in non-designated places, were raised by service providers, pointing to a need for civic education.

3.3 Efficiency

Challenges regarding use of the procurement portal at municipal level. Overall, the evaluation found nearly timely implementation of the both projects. However, there are apparently challenges in using the state procurement portal to implement grants or tenders, that delayed some of the grants and other activities. LSGs reported that despite the support of both projects' staff, a complicated procurement process causes delays due to difficulties in specifying every technical detail of a procurement item (tractors, graders, pen, paper, computer, chairs, tables, kitchen equipment, etc.). In addition, reportedly strict requirements related to documentation for obtaining permissions for repairs/constructions/electricity improvements, as well as construction-related work, also hold back the timely execution of outputs.

The projects put mitigation measures in place to lower the risk of corruption. For example, all municipalities participating in the projects are required to comply with the state procurement procedures; requirements about tender commission composition are in place (community representatives are required to be included in the commission); and monitoring procedures to monitor grant implementation have also been established. Further, grant funds are transferred through the local budget, meaning that local authorities are accountable for these funds to the community and to state inspection agencies. Overall, as reported by the projects, the experience of transferring funds through the Treasury department has proven to be reliable and safe, although some municipality staff members mentioned an initial challenge in initiating procurement activities before grant funds were transferred to the municipal budget. Reportedly, this challenge was successfully resolved with the help of VAP staff. The evaluation has limited data to extensively elaborate on all corruption risks; however, apart from embezzlement and theft risks, there might also be other corruption opportunities; e.g. fraud in the form of artificially increased prices for infrastructure construction, bribery, abuse of discretion and favoritism in the selection of certain construction companies. Another risk might be a misunderstanding of the service

provision concept, as some of the interviewed municipal service providers mentioned, and of opportunities for the commercialization of service provision.

Grant-supported physical investment has been made, installed and purposefully used. During the field mission the evaluation team visited some of the projects-supported sites in both target and non-target municipalities, such as schools, kindergartens, adaptation classes for children with special education needs, and construction sites (water pipes and meter installation areas). The observation of sites shows that physical investments have been made, specifically good quality grants-supported equipment being procured, installed and purposefully used. Similarly, technical equipment provided to municipalities (computers, printers, projectors, laptops, loudspeakers, amplifiers, microphones, information boards, etc.) are used as by municipality staff as well as by Initiative and M&E groups, and SIAP Working groups. Interviewed municipality staff members mentioned that since the equipment is newly acquired, there is no specific allocated item in the municipal budget for repairs; however, local budgets allocated an item for maintenance of this equipment, such as paying for electric power, water, etc.

PSI feedback boxes installed in visited municipalities; however, these boxes do not seem to be in use. In visited municipalities, the ET noticed the PSI project-installed boxes to collect feedback and suggestions. However, these boxes do not seem to be used by local people; municipality civil servants mentioned that they open the boxes once a week and find them empty. Apparently, the local population prefer to ask questions and provide feedback face-to-face, as they either receive a response immediately or are promised that responses will be sent in due course through a village head. In Bosteri municipality, in addition to ‘feedback’ boxes the evaluation found a notebook that contained a few feedback notes; however, the subsequent use of this information by the municipality was unclear.

Limited PSI staff resources hinder the project’s knowledge and practice dissemination. The evaluation found that the PSI project is understaffed; it consists of only five staff members. Despite this, the project is managed and coordinated in a professional manner, and to a great extent is achieving results. However, the limited human resources contribute to a high level of stress given the complexity of the project, as well as the need to control the considerable financial distributions to municipalities. Thus, for example, only one person manages the entire grant program and is also responsible for M&E. Insufficient allocation of staff impedes the project’s knowledge, practices and dissemination of lessons learned, as well as advocacy work at the national policy level. Without knowledge and dissemination, it will be challenging to ensure upscaling of results.

Visualization of achieved results needs to be improved. Both VAP and PSI put considerable effort into documenting implementation progress. However, the visualization of achieved results needs to be improved. For example, a list of VAP contributions in improving legislation regarding LSG lacks clear demonstration of what was actually achieved. Clarity can be improved by adding a column on status of effort, and in turn, improving the visualization of achieved results would be helpful for reporting and further marketing of the project’s success.

3.4 Impact

The broader impact of the VAP and PSI projects on local governance in Kyrgyzstan was assessed with the aim of identifying positive and negative changes produced by the project interventions, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. In contrast to project effectiveness, the impact assessment dealt with broader changes beyond the immediate scope of the project interventions.

Since VAP has been implemented over a longer time span, most impact achievements have their origins in activities carried out in this project, although the geographical overlap of PSI has allowed for stronger consolidation of these impacts. In this sense, it would be meaningless to attribute some of these impacts

to the VAP project without mentioning the PSI project as well. With this in mind, VAP has generally achieved its strongest impact in the promotion of transparency and public engagements, while PSI is set to achieve significant impact as regards sustainable approaches to municipal service delivery. Both projects have positively impacted on the overall LSG legislative framework and promoted their intervention approaches among government agencies such as ARIS and State Service for Architecture, Construction and Housing and Communal Services (SSACHCS), whilst other donors, most prominently the USAID-funded CAMI project, also adopted VAP and PSI methodologies, thereby considerably expanding the impact of the projects beyond the pilot areas.

As a result of VAP project's promotion of participatory budgeting, a general and seemingly stable enabling environment for participation has been established in the pilot municipalities. Notably, an enabling environment which did not exist prior to the implementation of the VAP project, although data from the field also suggest that previous support, such as the UNDP governance project promoting strategic planning and public engagements, also contributed in some cases to creation of the enabling environment. Overall, the impact of the VAP project, subsequently been reinforced by the PSI project, has infused a perception of mutual trust between LSGs and local residents and a change in attitude and behavior on both sides. Overall, both projects have promoted the importance of civic education among the general public and conveyed a broader message on the role and responsibilities of local governments and what it means to be a responsible citizen in a democracy at the level of local government.

While both projects seek to promote gender mainstreaming and active citizenship for women, it is not clear what *specific gender mainstreaming approaches* have been applied by the two projects. However, experience from the field suggests that the general promotion of participation also tends to further women's participation in local governance, which may also lead more women to run for local elections in the future.

A prominent message conveyed through both projects is the need to balance taxes and services. The participatory budgeting process and the SIAP methodology teach local residents that tax payments and levels of service delivery are linked and that priority decisions in one area have consequences for the other. The growing understanding of tax-service linkages was clearly demonstrated during the field visits. The budget hearing observed in Shark municipality, which was attended by some 476 residents (half of them women), entailed lively discussions on various priority areas for action. By listening to each other and referring to the draft 2019 budget presented at the beginning of the meeting, it became obvious to all that not all priorities could be realized within the 2019 budget. Participants also reflected that unregistered residents need to start paying taxes or face the consequence of not getting access to municipal services.

The concept of active citizenship and the need to contribute to the local community has also been taken further by some local Initiative Groups and M&E Groups. Evidence from LSGs in Alexandrovka, Shark, and Jazy suggest that fundraising activities to solve local issues beyond municipal services are emerging, either separately or in alliance with the LSG. This sense of tax payment responsibility among citizens is also promoted by the SIAP approach, which links cost recovery to municipal services, and evidence from the field suggests that the SIAP is applied beyond areas receiving grant support. The practices in Jeti-Oguz LSG also included an example, where local residents provided free food to road workers, over and above the budgeted costs for road maintenance, thereby expanding the reach of municipal funds for road maintenance. However, more work is still needed to sustain municipal services, especially on maintaining the arms-length principle between utility services and direct municipal subsidies and potential benefits (immediate and derived) of more engagement with private business sector in municipal service delivery.

Another PSI project impact is the overall rehabilitation of the municipal service delivery framework and support structures in the pilot municipalities, which include the overhaul of service registers, service standards and administrative regulations.

For councilors and staff employed by the LSGs, the projects promote a change of mindset towards serving the public rather than being self-serving or exclusively serving the interests of central authorities. After decades of centralized governance practices and upward accountability relations Kyrgyzstan is now moving towards a more balanced governance approach, in which open and transparent LSG management is combined with participatory, equitable and inclusive approaches in the pilot areas. In fact, evidence from the field suggests that participation has gained such momentum in many municipalities that any rolling back of such practices most probably will be resisted.

The rollout of VAP participatory approaches, including PRA and JAP, also appear to have decreased the risk of conflict between residents and local governments. This impact is critical since the VAP project was launched just after the ethnic and political tensions in 2010 and has operated in some of the hotspot areas of events during the time of conflict. The defusing of conflict risk is no doubt also a contributing factor in the relative success of promoting women's empowerment and participation. Global experience in local governance unanimously suggests that women's participation suffer immediately in times of conflicts and ethnic tension.

3.5 Sustainability

The assessment of project sustainability was conducted at local level and to the extent possible at the national level. It included ownership of results in the pilot municipalities as well as the likelihood of upscaling these results to other LSGs and nationwide through national partners in Parliament and Government, through the LSG Union and through collaborations with development partners. Overall, the evaluation is carefully optimistic about the long-term sustainability of results despite existing sustainability risks on national and municipal levels.

Sustainability Risks

As noted in the relevance section, the overall context of local governance in Kyrgyzstan is challenging, despite the presence of a national development plan for LSGs. While incremental improvements seem possible, and reflect the upscale strategy of both projects, decentralization remains contested, posing inherent risks for the sustainability of project results. The delicate balance between supporters and opponents of decentralization is challenged by the absence of strong champions for decentralization, who can spearhead concerted reform efforts, and ensure long-term cross-partisan political backing for their implementation.

Comprehensive local government reforms – from preparatory committee work to full implementation – usually take a decade or more (16 years in the case of the Latvian ATR from 1992-2008). Such a reform process will span at least 2-3 electoral terms. If broad political consensus cannot be ensured, there is a high risk of 'stop-go' policy-making or even a reversal of decentralization processes already initiated. Some Kyrgyz Members of Parliament and senior government officials fear that this could be the fate of decentralization reforms in Kyrgyzstan. Such zigzagging policies would make working conditions even more difficult for municipal civil servants at local level. The apparent lack of conceptual understanding, let alone support for the work of the LSG Union, and the seeming lack of collaborative reform networks among local councilors also hamper efforts to undertake concerted advocacy towards a stronger LSG system.

At municipal level, project sustainability is also challenged by the limited capacity of LSGs, due variously to the small size of average LSG administrations, low educational background of local officials, the difficulty of recruiting high-calibre staff, and high staff turnovers (28% annually). These project implementation barriers were also exacerbated by the local elections in 2016, which took place in the middle of the two-year pilot support.

Factors Supporting Sustainability

Despite these quite serious caveats, the evaluation team in general remains carefully optimistic about the long-term sustainability of results and the credibility of the incremental approaches the projects are applying. The potential risks and the challenging framework at national level are counterbalanced by the unilateral backing of results and approaches conveyed by project beneficiaries and partners at both local and national levels and the remarkably strong ownership of project results by stakeholders. This backing would make it more difficult to challenge the trend towards decentralization in Kyrgyzstan, given the demand for improved local democracy and services generated by the projects.

The evaluation team was also positively surprised by the seemingly strong institutional memory observed in the LSGs visited. Whilst high staff turnovers can seriously undermine capacity building support rendered by the projects, this did not appear to be the case in the pilot LSG assessed by the evaluation, nor in fact by non-project municipalities receiving scaled down support. In one extreme case, the team was even presented with participatory practices deriving from UNDP support in 2004-2005 on strategic participatory planning, which the AO head in one of the non-project municipalities still referred to. These findings lead the evaluation team to conclude that the high turnover in general does not undermine project results or the critical mass of capacity development necessary to maintain the new governance practices promoted by the projects.

The inclusive approaches of PRA, JAP, SIAP, etc. also broaden the knowledge and skills-base of these models, as more people within the LSG and within the local communities per se become capable of applying these tools. The same tools have also been promoted nationally and are now applied by national partners in government and among development partner such as the Ministry of Finance, USAID/CAMI, ARIS, GIZ, and the Soros Foundation. E.g. the SIAP model is now a de facto model for the application of stimulation grants from the Ministry of Finance, while the CAMI project has taken over VAP and PSI models per se, albeit foregoing the grants mechanism.

VAP: Key sustainability findings

Overall, both projects, but especially through VAP due to its longer duration, have been able to feed the legislative process in parliament and government with substantive legal support (see effectiveness section), which in essence upscale and sustain project results by way of generating incremental improvements in the legal framework of LSGs.

As expected, challenges remain at project level. In the case of VAP, the option of two-year pilot support does seem to be rather short and did not take into account the local elections in 2016. The remarkable results notwithstanding, there is still a case for extending the present pilots by one year as part of the VAP Phase II (if SDC contractual policy permits; if not, then extending the exit phase by one-year). The art of applying the participatory budgeting methodology has to be learned through practicing and adding another annual budget cycle to the learning process. This would be a valuable contribution to sustaining VAP approaches both in the target LSGs and for peer-learning in adjacent non-target LSGs, where VAP (and PSI) gathers considerable attention.

VAP has been successful in developing a training curriculum for LSG cadres in collaboration with SPS. In addition, external service providers have been introduced, as universities can now tender for training

delivery in the regional management centers. The evaluation team concur that increased competition is making good progress overall, but also recommend some caution in involving only academic resources in the training of LSG staff. While some supply-driven-training, for example on legal issues, no doubt needs to be provided by legal professionals, a lot of relevant short-term training of LSG cadres would entail practical issues such as applying VAP and PSI tools, or more generally how to deal with citizens and the private sector, how to deal with minority issues, gender mainstreaming and other issues in a day-to-day operation. Moreover, international good practice suggests that training of practitioners by academia is not always effective. Therefore, it is important to include trainer-practitioners along with trainers from academia, and to monitor the training delivered through systematic use of user-surveys to assess the quality of training and utilization of knowledge by trainees.

VAP and PSI may also promote good trainers from its network in the pilot LSGs. For example, the AO Head of Shark municipality revealed a strong knowledge about the VAP approaches, involvement of private business sector etc. and handled the budget hearing observed by the evaluation team very well. In addition, he has a legal background and fully understood the need for an LSG Union to spearhead advocacy at the national level. The LSG of Jeti-Oguz revealed good understanding of the IMC concept, while its female councilors demonstrated very good insights into the benefits of private business sector partnerships. Such local resources would be strong candidates as trainers of LSG staff (and local councilors).

Another point of interest relating to the short-term training courses is the applicability of e-learning as a supplement or alternative to traditional trainings, which VAP and PSI may consider as a cost-effective alternative of results dissemination. The Ministry of Finance (MoF) is currently testing e-learning as an alternative to traditional training methods. It plans to complete a comparative study on training effectiveness by late 2018. If the results are positive, the ministry will continue its e-learning courses. It was also open to accommodating other training sources, should VAP and PSI decide to disseminate project learnings this way, and the evaluation recommends that both projects consider this avenue of upscale/dissemination of project results.

Thus, for replicating and scaling up its achievements, VAP in its exit phase could, for example, focus on the following:

- a) assist SPS in increasing its capacity and competence to ensure the quality and effectiveness of LSG training delivery rendered by universities; for example, in order to measure quality of training and utilization of knowledge SPS should introduce a system for conducting surveys and develop a database for further analysis and improvement of modules/curriculum based on trainee feedback;
- b) advocate and assist SPS in developing a roster of LSG practitioner-trainers from the project's network in order to engage them in SPS-offered training of LSG cadres;
- c) foster peer-to-peer learning by engaging practitioners from target municipalities to non-target (not only adjacent) municipalities to practice application of the participatory budgeting methodology;
- d) explore an opportunity to link the VAP Model to the e-learning methodology currently tested by the Ministry of Finance as a cost-effective alternative to dissemination/upscaling of the project's results (see the sustainability section for details);
- e) continue to work on the incremental improvements of the legal framework of LSG mandate. However, given the challenging policy environment, legal assistance should not be considered as an end process, as it is a continuous, open ended activity that will require attention even after the end of the project.

PSI: Key sustainability findings While PSI has had less time in which to demonstrate solid results, and more work needs to be done to sustain and upscale them, the municipalities met by the evaluation team seemed remarkably well-versed in the SIAP methodology, applying it almost universally; i.e. even for funds mobilization beyond the project grant mechanism. To this end, the concept of cost-based local services seems to be well understood in the pilot municipalities. The issue of full cost recovery is also important in order to sustain the hardware investments funded by the SDC.

The team also noted emerging results with regard to intermunicipal co-operations (IMCs), with strong potential for upscaling. As mentioned above, the current territorial boundaries impose potentially weaker economies of scale in e. g. water supply, waste management and road maintenance, and IMCs are viable alternatives to larger LSG territories.

A contributing factor to the relatively quick absorption of PSI approaches in the LSGs has been the geographical overlap with VAP pilot areas, resulting in better preparedness and increased absorption capacity of the LSGs. Such quick gains would hardly have been possible if PSI was launched in new LSGs without VAP reference points (participation, understanding local finance, dealing with consultants and grant application formats, etc.). There has also been a considerable improvement, at least in the LSGs visited by the evaluation team, in the understanding of municipal services as being more than simply infrastructure. The PSI project still faces challenges however, which need to be addressed during its second phase.

One of the challenges is to mitigate the old practice of subsidizing municipal service providers directly, bypassing end-user payments. Direct subsidies for service providers, a relic of the socialist past, still seem to be the default way of thinking among local councils. If service providers obtain compensation no matter their efficiency or their ability to deliver on-standard service quality, perverse performance incentives are created. As already acknowledged by Helvetas and DPI, production costs need to be fully covered by way of end-user payments and service standards need to be spelt out in contractually binding service-level agreements which are monitored and enforced by LSGs with support from user surveys and a user complaints mechanism. If some end-users cannot pay full service costs, *they* should be subsidized, not the service provider.

Another challenge concerns the issue of private business sector involvement in municipal service delivery. Private business service providers may potentially be able to deliver better and more efficient services. LSGs can potentially also play a role in stimulating private business sector development and employment by involving the private business sector in service delivery activities. In fact, this is one of the few means LSGs have at their disposal to stimulate local economic development. The evaluation team's engagement with local councils revealed a very limited understanding of the potential benefits of involving the private business sector. In some cases, councilors even resented the idea of private business sector involvement and called for in-house service provision, if possible with the aim to generate a profit (and thereby compete with private companies using taxpayers' money)!

The intention of the evaluation team is not to promote private business sector as a default option for service provision, but there is indeed a strong need to raise more awareness about the potential benefits of private business sector involvement in terms of increased competition and benchmarking of publicly produced services, as well as the broader perspective of stimulating the local labour market and creating employment opportunities in the private business sector.

International experience in municipal service delivery indicates that it is within the technical and environmental services and municipal assets management where the greatest potential exists for private business sector involvement. This includes waste management, facility management, building owner advisory and management, selling and buying of municipal properties, rental/leasing of municipal car

fleets and machinery, and roads and parks maintenance. Good LSG practices include the development of regular local council *sourcing strategies*, which from time to time (e.g. just after local elections) reassess the overall LSG sourcing approach. Mapping the potential for private business sector involvement would include the assessment of:

- The council's own attitude towards in- or outsourcing of service deliveries
- Whether there is a viable private market
- Other LSGs sourcing experiences
- Where the service can be produced most cost-effectively
- Whether the laws imply a certain municipal responsibility which prohibits any outsourcing
- The targeted service standards and the ability of service providers to maintain them
- The extent which the LSG already produce the services and the LSG's capacity to continue doing so
- The complexity of the task and who is best positioned to manage it
- Whether the service production can be sufficiently delimited and outsourced without undermining the internal capacity of the LSG, such as increasing the unit price of LSG admin costs

The PSI project may consider adopting such mapping measures as part of the training module on services to stimulate private business sector involvement and overcome traditional resistance against the private business sector. Municipal services need not be outsourced as such, but it is part of prudent LSG management to consider such options in the LSG planning and service delivery. The wider implication of private business sector involvement and the stimulation of private job creation could prompt local economic development. LSGs have few tools available to stimulate local economic development, and involvement of the private business sector in local service delivery is one way to play an active role in local economic development and contribute to the President's Regional Development Plan. The PSI project may consider advocating this link at the national level as a means of strengthening LSG visibility and contributions to the plan.

The dialogue with USAID about the CAMI project revealed that the US Embassy has particular focus on private business sector development as part of improving municipal services. PSI may consider regular exchange of experiences in private business sector involvement in order to expand LSG service practices beyond in-house service production.

Some LSGs have already demonstrated good results in applying IMCs on waste management and road maintenance. As IMCs are viable and acceptable alternatives to ATRs and municipal amalgamations, documenting approaches and experiences should remain a high priority throughout the second phase of PSI. Ultimately, the evaluation recommends that PSI aim at publishing an official IMC guideline for LSGs through SALS GIR, the Ministry of Economy or whichever authority is the most relevant. The guidelines should cover such issues as:

- Preconditions for co-operation
 - Legal issues, trust (successful co-operation between municipalities must be based on mutual trust between the councils and LSG cadres), and the prospect of mutual benefits for all LSGs
- Motives for inter-municipal co-operation
 - Economies of scale, the need for specialization by sharing expensive specialists or equipment, avoiding trouble by referring tasks to IMCs (e.g. landfills), joint outsourcing of

municipal services and acquisition of goods or admin services, joint project applications, etc.

- Barriers of IMCs and issues of democratic deficiencies which need consideration
- How to reach a decision
 - Calculating advantages and disadvantages, balancing local democracy and efficiency, the issue of mutual trust between the municipalities
- How to organize inter-municipal co-operations, and the cases of binding or non-binding IMC agreements
 - Networking, informal agreements, mutual agreements with division of labour and tasks and common filing systems, procedures and service levels, ‘big brother’ serving ‘small brother’, setting up a joint company, etc.
- Case stories of binding and non-binding inter-municipal co-operations, such as
 - Joint promotion of private business sector or tourism
 - Public utilities and public transportation
 - Human Resource Development and purchase of office equipment
 - Other specialized tasks such as assistance to disabled children and adults or job creation
- When things go wrong – pitfalls of IMCs and how to avoid them
- Alternatives to IMCs such as outsourcing to the private business sector or CSOs

The Dutch local government association VNG has published an international guideline on IMC which provides further information on how to promote IMCs and what a guideline may contain. It is called ‘Inter-municipal cooperation - Introduction Guide to the VNG International Approach to a successful IMC’.⁹

LSG Union, SALSGIR and Latvia exchange

Both the LSG Union and SALSGIR expressed great appreciation to SDC for its long-term support through VAP and PSI, in contrast to other projects which close too early. As partners reported, the VAP and PSI long-term support contributes to increasing institutional capacity to promote the local governance agenda. Among other supports, the LSG Union highlighted assistance with the lawyer and a new website, while SALSGIR emphasized support provided to drafting of the new 2018-2023 LSG development plan, other technical assistance-related drafting regulations and the capacity building training.

The evaluation team concurs with the current PSI approach of involving the Union in peer-learning events and advocacy. Despite the indifference of the majority of councils, there is no alternative at the present time to engagement with the Union. Interestingly, SALSGIR and the LSG Union are set to receive an exchange visit from the Latvian Local Government Association later in 2018 to discuss LSG development. This visit is funded by the Latvian government and entails a return visit at a later stage. The evaluation team recommends that both PSI and VAP projects explore the opportunity to capitalize on this visit by facilitating a detailed discussion on lessons learned from the Latvian ATR. Whilst such discussions have taken place some years back, the evaluation team is able to present the consultancy report from 2000, which fed into final reform work in Latvia and included amalgamation criteria. While there are more to such reforms than pure technicalities, this report, provided it adds new information to previous discussions, could be used to stimulate another round of territorial discussions in Kyrgyzstan, including on how to design a future ATR. This will allow the PSI project to address the issue of ATR from two angles:

⁹ The IMC guidelines can be downloaded from VNG Internationals website: http://www.vng-international.nl/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/IMC_EN.pdf.

bottom-up through the IMC approach, as IMCs by nature also promote cooperation and trust among LSGs thereby paving the way for future amalgamations, and top-down through discussions on the Latvian experience as a whole. In case more funding is needed to support the Latvian exchange of experiences, the EU Delegation in Bishkek may be able to provide additional funding through its Civil Society Organizations/Local Authorities Facility. According to its website, the Delegation calls for local governance applications twice a year and SDC may support such applications by discussing a potential collaboration with the Delegation.

The evaluation team also commends the initiative of VAP to promote the European Charter of Local Self Government with the aim of involving the government in an internationally monitored agreement. This would put the issue of central-local government relations more firmly on the policy agenda and promote a more genuine understanding of the need for a common platform to strengthen the central-local dialogue. Regardless of whether or not the Charter is adopted, such discussion may be enhanced by disseminating the Russian language version of UN-Habitat's 'International Guidelines on Access to Basic Services for All' (2009), which is readily available on UN-Habitat's website and which, in contrast to the European Charter, includes provisions on municipal services.¹⁰

3.6 Transversal Themes

Overall the evaluation found that both VAP and PSI made considerable efforts in addressing transversal themes and have achieved varying degrees of success. The interventions established mechanisms for the mobilization of women, marginalized and socially excluded groups participation in various stages of ranking prioritized community needs and priority services. However, the absence of a gender mainstreaming strategy resulted in a missed opportunity to use gender responsive budgeting tools and knowledge to increase inclusivity of GSE gaps in decision-making.

VAP: Key findings

The VAP citizen engagement model is promoting participation of women and other disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in voicing and identifying priority needs, despite the fact that these groups have traditionally been excluded from the decision-making process at the local level in Kyrgyzstan. The VAP model provides a platform and tools for social mobilization and participation. Furthermore, the use of existing structures such as women's councils, village health committees (VHC), women's groups, parent committees, and local NGOs, who are predominantly represented by local women activists, provide leverage for addressing social issues. This is important given the dominance of conservative traditions and socio-cultural standards, especially in regions with high birth rates such as Jalal-Abad and Osh where there are significantly more men than women.

Southern municipalities disseminate written information in Kyrgyz, Uzbek and Russian (news, activities, upcoming events, and regulations issued by local councils). This practice indicates that VAP's participatory model in budget processes also strengthens inclusivity of ethnic minorities in local processes, consequently increasing resilience to inter-ethnic conflicts, as access to information and participation are key for equal access to community resources and decision-making.

The prioritization of community needs is widely recognized as legitimate, as the VAP's model includes ranking and voting for priority needs at village, village district and municipality levels; the issue that receives the majority of votes is included as a community priority. However, from the GSE standpoint the majoritarian principle in decision-making does not always guarantee inclusion of specific needs of

¹⁰ These guidelines can be accessed from <https://unhabitat.org/books/international-guidelines-on-decentralization-and-access-to-basic-services-for-all/#>

vulnerable and disadvantaged groups into the budget, precisely because they are in minority and therefore outnumbered by the majority. Thus, interviewed local council members in Chui stated that only statistical data, not majority voting, could be used to justify priorities for budget support, as disadvantaged and vulnerable groups invariably constitute only a small percentage of the total population. Overall, interviews with key informants at the local level have revealed a misunderstanding of ways to engage with women, ethnic groups, youth, and disabled persons in decision-making processes.

The VAP mechanism of engaging citizens involves conducting age-disaggregated FGDs in order to identify the specific needs of each age group. This allows youth, middle age and seniors to participate in the discussions and prioritization of needs to be included in the budget. However, the use of data from age-disaggregated FGDs by the project is unclear, except that data is used to track adequate implementation of the model, including ensuring different age representation in community discussions by VAP monitors.

Lack of indicators that measure participation of women and (other) disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in the decision-making process, as well as those that measure how well decisions are made by LSGs actually addressed priority needs of these groups. A review of the logframe revealed that VAP has only two indicators related to gender – one at impact and the other at output level – both of which simply count the percentage of women among project (small grant) beneficiaries. In order to ensure GSE mainstreaming into the project's activities, it is important to also include indicators that measure participation of women and (other) disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in the decision-making process, as well as to measure how well decisions made by LSGs are actually addressed as priority needs of these groups. Interviewed VAP project staff and local partners regarded their support to school and kindergarten kitchens/canteens as a transversal topic because it responds to local social community needs.

The evaluation found that VAP has developed gender-sensitive guidance on organizing and conducting public events. Nevertheless, this guideline should be simplified, so that municipal civil servants can easily apply and follow the algorithm of ensuring attendance and participation of disadvantaged women and men in the local budget development cycle and, most importantly, ensuring they are heard in the decision making process.

VAP missed the opportunity to use existing best practice, tools, and knowledge on gender-responsive budgeting (GRB). Within the framework of an EU-funded UN Women project, Kyrgyzstan as one of 15 pilot countries has developed a comprehensive approach to gender analysis of budgets both at local and national levels (2013-2015). This best practice was replicated within the NDI project. Capacity built amongst civil society organizations, including regional ones that have already adopted GRB, could also be utilized by VAP Phase II. GRB includes tools for analysis of budget revenue and spending, which enables visualization of women's and men's contributions and reasonableness of the budget distribution.

Despite missed opportunities with respect to GRB, the evaluation revealed a remarkable practice of the allocation of funds in the local budget in one of the Osh municipalities that provides free access to a gynecologist and ultrasound exams for local women.

A lack of attention by LSGs to accommodate specific needs of persons with disabilities to attend public events (village meetings, FGDs, public hearings) was commented on by interviewed engaged citizens in two municipalities. The evaluation observed that none of the municipal buildings are equipped with ramps for wheelchairs or expanded pathways, and that there is a lack of restrooms (as for any other resident) for disabled persons or designated parking spaces for vehicles of disabled persons.

PSI: Key findings

PSI seems to be inclusive of transversal themes, as its logframe contains GSE indicators to measure access and satisfaction with provided priority services. For example, indicators specify the percentage of vulnerable citizens (women, marginal groups and ethnic minorities) who have improved access to their priority local state services, as well as number of services initiated by vulnerable groups (women, marginal groups, and ethnic minorities) and adopted by municipalities. This is supported by the evaluation findings.

Women succeeded in prioritization of specific needs of children with disabilities and in establishing adaptation classes. Active engagement of women in discussion and determination of needs, as well as lobbying by mothers of disabled children, have allowed prioritization and further implementation of the PSI grants aimed at establishing two adaptation classes for children with special education needs in Issyk-Kul oblast. It should be noted that children with special education needs from neighboring municipalities are also allowed to attend these classes, which was highly endorsed by interviewed parents. One of the gender impacts is that mothers of disabled children now have new ways of socializing with each other. Some of the interviewed women stated that they now also have some time to pursue economic opportunities in the labor market. The implication of the established adaptation classes for municipalities is that such structural conditions to empower women lead to increases in local budgets through license fees and other tax payments.

Interviewed LSGs lacked understanding of the potential multiplier effect from the provision of preschool facilities in the local budget. Economic empowerment of women through enrolment of their children in pre-school facilities, and diversification of women's employment will increase the tax base (license tax, income tax, etc.) and yield additional funds for the budget.

Another finding indicates that existing GSE-related data collected by municipalities is not analyzed and presented to public, and is therefore not utilized in the development of further GSE sensitive policies and strategies. Tasks involving elaboration of policies, strategies, standards, and types of municipal services should always include a gender dimension so as to enable disaggregation of data re-access to social benefits by gender and to ensure equal and fair access of men and women to services.

In addition, forecasting by LSGs of who and how many beneficiaries will benefit from inclusion of their needs into provided services is key. One of the criteria for service delivery is accessibility. Services should be distributed and spaced in such a way that all members of the relevant population group can enjoy them without discrimination.

Presence of ethnic minorities in local community determines adherence of the services acceptability principle. This means that services shall be delivered in such a mode and way that respect cultural values, standards, and practices of everyone who keeps them. The services have to be valid, sufficient in cultural terms, and of sufficiently high quality.

Skills in building cause-and-effect relationships and calculating cost-benefits of decisions made are not yet a part of local government managerial culture. Gender responsive budget analysis and its implementation is critical for ensuring equality of opportunities and access to services. Beyond VAP and PSI-targeted municipalities, the methodology of gender analysis of local budgets was already developed and tested in a number of rural municipalities and towns (Osh, Jalal-Abad, and Chui oblasts and Kara-Kol) by several national think-tank groups and international organizations with strong GRB expertise (see footnote 16 for the names of the organizations).¹¹

¹¹ For example, DRR tool: Distribution, Resources, Reality. *Distribution*: How many women and men? It is necessary to calculate both gender participants at all levels of service delivery: management, staff, as well as among clients, citizens, and users of services and goods. For instance, what is proportion of female-headed households (single

Unintended positive consequence

Overall, women are poorly represented in Local Councils in Kyrgyzstan. According to national statistics, the current representation of women in Local Councils is only 10 percent. However, in visited VAP and PSI pilot municipalities, the evaluation calculated 16 percent of female representation in Local Councils. This indicates that the projects' promotion of general participation has unintentionally stimulated women to run for local elections and more actively participate in local governance processes. Experiences from several other countries demonstrate effectiveness of *ad hoc* measures toward support for women in local elections, leading to representation levels of up to 30 percent and above. In turn, there is a correlation between women's representation at the decision-making level in LSGs and indicators of social infrastructure development, combating gender-based violence, and transparency of local budgets.

LSGs and service providers should institutionalize a human rights policy to secure principles of equal opportunity and representation of women and men at all levels (where it is impossible, using affirmative action measures to ensure a critical mass of specialists of under-represented groups), thereby ensuring both gender users of services will not be subject to deprivation associated with cultural taboos and stereotypes.

It is also important to develop and disseminate media products about the social and economic costs of limiting access of women and men, girls and boys to services (for instance, limiting access to pre-school education, the social exclusion of disabled persons, and so on).

4. LESSONS LEARNED

Gender and social equity (GSE) focus must be included in the design phase and not treated as an add-on. VAP has a mechanism in place for the mobilization of women, various age groups, marginalized and socially excluded groups participation in PRAs, other stages of ranking prioritized community needs, and public discussions of issues of local importance. In addition, VAP promotes 30 percent women's representation in Initiative and M&E groups, as well as 30 percent participation in training and consultations. VAP (and PSI) also put effort into producing information tools and conduct capacity building activities in different languages (Kyrgyz, Russian and Uzbek) to accommodate needs of ethnic minorities. This has evidently resulted in bringing priorities of small grant initiatives responding to the needs of women, men and particular vulnerable groups. Still, the lack of a gender and social equity mainstreaming strategy for the projects resulted in limited attention to analysis of the local budgets and expenditures sensitive to the priorities and needs of women and socially disadvantaged groups.¹² Further, conducting gender analysis/expertise of tools, practices, AO Charters, training materials, guidelines, and modules produced by the project was less evident for the evaluation. Conducting gender analysis of the above-

mothers) among clients? Users who have teenagers or small children spent more hot water, and this data may underlie determination of rates and supply schedule. *Resources:* How are resources distributed between women and men – money, space, and time? Who are main users of municipal services, who pay for these services, and how will extra expenses affect both genders? The answer to this question allows comprehension of the extent to which women and men benefit from the project. *Reality:* Why gender distribution and distribution of resources between genders looks exactly like this? What are the normative ideas about men and women in the project, organization and society in general? How does this affect the activities?

¹² Overall, gender analysis is the critical starting point for gender mainstreaming. The assessment of how and why gender difference and inequalities are relevant to achieving the project's overall goal is the first step in mainstreaming strategy. A gender analysis helps ensure equal participation of women and men in decision-making and other processes. Also, gender analysis might show other inequalities, as neither women nor men form a homogeneous group, and gender relations interconnect with other social identities such as ethnicity, economic and social status, age, religion, political association and other.

mentioned project's practical/information/policy products is important, as it could address gender bias and discrimination, as well as being used for advocacy and other interventions to promote GSE-sensitive budgeting and public services. As discussed in the transversal themes section above, VAP has only two indicators linked to gender, which simply involve counting the percentage of women among project (small grant) beneficiaries. The lack of GSE indicators probably arose in part from a lack of clarity in the design phase about what should be measured. If GSE is a priority for a project, it is important for the project to research what the GSE gaps, priorities and interests are, how they should be achieved, and how they will be measured. Posing these questions should form part of the design phase. In addition, global and national best practices on gender and social inclusion methodologies and guidelines could be considered in the design stage.

Missed opportunity to use existing Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) expertise, tools and knowledge.

The lack of a gender and social equity mainstreaming strategy in the design phase (planning, methodology, indicators) resulted in a missed opportunity to make use of existing GRB expertise, tools and knowledge. Since the budget is a statement of the government's social and economic intentions, plans and priorities, GRB is key for incorporating a gender perspective in planning and budgeting frameworks to ensure concrete investment to address existing GSE gaps. GRB allows an assessment of the different priority needs and contributions of men and women to revenue, expenditures and allocations, and calls for adjusting budget policies to benefit all groups. Introduction of GRB as an approach to the different stages of budget cycle for municipal budgets could increase inclusivity of GSE and greater public transparency and accountability. There are a few national think-tank groups and international organizations that have strong GRB expertise and have developed useful tools and knowledge.¹³ Aligning the VAP project with such partners working specifically on GRB, GSE and other transversal issues at the design stage could benefit the outcome of the project, increasing the accountability of local authorities and enhancing equal citizen participation in the decision making process.

More attention to the election cycle is needed during the design of the LSG project. Limited attention to elections terms in the design of the LSG project brought some challenges in sustaining results achieved at the municipality level. Thus, the 2016 local elections took place in the middle of the two-year pilot support. The new cohort of local councils lacked knowledge of the projects' objectives and approaches, and this necessitated a new series of capacity building activities, since most of the newly elected councils have a low education background. For example, according to municipal civil servants in Chui, the new cohort of local councils caused barriers in project implementation as they were lacking basic knowledge about their roles and responsibilities, LSG legal basics, application of laws, local community efficiency dialogue, the importance of listening to constituents, formation and execution of local budgets, as well as coordinating work between executive and legislative branches and the local people. As a result of the local council elections, the Heads of AO in some municipalities were apparently changed due to the local politics. As the Head of Municipality is a political figure appointed by the local councils, this affects sustainable continuation of projects activities.

Private business sector needs to be promoted as a potential provider of municipal services. The involvement of the private business sector in municipal service delivery may stimulate private sector development, namely by increasing competition and estimating publicly produced services, creating employment opportunities and potentially being able to deliver better and more efficient services, and in fact encouraging local and regional economic development.

¹³ For example, the following are international organizations, think tank and NGOs developed GRB expertise, tools and knowledge in Kyrgyzstan: EU, UN Women, NDI, Innovative Solutions, Agency of Social Technologies, ISEDA, Alga, and Association of Civil Society Support Centers.

5. VAP AND PSI MERGER ISSUE

The evaluation understands a merger concept as combining two projects into one. The ET was specifically requested to assess the pros and cons of merging the VAP and PSI projects and provide a specific recommendation on this issue in the evaluation report. The issue of merger was discussed and assessed as an integrated aspect of the field mission. It is obvious that if both projects were to be designed from scratch, they would most likely be designed as one, integrated project with a single management structure. However, similar to cases in other countries, where mutually linked projects remain implemented in parallel setups, there are often very plausible explanations behind such solutions, even if they look sub-optimal at first sight. This also is the case with the VAP and PSI projects.

As the evaluation progressed, it became clear to the evaluators that there are no big gains to be made from merging VAP and PSI, and that a merger at this point in time would do more harm than good. The evaluation team therefore do not recommend a merger of the two projects, for the following reasons:

- (a) The projects are focused on different things as they are at different stages of implementation.** The PSI project was conceived based on the lessons learned from the first phase of the VAP project. While the VAP project is now approaching its exit phase and needs to wrap up its interventions and focus on final delivery, the PSI project is still less than halfway through its anticipated 10-year implementation period. A merger does not appear to be a very constructive idea at this stage, since each of the projects are at very different stages of the implementation cycle and therefore focus on different things (VAP focuses on exit phase/replication, while PSI is in pilot phase). A project merger might have been worth contemplating during the design phase back in 2014.
- (b) Merging the projects at this stage would not add additional value to any of the project strategies.** The most important argument for any merger is already captured by the design of the PSI project, since PSI approaches and its geographical coverage build on the pilot LSG and lessons learned from the first phase of the VAP project.
- (c) The projects are implemented in different geographic regions and a merger would not automatically bring cost-savings.** The consecutive implementation of VAP and PSI, with PSI located in the 1st phase VAP municipalities, means that VAP 2nd phase and PSI 1st phase are now located in different parts of the country. A merger would not automatically bring cost-savings to the projects, as the need to uphold the present support office structures would prohibit such savings.
- (d) The conceptual design of the two projects are already fully integrated and they operate in mutual coordination and synergy.** It is not only the conceptual designs of the two projects that are already fully integrated. The project implementors operate with mutual coordination and synergy in the project implementation. This is ensured by the fact that DPI is a partner in both projects and that staff crossovers takes place between DPI and Helvetas.
- (e) A merger would lead to a loss of momentum of the projects' progress and achievements made so far, as it would entail allocating time for a new design and tendering.** Should a merger go forward, this would entail the design of a whole new project and tendering it once again. Invariably, this could negatively affect the momentum of the projects and the progress and achievements made so far. The projects already had to deal with staff turnovers within their own ranks and, given the overall positive assessment of both projects, the evaluation team does not see a strong case for a new design and another tender and the risk of losing momentum that goes with it.

The design of upcoming project phases and the question of merger also touches upon the question of geographical coverage during the next stage. Given the scale and overall positive feedback on the project support, there are strong requests from central government partners, including SALSIGIR, to expand the coverage of the projects and include the final two *oblasts* in future support. Such requests are natural and do not come as a surprise. It can be politically very sensitive for any government to defend support to some parts of the country, while other parts are not included. However, the evaluation team does not support further expansion of project outreach for any of the projects. On the contrary, it is important to maintain the present coverage and deepen approaches and results in the pilot municipalities in order to focus on conceptual developments and demonstrate their operational viability. Any upscale and dissemination of results should be done through the involvement of central government, through peer-learning initiatives and through partnerships with other development partners. Such upscales are part of the present project strategies, which both projects are following with good results.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the evaluation team concludes that SDC and its PIUs play an important role in increasing accountability in municipal budgeting and public participation in the decision-making process, as well as improving municipal service provision responsiveness to the demands of the local population. VAP and PSI contributions toward providing policy support on a national level to advance decentralization, LSG sector reform, and improvement of municipal public services by linking pilot results and lessons learned have been largely relevant and effective. However, the critical decentralization reform in Kyrgyzstan is still challenged by proponents of a centralized system of governance, posing inherent risks to the sustainability of project results. The absence of strong champions of decentralization require continuous vigilance and mobilization of pro-decentralization supporters, in order to sustain incremental achievements obtained with the technical and advocacy support of the projects and to ensure long-term political backing of further advancements in sector reform. At the municipal level, the projects' sustainability is also challenged by the low education capacity of LSGs, limited resources and implementation capacity of LSGs, and high staff turnover.

Despite these contextual challenges, both VAP and PSI to a large extent are contributing to the achievement of their stated objectives and targets. Both projects' approaches are based on analysis and intervention logic, including approaches in mutual coordination and synergy in implementation.

The VAP's citizen engagement model in budget process is in place and well-functioning in both target and non-target municipalities. Women and other vulnerable groups participate in VAP-supported activities, including identifying priorities through the established project mechanism. However, the mechanism of involving these groups in decision-making is limited due to the lack of a GSE mainstreaming strategy. This resulted in a missed opportunity to use existing gender responsive budgeting tools and knowledge to increase inclusivity of GSE gaps in decision-making. It should be noted that both projects are putting considerable efforts into producing tools, guidelines, models, and other knowledge materials, as well as into conducting capacity building activities in different languages to accommodate the needs of ethnic minorities and to increase their information and participation.

The use of participatory tools to identify priority needs, developing JAPs and SIAPs to address local issues and priority service needs, forming Initiative, joint M&E and SIAP working groups to ensure residents' oversight, and capacity building activities contributed to a positive shift in the attitudes and behaviors of both residents and LSGs. In both projects' municipalities the monitoring mechanisms were institutionalized, ensuring sustainable mechanisms of citizen oversight of LSGs and service providers' activities and participation in local decision-making. There are perceptions of improved, accountable, and transparent local budgeting processes. The strengthened social contract between residents and local

authorities motivated and mobilized civic fundraising initiatives to contribute to service provision. Citizen participation in budget and tariff hearings appear to contribute to an emerging understanding among women and men about the relationship between tax payment and service delivery.

With the provided tools, guidelines, methodologies and knowledge, the projects have promoted good governance principles in practices and procedures, increased local governments' managing capacity to adequately respond to the priority needs defined by citizens, and their understanding of the concept of service delivery. To a large extent, the grant programs, through a competitive process, have been central in solving identified community priority needs, and in the case of PSI, in developing comprehensive SIAPs and implementation for winning municipalities. The risk of corruption and misuse of the project grants is low due to the mitigation measures established by the two projects and the proven reliability of transferring funds through the Treasure Department.

SIAP is effectively applied, as it is considered a useful tool for responding more effectively to priority public service demands. SIAP is widely used beyond the PSI's grant mechanism in pilot municipalities, as it allows LSGs to address any kind of issues. PSI municipalities appear to have standardized service provision systems, established citizen participation (identifying priority public service needs and oversight) mechanisms, as well as strengthened knowledge and skills in planning and management to deliver efficient priority public services among municipal civil servants and service providers.

The projects have demonstrated several characteristics that can be considered for upscaling. Among others, these include: a) substantial support to the national and local legal framework of LSGs; b) successful piloting of inter-municipal cooperation; c) systematic use of peer learning at local (for target and non-target LSGs) and national levels, as well as international exchange visits; d) promoting intervention methodologies and approaches to similar projects; and e) considerable contributions in improving national municipal civil servants' continuous education system upgrade. Upscale and dissemination of results should be continued through the involvement of the central government, through peer-learning initiatives and through partnerships with other development partners.

The evaluation findings demonstrate that merging VAP and PSI at this point in time is not recommended as there are no big gains to be made from merging these two projects, and that a project merger at this point in time would do more harm than good. A combination of the following five arguments make a case against a merger: a) the projects are focused on different things as they are at different stages of implementation cycle: PSI is in its pilot stage, while VAP is now focusing on exit phase/replication; b) PSI approaches and geographical coverage build on the pilot LSG and lessons learned from the first phase of the VAP project; c) merging the projects at this stage would not add additional value to any of the project strategies; d) the projects are implemented in different geographic regions and a merger would not automatically bring cost-savings; e) the conceptual designs of the two projects are already fully integrated, and they operate in mutual coordination and synergy; and f) a merger would lead to a loss of momentum of the projects' progress and achievements made so far. Further, the evaluation concludes that both projects should not expand into new *oblasts*. It is important to maintain the present coverage in order to sustain and deepen approaches and results in target municipalities, as well as to focus on the conceptual developments on the national level.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations arise directly from the VAP and PSI projects' evaluation findings and are intended to assist users in informing strategic orientation of the remainder of the current projects' phases.

VAP specific recommendations

1. The VAP project should extend its current support to pilot municipalities by one year in Phase II in order to adequately internalize and sustain project results. This extension should be TA-based only and be rendered without grant support. If SDC's contractual policy does not permit extension of the current VAP Phase II by one year, then consider extending the exit phase by one year.
Timeframe: Current Phase II
Priority: High
2. VAP should continue actively engaging in the Latvian exchange with the Kyrgyzstan government and explore the opportunity to discuss the Latvian ATR with Latvian partners. This is an opportunity to revive discussion on new ATR commitment announced by the President. In preparation for this meeting, review the Danish ATR consultancy report for Latvia, share a Russian translation with national partners and facilitate a thorough discussion of the criteria, policy and reform management guidelines applied during the Latvian reform.
Timeframe: Current Phase II (it might extend into the exit phase)
Priority: High
3. VAP should assess the possibility of supporting a longer LSG Union twinning cooperation with the Latvian counterpart organization. If sufficient funding cannot be mobilized through Latvian support or funded by VAP, an application could be made to the EU Delegation in Bishkek through its Local Authorities/Civil Society Organizations Facility.
Timeframe: Current Phase II (it might extend into the exit phase)
Priority: High
4. VAP should review its gender guidelines on organizing and conducting public events at the local level with the aim of amending them with a simple and applicable checklist.
Timeframe: Current Phase II
Priority: High
5. VAP should improve visualization of achieved results.
Timeframe: Current Phase II
Priority: Medium
6. VAP should assist SPS in increasing its capacity and competence to ensure the quality and effectiveness of LSG trainings delivered by universities. International experience with the use of academia in such trainings is very mixed and not always aligned to the daily challenges met by LSG practitioners. For example, in order to measure quality of training and utilization of knowledge, SPS should introduce a system for conducting surveys and develop a database for further analysis and improvement of modules/curriculum based on trainee feedback.
Timeframe: Exit Phase
Priority: High
7. VAP should advocate engaging practitioners in SPS-offered training for LSG cadres as trainers. However, in order to do so there is a need to establish an LSG practitioner-trainer roster. VAP should assist SPS in developing such a roster from the project's network. This roster could be also used in selecting practitioner-trainers for peer-to-peer learning, in order to scale-up VAP achievements. VAP could use the Latvian experience in promoting ideas on the engagement of practitioners in supply-driven training.
Timeframe: Exit Phase
Priority: High
8. VAP should foster peer-to-peer learning for replicating and scaling-up its achievements by engaging practitioners from the target municipalities. Peer-to-peer learning should not be

conducted only in VAP's neighboring municipalities but also beyond, formalizing it by engaging practitioners.

Timeframe: Exit Phase

Priority: High

9. VAP should promote its approaches through a simple and applicable budget guideline for PFM/budget cycle management published by the Ministry of Finance for national upscale purposes.

Timeframe: Exit Phase

Priority: High

10. VAP should explore an opportunity to link the VAP Model to the e-learning methodology currently tested by the Ministry of Finance (see the sustainability section for details) as cost-effective supplement to the project's achievements dissemination/upscaling.

Timeframe: Exit Phase

Priority: High

11. VAP should continue to work on incremental improvements to the legal framework of LSG mandate; however, given the challenging policy environment, legal assistance should not be considered as an end process, as it is a continuous, open ended activity that will require attention even after the end of the project. Therefore, legal assistance should not be considered a core activity in the exit phase, but rather as demand-based legal framework improvement assistance that will also help to maintain the established network at the central level.

Timeframe: Exit Phase

Priority: High

12. VAP, together with SALSGIR, SPS and the LSG Union, should explore and advocate training opportunities of newly elected local councils to mitigate the systemic problem of local councils' lack of capacity to fulfill their direct obligations.

Timeframe: Exit Phase

Priority: High

13. VAP should assess the training module to ensure it is conducive to the training needs of locally elected councilors.

Timeframe: Exit Phase

Priority: High

PSI specific recommendations

1. PSI should continue supporting all types of local services. While this will include unfunded mandates, it will leave open all options for service prioritizing to the participatory process.

Timeframe: Phase I and Phase II

Priority: High

2. PSI should raise awareness among LSGs about the option of involving the private business sector in municipal service delivery.

Timeframe: Phase I and Phase II

Priority: High

3. PSI should link up to USAID/CAMI and discuss on a regular basis lessons learned on private business sector involvement in municipal service.

Timeframe: Phase I and Phase II

Priority: High

4. PSI should enhance the SIAP methodology with a local service sourcing strategy option, which calls for local councils to develop such a strategy at the beginning of each election term (see sustainability section).
Timeframe: Phase II
Priority: High
5. PSI should carefully document lessons learned on inter-municipal cooperation with the aim of developing a national guideline for LSGs on inter-municipal cooperation (see sustainability section for details) so that it can be used for peer-to-peer learning for wider replication. The inter-municipal cooperation guideline should be published with the support of the project and disseminated through SALSGIR and the LSG Union.
Timeframe: Phase II
Priority: High
6. PSI should foster peer learning on a regional level through formalized training for disseminating knowledge and wider replication of SIAP and IMC.
Timeframe: Phase II
Priority: High
7. PSI should amend the SPS training package developed by PSI with training curriculums on (a) IMC and (b) private business sector involvement in municipal service delivery, respectively.
Timeframe: Phase II
Priority: High
8. The design of the PSI second phase should carefully consider sufficient allocation of staff for dissemination of good practices, in order to ensure maximum thrust behind upscaling of results.
Timeframe: Phase II
Priority: High

VAP and PSI common recommendations

1. VAP and PSI should continue as separate projects while maintaining maximum coordination and synergy.
Timeframe: VAP exit phase; PSI next phase
Priority: High
2. VAP and PSI should continue operating within their current pilot municipalities and regions in order to put maximum effort into concept developments and scaling-up.
Timeframe: VAP exit phase; PSI next phase
Priority: High
3. Both projects should directly support peer-to-peer learning at the municipal level by encouraging pilot municipalities to mentor non-project municipalities, facilitating in-country study tours, continuing with invitations to public hearings and encouraging direct observations (e.g. of budget hearings).
Timeframe: VAP current and exit phases; PSI next phase (part of deepening and disseminating knowledge)
Priority: High
4. VAP and PSI should promote LSG practitioners well-versed in VAP and PSI approaches to become part of the SPS trainers' roster. LSG practitioners may be selected through the network in the pilot LSGs.
Timeframe: VAP exit phase; PSI next phase

Priority: High

5. VAP and PSI should consistently conduct gender analyses of project products (AO Charters, draft legislation, training materials, modules, guidelines, etc.) and continue updating them based on collected M&E data (gender analysis, case-studies, best practice).

Timeframe: VAP Phase II and exit phase; PSI current and next phase

Priority: High

6. Whether or not the option of adopting the European Charter for Self-Government is followed through on, VAP and PSI should consider supplementing knowledge of the Charter by distributing the Russian version of the UN-Habitat international guideline on 'Decentralization and Access to Basic Services for All' (2009) to enhance discussions on central-local government relations and principles of municipal service delivery.

Timeframe: VAP Phase II; PSI current phase

Priority: High

Recommendations for SDC

1. In the event that additional funding is needed to facilitate longer cooperation between SALSGIR, the LSG Union and their Latvian counterparts, consider actively supporting an application to the EU Delegation and its Civil Society Organizations/Local Authorities Facility.

Timeline: Immediate; however, timeline might depend on the EU call for proposals cycle

Priority: High

2. SDC explore funding opportunity on decentralization and local government reform interventions from the EU delegation.

Timeline: As early as possible

Priority: High

3. Consider a comparative study on USAID/CAMI and VAP and PSI approaches for wider learnings on the added value of the grants mechanism in local governance support projects and good practices to enhance private business sector involvement in municipal service delivery.

Timeline: Next phases

Priority: High

4. Consider inviting donors working in the sectors on municipal service delivery (water, sanitation, infrastructure, etc.) to the donor coordination group on local governance meetings, in order to explore mainstreaming of PSI tools and approaches, share lessons learned and identify synergies and complementarities.

Timeline: As early as possible

Priority: High

ANNEXES

Annex A: List of People Consulted

Annex B: Documents Reviewed

Annex C: VAP Logical Framework

Annex D: PSI Logical Framework

Annex E: Data Collection Tools

Annex F: List of recommendations on amendments and supplements to the LSG legislation proposed by VAP

Annex G: Terms of Reference

Annex A: List of People Consulted

Key Informant Interviews		
Organization	Title(s)	Location
SDC/Kyrgyzstan	Deputy Head of Mission, Program Manager, National Program Officer	Bishkek
DPI	Chairperson DPI, VAP Project Manager, VAP Deputy Project Manager	Bishkek
Helvetas and DPI	PSI International Governance and Peace Advisor, PSI Program Manager	Bishkek
PSI staff	Manager on Local Implementation of the project, Grant and M&E officer	Bishkek
PSI staff	Local coordinator	Kenesh AO, Abdraimova village, Bazar-Korgon rayon, Jalal-Abad
PSI staff	Regional coordinator and Local Consultants	Kara-Kol, Issyk-Kul oblast
LSG expert	Former PSI Project Manager	Bishkek
DPI staff	M&E and Reporting Specialist; Grant Coordinator; and Gender and Grant program Assistance coordinator	Bishkek
DPI staff	National Level Coordinator; Inter-budget relations and Finance Specialist; and Municipal Services Specialist	Bishkek
DPI staff	Two LSG specialists and Specialist on Municipal Finance	Bishkek
DPI staff	VAP oblast Coordinator and Regional Specialist	Osh
Administration of the President of the KR	Head of Legal Department, and Department Expert (VAP partner)	Bishkek
State Personnel Service	Deputy Director	Bishkek
LSG Union	Executive Director and Deputy Director	Bishkek
SALSGIR	Deputy Director and Head of the research and development department	Bishkek
Ministry of Economy	Secretary of State and two staff members	Bishkek
Ministry of Finance	Head of anti-corruption department and Deputy Head of local budget expenditures analysis department	Bishkek
Jogorku Kenesh (Parliament of KR)	Member of Parliament	Bishkek
Jogorku Kenesh (Parliament of KR)	Head of the Section on Constitutional Legislation and State Structure of the Department of the Jogorku Kenesh Committee	Bishkek
National Government Apparatus, Department on organizational work	Head of Section on LSG, and LSG expert	Bishkek

and territorial management		
USAID	Portfolio Manager and National Coordinator	Bishkek
GIZ	Program Manager (SEDP model for LSGs)	Bishkek
The World Bank	Public Sector specialist	Bishkek
Ak-Bashat municipality	Deputy Head AO, Head of Finance Department, and Acting Executive Secretary	Novonikolaevka village, Jayil rayon, Chui oblast
Ak-Bashat municipality	Local Council members	Novonikolaevka village, Jayil rayon, Chui oblast
Alexandrovka municipality	Head of AO, Deputy Head of AO, Local coordinator	Alexandrovka village, Moskovskiy rayon, Chui oblast
Alexandrovka municipality	Local Council members	Alexandrovka village, Moskovskiy rayon, Chui oblast
Pervomaiskiy municipality (non-target)	Head of AO, Head of Finance department and Senior Specialist	Ak-Suu village, Moskovskiy rayon, Chui oblast
Kenesh municipality	Head of AO, Executive Secretary, Head of socio-economic department, Head of Finance department	Abdraimova village, Bazar-Korgon rayon, Jalal-Abad
Kenesh municipality	Local Council members	Abdraimova village, Bazar-Korgon rayon, Jalal-Abad
Kenesh municipality	Service Providers: Taza Suu (clean water) and Tazalyk (waste management)	Abdraimova village, Bazar-Korgon rayon, Jalal-Abad
Bagysh municipality	Head of AO, Head of Finance department, and accountant	Oktyabr village, Suzak rayon, Jalal-Abad oblast
Bagysh municipality	Local Council members	Oktyabr village, Suzak rayon, Jalal-Abad oblast
Bagysh municipality	Service Provider: Water Users Association	Oktyabr village, Suzak rayon, Jalal-Abad oblast
Jazy municipality	Head of Jazy AO, Executive Secretary, and Local coordinator	Dyikan village, Uzgen rayon, Osh oblast
Jazy municipality	Local Council Members	Dyikan village, Uzgen rayon, Osh oblast
Shark municipality	Head of AO and Local Coordinator	Padavan village, Kara-Suu rayon, Osh oblast
Shark municipality	Local Council Members	Padavan village, Kara-Suu rayon, Osh oblast
Mady municipality (non-target)	Head of AO and Executive Secretary	Asanchev village, Kara-Suu Rayon, Osh oblast
Mady municipality (non-target)	Local Council Members	Asanchev village, Kara-Suu Rayon, Osh oblast
Bosteri municipality	Head of AO, Local Coordinator, Executive Secretary, Head of Finance and economic development department	Bosteri village, Issyk-Kul rayon, Issyk-Kul oblast

Bosteri municipality	Local Council Members	Bosteri village, Issyk-Kul rayon, Issyk-Kul oblast
Bosteri municipality	Service providers: Adaptation class and municipal enterprise Taza Suu (clean water)	Bosteri village, Issyk-Kul rayon, Issyk-Kul oblast
Jeti-Oguz municipality	Head of AO, Deputy Head of AO, and Executive Secretary	Jeti-Oguz village, Jeti-Oguz rayon, Issyk-Kul oblast
Jeti-Oguz municipality	Local Council Members	Jeti-Oguz village, Jeti-Oguz rayon, Issyk-Kul oblast
Jeti-Oguz municipality	Service Providers	Jeti-Oguz village, Jeti-Oguz rayon, Issyk-Kul oblast
Jeti-Oguz municipality	Heads of two neighbouring municipalities; partners in inter-municipal cooperation on roads repair	Jeti-Oguz village, Jeti-Oguz rayon, Issyk-Kul oblast

Group Discussions		
Project	Stakeholder Group	Location
VAP	Initiative group and M&E group members	Ak-Bashat municipality, Novonikolaevka village, Jayil rayon, Chui oblast
VAP	Primary beneficiaries: residents of municipality	Ak-Bashat municipality, Novonikolaevka village, Jayil rayon, Chui oblast
VAP	Secondary school administration	Ak-Bashat municipality, Novonikolaevka village, Jayil rayon, Chui oblast
VAP	Initiative group and M&E group members	Alexandrovka municipality, Alexandrovka village, Moskovskiy rayon, Chui oblast
VAP	Primary beneficiaries: residents of municipality	Alexandrovka municipality, Alexandrovka village, Moskovskiy rayon, Chui oblast
VAP	Local kindergarten administration	Alexandrovka municipality, Alexandrovka village, Moskovskiy rayon, Chui oblast
PSI	M&E group and SIAP Working group members	Kenesh municipality, Abdraimova village, Bazar-Korgon rayon, Jalal-Abad
PSI	Primary beneficiaries: residents of municipality	Kenesh municipality, Abdraimova village, Bazar-Korgon rayon, Jalal-Abad
PSI	M&E group and SIAP Working group members	Bagysh municipality, Oktyabr village, Suzak rayon, Jalal-Abad oblast
PSI	Primary beneficiaries: residents of municipality	Bagysh municipality, Oktyabr village, Suzak rayon, Jalal-Abad oblast

VAP	Initiative group and M&E group members	Jazy municipality, Dyikan village, Uzgen rayon, Osh oblast
VAP	Primary beneficiaries: residents of municipality	Jazy municipality, Dyikan village, Uzgen rayon, Osh oblast
VAP	Initiative group and M&E group members	Shark municipality, Padavan village, Kara-Suu rayon, Osh oblast
VAP	Primary beneficiaries: residents of municipality	Shark municipality, Padavan village, Kara-Suu rayon, Osh oblast
VAP	2019 Public Budget Hearing observation	Shark municipality, Padavan village, Kara-Suu rayon, Osh oblast
VAP	Local kindergarten administration and staff	Mady municipality, Asanchev village, Kara-Suu Rayon, Osh oblast
PSI	M&E group and SIAP Working group members	Bosteri municipality, Bosteri village, Issyk-Kul rayon, Issyk-Kul oblast
PSI	School administration (adaptation class)	Bosteri municipality, Bosteri village, Issyk-Kul rayon, Issyk-Kul oblast
PSI	Primary beneficiaries: parents, grandparents and a school student of the adaptation class	Bosteri municipality, Bosteri village, Issyk-Kul rayon, Issyk-Kul oblast
PSI	M&E group and SIAP Working group members	Jeti-Oguz municipality, Jeti-Oguz village, Jeti-Oguz rayon, Issyk-Kul oblast
PSI	School administration (adaptation class)	Jeti-Oguz municipality, Jeti-Oguz village, Jeti-Oguz rayon, Issyk-Kul oblast
PSI	Primary beneficiaries: local residents and parents of the adaptation class students	Jeti-Oguz municipality, Jeti-Oguz village, Jeti-Oguz rayon, Issyk-Kul oblast

Annex B: Documents Reviewed

“Unity, Trust, Creation,” Development Program of Kyrgyz Republic for the period of 2018-2022, Bishkek 2018

Government resolution of the Kyrgyz republic on Local Self-Government Development Program of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2013-2017, Bishkek, 18 December 2013

National Sustainable Development Strategy for the Kyrgyz republic for the period of 2013-2017

Jesper Elias Lauridsen, PSI and VAP: Findings and recommendations on Gender and Social Equity, Helvetas, April 2018

VAP

Voice and Accountability Citizens’ Participation and Oversight of Budget Processes in the Kyrgyz Republic, Project Document, Phase II, 1 April 2015 – 31 March 2019

External Review “Strengthening Voice and Accountability Project,” Inception Phase and Phase I, November 2011 – March 2015, September 2014

Andris Jaunsleinis and Chynara Biialieva, Voice and Accountability: Citizen’s participation and Oversight of Budget Processes in the Kyrgyz Republic, Internal report, Mid-term review, Phase II, 1 April 2015 – 31 December 2016

Voice and Accountability: Citizen’s participation and Oversight of Budget Processes in the Kyrgyz Republic, 2015 Annual Progress Report, VAP Phase II, 1 April 2015 – 31 December 2015

Voice and Accountability: Citizen’s participation and Oversight of Budget Processes in the Kyrgyz Republic, 2015 Annual Progress Report, Appendix 1, Logframe: VAP achieved targets in the 2015

Voice and Accountability: Citizen’s participation and Oversight of Budget Processes in the Kyrgyz Republic, 2016 Annual Progress Report, VAP Phase II, 1 January 2016 – 31 December 2016

Voice and Accountability: Citizen’s participation and Oversight of Budget Processes in the Kyrgyz Republic, 2016 Annual Progress Report, Appendix 1, Logframe: VAP achieved targets in the 2016

Voice and Accountability: Citizen’s participation and Oversight of Budget Processes in the Kyrgyz Republic, 2017 Annual Progress Report, VAP Phase II, 1 January 2017 – 31 December 2017

Voice and Accountability: Citizen’s participation and Oversight of Budget Processes in the Kyrgyz Republic, 2017 Annual Progress Report, Appendix 1, Logframe: VAP achieved targets in the 2017

Voice and Accountability: Citizen’s participation and Oversight of Budget Processes in the Kyrgyz Republic, 2017 Annual Progress Report, Appendix 3, Risk Analysis (updated)

Voice and Accountability: Citizen’s participation and Oversight of Budget Processes in the Kyrgyz Republic, 2017 Annual Progress Report, Appendix 4.1: List of recommendations on Amendments and Supplements to the Legislation in the Sphere of LSG and Recommendations Proposed by VAP in 2017

Voice and Accountability: Citizen’s participation and Oversight of Budget Processes in the Kyrgyz Republic, 2017 Annual Progress Report, Appendix 4.4: List of legal consultations for LSGs through “Municipality” magazine

Voice and Accountability: Citizen’s participation and Oversight of Budget Processes in the Kyrgyz Republic, 2017 Annual Progress Report, Appendix 3: English translation of some articles about VAP’s activities during 2017, Municipality magazine

Estonia Study Visit of Delegation from Kyrgyzstan Program, April 23-29, 2017

Voice and Accountability: Citizen's participation and Oversight of Budget Processes in the Kyrgyz Republic, 2017 Yearly Plan of Operations

PSI

Public Service Improvement in Kyrgyzstan: Project Document, Phase I, 2015-2019, March 2015

PSI: Public Service Improvement Project, Kyrgyzstan: Phase I, 2017 Annual Report

Ben Blumenthal, Public Service Improvement (PSI) – Kyrgyzstan: Internal Mid-Term Review, 22 June 2017

Final Survey (end-line) within the Public Service Improvement Project, Alliance 'For Budget Transparency,'" April 2018

PSI Logical Framework (final version after midterm review)

PSI Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

Public Service Improvement Project, Kyrgyzstan: Phase I, 2016 Annual Report

Public Service Improvement Project, Kyrgyzstan: Phase I, 2015 Annual report, May 1 – December 31, 2015, March 31, 2016

Project: Public Service Improvement in Kyrgyzstan, 2017 Yearly Plan of Operation, Phase I

Grant Program under the Public Service Improvement Project

Public Service Improvement: SIAP development methodology, Bishkek 2016 (in Russian)

Annex C: VAP Logical Framework: Progress towards stated indicators to date (outcome level)

Outcome Monitoring Summary for Annual Report 2017

Reporting period: January 2016 to August 2017

Indicators	Baseline	Cumulative results (Up to end of 2017)	Target 2020
Outcome 1: Public institutions effectively fulfil their functions in a transparent and accountable manner to respond to the needs of citizens.			
Satisfaction rate with public services at the local level PSI	39% (2015)		54%
# local authorities informed # citizens transparently, involving them in decision-making-processes and considering their interests in local development and budget plans. Among the local authorities, # take specific measures for balanced participation and consideration of interests of women and vulnerable groups	64 LSGs (14% of all LSGs), 4029 citizens (incl. 1611 women)	24 LSGs informed 12 599 citizens (including 4 954 women) 9 029 (45%F) + 3 570 (42%F) (5,2% out of total 453 rural LSGs) 22 LSGs (4,8% of total 453 rural LSGs)	20% of all LSGs, 30'000 citizens
# and % of municipalities that conducted (one or more elements of) a gender budgeting process	38 LSGs (8% of all LSGs)	12 LSGs (2,6% out of total rural LSGs)	20% of all LSGs

Outcome 2: LSG's responsiveness to civic initiatives is increased			
# of municipalities that utilized citizen participation model in budget process	0 (2015)	18 in Chui	17
Value of Municipal Index of Budget Transparency	0 (2015)	Osh, Naryn – n/a Chui - 55	Chui oblast - 60
# proposals introduced to the local budget and approved by Local Councils, as a result of PB process	0 (2015)	44	20
# legal and other expert recommendations provided by the Project	0 (2015)	37	20

Annex D: PSI Logical Framework

Summary of PSI results as of end of 2017 is from the “Final Survey (end-line) within the Public Service Improvement Project,” conducted by Alliance ‘For Budget Transparency,’ April 2018

Indicator	Baseline Value	Actual Value	Target Value	Conclusion on attainability
1. Level of satisfaction with the services provided at the local level	39%	47%	54%	Target is achievable
2. Expanded coverage of services at the local level (quality and quantity)	0	16 services in 13 municipalities (43,3%)	60% (18 municipalities)	Target is achievable
3. Availability of local policy on service delivery	0	100%	80%	Achieved
4. Satisfaction level of priority services provided at the local level in the project municipalities	Jalal Abad 32%; Issyk Kul 39%	Jalal Abad region 41%; Issyk Kul region 47%	JA 47%; IK 54%	Achieved
5. Percentage of citizens (men and women) interviewed in the project municipalities who are satisfied with the quality of selected priority services	M. 34%, W. 35%	M. 52%, W. 52%	M. 49%, W. 50%	Achieved
6. Percentage of project municipalities that have improved at least one priority service	0	16 services in 13 municipalities (43,3%) According to the results of the field survey 93,3% (28) as a proportion of municipalities, in which satisfaction level increased at least for one service.	60% (18)	Achieved
7. Percentage of citizens from vulnerable groups (women, marginalized groups, ethnic minorities) who improved access to their priority services	0	In 13 municipalities - 58,9% According to the results of the field survey: 28% in 13 municipalities with the status "completed"	30%	Target is achievable
8. Number of financially effective service providers	0	8 service providers in 8 municipalities (26,7%)	Min 1 in 18 municipalities	Achieved

			x (60%)	
9. Number of municipalities that have approved query mechanisms for residents to improve services	0	100% - boxes for complaints and proposals, a provision on the procedure for complaints and applications. The reports of the citizens were tested in 4 local municipalities	100% (30)	Achieved
10. Number of municipalities that have approved monitoring mechanisms for service providers	0	100% in 29 municipalities	100% (30)	Target is achievable
11. Number of municipalities, satisfied with the work of the Union for Local Self-Government and Government Agency for Local Self-Government and Interethnic Relations		Work of Government Agency for Local Self-Government and Interethnic Relations - 14 municipalities, Work of the Union for Local Self-Government – 8 municipalities	50% (15)	Target is achievable
12. Number of local regulations contributing to the improvement of services at the local level	0	113 regulations in 100% of municipalities	Min. 1 in 30 municipalities x	Achieved
13. Number of (municipal or private) service providers with results-oriented budgets	2	14 service providers in 14 municipalities have results-oriented budgets for 2018 (47%)	Min 1 in 18 municipalities x (60%)	Target is achievable
14. Number of self-financing and profitable service delivery schemes	0	Two self-financing and profitable service delivery schemes have been launched with the support of the project: - Calculation of tariffs for paid services (solid domestic waste and water) - Subsidizing service providers, if the approved tariff is lower than the estimated value	100% (30)	Recommended to reconsider
15. Percentage of project municipalities that have approved the Action Plan for Services Improvement	2	100% (30) municipalities approved 52 APSI	100% (30)	Achieved

(further APSI) to improve at least one priority service provided at the local level		38 were supported by the grant program		
16. Number of established intermunicipal service delivery models	0	3 intermunicipal APSI: 2 – in Jalal Abad region, 1 – in Issyk Kul region	Min one in both regions	Achieved
17. Percentage of project municipalities with planning groups for the joint APSI	15	100% (30)	100% (30)	Achieved
18. Percentage of project municipalities with established mechanisms for complaints and claims of the citizens	18	100% - boxes for complaints and proposals, a provision on the procedure for complaints and applications. The reports of the citizens were tested in 4 local municipalities	100% (30)	Achieved
19. Number of services initiated by vulnerable segments of the population (women, marginalized groups and ethnic minorities) and adopted by municipalities	0	286 services were initiated, 148 of which were accepted by local keneshes in 30 project municipalities. 14 services initiated by the vulnerable groups are included in the grant program	50% (15 municipalities)	Achieved
20. Number of agreements on services between Local Self-Governments and providers with an integrated monitoring and evaluation system	2	17 agreements in 13 municipalities (43,3%)	60% (18 municipalities)	Target is achievable
21. Percentage of implementation of recommendations of local authorities regarding quality control by service providers	2	101 acts are executed at 100% in 29 municipalities	80% in 18 municipalities x min	Target is achievable
22. The number of requests formulated by municipalities and accepted by the Union for Local Self-Government and Government Agency for Local Self-Government and Interethnic Relations	0	Min 2 per year Total for January 2018: at least 6 requests are formulated and accepted	Min 2 per year Total: 8	Achieved
23. Number of regional events for the exchange of experience organized by the Union for Local Self-Government and Government Agency for Local Self-Government and Interethnic Relations	0	Min 2 per year In total for January 2018: at least 7 events were held	Min 2 per year Total: 8	Target is achievable

<p>24. Number of normative acts related to the provision of services proposed by Government Agency for Local Self-Government and Interethnic Relations and other state bodies</p>	<p>0</p>	<p>At least 4 changes in the legislation were proposed with the support of the Project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Changes in the Base Register of Municipal Services - Strategy development for utilities - Methodology development for paid services calculation (solid domestic waste, costing, etc) 	<p>2</p>	<p>Achieved</p>
<p>25. The number of trained municipal civil servants for services within the State Personnel Service</p>	<p>0</p>	<p>1747 municipal employees in 484 municipalities</p>	<p>Min 1 employee in 484 municipalities x</p>	<p>Achieved</p>

Annex E: Data Collection Tools

1. Informed Consent Process
2. SDC Interview Protocol
3. DPI and HELVETAS Interview Protocol
4. Local and National Stakeholder Interview Protocol
5. Public and Private Service Providers, Grant Awardees Interview Protocol
6. Primary Beneficiary Group Discussion Guide
7. Engaged Active Residents Group Discussion Guide

SDC/Kyrgyzstan: External End of Phase VAP and PSI Evaluation

Informed Consent Process

Introduction, Confidentiality, and Informed Consent: Good morning/afternoon, thank you for meeting with us. Our names are _____. We are a team from the Nordic Consulting Group conducting an evaluation of SDC’s “Voice and Accountability” and “Public Service Improvement” Projects implemented by the Development Policy Institute and HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation. The projects aim to provide support to LSGs on increasing accountability of LSGs and citizen participation in local decision-making processes, as well as to improve the system of service management at the local level and responsive to the demands of citizens.

We have received your contact information from _____ and would like to inquire if you are interested in participating in our study. We have prepared some questions to ask you about your experience with the projects. We anticipate the interview to last approximately 1 hour. Before we begin, we’d like to briefly clarify that we are not from SDC or its implementing partners but an independent organization, NCG. All answers shared with us will be kept completely confidential, so please feel free to speak openly about your opinion and perceptions of the projects.

All information will be aggregated and presented in the final report, so that information cannot be tied back to any specific individual or organization. This interview is also voluntary, so you are free to ask to skip a question or stop the interview entirely at any time.

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us and for being willing to be interviewed. Before we begin, do you have any questions on the information that we just discussed?

Informed Consent provided? ___ Yes (start interview) _____ No (do not start until provided).

SDC/Kyrgyzstan: External End of Phase VAP and PSI Evaluation

SDC Interview Protocol

Date of Interview:	_____				
Project:	1. VAP	2. PSI	3. Both		
Organization:	_____				
Stakeholder group & Title:	_____				
Location:	1. Bishkek	2. Chui	3. Osh	4. Jalal-Abad	5. Issyk-Kul
Municipality/Rayon:	_____				
Gender:	# of Male(s):	_____	# of Females:	_____	

RELEVANCE

1. Before we begin, could you please tell us a bit about your involvement with each of the projects? (Probe: role, duration, intensity, level of involvement.)
2. Were you involved in the design of these projects? If so, do the projects as implemented today differ in any significant way?
3. In your opinion, what are some of the specificities of the Kyrgyzstani context that influences the projects implementation? (Probe: technical and political bottlenecks in the process of decentralization, governance.)
4. How relevant do you think the projects activities have been in relation to the following:
 - a. Local decentralization, service provision reforms and governance context?
 - b. Enhancing accountability and transparency in public resource management and service delivery?
 - c. Increasing citizen participation?
 - d. Addressing any possible technical and political bottlenecks?
 - e. The projects' role in the policy dialogue at the national level?
5. What is the added value of VAP activities to PSI intervention?
6. What would you change about the projects' design/activity in future programming? (Probe: why? how?)
7. What are your thoughts about the projects' risk analysis and mitigation measures? Were they adequate?
8. What is your reflection on the methods of involvement of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups as beneficiaries and actors of the projects?
9. Are you aware of any unexpected challenges and barriers the projects faced during implementation? If so, what are your thoughts on the projects methods in dealing with unexpected challenges?

EFFECTIVENESS

10. What is your reflection on the adequacy of set goals and objectives of the projects?
11. In your opinion, have VAP and PSI been equally successful in achieving its stated objectives and targets, or has one project been stronger compared to another? (Probe: why?)
12. In your opinion, what have been each project's the biggest successes so far? What have been each project's the biggest challenges? (Probe: why? What factors contributed to this?)
13. What is your reflection on the effectiveness of the selected projects approaches? What are the benefits and drawbacks of the applied approaches?
14. Are there any areas of the projects that you feel are in need of improvement?

Merger

15. How would you assess joint experiences of VAP and PSI? What have been the most effective results of synergy between the two projects? What have been the challenges of synergy between the two projects?
16. In your opinion, what are the opportunities for VAP to strengthen synergies with PSI on both local and national levels? How can this be done?
17. In your opinion, what are the advantages and benefits of merging the two projects? What are disadvantages/risks of merging the two projects?
18. To what extent do you agree with merging these two projects?

Strongly Agree

Agree

No Opinion/Not Sure

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Probe: Could you please elaborate on your answer/why?

19. If 'strongly agree' or 'agree', what would be the most effective and efficient method of merging the two projects?
20. In your opinion, what should be potential focus of a merged project? Which geographic areas should it cover? What should be the selection criteria if new geographic areas should be covered?

EFFICIENCY

21. What is your reflection of the adequacy of current projects set-up and team compositions to deliver its stated results?
 - a. In you are opinion, do the project have adequate human, financial and other resources to deliver both project outcomes?
22. How would you assess the applied grant mechanisms by the projects? What is your reflection on the adequacy of the grant mechanisms to mitigate the risks of corruption, investment sustainability and purposeful use?
23. In your opinion, what could be challenges and barriers for efficiently merging the two projects? (Probe: is there a system in place to efficiently merge the two projects?)

IMPACT

24. What was the most significant or important change you observed as a result of the projects implementation?

SUSTAINABILITY

25. In your opinion, what type of benefits of the projects (models, systems, registers, etc.) will continue after the end of funding/implementation? (Probe: why?)
26. What are the contributing factors for continuation of the projects' benefits after the end of the funding?
27. How would you assess implementing partners' coordination efforts and the sharing/informing the projects methodologies with donors concerning other similar projects?
28. In your opinion, if the two projects merge, could it enhance the potential to help the LSGs gain sustainable results?

SDC/Kyrgyzstan: External End of Phase VAP and PSI Evaluation

DPI and HELVETAS Interview Protocol

Date of Interview:	_____				
Project:	1. VAP	2. PSI	3. Both		
Organization:	_____				
Stakeholder group & Title:	_____				
Location:	1. Bishkek	2. Chui	3. Osh	4. Jalal-Abad	5. Issyk-Kul
Municipality/Rayon:	_____				
Gender:	# of Male(s):	_____			# of Females: _____

RELEVANCE

1. Before we begin, could you please tell us a bit about your involvement in the project? (Probe: role, duration, intensity, level of involvement.)
2. Were you involved in the design of the project? If so, does the project as implemented today differ in any significant way?
3. In your opinion, what are some of the specificities of the Kyrgyzstani context that influences the projects implementation? (Probe: technical and political bottlenecks in the process of decentralization, governance.)
4. How relevant do you think the projects activities have been in relation to the following. Probe: why?
 - a. Local decentralization, service provision reforms and governance context?
 - b. Enhancing accountability and transparency in public resource management and service delivery?
 - c. Increasing citizen participation? Involvement of the most vulnerable groups as beneficiaries and actors
 - d. Addressing any possible technical and political bottlenecks?
 - e. The projects' role in the policy dialogue at the national level?
5. What is the added value of VAP activities to PSI intervention?
6. How would you assess the project's risk analysis and mitigation measures? Have they been solid enough?
7. To your knowledge, have the project's activities caused any unexpected challenges? If so, what methods has the project been using to deal with unexpected challenges?
8. How would you assess the gender, ethnic minorities, youth and other vulnerable groups mainstreaming strategy into the project's implementation and reporting?
 - a. How have the specific needs of women, the poor, ethnic minorities and other disadvantaged groups been reflected in intervention, monitoring and reporting?

9. What are the key lessons learned? What kinds of adjustments have been made to the project? (What has been done differently?)

EFFECTIVENESS

10. In your opinion, have your project and partners been successful in achieving the stated objectives and targets?
- What were the contributing factors in achieving (or not achieving) the stated objectives and targets?
 - What is your reflection on the adequacy of the set goals and objectives of the projects?
11. What have been the project's biggest successes so far? What major factors contributed to its success?
12. What have been the project's biggest challenges? What has the project done, or what could be done, to overcome these challenges?
13. In your opinion, has your project been equally successful in meeting all stated outcomes, or has the project been stronger in some areas compared to others?
14. What is your reflection on the effectiveness of selected projects approaches? What are the benefits and drawbacks of the applied approaches?
15. Are there any areas of the projects that you feel are in need of improvement?
16. What have been the project's most effective results thanks to cooperation with the selected partners?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses in the cooperation with the selected partners?
 - What cooperation strategies or methods help to promote effective and productive results with the selected partners?
 - What factors undermine the effective and productive results with the selected partners?
17. **For VAP staff:** How would you assess the effectiveness of the VAP grant mechanism?
- What aspects of the grant mechanism promote participatory budgeting?
 - What aspects of the grant mechanism promote LSG responsiveness to local initiatives?
 - What are the strengths and weaknesses of the grant mechanism?
18. What are the opportunities for women, ethnic minorities, youth, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups in voicing their priorities and participating in local decision-making/budgetary processes?
19. What methods are used for multiplying and scaling up successes in the current and possible future geographic areas?

Merger

20. How would you assess your joint experiences of VAP and PSI? What have been the most effective results of synergy between the two projects? What have been the challenges of synergy between the two projects?
21. In your opinion, what are the opportunities for VAP to strengthen synergies with PSI on both the local and national levels? How can this be done?

22. In your opinion, what are the advantages and benefits of merging the two projects? What are the disadvantages/risks of merging the two projects?

23. To what extent do you agree with merging these two projects?

Strongly Agree

Agree

No Opinion/Not Sure

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Probe: Could you please elaborate on why you chose this answer?

24. If 'strongly agree' or 'agree,' what would be the most effective and efficient method of merging the two projects?

25. In your opinion, what should be the potential focus of a merged project? Which geographic areas it should cover? What should be the selection criteria if new geographic areas should be covered?

EFFICIENCY

26. What is your reflection of the adequacy of the current projects set-up and team compositions to deliver the stated results? In your opinion, do the projects have adequate human, financial and other resources to deliver both projects outcomes?

27. What is your reflection on whether the objectives and outcomes were achieved in a timely manner? If delayed, why? What are the key factors for timely and consistent achievement of results?

28. What is your reflection on the adequacy of the grant mechanisms to mitigate the risks of corruption, investment sustainability and purposeful use?

29. **Merger.** In your opinion, what could be challenges and barriers for efficiently merging the two projects? (Probe: is there a system in place to efficiently merge two projects?)

IMPACT

30. What was the most significant or important change you observed as a result of the project implementation? How have these changes been measured?

31. To your knowledge, has the intervention caused any unexpected positive or negative outcomes?

a. Has the project attempted to enhance or mitigate them?

b. If so, what methods were used?

SUSTAINABILITY

32. To what extent did the project contribute to the changing attitude and behavior of partners? (Increased citizen participation, inclusion of priority needs to budget and plans, accountability, advocacy, provision of priority services, etc.)

1. To a great extent

2. To some extent

3. To a small extent

4. Not at all

Probe: Could you please provide any examples that demonstrate why you chose this answer?

33. In your opinion, what factors led to the changes in attitude and behavior of partners?

34. Has the project experienced any resistance on the part of its partners?

a. If so, who opposed it and why?

- b. What strategies helped to overcome this opposition?
 - c. Who were the champions of the intervention? Why were they supported?
- 35. In your opinion, which type of benefits of the projects (models, systems, registers, etc.) will continue after the end of funding/implementation? (Probe: why?)
- 36. Are there any strategies to ensure continuation of the benefits of the project after their end? If so, what are they?
- 37. What are your thoughts on the role of the Union of LSGs and other actors in sustaining the project's results?
 - a. What is their capacity and capability to sustain the results?
 - b. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Union of LSGs and other actors?
- 38. In your opinion, does the level of input from the project allow a scaling up by national partners? (The project has set model procedures, systems, mechanisms and solutions for further dissemination.)
 - a. What are the challenges in the application of the project's methodologies?
- 39. Which institution has the capacity and the will to continue the project's activities after the end of funding?
- 40. What is your reflection on the project's contribution into the LSG legal framework development that affected and improved LSG accountability, service management, and citizen engagement in the local budgetary processes? Could you please provide an example?
- 41. What is the quality of relationship and coordination with other donors and similar projects?
- 42. Has the project shared knowledge and approaches with other projects? If so, are you aware of utilization of the project's model procedures, systems, mechanisms and solutions by similar interventions? Please provide an example.
- 43. What strategies help to promote the transfer of the methodology of the project to larger, similar projects?
- 44. Are you aware of any application of the project's models and system on the inclusion of vulnerable groups, including women, in other non-target municipalities? Probe: Could you please provide an example?
- 45. In your opinion, in case the two projects merge, could this enhance the potential to help the LSGs gain sustainable results?

SDC/Kyrgyzstan: External End of Phase VAP and PSI Evaluation

Local and National Stakeholder Interview Protocol

LSGs, Local Council, SALSGIR, Union of LSGs, SPS, GA, MPs, SSACHCS

Date of Interview: _____

Project: 1. VAP 2. PSI 3. Both

Organization: _____

Stakeholder group & Title: _____

Location: 1. Bishkek 2. Chui 3. Osh 4. Jalal-Abad 5. Issyk-Kul

Municipality/Rayon: _____

Gender: # of Male(s): _____ # of Females: _____

RELEVANCE

1. Before we begin, please describe your involvement/role with the projects and their activities. (Probe: Since when have you been involved; how did you become involved; terms of engagement)
2. What involvement did you/your office have at the design, and implementation phase of this project, and what involvement now?
3. How relevant do you think the projects activities have been in relation to the specificities of the Kyrgyzstani context, specifically to: Probe: why?
 - a. Local decentralization, service provision reforms and governance process?
 - b. Enhancing accountability and transparency in public resource management and service delivery?
 - c. Increasing citizen participation in budgetary processes?
 - d. Addressing any possible technical and political bottlenecks?
 - e. The projects' role in the policy dialogue at the national level?
4. In your opinion, have the VAP activities contributed in preparing LSGs and the local community for PSI intervention? If so, what were the VAP's key contributions?
 - a. What is your reflection on the relevance of provided training to local and national stakeholders?
 - b. In your opinion, should the project repeat training in VAP target municipalities, even if there is a high staff turnover?
5. To your knowledge, have the projects' activities caused any unexpected challenges? If so, what methods have the projects been using to deal with these challenges?
6. How would you assess the gender, ethnic minorities, youth and other vulnerable groups mainstreaming strategy into the projects' implementation and reporting?
 - a. **For LSGs:** What were your strategies in identifying and engaging vulnerable and disadvantaged groups to participate in local decision-making/budgeting/priority service needs identification processes?

- b. To your knowledge, have the specific needs of women, the poor, ethnic minorities and other disadvantaged groups been reflected in intervention, monitoring and reporting?
- 7. What are the key lessons learned during your/your agency's involvement in the projects implementation? Are you aware of any adjustments that have been made to the projects? (What has been done differently?)

EFFECTIVENESS

- 8. In your opinion, have the projects and their partners been successful in achieving the stated objectives and targets?
 - a. What were the contributing factors in achieving (or not achieving) the stated objectives and targets?
 - b. What is your reflection on the adequacy of the set goals and objectives of the projects?
- 9. To your knowledge, what have been the projects' biggest successes so far? What major factors contributed to their success?
- 10. What have been the projects' biggest challenges? What have the projects done, or what could be done, to overcome these challenges?
- 11. What is your reflection on the effectiveness of selected projects approaches? What are the benefits and drawbacks of the applied approaches? (*training, grants, model of citizens engagement, public service delivery improvement, advocacy, initiatives for LSGs, etc.*)
- 12. Are you aware of any achievements as a result of cooperation of the projects with selected partners (e.g. SALSGIR, SPS, Union of LSGs, other)? If so, what were the most effective results? Probe: what were the most effective methods of cooperation? Why?
- 13. **For VAP partners:** How would you assess the effectiveness of the VAP grant mechanism?
 - a. What aspects of the grant mechanism promote participatory budgeting?
 - b. What aspects of the grant mechanism promote LSG responsiveness to local initiatives?
 - c. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the grant mechanism?
- 14. How have various groups in your municipality had access to the local decision-making/budgetary processes?
- 15. What opportunities do women, ethnic minorities, youth, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups have in your municipality to participate in local decision-making/budgetary processes and voice their priorities and needs?

Merger

- 16. To your knowledge, what have been the most effective results of synergy between the two projects? What have been the challenges of synergy between the two projects?
- 17. In your opinion, what are the opportunities for VAP to strengthen synergies with PSI on both the local and national levels? How can this be done?
- 18. In your opinion, what are the advantages and benefits of merging the two projects? What are the disadvantages/risks of merging the two projects?
- 19. To what extent do you agree with merging these two projects?

Strongly Agree

Agree

No Opinion/Not Sure

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Probe: Could you please elaborate on why you chose this answer?

20. If strongly agree or agree, what would be the most effective and efficient method of merging the two projects?
21. In your opinion, what should be the potential focus of a merged project? Which geographic areas it should cover? What should be the selection criteria if new geographic areas should be covered?

EFFICIENCY

22. In your opinion, how would you assess the adequacy of allocated human, financial and other resources to deliver both projects outcomes?
23. What is your reflection on whether the objectives and outcomes were achieved in a timely manner? If delayed, why? What were the key factors for timely and consistent achievement of results?
24. What is your reflection on the adequacy of the grant mechanisms to mitigate the risks of corruption, investment sustainability and purposeful use? What should have been done differently to mitigate these risks?
25. **Merger.** In your opinion, what could be the challenges and barriers for efficiently merging the two projects?

IMPACT

26. What was the most significant or important change you observed in your municipality as a result of the project implementation? What were the contributing factors for this change?
27. To your knowledge, has the intervention caused any unexpected positive or negative outcomes?
 - a. Has the project attempted to enhance or mitigate them?
 - b. If so, what methods were used?

SUSTAINABILITY

28. How would you rate the inclusion of your municipality/agency in the projects interventions' decision-making process?
 1. Excellent;
 2. Good;
 3. Adequate;
 4. Needs Improvement;
 5. Don't know

Probe: If 'needs improvement,' please specify in what way? _____
1. To what extent do you feel ownership over the project implementation?
 1. To a great extent
 2. To some extent
 3. To a small extent
 4. Not at all

Probe: Could you please elaborate on why you chose this answer?
29. In your opinion, what type of benefits of the projects (models, systems, registers, etc.) will continue after the end of funding/implementation? (Probe: why?)
30. What are your thoughts on your municipality/agency and other actors in sustaining the project's results?
 - a. What is your agency's strengths, capacity and capability to sustain the results?

31. Has your municipality/agency had experience in applying the projects' methodologies (establishing model register, service agreements, JAP/SIAP elaborations, model of citizen engagement)?
 - a. If so, have you faced any challenges in the application of the project's methodologies?
32. In your opinion, will the level of effort/input provided by the projects allow a scaling up by national partners?
33. Which institution has the capacity to continue the project's activities after the end of funding?
34. What is your reflection on the project's contribution into the LSG legal framework development that improved LSG accountability, service management, and citizen engagement in the local budgetary processes? Could you please provide an example?
35. To your knowledge, have the projects shared knowledge and expertise with other similar donor-funded projects? If so, are you aware of utilization of the project's model procedures, systems, mechanisms and solutions by similar interventions in your or other oblasts? Please provide an example.
36. In your opinion, how can the projects promote the methodology and knowledge to other similar projects in your oblast/nationally?
37. Has your municipality applied the projects' models and systems on inclusion of vulnerable groups and women in your other activities/initiatives not related to these projects?
38. In your opinion, in case the two projects merge, could this enhance the potential to help the LSGs gain sustainable results?

SDC/Kyrgyzstan: External End of Phase VAP and PSI Evaluation

Public and Private Service Providers, Grant Awardees Interview Protocol

Date of Interview:	_____				
Project:	1. VAP	2. PSI	3. Both		
Organization:	_____				
Stakeholder group & Title:	_____				
Location:	1. Bishkek	2. Chui	3. Osh	4. Jalal-Abad	5. Issyk-Kul
Municipality/Rayon:	_____				
Gender:	# of Male(s): _____	# of Females: _____			

RELEVANCE

1. Before we begin, please describe your involvement/role with the projects and their activities.
(Probe: Since when have you been involved; how did you become involved; terms of engagement)
2. How relevant do you think the projects activities have been in relation to the following. Probe: why?
 - a. Public service provision reforms and local decentralization context?
 - b. Enhancing accountability and transparency in public resource management and public service delivery?
 - c. Involvement of the most vulnerable groups as beneficiaries? Increasing citizen participation?
 - d. Addressing any possible technical bottlenecks in public service delivery?
3. Have you encountered any unexpected challenges during the provision of service/grant implementation?
 - a. If so, what kind of unexpected challenges have you faced?
 - b. What methods have you used to deal with these challenges?
4. *For Service providers:* What were your approaches in identifying and delivering priority public service delivery needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups?
 - a. How do you select beneficiaries to provide service?
 - b. How do you ensure that the most vulnerable are prioritized and reached?
5. *For Grant awardees:* How have the specific needs of women, the poor, ethnic minorities and other disadvantaged groups been reflected in your grant application, intervention, monitoring and reporting?
6. In your opinion, what groups of people benefited the most from the provided services/received grant?
7. What are the key lessons you learned in delivering the services/implementing grant? What kinds of adjustments have been made to your activities? (What has been done differently?)

EFFECTIVENESS

8. In your opinion, has your service/activity been successful in achieving the stated objectives and targets?
 - a. What were the contributing factors in achieving (or not achieving) the objectives and targets?
9. What have been your activity's biggest successes so far? What major factors contributed to its success?
10. What have been the biggest challenges in your service delivery/activities implemented in the framework of VAP and PSI? What has your agency done, or what could be done, to overcome these challenges?
11. For Service Providers: What is your reflection on the effectiveness of selected approaches in delivery of priority services? What are the benefits and drawbacks of the applied approaches?
12. For grant awardees: What is your reflection on the effectiveness of selected grant implementation approaches? What are the benefits and drawbacks of the applied approaches?
13. In your opinion, what were the most effective results of your cooperation with the projects and LSGs? What were the most effective methods of cooperation?
14. For grant awardees: What are the strengths and weaknesses of the project's grant mechanism?
15. For VAP grant awardees: How would you rate the effectiveness of the VAP grant mechanism for promotion of participatory budgeting?
 1. Very effective
 2. Effective
 3. Adequate
 4. Needs improvement
 5. Don't know

Probe: If 'very effective' or 'effective,' could you please provide any examples that demonstrate why you choose this answer?

16. For VAP grant awardees: How would you rate the effectiveness of the VAP grant mechanism for promotion of LSG responsiveness to local initiative?
 6. Very effective
 7. Effective
 8. Adequate
 9. Needs improvement
 10. Don't know

Probe: If 'very effective' or 'effective,' could you please provide any examples that demonstrate why you choose this answer?

EFFICIENCY

17. What is your reflection on whether services/grant implementation were delivered in a timely manner? If delayed, why? What were the key factors for timely and consistent achievement of results?

18. *For grant awardees:* What is your reflection on the adequacy of the grant mechanisms to mitigate the risks of corruption, investment sustainability and purposeful use?

IMPACT

19. What was the most significant or important change you observed as a result of the service delivery/grant implementation?
20. To your knowledge, has the intervention caused any unexpected positive or negative outcomes?
- Has your agency/organization attempted to enhance or mitigate them?
 - If so, what methods were used?

SUSTAINABILITY

21. How would you rate the readiness/willingness of your organization to continue the provision of priority services/activities after the end of the projects?
- Very high
 - High
 - Somewhat high
 - Somewhat low
 - Very low
 - Not ready at all
- Probe:* Could you please elaborate on why you chose this answer?
22. In your opinion, which type of benefits of the projects (models, systems, registers, etc.) will continue after the end of funding/implementation? (*Probe:* why?)

SDC/Kyrgyzstan: External End of Phase VAP and PSI Evaluation

Group Discussion Guide

Primary Beneficiaries (residents of target municipalities)

Date of discussion: _____

Project: 1. VAP 2. PSI

Stakeholder group: _____

Location: 1. Bishkek 2. Chui 3. Osh 4. Jalal-Abad 5. Issyk-Kul

Municipality/Rayon: _____

Gender: # of Male(s): _____ # of Females: _____

Introduction: Good morning/afternoon, thank you for meeting with us. Our names are _____. We are a team from the Nordic Consulting Group conducting an evaluation of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation's (SDC) "Voice and Accountability" and "Public Service Improvement" Projects implemented by the Development Policy Institute and HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation. The projects aim to provide support to LSGs on increasing accountability of LSGs and citizen participation in local decision-making processes, as well as to improve the system of service management at the local level and responsiveness to the demands of citizens. We have received your contact information from _____ and would like to inquire if you are interested in participating in our study. Since you are members of the community, we would like to learn about your opinion and experience with the projects. Before we begin, we'd like to briefly clarify that we are not from SDC or its implementing partners but rather an independent organization, NCG.

Confidentiality: We would like to assure you that all answers shared with us will be confidential, so please feel free to speak openly about your opinion and perceptions of the projects. All information will be aggregated and presented in the final report, so that information cannot be tied back to any specific individual or organization. You have no obligation to participate in this study so you are free to ask to skip a question or to stop the interview entirely at any time.

Structure: We anticipate the discussion to last approximately 1.5 hours. As part of this discussion, I will ask you about your experience with the evaluated organization's program, and my colleague will take notes. It is important to give everyone an opportunity to speak about his or her experience, so I will do my best to be sure everyone has a chance to participate.

Informed Consent: Thank you for taking the time to speak with us and for being willing to be interviewed. Before we begin, do you have any questions on the information that we just discussed?

Informed Consent provided? ___ Yes (start discussion) _____ No (do not start until provided).

RELEVANCE

1. To begin, please tell us a bit about your familiarity with VAP and PSI projects. (*List activities at the end of response to ensure group understands full range of activities: participated in PRA, budget and/or tariff hearings, priority service needs meeting, planning sessions, etc.*)
2. How relevant do you think the projects activities have been in relation to the following:
 - a. Enhancing LSGs responsiveness and accountability to citizens, and transparency in public resource management?
 - b. Increasing citizen participation?
3. How would you rate the integration of women, youth, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups in the project activities to participate in public events, and voice their needs?

1. Very integrated 2. Integrated 3. Somewhat integrated 4. Not integrated 5. Don't know
4. In your opinion, how well did the projects include the specific needs of women, the poor, ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities in intervention (JAP, SIAP, grants, service provision)?
5. Do you think the services and activities the projects provided addressed the priorities you identified? How?
6. Have the public services been equally accessible to the most vulnerable groups in your community since the start of the projects?

EFFECTIVENESS

7. What is your level of satisfaction with the opportunities provided to participate in the local decision-making/budgetary processes?
 - a. Highly satisfied
 - b. Satisfied
 - c. Somewhat satisfied
 - d. Somewhat unsatisfied
 - e. Dissatisfied

Probe: If 'highly satisfied' or 'satisfied,' could you please elaborate on why you chose this answer? If 'somewhat unsatisfied' or 'dissatisfied,' could you please elaborate on why you chose this answer?

8. What is your level of satisfaction with provided public services and responsiveness to your demands by LSGs?
 - a. Highly satisfied
 - b. Satisfied
 - c. Somewhat satisfied
 - d. Somewhat unsatisfied
 - e. Dissatisfied

Probe: If 'highly satisfied' or 'satisfied,' could you please elaborate on why you chose this answer? If 'somewhat unsatisfied' or 'dissatisfied,' could you please elaborate on why you chose this answer?

9. To what extent did the VAP grants contribute to promotion of participatory budgeting and LSG responsiveness to local initiatives?

- a. To a great extent
- b. To some extent
- c. To a small extent
- d. Not at all

Probe: If 'to a great extent' or 'to some extent,' could you please provide any examples that demonstrate why you chose this answer?

10. How have various groups in your municipality had access to the local decision-making/budgetary processes?
11. What opportunities do women, ethnic minorities, youth, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups have in your municipality to participate in local decision-making/budgetary processes and voice their priorities and needs?

EFFICIENCY

12. Were the public services delivered in a timely manner? (*Probe:* If delayed, ask about frequency of delays)
13. What is your reflection on the implementation of grants? Have they been used purposefully?

IMPACT

14. What are the most significant or important changes you observed in your municipality since the start of the project? Why do you think these changes occurred? To whom can you attribute these changes? Why?
15. To your knowledge, has the intervention caused any unexpected positive or negative outcomes?

SUSTAINABILITY

16. How would you rate the quality of provided public services since the start of the project in your community?
 - a. Improved a great deal
 - b. Improved somewhat
 - c. No change
 - d. Improved a little
 - e. Not at all improved
17. How would you rate the quality of the local government's interaction with residents, increased accountability and responsibility of LSG since the inception of the project in your community?
 - a. Improved a great deal
 - b. Improved somewhat
 - c. No change
 - d. Improved a little
 - e. Not at all improved
18. How would you rate the inclusiveness of vulnerable groups in decision-making processes and responsiveness to their needs since the inception of the project in your community?
 - a. Improved a great deal

- b. Improved somewhat
- c. No change
- d. Improved a little
- e. Not at all improved

19. How would you rate access to information since the start of the project in your community?

- a. Improved a great deal
- b. Improved somewhat
- c. No change
- d. Improved a little
- e. Not at all improved

SDC/Kyrgyzstan: External End of Phase VAP and PSI Evaluation

Group Discussion Guide

M&E Groups, Initiative Groups, SIAP Working groups, Planning Groups

Date of discussion: _____

Project: 1. VAP 2. PSI

Stakeholder group: _____

Location: 1. Bishkek 2. Chui 3. Osh 4. Jalal-Abad 5. Issyk-Kul

Municipality/Rayon: _____

Gender: # of Male(s): _____ # of Females: _____

Introduction: Good morning/afternoon, thank you for meeting with us. Our names are _____. We are a team from the Nordic Consulting Group conducting an evaluation of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation's (SDC) "Voice and Accountability" and "Public Service Improvement" Projects implemented by the Development Policy Institute and HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation. The projects aim to provide support to LSGs on increasing accountability of LSGs and citizen participation in local decision-making processes, as well as to improve the system of service management at the local level and responsiveness to the demands of citizens. We have received your contact information from _____ and would like to inquire if you are interested in participating in our study. Since you are members of the community, we would like to learn about your opinion and experience with the projects. Before we begin, we'd like to briefly clarify that we are not from SDC or its implementing partners but rather an independent organization, NCG.

Confidentiality: We would like to assure you that all answers shared with us will be confidential, so please feel free to speak openly about your opinion and perceptions of the projects. All information will be aggregated and presented in the final report, so that information cannot be tied back to any specific individual or organization. You have no obligation to participate in this study so you are free to ask to skip a question or to stop the interview entirely at any time.

Structure: We anticipate the discussion to last approximately 1.5 hours. As part of this discussion, I will ask you about your experience with the evaluated organization's program, and my colleague will take notes. It is important to give everyone an opportunity to speak about his or her experience, so I will do my best to be sure everyone has a chance to participate.

Informed Consent: Thank you for taking the time to speak with us and for being willing to be interviewed. Before we begin, do you have any questions on the information that we just discussed?

Informed Consent provided? ___ Yes (start discussion) _____ No (do not start until provided).

RELEVANCE

1. To begin, please describe your involvement/role with the projects and their activities. (Probe: Which groups are you member of, since when have you been involved; how did you become involved)
2. How relevant do you think the projects activities have been in relation to the following:
 1. Enhancing LSGs responsiveness and accountability to citizens, and transparency in public resource management?
 2. Increasing citizen participation?
3. In your opinion, have the VAP activities contributed in preparing LSGs and the local community for PSI intervention? If so, what were the VAP's key contributions?
 1. What is your reflection on the relevance of provided training to local and national stakeholders?
 2. In your opinion, should the project repeat training in VAP target municipalities, even if there is a high staff turnover?
4. To your knowledge, have the projects' activities caused any unexpected challenges? If so, what methods have the projects been using to deal with these challenges?
5. How would you rate the integration of women, youth, the poor, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups in the project activities to participate in public events, and voice their needs?
1. Very integrated 2. Integrated 3. Somewhat integrated 4. Not integrated 5. Don't know
6. How were the specific needs of the most vulnerable groups included/reflected in the projects interventions?
7. What were the key lessons learned during your/your body's involvement in the projects implementation?

EFFECTIVENESS

8. To your knowledge, what have been the projects' biggest successes so far? What major factors contributed to their success?
9. What have been the projects' biggest challenges? What have the projects done, or what could be done, to overcome these challenges?
10. What is your reflection on the effectiveness of selected projects approaches? What are the benefits and drawbacks of the applied approaches? (*trainings, grants, models of citizen engagement, initiative groups, public service delivery improvement, advocacy, initiatives for LSGs, etc.*)
11. What is your level of satisfaction with the opportunities provided to participate in the local decision-making/budgetary and monitoring processes?
 1. Highly satisfied
 2. Satisfied
 3. Somewhat satisfied
 4. Somewhat unsatisfied

5. Dissatisfied

Probe: If 'highly satisfied' or 'satisfied,' could you please elaborate on why you chose this answer?
If 'somewhat unsatisfied' or 'dissatisfied,' could you please elaborate on why you chose this answer?

12. What is a level of your satisfaction with provided public services and responsiveness to your demands by LSGs?

1. Highly satisfied
2. Satisfied
3. Somewhat satisfied
4. Somewhat unsatisfied
5. Dissatisfied

Probe: If 'highly satisfied' or 'satisfied,' could you please elaborate on why you chose this answer?
If 'somewhat unsatisfied' or 'dissatisfied,' could you please elaborate on why you chose this answer?

13. To what extent did the VAP grants contribute to the promotion of participatory budgeting and LSG responsiveness to local initiatives?

1. To a great extent
2. To some extent
3. To a small extent
4. Not at all

Probe: If 'to a great extent' or 'to some extent,' could you please provide any examples that demonstrate why you chose this answer?

14. How have various groups in your municipality had access to the local decision-making/budgetary processes?

15. What opportunities do women, ethnic minorities, youth, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups have in your municipality to participate in local decision-making/budgetary processes and voice their priorities and needs?

EFFICIENCY

16. Were the public services delivered in a timely manner? (*Probe:* If delayed, ask about frequency of delays)

17. What is your reflection on the adequacy of the grant mechanisms to mitigate the risks of corruption and investment sustainability?

1. Have grants been used purposefully?
2. What is a mechanism of control/oversight over grant implementation and its purposeful use? What should have been done differently to mitigate the risks?

IMPACT

18. What are the most significant or important changes you observed in your municipality since the start of the project? Why do you think these changes occurred? To whom can you attribute these changes? Why?

19. To your knowledge, has the intervention caused any unexpected positive or negative outcomes?

1. Has the project attempted to enhance or mitigate them?
2. If so, what methods were used?

SUSTAINABILITY

20. To what extent do you feel ownership over the project implementation?

1. To a great extent
2. To some extent
3. To a small extent
4. Not at all

Probe: Could you please elaborate on why you chose this answer?

21. To what extent did the project contribute to the changing attitude and behavior of partners?
(Increased citizen participation, inclusion of priority needs to budget and plans, accountability, advocacy, provision of priority services, etc.)

1. To a great extent
2. To some extent
3. To a small extent
4. Not at all

Probe: Could you please provide any examples that demonstrate why you chose this answer?

22. In your opinion, what factors led to the changes in attitude and behavior of partners?

23. Has the project experienced any resistance on the part of its partners on the local level?

1. If so, who opposed it and why?
2. What strategies helped to overcome this opposition?
3. Who were the champions of the intervention? Why were they supported?

24. Are you aware of the utilization of the project's model procedures, systems, and mechanisms by similar interventions in other municipalities where projects do not operate? Please provide an example.

Annex F: List of recommendations on amendments and supplements to the LSG legislation proposed by VAP in 2017¹⁴

1.	Proposals and comments to the draft Resolution of the Government of KR "On the Program for General Plans Development and Provision for Towns and Settlements in KR for 2017-2015". Submitted to the Director of the State Agency for Architecture, Construction, Housing and Communal Services under the Government of KR (ref. No.016 as of February 14, 2017)
2.	Proposals and comments to the draft Law "On Amendments to the Law of KR "On Transfer (Transformation) of Land Plots". Submitted to the deputy of JK KR Baipakbaev E. (ref. No.081 as of May 31, 2017)
3.	Proposals and comments to the draft Law "On Elections to Local Self-Government Bodies" received from the participants during the parliamentary hearings in Naryn, Osh, and Bishkek cities. Submitted to the initiator of the draft law, the deputy of JK KR Bokoev K. (ref. No.107 as of June 3, 2017)
4.	Proposals and comments to the draft Law "On Amendments to the Law of KR "On Administrative and Territorial Structure of KR" were submitted to the director of SALSGIR (ref.No.98 as of June 12, 2017)
5.	Proposals and comments on the draft Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts in the KR (Land Code, Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on Pastures" and the Tax Code) are submitted to the Minister of Agriculture, Food Industry and Melioration of the Kyrgyz Republic (ref.No.133 as of August 17, 2017)
6.	Proposals and comments on the draft Law of the Kyrgyz Republic «On Youth» were submitted to the Director of the State Agency on Youth, Physical Culture and Sports under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic (ref. No. 137 as of August 23, 2017).
7.	The draft Standard Regulations of AO were submitted to the director of SALSGIR (ref. No. 01-18/156 as of November 21, 2017)
8	Proposals and comments on the draft Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On Amendments to the Law of the KR" On Local Self-Government" were submitted to the Minister of Justice of the KR (reference No. 166 as of September 28, 2017).
9	Proposals and comments to the draft Laws of the Kyrgyz Republic "On Tourism" and "On Amendments and Supplements to Certain Legislative Acts" were submitted to the Union of LSGs (reference No. 203 as of November 1, 2017).
10.	Proposals and comments to the draft Regulation "The Procedure for the Impositions of Direct Government's Administration and Regime in remote regions (ayilny aimak, cities)." were submitted to the SALSGIR (ref. No. 146 as of September 5, 2017).
11.	Proposals and comments to the draft Laws of the Kyrgyz Republic "On Amendments to the Law of the KR "On Public Procurement" (ref.149 as of 11.09.17).
12.	Proposals and comments to the draft Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On Legal Acts" were submitted to the Minister of Justice of the Kyrgyz Republic (ref. No. 160 as of 21.09.17).
13.	Proposals and comments to the draft Order "On the Interaction of State Bodies in the Sphere of Protection and Defense from Family Violence" were submitted to the Ministry of Labor and Social Development (ref. No. 212 as of 10.11.17).

¹⁴ Source: Appendix 4.1 of the VAP, Annual Report: 1 January 2017 – 31 December 2017

Clarification of some legal provisions per LSGs request	
14.	Clarification of the powers of LSG bodies to provide material (financial) assistance to socially vulnerable groups of the population from the local budget were submitted to the Head of the Sadovsky AO of the Moscovskiy rayon of the Chui oblast (reference No. 099 as of June 21, 2017).
Advancing the municipal service	
15.	Proposals to the draft State and Municipal employees Training Development Program for 2018-2022 were submitted to the State Personnel Service of the Kyrgyz Republic (ref. No. 077 as of May 24, 2017).
16.	Proposals (recommendations) to the draft Order of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic State order for Training State and Municipal Employees for 2018 on training the heads of AO and Mayors of Cities were submitted to the State Personnel Service of the Kyrgyz Republic (ref. No. 230 as of November 27, 2017)
17.	Proposals (recommendations) to the draft Order of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic State order for Training State and Municipal Employees for 2018 in general were submitted to the State Personnel Service of the Kyrgyz Republic (ref. No. 233 as of November 29, 2017).
Advancing interbudgetary issues	
18.	Draft Law of KR "On Amendments to the Budget Code" developed in order to improve the Budget Code for ensuring stability of the financial base of LSG bodies, as well as to eliminate contradictions in the Budget Code. Submitted to the deputy of JK KR Bokoev K. (ref. No.034 as of March 07, 2017)
19.	Proposals and comments to the draft Law "On Amendments and Supplements to Certain Legislative Acts of KR" that anticipated introduction of amendments and supplements to the laws to correspond with the Budget Code, including such as "On Elections of Local Kenesh Deputies", "On State Duty", "On General Military Service of Citizens of KR, Military and Alternative Services", etc. Submitted to the Ministry of Finance (ref. No.007 as of February 2, 2017)
20.	Proposals to the draft Law "On Amendments and Supplements to the Law "On Local Self-Government" regarding supplementing the law with a new chapter on the financial and economic bases of LSG. Submitted to the deputy of JK KR Bokoev K. (ref. No.087 as of June 07, 2017)
21.	The draft methodology for formation of the civil budget by local self-government bodies, submitted to the Ministry of Finance of KR (ref. No.074 as of May 22, 2017) The Methodology was approved by the Order of the Ministry of Finance of the Kyrgyz Republic No. 166-P of December 26, 2017
22.	The draft methodology for assessing the municipal index of budget transparency, submitted to the Ministry of Finance of KR (ref. No.074 as of May 22, 2017)
23.	The draft methodology for conducting public hearings on republican and local budgets of KR, submitted to the Ministry of Finance of KR (ref. No.074 as of May 22, 2017)
24.	Proposals on improvement of the Standard Provisions on formation of regional development funds, submitted to the Ministry of Economy of KR (ref. No.92 as of June 12, 2017)
25.	The questionnaire to identify corruption in the territorial divisions of the Ministry of Finance, submitted to the Ministry of Finance of KR (ref. No.040 as of March 25, 2017)
26.	Proposals to Action Plan of the Ministry of Finance on Counteracting Corruption for 2018 (reference No. 237 of December 5, 2017).

27.	Proposals on improvement the Standard Regulations on the procedure for the formation of regional development funds were submitted to the Ministry of Economy of the Kyrgyz Republic (reference No. 092 of June 12, 2017).
28.	Proposals to the Draft Code on Non-Tax Revenues of the Kyrgyz Republic were submitted to the Ministry of Finance of the Kyrgyz Republic (ref. No. 117 of July 18, 2017).
29.	Proposals on paragraph 2 of Part 1 of the Protocol of the Interdepartmental Working Group of the Government of the KR dated 1 September 2016 No. 17-152 (Introduction of an electronic trading platform for tenders with municipal property) were submitted to the SALSGIR (ref.No.123 of August 4, 2017).
30.	Proposals to the Draft Budget Classification of the Kyrgyz Republic were submitted to the Ministry of Finance and the Union of LSGs (ref. No. 197 dated October 9, 2017)
31.	Proposals to the Draft Budget Classification of the Kyrgyz Republic were submitted to the SALSGIR (ref. No. 197 dated October 9, 2017)
32.	Proposals on Improvement the creation of a portal for regional development funds were submitted to the Ministry of Economy of the Kyrgyz Republic (ref. No. 248 of 22.11.2017).
33.	Proposals on Improvement of the Draft Budget of the Republic for 2018 and the Forecast for 2019-2020 were submitted to the Committee on Budget and Finance of the Jogorku Kenesh of the Kyrgyz Republic (ref. No. 244 of November 20, 2017).
34.	Proposals on increasing the revenues of the local budget within the framework of the SALSGIR Working Group on Increasing Local Budget Revenues. Submitted to the SALSGIR (ref. No. 242 of December 11, 2017).
35.	Proposals and comments to the Draft Methodology on Assessing the Index of Budget Transparency at the Local Level were submitted to the Prime – Ministers Office of the Kyrgyz Republic (reference No. 225 of November 20, 2017).
36.	An Analytical note on problems in the sphere of local budget for the preparation of the presentation on November 17, 2017 at public hearings on the Budget of Republic were sent to the Union of LSG of the Kyrgyz Republic (ref. No. 222 of November 17, 2017)
37.	Proposal to the Manual "On Building a Successful Relationship Between the Company and the Local Community" were submitted to the National Coordinator of the GIZ program "Mineral Resources for Development" (ref.234 dated November 29, 2017)

Annex G: Terms of Reference



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

Terms of references

External End of Phase Evaluation: Voice and Accountability Project (VAP) and Public Service Improvement Project (PSI)

VAP Phase II (April 1, 2015 – March 31, 2019)

PSI Phase I (May 1, 2015 – April 30, 2019)

1. Background

The “*Strengthening Voice and Accountability*” project (VAP) is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and implemented by the Development Policy Institute (DPI), a Kyrgyzstani organization. The project aims at more transparent and effective management of local finances by Local Self-Governments (LSG) through increased accountability and citizen participation in decision-making processes. The project started in November 2011 with an Inception phase. Currently, it is in its second phase. The first phase of implementation had an operational focus on two provinces (oblasts) – Issyk-Kul and Jalal-Abad oblasts. The second phase launched in April 2015 focuses on Chuy, Osh and Naryn oblasts and will end in March 2019.

The *Public Service Improvement Project (PSI)* is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and implemented by the Consortium of HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation and the Development Policy Institute (DPI). The project aims at improving the system of service management at the local level making it timely and efficiently responsive to the demands of citizens. PSI is currently in its first phase of implementation that will end in April 2019. The project builds on achievements and experiences of the Voice and Accountability Project and is implemented in the selected local self-governments from two regions – Issyk Kul and Jalalabad, the pilot oblasts of the first phase of VAP.

Several months prior to the end of the current phases, a joint external evaluation of both projects is planned to assess the results of the projects and to provide recommendations regarding the continuation of the projects and implementation of potential next phases.

2. Objective of the assignment

1. The end-of-phase evaluation of VAP and PSI serves to critically assess the achievements of the project goals and outcomes in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, relevance, impact and sustainability;
2. Provide recommendations for the adjustments of the projects for the remainder of the phases and provide strategic inputs as a basis for planning of potential additional project phases or merger of the two projects in a new project.

3. Process and deliverables

3.1 Working methodology

The evaluation methodology should answer the following questions, based on the five OECD/DAC evaluation criteria:

Relevance: to what extent the project activities of VAP and PSI are relevant to local decentralization, service provision reform and governance context in Kyrgyzstan? What do the project stakeholders and beneficiaries think of the projects regarding relevance of their activities regarding the public service sector and in terms of enhancing accountability and transparency in public resources management and increasing citizens' participation? Do VAP activities contribute to preparing LSGs and local communities for interventions within PSI? Were risk analysis and mitigation measures solid enough? How did the projects address unexpected challenges?

Effectiveness: to what extent have the project activities of VAP and PSI achieved their objectives and targets at the national and local levels? Is the level of ambition of the set goals and targets appropriate? Were the selected approaches effective (what vs. how)? Is the cooperation with the selected partners leading to the most effective results? What were the major factors influencing the achievements or non-achievements of the objectives? How effective was the VAP grant mechanism for promotion of participatory budgeting and LSG responsiveness to local initiatives?

Efficiency: what is the relation between the inputs and outputs of the projects? Were activities cost-effective? Were objectives achieved in time? Were the applied grant mechanisms adequate to mitigate the risks of corruption, investment sustainability and purposeful use?

Impact: What is the impact of the interventions to the overall situation of the target group or those affected? Are there any unexpected outcomes of the interventions and if so, is there a need to mitigate them or enhance them? Have the projects influenced other donors?

Sustainability: to what extent are the project partners and beneficiaries involved in the project implementation developing ownership? To what extent did the projects contribute to changing attitudes and behavior of partners (especially at the local level)? Who were the champions and those who resisted? How were the resistances overcome? How likely will the benefits of the projects continue after the funding/implementation has ceased? What is the role of the Union of LSGs and other actors in sustaining the projects' results? Does the level of input from the projects allow a scaling up by national partners? To what extent did the project contributions into the LSG system (legal framework) development affect the national policies and promote demand for LSG accountability, improved service management system and citizen engagement in local budgetary processes? To what extent could the methodologies of the projects

be simplified to ensure an easier scaling up? Which institution could play the role the projects are now playing? Could the projects become a center of expertise for other projects? How could the methodology and knowledge be shared? Have any efforts been made to inform other donors working at local level such as ADB, EU, WB and to transfer the methodologies of the projects to bigger projects?

The evaluation should also look into the lessons learnt, specific crosscutting issues and assess the idea of merging the two projects:

Lessons Learnt: what lessons have been learnt by the projects and the partners? To what extent have they already been taken into account in the interventions? What experiences have been made in cooperation and synergizing between the two projects? How can VAP strengthen synergies with PSI on both local and national levels? What lessons should be used for developing potential synergies with other SDC-funded initiatives (e.g. Strong and Inclusive Parliamentary Democracy project, Health Facility Autonomy, Bai Alai etc.)? What recommendations can be made on the future direction of the project implementation?

Transversal themes (gender, conflict sensitivity, human rights, poverty, and environment): to what extent were they integrated into the projects and intervention logic? To what extent are the specific needs of women, poor, ethnic minorities and disabled individuals (defined as the most vulnerable) reflected in the project design, interventions, monitoring and reporting? To what extent was access to the local decision making process/budgetary process provided for representatives of various groups in a municipality? To what extent did women, ethnic minorities, people with special needs and other vulnerable groups participate in the process, including voicing their needs and priorities? Have the projects contributed to enhancing participation or inclusion of vulnerable groups and women at the local level beyond the frame of the projects?

Merging of VAP and PSI: What could be possible effectiveness gains and risks if the operations of VAP and PSI are merged in one project? What could be potential efficiency gains and risks if the operations of VAP and PSI are merged in one project? Could a comprehensive set of support operations by VAP and PSI as a single project have an enhanced potential to get the LSGs to sustainable results? Is it recommended to consider one single project as a follow up to the current phases of VAP and PSI to improve service provision and accountability at the local level? If it is recommended, how can the merger be done?

3.2 Tasks

The following tasks should be performed in order to reach the objective of the evaluation:

Task 1: Develop the Evaluation Plan including the evaluation methodology and tools as well as the Work Plan, and the Evaluation Mission Programme.

The Evaluation Plan should provide feedback on the ToR, present the evaluation methodology and tools, the Work Plan and the Programme of Evaluation Mission in Kyrgyzstan. The Evaluation Plan should be approved before conducting the Evaluation Mission.

Task 2: Evaluate the overall project implementation progress and specific progress regarding each Outcome of each project towards the set Objectives and Targets as defined in the project Log-Frames.

In accordance with the Evaluation Plan, the evaluation should answer the questions on relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the project activities.

Task 3: Evaluate the project implementation progress in addressing the transversal themes in the area of each of the project Outcomes.

The evaluation should answer a question on how effectively and efficiently the projects addressed the transversal themes in the implementation, and present recommendations on addressing the transversal themes during potential next phases of the projects.

Task 4: Provide strategic recommendations as regards vertical and horizontal scaling up and possible merging of the two projects.

The evaluation should provide specific recommendations for the remainder of the current project phases and on the strategic orientation of the next phases, or on the combination of the two projects. It should be guided by but not limited to the specific questions on the future strategic orientation of the projects outlined in Annex 1, and inform the subsequent strategy formulation of the follow-on phases.

3.3. Consultant team and estimated level of effort

The assignment will be carried out by a team of consultants, which may include local consultants. The estimated combined total level of effort for all consultants together is 52 person-days – 20/21 days for each of the two international consultants (including travelling) and 11 days for the local consultant (please see the table under section 3.4.). The experts should be familiar with the country and its decentralization reforms, public finance management at the local level, public service provision development in general and challenges of the post-soviet context in particular.

3.4 Timeframe of the assignment and mission program

Date 2018	Activity	Level of efforts (in person-days)
Mid-March	Preparation, study of documents, development of evaluation methodology (incl. approval by SDC Bishkek)	6
Within March - May	Travel to/from Kyrgyzstan	4
1-2 days after arrival	Briefing SDC Bishkek, implementing consortium, and project PIU	3
Within mid-March - May	Field visits, interviews, discussion as per consultants methodology/work plan (national level, and JA and IK regions)	21
Within mid-March - May	Workshop with project PIUs (discussion of findings, follow-up phase), preparation of debriefing	6
1-2 days before departure	Debriefing/presentation of preliminary findings to SDC Bishkek, project consortium partners, and project PIU in Bishkek	3
15 days after return	Elaboration of draft final report	7

from the mission		
5 days after receiving feedbacks	Incorporation of feedbacks from project team and SDC into final report	2
July, 1	Submission of final report to SDC	
	Total number of days	52

3.5 Logistics and Budget

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) in Kyrgyzstan is available to provide logistical and administrative guidance during the consultants’ stay in Bishkek. Reservations and payments for flights, hotels and transport in and to the country are in the responsibility of the consultants. International travel tickets should be booked through the Swiss Government Travel Center. As part of the contract, the consultants shall submit the assignment budget based on the agreed offer, indicating separately the consultants fees/rates and all expenses for travel, per diem, hotels, local transport, etc.

The implementing partners, HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Kyrgyzstan and the Development Policy Institute, provide the evaluation team support for elaborating the mission program as well as with all necessary logistical support in the project areas. The VAP and PSI project teams will fully support and cooperate with the mission on all logistical and thematic matters and questions. All requested project documents and data will be made available to the consultants in due time.

4. Expected Results, Deliverables and Deadlines

The expected result of the assignment is the combined end of phase evaluation report of the two projects – VAP and PSI – presenting the results of evaluation as well as the recommendations regarding relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the project activities and of the strategic orientation of the next phases or of a new project. An assessment grid (Annex 2) shall be filled in individually for VAP and PSI and attached to the report.

The report shall be written in English and should not exceed 40 pages (excluding annexes). A draft Evaluation Report shall be submitted to SDC no later than 15 days after the return from mission, in electronic form. Comments from SDC and the implementing partners will be provided in order for the evaluation team to finalize the Evaluation Report. After incorporating comments and correcting factual errors, the final version shall be made available to SDC within 5 working days of receiving the comments from SDC. In case of differences on content and/or assessment conclusions, the consultants should add a section to report where they will be allowed to explain their perspective.

The deadline for the Evaluation report is July 1, 2018.

5. Qualification and Experience

The team of consultants will have at least two international experts (one expert on public service development and one expert on public budgeting) and one (or more) local expert. The team of consultants will have a team leader who will be the point of contact for SDC. The team leader should be one of the two international experts. Both international experts will have the following minimum qualifications and experience:

- University degree in public administration management, political sciences, development studies, law or in a related field;
- At least 8 years of experience in local self - government development, public policy development, public budgeting, public services development;
- At least 5 years of experience in evaluating large international development program and grant programs;
- Good understanding of local governance system in Kyrgyzstan;
- At least one of the international consultants should have a solid experience in the CIS region, ideally Kyrgyzstan;
- At least one of the international consultants would need to have a solid experience of working/evaluating gender inclusion;
- Excellent analytical and report writing skills;
- Excellent knowledge of English, desirably knowledge of Russian language;
- Knowledge of SDC and previous experience of working for SDC is an advantage.

The expertise of the local consultant should be complementary to the one of the international consultants, in particular in view of local work experience in public budgeting or public service development in Kyrgyzstan. An additional local consultant could be contracted to work on gender/inclusion component. Excellent knowledge of English, Kyrgyz and Russian are required.

6. Documents

List of available documents related to VAP:

1. Report on External Review Strengthening Voice and Accountability Project (VAP) Inception Phase and Phase I (November 2011 - 31 March 2015), September 2014 by Rayan Knox and Timur Baiserkeev;
2. Management response to the External review of the Phase I and planning the Phase II (April 2015 – March 2018) of the Voice and Accountability Project (VAP)
3. V&A Project Document for Phase II;
4. Yearly Plans of Operation for phase II;
5. Half-yearly and annual reports for phase II;
6. Report on the Internal Mid-Term Review of the Voice and Accountability: Citizens' Participation and Oversight of Budget Processes in the Kyrgyz Republic (1 April 2016 – December 31, 2016), July 2017 by Andris Jaunsleinis, Chynara Biialieva, Ph.D.;
7. Minutes of the discussion of the internal Mid-Term Review Report of the Voice and Accountability Project (VAP) with SDC;
8. Website: www.vap.kg;
9. Project publications;
10. National Development Strategy 2018-2040 and the 40 steps government program.

List of available documents related to PSI:

1. Public Service Improvement in Kyrgyzstan, Project Document Phase I, 2015-2019, March 18, 2015, including Annexes I to VI;
2. Revised Project log-frame, July 5, 2017 (final version after approved MTR);
3. Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, Oct 26, 2015;
4. Public Service Improvement Project – Grant Program, Apr 11, 2016;
5. Baseline survey, Jan 27, 2016 (first survey) and Aug 26, 2016 (second survey);
6. End-line survey, (planning report date March 31, 2018);
7. 2015 Yearly Plan of Operations, May 27, 2015;
8. 2015 Annual Progress Report, March 31, 2016;
9. 2016 Yearly Plan of Operations, Jan 28, 2016 including Revised Log-frame;
10. 2016 Semester Progress Report, September 13, 2016;
11. 2016 Annual Progress Report, March 30, 2017;
12. 2017 Yearly Plan of Operations, Jan 13, 2017;
13. 2017 Semester Progress Report, September Sep 18, 2017;
14. PSI Project – Internal Mid-Term Review, B. Blumenthal: MTR Report June 22, 2017;
15. PSI Project backstopping mission, B. Blumenthal: Back-to-office report, Oct 23, 2015;
16. PSI Project backstopping mission, B. Blumenthal: Back-to-office report, Sep 10, 2016.

7. Stakeholders

List of stakeholders to be interviewed for evaluation of VAP:

- State Agency for local self-governance and interethnic relations;
- Government's Office;
- President's Office;
- Ministry of Finance;
- Parliament;
- State Personnel Service;
- Development agencies, projects and programs;
- (7-9 days):
- LSGs in Chuy, Naryn and Osh oblasts (at least 2 target municipalities and 1 non-target/grantee in each oblast);
- Representatives of Local Councils;
- Citizens engaged in the local budgetary process through participating in Initiative Groups' operation, or in public monitoring of LSG performance/infrastructure project implementation and/or in public events on budget information disclosure (PRA sessions, general meetings, public budget hearings).

List of stakeholders to be interviewed for evaluation of PSI:

- State Agency for local self-governance and interethnic relations;
- Ministry of Economy;
- Government Apparatus: department on public administration and cadre work ;

- State Service for Architecture, Construction and Housing and Communal services;
- Target LSGs;
- LSG Union;
- Donors;
- Other relevant projects (e.g. CAMI).

Annex 1. Specific questions

In addition, the evaluation should provide **recommendations** to both projects based on the following specific questions:

- What are important context changes, the main technical and political bottlenecks and how do they influence the projects?
- What is the role of policy dialogue in addressing bottlenecks? What role can the projects play in the policy dialogue at national level and how?
- How can results and successes of the current phase best be used for multiplying and scaling up in the current and possible future project area, and beyond project intervention areas?
- Does it make sense to continue with two separate projects, or should the projects be merged? What would be the benefit of merging? What focus should a merged project have?
- Should each project cover new areas or should it consolidate what has been achieved so far? If the projects should cover new areas, what selection criteria should be used to select additional project areas, if any (new oblast, additional municipalities, etc.)?
- How to mainstream and strengthen the projects at the national level to ensure sustainability and to provide evidence base on project successes (e.g. as input to administrative or territorial planning, budgetary relations, etc.)?
- In view of the project sustainability, to what extent can/should the projects contribute to strengthening the horizontal and vertical exchange of LSGs among each other as well as with the national authorities? To what extent should they provide capacity building support to the Union of LSGs to this end?
- How to better address specific needs of women, poor, ethnic minorities and individuals with special needs in the project interventions? How to promote the involvement of the most vulnerable groups not only as project beneficiaries but also as actors?
- Is the current project set-up and team composition adequate to deliver the expected project results (at local and national level)?

VAP

- Should the project continue with initiatives for local communities and LSGs (e.g. Local Initiative competition, contest on the role of civil society organizations in engaging citizens)? What is their value added to the project?
- Should the project repeat trainings in VAP target municipalities in 3 oblasts of Phase 2 with a high staff turnover?
- How can/should the project promote the adoption of a common approach by other projects and partners?
- To what extent and how should the project promote gender budgeting?
- To what extent did the project provide evidence of benefits and close interaction of community engagement and budget transparency with service/welfare delivery?
- Should the project continue cooperation with the State Personnel Service and technical assistance for them to continue improvement of the system for municipal civil servants' capacity development?

- To what extent should the project encourage the Kyrgyz Government to support relevant international initiatives (e.g. European LSG Charter), which promote budget transparency and community engagement in local decision-making, and assessment of LSG officials by the central government against responsiveness and accountability to the citizens?

PSI

- To what extent does the project need to be adjusted to encourage and better be able to support inter-municipal cooperation (e.g. working in adjacent municipalities, definition of functional areas, etc.)?
- Should the project build and strengthen “champion municipalities” to foster peer-learning and spill-overs?
- Would focusing the project’s support on specific services (e.g. drinking water, public area maintenance) allow to better address the underlying causes of LSGs and providers’ weak capacity in service provision?
- How to incentivize municipalities to choose the best possible option for service provision (e.g. through private providers)?