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**HELVETAS**  
KYRGYZSTAN



ӨНҮКТҮРҮҮ САЯСАТ ИНСТИТУТУ  
ИНСТИТУТ ПОЛИТИКИ РАЗВИТИЯ  
DEVELOPMENT POLICY INSTITUTE

# **EVALUATION REPORT**

## **EXTERNAL END OF PHASE EVALUATION**

### **Public Service Improvement Project: Phase II** **May 2019 – May 2023 (NCE to July 2024)**

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ATR	Administrative and Territorial Reform
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DPI	Development Policy Institute
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GESI	Gender Equality/Social Inclusion
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
IMC	Inter-Municipal Cooperation
KII	Key Informant Interview
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
LSGU	Local Self-Governance Union
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MP	Member of Parliament
MTR	Mid-Term Review
OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee
PSI	Public Service Improvement
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEDP	Socio-Economic Development Programme
SEVAL	Swiss Evaluation Society
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
VAP	Voice and Accountability Project

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report relates to an external end of phase evaluation of the Public Service Improvement Project (PSI) Phase II. The project is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and implemented by a consortium comprised of HELVETAS Swiss Inter-cooperation (HELVETAS) and the Development Policy Institute (DPI). The evaluation covers the entirety of the Phase II implementation period from May 2019 – May 2023, while the project is currently under extension to July 2024. The geographical scope of the evaluation includes both oblasts where the project is being implemented – Issyk-Kul in the North and Jalal-Abad in the South, as well as activities at the national level. The project has a total budget of CHF 5.3 million.

As per the OECD/DAC Evaluation Criteria,<sup>1</sup> the evaluation aims to provide SDC, the project's implementing partners – HELVETAS and DPI, government counterparts, civil society partners and other stakeholders with an impartial assessment of the results generated to date. The evaluation assesses the project's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability; it identifies and documents evidence-based findings; and provides stakeholders with recommendations to inform the remaining implementation phase as well as the design and implementation of future phases. In addition to the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria, the evaluation also assesses three transversal themes – lessons learnt, dissemination of knowledge and learning and gender sensitivity and social inclusion.

The intended users of the evaluation include primary evaluation users, namely SDC, HELVETAS and DPI, who will use the evaluation to further strategize for improved public services in Kyrgyzstan. The secondary users, namely the project's stakeholders will use the information to learn about what works when advancing and enhancing public service provision in Kyrgyzstan. SDC may also use the evaluation for accountability and as input for decision-making purposes. Overall, all users can use the evaluation for accountability and transparency purposes, to hold the implementing partners accountable for their development contributions. The evaluation team sought to ensure the full and active participation of all users as relevant throughout the evaluation process.

The methodology used a mixed-methods approach but was essentially qualitative. It comprised an analysis of all relevant project documentation shared by the project – over 40 documents in total, and data collected both in-person and virtually through a total of 14 key informant interviews and 20 focus group discussions, covering both project locations. A total of 164 partners and stakeholders were met (89 women (54%) and 75 men (46%)) including government ministries and state entities; local authorities; civil society organisations; beneficiaries of the project's interventions; the project's donor; external partners and PSI project and programme staff. The evaluation met with 25 municipalities (21 PSI project municipalities and 4 LSG Union pilots).

It is without doubt that the project has punched above its weight and has achieved results beyond those that were planned in its logical framework. The project has proven to be highly responsive to the ever-changing context, including political and operational changes as well as the COVID-19 pandemic and the on-going administrative and territorial reform (ATR) process. The project's upstream policy work and capacity building have made significant long-term contributions, including legislative and policy changes; strengthening the capacities of the Union of Local-Self-Governance (LSGU) and supporting the establishment and capacity building of the Local Governance Academy for Central Asia (LGACA). The project's multi-pronged approach has brought substantial results in strengthening local public service provision and creating the enabling

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

environment for local self-government reform, although the institutionalization of results still need to be further reinforced.

The downstream project model, which is based on clear interlinkages between capacity development provided to the local authorities, improved service delivery and increased confidence and trust of communities, has proven to be highly successful and conducive of comprehensive buy-in of the local (and national) partners. In this clear causality, a special emphasis is placed on citizen participation whereby citizens are capacitated to not only be able to express their needs but also to contribute towards the delivery and quality of service provision, through joint vision and co-creation of solutions between communities, service providers and local authorities. The inter-municipal cooperation (IMC) model went beyond its original scope of just gathering municipalities and has evolved into a broader and more cohesive instrument for bringing together all stakeholders at the local level including communities, municipal enterprises, service providers and local authorities. The community monitoring model ensures the consistency and quality of local service provision as well as the role the community can play in holding local authorities to account. The IMC model has contributed towards strengthening good governance principles such as transparency and accountability and has decreased the risk of corruption in local service provision.

The project's approaches have contributed to its efficiency and effectiveness including the low-cost: high impact approach as well as the long-term commitment of both the project and its donor, who recognized that there are no quick fixes in programming and implementation related to strengthening the provision of local services.

There is strong evidence of the ownership of results, which is evidenced by the readiness of the local partners, and even communities' willingness to contribute further to similar initiatives, which is opening the potential for long-term sustainability. There is robust knowledge management within the project and learning feedback loops are systematized within the project cycle. This includes peer-to-peer learning between municipalities beyond the scope of the project as well as codification of knowledge products at the national level. This has also contributed towards ensuring strategic alignment and sharing learning to minimize duplication and waste resources.

Going forward, the project needs to continue to reinforce the institutionalization of the LSGU given its ever increasing relevance in view of the ATR and increased demands from municipalities for its services. This is expected to increase even further due to the ATR process. The institutional linkages between the Academy and the Union need to be further strengthened in order to ensure full optimization of knowledge codification. They should become repositories of knowledge on local self-government in Kyrgyzstan, with the help of which it will be possible to continue to strengthen local self-government capacities in line with the ATR. Some of the municipalities are still not fully familiar with the work of the Academy and there needs to be a clear programmatic line and understanding of the role and contribution of the Academy. Concerted efforts should be made to replicate and scale-up the best practice model of IMC, including increased budget allocation, as well as the broader more cohesive instrument of expanded local stakeholder participation. The role of civil society should be further explored and utilized where possible, given the current constraints.

**The project is even more relevant and needed now than when it started and this opportunity should be maximized by the project in offering policy solutions and implementing instruments.** The project is in a unique position to test and pilot different options and models and in this context, **the final phase of the project should be extended to include both a two-year implementation period as well as a two-year exit phase.** This will also upgrade SDC's partnership profile as the lead organization in local self-governance reform in Kyrgyzstan and will help to root achievements more sustainably and make them irreversible.

## EXTERNAL END OF PHASE EVALUATION PUBLIC SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT: PHASE II

### 1. Introduction

This report relates to an external end of phase evaluation of the Public Service Improvement Project (PSI) Phase II. The project is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and implemented by a consortium comprised of HELVETAS Swiss Inter-cooperation (HELVETAS) and the Development Policy Institute (DPI). The evaluation covers the entirety of the Phase II implementation period from May 2019 – May 2023, while the project is currently under extension to July 2024. The geographical scope of the evaluation includes both oblasts where the project is being implemented – Issyk-Kul in the North and Jalal-Abad in the South, as well as activities at the national level. The project has a total budget of CHF 5.3 million.

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The intended users of the evaluation include primary evaluation users, namely SDC, HELVETAS and DPI and who will use the evaluation to further strategize for improved public service in Kyrgyzstan. The secondary users, namely the project's stakeholders will use the information to learn about what works when advancing and enhancing public service provision in Kyrgyzstan. SDC may also use the evaluation for accountability and as input for decision-making purposes. Overall, all users can use the evaluation for accountability and transparency purposes, to hold the implementing partners accountable for their development contributions. The evaluation team sought to ensure the full and active participation of all users as relevant throughout the evaluation process.

The Evaluation Report is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 presents the context and background of the intervention as well as the project itself. Chapter 3 provides the evaluations' objective, scope and purpose as well as the evaluation methodology and data analysis approaches utilised as part of the evaluation process. Chapter 4 presents the findings, Chapter 5 the recommendations and Chapter 6 the lessons learnt. Conclusions are provided at Annex III in the SDC Assessment Grid.

There are a number of annexes to the Evaluation Report, including the key evaluation questions, the project's progress towards achievement of its impact, outcome and output indicators, the SDC Assessment Grid containing the evaluation's conclusions, the stakeholder list of stakeholders met during the evaluation as well as the Terms of Reference, which provided the framework for conducting the evaluation.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

## 2. Background

### 2.1 Context

The PSI project aims at improving living conditions of people in rural Kyrgyzstan through improved public services. The project is implemented in 26 selected municipalities from two regions – Issyk-Kul and Jalal-Abad.

As per the terms of reference (ToR), the main goal of PSI phase I (2015 – 2019) was 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.” The main thrust of PSI phase II is to deepen, replicate and scale up tested models and solutions from phase I as well as to test new models (e.g. inter-municipal cooperation) to tangibly improve public services by establishing replication models and supporting national mechanisms for their dissemination and scaling up the approach countrywide.

PSI II is working on achieving two outcomes that contribute to the overall goal:

*Outcome 1: Rural municipalities provide local public services in an effective and efficient manner*

*Outcome 2: The various system actors create enabling conditions – technical, legal and financial – fostering socially inclusive and gender responsive local public service provision*

During the phase II implementation (May 2019 – July 2024) the project strategy towards achieving the set results is grouped into two main interventions:

a. Creating models and supporting tangible service improvements through inter-municipal cooperation (IMC) and active and meaningful participation of citizens in development of local service policies and practices that are gender sensitive and socially inclusive; supporting and utilizing national mechanisms for dissemination and capitalization of the knowledge and best practices on effective local service provision.

At the meso level PSI II works both on inter-municipal service delivery models as well as models for regional planning and management of selected services, such as waste and water resources management.

b. At the national level the project is building the capacity of national stakeholders to improve the policy framework and learning mechanisms for service improvements.

### 2.2 Evaluation purpose, objective and scope.

The ToR provided the framework for the evaluation, including the purpose, objective and scope of the evaluation, which the evaluation team analysed to develop the methodology and approach for conducting the evaluation.

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the results of the project and provide recommendations regarding its continuation and implementation of potential next (exit) phase.

The objectives of the evaluation were two-fold:

- (i) The end-of-phase evaluation of PSI serves to critically assess the achievements of the project goals and outcomes in terms of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability;

- (ii) Provide recommendations for the adjustments of the project for the remainder of the phase and provide strategic inputs as a basis for planning of potential exit phase, focusing on the following main questions: how effective the already existing mechanisms for nationwide scaling-up are and what needs to be done in the exit phase to ensure that the piloted models of service improvement are scaled-up without external support of development partners.

The evaluation feeds into learning about what has worked well, what can be improved, serves accountability purposes, and feeds into decision-making regarding further iterations of the project.

The scope of the evaluation assessed the PSI project's progress against the project's theory of change (ToC) and logframe and the achieved results from May 2019 – October 2023. The evaluation's geographical coverage and approach will be focused on the two oblasts where the project is being implemented – Issyk-Kul and Jalal-Abad and in particular the 26 municipalities where the project is focusing – as well as regionally and nationally to capture results at the micro, meso and macro levels.

### 2.3 Theory of Change

As stated in the project document, the Theory of Change (ToC) for PSI II is anchored in systemic thinking. This entails that existing systems for public service provision are analysed and improved by finding new systemic and sustainable solutions and models that will prompt transformational change for beneficiaries, primary stakeholders and system actors.

The ToC reads as follows:

*If* women, men, youth and socially excluded groups of people are empowered to engage in local public service management processes; and

*If* municipalities are capacitated to improve public services by using effective and socially inclusive methodologies; and

*If* the national framework for service provision and relevant national actors are strengthened;

*Then* socially inclusive and gender responsive public service provision that addresses the needs and priorities of community members in Kyrgyzstan will be achieved.

In line with the overall ToC, the project goal for the period 2019-2023 is that ***People in rural Kyrgyzstan enjoy better living conditions thanks to improved public services.***

In addition to the well-elaborated ToC, which charts the causal pathway foreseen to achieving results and the overall goal or impact of the project, the project's logical framework contains the impact, outcome and output statements and corresponding indicators. The impact statement has three indicators, which are used by the project to track progress towards its overall goal. Outcome 1 contains three indicators and its corresponding outputs 1.1 and 1.2 also do. Under Outcome 2 there are four indicators, with an additional three indicators under output 2.1 and four indicators under output 2.2. **In total, there are 23 indicators which track the project's progress and results.**



### 3. Methodology

The main reference for the evaluation methodology is the OECD/DAC Evaluation Criteria<sup>3</sup> as well as SDC's Evaluation Policy 2018<sup>4</sup> and the Swiss Evaluation Society's (SEVAL) Standards.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the evaluation is designed to be gender-responsive, follow a human-rights based approach (HRBA), and reflect utilisation-focused and feminist approaches. The evaluation is both summative, in assessing the results of this phase of the project, as well as formative through providing forward looking recommendations and lessons learned to inform the remaining implementation period, as well as a potential final exit phase of the project. In particular the evaluation will consider possibilities for scale-up of the initiatives and replication.

#### 3.1 Evaluability Analysis

The evaluation team undertook a rapid evaluability assessment, looking at the project's ToC together with its logical framework and the project documentation that is available. The evaluation team assessed that the ToC and Results Framework are clear, with clearly and appropriately worded impact, outcome and output statements, together with well-articulated indicators, baselines and targets. Document availability was also assessed as very good. All relevant project documentation was shared with the evaluation team. Regular annual progress reports are comprehensive and available for all years and contain relevant and updated data, which is disaggregated where appropriate. A baseline survey has been shared with the evaluation team as well as a draft endline survey, which was conducted in October 2023. In addition, the evaluation team has been provided with the annual work plans and relevant financial information. Availability of documents made it possible to evaluate the project's work with documentation as well, the attention paid to them, maintenance, and their use, including for learning lessons and conducting audits in the future. Overall, this meant that from documentary sources alone, triangulation was potentially possible. The conclusion from the evaluability analysis was that the evaluability of the project is very good.

#### 3.2 Transversal Themes – Lessons learnt, dissemination of knowledge and learning and gender sensitivity and social inclusion.

In addition to the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria, the evaluation team was asked to analyse three transversal themes – lessons learnt, dissemination of knowledge and learning and gender sensitivity and social inclusion. For lessons learnt and the dissemination of knowledge and learning, the evaluation team utilised two different methods. The first was to analyse the project documentation to assess how lessons learnt and knowledge and learning from both phases of the project were incorporated into the project implementation, adaptive management approaches and replication and scale-up. The second was to ask stakeholders a series of questions specifically related to these aspects.

To respond to GESI, gender equality and the human rights based approach aspects were integrated into both the evaluation scope and methodology and incorporated into the evaluation matrix and evaluation questions. This allowed the evaluation team to assess how the project contributed towards gender equality and diversity and inclusion, for example through affecting gender and power relations and the structural causes of inequalities. The evaluation also analysed how the project has affected men and women differently. In addition to being participatory and inclusive, the evaluation team's approach was based on the principles of gender equality. All data gathered

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<sup>3</sup> Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development / Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC), Network on Development Evaluation, Better Criteria for Better Evaluation Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use, 2019, available at: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/revised-evaluation-criteria-dec-2019.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> [https://zewo.ch/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/20180906-evaluationspolitik-maerz-2018\\_EN.pdf](https://zewo.ch/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/20180906-evaluationspolitik-maerz-2018_EN.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.seval.ch/en/standards-competences/standards/>

has been disaggregated to the largest extent possible (gender, age, disability status, ethnicity etc.) and efforts were made for positive sampling in terms of ensuring a minimum of 40% women representation during the key informant interviews and focus group discussions. In the end, 54% of participants in the evaluation were women. To the extent possible, the evaluation team assessed gender equality and the human rights based approach using an intersectionality lens, looking at gender, age, disability status, ethnicity and other intersectional elements that may be relevant.

### 3.3 Evaluation criteria and elaboration of key questions.

As per the ToR, the evaluation team was asked to consider a number of key questions shaped around the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability and the additional transversal themes. The key evaluation questions and sub-questions (see Annex I) were synthesised into an evaluation matrix (see Annex III), which guided the evaluation team and provided an analytical framework for conducting the evaluation. The evaluation matrix sets out the relevant evaluation criteria, key questions and sub-questions, data sources, data collection methods/tools, indicators/success standards and methods for data analysis that were used. The evaluation matrix was divided into each of the six evaluation criteria – relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability, with the addition of the transversal themes. Within the effectiveness criteria, each of the project's four outputs were individually scrutinised. Each of the evaluation criteria were assessed and ranked in line with the SDC Assessment Grid, as provided in the ToR. The completed Assessment Grid is provided at Annex IV.

### 3.4. Evaluation Design

The evaluation was multi-faceted and the methodological approach used mixed (qualitative and quantitative) methods, as the best vehicle for meeting the evaluation's needs. The evaluation team ensured that the evaluation was conducted through a participatory and consultative process, which included all relevant national stakeholders and the project beneficiaries. The methodological approach promoted inclusion and participation by employing gender equality and human rights responsive approaches, as detailed above under section 3.2, with a focus on utilisation-focused and feminist approaches. These approaches and how they have been incorporated into both the design of the evaluation and its conduct were detailed in the Inception Report.

The evaluation's principal guide was the project document, in particular the Results Framework containing its logframe and M&E framework, which provided an indication and outline as to the set of questions that the evaluation team asked each stakeholder group. Key Informant Interview Guides were developed and additional questions were provided in the Evaluation Matrix.

### 3.5 Data collection methods and instruments

A number of different data collection methods and instruments were utilised by the evaluation team in order to collect as much primary and secondary, quantitative and qualitative data as possible, to ensure the integrity of the evaluation and to allow for data triangulation. In total, the evaluation met with 164 of the projects stakeholders and beneficiaries – 89 women (54%) and 75 men (46%).

- (a) **Desk research and document review:** The evaluation team conducted a detailed desk research and document review of over 40 relevant documents as part of the inception phase including regulatory policies. This process continued throughout the evaluation to obtain additional information, to validate and verify preliminary findings, and to fact-check and cross-reference data and information. Documentary review findings were recorded using a standardized analytical tool derived from the evaluation matrix, questions, and criteria; and triangulated against other data sources to generate robust findings. Data collected from all

sources was captured and systematized in a framework according to the key evaluation questions. The desk review and document research was triangulated with other data collection methods used in the evaluation to answer the evaluation questions as specified in the ToR and evaluation matrix. Within the desk review the websites of the Ministry of Economy of the Kyrgyz Republic <https://mineconom.gov.kg/ru>, the State Agency for Civil Service and Local Self-Governance <https://mkk.gov.kg/ru/>, the Institute for Development Policy <https://dpi.kg/>, the LSG Best Practices Portal <https://myktyaimak.gov.kg/?lang=ru>, etc. were examined. Media analysis was also carried out.

- (b) **Financial Analysis:** A detailed financial analysis was undertaken of the project's financial reports and related documentation to determine the level of efficiency of the project implementation.
- (c) **Key informant interviews:** A total of 14 qualitative interview and joint discussions with 24 stakeholders were conducted using interview protocols developed based on the evaluation questions (main questions and sub-questions). In all cases, the evaluation team treated all information that respondents provided as confidential, in as much as their comments have been reported in such a way that they cannot be traced back to a particular individual. This was intended to foster a frank discussion and to encourage interviewees to provide an accurate assessment of the project.
- (d) **Focus group discussions:** The evaluation team conducted 20 focus group discussions with 144 the project beneficiaries. The FGDs examined the effectiveness and sustainability of the project's activities and an analysis of the effectiveness and lessons learned from the different implementation strategies. The notes from these discussions were recorded under the Chatham House rule, without revealing the identity or the affiliation of participants, in order to encourage openness and to facilitate the sharing of information.
- (e) **Site visits/observations:** Five site visits were conducted by the evaluation team in municipalities in Issyk-Kul and Jalal-Abad where the project has been implemented including on waste collection and management, fitness and innovation for youth. This allowed the evaluation team to see first-hand the impact of the project on the local communities.

### 3.6 Analytical Framework

In order to analyse the collected data, the following analytical methods (lens) were applied by the evaluation team:

**Contribution Analysis** In the complex development context in Kyrgyzstan and in the specific oblasts in which the PSI project is being implemented, it is difficult for the final evaluation to attribute the observed results solely to the project. This is partly because of the number of stakeholders involved, partly because of other exogenous factors, and partly because of the complex nature of the project itself. For this reason, the evaluation team adopted a contribution analysis approach, which does not firmly establish causality but rather seeks to achieve a plausible association by analysing the project's ToC and results framework, documenting the project's successes and value added, applying the "before and after" criterion, i.e. what exists now that did not exist before and what has changed since the start of the project, and through considering the counterfactual – what would have happened without the PSI project.

**Political Economy Analysis** A political economy analysis approach recognises the local and regional contexts and the incentives faced by the actors engaged in it, i.e. the internal and external

factors that determine success. This helped the evaluation team to understand who seeks to gain and lose from the PSI project, as well as to identify who has vested interests and the social and cultural norms that need to be taken into account.

**Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analysis** Most of the primary data collection methods (interviews, FGDs and site visits) will collect qualitative data. These were analysed using a code structure, aligned to the key evaluation questions, sub-questions and indicators. The qualitative data from the primary data collection methods was cross-referenced with other sources such as documents. The quantitative data produced descriptive analysis (rather than more complex regressions).

**Triangulation** Triangulation is the process of using multiple data sources, data collection methods, and/or theories to validate research findings. The evaluation team used more than one approach (data collection method) to address the evaluation questions in order to reduce the risk of bias and increase the chances of detecting errors or anomalies. Wherever possible all data gathered, both qualitatively and quantitatively has been triangulated, through cross verification from two or more sources. For interviews, this was done through posing a similar set of questions to multiple interviewees. For the document review it was accomplished through crosschecking data and information from multiple sources to increase the credibility and validity of the material. The evaluation team applied three approaches to triangulation: methods triangulation (checking the consistency of findings generated by different data collection methods); interrogating data where diverging results arise; and analyst triangulation (discussion and validation of findings, allowing for a consistent approach to interpretive analysis).

**Data Synthesis** Data synthesis is the process of bringing all the evidence together to synthesize the data, to find cause-and-effect relationships between them and formulate findings, conclusions and policy recommendations for the project. Multiple lines of evidence fed into the contribution analysis. An evidence map was utilized to map information obtained from different sources on the same results area and evaluation questions, and information collected through interviews and focus groups. The evaluation team synthesised data in two ways. The first was the process of articulating the key findings and cross-checking the strength of the evidence for each. Based on this, the conclusions were developed and cross-checked for their relevance to the findings.

**Verification and Validation** The above steps incorporate verification and validation of evidence during the data collection and data analysis processes. In addition, the evaluation team had opportunity to present their preliminary findings and recommendations at two evaluation de-briefs with both SDC and the project implementing partners, DPI and HELVETAS. In addition, the draft evaluation report was shared widely amongst the project team and other key stakeholders, allowing for review and comments. These processes provided an opportunity to share key findings, offer mutual challenges and discuss the feasibility of and receptiveness to draft recommendations. It also provided an important opportunity to foster buy-in to the evaluation process particularly for the stakeholders who will have responsibility for implementing recommendations.

### 3.7 Sampling Methods for Qualitative and Quantitative Data Collection

The geographical scope of the evaluation included the two oblasts and 26 municipalities where the project is being implemented as well as regional and national level stakeholders. Of these, the evaluation team visited 25 municipalities (21 PSI pilot municipalities and 4 LSG Union pilots).

The evaluation team used a combination of both purposive and random sampling techniques. For example, purposive sampling techniques were used for the selection of the municipalities and for the selection of subjects from each of the oblasts where the project activities have been undertaken,

to ensure their inclusion and participation in the evaluation and data collection processes. Purposive sampling techniques was also be used to try to ensure 40% women participation in the evaluation process and for participation in the key informant interviews to ensure that the participants are able to actively engage and provide the needed information during the KIIs. Random sampling techniques were applied for participation in focus groups.

### 3.8 Challenges and Limitations of the Evaluation and Mitigation Responses

There were several potential challenges and limitations that confronted the evaluation focused around some key biases. These are detailed below, together with the evaluation team's mitigation response:

Challenge	Mitigation by evaluation team
<b>Recall bias:</b> The project has conducted many activities to date and it is quite possible that key informants did not accurately remember particular specific project intervention activities. A similar problem could be that participants in multiple SDC/HELVETAS/DPI activities may blend their experiences into a composite memory or response and, subsequently, will not distinguish between them as separate activities in their responses.	The evaluation team mitigated this bias primarily through a semi-structured interview protocol that calls questioning about specific project activities.
<b>Response bias:</b> Informants might have given the evaluation team positive remarks about the project because they would like to stay involved with the intervention in the future and they think that a negative evaluation could mean the end of project opportunities.	The evaluation team adopted two main strategies for mitigating this bias. First, they stressed for each informant that the team will maintain confidentiality and explained the evaluation's independence from both SDC and the project. Second, as with recall bias, questions designed to elicit specific examples helped to identify response bias.
<b>Selection bias:</b> Beneficiaries provided by the project and its partners could have meant that the evaluation team only heard from people who had positive experiences.	As with the other forms of bias, multiple sources of data and questions eliciting specific examples helped to mitigate the risk of this bias.

### 3.9. Informed consent and ethical considerations

The evaluation adhered to international best practices and standards in evaluation, including the OECD/DAC ethical considerations for development evaluations.<sup>6</sup> The evaluation was conducted in an ethical and legal manner, taking into account the well-being of those involved in and affected by the evaluation. The evaluation was conducted in accordance with professional ethics and standards to minimize risks to evaluation participants, including the principle of 'do no harm', and a protocol was in place to ensure that the clearly defined informed consent of all evaluation participants was obtained. All stakeholders were informed the evaluation was being conducted independently and that their participation in the evaluation is entirely voluntary as well as being confidential and anonymous. Nothing in the evaluation report has been attributed to any individual, organisation or institution. The Informed Consent Protocol was provided in the Inception Report.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/qualitystandards.pdf>



## 4. Findings

This chapter presents the analysis and findings of the final evaluation grouped around each of the evaluation criteria and cross-cutting issues and based on the analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data collected. Each of the key evaluation questions is answered within the narrative and the analysis and findings are also informed by the guiding questions provided in the ToR.

### 4.1 Relevance: Highly satisfactory – highly relevant to the national context

Finding 1: The project is highly relevant to the context in which it is being implemented. It contributes towards national and local development priorities and strategies including the National Development Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic 2018-2040. It is well aligned with SDC priorities in Kyrgyzstan and the region as well as those of the implementing partners HELVETAS and DPI. Most importantly, the project is relevant to service provision reform and the local governance context in the country. It has maintained its relevance throughout its implementation through adaptation and flexibility and is becoming ever more relevant given the current Administrative and Territorial Reform process. The project also contributes towards the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals and in particular, SDG 16.

The project is designed to be highly relevant to the Kyrgyz context. Phase II of the project was designed based on the lessons learned and knowledge gained from Phase I and was designed in a participatory and inclusive process to address the needs of its beneficiaries. The project is well aligned with the development priorities of the Government of Kyrgyzstan and in particular its National Development Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic 2018 – 2040.<sup>7</sup> The Strategy sets out a vision for the country and includes local governance priorities including a more professional and capable civil service and inter-budgetary cooperation between local authorities.

The project is also aligned with SDC's Cooperation Programme with Kyrgyzstan 2018 – 2021 and 2022 – 2025,<sup>8</sup> in particular under its second programmatic focus of good governance, human rights and service delivery. The evaluation was also informed that the project is well aligned with the priorities of its implementing partners – HELVETAS and DPI. In addition, the project contributes towards the furtherance of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and in particular SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions.

Moreover, the evaluation finds that the project's beneficiaries find the project to be highly relevant in the area of public service provision and in terms of increasing citizen participation. As one stakeholder informed the project:

“Meetings were held with the beneficiaries to find out their needs and priorities, and the project served the citizens.”

The initial project arose out of the identification of beneficiary needs during the previous Voice and Accountability Project (VAP), which ascertained that the local authorities did not have the capacities to address these needs. Thus, its initial concept was based on the needs and relevant to the beneficiaries. The evaluation was consistently informed by the project beneficiaries of the relevance of the project at the local level. The project facilitated the identification of key priorities at the local level as well as the co-design of solutions to address these issues. Through strengthening the capacities of the communities to voice their needs and the capacities of the local authorities to address these needs, while simultaneously strengthening the enabling environment

<sup>7</sup> <https://inff.org/resource/national-development-strategy-of-the-kyrgyz-republic>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/kyrgyzstan/en/home/international-cooperation/strategy-kyrgyzstan.html>

through policy and legislative changes and institutional building at the national level, the project was able to maintain its relevance throughout its implementation.

All of the stakeholders met during the evaluation informed the evaluation team that the project is relevant both to the needs of the local communities where the project is directly implemented and in a broader sense in the context of the country. This is also confirmed through triangulation with the desk research and document review. Both - municipalities and the population, demand it. Assistance responds to the specific needs of communities and is implemented in response to their demands. In this sense, the project fills an existing lack of municipal/public services through the delivery of services. This is evidenced by all of the grant ideas, which were supported through the project (on waste disposal, street lighting, etc.) and were identified by the local population (local activists, leaders, deputies, village heads, etc.). These were discussed at village meetings or public/budget hearings and were approved through a collective decision. In addition, all proposals had to pass through the project's detailed two-tier grant scheme. This was set out in the project's grant mechanism document as follows:

1. The *first tier grant* was used not only to draft a plan but also to establish the necessary consultation mechanisms with the citizens – consultations with citizens on needs (including the disadvantaged groups), hearing on tariffs and standards, establishing joint monitoring and evaluation groups, creating and implementation of monitoring plans, and citizens' feedback mechanism on the quality of provided services. All these processes and instruments were applied in each of the municipalities participating in an inter-municipal service models, separately. Therefore every municipality became accountable to their citizens for the service provided in its territory.
2. The *second tier grant* was awarded to 'clusters' of municipalities on a competition basis to implement service improvements, taking account, among others, of the following criteria: participatory process of selection of a service for improvement; a clear vision of how the proposed service will be managed, its cost-effectiveness and sustainability; joint financing plan; sustainability of service provider; consideration of the needs and priorities of socially excluded groups; foreseen M&E mechanisms; innovative solutions.

This approach led to a very high involvement of the community in the identification and prioritisation of their needs. As one stakeholder informed the evaluation:

“Community needs are endless - the project helps us to decide on priorities - but to address those needs we need funds - small grants are a very good instrument since we can respond to the most urgent needs but also improve our capacities to provide quality services.”

#### **4.2 Coherence: Satisfactory – Clear conceptual difference between roles and responsibilities of projects internally but potential for greater external coherence**

Finding 2: The project is working closely with all relevant partners and initiatives in the country, in particular USAID. The existing geographic and labour division between the SDC and USAID projects are clearly recognised and optimised by the local partners. The project builds on previous experiences with SDC's Voice and Accountability project and at the time of its design was well aligned with SDC's parliament project. Further, SDC has ensured a clear conceptual division of roles and responsibilities between the PSI project and the newly established Coalition, although it is too premature to assess to what extent this will translate to the operational level. There is

potential for greater coherence with other external interventions, including those related to economic development.

The project has strong coordination with USAID's Successful Aimak 2 and Active Communities projects, the former also being implemented by DPI. The PSI and USAID projects have similar objectives and activities but have worked closely together to both identify synergies and collaboration, while also avoiding overlap and duplication. This extends to agreement between target municipalities and activities. Both projects are well known and recognised by local partners and the opportunities that the projects present are well optimised. Furthermore, the Local Governance Academy for Central Asia (LGACA) has merged the two project's methodologies into one so that all municipalities follow the same methodology. The joint training module based on this methodology is being rolled-out nationwide. This has been crucial in ensuring a high level of coherence.

The project builds on previous experiences with SDC's Voice and Accountability project, with which it cooperated closely until the end of the VAP project in June 2022. At the time of its design, the project was well aligned with SDC's parliament project. It is well positioned in SDC's portfolio under its support to governance, human rights and service delivery, although it was beyond the scope of the evaluation to assess the level of complementarities with all SDC projects, including those on economic development.

SDC has ensured a clear conceptual division in the roles and responsibilities between the PSI project and the newly established Programme for Local Governance Development - Coalition. The Coalition is a joint initiative between DPI, the LSGU and the LGACA. Whilst DPI is the main coordinating partner, the LSGU leads in national dialogue, advocacy, policy framework development and central government engagement and LGACA will provide knowledge management and capacity building services. The long-term vision for all three participants of the programme is to establish durable, locally defined and locally-led dialogue processes, strong and inclusive networks, and reputable non-state institutions as sources of expert knowledge, advice and advocacy pursuing citizen-centric local governance in the Kyrgyz Republic. Having strong non-government partners will allow harnessing the full potential and amplifying the contributions of local governments, communities and ordinary residents. Given the complementary nature of the PSI and the Coalition, it will be important to ensure strong coordination and collaboration where possible. It is too premature to assess whether or how the clear conceptual division of roles and responsibilities between the projects will translate at the operational level.

With regards to other external partners, the evaluation was informed that the project participated in the inter-agency Expert Group formed in 2022 by the World Bank's Effective Governance for Economic Development Project (EGED) to support the Ministry of Economy and Commerce in developing the updated Methodology for elaborating Socio-Economic Development Programmes at local and sub-national (district) levels. The Project's input to the work of the Expert Group is focused on developing the guidelines on integrating equity and inclusion principles to strategic planning. These guidelines are both integrated across all sections of the Methodology and provided separately in the "Inclusive Development" section. The Draft Methodology has been prepared and piloted both on municipal and district levels in Osh and Naryn provinces (selected municipalities in Nookat and At-Bashy districts) in April-May, 2023. Based on the results of the pilot, changes were made to the Methodology aiming to simplify its format and make it more user-friendly. The updated draft is currently pending revision and approval by the Ministry of Economics and Commerce KR and is anticipated to enter into force at the end of this year.

Overall, with regards to coherence, one stakeholder commented as follows:



“We had no alternatives to this project, except possibly UNDP and USAID. But HELVETAS is our partner, who knows our problems and our work and is able to support us. The project staff have a high level of professionalism and always provided us with the necessary expertise.”

The evaluation finds that there could be additional possibilities for external coherence with regards to economic development initiatives. This includes the SDC project with EBRD (Small Business Initiative) as well as with IFC to support the private sector. Synergies with SECO have not always been fully utilised.

#### **4.3 Effectiveness: Highly satisfactory: On course to achievement its objectives and targets with IMC model going beyond original scope.**

Finding 3: The project is on-course to achieve its objectives and targets at the national and local levels and the results achieved have exceeded those anticipated in the project’s logical framework. The downstream project model, which is based on clear interlinkages between capacity development provided to LSGs, improved service delivery and increased confidence and trust of communities has proven to be highly successful and conducive of comprehensive buy-in of the local partners. In this clear causality, a special emphasis is placed on citizen participation whereby citizens are capacitated to not only be able to express their needs but also to contribute towards the delivery and quality of service provision. This is achieved through joint vision and co-creation of solutions between communities, service providers and local authorities. The IMC model went beyond its original scope of just gathering municipalities but has grown into a broader and more cohesive instrument for bringing together all stakeholders at the local level including communities, municipal enterprises, service providers and local authorities, although the role of civil society is less clear. It has also introduced and consolidated good governance principles amongst the municipalities, including transparency and accountability.

Outcome 1 is focused around rural municipalities providing local services in an efficient and effective manner. It consists of two outputs that contribute towards achievement of the outcome. The first is that men, women, public interest groups and LSGs participate and understand their role in sustainable service management at the local level and the second that innovative approaches for effective service provision are introduced and applied. Key activities included supporting the LSGU to disseminate and present the SIAP methodology developed during phase 1 to the target region; capacity building for different target groups; facilitation of public hearings on budget planning and execution and tariff setting; strengthening socially inclusive and gender responsive public service provision; organisation of public hearings; establishing citizen monitoring groups; and launching the IMC mechanism.

Under outcome 1 there is strong evidence that the innovative inter-municipal service provision schemes introduced by the project have transitioned and are consistently and efficiently delivering services to the population. One of the lessons learnt from Phase I was the realization that often the municipalities were unable to implement the SIAPs or address issues individually. The conclusion from this was that municipalities needed to address some issues jointly and as such, there was a need for inter-municipal cooperation (IMC). In response to this, the project amended the SIAP methodology so that it could be applied to IMC.

The grant mechanism provided through the project was very specific and unique in that it allowed for maximum transparency and minimized and mitigated the risk of corruption. This included some specific features of the mechanism, such as on-budget grants and strict adherence to Public procurement requirements both technical and financial. The project developed a detailed grant mechanism procedure, which set out the procedure and requirements for the mechanisms as well

as identifying potential corruption risks and how these would be mitigated. Once the grant money was transferred to the municipalities, it became public money and the municipalities had to report on it, not only to the project but also to the Accounting Chamber. This had the double effect of not only improving the financial management by the municipalities but also civic engagement was strengthened and individuals at the community level became involved in monitoring. It also contributed towards investment opportunities, with the municipalities using the grants with a long-term view in mind. For example, in Noken, the municipality used the grant to establish a one-stop-shop (OSS) service. Firstly, the municipality identified together with the community the service areas where there were the most complaints. They then conducted a public awareness campaign, while also establishing the OSS. Co-funding was secured from the municipalities' budgets. The system has been digitalised and the community is able to resolve many regular issues in one place. As one stakeholder commented:

“This has increased transparency and decreased corruption because everything is conducted in an open space. The service providers are more orientated towards the clients and are more professional because they can be seen.”

Stakeholders informed the evaluation how much the OSS has made their lives easier, as previously people had to spend a number of days to resolve their issues and travel many dozens of kilometres to pay bills or calculate land tax. The project created a virtual link between the municipality/and the central government and the people on the ground. A resident of Noken said that the project has brought relief:

“We feel ourselves more advanced, modern and digitalised compared to other villages and we are proud of it.”

Another example is the waste management project in Kenesh, which brought together three municipalities through the IMC mode. The evaluation was informed that prior to the project, each municipality individually was unable to address the issue of waste management due to insufficient resources. However, through coming together and pooling their resources, they were able to buy one vehicle and 76 waste containers. Together, they have established a system of waste management and the communities are collecting their waste and disposing of it. A small monthly fee is charged, which is decreased for vulnerable groups. The PSI project provided capacity building support, budget and tariff setting support and facilitated a peer-to-peer learning tour to Issyk-Kul to share experiences. Other municipalities have also visited Kenesh to learn from their experiences. One stakeholder provided the following:

“We have had many successes and have become known throughout Kyrgyzstan because of this. For example, 35 municipalities came to visit us to learn about our experience.”

The project very saliently worked with all staff in the pilot municipalities and not just with the heads of the municipalities. This means that all current staff are now experienced in applying the SIAP and utilizing the opportunities of IMC. The municipalities are also very proud of having piloted the methodology. As one stakeholder informed:

“We are pioneers of IMC. We also plan to use it to address all 25 services that we have to offer the community”

The evaluation finds that the SIAP methodology and associated activities have been instrumental in building the capacities and understanding of the rural municipalities in providing quality local services in an efficient and effective manner. The municipalities have a good understanding of the

SIAP methodology and have applied it beyond the scope of the project. As one stakeholder informed the evaluation:

“The SIAP mechanism can be used for other services. Now we are trained step-by-step and can use it to solve our own problems.”

Another commented:

“This project was different because we learnt and learnt how to work. We previously had a big challenge with financial audit and there were frequent violations of the rules. The knowledge we have gained is staying with us.”

The benefits of cooperating together through the IMC are well acknowledged by the stakeholders.

“The success of our neighbours is impacting us all – that is why we are growing and learning together.”

The capacity building support provided through the project has been highly valued and well received by the municipalities. Consistently, all stakeholders informed the evaluation that they are highly appreciative of the capacity building support – which targeted all levels of the LSG staff – and how they have also been able to apply what they have learnt into other areas of their day-to-day work. They also informed the evaluation that the training was well tailored to their needs. As one commented.

“We were ignoring the trainings before - firstly they were running after us to have training now we are running after them to have training - the training fits our needs completely.”

The level of results of the project is evidenced by the fact that communities are now willing to pay for services and that there is a continuous increase in the collection of money/tariffs for those services. The municipalities are also extended their services, for example to business, who are willing to pay, for example for waste disposal services.

The project also introduced the concept of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) to the LSGs. This has led to greater transparency and accountability because the municipalities have to, as one stakeholder commented, “show them the numbers and where the money is being used.” The municipalities have become well versed in organising public hearings and meetings to discuss priorities and needs and present the results of the pilots. Indicators have been used to measure results. These concepts are new to the local municipalities, but have been embraced by them.

Another key result of the project has been the digitalisation of the property register at the municipal level. Stakeholders informed the evaluation of the great value of this, not just in addressing potential corruption, but also as a means of raising finances for investment. First they were trained, followed by undertaking a situation analysis, which then led to the development of the register. Going forward, this will be a crucial tool for the municipalities, particularly in light of the Administrative and Territorial Reform (ATR).

Finding 4: The project’s upstream policy work and capacity building have made long-term contributions to local public service provision reform. The project’s multi-pronged approach has brought significant results and contributed to creating an enabling environment through supporting the development of a number of key pieces of framework legislation related to public services. Addressing policy gaps and changes to existing legislation are expected to have heightened

importance given the anticipated Administrative and Territorial Reform. Through the institutional development of the LSGU the project has supported national learning and replication mechanisms, including the broad dissemination of the SIAP methodology and regular consultations. The project has convincingly supported the institutional development of the LGACA including through the digitalization of its educational and methodological materials and as an operator of the Best Practices Portal. However, the Academy is less visible at the national level and its achievements are less well-known.

Phase II of the PSI project witnessed an upscaling of activities at the national level, especially regarding the capacity development of the LSGU and the LGACA, combined with support for legislative and policy amendments to strengthen the enabling environment for local self-governance reform.

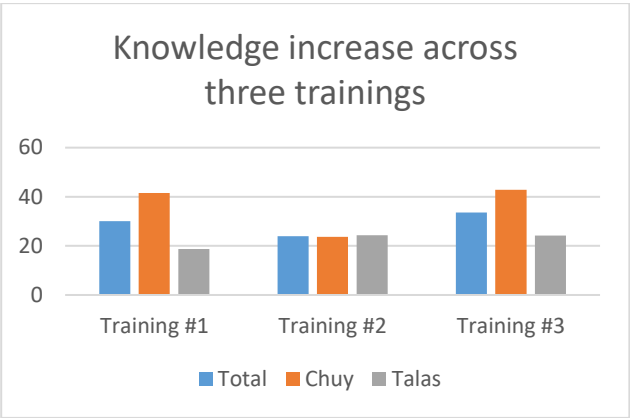
For the LSGU, the project has provided considerable support to its capacity development as well as its organisational strengthening. The LSGU provides support to the local municipalities in the form of advice, capacity development, lobbying and advocacy and is the bridge between the municipalities and the government. One of the key results of the project's support to the LSGU has been the increase in membership accompanied by the increase in membership fees. The evaluation was informed that 90% of the municipalities are now members (out of 440 total municipalities) and that they all pay their fees. This is in contrast to the start of the project where only between 10-20% were members and paid membership fees. The LSGU recognises the benefit and utility of the SIAP methodology. It confirmed that there is a strong level of interest among municipalities to utilise the tool and their trainings on SIAP are well attended and participatory.

While the LSGU existed before the project, mainly through donor support, the project has strengthened their organizational structure, increased its membership and visibility and enhanced its presence in the regions. All the municipalities who participated in the evaluation confirmed that they are members of the LSGU. They value the responsiveness of the Union and the opportunity to ask questions through the WhatsApp groups that have been established. This provides them with quick answers to immediate questions. The evaluation was informed that the LSGU receives approximately 5,000 messages per day on the various thematic WhatsApp groups.

The LGACA was established in 2020-2021 by DPI, the LSGU and the State Agency for State Service and Local Governance under the Cabinet of Ministers (State Agency) in order to train municipal staff. It serves as a centre of knowledge and shares knowledge and experience, for example through their subscription-only magazine publication. The evaluation was informed by a number of stakeholders of the great utility of the magazine in keeping them up to date in changes on legislation and regulations and well as learning from other municipalities. The Academy trains both municipal staff as well as municipal MPs and while the training was initially free of charge, since February 2023 participants pay for their training, meaning that the Academy is not donor dependent. With regards to the LGACA the project has supported the digitalization of knowledge and the development of the online Best Practices Portal, which contains the tools and methodologies developed through the project. All municipalities are registered on the portal and have real-time access to the resources available. While the municipalities appreciate the training that is provided by the Academy, a number of stakeholders commented that the training is difficult to access and they are only able to participate when it is conducted at the district level.

It should be noted that the Academy is a very new institution. It only started with providing training in November 2022 and has so far trained 200/10,000 municipal staff. However, pre and post-training data shows that the participation in the Academy's training is increasing the level of knowledge of its participants. The post-training data from three of the project's trainings on the organisation of the provision of public services at the local level, training on local budgets and

training on basics of organising services at the local level for members of local councils shows an increase of knowledge or at least 20% across the board. This can be seen in the chart below:



**Figure 1: Increase in knowledge of participants post LGACA training.**

The project also strengthened its collaboration with the State Agency regarding the Law on State and Municipal Services, which requires legal normative acts and by-laws to implement it. This led to an agreement to elaborate a Basic Register of Municipal Services, which was subsequently adopted through Decree No. 23 by the Government. The evaluation was informed that this is universal throughout the country and contains a list of the 11 services that the municipalities have to provide. The project then supported the development of standards for each of the services. Together with the Ministry of Economy and Commerce, the project contributed towards the revision and reconceptualization of the Law on State and Municipal Services, to include for example, communal services. The evaluation was informed that the draft Law has been reviewed as it currently awaiting adoption.

With the Ministry of Economy and Commerce, the project supported the development of a practice for horizontal budget transfers between municipalities, which while previously allowed by the Budget Code had never been done. This proved to be game-changing in implementing the IMC.

The project’s approaches have proven to be highly successful. For example, it was very challenging to secure the buy-in of the State Agency to develop the Electronic Register of Municipal Property, however through persistent advocacy and awareness raising the project was able to successfully secure the buy-in and the Register has been developed. The project has consistently and convincingly tried to address problems in legislative and policy gaps as and when they arise and through this has strengthened the enabling environment for local self-governance reform in Kyrgyzstan.

**Finding 5: The on-going Administrative and Territorial Reform raises many questions and creates uncertainty regarding the remaining implementation phase of the PSI project as well as any future phase. However, it also provides an opportunity for the project to reinforce its position as the main partner for capacity building of the local administration. The IMC model, already introduced in the pilot municipalities has paved the way for the ATR.**

Kyrgyzstan is currently undergoing a process of administrative and territorial reform, which began in October 2022 with the adoption of a Presidential Decree. This decree instructed the Cabinet of Ministers to develop a new law for restructuring the administrative-territorial divisions of the country, aiming to meet the current needs of society and the state. In December 2022, a pilot phase of the ATR was launched in the Tyup district of the Issyk-Kul province. This involved the merger



of 13 rural municipalities into 5 larger municipalities. The LSGs in these newly formed municipalities were granted additional authorities related to managing state pasture lands and maintaining irrigation systems for irrigated lands (management and disposal of state pasture lands; operation, maintenance of on-farm irrigation systems and distribution of water on contractual terms to persons owning and using irrigated lands). By another presidential decree in April 3, 2023, it was decided to pilot the administrative-territorial reform at the level of the whole Naryn province. 63 rural municipalities were merged into 27. In most cases, 2-3 municipalities were merged into one, although some were merged into larger groups, and a few remained unchanged or were divided into two. In addition to the new state powers to manage pastures and maintain on-farm irrigation systems, the Decree instructed LSG bodies to *create multifunctional municipal enterprises (ME)* to handle various tasks such as comprehensive maintenance and development of irrigation systems, drinking water supply systems and effective management of pasture lands. These MEs were also expected to address the solid waste management issues.<sup>9</sup>

While the ATR is expected to be completed by the end of 2023, the evaluation was informed that this is highly unlikely to be met. Nevertheless, the reform raises considerable uncertainty about the consolidation of municipalities, how successor entities will operate, whether they will fulfil their obligations, and concerns about the sustainability of municipal enterprises due to their new state functions. These consequences of the ATR could impact the timeline and achievement of the PSI project goals associated with these reforms, as has already been witnessed during 2023. While stakeholders informed the evaluation that they do not perceive the ATR to be a huge challenge because people will always want services, in the media and informally many people are expressing their concern about how the results of the reform will look in practice. In particular, many people are concerned about the distance that they will have to travel to receive services. There are also concerns that the government is using the ATR as a way to centralise power rather than decentralise as the reform suggests. That said, in the pilot municipalities, the stakeholders feel that the main approaches of the IMC, which have already been captured in tools and manuals have prepared those municipalities for the ATR. As one stakeholder informed the evaluation:

“The project has already prepared us for the ATR because we already have experience of working together and we will formally become one municipality under the ATR.”

However the **human resource capacities of the municipalities going forward is a risk as well as keeping the already created services at the same level**. There will be a shift towards a more professionalised but streamlined civil service. All stakeholders confirmed that there will be a strong need for continued capacity development to support the municipalities through the transition process. This will include, but not be limited to, municipalities where different ethnic groups will be merged for the first time.

#### 4.4 Efficiency Highly satisfactory – low-cost: high impact approach

**Finding 6:** The project has punched above its weight in terms of the results that have been achieved vis-à-vis the inputs invested. It has been implemented in a lean and cost-efficient manner with a proper ratio between the management and programme costs. The project’s organizational structure contributed towards its efficiency. The project’s approaches provide good value for money for its donor, SDC. The expertise that the project staff and short-term experts are able to offer local partners are highly valued and acknowledged. The project’s low-cost: high impact approach, together with the long-term commitment of both the project and its donor have further contributed to the efficiency and effectiveness of the project. In particular the grant mechanism has proven to be highly effective, achieving results above the level of the investment. The project has introduced

<sup>9</sup> PSI Project, Semi-Annual Report, July 2023

a sound M&E system although its Advisory Board meetings have been inconsistent. The project has solid communication mechanisms in place that allow for communication of activities as well as results, although there is still space for heightened visibility of the project. While there have been some delays in the project implementation, these have been largely caused by the operational context and factors beyond the control of the project, including COVID-19 and political changes.

The project's results, as detailed under findings 3 and 4 have exceeded its inputs, offering a very high value for money for its donor. The project has consistently used low-cost: high impact approaches, which together with the long-term commitment of both the donor and the project have further contributed to the effectiveness and efficiency of the project.

The project's grant mechanism has proven to be particularly efficient, achieving results above the value of the investment. While it was initially planned to investment 34.1% of the project's budget into the grant mechanism (874,000 CHF), due to the success of the mechanism the actual allocation has been higher – 41% (978,675 CHF). The project's approach of securing co-funding from the LSGs has contributed to the efficiency of the project in terms of the level of commitment and buy-in of the stakeholders that has been generated and the sustainability prospects of the interventions. It should be noted that through the IMC, the project secured between 23% - 61.5% of co-funding and in the implementation of the SIAP with the LSGU the project secured 10% co-funding. This is very impressive and also evidences the relevance of the project to its stakeholders and their level of commitment to the project's goals and activities.

The project's organisational structure was quite unique and contributed to its efficiency. While the implementation of the project is led by HELVETAS and they provided technical assistance, the project manager came from DPI. Teams from both organisations sat together in one office. The project has supported the organisational strengthening of DPI as well as its governance structures, for example, through HELVETAS sharing its own experience, tools and procedures. SDC and HELVETAS have been mentors and advisors to DPI throughout both phases of the project implementation. While DPI has provided excellent leadership their exposure to HELVETAS has led to their significant capacity development.

The level of technical expertise that the project is able to offer is highly valued by its stakeholders. As one municipal representative commented:

“The project staff are always available. They always pick up the ‘phone. All of the experts are highly qualified specialists and we are very grateful.”

This extends to both project staff and the short-term experts hired by the project. Stakeholders repeatedly mention the fact that even after the end of their contracts, the short-term experts remained available for consultation and advice. This level of commitment and expertise has added to the degree of trust and confidence between the project and its stakeholders.

The project has very sound monitoring and evaluation processes in place including conducting a baseline and endline survey, a mid-term and end of phase evaluation and regular project monitoring against indicators. While a Steering Committee was constituted and held meetings during Phase I of the project, during Phase II, the status changed to an Advisory Board meeting, which would be conducted together with other SDC funded projects. This was in line with a SDC internal decision that applies to all projects that advisory boards can only provide recommendations, with SDC having responsibility for taking any decisions. However, during 2019 the meeting was not held and during 2020 the meeting was again not held due to COVID-19. In 2021, the meeting was held jointly with the VAP project and in 2022, it was held just for the PSI project. This provided an opportunity for the key project stakeholders to convene and

discuss the progress of the project. The evaluation notes that there have been some delays to the project implementation, however these have largely been caused due to factors outside the influence of the project, including the COVID-19 pandemic, political changes in the country and most recently with the anticipated ATR.

The project uses multiple communication mechanisms, including social and print media to reach out to a broad variety of stakeholders. This includes common policy messages as evidenced by the project's reported media coverage. The evaluation team acknowledge that the low-key approach of the project in terms of visibility is appropriate, considering SDC's long-term approach, however visibility efforts need to be more systemic and structured to support the linkages and underline the causality between the project's activities and its impact. For example, this would *inter alia* allow for clear positioning and raising of the Academy's profile.

Overall, the project has been using its funds efficiently. Currently, it is not fully meeting its financial disbursement targets due to delays in activities implementation mainly related to the government-initiated ATR that has already disrupted the PSI's work in the form of postponement of activities and requiring additional time to take stock regarding a degree of relevance of the elaborated methodologies, guidelines and policies (the Semi-annual Report for January - June 2023 showcased overall deviation of 78.18 %). However, following the delivery dynamic of 100% from 2022 (the Financial Statement 01.01.2022-31.12.2022 stated that out of CHF 1.3m planned - CHF 1.293m was delivered) upwards trajectory is still to be expected based on the project planning and assessments.

#### **4.5 Impact Satisfactory: contributed towards changes in attitudes and behaviours**

**Finding 7: The project is contributing to its goal that people in rural Kyrgyzstan enjoy better living conditions thanks to improved public services. This is evidenced by gradual changes in attitudes and behaviours as well as an increase in trust and confidence between local service providers and the communities. There is empirical as well as anecdotal evidence to support this.**

There is strong evidence – both empirical and anecdotal - that the project is contributing to its goal that people in rural Kyrgyzstan enjoy better living conditions thanks to improved services. The project document contains three impact level indicators, which seek to measure the impact of the project. This includes:

- Indicator 1 - % increase in citizens' satisfaction rate with public services at local level
- Indicator 2 – # of rural municipalities that improved services
- Indicator 3 - % of women's unpaid care and domestic work load is reduced and redistributed due to improved public services at local level

The project undertook a comprehensive baseline study at the start of the project, which captured the baseline data to feed into the logical framework as well as to set targets. This has been followed up by an endline survey, which was undertaken during October 2023. The results from the endline survey show the progress of the project towards meeting its impact indicators as follows:

Indicator	Baseline	Target value	Endline
% increase in citizens' satisfaction rate with public services at local level	48%	60% countrywide	Country level – <b>56%</b> Project+pilot municipality – <b>58%</b>



			Project municipality (25+Toktogul) - <b>56%</b>
# of rural municipalities that improved services	0	135	<b>127</b> Including: Project municipality – <b>26</b> Issyk-Kul obl. - <b>22</b> Jalal-Abad obl. - <b>32</b> Chui obl. – <b>17</b> Talas obl. – <b>21</b> Batken obl. – <b>7</b> Naryn obl. - <b>2</b>
% of women's unpaid care and domestic work load is reduced and redistributed due to improved public services at local level	Women – 57%	Women – 50%	Time spent on unpaid work: Country level – <b>58,2%</b> Project municipality – women <b>55,9%</b> Pilot municipality – women <b>58,2%</b>

The endline study shows that out of the three impact level indicators, while the project is only on-track to meet one, it has contributed significantly towards the others, in particular the increase in citizens' satisfaction rate with public services at the local level. With regards to the % of women's unpaid care work being distributed, while the project has not yet met this target, it should be noted the project has planned in Q2-4 of 2023 to conduct an informational campaign on the success stories in redistribution of unpaid care work (through hashtag competition in social networks) and the results of this may not be reflected in the endline survey data.

Anecdotally, the project is having a large impact at the micro level. For example, the evaluation was informed that previously there was a disconnect between people and their understanding of their rights and obligations. As a result of the project interventions, people understand that if they want good services they have to pay for it. They understand that they have a role to play and that they need to participate, pay for services, maintain infrastructure, monitor service provision etc. As one stakeholder informed the evaluation:

“We did face some resistance from community members who did not want to pay. However, we worked with the community leaders and as soon as the communities started to see the results, they all wanted to join.”

Another beneficiary said that:

“In the past, we did not perceive a service as a product. For it was something that was not clear, vague and intangible. But as a result of explanatory work, the first results from the provision of services, we finally realized that service is a product, it is a part of the public goods (welfare).”

There have also been changes regarding the attitudes of the municipalities, who now understand that they need to organize and provide services. This is reflected in a comment from one of the stakeholders:

“We grew together as a team and we changed our attitudes towards our communities and realised that we need to provide them services.”

The project has created an understanding of monitoring and evaluation processes and the need to monitor service provision. This has increased the people’s understanding of their role in monitoring service provision as well as the part they play in holding the municipalities to account. In turn, this has increased the level of accountability and transparency among the municipalities who now understand that they need to be accountable to the people. The introduction of public hearings have also led to changes in the understanding of rights and responsibilities amongst all stakeholders.

Attitudes towards waste management have also changed among both rights holders and duty bearers. This has led to changes in people's consciousness and behaviour. People are willing to pay money for waste collection, they began to strive for waste-free recycling, separation of different types of waste, thinking about preserving the environment, sanitation and protection of health.

The level of trust between the people and the municipalities has also increased. The people now approach the municipalities with their problems and to find a joint solution. As one stakeholder commented:

“We learnt how to cooperate with people, who now come to us with their problems. Previously we didn’t know how to answer citizen questions. Now we try to find joint solutions.”

Another stakeholder confirmed:

“We learned how to cooperate in partnership together with other LSGs and the people. Previously we were all fighting, now we are learning from each other.”

The project’s progress towards all impact, outcome and output level indicators is provided in Annex II as captured by the endline survey. This shows that the project has not achieved its two of its three impact level indicators; of its seven outcome indicators it has achieved or over-achieved four with one indicator being almost achieved and two not being met; and of its 13 output indicators, the project has achieved or over-achieved 12 with one indicator not being met. This indicates the need for continuation of the project to fully reinforce its results and allow time for its successes at the output level to be fully reflect at the outcome level and for further impact of its results to be shown.

Finding 8: There have been a number of positive, unexpected outcomes of the project, which should be enhanced going forward. This includes the substantial capacity building of the consortium partner DPI, usage of the SIAP methodology to mobilise resources beyond the scope of the project; improved understanding of environmental protection and a green economy and improved understanding of a healthy lifestyle.

The project has convincingly strengthened the capacities of local partners, including its own implementing partner, DPI. This was not envisaged as such in the project design, but by sharing offices and the continuous advisory support provided by both SDC and HELVETAS, DPI’s organisational capacities have been strengthened, leading it to being successful in additional resource mobilisation efforts.

The project has supported a number of initiatives to introduce a waste management service in a number of municipalities. As mentioned above, this has led to a change in attitudes towards the importance of waste disposal. However, it has also had a number of knock-on effects such as

raising people's awareness – both within the communities and among service providers – of environmental issues and the environmental impacts of a lack of waste disposal. People are more aware of the need to reduce, reuse and recycle and the ecological footprint of their waste. As the evaluation was informed:

“People are throwing away less rubbish. We see this. It is visible. We want to become a waste-free society”

In Kok-Jangak the evaluation learned that the innovation on solar energy through the project has had a number of unexpected positive outcomes. This includes a greater awareness of environmental issues and the need to conserve energy as well as a reduction in crime in the areas where the solar lighting has been placed. This is particularly important, since the solar lighting was placed in five streets where there are a number of public buildings, including schools. These were areas where women and children often walked alone and were vulnerable to attack. The evaluation was informed that as a result of the project, people and businesses have started to install their own solar energy, due to their increased awareness and understanding of the benefits. It should also be noted that this was a joint effort with funds for the initiative being provided through the project (through a LSGU grant), through the local municipality as well as contributions being received from the community. As the evaluation was informed:

“People are aware now of the value of cooperation.”

“We understand that the green economy is a global issue.”

A final knock-on effect has been the reduced energy costs for the municipality during the energy crisis.

Another example is Mihailovka, where the evaluation was able to conduct a site visit to a fitness centre, established with support of the project. The initiative was designed at the behest of the community members who selected fitness as their priority. The project contributed 300,000 Soms, the municipality 200,000 Soms and the community 50,000 Soms. Initially the fitness centre was planned to have only women members, but the level of interest has been so high that it has already expanded to teenagers and youth. Anecdotally, the evaluation was informed that the fitness centres has not only improved its members level of fitness but has also improved their mental well-being as well as decreased incidents of diabetes and back problems. These unexpected outcomes are anecdotal and there is no empirical evidence as such to support them.

#### **4.6 Sustainability - Satisfactory: good sustainability prospects but need for further reinforcement**

Finding 9: A strong level of ownership of the project and its results is seen among all stakeholders. At the micro level that are strong indications of the likely sustainability of the project's results, however this needs to be translated at the national level to ensure full institutional and financial sustainability. The sustainability of the IMC mechanism is better assured in municipalities where there is a firm commitment to cost-sharing. The importance of the LSGU for creating an enabling environment is on an upwards trajectory and is expected to be in high demand. Consolidation and replication of knowledge through the LGACA would contribute towards longer-term sustainability going forward.

There is a strong sense of ownership of the project and its results by both the local authorities and the communities at the local level, as well as amongst the LGSU and LGACA at the national level.

The project has always put its partners first, seeking to empower them and to strengthen their capacities and ownership and to help them fulfil their mandates. The evaluation finds that the partners were always in the driving seat with the project providing technical and advisory support and assistance and facilitation. This has contributed to the high degree of ownership.

The usage of the SIAP methodology has excellent prospects of being sustainable beyond the lifespan of the project. It has already been well utilised by the municipalities and is recognised as a valuable tool by them. As one stakeholder commented:

**“We are very confident about the sustainability and will continue to use SIAP.”**

Furthermore, the SIAP methodology is already being used beyond the project by the pilot municipalities with regards to other service provision and anecdotally the evaluation was informed that it has been used by municipalities beyond the pilot municipalities covered by the project. The evaluation scope did not allow for this to be verified. By including communities in the SIAP methodology, as well as by training all levels of local municipality staff, the project has sought to mitigate any possible adverse effects from a changeover among the heads of municipality as a result of the ATR process. This should help ensure that institutional knowledge of the methodology remains. As one stakeholder commented:

**“We learnt how to provide public services, how to set tariffs, what documents we need to prepare and how for service provision. We are using this knowledge beyond the scope of the project and are using it for all other services.”**

Further, the capacity development provided through the project has considerably increased the capacities of the stakeholders. One informed the evaluation:

**“Previous projects and donors gave us equipment – this project gave us knowledge and tools that we can use.”**

Many of the initiatives supported through the project in the IMC are self-sustainable and should continue beyond the lifespan of the project. For example, municipalities who have addressed waste management are now collecting revenue to fund the service going-forward; the fitness centre is generating revenue through membership fees which is re-invested in the initiative. This will contribute towards the sustainability of service provision beyond the lifespan of the project.

At the national level, the project has contributed towards some key legislative and policy changes, including the draft Law on State and Municipal Services. Knowledge and methodologies have been codified and are available to all municipalities through the Best Practices Portal. Continuous capacity building is being conducted by the LSGU through the LGACA, for which fees are now being charged, again indicating the sustainability of this result in the future. However, the project will need to make continuous efforts to reinforce its results and ensure their full institutionalisation prior to the end of the project period as well as to up-scale its’ methodologies and approaches. It will also need to support the implementation of the newly adopted Laws and policies.

#### **4.7 Transversal themes - Satisfactory: successful knowledge management and gender and social inclusion efforts**

Finding 10: The project has made considerable efforts to capture its lessons learned and widely disseminate its knowledge and learning. This includes at the national level through the LSGU and the LGACA as well as through peer-to-peer learning at the local level. The project has over-

achieved on both of its output level indicators relating to knowledge management and dissemination.

The project has adopted a number of different approaches towards capturing its lessons learned and disseminating its knowledge and learning. This has included at both the national and local level.

At the national level the project is working with the LSGU and the LGACA to codify all knowledge through the best practices portal as detailed previously. All municipalities have real time access to the portal, although the extent to which it is being utilised by them currently is not known. The Portal also provides an opportunity for questions and answers. The training and capacity development courses offered by the LGACA also contributes to the sharing of knowledge as does the publication of the Municipality magazine. Starting in 2021-2022 and continued in 2023, the Academy has collected examples of best practices in the realm of local government and community engagement, through a competition supported by the project entitled “Best LSG Practice.” The competition incentivized LSGs and local activities to share their successful collaborative initiatives. These have then been published in the magazine and shared more widely. As stakeholders informed the evaluation, the Magazine is widely read and appreciated by the LSGs.

At the local level, there is an initial culture of learning among the municipalities in terms of the IMC. This peer-to-peer learning and sharing of experiences, which is taking place both formally through the project as well as informally, is highly valued by the stakeholders and contributes towards the sharing of knowledge and lessons learnt. As one stakeholder commented:

“We have many joint meetings with the heads of municipalities and also at the provincial and district level and we have shared our knowledge. We even had some municipalities coming to visit us because they were interested to learn from us about IMC. We have also learnt from other municipalities who have addressed waste management, which we also hope to do.”

The project’s logframe contained two indicators relating to knowledge management and dissemination – indicators 22 and 23. Data gathered through the endline survey shows that the project has considerably over-achieved in respect of both indicators. This can be seen in the table below.

Indicator	Initial values	Actual values	Target values	Notes
22. The number of project knowledge products generated and disseminated through national partners showcasing innovative, gender sensitive and socially inclusive models for public service management	0	<b>120</b> best practices <b>20</b> informational educational products	At least 15 products and 30 best practices	Achieved, overachieved
23. The number of knowledge and peer-learning events provided through national learning mechanisms	0	<b>Total: 157</b> 2020 - 17 2021 - 35 2022 - 52 2023 (half a year) - 53	At least 130 (countrywide)	Achieved, overachieved

Finding 11: Considerable efforts have been made by the project with regards to inclusivity and strengthening gender sensitivity and social inclusion in local service policy and practice at both national and local levels. This has included inclusion of vulnerable groups in the community level monitoring mechanisms; raising awareness of vulnerable groups' needs among the municipalities and the introduction of innovative measures and solutions such as reduced service provision tariffs for these groups. The inclusion of a gender and social inclusion specialist in the organisational structure of the project in Phase II has contributed towards the achievement of results in this area. Awareness raising activities have also focused on reaching women and vulnerable groups. The role of civil society has been maximised to the extent possible given the overall current climate in Kyrgyzstan and the shrinking democratic space.

The project has made considerable efforts to ensure that it addresses and strengthens gender sensitivity and social inclusion in local service policy and practice. For example, the SIAP methodology was specifically designed to be inclusive and the project only awarded grants to those SIAPs that addressed gender and were socially inclusively balanced. This was one of the key grant award criteria. The project also established community-level monitoring groups to monitor the provision of the local services. The M&E groups are highly inclusive and their composition includes women, youth and persons with disabilities. The evaluation was also informed that the LSGs have integrated discounts in their service provision for women headed-households and PWDs and other vulnerable groups. In addition, the project has conducted awareness raising activities, which have focused on reaching women and other vulnerable groups.

At the national level, the project participates in a number of high level expert groups on gender and social inclusion related issues. This includes the inter-agency Expert Group formed in 2022 by the World Bank's Effective Governance for Economic Development Project (EGED) to support the Ministry of Economy and Commerce in developing the updated Methodology for elaborating Socio-Economic Development Programmes at local and sub-national (district) levels. This is elaborated under Finding 2.

Additionally, PSI has been supporting LGACA by developing a training module on socio-economic development programmes aimed at inclusive growth (inclusive SEDPs) at the local level. The draft module was prepared by the experts but needs revision and, possibly, adaptation due to the ATR and anticipated updates SEDP Guidelines.

A number of the project's indicators related to GESI, including indicators 3, 10 and 13, which allows the project to measure its progress towards GESI. Analysis of these indicators shows a mixed picture. The Endline Survey shows that in relation to these indicators, the project has not met impact indicator 3 in relation to *the percentage of women's unpaid care and domestic workload is reduced and redistributed due to improved public services at local level* by 5.6 percentage points; it has not met outcome indicator 10 related to *the number of municipalities with socially inclusive and gender responsive service policies in place*, although it did meet the target of achieving this in 100% of the project municipalities but only 21/30 in the non-project municipalities; and in relation to output indicator 13 related to *the number of municipalities covered by awareness raising initiatives on civic responsibility and gender and social inclusive services for LSG Units and communities*, the project has over-achieved by one municipality. This indicates that further efforts need to be made with regards to GESI.

While civil society and/or individual activists have been engaged by the project for awareness raising and have participated in the public meetings and community monitoring groups, their role in the project is quite minimal. This is due to a combination of reasons. Firstly, not all municipalities have local viable civil society organizations, they simply do not exist in the villages. Secondly, the overall atmosphere in the country of a shrinking democratic space is mirrored to



some extent in the behaviour of local officials, which is reflected in the fact that CSOs are avoided, not invited or cut out of dialogues. Finally, the third reason is related to CSOs themselves. Where they exist, they are also reluctant to get involved in various projects, because municipalities themselves are subsidized and cannot pay money, so CSOs do not want to engage.

At the same time, it should be noted that there are not many civil organizations that understand the problems of local self-government and specialize in this subject at the national level. As such, the evaluation only met with the Rural Health Committee, which is a formalized civil organization (a subdivision of the national Association of Rural Health Committees).<sup>10</sup> The role of these Committees in waste collection and management and rural education projects is important and very relevant. The remaining organizations that the evaluation team had opportunity to meet with were informal associations of citizens represented by councils of aksakals and councils of women under municipalities and youth volunteer groups of activists. These were either informalized CSOs or individual activists. They are all located under the municipalities and are members of the project's community-based monitoring groups, participating in determining the needs of the population. In view of the existing conditions and the realities in the country, the evaluation finds the approach of the project with regard to civil society engagement to have been relevant and effective. Given the lack of CSOs on the ground, ordinary activists, in particular through the community monitoring groups, were able to ensure civic participation.

## 5. Conclusions

Conclusions are provided in the SDC Assessment Grid, which can be found at Annex III.

## 6. Recommendations

The following section provides a set of forward-looking recommendations for the project, which are practical and actionable. The recommendations are provided in the same order as the evaluation criteria and questions, and as per the order of the findings, rather than in order of priority.

**Recommendation 1:** Given the on-going uncertainties and complexities regarding the ATR process and in view of SDC's commitment to long-term partnerships, the evaluation believes that it is too premature to immediately start with the exit phase of the project. The evaluation recommends extending the final phase of the project for an additional period of two years. This would allow for two more years of implementation followed by the two-year exit phase as originally planned. This will allow the project sufficient time to fully reinforce its results and ensure their sustainability going forward.

- The project will need to closely monitor and follow the development and implementation of the ATR process and regularly conduct strategic assessments and political economy analysis to align the viability of the project with the reform.
- The uncertainty around the ATR process demands continuous learning through the duration of the project to foster efficient project management and planning and importantly allow for timely adaptive management, when the situation necessitates. In that context the project should develop a comprehensive learning plan based on collaborative learning and adapting methodology to guide this process.
- It will be crucial to conduct a detailed mid-term evaluation, which would serve as the basis of guiding the exit phase both programmatically and operationally.

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<sup>10</sup> This organization reaches every village and in conditions when the level of medical knowledge is falling everywhere, carries out very useful work in Kyrgyzstan, spreading knowledge about sanitation, hygiene, women's health, nutrition, raising children and their education on sanitation and hygiene, vaccination, prevention and prophylaxis of various diseases, etc.

**Recommendation 2:** The project should fully leverage the partnership with the new SDC - supported Coalition to ensure the full synchronisation and alignment between the project, the ATR and the overall operational context and direction of the reform process. This includes maximizing opportunities for digitalization as well as the internal and external coherence of results. This would further position SDC as the lead partner in local self-governance reform in Kyrgyzstan.

- SDC should ensure that there are clear operational and financial roles and responsibilities between the project and the coalition so that both initiatives are working to their strengths and ensure the comprehensiveness of assistance. Beyond this, SDC's role should not be to control these initiatives but it should strategically steer them towards maximising and multiplying their individual and mutual potentials and results.
- It is highly important to keep the dialogue open with the national partners to identify policy solutions to reinforce the project's results and explore further policy engagement and opportunities.
- Considering the increased value of the project in the current context this opportunity should be maximized by the project in offering policy solutions and implementing instruments.

**Recommendation 3:** At the national level the project should continue with its upstream policy work to further support the institutionalization of both the LSGU and LGACA in order to boost national learning and replication mechanisms and address the remaining legislative gaps. The LSGU should be further capacitated to fulfil its mandate in playing a more visible role in advocating for local government principles, as well as the project's outcomes. This will further strengthen the enabling environment for local self-governance reform. The project should focus on providing support initially to its pilot municipalities but also look more towards nationwide efforts. It needs to roll-out its knowledge to other municipalities and the Academy needs to have the capacities to train all municipalities.

- The project needs to continue to reinforce the institutionalization of the LSGU, given its ever increasing relevance increased demands from municipalities for its services, due to the ATR process. These needs and demands are expected to increase even further as the ATR is rolled-out. The LSGU should be advocating on behalf of the municipalities to the upper levels of government and not just focusing on micro-level issues. It needs to be able to advocate independently of government and represent the best interests of the local government reform. The kurultai<sup>11</sup> forum could provide a useful platform for this.
- The institutional linkages between the Academy and the Union need to be further strengthened in order to ensure the full optimization of knowledge codification. Some of the municipalities are not familiar with the work of the Academy and there needs to be a clear programmatic line and understanding of the role and contribution of the Academy. For example, the project could support the Academy and the Union in conducting joint, participatory planning sessions related to curricula development, implementation of specialised trainings and knowledge and best practice capturing and codification. In addition, the project should support the visibility and level of understanding of the role of the Academy and the differences and interlinkages between the two institutions. The project should be instrumental in supporting the Union in meeting the challenges of fully representing and protecting the interests of LSGs at the national and local level. At the same time the project should support the Academy in the codification of knowledge and best practices including national learning mechanisms. This will improve the internal and external understanding of the project's results and impact.

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<sup>11</sup> The kurultai forums are a large congress of people who meet with the President to discuss important issues. They have been gaining momentum in recent years and are prescribed in the constitution



- As a result of the ATR, Kyrgyzstan will need 300 highly capable professionals for each service provision area. It is crucial that the project supports the Academy in being able to contribute towards this. The project should support the Academy in the development and roll-out of more advanced and specialised training linked to the ATR – e.g. on water services, waste disposal etc. to support this full professionalisation of the local civil servants.
- The project should continue to address gaps in the legal framework and advocate for the adoption of the Law on Public Services, followed by the provision of support towards its implementation.

**Recommendation 4:** At the local level the project should reinforce its downstream efforts to scale-up and replicate the piloted models of improved service provision. This will require expanding to new municipalities as per the ATR and/or regionalization through the testing of the IMC model at the regional level to build a joint vision and co-creation of solutions between communities, services providers and local authorities. The project should explore opportunities to engage with the private sector including testing public-private partnerships. The project needs to mainstream the SIAP and the IMC approach as the ATR will almost certainly lead to the municipalities providing joint services even more. When looking at economy of scales, there will be an even greater need for IMC and the project could consider expanding further the amount of its budget allocated to the IMC. The project will need to adapt to this and claim its space, making its support even more efficient. Consideration should be given to regional level programmes – for example the Regional Plan on Solid Waste Management for Issyk-Kul. This would be something totally new for Kyrgyzstan and the project should position itself to support this.

- Careful consideration should be given to the selection of municipalities to be included in the expanded final project phase. The selection should accurately reflect the ATR changes and parameters.
- Special consideration should be given towards the programming related to improvement of service provision at the regional level. Continuous effort should be given to operationalize regional models, such as the regional Issyk-Kul waste management initiative.
- Mihailovka is one of the pilot municipalities for ATR as well as one of the project pilots and the project should leverage their sharing of knowledge – already other municipalities are coming to them. While the number of municipalities will decrease as a result of the ATR and their budgets will be merged, it should be kept in mind that 82% of municipalities are still subsidised by the state budget. IMC should be leveraged further to provide investment opportunities as well as cost-efficiencies for the municipalities. This could include an expansion of the project's budget that is allocated to the grant mechanism. Currently standing at 41% this could be increased to 50% or more going into Phase III. ~~In order to strengthen sustainability prospects, the project could consider a phased minimum contribution of the LSGs (and/or private sector) of 50% in year 1, 60% in year 2, 70% in year 3, 80% in year with a view of the LSGs taking over 100% of costs at the end of the project. This could be included in the project's exit strategy and would also contribute towards the sustainability of the interventions.~~
- Private sector – As budget allocations to big municipalities grow as part of the ATR there will be more opportunities and more resources available for the municipalities and the private sector will be more involved in investment opportunities. This is a new field for the municipalities and their capacities will need to be upgraded as investors and to link them to businesses. The project should support this through providing a platform to link the municipalities with the private sector. In conjunction with this, the project should actively explore and support potential synergies, in particular at the local level, between

the PSI project and other projects in the field of economic development, such as SDCs project with the EBRD Small Business Initiative or with IFC in support to the private sector. Synergies with SECO should also be optimised.

- Overall the programmatic focus of the final phase of the project should be on optimizing resources in the improvement of the provision and quality of local services. It is hoped that the enlargement of the municipalities will create opportunities to strengthen the economic efficiency of the project and opportunities for scaling up the project results.

**Recommendation 5:** In order to strengthen the quality of local service provision as well as the role of communities in holding service providers to account, the community monitoring mechanism should be further maximized. This includes expanding the role of civil society to ensure the cohesiveness of the instrument.

- The role of civil society should go beyond just awareness raising towards full participation, for example in the community monitoring mechanism. They can train monitoring groups in monitoring techniques. Such knowledge is, in fact, insufficient. Therefore, such assistance from CSOs working at the district or regional level could be very useful. In addition, CSOs could be invited to conduct external independent assessment or mini-sociological surveys (they could collect villagers'/beneficiaries' opinions on the quality of the local services provision, their suggestions, complaints and thus serve as a feedback mechanism between local authorities/providers and population.
- The project should explore the possibility of the institutionalisation of the community monitoring mechanisms to become standard practice at the municipal level.
- The project should ensure that there are regular feedback loops within the IMC mechanism itself, which are then communicated to the project that capture the recommendations provided by the community monitoring mechanism, which feedback into the improvement of the IMC model.

**Recommendation 6:** Gender sensitivity and social inclusion should continue to be an integral part of the programming. Enhanced efforts should be made to meet all of the project's GESI related indicators and targets.

- The project should enhance its efforts to meet GESI related targets, including at the impact level on the redistribution of unpaid care work. Reducing and redistributing the unpaid care and domestic work load of women involves a multifaceted approach that includes policy changes, community engagement, and the improvement of public services at the local level. Several strategies that the project may wish to consider include broadening the grant mechanism to include topics such as accessible and affordable childcare, flexible work policies and community support programmes that support women in managing their domestic responsibilities. Conducting educational campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of redistributing domestic work and the benefits of gender equality, could also be continued from the current phase.
- Only 5% of municipalities are headed by women. The project should continue to advocate for more gender sensitivity and equality among local authorities and support the capacities of women to participate. The issue should be consistently raised by the project, SDC and the Embassy during speeches, official meetings and visits to the regions using all communication channels possible.

## ANNEX I – Key Evaluation Criteria and Questions as per the Terms of Reference

### Relevance

1. To what extent the project activities of PSI are relevant to service provision reform and local governance context in Kyrgyzstan?
2. What do the project stakeholders and beneficiaries think of the project regarding relevance of its activities in the area of public service provision and in terms of increasing citizens' participation?

### Coherence

3. How well does the project fit with other interventions in the country/sector (including those funded by SDC)?

### Effectiveness

4. To what extent have the project activities of PSI achieved its objectives and targets at the national and local levels?
5. Were the selected approaches effective (what vs. how)?
6. What were the major factors influencing the achievements or non-achievements of the objectives?
7. How effective was the IMC mechanism for improvement of public services at the local level?
8. To what extent was the work at meso level effective to complement and add value to the work at national and local levels?
9. Were coordination/synergies with other interventions and donors effective?

### Efficiency

10. What is the relation between the inputs and outputs of the project?
11. Were objectives achieved in time?
12. Were the applied grant mechanisms (both IMC and the grant mechanism of the Union of local self-governments (ULSG)) adequate to mitigate the risks of corruption and contribute to investment sustainability and purposeful use?

### Impact

13. What is the impact of the interventions to the overall situation of the target group or those affected?
14. Are there any unexpected outcomes of the interventions and if so, is there a need to mitigate them or enhance them?
15. What impact the project made in terms of the local governance and decentralization context?

### Sustainability

16. To what extent did the project contribute to changing attitudes and behaviour of partners (especially at the local level)?
17. Who were the champions and those who resisted?
18. How were the resistances overcome?
19. How likely will the benefits of the project continue after the funding/implementation has ceased?
20. Can IMC be scaled-up without funding from other development partners?
21. What is the role of the Union of local self-governments (ULSG), the Local Governance Academy of Central Asia (LGACA) and other actors in sustaining the project's results?

22. How effective were the project's intervention in strengthening the national partners' critical functions in supporting, representing and capacitating the local self-governments in order to provide sustainable, gender and socially inclusive services to their citizens?
23. To what extent did the project contributions into the LSG system (legal framework) development affect the national policies and promote demand for improved service management system?

## **Transversal themes**

### **Lessons Learnt**

24. What lessons have been learnt by the project and the partners, including other donors?
25. To what extent have they been already taken into account in the interventions?
26. Based on the lessons learnt, what recommendations can be made on the future direction of the project implementation?

### **Dissemination of Knowledge and Learning**

27. How relevant have the project's strategies been in supporting national mechanisms for knowledge dissemination and scaling up of tested service models and practices and to what extent they take into account the general trend towards digitalization of public administration?
28. To what extent did the capacity of national partners, in particular of the Union of LSGs and LGACA, improve?
29. Does it make sense to shift from the Union for scaling up?
30. Are there other national/local actors in view who could support scaling up and dissemination of knowledge (e.g. regional CSOs, LGACA)?

### **Gender sensitivity and social inclusion (GESI)**

31. To what extent have the project's approach and interventions strengthened gender sensitivity and social inclusion in local service policy and practice?
32. What project activities on GESI promotion impacted local municipalities' policies and practices the most?
33. To what extent have awareness raising initiatives stimulated innovative measures and solutions in addressing the needs of the vulnerable groups?
34. How can the Project further support municipalities to be gender sensitive and socially inclusive?

## Annex II

### Assessment results of indicators of the project's second phase

Indicator	Initial values	Actual values	Target values	Notes
<b>Impact indicators</b>				
1. The percentage increase in citizens' satisfaction rate with public services at local level	48%	Country level – <b>56%</b> Project+pilot municipality – <b>58%</b> Project municipality (25+Toktogul) - <b>56%</b>	60% countrywide	Not achieved by 4 percentage points
2. The number of rural municipalities that have improved their services	0	<b>127</b> Including: Project municipality – <b>26</b> Issyk-Kul obl. - <b>22</b> Jalal-Abad obl. - <b>32</b> Chui obl. – <b>17</b> Talas obl. – <b>21</b> Batken obl. – <b>7</b> Naryn obl. - <b>2</b>	At least in 135 AA	Not achieved in 8 municipality
3. The percentage of women's unpaid care and domestic workload is reduced and redistributed due to improved public services at local level	Women 57%	Time spent on unpaid work: Country level – <b>58,2%</b> Project municipality – women <b>55,9%</b> Pilot municipality – women <b>58,2%</b>	Women 50%	Not achieved by 5.9 percentage points in project municipality
<b>Target Indicators</b>				
4. The number of men and women directly benefitting from the improved services in target oblasts	0	<b>463149</b> receive improved services, of which 246,082 are women, accounting for 53%	Approximately 500'000 in target oblasts	Almost achieved
5. The percentage of women and men in project municipalities who are satisfied with the quality of the prioritized services	Women - 52% Men - 55%	Men – <b>67%</b> Women – <b>63%</b>	Women - 66% Men - 66%	Partly achieved, overachieved
6. The number of service providers who are cost-effective	0	<b>12</b>	At least 12 service providers	Achieved
7. The number of policy areas with barriers and gaps to be removed by national policy makers to improve service provision at local level	0	<b>3</b>	At least 5 spheres of political impact	Not achieved

Indicator	Initial values	Actual values	Target values	Notes
8. The percentage of municipalities satisfied with support and services by Union of LSG and SALSGIR	44% SALSGIR 49% Union of LSG	<b>Union of LSG:</b> Project municipality – <b>96%</b> Countrywide – <b>83%</b> <b>SALSGIR:</b> Project municipality – <b>52%</b> Countrywide – <b>56%</b>	75% Union of LSG (countrywide) % SALSGIR	Achieved, overachieved
9. The percentage of LSGs that perceive the frame conditions for public service provision has improved	46%	Country level – 67% Project municipality – 73% Pilot municipality – 52% Control municipality – 76%	Increase to 66% (countrywide)	Achieved, overachieved
10. The number of municipalities with socially inclusive and gender responsive service policies in place	0	26 (100%) project municipalities and 21 non-project municipalities	100% (project municipalities) and 30 non-project municipalities in the target regions	Not achieved
<b>Target indicators</b>				
11. The number of men and women participating in public hearings on budget, tariffs, and prioritization	0	<b>17788</b> of which 7272 are women, accounting for 40.9%	At least 15'000 participants (at least 30% of women)	Achieved, overachieved
12. The number of joint monitoring recommendations elaborated by LSGs and community groups in project municipalities	0	<b>150</b> Including: 88 recommendations for Jalal-Abad and 62 recommendations for Issyk-Kul	At least 20	Achieved, overachieved
13. The number of municipalities covered by awareness raising initiatives on civic responsibility and gender and social inclusive services for LSG Units and communities	0	<b>41</b>	At least 40 (in target oblasts)	Achieved, overachieved
14. The number of services delivered through IMC SIAPs	0	<b>8</b>	At least 8 (in target oblasts)	Achieved
15. The number of developed and used models for intermunicipal service provision	0	<b>4</b>	At least 4 (in target oblasts)	Achieved
16. The number of private businesses engaged in	0	<b>5</b>	At least 4 (in target oblasts)	Achieved, overachieved

Indicator	Initial values	Actual values	Target values	Notes
service provision and service improvement				
17. The number of policy proposals regulating service provision elaborated by national partners	0	8	At least 7	Achieved, overachieved
18. The number of issues based national policy dialogue events resulting in legislative changes (e.g. GSE policies, inter-budgetary transfers, gaps in legal framework on service provision)	0	7	At least 5	Achieved, overachieved
19. The number of elaborated recommendations and models on regional organization of services and cooperation	0	2	2	Achieved
20. The number of non-project municipalities that improved services based on SIAP methodology in target regions with the support of the Union of LSGs	0	92	At least 70 (in target oblasts)	Achieved, overachieved
21. Rate of implementation of the roadmap on capacity building of the Union of LSGs	0%	95 %	100%	Not achieved
22. The number of project knowledge products generated and disseminated through national partners showcasing innovative, gender sensitive and socially inclusive models for public service management	0	120 best practices 20 informational educational products	At least 15 products and 30 best practices	Achieved, overachieved
23. The number of knowledge and peer-learning events provided through national learning mechanisms	0	<b>Total: 157</b> 2020 - 17 2021 - 35 2022 - 52 2023 (half a year) - 53	At least 130 (countrywide)	Achieved, overachieved

## ANNEX III ASSESSMENT GRID (version July 2021)

**Note:** this assessment grid is used for evaluations and internal assessments of SDC or SECO financed projects and programs (hereinafter jointly referred to as an 'intervention'). It is based on the OECD Development Assistance Committee evaluation criteria.<sup>12</sup> If specific results are not yet measurable at the time of the assessment, it requires analysing the likelihood of achieving impact and sustainability. All applicable sub-criteria should be scored and a short explanation should be provided. Additional sub-criteria may be added.

Select the corresponding number (0-4) representing your rating of the sub-criteria in the column “score”: 0 = not assessed; 1 = highly satisfactory; 2 = satisfactory; 3 = unsatisfactory; 4 = highly unsatisfactory

- **Highly satisfactory (HS)** – there were no shortcomings in relation to the intervention’s relevance, coherence and efficiency; the objectives at outcome level were fully achieved or exceeded and are likely to have a significant impact, which will be sustained in the future.
- **Satisfactory (S)** – There were moderate shortcomings in relation to the intervention’s relevance, coherence and efficiency. Most intended objectives at outcome level were achieved (or for mid-term: are likely to be achieved). The likelihood of achieving intended impact or sustainability of the intervention’s benefits is reasonable.
- **Unsatisfactory (U)** – There were important shortcomings in relation to the intervention’s relevance, coherence and efficiency, in the achievement of its objectives (N.B. if outputs are achieved, but do not result in the expected outcomes, consider rating relevance and/or effectiveness as unsatisfactory). The likelihood of achieving intended impact or sustainability of the intervention’s benefits is questionable.
- **Highly unsatisfactory (HU)** - There were very severe shortcomings in relation to the operation’s relevance, coherence and efficiency. Intended objectives have not been achieved, achievement of intended impact or sustainability of benefits are highly unlikely.
- **Not assessed (na)** – The criteria statement cannot be assessed. Please explain and provide details in the justifications section.

Title of the evaluated intervention: Public Service Improvement Project – phase II, Kyrgyzstan

Evaluation type: End of Phase Evaluation

Evaluator(s): Joanna Brooks, Olivera Puric, Gulmira Mametkerimova

Date of the evaluation: 30.11.2023

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<sup>12</sup> For more guidance see: Better Criteria for Better Evaluations. Revised Evaluation Criteria. Definitions and Principles for Use, OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation, 2019.



Key aspects based on DAC criteria	Score	Justification (Provide a short explanation for your score or why a criterion was not assessed)
<b>Relevance</b> <b>Note:</b> the assessment here captures the relevance of objectives <u>and</u> design <i>at the time of design and at time of evaluation</i>		
1. The extent to which the objectives of the intervention respond to the needs and priorities of the target group.	1 - highly satisfactory	The project was highly relevant to the needs and priorities of its target group, who were included in the development of the project. PSI arose out of a pre-identified capacity gap among the LSGs, identified through SDC's VAP project. The project sought to address needs both at the enabling environment level through legislative and policy amendments and strengthening the LSGU and formation of the LGACA as well as through building capacities at the local level. It also worked with rights holders to raise their awareness and capacities to engage and participate in local service provision processes.
2. The extent to which the objectives of the intervention respond to the needs and priorities of indirectly affected stakeholders (not included in target group, e.g. government, civil society, etc.) in the country of the intervention.	1 - highly satisfactory	The project responds to the needs and priorities of the country as a whole and all the people in Kyrgyzstan. It corresponds to national development priorities on decentralisation and LSG reform and contributes towards global development goals – i.e. the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals – in particular SDG 16. The project sought to improve living conditions for rural people in Kyrgyzstan and there is good evidence that it succeeded in this in the pilot communities.
3. The extent to which core design elements of the intervention (such as the theory of change, structure of the project components, choice of services and	1 - highly satisfactory	The project was designed based on a pre-identified need. The target groups were included in the design of

Key aspects based on DAC criteria	Score	Justification (Provide a short explanation for your score or why a criterion was not assessed)
intervention partners) adequately reflect the needs and priorities of the target group.		the project document through consultations and analyses undertaken to inform its development. The theory of change was sound with a clear causal pathway between the project's overall goal, outcomes and outputs. The project identified the right partners to work with at the national level and developed clear criteria for the selection of the pilot municipalities at the local level. At the local level, the choice of services were jointly identified and prioritised by the communities together with the LSGs ensuring their relevance.
If an additional sub-criteria is relevant please formulate it here	select	Click here to enter text.
<b>Coherence</b>		
4. Internal coherence: the extent to which the intervention is compatible with other interventions of Swiss development cooperation in the same country and thematic field (consistency, complementarity and synergies).	2 - satisfactory	The project is well positioned in SDC's portfolio under its support to governance, human rights and service delivery. There was strong coherence with the VAP project as well as the Parliament project at the time of its design. SDC has ensured a clear conceptual division in the roles and responsibilities between the PSI project and the newly established Programme for Local Governance Development – Coalition. It is too premature to assess whether or how the clear conceptual division of roles and responsibilities between the projects will translate at the operational level. The evaluation did not have opportunity to fully assess the coherence or synergies with SDC's economic development initiatives.

Key aspects based on DAC criteria	Score	Justification (Provide a short explanation for your score or why a criterion was not assessed)
5. External coherence: the extent to which the intervention is compatible with interventions of other actors in the country and thematic field (complementarity and synergies).	2 - satisfactory	The project has strong coordination with USAID's Successful Aimak 2 and Active Communities projects, the former also being implemented by DPI. The PSI and USAID projects have similar objectives and activities but have worked closely together to both identify synergies and collaboration, while also avoiding overlap and duplication. This extends to agreement between target municipalities and activities. There is strong coherence with the World Bank's Effective Governance for Economic Development Project (EGED) to support the Ministry of Economy and Commerce in developing the updated Methodology for elaborating Socio-Economic Development Programmes at local and sub-national (district) levels..
If an additional sub-criteria is relevant please formulate it here	select	Click here to enter text.
<b>Effectiveness</b>		
6. The extent to which approaches/strategies during implementation are adequate to achieve the intended results.	1 - highly satisfactory	The project adopted a number of effective strategies and approaches, which contributed towards its effectiveness. This included utilising the HRBA and working both top-down and bottom-up; being highly participatory and inclusive; using low-cost: high impact approaches and the long-term commitment of both the project and its donor. Capacity development approaches at both the national and local levels have proved highly effective in contributing towards the project's results.
7. The extent to which the intervention achieved or is expected to achieve its intended objectives (outputs and outcomes).	1 - highly satisfactory	As shown by the endlines survey conducted in October 2023, of its seven outcome indicators, the project has

Key aspects based on DAC criteria	Score	Justification (Provide a short explanation for your score or why a criterion was not assessed)
		<p>achieved or over-achieved four with one indicator being almost achieved and two not being met. Of its 13 output indicators, the project has achieved or over-achieved 12 with one indicator not being met. While it is anticipated that there will be further progress towards the outcome level indicators during the remaining implementation period, progress to date indicates the need for continuation of the project to fully reinforce its results and allow time for its successes at the output level to be fully reflect at the outcome level and for further impact of its results to be shown.</p>
<p>8. The extent to which the intervention achieved or is expected to achieve its intended results related to transversal themes.</p>	<p>2 - satisfactory</p>	<p>The project has made considerable efforts with regards to inclusivity and strengthening gender sensitivity and social inclusion in local service policy and practice at both national and local levels. This has included inclusion of vulnerable groups in the community level monitoring mechanisms; raising awareness of vulnerable groups' needs among the municipalities and the introduction of innovative measures and solutions such as reduced service provision tariffs for these groups. Criteria for awarding SIAP grants included inclusion related criteria and awareness raising activities have focused on inclusion. In addition, a number of the project's indicators included GESI related disaggregation, including indicators, 3, 10 and 13 and indicators 22 and 23, which related to knowledge dissemination. The GESI indicators have not been fully</p>

Key aspects based on DAC criteria	Score	Justification (Provide a short explanation for your score or why a criterion was not assessed)
		met and GESI should remain a key priority of the project going forward.
If an additional sub-criteria is relevant please formulate it here	select	Click here to enter text.
<b>Efficiency</b>		
9. The extent to which the intervention delivers the results (outputs, outcomes) cost-effectively.	1 - highly satisfactory	The project is highly cost-efficient representing good value for money for its donor. It has used a low-cost – high impact approach throughout achieving many results with small investments. IMC and SIAP grants have been highly effective in achieving results beyond those envisaged by the project and consideration could be given towards expanding the grant mechanism during Phase III.
10. The extent to which the intervention delivers the results (outputs, outcome) in a timely manner (within the intended timeframe or reasonably adjusted timeframe).	2 - satisfactory	There have been some delays in the implementation of the project, however, these have largely been due to factors beyond the control of the project. This includes the COVID-19 global pandemic, the changing political context in Kyrgyzstan and currently the anticipated Administrative and Territorial reform process. The project has been able to show a high degree of flexibility and adaptability to mitigate these factors.
11. The extent to which management, monitoring and steering mechanisms support efficient implementation.	2 - satisfactory	The project organisational set-up has been highly conducive to achieving the project's results with a lean but effective team. The two implementing partners sitting together in one office contributed towards this. The inclusion of a gender and social inclusion specialist on phase II contributed towards results in this area. The

Key aspects based on DAC criteria	Score	Justification (Provide a short explanation for your score or why a criterion was not assessed)
		project has a highly developed system of monitoring to ensure that it remains on track.
If an additional sub-criteria is relevant please formulate it here	select	Click here to enter text.
<b>Impact</b>		
<p>12. The extent to which the intervention generated or is expected to generate 'higher-level effects' as defined in the design document of the intervention.</p> <p>Note: when assessing this criterion, the primary focus is the intended 'higher-level effects'. In the event that <i>significant</i> unintended negative or positive effects can be discerned, they must be specified in the justification column, especially if they influence the score.</p>	2 - satisfactory	While the project has not fully met any of its three impact level indicators yet, the results of the endline survey conducted in October 2023 show that the project has achieved considerable progress and thus impact in increasing the % of citizen satisfaction rates with public services, in particular in the target municipalities; with improving services in rural municipalities; and to a lesser extent with reducing the % of unpaid women's care and domestic work. It is noted that activities focused on this final indicator have largely been during the second half of 2023 and results may not yet be fully reflected. The project has anecdotally also had impact beyond the scope of the project and its logical framework, including changes in attitudes and behaviours.
If an additional sub-criteria is relevant please formulate it here	select	Click here to enter text.
<b>Sustainability</b>		
13. The extent to which partners are capable and motivated (technical capacity, ownership) to continue activities contributing to achieving the outcomes.	2 - satisfactory	There is considerable evidence that the IMC and SIAP methodologies will continue to be used beyond the lifespan of the project and they are already being used beyond the scope of the project. Service provision introduced through the IMC and SIAP is largely self-



Key aspects based on DAC criteria	Score	Justification (Provide a short explanation for your score or why a criterion was not assessed)
		sustainable through tariffs and revenues collected at the local level. Legislative and policy changes also have a reasonable chance of continuation. The capacity building efforts instigated by the project have good sustainability prospects through the partnership with the LSGU and the LGACA. However there is a need to continue to reinforce the results in order to strengthen the sustainability prospects, particularly in view of the ATR.
14. The extent to which partners have the financial resources to continue activities contributing to achieving the outcomes.	0 - not determined	The evaluation did not formally assess this, however anecdotally, the LSGU and LGACA still require support to fully institutionalise the results of the project. Both are on an upwards trajectory and there is a risk of results being lost without some additional financial support. At the local level, the IMC and SIAP methodologies need to be replicated and rolled-out nationwide, which will require additional resources beyond the state budget.
15. The extent to which contextual factors (e.g. legislation, politics, economic situation, social demands) is conducive to continuing activities leading to outcomes.	2 - satisfactory	There is a lot of uncertainty regarding the current ATR process, which may influence the project's results. The project needs to continue to be adaptive and flexible to changing needs and demands. At the local level there is increasing demand for services, which is unlikely to change. The political context in Kyrgyzstan is fragile and unstable, which also poses risks.
If an additional sub-criteria is relevant please formulate it here	select	Click here to enter text.

## ANNEX IV – STAKEHOLDER LIST

Stakeholders	Location	Modality		Total	Males	Females
		KIIs	FGDs			
<b>Government Ministries and Entities</b>						
Ministry of Economy and Commerce, Department for Public Services; State Agency for Civil Service and Local Self-Governance under the Cabinet of Ministers; Union of Local Self-Governance; Local Governance Academy for Central Asia	Bishkek	4		10	4	6
<b>Local authorities</b> (heads of municipalities, local councillors, Director of ME, Accountant of ME, Head of FED; + Heads of AO)	<b>By regions:</b>					
	Jalal-Abad		5	34	22	12
	Issyk-Kul		5	40	21	19
<b>Civil society organizations</b>	<b>By regions:</b>					
	Bishkek	3		6	3	3
<b>Beneficiaries:</b>	<b>By regions:</b>					
	Jalal-Abad	-	5	37	24	13
	Issyk-Kul	-	5	29	6	23
<b>International, donor organizations</b>						
<b>SDC</b>	Bishkek	2	-	2	1	1
<b>Helvetas, INGO</b>	Bishkek	2	-	2	-	2
<b>PSI project staff</b>	Bishkek	2		3	2	1
<b>DPI</b>	Bishkek	1		1		1
<b>Total</b>		<b>14</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>75 (46%)</b>	<b>89 (54%)</b>

## ANNEX V – TERMS OF REFERENCE