

**United Nations Development Programme
Afghanistan & Tajikistan, November 2017**

**FINAL EVALUATION OF LIVELIHOOD
IMPROVEMENT IN TAJIK-AFGHAN CROSS-
BORDER AREAS PROJECT**

Abhijit Bhattacharjee & Jovidsho Juarev

In association with
Afghanistan Institute of Rural Development

Acknowledgement

We are grateful to a number of people who played an important role in assisting us during the research and fieldwork for this evaluation: Nilofer Malik, Programme Analyst (Livelihoods & Resilience Unit, UNDP Afghanistan), Roshan Safi, LITACA Project Manager (MRRD Afghanistan) and Ruslan Ziganshin, LITACA Project Manager, UNDP Tajikistan, who facilitated and organised all the meetings and visits in Afghanistan and Tajikistan, and ensured logistics for the team. Besides logistical support, they ensured that the evaluation team had access to all available documents at during the evaluation process.

Special thanks are due to Abdul Munir, Head of Survey, Afghanistan Institute of Rural Development (AIRD), and his team for conducting data collection survey in highly insecure environments in Afghanistan. That the evaluation was able to draw on any primary data in Afghanistan, despite the evaluation team not being able to visit the project areas, is owed to the work of AIRD.

We owe special thanks to Abdullo Gulliev, Manager of UNDP Area Office in Kulob, Abdughani Ibrohimov, Manager of UNDP Area Office in Shaartuz, and their teams for facilitating field visits in Tajikistan.

The views in this report are those of the evaluators, and may not necessarily represent those of UNDP or of its donors and partners.

Evaluation team

November 15, 2017

Content

Executive Summary	v
Section 1: Introduction, Purpose and Methodology of the Evaluation	1
1.1 Background to the evaluation	1
1.2 Purpose, scope and objectives of the evaluation	1
1.3 Organisation of the evaluation	2
1.4 Methodology	2
1.5 Ethical considerations	4
1.6 Limitation	5
Section 2: LITACA Project Context and Content.....	6
2.1 Overall context of development, security and stability.....	6
2.2 The LITACA project – objectives and approach	8
2.3 Project management.....	10
Section 3: Evaluation Findings – Outputs and Crosscutting Issues	12
3.1 Promotion of good governance, economic development, infrastructure and services	12
3.2 Cross-border interactions, dialogue and partnerships	21
Section 4: Conclusions – Assessment Against Evaluation Criteria.....	24
4.1 Relevance	24
4.2 Effectiveness	25
4.3 Efficiency	26
4.4 Sustainability.....	27
Section 5: Key Conclusions, Lessons and Recommendations.....	29
5.1 Overall conclusion	29
5.2 Detailed conclusions	29
5.3 Lessons and good practices	30
5.4 Recommendations	30

Tables and Figures

Table 1: Breakdown of interviews, focus groups and surveys conducted.....	4
Table 2: Output and result areas, LITACA project	9
Table 3: LITACA Financial Statement	11
Table 4: Infrastructure projects visited by survey team in Afghanistan.....	16
Figure 1: Asset-Income profile of surveyed women, LITACA project, Afghanistan.....	19
Figure 2: Previous experience of women participants.....	18
Figure 3: Decision making and voice.....	20
Figure 4: Beneficiary feedback on income.....	25

Annexes

Annex 1: Terms of Reference - LITACA final evaluation	
Annex 2: Inception Report - LITACA Final Evaluation, 2017	
Annex 3: List of Key informants and focus groups	
Annex 4: Itinerary of the evaluation team	
Annex 5: List of key documents consulted	
Annex 6: List of infrastructure assets created in Afghanistan and Tajikistan through LITACA project	

Abbreviations

Afg	Afghanistan
AIRD	Afghanistan Institute of Rural Development
BSC	Business Support Centre
CDC	Community Development Committee
CO	Country Office
CP	Country Programme
CPAP	Country Programme Action Plan
CPD	Country Programme Document
DDA	District Development Assembly
DDP	District Development Programme/Plan
DeQ	Dast-e-Qala
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HH	Household
IC	International Consultant
IS	Imam Sahib
IT	Information Technology
JICA	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
KII	Key Informant Interview
LA	Local Authority
LITACA	Livelihood Improvement in Tajik-Afghan Cross-Border Areas
MHP	Micro-Hydro Electric Power
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Government of Afghanistan
NABDP	National Area-Based Development Programme
NGO	Non Government Organisation
OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee
OVOP	One Village One Product/Our Village Our Pride
PM	Project Manager
PO	Public Organisation
ProDoc	Project Document
TJK	Tajikistan
TJS	Tajik Somoni (US\$1=TJS8.8)
TOC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
US\$	American Dollar
WG	Working Group
WUA	Water Users Association
YeQ	Yang-e-Qala

Glossary

Gilim	Made of sheep wool, gilims are flat woven carpets that can be found as carpets, wall hangings and saddle bags; they are very sturdy and are usually in a deep wine red with multi-coloured patterns
Jamoat	Institutions of self-governance at sub-district level in Tajikistan
Prodoc	Project document

Executive Summary

The “Livelihood Improvement in Tajik-Afghan Cross-border Areas” (LITACA) is a three-year project, implemented in the cross-border areas of Tajikistan and Afghanistan by UNDP in partnership with the Governments of the two countries. Started in April 2014, initially for a period of three years, the project was subsequently extended to December 2017. UNDP commissioned an independent evaluation of the project which was funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) of the Government of Japan. The purpose of this final evaluation was to assess overall performance of the project against stated outputs and results, as well as to comment on the approaches and strategies in implementation, challenges and lessons for future programming. The evaluation, conducted in September-October 2017, utilised a mixed-method approach using quantitative and qualitative data gathered from a carefully selected range of sources. The following criteria were used to assess overall performance: Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Sustainability.

Conclusions

The LITACA project has developed models for working with local authorities and communities in improving the living standards of bordering communities through improved provision of basic services and livelihood opportunities, and engaging in cross-border trade, exchange and learning between the cross-border regions of Afghanistan and Tajikistan. The project has promoted cross-border cooperation between the two countries, working in tandem with other similar initiatives for regional cooperation prioritised by the two governments.

Relevance

The project’s activities have demonstrated their relevance to the needs of communities in the border regions of Afghanistan and Tajikistan. LITACA’s successful models for livelihoods and economic development interventions could be leveraged for systematic area-wide strategy for skills development and job creation, involving substantial investment. The cross-border dimension of the project has worked only in a limited way due to security constraints which restrict free movement and exchange. Despite this, it should be possible to make greater use of opportunities for joint planning, training and implementation of activities, and learning from each other.

Effectiveness

In Tajikistan, where infrastructure development received bulk of the project funding, the activities have begun to bring immediate benefits to people. The concept of business support centres and linking some of those trained in vocational training with small grants programme run by the project was innovative and enabled the beneficiaries in successful start up and /or expansion of their production centres. In Afghanistan, the project has demonstrated its potential to create jobs and income opportunities for vulnerable people through the women’s economic empowerment project and one-village-one-product (OVOP) initiative by providing markets and networking opportunities for local farmers, entrepreneurs and producers in remote rural and peri-urban communities.

Efficiency

The project provides good value for money (VfM) from the point of view of outcomes it has delivered for communities in basic services, livelihoods opportunities, as well as contributing to cross-border exchanges and trade, albeit in a small way. The project steering committee involving

senior officials from the two countries' governments was a good model for partnership and provide opportunities for all stakeholders to have a say in project implementation. The project reporting system is well organised and up-to-date data was available on physical progress and financial status for each activity, which is no mean feat considering that work is carried out in two different countries, involving two UNDP country offices and the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) in Afghanistan.

Sustainability

There is strong ownership of some of the activities by the governments and these are therefore likely to be sustained, though for some of the assets that require regular maintenance, sustainability remains a challenge. The Government of Afghanistan is now scaling up the women's economic empowerment programme and the OVOP approach across the country. It is understood that within UNDP as well, the OVOP concept is now being taken forward in all livelihoods and economic development programme in Afghanistan. Several good practices in the project have potential for dissemination and replication in other development programmes. The Quality Assurance tool UNDP Tajikistan has developed for use during planning of all infrastructure projects assesses the feasibility of a project on multiple dimensions, including a rapid assessment of environmental and social impact. The public hearing process needs systematic documentation and its lessons, likewise, could be applied elsewhere.

Lessons and good practices

Several lessons and good practices were noted in the project that can be replicated and scaled up in other development programmes:

- ❖ Systematic implementation of the public hearings initiative can strengthen local governance by putting in place effective mechanism for demonstrating accountability to people;
- ❖ The multi-attribute quality assurance tool used in Tajikistan for feasibility/planning studies for small-scale local infrastructure projects can improve local planning at district and sub-district levels;
- ❖ The OVOP approach building on provision of local market infrastructure for local produce that meet local needs, accompanied by relevant business and technical skills for the producers/ artisans, have good potential for livelihoods programming in rural and remote areas of Afghanistan and Tajikistan where market penetration by global and national brands may be weak.

Recommendations

Across both countries

- R1: Work closely with other partners and international NGOs active in the border region and explore opportunities for more cross-border exchanges and people-to-people contact and trade, security constraints notwithstanding.
- R2: Explore possibilities of scaling up the project beyond the current level, in partnership with development partners and governments of the two countries.
- R3: Work with local authorities and communities to ensure maintenance and care of the public assets that require regular/periodic maintenance.

Tajikistan

- R4: Undertake systematic documentation of the public hearing process and use appropriate publications and media to disseminate and advocate for these practices to be adopted in districts.
- R5: Review targeting criteria for selection of beneficiaries for livelihoods programmes, ensuring that equity considerations remain at the forefront of all external assistance.
- R6: Undertake a review of the OVOP workshop at the earliest opportunity to gather evidence based on market response, and undertake course correction, if necessary.

Afghanistan

- R7: Based on the Tajikistan model, introduce public hearings through engagement with district development assemblies (DDA) and local authorities in the project area.
- R8: Document the process of OVOP development and experiences from it to systematise learning and develop a dissemination and advocacy strategy to replicate the model in all development interventions aimed at rural livelihoods and economic development in the country.

Figure 1: Map of LITACA project area, Afghanistan & Tajikistan (Source: UNDP)



Section 1

Introduction, Purpose and Methodology of the Evaluation

1.1 Background to the evaluation

1. The “Livelihood Improvement in Tajik-Afghan Cross-border Areas” (LITACA) is a three-year project, implemented in the cross-border areas of Tajikistan and Afghanistan. Started in April 2014, initially for a period of three years, the project was subsequently extended to December 2017. The project builds on previous initiatives and several ongoing commitments of the two countries for cross-border cooperation and development of local communities in border areas for peace and security in the region. With overall lead taken by UNDP Tajikistan, the project was directly implemented by the former on the Tajikistan side, while in Afghanistan, the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), a partner of UNDP Afghanistan, was responsible for implementation.
2. The project was evaluated in its mid-term, and as per the project document (ProDoc), a final evaluation was required to be conducted before the end of the project which is funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) of the Government of Japan. This report details the methodology, findings, conclusions and recommendations from an external final evaluation conducted during August-September 2017.

1.2 Purpose, scope and objectives of the evaluation

Purpose and scope

3. As stated in the Terms of Reference for the evaluation (Annex 1), the purpose of this final evaluation was to assess overall performance of the project against stated outputs and results, as well as to comment on the approaches and strategies in implementation. The evaluation also highlights issues, challenges and lessons for future programming. The scope of the evaluation covers various activities undertaken since 2014 in both Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

Objective of the evaluation

4. The evaluation examined results, achievements and challenges faced in the course of implementation over the last three years of the project, with emphasis on lessons learnt. The main objectives of the evaluation were threefold:
 - i. assess the overall progress of the LITACA project against intended outputs and results outlined in the project document (Prodoc),
 - ii. examine the approaches and strategies used in delivery of the project, and
 - iii. provide evidence-based recommendations and lessons learned to inform future development of the project or its successor.

5. Specifically, the evaluation had the following sub-objectives/deliverables:
 - i. To review and assess the extent to which the planned outputs and related outcomes have been achieved, or are likely to be achieved by the end of current project, using the following **criteria**: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability
 - ii. Comment on **factors that facilitate and/or hinder progress** in achieving the outcomes, both in terms of the external environment and those internal to the UNDP, including: weaknesses in design, management, resource mobilisation and human resources;
 - iii. Analyse the extent of engagement of partner institutions and stakeholders in the project, and assess the **strategic partnerships and linkages** created; and
 - iv. To identify **lessons and good practices** from the project, with potential for replication or inclusion in national policies or programmes.
6. The evaluation used the following standard OECD/DAC criteria for assessment of overall performance:
 - **Relevance**: examine relevance of the project to the wider context especially current national priorities, international policy frameworks;
 - **Effectiveness**: assess the extent to which project objectives have been achieved and are likely to be achieved in the remaining period of the project;
 - **Efficiency**: comment on the value for money and cost-effectiveness of the project;
 - **Sustainability**: assess the likelihood of the project-supported interventions to continue to deliver benefits for an extended period of time beyond the project duration.

1.3 Organisation of the evaluation

7. The evaluation was commissioned and managed by the Livelihood and Resilience Unit of UNDP Afghanistan country office, with support from Project Manager (PM) of LITACA at MRRD Afghanistan and UNDP Tajikistan. An international consultant and a national consultant in Tajikistan were hired to carry out the evaluation, field visit for which took place during September-October. Since, under the UNDP security procedure, the international consultant (IC) did not have access to the project areas in Afghanistan, a survey team from the Afghanistan Institute of Rural Development (AIRD) was tasked by UNDP to gather primary data on the project in Afghanistan.
8. After initial briefing and desk research, the consultants drafted an inception report (Annex 2) in advance of the field visits and this was finalised during the first week of the evaluation mission in Kabul, following discussions with the UNDP Afghanistan and Tajikistan, AIRD and MRRD. The inception report outlined the evaluation questions, methodology, tools and detailed workplan for delivering the evaluation according to the Terms of Reference (ToR). The IC produced appropriate tools for data collection by the AIRD team as part of the inception process, and the survey team was given orientation on administration of the tools. MRRD team in Afghanistan and UNDP in Tajikistan provided support in arranging meetings and interviews, field visits and ensured that the evaluators had access to available documents.

1.4 Methodology

9. The overall methodology followed by the evaluation is described in detail in the inception report (IR). As is customary with mixed-method evaluations, this evaluation ensured that

opinions, views and perspectives offered by each interviewee or key informant were tested against information obtained from other interviewees and documents. Triangulation with multiple sources of data comprising field observations, key informant interviews (KIIs) and desk reviews was crucial for developing the evidence-base for this evaluation. During inception phase, the evaluators undertook a desk-based search, analysis of secondary sources and a preliminary stakeholder mapping exercise. The mapping of key stakeholders formed an initial list for the key informant interviews which was refined and added to as the data gathering progressed.

10. As outlined in the IR, the key questions examined in the evaluation were as follows:

Box 1: Key questions for the evaluation

Relevance: To what extent are the LITACA interventions aligned with UNDP country priorities in TJK and AFG? Is there a clear rationale in the project logic in terms of linkage between activities, outputs and outcomes? Were the implementation approaches, resources and scale of programming relevant to achieve the intended outputs and outcome? To what extent the technical assistance (rehabilitation, training, equipment) provided to beneficiaries addressed the actual needs of beneficiaries over the course of LITACA in TJK and AFG? Has the project been able to adapt its programming to the changing context in the country and enabled UNDP to position itself strategically?

Effectiveness: What changes in the lives of final beneficiaries in cross border communities are associated with LITACA interventions? To what extent the LITACA has delivered stated output indicators? To what extent the key stakeholders benefited from capacity building programme of LITACA to manage local development processes? What are the results of the LITACA infrastructure rehabilitation projects in TJ and AFG? What are the results of the LITACA interventions for local economic development in TJ and AFG? What changes occurred as a result of LITACA interventions in terms of private public partnership in targeted districts in Tajikistan? What are the results of vocational education programme implemented under the LITACA in Tajikistan? What are the results of exchange visits and study tours organised for participants? What are the results of technical assistance provided to BSCs by LITACA? What are the results of OVOP initiative and activities for facilitating cross border trade initiated under LITACA? What are the benefits of DRM interventions in targeted locations?

Efficiency: To what extent funding utilisation correlates with project outputs? To what extent the Project Steering Committee mechanism under LITACA were utilised in decision-making? Were issues that negatively affected performance identified and dealt with in a timely and effective manner? Has the reporting been adequate and met standard for programme implementation? Has the M&E been adequately designed and used to inform decision-making?

Sustainability: To what extent the LITACA interventions are contributing to sustainability of its outcomes at micro, meso and macro levels? How the LITACA ensured environmental sustainability of interventions? What are LITACA's knowledge management strategies? What are LITACA's outreach and communication strategies employed?

11. The evaluation team met /interviewed a total of 40 individuals through a semi-structured process, conducted several focus groups and visited all the eight districts in Tajikistan where LITACA project is being implemented. As mentioned previously, the evaluation team could not visit any of the districts in Afghanistan and had to rely of data gathered by the AIRD survey team. The following table (Table 1) shows breakdown of key informant interviews, focus group discussions and site visits made by the evaluation team and the survey team:

Table 1: Breakdown of interviews, focus groups and surveys conducted

Stakeholder groups	KII	FGD	Survey – individual respondents	Survey - groups
Afghanistan				
Local authorities	-	-	22 (18M; 4W)	-
DDA	-	-	19 (8M; 11W)	-
Government	7	-	-	-
UNDP	3	-	-	-
NGOs	2	-	-	-
Others	2	-	-	-
Communities/ beneficiaries	-	-	76 (21M; 55W)	8 (6M; 2W)
Tajikistan				
Local authorities	3	-	-	-
DDP WG	-	2 (26)	-	-
Government	4	-	-	-
UNDP	8	1 (10)	-	-
NGOs	3	1 (11M, 9W)	-	-
Others	6	4 (M)	-	-
Communities/ beneficiaries	2 (M)	2 (M); 2 (W)	-	-

12. A full list of all interviewees is provided in Annex 3, and a full itinerary provided in Annex 4. Data from these were supplemented with those obtained from desk research carried out by the evaluation team. A list of the key documents consulted is attached as Annex 5.

1.5 Ethical considerations

13. The following protocol was adhered to by the evaluation team in all interactions with stakeholders:
- ❖ *Informed consent* - all participants gave their consent to participate in any activity related to the evaluation, and the review team was mindful of not pushing any member/participant to engage in the process, if they were not prepared to;
 - ❖ *Respect of rights* of those involved in evaluation process or activity; participants were duly informed of the purpose so that they participated freely and voluntarily;

- ❖ *Respect dignity* - interviews and data-gathering were conducted in a way that respected individual's dignity;
- ❖ *Ensuring inclusivity* – all voices were heard, ensuring respect to privacy and confidentiality.

1.6 Limitation

14. The survey team did a good job of collecting data as per the tools developed at the inception stage. However, the evaluation team not being able to visit project areas in Afghanistan meant that the team lacked first-hand exposure to the area, its communities, or opportunity for direct observations of any of the activities undertaken by the project. This remained a serious limitation of the evaluation; though the survey was able to collect data from local authorities and beneficiary communities, lack of mixed-method evaluation expertise meant that triangulation of data obtained remained a challenge. The evaluation has therefore relied on secondary data and information contained in documents provided by UNDP Afghanistan and MRRD, to a large extent, to fill the void.

Section 2

LITACA Project Context and Content

2.1 Overall context of development, security and stability

15. The context within which this project is being implemented is described in detail in the project document (ProDoc) and Annual Reports. Poverty is widespread in both Afghanistan and Tajikistan, with 39.1 per cent of population living below poverty line in the former while in the latter, the corresponding figure is 32 per cent.¹ For every 1,000 live births, 66 in Afghanistan and 39 in Tajikistan die before their first birthday. In areas bordering the two countries, the situation is far worse than the national average. In the north-eastern region of Afghanistan comprising the border districts of Badakshan, Takhar, Baghlan and Kunduz, poverty rate, according to a joint World Bank and Government of Afghanistan report, was 49.1 per cent in 2011-12, the latest year for which data was available. What is more, while in the rest of the country, poverty has declined between the period 2007-08 and 2011-12, in these border provinces, there was an increase in percentage of population below the poverty line by over 13 per cent between these two periods.²
16. Across the border, the Gorno-Badakshan Autonomous Oblast (GBO) and Khatlon Oblast are the poorest regions in Tajikistan. With almost 2.7 million people in 2011, the oblast of Khatlon is the most populous of the four administrative regions of Tajikistan.³ It borders Afghanistan and lies on the path of major drug-smuggling routes; its poor, agriculture-based economy is highly dependent on export of labour to Russia; its population is heavily reliant on remittances from migrant workers. Khatlon is the poorest region in the country with a 54 per cent poverty rate, and has a higher rate of population growth than the national average (World Bank, 2013). Given the high share of the youth in the total population (almost 40 per cent below 14), Khatlon is characterised by a very high unofficial unemployment rate (35 per cent) and of official unemployment rate of seven per cent. The median monthly wage remains one of lowest in the country forcing large migration abroad with close to 40 per cent of households reporting at least one migrant working in Kyrgyzstan and Russia.⁴ The southern region of Tajikistan is also marked by poor infrastructure, markets and business environment, unlike the northern regions which are better connected for trade and export markets with Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia.
17. In Afghanistan, security situation remains fragile throughout the country, especially in the northern region including the project area, as evidenced by the takeover of the city of Kunduz by the Taliban in 2015. Due to insecurity and risks of kidnapping, robbery, insurgency,

¹ Source: Asian Development Bank (2017). Basic 2017 Statistics, April 2017

² Source: Ministry of Economy and World Bank (2012). Afghanistan Poverty Status Update - An analysis based on National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) 2007/08 and 2011/12. October 2015.

³ The World Bank (2013). Tajikistan - Reinvigorating Growth in the Khatlon Oblast, April 2013. Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Unit Europe and Central Asia

⁴ The World Bank (2013). *Ibid*

sporadic skirmishes on Kunduz-Takhar highway and on the roads connecting the northern districts, access to those areas has been very limited.⁵

18. Taking into consideration the situation on the Tajik-Afghan border areas, with the poor living conditions in both countries and the planned withdrawal of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)/International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) from Afghanistan in 2014, the project interventions were designed to contribute to stability and security in the region comprising Southern Tajikistan (Khatlon region) and Northern Afghanistan (Takhar and Kunduz provinces), as well as improving the livelihoods of the bordering communities. There have been on-going border management operations for some years in the region, and the LITACA project was meant to complement these efforts with local development activities that promoted job creation, infrastructure development and provision of basic services. While security sector interventions have been implemented by UNDP Tajikistan through its EU-funded Border Management in Central Asia (BOMCA) and Border Management in Northern Afghanistan (BOMNAF) programmes on continuous basis, the local development activities remained fragmented. Only in 2010, with the funding support of the Government of Japan for implementing the Tajik-Afghan Poverty Reduction Initiative (TAPRI), UNDP was able to complement the border management activities with human development interventions. This work is further supported by well-functioning frameworks of the United Nations Special Programme for Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) and Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC), which aimed to support the adoption of international standards, build capacity and monitor the status of implementation of projects in the field of investment, trade, transit and border management. At bi-lateral level, the two governments are also strongly committed to strengthen cross-border collaboration and relations between communities who share the same culture and history.
19. Since the project was designed and launched (2013-14), a major change that has affected the border areas, particularly on the Tajik side, has been the return of thousands of migrant labourers from Russia as its economy faltered in the past 2-3 years. This has not only put a squeeze on household income, with remittances drying up, but also added to growing unemployment on the Tajik side of the Afghan-Tajikistan border. Historically, this area relied heavily on migration and remittances, as alternative livelihoods and trade are not well developed, unlike in the northern or eastern borders of the country.
20. Besides scarce employment opportunities and limited livelihood option, the border areas on both sides also suffer from lack of functioning infrastructure like roads, irrigation system, healthcare and education facilities. While on the Afghan side, these have always been weak and often non-existent, on the Tajik side the collapse of Soviet Union followed by civil war in the country witnessed systematic crumbling of these system, from which the country is yet to recover. Additionally, communities in Tajik-Afghan cross-border regions are vulnerable to the risks of natural disasters, due to a number of geological and geographic factors, with limited capacities for managing disaster risks.

⁵ UNDP (2016). LITACA Annual Report 2015.

2.2 The LITACA project – objectives and approach

21. LITACA covers 8 bordering districts of Khatlon region of Southern Tajikistan,⁶ with a total population of 866,600, and 2 districts⁷ of Takhar and 1 district⁸ of Kunduz provinces of Northern Afghanistan, with a total population of 256,100. In Tajikistan, the project was implemented directly by UNDP through its two area offices located in Kulyab and Shaartuz which cover Khatlon region, in partnership with the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade (MEDT). In Afghanistan, the project was implemented by the MRRD through, initially the project structure for the national flagship programme, National Area Based Development Programme (NABDP),⁹ and subsequently through a small project unit within MRRD dedicated for LITACA.
22. The project is designed to enhance security, stability and resilience of people living in cross-border areas of Afghanistan and Tajikistan through improvements in the living standards of communities. The project intends to achieve this by delivering two main outputs, namely: (1) promotion of good local governance, improved livelihoods and economic development opportunities, infrastructure and services; and (2) enhanced opportunities for cross-border interactions, dialogue and partnerships. Funded by the Government of Japan, with a total budget of US\$ 10.75 million (which subsequently increased to US\$11 million due to exchange rate gains),¹⁰ the project started on 1 April 2014 and will end in December 2017.¹¹ The project document¹² outlines the following specific outputs and results intended by the project (Table 2):

⁶ Jayhun (Qumsangir), Qabodiyon, Dusti (Jilikul), Shaartuz, Pyanj, Farkhor, Hamadoni, and Shamsiddin Shohin (Shurobod)

⁷ Yang-e-Qla and Dast-e-Qala

⁸ Imam Sahib

⁹ NABDP came to an end at the end of 2015.

¹⁰ The currency exchange gains of about US\$300K were committed in 2016.

¹¹ The project was to end on March 2017, but its duration was subsequently extended, first to 30 September, and subsequently, to 31 December on the basis of a no-cost extension granted by the donor, JICA.

¹² United Nations Development Programme (2014): Project Document - Livelihood Improvement in Tajik- Afghan Cross-border Areas (LITACA)

Table 2: Output and result areas, LITACA project

Outcome: Living standards of selected rural communities in the bordering areas of Tajikistan and Afghanistan will be strengthened.		
Outputs	Results	Key interventions/activities
<p><u>Output 1:</u> Communities in the bordering provinces of Tajikistan and Afghanistan enjoy better governance, access to rural infrastructure and services as well as economic development opportunities.</p>	<p>1.1 Enhanced capacity to manage local development processes benefiting 436 people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Training for local government officials on strategic planning, resource mobilisation and monitoring and evaluation in Tajikistan; * Provide IT equipment benefiting 24 local government officials in Tajikistan; * Trainings for improving internal business processes benefiting 48 local government in Tajikistan; * Technical assistance for review and update of 8 District Development Programmes benefiting local government officials (10 per target district) in Tajikistan and Technical Assistance, Training and Workshops for local government officials and Communities on district planning and implementation in Afghanistan; * Conduct public hearings involving civil society organisations and 80 private sector representatives on the implementation of District Development Programmes in Tajikistan.
	<p>1.2 Rehabilitated rural infrastructure and services, benefiting 126,500 people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Rehabilitate 25 water supply and irrigation objects (20 in Tajikistan and 5 in Afghanistan); * Rehabilitate 20 rural hospitals and 10 schools in Tajikistan; * Rehabilitate 10 roads/bridges/walls in Afghanistan; * Rehabilitate 4 energy objects (2 in Tajikistan and 2 in Afghanistan);
	<p>1.3 Enhanced job and income opportunities for sustainable local economic development, benefiting 14,130 people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Provide small grants to 10 civil society organisations for agriculture and business development activities in Tajikistan; * Establishment and strengthening dialogue between public and private sector in improving business enabling environment; * Business training for 300 farmers, entrepreneurs, and other private sector representatives (150 in Tajikistan and 150 in Afghanistan); * Vocational training for 500 vulnerable community representatives in Tajikistan

<p>Output 2: Cross-border communities have better opportunities for cross border interactions, dialogue and partnerships.</p>	<p>2.1 Cross-border information and experience exchange.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Publication materials on cross border issues * Development of video film on the development context of target communities * Broadcasting TV/radio programmes on cross border issues (quarterly) * Study tours and experience exchange visits (semi-annually)
	<p>2.2. Cross-border economic cooperation benefiting 1,810 people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Technical assistance for 2 Business Support Centers benefiting 1,100 people (in Tajikistan); * Pilot One Village One Product in Tajikistan and Afghanistan benefiting 60 people (30 each in Tajikistan and Afghanistan); * Construct a cross border market benefiting 200 people (100 people from each side of the border); * Conduct 2 business forums benefiting 150 people (100 from Tajikistan and 50 from Afghanistan); * Conduct 3 trade-fairs benefiting 300 people (150 each in Tajikistan and Afghanistan);
	<p>2.3. Cross-border disaster risk management benefiting 10,100 people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Provide training across the border for disaster risks management and mitigation to 100 community leaders; * Implementation of 4 disaster risk management initiatives benefiting 10,000 people (2,500 people per project);

(Source: Extracted from Project document, LITACA)

2.3 Project management

23. In Tajikistan, the project is implemented through UNDP's Communities Programme, with the Programme Manager providing strategic oversight, including coordination and communication. In Afghanistan where the project is implemented through national implementation modality, a Project Management Unit in the MRRD deals with day-to-day management of the project. In each country there is a Project Manager (PM) for LITACA, with the Tajikistan PM¹³ taking the lead for overall coordination between the two countries. A Steering Committee comprising JICA (1 each from their Afghanistan and Tajikistan offices), Country Directors of UNDP Afghanistan and Tajikistan, the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade of Tajikistan (1 person), and the MRRD (1 person) provides overall direction and guidance to the project teams. The Khatlon Oblast Government (1 Senior representative) has an observer role in the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee meets twice a year and is responsible for review of the project from time to time, approval of six-monthly and annual reports, annual workplans and budget.
24. Project teams (led by Project Managers based in capitals) of the two countries are responsible for implementation of the project, assisted by a small team of support staff and specialists in

¹³ In the next phase of the project, this role will be taken over by the Afghanistan PM. The transition process had already begun at the time of the evaluation.

the UNDP CO in Tajikistan and MRRD in Afghanistan, with support from UNDP CO. The Project Managers bear responsibility for overall financial and operational accountability of the Project, including budgets and ensuring strict and consistent application of UNDP rules and regulations. In Tajikistan, UNDP has two area offices in the region from which day-to-day operations in the project are conducted, and in Afghanistan, MRRD works through various technical departments who have staff located in districts. Besides this, LITACA has small technical teams who, for example, during the planning and implementation of infrastructure projects in both countries, were regularly monitoring physical implementation and ensuring quality control.

25. The following Table (Table 3) presents the financial status of the project as of 30 September 2017.

Table 3: LITACA Financial Statement - project budget and actual expenses (as of 30 September 2017)

Outputs	Results	Amount spent (US\$)	
		Tajikistan	Afghanistan
Output 1: Communities in the bordering provinces of Tajikistan and Afghanistan enjoy better governance, access to rural infrastructure and services as well as economic development opportunities.	1.1 Enhanced capacity to manage local development processes benefiting 436 people	257,625	15,124
	1.2 Rehabilitated rural infrastructure and services, benefiting 126,500 people	4,463,440	1,077,637
	1.3 Enhanced job and income opportunities for sustainable local economic development, benefiting 14,130 people	301,955	249,454
Output 2: Cross-border communities have better opportunities for cross border interactions, dialogue and partnerships.	2.1 Cross-border information and experience exchange.	178,829	Spent by TJK
	2.2. Cross-border economic cooperation benefiting 1,810 people.	336,728	531,053
	2.3. Cross-border disaster risk management benefiting 10,100 people.	595,988	-
	Direct project cost	1,143,237	1,046,216
GMS (8%)		571,987	233,557
	TOTAL	7,849,788	3,153,041

Section 3

Evaluation Findings – Outputs and Crosscutting Issues

3.1 Promotion of good local governance, improved economic development opportunities, infrastructure and services

3.1.1 Enhanced capacity – local governance and planning

26. A significant aspect of LITACA’s implementation approach has been in its emphasis on participation of local authorities at district and sub-district level in selection of priority activities in villages/municipalities. The approach has been very similar in both the countries, facilitated by the fact that at the district/sub-district level, the governance structure looks fundamentally the same, though the two governments have followed different trajectory in development of their national and regional governance structures. In Afghanistan, the elected District Development Assemblies (DDAs) serve as the lead agency through which project prioritisation was done. The DDAs are responsible for District Development Plans (DDP) which are supposed to be subsequently linked with the sub-national consultation of Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and the provincial development planning.¹⁴ LITACA used the DDPs as the primary reference point for selecting priority activities in both countries.
27. In Tajikistan, DDA-like elected bodies in the form of Majlis (Council of Local Deputies) exist, and the heads of the regional, city or district state administration (*khukumat*) wield executive authority and act as local council chairmen. At the sub-district level, a *jamoat* is an institution of self-governance in towns and villages. The Councils of the Local Deputies (province/district/city/town level Majlis) are assigned to adopt the DDPs elaborated by the DDP Working Groups (DDP WGs) and approved by the local (oblast/district/city/town) administrations. In all the districts visited by the evaluation team, there were functioning WGs under the district administration which were responsible for developing DDPs. The DDP WGs largely comprise district officials from various sectoral departments, and individuals representing local media, private sector and NGOs, nominated by the provincial and district governors. Focus group discussions with DDP WGs in two districts revealed that LITACA undertook a consultative process for selection of its interventions and all activities reflected the priorities identified in the DDPs, much in the same way as was done in Afghanistan.
28. In both countries, while DDP process appears to be well established in most districts, the plans are not fully linked to budget at district or provincial level, and funding of plan implementation is largely project-based and depends on donor funding, like the LITACA project as well as private sector investments, long-term soft loans (which are served by the state budget). This does mean that DDPs run the danger of losing their relevance, if funding does not come forth. Additionally, this has implications for sustainability of infrastructure created through project

¹⁴ UNDP (2017). LITACA Annual Report, 2016.

funding, especially those which require regular or periodic repairs and maintenance.

29. Through the LITACA project, district officials, DDA members and Community Development Council (CDC) members at village level in Afghanistan were provided training on district planning, strategic planning, and monitoring and evaluation in relation to implementation of the district plans. In key informant interviews with district officials (from district governor's office and technical departments namely, agriculture, health and education) in three districts, overwhelming majority of respondents rated the training high, particularly the training of DDA members and CDCs. In Tajikistan, similar training on local economic planning, resource mobilisation and monitoring and evaluation were provided to district officials, and *Jamoat* officials trained in district planning. FGDs with Tajik officials and DDP WGs similarly endorsed relevance of these trainings, though did not provide any conclusive feedback on the use of knowledge acquired in the trainings in their work, as many staff may have changed in the past three years. In Tajikistan, district and local officials have been through a number of trainings organised by government and other agencies from time to time, which makes it difficult to conclusively establish the benefit of training provided by LITACA. However, active engagement by LITACA project with district officials on DDP gave the latter a sense of involvement, which was crucial for successful implementation of various activities. In Afghanistan, early involvement of local authorities and DDAs in training and project prioritisation made the implementation process smooth as they often act as 'gatekeepers' for access to local communities.
30. Over the past several years, UNDP in Tajikistan has built capacity of the local authorities through training, knowledge sharing, exchange of experience on strategic planning for local development. UNDP introduced and piloted the practice of open public hearings to make local governance transparent, accountable and participative. In the eight target districts under LITACA, UNDP used the open public hearings approach which it developed previously and applied countrywide as a good practice. These bring government officials (officials from local authorities and Ministry of Economic Development and Trade) face-to-face with local communities, media, NGOs and private sector representatives. These provide an open platform where plans may be discussed and feedback provided by people on various activities included in the DDPs. Public hearings are an integral part of district planning process in Tajikistan and are held twice a year. Though the public hearing process has potential to be developed into a structured social audit mechanism, key informant interviews indicated that while the local authorities consider it a success, it is generally perceived as a top-down process controlled by officials, often lecturing communities on the need to contribute resources for various activities, with limited participation of local people. In Afghanistan, there is no system of public hearing, but under the LITACA project, a few ad hoc hearings involving communities and local officials were held in Takhar province to obtain feedback on our-village-our-pride¹⁵ (OVOP) activities.
31. The LITACA project in Tajikistan provided all the eight districts in the project areas with IT equipment. While it is difficult to ascertain the contribution this made to the core objectives of LITACA project, given the limited resources district administrations operate with, all such assistance would have been well received. It is expected that the IT equipment may have helped establish internal business processes in the district administration. According to representatives of local authorities in visited districts, the IT equipment addressed their needs and contributed to "e-governance" efforts promoted by the Government of Tajikistan. Each

¹⁵ The phrase generally used to define this approach is 'one village one product'. However, in Afghanistan, this has been adapted slightly to 'our village our pride' (OVOP).

district *hukumat* (state authority office) has IT specialist responsible to ensure timely operations and maintenance (O&M).

32. Overall, although the capacity building component of the project was small – with actual expenditure amounting to US\$272,000 (about 2.5 per cent of the total) in both countries – it was critical for LITACA to engage with local authorities and elected officials (Afghanistan) as this enabled smooth implementation of the project and gave a sense of involvement and ownership to the local government. For this very reason, the discrete activities under this component were crucial for the project, despite the fact that in both countries, there are multiple initiatives and support from different agencies on building capacity for local governance.

3.1.2 Rehabilitation and development of rural infrastructure and services

33. The largest component of the project has been infrastructure. While the approach has been to largely rehabilitate existing infrastructure in Tajikistan which has seen crumbling of basic rural infrastructure over the years following collapse of the Soviet Union, in Afghanistan the emphasis has been on developing new infrastructure like rural roads, irrigation canals, flood protection walls. In total, the project has constructed or rehabilitated 77 rural infrastructure facilities (drinking water, sanitation, irrigation, health centres, schools, transport, cold storage, energy facilities), bringing direct benefits to over 300,000 people (49% women).¹⁶ A list of all infrastructure projects completed in both countries is provided in Annex 6 of this report.

Tajikistan

34. The evaluation team visited several health centres constructed with the support of the LITACA project at *jamoat* and village level. Villagers and staff interviewed expressed their satisfaction with the infrastructure which have now made primary healthcare accessible for villages. Previously, people had to travel long distances to visit district hospitals as the local health centres were in poor condition. All construction work was undertaken using the Government's standard design specifications for rural health centres. During planning and implementation of all infrastructure projects, a Quality Assurance (QA) tool for rehabilitation and construction of infrastructure projects was used which looked into various aspects of public consultation, social, economic and environmental impact, gender and disability issues.
35. The project helped rehabilitate 20 drinking water and irrigation systems in Tajikistan, involving repair and reinstallation of pumping station and distribution networks. All of these structures existed since the Soviet days, but lack of investment in regular maintenance had made them dysfunctional. LITACA project has worked with local authorities to get these functioning again. Interviews with communities and local authorities during this evaluation showed a strong sense of ownership of the drinking water schemes which now provide easier access to safe drinking water. Irrigation schemes rehabilitated have enabled bringing large areas of land under cultivation again, after years of lying fallow, as farmers had no source of irrigation.

¹⁶ Source: UNDP (undated). History of engagement, achievements, best practices and lessons learned during LITACA Phase I (2014 – 2017) and future on how to build on them during LITACA Phase II

36. Water Users' Associations (WUA) have been mobilised to maintain the water systems and collect user fees. Some of the completed infrastructures were handed over to the WUAs/user groups (Dehkan farms), and others to relevant departments in the districts. Interviews with WUA indicated that user fee collection is undertaken regularly, and it covers all operating cost, including the wages of one person who acts as a pump operator. While the user fees cover the operating cost of the pump, these do not factor in maintenance of the distribution network. Further, the revenue generated may not be enough to cover costs in case of any major breakdown, and neither the WUA or the departmental officials were clear where funds would come from, except to state vaguely that 'some resources will be found'.
37. Schools and medical facilities assets are transferred to the asset registers of relevant authorities immediately after construction, and this ensures that operational costs are factored in their departmental budgets. The site visits conducted by the evaluation team in Tajikistan indicated that the buildings (health centres and schools) and drinking water pump stations constructed and equipped under the project were being maintained, and the quality of structures seemed high. Schools built in remote areas may have contributed to increased enrollment of girls into upper grades (9-11), where girls represented almost 40% of students, which is higher than national average. Maintenance of structures which require regular periodic cleaning and maintenance - like irrigation/drainage canals, check dams and flood protection structures – were, however, problematic. In several sites visited by the team, leaking distribution channels, breaching canal walls, earthen flood protection structures filled up due to high sedimentation, were common sights. Though communities and local authorities claimed that these would be cleaned after the current crop season, the fact that these were not maintained since completion at least over two years ago indicated that regular maintenance was not taking place. Key informant interviews with government authorities at senior level and other stakeholders confirmed that maintenance is a problem; there is a lack of clarity on who is responsible for maintenance of flood infrastructure as the irrigation department does not have budget for this. An internal report prepared by UNDP notes that in future, "the issue of the local governments' capacities to maintain the infrastructure, should be fully considered and properly addressed".¹⁷
38. LITACA has constructed two micro-hydroelectric power plants (MHP) which were not yet operational at the time of the evaluation,¹⁸ and so the evaluators could not assess the outcome of these. UNDP staff stated that one of the units visited by the evaluation team is operated off-grid and has more than 15 households and a school connected to it, and there is a possibility of connecting additional households. LITACA promotes an integrated approach by connecting social facilities and local business to energy sources. The project has also provided trainings to operators and the district administration to operate and manage the plant. Observations made during a visit to another similar project of UNDP in a different project area – though this was meant for the purpose of demonstration - raised questions about sustainability and efficiency of MHPs, as in the visited location only a smaller number of households (up to 15) benefitted from the project (investment of more than \$100K for the station generating up to 30 KW electricity).

Afghanistan

39. The survey team visited 11 locations (Table 4 below) in three districts where infrastructure projects were implemented and interviewed communities during site visits. With few

¹⁷ UNDP (2017). LITACA Internal Review, 2017

¹⁸ Subsequently, the evaluation team was given to understand that these became operational in November-December.

exceptions, most of the infrastructures were new constructions and involved communities, CDCs and DDA in their planning and design. A common feature of most of the projects, except the micro-hydro electricity projects (MHP), was that these were labour intensive and employed local people during construction. FGDs conducted by the survey team in all these locations indicated that these were of immediate benefit to local people who also contributed 10 per cent of the cost, mostly through contribution of labour. Road construction and gravelling, in particular, was rated highly in all FGDs as these provided communities easier access to nearest towns and markets and also connected villages. So far, the newly created infrastructures were in good shape and the CDCs claim that they will take responsibility for maintenance as and when needed, though there is no evidence yet of communities being self-reliant in terms of maintenance costs. Several MRRD officials interviewed for the evaluation did express concern that although DDAs were meant to be responsible for maintenance, this was not happening in reality. It should however be noted that gravelled roads should last at least 5-7 years, unless there is severe flooding or damage caused by natural hazards.

Table 4: Infrastructure projects visited by survey team in Afghanistan

Activity	Cost (US\$)	Total beneficiaries
1. Road gravelling, Major Larkhabi village, Imam Saheb (IS) district	91,670	15 villages connected
2. Culvert in New Abad village, IS district	23,300	3500 HH
3. Culvert in Moder Said Shah village, IS district	26,000	20 villages connected
4. Protection wall, Julga village, Yang-e-Qala (YeQ) district	80,449	340 HH
5. Bridge in Kildish village, YeQ district	137,277	1,550 HH
6. Protection wall in Khowaja Hafiz village, YeQ district	78,350	2,550 HH
7. Gravelling of 4 culverts in Arbab Ali Khan Rahman village, Dasht-e-Qala (DeQ district)	21,491	600 HH
8. MHP in Bay Abe Gharbi and Safi Jangal villages, YeQ	196,839	450 HH
9. Canal protection wall in Haji Sultan village, DeQ district	141,360	6,200 HH
10. Canal excavation (deepening of existing canal) in Arbab Kol village, IS district	86,000	3,000 HH
11. Canal protection wall in Alty Khowaja village, DeQ district	163,699	6,200 HH

(Source: Data provided by LITACA project office, MRRD)

40. In the two MHPs (built through LITACA) which serve about 215-220 households each, there is a set customer tariff of Af10 per 'light unit'¹⁹ to be paid by each household which is collected by the operator. The revenue thus generated goes to pay for the operating cost and maintenance of the installation. So far the two MHPs appears to be working fine. However, according to key

¹⁹ Number of light bulbs or fittings connected.

informants, including from MRRD, Afghanistan's experience with MHPs in the past through the former national flagship programme, the National Area Based Development Programme (NABDP), has shown that sustainability remains an issue due to the fact that availability local skills and facilities for repair and maintenance in remote areas is scarce.

41. Though the survey team could not gather any data regarding gender perspectives on the infrastructure projects, an internal review²⁰ of LITACA undertaken early this year raised some concerns as the utility of such projects for women did not appear to be very high, and argued for greater emphasis on mainstreaming gender issues to ensure equality in access to and utilisation of infrastructure.

3.1.3 Enhanced job and income opportunities

Tajikistan - Business training and vocational training

42. In Tajikistan, the project has undertaken business training for entrepreneurs and vocational training in trades²¹ that are in high demand, for example, gardeners, electricians, plumbers, auto mechanics and sewing and tailoring for women, being the most popular trades. The vocational trainings were coordinated with the local departments of employment agency and organised at Modular Training Centres operated by the Ministry of Labor, Migration and Employment, and the outcomes were further tracked by Employment Agency at local level. Anecdotal evidence from key informant interviews and several FGDs with women in particular who were provided training suggest that the training courses were rated highly by people, and in some cases, this enabled them to establish own businesses, and in others, the enhanced skills gave people better chance of finding employment elsewhere. There is no system of tracking all the trainees, but LITACA has linked some of those trained with small grants programme under the project which provides grants of US\$8,000-10,000 to help set up and/or expand businesses. According to project reports, 14 small grants were supported on competitive basis.
43. LITACA has also used grants to promote the concept of Business Support Centres (BSC) which are existing public organisations (non-governmental organisations) supporting farmers, entrepreneurs and women with training and consultancy services. Three BSCs have been assisted to support women in sewing, tailoring, embroidery and baking which appear to have already made a difference, not only in terms of providing economic opportunities to young women, but also strengthened solidarity and interactions among women, leading to increased confidence and self-esteem. The evaluation team visited three tailoring/embroidery centres in Hamadoni and Panj districts, each of which now has about 15-25 women fully trained and working full-time, earning on an average 250-300 TJS every week (see Box 2).

²⁰ LITACA Internal Review Report, 2017. Pp14

²¹ Number of people trained were as follows: 500 unemployed people received vocational trainings for the skills like tailoring, gardening, electricians, electric welders, auto mechanics, bookkeeping, plumbing, etc; 185 entrepreneurs (including 55 women) on business planning and development and 176 women benefited in Afghanistan from implementation of women economic empowerment projects (handicrafts, livestock and dairy processing, beekeeping and tailoring).

Box 2: Women's business centres in Tajikistan, LITACA project

Bonuvoni, Panj district: A public organisation, Bonuvoni Pyanj, was provided a grant of US\$7,500 which contributed to construction of a building and purchase of furniture and equipment for a sewing workshop. The centre now has 15 women working full time, after having undergone training provided through the project. Several of the women in the group were victims of domestic violence and divorced, and some were single women with children with disabilities. While the income they earned (about TJS300 per week) has added to their family income and welfare, equally important for them has been the confidence and voice they have gained which have given them a new status within their households and community.

Ravonbaksh, Hamadoni district: Located in Faizobod village, this public organisation works primarily with people with disabilities. A grant of US\$10,00 provided to this organisation enabled it to set up a sewing and embroidery centre which currently employs about 25 women trained through LITACA's vocational training programme. As in the Panj district visited by the evaluation team, women here also earn about TJS250 every week. The centre caters to local market and gets bulk orders from schools and hospitals in the neighbourhood for uniforms.

Chashma, Shartuz: The public organisation identifies vulnerable groups and refer them to a micro-finance organisation to get loan and start own business, while providing them with ongoing technical support and coaching. Chasma's approach could provide useful learning for targeting the most vulnerable.

44. The PO "ATAC" (providing business advisory services) visited by the evaluation team was provided a small grant of US\$9,970 to provide training on agricultural production using greenhouse, bee-keeping, food conservation and confectionery. Most of its trainees were women selected from villages from Farkhor, Hamadoni and Shamsiddin Shohin districts. Several dehkan farm associations were also provided small grants through which tools, implements and agricultural machinery were made available to the associations.
45. Another public organisation owned by a farmer who is also a member of DDP WG in Jayhun district and has been a successful greenhouse farmer growing and exporting lemon was provided a grant of US\$7,400 to establish a second greenhouse to provide training to farmers in use greenhouse techniques. Interviews with the farmer showed no significant added value in terms of 'demonstration effect' for other farmers, or in terms of employment creation. Lemon farming is not a labour intensive work, and once the seedlings are established, watering and weeding do not require employing hired labour, especially for a small greenhouse this farmer was provided with.²² LITACA's beneficiary selection criteria includes targeting the poor, unemployed youth, women and people with disabilities. By and large, this was evident in its economic programmes for women's groups which have targeted vulnerable women. However, in most other employment generating interventions, a consistent emphasis on targeting the vulnerable was not evident. The project had made the selection of beneficiaries in consultation with local government and donor, based on a number of criteria²³ on a competitive basis. Key

²² Lemons grown in Jayhun district have a very unique taste and a number of farmers grow this fruit. According to UNDP, in future, there are plans to go for value chain development through processing of lemon chips, lemon jam, citrus acid, etc. which will increase the employment opportunities for local people.

²³ Proposals were selected based on criteria agreed such as:

- At least 3 years of practical experience in the implementation of similar activities;
- Availability of members representing SMEs, entrepreneurs, processors, suppliers, disabled people, women, youths and etc.;
- Availability of technical and administrative capacity;
- Proven knowledge and work experience linked with improvement agriculture and business development practices;
- Advanced experience in working with local authorities and the private sector representatives (at the local and national levels);
- Demonstrated capacity to implement such activities and experience in working with international agencies;
- Applications with a special focus on gender, women empowerment, youth empowerment, and empowerment of people with disabilities, job creation (employment);
- Demonstrated capacity and experience to deliver funds maximum US\$ 10,000 within 5 months.

informant interviews with staff indicated that since finding ‘successful businesses’ to replicate/expand their businesses and provide employment to other people has been an underlying approach for the economic development programme, there has been a strong assumption that benefits will trickle down to the poor and most vulnerable over time, if the ‘better off’ sections of people who are already successful can be supported to expand their businesses. The evaluation questions this trickle down approach. Though successful businesses can multiply success, not all successful businesses create employment, nor all start ups by poor and vulnerable fail. Development aid ought to follow a different trajectory than what a banker would.

Afghanistan – economic empowerment activities for women

46. Training was provided to 204 women in 3 districts in tailoring, embroidery and weaving of *gilimi* products (carpets made of sheep wool), bee-keeping and livestock rearing. Trained women were provided sewing machines and materials, and in some communities, tailoring training combined basic numeracy and literacy skills. The survey team interviewed 55 women who benefitted from the economic empowerment activities under the LITACA project; of these, about two-thirds (65 per cent) were from vulnerable households with no alternative sources of income or employment, and had limited household assets (Figure 2a and 2b below), and of the 55, only 42 per cent had been running some economic activity before the LITACA project and another 40 per cent was involved in no economic activity at all (Figure 3).

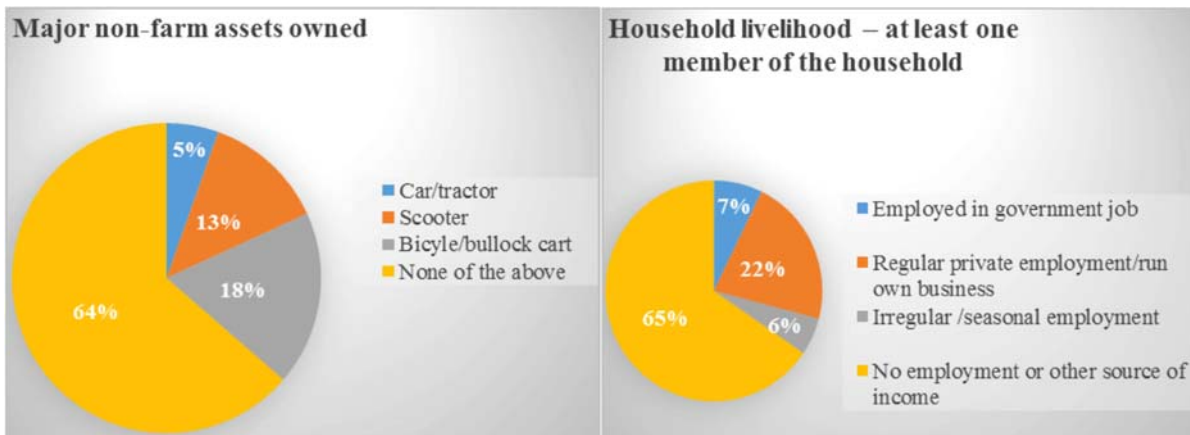


Figure 2 (a & b): Asset-Income profile of surveyed women, LITACA project, Afghanistan

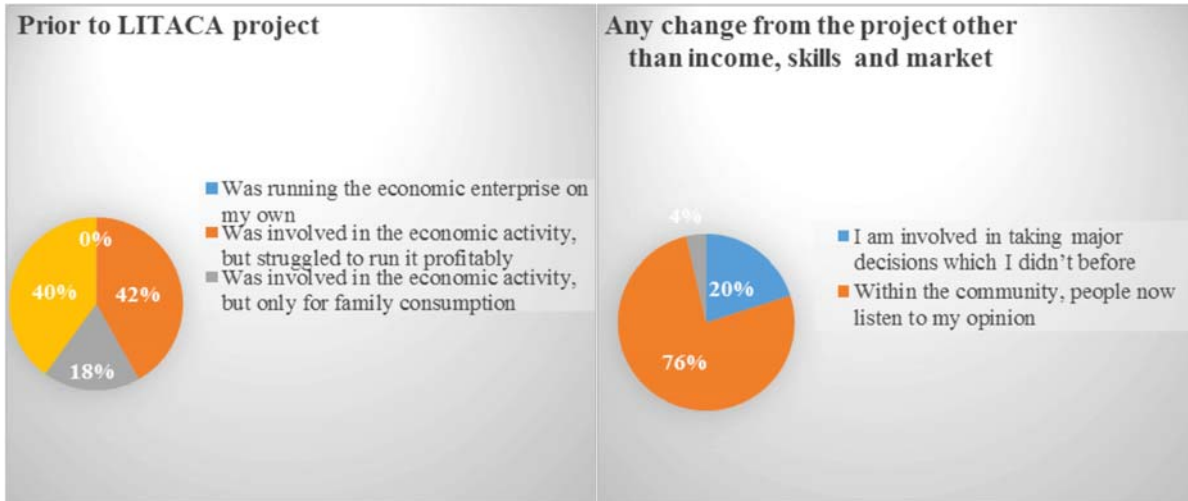


Figure 3: Previous experience of women participants **Figure 4: Decision making and voice**

47. Interviews with beneficiary women indicated that tailoring and *gilimi* weaving training have brought about significant changes in their economic well-being and social status. In the local market, there is good demand for these trades, and the training has given the women a good understanding of designs based on customer preferences. Asked about the most significant contribution of LITACA project, 38 per cent of participants claimed that learning new skills was the most significant and another 44 per cent rated their ability to access capital and finance from various sources was the most-transformative effect of the project. While two-thirds of the interviewees claimed that following participation in LITACA their income increased “somewhat”, a third of the participants noted that their income had increased “substantially,” the overwhelming change in their lives has been in their involvement in taking decisions and recognition within communities (Figure 4). Due to the confidence they gained from participation in various training and economic activities, some women even went to Kabul to participate in an exhibition of their products, something they would have never imagined doing it before.
48. Other major economic activities were fruit drying, processing of dairy products and provision of two goats (1 female and 1 kid) to 55 women three years ago. The mid-term review noted the failure of the goats project and observed that the breed that was imported from Pakistan was not appropriate for the area. It appears that some of the fears may have been unfounded; MRRD officials claimed during this evaluation that though a few (less than 10 per cent) died after the goats were distributed, large majority of the animals survived and now each beneficiary woman has about 15 goats which help them tide over family emergencies by selling goats as and when needed. It is reported that more women are now starting to buy and rear goats in the area. Interviews with other agencies working in the provinces where LITACA is being implemented confirmed that vocational training of women which helps them tap into local market to meet local demand for services like tailoring and products like utility items made with *gilimi*, and dairy products, for example, have good potential. Organisations like Aga Khan Foundation and GiZ working in the border areas have successfully combined their interventions on women’s economic empowerment with savings and credit groups. Senior MRRD officials in Kabul mentioned that the Ministry is launching a nationwide programme for women’s economic empowerment from 2018 drawing lessons from LITACA and other similar projects implemented by various organisations.

3.2 Cross-border interactions, dialogue and partnerships

3.2.1 Cross-border dialogue, exchange and learning

49. The project has facilitated exchange visits for government officials from both Afghanistan and Tajikistan to Kyrgyzstan to study one-village-one-product (OVOP) activities which have been undertaken on an extensive scale in that country, in cooperation with JICA. This appears to have triggered some interest in the concept of OVOP at senior government level in both countries, as was gathered by the evaluation team in interviews with Ministers and senior officials in both countries. Farmers and entrepreneurs from both countries were also sent on a study tour to Kyrgyzstan to see for themselves the functioning of OVOP.
50. There have been trade fairs organised in Tajikistan where farmers and traders from both countries' border areas participated. The project organised a Business-to-Business matchmaking event and trade fair with 30 business representatives from both countries which resulted in 16 agreements and business deals signed for a total amount of US\$600,000 in agro processing, dairy processing and cross-border trade.²⁴ Several local traders established direct business links across the border through participation in these fairs. The "Khatlon-2016" Investment Forum and trade fair in Tajikistan attracted 1,000 participants (including 150 business representatives, 250 government representatives and 600 customers) from Tajikistan and Afghanistan and other countries. A total of 12 agreements were signed between Tajik–Afghan entrepreneurs to establish, develop and extend joint businesses.²⁵
51. Key informant interviews suggest that while the potential for cross-border interactions and exchange are immense due to cultural and family ties, in reality these are constrained by political and security factors. Security along the Afghan-Tajik border remains a concern for Tajikistan, as much of the border is rugged terrain and used as a major route for drug smuggling from Afghanistan. There are five cross-border markets between the two countries to facilitate cross border interactions, including one recently constructed in Shamsiddin Shohin district (where LITACA contributed by making provisions for electricity) that was inaugurated recently. LITACA made a contribution to its construction. Every Saturday the governments on both sides are to allow visa-free travel during certain times of the day. But due to security constraints, some of the cross-border markets and bridges remain closed for significant lengths of time.

3.2.2 Cross-border economic cooperation

52. There is a great deal of overlap between the output 'enhanced job and economic opportunities' discussed in section 3.1.3 and cross-border economic cooperation. As discussed above, cross-border dimensions of various activities have been limited, and instead, these have rightly focused on appropriate economic development interventions across both sides of the border. The OVOP approach focuses on development of entrepreneurial and business skills, enhancing design and quality of products, marketing skills and increased access to markets for producers, and promotion of value-chain through backward linkages with locally available raw materials. In Tajikistan, products like pickled wild onions which are unique to the country, and in Afghanistan, *gilimi* weaving, *nashpati* pear (a variety of pear unique to the region) cultivation are being promoted, besides other traditional products like dairy produce, honey, dry fruits, handicraft items and shoe-making, which are also supported.

²⁴ UNDP (2017). LITACA Annual Report 2016

²⁵ UNDP (2017). LITACA Annual Report 2016

53. In Tajikistan, the evaluation team visited an OVOP workshop where local products like wild onions, gherkins, garlic, cucumber, mulberry and wild plums were being procured from local farmers and converted into pickles. The centre is located in the premises of a farmers' association which has existed since 2007, and has membership from neighbouring villages, covering 350 households (direct beneficiaries: 1,000 (520 female) people, indirect beneficiaries: 6,431 (3,053 female) people), and created 20 seasonal and 10 permanent jobs. Their target market is Dushanbe and other urban centres in the country. Key informant interviews, including with senior staff from one agency which has done significant work on livelihoods promotion in the region indicated that, except for pickled wild onions, market is flooded with similar products imported from China. Therefore, competition with the already established products will be a key challenge the OVOP group will have to face. UNDP local staff however are optimistic and claim that the group has pre-arranged agreements with wholesale customers in Dushanbe, Kulob and Khujand which should help the OVOP in its marketing.
54. On the Afghanistan side, the OVOP, which goes by an adapted name, 'our village our pride', concept has received greater traction. Besides training, market studies, value chain development, a key intervention by LITACA has been in establishing market infrastructures through setting up OVOP centres. One large OVOP complex has been established in Yange-e-Qala district which provides multi-purpose facilities like women's vocational training, cold storage facility, farmers' market, packaging house, coffee shop, shoe-making workshop, all in one central location. Land for this centre, as well as two other OVOP centres, were provided by the town municipalities; the DDAs were involved in oversight of the centres. Though opened only about 2-3 months ago, the evaluation findings through key informant interviews and FGDs with farmers/local traders revealed that these facilities have already been hugely successful in providing outlets to produces and farmers. Many more communities have been coming forward and demanding more such centres in their areas. By diversifying into a wide range of trades and economic activities, the project has ensured that bulk of its beneficiaries are from economically poorer sections of the area.
55. KII with other organisations working in the area on livelihoods and economic development indicated that OVOP centres fill a big gap in market access – many of the producers and farmers who were supported by Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) and GiZ over the years have also been using the OVOP centres for display and sale of their products. Interviews with store managers in two OVOP centres confirm that they are currently unable to cope with the market demand and interest in various products sold through the centres, a view also confirmed by AKF and GiZ key informants.
56. The evaluation found that the OVOP approach in Afghanistan underpins an integrated approach to value chain development, starting with feasibility and market studies for products, training and skills development, design and product development, accompanied by access to local markets. A diverse range of products, catering to local needs, using locally available materials and skills is at the heart of its success. LITACA has also provided a transportation van which goes around in the area to help farmers bring their produce to the market. The centres are registered with the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI) and staffed by a store manager. The stores charge a set administrative fee (5 per cent on *gilimi*/handicrafts products, 2 per cent on agricultural products) which they collect from the sellers; besides this, rent from shops in the OVOP centres also provide an income stream. This revenue more than offsets the operating cost of the centres. It is, however, unclear how these

centres would be managed once the MRRD hands these over to local authorities, though there is a good deal of engagement of the latter in functioning of the centres.

3.2.3 Cross-border disaster risk management

57. The project has implemented several structural measures for flood prevention on the Tajik side of the border. The evaluation team visited flood protection structures in Hamodini district which involved a series of two check dams, deepening of canals and drainage outlets. The problems of maintenance of these structures have already been discussed in section 3.1.2. Training on disaster risk management have also been organised for women. In Afghanistan, one small canal protection wall in Dast-e-Qala district has been constructed under this component. Besides the fact that the disaster risk management approach has been predominantly structural measures, there has been no cross-border initiative to develop a detailed area-based approach to disaster risk assessment which could help identify specific risks. The prevailing security situation may have contributed to restricted space for such cross-border initiative.

Section 4

Conclusions – Assessment Against Evaluation Criteria

4.1 Relevance

58. At a regional level, the LITACA project reflects the commitment made by international community to support the security and development of Afghanistan during the Transformation Decade (2015-2024) and “realize the vision of regional connectivity and economic integration, where Afghanistan can serve as a hub and a land-bridge at the center of a stable and prospering region”.²⁶ At country levels, the project aligns with the national priorities identified in both countries, namely:
- Citizen’s charter for Afghanistan, and
 - The National Development Strategy for the period to 2030 and the Mid-Term Development Programme.
59. In the current country programme document (CPD) for Tajikistan, under the sustainable and equitable growth component, regional collaboration with countries like Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan in the agro-processing sector in particular, and South-South cooperation in general, to promote trade and businesses has been prioritised. The centrality of LITACA’s purpose is reflected in the CPD which states,²⁷ *“Using its on-the-ground presence and established partnerships in the Khatlon and Soghd regions and Rasht Valley, UNDP will continue to support local policies and capacities for job creation and improved livelihoods, particularly for women and youth, through sustainable management of natural resources”*. LITACA interventions were also aligned the United National Development Assistance Framework for Tajikistan (UNDAF) Outcome 2 on equitable and sustainable economic growth through better employment opportunities and livelihoods, access to knowledge and information for entrepreneurs and farmers, as well as stable energy supply. The Afghanistan CPD,²⁸ under its outcome 3, prioritises sustainable livelihoods development, South-South and triangular cooperation with Tajikistan and other central Asian countries, and disaster risk reduction.
60. In terms of stated impact, the project aspires to contribute to increased security and stability in the cross-border areas of Afghanistan and Tajikistan through enhancing the living standards of communities. Although globally, links between improved living standards (livelihoods, services and infrastructure) and security and stability are tenuous, and there is no evidence that conflict in Afghanistan is in anyway causing instability and insecurity in Tajikistan,²⁹ the intended outcome (improved living standards) is highly relevant for the communities themselves, as well as for the purpose of greater regional integration that both countries intend

²⁶ Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan the Tokyo Declaration Partnership for Self-Reliance in Afghanistan from Transition to Transformation July 8, 2012

²⁷ UNDP (2015). Country programme document for Tajikistan, 2016-2020

²⁸ UNDP (2014). Country programme document for Afghanistan, 2015-2019

²⁹ Whatever minor incidents now occur relate more to drugs and crime as in any other part of the country, and can be dealt with by law and order machinery (border patrol and regular police).

to move towards. Further, the LITACA project complements various other initiatives towards border management as well as in promoting cross border cooperation between the two countries.

61. As discussed in section 3, in terms-of cross-border activities, the project has organised farmers' exchanges, business-to-business linkages and trade fairs. However, by and large, the cross-border dimension of the project has worked only in a limited way due to security constraints. The project appears to have had two distinct 'identities' in the two countries – key informant interviews with communities and external stakeholders indicated that in Tajikistan, it is known for its work on rural infrastructure, while in Afghanistan, its predominant role is seen in promoting OVOP. A joined-up approach and common identity would provide greater coherence and opportunities for learning from each other, which will be a key focus in the next phase of the project, according to UNDP.
62. It needs to be noted that given the scale of needs on both sides of the border, the funds available for this project are relatively small to meet the needs on a significant scale. LITACA was therefore seen as a pilot project in the first phase, generating lessons and models that could be scaled up in future programmes. To this extent, LITACA has proved its relevance, and lessons emerging from cross-border exchanges/trade-fairs and OVOP are certainly scalable in future.
63. The operating context in both countries have not undergone any substantial change during the period of LITACA implementation, except for some changes in Tajikistan in that a large number of migrant labourers who were working in Russia have come back to the region in the past 2-3 years, adding to the pressure of unemployment. Though built on previous work of UNDP in both countries, LITACA was a pilot project and its livelihoods and economic development interventions so far has not been on a scale that it can contribute to addressing this issue which will require a systematic area-wide strategy for skills development and job creation, involving substantial investment.

4.2 Effectiveness

64. As discussed in section 3, LITACA's main contribution in the lives of communities and vulnerable men and women have been in providing access to healthcare facilities, schools, drinking water, irrigation water, skills development in various occupational areas in border districts of Tajikistan, and improving basic rural infrastructure and development of livelihoods opportunities across the border in Afghanistan. In both countries, resources provided through LITACA enabled local authorities to engage with communities in implementation of some of the priority activities that met basic needs of people. Through the capacity building interventions, the training of district officials and private sector representatives and DDAs/DDP WG on district planning fostered greater understating between private sector, citizens groups, and local authorities. In Tajikistan, this was buttressed by public hearings which, despite their limitations, provide an opportunity for local authorities to listen to people's concerns and perspectives. Overall, the evaluation concludes that the training and capacity building support provided to local governance and administrative bodies have made a contribution to district developing planning and prioritisation process, although linking DDPs to budgetary resources remains a challenge in both countries.
65. The infrastructure projects implemented in both countries have begun to bring immediate

benefits to people, and there is high satisfaction among user groups, as FGDs and interviews on both sides of the border showed. Particularly in Tajikistan where infrastructure has received bulk of the project funding (over 57 per cent of total expenditure in the country), local communities and authorities rate LITACA high on this score. In Afghanistan, the project has demonstrated its potential to create jobs and income opportunities for vulnerable people through the women's economic empowerment project and OVOP initiative. Over 82 per cent OVOP-beneficiary respondents in Afghanistan gave a confident response that their income/well-being had increased "somewhat" after participating in the project for 3-4 months. OVOP centres have demonstrated their ripple effect in terms of providing markets and business networking opportunities for local farmers, entrepreneurs and producers in remote rural and peri-urban communities. In Tajikistan, the concept of business support centres and linking some of those trained in vocational training with small grants programme run by the project was innovative and enabled beneficiaries in successful start up and /or expansion of their enterprises/production centres, and provided additional employment. However, vulnerability-based targeting has not been given strong emphasis as the project has relied on selecting already-established and successful entrepreneurs, on the assumption that benefits will trickle down to the poor once the former expands business.

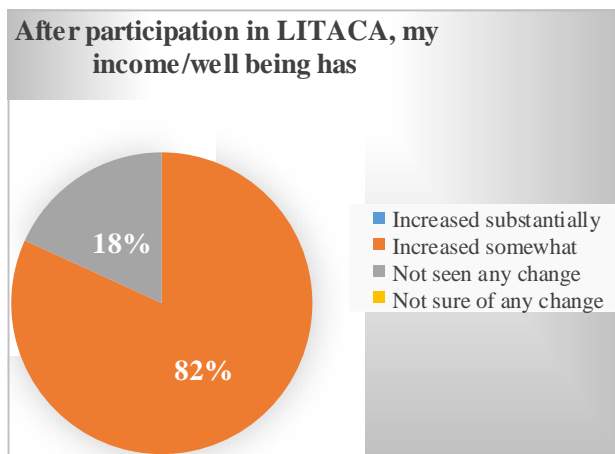


Figure 5: OVOP Beneficiary feedback on income

66. In relation to cross-border exchange and learning, there has been some progress, albeit limited, due to cross-border restrictions on movement. It needs to be noted that such restrictions will remain until there is a significant transformation in the security and political landscape within Afghanistan, and projects like LITACA (and other organisations like Aga Khan Foundation, GiZ) will need to continue working with communities along both sides of the border and promote exchanges, whenever opportunities arise.

4.3 Efficiency

67. The project had a budget of approximately US\$ 10.75 million which effectively increased to US\$ 11 million due to exchange rate gains. As shown in Table 3 earlier, by the end of the project, all funds are likely to be fully utilised. For a project covering two countries over a period of three years, the project has achieved more than what a pilot project would conceivably have done. This has been possible due to several factors, namely:
- Selecting activities which provided potential to demonstrate quick wins and benefitted communities directly
 - Implementation through, or with active involvement of, local authorities, accompanied by systematic monitoring by project staff
 - Seeking contribution from communities, both in kind and in the form of voluntary labour contribution (particularly for infrastructure work in Afghanistan)
 - Leveraging technical resources from UNDP country offices in Afghanistan and Tajikistan

and the oversight of MRRD.

68. The project provides good value for money (VfM) from the point of view of outcomes it has delivered for communities in the area of access to basic infrastructure in Tajikistan, livelihoods opportunities in Afghanistan, as well as contributing to cross-border exchanges and trade, albeit in a small way. The concept of VfM used now a days in appraisal of projects covers multiple attributes which include: results and effectiveness, cost considerations, and equity. On cost considerations, besides direct cost of activities, the overall management and overhead costs are an important parameter to be taken into account. In Tajikistan, the management and overhead costs (including general management services) comes to below 22 per cent of the total spend in the country which would be generally considered to be good in aid management, the standard benchmark being around 20 per cent. However, the corresponding figure for Afghanistan is about 41 per cent, ostensibly because of high operating costs due to insecure environment, bringing the aggregate average for the project to slightly above 27 per cent. The operating environment in Afghanistan does escalate costs, but this is something the project needs to keep track of, moving forward. On equity, as was discussed in section 3.1.3, Tajikistan could do better in its targeting for livelihoods and economic development programmes.
69. As mentioned earlier (section 2.3), the project steering committee is responsible for oversight of the project and meets twice a year. Senior government functionaries in both countries noted that this was a good model for partnership and provide opportunities for all stakeholders to have a say in project implementation. Particularly in Tajikistan, where the project is implemented by UNDP, the MEDT found the SC a good platform to provide its inputs, as well as ensure that at local level, there is full involvement of regional/district authorities.
70. The project reporting system is well organised and up-to-date data was available on physical progress and financial status for each activity, which is no mean feat considering that work is carried out in two different countries, involving two UNDP COs and MRRD in Afghanistan. The project submits half-yearly reports to UNDP which are then reviewed by the SC. The project does make use of opportunities for exchange and learning between the two country staff – during SC meetings when the staff come together, separate sessions are earmarked outside of the SC meeting when staff compare notes and share lessons from each country.

4.4 Sustainability

71. There is strong ownership of some of the activities by the Government which augur well for sustainability of these activities. The school buildings and health centres which have been transferred to concerned government departments' asset registers are likely to now be included in their revenue budget for upkeep and maintenance. Some of the irrigation and water infrastructure require regular maintenance, and this remains a challenge to their sustainability. Individual business units and enterprises supported through the project are already showing signs of viability, though these need more support to make these stronger. The OVOP centres have demonstrated their potential benefits, though these need more handholding to get them to a stage where either the local authorities or the producers' groups can start managing these without any external support. However, the fact that the Government of Afghanistan is now scaling up the women's economic empowerment programme and the OVOP approach across the country shows the potential sustainability of lessons that emerged from LITACA project. It is understood that within UNDP as well, the OVOP concept is now being taken forward in all

livelihoods and economic development programme in Afghanistan.

72. Several good practices in the project have potential for dissemination and replication in other development programmes. The Quality Assurance tool,³⁰ developed during implementation of LITACA infrastructure projects (which has now been adopted by UNDP Tajikistan for use in planning of all infrastructure projects across the country), assesses the feasibility of a project on multiple dimensions, including a rapid assessment of environmental and social impact. The public hearing process needs systematic documentation and its lessons, likewise, could be applied elsewhere. In this regard, more will need to be done to document, publicise and advocate for these practices. The current approach to disseminating the project's progress is more meant for general communication and public relations process, and not appropriately tailored to disseminate learning or undertake advocacy.

³⁰ This QA tool refers to the pre-tender screening for infrastructure projects (different from UNDP QA for Social and Environmental Screening Procedure).

Section 5

Key Conclusions, Lessons and Recommendations

5.1 Overall conclusion

73. The LITACA project has developed models for working with local authorities and communities in improving the living standards of bordering communities, through engaging in cross-border trade, exchange and learning between the cross-border regions of Afghanistan and Tajikistan. In a small way, with its limited budget, the project has promoted cross-border cooperation between the two countries, working in tandem with other similar initiatives for regional cooperation prioritised by the two governments. Having demonstrated the potential of the LITACA approach through a limited pilot project, the need now is to scale up the work, in cooperation with governments, development partners and local communities.

5.2 Detailed conclusions

Relevance

74. The project's activities have demonstrated their relevance to the needs of communities in the border regions of Afghanistan and Tajikistan, and met some of the critical needs of bordering communities for basic services and livelihoods. LITACA's successful models for livelihoods and economic development interventions could be leveraged for systematic area-wide strategy for skills development and job creation, involving substantial investment. The cross-border dimension of the project has worked only in a limited way due to security constraints which restrict free movement and exchange. Despite this, it should be possible to make greater use of opportunities for joint planning, training and implementation of activities, and learning from each other.

Effectiveness

75. The evaluation concludes that the training and capacity building support provided to local governance and administrative bodies have made a contribution to district developing planning and prioritisation process, although linking district development plans to budgetary resources remains a challenge in both countries. In Tajikistan, where infrastructure development received bulk of the project funding, the activities have begun to bring immediate benefits to people. The concept of business support centres and linking some of those trained in vocational training with small grants programme run by the project was innovative and enabled the beneficiaries in successful start up and /or expansion of their production centres. However, vulnerability-based targeting could have been given a much stronger emphasis in Tajikistan for economic development programmes. In Afghanistan, the project has demonstrated its potential to create jobs and income opportunities for vulnerable people through the women's economic empowerment project and OVOP initiative by providing markets and networking opportunities for local farmers, entrepreneurs and producers in remote rural and peri-urban communities.

Efficiency

76. The project provides good value for money (VfM) from the point of view of outcomes it has delivered for communities in basic services, livelihoods opportunities, as well as contributing to

cross-border exchanges and trade, albeit in a small way. The project steering committee involving senior officials from the two countries' governments was a good model for partnership and provide opportunities for all stakeholders to have a say in project implementation. The project reporting system is well organised and up-to-date data was available on physical progress and financial status for each activity, which is no mean feat considering that work is carried out in two different countries, involving two UNDP COs and MRRD in Afghanistan.

Sustainability

77. There is strong ownership of some of the activities by the governments and these are therefore likely to be sustained. However, for some of the assets that require regular maintenance, sustainability remains a challenge. The Government of Afghanistan is now scaling up the women's economic empowerment programme and the OVOP approach across the country. It is understood that within UNDP as well, the OVOP concept is now being taken forward in all livelihoods and economic development programme in Afghanistan. Several good practices in the project have potential for dissemination and replication in other development programmes. The Quality Assurance tool UNDP Tajikistan has developed for use during planning of all infrastructure projects assesses the feasibility of a project on multiple dimensions, including a rapid assessment of environmental and social impact. The public hearing process needs systematic documentation and its lessons, likewise, could be applied elsewhere. In this regard, more will need to be done to document, publicise and advocate for these practices. The current approach to disseminating the project's progress is more meant for general communication and public relations process, and not appropriately tailored to disseminate learning or undertake advocacy.

5.3 Lessons and good practices

78. Several lessons and good practices were noted in the project that can be replicated and scaled up in other development programmes:

- ❖ Systematic implementation of the public hearings initiative can strengthen local governance by putting in place effective mechanism for demonstrating accountability to people;
- ❖ The multi-attribute quality assurance tool used in Tajikistan for feasibility/planning studies for small-scale local infrastructure projects can improve local planning at district and sub-district levels;
- ❖ The OVOP approach building on provision of local market infrastructure for local produce that meet local needs, accompanied by relevant business and technical skills for the producers/artisans, have good potential for livelihoods programming in rural and remote areas of Afghanistan and Tajikistan where market penetration by global and national brands may be weak.

5.4 Recommendations

Across both countries

- R1: Work closely with other partners and international NGOs active in the border region and explore opportunities for more cross-border exchanges and people-to-people contact and trade, security constraints notwithstanding.
- R2: Explore possibilities of scaling up the project beyond the current level, in partnership with development partners and governments of the two countries.

R3: Work with local authorities and communities to ensure maintenance and care of the public assets that require regular/periodic maintenance.

Tajikistan

R4: Undertake systematic documentation of the public hearing process and use appropriate publications and media to disseminate and advocate for these practices to be adopted in districts.

R5: Review targeting criteria for selection of beneficiaries for livelihoods programmes, ensuring that equity considerations remain at the forefront of all external assistance.

R6: Undertake a review of the OVOP workshop at the earliest opportunity to gather evidence based on market response, and undertake course correction, if necessary.

Afghanistan

R7: Based on the Tajikistan model, introduce public hearings through engagement with DDA and local authorities in the project area.

R8: Document the process of OVOP development and experiences from it to systematise learning and develop a dissemination and advocacy strategy to replicate the model in all development interventions aimed at rural livelihoods and economic development in the country.

**United Nations Development Programme
Afghanistan, November 2017**

FINAL EVALUATION OF LITACA PROJECT