**Support to Territorial and Administrative Reform Project – STAR2**

**Evaluation Report**

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**June, 2019**

# **Disclaimer**

This report was prepared by two external national evaluation experts, namely Dr. Diana Papleka and Dr. Blerjana Bino. The content, analysis and recommendations of this report, do not reflect necessarily the views of UNDP, but only those of the authors.

# **Acknowledgments**

The evaluation experts wish to thank STAR2 Project team, as well as UNDP’s program staff for all support provided throughout the evaluation process, including coordination and arrangement of meetings. The evaluators are also grateful to all interviewed stakeholders, including development partners, municipalities of Shkodër, Lezhë, Pogradec, Librazhd, Cërrik, Belsh, Finiq and Konispol, central and local institution representatives as well as project beneficiaries for their time and contributions to this external evaluation.

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# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## *Evaluation background*

UNDP in Albania hired two external experts to evaluate STAR2 Project’s implementation process, short-term project results, and project impact. The process aimed at identification of challenges and constraints, lessons learned, and recommendations for further follow-up interventions.

## *Project Outline*

The project’s development objective is to ensure functionality of LG, so that local administrative and service delivery outcomes are effective, qualitative, participatory, and inclusive, and correspond to evolving decentralized competencies and responsibilities. STAR2 has three main objectives:

1. To strengthen the institutional and administrative capacities of local administrations.
2. To increase the local service delivery efficiency, quality, coverage, accessibility and inclusiveness for men and women.
3. To enhance local democracy through fostering citizen-oriented governance and participatory decision making, leveraging the roles of women as actors of change.

## *Evaluation Objectives*

The key objectives of the evaluation are:

1. To measure to what extent the STAR2 project has implemented the activities, delivered outputs, attained outcomes, and specifically achieved development results;
2. To generate substantive evidence-based knowledge by identifying best practices and lessons learned, and to make recommendations for improved future assistance in the relevant area.

## *Evaluation Methodology*

The evaluation methodology adopts a qualitative and participatory approach as per the following sequences of key phases:

1. Preparation phase (April 25th – April 29th)- involving the desk review and relevant document analysis of 18 STAR2 project-related documents, reports, national policies and strategies, as well as international reports on local governance in Albania.
2. Field phase (May 2nd – May 10th)- involving six field visits and corresponding observations to the municipalities of Shkodër, Lezhë, Pogradec, Librazhd, Cërrik, Belsh, Finiq and Konispol.
3. Interviewing phase (April 30th – May 20th) - involving 67 interviews with STAR2 project and UNDP staff, project stakeholders and partners, subcontractors, direct beneficiaries at municipal level, and citizens.
4. Reporting phase (May 11th – May 27th) - with the submission of draft and final evaluation report.

## *Overview of Key Findings*

### Relevance

The entire scope of the STAR2 project is relevant and in line with the priorities of Central and Local Government (LG). Its objectives are very well aligned with the National Crosscutting Strategy for Decentralization and Local Governance 2014-2020, and the Government of Albania’s reforms pertaining to public administration, good governance and democracy at the local level, as well as with the fundamental requirements for European integration.

STAR2 has been developed after a process of consultation, collaboration and agreement between the Minister of State for Local Issues, LGUs, project development partners representing the European Union, development cooperation offices of Italy, Sweden, Switzerland, and USAID, and UNDP Albania as the donor-pooled fund manager and project implementer. The Minister of Interior is the government counterpart following the re-organization of government structures in 2017.

STAR2 has designed and employed a multidimensional, well-integrated methodology to respond to the substantial needs of the LG in the areas of institutional development and capacity building, service delivery, and good governance. Project interventions, particularly training programs, were designed and implemented taking in consideration gender equality to some extent.

STAR2 used relevant methods (on the job training, peer to peer exchange, identification, sharing and replication of best practices, piloting and reorganizing of services, setting standards and systems) and activities to address the needs and sustain results, that were identified through contextual and needs assessment processes and a series of consultations with the project stakeholders, partners and beneficiaries.

The multidimensional project intervention has positively influenced the LG transformation. Some of the key notable results are: capacity building on Code of Administrative Procedures, improvement of tax collection and enforcement, assets and land management, standardization of local archives, development of e-government at local level (OSSIS), public engagement and consultation, the publication of municipal decisions, compliance with HAS recommendations, as well as transparency improvement in local policy making and adoption of measures against corruption.

Although the relative prolonged inception phase (12 months) caused considerable delays in starting the implementation of project activities, STAR2’s flexible, participatory and all-inclusive approach was useful, as it allowed for adapting the Project design to changing political and local contexts and concrete needs of the LGUs. Moreover, the inception phase served very well to foster synergies and linkages with other new programs and projects in this area.

### Effectiveness

STAR2 project has been effective in delivering quantitative results. More importantly, the Project has delivered valuable qualitative results. Project feasibility was carefully assessed by the project team through assessing and clearly defining LG needs, effectively analyzing the intervention methods, and employing an integrated course of actions. The coherence of STAR2 purpose – outcome – output interdependence has created a foundation for successful implementation.

Produced outputs are of high quality and provide a solid foundation for accomplishing the Project outcomes. Overall, the beneficiaries are very satisfied with the Project outputs and activities and state their interest and need for further support and assistance.

At the time of this report, STAR2 project enters into its final phase, with intensive efforts to complete all activities and provide timely and quality outputs. The results obtained during the Project implementation period meet the planned expectations and demonstrate potential for knock-on effects in the work of all 61 Albanian municipalities. However, not all activities have been completed on time and key activities are still in progress, such as the roll out and consolidation of OSS model, and the development of a Benchmark System on LG administrative and public services and reorganization of public services.

### Efficiency

STAR2 resources have been utilized efficiently. Overall, most of the STAR2 activities have been delivered as per the Project plan. Their implementation, in several instances, exceed the expected results, particularly in the areas of new behaviors and created synergies. The integration of lessons learned from previous interventions and the consultation process has led to continuous improvement of implementation modalities and shaped efficient coordination mechanisms.

The Project was efficient in producing the planned results under the planned budget and made strong efforts to respect the time limits; however, some of the interventions took longer than initially planned. Overall, STAR2 has involved sufficient resource mobilization.

Merging several major project activities has contributed to increased efficiency, mostly related to time efficiency, reducing cost, and use of human resources (joint procurement and implementation of assessing challenges for service delivery and piloting Service Re-organization under Component 2, as well as increase LG Public Ethics & Integrity and pilot Municipal Integrity Plan under Component 3 serves as an example of project efficiency).

STAR2 management and coordinative mechanisms allowed for successful implementation of project activities. The role of the Project team was integral for coordinating sub-contractors and external expertise, assuring the quality of activities and outputs, as well as constantly evaluating the achieved results and responding to LGUs needs and constraints. In addition, the Steering Committee was crucial to ensure that the Project was producing sustainable results, achieving complementarity with other interventions and facilitating knowledge-sharing. Periodic progress reports were timely and appropriate tools for ongoing monitoring of project activities and evaluation of results.

Project efficiency was also positively affected by the involvement of a field presence coordinator and 12 regional coordinators, who in close collaboration with the Tirana-based project staff, have ensured efficient project monitoring and coordination by constantly assessing project assumptions and risk mitigation at the local level.

Finally, the Project has managed to deliver additional effects besides those initially planned. As such, STAR2 has been successful in supporting the Ministry of Interior and ASLG, as well as other central government institutions, in advancing the decentralization process in Albania and improving good governance practices at local level. These additional effects will also have a lasting impact on the socio-economic development of the country and improvement of citizens' standard of living.

### Sustainability

STAR2 activities have paved the way for sustainable results for project beneficiaries through a multidimensional investment in many areas related to institutional strengthening and capacity building of local staff, creation and improvement of standards and systems, providing users with a high quality of manuals and toolkits, and creating the opportunity for the Project to keep producing effects after its completion. The strengthening of LG communication and coordination with central and parliamentary institutions will contribute toward sustaining the project results.

An important component of project sustainability is based on other benefits that Project has produced regarding the change in local administration mentalities toward new methods of service provision, the incorporation of new technology, increase of transparency, responsiveness, accountability and ethical behavior. The synergy created with project partners and stakeholders is another significant element of project sustainability.

Another important component of project sustainability relates to project effects and impact on local policy making such as the creation and implementation of systems on administrative procedures, development of standards in public and administrative services, creation of platforms and systems for citizen consultation, transparency and integrity.

The continuation of on-the-job assistance to consolidate interventions and sustain the created systems and standards, the transfer of project tools and systems' ownership in both levels (in central level, as administrator and monitor and in local one as user and beneficiary) combined with monitoring the project assumptions and mitigating the potential risks, will contribute to ensuring project sustainability.

The role of MB and ASLG as key partners and beneficiaries in endorsing the final products of the project and follow up on the achieved results is essential for the project sustainability.

### Impact

The STAR2 multi-stakeholder and multi-dimensional approach has demonstrated its capacity to partner with a wide range of actors in order to multiply its response to the major needs of LG.

Most importantly, the STAR2 project has produced transformative changes in LG working cultures.The Project has produced an effective change of mentality for municipal staff members. By actively participating in project activities, they have not only learned new skills and improved their understanding of their roles and responsibilities, but also have started to change the working practices and perceptions on service delivery to citizens, integrity and transparency, and also approach to ethics and the need for standards. Through participation in needs assessments, consultation processes and more importantly in products development processes, they have developed the ownership over project results, which will contribute to long term positive change.

## *Lessons learned and best practices*

In general, STAR2 is considered to be a very broad and ambitious project, affecting many aspects of LG. Due to its breadth, the depth of some interventions has been limited, and the areas addressed deserve more attention and future follow up. There are numerous lessons to be learned as well as best practices from the STAR2 project life cycle, as summarized below.

* 1. Lessons Learned Summary
* Adoption of a flexible approach and the ability of the Project to respond to changes in political and LG contexts have proven essential for successful implementation of project activities, despite identified risks.
* The Project has invested in the most important aspects of local governance by creating standards and systems, however in order to support and sustain their overall execution and functionality this has to be followed with on-job assistance and continuous monitoring.
* The Project has worked in the area of promotion. Particular recent efforts are dedicated to visibility and awareness raising on key project results as those related to OSS, transparency and accountability and archiving. However, there is a need for more efforts to boost project visibility.
* Project has tried to incorporate a gender perspective across all activities such as training, assessments and instruments produced. There is more to be done to make sure that project activities are contributing to women’s empowerment. Gender perspective should be considered in the following dimensions: representation and involvement within the administration, incorporation of women and vulnerable groups in LG service delivery and standards, public engagement and participation, as well as in data gatherings and statistics.
* Even though the Project has tailored the training to fit the needs of the focused structures, there is a need for an all-inclusive and integrated training approach to ensure the inclusion of other related structures’ staff, i.e. there is a need for involving staff from other related directories to receive the same training as the OSS dedicated staff, in order to increase system’s efficiency. Same applies for trainings on CAP and the SOP which involves all LG administration.
* Even though STAR2 has delivered quality outputs, the full execution and functioning of standards and systems is dependent on the willingness, vision, and leadership of mayors and senior management at LGUs.
* Even though STAR2 has provided quality trainings to LGUs staff, the sustainability of human resources capacity building can also be achieved through collaboration with ASPA and DoPA and related public institutions in the relevant area.
* Even though the Mayors and the staff of 61 municipalities has well received and appreciated the STAR2’s technical assistance, it is very important to manage their expectations by continuing to communicate clearly the project contribution, expected results and LG roles in different stages of the project. The regional coordinators and especially the national coordinator will continue to play an important role to ensure effective communication with the Mayors and to foster their understanding.
  1. Best Practices Summary

General

* *Multidimensionality of intervention*: The Project intervention was multidimensional and has targeted the most important, interrelated components of local governance.
* *Standardization and systematization*: The Project has created standards and systems applicable to all municipalities, despite their category, by considering legal requirements and defining their practical implementation.
* *Optimization of success factors*: The Project had optimized success factors and the sustainability of interventions by piloting the new initiatives while assessing and considering risk effects.
* *Coverage*: The Project has managed to cover the entire country, thereby maximizing its scope.
* *Selection of approaches and methods*: On the job training, “How to….” approach to learning, peer to peer exchange, development of standardized toolkits, and manuals of users and service standards are valued by beneficiaries.
* *Establishment/strengthening of communication with state institutions:* The project has managed to strengthencommunication and coordination between LG and central/state institutions. LG standards are defined legally. They require a local-central interaction as some of the functions are oversighted by the state institutions and in several cases administered by them.
* *Representation:* The involvement of both LG associations proved to contribute to the increased participation from the part of Mayors.

Specific

* The *One Stop Shop* model for LG administrative services- defined and scaled nationwide - is contributing to essential improvement of quality, efficiency, coverage and inclusiveness of administrative service delivery.
* A *National Benchmarking* System for LG, for key selected administrative/public services (still under assessment phase) will pave a way toward building a platform based on an integrated set of key performance indicators, which will allow the advancement and further standardization of services.
* Development of the *Standard Operating Procedures for LG functions,* in compliance with the Code of Administrative Procedures, has created a referral mechanism for LG administration, helpful and user-friendly at the same time.
* *Reorganization of Services* (under implementation) will support target municipalities for a complete takeover of newly delegated functions. The customized approach and intervention will be based on local and international best practices.
* *Local Government Mapping* initiative has provided an important baseline on four key “Good Governance” dimensions of LG in Albania, informing local decision making, as well as central government policy and decision making of the project during its inception phases. It has created a base for STAR2 to exploit synergies with other projects working in the area of Local Governance.
* *A Model of Transparency Programme* for Local Government is endorsed by the Commissioner on the Right to Information as a mandatory standard to be followed from all municipalities. Together with a set of actions, such as the online publication of Municipal Council Decisions of 33 municipalities, the design of a standard municipal webpage for 13 municipalities, and the increased awareness and knowledge on public consultation and engagement are contributing to improved transparency and accountability and participation at local level.
* *Strengthened cooperation* between LG and GDA/RDA, HSA, Commissioner for the Right to Information, ASPA, NAIS, coordinated with and through ASLG remains a step forward toward successful cooperation.

## *Recommendations*

1. In general, the Project needs to plan a better-focused final phase in order to ensure the sustainability of its main interventions.
2. The Project should intensify efforts to strengthen capacities of central level institutions in charge of LG, (ASLG) to take the ownership of LG national systems and standards.
3. The Project needs to further incorporate gender perspective in all project interventions in order to contribute to women’s empowerment.
4. The Project needs to continue to enhance collaboration with key stakeholders and partners and to keep coordination and consultation with public institutions to ensure sustainability by applying integrated approaches: ASPA, DoPA, ADISA and others affecting LG.
5. The Project needs to continue investing in institutional development and capacity building of human resources at LG.
6. The Project needs to continue consolidating “One Stop Shop” model of service provision in all municipalities, including the administrative units.
7. The Project needs to continue finalize and consolidate the “Benchmarking system” initiative.
8. The Project needs to continue building capacities to strengthen local democracy including transparency and openness, public engagement and consultation in local decision-making and most importantly the expansion of anti-corruption instruments such as integrity plans and codes of conducts.

**I. PROJECT OUTLINE**

## *1.1 Project Context*

Due to a history of centrally controlled governance and non-participatory decision-making processes, the decentralization process in Albania and the establishment of LG units (LGUs) have undergone several major reforms in the 27 years since the country changed from a closed to an open and democratic society. The most recent LG reform that took place in 2014 – 2015 reorganized the division of the country into 61 Municipalities (a reduction from 373). The guiding framework of this transformation is the National Crosscutting Strategy for Decentralization and Local Governance 2014-2020, of which implementation is coming to its final stage. The essence of the new Territorial and Administrative Reform and decentralization reform consisted of the empowerment of Local Government Units (LGUs) and aimed to improve the quality of public services for the population in alignment with the subsequent ratification of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and the approval of the decentralization strategy.

Among the key milestones so far are (i) Mid Term Review of the Decentralization Strategy paving the way to a decision on future prioritization for this cross-cutting reform; (ii) The reforming of the Agency for Support to LG, which is set to be in charge of monitoring institutionally the implementation of the decentralization strategy, improving coordination and evaluate the performance of local administrations and the effective implementation of the legal framework, among others; and (iii) the further revival of the Consultative Council between the Central Government and the local ones (STAR2 Progress Report, 2019).

While progress is made in some key areas, the LG functions and responsibilities are still evolving. Overall, the main challenges of LG are: capacity to carry out their expanded responsibilities; full implementation of the Law on Civil Servants at the local level; implementation of the institutional framework for public participation in local decision-making, particularly in the budgeting process; management of local finances; implementation of the revised property tax law; assets transfer to LG; an overall advancement of the decentralization process for further empowering LGUs.

Technical assistance for LG and governance is at high levels. The key development partners in Albania have been and are still working in this area. However, besides support and opportunities, challenges remain in improving the overall functionalities, service provision, democracy and good governance at the local level. The transformation brought by the Territorial and Administrative Reform is positive, however, to sustain and maximize its effects, there is still need for more technical assistance and support. Moreover, the implementation of the National Crosscutting Strategy for Decentralization and Local Governance 2014-2020 is interrelated with the Crosscutting Public Administration Reform Strategy (2015-2020) and the Inter-sectoral Strategy against Corruption 2015-2020. These major reforms constitute key pillars of the European integration process. Thus, LGUs are in need of continuous and further support to adequately address the challenges and opportunities laying ahead.

## *1.2 Project Scope*

STAR2 Project aimed at developing local capacities both administratively and institutionally in order to ensure the effective functionality, recognized by men and women, of the newly established LG, so that local administrative and service delivery outcomes are effective, qualitative, participatory, and inclusive, and correspond to evolving decentralized competencies and responsibilities.

STAR2 is a large, multidimensional and highly ambitious project that aims to address the essential needs and priorities of LG in all 61 municipalities, and to bring about substantial and systematic changes. The project is promoting new technologies and e-services to make the LG more efficient, transparent and accessible to the public. It encompasses all Albanian municipalities by engaging many layers of LG administrations. It builds on a previous wider donor support of the territorial reform project (STAR1). The project is in line with national priorities and complementary with the assistance of various development partners who work to support LG and has built activities upon the best practices and models developed previously by UNDP, STAR1 and other projects in the same field.

The project is supported by the European Union (EU), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Swedish International Development and Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and UNDP Albania – which was also the pooled-fund manager and project implementer - under the Government leadership and ownership through the Ministry of Interior.

## *1.3 Project Objectives and Results*

The overall project objective is to ensure functionality, recognized by men and women, of the newly established LG, so that local administrative and service delivery outcomes are effective, qualitative, participatory, and inclusive, and correspond to evolving decentralized competencies and responsibilities.

This is achieved through the following specific objectives (outcomes):

1. Strengthened institutional and administrative capacities of LGUs
2. Increased local service delivery efficiency, quality, coverage, accessibility and inclusiveness for men and women
3. Enhanced local democracy through fostering citizen-oriented governance and participatory decision-making, leveraging the roles of women as actors of change.

The main project results are:

* Enhanced human resource and administrative management capacities leading to a more professional public administration at local level.
* Management skills of local senior managers improved.
* Local public financial and fiscal management capacities enhanced.
* Delivery of services and their management (including new competencies) improved.
* A national benchmarking system for key selected administrative/public services established.
* A one-stop-shop model is defined and scaled up nationwide.
* A standardized system of LG archives adopted nationwide.
* Status of local governance mapped in all LGUs.
* Strengthened local democracy through enhanced participation, transparency, accountability, ethics and integrity in LG.

## *1.4 Project Beneficiaries*

The project directly targets 61 municipalities, their elected and administrative representatives, local civil society, businesses, and other community representatives exposed to or participating in different activities of STAR2. Furthermore, Minister of State for Local Issues (MSLI) / Ministry of Interior (MOI) and LGUs (staff, members of municipality councils and mayors) are not only benefiting primarily by STAR2, but also partnering and collaborating very closely with the program. The ultimate beneficiaries are the citizens of Albania that are better served by LG and benefit from improved local good governance.

## *1.5 Project Partners*

* Albanian Municipalities
* Association for Local Autonomy & Association of Albanian Municipalities
* Other regional and local development stakeholders
* Central Government institutions and agencies such as:
* Relevant line ministries of Finance, Agriculture, Environment, etc.,
* ADISA,
* Agency for Support of Local Self-Government (ASLG) – former AITR,
* Department of Public Administration (DoPA) / Albanian School of Public Administration (ASPA), National Agency for Information Society,
* INSTAT,
* General Directorate of Archives,
* Supreme State Audit,
* Commissioner for the Right to Information and Protection of Personal Data,
* Various Civil Society Organizations, etc.

# **EVALUATION APPROACH & METHODOLOGY**

## *2.1 Objectives of the Evaluation*

UNDP in Albania hired two external experts to evaluate STAR2 Project’s implementation process, its immediate results and impact from the official signing of the Project Document between the Government of Albania and UNDP in July 2016 to April 2019. The process aimed at identifying the challenges and constraints, best practices, lessons learned, and recommendations, which will serve UNDP as key insights for the remaining period of project implementation and for potential follow-up interventions.

More specifically, the evaluation focuses on the following objectives:

1. Measure to what extent STAR2 Project has implemented the activities, delivered outputs and attained outcomes and specifically achieved development results;
2. Generate substantive evidence-based knowledge, by identifying best practices and lessons learned and make recommendations for improved future assistance in the relevant area.

The findings of the evaluation process will be presented in this report according to the following four steps:

Figure 1: STAR2 Evaluation Process

## *2.2 Evaluation Criteria*

An Evaluation Matrix with questions regarding the main elements of the Evaluation process (Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Sustainability and Impact) is presented below. The report structure reflects the Evaluation Matrix.

Table 1: Evaluation Matrix

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Definitions of Key Evaluation Criteria** | | |
| **Evaluation Criteria** | **Description** | **Questions posed to interviewees** |
| **Relevance** | The degree to which the project takes into account the local context and development problems; the extent to which the objectives of the project are consistent with beneficiary requirements; to what extent the approach is coherent with the Country's policies; the extent to which the project design is logical and coherent; the link between activities and expected results, and between results and objectives. | 1. What were the issues at local level that project was planning to address? 2. To what extent has STAR2 (its purpose and its objectives) been consistent with, and supportive of the priorities of the LG? 3. What are main strategies / methods of STAR2 to address them? 4. How do project activities contribute to address the main problems of LG? 5. What were main challenges to the project implementation? 6. What was synergy created with other actors in the area of LG? |
| **Effectiveness** | The extent to which the project's objectives have been achieved, compared to the overall project purpose; if the planning activities are coherent with the overall objectives and project purpose; the analysis of principal factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives. | 1. How you would describe the project feasibility? 2. Are the project activities coherent with the overall objectives and project purpose? 3. Did the outputs lead to the expected outcomes? 4. To what extent outputs have been produced as expected? 5. To what extent have STAR2 activities been implemented? 6. Are the project objectives met? 7. What are the principal factors influencing the achievement of the objectives? 8. To what extent have the beneficiaries been satisfied with the project outputs and activities? |
| **Efficiency** | To which extent is the intervention efficient in terms of resources and input committed when delivering outputs and immediate results | 1. What are the main outputs of the project? 2. Are the resources used efficiently? 3. To what extent have the project means been utilized in an optimal manner? 4. To what extent have project activities been delivered on time? 5. How efficiently have STAR2 resources been converted into results? 6. Were the project partners at local and national level effectively involved in the planning and implementation of the project? |
| **Impact** | The main impact effectively achieved; the strategic contribution of the project to sustainable development changes | 1.Are the outcomes of STAR2 producing the long-term changes? 2. What are the broader effects of the project? 3. What assumptions have been considered to make sure that project will be having the planned impact? |
| **Sustainability** | The project capacity to produce and to reproduce benefits over time; to what extent intervention benefits will continue even after the project is concluded and the principal factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the project sustainability. | 1. Has the project the capacity to sustain its results by reproducing the benefits over time? 2. To what extent intervention benefits will continue even after the project is concluded? 3. To what extent have the project mechanisms ensured that the intended results are sustainable beyond the project implementation? 4. What are main factors influencing the sustainability of project activities? 5. Will local authorities be able to continue supporting the project established mechanisms beyond the project implementation? 6. What best practices emerged from STAR2 implementation? |
| *\*Source: Authors* |  |  |

## *2.3 Evaluation Methods*

The evaluation methodology is qualitative and participatory in its approach by ensuring input from 67 key project staff, beneficiaries, and relevant stakeholders and partners engaged in and impacted by the implementation of STAR2. Evaluators triangulated information gathered from various sources in order to provide stronger evidence-based recommendations (i) comprehensive documentation review, (ii) in-depth interviews (iii) field visits and observations. Evaluation took place during the period 25th April to 27th May 2019.

The evaluation has been conducted by independent consultants, comprised of two Evaluation Experts, tasked with the following activities during three main phases:

Preparation phase (April 25th – April 29th)

This phase includes a comprehensive document analysis and review of relevant project-related documents such as STAR2 documents and produced outputs, national policies and strategies as well as international reports in the relevant area. A full list of documents reviewed can be found in *Annex IV – List of Documents Reviewed.*

Interviewing phase (April 30th – May 20th)

In-depth and informative interviews were conducted with a total of 67 persons as illustrated in Table 2 (below). The evaluators attempted to be as inclusive as possible in determining the sample framework for interviews covering STAR2 Project staff; UNDP program staff; development partners; central governmental and other public institutions such as the Deputy Minister of Interior, Agency for Support of Local Self-Governance (ASLG) and Supreme State Control; municipal leadership – Mayors and Deputy Mayors, and direct beneficiaries at LGUs level as well as citizens.

Table 2: Evaluation Sample

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| UNDP STAR2 Project Staff / Experts | 14 |
| Mayor | 4 |
| Deputy Mayor | 3 |
| Municipality Staff / Beneficiaries | 38 |
| Development Partners / Donors | 4 |
| Central Government / Public Bodies | 3 |
| Total | 66 |

A full list of persons interviewed, their position and institutions in presented in *Annex I – List of People Interviewed.*

The interviews followed a set of prepared questions corresponding to the profile of each interviewee as demonstrated in *Table 1: Evaluation Matrix.* The evaluators ensured the informed consent of the interviewees and confidentiality was maintained when requested. The objectives of the evaluation were initially explained followed by a brief presentation of the interlocutors and then the interview followed a conversation-like flow with the evaluation questions serving as a guideline. The interviews typically lasted between 30 to 65 minutes. One interview was conducted via Skype, and all others were conducted in person. All interviews are transcribed in the language they took place: English and Albanian.

Field phase (May 2nd – May 10th)

8 field visits were carried out by the evaluators in the municipalities of Shkodër, Lezhë, Pogradec, Librazhd, Cërrik, Belsh, Finiq and Konispol. The field visits were facilitated and coordinated by STAR2 Project staff and local coordinators. During the field visits the evaluators conducted interviews with direct beneficiaries and observed One Stop Shops infrastructure and service delivery (in the municipalities that OSS are functional), including demonstration of OSS online system.

# **III. ANALYSIS**

## *3.1 Background of Analysis*

This section presents an analysis of STAR2 progress and achieved results from the completion of the inception phase from July 2017 to April 2019. This analysis draws information from primary data collected through in-depth interviews, through secondary resources and also from the Project’s periodic reports, and other supporting documents. This analysis demonstrates an overview of the current progress and achieved results for each of the three components of STAR2 and a more specific description of each activity, output, and indicator vis a vis the action plan finalized upon completion of the inception phase.

STAR2 has intensively committed resources and mobilized the project team to finalize project activities. Overall, as of May 2019, 9 activities are completed, and 11 others are under implementation at different stages as shown in *Table 3* below.

Table 3: Overall completion of activities per component

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Component/Activity** | **No. of main activities** | **No. of completed activities** | **Level of completion of ongoing activities: less than 70% completed** | **Level of completion of ongoing activities: more than 71% completed** | **Code\*\*** |
| **Component 1** - Strengthening Institutional and Administrative Capacities of LGUs | 7 | 5 | 2 | 0 |  |
| **Component 3** - Enhanced local democracy through fostering citizen-oriented governance and participatory decision making, leveraging the roles of women as actors of change | 7 | 3 | 3 | 1 |  |
| **Component 2** - Increased local service delivery, efficiency, quality, coverage, accessibility and inclusiveness for men and women | 6 | 1 | 5 | 0 |  |
| **Total** | **20** | **9** | **10** | **1** |  |

\*A complete table of completion level per each component / activity can be found in *Annex V - Summarized implementation progress per activity.*

*\*\* RAG Status Project Reporting: red indicates that there is some concern and immediate and intense efforts are required / amber indicates that there is no room for concern and green indicates that things are running smoothly and are about to be completed.*

While extra efforts should be taken to complete all activities as per the Action Plan, the activities under components 2 and 3 with less than 70% completion rate require particular attention. Also, considering the complex issues that they address (such as finalization of consolidation and roll out of OSS model, public service delivery assessment, reorganization and piloting, benchmarking system as well as piloting LG public ethics and integrity plans) as well as the evolving LG and political contexts, a more dedicated focus is needed to review the interim outputs and monitor the overall activities’ execution. It is appreciated that similar activities under each component have been combined for implementation and tendering procedures’ purposes, resulting in considerable time and resources savings.

## *3.2 Institutional and Administrative Capacities of LGUs (Component 1)*

The first component seeks to strengthen institutional and administrative capacities of LGUs. It comprises seven main activities, five of which are completed (marked in blue) and two of which are ongoing at 60% implementation rate as of May 2019, as demonstrated below.

Table 4: Component 1 planned and achieved outputs

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Component 1: Strengthening Institutional and Administrative capacities of LGUs** | |
| Output 1.1: Enhanced human resource and administrative management capacities leading to a more professional public administration at local level  1.1.3 Capacity building on Code of Administrative Procedures implementation  1.1.4 capacity building on adopting LG Standard Operating Procedures | |
| **Planned** | **Achieved** |
| * Municipal coverage: 61 * 120 Municipal senior staff trained * 300 staff (5/Mun) trained * 21 training sessions organized * Timeline: Oct 2017- Oct 2018 | * Municipal coverage: 57 * 205 municipality staff trained and certified by ASPA * National dissemination event organized with 151 participants * 14 training sessions (2 days) delivered * Training curricula on CAP and SOP developed and certified by ASPA * 9 workshops on 3 thematic SOPs organized for 61 Municipalities * Activity on CAP finalized in 2018 * Activity on SOP finalized in April 2019 * Guidance for SOP drafted |
| 1.2.1 Develop and deliver training on leadership | |
| * Municipal coverage: 61 * 150 mayors and vice-mayors trained * Timeline: Oct – Dec 2017 | * Municipal coverage: 61 * 6 round tables with mayors organized across Albania * Mayors proposals on LG presented in Consultative Council meeting * Assessment of best experiences and main challenges of 61 mayors prepared * Booklet on best experiences in 61 Municipalities prepared * Documentary video on 6 best practices prepared * Activity is ongoing |
| 1.3.1 Support Improvement of local tax collection and enforcement | |
| * Municipal Coverage: 61 * Up to 180 staff of finance and tax departments trained * 9 training sessions organized * Timeline: Sep 2017 – Feb 2019 | * Municipal coverage: 61 * 114 tax experts benefitted * Assessment on best performance tax management systems organized * 2 focus group meetings * Training curricula developed * 8 training sessions organized * Manual on tax administration in LG developed * Finalized in May 2019 |
| 1.3.2 Develop local revenue management action plans for 30 small and medium municipalities | |
| * Municipal coverage: 30 * 6 training sessions organized * 90 staff trained * Timeline: March 2018 – Feb 2019 | * Municipal coverage: 29 * 4 round tables organized * 40 municipal staff participated * 29 Revenue action plans on tax collection, cleaning fee and enforce collection are prepared and approved by the respective mayors. * Dissemination period not undertaken yet |
| 1.3.4 Capacity building on asset and land management to relevant LG departments | |
| * Municipal coverage: 61 * 120 senior managers * 180 staff trained * Time: Sep 2017 – Nov 2018 | * Municipal coverage: 61 * 128 senior staff trained * 101 staff trained * Training curricula prepared * Finalized within 2018 |
| * + 1. Compliance with the requirements of High State Control Institution | |
| * Municipal coverage: 61 * 180 municipality staff participate * Time: Sep 2017 – Nov 2018 | * Municipal coverage: 61 * 254 municipality staff participated in the training sessions * Informative guide on HSA on LG prepared * Activity finalized in 2018 |

With regard to the first component, some of the most valued outputs by the direct beneficiaries, as confirmed through in-depth interviews during the evaluation process, are: capacity building assistance on CAP implementation and adopting SOPs; on-the-job assistance for development and adoption of SOPs; and capacity building on improving and enforcing local level tax collection. Mayors particularly expressed high interest in the peer-to-peer roundtables and exchange of experiences as an appropriate method, compared to direct trainings.

In the remaining project period, efforts should be placed on continuous on-the-job assistance regarding action plans for tax collection and enforcement and the attainment of remaining outputs.

## *3.2 Local Service Delivery (Component 2)*

The second component seeks to increase local service delivery, efficiency, quality, coverage, accessibility and inclusiveness for men and women. Six main activities were envisaged for this component, but only one of them is fully completed: a unique system of LG physical archive was developed and adopted nation-wide. Other activities are still in the process of implementation, as shown below.

Table 5: Component 2 planned and achieved outputs

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Component 2: Increased local service delivery, efficiency, quality, coverage, accessibility and inclusiveness for men and women** | |
| 2.1.1 Improve the way services are planned, organized, managed and delivered  2.1.2 Addressing challenges and capacity building for a full takeover of new delegated functions  2.1.3 Assist in reorganization of selected services in terms of efficiency and standards | |
| **Planned** | **Achieved** |
| * Municipal coverage: 61 (training) * 300 technical municipal staff trained on the way services are planned, organized and managed * 300 staff trained on the new competences * Up to 3 municipalities/municipal clusters be assisted in re-organization of 3 selected services * Time line: June 2017- January 2019 | * Inception report finalized * Questionnaires to assess the situation and challenges LGUs with regard to service delivery are drafted * 30% implementation * Time line: continue till Dec 2019 |
| 2.2.1 Establish a national benchmark system on LG administrative and public services | |
| * Municipal coverage: 61 * Timeline: July 2017 – July 2019 | * Inception report delivered * 20% implementation * Expected to get finalized in Aug 2019 |
| 2.3.1 Develop a one-stop-shop model and scale it up at national level | |
| * Municipal Coverage: 49 * Timeline: July 2017 – Sep 2019 | * System deployment for 49 Municipalities, mainly on central municipalities, not expanded in most of administrative units * Training and configuration, system deployment and set up completed in 47 municipalities * Roll out plan prepared * 13 Municipalities are using OSS / 7 are ready to go live within May * Timeline: December 2019 |
| 2.4.1 Develop a unique system of LG archiving and adopt it national wide | |
| * Municipal coverage; 61 Municipalities * 500 archives and protocol staff trained * Timeline: July 2017 – Oct 2018 | * Municipal coverage: 61 Municipalities * SMART objectives and job descriptions for archives and protocol staff in line with the existing legal requirements are drafted * Documentation of standardized workflows * Practitioner’s training manual for archiving is developed, * Best practices manual on LG archives * Provision of professional boxes and files to 61 municipalities * A total of 430 Local Archive Specialists out of 456 targeted were trained * 343 local Archive Specialists received performance certification * 59 municipalities concluded the archives inventory conform legal requirements * Time line: Aug 2017 – Dec 2018 |

Three outputs related to the delivery and management of public services have been merged and are being implemented jointly. This is a suitable and flexible approach contributing to time and financial savings. The implementation status as of May 2019 is 30% completed. This is a key activity pertaining to the improvement of public service delivery at local level, in addition to administrative services, which have been addressed by the OSS model. Mobilization of efforts is now needed to finalize the assessment of the current status of public services at selected municipalities, and the re-organization of selected services. These outputs’ timely delivery is crucial for the successful implementation of the re-organized services, assistance to municipal staff, and monitoring the services’ implementation.

With regards to the establishment of a national benchmark system on LG administrative and public services, the implementation status is only 20%. The delays in finalizing the related sub-activities are mainly due to the organization of several coordination meetings with INSTAT, as well as the relevant Swiss funded projects with focus on data and aiming, to avoid overlaps and create synergy for the benchmarking system. Moreover, the lack of data, issues with reliability, and standardization of data hindered the implementation of this activity. An ongoing limiting factor is the LGU’s ability to demonstrate a vision and a structured demand for the type and use of local data; this weakness also exists at the line ministry level. The successful finalization of the benchmark system requires intense efforts and ongoing coordination.

The development of the OSS model, as well as its roll out and scale-up is progressing. As of May 2019, its implementation stage is estimated at 65%. Out of 49 municipality planned, currently 13 municipalities are using OSS, 7 have received relevant training, and are ready to go live in May 2019.

With regards to the OSS rollout plan: even though the preparatory work is completed, the lack of OSS infrastructure (computers, scanners, printers, network devices, as well as office premises and equipment) constrains the ability of the system to “go live” in 28 municipalities. STAR2 conducted an assessment of 49 municipalities at scope, in terms of availability and decency of necessary minimal IT hardware, IT and physical infrastructure, and other relevant local resources. The assessment results showed that most municipalities do not meet the requirements. STAR2 has already raised this issue with the MoI to consider the option of a single procurement of hardware with state funds for all municipalities and in principle it is agreed that this is the only viable option. The government counterpart took a promising stance. However, the process encountered shortfalls in communication and sharing responsibilities between NAIS and ASLG/ MoI resulting in lack of budget allocation of the estimated amount of $3 million. Joint efforts are needed in this regard for the successful roll out of OSS model, its consolidation and further support to municipal staff.

The excellent collaboration with ADISA for co-location of OSS in selected municipalities by coordinating standards for service delivery and information exchange is an example of a best practice developed during the Project implementation phase. Such collaboration should be further maintained, particularly with a view into the future of public service delivery at the central and local level. Moreover, it is necessary to provide assistance to municipalities to monitor and evaluate the success of OSS implementation and reorganize, if need be, services and procedures to meet citizens’ expectations. Increasing implementation speed of OSS model roll out should be also accompanied with increased visibility and communication.

## *3.3 Local Democracy (Component 3)*

The third component seeks to enhance local democracy by fostering citizen-oriented governance and participatory decision making while leveraging the roles of women as agent of change. Out of seven activities planned, three are completed as shown below.

Table 6: Component 2 planned and achieved outputs

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Component 3: Enhanced local democracy through fostering citizen-oriented governance and participatory decision-making, leveraging the roles of women as actors of change** | |
| 3.1.1 Conduct LG mapping | |
| **Planned** | **Achieved** |
| * Municipal coverage: 61 * Approximately12.500 citizens and local public officials involved * Timeline: Nov 2016- May 2017 & end 2019 | * Municipality coverage: 61 municipalities * Individual Reports for the 61 municipalities drafted * Aggregate Report with Data from the 61 Municipalities * An Online platform with the Data of LG Mapping for the 61 municipalities is developed and accessible (<http://www.star2lgm.com/en/>) * 12 citizens and 400 municipality officials involved * 1st round – June 2017 |
| 3.2.1 Build institutional capacity for public engagement and consultation, inclusive of vulnerable and marginalized groups | |
| * Municipal coverage: 61 municipalities * 30 training sessions organized * 300 managers and coordinators on the right to information participate in the training * Timeline: Sep 2017 – Oct 2018 | * Municipal coverage: 61 municipalities * 28 training sessions organized * 505 municipal officials have benefited from the training * Timeline: ended in March 2019 |
| 3.2.3 Introduce practices to strengthen local officials’ accountability – Promote programs of transparency | |
| * Pilot Municipal Coverage: 5-6 municipalities * Replicate in 50 Municipalities * Organize 13 workshops/training sessions * Target participants: 275 * Timeline: Oct 2017 – Nov 2018 | * Standard Model of Transparency Programme and Measurement System developed (became obligatory by the Commissioner on the Right to information 10th Sep 2018 * 13 workshops/training sessions organized * 250 participants benefitted from the activities * Timeline: December 2018 |
| 3.2.4 Support development and application of systems allowing publication of municipal acts and regulations | |
| * Municipal coverage; 31 Municipalities * Target group: 31 municipal councils * Timeline: Aug 2017 – Mar 2019 | * Municipal coverage: 33 Municipalities * Assessment on the extent to which municipalities publish MC decisions undertaken * Municipal Council Decisions of 33 municipalities published on line (vendime.al) * Time line: Dec 2017 – Mar 2019 |
| 3.2.6 Develop standard municipal websites, or improve them, and increase capacities of PR staff | |
| * Target: 30-40 municipalities for web -design; 61 municipalities for template and training * Timeline: Jun 2017-Aug 2018 | * Assessment process undertaken; 13 municipalities needed assistance * Standard model of webpage developed and tested and accepted by 13 municipalities * Capacity building program finalized * Final report expected to be delivered * Timeline: Aug 2018 – May 2019 |
| 3.2.7 Increase LG public ethics and integrity  3.2.8 Pilot municipal integrity plans | |
| * Municipal coverage: 61 municipalities * Target participants; 720 trainees * Target Pilot 6 municipalities * Timeline: Oct 2017- Mar 2019 | * Integrity assessment methodology drafted * 50% implementation rate * Timeline: Oct 2018 – Dec 2019 |

The first round of LG Mapping was completed and presented on time and provided a foundation for the development of other STAR2 activities. The 2nd round of LG Mapping is planned to start around September 2019 to measure the impact of the project as well as to articulate the overall progress of local governance during the project lifetime. A significant output in terms of public engagement and consultation is the capacity building program which offered to LGUs a guiding operational toolkit and the measurement system on public engagement and consultation. This program was certified by ASPA and thus ensuring sustainability for future use.

In terms of the Programs of Transparency at the municipal level, STAR2 has provided some essential tools, such as a Standard Model of Transparency Program and Measurement System, Awareness Raising Instrument, and an online help desk platform; all were supported with the capacity building program. However, municipalities are slow in adopting the order of the Commissioner on the new Transparency Program. In the remaining period, STAR2 is exploring ways to further promote the adoption of the new Transparency Program in cooperation with the Commissioner. This is an appropriate approach to ensure sustainability.

The online publication of municipal council decisions (vendime.al) is successfully completed and the Project is now exploring ways on how to further increase the usage of the online platform. The development or improvement of standardized municipal websites is in progress and its successful implementation requires training for the relevant municipality staff. Bolstering LG public ethics and integrity and piloting municipal integrity plans are being implemented jointly, and focus is required for their completion. Challenges remain regarding the motivation and willingness of municipal senior leadership to adopt these plans.

Gender equality has not been fully mainstreamed as envisioned in the project objectives and action plan. Although data are disaggregated by gender and equal gender participation in trainings has been taken in consideration, further efforts are needed for the empowerment of women at the local level.

**Challenges and obstacles in STAR2 Project implementation**

Inception and timeline

While the Project design was very relevant, the most significant challenge emerged after the Project document phase, when an implementation plan was drawn up to outline priorities and focus efforts - inception phase. Far from initial plans, one year passed from Project signature to the approval of the Inception Report and approach, a period that included both the recruitment of the Project Team and an intensive process of consultations with stakeholders. In fact, the Inception phase started around Nov-Dec 2016, when most of the essential project staff was on board. This phase concluded in July 2017, therefore 7-8 months, with the approval of the Inception Report.

Inception phase resulted in major changes introduced to the Project logical framework, including outputs and activities. Inception phase resulted in major changes introduced to the Project logical framework, including outputs and activities. The relative prolonged inception phase caused to a considerable extent delays in the implementation of project activities. Thus, the actual project timeline for the implementation of activities was reduced to about 29 months (initially planned 33.5 months). However, this flexible, participatory and all-inclusive approach of STAR2 was highly appreciated as it allowed for adapting the Project design to the context and concrete needs of the relevant area of intervention and for ensuring complementarity. However, this flexible, participatory and all-inclusive approach of STAR2 was highly appreciated as it allowed for adapting the Project design to the context and concrete needs of the relevant area of intervention and for ensuring complementarity.

Challenges at municipal level: institutional, infrastructural and human

The full collaboration of municipalities is a key precondition for the successful implementation of project activities. However, municipalities have different scales of readiness in terms of human and material resources, in their absorption capacities and the political will and commitment to collaborate, respond and succeed. The Project had to and still has to deal with such diversity and is constantly making efforts to nurture specific partnerships and dialogue with each of the municipalities at scope.

Insufficient quality and reliable data

At the time of project design, inception, and initial implementation phases, there was no consolidated system for local data collection. Issues related to the lack of local data, quality difference, accuracy and standards were identified from municipality to municipality. Limited technical capacities to collect, process and utilize data were found at municipal level.

Coordination of multiple activities in a relatively limited timeframe

Interviewees stated that it was very challenging to manage the coordination of multiple training events that were designed and implemented by different project components. Also, the pace of program implementation was very fast, which put a lot of pressure on municipalities, particularly considering the presence of other interventions in the same area.

Political context

The Project has not really suffered any major impact from elections along its life cycle until 2019, where the situation of local elections is so unprecedented and municipal leadership and local administrations are increasingly getting confused with the political direction and decision to go forward. The situation during the writing of this evaluation report was not clear and not giving any hint on how the situation would have been managed as the election date of 30 June is approaching.

# **VI. FINDINGS**

## *4.1 Relevance*

**STAR2 addresses key local priorities in light of the Territorial and Administrative Reform and identified needs for further consolidation**

The entire scope of the STAR2 Project is relevant and in line with the priorities of central and LG in regard to the consolidation of the historical and transformative Territorial and Administrative Reform. STAR2 has designed and employed a multidimensional, well-integrated methodology to respond to the most important needs of the LG in the areas of capacity building, service delivery and good governance. Municipal leaders, senior managers and staff confirmed the high relevance of STAR2 in supporting them in addressing key challenges of local governance.

The Project has been instrumental in involving new technologies, which has responded to the most articulated need to improve efficiency, transparency, citizen access and quality.

All project interventions were based on thorough needs assessment processes conducted in all the targeted municipalities. The information gathered from the needs and situational assessment processes has informed the intervention, which has been well-aligned with the identified priorities and needs. The data gathered were disaggregated by gender and subpopulation groups.

**STAR2 is consistent and in full compliance with the national priorities, policies and strategies on local self-governance, public administration, good governance and democracy. In addition, STAR2 project aligns with Anticorruption Strategy, *I*nnovation Policy, NSDI (2015 – 2020), EU agenda of the country, and 2030 Global Agenda (SDG).**

The Project is well-aligned with the priorities of the National Crosscutting Strategy for Decentralization and Local Governance (2014-2020), which focuses on the consolidation of local human resources and their skills: “empowering the local administration [through] the establishment of a non-bureaucratized, professional and transparent public administration … able to respond to the expectation of the business and the community for public services [and the development of] a special “performance monitoring system” for the LGUs … to guarantee the accountability of the public administration and ensure efficient delivery of services at the local level”.

STAR2 was designed as a collaborative work of primary and secondary stakeholders with MSLI as a principal contributor and leader in all project phases: assessment, design, a series of consultations, and implementation. Since September 2017, the Deputy Minister of Interior has played a crucial role in coordinating the Project activities with other initiatives in order to make sure that the intervention is responding to the most important needs of LGUs and is in compliance with the relevant strategies and laws. The Deputy Minister considers STAR2 Project to be very successful, recognizing that the Project has continuously consulted all project intervention methods with the Ministry’s structures.

“*STAR2 is a project with clear ideas, high level of functionality of systems developed and a high level of expertise involved, which has resulted in local ownership of new processes and standards. The Project vast coverage (all 61 municipalities), employment of very well-tailored strategies, involvement of the highest local expertise and a great leadership and coordination from the part of UNDP staff, make STAR2 Project very relevant, effective and impactful*”.

[Deputy Minister of Interior, 30 April 2019]

**STAR2 Project design, strategies and methods are very relevant to achieve projects’ outcomes**

The activities deployed by STAR2 are multi-level, multi-dimensional and multi-sectoral. This has made the Project approach holistic and responsive to needs and priorities of LG- mostly related to the need for increasing the administrative and managerial capacities at local level, improving service delivery in the areas of efficiency, quality, coverage, responsiveness and inclusiveness, as well as the need to increase transparency, citizen participation and consultation, accountability and responsiveness of local governance. The methods used to address the needs are assessed as very relevant by the beneficiaries interviewed for this evaluation purpose.

The approaches used are appropriate to maximize the effects of the project intervention, especially:

* The Project approach “How to…” has created the base for practical learning among participants. The needs assessment processes were done in a holistic manner mostly based on the exchange and consultation among program experts and local municipalities who have analyzed issues, identified gaps and tailored the program intervention to best fit the needs and priorities.
* The Project approach “On the job training” has proved to be the most successful method based on the beneficiaries’ feedback. Training was delivered at the workplace of the participants, which was found very practical and grounded in relevant laws.
* The Project approach “Peer to peer exchange”, focused on building the leadership capacities of mayors, was deemed more relevant compared to classroom training. This approach has allowed for sharing the best experiences and transferring skills. However, mayors, deputy mayors, and heads of municipal councils are in need of continuous capacity-building and leadership development.

**Successful examples of appropriate project methods**

A successful example of the relevant project methodology was the intervention to standardize the municipality archives. The Project intervention started with the thorough assessment, consultation process, involvement of experts, delivery of series of training, conducting on-the-job training, and designing the users’ manual. Inventory of the archives, standardizing the processes, and creating the base for advancing the process to the next level (digitalization) was highly appreciated by the relevant staff and senior management.

Furthermore, the OSS model was the highlight of the second component of improving service delivery. Both development partners and beneficiaries confirmed their appreciation of the OSS in terms of final impact to citizens. However, development partners were concerned for the progress of the roll out and scale up of OSS at national level. Beneficiaries at municipal level argued that they still needed further support and technical assistance regarding the consolidation of OSS and the corresponding transformations in the operating procedures and working culture of their staff.

**Project activities are designed in a very effective way to respond to LGUs needs**

Project activities were designed in a very effective way to respond to the main problems of LG:

* The compliance with the Code of Administrative Procedures was addressed through a well-integrated and deliberately designed set of activities related to the development of SOP (situational analysis, development of Training Plan, delivery of training, facilitate SOP process, organizing workshops and trainings).
* The need to improve the management of assets and land was addressed through designing and implementing a series of activities which were primarily focused on training relevant employees and organizing workshops.
* Poor compliance with the requirements of the High State Control was addressed through conducting situational analysis, involving HSA experts, training related staff, and developing a guideline toolkit.
* In response to the problem of service delivery, the Project has designed and is currently implementing the OSS model.
* In response to the challenges of local democracy pertaining transparency, accountability and citizen participation, STAR2 has designed and implemented a series of well-integrated activities based on the assessment of LGs on the availability of data, evidence-based policies and decision making systems, availability of institutional instruments to ensure citizen participation, availability of accountability instruments, and systems to ensure equity and inclusion. STAR2 has designed a Model Transparency Program and Measurement System of Transparency. It has set up an online platform for the publication of municipal councils’ decisions (Vendime.al) and is currently creating Standardized Municipal Websites.
* In response to the ethics-related problems and dilemma faced by municipal employees, the project has facilitated the development of Codes of Conduct, has provided relevant training to the local staff, and has also facilitated the Pilot Municipality Integrity Plans.

**Synergy and complementarity with other programmes in the area was ensured**

Many programs are engaged in enhancing local administrational efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, accountability- as well as local democracy- by providing the LG with technical assistance in the areas of strengthening various strategic, institutional, and operational aspects of municipal functions.

UNDP and STAR2 have managed to create synergies and complementarity with other programs in this area. The inception phase and variety of consultation meetings served very well to this purpose. Ongoing communication with development partners and other programs should be maintained throughout project implementation cycle to continue ensuring complementarity and coordination.

Following STAR1 approach, the establishment of the Steering Committee and its periodic meetings resulted in a functional structure that used its leadership to ensure effective project implementation and synergies with other related initiatives - avoiding overlapping and at the same time monitoring activities and the quality of outputs, and closely evaluating the process of achieving outcomes and impact.

The burden of ensuring coordination, complementarity and synergy did not fall only on UNDP, but primarily on the central government and donors (Donors coordination group on LG). The Integrated Planning and Management Group (IPMG) on Public Administration Reform and Good Governance and related thematic working groups on decentralization and local self-governance were the appropriate platforms to ensure coordination, complementarity and synergy among different interventions and development partners in the relevant area.

However, cross-sectoral collaboration is still relatively weak and bringing different ministries, development partners and other stakeholders to the same discussion table requires special efforts. In most cases, the IPMG meetings lack meaningful policy discussions and strategic overview of the interventions. They mostly include a simple tour de table to present ongoing activities. Local actors should be more adequately represented.

4.2 Effectiveness

**STAR2 Project purpose at impact level is in coherence with project objectives at outcome level and activities at output levels.**

The Project purpose (long term change that the project will be achieving) aligns well with the Project objectives (the immediate/intermediate change that project is bringing out), which are well-coordinated with the Project activities (specifying the main ways how the Project will be bringing the short term and long term changes). This coherence and interdependence has created a base for successful implementation.

Overall, the Project was designed and implemented using a well-thought and aligned logic. This logic and coherence is visible in the vertical hierarchy where the project objectives are being met through employing a very effective set of activities.

**Produced outputs are of a very good quality and provide a solid foundation for accomplishing the Project outcomes, nevertheless constant monitoring, risk mitigation and change management control is needed.**

The Project outputs under each component are of a very good quality. However, time pressure to achieve the remaining results might hinder the quality of outputs still to be produced. In order to further achieve and sustain the above-mentioned outcomes there is a need to sustain the functionality of all above-mentioned outputs and to continue monitoring the Project assumptions and mitigate risks with constant Monitoring Results Measurement and change management control.

**Outputs have been produced as expected to a great extent, but not all activities have been implemented on time and 11 out of 20 activities are still ongoing.**

The realization of the Project output “A national benchmarking system for key selected administrative/public services established” has just started. The success of this process will positively affect the achievement of all project outcomes by establishing a system of interrelated and integrated indicators. This system will produce information needed to monitor and evaluate the performance of LG, particularly in terms of service delivery.

The OSS model needs to be rolled out and consolidated in all 28 remaining municipalities. Constant support and monitoring are also needed, particularly in reviewing the organization of the administrative services. The Project activities are still being implemented and STAR2 is on a good trajectory for meeting its objectives, but in the remaining 6 months focus should be placed on core activities which constitute the backbone of the entire project.

**The beneficiaries (interviewees) are very satisfied with the Project outputs and confirm their interest and need for further support and assistance.**

Direct beneficiaries confirmed that training programs were of very high quality. Facilitators were very professional and training methods were very well tailored to their needs and responsibilities. They were very satisfied with the technical knowledge of the facilitators, who were the best experts of the field. Their practicality and communication were highly appreciated. The duration of the training programs was just right. The venue of the training programs in close proximity to their workspace, or within their workspace was highly appreciated. All interviewed, training participants shared that the training programs in which they participated were among the best / or the best training program they had ever participated in.

Training participants shared that the training format and methodology were designed in a way that encouraged learning. All training programs were based on relevant laws and helped the participants to understand them. The learning techniques employed were very user-friendly making it easier for all participants to learn. All training programs were skills-based and were designed to build new skills for the participants in the relevant area. Training participants from the same field appreciated the exchange of ideas and best practices with their peers. A training method that was truly appreciated was brainstorming on how to address issues/concerns related to their job responsibilities.

Training participants responded that every training program left them with a tailored product such as SOP, User Manuals, and Toolkits/ Training Manuals. These materials are referral materials for municipality staff to help them perform their responsibilities in compliance with relevant laws and standards. SOPs, in particular, are very helpful. The standards that training programs have created are conducive to sustaining these learned skills.

## *4.3 Efficiency*

**STAR2 resources have been utilized in an efficient manner.**

Although with a difficult and slow start, STAR 2 has managed to spend 5,201,032 USD or 64% of the total budget by the end of April 2019. It is worth noting, that almost all the remaining budget is allocated in already signed and on-going contracts.

Table 7: STAR2 Budget Expenditures

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Expenditures Items** | **Original Budget  (in USD)** | **Ratio vs total in %** | **Actual Expenditures & Commitments** | **Ratio vs total in %** |
| Human resources | 947,021 | 11.6% | 933,511 | 13.5% |
| Per diem | 36,000 | 0.4% | 17,942 | 0.3% |
| Equipment and supplies | 287,700 | 3.5% | 262,349 | 3.8% |
| Publication and Visibility | 426,500 | 5.2% | 212,523 | 3.1% |
| Component 1 | 573,478 | 7.0% | 593,455 | 8.6% |
| Component 2 | 4,166,178 | 51.0% | 3,472,191 | 50.3% |
| Component 3 | 1,178,914 | 14.4% | 946,815 | 13.7% |
| UNDP Management | 552,877 | 6.8% | 467,456 | 6.8% |
| **TOTAL** | **8,168,668** |  | **6,906,242** |  |

STAR2 resources have been utilized in an efficient manner when considering the results achieved and strong progress toward the development objective due to commitment from staff, stakeholders, development partners and beneficiaries, intervention methodology, and standards and systems created and designed to be sustainable.

**STAR2 resources are being successfully converted into results.**

Almost all activities and expenditures were committed and carried out in a period of three calendar years and the final deliverables are voluminous. A detailed list can be found in:

*Table 4: Component 1 planned and achieved outputs*

*Table 5: Component 2 planned and achieved outputs*

*Table 6: Component 2 planned and achieved outputs*

## 

## *4.4 Sustainability*

**STAR2 has produced sustainable results, but further support and assistance is needed to ensure consolidation and ownership of achieved results.**

STAR2 has produced sustainable results for its beneficiaries through a multidimensional investment in three main areas: building institutional and individual capacities of local staff, building high quality project outputs, providing the users with a high quality of manuals and toolkits paving consequently a solid ground for project to produce its effects for a long time.

The intervention to establish and /or improve the organizational systems and standards has created the foundation for project sustainability. The sustainability is also based on the other benefits that project has produced regarding the change in local mentalities toward new ways of service provision, new technology usage, transparency and accountability, and ethical behavior. The learning by doing from local administration through on the on-job assistance, followed the standard trainings creates the best ground for project sustainability. The synergy created with project partners and stakeholders has also paved a way for long-term effects. Monitoring the Project assumptions and mitigating the risks will be the main factor toward achieving the Project sustainability.

STAR2 was built on the successes and results of STAR1 and has considered lessons learned in designing and implementing its project activities by making sure the continuity and logic of project interventions, thus creating the foundation for sustainability.

Another important element of project sustainability relates to project effects and impact on local policy making (interventions on creation and implementation of systems on administrative procedures, development of standards in public and administrative services, creation of platforms and systems for citizen consultation).

That said, the continuation of on-the-job assistance to consolidate interventions and sustain systems and standards created, as well as monitoring of the Project assumptions and mitigation of potential risks, will be the main factors toward ensuring project sustainability.

The involvement and cooperation with ASPA and ASLG have also contributed to project sustainability.

## *4.5 Impact*

**The outcomes of STAR2 are producing the long-term changes to a considerable extent, but continuous support and assistance is still needed.**

In general, the multitude and broadness of the Project intervention have contributed significantly to achieve all three main outcomes of the Project related to increased capacities for administrative and institutional support, increased efficiency, quality, coverage, access and inclusiveness of local service delivery, and improved local governance regarding transparency, public consultation and ethical behavior**.** All outcomes are interrelated and well-coordinated with each other. They are sufficiently capable to bring the desired long-term change in improving wellbeing of citizens, who will be able to receive quality services, feel respected, involved and served by LG.

The Project should keep monitoring the Project assumptions regarding the motivation of mayors and their staff to sustain the intervention done, motivation of stakeholders to support the Project and mitigate risks mostly related to local elections and political unrest.

**STAR2 has produced transformative changes in working cultures of municipalities.**

The Project has created the foundation for broader effects. The Project has produced an effective change of mentalities for municipal staff. By actively participating in project activities they have not only learned new skills and improved their understanding about their roles and responsibilities, but they also have started to change their mentality and behaviors regarding the way they view service to citizens, responsiveness and transparency, and also with their approach to ethics and the need for standards. Through participation in needs assessments and consultation processes they have developed a sense of ownership over project results which will contribute to long term results and affect positive change. The synergy created among project stakeholders and partners has created the foundation for broad effects.

**STAR2 has identified assumptions and risks and developed plan to mitigate them.**

The Project logical hierarchy was based on a careful identification and definition of project assumptions. Constant monitoring of the Project assumption at all levels (assumptions related to conditions and factors necessary for inputs to produce outputs, assumptions related to conditions and factors necessary for outputs to produce the Project outcomes and especially those of a higher level for outcomes to produce long term impact) has contributed to the overall project progress to reach all abovementioned levels in interrelated and effective way. Most of the assumptions have proved to be effectively defined:

* Readiness, motivation and active involvement of the Central Government structures;
* MoI support in strengthening institutional coordination;
* Ensure the national and subnational government ownership for effective results;
* Adequate technical and operational resources mobilized for a timely implementation of activities;
* Readiness and motivation of LG structures to support, actively participate and take ownership of project results;
* Readiness of LG structures to change mentality toward technology usage and its benefits;
* Readiness of LG structures to develop internal standards and systems;

**V. LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES**

## *Lessons learned and best practices*

In general, STAR2 is considered to be a very broad and ambitious project, affecting many aspects of LG. Due to its breadth, the depth of some interventions has been limited, and the areas addressed deserve more attention and future follow up. There are numerous lessons to be learned as well as best practices from the STAR2 project life cycle, as summarized below.

1. Lessons Learned

* Adoption of a flexible approach and the ability of the Project to respond to changes in political and LG contexts have proven essential for successful implementation of project activities, despite identified risks.
* The Project has invested in the most important aspects of local governance by creating standards and systems, however in order to support and sustain their overall execution and functionality this has to be followed with on-job assistance and continuous monitoring.
* The Project has worked in the area of promotion. Particular recent efforts are dedicated to visibility and awareness raising on key project results as those related to OSS, transparency and accountability and archiving. However, there is a need for more efforts to boost project visibility.
* Project has tried to incorporate a gender perspective across all activities such as training, assessments and instruments produced. There is more to be done to make sure that project activities are contributing to women’s empowerment. Gender perspective should be considered in the following dimensions: representation and involvement within the administration, incorporation of women and vulnerable groups in LG service delivery and standards, public engagement and participation, as well as in data gatherings and statistics.
* Even though the Project has tailored the training to fit the needs of the focused structures, there is a need for an all-inclusive and integrated training approach to ensure the inclusion of other related structures’ staff, i.e. there is a need for involving staff from other related directories to receive the same training as the OSS dedicated staff, in order to increase system’s efficiency. Same applies for trainings on CAP and the SOP which involves all LG administration.
* Even though STAR2 has delivered quality outputs, the full execution and functioning of standards and systems is dependent on the willingness, vision, and leadership of mayors and senior management at LGUs.
* Even though STAR2 has provided quality trainings to LGUs staff, the sustainability of human resources capacity building can also be achieved through collaboration with ASPA and DoPA and related public institutions in the relevant area.
* Even though the Mayors and the staff of 61 municipalities has well received and appreciated the STAR2’s technical assistance, it is very important to manage their expectations by continuing to communicate clearly the project contribution, expected results and LG roles in different stages of the project. The regional coordinators and especially the national coordinator will continue to play an important role to ensure effective communication with the Mayors and to foster their understanding.
* Senior management of municipalities should participate in training programs in order to ensure that skills learned will be implemented by municipal staff.
* Although the Associations of Municipalities have developed some collaboration on the technical level, they still need to coordinate their activities and increase collaboration in order to serve their constituencies and implement their mission more effectively.
* Adoption of a flexible approach and the ability of the Project to respond to changes in political and LG contexts have proven essential for the successful implementation of project activities, despite identified risks.
* Even though STAR 2 has developed its own OSS model for LGUs, the collaboration and integrated approach with ADISA proved to be very successful in allocation of services of central and LG, their standardization, and exploration of further collaboration for public service delivery.
* Introduction of new technologies and innovative tools in working practices and procedures of municipal staff, such as the OSS model, are prone to user resistance in almost all levels in municipalities.

1. Best Practices

General

* *Multidimensionality of intervention*: The Project intervention was multidimensional and has targeted the most important, interrelated components of local governance.
* *Standardization and systematization*: The Project has created standards and systems applicable to all municipalities, despite their category, by considering legal requirements and defining their practical implementation.
* *Optimization of success factors*: The Project had optimized success factors and the sustainability of interventions by piloting the new initiatives while assessing and considering risk effects.
* *Coverage*: The Project has managed to cover the entire country, thereby maximizing its scope.
* *Selection of approaches and methods*: On the job training, “How to….” approach to learning, peer to peer exchange, development of standardized toolkits, and manuals of users and service standards are valued by beneficiaries.
* *Establishment/strengthening of communication with state institutions:* The project has managed to strengthencommunication and coordination between LG and central/state institutions. LG standards are defined legally. They require a local-central interaction as some of the functions are oversighted by the state institutions and in several cases administered by them.
* *Representation:* The involvement of both LG associations proved to contribute to the increased participation from the part of Mayors.

Specific

* The *One Stop Shop* model for LG administrative services- defined and scaled nationwide - is contributing to essential improvement of quality, efficiency, coverage and inclusiveness of administrative service delivery.
* A *National Benchmarking* System for LG, for key selected administrative/public services (still under assessment phase) will pave a way toward building a platform based on an integrated set of key performance indicators, which will allow the advancement and further standardization of services.
* Development of the *Standard Operating Procedures for LG functions,* in compliance with the Code of Administrative Procedures, has created a referral mechanism for LG administration, helpful and user-friendly at the same time.
* *Reorganization of Services* (under implementation) will support target municipalities for a complete takeover of newly delegated functions. The customized approach and intervention will be based on local and international best practices.
* *Local Government Mapping* initiative has provided an important baseline on four key “Good Governance” dimensions of LG in Albania, informing local decision making, as well as central government policy and decision making of the project during its inception phases. It has created a base for STAR2 to exploit synergies with other projects working in the area of Local Governance.
* *A Model of Transparency Programme* for Local Government is endorsed by the Commissioner on the Right to Information as a mandatory standard to be followed from all municipalities. Together with a set of actions, such as the online publication of Municipal Council Decisions of 33 municipalities, the design of a standard municipal webpage for 13 municipalities, and the increased awareness and knowledge on public consultation and engagement are contributing to improved transparency and accountability and participation at local level.
* *Strengthened cooperation* between LG and GDA/RDA, HSA, Commissioner for the Right to Information, ASPA, NAIS, coordinated with and through ASLG remains a step forward toward successful cooperation.
* Development of *Local Revenue Management Action Plans* for 30 small and medium municipalities (under implementation) will create a process that will encourage periodic exchange of data with municipalities regarding the indicators set in the monitoring plans.
* The “*Guidance for Municipalities on Rural Development”* will support target municipalities to understand and better shape their role in rural development.
* The development of *Model Transparency* program and measurement System of Transparency and Accountability, including a consultation process and the approval from the Commissioner, has contributed toward improved local democracy through enhanced participation, transparency and accountability and ethics, and integrity in LG.

# **VI. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recommendation 1

In general, the Project needs to plan a better-focused final phase in order to ensure the sustainability of its main interventions. In this regard, all systems and standards established are in need for continuous monitoring, further expansion as needed (scope, territory), and more in-depth, on-the-job assistance to ensure their overall execution, functionality and sustainability.

Recommendation 2

In case of future support, the Project needs to focus on the few key components with an entire national coverage and introduce more lobbying at central government level for structural / legislative changes affecting LGUs. Also, the Project should intensify efforts to strengthen capacities of central level institutions in charge of LG, (ASLG) to take the ownership of LG national systems and standards.

Recommendation 3

The Project needs to further incorporate gender perspective in all project interventions in order to contribute to women’s empowerment. Gender perspective should be considered in the following dimensions: representation and involvement within the administration, incorporation of women and vulnerable groups in LG service delivery and standards, public engagement and participation, as well as in data gatherings and statistics.

Recommendation 4

The Project needs to continue to enhance collaboration with key stakeholders and partners. ASPA in cooperation with MoI/ASLG might be a close collaborator to identify LG administration training needs in order to design and deliver the capacity building assistance. Also, ASPA might be a close collaborator in order to design and deliver the orientation course to the Mayors without prior experience. The Project needs to keep coordination and consultation with public institutions to ensure sustainability by applying integrated approaches: ASPA, DoPA, ADISA and others affecting LG.

Recommendation 5

The Project needs to continue investing in institutional development and capacity building of human resources at LG. In this regard, it is necessary to systemize and standardize sustainable training programs for municipal staff, and to strategize and invest in motivating, cultivating, and sustaining human resources - especially for small and medium-sized municipalities. It is recommended to maximize and share best experiences (Standard Operating Procedures) and follow up on challenges identified during STAR 2. This will be a good way to identify progress and replicate best practice (peer to peer exchange, twining, internship) and continue to learn from each other.

Recommendation 6

The Project needs to continue consolidating “One Stop Shop” model of service provision in all municipalities, including the administrative units. OSS model of service provision should be functional in all municipalities and should be extended to all administrative units. There is a need to identify the required resources, best method and adequate infrastructure for effective service delivery. Digitalization of services is needed in order to increase the efficiency, quality and coverage of services. Continuous cooperation with ADISA is also highly suggested.

Recommendation 7

The Project needs to continue finalize and consolidate the “Benchmarking system” initiative. The Benchmarking system must be used to create a platform based on integrated indicators that will be used to contrast and compare standards within and among municipalities, as well as monitor and evaluate the service delivery process and overall municipality performance for municipality employees, citizens and partners.

Recommendation 8

The Project needs to continue building capacities to strengthen local democracy. It is recommended to contribute to the further consolidation of democratic governance practices at local level including transparency and openness, public engagement and consultation in local decision-making and most importantly the expansion of anti-corruption instruments such as integrity plans and codes of conducts.

# **Annex I – List of People Interviewed**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Monitoring and Evaluation STAR2 / Interviewees List** | | | | |
| **#** | **Name (alphabetically)** | **Position** | **Institution** | **Date of interview** |
| 1 | Adriatik Brace | Local Coordinator | UNDP STAR2 Project | 9th of May, 2019 |
| 2 | Aferdita Alla | Director of Economic Directorate and Financial Management | Municipality of Librazhd | 10th of May, 2019 |
| 3 | Agiano Diloshi | Local Taxes Specialist / OSS Front Desk | Municipality of Cërrik | 6th of May, 2019 |
| 4 | Agron Haxhimali | Director | Albanian Association of Municipalities | 10th of May, 2019 |
| 5 | Alexander Mihaylov | International Project Implementation Advisor | UNDP STAR2 Project | 8th of May, 2019 |
| 6 | Alketa Mane | Specialist for Archives | Municipality of Pogradec | 9th of May, 2019 |
| 7 | Ana Adhoni | Deputy Mayor | Municipality of Pogradec | 9th of May, 2019 |
| 8 | Anila Shehu | Project Coordinator | UNDP STAR2 Project | 1st of May, 2019 |
| 9 | Arlinda Marku | Chief of Directorate of Planning, Development and European Integration | Municipality of Lezhe | 9th of May, 2019 |
| 10 | Arsila Cina | Specialist for Human Resources Management | Municipality of Pogradec | 9th of May, 2019 |
| 11 | Artur Kurti | Field Presence Coordinator | UNDP STAR2 Project | 30th of Apr, 2019 |
| 12 | Asim Sula | Local Coordinator | UNDP STAR2 Project | 6th and 10th of May, 2019 |
| 13 | Astrit Popja | Specialist at OSSh | Municipality of Librazhd | 10th of May, 2019 |
| 14 | Astrit Qathja | Specialist for Archives, Hotolisht | Municipality of Librazhd | 10th of May, 2019 |
| 15 | Avdullah Canaj | Deputy Mayor | Municipality of Pogradec | 9th of May, 2019 |
| 16 | Bekim Murati | Director General | Agency for the Support of LG | 30th of Apr, 2019 |
| 17 | Davida Deda | Specialist, Asset Management Office | Municipality of Lezhe | 3rd of May, 2019 |
| 18 | Debora Kern | Head of Governance and Health Sector | Swiss Embassy | 3rd of May, 2019 |
| 19 | Denisa Kovaçi | Specialist of Strategic Planning | Municipality of Lezhe | 3rd of May, 2019 |
| 20 | Dilo Terziu | IT at One Stop Shop | Municipality of Librazhd | 10th of May, 2019 |
| 21 | Dritan Shutina | Director | Co Plan | 20th May, 2019 |
| 22 | Eda Kapllani | Local Government Data Analyst | UNDP STAR2 Project | 8th of May, 2019 |
| 23 | Edlira Muhedini | Team Leader Component 1 on Capacity Development | UNDP STAR2 Project | 1st of May, 2019 |
| 24 | Eduard Kapri | Mayor | Municipality of Pogradec | 9th of May, 2019 |
| 25 | Elda Pengu | Human Resources Manager | Municipality of Pogradec | 9th of May, 2019 |
| 26 | Elida Fara | Expert Local Finances | UNDP STAR2 Project | 1st of May, 2019 |
| 27 | Emilia Koliqi | Deputy Mayor | Municipality of Shkoder | 2nd of May, 2019 |
| 28 | Endri Xhaferaj | Programme Officer, Human Development and Good Governance | Italian Cooperation | 2nd of May, 2019 |
| 29 | Erda Poci | Specialist of Economic Directorate and Financial Management | Municipality of Librazhd | 10th of May, 2019 |
| 30 | Erjola Calia | Director General | Municipality of Cërrik | 6th of May, 2019 |
| 31 | Ermira Budani | Protocol / Archive Specialist | Municipality of Belsh | 6th of May, 2019 |
| 32 | Fabjan Lashi | Team Leader Component 2 Service Delivery | UNDP STAR2 Project | 1st of May, 2019 |
| 33 | Filloreta Buzo | Specialist for Asset Management | Municipality of Pogradec | 9th of May, 2019 |
| 34 | Gjergji Kurti | Chief of OSSh, Coordinator for Information | Municipality of Shkoder | 2nd of May, 2019 |
| 35 | Ibrahim Koci | Specialist of Public Relations | Municipality of Librazhd | 10th of May, 2019 |
| 36 | Irena Musta | Public Information Clerk / OSS Front Desk | Municipality of Cërrik | 6th of May, 2019 |
| 37 | Irene Eksariho | Chief of Human Resources | Municipality of Finiq | 14th of May, 2019 |
| 38 | Ismet Hasa | Chief of Human Resources | Municipality of Librazhd | 10th of May, 2019 |
| 39 | Kastriot Gurra | Mayor | Municipality of Librazhd | 10th of May, 2019 |
| 40 | Kleda Vaka | Specialist for Internal Auditing | Municipality of Pogradec | 9th of May, 2019 |
| 41 | Klodjana Zdrama | Head of Information Desk / OSS | Municipality of Belsh | 6th of May, 2019 |
| 42 | Julian Yzeir | Head of EU Desk | Municipality of Konispol | 15th of May, 2019 |
| 43 | Leonidha Hristo | Mayor | Municipality of Finiq | 14th of May, 2019 |
| 44 | Liliana Topciu | Specialist at OSSh | Municipality of Pogradec | 9th of May, 2019 |
| 45 | Linda Gjermani | Programme Officer | SIDA / Embassy of Sweden | 3rd of May, 2019 |
| 46 | Lindita Paluca | Chief of the office for Protocol and Archives | Municipality of Lezhe | 3rd of May, 2019 |
| 47 | Lorela Musaj | Specialist at OSSh | Municipality of Lezhe | 3rd of May, 2019 |
| 48 | Muharrem Bajrami | Specialist of Archives, | Municipality of Shkoder | 2nd of May, 2019 |
| 49 | Mustafa Carcilli | Secretary General | Municipality of Belsh | 6th of May, 2019 |
| 50 | Nesila Koka | Director of Project Office and External Relations | Municipality of Librazhd | 10th of May, 2019 |
| 51 | Representative | Chief Audit | Supreme State Control | 3rd of May, 2019 |
| 52 | Orlando Fusco | Local Governance | EU Delegation to Tirana | 3rd of May, 2019 |
| 53 | Pashk Luka | Local Coordinator | UNDP STAR2 Project |  |
| 54 | Pranvera Shkullaku | Specialist for Protocol and Information | Municipality of Pogradec | 9th of May, 2019 |
| 55 | Regana Fezullau | Economic Development and Statistics Specialist / OSS Front Desk | Municipality of Cërrik | 6th of May, 2019 |
| 56 | Rita Çupi | Specialist of Archives | Municipality of Lezhe | 3rd of May, 2019 |
| 57 | Romina Kuko | Deputy Minister of Interior | Ministry of Interior | 30th of Apr, 2019 |
| 58 | Silvana Malaj | Team Leader Component 3 Local Democracy and Good Governance | UNDP STAR2 Project | 1st of May, 2019 |
| 59 | Skenderije Halo | Specialist for Archives and Protocol | Municipality of Librazhd | 10th of May, 2019 |
| 60 | Suada Curra | Gender Equality Specialist / OSS Front Desk | Municipality of Cërrik | 6th of May, 2019 |
| 61 | Suel Hadri | General Secretary of City Council | Municipality of Shkoder | 2nd of May, 2019 |
| 62 | Shuaip Beqiri | Mayor | Municipality of Konispol | 15th of May, 2019 |
| 63 | Tatjana Elezi | Specialist, Asset Management Office | Municipality of Lezhe | 3rd of May, 2019 |
| 64 | Taulant Zeneli | Expert Local Services | UNDP STAR2 Project | 7th of May, 2019 |
| 65 | Valbona Gega | Specialist for Protocol | Municipality of Librazhd | 10th of May, 2019 |
| 66 | Vladimir Malkaj | UNDP Project Officer | UNDP STAR2 Project | 1st of May, 2019 |

# **Annex II - Glossary of Acronyms**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| AAC | Albanian Association of Communes |
| AAM | Albanian Association of Municipalities |
| AITR  ASLG | Agency for the Implementation of the Territorial Reform  Agency for Support Self-Local Governance |
| ALA | Association of Local Autonomy |
| ASPA | Albanian School of Public Administration |
| CB | Capacity Building |
| CDR | Combined Delivery Report |
| CoE | Council of Europe |
| CGF | Classification of Government Functions |
| CS | Civil society |
| CSL | Civil Service Law |
| CSO | Civil Society Organization |
| DLDP | Decentralization and Local Development Program |
| DLG | Decentralization and Local Governance |
| DOPA | Department of Public Administration |
| e-PAV | Electronic Platform of Local Administration |
| FIL | Freedom on Information Law |
| GDA | General Directory of Archives |
| GDT | General Directorate of Taxes |
| GoA | Government of Albania |
| HR | Human Resources |
| HRM | Human Resources Management |
| HRMIS | Human Resources Management Information System |
| HRMU | Human Resources Management Unit |
| HSCI  IPMG | High State Control Institution  Integrated Policy Management Group |
| LGAP | Law on General Administrative Procedures |
| MCD | Municipal Council Decision |
| MoF  MoI | Ministry of Finance  Ministry of Interior |
| MSLI | Minister of State for Local Issues |
| MTBP | Medium Term Budget Programme |
| NIM | National Implementation Modality |
| NPD | National Project Director |
| NSDI | National Strategy for Integration and Development |
| OSS | One Stop Shop |
| OSSIS  PAC | One Stop Shop Information System  Project Appraisal Committee |
| PAR | Public Administration Reform |
| PEFA | Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability |
| PFM | Public Finance Management |
| PFP | Project Field Presence |
| PLGP | USAID's Planning and Local Governance Project in Albania |
| PM | Project Manager |
| PMT | Project Management Unit |
| PPR | Project Progress Report |
| PSC | Project Steering Committee |
| RDF | Regional Development Fund |
| SBAA | Standard Basic Assistance Agreement |
| SC | Steering Committee |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goal |
| SOP | Standard Operating Procedures |
| TA | Technical Assistance |
| TAR | Territorial and Administrative Reform |
| TNA | Training Needs Assessment |

# **Annex III – Action Plan and ToRs**

**EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT**

**“Support to Territorial and Administrative Reform Project – STAR2”**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Evaluators:**

Diana Papleka

Blerjana Bino

**ACTION PLAN**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Develop the Action Plan for Evaluation Process | 24-25 April, 2019 |
| Complete the Desk Revision of the Project Materials (Logical Framework, Project Proposal, Reports, Documentation of Activities, materials produced etc.) | 26-30 April, 2019 |
| Develop Evaluation Methodology (Questionnaire, data gathering platform etc.) | 26-29 April, 2019 |
| Meet with Albanian Government representatives (Deputy Minister of Ministry of Interior, and Agency for Support of LG) | 30 April, 2019 |
| Meet with Cluster Manager, Project Manager, Team Leaders, Coordinator and other involved staff of STAR2 | May 1st, 2019 |
| Meet with the EU, SIDA, SDC, Italian Cooperation, USAID | May 2nd, 2019 |
| Meet with ‘Strong Municipalities” and ADISA representatives | May 2nd, 2019 |
| Visit municipality of Lezhe/Shkoder | May 3rd, 2019 |
| Visit municipality of Cerrik/Belsh | May 6th, 2019 |
| Visit municipality of Librazhd/Pogradec | May 10th, 2019 |
| Develop the Draft of the Evaluation Report | May 11th -14th, 2019 |
| Submit the Draft Evaluation Report | May 15th, 2019 |
| Meet with the Project staff to receive feedback on the Draft Report | May 20th, 2019 |
| Finalize the Evaluation Report | May 21st-23rd, 2019 |
| Submit the Final Evaluation Report | May 23rd, 2019 |
| Revised | May 27th, 2019 |

|  |
| --- |
| **Duties and Responsibilities** |
| The object of this evaluation is to analyze STAR2 Project process of implementation, the impact and changes that have occurred within beneficiaries and systems, identify problems and constraints that have been encountered, identify important lessons to be learned, and make recommendations for the implementation of future projects.  The evaluation aims at the followings:   1. Measure to what extend STAR2 Project has implemented the activities, delivered outputs and attained outcomes and specifically achieved development results; 2. Generate substantive evidence-based knowledge, by identifying best practices and lessons learned and make recommendations for improved future assistance in the relevant area.   More specifically the evaluation will:   1. Review the Project ’s design and internal coherence (needs and problems it sought to solve); 2. Analyze and evaluate the sustainability of project interventions; 3. Provide feedback on the soundness (defined as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability) and impact of project results; 4. Based on the analysis and evaluation conducted over the experience of STAR2, extract lessons learned and provide recommendations for follow-up.   The conclusions and recommendations generated by this evaluation will be addressed to UNDP, the Project Steering Committee, ASLG, and other partners involved in the Project implementation.  **Evaluation methodology**  The evaluation shall be based on the standard evaluation criteria including relevance, level of achievement of project objectives, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability as well as results-based management approach. More concretely:   * **Relevance:** The evaluator will assess the degree to which the Project takes into account the local context and development problems. The evaluation will review the extent to which the objectives of the Project are consistent with beneficiary requirements and needs and assess whether the approach was coherent with the Country's policies. The evaluation will also review the extent to which the Project design was logical and coherent, and it will assess the link between activities and expected results, and between results and objectives to be achieved. * **Effectiveness:** The evaluation will assess the extent to which the project's objectives have been achieved, compared to the overall project purpose. In evaluating effectiveness, it is useful to consider: I) if the planning activities are coherent with the overall objectives and project purpose; 2) the analysis of principal factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives. * **Efficiency:** To which extent is the intervention efficient in terms of resources and input committed when delivering outputs and immediate results? * **Impact:** The evaluation will assess the main impact effectively achieved by the STAR Project in the context of reference. * **Sustainability:** The evaluation will assess the Project capacity to produce and to reproduce benefits over time. In evaluating the Project sustainability, it is useful to consider to what extent intervention benefits will continue even after the Project is concluded and the principal factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the Project sustainability.   The evaluation shall be conducted by a team composed of a Senior evaluator, tasked to lead the evaluation process and an Evaluator, supporting Senior evaluator during the assignment implementation. The evaluators will use methodologies and techniques as determined by the specific needs for information, the availability of resources and priorities of stakeholders. In all the cases, the evaluators are expected to analyze all relevant information sources, such as annual reports, project documents and files, country development documents, and any other documents that may provide evidence on which to form opinions. The evaluators are expected to use interviews as a means to collect relevant data for the evaluation.  The methodology and techniques to be used in the evaluation should be described in detail in the inception report and the final evaluation report, and should contain, at a minimum, information on the instruments used of data collection and analysis, whether these be documents, interviews, field visits, questionnaires or participatory techniques.  It is expected that the evaluators will conduct consultations and meetings with project partners and representatives of sister like projects (DLDP, Strong Municipalities, etc) as well as other actors involved in the sector.  **Outputs and deliverables**  Working under the supervision of the Project Implementing Advisor (focal point) and UNDP Cluster Manager, the evaluators shall produce the following deliverables through the course of the as­signment:   * **Work plan** – within 2 days of the start of the assignment.  The evaluators will submit the wok plan which will include a detailed approach and methodology and schedule.  In par­ticular, the work plan will require a clear approach to data collection and work organization to examine the Project in its full scope. * **Presentation of findings –** within 18 days of the start of the assignment a presentation of findings and preliminary recommendation to key stakeholders will be carried out. The purpose is to provide opportunity for initial validation and support further elaboration of the evaluators’ findings and recommendations. * **Final evaluation report** – within 4 days of receiving the consolidated comments from stakeholders, the evaluators shall submit a final document that addresses relevant comments and provides comprehensive reporting on all elements of the assignment. This report will be submitted to the evaluation focal point for clearance.   **Evaluation Report Outline**  As a minimum, the Evaluation Report (draft or final) shall include the following components (the exact structure of the report may be influenced by the Project components and compo­nents of the Evaluation TOR):   1. Executive Summary 2. Introduction 3. Project outline 4. Methodology 5. Analysis 6. Findings 7. Best Practices and Lessons Learned 8. Recommendations 9. Relevant Annexes, for example:    * List of people interviewed    * List of acronyms    * Evaluation work plan and TOR    * List of key reference documents |

# **Annex IV – List of Documents Reviewed**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **List of documents reviewed** | |
| UNDP STAR2 Project Documents | Full STAR2 Project Document |
| STAR2 Inception Main Report |
| STAR2 Inception Annexes |
| STAR2 Implementation Plan 2018-2019 |
| STAR2 Progress Report 2016-2017 |
| STAR2 Progress Report Jan - Jun 2018 |
| STAR2 Interim Progress Report June 2016-Jan 2019 |
| STAR 1 Evaluation Report Final Draft 2016 |
| Monitoring Report STAR2 Sandra Buzlieva, April 2018 |
| UNDP STAR2 Outputs / Reports | Local Governance Mapping in Albania |
| Supporting Materials for LGUs Mapping |
| Programme Model for Transparency for LGUs |
| Training Module for Archives and Protocol Staff in LGUs |
| Assessment of the level of digitalization and online publication of Municipal Council's Decisions |
| Policies / Strategies / Legal Documents | Law 115/2014 “On the territorial and administrative division of LG units in the Republic of Albania” |
| National Cross Cutting Strategy on Decentralization and Local Governance |
| Overview of Agency for Supporting Local Self-Governance / DCM No. 11, Date 12.01.2018 |
| International Reports | SIGMA Report 2017 on The Principles of Public Administration |

# **Annex V - Summarized implementation progress per activity**

| ***Component/Activity*** | ***Implementation Stage*** |
| --- | --- |
| **Component 1 - Strengthening Institutional and Administrative Capacities of LGUs** |  |
| 1.1.3 Capacity building on Code of Administrative Procedures (CAP) implementation | **COMPLETED**  **COMPLETED** |
| 1.1.4 Capacity building on adopting LG Standard Operating Procedures |
| 1.2.1 Capacity building on leadership | Ongoing  60% |
| 1.3.1 Capacity building on improvement of local level tax collection and enforcement | **COMPLETED** |
| 1.3.2 Local revenue management action plans for 30 small and medium municipalities | Ongoing  60% |
| 1.3.4 Capacity building on asset and land management | **COMPLETED** |
| 1.3.5 Capacity building on LGUs’ compliance with HSAI | **COMPLETED** |
| **Component 2 - Increased local service delivery, efficiency, quality, coverage, accessibility and inclusiveness for men and women** |  |
| 2.1.1 Capacity building for general service delivery provision | Joint implementation  Ongoing  30% |
| 2.1.2 Assessing challenges for service delivery |
| 2.1.3 Piloting service reorganization |
| 2.2.1 Development of a benchmark system on LG administrative and public services | Ongoing  20% |
| 2.3.1 OSS model developed and scaled up | Ongoing  65% |
| 2.4.1 Capacity building for standardized local archives | **COMPLETED** |
| **Component 3 - Enhanced local democracy through fostering citizen-oriented governance and participatory decision making, leveraging the roles of women as actors of change** |  |
| 3.1.1 Local Governance Mapping | Ongoing  50% |
| 3.2.1 Capacity building for public engagement and consultation | **COMPLETED** |
| 3.2.3 Municipal Programs of Transparency | **COMPLETED** |
| 3.2.4 Publication of Municipal Councils Decisions | **COMPLETED** |
| 3.2.6 Develop standard municipal websites | Ongoing  80% |
| 3.2.7 Increase LG public ethics and integrity | Joint implementation  Ongoing  50% |
| 3.2.8 Pilot municipal integrity plans |

\*Star Progress Report January – April 2019