

EXTERNAL EVALUATION

Project title: “Support for Innovation against Corruption: Building a Citizen Centric Service Delivery Model in Albania” (ISDA Support Project)

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NOVEMBER 2019
COMMISSIONED BY UNDP ALBANIA

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Executive Summary

The project “*Support for Innovation against Corruption: Building a Citizen Centric Service Delivery Model in Albania*” (implementing period August 2014- December 2019¹), hereinafter referred to in this report as the “ISDA Support Project” has assisted the take-off of the Albanian’s government efforts to improve access to public services and the quality and efficiency in their delivery, through citizen-centric innovation and use of technology. Specifically, the project was positioned from the onset to provide key contributions to reform design, implementation, public outreach and monitoring. As a technical assistance instrument, it has helped in the mobilization and disbursement of the large-scale World Bank assistance for the reform.

Reforming the public service delivery through a citizen-centric approach represents the government’s determination to improve service access and quality for citizens and businesses and increase efficiency in the Albanian public administration as a mean to strengthen the rule of law and fight against corruption, to foster a customer-care culture, to strengthen compliance with the EU integration agenda, and align with the commitments under Southeastern Europe regional initiatives and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. As a continuing government priority since April 2014, the reform is now under the leadership of the Deputy Prime Minister (DPM).

The ISDA Support Project has relied on a donor pool fund mechanism (UN & UNDP, and the Italian and Austrian governments) administered by UNDP, aiming to provide support to the reform leader² in ensuring effective management of the overall reform, support the Front Office – Back Office separation and its piloting, support the elaboration of the larger endeavor for public services delivery as well as operational and functional support to the Agency for Delivery of Integrated Services of Albania (ADISA).

During its implementation, the ISDA Support Project has followed two substantial revisions which have ensured the impact of the project based on the development challenges and the needs of the country in advancing the public service delivery. In this regard, the second revision of the project in 2018 continued to support the Albanian government on the standardization and re-engineering of service delivery processes in Albanian central government institutions; strengthening the adoption of customer care standards in the delivery of public services by government institutions; continuous assistance to ADISA to ensure its sustainability; quality assurance and performance monitoring based on the established standards; promoting innovative solutions; ensure nationwide access to citizens throughout Albania to central government services provided under customer care standards through ADISA’s regional offices and colocation and boost the use of innovation and IT.

¹ The Project’s Steering Committee has agreed on a 3-month extension in 8 October 2019, thus till March 2020.

² Following the changes in the institutional landscape after the general elections in 2017, the Deputy Prime Minister has been appointed as reform leader, while the position of the Minister of State for Innovation and Public Administration who led the reform from 2014, was retired.

Fully in line with UN's Albania Programmes of Cooperation for Sustainable Development (2012-2016 and 2017-2021), the project firmly succeeded to support the Government's strategy on public service delivery, to establish a coordination and monitoring frame for the implementation of the reform, to expand the service delivery in different regions/municipalities of Albania and to offer inclusiveness, equity and access to services for citizen based on best practices and know-how for innovative service provision. The ISDA Support Project was successfully implemented in accordance with its project design and its intent.

Based on its achievements, (from policy to expert technical support), the ISDA Support Project has been coherent by responding step by step to the needs and challenges and its impact is increased over the years. Regardless of the government changes and changes to the government institution in charge for the implementation of the public administration reform, there has been no substantial negative impact in the implementation of the project and on the level of cooperation between the government institutions and the project management. This confirms again the effectiveness of the project, its coherency, effective management and the vision of the UNDP and sustainable cooperation with the state institutions.

The envisaged results (and respective outputs) of the project are as follows:

- Public Service Delivery Policy Development and Implementation
 - Output 1.1: Public service reform policy document formulated
 - Output 1.2: A Result-Based Framework for Public Service Delivery Reform established and restructuring assistance provided
 - Output 1.3: Annual "Trust in Governance" survey
- Front Office - Back Office separation and the establishment of the service delivery standards for citizens and businesses
 - Output 2.1: Best practice and know how transferred on standardized service delivery
 - Output 2.2: Best practices in customer care standards adopted in key Albanian institutions and communicated
- Agency for Delivery of Integrated Services of Albania is supported and operational
 - Output 3.1: ADISA head offices equipped and furnished
 - Output 3.2: Organizational and functional support for ADISA's regional offices provided
 - Output 3.3: Institutional roles in design, implementation and inspection of service standards defined and oversight carried out
- Innovative solutions promoted sustainably for the public service delivery reform implementation
 - Output 4.1: Public Services Innovation Lab established at ADISA
 - Output 4.2: Regional distribution of central government services supported
- E-government agenda activities with high impact on service delivery reform implemented
 - Output 5.1: Review of citizen online user experience conducted

- Output 5.2: Digitization management support enabled
- Support for reform program management
 - Output 6.1: Local Technical Assistance provided

The project design is sound and relevant. It has achieved the expected results and the related outcomes. Being clearly focused on the areas of intervention, the project has achieved to build close cooperation with the government institutions at central and local level as well as the other stakeholders. Albanian officials have learned from models of countries such as Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Estonia and have adapted the best practices of those models for modernizing the public service delivery in Albania. The project has been also effective and successful in its outreach and communication activities to raise awareness about the public service delivery to the general public. In addition, the project has produced many attractive designed flyers, leaflets and publications.

Involvement of stakeholders: The project is a good example of effective and participatory involvement of stakeholders such as the reform leading institution (the Deputy Prime Minister Office-Acting as the leading institution of the public service delivery reform and at the same time as the National Implementing Partner, on behalf of the Government of Albania for the ISDA Support Project); ADISA – the main state agency and the main target of assistance for the project in terms of institutional and operational capacity building; other state institutions, the donors community, the civil society actors involved also in monitoring research activities and citizens.

Gender and support to vulnerable groups

The overall project’s approach relies on the principles of equal and fair treatment for all beneficiaries, while paying special attention to the economically disadvantaged, the elderly, women, persons with disabilities, minorities and the rural population. Specifically, the project has paid attention to the gender disaggregated data from the participant’s list from the capacity building activities, from the “Mystery shopper” and “Trust in governance” opinion polls. Additionally, in order to better develop the “Leave no-one behind” approach, the project management made use also of other data gathered from other surveys, such as the national household surveys in 2016 and 2018 conducted by the World Bank. In the future, the project should advance its efforts at addressing gender inclusiveness by supporting women and girls particularly in remote areas with IT skills.

Activities implemented in frame of the project have carefully addressed issues for people with disabilities such as infrastructure facilities for them. Lately ADISA has designed a video-material targeting blind people aiming to explain the services offered by ADISA- thus contributing at the inclusiveness of this group as beneficiary of the public services too.

Furthermore, over the past year, the project has contributed also improve the access to public services of the Roma and Egyptian community in Albania.

Sustainability of the results

The results achieved so far by the project are very relevant to the Albanian Government national priority on public service delivery as an important component of the public administration reform. Much of the success is due to the relevance of the program, its responsive design, level of government commitment and effective UNDP and donor coordination. However continued donor funding and government support, would contribute even more in the consolidation of these results. Conclusions, lessons and recommendations suggests that (due to their nature and complexity), some of the project outputs needs to be consolidated in the following years, such as ADISA's business model and its geographic enlargement, government efforts in advancing and supporting its digital agenda as well as further assistance to the vulnerable groups such as Roma community and people with disabilities.

Findings and conclusions

In terms of relevance, the project presented a straightforward idea that resonated well with beneficiaries and stakeholders. In its design, it included an ambitious, realistic and complementary approach to initiate and advance the Albanian government efforts on public service delivery. Overall, the project addressed a complex topic, driven by the domestic demand. The project activities focused on policy formulation and capacity building set ground to the accountability and professionalism of the responsible institutions to deliver quality public services focused on citizens. All project activities were complementary to the Cross-Cutting Public Administration Reform Strategy (PAR) 2015–2020, UN's Albania Programme of Cooperation for Sustainable Development (2017-2021), to the National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI) 2015–2020 and to the Cross-Cutting Strategy "Digital Agenda for Albania" (DAA) 2015–2020.

In terms of effectiveness and efficiency, overall project objective has been achieved. The plan of activities was delivered on time and with impactful results and outputs. Moreover, project partners and stakeholders expressed high satisfaction with the project implementation and commended UNDP for its leadership role. Internal procedures were clearly-communicated, protocols were put in place. The project's approach based on inclusiveness and participatory manner is one of the added value for the successful implementation. The project contribution was greatest in increased government capacities on public service delivery topic as one of the most important pillars of the public administration reform in Albania.

In terms of impact and sustainability, ISDA Support Project provides a country show case for good practice, however it should be replicated in order to consolidate the initiatives implemented so far, particularly that of ADISA. UNDP has built a sound monitoring and evaluation plan which has contributed to the assessment of the progress at result level and phasing out strategies. At this stage, the donor support is still crucial for the sustainability of the service delivery sector in Albania. During the evaluation, it was clear the interaction between the project management

and the government institutions, however the leading reform institution (currently the Deputy Prime Minister Office) needs to be supported with additional dedicated technical staff which will help at accelerating the implementation of the reform on civic-centered public service delivery.

Bold joint synergy with UNDP project STAR II was put in place which produced concrete results at approaching public services of the central government at local level. The greatest best practice marked by the stakeholders was the operational and functional support given to ADISA and its expansion in the country (through collocation and ADISA mobile office), thus offering better services to the citizens even in remote areas.

The credibility of the project is widely perceived and accepted as a model or inspiration of positive approach and improved trust in the state institutions at central and local level. Innovative approaches are a great contribution too.

As regards recommendations, overall no drastic changes are required as regards the project management. In view of possible continuation it is recommended that the project should continue its efforts at increasing the capacities of the reform leading institution; supporting ADISA's sustainability as well as on infrastructure and capacity building specifically on innovation and its expansion in other medium/small sized municipalities and remote areas. On the other side, emphasis should be given to the citizen's outreach and awareness campaigns on public service delivery as well as on IT literacy to vulnerable groups, youth and women.

INTRODUCTION

This external evaluation commissioned by UNDP aims to analyze the ISDA Support Project's implementation process, its impact and important lessons to be learned as well as to provide insights for its continuity and sustainability. This evaluation is guided by Terms of Reference (ToRs) dated September 2019 (Annex A) and the work is undertaken during September – October 2019, in close coordination with the ISDA Support Project's staff which provided all the assistance and facilitated communication with different stakeholders interviewed for the purpose of this assessment report.

Methodology

The evaluation methodology applied qualitative tools at assessing the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability of the project. Such tools consisted on the analysis of project documents and other relevant policy materials provided by project management, face-to-face interviews, online interviews, and direct observation by the attendance in the inauguration of the ADISA Mobile Office in Zall-Herr administrative unit of Tirana in October 10th 2019.

The interviews are conducted with key stakeholders/beneficiaries of ISDA Support Project including representatives from central and local government, donors' community, ADISA's representatives in different cities and other experts.

The evaluation interviews were based on the evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact of the project.

In line with the ToRs, the assessment is conducted based on the following five criteria:

- a) Relevance- the degree to which the project has taken into account the local context and development problems, the extent to which the objectives of the project were consistent with beneficiary requirements/ needs and the extent to which the project was coherent with the Country's policies.
- b) Effectiveness: the extent to which the project's objectives have been achieved, compared to the overall project purpose as well as the analysis of principal factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives.
- c) Efficiency: the extent to which the intervention was efficient in terms of resources and input committed when delivering outputs and immediate results.
- d) Impact: The main impact effectively achieved by the ISDA Support Project in the context of reference.
- e) Sustainability: the project capacity to produce and to reproduce benefits over time.

The project management has been effective and professional. There has been only positive feedbacks received during the interviews.

Main Findings

These findings are organized on the following sections:

- Relevance of the project to the Albanian context
- Effectiveness and Efficiency
- Impact and Sustainability
- Conclusion and lessons learned
- Recommendations

Relevance

The ISDA support project is highly relevant and responds to the reformations and challenges of the Albanian Government at transforming the public service delivery in the country through the citizens- centric approach. Such approach and vision are part of the *a) Cross-Cutting Public Administration Reform Strategy (PAR) 2015–2020* which constitutes the overall framework for the modernization and transformation of institutions and practices of public administration in the country, with the vision of providing “high quality services for citizens and businesses in a transparent, effective, and efficient way through the use of modern technologies and innovative services, and that complies with the requirements of European integration through impartial, professional and accountable civil servants, part of efficient setups”; *b) of the National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI) 2015–2020*. Furthermore, this vision is supported *c) by the Cross-Cutting Strategy “Digital Agenda for Albania” (DAA) 2015–2020* under the strategic priority 2 “Policy for the development of electronic governance and delivery of interactive public services for citizens and businesses”.

The project’s key strength relies in addressing the public service delivery challenges focused on the citizens, in an innovative and consistent manner in close partnership with the government at central and local level. The evaluation confirms that the project has critically contributed at the implementation of the government’s priorities on public service delivery since the beginning of this efforts from the Albanian government in 2014 and in expanding geographically the pool of these services focused on quality and inclusiveness. Additionally, stakeholders involved in this assessment report stated that UNDP is in a unique position as a donor and as an international agency with constructive cooperation with government, other donors and international organizations as well as with Albanian non-state stakeholders (CSOs, media, businesses, academia etc.)

The ISDA Support Project has contributed also in fulfilling the SDG goal no 16 “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”, specifically target no 16.5³, target no. 16.6⁴ and target no. 16.10⁵. Such contribution is also stated on the report in 2019 “SDG mainstreaming through the National Strategy for Integration and Development 2015-2020 (NSDI II) which acknowledge that the cooperation between the Government of Albania and the UNDP earlier in 2014 enabled Albania to share information and benchmark progress with other countries in the area of good governance.

Responding also to the objective no. 5⁶ and objective no. 8⁷ of the “Albanian Public Administration Reform Strategy 2015-2020”, ISDA Support Project has met the challenges of the Albanian public sector also by exploring new sustainable models for public service delivery which significantly improve customer experience and outcomes through enhanced service levels, reduced cost and corruption cases. This solution starts in 2014 with the establishment and continuous support over this years of the Agency for the Delivery of Integrated Services (ADISA)⁸ a public-centred institution which aims to provide fast quality services and standards through the establishment and administration of front-desks for the citizens and one-stop-shop centers for the delivery of integrated services provided by the central and local government institutions and agencies.

Project objective and its results have been both at strategic and technical level. As such, the ISDA Support Project has assisted at developing the “Long-Term Policy Document on the Delivery of Citizen Centric Service” in 2016. The project has served both as a bridge phase towards the forthcoming core financial support from the World Bank, and as a catalyzer for innovative ideas and solutions. Another key strength of the project has been its ability to provide highly effective support for capacity building and increasing the capacities of the central government institutions and of ADISA. As a result, the ISDA Support Project has provided particular expertise specially focused on IT, re-engineering process as well as to the separation of Front Office – Back Office separation.

In frame of the administrative-territorial reform in Albania in 2004, the ISDA Support Project has joined synergies with the other UNDP program STAR II aiming to enhance the efficiency of local administrations as well as strengthen and consolidate the operations of the local government units. As such, under the service delivery model of central government institutions, over the past 2 years the project achieved to develop in practice the colocation of central and local government services in municipal one-stop shop offices (in 6 municipalities of Divjake, Belsh, Maliq, Patos, Librazhd, Malësi e Madhe, with Kukësi in the pipeline) and to adopt standardized practices of the local government services under the model of the central service

³ Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms

⁴ Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels

⁵ Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements

⁶ “Improved, accessible and integrated public services by reducing the corruption opportunities and strengthening of ethics when delivering public services”

⁷ “Simplified procedure for the provision of services by facilitating communication with the public and avoiding corruption”

⁸ Law no. 13/2016 Date 18.2.2016 “On the way of delivering public services at front office level in the Republic of Albania

delivery. This synergy is an effort which contributes both at the experience sharing and increasing the capacities of the local government units at delivering their services as well as to the overall approach of the project and of the public service delivery reform through citizen-centric approach.

Effectiveness and Efficiency

The ISDA Support Project implementation (2014-2019) has gone through two main milestones, the first one mainly focused on policy formulation and institutional capacity building and the second one mainly focused on adopting best practices and promoting innovative solutions. Intervention during both phases is categorized by a clear logic and tailored to the government challenges and changes on public service delivery system. Over the 5 years of implementation the government institution in charge of the Public Administration Reform (PAR) has been changed 2 times, however, given the commitment and the professionalism of the project management, the UNDP and involvement of all the stakeholders, the ISDA Support Project managed to overcome and to achieve the intended outcomes in time.

This project was a multi-year project including combination of different types of activities at strategic and technical level. The general framework of the project is well-detailed by specifying for each of the expected outputs respectively the output indicators, data source, baseline targets and the data collection methods. The project has achieved to implement the envisaged activities, to deliver the outputs and specifically to achieve the development results. All interviewed stakeholders, expressed satisfaction with both achievement and project performance. All of the set indicators have been achieved and reflection on the level of the overall impact is already in place by the project management.

Based on the project framework, the project has achieved the following important results and outputs:

Public Service Delivery Policy Development, Implementation and Front Office - Back Office separation and the establishment of the service delivery standards for citizens and businesses

The efforts on policy formulation has started since the beginning of the project implementation in 2014 and during the first phase of the project till 2016 the project has substantially contributed to the development of the key policy document “Long term policy document on the delivery of citizen centric services by central government institutions in Albania”, approved by the Decision of the Council of Ministers no. 384, dated 25 May 2016. Key contributions of the project under these two first results consist also on the expertise offered for the process of separation of the front office (FO) from the back office (BO) in central government institutions. Key stakeholders involved in this assessment report highlights that the starting phase of the reform in itself was challenging and the assistance provided by the ISDA Support Project critical. This, due to the fact that “it was not only about changing the public administration, it was about changing a

whole system's approach and culture". The commitment of the reform leading institution at that time and the support of the project management exceeded some major problems related to the resistance from change of the administration or even to the resistance of the government agencies and offices as regards the front-back office separation process as "a threat" to their authority. Still these perceptions are evident in the work of ADISA, however (to date) the government actors are generally committed to facilitate ADISA's work as a unique state institution which ensures that citizens and businesses in the country receive quality public service delivery and easy access to the administrative services.

Other significant assistances of the project are:

- The formulation of the Citizen Charter⁹ which defines the citizen's rights and duties in public service delivery. - approved by the Council of Ministers on 26 October 2018. Approval of the Citizen Charter is followed by a broad publicity campaign in order to communicate to the citizen relevant information about the content of this document and to raise awareness about their rights on public service delivery. However, awareness raising campaigns with citizens and businesses, particularly youth and vulnerable groups should be continued in the future through face to face meetings, particularly in the remote areas.
- Trust in Governance" survey, which became part of ISDA Support Project in 2016. It started as an experimental tool in the context of OGP (Open Governance Partnership) Albania in 2013 and further evolved into a research instrument fueling public and policy discourse with accurate data on citizens' experience with and expectations from governance – particularly in the context of territorial & administrative reform and public services at central and local level. Over the years "Public trust" surpassed all expectations by becoming the main independent and reliable measuring / assessment instrument on governance, integrity, anticorruption and accountability of Albania's governance system which is seriously taken into account by the Government and other state intuitions at all levels, by donor community (using it for both, as planning tool and also as an indicator), by international organizations, Albanian media, civil society and other policy stakeholders. In this component, the UNDP has been partnership-oriented given the fact that the instrument is regularly consulted (before the survey) not only within UN agencies but also with other donors and government agencies. During 2013-2016, the "Trust in governance" survey has followed the same methodology, survey instrument and national coverage. For 2017, a section on the Performance of Public Institutions was re-introduced along with new questions under the sections of Transparency and Accountability, Corruption in Public Institutions and Citizen Engagement. For the 2019 "Public Trust" an updated methodology is designed with a very solid nationally representative sample (2500 respondents). Additionally, the survey instrument (questionnaire) has reached a very high consistency level (after 7 years of implementation) which allows for sufficient

⁹ Approved by the Council of Ministers on 26 October 2018

section introducing new questions to cover specific developments and dynamics related to Albania's governance system.

Agency for Delivery of Integrated Services of Albania and promotion of Innovative solutions promoted sustainably for the public service delivery reform implementation

The Agency for Delivery of Integrated Services of Albania- ADISA is certainly the best practice as regards the public service delivery reform. Such statement is underlined by all the stakeholders interviewed in this report. ADISA, established in 2014 under MIPA¹⁰'s authority and by Decree no. 693 of the Council of Ministers with the mandate of managing the citizen service centers, currently operates based on the law no. 13/2016, dated 18 February 2016 "On the way of delivering public services at front office level in the Republic of Albania", which provides for expanded responsibilities in citizen centric public service delivery. In frame of ISDA Support Project, ADISA has gained organizational and functional support. During the project implementation, through international and local technical assistance, the project supported ADISA on Front Office – Back Office separation, on management of the delivery of integrated services, on customer care service, management and supervision. Furthermore, assistance is given at infrastructure level as well as on institutional capacity building for ADISA and its branches outside Tirana. The support given to ADISA and its growth over the year has been recognized by all the stakeholders which suggests that this assistance is still relevant in order to ensure the sustainability of the agency.

The establishment of the Innovation Lab in 2017 based on the successful practices supported by UNDP in South Asia and Europe is another important achievement of the project under the result "Innovative solutions promoted sustainably for the public service delivery reform implementation". The first of its kind in the Balkans, ADISA Lab introduces the use of innovation and technology on public service delivery in Albania. This Lab, approved as a self-standing unit under ADISA's Executive Director as of January 2019, operates based on the contribution of a diverse group of people within the agency, bringing together different skills and expertise, who are committed in advancing the innovation agenda. The project assisted the ADISA Lab in operational issues (such as operational manuals) as well communication issues, capacity building by offering relevant expertise.

Responders in this report emphasize that the colocation process within local One Stop Shop offices of municipalities (as part of the output "Regional distribution of central government services") has contributed to the regional distribution of the central government services to the medium-sized municipalities, thus complementing 16 centers of ADISA in large municipalities of the country. In addition, it has helped the LGUs (Local government units) to adopt the central level development tools, methodologies, and templates on service delivery. To date, there are 6 co-located offices in the country, respectively in the municipalities of Maliq (launched in November 2018), Patos (Launched in April 2019), Belsh (Launched in Maj 2019), Librazhd (Launched in July 2019), Divjaka (Launched in September 2019), Malësi e Madhe (launched in

¹⁰ Ministry of Innovation and Public Administration

October 2019) and another one in Kukës municipality which is expected to be opened in November 2019, and three more planned for early 2020. The ISDA Support Project, in close cooperation with STAR II project has contributed with knowledge transfer to LGUs and infrastructure, i.e. adoption of standardized practices; queue management and camera systems, IT equipment, etc. The project has supported ADISA in the production of a Standards Manual for Customer Care Front Offices for LGUs, and in providing municipalities ready for co-location with assistance in one-stop-shop space design, FO workflow and signage.

The geographical distribution of the ADISA offices, by making use of the one-stop shops Albania is far from reaching out the majority of the medium-sized municipalities of the country. In this regard, further support is needed, considering also the challenges that are faced such as lack of capacities of the local government units both at infrastructural and operational issues.

Reaching out citizens and businesses comprise the core vision of the ISDA Support Project and its activities have contributed to do that. In addition to the abovementioned assistance to ADISA centers in large municipalities and co-located centers in medium-sized municipalities, the project has established another contact point with citizens and businesses by introducing the first mobile delivery facility (MDF) targeting remote areas of the country. The first presentation of the mobile office was introduced in Zall-Herr administrative unit in October 2019 and it is in piloting phase in administrative units of Tirana. This facility is considered from responders and participants in the presentation event as an important facility that enables the contact and communication between citizens, businesses and central government, particularly avoiding long distances and lack of transport infrastructure of citizens in remote areas.

A core contribution under the support given to the Agency for Delivery of Integrated Services of Albania is the “Mystery Shopper” assessment of the central institutions in public service delivery- carried out by the consortium of three civil society organizations: The Institute for Development, Research and Alternatives (IDRA), the Gender Alliance Center for Development (GADC) and the Center for Information and Development (CID). This output is part also of the supporting activities in frame of the public service delivery reform. On its first report conducted in 2018, it has monitored and assessed the service’s standards, the administrative function and interpersonal skills of the employees and the professionalism, transparency and appearance of 7 central government institutions and of ADISA. This assessment is considered as an added value that contributes in advancing the work and the quality of delivering the public services based on standards, however, responders underline the importance at expanding this monitoring tool also for other central government institutions. Mystery Shopping 2019 assessment is being currently conducted. The purpose in the future is to transform this as a standardized tool for performance monitoring and drive for improvement that can be comprehensively utilized by the Government of Albania for all public service providers and consistently throughout the year.

E-government agenda activities and management support to the reform leader institution

Projects outputs for these envisioned results consists on providing E-Government expertise on the preparation of a pre-feasibility study on broadband development in Albania. This expertise is completed in 2017 and supported the Government of Albania strategic investment plans as well

as the digital integration pillar of the Western Balkans' regional economic area. Experts interviewed in this report considers the implementation of IT solutions are important at enabling public service delivery and increasing benefits to citizens and businesses. The project has also provided e-government expertise, including on guidelines related to planning, implementation and oversight for public services, and standards for increased service automation level. Current activities under this result are related to supporting ADISA in its initiative to increase capabilities of E-Albania usage by the citizens through the availability of double screen service windows in its centers and co-location locations.

Important highlights are given from the interviewees as regards the expertise offered by the project on standard compliance and quality assurance in public service delivery, reengineering and deregulation processes, front-back office separation and support to ADISA. Additionally, support is given to the reform leading institution which has been highly important since the beginning of the public service reform in 2014. The ISDA Support Project has continued in doing so during its implementation, however, changes in the government after the elections in 2017 have produced some challenges particularly related to the staff flow and need for sustainability of technical staff in the field.

USE OF RESOURCES AND RISKS

The project is implemented in accordance with UNDP's National Implementation Modality, whereby the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is the National Implementing Partner, on behalf of the Government of Albania. The highest management body for the project is the Project Steering Committee (PSC) which includes on the Government side: the reform leader, the appointed project director (who as of January 2019 is ADISA's Executive Director), ADISA, AKSHI (National Agency for Information Society), Delivery Unit / Prime Minister's Office, Deputy Minister of the Interior & Agency for Support of Local Self-Government (ASLG) /, and on the donor side: all contributing partners' representatives - the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), and UNDP – as well as EU Delegation and the World Bank- all partners in supporting the Albanian Public Service reform.

The UNDP is recognized in this report as a strategic partner of the Albanian Government which has contributed to address the development changes of the country and to support relevant interventions with sound coordination with the donor's community.

The project have involved both long-term and short -term staff, respectively composed by National project manager and a Project assistant and by local and international experts with a strong background in the various sub-areas of public service delivery and innovation.

Over the past years, the project has identified and addressed several risks that might have influenced the implementation of the project, such as: the Institutional resistance to inter-agency collaboration; Inadequate institutional capacity to deliver reforms; Inadequate political will to implement specific reforms; changes due to the 2017 national and 2019 local elections; Lack of timely and sufficient resource mobilization based on the funding availability and willingness to commit from potential partners. However, it is evident that the project has succeeded to mitigate

the risks through continuous consultancy with key stakeholders and analysis. In this regard, the project successfully managed the government changes after the general elections in 2017 which included the suppression of the position of the Minister of State for Innovation and Public Administration in the new cabinet and transition of the reform leadership to the Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) since September 2017 and the replacement of the deputy prime minister in 2019.

Taking into consideration also the complexity of the project, the project stakeholders consistently underlined that the project manager has ensured timely planning and management of the project. However, responders highlight the need for more technical staff of the reform leader institution (DPM office).

All the stakeholders interviewed in frame of this evaluation report considered that the various project activities increased their knowledge and skills, particularly those related to innovation. Most stakeholders confirmed that the project strengthened the capacity of the central government institutions on public service delivery.

All sources of information confirm that the project is implemented as planned and in line with the government needs and challenges as regards the implementation of the public service reform.

Impact and Sustainability

Different stakeholders shared their views in frame of this assessment report on the role that the ISDA Support Project has played at developing the Albanian's government reform to improve the public service delivery. All of the individuals unanimously agreed that the project impact is high at policy level as well as at capacity building level. This, due to the political commitment, the individual commitment of the reform leading institution and of the commitment of the UNDP project management.

In regard to the impact and the sustainability, the pool of expertise offered by the project since the beginning of the government reform is another key contribution of the project. Such statement is confirmed by all the stakeholders who emphasize it as a must, not only at the beginning of the reform (central government institutions required capacities), but even in the future, particularly focused on innovative solutions.

Coherency and the relevance of the project to the needs of the Albanian administration at improving the public services is evident, based on its impact and its milestones throughout its implementation. Innovative ideas and solutions that are promoted particularly over the past 2 years have moved forward the quality of offering public services with focus on citizens, taking into consideration the vulnerable groups of the society too. The project assistance to the legal and strategic frameworks is a contribution to long-term processes of the public service delivery which should be consolidated in the future.

The support given to the public administration in frame of the reform undertaken in 2014, has its impact to the citizens- as the final intended target group standing at the core of the public service delivery reform. From the citizen's perspective, ADISA's regional and co-located offices are very important and have facilitated the communication between them and the central public institutions. Furthermore, these offices and quality services are considered as important tools as changing the culture among citizens and increase their trust in government institutions. Separation of the front and back office has been an enormous effort which has increased the professionalism of the administration and the quality of the services too.

At activity level, highest perception of impact was reported for ADISA which is considered an important entry point to the general public service delivery in Albania. However, at this stage, ADISA faces several challenges particularly related to its sustainability, its business model, its geographical expand and staff.

Key Conclusions

The main conclusion is that the project has made an excellent progress by fully achieving its objectives.

Some more specific conclusions that can be made following the evidence collected during the evaluation are as follows:

Conclusion 1 – The ISDA Support Project has played an important role at the development of the Albanian government public service delivery reform by directly contributing in this field since the project's start in 2014. This is done by offering capacity building and expertise in core processes of the reform as well as in the legal and strategic framework.

Conclusion 2: The project responded to the development challenges of Albania at promoting a responsive and transparent system of public service as a critical precondition for Good Governance and Sustainable Development of the country. The project was tailored to the country's needs and the beneficiaries were satisfied that the project's approach and the implemented activities were relevant for their work and the national context.

Conclusion 3: The project was fully in line with the sustainable economic and social development goal set out in the National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI) 2015–2020. It responds to the overall framework for the modernization and transformation of institutions and practices of public administration in the country as part of the Cross-Cutting Public Administration Reform Strategy (PAR) 2015–2020 as well as to the vision of the Cross-Cutting Strategy "Digital Agenda for Albania" (DAA) 2015–2020 and to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Conclusion 4: The project was driven by inclusiveness approach, thus gave emphasize to the gender-related issues and to the human rights which were integrated into project activities. However, more concrete activities should be taken into consideration in the future.

Conclusion 5: The project management structure contributed to effective implementation of the project and responded to the needs of the beneficiaries, particularly related to the government changes. Most information sources indicated that the collaboration and coordination among beneficiaries was effective. This collaboration was seen as one of the main strengths and successes of the project as it helped to build relevant synergies.

Conclusion 6: UNDP has been focused to ensure the sustainability of the results by offering strong management assistance, building synergies among beneficiaries and the donor's community, support in policy formulation and institutional capacity building, identifying and adopting best practices and promoting innovative solutions for the public service delivery system in Albania.

Conclusion 7: The capacities of civil society actors were recognized throughout the project implementation and cooperation arrangements were established which ensured their participation in different activities. The project management has carefully undertaken the stakeholder analysis from the start of the project in order to include specific activities targeting civil society.

Conclusion 8: The project success was due to a mixture of factors and actor's commitments, such as of the political will and the commitment of Ministry of Innovation and Public Administration and later of the Deputy Prime Minister office, commitment of the donors as well as the capacities and the commitment of the project management and the steering committee members.

Conclusion 9: According to the analysis conducted as part of this evaluation, weaknesses (also part of the risk analysis of the ISDA Support Project) on the overall implementation of the public service delivery reform are faced over the years particularly related to the staff flow of the reform leader- following the changes in the government. The project has achieved to exceed this weakness.

Conclusion 10: The regional enlargement of ADISA supported by the project is very important at improving the citizen-centric approach. As such, the co-location is acknowledged as a key-success of the project. However, in order to boost the impact of these initiatives at local level, particularly in remote areas, a strong engagement of citizens and their ICT literacy is needed. As it is stated also by the Balkan barometer 2019, the rate of utilization of e-government services is low for a mixture of reasons, particularly having to do with the availability and ease of access. In this regards, the mobile facility initiated by the ISDA Support Project is of a high importance at approaching to the citizens in remote areas that have both limited access and limited ICT capacities.

Lessons Learned

The close collaboration among ISDA Support Project staff and state/non state stakeholders of the project was broadly recognized as a crucial element in the successful implementation of the project. As confirmed during the interviews, this close and consistent collaboration was achieved

by setting clear goals, ensuring open and frequent communication as well as avoid overlapping of the activities with other initiatives in the field.

In this context, the ISDA Support Project was perceived as an important actor, contributing particularly at increasing the capacities of the government's administration and at policy formulation since the start of the public service's delivery reform in Albania.

Lesson 1. The project's implementation reveals the importance of being pro-active in providing support to the policy formulation and in responding timely with relevant capacities/expertise to the development challenges emerged since 2014.

Lesson 2. The success and effectiveness of the project and its outputs have been timely institutionalized without any substantial delay. This, due to the government and donors commitment too. However overall, the reform leader institution and ADISA needs more capacities and skilled staff and this is a consistent challenge which should be addressed in the future in order to avoid any potential delay both at policy level and at the self-sufficiency of ADISA.

Lesson 3: Throughout the implementation period of the project (of the Public Administration Reform too), different challenges and needs have developed. After 5 years, further challenges are particularly related to the quality of the services and to the financial sustainability of ADISA. To date, one of the most challenging issue of ADISA is lack of financial resources for staff needed, considering also its geographic expansion throughout Albania. This challenge has been addressed so far in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance, however, in mid and long term and given the ADISA's vision and its mission, ADISA should act on the basis of a business model which ensures the self-sustainability of this agency.

Lesson 4: E-government agenda is also a key component at improving service delivery. As such, AKSHI (the National Agency for Information Society) has been partner of the project and of the broad service delivery reform. Responders in this evaluation underline the importance and role of coordination so far with AKSHI.

Recommendations

Given the complexity and the nature of the entire public service delivery processes and reform, the project should continue to consolidate the results achieved over these years. In frame of this report, there are no substantial recommendations related to the project cycle management and to the UNDP strategic commitment to respond to the Albania's challenges in the field of the public service delivery reform as one of the main components under the good-governance pillar. Responders during the interviews do confirm the important UNDP's role and vision too. The recommendations below are focused on the new challenges that should be addressed at ensuring the sustainability and the quality of the public service delivery.

Recommendation 1: The reform leading institution, given its important role, should improve capacities on technical expertise/staff in order to better respond to the dynamics of the reform's implementation.

Recommendation 2: Following the abundant support given to ADISA during these years, it is important to build its ownership, to consolidate its capacities and the self-sustainability. Interventions in this regard should be a mixture of capacity building to the existing and future staff (on topics related to the service quality, performance monitoring and evaluation), boost use of innovative tools (through the innovation lab) and assistance to ADISA's organizational structure aiming to sustain its capacities and staff.

Recommendation 3: The extent to which the reform has been implemented so far in Albania is based also on the valuable contribution from different donors support, such as the Italian and Austrian governments, United Nations, the European Union, and the World Bank. However, the donor support over the next years is still very crucial in order to consolidate even more the results achieved so far, to accelerate the processes and to respond on time to the needs particularly at increasing the services also from other central institutions and expanding these services all over the country.

Conclusions, lessons and recommendations suggests that (due to their nature and complexity), some of the project outputs needs to be consolidated in the following years, such as ADISA's business model and its geographic enlargement, government efforts in advancing and supporting its digital agenda as well as further assistance to the vulnerable groups such as Roma community and people with disabilities.

Recommendation 4: Based on the citizen-centric approach, it is recommended that additional focus should be paid to the citizens in remote areas. The ADISA Mobile Office Facility is an important initiative which should continue and expand in the future in all remote areas of the country. Based on the success of the co-location model, the Mobile Office Facility can make use of local capacities on the ground.

Recommendation 5: As stated in this report, the project has paid special attention to the vulnerable groups and to gender issues. In this regard, it is recommended that the future activities should be focused on ICT literacy for these groups, development of relevant training materials targeting different age groups (especially youth in remote areas). Such initiatives can be coordinated with the education institutions in the targeted areas.

Recommendation 6: The success of the public Service Delivery reform is two-sided, depending both on the government's and the citizen's commitment. It is recommended that in the future, additional awareness raising campaigns should be focused on citizens, in order to increase their involvement as beneficiaries of the public services (i.e continue promotion of the Citizens Charter) and as monitoring agents of the public service's quality.

ANNEX A- Terms of Reference

Re-Advertisement - Senior Expert for Final Project Assessment

Location :	Tirana, ALBANIA
Application Deadline :	13-Aug-19 (Midnight New York, USA)
Type of Contract :	Individual Contract
Post Level :	National Consultant
Languages Required :	English
Expected Duration of Assignment :	25 working days with 4 one-day field missions, within 26 November 2019

Background

The Government of Albania is reforming its public service delivery through a citizen-centric approach. The reform represents the Government's determination to improve service access and quality for citizens and businesses and increase efficiency in the Albanian public administration as a means to strengthen the rule of law and fight corruption, foster a customer-care culture, strengthen compliance with the EU integration agenda, and align with commitments under Southeastern Europe regional initiatives and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. As a continuing government priority since April 2014, the reform is now under the leadership of the Deputy Prime Minister (DPM).

Conducted in implementation of the Cross-Cutting Public Administration Reform Strategy (PAR) 2015–2020, which constitutes the overall framework for the modernization and transformation of institutions and practices of public administration in the country, as well as the Cross-Cutting Strategy “Digital Agenda for Albania” (DAA) 2015–2020, while in line with the National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI) 2015–2020, the reform is guided by the Long-term policy document on the delivery of citizen-centric services by central government institutions in Albania (LTPD) approved by the Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 384, dated 25 May 2016.

As part of the reform, in October 2014, ADISA, the Agency for the Delivery of Integrated Services in Albania, was established to manage the centralized public service delivery to the citizens. Positioned as reform champion, its mandate, based on the law no. 13/2016, dated 18 February 2016 “On the way of delivering public services at front office level in the Republic of Albania”, includes the implementation of the separation of the front office (FO) from the back office (BO) in all central institutions. This process entails the overhaul of public service delivery in Albania with the establishment of service standards for the citizens and performance monitoring for service window clerks, based on a customer-care culture.

Since mid-2014, UN Albania has provided support for the public services reform through technical assistance, which has been structured within a donor pool fund project format under the name of “Support for Innovation against Corruption: Building a Citizen Centric Service Delivery Model in Albania” (ISDA Support Project).

The current contributors to the pool fund are the Government of Italy, Government of Austria and the UNDP. Implementation follows UNDP's national implementation modality. UNDP provides project and financial management support in accordance with UNDP's regulations and rules for project management.

The results of the ISDA Support Project, which is scheduled to be concluded by 31 December 2019, include:

- Long-term public service reform policy document;
- Design of the Front Office - Back Office (FO-BO) separation model and its piloting;
- Establishment of service delivery standards;
- Support for the development of multi-channel service delivery, including online;
- Institutional capacity building for ADISA to implement the service delivery reform;
- Technical assistance in reform management, monitoring and communications.

Duties and Responsibilities

Objective and scope of the assignment

The aim of the evaluation is to analyze ISDA Support Project process of implementation, the impact and changes that have occurred within beneficiaries and systems, identify problems and constraints that have been encountered, outline important lessons to be learned, and provide insights for the implementation of future projects in the relevant area.

The evaluation objectives include the following:

1. Measuring to what extent the ISDA Support Project has implemented the activities, delivered outputs and attained outcomes and specifically achieved development results;
2. Generating substantive evidence-based knowledge and recommendations for improved future assistance.

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 ISDA Support Project, 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, 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 expert 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: 1) 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 ISDA Support 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 expert 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 expert 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 expert is 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 expert will conduct consultations and meetings with project partners and representatives of relevant projects, as well as other actors involved in the sector.

Outputs and deliverables

The expert shall produce the following deliverables through the course of the assignment.

Work plan – In 2 working days following the assignment kick-off. The work plan will include a detailed approach and methodology and schedule. In particular, the work plan will specify a clear approach to data collection and work organization to examine the project in its full scope.

Presentation of findings – Within 18 working days following the assignment kick-off. The purpose of the presentation of findings and preliminary recommendations to key stakeholders is to provide an opportunity for initial validation and support further elaboration of the expert's findings and recommendations.

Final evaluation report – Within 5 working days of receiving the consolidated comments, the expert shall submit the final document that addresses relevant comments and provides comprehensive reporting on all elements of the assignment.

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:
 1. List of people interviewed
 2. List of acronyms
 3. Evaluation work plan and ToRs
 4. List of key reference documents

Implementation Arrangements

In consultation with the Senior expert and as requested, UNDP/ISDA Support Project personnel will make available all relevant documentation and provide contact information to key project partners and stakeholders, and facilitate contact where needed.

Duration and remuneration

UNDP will fund the costs of the consultancy work as per UNDP regulations. The duration of the consultancy is 25 working days during the period of August – November 2019.

Competencies

Corporate Competencies:

- Demonstrates integrity by modelling the UN's values and ethical standards;
- Promotes the vision, mission, and strategic goals of UNDP;
- Displays cultural, gender, religion, race, nationality and age sensitivity and adaptability.

Functional Competencies:

- Demonstrated experience in program design, monitoring and evaluation;
- Knowledge, experience and understanding of the public administration strategy and public services reform Albania;
- Demonstrated ability to write comprehensive reports in English language;
- Strong analytical and conceptual thinking;
- Fluency in spoken and written English and Albanian;
- Organizational skills, and ability to abide by deadlines.

Required Skills and Experience

Qualifications:

- Advanced University Degree in Economics, Public Administration, Political or a Development related field;
- At least 10 years of experience in program design, monitoring and evaluation;
- Experience in conducting evaluations from a governance based perspective and thematic/sector evaluations.

Evaluation of Applicants

Individual consultants will be evaluated based on a cumulative analysis **taking into consideration the combination of the applicants' qualifications and financial proposal.**

The award of the contract should be made to the individual consultant whose offer has been evaluated and determined as:

1. responsive/compliant/acceptable, and
2. having received the highest score out of a pre-determined set of weighted technical and financial criteria specific to the solicitation.

Only the highest ranked candidates who would be found qualified for the job will be considered for the Financial Evaluation.

Technical Criteria - 70% of total evaluation – max. 70 points:

1. Compliant educational background (10 points);
2. Demonstrated experience in program design, monitoring and evaluation (30 points);
3. Proven ability and experience in governance and development issues (20 points);
4. Proven record in analytical thinking and concise writing and reporting in English language (10 points).

Financial Criteria - 30% of total evaluation – max. 30 points

ANNEX B: LIST OF INTERVIEWED PERSONS

<u>Name</u>	<u>Last name</u>	<u>Organization/institution</u>
Fabian	Lashi	Service Specialist STAR II
Endri	Xhaferraj	AICS Tirana- project manager
Laura	Reka	International Consultant – ISDA Support Project
Etleva	Mertiri	Austrian Development Agency- program manager
Jonida	Taraj	Director, Service Development Directorate, ADISA
Ili	Sado	Head of Unit – ADISA
Lorin	Ymeri	Executive director, ADISA
Endri	Nocka	Deputy Prime Minister office
Elda	Bajraktari	Deputy Prime Minister office
Ibrahim	Koci	ADISA Librazhd
Gjergji	Vurmo	Institute for Democracy and Mediation

ANNEX C: DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

- 1- Project documents and reports/fact sheets
- 2- Cross-cutting public administration strategy 2015-2020 (PAR)
- 3- “Mystery shopper” report
- 4- “Trust in government” reports
- 5- Cross-cutting strategy “Digital agenda of Albania 2015-2020”
- 6- National Strategy for Integration and Development 2015-2020
- 7- Law on the Delivery of Public Services in the Front Offices in Albania 2016
- 8- Long-term policy document on the delivery of citizen-centric services by central government institutions in Albania
- 9- UNDP Country Program 2017-2021
- 10- Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM): Albania End-of-Term Report 2016-2018-Open Government Partnership
- 11- The World Bank “Citizen-Centric Service Delivery Project” project reports