



Mid-term Evaluation

Capacity Development of Local
Governments – UNDP Sri Lanka

Final Report
Volume I

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Institute for Participatory
Interaction in Development



Project Information

Title of the Project	Capacity Development of Local Governments (CDLG)
Atlas ID	00112897
Atlas Output ID	00118837
Project period	November, 2019 to November, 2023
Funding	10,935,000 USD (Euro 10 million by the European Union)
Expenditure as at 31 May 2022	5,960,656 USD
Geographic scope	Sri Lanka; Northern, Eastern, Uva and North Central Provinces with national activities
National Implementing Partner/ Project Executing Partners	Direct Implementation (DIM) by UNDP in close consultation with the Ministry in charge of the subject of Provincial Councils and the relevant Provincial Councils
UNDAF/CPD Contributing Outcome	By 2022, people in Sri Lanka, especially the marginalised and vulnerable benefit from more rights-based, accountable, inclusive and effective public institutions, to enhance trust amongst communities and towards the state. [Indicative UNDAF outputs 1.3 and 2.1]
Contributing SDG	# 16

Acknowledgements

On behalf of the Evaluation Team, the Institute for Participatory Interaction in Development (IPID) takes this opportunity to express its deep appreciation to the Project Team for their support and insights during the evaluation; special thanks are due to Mr Dhaanish Mohamed for coordinating the assignment.

This evaluation would not have been possible without the insights from the large body of stakeholders from the Government of Sri Lanka, particularly from the provinces, elected representatives, youth, donors, and personnel of complementary projects who voluntarily provided valuable insights and have been kindly flexible to our requests for interviews as the evaluation was conducted remotely. IPID is extremely grateful for the candid views expressed by them, and for the confidence they placed on the Evaluation Team.

Our particular thanks are due to the Project's provincial staff and the provincial implementing CSO partners for their unstinted support in making arrangements and convening the stakeholders for focus group discussions under the current trying circumstances.

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Timeframe	April, 2022 to August 2022
Date of the Report	19 October 2022 (Revised)
Location	Sri Lanka
Commissioning agency	UNDP Sri Lanka
Evaluation Team	Bandula Ranathunga (Mr) Sisira Kumarasiri (Mr) Inoka Priyadarshini (Ms) Susil Perera (Mr)

Volume I – Main Report (this Report)

Volume II – Annexes (of the Main Report)

Chronology of the Evaluation

Field work – 1 to 11 August, 2022

Submission of the Draft Report – 25 August 2022

Receipt of Audit Trail from UNDP – 30 September 2022

Submission of the Revised Report – 20 October 2022

Further comments from UNDP – 30 December 2022

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACLG	:	Assistant Commissioner of Local Government
CLG	:	Commissioner of Local Government
LA	:	Local Authorities (<i>Pradeshiya Sabha, Municipalities & Urban Council</i>)
CDLG	:	Capacity Development of Local Governments Project (this Project)
LDSP	:	Local Development Support Project
STRIDE	:	Strengthening Transformation, Reconciliation and Inclusive Democratic Engagement Programme
SEDR	:	Support to Effective Dispute Resolution Project
UNDP	:	United Nations Development Programme
SDG	:	Sustainable Development Goals
USD	:	United States Dollar
GoSL	:	Government of Sri Lanka
CSO	:	Civil Society Organisation
TAF	:	The Asia Foundation
FSLGA	:	Federation of Sri Lankan Local Government Authorities
JSAC	:	Jaffna Social Action Centre (CSO)
ESDF	:	Eastern Social Development Foundation (CSO)
NEUF	:	National Ethnic Unity Foundation (CSO)
SLILG	:	Sri Lanka Institute of Local Government
MDTU	:	Management Development Training Units
ToC	:	Theory of Change
GRM	:	Grievance Redress Mechanisms
EU	:	European Union
KII	:	Key Informant Interview
FGD	:	Focus Group Discussion
IPID	:	Institute for Participatory Interaction in Development
REA	:	Rapid Evaluability Assessment
OfERR	:	Organisation for Elangai Refugees Rehabilitation (CSO)
GE	:	Gender Equality
HRBA	:	Human Rights-based Approach
GGRC	:	Good Governance Resource Centre
NSC	:	National Steering Committee (of STRIDE programme)
CCS	:	Climate Change Secretariat
DMC	:	Disaster Management Centre

CC	:	Community Centre
ToT	:	Training of Trainers
RDS	:	Rural Development Society
CDO	:	Community Development Officer
PS	:	Pradeshiya Sabha
INGO	:	International Non-Governmental Organisation
YSC	:	Youth Shadow Council
DRR	:	Disaster Risk Reduction
ICT	:	Information and Communication Technology
MoPCLG	:	(State) Ministry of Provincial Councils and Local Government
NCP	:	North Central Province
EP	:	Eastern Province
NP	:	Northern Province
ADB	:	Asian Development Bank
M&E	:	Monitoring & Evaluation
LKR	:	Sri Lankan Rupee
PwD	:	Persons with Disabilities
PC	:	Provincial Coordinator (of this Project)
GoSL	:	Government of Sri Lanka
WRDS	:	Women's Rural Development Society

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Summary

The Project, **Capacity Development for Local Government** addresses challenges faced by local authorities on service delivery to protect and promote the **comfort, convenience**, and **welfare** of the people due to weak integration and linkages between local authorities (LAs) and decentralised units, weak capacities of LAs, and limited participation and engagement of the citizenry in local planning and decision-making processes. The Project's objective is *"to strengthen the process of decentralisation in the targeted province and the dialogue between people and the state thereby contributing to the resolution of critical underlying causes of conflict and prevention of escalation of local disputes"*, to be achieved through one outcome and three outputs.

This four-year project with Euro 10 million funding from the European Union started in November, 2019. It is a part of the larger STRIDE programme and is implemented nationally (Ministry of in charge of the subject of Provincial Councils) as well as in Northern, Eastern, Uva, and North Central Provinces, covering 134 local authorities (115 *Pradeshiya Sabhas* and 19 Urban/municipal councils). The Project is directly implemented by UNDP Sri Lanka in partnership with the Ministry of Provincial Councils and Local Government, relevant Provincial Councils and LAs. The direct beneficiaries include 2,756 LA Councillors (including 612 women councillors) and 12,454 targeted staff in the Provinces. About one million people are expected to benefit indirectly.

The purpose of the mid-term evaluation is to review the progress made by the project towards achieving its objectives and results as planned through the Theory of Change, in terms of the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of strategies and interventions undertaken in light of development priorities and emerging issues, including the impact of Covid-19 at the national and sub-national levels. The evaluation consisted of desk research, 116 key informant interviews (made up of 89 external and 27 project/implementing staff), 12 focus group discussions, and six field observations, and was undertaken from May to August, 2022. The field work was delayed due to transport difficulties arising from a country-wide fuel shortage.

Relevance: The Theory of Change is relevant in the context of service delivery in LAs. The Results Framework has indicators which cannot be reported on due to paucity of data. The workplans are not articulated to achieve the indicators. Overall, the Project is very relevant with clear alignment to GoSL needs. The Project is expected to contribute to the larger STRIDE programme.

Effectiveness: The Results Framework is of limited use for assessing the performance due to absence of data. The Project's M&E framework has established zero baselines and end-of-the Project targets, but the basis for these targets is unclear. The capacity development component is a welcome contribution to the local government service. The Project suffered significantly from COVID-19 pandemic as its key activity, training could not be conducted as planned in 2020 up to mid-2021 due to restrictions imposed by the government. Overall, there is satisfaction amongst the beneficiaries on the training received. They have better confidence to work, and knowledge, skills, and attitudes towards their jobs have improved. However, only 3 out of 156 respondents were able to indicate improved service delivery as a result of their training. The improvements in service delivery and LA revenue collection are yet to be seen, and capacity for delivery of social development aspects has not received due attention. The women councillors have benefitted from training programmes. The Project has also strengthened the institutional capacity by providing IT and other hardware, and systems.

Work on improving the capacity of the Community Centres is in the early stages, and the work on Shadow Youth Councils has just begun, and their recognition by the elected representatives is yet to be established. Work on citizen charters is also at a nascent stage. About 75% of the work relating to drafting/amending the by-laws is complete, but further work is held up until there is agreed way forward with the Ministry.

Achievement Rating: Key Activities 1.1 & 1.5 (Satisfactory); Key Activities 1.2, 1.3 & 2.3 (Marginally satisfactory); Key Activities 1.4, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1 & 3.2 (unsatisfactory, and unlikely to be completed by project closure).

Coherence: CDLG is a part of the larger STRIDE programme, and the complementary projects are the LDSP and SEDR. The National Steering Committee of the STRIDE programme oversees all projects. There are synergies as well as duplication of efforts amongst component projects. The Results Framework does not detail out the scope of the expected contribution of CDLG to STRIDE. The evaluation did not find significant evidence of complementarity, concrete harmonisation, and coordination to bring out the results into a common platform.

Efficiency: The evaluation did not analyse Project expenditures. It is evident that the Project has deployed sufficient staff in the provinces to implement the programme. The need for cost-effective capacity development is noted as well as better coordination at the PMU to improve efficiency in delivery.

Progress towards impacts: Due to the delays in implementation, the Project has not progressed adequately to achieve the main changes envisaged in the Theory of Change. Improvements to LA service delivery are yet to be concretely seen.

Sustainability and national ownership: As the Project is at mid-term with delayed implementation, it is premature to assess sustainability and national ownership. The situation is exacerbated by GoSL's cost-cutting measures which have affected the key institutions (SLILG and MDTUs) to continue Project work. The Community Centres have not demonstrated their sustainability. Another concern is the rapid staff turnover in LAs. Meanwhile, there are several project interventions with potential for upscaling.

Programme Management: The Project Management Unit and its provincial units are adequately staffed. The evaluation noted close rapport of the Project Coordinators and their staff with provincial systems and LAs. The National Steering Committee has not met to provide oversight in 2022. At the provincial level, there are Provincial Advisory Committees under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary to review progress.

The current Results Framework is of limited use for monitoring and reporting. The evaluation has proposed revision of the Results Framework with new Indicators at the outcome level, to take forward the project restructuring that has already begun. Discrepancies between the workplans and the actual work done in the field are noted, and there is no evidence of reporting on progress towards outcomes. The evaluation did not find a systematic monitoring protocol at the provincial level to ensure that the workplans of both provincial government as well as CSOs being monitored. The need for clear milestones for effecting payments to GoSL entities has been noted. Overall, monitoring mechanisms at the provincial level, and tracking workplans are not to the expected level.

Recommendations:

In **Project Design**, the restructuring of the Project should proceed with an extension due to implementation setbacks with a new set of outcome indicators. A more strategic capacity development programme to meet the needs of LAs has to be developed in close consultation with stakeholders. Citizen participation in planning and decision-making has to be improved, with the inclusion of disadvantaged communities. The design of the seed fund component for women councillors needs review with better support for proposal writing. Specific CDLG contribution to the STRIDE programme needs to be clearly identified in the Results Framework.

In **Project implementation**, several areas have been identified for speedy implementation, needed because of implementation delays resulting largely from COVID-19, namely: widely share with the stakeholders the Asia Foundation Assessments in Sinhalese and Tamil languages, improve capacity for delivering social

development services in consultation with the relevant provincial Ministries, review support given to the Community Centres including possible LA support for upkeep them, discontinue work on Shadow Youth Councils, improve coordination and collaboration between service delivery partners, develop an exit strategy to identify sustainability potential, improve gender equality awareness amongst elected councillors and LA Secretaries, and quicken the pace of gender equality work. Work on drafting/amending by-laws should be suspended until there is a clear way forward.

In **Project Management**, revive the National Steering Committee to urgently resolve issues on the drafting of by-laws, and improve coordination between the component projects. Improve monitoring and reporting by introducing results-based monitoring system, enhance appreciation of results-based reporting amongst provincial staff and CSOs, and establish a rigorous monitoring system particularly at the provincial level to ensure compatibility between workplans and work done, and timely, efficient, and cost-effective delivery.

In **Outreach**, improve the visibility and awareness of CDLG Project amongst its stakeholders, particularly at the community level.

1. Introduction

Since Independence, various processes of decentralization and devolution have taken place in Sri Lanka to address changes in socio-economic and political conditions [e.g., District Political Authority (1973)¹, District Ministerial System (1978)², District Development Councils (1981)³, and Provincial Councils (1988)⁴].

In the 1980s, the discourse on decentralization intensified. Some argued that one of the reasons for the civil conflict (1983 – 2009) was due to lack of devolution of power to lower levels. The District Development Council system was introduced in 1980 as a means of decentralization of power. District Development Councils introduced administrative district boundaries and revised the prevailing system of Local Government, which dates back to the British colonial era. That system consisted of several types of institutions, Village Councils⁵, Town Councils⁶, Urban Councils⁷, and Municipal Councils⁸, which were defined based on the population and level of urbanization. The establishment of District Development Councils amalgamated all Village Councils and Town Councils (excluding Urban Councils and Municipal Councils) within one administrative district into a single unit. The Village Councils or Town Councils, which were geographically small and sparsely populated, became centralized units which are geographically large and served a bigger population.

An important change was the assignment of local development functions to the District Development Councils, in addition to their normal functions. The Government Agent, who was the Chief Public Officer of the District, was appointed *ex-officio* Secretary of the Development Council, thereby facilitating the connection between administration and the Development Councils. The Government Agent thus became the District Secretary.

In 1987, the District Development Council system was replaced with the introduction of Pradeshiya Sabhas⁹, which were more decentralized compared to the District Development Councils. Although the power which has so far been centralized to the District Councils was devolved to the Divisional Secretariat level by this revision, it also led to a certain level of centralization because Pradeshiya Sabhas were developed by amalgamating several Village Councils and Town Councils (except in a few cases).

In parallel to these changes in 1987, the subject of Local Government, which had hitherto been administered by the Central Government, was transferred to the Provincial Councils under the 13th Amendment to the Constitution. Some of the powers which were earlier vested in the District Assistant Commissioners of Local Government (ACLGs) were assigned to the Provincial

¹ Warnapala, Wiswa W A (1974) Sri Lanka in 1973: A Test for Both the Rulers and the Ruled. *Asian Survey*, 14(2), 148–156. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2643088>

² Warnapala, Wiswa W A (1979) Sri Lanka 1978: Reversal of Policies and Strategies. *Asian Survey*, 19(2), 178–190. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2643784>

³ Matthews, B (1982) District Development Councils in Sri Lanka. *Asian Survey*, 22(11), 1117–1134. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2643983>

⁴ Shastri, A (1992) Sri Lanka's Provincial Council System: A Solution to the Ethnic Problem? *Asian Survey*, 32(8), 723–743. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2645365>

⁵ Village Councils Law (No. 6 of 1964)

⁶ Town Councils Ordinance (No. 3 of 1946)

⁷ Urban Councils Ordinance (No. 61 of 1939)

⁸ Municipal Councils Ordinance (No. 29 of 1947)

⁹ Pradeshiya Sabha Act (No. 15 of 1987)

Commissioners of Local Government (CLGs) who emerged with the establishment of the Provincial Councils; this led to a certain degree of centralization of powers again.

As stated in the Municipal Council Ordinance, Urban Council Ordinance, and the Pradeshiya Sabha Act, the functions of Local Authority are to protect and promote the **comfort**, **convenience**, and **welfare** of the people in their jurisdictions.¹⁰ In the Sri Lankan context, Local Authorities often must rely on the central and provincial governments in order to achieve these conditions. This would require efficient systems and service delivery at all levels, including close coordination between the elected councillors and the decentralised administration, especially to provide equitable welfare service, particularly to the vulnerable and marginalised communities.

The situation analysis conducted by the Project noted the challenges of Local Authorities (LAs) that affect them from a more active role in local development. These include:

- Much of the service delivery (both national and provincial services) is channelled through the Divisional administration;
- Limited integration and linkages between LAs and decentralised units;
- Weak capacities of LAs; and
- Limited participation and engagement in local decision-making processes.

¹⁰ **Comfort** relates to ensuring the day-to-day needs of the people (food, shelter, education, health); **convenience** relates to the availability of utilities and a safe environment for a comfortable life; **welfare** relates to equality of services without distinction in the society.

2. The Project

The Project, Capacity Development of Local Governments (CDLG) is a part of the larger STRIDE programme¹¹, and was launched to improve the service delivery by Provincial and Local Authorities as stated in the respective statutes to ensure community wellbeing and ultimately lower the vulnerability, marginalization and poverty of the communities.

CDLG is expected to ensure local authorities to be inclusive, responsive and accountable in delivering their services. The Project also emphasises strengthening of vertical and horizontal linkages between the different levels of local government and the national government, and between the devolved (elected councils) and decentralised administrative units (District and Divisional Secretariats) for improving policy and programme coherence, integrated planning and service delivery, and to avoid duplication of efforts with improved efficiency. The project aims to:

- Improve local planning and budgeting cycles and service delivery, and ensure that they are responsive to gender and marginalisation issues;
- Strengthen the local governance system to be innovative and provide inclusive and responsive services that address multi-dimensional challenges; and
- Strengthen legal and policy framework to execute decentralisation functions including improving linkages between devolved units and decentralised units in the provinces.

The Project shares the logframe, ACA/2017/640-699, of STRIDE¹².

The Project Objective

The Project's objective is "*to strengthen the process of decentralisation in the targeted province and the dialogue between people and the state thereby contributing to the resolution of critical underlying causes of conflict and prevention of escalation of local disputes*" and is the same as STRIDE objective.

This objective is achieved through one outcome and three outputs, as follows:

Outcome statement: *Efficient, inclusive, gender-sensitive and accountable mechanism of service delivery at elected local government level is established*

Outputs:

Output # 1 – Local planning and budgeting cycles, and local service delivery improved and are responsive to gender and marginalised issues¹³

Output # 2 – The local governance system is innovative and provides services that address multi-dimensional challenges

Output # 3 – Legal and Policy framework facilitate systems change and strengthen the process of decentralisation

¹¹ Strengthening Transformation, Reconciliation and Inclusive Democratic Engagement (STRIDE) programme is a multi-stakeholder initiative funded by the European Union to promote dialogue between communities and local governments by improving access and quality of services at the local level.

¹² Cf. Results Framework of the Project (page 7 of prodoc)

¹³ CDLG Outputs contribute to Output # 1 [Roles of local authorities for development, service delivery and reconciliation enhanced] of STRIDE. [Source: Project Document]

Altogether, 10 key activities have been formulated to achieve the outputs. The Results Framework is at Annex 2.1.

The Project is a component of a larger effort. The *Local Development Support Project* (LDSP) funded through a loan agreement with the World Bank and contribution of € 22.5 million from the European Union under the latter's broader € 40 million programme, *Strengthening Transformation, Reconciliation and Inclusive Democratic Engagement* (STRIDE). In addition to this project (CDLG), the STRIDE programme also includes the *Support to Effective Dispute Resolution* Project (SEDR) implemented by the British Council, Sri Lanka.¹⁴

An important activity of the Project is to develop/update LA by-laws, which is reflected in STRIDE Output # 1 (1.1.5).

The focus of LDSP is to strengthen local authorities' capabilities to deliver services in a responsive and accountable manner by providing direct fiscal transfers (basic transfers and performance transfers), which will allow LAs to have a greater control over the implementation of Local Area Participatory Development Plans (LAPDP). LDSP is also geared to support infrastructure investment across administrative boundaries of several LAs. The STRIDE programme provides funds for performance transfers under LDSP. The SEDR project is expected to strengthen local mediation boards as a means to promote greater civic engagement (including youth) and strengthen mechanisms for resolving disputes on the ground. As a result of the synergies, CDLG has become an important cog in these efforts to achieve the objective. The Output # 1 of CDLG contributes towards Output # 1 of STRIDE.

The Project is also expected to contribute to UNDP's SDG 16 flagship portfolio on peace, justice and strong institutions (2019-2022).

Project duration and funding

The Project duration is from November, 2019 to October 2023. The Project's actual start up is considered January, 2020. However, the Project Manager and the key technical staff were in place only by about June 2020. Field staff have been recruited subsequently.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Project was unable to complete its inception report; however, the baseline reports (November, 2020) developed by The Asia Foundation, is considered as the inception report.

The Project funding is € 10 million. In 2020, the Project was re-programmed with the approval of the donor, European Union, to provide emergency support for Covid-19 pandemic management to the value of about USD 1 million.

Geographic scope of the Project

The Project is a part of the larger STRIDE project which is implemented nationally¹⁵ as well as in Northern, Eastern, Uva and North Central Provinces. CDLG covers 134 local authorities (115 *Pradeshiya Sabhas* and 19 Urban/municipal councils) in these provinces.

Project management and implementation

The Project is directly implemented by UNDP Sri Lanka in partnership with the Ministry of Provincial Councils and Local Government, relevant Provincial Councils and local governments.

¹⁴ SEDR does not work in the North Central Province.

¹⁵ The national actions relate to work at the Ministry level on policies and strategies.

At the local level, the Project has Letters of Agreement with Provincial Councils to implement project activities.

The Project Team, headed by the Project Manager, has dedicated staff including subject experts, support staff, and Project Coordinators for each of the Provinces. Project management is overseen by the National Steering Committee of the STRIDE programme, co-chaired by the Secretary, Ministry of Provincial Councils and Local Government and the Head, European Union Delegation to Sri Lanka and Maldives.

At the local level, project implementation is supported by a group comprising GoSL agencies and CSOs [The Asia Foundation; Sri Lanka Institute of Local Government; Marga Institute; Federation of Sri Lankan Local Government Authorities (FSLGA); OfERR (Ceylon); Jaffna Social Action Centre (JSAC); Eastern Social Development Foundation; PALM Community Development Services Company; Uva Shakthi Foundation; and National Ethnic Unity Foundation (NEUF)]. At the strategic level the project intended to overcome local government capacity shortcomings by designing and delivery of capacity enhancement interventions and knowledge management through these implementing partners.

As a result of Covid-19 pandemic (largely in 2020), some key activities of the Project (e.g., capacity building on planning, budgeting and for utilization of basic and performance transfers (1.2), Develop and utilize tools to enhance participatory, responsive, and accountable service provision (1.3), Targeted capacity development programmes for women and youth officials (Elected and Administrative (1.5) and Build capacities to support gender-inclusive resilient development (2.2) were reprogrammed and the funds redirected for Covid-19 response interventions¹⁶. In addition, some activities were either only partially conducted or reformulated with a lower priority.

Project Stakeholders

The Project's stakeholders include: the Ministry of Provincial Councils and Local Government, Finance Commission, Management Development Training Units (MDTU), Sri Lanka Institute of Local Government (SLILG), key functionaries at Provincial, district, and divisional levels. The Evaluation Team has undertaken a stakeholder mapping (See Section 3.5).

The beneficiaries include 2,756 LA Councillors (including 612 women councillors) and 12,454 targeted staff in the Provinces. The programme is expected to be implemented for four years and is estimated to help about one million Sri Lankan people under 134 local government authorities in the four provinces.

¹⁶ Source: Project Annual Report (2019-2020)

3. Overview of the Evaluation

3.1. Scope of the Evaluation

This formative, mid-term evaluation was expected to assess the progress of the implementation of the Project vis-à-vis the Results Framework.

- (a) **Geographical and chronological scope:** The focus of the evaluation covered the period 1 December 2019 to 31 December 2021. Information outside this period was used only insofar as to illuminate issues in the current programme, particularly in delayed interventions, as agreed during the inception phase. The evaluation was national (relating to policy issues with the Central Government) with particular focus on programme implementation provinces, namely Northern, Eastern, North Central and Uva Provinces.
- (b) **Theory of Change:** The Theory of Change of the Project was explored to assess the contribution made towards achieving the Project outcomes/Objective, and any changes that are needed given the relevance of the indicators and the work that has been accomplished so far (particularly in view of the challenges faced by the Project during Covid-19 pandemic). The evaluation included a review of the original project assumptions against the changes in circumstances, which have occurred during the period under review, as well as an analysis of existing contributions and gaps in light of SDG 16.
- (c) **Results Level:** The Evaluation assessed the full results framework. Furthermore, it examined the Project's contributions to STRIDE Results Framework, in particular Output 1. The Project's work on internalising SDGs in local planning systems and plans was found to be in early stages.
- (d) **Participants:** As one of the important objectives of the evaluation is to seek information for the implementation during the balance period of the Project, the main participants of the evaluation were the external stakeholders. In this connection, the evaluation team undertook a stakeholder mapping exercise (see Section 3.5).

3.2. Purpose and Objectives of the Evaluation

The purpose of the mid-term evaluation is to review the progress made by the project towards achieving its objectives and results as planned through the theory of change, in terms of the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of strategies and interventions undertaken in light of development priorities and emerging issues, including the impact of Covid-19 at the national and sub-national levels.¹⁷

Specific purposes are:

- (a) Assess the progress made in achieving expected results;
- (b) Assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, and efficiency of progress made towards impacts, sustainability management and monitoring outlooks of the programme in supporting target Local Governments involved in improving inclusive planning and local budgeting;
- (c) Analyse how cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, women and youth and climate change principles have been integrated into the programme implementation;

¹⁷ Excerpted from the Terms of Reference.

- (d) Assess the contribution of the CDLG project towards the results of the overall Portfolio on SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions;
- (e) Identify and discuss challenges with regards to technical and functional capacity building of individuals, institutional development, societal capacity building, monitoring and evaluation, risk analysis as well as planning, Grievance Redress Mechanisms (GRM) and reporting, including any improvements that might be necessary;
- (f) Assess CDLG's contribution towards other projects (LDSP and SEDR), and examine synergies between CDLG, LDSP and SEDR and how those projects help the mandate of CDLG to improve the effective and efficient service delivery of LAs;
- (g) Recommend strategic, programmatic and management considerations for implementing the remainder of project activities with particular emphasis on (i) the Results framework, and (ii) the Work Plan.

The Terms of Reference for the evaluation, provided by UNDP, is at Annex 3.1.

3.3. Evaluation Principles

Perspectives of equity, gender, and human rights as well as conflict sensitivity were assured in the evaluation by adopting the following:

- obtaining consent from all participants;
- conducting interviews in the local languages;
- examining the extent to which elements of gender responsive programming have been incorporated into the design; and
- Integrating gender equality and human rights-based approaches and guided by the principles of do no harm, impartiality, transparency, inclusivity and participation.

Ethical norms and principles were followed during the interviews. Confidentiality was maintained.¹⁸ IPID took measures to maintain a free and an independent evaluation process upholding evaluation ethics, in order to maintain the integrity and honesty.

The evaluation adopted a participatory approach, combining self-reporting with external validations (as situations permit), extensive discussions and feedback loops with the respondents.

This evaluation has been contracted by UNDP; therefore, The evaluation followed the guidelines of UNDP¹⁹ and maintained the minimum standards and procedures outlined by UNDP. The evaluation also followed the foundational guidelines of UNEG²⁰, and was guided by the three principles, namely, respect for all persons, beneficence and non-maleficence (doing no harm), and justice.

¹⁸ Interviews were not recorded.

¹⁹ UNDP Evaluation Guidelines; IEO UNDP (June 2021)

²⁰ Norms and Standards for Evaluation; UNEG (2016)

The Gender Equality Strategy of UNDP²¹ was used to ensure that gender equality is integrated into project actions. Reference was made to the EU Gender Action²², and the Project's Gender Action Plan²³.

3.4. Evaluation Design and Approach

The evaluation design focused on the key interventions of the project. The evaluation was designed according to the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria (i) Relevance, (ii) Coherence (iii) Effectiveness, (iv) Efficiency, (v) Progress towards Impact, and (vi) Sustainability and National Ownership. In addition, it also focussed on Management and Monitoring, and Gender Equality and Human Rights-Based Approach.

The evaluation criteria, key questions and sub-questions, and sources of information are set out in Annex 3.2 (Evaluation Design Matrix); this matrix was used to develop the KII and FDG Guides.

IPID followed a participatory and interactive approach in this evaluation. Qualitative methods/techniques in terms of their relevance to the characteristics or performance of the Project were used to collect data/information. Qualitative data were selected from specific sources of information including primary and secondary information related to the Project.

The data collection methods and tools were customized to obtain answers to the evaluation questions stipulated in the Terms of Reference under the criteria indicated in the preceding paragraph. Data and information collection was conducted in an independent and objective manner and followed a participatory and ethically accepted approach, ensuring participation of both males and females, and youth, and addressed accountability, equity and non-discrimination.

3.5. Rapid Evaluability Assessment (REA)

During the inception phase, the Evaluation Team undertook a Rapid Evaluability Assessment (REA), at the request of the Project. The REA in this instance adopted, with suitable adaptations, the criteria outlined by Davis.²⁴ It used the desk review as the main source of information, supplemented with information collected during the meetings with Project staff during the inception phase. The evaluators' observations and comments on the main REA criteria are given in Annex 3.3. This analysis provided opportunities and challenges in the evaluation; yet it found some utility values in the current context, including examination of the Project Design and the Theory of Change as well as stakeholder engagement processes. The evaluation design used the REA analysis for information collection.

3.6. Evaluation Methodology and Tools

The evaluation used a mixed methods approach, which allowed triangulation of data from different sources. The Evaluation Design Matrix (Annex 3.2) summarises and links the

²¹ Gender Equality Strategy; UNDP 2018-2021 (2018)

²² European Commission (Nov., 2020) EU Gender Action Plan (Gap) III – An Ambitious Agenda for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in EU External Action.

²³ (Draft) Gender Action Plan, CDLG (undated)

²⁴ Davis, R (2013) Planning Evaluability Assessments; Working Paper # 40; UK Department for International Development

evaluation criteria, key questions and sub-questions, indicators and sources of information/data. The proposed methods are briefly described below:

Stakeholder Mapping

As a first step for inception of the evaluation, the Evaluation Team undertook a stakeholder mapping from the information available in the documents and from the information gleaned during the meeting held with some team members of the Project on 28 March 2022. At the meeting held on 8 April 2022, it was revealed that some components (e.g., Climate Change/Disaster Risk Management; linkages with decentralised units) were still at a nascent stage, and that the relevant stakeholders may not be fully aware of the Project. In the circumstances, the Evaluation Team identified stakeholders based on their expected engagement in the Project design, planning and implementation. Fig. 3.1 presents a summary the stakeholders identified by the Evaluation Team.

Fig. 3.1 – Stakeholder mapping



Desk Research

Desk research on secondary sources and data enabled abstraction of information to understand the key evaluation questions. Key documents consulted are listed in Annex 3.4.

The Evaluation Team has reviewed the annual reports to prepare a matrix of accomplishments of the Project, which was presented to the Project as a part of the Inception Report (Annex 3.5).

The desk research also focussed on the diagnostic study, conducted by The Asia Foundation as a part of the inception phase of the Project to develop key indicators and baselines for LAs in the Project areas.²⁵

Key Informant Interviews

At the inception, it was proposed by the Project that 26 key informants would be interviewed²⁶; however, during the evaluation this list was expanded. Eventually, the evaluation conducted 116 interviews ((made up of 89 external and 27 project/implementing staff) using the Guides developed (Annex 3.6), which took more time than envisaged. The interviewees included representatives of the Central Government, Provincial Councils, Local Authorities, beneficiaries (Office bearers of the Community Centres), and service providers including individual consultants. Due to the prevailing situation, all KIIs were conducted online. Additional interviews, to seek supplementary information, were conducted physically during the field visits. Annex 3.7 provides a list of KIIs conducted.

In addition, online group discussions were held with Project Staff and the staff of following CSO partners.

- Jaffna Social Action Centre (JSAC)
- Organisation for Elangai Refugees Rehabilitation (OfERR Ceylon)
- Eastern Social Development Foundation (ESDF)
- National Ethnic Unity Foundation (NEUF)
- Palm Foundation
- Uva Shakthi Foundation

Focus Group Discussions

The evaluation team held 12 FGDs, as against eight FGDs agreed at the inception but increased later to include Shadow Councils, as summarised in Table 3.3, using pre-prepared Guides (Annex 3.8). The FGDs were arranged by the Project's provincial staff and/or the relevant CSO partners. The participants of these FGDs are listed in Annex 3.9.

Table 3.3 -

Province	Date	Category/venue	Male	Female	Total
Uva	1 Aug 2022	Trainees (CLG Office, Badulla)	11	21	32
	1 Aug 2022	Shadow Youth Council @ Uva Shakthi Foundation	19	8	27
	1 Aug 2022	Trainees (@ Pradeshiya Sabha, Wellawaya)	7	4	11
Eastern Province	8 Aug 2022	Trainees (Town & Gravets Pradeshiya Sabha, Uppuveli)	24	13	37
	8 Aug 2022	Members of Shadow Youth Council and Community Centres (Town & Gravets Pradeshiya Sabha, Uppuveli)	16	3	19

²⁵ The Asia Foundation (undated), Institutional Assessment – Consolidated Report

²⁶ cf. Inception Report; Table 3.2

Province	Date	Category/venue	Male	Female	Total
	10 Aug 2022	Trainees (Good Governance Resource Centre, ACLG Office, Batticaloa)	12	6	18
	10 Aug 2022	Members of Shadow Youth Council and Community Centres (Good Governance Resource Centre, ACLG Office, Batticaloa)	15	11	26
Northern Province	8 Aug 2022	Trainees (Vavuniya Sinhala Pradeshiya Sabha, Vavuniya)	9	6	15
	8 Aug 2022	Youth Action Group (OfERR Office, Kurumankadu, Vavuniya)	6	6	12
	8 Aug 2022	Community Centre Members (Sakayamathapuram CC, Vavuniya)	4	5	9
North Central Province	9 Aug 2022	Trainees (MDTU, Arippe Road, Anuradhapura)	30	13	43
	9 Aug 2022	Janahitha Community Centre Members (Ambagahawewa, Nochchiyagama, Anuradhapura)	7	9	16
TOTAL			160	105	265

The evaluation team met with 265 persons of which 156 (93 males and 63 females) participated in training programmes conducted by the project. The balance [109 (67 males and 42 females)] were Shadow Youth Councillors and some Community Centre members.

Integration of gender equality and human rights-based approach

The evaluation design used UNEG's Ethical Guidelines for Evaluations and the Norms and Standards²⁷ in integrating GE and HRBA to answer the evaluation question "How well does the project address and/or contribute to GE and HRBA in its design, implementation and the progress towards the results". The evaluation examined the way the project has enhanced the knowledge, skills, abilities and self-confidence of men, women and young people (agency building); contributed to changing social norms, customs, institutional practices and policies (changing the structures); and addressed power dynamics in households and community to facilitate meaningful participation in community fora and facilitated space for women and young people to access services/their rights (building relations). These aspects were used as a lens when conducting KIs and FGDs.

Examination of the Theory of Change

The Project's Theory of Change (ToC) focusses on the promotion of service delivery at the local government level including strengthening the process of decentralisation and institutionalise participatory local governance in the targeted provinces. During the evaluation, the relationship between the proposed Theory of Change and the actions proposed to achieve the objectives, as presented in the Project's Results Framework, were examined from the data and information currently available with the Project, supplemented with information from KIs. It also examined the adequacy of the Results Framework to assess the Project's progress towards achieving the objective and any changes that are required to ensure that the progress towards outcomes is focussed on the objective. As an essential part of this examination, the current situation of the key indicators and the availability of data and information on these indicators were examined with a view to propose changes that are deemed necessary.²⁸

²⁷ UNEG (2014) *Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations*. New York: UNEG.

²⁸ The inception report indicated that most baseline data were not available. The assessment by the Asia Foundation has used a number of very appropriate indicators for capacity assessment; however, their connection to the Results Framework is not clearly spelt out.

Field Inspections

During visits to the districts for FGDs, the evaluation team took the opportunity to visit the following facilities to observe and assess the support provided by the Project in order to improve the institutional capacity of the relevant institutions.

- Building construction laboratory, CLG Office, Badulla
- Pradeshiya Sabha, Wellawaya
- Town and Gravets Pradeshiya Sabha, Uppuveli, Trincomalee
- Vavuniya Sinhala Pradeshiya Sabha, Vavuniya
- MDTU Centre, Anuradhapura
- Good Governance Resource Centre, CLG Office, Batticaloa

Data Management

The qualitative information collected were analysed taking into consideration data and information in the literature and triangulated to derive trends and conclusions.

3.7. Use of the evaluation findings

The findings of this mid-term evaluation will inform the project of any changes and course corrections needed for the balance period of the Project in the processes and the theory of change. It also documented, where available, replicable examples that will support the delivery of results and opportunities for scaling up the project's activities for the remaining duration of the project.

3.8. Limitations

The main limitations of the evaluation are as follows:

- Travel difficulty due to fuel shortage; if not for this, the field work component could have been completed much earlier with a broader geographical spread.
- Difficulties of obtaining times for interviews, particularly from Government Officials. Of the four Chief Secretaries, only one was able to provide time for an interview as the others were deemed to be busy with the current difficult situation in the country.

4. Evaluation findings

This section provides the evaluation findings based in the evaluation criteria.

4.1. Relevance

Theory of Change (ToC)

The Theory of Change envisages strengthening the process of decentralisation and institutionalisation of participatory local governance in the four provinces by improving planning and budgeting cycles, improving capacities of LAs and provincial councils, promoting resilient local development thereby promoting inclusive, responsive, gender-sensitive, and accountable mechanisms of delivery for better service delivery at the local level.

The situation at the design stage of the project in relation to the challenges faced in shaping local development are summarised as follows²⁹:

- Much of the service delivery is channelled through the decentralised administration (District and Divisional Secretariats and *Grama Niladharis* at the village level);
- There is limited integration and linkages between LAs and decentralised units;
- Weak capacities of LAs;
- Limited participation and engagement of citizenry in planning and local decision-making processes.

In the context of the situation analysis undertaken prior to project formulation, the ToC is relevant, and addresses the needs of the local authorities and provincial councils.

The ToC has to be considered in the light of other complementary initiatives that have been launched in Sri Lanka. The overall four-year programme, Strengthening Transformation, Reconciliation and Inclusive Democratic Engagement (STRIDE) has the outcome of providing efficient, inclusive, gender-sensitive and accountable mechanism of service delivery at elected local government. Under the overall umbrella of STRIDE, there are three projects: the Local Development Support Project (LDSP) which is expected to *strengthen local government authorities' capabilities to deliver services to communities in a responsive and accountable manner, to support economic infrastructure development in participating provinces, and to provide immediate and effective response to an eligible crisis or health emergency*, the Capacity Development of Local Governments (CDLG) (this Project) aims to *improve local planning and service delivery, supporting the local governance systems to be innovative and inclusive to address multidimensional challenges, and strengthen the ability of Central and Provincial institutions to support local government authorities to deliver better*, and the Supporting Effective Dispute Resolution (SEDR) promotes *mediation as an alternative dispute resolution mechanism at the community level*.

The CDLG ToC encompasses the visions of all three projects as well as the overall STRIDE programme and addresses the needs of the Government of Sri Lanka in its efforts to improve the capacity of the duty bearers and the delivery of services required by the citizenry.

Relevance of Project Strategies vis-à-vis national needs/priorities

²⁹ Project Document (page 5 & 6)

Since the enactment of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution in the 1980's it is the general view of senior officials that the focus provided to LAs for better delivery of their services was inadequate³⁰. Indeed, externally supported capacity development for better service delivery has been sparse in the local government system, and the CDLG support is seen as a very important contribution.

The evaluation notes that the Project has considered the national needs and priorities enshrined in the National Policy on Local Government.³¹ The national policy underscores the need to maintain strong inter-linkages between and amongst existing national, provincial and local governments and administrative structures and the need for public participation and social awareness as essential tools to achieve the highest expectations of decentralization. It also emphasises that *every citizen has the right to demand optimal basic services, facilities and infrastructure from the Local Government (also from other Government Departments and Authorities) and it is the moral and legal responsibility of the Local Authorities to deliver a reasonable service for every citizen as enshrined in the Local Government Citizens' Charters*. The project is also in line with the devolution of powers to the provincial and local levels under the 13th amendment to the constitution.

The project has adopted a consultative process in designing and launching the project. A series of consultative meetings have been conducted both at national and provincial levels for designing the project and reaching consensus on the provincial plans for local government capacity development in 2020 and 1st quarter of 2021.

Output # 1: The capacity development interventions are generally well aligned to the needs of the provinces. The initial needs assessment conducted by the Asia Foundation engaged the stakeholders through a series of self-assessments in identifying the capacity needs of the provinces. Since then, the provincial authorities, led by the Chief Secretary, have conducted annual assessments of capacity needs.³² The evaluation noted that these assessments are somewhat *ad hoc* in the sense that it is a collection of requests from different agencies in the province, rather than based on an assessment tool.³³

Output # 2: Introduction of social innovations and mainstreaming disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation are very relevant in the realm of local governance to address the multitude of challenges faced by the citizenry. Introducing innovative systems for revenue collection is a part of another ongoing project.³⁴

Output # 3: Implementation of new regulations and directives, meeting audit requirements, and improving procurement processes is important for LAs, and has been a long-felt need. The Project's support in this regard is deemed very timely.³⁵

Changes in the Country Context

The period relevant to this evaluation (2020-2021) witnessed a series of critical issues in the country.

³⁰ KII with Senior Provincial Officials.

³¹ http://www.preventionweb.net/files/28587_localgovernmentpolicy.pdf(accessed on 12 August 2022)

³² KII with provincial officials

³³ KII with provincial authorities and FGDs

³⁴ Local Government Enhancement Sector Project (RRP SRI 42459)(ADB)

³⁵ KII with Senior Provincial Officials.

(a) Changes in the Government and policies

The Presidential elections held on 16 November 2019 saw the election of a new President. Following the Presidential elections, Parliamentary elections were held on 5 August 2020 following which a new Government came into power. These changes resulted in changing key portfolios of the Ministries. The new government decided to withdraw the commitment under UN Human Rights Council's resolution 30/1 to promote reconciliation and accountability, which the previous government had co-sponsored.

The Project was attached to the State Ministry of Provincial Councils, with its Secretary functioning as a Co-Chair of the National Steering Committee. During the changes to the government in May, 2022, the position of the Secretary of the State Ministry became vacant; the State Ministry is not functional at the time of this evaluation.

The 20th Amendment to the Constitution brought about more powers to the President.

The latter part of 2021 witnessed civic displeasure of government actions such as politicisation of institutions, shrinking transparency and accountability, lukewarm attitude on reconciliation, social cohesion and transitional justice, and reduced food production due to ban on inorganic fertilizers and other agro-chemicals, and the balance of payment crisis.

(b) Economic outlook

Sri Lanka became an upper middle-income country in 2019. However, within one year, the World Bank downgraded Sri Lanka from upper middle income to lower middle-income category (2020)³⁶ due to the uncertainty created in the economic system in the first half of 2019 emanating from the constitutional crisis of October-December 2018, and the Easter Sunday attack in April, 2019 and the resultant religious disturbances which impacted on growth. The Easter Sunday attack caused economic downturn, particularly by greatly reduced tourist income.

The civic disturbances resulting from the Easter Sunday attack impacted in project implementation, particularly in some provinces. During this period, it was not possible to conduct training programmes.

(c) COVID-19 pandemic

The Sri Lankan authorities reacted quickly to the emergence of COVID-19 by setting in place travel bans, lockdown (initially a strict curfew), and workplace closure by March 2020. While there was a gradual return to normalcy by around May, subsequent pandemic waves caused restrictions to be reimposed regionally and/or nationally. The economy contracted by 3.6 per cent in 2020, which is the worst performance on record – in the second quarter alone it contracted by as much as 16 per cent.³⁷ The Project implementation suffered badly due to travel and meeting restrictions.

Re-alignment of programme interventions

COVID-19 adversely impacted on project implementation. The Project activities started in early 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic was raging; the focus of activities at the beginning was

³⁶ <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups>

³⁷ Economic and poverty impact of COVID-10, Sri Lanka Development Update 2021, World Bank 2021.

on conducting trainings. Most of the face-to-face trainings had to be postponed due to travel and meeting restrictions, and on health grounds. The Project responded by introducing some online training events; the general perception is that the online training conducted has not met with the same level of satisfaction as with face-to-face trainings.³⁸ Furthermore, participants, particularly those in remote areas, were faced a number of difficulties with online trainings due to accessibility of digital devices, and poor connectivity.

The Project, realising the importance of LAs in their responsibility towards managing the COVID-19 pandemic, reprogrammed its activities by deprioritizing some activities and channeling the funds for COVID-19 management in consultation with the donor, the European Union. Important contributions in this regard included the provision of digital equipment to LAs and Provincial Councils to enable them to conduct online meetings during the pandemic, which also facilitated decision-making, and health care equipment provided to the LAs.

The evaluation also noted that the workplans were 're-aligned' following the pandemic, and the work progressed slowly thereafter.³⁹ It is also noted that work picked up speed during the last quarter of 2021.

The pandemic has also demonstrated the need of LA staff to adapt to new conditions of work. The evaluation noted the need for capacity development in the area of emergency response, which has arisen after the COVID-19 experiences.

Given the rapid staff turnover, the need of LAs appears to be short induction courses on fundamentals of local governance and service delivery. The Diploma courses supported by the Project are useful to individuals but is not the priority need of LAs⁴⁰.

The Project will need to focus on officials from difficult-to-reach areas who could not participate in the Project's capacity development activities due to logistical problems (see Capacity Development sub-section).

Cross-cutting themes

Gender and equity aspects are mainstreamed in the Project. However, climate change and disaster risk reduction are yet to be mainstreamed; the Project is yet to programmatically engage with the two key GoSL agencies, the Disaster Management Centre (DMC), and the Climate Change Secretariat (CCS) of the Ministry of Environment, which should have been engaged from the design stage of the Project. The Project Document cites DMC as a key stakeholder; nevertheless, its engagement is very recent.⁴¹ Discussions with CCS have not begun. The Project's provincial studies, *Provincial Climate Vulnerability Risk Assessment and Guidance for Capacity Development of Local Governments on Assessing Climate Change Vulnerability* should have been undertaken in close collaboration with CCS in order to ensure the GoSL ownership as well as the integration of the recommendations of these four studies into the Provincial Adaptation Planning process which is currently ongoing in all provinces as a part of GCF-funded NAP Readiness project implemented by the CCS in close collaboration with Provincial Councils.

³⁸ Information from the FGDs.

³⁹ KII with stakeholders; Annual Report (2020)

⁴⁰ KII and FGDs with Provincial stakeholders

⁴¹ KII with DMC; currently the Project is engaged with DMC on preparing a letter of agreement.

Save for the Uva Province, the Project is yet to engage with the district-level DMC officials to take forward the DMC initiative, and to access district-wise data which will be useful for local planning⁴².

4.2. Effectiveness

The effectiveness component is discussed under the three outputs.

Output # 1: Improvement to service delivery, and local planning and budgeting

Capacity Development

The capacity development component, with a relatively heavy investment, is aimed to reach target groups at the local government as well as the community level with a view to address the capacity gaps to ensure enhancing the quality of service delivery by LAs and increasing demand for quality and timely services to the satisfaction of the community. The target population include 2,756 elected councillors of 134 local authorities in the four provinces including 612 women councillors, some of whom have been elected for the first time. In addition, some 12,500 staff members of local authorities belonging to different service categories have been targeted. At the community level, the project was expected to reach at least 10 to 12 selected Community forums/Community Centres in each LA representing 1,582 wards. The Project also intended to focus on young men and women in the target communities and their community-based organizations.

The Project engaged the services of the Asia Foundation (TAF) to identify national priorities and existing capacity gaps in consultation with key staff of the provincial local government Ministry/ LG Department and the professional staff of the local authorities, and the elected council members. TAF undertook 12 studies to assess the capacities across seven broad domains and 27 specific indicators, covering areas related to asset management, infrastructure, staffing, compliance, governance, and uptake of technology and innovations, and the assessment reports were made available in November 2020.⁴³

The assessment found that the overall capacity for delivering services in the four provinces is considerably low. The capacity for providing social development was quite low. Most of the LAs (72%) are in the 'average performance' category with a 'below average' institutional capacity. Across provinces, Eastern Province recorded a marginally better profile.

Legal compliance in financial management and regulatory service delivery have been categorised as 'excellent' across all provinces, whereas using innovations in regulatory services, staff for key services, expenditure for social development services, delivering social development, and innovative practices in financial management were found to be poor across all provinces requiring urgent attention.⁴⁴

Although the Project has indicated that the findings in TAF reports have been presented to provincial authorities, many stakeholders seem unaware of their capacity gaps, as presented

⁴² KII with DMC officials.

⁴³ The Asia Foundation (undated); Institutional Assessment (the Report consists of four volumes relating to the capacity assessment of the four provinces plus a consolidated report). Also accessible at [\[https://www.lk.undp.org/content/srilanka/en/home/library/search.html?tagid=topics:governance-and-peacebuilding/local-governance-and-local-development\]](https://www.lk.undp.org/content/srilanka/en/home/library/search.html?tagid=topics:governance-and-peacebuilding/local-governance-and-local-development)

⁴⁴ *Ibid* (Consolidated Report)

in the reports.⁴⁵ This is perhaps due to the fact that the reports are in English, and therefore not widely read. Many stakeholders requested the report to be translated, as it will be useful for them in the long run.

The Project's main interventions can be summarised as follows:

- A series of training programs for the staff and elected councillors covering subject areas such as basic awareness in local governance, legal and regulatory aspects of LAs, citizen and stakeholder engagement, specific areas of service delivery (e.g., solid waste management) and financial management have been delivered with the support of the Sri Lanka Institute of Local Government (SLILG), the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sri Lanka, and the provincial Management Development and Training Units (MDTUs) and external resource persons .
- Several training of trainers (TOT) programmes have been conducted with the objective of setting up a provincial pool of trainers with improved skills, assessment of training needs, module development, active listening and communication, training delivery on different subject areas through presentations, facilitation, use of group dynamics and participatory methodologies, time management, and training evaluation.
- Special Diploma courses have been organized on subjects such as financial management (in collaboration with Institute of Chartered Accountants) and solid waste management (with University of Colombo) for LA staff. The financial management training is very much appreciated by the beneficiaries, and some provinces have received awards for the quality of their financial reports. The number and frequency of audit queries have also decreased.⁴⁶
- A Diploma course on Community Leadership has been conducted with SLILG and a certificate course for Women Councillors on Gender and Development by the Project.
- In the four provinces, six CSO partners have been contracted to develop the capacities of community centres and their members. In the four provinces series of awareness building sessions and training programmes have been conducted.

Assessment

The stakeholder interviews brought out the fact that the capacity development initiatives in the local government service, compared to some of the other government services, have been much less than desired. The evaluation noted that some officials with over 15 years' service in local government did not have any opportunity for formal training to improve their capacities.⁴⁷ In this context, the Project's capacity development initiative is welcomed and appreciated as a rare opportunity to improve the LA capacity.

The Project suffered significantly from COVID-19 pandemic as it could not conduct the training events in 2020 and up to about mid-2021 due to restrictions imposed by the government on travel and physical meetings. As a result, the training programmes have been much delayed. Some agencies (e.g., SLILG) resorted to online training; the interviews revealed that such training programmes were not fully successful and therefore had to be repeated with face-to-

⁴⁵ KII with provincial staff. The Project notes that these reports could have been accessed from the UNDP website.

⁴⁶ Information from FGDs (NCP and Uva)

⁴⁷ FDG with Trainees

face training later, incurring additional expenditure.⁴⁸ For the same reason, the CSOs could not undertake trainings at the Community Centres.⁴⁹ They developed the training modules and course materials during the latter part of 2021; actual training started only during the second quarter of 2022.

There was no concrete evidence of participatory planning and budgeting; perhaps it is too early to expect on the ground results due to delay in implementation.

Other observations are summarised below:

- Overall, there is satisfaction amongst the beneficiaries on the training received. They

My school had only five students and it was destined to be closed. After my leadership training, I went back to the village and spoke to the community, and managed to increase the student population to 21 within two weeks, thereby averting the closure of school.

School teacher (Uva)

have better confidence on their work, and knowledge, skills, and attitudes towards their jobs have improved. However, 3 out of 156 respondents were able to indicate improved service delivery to the citizenry as a result of their training, perhaps it is too early for them to apply the new skills at the LA level or at the community level with practical activities. Yet, they noted

improved internal performance in the offices. It was also noted that the opportunities for government staff from difficult-to-reach areas in the provinces have not been able to engage in training programmes due to travel and other logistical difficulties.

- The trainers who received ToT training have not been able to complete mock-trainings and cascade their training skills with practical training for other staff. There were no follow-up activities in terms of bringing the trainers together and formalising the trainers' pool and using their new skills for practical purposes.
- The Provincial Councils also undertake an annual capacity needs assessment. The evaluation noted that this assessment did not follow a rigid protocol using special tools but is a collation of 'requirements' of the respective LAs. In the overall scheme, the evaluation noted that the needs of LAs are more customised and contextualised trainings, rather than pre-determined trainings. In this context, some of the trainings provided have not delivered the expected results.
- The administrative structure in most LAs is weak to plan and capture capacity development. Often, the Chief Administrative Officer of *Pradeshiya Sabhas* and Urban Councils is a Management Assistant without adequate experience. In order to reap full benefits of the Project, the management structure of LAs including the elected representatives has to be responsive.
- The evaluation noted that the attention paid to improve LA capacities to increase their revenue is inadequate. The staff do not appear to have a grasp of the principles of income generation, as per Local Authorities' Acts and best practices in the world. For example, out of the large number of self-revenue generation sources identified, many

It is a 'torrent' of training workshops, sometimes disrupting the day-to-day work of the agencies. We would rather have customised trainings to address our specific needs.

Senior Provincial Official

⁴⁸ KII with senior provincial officials and trainees.

⁴⁹ The Project engaged the CSOs in September, 2021.

LAs use only limited number of revenue sources.⁵⁰ Practically, court fines should decrease due to better management of properties, and stamp duty revenue also should decrease due to fewer land subdivisions if a planned city development and systematic land use plans are implemented.⁵¹

The autonomy of LAs has to be appreciated by the staff and elected councillors, and the need to generate sufficient funds to conduct its affairs is of paramount importance. LAs should not depend on the central government for finances and other resources. The staff capacity to act independently and generate sufficient funds for LA operation was not demonstrated during the evaluation.

- The Project's main partner in the provinces is the Commissioner of Local Government, and the capacity strengthening has largely revolved around the agencies connected to the CLG. On the other hand, TAF assessment has shown very poor service delivery in social development across all provinces (see Table 4.1 in this Report). Subjects such as child protection, education, health and nutrition, and social protection were not evident in the capacity development programmes as the relevant agencies are, to wit, 'outside the purview of CLG'.⁵² The need to improve the service delivery of these areas requires technical inputs (e.g., service delivery to manage stunting and wasting in children, common in some of the target provinces), which have not been adequately addressed in the capacity development programmes.
- *Capacity development of women councillors:* The Project launched a special awareness programme aimed at improving the understanding of local governance targeting women councillors, particularly those who have been appointed for the first time. The women councillors were very appreciative of this effort which enabled them to understand the functioning of LAs, key legislation, and the protocols and procedures in conducting the business of LAs. Most of the women councillors have been elected under the proportional scheme (25% seats for women), and did not have prior knowledge on the functioning of LAs.

Concurrently, the project launched a special grant scheme to women councillors to enable them to be proactively engaged with the community. Due to the current food crisis, women councillors have been encouraged to involve the community in food production activities, although some women councillors interviewed were inclined to use the grant for other more productive livelihood activities (e.g., household garment production). The evaluation team had the opportunity to examine one such 'home gardening' proposal; the evaluation notes that this particular proposal lacked basic data on the viability of the project, expected benefits to the community, and sustainability. Without such key information, success of a project cannot be achieved; if the project fails, women councillors stand to lose confidence to work with the communities. In this particular instance, the assistance of the agricultural officials should have been sought to determine costs and benefits (also see the sub-section on gender and HRBA later in this report).

⁵⁰ The Asia Foundation (2018) Revenue sources of local authorities; sub-national governance publication.

⁵¹ See also Lessons Learnt (Polonnaruwa MC)

⁵² Information gathered during KIIs (with senior provincial officials) and FGD (with trainees).

- *Gender and Equity:* The Project has a gender action plan to promote gender and inclusivity to be incorporated in its interventions and change the institutional culture of LAs and the other partner organizations to enable more effective delivery of gender

Following the training on gender budgeting, the Kattankudy Urban Council initiated an intervention to provide e-learning facility, access to library service, soft-skills development training and entrepreneurship training to about 200 female boarding students who are from the different parts of the country so that they could start a business with funds allocated by the UC.

Female LA Official (Batticaloa)

commitments and political and civil rights. The Project has a set of guiding principles aimed at strengthening LAs' capacities for inclusive, responsive and accountable service delivery, and for addressing multi-dimensional challenges. The project has provided external consultants with a lengthy process guideline that explains how

gender and HRBA can be integrated into consultancy work. ToRs have been elaborated stipulating the gender and inclusive objectives. This facilitated inclusion of fair representation of ethnicity, women and men and people from vulnerable segments and people with disabilities. A disability expert has been engaged in conducting a disability assessment and awareness creation on disability inclusion. The training of trainers included gender awareness and sensitization, gender responsive budgeting in the LAs and community engagement and gender empowerment in local governance. The ToT has been completed in two provinces.

The provision of seed fund for female councillors to build their capacity in grant proposal writing and implementing such project is a progressive step by the project which has brought mixed reactions from the male councillors.⁵³ Application of the principles of equity is yet to be evident. This component is yet at nascent stage.

- *Participation in training events:* Many LAs had difficulties in identifying appropriate candidates for training events, largely due to staff shortages and other exigencies of work.⁵⁴ On occasion, LAs found it difficult to release staff for training events of more than one-day duration. The evaluation came across several instances where one officer has attended more than five training workshops on a variety of subjects. This is perhaps due to the paucity of staff to nominate for training courses, a fact which needs the attention of both the Project and LAs.

The Project has introduced a number of long-term Diploma courses. In general, these have been found to be beneficial to the individuals and have improved their skills to do their job. However, there was no guarantee that the candidate would remain in the LA as many local authority staff have a desire to move out of local government as they feel that the career prospects are less than in other services. It was the view of almost all interviewed that improvements to service delivery

I am a new recruit to the local government service; my training provided me an opportunity to meet and share experience with others on my subject area, how to work in difficult areas, and improve my knowledge on the subject to do my work more efficiently. Also, the training allowed me to correct negative perceptions of the local government service.

Female LA Official (Uva)

⁵³ The majority of the male Councillors felt that provision of seed grants is a step in the right direction as it creates a space for women to build their capacity; however, there were a few male councillors who felt that the facility should have been provided to both males and females.

⁵⁴ KII with senior provincial officials.

due to specific technical training, whilst beneficial to the individual, may not be demonstrated in the LA due to possible transfer of the officers, which is a right of the individual⁵⁵. In the circumstances, the general opinion expressed is the need to have regular induction training for all newcomers to LA covering the important work of LAs and develop standard guidelines to enable them to follow, rather than specific technical training, which should be carefully targeted to technical staff.

- *Institutional strengthening:* The Project has invested significantly on improving the LA capacities with hardware. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Project provided ICT hardware and software for online meetings. The evaluation noted a number of LAs unable to use the online meeting facility provided by the Project as they were not familiar with it.⁵⁶ In the LAs, there were instances where the Project has provided licenced software; however, the agencies did not have funds to renew licences.
- *Tool for capacity assessment:* The tool developed by the Asia Foundation for capacity needs assessment has been shared with LAs. However, the evaluation was informed of some limitations in the use of this tool in specific circumstances.

Overall, the evaluation could not find many significant outcomes of the trainings in terms of improved service delivery to the citizenry⁵⁷. The few examples cited are: the possibility of reducing time taken to issue construction permits, more efficient front desk service⁵⁸, and computerisation of revenue collection (in a limited LAs) and leading to quick document retrieval assisting service delivery.⁵⁹

Community Centres

In a short critique, Weerawardene analyses the long history of both formal and non-formal rural institutions in Sri Lanka in rural development.⁶⁰ The rural development movement of 1948 resulted in the Rural Development Societies (RDS) being established in every village to build a society of self-reliance. The role of RDS was to undertake development work in the villages. In late 1970's, *Gramodaya Mandalas* were established under an Act of Parliament.⁶¹ These consisted of representatives of all recognized village level societies, with the authority to undertake village development. The *Gramodaya Mandalas* were linked to the Pradeshiya Sabhas at the Divisional level and the District Development Committees at the District level. Multiplicity of village level institutions for rural development has been the pattern in the rural sector in 70's to 90's.

The legal coverage for Community Centres was provided by the then Ministry of Local Government, Housing and Construction in October, 1977; it also provided the guidelines for

⁵⁵ KII/FGD with provincial stakeholders.

⁵⁶ Based on the experiences of the evaluation team from their online meetings.

⁵⁷ Only three (3) out of 165 FGD participants were able to articulate improved service delivery as a result of the trainings.

⁵⁸ Front desk service was available in many LAs for a considerable time, established with support from various donors. The CDLG Project has supported improvements of front desk services and established new facilities in a number of LAs.

⁵⁹ There is another project supporting IT solutions in some of CDLG districts (Local Government Enhancement Sector Project of the ADB) and the evaluation noted respondents' uncertainty over which project has assisted them.

⁶⁰ Weerawardene, I K (1987) A historical analysis of rural institutions in Sri Lanka; Economic Review (February, 1987)

⁶¹ *Gramodaya Mandala Fund Act* (No. 28 of 1982) and its amendment No. 68 of 2009 on *Jana Diriya Fund*.

registration and operation of CCs.⁶² With the introduction of the 13th amendment to the Constitution, a need arose for legalization of CCs with provincial statutes at sub-national level.⁶³ The Provincial Commissioners of Local Government are empowered to oversee CCs. In 2021, CCs were permitted to undertake contract work in the villages through LAs.⁶⁴

Notwithstanding these developments, the real role of the community in development have not surfaced, largely due to poor coordination between agencies (e.g., Pradeshiya Sabha and Divisional Secretariats), overlapping of responsibilities, politicisation of societies, and continuing inability of the authorities to regularly consult the communities to identify their real needs.

Unlike RDS, WRDS, Death Donation Societies which are well-established rural societies with linkages to the decentralised units, Community Centres have had an uneven passage with their linkages to the devolved units. Their responsibilities can be summarised as follows:

- Undertaking social welfare work, *shramadana*, sports and literacy activities in the villages;
- Identify community needs and prepare Village Development Plans, in consultation with authorities (participatory planning);
- Function as a discussion forum on matters relating to development, peacebuilding and conflict resolution, resource use, advocacy etc.
- Undertaking village contract work.

Given the need for conflict resolution, there was significant donor interest in strengthening Community Centres, particularly in conflict-affected areas in the country.⁶⁵ The Community Centres flourished under donor projects, but nevertheless became inactive after the projects ended.

When the CCs were active, some have made significant contribution to the welfare of the community through leveraging funds for development activities. 'Citizen consultation' has been well demonstrated, and the CCs have canvassed the authorities for funds. The CCs have elected office-bearers and are registered with the Asst. Commissioner of Local Government. Their main income is from contract management (5%). In the Eastern Province for example, some CCs in the past launched innovative fund raising by managing car parks and other public spaces; they also received a monthly grant from the LAs. There are recorded instances in the past where CCs have used their reserve funds for helping the livelihood of the community.

The Project selected CCs using a set of criteria such as their active functionality for two to three years, existence of an executive committee, conducting regular meetings, operation of a bank account etc.⁶⁶ The evaluation noted that over 50% of the Community Centres in the four Provinces are currently inactive. Many have neither office-bearers nor statutes, and the members have not met for years. The interest of the community has waned, partly ascribed to lack of interest of the Community Development Officers. In this Project, attempt has been

⁶² The Asia Foundation (2018) Evolution of Praja Mandala and its role in Participatory Governance & Development Process

⁶³ 13th amendment to the Constitution 1987-schedule-1 (4 local government-28 registration of societies)

⁶⁴ Treasury Circular on Public Finance No.1/2021 [PFD/PMD/Cir/2021/1]- Section 2.1 (vii).

⁶⁵ For example: Project: Capacity Building of Civil Society and Local Authorities to Define Development through Sustainable Livelihoods (2018 – funded by the European Union)

⁶⁶ Criteria for Selection of Community Centres in CDLG (provided by the Palm Foundation)

made to revive some of the Community Centres by assisting with their constitution and registration. However, many CCs are yet to be registered.

General oversight and guidance for CCs is provided by the Community Development Officers (CDOs) of the provincial ACLG offices. The evaluation found that the oversight provided by the CDOs to CCs is inadequate. However, it also noted that, as a result of project interventions, the office bearers are better informed about the role of CCs, and their own responsibilities towards the community.⁶⁷

Other observations made during the evaluation are summarised below:

- *Capacity development of CCs:* The evaluation noted that the office bearers of Community Centres have gained new knowledge from the trainings received. The training has given them new insights and motivation to advocate citizen rights for effective service delivery by the respective local authorities. Puliymankulama Vimukthi Community Centre (Gomarankadawala PS Area) in the Eastern Province and Sanasuma Community Centre (Medawachchiya PS) in the North Central Province are cases in point. These Community Centre office bearers have had discussions with the respective LAs to initiate a consultative process for inclusion of their village priorities into the next budget cycle of the LAs.
- *NGO support for Community Centres:* The evaluation noted that there are INGOs working with CCs in the same provinces.
- *Politicisation of the Community Centres:* The Community Centres (CCs) form a part of direct democracy and, therefore, are able to make direct decisions without the aid of intermediaries or representatives. Nonetheless, local authorities form a part of representative democracy, (i.e. decisions are made by elected representatives who have often political party affiliations). The CCs are better positioned to work as watchdogs with advocacy and social audit roles to ensure that elected LA representatives make transparent and accountable decisions with regard to the utilization of public funds. However, the discussions with office bearers and members of CCs revealed that one of their main interests is income generation through construction contracts. In practical realities, construction contracts are channelled through LA representatives, and many CCs were willing to enter into construction contracts on a commission basis (often 5%) on behalf of elected LA representatives. This is a conflict of interest on the part of the CCs and a deviation from their main forte of social audit leading to the politicization of CCs. Indeed, the evaluation is of the view that CCs should be excluded from the revenue stream and regularly supported by LAs (e.g., monthly stipend) if they are to perform their legitimate work of advocacy and social audit through participatory fora, for the welfare of the community.
- *Management of CCs:* The evaluation noted that, often times, members of CCs were members of other societies. It was also observed that, in many instances, the main office bearers were the same as those of RDS or other Societies. The FGDs revealed that there was an element of uncertainty in the minds of CC Members on the need for establishing Community Centres as they felt that the responsibilities could be carried out by other Societies. Proliferation of societies in villages with small number of families has little relevance.

⁶⁷ KILs with office bearers of the Community Centres.

- *Plethora of CCs:* The LAs have a large geographical area to cover; however, due to shortage of funds and manpower, they are unable to provide the required service to the expected level. CCs are considered as an option by the local authority representatives to undertake village level work on behalf of them. However, the evaluation finds that ward-level CCs are adequate for this purpose, rather than village-level CCs. The Project is in a position to open a dialogue on this aspect to enable PCs to examine the issue holistically.
- *Views of elected representatives on CCs:* One of the elected members interviewed was able to indicate potential utility of CCs in social audit in order to monitor social accountability aspects of LA activities.

The evaluation had the opportunity to meet with a long-standing active CC (established in 1992). It has over LKR one million in deposits earned during the last decade or so. However, they have no plans to use some of these funds for welfare of the community as they do not have the freedom to decide on actions. All expenditures require the approval of the Community Development Officers, which is difficult to obtain.

The evaluation team met with all CSOs engaged with CC work. Although there are common pieces of work, there has been no opportunity for them to meet as a group and discuss common issues. Also, there is duplication of work (e.g., constitution of CCs, which has a common grounding).

Given the past records and the findings of this evaluation, there is uncertainty on the benefits of continued support to CCs. The evaluation notes the need for new strategies to engage the community in community welfare work. In this regard, the evaluation notes that one of the STRIDE component projects, LDSP, will withdraw support to CCs. The reasons for this decision will also be relevant in continuing CDLG support to CCs.⁶⁸

Shadow Youth Councils (SYC)

The Project has included youth as a focus area, and expects '*young people's awareness and understanding of participatory planning and creative problem solving will be enhanced...*' The Project introduced the concept of Shadow Youth Council. As the term defines, it is expected to shadow the respective LAs so that the youth as a forum can participate and influence decision-making on democratic governance issues by the LAs using their collective voice. The Project also expected the SYCs to influence positive changes in institutional culture of local authorities for effective service provisions.

The evaluation noted the following in terms of Shadow Youth Councils:

- The evaluation notes the formation of YSC as a positive development to engage youth in democratic local governance, enrich citizen engagement, and to develop future political leaders. However, it is too early to observe any results, as the work has just begun.
- YSCs have been formed in Uva and Eastern Province; in the Northern Province, there have been objections to the term 'Shadow Council' based on its purported functions.⁶⁹ Instead, the youth groups in the Northern Province are termed 'Action Groups'. In the NCP, they are yet to be formed.

⁶⁸ KII with Director, LDSP

⁶⁹ KII with Project and CSO staff.

- They have been formed in 2022 – in Uva, the YSC has been formed about one month ago.
- The YSC members, in general, were unaware of the purpose of the YSC, or their individual or collective responsibilities. Their involvement in SYC was found to be very low.⁷⁰ Overall, their conceptual understanding and knowledge on the objectives, benefits and potential outcomes of the YSCs were low. This was particularly evident in the Eastern (Trincomalee) and Uva provinces. In the Northern Province and in the Batticaloa district, the evaluation came across participants who demonstrated a better understanding. They referred to the need to resolve issues such as economic marginalization at the community level, discriminatory social and political environment of the youth, persistence of undemocratic political culture at LA level, and the need for respecting the rule of law. The lack of opportunities to communicate their ideas and needs to the decision-makers, inadequate facilities to improve their educational standards, and the dearth of career pathways for future employment were seen as major issues affecting the youth.
- In general, only a very few members were interested in mainstreaming into politics. They are very disillusioned about the current political culture, perhaps due to the ongoing anti-government campaigns (*áragalaya*).
- On the other hand, many LAs were unable to accommodate YSC members as observers/spectators in their sessions due to space constraints.⁷¹ The interviews with LA elected representatives indicate that there is lack of genuine interest on the part of LA elected representatives to accommodate YSC members in their discussions. One Pradeshiya Sabha chairperson indicated that there is no legal provision to entertain SYCs as a part of the local governance system.⁷²
- There is a disconnect between the YSC and CCs. Only a handful of YSC members met were members of CCs.⁷³ Sustainability of YSC is uncertain after the Project is over, particularly since YSCs have no formal linkage to CCs.

The evaluation notes that there is potential for contribution by SYCs in local governance to mainstream youth voluntary activism and leadership (men and especially women) for galvanizing their engagement. An important caveat is the systematic implementation of this initiative, and the acceptance of SYCs by the political leaders, particularly in the current political context in the country. Overall, it is too early to assess the effectiveness of YSCs.

Citizen Charters

The project has planned to prepare Citizen Charters at the LA level with the guidance of four individual consultants contracted for the purpose. The assigned consultants have completed staff orientation of LA staff and council members as a prelude to preparing citizen charters through a citizen consultative process.

⁷⁰ Observations from FDGs with SYCs.

⁷¹ In Chankaladi PS, YSC members had the opportunity to observe the sittings of the PS proceedings and to provide a feedback to the chairperson.

⁷² KII with a Chairperson, Pradesheeya Sabha.

⁷³ FGDs with YSCs.

- The citizen charters intend to improve the quality of the local government service deliveries by informing the citizens on the mandate of LAs vis-à-vis regulatory services, time taken for delivery of certain services and the remedial measures to be taken in the event of failure to keep service promises.⁷⁴ Although a Citizens' Charter does not create new legal rights, it would help ensure protection of existing rights of the citizens for receiving effective and timely services from the local authorities.
- The evaluation noted that the process has begun with updating regulatory mapping and work procedures for 30 local government services as a base for formulating service promises and remedial measures for compliance as part of the citizen charters. One of the key activities is to present local authority service delivery details to citizens through large TV screens in the front offices of LAs replacing the old billboards.

It is too early to assess the results of citizen charters since the work related to preparation and finalization of citizen charters by the individual local authorities have been delayed due Covid-19 pandemic and to the prevailing travel difficulties.

Integrating SDGs into local planning

UNDP recognises the need for integrating SDGs into development planning for a balanced social, economic and environmental sustainability. One of the flagship projects is on SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).

The project has initiatives to support mainstreaming SDGs into provincial development plans in the targeted provinces, 12 plans for LAs [UCs (6) and MCs (6)], namely, Jaffna, Akkaraipattu, Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Badulla, Bandarawela Municipal Councils, and Mannar, Vavuniya, Trincomalee, Eravur, Ampara and Haputale Urban Councils (Activity 1.2.8). Marga Institute is the supporting partner in this assignment. In this regard, preparatory meetings had been held in December 2021/January, 2022, and the evaluation noted the following⁷⁵:

- The manual, *Guide to Participatory Planning and budgeting for local authorities in Sri Lanka* had been published about 10 years ago by the Ministry of Local Government and Provincial Councils with technical support from the Asia Foundation. This manual is currently being revised in order to incorporate SDGs into planning, budgeting, and priority setting;
- Although there are six programme areas in SDG application, LAs are mostly interested in physical planning;
- The criteria for selecting the above LAs for the intended purpose is not clear to the Marga Institute.
- Although some LAs have enthusiastic officials, the capacities in the LAs was found to be generally inadequate to grasp the intricacies of integrating SDGs at LA level; Marga Institute found difficulty in convening preparatory meetings due to other more pressing business of the LAs, and there was general lack of interest in SDGs at LA level; and

⁷⁴ Ministry of Local Government & Provincial Councils (2007) Guidelines for Citizen Charters

⁷⁵ KII with Marga Institute

- There are no provincial officials to coordinate and support work on SDGs.
- Linkages across with the other donor projects and partners for this activity have not been established through awareness and joint planning.

Given the above situation, Marga Institute is faced with difficulties to take this work forward⁷⁶. Therefore, mainstreaming SDGs through mid-term development plans of LAs on a pilot basis needs re-focused attention in view of UNDP's engagement in SDG integration at the national level which includes the localization and integration of SDGs in provincial structures.

Output # 2: Innovative local governance systems

Capacity for Innovative local governance systems

The Project is expected to address multi-dimensional challenges by adopting innovative local governance systems. The progress is uneven, and work is at nascent stage in many LAs. Essentially, work so far focussed on providing computers and network facilities to LAs with the expectation of introducing novel systems to improve revenue, improve efficiency of services (electronic services), and mainstream DRR in local plans and services.

Some larger LAs (Municipalities) had already systems in place for online payment of assessment rates.⁷⁷ The evaluation, during its limited field visits, could not discern any innovative practices that have been implemented by LAs. However, there are a number of pending proposals such as the Green City development, which are timely but LAs have difficulty in implementing these due to funding constraints. The evaluation noted that some senior staff of LAs have innovative ideas for strategic adoption, such as the need to encourage joint activities by several LAs across their boundaries by sharing their resources to manage the common service delivery challenges, and collaboration with the private sector and other resource agencies for improvement of service delivery performances.⁷⁸

The grievance redress mechanisms were in place in many LAs even before the project. The CDLG Project improved this mechanism and linked it to the performance grants. The project provided training to raise awareness to prevent abuse of authority, harassment etc. At the community level it was expected to be expanded through public disclosure of information etc. for which different mechanisms such as citizen charters, call centres, and use of online communications were planned⁷⁹. The project has supported some local authorities (e.g. Uva province) to establish mechanisms⁸⁰ to improve information sharing and accept public complaints. The project has introduced the *Mankiwwa* ICT application to facilitate citizens to make online complaints and report their problems in their preferred language. Again, the resources in the LAs are very limited to fully implement these 'innovations'.

Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction

The Project has prepared Provincial Climate Vulnerability Risk Assessment and Guidance for Capacity Development of Local Governments on assessing climate change vulnerability for the

⁷⁶ KII with Marga Institute

⁷⁷ Some of these facilities have been provided by donor projects.

⁷⁸ KII with senior provincial officials and elected councillors.

⁷⁹ cf. Project Document (page 21)

⁸⁰ The local authorities refer this as 'call centres'.

four provinces. It is a comprehensive assessment with useful recommendations to PCs and LAs as well as to the DMC, CCS and other stakeholders who are engaged in DRR, CCA and resilience building work in the country to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable communities.

The evaluation noted that the assessment used administrative boundaries for the study without adequately considering climatic zones which run across administrative boundaries. An example is the Uva Province with two districts having different climatic and ecological conditions.

Work on CCA and DRR has been largely in the Uva Province, where the Project has coordinated with the District Managers of the Disaster Management Centre. The Project is in the process of establishing linkages with the Disaster Management Centre in Colombo. The engagement with DMC is not systematic, and clear responsibilities of the respective parties have not been determined.⁸¹ Likewise, CCA and DRR work have not been taken to the LA level, where there is significant scope for integrating CCA and DRR concepts into development planning. There is also scope for GN division-level risk assessment which would be very useful for village-level planning for DRR and resilience building activities.

The Project is yet to engage with the Climate Change Secretariat of the Ministry of Environment.

Output # 3: Legal and Policy framework for systems change

Legal and Policy Framework and Systems Change

An important activity is to review the existing LA by-laws, and where necessary draft new by-laws. The Project has engaged the services of Federation of Sri Lankan Local Govt. Authorities (FSLGA), the Sri Lanka Institute for Local Government (SLILG) and several independent consultants to support this activity.

In the local government system, there are two types of by-laws, viz.,

- By-laws enacted by the Local Authority for its own specific needs (Council By-Laws)
- By-laws promulgated by the Central Government or by the Provincial Councils covering LAs (Standard By-Laws)

Scope of work of FSLGA:

The FSLGA has been tasked with developing about 100 new by-laws for LAs consisting of standard and council by-laws and updating nearly 50 standard by-laws which have been gazetted in the past. The work is progressing, and about 80% of the tasks have been completed. In the process of implementing this assignment, FSLGA has identified additional needs in consultation with the Project (e.g., improvement of the capacity of elected officials in filing court cases, capacity improvement of women and youth councillors etc.).⁸²

FSLGA has also completed a visioning exercise to develop visions for all 134 LAs.⁸³

⁸¹ The evaluation noted that discussions are underway between the Project and DMC on a possible work programme.

⁸² The evaluation noted that the Project has not shared the capacity assessment completed by the Asia Foundation with FSLGA. The Project notes that the relevant reports could have been accessed via the UNDP website.

⁸³ Some LAs already had a vision, which was refined through this process.

The evaluation has noted an impasse on the work on the development of by-laws. FSLGA has not been able to proceed with the completed work as the special committee appointed by the Ministry via SLILG to review the drafted/amended by-laws has not agreed on the scope of the by-laws, and the subjects for which by-laws are needed. Indeed, the Ministry has informed the Project to submit a list of by-laws that should be in the assignment for their review, prior to proceeding with this assignment. Furthermore, the Committee has examined some of the drafted by-laws, and are not satisfied with the quality and consistency. The Ministry has requested the Project not to proceed with by-law drafting/revisions until the committee agrees on the scope of the assignment.⁸⁴

In this regard, an excerpt from the Minutes of the Project Steering Committee held in December, 2021 is reproduced below:

“Mr. Nayeemudeen requested to strengthen the coordination between the Ministry (sic), UNDP and other STRIDE implementing partners and to adopt a multi sectoral approach to amending/creating By-Laws. He noted that when it comes to By-Laws the Ministry has priorities (for example By-Laws in the area of firefighting) and they have commenced amending the legal framework applicable to local authorities. He requested UNDP to have a discussion on the creation of By-Laws with the Ministry so that their expertise and guidance on this area can be used for the benefit of the project. He noted that the Ministry is ready to take the leadership on this as it is the mandate of the Ministry. Mr. Weerasekara also reiterated the significance of improved coordination between implementing partners and the Ministry. [page 5 of the Minutes]

On the other hand, consultation with provincial officials revealed that the situation is considered by some as usurping the powers of the provincial councils in enacting by-laws. Accordingly, the evaluation team examined the situation in detail, and the following observations are made:

- According to the 9th schedule of the 13th amendment to the constitution there are three lists which deal with the devolution of powers of the Central Government to the Provincial Councils, as follows:⁸⁵
 - List I- Provincial Council List (Powers of the Provincial councils)
 - List II- Reserved List – (Powers of the Central Government)
 - List III -Concurrent List (Matters where National government and Provincial councils should concur)
- The Central Ministry of Provincial Councils and Local Government has provided guidelines detailing out the process for drafting/amending by-laws to be completed by the Provincial Councils.⁸⁶ In terms of the published guidelines, it has been pointed out that the Central MoPCLG has no role to play in this process. However, It can be involved under the following circumstances:

⁸⁴ KII with MoPCLG officials

⁸⁵ 13th Amendment to the Constitution (1987)

⁸⁶ Ministry of Provincial Councils and Local Government (2015) Guidebook on Review of Enforcement of By laws in Local Authorities

- Where Provincial Councils/CLGs/ACLGs/LAs request the assistance on the basis of lack of technical expertise for by law preparation and review process.⁸⁷
- The provincial by-laws adopted are seen to have contravened and/or breached the national laws passed by the parliament.

Notwithstanding this position, the MoPCLG maintains that it has a responsibility of maintaining quality, consistency with other laws, and avoid duplication of all new/amended by-laws. It is in light of these requirements that MoPCLG has established the committee at SLILG, based on its mandate.⁸⁸

Clearly, this is a point of disagreement on the interpretation of the procedure by the relevant parties, and the way forward in this task is uncertain.

The evaluation also noted that there are about 1,200 by-laws pending at the MoPCLG for clearance, and this work has been hampered by the recent disturbances in the country.⁸⁹

Scope of work of SLILG:

The Sri Lanka Institute of Local Government (SLILG) is tasked with capacity development including awareness creation and training on by-laws. It has developed 16 modules and has conducted 158 training/awareness events in the four provinces. This programme will be converted into a certificate programme in the future. They have faced with several constraints in implementing their assignment. These include: short time period provided for the assignment, lack of training equipment, and trainees moving on to other jobs after training.⁹⁰

Scope of work of Individual consultants:

There are individual consultants engaged for developing the Citizen's Charters in the four provinces. A few Training of Trainers events have been conducted, but the work is very much delayed due to ongoing travel difficulties. The evaluation noted that the four consultants in the different provinces have had not opportunity to interact and share experiences.⁹¹

The overall observations are as follows:

- The three groups who have some common work assignments have had no opportunity to meet and discuss their work.
- There is duplication/overlapping of work.
- Their understanding of the overall picture of the Project is low.
- Work of the FSLGA cannot be taken forward due to the circumstances described above.

Coordination between LAs and Decentralised Units

The Project has identified weak integration and linkages between LAs and decentralised units as a deterrent for efficient service delivery. The Project has started some work only now and is yet to develop a clear strategy to take forward this work. The evaluation team interviewed only one District Secretary as there has been no work on this component in other districts/provinces. The need for close interaction between LAs and decentralised units is also

⁸⁷ However, such instances are very rare since the Provincial Institutions/LAs are able to directly contract the services of the external consultants for by-law making and review process.

⁸⁸ KII with the Legal Officer of MoPC.

⁸⁹ KII with MoPCLG senior staff.

⁹⁰ KII with SLILG.

⁹¹ KII with Project's consultants.

seen by the evaluation team as a priority as local planning cannot be done in isolation without the active involvement of District/Divisional Secretaries and their planning divisions. It is also noted that key statistics and data relating to local planning are in the custody of Divisional Secretaries (and *Grama Niladharis*). Furthermore, such linkages can reduce overlapping and duplication thus avoiding inefficiencies.

The evaluation noted that there are Provincial Advisory Committees to oversee the project implementation. Except in NCP, other Committees do not have the District Secretary (or representative) as a Member.

The effectiveness of this component cannot be assessed as work has not started. However, a positive development is that the subjects of devolved institutions and decentralised institutions are now housed in the same Ministry (Ministry of Public Administration, Home Affairs, Provincial Councils and Local Government), which could provide the required facilitation to the Project to initiate this activity effectively.⁹²

Outreach

The visibility of the CDLG project is important for a variety of reasons such as advertising the Project, improving the sense of ownership of the project process, optimising team spirit, resource utilisation, and for the effectiveness of the development cooperation. The evaluation noted that some of the outreach materials of the project carried prominently the logo of STRIDE with CDLG signage rather obscure. In the locations where project activities such as meetings, training, and FGDs were conducted STRIDE stand-up banners were displayed, where CDLG signage was weak. Most SYC members attending the meetings wore T-shirts with STRIDE logo, but were unaware of the STRIDE programme or CDLG. The evaluation noted the need for improved visibility of the CDLG. In this regard, the evaluation noted the following:

- The visibility of CDLG is inadequate in its present form, and many stakeholders are confused when STRIDE logo is prominently displayed, overshadowing CDLG signage;
- Thus there is a need for better visibility of CDLG in outreach materials produced by the Project;
- There is no structured learning process to capture the local wisdom and the leading practices and experiences generated by the project and sharing them through CDLG identity;
- The knowledge products produced by the CSO partners are not systematically encapsulated and integrated into the Project's outreach portfolio;
- The key findings of the Project are not available in local languages.



Overall achievement

The overall achievement rating is provided in Table 4.1.

⁹² KII with Senior Officials of the Ministry of Public Administration, Home Affairs, Provincial Councils and Local Government.

Table 4.1 - Achievement Rating

Colour coding	Rating			
Green: completed, indicator shows successful achievement	HS	Highly satisfactory	MU	Marginally Unsatisfactory
Yellow: indicator shows possible completion by the end of the project	S	Satisfactory	U	Unsatisfactory
Red: indicator shows poor achievement – unlikely to be completed by project closure	MS	Marginally Satisfactory	HU	Highly Unsatisfactory

Sources: ProDoc; Annual Reports; KIs, FGDs

Output	Key activity	Baseline	Mid-term Target	End-of-Project Target	Mid-term level & Assessment	Achievement Rating	Justification for Rating
Output # 1	1.1. Conduct Capacity mapping and develop capacity development plan:					S	TAF study completed; ongoing annual capacity assessment by the LAs
	1.2. Conduct capacity building on planning, budgeting and for utilization of basic and performance transfers.					MS	Capacity development on planning and budgeting is continuing and basic and performance transfers just started; some key actions delayed/slowly progressing (e.g., peer-to-peer exchange; targeted training for resilient development; joint workshops with deconcentrated units not held; dashboards for participatory tracking not available)
	1.3. Develop and utilize tools to enhance participatory, responsive, and accountable service provision and simplify and visualize planning and budgeting processes.					MS	Some actions are very much delayed (digital participation platforms for all stakeholders; planning and budgeting tools – limited; service tracker not available; grievance and feedback mechanism limited; e-citizen report cards; interoperability of web/mobile tools; collation of lessons and experiences)
	1.4. Build capacities for data management					U	Key actions delayed (review of data management routines, practices; data availability assessment; DRR data); limited profiling of tiers of government

	1.5. Execute targeted capacity development programmes for women and youth officials (Elected and Administrative)					S	The gender ToT has been completed in some provinces only. There has been no follow-up training by the Trainers yet.
Output # 2	2.1 Build capacities for innovative service delivery					U	Changes in the application of innovative service delivery not demonstrated yet.
	2.2 Build capacities to support gender – inclusive resilient development					U	Key actions delayed; collaboration with DMC and CCS delayed
	2.3 Targeted support MCs/ UCs to address urban challenge					MS	Few Green Cities Plans have been developed, but these are of limited utility as funds are not available for implementation; Some key actions (e.g. planning tools, data management and analytics training, community mediation (SEDR), designing innovative service delivery; exchanges between MCs and UCs) are delayed.
Output # 3	3.1. Conduct advocacy and learning exchange programmes					U	Key actions delayed.
	3.2. Improve collaboration between different levels and units of central, decentralized and devolved government					U	Only limited actions in one province; very much delayed

4.3. Coherence

Similar interventions of the government and other donors

The CDLG Project is a part of the larger programme, Strengthening Transformation, Reconciliation and Inclusive Democratic Engagement (STRIDE); in fact, Output # 1 of CDLG is expected to directly contribute to the Output # 1 of STRIDE programme. The other complementary projects are:

- The Local Development Support Project (LDSP) with the objective of strengthening local government authorities' capabilities to deliver services to communities in a responsive and accountable manner, and to support economic infrastructure development in participating provinces. It also focusses on LA planning systems. The Project is a World Bank USD 101 million loan agreement with GoSL; and
- Supporting Effective Dispute Resolution (SEDR) Project, implemented by the British Council with the Asia Foundation to Improve dispute resolution services for both individual and community level grievances. SEDR is implemented in only three Provinces (NP, EP and Uva).

The inclusion of SEDR in the larger STRIDE programme is considered somewhat artificial as there is no common vision between the projects. About 65% of its resources support the national mediation programme with focus on community-based disputes.⁹³

The National Steering Committee (NSC) of the STRIDE programme oversees the CDLG Project, and is expected to bring about coordination amongst the projects. However, the evaluation noted the coordination to be less than desired.

In terms of duplication of work, the evaluation noted the following:

- Addressing community grievances is an indicator in the CDLG Results Framework (at the Objective level); the evaluation noted that CDLG Project's focus on community grievance mechanisms has not been addressed yet. However, this is directly addressed by the SEDR project, which is better placed to address the grievance related work;
- SEDR is also committed to strengthen Community Centres (*Praja Mandala*) with the assistance of CSOs. Additionally, it focusses on youth empowerment (Active Citizens) and uses the same CSOs as in CDLG for work in the Uva and Northern Provinces. In this component, SEDR's attention has been to empower youth to identify problems and issues. SEDR has already completed 15 Social Action Projects resulting from these interventions.⁹⁴ In this regard, the evaluation noted potential duplication of work at the field level; although SEDR has explicit focus, this has not been translated into the thinking of the CSO.⁹⁵
- The evaluation has revealed that both CDLG and LDSP are being implemented in the same set of local authorities in the Northern, North Central, Eastern, and Uva provinces. The two projects are expected to be implemented in close coordination in order to ensure the effective utilization of resources and avoid duplication.

⁹³ KII with SEDR Project.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Discussions with CDLG CSOs. The evaluation team did not meet with SEDR's CSOs.

The evaluation found that in addition to well-known major barriers, the actual implementation has been delayed due to a lack of clarity on responsibilities of the different players at the local authority level. There was no clarity on the coordination between the two projects at the local authority level. This has led to duplication of work in terms of awareness building, allocation of resources for the local planning process, and confusion on the responsibilities for the achievement of the final results.

The evaluation also noted that in some districts, the same partner works for both projects, and there is repetition of work as the responsibility is for both projects.

Synergies and interlinkages between the project and other interventions

The evaluation noted some synergy between CDLG and LDSP. CDLG is expected to contribute towards the performance grant scheme launched by LDSP with technical support. KIIs and FGDs revealed that there is close collaboration between the two projects for performance grants relating to service delivery, bottom-up approaches to citizen positioning in the local decision-making process through local planning and budgeting, and feedback mechanisms. Both projects have prioritized local participatory plans and gender sensitive budgeting. Basic and performance transfers are aimed to strengthen the role of the elected representatives of LAs.

CDLG contributions are underway only just now for guiding and supporting LAs to become qualified for performance grants by improving their performance efficiency (e.g., enhancing efficiency of general management, financial performance through tax and own revenue regimes, cost-benefit analysis, reduction of expenditure and wastage, efficient asset management, and use of digital technological innovations). CDLG's provision of equipment to LAs has been useful for LDSP's data management efforts towards transfers. The performance grant system is in its early stage with the first one awarded in early 2022 as a Covid-19 response grant.

CDLG is expected to contribute towards the STRIDE programme, particularly its 1st Output. Yet, there is no mechanism to assess this contribution, and the Results Framework does not detail out the scope of the expected contribution. Whilst in general terms linkages are seen between the outputs, these cannot be assessed with the available evidence.

As a mechanism to spell out the linkages, the Project attempted to develop a common results framework; the complementary projects have not seen the utility of this common results framework, and indeed, there is a confusion on the current status.

Complementarity, harmonization, and co-ordination with others

The evaluation found it difficult to seek any evidence of concrete harmonisation and coordination to bring out the results into a common platform. This is due to the absence of formal mechanisms to bring about the coordination. A case in point is the empowerment of Community Centres in the Uva Province. The CDLG uses the CSO, Uva Shakti Foundation to enhance CC capacities whereas SEDR uses Chrysalis for the same purpose. The evaluation found that there has been no sharing of experiences and thoughts by the two CSOs in regard to approaches to empower the Community Centres.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ KII with the CSO.

The SEDR project is now linked to the Ministry of Justice given the project's focus on mediation. There is thus a disconnect between MoPCLG and SEDR. The coordination mechanisms need to be re-examined as SEDR is expected to host the NSC this year.

The evaluation also noted that LDSP and CDLG teams meet regularly; however, SEDR does not participate in these meetings.⁹⁷

Value Addition

The examples of value addition are few and apart. As already mentioned, the technical inputs of CDLG have helped LDSP. On the other hand, the evaluation noted several instances of efforts being duplicated, which could have been avoided by closer dialogue and coordination between the projects as well as in the field. The evaluation has, however, noted the potential for value additions by LAs through simple steps for reduction of service delivery duration, minimizing the occurrence of opportunity cost for citizens and promoting innovative practices for community governance, and sustainable maintenance of assets and facilities.

4.4. Efficiency

The evaluation did not analyse expenditures as the requisite expenditure information was not provided. In the circumstances, the analysis provided here is limited.

Cost-efficient results

Whilst no data are available for a systematic analysis, the evaluation notes the following:

- The Project has deployed sufficient staff in the provinces to implement the programme; in larger provinces, additional project associates are in place to ensure that the LAs are adequately covered.
- Interviews with GoSL officials indicated the need to rationalise expenditure on resource persons contracted directly by the Project used for capacity development activities and to reduce overall expenditure.⁹⁸ It was indicated that the Project should set in place mechanisms to ensure that the capacity development deliverables are cost-effective and demonstrate value for money. In this regard, the evaluation noted the Project's difficulties in securing competent resource persons in some of the provinces forcing the project to use available resource persons. Also, it is noted that the Project has faced difficulties in securing the services of Tamil-speaking resource persons.
- The external stakeholders were also of the view that improved coordination at the PMU level could improve efficiency of delivery. Better coordination amongst project staff could rationalise training events by combining subjects. Additionally, it was pointed out that coordination between PMU and provincial project staff could reduce duplication of work, particularly when a CSO works for more than one agency. The evaluation has noted this shortcoming.
- The Project has provided significant amount of ICT hardware to the LAs; the evaluation noted that there is no plan at the LA level to provide and maintain the licenced software

⁹⁷ KII with LDSP Project.

⁹⁸ KII with senior government officials.

necessary for the hardware. The Project has upgraded internet connections in LAs by providing fibre optic connections.

Achieving the planned results

- The Project reprogrammed some of its activities to accommodate LA's requests for Covid-19 management; the Project responded by providing assistance of about USD 1 million to supply health-care materials and undertaking awareness programmes. This support also included providing online facilities to LAs. Overall, the support is appreciated by the LAs, although there was evidence of lack of follow-up care on the facilities provided to the LAs. For example, some LAs could not use the online discussion/live streaming facilities provided due to poor bandwidth.
- The delays in delivery of outputs caused by Covid-19 pandemic are noted throughout the programme; in the current context, the travel difficulties due to fuel shortages have hindered efficient implementation. It is however noted that the exchange gains⁹⁹ would offset additional costs on travel, meeting logistics etc. and would therefore not affect the project significantly.
- Concomitantly, there are a significant number of consultancies with delayed delivery, due to the same reasons. A point noted during the evaluation is the Green Cities Planning; there is an expectation amongst a number of stakeholders that the Project will support funding some of the recommendations in the Green City Plans. Otherwise, the utility of the plans is questioned. The LA expectations from this component are unclear. Additionally, there is a concern that the ongoing consultancies will not produce reports in time for the Project to take action.

Best practices and improvements to cost efficiency

It is too early to seek any best practices as the Project has been in full swing for only about one year. Yet, the evaluation notes the following areas for improving cost-efficiency:

- Improving coordination amongst CSO partners and other service providers with a view to avoid duplication of work. An example is the development of a constitution for Community Centres. All CSO partners are doing this; rather a generic template could have been developed which could be fine-tuned according to the specific needs of the provinces.
- A similar disconnect is seen between SLILG, FSLGA and the Marga Institute which have been contracted for work relating by-laws and related areas. Closer dialogue between these organisations, facilitated by the Project could have avoided duplication of work (e.g., training), and better coordination for more efficient delivery. A similar situation is seen in work relating to the Citizens Charters, where individual consultants are working in the different provinces without discussing amongst themselves.

Leveraging other resources

The evaluation did not observe any leveraging of funds by the Project. Indeed, government funding of two important partner agencies, SLILG and MDTUs has been drastically reduced

⁹⁹ The exchange rate (USD to LKR) at the beginning of the Project was about LKR 175/USD; it is currently about LKR 385/USD.

this year as a part of reducing government expenditure. The evaluation noted that, if not for the Project, both SLILG and MDTUs would not have adequate work in 2022.¹⁰⁰

The CDLG project has provided for developing relationships/partnerships with the decentralized administration for joint planning and sharing the government resources for collaborative programme implementation (Output # 3). This interface is yet to be built, and proper functioning of the interface between the devolved and decentralised units requires attention to in-depth understanding of the different systems. Strong vertical and horizontal linkages are pivotal for success, and if addressed properly, can be a successful window for leveraging state and other funds. Since this work is yet in early stages, there is an urgent need to commence a policy dialogue to review the current status of linkage building with decentralized administration and explore mechanisms and entry points to promote collaboration between LAs and decentralized units for leveraging cost-efficient local government services.

4.5. Progress towards impacts

Output level achievements congruent with the outcome level results

The CDLG Theory of Change spells out key changes needed to improve service delivery by the LAs, as summarised below:

- (a) Improving local planning and budgeting cycles to allow outcome-based participatory planning in line with the 2030 Sustainable development Agenda;
- (b) Improving capacities of LAs and decentralised units
- (c) Provide equitable services and reduce inequity and minimise vulnerability to climate and disaster risks;
- (d) Institutionalising participatory planning

Due to the delays in implementation, the Project has not progressed adequately to achieve the main changes envisaged enumerated above. The Project has concentrated on capacity development [(b) above]. Participatory planning and local budgeting is still at early stage to demonstrate the changes.

In regard to capacity development, the evaluation team met with over 150 trainees in all four provinces. However, only 3 out of 156 respondents were able to recount any changes in their work patterns, and hardly any who were able to positively identify improvements to service delivery systems to the community. On repeated probing and leading questions, some participants were able to indicate that they may now provide the construction permits within the stipulated times. Improvements to overall service delivery were not obvious.

However, some of the participants said that because of the new realization taking place during the first few months of the year 2022, they could utilize their new skills gained from the capacity-building training and capture missing gaps through enhanced involvement in the participatory local planning and plan implementation process.

The evaluation also faced the difficulty of using the Results Framework and annual reports to analyse impacts. There is no results-based reporting currently, rather reporting is on activities.

¹⁰⁰ KII with senior government officials.

Furthermore, baselines (as stipulated in the Results Framework) are not available for comparison with the current situation.

The evaluation also noted that the Project, given its current focus on capacity development, has not focussed adequately on the following areas of work to provide significant results:

- Improve revenue generation by LAs;
- Mediation work and reducing conflicts (which is a focus of the SEDR project)

Currently, the Project does not have an explicit conflict-sensitivity approach, particularly in the Northern and Eastern Provinces.

As captured in Table 4.1 (Rating Scale), work is still proceeding, and it is too early to assess the achievement of outcome level results. However, a number of sub-outputs is unlikely to be achieved by the end of the Project.

Unintended impacts

The evaluation did not come across any significant unintended impacts.

Strategic changes/re-alignments required to achieve high-level results

Given the short period left, the Project needs to reprogramme its activities to focus on a few result areas, which have shown promise. The entire capacity development programme has to be reviewed in order to provide customised trainings, taking into consideration the rapid turn-over of LA staff with a clear focus on improving service delivery to the people. The attention provided to social development aspects is inadequate, and LAs need to collaborate with other social development Ministries and agencies within the LAs to engage in identifying the pressing capacity needs to improve service delivery, particularly in the areas of education, health and nutrition, child protection and social protection schemes.

The Project may, through consultation with LAs identify activities that should be scaled up, based on the experiences gathered so far. The evaluation noted limited innovations for revenue collection, for example, which have the potential to be scaled up. Such scaling up requires commitment from the LAs.

The Project may consider downsizing its engagement in areas covered by other complementary projects (e.g., mediation work, social audits); this would require a close dialogue with other projects to agree on the working modalities and provincial and local coordination of activities.

4.6. Sustainability and national ownership

As the Project is at mid-term, it is premature to assess sustainability and national ownership. The situation is exacerbated by the economic crisis faced by GoSL currently, and drastic reduction of GoSL expenditure. Nevertheless, the following section summarises the evaluation team's assessment on the possibilities of sustaining the project initiatives and results.

National Institutional Capacities

The Project has invested significantly towards building the capacity of LA officials, elected representatives and the relevant institutions. In regard to continuity of these results, the following observations are made:

- The Government institutions mandated with LA capacity development are the SLILG and the MDTUs, together with the relevant Ministries. In both SLILG and MDTUs, there have been drastic budget reductions in 2021 and 2022. As mentioned elsewhere, these institutions would not have had a workplan for 2022 if not for the CDLG project. Currently, their work is almost entirely dependent on the CDLG financial contributions. The human resources capacities and infrastructure facilities at the MDTUs have been improved by the Project; however, non-availability of funds for recurrent expenditure poses a question on sustainability of the results. The evaluation noted that in one MDTU, the annual allocation for training has been only a mere LKR 500,000.
- The Project has supported the establishment of testing laboratories for the construction industry sector. Similar laboratories are available in other provincial departments. The evaluation team visited one and the discussions revealed that there was no business plan to ensure sustainability of the laboratory. Indeed, there was no allocation for maintenance of equipment provided by the Project, should there be a breakdown.
- The Community Centres have not demonstrated their sustainability in their current structures. Their past performance shows that many CCs have become defunct after project funding.
- Another concern is the rapid staff turnover in LAs. Whilst the Project has built individual capacities to improve working of LAs, transfer of trained officials to another agency would adversely affect the LA. There is no solution to this issue as transfers are a right of the officer; unless local government service is made attractive and comparable in recognition to other services, there is possibility of staff transferring out of the service. However, many senior officials felt that in order to overcome this issue, comprehensive induction courses to the new entrants are needed and should be regularly held to new entrants so that fundamentals of service delivery are understood by them.
- The evaluation noted several interventions (e.g., online payments/revenue collection) with potential for upscaling. This was a focus area of the evaluation, but the responses from LAs was mixed. There is a general apathy to introduce novel systems, exacerbated by the poor financial situation of many LAs, due largely to inconsistent revenue collection.
- The uncertainty of the term of office of LA elected councillors has not helped the cause of sustainability, as it would appear that political authorities are pre-occupied with issues related to their term of office and elections.

The provincial governors and Chief Secretaries should be able to leverage political windows to create broader platforms for improving service delivery; however, this is not demonstrated in the current political milieu.

Long-term risks for sustaining the results

Although it is too early to judge, the current economic downturn is unfavourable for sustaining the results. At the lowest level, there is uncertainty of regular updating of software provided

by the Project, due to financial difficulties. On the other hand, some LA officials are enthusiastic about sustainability of the results as they have personally experienced the changes in their office routine.

Judging from the past experiences, the sustainability of Community Centres (and the Shadow Youth Councils) cannot be foreseen, unless there is regular support from LAs toward the upkeep of CCs.

The sustainability of results will depend largely on the funding available. Unless the LAs improve their own revenue generation as per the statutes through enhancing legal and process compliance for all identified revenue sources (e.g., assessment taxes, rent, licencing fees, trade and business taxes, and recovery of charges) sustainability cannot be ensured. The Project will find useful to interact with the ADB-funded Local Government Enhancement Sector Project which is operational in some of the CDLG project areas with a focus on improving revenue collection through *Pura Neguma*.¹⁰¹

4.7. Programme Management

The overall management of the Project is by a Project Management Unit located in Colombo, comprised of a Project Manager and technical staff. The four provinces have a Project Coordinator (PC) and a number of Project Associates to help the PC. The number of Project Associates vary, depending on the size of the province. The Northern Province and Eastern Province have two Project Associates as they are large provinces with five and three districts, respectively. In the NCP and Uva, the PC is supported by one Project Associate.

The Project Coordinators are an important cog in the system in that they liaise directly with the Provincial Councils. The evaluation noted a close rapport between PCs and the respective Provincial Councils, represented by the Chief Secretary. The bondages between the Chief Secretary and the Project varied from province to province. For example, in Uva, there was very close liaison with the Project; it was noted that the Chief Secretary was previously in local government service and therefore is particularly interested in the Project.¹⁰²

Civil Society Organisations in implementation

At the provincial level, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have been engaged in project implementation, particularly in the community engagement component. The evaluation met with all CSOs involved in project implementation in the provinces. Some of them are long-standing partners of UNDP, and have a good relationship with the community, and understand UNDP philosophies.

Although a comparative assessment of the performance of CSOs is not in the scope of this evaluation, the following notes are made from discussions with CSO staff and field observations:

- In general, CSOs have a good rapport with the communities with which they work.

¹⁰¹ Local Government Enhancement Sector Project, Asian Development Bank (currently ongoing)

¹⁰² Source: KII; unfortunately, in spite of several attempts by the Evaluation Team and the Project Field Staff, interviews with Chief Secretaries in other provinces could not be arranged as they were otherwise engaged.

A key partner of CDLG was of the view that successful achievement of project targets requires the PMU to interact closely with field staff and provide mentoring and coaching to transfer skills in programme management and LA service delivery. This will make field staff more resourceful and confident to successfully cascade their knowledge and skills to the local authority level. Knowledge and skills transferred in such a manner should include facilitation skills, local planning budgeting and priority setting, monitoring and evaluation, and documentation of innovative approaches and good practices.

Source: KII with a Partner

- The PCs are expected to guide the CSOs in their work; the relationship between the PCs and staff and CSOs varied from province to province; in some provinces, the evaluation noted CSOs' sincere request for better technical

guidance for their work from project staff, and more regular dialogue with them so that their field work could be more efficiently handled.

- There are gaps in understanding of the project in its entirety by some CSOs as they concentrate only on the assignment given to them. Their understanding of the relationship and their contributions to STRIDE (and other component projects) could be better. This is a shortcoming in almost all provinces, and this can only be improved by regular 'hand-holding' by the Provincial field staff.
- The evaluation noted the need as well as the potential for further improvement of the field approaches of CSOs with enhanced coaching and mentoring by the Project's provincial field staff, as a running partner with a long-term trusted relationship, rather than as a service provider, which can also be instrumental in improving efficiency.

Oversight committees

The oversight for the implementation of the Project is provided at two levels, viz., national and provincial.

The National Steering Committee (NSC) of the STRIDE programme provides oversight to the CDLG project. The objective of the NSC is given as '*provide strategic oversight and guidance to the Programme for transparent, accountable, and responsive result-oriented delivery of activities.*'¹⁰³

Its functions include, *inter alia*, guiding the planning and implementation of activities at all levels; approve annual work plans, budgets and relevant documents, provide oversight and review progress against approved workplans; ensure strategic harmonization and coordination among the implementing partners of STRIDE Programme; monitor business and strategic issues and provide advice on risks that may have an impact on the project rationale or success; and review consolidated progress and financial updates of the STRIDE submitted by relevant implementing partners.

The National Steering Committee for STRIDE Programme is co-chaired by the State Secretary to the Ministry of Provincial Council and Local Government and the Head of Development Cooperation of European Union Delegation. The National Steering Committee is expected to

¹⁰³ Excerpted from the Terms of Reference of the NSC

meet at least twice a year. In 2021, it met twice, but there have been no meetings in 2022. Since the change of the Government, there is no State Ministry of Provincial Councils.¹⁰⁴

The evaluation team has perused the minutes of the meetings held in 2021; in the main, it has been presented with progress made by the different projects, but has not examined the results or progress towards outcomes. The issue of inter-project coordination has also been raised at the meeting held in December, 2021. The NSC would be best placed to integrate outputs from all three projects to ensure that STRIDE outcomes are evident; this is not clearly seen yet. Another point raised at this meeting is the need to widen the scope of amending by-laws, which has not been followed up by the Ministry.

An important discussion point has been the development of a common results matrix to map the changes in *transformation, reconciliation and democratic engagement* to have a clearer understanding of STRIDE outcomes.¹⁰⁵ However, as discussed elsewhere, the task of developing a common results framework has not been taken to a completion, and the management utility of the common results framework in its current form is unclear. The work done in developing the common results framework could nevertheless have been used to track progress by different projects and identify consequential delays.¹⁰⁶

Overall, the National Steering Committee could have played a more influential role to ensure that the results of the projects converge to bring about the desired changes. The NSC has not met in 2022 as of the time of evaluation, and there is no alternative system to take forward its important work.

At the provincial level, there are Provincial Advisory Committees set up under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary to review progress. The evaluation team has access only to minutes of the NCP Provincial Advisory Committee held in December 2020. The evaluation team has been informed that meetings are held, albeit not quite regularly. Furthermore, the Project is expected to hold monthly provincial meetings to assess progress.

Programmatic and management considerations for implementing the remainder of project activities with particular emphasis on (a) The Results framework, and (b) Work Plan

Due to the lockdowns resulting from Covid-19 pandemic and the shortage of fuel since about March 2022, project implementation has suffered badly. Given the volume of the portfolio, it is unlikely that the remainder of the work programme could be completed during the balance period of the Project.

The current Results Framework is of limited use for monitoring and reporting. It has a well laid out set of indicators; however, there are neither baselines nor any attempt to track the quantitative data to track progress towards outcomes. Some indicators are not SMART.

¹⁰⁴ The Evaluation Team interviewed the ex-Secretary, MoPCLG in place of the Co-Chair from Government as currently there is no State Ministry. However, the Ministry of Public Administration, Home Affairs, Provincial Councils and Local Government is hopeful of convening a meeting in September, 2022 (KII with Senior Official)

¹⁰⁵ Minutes of the National Steering Committee held on 16 December 2021 (Agenda item 4 - Integrated logical framework)

¹⁰⁶ See: presentation made by PMU at the Steering Committee meeting held on 16 December 2021.

The Results Framework in the Project Document spells out the Indicators; the baselines (including reference year) and targets were to be established during the inception phase. This has not materialised; however, an institutional assessment using seven broad domains and 27

Sub-Indicators	Overall	Uva	East	North	NCP
Legal Compliance in Financial Management	87%	90%	86%	90%	83%
Good Practice in Regulatory Service Delivery	78%	77%	80%	80%	74%
Regulatory Service Delivery	71%	67%	77%	63%	77%
Partnerships	69%	61%	60%	94%	60%
Service Coverage	66%	63%	64%	66%	70%
Procurement	64%	53%	71%	68%	66%
Community Participation - Human Resource	63%	42%	74%	82%	56%
Office Management Good Practices	63%	73%	64%	60%	55%
Environmental Management	60%	65%	58%	56%	60%
Grievance Redress Management	56%	43%	66%	68%	45%
Human Resources	55%	46%	61%	59%	56%
Inclusiveness	54%	51%	63%	57%	44%
Key Assets	53%	50%	53%	54%	56%
Planning Capacity	53%	53%	53%	54%	52%
Revenue Collection	48%	47%	51%	45%	47%
Expenditure Management	47%	44%	45%	49%	51%
Community Participation - Process	41%	13%	76%	41%	34%
Social Protection	41%	32%	47%	39%	44%
Budget Management	40%	41%	36%	44%	40%
Information Dissemination	34%	32%	36%	37%	32%
Use of ICT	29%	41%	24%	31%	21%
Innovative Practices in Financial Management	22%	40%	14%	19%	16%
Delivering Social Development Services	19%	32%	10%	12%	23%
Allocation for Social Development Services	16%	13%	10%	9%	31%
Expenditure for Social Dev Services	15%	19%	10%	8%	24%
Staff for Key Services	8%	4%	18%	2%	10%
Innovation in Regulatory Services	3%	9%	0%	1%	0%

Fig. 4.1 – Institutional Assessment sub-indicators Scores across provinces (Source; The Asia Foundation, 2020)

Color code	Interpretation
Dark Green	• Scored >75 – Excellent Performance
Light Green	• Scored >50 but < 75 – Good performance
Yellow	• Scored >25 but <50 – Average performance, needs improvement
Red	• Scored <25 – Requires urgent attention

framework does not have the following high-level indicators, which are found in the original Results Framework:

- Sub-national government share of expenditure and revenue in the targeted provinces;
- Percentage reduction in number of ethnic related incidents in the targeted areas;
- Number of grievance cases effectively addressed and resolved by the mediation boards and community interventions (more relevant to SEDR project);

The only objective level indicator retained is '% people in the targeted provinces that perceive increase in efficiency and performance in the LA service'. This indicator is directly related to improving LA service delivery, but its baseline is set at zero.

In regard to outcome indicators, Table 4.2 gives targets set out in the Project's M&E framework.

specific indicators has been undertaken using a self-assessment protocol by the Asia Foundation. The report (3rd Quarter 2020) provides a comprehensive assessment of the situation (see Fig. 4.1).

The Project has prepared a M&E framework¹⁰⁷ which has set all baselines at zero. This is not a realistic baseline given the investments in the sector in the last two decades, where much work has been done to improve the systems. The M&E

¹⁰⁷ CDLG M&E System in a nutshell (undated)

Table 4.2 – Targets set out in the Project’s M&E Framework

Indicator	Baseline	Target at the end of the Project
1. Number of local authorities that achieve improved performance standards measured by province	0	100
2. Presence of participatory mechanism at local authority level with evidence of women's voice taken into consideration	No	Yes
3. Number of people involved in participatory planning	0	1200
4. Number and type of accountability measures adopted and implemented through the grant scheme	0	4
5. Proportion of seats held by women in local government (GAP 17.1) (EURO Level 1)	22%	25%

In regard to these Indicators, the following comments are made:

- On Indicator # 1, it is unclear what is meant by ‘improved performance standards’, this is not spelt out in the M&E framework, and is left to varying interpretations. On the contrary, the Asia Foundation assessment, which reflects very closely the spirit of this Indicator, is based on a definitive set of criteria with clear parameters. Furthermore, it has set the baseline as well. It is suggested that Indicator # 1 be replaced with TAF baseline terminology, as this will allow the project to measure improvements at the end of the Project using the same tools so that the quantitative data will be comparable.
- On Indicator # 2, change from ‘No’ to ‘Yes’ after four years of work and an investment of several hundred millions of LKR is not justified. The use of the proposed participatory mechanism should have an outcome result which is not reflected adequately. In the current form, this Indicator has limited utility. Given the importance of the citizen participation in the decision-making process outlined in the Situation Analysis, it is suggested that this be reflected as an Outcome level result (see Table 4.5).
- On Indicator # 3, the number of people involved in participatory mechanisms could also be reflected in Indicator # 2; yet its utility is very limited as participation of citizens in planning should be reflected, as an outcome, approved LA plans with citizen’s suggestions incorporated. In the current wording, this is more an activity (for example, 1,200 attending workshops or meetings could be interpreted as ‘number of people involved in participatory planning’. It is noted that this same Indicator is reflected, perhaps correctly, as an Output indicator (cf. Indicator 1.b in CDLG Output # 1). It is suggested that this Indicator be removed from the Outcome level.
- On Indicator # 4, this is currently worded weakly allowing different interpretations. Whereas the Project has defined the measurement criteria for output indicators¹⁰⁸, there are no measurement criteria for this Indicator. If this Indicator is to be retained, the Project will have to justify the baseline of zero, and provide measurement criteria and definitions of ‘accountability measures’.
- On Indicator # 5, the Project should consider the fact that local elections have been postponed indefinitely; unless they are held or unless there are resignations of existing members, the probability of increasing the women representation is low.

The sub-indicators which received less than 35% score in the Asia Foundation assessment are presented in Table 4.3.

¹⁰⁸ CDLG Project; Baseline vs Annual Targets (undated)

Table 4.3 – Sub-indicator Scores across provinces

Sub-indicator	Score
Innovation in regulatory services	3%
Staff for key services	8%
Expenditure for social development services	15%
Allocation for social development services	16%
Delivering social development services	19%
Innovative practices in financial management	22%
Use of ICT	29%

Source: Excerpted from Fig. 5 of TAF Consolidated Report

It is expected that the Project would focus in these areas to improve services (except staffing, which is not within the mandate of the Project). The TAF Assessment also identified high impact interventions, as presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 – High Impact interventions identified for targeted provinces

Sub-indicator	Intervention	High Impact Intervention							
		Policy Intervention				Practice Change			
		NP	EP	NCP	Uva	NP	EP	NCP	Uva
Innovation in Regulatory Services	Delivering of online/customer friendly regulatory services	√	√	√	√				
Delivering social development services	Delivery of any of the following social development services (psychosocial support, livelihood support programme, poverty eradication programmes and support to vulnerable communities) ¹⁰⁹	√	√						
Allocation for social development services	Clearly identified budget allocation for social development services					√	√		√
Expenditure for social development services	Expenditure made against allocation in actual terms for social development services	√	√		√				
Innovative practices in financial management	Computerised systems, online facility to pay taxes		√	√					
Process for citizen participation	Community consultations for planning and budgeting; formation of social audit committees								√

Source: Adapted from Tables 7 to 10 from Section 6.4 of the TAF Consolidated Report

In the Results Framework as reflected in M&E framework, it is proposed that the outcome indicator, *Number of local authorities that achieve improved performance standards measured by province* be retained with appropriate adjustment to reflect TAF Indicators.

The Outcome indicators of the Results Framework may be revised as reflected in Table 4.5:

Table 4.5 – Proposed Results Framework at the Outcome level

¹⁰⁹ The Project may consider other social development areas such as health and nutrition, and child protection.

Intervention Logic (Outcome)	Indicator	Baseline	End of the Project Target
Performance of the targeted provinces improved	Innovation in regulatory services	3%	To be established by the Project, having considered project interventions and work of other projects.
	Expenditure for social development services	15%	
	Allocation for social development services	16%	
	Delivering social development services	19%	
	Innovative practices in Financial management	22%	
	Revenue collection	48%	
Number of instances of community- identified interventions incorporated into LA budgets	Community participation process ^(a)	Datapoint to be obtained from TAF study	
	Number of budget proposals submitted by Community Centres (by Province)	^(b)	

(a) – to be refined based on the data available in the TAF study

(b) – A representative sample of CCs which were active at the time of project initiation may be selected and the baseline determined for each Province.

The work will have to be adjusted accordingly after due consultations with the stakeholders. In doing so, the following considerations are suggested:

- Focus on LAs which have shown low PERFECT and Institutional assessment scores in TAF studies (See Table 4.6).

Table 4.6 – No. of LAs where Z scores for both PERFECT and Institutional Assessment are LOW

Province	Number and Percentage
Eastern Province	17 (39%)
Northern Province	13 (38%)
North Central Province	6 (25%)
Uva	11 (39%)

Source: Compiled from TAF Diagnostic Surveys (2021)

- Develop customised training programmes focussing specifically on weak areas of performance of LAs.
- Avoid duplication of work, particularly considering the work of other Projects in the STRIDE programme as well as the ADB-funded Local Government Enhancement Sector Project.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ This Project was not listed for consultation. The relevant work, as excerpted from the website, is as follows: "Training is now provided for 29 Pradeshiya Sabhas of Additional Financing. The IT solutions for use in the Pradeshiya Sabhas under the name e Pura Neguma which are: 1. Issues of forms and receipts; 2. Application tracking system; 3. Grievance / complaint management system; 4. Assessment tax / rates management system. These systems are installed in almost all 135 Pradeshiya Sabhas and use of these systems is being coordinated. Continuous handholding and training provided for sustaining the implementation of these systems in the project 135 Pradeshiya Sabhas. To ease the payment of assessment tax mCash system is introduced with the mobitel. At present mCash system is installed in 50 Pradeshiya Sabhas and it is proposed to cover additional Pradeshiya Sabhas which have assessment tax systems. The installation and implementation have now commenced in 29 Pradeshiya Sabhas in the Pradeshiya Sabhas of Additional Financing". <<https://www.adb.org/projects/42459-013/main>>; accessed on 16 August 2022.

Review of the Results Framework is also important since it is unlikely that, given the current implementation status, the Project will achieve its targets by the end of the Project term. It is learnt that the Project will be seeking an extension of time.¹¹¹

Monitoring

The evaluation did not find a systematic monitoring protocol being used at the provincial level to ensure that the provincial workplans, both relating to the government as well as CSOs.

The Project has LoAs with the Chief Secretaries; these are over LKR 100 million in value, and the LoAs have activities/deliverables identified. The evaluation noted the concerns of some of the senior government officials about lack of adequate monitoring of these provincial workplans, and the absence of milestones to claim payments by the Chief Secretaries' offices. Providing clear milestones for payment will ease the burden of all parties on accountability. Another concern expressed by the provincial authorities is the delays in delivering consultancies – they understand the genuine difficulties due to Covid-19 and fuel restrictions, but nevertheless are of the view that there is a general apathy on the part of the consultants to deliver on time.

Overall, monitoring mechanisms at the provincial level, and tracking workplans agreed with the Chief Secretary are not to the expected level. This is particularly important as the question of accountability has been raised by government officials. The provincial monitoring could also be improved by closer dialogue between the provincial staff and CSOs.

Reporting

The evaluation notes discrepancies between the workplans and the actual work done in the field. The narrative annual reports are activity based, and there is no evidence of results-based reporting, although in the current context, results-based reporting would be difficult. The Provincial staff are yet to appreciate the need to report on the higher level of results. Overall reporting needs much improvement to capture the changes desired by the Project in terms of its main focus, improving service delivery.

4.8. Gender equity and Human Rights-based Approach

Incorporation of gender equality and rights-based approach in the project

The project used the learning from previous similar interventions by UNDP on capacity building of local authorities in integrating gender and HRBA into the CDLG project. As a result, the CDLG project has a set of guiding principles that are aimed at strengthening LAs' capacities for inclusive, responsive and accountable service delivery, and for addressing multi-dimensional challenges.

The Project has provided to its external consultants a process guideline to integrate gender and HRBA into their respective consultancy work. ToRs were elaborated stipulating the gender and inclusive objectives. This facilitated including a fair representation of ethnicity, women and men and people from other vulnerable segments and people with disabilities. A disability

¹¹¹ Discussion with the Project staff (28 March 2022)

expert is engaged in conducting a disability assessment and awareness creation on disability inclusion. The evaluation noted that as a follow-up of this training, a Pradeshiya Sabha has started service provision for PwDs.¹¹² However, the evaluation also noted an instance where the consultant's lack of understanding on the subject limited the participation of women due to existing social norms limiting women's mobility (in the Eastern Province). If the consultant had prior knowledge about the context and its social and cultural gender norms, proactive measures could have been taken to include women's voices in the consultations.

The provision of seed funds for female councillors, particularly freshly elected councillors, to build their capacity in grant proposal writing and implementing such projects is a progressive step by the Project. However, implementation of this initiative is uneven in the four provinces with concerns expressed as follows:¹¹³

- In the Northern and Eastern Provinces, the proposals have not been approved, and the female councillors are in a quandary about the future prospects, particularly as their term would be completed soon. In general, majority of the male participants were of the opinion that opportunity provided for women to submit proposals was a fair decision because it creates a space for women to build their capacity; however, few reservations were expressed as the males too would like to have this facility.
- In Vavuniya South, four female councillors received LKR one million to start home gardening. During their capacity building training, the trainer had guided the female councillors to focus on home gardening to contribute towards food production due to the prevailing crisis. Each female councillor had identified 10 female beneficiaries to cultivate vegetables for household consumption and sales, despite the fact that monkey damage to vegetables is significant in the area. Female councillors (especially in Vavuniya) felt that they were forced to develop their proposals on vegetable cultivation rather than identifying a livelihood in consultation of target beneficiaries (One female councillor stressed the importance of supporting women with a sustainable income generation option). The evaluation also noted that the proposal had not been critically assessed for cost-benefit analysis. If failed, it would badly reflect on their performance as a female councillor. In addition, the councillors were of the view that the allocated amount per beneficiary (LKR 25,000) would not be sufficient given the soaring market price of agro-chemicals and equipment.

Risks and challenges in implementation in incorporating the Project's GE strategy and HRBA

In 2021, the Project facilitated the development of gender action plan incorporating two thematic priorities: shifting the partner organizational culture to more effectively deliver on gender commitments and political and civil rights; and strengthening girls' and women's voice and participation. This mobilised the experience of project personnel, and learning to identify the needs to develop the gender action plan.

¹¹² FGD with elected Councillors (NCP).

¹¹³ This activity has started in 2022.

This activity was followed-up with developing three manuals, viz., "GENDER IN ACTION" E-Learning Course, Gender Responsive Budgeting in the Local Government Authorities, and Community Engagement and Gender Empowerment in Local Governance.

The gender ToT started only in June 2022 with programmes in Ampara, Batticaloa and Anuradhapura. The training held in Anuradhapura had to be curtailed to cover key theoretical concepts within 1.5 days due to the current travel difficulties. The evaluation noted that the TOT participants had neither shared the training experience with their fellow staff nor involved in delivering the cascade training. It also noted the need for further knowledge enhancement on concepts, and coaching and feedback for their cascade training.

Wider understanding about gender and inclusivity would create a conducive and pleasant environment in their respective LAs which will help ToT participants to deliver their cascade training, share the knowledge gained and integrate learning into the work. The evaluation noted and agreed with the request of trainees to create awareness about gender and inclusion and gender budgeting among the LA Secretaries and Chairmen to be included in the training as they will be responsible for decision-making on LA budgets.

The evaluation also noted that in some areas, participation of female youth in the Youth Shadow Councils is discouraged by parents due to social norms. However, their participation in the recent meetings has slowly changed the perception, as a result of the trust built by the implementing CSO.

Concluding remarks

Inclusion of gender and HRBA in the Project is at satisfactory level. The Project has laid the framework for gender and HRBA inclusion. The work is still at early stage, but implementation and monitoring are important considerations to ensure the spill-over effects to the community.

4.9. Risk Assessment

The risks enumerated in the original project document were reviewed, and the current status is shown in Table 4.7

Table 4.7 - Updated Risk assessment

Risk description	Impact and Probability¹¹⁴	Current status of the Risk
Presidential, Provincial and/or Parliamentary elections anticipated in 2019 and 2020 may result in political instability and	P = 4 I = 4	Presidential and Parliamentary elections have been held. Provincial Council Elections are overdue, and in the interim, powers are vested with

¹¹⁴ (Original) Probability (P) of risk is measured on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high); Impact (I) of the risk is measured on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high).

consequent delays in project implementation		the Provincial Governors. The nodal State Ministry has not been functional since May 2022, and there is no government forum to oversee the Project. The current term of the Provincial Councils is limited.
There may also not be commitment to implementation of current devolution arrangements under the 13 th Amendment to the Constitution, and/or policy reforms for meaningful decentralisation, following the aforesaid elections	P = 2 I = 4	Following the change of the Government, lukewarm attitude prevailed in the new Government towards devolution. 20 th amendment called for more presidential powers. The new State Minister of Provincial Councils questioned the need for Provincial Councils. However, this Minister is no longer in power. There is no discernible change in Government commitment to devolution.
Potential increase in ethno-religious and/or political division within LAs may impact on their internal governance/operations	P = 2 I = 4	The situation remains unchanged.
Current local governance system is top-driven and there is limited engagement and coordination between devolved and deconcentrated units. This may hinder development of integrated capacity development approaches involving key departments	P = 3 I = 3	The situation remains unchanged; the Projects interventions in this regard have also delayed.
Limited commitment from LAs/PCs to use participatory mechanisms	P = 3 I = 3	Despite <i>ad hoc</i> and intermittent discussions in training programmes, no significant improvement has been observed.
Weak incentive system for LAs to adopt new systems and tools	P = 3 I = 3	No significant improvement has been observed.
The absence of outcome-based financing systems and procedures undermines LAs capacity to address local needs sustainably.	P = 3 I = 3	No significant improvement has been observed.

The government passed the Provincial Councils and Administration Amendment Bill H.B. 5, 2021 (Gazetted on the 31 March 2021), and the Delimitation Committee was appointed as a prelude to provincial elections. The current situation is that the new system proposed in the Bill cannot proceed since the delimitation process is not complete. The Bill has to be either withdrawn or repealed to hold provincial elections under the Provincial Councils Act, No. 42 of 1987. It appears that there is no political will to resolve the current legal impasse to enable holding of provincial elections. Meanwhile, UNDP's LoAs with provinces to implement CDLG is operative through the powers vested with the Governor, Chief Secretary and the Provincial Local Government Commissioner without a political commitment, which is essential for the devolution of powers.

5. Conclusions and Lessons

This section contains a summary of findings under the evaluation criteria.

Relevance

Overall, the Project is very relevant with clear alignment to the Government on Sri Lanka policies and strategies, notably the provisions for devolution of power. The Project, in the main, addresses the issues surrounding sub-national capacity to legislate, plan, and budget to improve service delivery to the citizens in the changed context following the devolution of power. In the context of the situation analysis undertaken prior to the design of the Project, the Theory of Change is relevant, and is aimed to address the needs of LAs. The Project is a part of the larger STRIDE programme, and is expected to contribute towards STRIDE outcomes. The Project's strategies of developing the capacity of LAs, introducing gender responsive planning and budgeting processes, innovations, and improving the legislation and linkages between devolved and decentralised units in the Provinces are in line with the needs of the provinces.

The Project has been designed through a consultative process. During the Project, there have been contextual changes in the makeup of the Government, political and economic outlook, and the Covid-19 pandemic. Yet, the Project remains relevant and there was no evidence for the need to change its priorities. The reprogramming of the Project after Covid-19 pandemic resulted in adjusted workplans; these contextual changes indicate some additional areas of work particularly relating to LA capacities to mitigate emergency situations.

Whilst the gender equality is mainstreamed, equity, climate change and disaster risk reduction work are yet to be mainstreamed.

Effectiveness

The Results Framework is of limited use for assessment, as it has ambitious indicators without baselines or achievement targets at the end of the project. The Project's M&E Framework has set zero baselines and end-of-the Project targets, but the basis for these targets is not available.

The capacity development component is a welcome contribution to the local government service as it lacks opportunities in the past. The Project suffered significantly from COVID-19 pandemic as it could not conduct the training events in 2020 and up to mid-2021 due to restrictions imposed by the government on travel and physical meetings. For the same reason, the CSOs could not undertake trainings at the Community Centres. There was no concrete evidence of participatory planning and budgeting.

Overall, there is satisfaction amongst the beneficiaries on the training received. They have better confidence on their work, and knowledge, skills, and attitudes towards their job have improved. However, only a very few were able to demonstrate improved service delivery as a result of their training. ToT trainings have not been taken forward to ensure cascading effects in many instances. The improvements in service delivery and LA self-revenue collection and innovations are yet to be seen, and the social development aspects have not received due attention. The women councillors have benefitted from trainings. The Project has a gender action plan to promote gender and inclusivity to be incorporated in its interventions, and

gender ToT is in progress. The Project has also strengthened the institutional capacity by providing hardware.

Work on improving the capacity of the Community Centres is in early stages. About 50% of the CCs in the four provinces are inactive. The trainings provided by the Project have benefitted the CCs to understand their role; yet they are pre-occupied with contractual services to improve their income. The office bearers of CCs are often office bearers of other rural societies.

Work on Shadow Youth Councils has just begun, and their recognition by the elected representatives is yet to be established. Work on citizen charters is also at a nascent stage.

Introduction of innovative mechanisms at LAs is ongoing with mixed results. Integration of climate change and disaster risk reduction in local planning is yet to begin.

The process of reviewing LA by-laws is at an uncertain stage pending Ministry approval of the process and scope of work. Work on awareness on bylaws is also in progress. Work on improving linkages between devolved and decentralised units is yet to begin.

Coherence

CDLG is a part of the larger STRIDE programme, and the complementary projects are the LDSP and SEDR. The National Steering Committee of the STRIDE programme oversees all projects. There is duplication of efforts amongst the projects, as well as synergies. CDLG is expected to contribute towards the performance grant scheme launched by LDSP and is also expected to contribute towards the STRIDE programme, particularly its 1st Output. However, the Results Framework does not detail out the scope of contribution. As a mechanism to spell out the linkages, the Project attempted to develop a common results framework. The evaluation found it difficult to seek any evidence of complementarity, concrete harmonisation and coordination to bring out the results in a common platform.

Efficiency

The evaluation could not analyse Project expenditures as the expenditure information was not available. From the information available, it is evident that the Project has deployed sufficient staff in the provinces to implement the programme. The need for cost-effective capacity development is noted as well as improved coordination at the PMU to enhance efficiency of delivery. The delays in delivery of outputs caused by Covid-19 pandemic are noted throughout the programme; in the current context, the travel difficulties due to fuel shortages have hindered efficient implementation. Also, there are delays in consultancies, making their utility during the project life questionable. Efficiency could also be improved by improved coordination amongst service delivery partners.

Progress towards impacts

Due to the delays in implementation, the Project has not progressed adequately to achieve the main changes envisaged in the Theory of Change. Improvements to LA service delivery is yet to be seen. It is too early to assess the achievement of outcome level results. The Project needs to consider reprogramming its activities to focus on a few result areas, which have shown promise, taking into consideration the rapid turn-over of LA staff with a clear focus on improving service delivery to the people, and identify activities that should be scaled up.

Sustainability and national ownership

As the Project is at mid-term, it is premature to assess sustainability and national ownership. Yet, it is noted that GoSL cost-cutting measures have affected the key institutions (SLILG and MDTUs) to continue some of the work. The Community Centres have not demonstrated their sustainability elements in their current structures. Another concern is the rapid staff turnover in LAs. Whilst the Project has built individual capacities to improve working of LAs, transfer of trained officials to another agency would adversely affect the performance level of LAs. There are several interventions with potential for upscaling. Due to the uncertainty of the term of office of LAs, their focus on the project in terms of sustaining project benefits is limited.

Programme Management

The overall management of the Project is by a Project Management Unit located in Colombo, comprised of a Project Manager and technical staff. The four provinces have a Project Coordinator (PC) and several Project Associates to help the PC. The Project Coordinators are an important cog in the system in that they liaise directly with the Provincial Councils. The evaluation noted a close rapport between PCs and the respective Provincial Councils. The oversight for the implementation of the Project is provided at two levels, viz., national and provincial. The National Steering Committee of the STRIDE programme provides oversight to the CDLG project; it is co-chaired by the State Secretary to the Ministry of Provincial Council and Local Government and the Head of Development Cooperation of European Union Delegation. With the change of government in May, 2022, the State Ministry does not function anymore, and there have been no National Steering Committee meetings in 2022; thus there is no formal GoSL oversight. At the provincial level, there are Provincial Advisory Committees set up under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary to review progress.

The current Results Framework is of limited use for monitoring and reporting. The evaluation notes discrepancies between the Project's workplans and the actual work done in the field, and there is no evidence of results-based reporting. New indicators have been suggested in keeping with the restructuring of the Project already started. The evaluation did not find a systematic monitoring protocol being used at the provincial level to ensure that the provincial workplans, both relating to the government as well as CSOs. The need for clear milestones for effecting payments has been noted. Overall, monitoring mechanisms at the provincial level, and tracking workplans agreed with the Chief Secretary are not to the expected level.

At the current level of implementation, the Project is unlikely to achieve most of its original targets.

Lessons Learned

Implementation of the Project has been delayed largely due to Covid-19 pandemic; thus the expected outputs are mostly not in place yet. Nonetheless, it is possible to document a few lessons from the observations during the MT evaluation.

(a) Need for close coordination

CDLG is a part of a complex programme and is a component project contributing to a larger objective. Given the different responsibilities and contributions from other projects, the

experiences thus far show the need for close collaboration between projects and their stakeholders at the national, provincial and local levels to ensure that there are joint efforts towards addressing the core issues identified during the situation analysis preceding project design. Lack of coordination with the decentralised units is an important lesson as projects such as CDLG with its service delivery focus cannot work in isolation. Equally, the partners of the project and those with similar responsibilities in other projects need to coordinate closely to share experiences, make joint plans, and avoid duplication as well as picking the best practices amongst them.

(b) Building Horizontal linkages with decentralized institutions:

Related to coordination is the need to establish linkages for formal and closer collaboration, proximity, and functional integration with the District and Divisional secretariats and other decentralised units working at the District, Divisional and Local levels. The gaps were visible at the local authority level for social development for the improvement of comfort, convenience, and welfare at the community level. Lack of horizontal closer coordination has created gaps in terms of sharing resources of other key stakeholder institutions with the LAs in a common platform.

(c) Community engagement:

The project considered community engagement and participation as a cornerstone for the achievement of the end results. The modality adopted was to strengthen Community Centres as community organizations by engaging the services of interface CSO partners and mobilizing the community. The practical lessons showed that despite the preparatory activities by the CSO partners to mobilize CCs to play an advocacy role and social audit function, CCs did not demonstrate any interest in this regard. The learning from the evaluation show that if a project of this nature expects CCs or other CBOs to play a democratic governance role, significant inputs are required to sensitize and mobilize the community on aspects such as democratic governance, transparency and accountability, prevention of corruption and handling community conflicts and disputes in order to enable them to unleash their voluntary activism. Besides, such an approach needs to ensure the buy-in of the political representatives of the local authorities with political blessings.

(d) Readiness of the Beneficiaries

The experiences from the evaluation show that most LAs are not ready for the capacity development interventions proposed by the Project. They are not conditioned for innovations; the outlook of elected councillors is not in sync with administration; and importantly, most LAs do not seem to have enough staff to be engaged in the different capacity development training programmes. As a result, some officials have attended as much as five training programmes on different subjects.

The evaluation also showed the need for proper understanding of the responsibilities by the elected councillors in order to improve revenue collection and service delivery.

Polonnaruwa Municipal Council: The Municipal Council (MC) of Polonnaruwa was established in March 2018 after a sudden decision by the government to elevate the existing Local Authority without looking into the background requirements. The MC began with the existing staff who were conditioned with and accustomed to the legal and administrative procedures and the institutional culture of the Pradeshiya Sabha. Except for the Municipal Commissioner, almost all staff members did not possess previous experience in working within an MC in terms of the legal and administrative procedures of the Municipal Ordinance. All 11 Council Members (9 male and 2 female) also did not have previous experience working in an MC. The government was unable to provide experienced staff from other MCs and introduce an in-depth orientation to the existing core staff and council members on the working modalities of an MC.

The negative effects of this situation are reflected in the inability of the MC to make the required decisions to open the standard revenue sources and taxes and enhanced rates after the expansion of the built-up area of the municipality for service provision. In a recent council meeting, a proposal to introduce a vehicle parking levy for the municipality area ended in rejecting the proposal by the majority of the council members because they feared that such a proposal would negatively affect their chances of re-election in the future.

In such situations, there is a need to recast the mindset of the councillors and the core staff members through an in-depth induction training.

KII with key staff of the MC

(e) Participation of Youth

Engagement of youth in the Project for specific purpose of Youth Shadow Councils (YSC) require much preparatory work including mobilisation, in-depth sensitization, and socio-political education to enable the youth to realize their political participation at the LA level. The real issues of youth need to be considered before their participation in YSCs, especially in the current scenario of economic downturn, lack of access to cash, and the political complexity of the country. Unless there is a clear understanding of the issues of youth, their participation in SYCs will not be fruitful, particularly given their hostility to politicians.

6. Recommendations

The MTR has carefully reviewed the implementation status of the Project, the original scope of the Project, and the delays caused by Covid-19 and the fuel crisis. As per item # 7 of the scope of this review, strategic, programmatic and management recommendations are provided for implementing the remainder of project activities.

Strategic considerations

Recommendation - 1. Whilst the Theory of Change is relevant in the context of agencies with devolved powers, the Results Framework and the workplans are ambitious. Given the current state of implementation, it is recommended that the process already started to restructure the Project be continued with a focus on the following:

- Revise the Results Framework in keeping with the project restructuring already started and include new indicators to assess performance. This revision should also take into consideration the balance period available for project implementation.
- Developing a more strategic, needs based capacity development programme;
- Improving citizen participation in local level planning and decision-making with improved representation of the citizen's needs in local plans and budgets, including those of marginalised and disadvantaged communities in keeping with UNDAF focus;
- Revisit the design of the seed fund for women councillors to ensure that their needs are reflected in the proposals and that the proposals are reviewed carefully to ensure their technical and financial rigour in terms of project cycle management.
- Identify the expected inputs from CDLG into STRIDE Output # 1 to enable clear assessment of results.
- In order to facilitate implementation, monitoring and reporting, it is recommended that new Indicators on LA service delivery and citizen participation in planning and decision-making be established at the Outcome level where TAF has provided the baselines.

MU and UNDP

Programmatic considerations

Recommendation - 2. Considering the delayed implementation, it is recommended that an extension of the project period be sought from the donors. In the meantime, the Project should develop a doable workplan in consultation with other projects to quicken the pace of delivery relating to the following:

- Integrating Climate Change Adaption and Disaster Risk Reduction into the local planning process in the target provinces. If there are limitations foreseen, the Project should identify, in addition to Uva, at least one more province to integrate these concepts, at least as a pilot.
- The Project should at least begin work on the important activity # 3.2 to enhance collaboration with decentralised units (District Secretariats, Divisional Secretariats, and

Grama Niladharis). In this regard, the Project should also begin to facilitate joint visioning and planning at the district level by decentralised and devolved units, as envisaged in the original proposal. Again, given the short time period available, this may be implemented in identified provinces where the linkages are weakest.

- Introducing innovative methods;
- Improve LA revenue collection systems;
- Work on developing Citizen Charters.

PMU and UNDP

Work on drafting/amending by-laws should be suspended until the way forward with these by-laws is cleared by MoPCLG/SLILG and the National Steering Committee.

MoPCLG, PMU and UNDP

Recommendation - 3. Given the diffused and broad nature of the capacity development programmes implemented by the Project, it is recommended that an overall plan of capacity development be prepared according to the priority needs of the provinces, TAF assessments, and taking into consideration the rapid turn-over of trained staff. Furthermore, in order to ensure ownership of the Government, this activity should be led by an appropriate GoSL agency such as the Sri Lanka Institute of Local Government. Further considerations include:

- Widely sharing and updating, as required, TAF capacity assessment reports, including providing summaries in Sinhala and Tamil languages.
- Ensuring that difficult-to-reach areas in provinces/districts in terms of logistics, distance etc. are adequately covered in the capacity development programmes, and that the support to the provinces covers the district needs evenly.
- Identify specific capacity development efforts directed at improving delivery of social development aspects (e.g., health and nutrition, child protection and welfare, social protection networks, education); this will have to be developed in close coordination with the relevant provincial ministries/departments and decentralised units.
- Completing Training of Trainers programmes by providing opportunities for mock-training and using the trained persons to undertake training themselves;
- Avoid granting multiple training opportunities to the same beneficiary individual, unless there are compelling circumstances
- Review the need for long-term Diploma courses as these are not the priorities of provinces; and
- Further developing provincial resource pools at the MDTU and Good Governance Resource Centre level.

PMU, Provincial Councils and LAs

Recommendation - 4. *Support to the Community Centres:* Given the very uneven performance of the community centres and general lack of interest by the community as well as lukewarm support by the Community Development Officers, the Project should carefully review its engagement with the Community Centres, and the interventions and results thus far vis-à-vis value-for-money. The Project has to influence GoSL to support

Community Centres for their upkeep in order to allow them to undertake their mandated work, rather than depend on commissions received from contracts, which forces the CCs to deviate from their main responsibility and to prioritise contract work. The Project should also assess whether existing community structures such as the Rural Development Societies, Death Donation Societies, Women's Rural Development Societies (WRDS) etc. are sufficient alternatives for community participation which will also bring about the link between devolved and decentralised structures at the community level.

NSC and PMU

Recommendation - 5. *Shadow Youth Councils:* Given that the SYCs are yet in a very nascent stage (and yet to be formed in NCP and facing difficulties in the Northern Province with the name), the Project should carefully assess whether the desired changes are likely to be achieved during the remaining part of the Project. The evaluation recommends that the investments earmarked for SYCs be instead channelled to other priority areas, given that there is no clear sustainability path for SYCs as they are not obliged to be linked to the Community Centres.

NSC and PMU

Recommendation - 6. *Programmatic coordination support in service delivery:* There are number of agencies and individual consultants engaged in providing technical inputs towards capacity development. It is recommended that a mechanism be set up to ensure adequate coordination between these external parties as well as with the PMU and to ensure strong synergy between partners to enable consistency in the quality of outputs and to reduce duplication. Similarly, mechanisms for coordination and sharing experiences amongst and between CSO partners who are largely engaged with Community Centre work have to be established, and the Project should set in place protocols for production of common deliverables.

Additionally, the partnership between PMU, Project's provincial staff, and implementing CSOs should be strengthened where necessary to ensure that CSOs acquire the necessary skills and confidence, and are able to provide cost-efficient delivery.

PMU and UNDP

Recommendation - 7. *Sustainability:* Given the declining provincial funding for continuing capacity development, the Project should establish an exit strategy indicating the GoSL pathways to continue essential capacity development for provincial officials, in particular the entry level inductions. This strategy should also examine the sustainability of Community Centres.

PMU and UNDP

Recommendation - 8. *Gender and Equity:*

In addressing gender and equity perspectives, it is recommended that the Project should:

- Provide basic awareness on gender and gender budget preparation to LA Secretaries and Chairmen;
- Provide coaching and observation support for ToT participants when they cascade the gender training; and

- Complete partly finished gender ToT conducted in the North Central Province and plan their cascade training accordingly.

PMU

Management considerations

Recommendation - 9. *Oversight:* The National Steering Committee of STRIDE, which is expected to provide oversight to CDLG Project has to be urgently revived to provide the required oversight. In the main, it has two immediate responsibilities, to wit.,

- Decide on the course of action to be taken in regard to the drafting/amending by-laws;
- Dedicate time to examine the coordination and synergies between the three component projects (SEDR, LDSP and CDLG) to provide guidance to CDLG Project (and to other projects) to ensure that the complementarity expected in the original project document is achieved and duplication of efforts avoided.

UNDP

Recommendation - 10. *Monitoring and Reporting:* The Project has to strengthen its monitoring and reporting systems by:

- Adopting a results-based reporting system, rather than the current activity-based reporting.
- Enhancing the capacity of provincial staff and partner CSOs on results-based reporting;
- Establishing a rigorous monitoring system, particularly at the provincial level, to ensure compatibility between workplans and actual work done, and to ensure timely delivery of outputs to the desired quality.

PMU

Outreach

Recommendation - 11. Improve visibility and awareness of the CDLG Project, particularly amongst the officials and communities as outreach signage used by the Project highlights STRIDE with obscure mention of CDLG; improve visibility of CDLG in outreach materials; share project learnings through CDLG identity; integrate knowledge products generated by CSOs into the Project's outreach portfolio, and provide key finding in local languages.

PMU, STRIDE and UNDP