



Final Mid-Term Evaluation Report

Empowering Municipal Councils – Phase 2 Project

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Prepared by:

Name: Dimitrija Sekovski

Role: National Expert – Evaluator

Supervised by:

Empowering Municipal Councils – Phase 2

UNDP North Macedonia – Democratic Governance Unit

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List of Acronyms/Abbreviations

AFO - Association of Finance Officers of the Local Governments and Public Enterprises
AP - Action Plan
BMCPI - Building Municipal Capacities for Project Implementation (Phase 2) project
CEDRIG - Climate, Environment, and Disaster Risk Reduction Integration Guidance
CDP - Capacity Development Programme
CF - Community Forums
CSO - Civil Society Organization
CoC - Committee of Councils
DG - Democratic Governance
EC - European Commission
EMC1 - Empowering Municipal Councils – Phase 1
EMC2 - Empowering Municipal Councils – Phase 2
EU - European Union
GoNM - Government of North Macedonia
IFMIS - Integrated Financial Management Informational System
IFS - Integrated Finance System
ILD - Integrated Local Development Plans
ILDP - Integrated Local Development Plans
IMC - Intermunicipal Cooperation
ILDPs - Integrated Local Development Plans
IT - Information Technology
LNOB - Leave No One Behind
LSGU - Local Self-Government Unit
MDT - Ministry of Digital Transformation
MF - Ministry of Finance
MLSG - Ministry of Local Self-Government
MTE - Mid-Term Evaluation
NALAS - Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe
OECD-DAC - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
PEFA - Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability
PFU - Project Financial Unit
PLSDD - Programme for Sustainable Local Development and Decentralization
RDM - Result Data Management
SDC - Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SEP - Secretariat for European Affairs
TWG - Thematic Working Groups
UNDP - United Nations Development Programme
USAID - United States Agency for International Development
ZELS - Association of Local Self-Government Units

Executive Summary

The Mid-Term Evaluation of the EMC2 project assesses its performance against the **OECD-DAC evaluation criteria**: Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, and Sustainability. The evaluation utilized a mixed-methods approach, incorporating desk reviews, online surveys, stakeholder interviews, and discussions with project staff.

The EMC2 project aims to strengthen municipal council performance, enhance citizen participation, and improve service delivery through digitalization. Since its launch in April 2022, the project has made significant progress across all three outputs:

1. **Municipal Councils' Performance:** The Capacity Development Programme (CDP) has delivered 107 training sessions, benefiting over 426 participants, including councilors, municipal staff, and mayors. The e-learning platform and thematic workshops have enhanced governance capacities, while the project supports legislative revisions to strengthen local governance.
2. **Citizen Participation:** Community forums have engaged citizens effectively, with 93 sessions held across 20 municipalities, contributing to the selection of 21 community projects. Efforts to institutionalize community forums in municipal statutes enhance sustainability prospects.
3. **Service Delivery:** Digital tools, including the e-dashboard and live-streaming equipment, have improved transparency and accountability in municipal governance. These initiatives have facilitated better public access to municipal financial data and decision-making processes.

Key Findings

- **Relevance:** The project aligns strongly with local governance priorities and national strategies, addressing critical capacity gaps and promoting inclusivity.
- **Coherence:** EMC2 demonstrates effective coordination with national institutions and complements other governance initiatives, ensuring alignment with broader development goals.
- **Effectiveness:** Significant achievements have been recorded in governance training, citizen engagement, and transparency improvements. However, challenges such as councilor turnover and varied commitment levels need continued attention.
- **Efficiency:** Financial and human resources have been managed effectively, with balanced expenditure across outputs and steady implementation progress despite election-related delays.
- **Impact:** Early signs of positive impact include enhanced transparency and citizen participation. However, systemic challenges beyond the project's control may influence its overall effectiveness.
- **Sustainability:** Efforts to embed project outcomes in local systems show promise, but sustained results will require ongoing institutional commitment, policy adjustments, and a well-defined exit strategy.

Key **recommendations** include finding an institutional host for the CDP, supporting legislative revisions to ensure the sustainability of community forums and digital tools, and focusing on capacity-building efforts for municipal councilors, and administration. Additionally, **scenario planning** and an **exit strategy** are essential to maximize the project's long-term impact.

In conclusion, the EMC2 project is on track to achieve its objectives and demonstrates strong alignment with the OECD-DAC criteria. While challenges exist, the project's adaptability, relevance, and strong partnerships position it as a vital contributor to local governance reform in North Macedonia. The Final Evaluation should further examine systemic impacts, sustainability measures, and emerging lessons to inform future programming.

Acknowledgements

The Mid-Term Evaluation team expresses its deepest gratitude to the EMC2 project team for their invaluable support throughout the evaluation process. Their selfless dedication, quick responses, and comprehensive access to documentation and information have been instrumental in conducting a thorough and insightful assessment.

We also extend our heartfelt thanks to the project partners for their open discussions and constructive feedback. Their willingness to share experiences, insights, and recommendations has greatly enriched the evaluation and provided a solid foundation for actionable findings and recommendations.

This report reflects the collective efforts and collaboration of all stakeholders, and we sincerely appreciate their commitment to enhancing local governance in North Macedonia.

1. Introduction

1.1. Overview of the Empowering Municipal Councils – Phase 2 project

The **Empowering Municipal Councils – Phase 2 (EMC2)** project, implemented by UNDP, builds upon the successes of the first phase (**EMC1**), which commenced in January 2016. With a current total budget of **USD 6,866,670¹**, this initiative is co-financed by the **Swiss Government**, the **Government of North Macedonia**, **UNDP**, and the partner **municipalities**.

The project aims to further strengthen local self-governments through empowered municipal councils capable of effectively fulfilling their roles in representation, oversight, and enacting municipal legislation, all with active citizen involvement.

EMC2 is structured around three primary result areas (outputs), each designed to address specific challenges within the local governance framework:

1. **Municipal Councils' Performance:** This output focuses on systematically and sustainably improving the performance of municipal councils while enhancing the overall local government system. The project recognizes that the capacity development of municipal councilors is crucial for their effective participation in governance. A comprehensive **Capacity Development Programme (CDP)** is being implemented, encompassing training modules that cover topics such as municipal good governance, financial management, inter-municipal cooperation, and selected transversal topics.

In addition to capacity development, the project actively contributes to improving the local governance legislative and policy framework by supporting the implementation of the **Programme for Sustainable Local Development and Decentralization (PSLDD) 2021-2026**. This includes assisting in the preparation and execution of **Action Plans** that strengthen the legal foundations of decentralization and empower municipalities to operate more autonomously and effectively.

The project also **supports councilors' networking** through established thematic groups and the Committee of Councils (CoC), catalyzing their engagement and strengthening their role in shaping ongoing decentralization reforms.

The overall objective is to foster informed and effective decision-making among councilors, enhancing their oversight capabilities over the executive branch while ensuring that municipalities are equipped with the appropriate legal tools to carry out their functions.

The project's support is crucial in laying the groundwork for the upcoming **revisions to the systemic Law on Local Self-Government**, positioning it as a central initiative within the broader local governance landscape.

2. **Citizen Participation:** Enhancing citizen engagement is a critical aspect of the project, aiming to sustain local democracy and improve the quality of life for all residents. EMC2 is promoting **community forums** to facilitate dialogue between municipalities and citizens, ensuring that local priorities are identified and addressed collaboratively. The project emphasizes the importance of gender equality and the involvement of marginalized groups, ensuring that diverse perspectives are included in local decision-making processes.

¹ The project combines funding contributions from the Swiss Government totaling USD 4,200,000, the Government of North Macedonia providing USD 1,250,000, the UNDP contributing USD 716,670, and municipalities co-financing with USD 700,000, emphasizing the collaborative commitment of project partners.

Furthermore, the project promotes institutionalizing these participatory mechanisms through **policy and normative interventions**, ensuring their long-term sustainability as part of the local governance framework.

A key feature of this process is the **grant scheme**, which provides financial support for projects selected through the community forums. This ensures that the priorities identified by citizens are not only recognized but also implemented, reinforcing the connection between participatory decision-making and tangible outcomes in local development.

The community forum process has been **recognized as a good practice** by other projects as well. For example, the experience and know-how gained under EMC2 have been utilized by other UNDP initiatives, such as the “Building Municipal Capacity for Project Implementation – Phase 2” (BMCPI) project for the preparation of Integrated Local Development Plans (ILDPs) and the prioritization of measures for mitigating air pollution under the “Scaling up Actions to Tackle Air Pollution” project—both funded by Swedish Sida.

3. **Service Delivery:** Leveraging technology and innovation to improve municipal services is a key focus of the project. This output aims to digitalize processes and services in municipalities, facilitating transparency and efficiency in service delivery. By implementing tools such as financial **e-dashboards** and **innovative IT solutions**, the project enhances improved service delivery, accountability and citizen participation in monitoring municipal performance. This also includes support for the implementation of the LOGES system, aimed at enhancing digital service delivery at the local level.

Additionally, the project is working to ensure that these systems are supported by an appropriate legal and regulatory framework.

A core objective is to **improve transparency in local self-governments** by promoting **public access to financial data** through these digital platforms and encouraging regular reporting on municipal expenditures and revenues. This transparency aims to empower citizens to hold their local governments accountable, fostering trust and improving governance practices.

This project phase targets **40 municipalities**, expanding its reach from the previous phase's 24 municipalities, thereby covering 79% of local self-government units in North Macedonia. This strategic expansion reflects the commitment to addressing governance challenges at a broader scale.

The project emphasizes key principles of **good governance**, including transparency, accountability, and anti-corruption, aimed at improving governance practices at both central and local levels.

The integration of **gender equality principles** is a core focus of the project, empowering both women and men in decision-making processes. The project ensures that gender considerations are integrated into all training modules and activities, fostering an environment where both genders can participate equally in local governance.

1.2. Management Setup for Project Implementation

The management structure for EMC2 is designed to facilitate efficient coordination, effective communication, and accountability across various stakeholders. The project is overseen by a dedicated project unit composed of experienced professionals, including a Programme Analyst (acting as the Programme Manager), a Local Governance Coordinator, an Associate Researcher, an Associate Monitoring Officer, and a Project Associate (*Table 1*).

This team is supported by a Gender Equality Coordinator and a Communication Specialist, ensuring that gender considerations and effective communication strategies are embedded throughout project activities.

The project unit operates under the guidance and supervision of the UNDP Programme Officer, who heads the Democratic Governance (DG) Unit. This oversight ensures alignment with UNDP's broader strategic objectives and compliance with organizational policies.

Table 1. Overview of project staff and share of responsibilities

	Name of Staff	Position in project (level of involvement %)	Overview of Key Responsibilities
1.	N/A ²	Programme Officer / Head of DG Unit (20%)	Performs oversight and ensures alignment with UNDP's broader strategic objectives and compliance with organizational policies.
2.	Ilmiasan Dauti	Programme Analyst / Programme Manager (70%)	Oversees project implementation, coordinates with key partners, supports completion of project deliverables, and ensures adherence to project timelines and objectives.
3.	Fisnik Shabani	Local Governance Coordinator (100%)	Coordinates project activities across the three main components and provides technical support to partner institutions and organizations in the implementation of the project activities and the implementation of grant scheme.
4.	Lejla Nebiu	Associate Monitoring Officer (100%)	Tracks and evaluates project progress, ensuring activities align with project targets and contributing to the development of monitoring reports and strategies. Plays a key role in coordination and implementing activities related to Output 1 and 2.
6.	Blazhen Maleski	Associate Researcher (100%)	Conducts research activities, data collection, and analysis, supporting evidence-based decision-making and reporting within the project. Responsible for managing the e-learning platform and the financial reporting platform, ensuring their effective use and continuous improvement.
7.	Vencislava Gjuroska	Project Associate (100%)	Manages day-to-day administrative, operational, and financial tasks, providing essential support to ensure the successful delivery of project results.
8.	Kristina Plecic	Gender Equality Coordinator (30%)	Ensures gender considerations are integrated into all aspects of the project, promoting equal participation and benefits for both men and women in municipal decision-making processes.
9.	Ratka Pemova	Communication Specialist (50%)	Manages internal and external project communications, ensuring visibility and outreach through media, publications, and other communication channels.

The project unit **collaborates closely with key strategic partners**, including the Ministry of Local Self-Government (MLSG) and the Ministry of Finance (MF), which participate in project activities, co-financing, and the establishment of institutional frameworks. Regular meetings and communication with these

² The recruitment process for the new Programme Officer/Head of DG Unit was ongoing during the preparation of this Inception Report.

partners promote synergy, facilitate knowledge transfer, and ensure that project outputs align with national policies and local needs.

Additionally, the project leverages the expertise of **external consultants and short-term experts** across various domains, including decentralization, fiscal management, and IT. The **Association of Local Self-Government Units (ZELS)** and the **Association of Finance Officers (AFO)** play important roles as responsible parties, implementing specific project activities, conducting training, and providing mentorship to municipal councilors as well as enabling horizontal communication and networking of the councilors and municipal administration.

This collaborative approach promotes a sustainable network of support and resources, enhancing the capacity of local governance institutions and ensuring the project's long-term impact on the democratization and decentralization processes in North Macedonia.

2. Evaluation Methodology

2.1. Purpose, Objectives and Methodology of the Mid-term Evaluation

The MTE plays an important role in assessing the ongoing **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability**. This evaluation serves as an objective and systematic assessment of the project's implementation, aiming to identify areas of strength, opportunities for improvement, and recommendations for future actions. Specifically, the evaluation measures how effectively the project meets its objectives, contributes to local governance, and enhances citizen participation.

The evaluation covers the **period from the project's inception to June 2024**, capturing positive and negative outcomes, achievements, and challenges. It informs UNDP, the Donor, other stakeholders, and partners to guide decision-making and adjust the project's intervention logic and implementation approach. Importantly, the MTE also examines **sustainability requirements**, assessing long-term impacts and potential **follow-up projects or initiatives** to support the project's objectives.

The MTE adopts a comprehensive **evaluation methodology** aligned with the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria, which includes five key dimensions:

1. **Relevance:** Assessing the extent to which the project objectives align with the needs of beneficiaries, national policies, and priorities.
2. **Effectiveness:** Evaluating the extent to which the project has achieved its planned objectives and outcomes.
3. **Efficiency:** Analyzing the project's resource use, cost-effectiveness, and timeliness in delivering outputs and outcomes.
4. **Impact:** Identifying the broader effects of the project on the targeted municipalities, stakeholders, and beneficiaries.
5. **Sustainability:** Examining the likelihood of maintaining project outcomes and benefits in the long term.

The evaluation includes a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, including:

- **Desk Review:** Reviewing project documentation, progress reports, and related materials.
- **Online Survey:** Distributing questions to stakeholders and project participants to capture their feedback and experiences.
- **Interviews:** Conducting interviews with key stakeholders, partners, and project beneficiaries to gather insights and perceptions on the project's implementation.

The evaluation process is conducted over a period of 3-4 months. It includes:

- **Inception Phase:** Refining the evaluation plan, tools, and methodologies.
- **Data Collection:** Gathering data through document review, survey and interviews.
- **Analysis and Reporting:** Analyzing data, preparing the draft report, and incorporating feedback from stakeholders before finalizing the evaluation report.

By applying this methodology, the MTE provides an objective assessment, offering insights into the project's progress and recommendations for enhancing its impact, sustainability, and future direction.

2.2. Data Collection Methods

The evaluation utilizes a range of data collection methods to gather diverse perspectives and insights from stakeholders:

- **Desk Review:** A thorough desk review of all relevant project documents, reports, progress updates, meeting minutes, and financial statements. This review provides a foundation for understanding the project's design, implementation, and outcomes to date.
- **Online Survey:** An online survey was distributed among key stakeholders, involving about 150 interlocutors, including municipal councilors, municipal administration staff, representatives from the Ministry of Local Self-Government, the Ministry of Finance, and other relevant partners. The survey aimed to capture stakeholders' experiences, perceptions, and feedback on the project's progress and outcomes. Emphasis was placed on ensuring gender-sensitive and inclusive participation to capture diverse perspectives. The questions for the online survey are included in **Appendix A**, and a summary of the feedback received is presented in **Appendix B** of this report.
- **Targeted Interviews:** In-depth interviews were conducted with key project partners and stakeholders, such as representatives from UNDP, MLSG, MoF, ZELS, AFO, municipal councilors, and mayors. These interviews took place after the online survey has been completed to refine the thematic focus and delve deeper into specific issues identified during the survey process. The interview questions for selected stakeholders are provided in **Appendix C**.

2.3. Data Analysis Plan

The collected data were analyzed using a combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques:

- **Quantitative Analysis:** Data from the online survey were analyzed using statistical methods to identify trends, patterns, and correlations in stakeholders' responses. This analysis helped quantify the extent of progress, effectiveness, and impact of the project's activities.
- **Qualitative Analysis:** Interview transcripts were analyzed thematically, identifying key themes, insights, and narratives that emerge from stakeholders' experiences. This allowed the evaluation process to capture in-depth perspectives on the project's achievements, challenges, and areas for improvement.
- **Triangulation:** Findings from different data sources were cross verified to ensure validity and reliability. This triangulation process strengthens the credibility of the evaluation conclusions and recommendations.

2.4. Reporting

The final stage of the methodology involved synthesizing findings from the desk review, survey, and interviews into a comprehensive (draft and final) mid-term evaluation report. This report captures key insights, lessons learned, and actionable recommendations to guide the remaining project

implementation period. The evaluation findings were presented to key stakeholders, and their feedback has been thoroughly integrated into the final version. Emphasis has been placed on identifying potential adjustments to the project’s intervention logic and implementation approach, with the aim of ensuring the achievement of intended results, maximizing impact, and bolstering sustainability objectives.

2.5. Data Source Matrix

To ensure a comprehensive and systematic evaluation of the EMC2 project, a Data Source Matrix has been developed. This matrix aligns the key evaluation questions, as outlined in the TOR and guided by the OECD-DAC criteria, with the corresponding data sources, collection methods, and analysis plans. The matrix serves as a structured tool to guide the data collection and analysis process, ensuring that each evaluation criterion is addressed using multiple data sources and methods, thereby enhancing the credibility and reliability of the evaluation findings.

The Data Source Matrix (Table 2) provides a detailed alignment of the key evaluation questions with the data sources, collection methods, and analysis plans. This matrix ensures that the evaluation covers all aspects of the project’s progress, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability.

Table 2. Data Source Matrix

Evaluation Question	Data Sources	Collection Methods	Analysis Plan
Relevance			
To what extent is the EMC2 project aligned with national policies and priorities?	Project documents, MLSG policies, SDC guidelines, interviews with key stakeholders	Desk review, targeted interviews	Compare project objectives against national policy documents and interview responses
How well does the project address the needs and priorities of municipal councils and citizens?	Survey responses, interviews with councilors, community forum reports	Online survey, targeted interviews	Analyze survey data and interview insights to identify alignment with local needs
Effectiveness			
Are the expected results being achieved as planned?	Quarterly and annual reports, M&E data, partner feedback	Desk review, interviews with project team and partners	Compare actual achievements with planned outputs, identify gaps and reasons
What factors have contributed to or hindered project effectiveness?	Survey responses, interviews with project staff and stakeholders, project risk logs	Online survey, targeted interviews, risk analysis	Identify patterns in data regarding enablers and barriers to project progress
Efficiency			
How efficiently have resources (financial, human) been utilized?	Financial reports, project budgets, interviews with project team	Desk review, targeted interviews	Analyze budget utilization against project activities, cross-check with team feedback
What measures have been taken to ensure cost-effectiveness?	Interviews with project staff, financial reports, partner feedback	Interviews, document review	Identify cost-saving measures and assess their impact on project delivery
Impact			
What evidence exists of the project’s contribution to improved municipal governance?	Survey responses, interviews with stakeholders, project case studies	Online survey, interviews, case study review	Evaluate responses to gauge perceived impact, compare against case studies

Has there been any unintended impact (positive or negative) of the project?	Interview responses, survey feedback, project reports	Interviews, survey	Identify any unintended outcomes and analyze their implications
Sustainability			
To what extent are the project's results likely to be sustainable?	Interviews with MLSG, ZELS, AFO, project team, survey data	Interviews, online survey	Assess plans for institutionalizing project activities, sustainability measures
What steps have been taken to enhance sustainability (e.g., capacity building, partnerships)?	Training reports, partnership agreements, interviews	Desk review, interviews	Analyze efforts made towards sustainability and the likelihood of long-term continuation

3. Current Status of the Project

3.1. Overview of Progress and Key Achievements

Since the launch of EMC2 project in April 2022, significant achievements have been consistently reported toward strengthening municipal councils, enhancing citizen participation, and improving service delivery through digitalization. Additionally, the project has provided vital flexible support to the MLSG in enhancing internal legislative and policy-making processes, utilizing the Government's contribution to EMC2 to achieve these objectives.

The project has effectively expanded upon the foundation laid by Phase 1, engaging 40 municipalities and scaling up efforts to cover around 79% of local self-government units in North Macedonia.

Output 1: Municipal Councils' Performance Improved

- Capacity Development Programme (CDP):** A total of 107 training sessions (78 classroom and 29 on-the-job) were conducted, benefiting 426 participants, including 320 councilors, 99 municipal staff, and 7 mayors. Women's participation exceeded expectations, with 43% of participants being women. The comprehensive roster of 19 experts enhanced the quality and coverage of the training modules, which focused on governance, anti-corruption, urban planning, financial management, and other transversal topics, such as green recovery and crisis management.
- E-learning Platform:** Continuously updated, the platform now supports over 1,212 registered users and has been populated with 81 new laws, by-laws, learning materials, and publications. Improvements in the platform's interface provided a more user-friendly experience, while assessments conducted on its functionalities ensured that necessary enhancements were implemented. In addition to laws, the platform was enriched with learning materials related to new trends such as resilience building and anti-corruption.
- Local Governance Policy and Legal Improvement:** Numerous reports and analyses were completed, contributing to the enhancement of the local governance legislative and policy framework. Key outputs include the **Program for Sustainable Local Development and Decentralization (2021-2026)** and its **2024-2026 Action Plan**. Furthermore, assessments were conducted on topics like municipal revenues, citizen satisfaction, the implementation of decentralization reforms, public services, and gender equality. These analyses have helped inform policy development and institutional reform processes, including the institutionalization of project products like the e-dashboard and capacity-building initiatives.

The project is set to lead the **evaluation of the Law on Local Self-Government and will support its revision** by providing external expertise and facilitating a platform for stakeholder

involvement. This legislative revision is expected to create opportunities for ensuring the sustainability of key project outcomes, such as the CDP, community forums, and digitalization achievements

- **Thematic Workshops and Peer-to-Peer Learning:** 9 Thematic working groups consisting of presidents of municipal councils were created, and 9 individual or joint workshops were carried out, with over 80% of council presidents participating. In addition to the joint workshops organized for presidents of municipal councils, a workshop on key themes such as **hate speech and digital violence** was held for municipal administration, with over 49% of municipalities participating.

Output 2: Citizen Participation Enhanced

- **Community Forums:** A total of **93 forum sessions** were conducted across **20 partner municipalities**, with significant citizen participation (an average of **63 citizens per session**, with **51% being women**). These forums played a crucial role in facilitating dialogue between citizens and municipalities and municipal councils, leading to the selection of **21 priority community projects**. Additionally, these forums contributed to the institutionalization of citizen participation mechanisms in **six municipalities**³, ensuring the long-term sustainability of these participatory processes.
- **Grant Scheme:** **15 out of 21 planned grants** have been implemented to support projects selected through the community forums. Municipalities co-financed these projects, with a total value of **\$1.25 million**, of which **\$385,000** came from municipal contributions. The grant scheme was instrumental in fostering local ownership, accountability, and active participation in development projects, promoting greater alignment between municipal priorities and citizen needs. The complete list of projects supported through the grants program is available in **Appendix D**.
- **Support for Local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs):** Training was provided to **27 CSOs**, strengthening their capacity to monitor local development activities and ensure the effective implementation of priority projects. This has enhanced the role of CSOs in local governance, contributing to increased transparency, citizen oversight, and accountability in decision-making processes at the municipal level.
- **Intermunicipal Cooperation (IMC):** **Three IMC partnerships** were established, fostering collaboration between municipalities in areas such as **protection and rescue** and the provision of **digital services**. Additionally, **17 municipalities** received expert support for the development of **Integrated Local Development Plans (ILDPs)**, which align with the newly adopted **Methodology for Integrated Local Development Planning**. This effort ensures that municipalities are equipped to undertake strategic and integrated local development planning, promoting sustainable growth and resilience.

Output 3: Municipal Services Improved through Digitalization

- **E-Dashboard Implementation:** The e-dashboard, populated with financial data from **55 municipalities**, has significantly improved transparency and accountability by providing regular updates on municipal financial indicators. Municipalities are utilizing this tool to enhance their financial reporting practices, promoting **greater public trust** in local governance and enabling citizens to monitor how municipal resources are managed.

³ This is in addition to the 14 other municipalities that have already incorporated community forums into their statutes.

- **Digital Tools for Transparency:** A total of **20 municipalities** have adopted various digital tools aimed at enhancing transparency, citizen engagement, and service delivery. These tools include **live-streaming equipment** for council meetings, **e-kiosks** allowing citizens to pay local taxes and fees and **upgraded municipal websites** with interactive features. These initiatives have made municipal councils more **accessible** to the public, strengthened the role of citizens in monitoring governance processes, and fostered **greater accountability** in local decision-making. Additionally, these digital tools have contributed to more **efficient service delivery**⁴, facilitating improved communication between local governments and their constituents.

3.2. Challenges and Issues

The implementation of the EMC2 project has encountered several challenges:

- The **parliamentary and presidential elections** have disrupted the regular flow of project activities, particularly for Output 1, which requires active participation from councilors, municipal representatives. The electoral process caused delays in capacity development training sessions and the coordination of activities with government institutions.
- **Internal administrative procedures within UNDP** and the introduction of the new Quantum operational system caused some delays in the disbursement of funds, impacting the timely implementation of priority projects and other project-related transactions.
- **Public procurement challenges** emerged as a key issue in Output 2, requiring enhanced guidance and support to municipalities to ensure successful project implementation.

An overview of the reported project progress, challenges, lessons learned, and the planned way forward, as currently outlined by the team, is provided in **Appendix E**.

3.3. Status of Project Monitoring and Evaluation

The project's monitoring and evaluation activities have been systematic, ensuring that progress is tracked, and corrective actions are taken where necessary:

- **Semi-annual and annual reports** on municipal revenues and expenditures were prepared, providing insights into the financial management of participating municipalities.
- The **Citizen Satisfaction Survey** for 2022 and 2023 was conducted, capturing feedback on local governance and service delivery, which serves as an essential tool for assessing project impact.
- The **Nationwide Web Sites Survey** assessed the transparency and usability of municipal websites, contributing to ongoing efforts to improve access to information for citizens.
- **Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA)** assessment for the first group of 10 municipalities conducted in 2022 provides a comprehensive and in-depth assessment of the management of public funds on a smaller sample of municipalities, which is helpful for the implementation of the fiscal decentralization reform⁵.

From a project cycle management perspective, the EMC2 project has adhered to standard UNDP monitoring, evaluation, and reporting practices as outlined in the ProDoc. During the reporting period, three Project Board, and two Steering Committee meetings were convened, ensuring that the steering

⁴ With the support of the project, five municipalities joined the LOGES system, which now provides a total of 23 digital municipal services.

⁵ The PEFA assessment will help track project progress toward achieving its indicators and corresponding targets. To ensure a consistent approach, the assessment will focus on the initial 10 municipalities, generating comparable data that can be extrapolated to draw conclusions for all other municipalities

levels remained actively engaged and equipped with accurate and timely information to support informed decision-making.

3.4. Communication and Visibility

Communication and visibility efforts have been an integral part of the EMC2 project, ensuring that the project's activities, achievements, and impacts are widely recognized among key stakeholders, including municipal representatives, central government institutions, civil society organizations, and the public. These efforts are guided by comprehensive, annually developed **communication work plans**.

The project has employed a multi-channel approach to enhance visibility and raise awareness on local governance improvements and the role of municipal councils in fostering citizen participation and transparency.

Key activities and strategies implemented include:

- **Media Engagement:** The project has worked closely with local and national media outlets to promote its activities, achievements, and events. This includes coverage of community forums, capacity-building sessions, and the digitalization of municipal services, highlighting the positive impacts of these initiatives on local governance.
- **Digital Presence:** The project's e-learning platform, which supports the CDP, has played a critical role in promoting visibility among municipal councilors and staff. In addition, the e-dashboard has provided an accessible platform for citizens to monitor municipal financial indicators, further enhancing transparency and citizen engagement. The project maintains a dedicated website, www.opstinskisoveti.mk, which is regularly updated with relevant information to engage key stakeholders and inform the public.
- **Workshops and Events:** Thematic workshops and peer-to-peer learning events have served as key platforms to promote the project's objectives and outcomes. These events, coupled with the implementation of digital tools such as live streaming of council meetings, have improved the visibility of council operations, enabling greater citizen participation and oversight.
- **Collaborative Communications with MLSG and ZELS:** The project has closely coordinated with the MLSG and ZELS to ensure that communication strategies are aligned with national priorities for decentralization and local governance reform. This collaboration has facilitated greater outreach and engagement with key stakeholders.

The appointment of a dedicated **Communication Specialist** (50% involvement) within the project team has ensured that these communication efforts are structured, targeted, and responsive to the needs of stakeholders and the public. The ongoing focus on visibility is expected to continue to strengthen project impact and stakeholder engagement, ensuring that the project's achievements are recognized and sustained beyond its duration.

In summary, based on documentary review and staff feedback, the EMC2 project is progressing steadily, with significant achievements in enhancing municipal council performance, promoting citizen participation, and leveraging technology for improved service delivery. Despite facing challenges, the project has demonstrated adaptability and resilience, ensuring that key outputs are delivered effectively and that the foundations for sustainability are being strengthened.

4. Preliminary Evaluation of Project Implementation Progress Against OECD-DAC Dimensions

This section evaluates the implementation of the EMC2 project using the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria: Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, and Sustainability. The assessment draws on a comprehensive review of project documentation, discussions with project staff, insights from an online

survey, and findings from stakeholder interviews. Each criterion is graded on a scale of 1 to 5, reflecting the extent to which it has been achieved.

4.1. Relevance

The EMC2 project demonstrates a high degree of relevance to the local governance challenges in North Macedonia. It aligns closely with national priorities for strengthening local governance and meets the specific needs of participating municipalities. The project effectively addresses critical areas such as capacity development for municipal councils, enhancing citizen participation, and modernizing service delivery through digital tools.

Capacity Development Programme

Survey responses and interviews highlight the strong alignment of the CDP with the knowledge gaps of municipal councilors and administration. Topics such as good governance, financial management, anti-corruption, and urban planning have been particularly well-received. Respondents noted that CDP is recognized as the only comprehensive training program of its kind, acknowledged widely by councilors, municipal administration, and other stakeholders. However, the need to ensure timely delivery of training sessions, especially at the start of councilor terms, was emphasized. Interviews pointed out that political factors, such as councilor turnover and varying commitment levels, pose challenges to consistent training impact. Stakeholders also suggested the introduction of accreditation mechanisms or integration into national legislation to sustain CDP benefits in the long term.

Citizen Participation and Community Forums

Community forums have been instrumental in enhancing citizen engagement in municipal decision-making. Survey findings show that 80% of respondents perceive a significant improvement in citizen participation since the project's inception. The institutionalization of community forums in many municipalities is seen as a major achievement, ensuring the sustainability of participatory mechanisms. However, interviewees emphasized the importance of further investment in youth mobilization and outreach to marginalized groups to enhance inclusivity in these processes. Stakeholders recommended increasing awareness campaigns and leveraging partnerships with youth-focused initiatives.

Grants Programme

The grants were awarded to projects prioritized by citizens, ensuring that resources directly address real and pressing local needs. By fostering municipal co-financing, the Grants Programme reflects strong local commitment and ownership of development initiatives.

Examples of funded projects include infrastructure improvements, social services, and initiatives to address environmental concerns. Such projects deliver visible and immediate impacts on communities, reinforcing citizen trust in local governance processes. Additionally, the Grants Programme promotes transparency and inclusive decision-making, as the prioritization process engages citizens, including women and marginalized groups, ensuring their voices are reflected in municipal investments.

The findings from the survey and interviews further validate the Programme's importance. Respondents appreciated the tangible outcomes of the funded projects and highlighted the value of citizen participation in shaping local development priorities.

Digitalization and Service Delivery

The project's digital tools, including the e-dashboard and tools for live-streaming/recording council meetings, have significantly contributed to improving transparency and accountability in municipal operations. Survey results indicate strong recognition of these tools' effectiveness, with many respondents noting their potential to transform service delivery and public trust in governance. However,

some councilors reported limited digital literacy as a barrier to fully utilizing these resources, suggesting a need for complementary training and support for effective adoption.

Support to MLSG and Legislative Revisions

The project's direct support to MLSG has been critical in advancing local governance reforms. The upcoming revision of the Law on Local Self-Government is a pivotal intervention, as it provides a unique opportunity to institutionalize key project outputs, including the CDP and community forums. MLSG emphasized the need for aligning these changes with broader legislative frameworks, underscoring the project's relevance to systemic governance improvements.

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

Survey and interview findings underscore the project's emphasis on gender equality and social inclusion. Approximately 60% of survey respondents rated the project's gender-sensitive activities as effective or highly effective. Training programs have ensured a higher-than-expected representation of women (43%), and community forums have seen nearly equal participation by women (51%). Despite this progress, feedback from interviews highlights opportunities to deepen outreach to marginalized groups, with calls for tailored interventions to address systemic barriers and ensure equitable benefits for all.

Key Finding

The EMC2 project's activities align strongly with national priorities and the needs of participating municipalities, demonstrating exceptional relevance. Its focus on capacity building, citizen participation, digitalization, gender equality, and legislative reform ensures a holistic approach to addressing local governance challenges. While significant progress has been made, targeted efforts are recommended to ensure the sustainability of training impacts. **Grade: 5**

4.2. Coherence

The EMC2 project demonstrates a strong level of coherence by complementing broader governance initiatives in North Macedonia. It aligns effectively with both internal UNDP efforts and external stakeholder priorities, ensuring a unified approach to strengthening local governance systems, decentralization, and service delivery.

Internal Coherence

The project builds on the foundation laid by EMC1 and aligns with other UNDP-supported programs targeting decentralization, local governance, and capacity-building. Stakeholders, including MLSG and the MoF, highlighted the flexibility and responsiveness of the EMC2 team in adapting to emerging needs, reinforcing its coherence with ongoing institutional processes. The survey responses also confirm that EMC2's objectives align well with municipal priorities, with over 77% of respondents perceiving the project's goals as fully or mostly aligned with local needs.

External Coherence

EMC2's coordination with government institutions, including MLSG and MoF, ensures that project activities are consistent with broader governance and policy frameworks. For example, the project supports the preparation of semi-annual and annual municipal financial reports for the Commission on Financial Systems, a priority for MoF. MLSG acknowledged the project's alignment with legislative reform efforts, particularly the upcoming revision of the Law on Local Self-Government, which is closely integrated with EMC2 activities.

Interviews with municipal stakeholders and ZELS also highlight the project's coherence with municipal governance systems. However, ZELS expressed concerns about their limited involvement in EMC2's

strategic design and broader activities, suggesting room for greater collaboration to ensure alignment with their initiatives.

Collaboration with Civil Society Organizations

The project has worked to strengthen the role of CSOs in monitoring local development activities. Training for 27 CSOs has enhanced their capacity to oversee municipal governance processes, contributing to increased transparency and accountability. However, both survey and interview findings suggest that further efforts are needed to deepen partnerships with CSOs, particularly in areas such as youth mobilization.

Avoidance of Duplication and Creation of Synergies

Survey and interview feedback confirmed that EMC2 avoids duplication by filling critical gaps in capacity development and governance reform. The CDP and Community Forums are recognized as unique interventions that complement other initiatives without overlap.

Notably, the Community Forums process has been adopted as a good practice and utilized by other UNDP projects, such as the BMCPI – Phase 2 project, where it was used to facilitate the preparation of ILDPs, and “Scaling up Actions to Tackle Air Pollution” in the prioritization of measures for tackling air pollution.

At the same time, EMC2 benefits from synergies with other initiatives. For instance, the methodology for ILDP preparation, developed under the BMCPI – Phase 2 project, has been effectively applied by EMC2 to support the development of 17 ILDPs for selected municipalities. This demonstrates the project’s ability to leverage existing tools and approaches, maximizing efficiency and ensuring consistency in local development planning.

Key Finding

The EMC2 project demonstrates a high degree of internal and external coherence, effectively aligning its activities with broader governance initiatives and avoiding duplication. It creates synergies with other initiatives through strong collaboration with government institutions, particularly MLSG and MoF. Opportunities exist to enhance partnerships with CSOs, ZELS, and other local actors to further strengthen the coherence of project interventions. **Grade: 5**

4.3. Effectiveness

The EMC2 project has demonstrated substantial progress toward achieving its intended outputs, effectively advancing its goals to strengthen municipal councils, enhance citizen participation, and improve municipal service delivery through digitalization.

Output 1: Municipal Councils' Performance Improved

The CDP has proven to be a cornerstone of the project’s success, with 107 training sessions (78 classroom-based and 29 on-the-job) conducted, benefiting 426 participants. These trainings are recognized as highly relevant and impactful by municipal councilors, administration staff, and even mayors. Survey feedback indicates that the CDP significantly improved participants' knowledge and skills, particularly in governance, financial management, and anti-corruption.

However, interviews with municipal councilors and ZELS raised the importance of delivering training earlier in councilors' mandates and addressing digital literacy gaps for more effective use of e-learning tools. Stakeholders emphasized the need for continuous training post-2025 elections to maintain momentum and equip newly elected councilors.

The project’s focus on gender-sensitive approaches was acknowledged positively, with 43% of CDP participants being women, exceeding expectations. However, both survey and interview responses highlighted opportunities to further strengthen efforts in involving marginalized groups in training and governance processes.

Output 2: Citizen Participation Enhanced

Community forums have effectively improved citizen engagement in decision-making processes. With 93 sessions conducted across 20 partner municipalities, participants reported significant improvements in transparency and collaboration between citizens and municipal councils. Survey respondents noted a tangible increase in citizen participation, with nearly 80% observing a positive impact.

The grant scheme associated with community forums has further strengthened local ownership, supporting 15 out of 21 planned priority projects to date. Municipal co-financing has reinforced accountability, although delays in grant implementation were identified as a concern by some stakeholders.

Nevertheless, the survey and interviews highlighted youth mobilization as a lagging area, calling for targeted efforts to engage younger populations more effectively. This includes leveraging partnerships with youth-oriented projects and awareness-raising initiatives.

Output 3: Municipal Services Improved through Digitalization

The implementation of digital tools, including the e-dashboard and e-learning platform, has significantly enhanced municipal transparency and service delivery. The e-dashboard, adopted by 55 municipalities, is widely recognized as a valuable tool for monitoring financial indicators and promoting accountability.

Survey respondents rated the e-learning platform as effective but noted limited uptake due to varying levels of digital literacy among councilors. Interviewees emphasized the importance of maintaining and expanding these tools to ensure their long-term sustainability, with calls for integrating them into broader municipal processes.

Key Finding

The EMC2 project is on track to achieve most of its intended outcomes, with strong evidence of improved skills among councilors, increased citizen participation, and enhanced municipal transparency. While gender-sensitive and inclusive approaches are promising, further institutionalization and outreach to marginalized groups are necessary to fully realize the project's potential. **Grade: 5**

4.4. Efficiency

The EMC2 project demonstrates a high level of efficiency in its management of financial and human resources, as evidenced by a reported delivery rate of approximately 89% by the end of 2023. The project team has effectively balanced the dual responsibilities of implementing EMC2 activities (funded by SDC) and providing on-demand support to the MLSG through its co-funding contributions.

This flexibility, combined with the team's extensive experience and strong internal coordination, has enabled them to adapt to the variable nature of MLSG's requests and address emerging needs efficiently.

Financial Resource Management

Project expenditures have grown steadily, reflecting stable and consistent implementation progress over the reporting period (April 2022 – June 2024). The quarterly expenditure trends demonstrate well-distributed spending aligned with the project's planned activities. Notably, expenditure spikes in the fourth quarter of each year indicate an expected accumulation of preparatory activities earlier in the year, followed by more resource-intensive implementations in the latter stages (Figure 1).

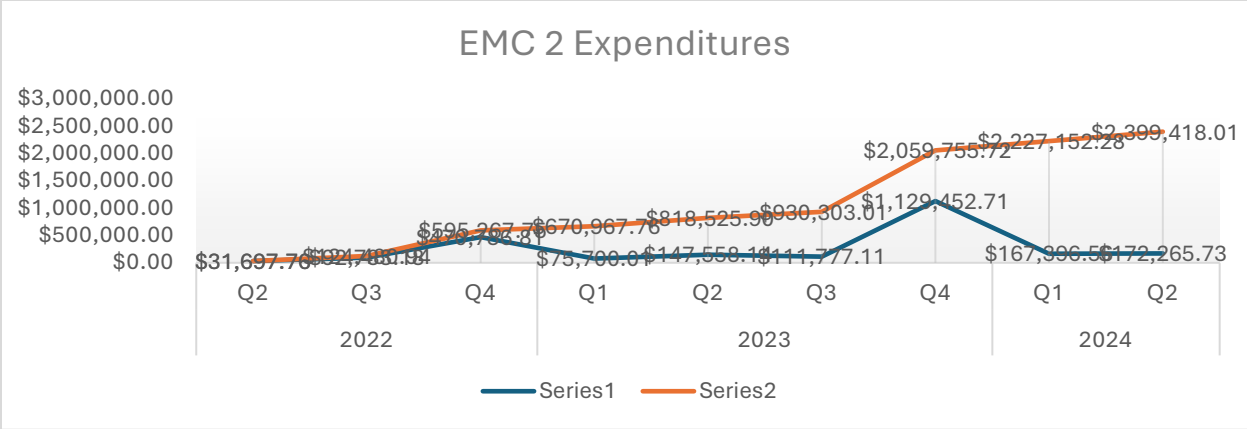


Figure 1. Overview of Project’s quarterly and cumulative expenditures over the reporting period

The financial distribution across outputs and management costs illustrates a balanced approach, as shown in Table 3 below. The expenditure levels for Outputs 1 and 2, both at approximately 31% of the total budget, align with the project’s focus on governance and citizen engagement. The smaller proportion allocated to Output 3 (around 15%) reflects the relative cost intensity of digitalization efforts.

Management costs, slightly exceeding 20%, are within optimal levels given the project's complexity, underscoring the effective use of resources to support all components.

Adaptability and Responsiveness

The project team’s ability to navigate challenges, including delays caused by parliamentary and presidential elections, is a testament to their adaptability. While these external factors disrupted some activities, particularly those requiring active participation from councilors, the team mitigated these impacts through effective coordination with MLSG, MoF, and partner municipalities.

Additionally, their long-standing collaboration and shared experience contributed to their capacity to absorb and manage a diverse workload.

Table 3. Simplified overview of project expenditures by outputs and management costs⁶

Outputs / Cost Category	Expenditures to date (USD)	% of total budget
Output 1. Municipal Councils' Performance	740.051,90	30,84%
Output 2. Citizen Participation	745.617,30	31.07%
Output 3. Service Delivery	357.241,78	14,90%
Management costs	556.507,03	23,19%
Total	2.399.418,01	100%

Key Finding

The EMC2 project appears to be efficiently managed, with steady progress and strategic allocation of resources across its components. The adaptability of the project team has been instrumental in maintaining implementation momentum despite external challenges. Moving forward, efforts should focus on sustaining this level of flexibility while minimizing disruptions caused by external factors, such as elections, to ensure uninterrupted engagement from municipal councilors. **Grade: 5**

⁶ The table shows only SDC’s budget of EMC2.

4.5. Impact

The EMC2 project demonstrates emerging positive impacts in municipal governance, citizen participation, and service delivery, with tangible results in areas under its direct control. These achievements, however, are set against a broader and dynamic context that influences the overall impact. As such, both the observable outcomes and the opportunities presented by the project-supported changes to legislation and policies need to be carefully considered to maximize the project's long-term contribution to local governance reform.

Enhanced Municipal Governance

CDP has significantly contributed to building the skills of municipal councilors and administrative staff, equipping them with tools to perform their roles more effectively. Improved transparency and accountability are evident through the implementation of the e-Dashboard, which has allowed municipalities to regularly update and disclose financial data, enhancing public trust and oversight.

The project has also taken critical steps to strengthen the legislative and policy framework governing local self-government. By supporting the evaluation and forthcoming revision of the Law on Local Self-Government and facilitating the development of other legislative tools, EMC2 is creating impact opportunities that extend beyond its immediate scope. These changes have the potential to institutionalize practices such as citizen participation and councilor training, ensuring the sustainability of project achievements.

Increased Citizen Participation

Community forums have played a transformative role in fostering citizen engagement, creating platforms for participatory decision-making and prioritization of municipal projects. Feedback from stakeholders highlights the forums' ability to address local needs collaboratively while promoting inclusivity. The associated grant scheme has further reinforced community ownership and accountability, aligning municipal priorities with citizen needs. However, the project recognizes the need for enhanced mobilization of underrepresented groups, such as youth, ethnic minorities, and marginalized populations, to ensure equitable participation.

Improved Service Delivery

The project's digitalization efforts, including the implementation of tools such as live-streaming equipment, upgraded municipal websites, and the implementation of the LOGES system have enhanced transparency and citizen access to governance processes. These tools are facilitating more efficient service delivery and fostering better communication between municipalities and their constituents. The Ministry of Finance has also recognized the project's potential to support systemic improvements, including taking over tools and processes such as annual and semi-annual financial reporting.

Impact Opportunities from Legislative and Policy Reforms

One of EMC2's most promising impact opportunities lies in its support for changes to legislation and policies. The project's role in the revision of the Law on Local Self-Government and related legal frameworks has created avenues for embedding key achievements, such as the CDP and community forums, into national systems. These legislative efforts are expected to provide a robust institutional foundation for sustaining and scaling project results, including digitalization and enhanced governance practices.

Contextual Factors Influencing Impact

While the project demonstrates significant results in its areas of control, external factors beyond its direct influence, such as political dynamics and legislative developments, will ultimately shape its overall impact. These variables are fluid and require the project to remain adaptable to maximize its contributions. EMC2

has handled these contextual challenges well, maintaining steady progress and demonstrating resilience. However, scenario planning is recommended to anticipate and address potential risks or opportunities that may arise.

Ensuring Long-Term Impact

A carefully designed **exit strategy** is critical to ensuring that project results are integrated into national systems and sustained beyond EMC2's timeline. This strategy should focus on building the capacities of key institutions, such as the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Local Self-Government, enabling them to take ownership of critical processes like financial reporting and councilor training. Institutional partnerships and policy integration should be further strengthened to ensure the lasting impact of project outcomes.

The EMC2 project is creating meaningful, albeit still developing, changes in local governance. Through a combination of direct achievements, strategic legislative efforts, and adaptive planning, EMC2 is well-positioned to maximize its long-term impact while addressing the complexities of its operating environment.

Key Finding

The EMC2 project is generating significant results within its areas of control, including enhanced municipal governance, increased citizen participation, and improved service delivery. These results are reinforced by the project's support for legislative and policy changes, which offer opportunities to institutionalize and sustain key achievements. However, broader contextual factors, including political dynamics and systemic challenges, remain critical variables that could influence the overall impact. The project has demonstrated strong adaptability to these external factors, but **scenario planning** and a robust **exit strategy** are essential to maximize impact opportunities and ensure sustainability. **Grade: 4**

4.6. Sustainability

The EMC2 project has prioritized embedding its outcomes into institutional frameworks and fostering partnerships to ensure sustainability. Efforts across the project's key lines of intervention reflect varying degrees of progress toward sustainability. Below is an analysis of sustainability structured by the project's key lines of intervention.

Capacity Development Programme

The institutionalization of the CDP is central to the project's sustainability strategy. Discussions with stakeholders indicate strong interest in continuing the program, particularly from AFO, which has expressed willingness to host and sustain the methodology if financial support is secured. However, challenges remain, including the high turnover of councilors and the need for long-term funding to support regular training cycles.

Stakeholders, including MLSG, emphasized the importance of focusing on municipal administration for sustained capacity-building, as they are less affected by turnover and can ensure consistent institutional memory. Efforts to integrate the CDP into broader legislative frameworks, such as the upcoming revisions to the Law on Local Self-Government, provide an opportunity to formalize capacity-building obligations for municipal councils and administration.

Citizen Participation Mechanisms

Community forums have proven effective in fostering citizen engagement, with institutionalization efforts in all municipalities representing a significant step forward. However, their long-term functionality depends on policy support and municipal leadership commitment. Stakeholders noted that local ownership and municipal budget allocations are critical to sustaining these participatory mechanisms.

Efforts to align community forums with the broader governance framework, including the integration of participatory practices into municipal statutes, have improved their sustainability prospects. However, continued emphasis on building youth participation and outreach to marginalized groups will be crucial to ensure inclusivity and relevance over time.

Digital Tools and Service Delivery

The sustainability of digital tools, including the e-Dashboard and transparency-enhancing technologies, is a key area of concern. Stakeholders highlighted the need for municipalities to allocate resources for the maintenance and updating of these tools, as well as for quality control and data validation processes.

The Ministry of Finance has shown interest in taking over the tools for financial reporting and budget management, indicating a potential pathway for ensuring their long-term use. However, this will require investment in automation and integration into the broader Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS) to reduce manual errors and enhance efficiency.

Legislative and Policy Support

The project's role in supporting the revision of the Law on Local Self-Government offers a critical opportunity to institutionalize its key achievements. Embedding mechanisms for councilor training, citizen engagement, and digitalization into the legislative framework will provide a solid foundation for sustainability. However, as highlighted by MLSG, systemic reforms, including improved staffing and internal capacity-building at the ministry level, are necessary to ensure these changes are effectively implemented and maintained.

Key Finding

The EMC2 project has taken significant steps toward sustainability, particularly through institutionalization efforts and strategic partnerships. However, the sustainability of certain activities, such as the maintenance of digital tools and the continuation of community forums, requires additional measures. A comprehensive **exit strategy**, including resource allocation, stakeholder ownership, and **scenario planning**, is essential to maximize the impact and longevity of the project's outcomes. **Grade: 4**

4.7. Cross-Cutting Issues

The EMC2 project has successfully incorporated cross-cutting themes such as gender equality, social inclusion, and innovation into its design and implementation, reinforcing its transformative potential. These dimensions align with broader international commitments, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

Gender Equality

The project has made tangible efforts to ensure gender-sensitive practices across all activities. This is evident in the CDP, which achieved a significant representation of women (43% of participants). Community forums have also been structured to encourage active participation by women, with over half of participants being female. Feedback from the survey and interviews highlights that stakeholders appreciate the project's gender mainstreaming efforts, though additional targeted actions to engage women in leadership and decision-making roles remain necessary.

Social Inclusion

EMC2 has shown a strong commitment to leaving no one behind (LNOB) by promoting inclusivity in its initiatives. The community forums, grant schemes, and citizen participation mechanisms have been designed to ensure representation of marginalized and vulnerable groups, such as ethnic minorities and low-income populations. However, feedback suggests that further efforts are needed to actively mobilize

and engage these groups, especially youth and people with disabilities, to ensure equitable access to project benefits.

Innovation

The project has leveraged technology to drive transparency, accountability, and inclusivity in municipal governance. Key innovations include the e-dashboard, enabling citizens to monitor municipal finances, digital tools like live-streaming council meetings and interactive websites, and the LOGES, which have enhanced citizen engagement and access to services. These innovations have positioned EMC2 as a pioneer in the digitalization of local governance in North Macedonia.

Environmental and Crisis Sensitivity

While not a primary focus, the project has integrated elements of crisis management and green recovery into its training modules and support to municipalities. These efforts ensure that local governance structures are better prepared to address environmental challenges and respond effectively to crises. Furthermore, the project has undergone the SDC Climate, Environment, and Disaster Risk Reduction Integration Guidance (CEDRIG) assessment, internalizing climate-related aspects into its implementation.

Key Finding

The EMC2 project demonstrates strong integration of cross-cutting issues, enhancing its relevance, impact, and sustainability. Gender equality, social inclusion, and innovation are effectively incorporated into project activities, contributing to more inclusive and accountable local governance. These achievements align with the **GEN 2** classification of the project. However, targeted outreach to underrepresented groups and sustained focus on inclusive digital access will be critical in maintaining this trajectory. **Grade: 5**

Based on the comprehensive analysis of project documentation, online survey responses, and stakeholder interviews, the EMC2 project demonstrates a robust alignment with the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria. The project scores particularly high in **Relevance** and **Coherence**, reflecting its strategic alignment with national priorities, local needs, and complementary initiatives. The project's **Effectiveness** is evidenced by notable achievements in capacity building, citizen engagement, and digitalization, while its **Efficiency** is underscored by prudent resource management and the adaptability of the project team.

Emerging evidence highlights **Impact**, including enhanced municipal transparency, accountability, and governance capacities. However, the broader systemic and contextual variables, beyond the project's control, will heavily influence the long-term effects, necessitating scenario planning to capitalize on impact opportunities. **Sustainability** remains a work in progress, with encouraging steps toward institutionalization and stakeholder ownership, but requiring further efforts to solidify long-term outcomes, particularly in areas like digital tools and participatory mechanisms.

These findings suggest that the **EMC2 project is on track to achieve its objectives**, but further refinement, scenario-based planning, and an updated comprehensive **exit strategy** are needed to maximize the project's impact and ensure the longevity of its results.

Appendix F presents a comprehensive review of the project's progress against the established indicators and targets outlined in the LogFrame. This review provides an assessment of the achievements made to date, highlighting the extent to which the project is on track in meeting its objectives, as well as identifying any areas that may require additional focus or adjustment. Additionally, the review offers suggestions on **indicator adjustments** that will support more effective project implementation during the remaining half of its duration.

5. Conclusions

The EMC2 project has demonstrated significant progress in achieving its objectives of strengthening municipal councils, enhancing citizen participation, and modernizing service delivery through digitalization. Findings from the evaluation, based on a combination of desk reviews, stakeholder interviews, and the online survey, indicate that the project is highly relevant to the needs of North Macedonia's local governance system. Its interventions align with national priorities and effectively address key challenges in local governance, transparency, and accountability.

The project's CDP has delivered measurable improvements in the knowledge and skills of municipal councilors and staff, fostering better governance and decision-making at the local level. Community forums have successfully facilitated citizen participation, increasing the inclusiveness of municipal decision-making processes. Moreover, digital tools like the e-Dashboard have enhanced transparency and accountability in municipal operations, promoting trust in local government institutions.

Despite these successes, several challenges remain. External factors, such as election-related delays, limited engagement from certain stakeholders, and varying levels of commitment among municipal councilors, have posed difficulties. Additionally, the sustainability of key interventions, such as the CDP and digital tools, requires further institutional support and integration into national systems to ensure their longevity.

The project has effectively leveraged its flexibility to adapt to emerging needs and address challenges as they arise. Its coordination with key stakeholders, including the MLSG, MoF, and local actors like ZELS, has been a cornerstone of its success. However, opportunities exist to deepen partnerships with civil society organizations and strengthen systemic approaches to sustain project outcomes.

Key Findings

- **Relevance and Coherence:** EMC2 aligns strongly with national priorities for local governance reform and integrates well with complementary initiatives. Its focus on gender equality and social inclusion further strengthens its relevance.
- **Effectiveness:** The project is achieving its intended results, with evidence of improved governance capacities, increased citizen participation, and enhanced municipal services through digitalization.
- **Efficiency:** Resources have been effectively utilized, with steady progress observed across all outputs. The project team's flexibility and coordination with stakeholders have been instrumental in overcoming operational challenges.
- **Impact:** The project has generated positive outcomes, including enhanced transparency and accountability, although the full extent of its impact requires further assessment.
- **Sustainability:** Steps have been taken to embed project outcomes within institutional frameworks, but long-term sustainability will depend on stronger local ownership and policy integration.

Recommendations

To maximize its impact and ensure sustainability, the project should:

1. **Institutionalize Key Interventions:** Identify suitable institutional hosts for the CDP and digital tools, supported by legal, financial, and operational frameworks.
2. **Strengthen Legislative Reforms:** Align project-supported activities with upcoming legislative changes to enhance their systemic impact.
3. **Promote Local Ownership:** Foster greater commitment from municipal councils and administration through capacity-building and incentives.

4. **Expand Inclusivity:** Increase outreach to marginalized groups, ensuring that all citizens benefit equally from project initiatives.
5. **Plan for Sustainability:** Develop a clear exit strategy and sustainability plan, focusing on embedding project results into national systems and securing long-term funding

The (future) final evaluation should build on the findings of this mid-term evaluation, offering a comprehensive analysis of the project's long-term impacts and sustainability prospects. It should evaluate how well the project's interventions, particularly the CDP, community forums, and digital tools, have been institutionalized within local and national systems. Additionally, it should assess the effectiveness of legislative and policy changes supported by the project and their role in reinforcing local governance. The final evaluation should also explore the broader contextual factors—political, economic, and social—that influence the project's outcomes, providing actionable recommendations for navigating these dynamics. Finally, it should address the transition and exit strategy, ensuring that EMC2's achievements are sustained and scaled for continued impact beyond the project's duration.

Given the substantial progress achieved under EMC2, there is a strong case for continuing and/or upgrading the initiative, subject to the availability of funds. Expanding the program would allow for the inclusion of municipalities that have not yet benefited from any phase of the project, ensuring equitable access to capacity-building, citizen engagement, and digitalization initiatives across the country.

Furthermore, the complex nature of the exit strategy requires more time to ensure its effective implementation. This includes systemic legislative, policy, and institutional adjustments, which are critical for embedding project-supported mechanisms such as the CDP, community forums, and digital tools into national frameworks.

Continuation would also provide an opportunity to further enhance the capacities of institutions like MLSG, ZELS, and AFO to assume full responsibility for maintaining and scaling these key results and systems, ensuring the long-term sustainability and impact of EMC's transformative interventions.

6. Recommendations

To ensure the project's sustainability and maximize its impact, targeted actions are required in key areas. These recommendations aim to address observed challenges, capitalize on emerging opportunities, and ensure the integration of EMC2's achievements into national systems and local governance structures.

This section provides specific, actionable recommendations organized by the project's three primary outputs and their respective lines of intervention. Each recommendation is supported by a summary table detailing the suggested actions, responsible entities, timelines, and priorities. This structured approach aims to guide stakeholders in implementing strategies that build upon the project's successes while addressing areas for improvement and long-term sustainability.

Output 1: Municipal Councils' Performance Improved

1. **Institutionalize the CDP:** Develop a clear **exit strategy** that gradually transfers the CDP to a long-term institutional host. Address legal, functional, certification, and financial aspects to ensure sustainability while maintaining the quality and reach of the program.
2. **Embed Capacity-Building in Policy:** Incorporate capacity-building provisions for councilors and municipal staff into the revised **Law on Local Self-Government** and related policies to ensure systemic and sustainable improvements.

Output 2: Citizen Participation Enhanced

1. **Broaden Adoption of Community Forums:** Expand the institutionalization of community forums to additional municipalities through targeted improvements in legislation and the sharing of best practices.
2. **Strengthen Youth Engagement and Further Social Inclusion:** Implement targeted campaigns, partnerships, and awareness-raising efforts to mobilize youth and marginalized groups, fostering even more inclusive participation in local governance.

Output 3: Municipal Services Improved through Digitalization

1. **Develop a Sustainability Plan for Digital Infrastructure:** Create a comprehensive **exit strategy** for the digital tools, including maintenance, updates, and financing. Work with the Ministry of Finance and MLSG to transfer ownership, integrate tools into national systems, and ensure technical support.
2. **Address Digital Literacy Gaps:** Provide targeted digital literacy training for councilors and municipal staff to build confidence and enhance the effective use of digital tools. This will foster **local ownership** and ensure tools are fully utilized, driving long-term impact.

In summary, the recommendations provided for each output focus on institutionalization, legislative and policy adjustments, capacity building, and fostering local ownership. These actionable steps (detailed in **Appendix G**) are designed to ensure that the project's successes are embedded within the national governance framework, creating a lasting legacy of transparent, accountable, and participatory local government.

6.1. Institutionalization of the Capacity Development Programme

The CDP is one of the EMC2 project's most impactful achievements, equipping municipal councilors and staff with essential governance and administrative skills. Ensuring the long-term sustainability and institutionalization of the CDP is a critical priority as the project approaches its exit phase. This subsection provides a roadmap for the institutionalization of the CDP, integrating stakeholder feedback, sustainability considerations, and actionable recommendations.

Key Recommendations for CDP Institutionalization

1. **Develop a Comprehensive Exit Strategy:** To ensure a smooth transition, a phased approach should be adopted, gradually transferring the CDP to a suitable institutional host (proposed structure outline is provided below).
2. **Identify and Secure a Suitable Host Institution:** The choice of the CDP host institution is crucial for its success. Options include ZELS, AFO, MLSG, regional development centers, or a consortium of (two or more) institutions. Each option has unique advantages and challenges, which are summarized in the table below. The decision should prioritize the institution's ability to deliver, sustain, and expand the program while aligning with national governance frameworks.
3. **Support and Advocate for the Integration of CDP Provisions into Policy and Legislation:** Legislative and policy adjustments could play a critical role in the institutionalization of the CDP. While the project cannot directly commit to drafting or implementing legislation, it will actively support and advocate for integrating CDP provisions into relevant frameworks, such as the revised Law on Local Self-Government. This could include recommendations to mandate training, establish funding mechanisms, and create pathways for certification, enabling a systemic approach to capacity-building that extends beyond the project's lifespan.
4. **Ensure Long-Term Funding and Certification Opportunities:**

- Develop a funding strategy to secure financial sustainability, potentially including contributions from MLSG, municipalities, or external donors.
- Certification options should enhance the professional value of the training, incentivizing participation and creating pathways for councilors’ professional growth.

5. Strengthen Collaboration Among Stakeholders

- Foster partnerships with ZELS, MLSG, municipalities, and external donors to create an integrated training ecosystem.
- Clearly define stakeholder roles to prevent overlaps and inefficiencies, promoting a unified approach to governance capacity-building.

For future reference, the following tentative structure outline can serve as a guide when preparing the Exit Strategy:

- **Institutional Ownership:** Secure a long-term host for the CDP, such as ZELS, MLSG, AFO, or a consortium of institutions, ensuring alignment with national governance frameworks.
- **Policy Integration:** Embed capacity-building provisions into the revised Law on Local Self-Government and related policies to establish a systemic approach to training.
- **Sustainability Planning:** Address financial, operational, and quality assurance aspects, including potential funding sources and monitoring mechanisms.
- **Certification and Accreditation:** Explore certification options to provide councilors with recognized qualifications and incentives for participation.
- **Phased Transition:** Define roles for project staff, institutional hosts, and other stakeholders to ensure continuity during the transition.
- **Stakeholder Collaboration:** Build partnerships with local and national actors to support the program’s implementation and longevity.

Table 4. Summary of CDP Host Options

Host Option	Pros	Cons	Sustainability Requirements	Collaboration Requirements
ZELS	Strong municipal ties; recognized by councilors.	Limited interest; requires funding and recruitment mechanisms.	Dedicated funding; recruitment process for trainers.	Partnership with MLSG, LSGUs, and donors for capacity-building.
AFO	Smooth transition; existing training infrastructure and experience; strong municipal ties.	Requires funding.	Long-term funding; continually tailored curriculum.	Partnership with MLSG, LSGUs, donors, and central government authorities for policy alignment.
MLSG	Central authority; ability to align with governance frameworks.	Understaffed; potential perception of executive interference between central and local governance levels.	Increased staffing; separation of training and executive functions.	Coordination with municipalities.
Regional Centers	Localized relevance; improved accessibility.	Need for consistency in training quality and methodology; limited	Uniform training methodology; funding from MLSG,	Close coordination with MLSG for oversight.

		staffing; lack of prior experience in CDP delivery.	municipalities, and/or donors.	
Consortium (e.g., two or more entities from the above)	Resource-sharing; combines strengths of multiple institutions.	Coordination challenges; risk of inefficiencies if roles are unclear.	Strong governance structure; defined roles and responsibilities.	Agreements among stakeholders; regular oversight.

In summary, the sustainability of the CDP will depend on establishing stable and predictable funding mechanisms alongside institutional ownership. Options include municipal self-funding, where each municipality allocates resources for councilor training, and the creation of a permanent financial mechanism by MLSG. Both approaches distribute costs and responsibilities while promoting local ownership and reducing dependence on external donors.

By embedding the CDP into national systems and fostering collaborations among stakeholders, EMC2 can ensure a lasting impact on municipal governance and capacity-building. The above recommendations and key elements of the exit strategy outline a clear pathway for transitioning the CDP into a sustainable, nationally integrated program.

APPENDICES

Terms of Reference

**NATIONAL CONSULTANT— EVALUATOR
(TO PERFORM PROJECT MID-TERM EVALUATION)**

PROJECT TITLE

Empowering Municipal Councils – Phase 2 (00118203)

DURATION

Number of estimated working days:	Estimated 30 days
Contract start date:	01 August 2024
Contract end date:	15 November 2024
Duty station:	Home-based work with eventual travels to and out of Skopje
Type of contract:	Individual contract

BACKGROUND and Context

After the launch of the decentralization process in North Macedonia in 2002, when an abundance of responsibilities and tasks have been transferred to local level, municipalities have been struggling with a set of problems to secure quality services to their citizens. In addressing these issues, the Government and the international development partners have been focusing on the capacity of the executive branch of local governance – the mayors and the administration, due to the pressure to deliver services and development projects. This left the municipal councils unassisted in performing their primarily, oversight and representative role.

To address these challenges, UNDP is currently implementing the second phase of the project "Empowering Municipal Councils", which is funded by the Swiss Embassy and the Ministry of Local Self-Government, and it is co-financed and implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The **overall project objective** is to further strengthen local self-governments through empowered municipal councils that are capable to effectively fulfil their assigned roles of representation, oversight and enacting municipal legislation with active citizen involvement. In turn, these efforts, coupled with adequate policy and legislative improvements, digitalization of services, enhanced transparency, and reduced opportunities for corruption, will lead to improvement of the local governance system and overall living conditions in the local communities.

The Empowering Municipal Councils – Phase 2 project (EMC2), building upon the experiences and best practices from the EMC1, developed systemic solutions and recommendations from the Phase 1 mid-term review, and continuous analyses of the local governance system in North Macedonia, aims to address the remaining priority challenges by: strengthening capacities of the municipal councillors and enhance citizens participation at the local decision-making processes; modifying and adjusting the outputs and activities from the Phase 1 to the new circumstances; expanding the

scope of the project to another 40 municipalities; and ensuring sustainability of the results of both phases through policy and institutional arrangements, for which the prior support has been secured.

The expected outcome of the EMC2 is to further strengthen local self-governments through empowered municipal councils capable of effectively fulfilling their assigned roles of representation, oversight, and enacting municipal legislation with active citizen involvement. In turn, these efforts coupled with adequate policy and legislative improvements, digitalization of services, enhanced transparency, and reduced opportunities for corruption will improve the local governance system and overall living conditions in the local communities. This phase of the project, also provides an opportunity to ensure the sustainability of the achieved results, introduce new and replicate the created tools and mechanisms in new 40 selected municipalities.

The Empowering Municipal Councils – Phase 2 (EMC2) project is designed to allow for wider application of the successful practices and models and the lessons learned from the first phase (EMC1) including their integration into the policy making, legislative actions and institutionalization. In this phase, the project structure is adapted to address the new realities: COVID-19 outbreak and its consequences; decentralization efforts of the Government and newly adopted strategic and legal national documents – as well as SDC cooperation framework and UNDP Country Programme Document. IT tools and digital services will be further expanded to enhance transparency, advance local financial planning, and service delivery, support anti-corruption efforts and possibilities of the citizens' participation in local decision-making processes. The second phase of the project also, provides an opportunity to ensure the sustainability of the achieved results, introduce new and/or replicate the created tools and mechanisms in new 40 selected municipalities.

The project taps into local democracy and good governance, rule of law, local financial management, resilience, service delivery, digitalization, principles of gender equality and equal opportunities, prevention of corruption, through all project activities and it is structured around the following outputs:

Outcome 1: Municipal Councils' performance improved systematically and sustainably, and the system of local government further strengthened and advanced;

Outcome 2: Citizen's participation enhanced to sustain the local democracy and improve quality of life;

Outcome 3: Municipal services improved by leveraging technology and innovation.

The outputs related to these outcomes are defined as follows:

For Outcome 1:

Output 1.1- Capacity Development Programme upgraded and delivered.

Output 1.2- Existing models for cooperation and coordination between the councilors, the mayors, and the municipal administrations re-designed and new ones established.

Output 1.3- Overall local governance legislative and policy framework improved, including through active involvement of councilors.

For Outcome2:

Output 2.1- 40 new municipalities will organize community forums.

Output 2.2- At least 4 inter-municipal cooperation partnerships for building greener and resilient municipalities established.

For outcome 3:

Output 3.1- Implemented new solutions to modernize service delivery, overall digitalization of business processes and services in two municipalities.

Output 3.2- Local governance improved through innovation and digitalization.

Detailed background and context information (logical framework and indicators, theory of change, monitoring plan) are enclosed to this ToR as annexes.

The project directly contributes to:

United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) – North Macedonia ⁷	Outcome 4 - By 2025, people in North Macedonia benefit from improved rule of law; evidence based, anticipatory and gender responsive policies; greater social cohesion; and effective service delivery by transparent, accountable and responsive institutions.
National Development Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justice and rule of law • EU accession
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	<p>SDG Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls <u>SDG Target 5.5</u>: Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.</p> <p>SDG Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels <u>SDG Target 16.6</u>: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels. <u>SDG Target 16.7</u>: Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.</p>

The project will be implemented in five years (60 months), starting from 1st April 2022 until 31st March 2027. The proposed project duration will enable participation of municipal councilors from two electoral cycles, ensuring long-term and systematized support and leaving behind sustainable endogenous capacities, products, and experiences.

The project is financed by the Swiss Government, Ministry of Local Self-Government, Ministry of Information Society and Administration, partner LSGUs and UNDP in the role of a donor and implementer of the project with a budget of 6,910,638 USD through funds secured as follows:

Swiss Government	4,200,000 USD
Government of North Macedonia	1,293,968 USD
40 partner municipalities	700,000 USD

⁷ UNSDCF for North Macedonia is available on the following link: <https://northmacedonia.un.org/en/100160-republic-north-macedonia-and-united-nations-sustainable-development-cooperation-framework>

UNDP	716,670
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Key strategic partners of the project are the Ministry of Local Self-Government and the Ministry of Finance. The Association of Local Self-Government Units (ZELS) and the Association of Finance Officers (AFO) and municipalities engaged as responsible parties for the implementation of specific project activities. Other national partners include the State Commission for Corruption Prevention, the State Audit Office, and Innovation Fund.

From the projected 40 partnered municipalities, the project has finalized all activities in 20 partner municipalities presenting a solid ground for conduction of the mid-term evaluation of the project, which is why the project intends to commission and independent mid-term evaluation to get an objective and systematic assessment of the project implementation, achieved results and recommendations on the main strategic directions for further implementation of the project activities and areas of improvement.

Therefore, UNDP is seeking a qualified National Consultant with relevant experience and expertise in evaluating large-scale development projects preferably in the field of local governance.

EVALUATION PURPOSE, SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the mid-term evaluation is to measure the extent to which the “Empowering Municipal Councils- Phase 2” has succeeded to achieve the envisaged project results in terms of relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency in compliance with UNDP and IEO corporate guidelines for project evaluations.

The mid-term evaluation shall achieve, but not limited, the following objectives:

1. To ensure that project is aligned with UNDP strategic plans/ programmes, and other global, national or corporate priorities;
2. To ensure accountability and transparency towards the stakeholders for project’s development contributions;
3. To generate empirical knowledge about the interventions undertaken by the project and undertake programmatic improvements resulted from the mid-term evaluation;

The mid-term evaluation will cover the period from the beginning of the second phase of the Empowering Municipal Councils- Phase 2 project (April 2022) until June 2024 and will capture both positive and negative, expected project results as well and broader achievements by the project in this period. The evaluation is intended for UNDP Democratic Governance Unit and the project as well as the project donors, partners and beneficiaries.

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND KEY GUIDING QUESTIONS

The evaluation will be based on the indicative list of questions provided below, based on OECD- DAC Criteria, and will be further refined by the evaluator and the project team during the inception phase. Questions should be grouped according to five OECD-DAC evaluation criteria: (a) relevance; (b) coherence; (c) effectiveness; (d) efficiency; and (e) sustainability, and cross-cutting issues.

Relevance/ Coherence

- To what extent was the project in line with national development priorities, country programme outputs and outcomes, the UNDP Strategic Plan, and the SDGs?
- To what extent does the project contribute to the theory of change for the relevant country programme outcome?
- To what extent the project supports the MLSG in the reforms of the legal framework for local self-government and has this cooperation and support been on a satisfactory level?
- Has the project established donor coordination mechanism related to decentralization and does the project possess the required capacities for a more prominent role in coordination and support to decentralization processes.
- To what extent were lessons learned from other relevant projects considered in the design?
- To what extent were perspectives of men and women who could affect the outcomes, and those who could contribute information or other resources to the attainment of stated results, taken into account during project design processes?
- To what extent does the project contribute to gender equality, the empowerment of women and the human rights-based approach?

Effectiveness

- To what extent did the project contribute to the country programme outcomes and outputs, the SDGs, the UNDP Strategic Plan, and national development priorities?
- To what extent were the project outputs achieved, considering men, women, and vulnerable groups?
- What factors contributed to effectiveness or ineffectiveness?
- In which areas does the project have the greatest achievements? Why and what have been the supporting factors? How can the project build on or expand these achievements?
- In which areas does the project have the fewest achievements? What have been the constraining factors and why? How can or could they be overcome?
- How did the project affect the work of the councilors and improved their knowledge of the functioning of the municipalities?
- Are the project objectives and outputs clear, practical and feasible within its frame? Do they clearly address women, men, and vulnerable groups?
- To what extent have different stakeholders been involved in project implementation? To what extent has the project contributed to gender equality, the empowerment of women and the realization of human rights?

Efficiency

- To what extent was the project management structure as outlined in the project document efficient in generating the expected results?
- To what extent were resources used to address inequalities in general, and gender issues in particular?
- To what extent has there been an economical use of financial and human resources? Have resources (funds, male and female staff, time, expertise, etc.) been allocated strategically to achieve outcomes?
- To what extent have project funds and activities been delivered in a timely manner?
- To what extent do the M&E systems utilized by UNDP ensure effective and efficient project management?

Sustainability

- Are there any financial risks that may jeopardize the sustainability of project outputs affecting women, men, and vulnerable groups?
- To what extent will target men, women and vulnerable people benefit from the project interventions in the long-term?
- To what extent will financial and economic resources be available to sustain the benefits achieved by the project?
- Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project outputs and the project contributions to country programme outputs and outcomes?
- Do the legal frameworks, policies and governance structures and processes within which the project operates pose risks that may jeopardize sustainability of project benefits?
- To what extent do stakeholders (men, women, vulnerable groups) support the project's long-term objectives?
- To what extent are lessons learned documented by the project team on a continual basis and shared with appropriate parties who could learn from the project?
To what extent the knowledge products created by the project (e.g., Capacity Development Programme modules and e-learning platform) can be adapted to sustain after the end of the project?
- To what extent project responsible parties (municipalities, ZELS, AFO) will contribute to sustainability of project developed knowledge products?

Crosscutting questions:

Gender equality

- To what extent have gender equality and the empowerment of women been addressed in the design, implementation and monitoring of the project?
- Is the gender marker assigned to this project representative of reality?
- To what extent has the project promoted positive changes in gender equality and the empowerment of women? Did any unintended effects emerge for women, men or vulnerable groups?

Disability

- What proportion of the beneficiaries of a project were persons with disabilities?

Duties and responsibilities

Under the guidance of the Head of Dg Unit, Programme Analyst and M&E Specialist, the Consultant will be responsible to:

- Initial briefing of the assignment with donors and project partners;
- Conduct a comprehensive desk review of relevant documents including Project Document, Project Progress Reports, Annual Work Plans, minutes from the Project Board meetings, minutes from the Steering Committee meetings, and other relevant documents;
- Prepare a draft Inception Report (10-15 pages) based on the preliminary discussions with UNDP and after the desk review;
- Prepare final Inception Report by incorporating the feed-back provided by UNDP;

- Conduct interviews, focus group discussions and surveys with key stakeholders including but not limited to Ministry of Local Self-Government, Ministry of Finance, Association of Finance Officers, ZELS, Project Board members, municipal councilors, mayors and municipal administration as well as the project team;
- Prepare draft Evaluation Report (40-60 pages) which will include, but not limited to the executive summary, elements outlined in the UNDP evaluation report template and quality standards;
- Prepare final Evaluation report by incorporating the comments of stakeholders on the audit trail;
- Presentation of the findings, lessons learned and recommendations for further improvement from the Evaluation to UNDP CO management, SDC Senior Programme Officer, Head of DG Unit and project team.

Methodology

The evaluation process should begin with a thorough examination of project documentation. The project team will provide all essential paperwork, comprising the Project Document, Logistical Framework, work plans, project progress reports, minutes from the Project Boards, minutes from the Steering Committee meetings, M&E tools (results framework, monitoring plan), monitoring data, financial records, and any other relevant documents. This initial desk review may unveil preliminary insights, aiding in the refinement of the outlined questions above.

The consultant is expected to formulate a comprehensive methodology during the inception phase, describing how criteria will be addressed. This will entail an innovative mixed methodology approach for data collection and analysis, employing diverse tools and techniques to capture both qualitative and quantitative impacts. Triangulation will be utilized to bolster the validity and rigor of review findings, with engagement of stakeholders and project partners at all levels throughout the data collection and reporting stages. Emphasis will be placed on evidence-based results.

As part of the inception report, the consultant will construct a data source matrix, aligning review questions with tools, data sources, collection methods, and analysis plans.

The final methodological approach, encompassing interview schedules, field visits, and data utilization, will be clearly delineated in the inception report and collaboratively finalized among UNDP, key stakeholders, and the consultant.

The data collection phase will encompass municipalities within the targeted areas and on a national level, and may include:

Desk review- comprehensive review of project documents and all relevant project documents.

Semi- structured interviews and meetings with key stakeholders, donor, strategic and responsible parties, and **focus group discussion** with beneficiaries (including man and women and other marginalized groups).

Surveys and questionnaires for larger group of participants and other stakeholders.

Field visits to institutions partnering with the project, along with logistical arrangements are responsibility of the consultant, with assistance from the Project team in identifying key stakeholders and facilitating interview schedules and site visits as needed.

An indicative list of interviewees will be provided by the Project team.

The methodology will adhere to a gender-sensitive approach and inclusion principle, elaborated in the report to demonstrate how data collection and analysis integrate gender considerations, use disaggregated data, and reach diverse stakeholder groups.

The review's findings will culminate in specific, practical, and achievable recommendations tailored to the intended users.

Toward the evaluation's conclusion, the consultant will convene a meeting with key stakeholders, the Project team/management, and partners to present and validate preliminary findings and address any data gaps. A draft report will be compiled and subject to methodological review by the Project team, followed by necessary adjustments.

Evaluation products (deliverables)

The consultancy is expected to deliver the following deliverable:

	Deliverables	Tentative dates
1.	Draft Evaluation Inception Report	09 August 2024
2.	Final Evaluation Inception Report	10 August 2024
3.	Draft Evaluation Report	30 August 2024
4.	Audit Trail (detailing how comments have been addressed)	01 September 2024
5.	Final Evaluation Report	07 September 2024
6.	Knowledge Product/Lessons Learned	11 September 2024
7.	Presentation of the Final Report to Stakeholders	15 September 2024

1. Draft Evaluation Inception report: based on the ToR, preliminary meetings with Project Team and UNDP management and following a desk review of project documentation the consultant will formulate the final set of questions and determine the stakeholders to be interviewed, focus-groups and a survey- as necessary. The consultant is expected to develop an inception report of at least 15 pages (plus annexes) to introduce the assignment, clearly define the methodology, data source matrix, data collection and analysis methods, risk management plan, and workplan. The inception report will be reviewed by the Project team, and the consultant is expected to incorporate received feedback and comments.

2. Implementation of the review; data collection and analysis: will be initiated once the inception report is approved by the Project Team. With the support of the Project Team, the consultant is expected to conduct the data collection and analysis process with all identified stakeholders, through in-person meetings and discussions or (where necessary) online meetings.

3. Debriefings. Following the evaluation, the project may ask for a preliminary debriefing and findings.

4. Draft Evaluation Report: the consultant is expected to submit a draft evaluation report including findings and recommendations. Findings and recommendations will be validated with the Project Team, in addition to relevant stakeholders. Comments and changes provided by the UNDP in

response to the draft evaluation report should be retained by the evaluator to show how they have addressed comments (**audit trail**).

5. Final Evaluation Report: the consultant should revise the draft evaluation report and provide the final report incorporating all UNDP comments and stakeholders' feedback. The final report must include:

- Introduction — Summarizes the context, review purpose, and questions.
- Review methodology — includes the data collection sources, tools and process, and analysis approach.
- Findings and conclusions — Evidence-based findings for each question.
- Recommendations — Propose relevant and action-oriented recommendations clearly supported by conclusions and findings, outlining priority suggestions that increase the impact of MERP for the remaining phase and identifying potential priority areas of interventions to be addressed in the current and potential second's phase of MERP.

6. Brief and knowledge product: the service provider is expected to prepare a 4-pages knowledge product summarizing the findings and lessons learned and propose the best methods, tools and formats to communicate these findings and lessons to enhance the use of the results.

The minimum content that needs to be included in the inception report and the final evaluation report is provided in the annex section. The reports should address all the quality criteria mentioned in the [UNDP Evaluation Guidelines](#). The final report should also adhere to the UN editorial manual.

The payment will be made in one instalment upon confirmation of UNDP on the satisfactory completion of all deliverables:

Required Qualifications and Competencies

Education

- At least **Master's degree** in law, public or business administration and management, political and or social sciences, economics, local governance, engineering or related discipline is required. A PhD degree will be considered as a strong asset.

Experience

- At least **7 years of professional experience** relevant for this assignment (working on local self-government, good governance, rule of law and/or similar).
- At least **2 assignments** in design and conduct of complex evaluation processes with multiple stakeholders in development cooperation contexts.
- At least **1 assignment** in conducting evaluation in the field of local self-government.
- Technical knowledge and experience in gender and other cross-cutting areas such equality, disability issues, rights-based approach, and capacity development.

Corporate Competencies

- Knowledge on UNDP programming principles and procedures, the UN evaluation framework, norms, and standards; human rights-based approach (HRBA).

- Demonstrates commitment to the UN values and ethical standards.
- Displays cultural, gender, religion, race, nationality, and age sensitivity and adaptability.
- Treats all people fairly and with impartiality.
- Good communication, presentation and report writing skills including proven ability to write concise, readable, and analytical reports and high-quality publications in English.
- Ability to work under pressure and to meet deadlines.
- Flexible and responsive to changes and demands.
- Client-oriented and open to feedback.
- Excellent language proficiency in both written and oral English.
- Excellent report writing skills.

The consultant should be independent from any organization that have been involved in designing, executing, or advising any aspect of the intervention that is the subject of the evaluation.

EVALUATION ETHICS

The evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the UNEG “Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation”⁸.

The consultant must safeguard the rights and confidentiality of information providers, interviewees, and stakeholders through measures to ensure compliance with legal and other relevant codes governing collection of data and reporting on data. The consultant must also ensure security of collected information before and after the evaluation and protocols to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of sources of information where that is expected. The information knowledge and data gathered in the evaluation process must also be solely used for the evaluation and not for other uses with the express authorization of UNDP and partners.

UNDP will request from the Consultant to read, understand and sign the Code of Conduct for Evaluators in the UN System, which can be accessed at: <https://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/100>

IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

The Consultant will work under direct supervision of the Head of DG Unit and in close coordination with the M&E specialist. He/she will be in regular communication with the supervisor and will provide update on the progress achieved on regular basis.

The Programme Officer and the M&E Specialist will provide guidance to the Consultant on the evaluation design, methodology and quality assurance of the evaluation products.

The Programme Analyst and the project team will provide all necessary documentation needed for the desk review, compile a comprehensive list of key informants and schedule interviews and meetings.

TIMEFRAME / DURATION OF THE ASSIGNMENT

⁸ <https://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/2866>

The duration of the Consultant's work is estimated up to 30 working days in the period from 01st of August until 15th of November 2024.

Activity	Estimated # of working days	Date of Completion	Place	Responsible Party
Phase I: Desk review and Inception Report				
Briefing with UNDP Project Team	7 days	02 August 2024	Online Meeting	UNDP & Consultant
Desk review, review design, methodology and updated workplan including the list of stakeholders to be interviewed		08 August 2024	Home-based	Consultant
Submission of the Draft Inception Report (15 pages + Annexes)		09 August 2024	Via e-mail	Consultant
Finalization of Inception Report	1	10 August 2024	Via e-mail	Consultant
Phase II: Data collection mission				
Consultations and field visits, interviews, and focus groups, survey	7	23 August 2024	Combined: Home-based with field visits	UNDP to provide list of relevant stakeholders. Consultant to conduct the mission.
Debriefing to UNDP and key stakeholders	1	24 August 2024	UNDP premises or Remote	Consultant
Phase III: Report writing				
Preparation of Draft Evaluation Report (50 pages maximum excluding annexes), executive summary (4-5 pages)	5	01 September 2024	Home-based	Consultant
Submission of Draft Evaluation Report		01 September 2024	Via e-mail	Consultant
Debriefing with UNDP/Project Team	1	04 September 2024	Online Meeting	UNDP & Consultant
Finalization of the Evaluation Report incorporating comments provided by UNDP/Project team.	2	07 September 2024	Home-based	Consultant
Submission of the Final Evaluation Report to UNDP/Project Team (50		07 September 2024	Via e-mail	Consultant

pages max. excluding executive summary and annexes)				
Production and submission of Knowledge Product / Lessons Learned	1	09 September 2024	Home-based, via e-mail	Consultant
Estimated Total # of days	30			

DUTY STATION AND TRAVEL

The Consultant is expected to work from home and travels to conduct meetings with the counterparts and beneficiaries pursuant to the work plan for this assignment. In event of business travel, the Consultant is responsible to make his/her own travel arrangements.

If unforeseen travel is requested by UNDP and not required by the Terms of Reference (ToR), such travel shall be covered by UNDP in line with applicable rules and regulations and upon prior written agreement.

DOCUMENTS TO BE SUBMITTED

Interested individual consultant must submit the documents/information listed below to demonstrate their qualifications and willingness to engage within the scope of the activity.

1. Most updated CV with focus on required qualification as well as the contact details of at least three (3) professional references;
2. Financial Proposal The financial proposal must be expressed in the form of a lumpsum all-inclusive cost*, supported by breakdown of costs as per template provided in MKD for this consultancy.

The financial proposal must consider various expenses that will be incurred during the contract, including: the daily professional fee; cost of travel out of duty station (if required); communications, any other expenses related to this assignment.

Please note that if the deliverables are not produced and submitted by the consultant to the satisfaction of UNDP as approved by the responsible Head of DG Unit, no payment will be made even the consultant has invested man/days to produce and deliver such deliverables.

*The term “all-inclusive” implies that all costs (professional fees, communications, consumables, insurance, etc.) that could possibly be incurred by the Consultant are already factored in the financial proposal. Eventual in-country travel costs will be reimbursed separately, as outlined above.

Appendix B. Key Questions for the Online Survey⁹

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. What is your current role?
 - Municipal Councillor
 - Mayor
 - Municipal Administration Staff
 - Representative from Ministry of Local Self-Government
 - Representative from Ministry of Finance
 - Representative from ZELS
 - Representative from Civil Society
 - Other (please specify)
2. What is your gender?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Prefer not to say
3. How long have you been involved with the “Empowering Municipal Councils – Phase 2” project?
 - Less than 6 months
 - 6-12 months
 - 1-2 years
 - More than 2 years

Section 2: Verification of Results (Effectiveness & Efficiency)

4. To what extent do you agree that the Capacity Development Programme (CDP) has improved your knowledge and skills relevant to your role?
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
5. Which method of training provided by the “Empowering Municipal Councils – Phase 2” project has been the most useful or effective for your learning and professional development? (Select up to two)
 - Classroom/Traditional Style Training
 - E-learning/Online Training
 - On-the-job Training
 - A combination of methods
 - Other (please specify)

⁹ The survey questions have been translated into Macedonian and Albanian to facilitate accurate feedback from the interlocutors.

6. Which aspects of the CDP have been most beneficial to your work? *(Select up to three)*
- Municipal good governance
 - Fighting corruption
 - Municipal budget preparation, adoption and execution
 - Management of liabilities (and incurring debt), procurement and revenues
 - Financial reports of the local self-government units and their analysis
 - Financial control and audit
 - Spatial and urban planning
 - Gender equality
 - Inter-ethnic relations
 - Inter-municipal cooperation
 - Green recovery, delivery of communal services
 - Crisis management and resilience building
 - Other (please specify)
7. Have you noticed an improvement in citizens' participation in decision-making processes in your municipality since the project began?
- Yes, significantly
 - Yes, somewhat
 - No noticeable change
 - Not applicable/Not sure
8. Which tools or resources provided by the “Empowering Municipal Councils- phase 2” project have been most effective in enhancing municipal service delivery?
- E-learning platform
 - E-dashboard with financial indicators
 - Community forums
 - Digital tools for transparency and accountability
 - Capacity Development Programme (CDP)
 - Other (please specify)

Section 3: Challenges Encountered (Relevance & Coherence)

9. To what extent do you feel that the project’s objectives align with the current needs and priorities of your municipality/organization?
- Fully aligned
 - Mostly aligned
 - Somewhat aligned
 - Not aligned
10. What challenges have you faced in implementing the project activities in your municipality/organization? *(Select all that apply)*
- Limited financial resources
 - Lack of staff capacity or expertise
 - Resistance to change among stakeholders
 - Delays due to external factors (e.g., elections)
 - Insufficient coordination with other institutions
 - Other (please specify)

11. What measures could help overcome the challenges you identified above? *(Select up to two)*
- Increased financial support
 - More training and capacity-building activities
 - Improved communication and coordination
 - Greater involvement of community members
 - Other (please specify)
-

Section 4: Sustainability (Sustainability & Impact)

12. Do you believe the skills, knowledge, and systems introduced by the “Empowering Municipal Councils – Phase 2” project will continue to benefit your municipality/organization after the project ends?
- Yes, definitely
 - Yes, to some extent
 - No, not likely
 - Not sure
13. Which project activities or resources do you consider the most sustainable in the long term?
- Capacity Development Programme (CDP)
 - E-learning platform
 - Inter-municipal cooperation initiatives
 - Community forums and citizen engagement mechanisms
 - Financial e-dashboard
 - Other (please specify)
14. What additional support or resources would help ensure the sustainability of the project’s outcomes? *(Select up to two)*
- Continued training and mentorship
 - Integration of project practices into municipal policies
 - Ongoing financial support
 - Strengthened partnerships with other institutions
 - Regular monitoring and evaluation
 - Other (please specify)
-

Section 5: Gender and LNOB

15. How effectively do you think the project has integrated gender equality in its activities, particularly in terms of ensuring equal participation and benefits for both women and men in municipal decision-making processes?
- Not effective at all
 - Somewhat ineffective
 - Neutral/Neither effective nor ineffective
 - Somewhat effective
 - Very effective

16. In your view, how well has the project addressed the needs and inclusion of marginalized or vulnerable groups (e.g., ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, low-income communities) in its activities and outcomes?
- Not well at all
 - Somewhat poorly
 - Neutral/Neither well nor poorly
 - Somewhat well
 - Very well
-

Section 6: General Feedback and Recommendations

17. What improvements or adjustments would you suggest to enhance the impact of the “Empowering Municipal Council – Phase 2” project in the remaining implementation period?
18. Any additional comments or suggestions?

Appendix C. Survey Insights – Evaluation of EMC2’s Impact and Recommendations

The survey results provide valuable insights into the EMC2 project's impact on municipal council performance, citizen participation, and service delivery improvements across participating municipalities. Overall, responses indicate that **EMC2 is achieving its goals**, with significant progress in enhancing transparency, promoting inclusivity, and strengthening governance capacities at the local level.

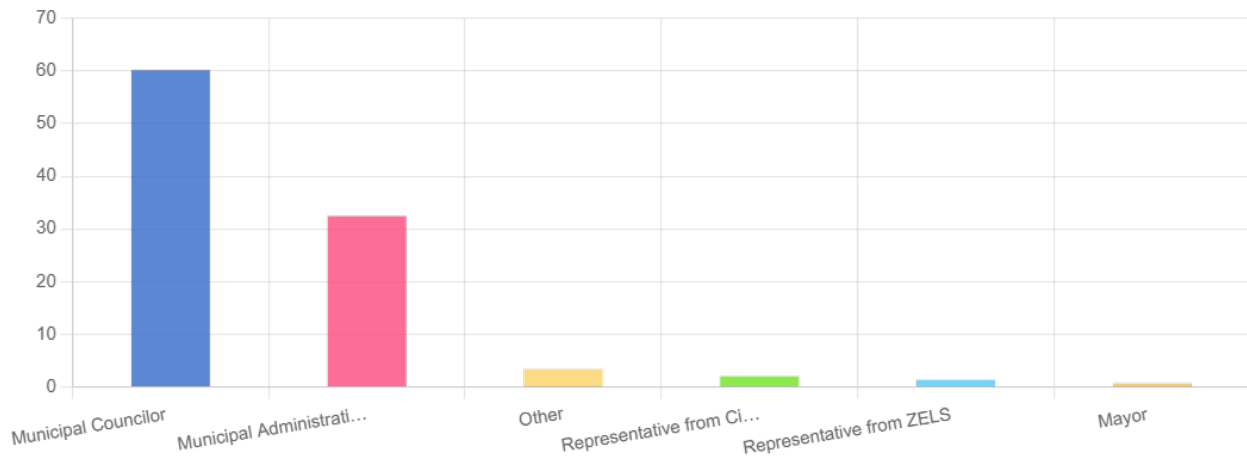
Key findings highlight the success of EMC2’s training programs, digital tools, and community forums in fostering more accountable and participatory governance structures.

Respondents also provided recommendations for further strengthening the project’s impact, including continued capacity-building support, and enhanced institutional partnerships to ensure long-term sustainability. These insights form a basis for actionable steps to optimize EMC2’s contributions as it continues to advance local governance reform.

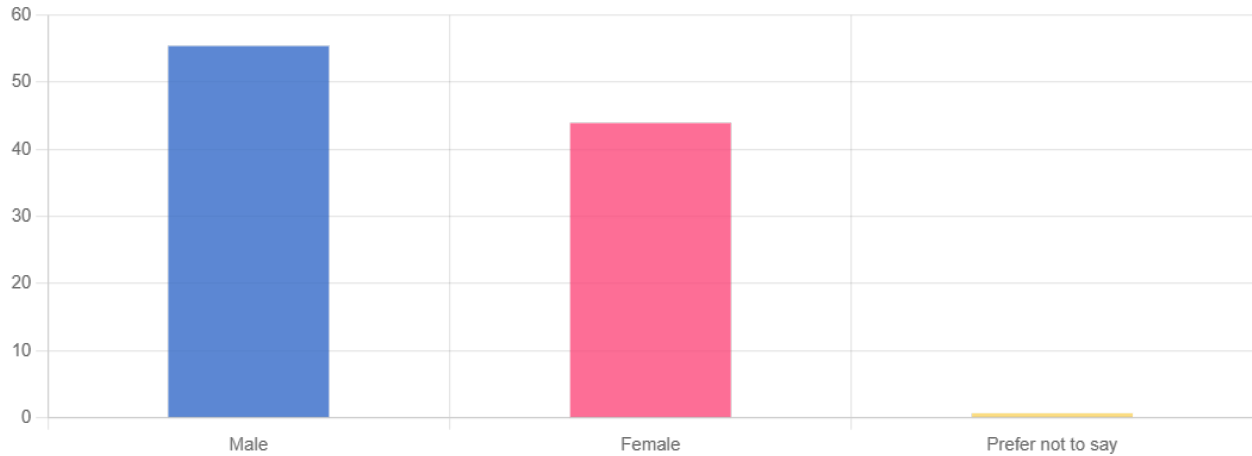
The following provides an overview of the main conclusions and recommendations drawn from stakeholder insights gathered through the survey, organized according to key stakeholder questions.

7.1. Demographic Information

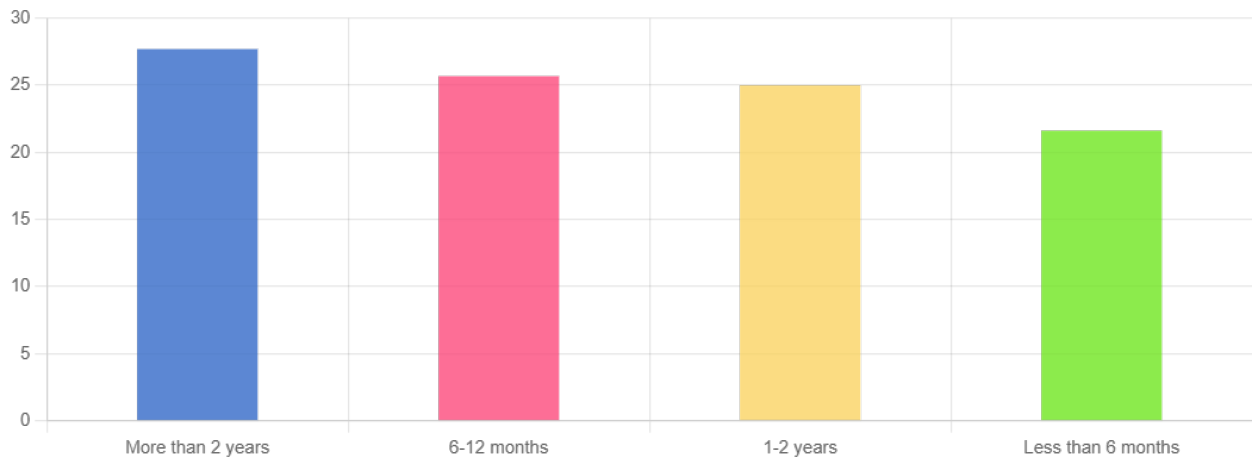
Respondent Roles: The majority of the **148 participating respondents** were **Municipal Councilors** and **Municipal Administration Staff**. Although there was limited involvement from other stakeholder groups (e.g., MLSG, Mayors), this distribution provides a balanced perspective from key local governance stakeholders and aligns with the project's focus on empowering municipal councils. Perspectives from the less represented groups will be further explored through follow-up interviews to ensure comprehensive insights. Respondents came from a wide range of municipalities, providing insights from diverse geographical areas.



Gender: Gender representation among respondents was relatively balanced, with a slight majority identifying as male. This gender distribution reflects general trends within local government structures.

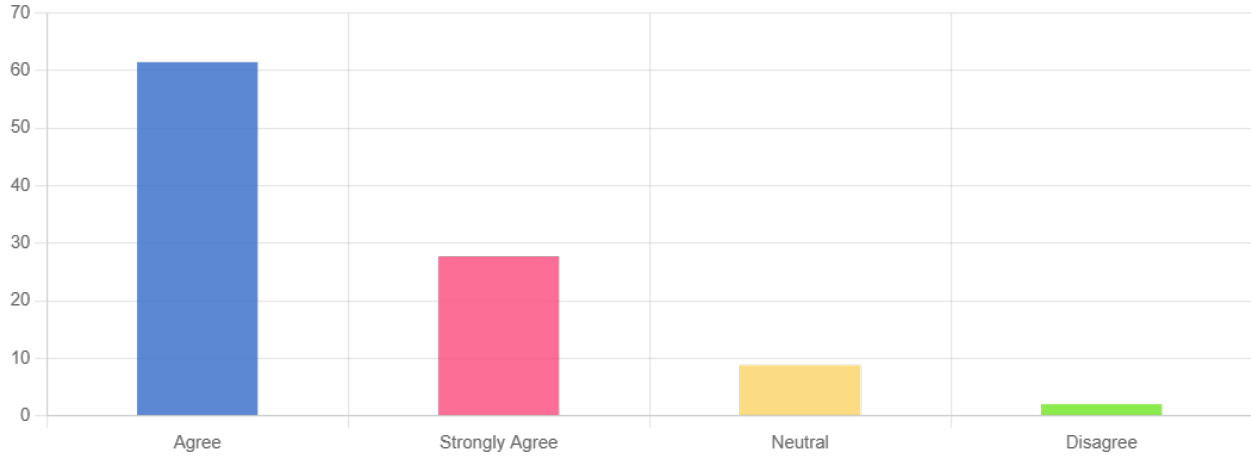


Involvement Duration with EMC2: Most respondents (78%) reported being involved with EMC2 for **1-2 years or more than 2 years**, indicating substantial familiarity with project activities. This level of engagement is beneficial as it allows respondents to offer informed feedback on the project’s progress and effectiveness.



7.2. Verification of Results

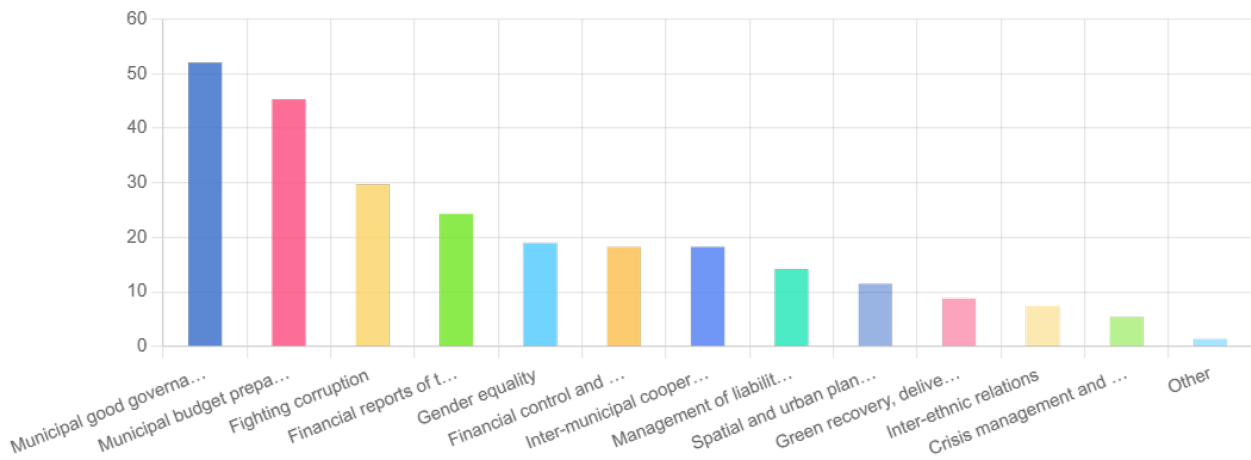
Effectiveness of Capacity Development Programme (CDP): The majority of respondents indicated that the CDP has **significantly improved their knowledge and skills**. A high number of participants selected "Agree" or "Strongly Agree," reflecting the CDP's effectiveness in enhancing capacities within municipal roles. This positive reception suggests that the training content and delivery meet the professional needs of councilors and municipal staff.



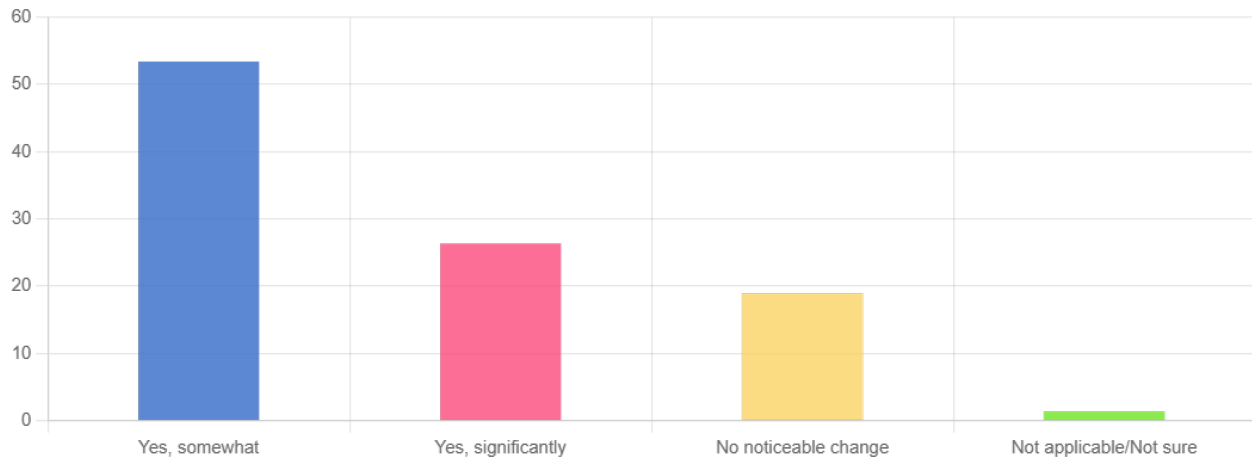
Preferred Methods for Training Delivery: Survey responses indicate a strong preference for **combined methods** and **traditional classroom-style training**, followed closely by **on-the-job training**. **E-learning** was less favored but still valued by a portion of participants.



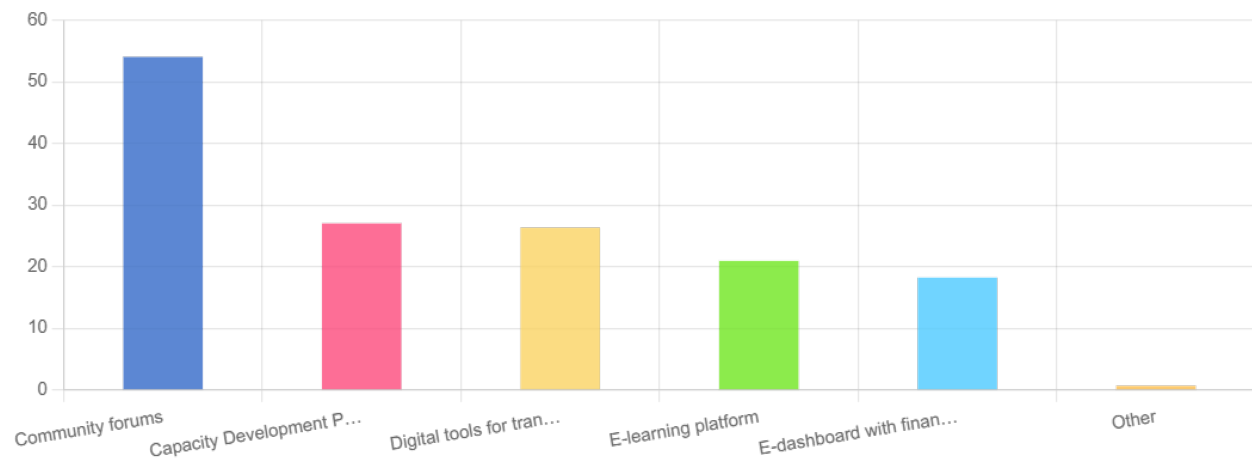
Most Beneficial Aspects of the CDP: **Good Governance and Transparency**, and **Financial Management and Budgeting** were highlighted as the most beneficial areas, followed by **gender equality**, and inter-municipal cooperation. The responses underscore the relevance of these topics.



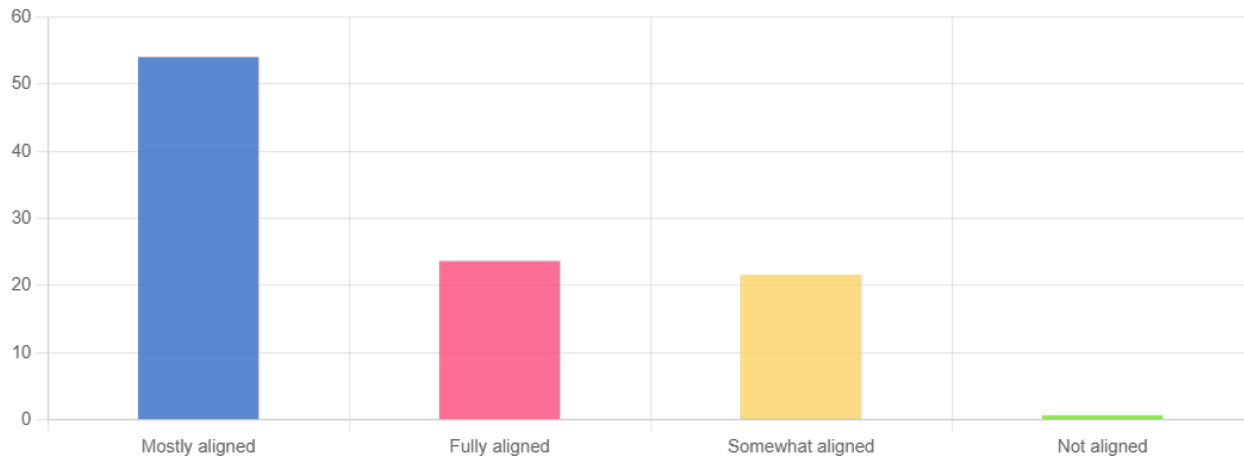
Citizen Participation Improvements: Respondents reported noticeable improvements in **citizen participation in decision-making** since the project's start. A significant portion (nearly 80%) indicated that this aspect has either "Significantly" or "Somewhat" improved, suggesting that the community forums and other participatory mechanisms are positively influencing local governance.



Effectiveness of EMC2 Tools for Service Delivery: **Community Forums, CDP, and digital tools for transparency and accountability** were cited as the most effective tools in enhancing municipal service delivery, with the and the **E-learning platform** and the **financial e-dashboard** also receiving notable mentions. These tools appear to support transparency and knowledge-sharing, both critical components for effective governance.



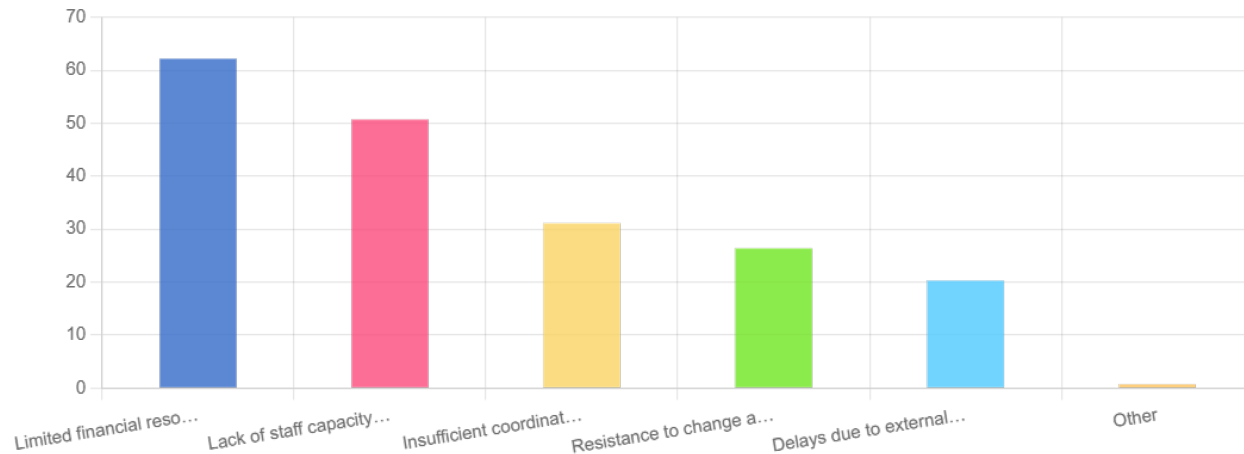
Alignment of project with municipal priorities: The responses indicate that respondents perceive the project's objectives as **mostly or fully aligned** (over 77%) with the needs of their municipalities, suggesting a solid foundation but with room for adjustments to address practical and relational barriers.



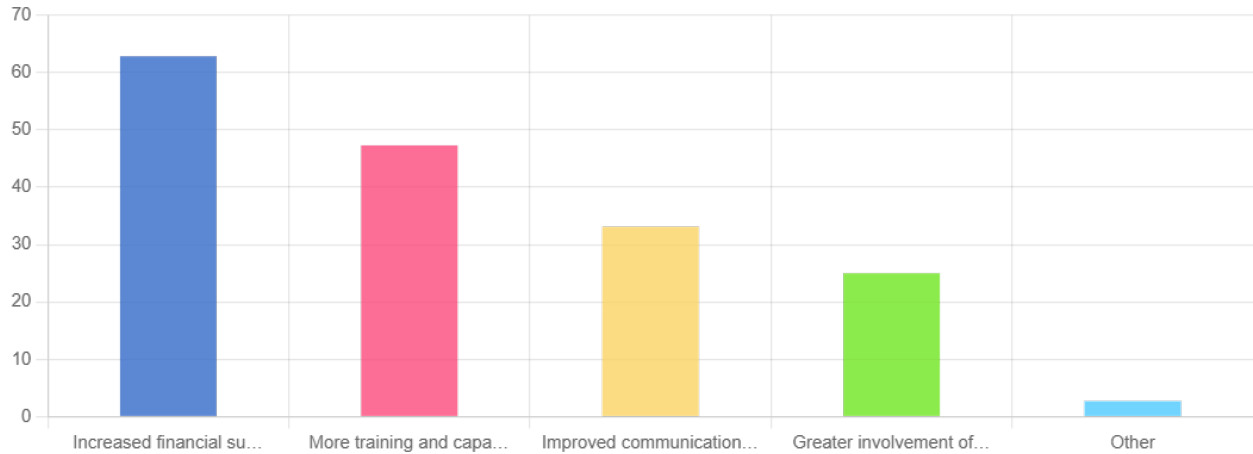
Challenges Encountered: A significant number of respondents identified **limited financial resources** as a challenge in implementing project activities. This suggests that while the project has been effective, constraints in budget allocations have restricted some initiatives' potential impact or scalability.

A recurring challenge noted by respondents was the **lack of adequate staff capacity or expertise** to fully implement and manage project activities. Another significant issue was **insufficient coordination with other institutions**, underscoring the importance of enhanced inter-agency collaboration.

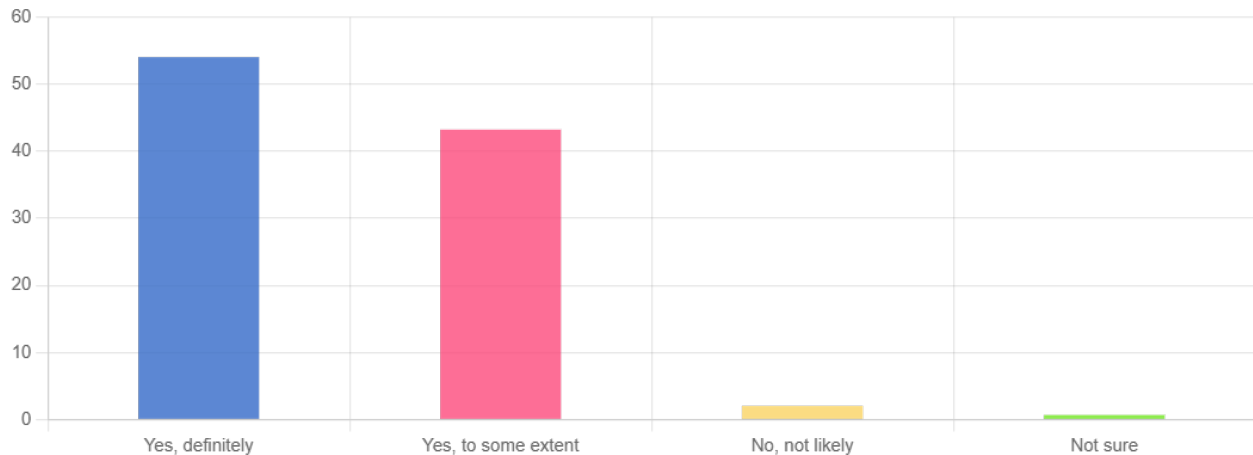
Some participants identified **resistance to change** among stakeholders as a barrier. This may reflect hesitation or skepticism among municipal staff or community members regarding new practices, technologies, or participatory approaches introduced by the project. Some respondents cited **delays due to external factors**, such as the **electoral cycle**, as a challenge impacting project progress.



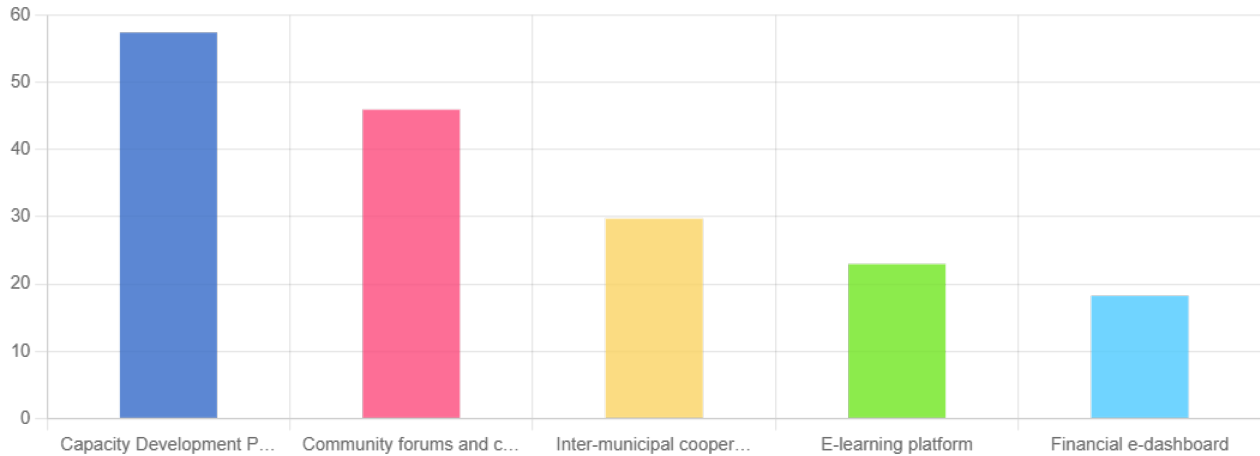
Suggested Measures to Overcome Challenges: The survey results also highlighted some actionable recommendations for overcoming these challenges, with **increased financial support** and **additional training and capacity-building activities** frequently noted. Other recommendations included **improved communication and coordination** mechanisms and a greater **involvement of community members** in project planning and implementation stages, which could reinforce local ownership and mitigate resistance.



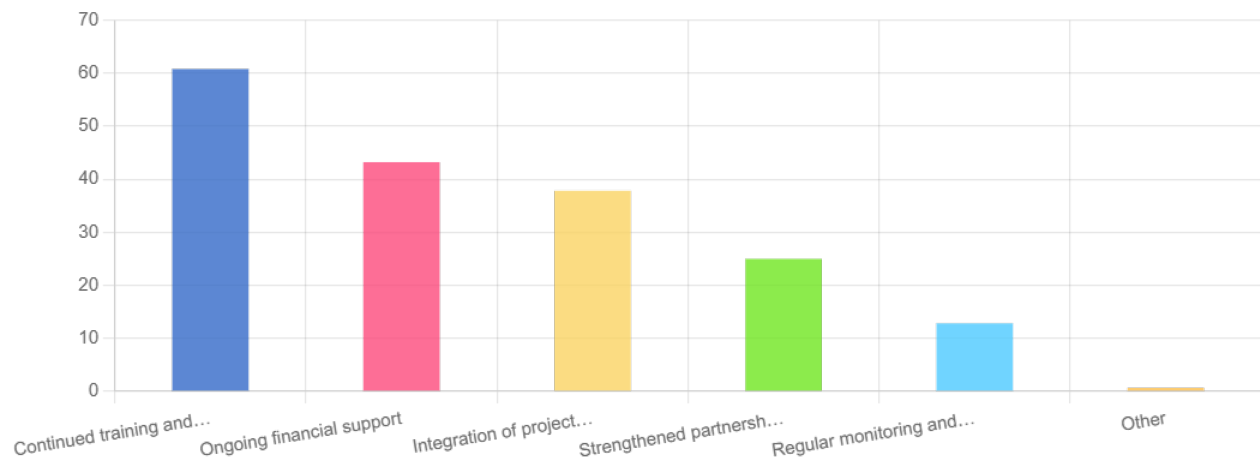
Sustainability of skills, knowledge and systems: The survey responses indicate that the majority of respondents are **optimistic about the sustainability** of the skills, knowledge, and systems introduced by EMC2, with a substantial portion of participants expressing confidence that the project’s benefits will continue post-closure.



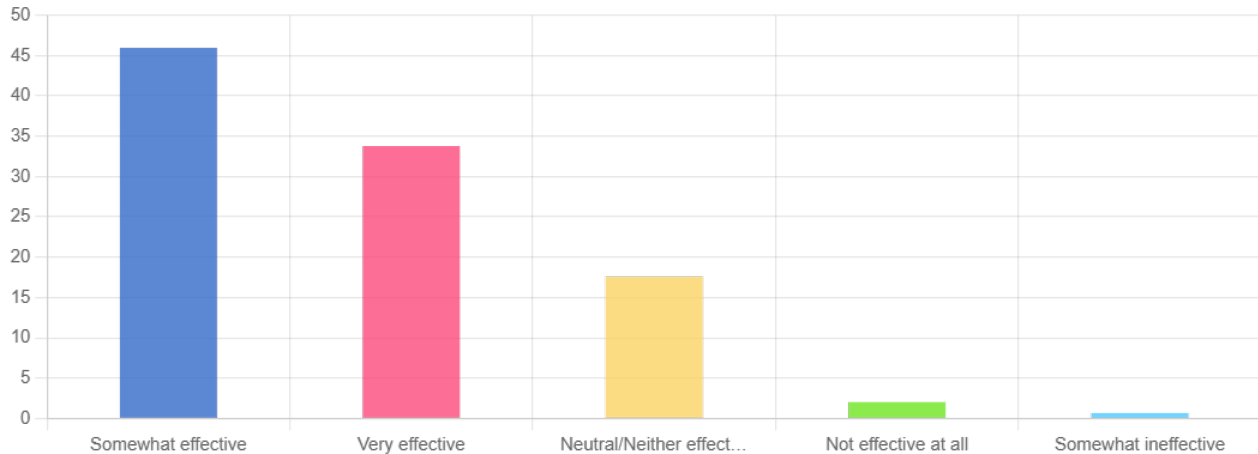
Sustainability of project results: Many respondents agreed that capacity-building initiatives, such as the **CDP** and **community forums**, have been effectively structured to support lasting improvements in governance and service delivery. These efforts are complemented by **inter-municipal cooperation** initiatives, the **e-learning platform**, and the **financial e-dashboard**, which further enhance the project’s impact.



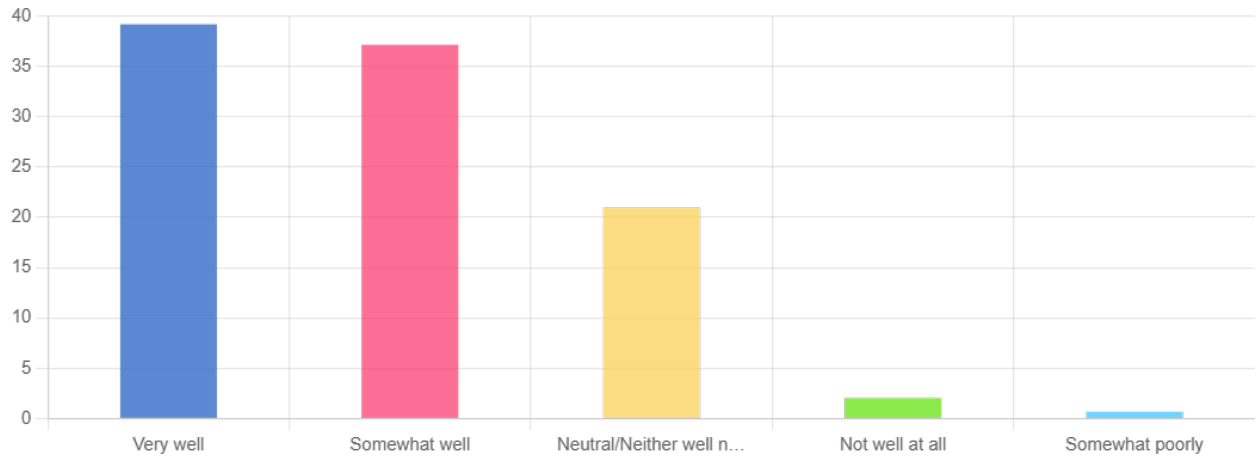
Potential Areas for Further Support: While respondents see EMC2’s contributions as valuable, some expressed concerns about maintaining momentum without continued funding or institutional backing. They recommended support in areas such as **regular training and mentorship, ongoing financial support, integration of project practices into municipal policies, and formal partnerships with other institutions** to ensure these practices are embedded in local governance structures. There was also a noted desire for periodic **monitoring and evaluation** post-project to assess the longevity of project impacts and adjust strategies as needed. This reflects an understanding of the need for ongoing accountability and adaptation to ensure EMC2's achievements are maintained over time.



Gender mainstreaming: The chart on gender integration reflects below that a significant portion of respondents view the project as effectively incorporating gender equality in its activities. Many recognize the project’s efforts to ensure balanced participation and benefits for both women and men within municipal decision-making processes. However, there remains a small percentage who feel that gender integration could be improved, suggesting that while progress has been made, additional measures may still be needed to fully achieve gender-sensitive project outcomes.



Inclusion aspects: Survey respondents' feedback on EMC2's efforts to address the needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups was largely positive but highlighted a few areas for further attention. Insights from this question include:



Based on the respondents' written feedback from the last two open ended questions in the survey, here is a concise summary highlighting common themes and recommendations:

1. **Positive Impact on Governance and Capacity Building:** Many respondents expressed appreciation for the EMC2 project's positive influence on local governance. The capacity-building initiatives, especially the trainings in financial management, governance, and anti-corruption, were frequently mentioned as beneficial. Several noted that the training has empowered municipal staff and councilors, enabling them to perform their roles more effectively.
2. **Suggestions for Enhanced Citizen Participation:** A recurring recommendation was to continue and further deepen citizen engagement activities. Respondents suggested increasing community forums and ensuring broader citizen involvement, particularly in decision-making processes that impact local communities. This feedback underscores the importance of sustaining efforts to include the public, even after the project ends.
3. **Digital Tools and Technology:** Feedback on the digital tools introduced, such as the e-learning platform and financial e-dashboards, was generally positive. However, some respondents highlighted the need for additional support to enhance user familiarity and integration of these

tools in routine tasks. Recommendations included ongoing training and technical support for optimal use of digital resources.

4. **Sustainability Concerns and Recommendations:** Some respondents expressed concerns about maintaining project gains after EMC2 concludes, particularly in terms of resources and continued training. Several suggested that embedding training modules in municipal structures and collaborating with national institutions could provide a more sustainable framework. Requests for follow-up training, refresher sessions, and periodic evaluations were also common, indicating a strong desire to maintain and build upon the project's achievements.
5. **Further Coordination and Partnerships:** Respondents noted that the project could benefit from enhanced coordination with other governmental and non-governmental organizations. Strengthening partnerships was recommended to streamline efforts, avoid duplication, and foster a more unified approach to local governance improvement.

Overall, the written feedback reflects a positive perception of EMC2's initiatives, with respondents expressing a strong interest in seeing continued support and sustainable frameworks to preserve the project's gains. Recommendations largely focus on sustainability, inclusivity, and maximizing the effectiveness of digital tools and training programs.

7.2. Key Findings and Recommendations by OECD-DAC Criteria

The EMC2 project has made substantial improvements in advancing local governance in North Macedonia through enhanced municipal council performance, increased citizen participation, and digital innovations for improved transparency. Survey results highlight EMC2's significant impact, while also identifying areas where further action could enhance outcomes. The following findings and recommendations are organized according to the OECD-DAC criteria: Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, and Sustainability.

1. Relevance

- **Key Findings:** EMC2's objectives align strongly with the needs and priorities of municipalities, as evidenced by positive responses indicating that the CDP and community forums have addressed governance gaps. Topics such as financial management, transparency, and anti-corruption strategies have been especially relevant to councilors' and municipal staff's roles.
- **Recommendation:** Continue prioritizing relevant training areas, such as financial management and transparency, while also expanding coverage on digital tools and inclusivity practices to address ongoing governance needs.

2. Effectiveness

- **Key Findings:** The majority of respondents reported significant improvements in their skills and knowledge due to EMC2's capacity-building activities. Community forums were effective in fostering citizen engagement, and digital tools have strengthened transparency. Additionally, gender representation within the project has been positive, with a strong female presence in both training and decision-making roles.
- **Recommendation:** Expand/further improve practical training formats, such as on-the-job and classroom training, which respondents found particularly effective. Additionally, reinforce the role of digital tools by increasing training on e-learning platforms, e-dashboards, and other transparency mechanisms to further enhance effectiveness in governance practices.

3. Efficiency

- **Key Findings:** EMC2 has efficiently utilized digital tools, such as financial dashboards and live-streaming systems, to enhance service delivery and accountability at the municipal level. These tools have increased public trust and enabled citizens to actively monitor council activities.
- **Recommendation:** To maximize efficiency, focus on the sustainable deployment of digital tools, including maintenance and training on their use. Ensuring a stable digital infrastructure will promote continued public engagement and transparency even after the project's closure.

4. Impact

- **Key Findings:** EMC2 has had a significant impact on municipal transparency and accountability. The project's digital tools, training programs, and community forums have created lasting changes in local governance. Respondents observed a notable increase in citizen participation and representation, with community forums institutionalized in six municipalities to support ongoing citizen engagement.
- **Recommendation:** Strengthen inclusivity efforts within community forums to reach marginalized groups, such as ethnic minorities and low-income populations, ensuring that the benefits of improved governance reach all community members.

5. Sustainability

- **Key Findings:** Respondents expressed optimism about sustaining the project's benefits, particularly in areas of capacity-building, citizen engagement, and digital tools. However, they noted the need for ongoing support to maintain momentum post-project, especially in funding, policy integration, and partnerships.
- **Recommendations:**
 - **Promote Sustainable Digital Infrastructure:** Ensure long-term plans for maintaining digital tools like the e-dashboard and e-learning platforms, which are essential for continued transparency.
 - **Embed Gender and Inclusivity in Policy:** Institutionalize gender and inclusion principles within municipal policies, ensuring that they are embedded within governance structures beyond EMC2's lifespan.
 - **Strengthen Capacity-Building Partnerships:** Collaborate with national institutions, such as MLSG and UNDP, to secure resources and partnerships that support ongoing training and capacity development. Regular monitoring and evaluation post-project can help maintain momentum and adjust strategies as needed.

These findings and recommendations, structured by the OECD-DAC criteria, provide a comprehensive path forward for EMC2. They reinforce EMC2's achievements while highlighting actionable steps to ensure its continued success and sustainability in local governance. By addressing these criteria, the project can strengthen its legacy in North Macedonia's municipalities and foster a resilient, inclusive governance environment.

Appendix D: Orientational Interview Questions for Selected Stakeholders

Note: These questions are designed to provide complementary insights to the survey findings, particularly from stakeholders who were underrepresented in the survey responses. They remain aligned with the evaluation questions in the TOR, organized according to the OECD-DAC criteria of Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, and Sustainability.

1. Relevance and Coherence

1. How well do you believe the EMC2 project addresses the immediate needs and strategic priorities of your municipality/organization?
 - *Can you provide specific examples where the project's objectives and activities have directly supported (or deviated from) your local priorities?*
2. How has the EMC2 project integrated or complemented other local or national initiatives within your municipality/organization?
 - *Have you noticed any overlaps or gaps between EMC2 and other ongoing projects or programs?*

2. Effectiveness

3. In your experience, how has the Capacity Development Programme (CDP) affected the skills and competencies of municipal councilors and staff?
 - *What aspects of the training (e.g., on-the-job, classroom, or e-learning) were most or least effective?*
4. How has citizen participation in local governance evolved since the project's implementation?
 - *Can you share examples of specific activities (e.g., community forums) that have led to greater engagement or responsiveness among citizens?*
5. Have there been any unexpected or unintended outcomes from the project activities?
 - *How have these outcomes, whether positive or challenging, been managed or adapted within your municipality?*

3. Efficiency

6. From your perspective, how efficiently has the project utilized its resources (financial, human, and time) to achieve its goals?
 - *Were there any areas where resources could have been allocated more effectively, particularly in view of limited budgets or staff capacities?*
7. Were there any delays or challenges in delivering project activities on time and within budget?
 - *How were these challenges managed, and what lessons have been learned to ensure timeliness in future initiatives?*

4. Impact

8. What do you consider the most significant positive changes brought about by the EMC2 project in your municipality/organization?
 - *Can you provide examples of how these changes have influenced governance, service delivery, or citizen participation?*

9. To what extent has the project contributed to improving transparency, accountability, or reducing corruption within municipal operations?
- *Are there specific indicators or examples you can point to as evidence of these improvements?*

5. Sustainability

10. What steps or policies have been adopted to ensure that the knowledge, skills, and systems introduced by EMC2 will continue to benefit your municipality after the project ends?
- *Are there any specific practices in place that you believe will help sustain the project's impact?*
11. What additional support or resources would be helpful to maintain the project's results and continue its momentum?
- *How could municipal councils, national government, or external stakeholders contribute to this sustainability?*

6. Cross-Cutting Issues (Gender, Social Inclusion, and Innovation)

12. How effectively has the project addressed gender equality and social inclusion within your municipality/organization?
- *Can you share examples where the project has successfully promoted gender-sensitive or inclusive practices, particularly for marginalized groups?*
13. How has the project utilized digital tools and innovations (e.g., e-dashboard, e-learning) to improve service delivery?
- *What challenges or successes have you experienced with these tools, and how could their adoption be further supported?*

7. Lessons Learned and Recommendations

14. What are some key lessons learned from your involvement with the EMC2 project so far?
- *How could these lessons be applied to strengthen the project's effectiveness and impact?*
15. What specific recommendations do you have for enhancing the impact, efficiency, or sustainability of the project in its remaining period?
- *Are there any adjustments or additional activities that could further support local governance objectives?*
16. Are there any project areas or issues that you feel require additional focus or adaptation?

What adjustments, if any, would you recommend to ensure that the project fully meets its intended goals?

Appendix E. List of projects supported through the grants program

Municipality	Title of the project	Budget of the project	Year of implementation
FIRST GROUP OF MUNICIPALITIES (2022/23)			
DEBRCA	Construction of a park in the village of Trebenishta, with a children's playground	2.604.500 MKD (out of which 651.303 MKD municipal Co-financing)	2023
BOGOVINJE	Construction of the riverbed and pavement on the quay in the village of Pirok	3.702.547 MKD (out of which 1.369.384 MKD municipal Co-financing)	2023
KRIVA PALANKA	Construction of a pump track to improve the sports offer of the city	4.001.940 MKD (out of which 1.518.650 MKD municipal Co-financing)	2023
NOVO SELO	Purchase of machinery for better communal services (excavator and tractor)	3.462.961 MKD (out of which 1.180.438 MKD municipal Co-financing)	2023
NEGOTINO	Reconstruction and levelling of sidewalks on st. Marshal Tito	3.259.710 MKD (out of which 1.101.678 MKD municipal Co-financing)	2023
KARPOSH	Adaptation and equipment of sensory rooms in 2 kindergartens in Karposh	3.048.452 MKD (out of which 640.175 MKD municipal Co-financing)	2023
AERODROM	Installation of LED lighting in the ES "Lazo Angelovski" in Aerodrom	2.989.190 MKD (out of which 624.908 MKD municipal Co-financing)	2023

PRILEP	Installation of urban equipment - requisites for an inclusive children's playground	3.703.690 MKD (out of which 1.037.043 MKD municipal Co-financing)	2023/24
ARACHINOVO	Installation of urban equipment - requisites for an inclusive children's playground	2.869.328 MKD (out of which 775.147 MKD municipal Co-financing)	2023/24
SHTIP	Installation of a public lighting system on the quay of the river Otinje	5.752.508 MKD (out of which 3.528.054 MKD municipal Co-financing)	2023/24
SECOND GROUP OF MUNICIPALITIES (2024/25)			
VINICA	Purchase of special communal waste collection vehicle	4.135.800 MKD (out of which 1.240.500 MKD municipal Co-financing)	2024
KISELA VODA	Purchase of special equipment for cleaning public areas	4.000.000 MKD (out of which 1.200.000 MKD municipal Co-financing)	2024
MAVROVO I ROSTUSHE	Reconstruction of water supply network in v. Rostushe	2.913.990 MKD (out of which 546.802 MKD municipal Co-financing)	2024
KARBINCI	Purchase of special communal waste collection vehicle	4.960.000 MKD (out of which 1.763.000 MKD municipal Co-financing)	2024
GRADSKO	Installation of public lighting system on a local street in the village of Vinicani	2.000.000 MKD (out of which 500.000 MKD municipal Co-financing)	2024
	Reconstruction of children's playgrounds in v. Vinicani and v. Dolno Gradsko	1.570.750 MKD (out of which 392.688 MKD municipal Co-financing)	2024/2025

STUDENICHANI	Reconstruction of Sports Center in v. Studenichani	3.084.924 MKD (out of which 620.524 MKD municipal Co-financing)	2024
GEVGELIJA	Construction of a sports and recreational park in Toplik neighbourhood	5.221.230 MKD (out of which 1.978.230 MKD municipal Co-financing)	2024
RANKOVCE	Installation of street lighting with energy-efficient lamps in the Rankovce and Psacha neighborhoods	4.157.190 MKD (out of which 1.288.729 MKD municipal Co-financing)	2024/25
RESEN	Construction of a recreational park in the Prolet neighborhood	3.300.000 MKD (out of which 550.625 MKD municipal Co-financing)	2024
DEBAR	Equipping schools with didactic equipment and instruments for cabinets of applied sciences	2.991.750 MKD (out of which 594.600 MKD municipal Co-financing)	2024

Appendix F. Overview of reported project progress, challenges, lessons learnt, and way forward

Output	Progress Reported	Challenges/Issues	Lessons Learned	Way Forward
1.1. Capacity Development Programme upgraded and delivered	Third revision of CDP conducted, expansion of roster of trainers, assessment and improvement of e-learning platform, 107 trainings conducted.	Increase in market prices impacting catering, internal UNDP administrative delays, active participation of councilors hampered due to other commitments.	Frequent coordination and monitoring are essential, technical support to municipalities is crucial, regular evaluations and expanding trainer rosters are beneficial.	Continue to expand the roster of trainers, monitor platform improvements, plan next training sessions based on needs assessment.
1.1. Capacity Development Programme upgraded and delivered	Field visits in municipalities, new experts engaged, ongoing registration of profiles, assessment of legal framework initiated, interactive modules developed, trainings conducted.	Elections affected participation, quality project documentation needed, ensuring active involvement of councilors and MLSG representatives.	Field visits and assessments are crucial for understanding ground realities, regular communication improves project engagement.	Implement planned activities post-elections, finalize registration of new councilor profiles, continue engaging with partner municipalities.
1.1. Capacity Development Programme upgraded and delivered	Evaluation of experts engaged, 78 classroom trainings conducted, finalization of draft report on institutionalization assessment, improved interface and additional materials added to e-learning platform.	Suspension of activities during elections, engagement of councilors affected, delays due to changes in central government.	Effective planning around elections mitigates disruptions, importance of readiness and adaptability in response to political changes.	Finalize legal framework assessment, continue engagement with new government representatives, adapt training schedules post-elections.
1.2. Existing models for cooperation and coordination re-designed and new ones established	Implementation of peer-to-peer learning workshops, thematic workshops organized on finance, public affairs, gender, urban and spatial planning, youth, fight against corruption, hate speech and digital violence, collaboration with ZELS for expanding training coverage.	Parliamentary elections increased misinformation, risk of hate speech, municipal representatives needed better mechanisms for addressing issues.	Engaging multiple stakeholders increases awareness, cross-municipal workshops are effective for addressing sensitive issues.	Conduct more workshops to address digital violence, ensure wider coverage across municipalities, collaborate with ZELS.
1.3. Local governance legislative and policy framework improved	New Action Plan (2024-2026) for PSLDD finalized, regular discussions around decentralization reforms, preparation of municipal revenue/expenditure reports initiated.	Pending establishment of the new Government delaying some policy-related initiatives, internal coordination challenges.	Coordinating with central institutions ensures smoother policy implementation, stakeholder engagement remains vital.	Implement the finalized Action Plan, continue monitoring and reporting, engage new government representatives in reform discussions.

2.1. 40 new municipalities organize community forums	Community forums conducted in 20 partner municipalities, 89 project proposals developed, 21 priority projects selected, Letters of Agreement and Co-financing Agreements signed, procurement processes and project implementation started.	Procurement procedures during election period delayed implementation, requirement for timely preparation and planning.	Engagement of community forums facilitates better identification of priority projects, early planning helps overcome delays.	Finalize priority projects and procurement in partner municipalities, support additional community forums, enhance monitoring.
2.1. 17 municipalities receive new ILDPs	Support provided to 17 municipalities in preparing ILDPs, municipal development teams established, facilitation and consultation for integrated planning conducted.	Elections delayed activities; ensuring timely involvement of municipal teams was crucial.	Active guidance and regular check-ins support successful implementation, structured workshops improve collaboration.	Complete ILDPs with municipalities, provide guidance and support for integrated development, ensure consistent progress tracking.
3.2. Municipal services improved by leveraging technology and innovation	E-dashboard populated with quarterly financial reports from 55 municipalities, regular support provided.	Some municipalities delayed in submitting financial reports; coordination needed to encourage regular updates.	Continuous support and technical assistance help maintain regular data reporting, consistent follow-up aids accountability.	Assist municipalities in data submission, continue supporting e-dashboard usage, provide training on financial data reporting.
3.2. Local governance improved through innovation and digitalization¹⁰	Innovative digital tools selected in 20 municipalities, project documentation finalized, procurement preparation initiated.	Need for technical documentation and equipment procurement caused delays; ongoing monitoring required.	Early preparation and procurement planning mitigate delays, ensuring municipalities understand requirements is crucial.	Procure equipment for digital tools, ensure implementation in partner municipalities, monitor and evaluate digital service improvements.

¹⁰ While the evaluation period defined the scope of available information, a key development took place prior to the evaluation. Specifically, the Ministry of Local Self-Government and the newly established Ministry of Digital Transformation formally approached UNDP/EMC2 for support in leading the digitalization of local self-governments across North Macedonia. This initiative primarily focuses on facilitating the adoption of Loges by all municipalities by the end of 2026. This collaboration underscores the strategic importance of EMC2 in advancing governance reforms and expanding its potential impact. The outcomes and implications of this initiative should be thoroughly examined in the final evaluation of EMC2. Notably, during the evaluation process, continuous coordination with both ministries and other relevant stakeholders was underway, as confirmed through information gathered during interviews.

Appendix G. Project status update (LogFrame)

Hierarchy of objectives Strategy of Intervention	Key Indicators	Status as of June 2024 / Remarks
Impact (Overall Goal)	Impact Indicators	
The overall objective of the project is to strengthen local self-governments through empowered municipal councils that are capable to effectively fulfil their assigned roles of representation and oversight of the executive branch of the municipalities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Effectiveness of the municipal councils increased: Baseline: (<i>Information on revenue collections</i>)- PEFA¹¹ (PI¹²-20.1) scores: No. of municipalities = 10¹³: tbd¹⁴ (2022) (ex-ante assessment) Target: tbd in 2026 (ex-post assessment) ▪ Municipal governance improved Baseline: (<i>Public access to fiscal information</i>) – PEFA (PI-9.1) scores: No. of municipalities = 10: tbd¹⁵ (2022) (ex-ante assessment) Target: tbd in 2026 (ex-post assessment) ▪ Level of general satisfaction with public services at the local level (average score on a scale of 1-5) Baseline: 2,97 (2021) Target: 3.5 (2026) ▪ (%) of local public revenues in GDP Baseline: 5.40% (2019) Target: 6.60 (2025) 	<p>PEFA 2022 3-B; 4-c; 1-C+; 2- D+</p> <p>PEFA 2022 7-B; 3-D</p> <p>3.04 (2023)</p> <p>5.08% (2023)</p>
Outcomes	Outcome Indicators	
Outcome 1: Municipal Councils' performance will be improved systematically and sustainably, and the system of local government will be further strengthened and advanced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Budget implementation improved 	PEFA 2022 1-B; 4-C; 5-D

¹¹ Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability methodology

¹² PEFA Indicator

¹³ First group of 10 pilot municipalities in the second project phase.

¹⁴ Baseline and targets will be determined after the completion of the initial PEFA assessment for the first group of 10 beneficiary municipalities.

¹⁵ Baseline and targets will be determined after the completion of the initial PEFA assessment for the first group of 10 beneficiary municipalities.

Hierarchy of objectives Strategy of Intervention	Key Indicators	Status as of June 2024 / Remarks
	<p>Baseline: (Aggregate expenditure outturn) PEFA (PI-1.1) scores: No. of municipalities = 10: tbd¹⁶ (2022) (ex-ante assessment) Target: tbd in 2026 (ex-post assessment)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Predictability and control in budget execution increased Baseline 1: (<i>Revenue arrears monitoring</i>) - PEFA (PI-19.4) scores: No. of municipalities = 10: tbd¹⁷ (2022) (ex-ante assessment) Target: tbd in 2026 (ex-post assessment) Baseline 2: (Implementation of internal audits and reporting) - PEFA (PI-26.3) scores: No. of municipalities = 10: tbd¹⁸ (2022) (ex-ante assessment) Target: tbd (2026) (ex-post assessment) ▪ Financial information (budget and annual report) published regularly on the municipal website <i>Published municipal budget for the current year:</i> Baseline 1: 63 LSGU (2021) Target: 75 LSGU (2026) <i>Published Annual Financial Report for the previous year:</i> Baseline 2: 54 LSGU (2021) Target: 81 LSGU (2026) ▪ In-year financial reports discussed regularly with the public 	<p>PEFA 2022 4-B; 2-C; 4-D</p> <p>75</p> <p>N/A (<i>relevant data to be made available through the bi-annual survey 2024</i>)</p>

¹⁶ Baseline and targets will be determined after the completion of the initial PEFA assessment for the first group of 10 beneficiary municipalities.

¹⁷ Baseline and targets will be determined after the completion of the initial PEFA assessment for the first group of 10 beneficiary municipalities.

¹⁸ Baseline and targets will be determined after the completion of the initial PEFA assessment for the first group of 10 beneficiary municipalities.

Hierarchy of objectives Strategy of Intervention	Key Indicators	Status as of June 2024 / Remarks
	<p>Baseline: tbd¹⁹ (2022) Target: tbd (2026)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Information on the councillors and council sessions published regularly on municipal websites <i>Information on the councillors:</i> Baseline 1: 72 LSGU (2021) Target: 81 LSGU (2026) <i>Minutes from the council sessions:</i> Baseline 2: 21 LSGU (2021) Target: 61 LSGU (2026) Conclusions from the council sessions: Baseline 3: 57 LSGU (2021) Target: 75 LSGU (2026) ▪ Number of municipalities with problem-reporting on-line tools increased Baseline: 54 LSGU (2021) Target: 70 LSGU (2026) ▪ Citizen satisfaction with the transparency and accountability of the municipal bodies (average score on a scale of 1-5) Baseline: 2.66 (2021) Target: 3.00 (2026) ▪ Number of adopted annual Action Plans for Equal Opportunities of women and men by the councils increased and adequately budgeted Baseline: 24 LSGU (2021) Target: 64 LSGU (2026) 	<p>80 (<i>candidate indicator for revision</i>)</p> <p>79 (<i>candidate indicator for revision</i>)</p> <p>51 (<i>candidate indicator for removal due to limited relevance</i>)</p> <p>66</p> <p>2.31 (2023)</p> <p>39 (2023)</p>

¹⁹ Baseline and targets will be determined after the completion of the first Nationwide (bi-annual) Survey on the implementation of the local competencies in all municipalities.

Hierarchy of objectives Strategy of Intervention	Key Indicators	Status as of June 2024 / Remarks
<p>Outcome 2: Citizens participation mechanisms is supported to sustain the local democracy and improve quality of life for both women and men;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Participatory and policy-based budgeting improved Baseline: (<i>Information of revenue collection</i>) - PEFA (PI-20.1) scores: No. of municipalities = 10: tbd²⁰ (2022) (ex-ante assessment) Target: tbd (2026) (ex-post assessment) ▪ Community forums methodology introduced and implemented in participating municipalities – incorporated in municipal statutes; Baseline: 70 LSGU (2021) Target: 72 LSGU (2026) ▪ Local CSOs actively performing the role of oversight over and initiation of local development activities; Baseline: tbd²¹ (2022) Target: tbd (2026) ▪ Citizens' satisfaction with the local economic development (average score on a scale of 1-5) Baseline: 2.51 (2021) Target: 2.85 (2026) ▪ Citizens' satisfaction with the municipal social protection services (average score on a scale of 1-5) Baseline: 2.65 (2021) Target: 2.95 (2026) ▪ Number of established inter-municipal cooperation forms Baseline: 32 (2021) Target: 36 (2026) 	<p>PEFA 2022 4-B; 2-c; 1-C+; 2-D+; 1-D</p> <p>75</p> <p>76 LSGUs</p> <p>N/A (<i>candidate indicator for revision, for example, Local CSOs capacitated to undertake the oversight role</i>)</p> <p>2,54 (2023)</p> <p>2,61 (2023)</p> <p>3</p>

²⁰ Baseline and targets will be determined after the completion of the initial PEFA assessment for the first group of 10 beneficiary municipalities.

²¹ Baseline and targets will be determined after the completion of the first Nationwide (bi-annual) Survey on the implementation of the local competencies in all municipalities;

Hierarchy of objectives Strategy of Intervention		Key Indicators	Status as of June 2024 / Remarks
<p>Outcome 3: Municipal services will be improved by leveraging technology and innovation</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Applied e-tools for promoting the transparency and inclusiveness of the municipalities <i>Published online initiatives or surveys:</i> Baseline 1: 36 LSGU (2021) Target: 70 LSGU (2026) <i>E-services provided through the municipal websites:</i> Baseline 2: 42 LSGU (2021) Target: 70 LSGU (2026) ▪ Number of new innovative and digital services available to citizens Baseline: tbd²² (2022) Target: tbd (2026) ▪ Citizens' satisfaction with the fiscal transparency of the municipalities (% of satisfied respondents) Baseline: 18.2% (2021) Target: 30% (2026) ▪ Number of municipalities that have installed and regularly update the e-Dashboard platform Baseline: 34 LSGU (2021) Target: 74 LSGU (2026) 	<p>70 Initiatives 17 e-services 53</p> <p><i>(These two indicators can be merged into a single indicator)</i></p> <p>20</p> <p>22% (2023)</p> <p>55</p>
Outputs (per outcome) and costs		Output Indicators	
Output 1.1.	Capacity Development Programme upgraded and delivered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No. of newly elected councilors taking introductory training course <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Baseline: 0 ○ Target: at least 70% of newly elected councilors in two electoral cycles 	500 (37%)

²² Baseline and targets will be determined after the completion of the first nationwide (bi-annual) survey on the implementation of the local competencies in all municipalities.

Hierarchy of objectives Strategy of Intervention		Key Indicators	Status as of June 2024 / Remarks
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No. of councilors, mayors and adm. staff taking CDP classroom and online courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Baseline: 421 councilors trained (41.5% women) and 244 certificates issued, 0 mayors, 0 adm. staff (2021) ○ Target: min. 400 councillors, 20 mayors and 160 adm. staff (at least 30% women) ▪ Training plan and calendar available, training events organized: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Baseline: 101 classroom training events delivered (2020) ○ Target: min. 136 training events ▪ Profiles and accounts created on the e-learning platform for councilors, mayors and municipal administration staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Baseline: 1347 elected councilors, 0 mayors, 0 adm. staff (2021) ○ Target: 90% of newly elected councilors (min. 30% women), 40 mayors and 160 adm. Staff (min. 30% women) 	<p>320 councilors (45% women) 99 administration 7 mayors</p> <p>107 (<i>candidate indicator for revision</i>)</p> <p>1120 (83%)</p> <p><i>The sub-indicators need to be revised in line with the functionality of the platform (it does not provide such disaggregation)</i></p>
Output 1.2.	Existing models for cooperation and coordination between the councillors, the mayors, and the municipal administrations re-designed and new ones established	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No. of new thematic groups established: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Baseline: 6 thematic groups established ○ Target: min. 6 new thematic groups established 	9
Output 1.3.	Overall local governance legislative and policy framework improved, including through active involvement of councilors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PLSDD 2021-2026 supported through the project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Baseline: 0 (Phase 1 project was consistent with PSLDD) ○ Target: min. 10 activities supported with direct participation of the Committee of Councils and councillors thematic groups 	<p>12</p> <p>6</p>

Hierarchy of objectives Strategy of Intervention		Key Indicators	Status as of June 2024 / Remarks
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Analytical reports on municipal revenues and expenditure; citizens' satisfaction; LSGU's competencies, transparency and quality of online communication; PEFA, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Baseline: Nationwide (semi-annual and annual) Reports on the Municipal Revenues and Expenditures (2020) ○ Target: Nationwide (semi-annual and annual) Reports on the Municipal Revenues and Expenditures prepared 	(PEFA, citizen's satisfaction 2022, 2023, semi-annual and annual reports (2022, 2023), website assessment)
Output 2.1.	40 new municipalities will organize community forums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No. of municipalities having Community forums (CF) incorporated in their statutes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Baseline: 70 LSGUs in the country incorporated CFM in their statutes ○ Target: 72 LSGU's will incorporate CF in their statutes ▪ No. of CFs organized and decisions on priority projects reached: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Baseline: 24 CF ○ Target: 40 CF ▪ No. of Local development policies, strategies and programmes prepared and/or revised with project support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Baseline: 0 ○ Target: 10 ▪ No. of local CSOs included in citizens mobilization and monitoring of the transparency and accountability: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Baseline: 0 ○ Target: 10 CSOs 	<p>76</p> <p>30 (2023)</p> <p>17</p> <p>N/A (<i>candidate indicator for revision, for example, number of trained CSOs on monitoring of transparency and accountability</i>)</p>
Output 2.2.	At least 4 inter-municipal cooperation partnerships for building greener and resilient municipalities established.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Service provision in LSGU's improved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Baseline: 32 IMCs ○ Target: 36 IMCs 	3 (2023)

Hierarchy of objectives Strategy of Intervention		Key Indicators	Status as of June 2024 / Remarks
Output 3.1.	Implemented new solutions to modernize service delivery, overall digitalization of business processes and services in two municipalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Digitalized business processes and services serves as pilot for upscaling digitalization of LSGU's in the country: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Baseline: 0 LSGU's ○ Target: 2 LSGU's 	23 (<i>candidate indicator for removal or adjustments due to the horizontal implementation of Loges across all municipalities</i>)
Output 3.2.	Local governance improved through innovation and digitalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No. of municipalities applying financial e-Dashboard: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Baseline: 24 LSGUs</i> ○ <i>Target: 74 LSGU's</i> ▪ No. of municipalities supported in developing innovative and digital tools for service delivery: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Baseline: 29 innovative and digital tools</i> ○ <i>Target: 69 innovative and digital tools</i> 	55 49

Note: The indicators requiring adjustments are highlighted in *red font*.

Appendix H. Action Table for Recommendations

Output	Recommendation	Responsible Entities	Timeline	Priority
Output 1: Municipal Councils' Performance Improved	Develop a clear exit strategy that gradually transfers the CDP to a long-term institutional host. Address legal, functional, certification, and financial aspects to ensure sustainability.	UNDP, Relevant National Institutions	2024-2025	High
	Incorporate capacity-building provisions for councilors and municipal staff into the revised Law on Local Self-Government and related policies to ensure systemic and sustainable improvements.	UNDP, MLSG	2024-2025	High
Output 2: Citizen Participation Enhanced	Expand the institutionalization of community forums to additional municipalities through targeted improvements in legislation and the sharing of best practices.	Municipalities, UNDP, MLSG	2024-2025	High
	Implement targeted campaigns, partnerships, and awareness-raising efforts to mobilize youth and marginalized groups, fostering even more inclusive participation in local governance.	UNDP, Youth Organizations, Civil Society Partners	2024-2025	Medium
Output 3: Municipal Services Improved through Digitalization	Create a comprehensive exit strategy for the digital tools, including maintenance, updates, and financing. Work with the Ministry of Finance and MLSG to transfer ownership, integrate tools into national systems, and ensure technical support.	Ministry of Finance, MLSG, UNDP	2024-2025	High
	Provide targeted digital literacy training for councilors and municipal staff to build confidence and enhance the effective use of digital tools. This will foster local ownership and ensure tools are fully utilized.	UNDP, Municipal Councils, Municipal Staff	2024-2025	Medium

Appendix I. Signed Ethical Pledge of Conduct



ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATION

PLEDGE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT IN EVALUATION



By signing this pledge, I hereby commit to discussing and applying the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation and to adopting the associated ethical behaviours.



INTEGRITY

I will actively adhere to the moral values and professional standards of evaluation practice as outlined in the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation and following the values of the United Nations. Specifically, I will be:

- Honest and truthful in my communication and actions.
- Professional, engaging in credible and trustworthy behaviour, alongside competence, commitment and ongoing reflective practice.
- Independent, impartial and incorruptible.



ACCOUNTABILITY

I will be answerable for all decisions made and actions taken and responsible for honouring commitments, without qualification or exception; I will report potential or actual harms observed. Specifically, I will be:

- Transparent regarding evaluation purpose and actions taken, establishing trust and increasing accountability for performance to the public, particularly those populations affected by the evaluation.
- Responsive as questions or events arise, adapting plans as required and referring to appropriate channels where corruption, fraud, sexual exploitation or abuse or other misconduct or waste of resources is identified.
- Responsible for meeting the evaluation purpose and for actions taken and for ensuring redress and recognition as needed.



RESPECT

I will engage with all stakeholders of an evaluation in a way that honours their dignity, well-being, personal agency and characteristics. Specifically, I will ensure:

- Access to the evaluation process and products by all relevant stakeholders – whether powerless or powerful – with due attention to factors that could impede access such as sex, gender, race, language, country of origin, LGBTQ status, age, background, religion, ethnicity and ability.
- Meaningful participation and equitable treatment of all relevant stakeholders in the evaluation processes, from design to dissemination. This includes engaging various stakeholders, particularly affected people, so they can actively inform the evaluation approach and products rather than being solely a subject of data collection.
- Fair representation of different voices and perspectives in evaluation products (reports, webinars, etc.).



BENEFICENCE

I will strive to do good for people and planet while minimizing harm arising from evaluation as an intervention. Specifically, I will ensure:

- Explicit and ongoing consideration of risks and benefits from evaluation processes.
- Maximum benefits at systemic (including environmental), organizational and programmatic levels.
- No harm. I will not proceed where harm cannot be mitigated.
- Evaluation makes an overall positive contribution to human and natural systems and the mission of the United Nations.

I commit to playing my part in ensuring that evaluations are conducted according to the Charter of the United Nations and the ethical requirements laid down above and contained within the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation. When this is not possible, I will report the situation to my supervisor, designated focal points or channels and will actively seek an appropriate response.

DIMITROVA

Sokolovski

(Signature and Date)