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UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

BULGARIA

GOVERNANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT CLUSTER

J (BUL/96/003 - CAPACITY BUILDING FOR A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AT NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY LEVELS,
.Î BUL/97/002 - METHODOLOGIES AND ANALYSIS FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE - GOVERNANCE UMBRELLA,
BUL/97/007 - SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOCRACY NETWORK PROGRAMME, BUL/97/008 - PROMOTION OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN BULGARIA- CHITALISHTE)

Report of the External Evaluation Mission

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Sigk Pas
17/12/99

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY A.

Introduction

The object of this evaluation is the Good Governance for Sustainable Development Cluster projects (GGSD Cluster projects) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Bulgaria. The GCSD Cluster is one of the two priority areas identified in the 1997-1999 Country Co-operation Framework (CCF) for Bulgaria. UNDP's objective in this area is to promote the development of the capacity for good governance as a means to eradicate poverty. The GGSD Cluster projects are designed to achieve this objective by focusing on policy analysis and formulation, civil society participation and management efficiency.

The main objective of this evaluation exercise was to assess the extent to which the four projects that make-up the GGSD Cluster projects, are on the way to achieving their objectives. In relation to this objective, six areas of analysis were established:

- **Relevance**
- **Performance and Outputs**
- **Overall Success of the GGSD**

- •**Strength and weaknesses of the GGSD Cluster projects**
- • **Recommendations**
- • **Lessons learned**

This evaluation has limited its scope as to cover four specific projects. These were: BUL/96/003 - Capacity Building for a Sustainable Development at National and Community Levels; BUL/97/002 - Methodologies and Analysis for Good Governance (Governance Umbrella); BUL/97/007 - Sustainable Development and Democracy Network Programme; and BUL/97/008 - Promotion of Community Participation and Development in Bulgaria- Chitalishte.

The evaluation team was composed of an external international consultant, who was also the team leader, and a national consultant. The team leader was responsible for the overall co-ordination and supervision of the evaluation team, as well as for actively participating in all the major activities of the project (interviews, site visits, drafting of the report). The team also had an external national consultant, who actively contributed to all the major phases of this evaluation.

B. Methodological Framework and Main Concept for the Evaluation

The evaluation of Cluster projects that aim to promote and strengthen the development of capacity for good governance as a means to eradicate poverty (through policy analysis and formulation, civil society support and fostering management efficiency), calls for a model of analysis that would help to understand its synergy. The GGSD Cluster is new to the UNDP Bulgaria's organisational design, and as such is in a process of consolidating its functions, interactions and inter and intra Cluster coordination. Nonetheless, it seems to have the potential to articulate several projects and become a strategic mechanism to promote a holistic and systemic operative definition of "Good Governance," which could include the State, the private sector and civil society.

In seeking to promote good governance, UNDP's Bulgaria Programme has prioritised civil society support. In addition to becoming a means to accelerate change in the system of values, UNDP Bulgaria believes that the civil society support would also lead to a greater understanding of the reform process. UNDP is drawing not only on its experience and mandate, but also on a keen sense of identifying actors and areas of intervention. The context in which these initiatives are being pursue, is a dynamic one, but with a high degree of uncertainty, complexity and risk. This is why the GGSD Cluster projects have provided an initial framework or model that guides programme activities.

This framework involves a so-called upstream and down stream approaches. At the top there is an umbrella project (BUL/97/002) which is supposed to provide timely information and highly quality analysis to support government efforts for a constructive policy dialogue with civil society and the international donor community. This project is supposed to be proactive, in terms of its capacity to be creative, as well as reactive in such a way that is flexible enough as to respond to rapidly emerging needs and priorities. Then there is a linkage project, the Sustainable Development and Democracy Network

Programme (BUL/97/007 - SDDNP), which aims at establishing a virtual network of government, civil society and private sector organisations for them to exchange information and experiences regarding all aspects of human sustainable development. This linkage project, in fact, can be thought out to be the main focal point that manages the flows between up and down streams and vice versa. The guiding framework of the GGSD Cluster projects also has two downstream projects. The Capacity Building for a Sustainable Development at National and Community Levels (BUL/96/003), which aims to setting and testing models for sustainable community development. This project establishes mechanisms, which is expected to facilitate the creation of an enabling environment for advancing sustainable development at the national and local levels. And the project that promotes community participation and development through the Chitalishte organization (BUL/97/008).

The GGSD Cluster project and their activities seem to be focused on one specific category; develop or strengthen strategic capacity to promote sustainable development mainly from the bottom-up, working with municipalities and/or local authorities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and private sector organizations. The effectiveness of this model, however, is highly related to how well these capacities can articulate and manage goals and systemic change.

C. Cluster Projects Concept and Design

All four projects of the GGSD Cluster started between the end of 1996 and the middle of 1997, coinciding with the so-called Winter Crisis Period, which was characterized by both economic and political upheaval. The immediate aftermath of this crisis, were harsh reform measures. While the attempts at economic and political reform showed some significant but slow advances, relatively little attention had been given to issues of social reform. In general, UNDP response during this critical period was very important. For example, special UNDP emergency funds were activated to fund a United Nations inter-agency humanitarian needs assessment mission and the establishment of a Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Unit based

in Sofia. As a compliment, a series of specific projects were expeditiously designed and approved. All four projects of the GGDS Cluster, were part of these UNDP efforts and in that sense, were very relevant to the context, mainly because the country faced a long process of recovery, which implicitly placed as a common social goal the idea of good governance. Since then, especially in the political arena, the process of democratization has continued to advance. The civil society sector, since then, has also evolved.

The GGSD Cluster projects are diverse, and at the same time related. All four projects of the GGSD Cluster projects are creating capacity for sustainable development. They are providing training; access to highly advanced technological information, and planning capabilities for municipalities, NGOs and Chitalishte. They are also producing human development information, promoting ownership and new partnerships. All four GGSD Cluster projects are also fostering national and/or local execution strategies and at the same time strengthening institutions and human resources. In general these projects have also addressed issues related to poverty, gender, inequality and environment.

D. Overall Findings of the Evaluation

1. The implementation of the main activities for the GGSD Cluster projects was in line with the approved plans. In three of the projects the initial schedule was adjusted. Both downstream projects started at the local level but at their second phase they intend to up-scale at the regional level. The upstream project addressed mostly national issues but its recent products - the Correa Report on Decentralisation and the National Human Development Report for 1999 - are focused on the regional issues.

2. The evaluation team found that the GGSD Cluster projects addressed very well key UNDP development issues, particularly those related to UNDP's mission. All four of the GGSD Cluster projects had relevance to basic aspects of sustainable human development. For example, the evaluation team found that both; the upstream and downstream GGSD Cluster projects have fostered a significant amount of *empowerment* among men and women involved in the project. Not only did the GGSD Cluster projects strengthen capabilities (through training in project management and planning, knowledge transfer, use of technology), but they are also encouraging more opportunities for project target groups and beneficiaries to organise and participate in economic, social and political activities.

3. Another way, in which the GGSD Cluster projects were relevant to basic aspects of sustainable human development, is *cooperation and partnerships.* All four projects have established strategic partnerships with key development actors, and is positively affecting the way in which people are working together and interacting.

4. The GGSD Cluster projects were relevant to UNDP development issues, targeted groups and beneficiaries, in that they are all beginning to change attitudes and shape governance.

5. The GGSD Cluster projects are all making progress toward achieving their objectives. Two of the projects under are about half way completed, whereas the other two projects of the GGSD Cluster projects are entering their final phase. In all four cases, but with much more clarity in the case of the Capacity 21 project (BUL/96/003) and the Chitalishte project (BUL/97/008), the projects have produced the desired outcomes. On the basis of transforming inputs into outputs, the cost effectiveness of the GGSD Cluster projects can be said to be more than adequate. This is mainly due to five reasons: 1) the limited financial resources assigned to each project, which averaged less than
US$500,000 per project (optimal use of limited funding); 2) precise and focused objectives; 3) pilot/demonstration nature of projects; 4) use of local capacities is maximized; and 5) low administrative costs. Together these five elements have created an adequate performance context.

6. At the beginning, the majority of GGSD Cluster projects did not manage the time and planning factors as adequately. Projects took longer to initiate activities, or simply underestimated the actual time it would take to accomplish some objectives. This may have also responded to the critical time period, when the country was facing difficulties and impending priorities (end of 1996 to mid 1997). Nonetheless, all four projects eventually found effective ways to manage time within the context of their projects.

7. The GGSD Cluster projects are a good channel not only for achieving UNDP's mission, but also to promote the concept of good government for sustainable development and test and demonstrate viable and practical approaches to strengthen governance for SHD. Eventually, the Cluster projects could be an efficient systemic mechanism to approach and promote human development. The process of good governance for sustainable development in Bulgaria could benefit from such a systemic approach, in that it could help articulate a number of actors (national and local governments, NGOs, community based organizations, donors and Chitalishte). This process will also involve a learning-by-doing mode rather than a theoretical one, because it calls for a transformation of the modalities of societal interaction. The GGSD Cluster projects have all the potential necessary to undertake and manage this process.

8. All GGSD Cluster projects will be as effective and efficient in future phases, as long as they continue to involve some form of participatory partnership, which will require on the part of the Cluster a more systemic thinking, strategic design, implementation of multi-actor modalities of action and reflection-in-action.

9. The GGSD Cluster projects so far have had an overall success. The projects have been relevant in their conception and successful in their implementation. This seems to be more clear in the two downstream projects -- Capacity 21 Project (BUL/96/003) and the Chitalishte Project (BUL/97/008). One reason for this difference may be the fact that each of the four projects had established different indicators of success.
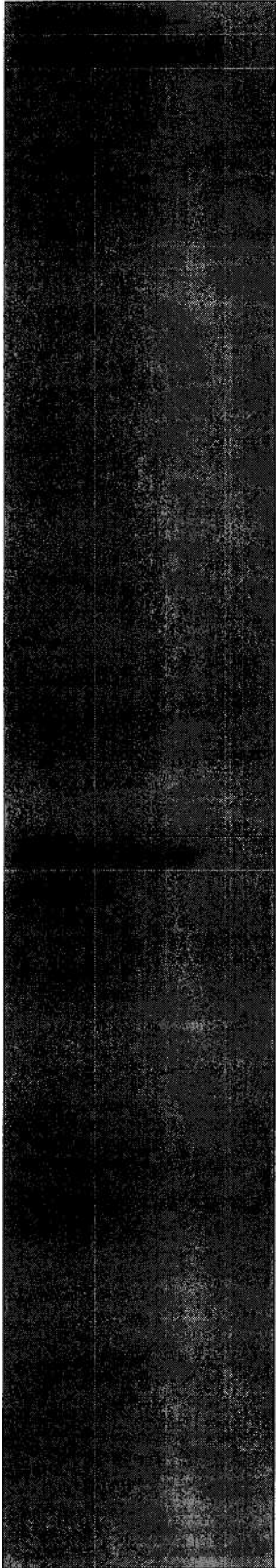
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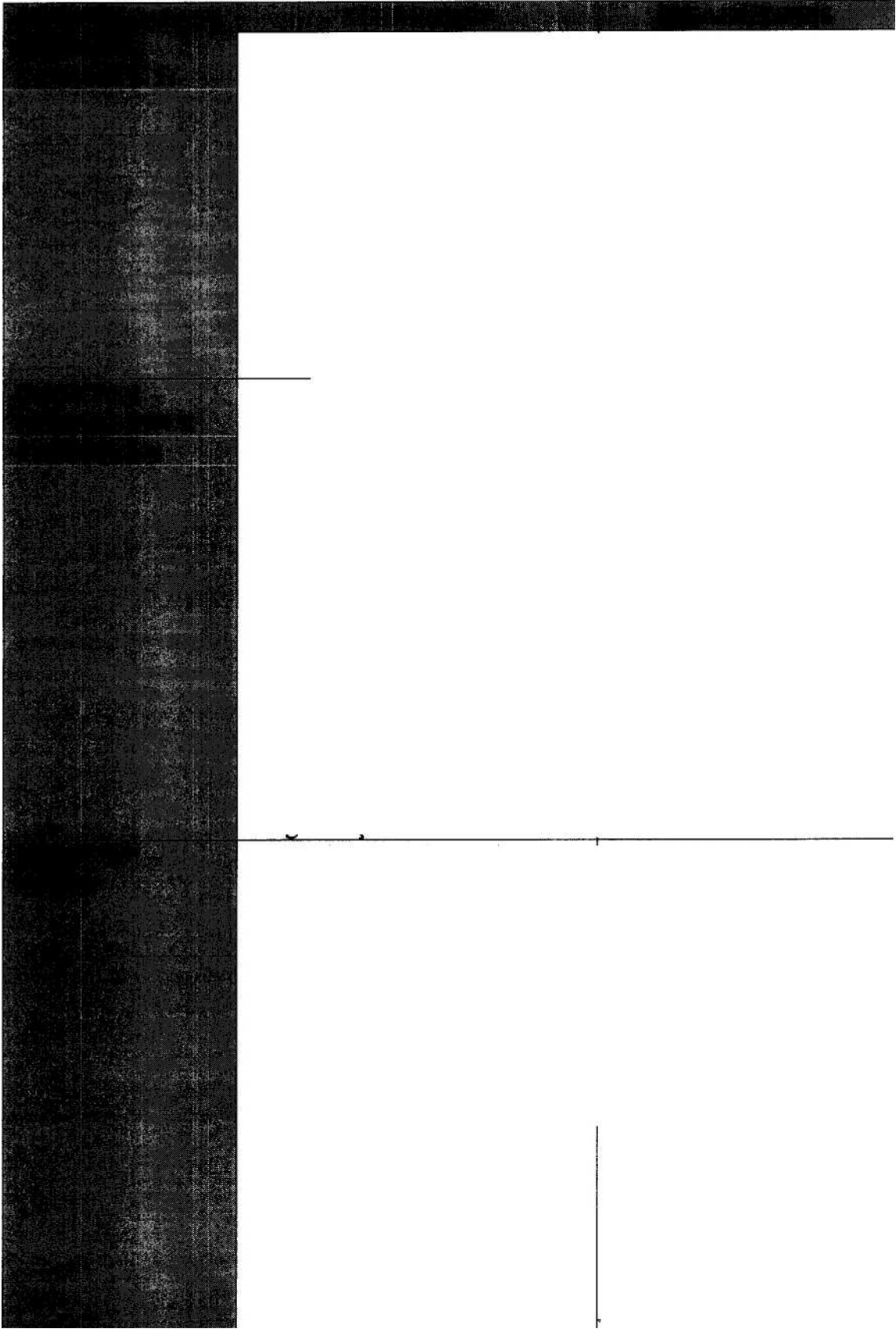
= local level of government involvement

= national level of governmental involvement
= community involvement and commitment
= flexibility of project to respond to government demands and priorities
= potential of creating agents of change
= provides information for strategy, planning public policy and policy dialogue
= emerging needs component or module
= Involvement of large number of actors in the elaboration process of the reports (readers group, consultants, experts, donors)
= flexibility of human development reports as regards to themes
= potential instruments to continue to strengthen UNDP's ima e and osition
= use of highly advanced technology
= strong and dynamic implementing agency (Arc fund = potential for disseminating information
= objectives of its training component, which goes beyond technical use into policy dialogue and social marketing
= universities are not involved in process = underestimation of planning and timing of some project activities
= awareness of concept is not consolidated yet
= two pilot projects are not sufficient
= awareness among journalists not as effective

= universities are not involved in the process
= process of elaboration of reports is not institutionalized yet = does not have clear ownership of process and products yet
= not sufficient governmental senior policy people involvement = lack of a more efficient dissemination and public relations strategy
= context in which highly advance technological project is being implemented (low Internet usage, low hardware ownership, expensive service)
= does not have capacity to expand beneficiaries beyond Sofia or tap into more NGOs
= universities are not involved in the process = government is not as involved (especially for sustainability)
= lack of policy dialogue component

= leadership of UNDP in supporting Chitalishte as a highly innovative project =
potentiality of Chitalishte as civil society agents = commitment of project managers
= geographic decentralization of projects
= visible and income generating results
= using local tradition as an asset for development = focuses on a gap (lack of genuine
grass-roots organizations) in the Bulgarian NGO sector
= the project has devised mechanisms for potential sustainable development
= enable UNDP to bring the issue of Chitalishte to the attention of the donors
community

= potential to promote and foster issues and concept of good governance for sustainable
development under the upstreamdownstream approach = established leadership in some
good governance strategic areas (Chitalishte, umbrella and civil society and capacity
building) = potential for program approach synergy
= good record on demonstration and pilot projects = all projects have mobilized resources (
three projects have at least 50% of their budget coming from cost-sharing) = all four
projects focus on concrete SHD results and processes for good governance promotion

= there is no clear strategic thinking to transform pilot project into a program
= low level of involvement of government (Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education and
Science, Ministry of Finance) = project staff is small and overwhelmed with administrative
procedures = Chitalishte are still viewed as mainly cultural organizations = selection
mechanism is too rigid
= skills of Chitalishte personnel still insufficient to accept new roles (requires more formal
training with hands on experience)

= consolidating cluster
= projects were planned before cluster
= lack of cluster strategic thinking
= lack of public relations (external) as a cluster

F. **Recommendations**

        The GGSD Cluster projects were relevant in their conception and to date
successful in their implementation. The GGSD Cluster projects are contributing to
fostering and promoting the concept and related issues of good governance for sustainable
development. The evaluation team considers that the GGSD Cluster projects should begin
to capitalize on its success, consolidate its cluster work and synergy and translate current
results into future activities. The recommendations are grouped by project, but there are
also general recommendations for the whole cluster at the end.

Project BUL/96/003 (Capacity Building for Sustainable Development/Capacity 21)

1. Expand number of Municipalities involved in the project, to provide more
    evidence of success or failure and lessons for future projects.

2. Expand project activities into the regional level, in coordination with governmental agencies involved in the National Regional Development Plan.
3. Explore alternative approaches to reach journalists. Special effort should be made to link approaches with journalism departments or faculty at universities and national and local television and radio. Next pilot project should have an especial component for a more strategic public relations campaign as a project activity.

Project BUL/97/002 (Methodologies and Analysis for Good Governance - Umbrella)

4. Explore new partnerships with universities, especially the social science, economics, geography and international relations department. A more active participation of universities should be envisaged, not only for the elaboration phase of the reports, but for the discussion phase as well.
5. Design a new strategy to disseminate and market reports, that would involve policy-makers of appropriate parliament commission, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Regional Development and Construction, Ministry of Environment and Waters and Opinion Leaders. This would significantly increase the policy dialogue and will enhance the ownership process.

Project BUL/97/007 (Sustainable Development and Democracy Network Project)

6. Find more adequate approaches to subscribe and link more NGOs outside Sofia. 7. Explore possibility to expand services to some pilot Chitalishte, and monitor and report the results.
8. Organize several pilot virtual classroom activities with primary, middle and secondary schools, and report on results to assess potential expansion.

Project BUL/97/008 (Promotion of Community Participation and Development in Bulgaria - Chitalishte)

9. Provide more training for Chitalishte Staff, in areas such as management, fund raising and legal aspects of 1996 Chitalishte Act.
10. Explore alternative intervention approaches with Chitalishte, to continue to test the broadening of their functions and actions. Civic education should be a priority area, as well as more activities with young people.
11. Establish and/or strengthen local working groups at each Chitalishte participating in the project, and monitor and report progress.

Good Governance for Sustainable Development Cluster (GGSD)

12. The GGSD Cluster projects should continue to consolidate internally and externally, by interacting, collaborating and sharing information with Cluster colleagues, members of the other cluster, other UNDP projects and other UN agency projects.

G. LESSONS LEARNED

In general terms, this evaluation proved that it is possible to design and implement successful projects that foster and promote good governance for sustainable development. That an upstream and downstream model framework for Cluster work could be extremely potential, especially if it fosters strategic thinking and approaches. On the basis of this exercise, the evaluation team found nine specific lessons that can help to reflect about future interventions (see page 50).

H. INTRODUCTION A.

Background

The object of this evaluation is the Good Governance for Sustainable Development Cluster (GGSD Cluster projects) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Bulgaria. The GCSD Cluster is one of the two priority areas identified in the 1997-1999 Country Cooperation Framework (CCF) for Bulgaria.' UNDP's objective in this area is to promote the development of the capacity for good governance as a means to eradicate poverty, since human development could not be sustained without government and governance cannot be valuable unless it sustains human development. The GGSD Cluster projects is designed to achieve this objective by focusing on policy analysis and formulation, civil society support and fostering management efficiency.

After carefully analysing Bulgaria's overall human development situation, the need for good governance became clear in 1997. After a period of severe social, political and economic crisis, Bulgaria began to intensify the process of transformation from a central planning economy into a market-oriented one. In 1997, a new democratic political regime was emerging and integration, trade and investment activities within the European Union prompted Bulgaria to think of ways to develop spread and use new technologies. However, underneath these emerging realities of transition lied a fact; the society did not have enough systemic capacity to withstand the uncertainties, challenges and complexities of transition or to take advantage of the many opportunities brought by the process of globalization. Most importantly, the majority of Bulgarians were dissatisfied with the overall situation in their country.[2]

The 1997 Human Security Report of Bulgaria showed that in spite of the fact that most Bulgarians gave low performance rating to most governmental institutions, an overwhelming majority of the people surveyed (80%) still believed that Bulgaria's future development depended on the decisive role of the government.[3] Hence, good governance became a key determinant in whether the country would be able to create and sustain equitable opportunities for its people. Bulgaria's low human security perception in 1997 had four clear messages: 1) if government does not function efficiently and effectively, the resource base can not be expanded and scarce resources are still going to be used improperly; 2) if government does not have legitimacy in the eyes of the people, it will not be able to achieve common public goals; 3) if government is unable to foster social

integration, the society risks disintegration and chaos; and, 4) if people and civil society organizations are not empowered to take responsibility for their own development within an enabling framework provided by the government, development will not be sustainable.

The GGSD projects selected a type of intervention that could particularly adapt and be relevant to the country context. In 1996-1997, this context showed tendencies towards social disintegration, individual survival strategies and a lack of a firm

'The other area is reversing impoverishment and decline in the quality of life of the population.
[2] UNDP/Friedrich Ebert Stiftung/Centre for the Study of Democracy. *Human Security in Bulgaria 1997.•*
People in Transition. Sofia: UNDP/Friedrich Ebert Stiftung/Centre for the Study of Democracy, 1998.
[3] Ibid., p. 62 and p. 71.

consensus among the population on a societal model. Similarly, because of inter-institutional competition and a largely passive civil society (elitist NGO sector and not enough grass-root organisations), there was a lack of understanding of the concept of partnership between the State, the private sector and civil society. Finally, the context for the GGSD projects involved dealing with the absence of a proactive attitudes, initiative, participation and reliance on the State, elements which were out of line with the basic requirements of democracy and market economy.

These were some of the reasons why UNDP Bulgaria chose as one of its priority areas, the issue of good governance for sustainable development. Under the 19971999 CCF, 13% of the resources was earmarked for spending in the areas of capacity development for good governance.

B. Evaluation Objective

The main objective of this evaluation exercise was to assess the extent to which the four projects that make-up the GGSD Cluster projects, are on the way to achieving their objectives (see Terms of References in Annex Section). In relation to this objective, six areas of analysis were established:

- **Relevance** of the GGSD Cluster projects to the general issue of development, target groups and/or direct beneficiaries and to UNDP's mission to promote sustainable human development. The main question in this area was, to what extent has the GGSD Cluster projects addressed key UNDP development issues?
- **Performance and Outputs** of the GGSD Cluster projects in terms of effectiveness, efficiency and time. The main questions in this area were to what extent is the GGSD Cluster projects succeeding in achieving the objectives of its four projects? How can the resources and means (inputs) of the GGSD Cluster projects be assessed in relation to its results (outputs)? To what extent can the GGSD Cluster projects are consider an efficient channel for achieving UNDP's mission?
- **Overall Success of the GGSD Cluster projects.** The main questions in this area were: What has been the impact so far of the GGSD Cluster project's projects? To what extent can the GGSD Cluster projects results be maintained after the end of the funding or continued in a Second Phase? To what extend has the GGSD Cluster

projects succeeded in making contributions to the country's transition process and what are these contributions?

• **Strength and weaknesses of the GGSD Cluster projects.** The main question in this area was, what were the main features of the GGSD Cluster project's projects and how did they evolve?

• **Recommendations.** The main question in this area was, based on the main findings of this evaluation what general and specific recommendations could be made to UNDP to improve, strengthen and/or reorient its good governance activities?

• **Lessons learned.** The main question in this area was, what can we learn so far from the experience of the GGSD Cluster projects with regards to project design, implementation, management (administrative and financial), co-ordination, interaction and best and worst practices?

C. Scope of the Evaluation

UNDP Bulgaria has a diverse portfolio of projects divided into two thematic areas (reverting impoverishment and good governance). Inasmuch as all UNDP's projects aim at improving the quality of human life and many of these indirectly seek to promote good governance, this evaluation has limited its scope as to cover only four specific projects. These were: BUL/96/003 - Capacity Building for a Sustainable Development at National and Community Levels; BUL/97/002 - Methodologies and Analysis for Good Governance (Governance Umbrella); BUL/97/007 - Sustainable Development and Democracy Network Programme; and BUL/97/008 - Promotion of Community Participation and Development in Bulgaria- Chitalishte. Together, these four projects make up the GGSD Cluster projects.

The evaluation relied on different sources of information. The evaluation team had access to all relevant documentation, that included project documents and reports, human security and development reports, development cooperation reports and complementary background materials (a complete list of the documentation reviewed is provided in the Annex Section). In addition, the team also had the opportunity to meet with UNDP staff, national project coordinators and their staff, central and local government counterparts, direct beneficiaries and members of the international donor community of Bulgaria (a complete list of the people who were interviewed for this evaluation is provided in the Annex Section). Finally, the evaluation team also visited
several project sites to observe first-hand the results and activities, as well as to include in the evaluation some limited fieldwork. With the help of national project coordinators, UNDP staff selected the project sites taking into account not only the sites special characteristics but also some logistical factors and time limitations.

In sum, this evaluation has focused on four projects, a review of relevant documentation, extensive interviews with a diverse group of project managers and participants, as well as with national and international experts and project site visits. With regards to the scope of the evaluation, two interrelated limitations are important to mention. First, the duration of the evaluation (three weeks), which potentially had the disadvantage of providing more time for extensive interviews and meetings and less time for processing and analyzing data and information. And, second the reliance on a limited number of

project site visits, which may hinder the issue of representativeness for the overall findings. Nonetheless, these two limitations have been more than compensated by periodic briefings with UNDP staff, rapid assessment debriefing (RADs) meetings among the evaluation team, more in-depth macro & micro -analysis of good governance for sustainable development issues, and the good working relationship established by team members.

D. Methodological Framework and Main Concept

The evaluation of Cluster projects that aim to promote and strengthen the development of capacity for good governance as a means to eradicate poverty (through policy analysis and formulation, civil society support and fostering management efficiency), calls for a model of analysis that would help to understand its synergy. The GGSD Cluster is new to the UNDP Bulgaria's organisational design, and as such is in a process of consolidating its functions, interactions and inter and intra Cluster coordination. Nonetheless, it seems to have the potential to articulate

several projects and become a strategic mechanism to promote a holistic and systemic operative definition of "Good Governance," which could include the State, the private sector and civil society'[4]

The GGSD Cluster projects identified that in Bulgaria today the main good governance problem has little to do with natural and human resources required for development, and a lot to do with organization incapacity, at both State and society levels. The government is already implementing an administrative reform programme that aims at strengthening policy-making capacity, administrative efficiency and transparency, as well as promoting decentralisation and better inter and intra governmental coordination. Consequently, the GGSD Cluster projects efforts have instead focused at this initial phase on the functioning of civil society and its interaction with the state.

Despite a long history in local civic self-organization, civil society's role in Bulgaria is still limited. After half a century of controlled social organization and compulsory participation, civil society activity is just beginning to play an increasing role in good governance. As the 1998 National Human Development Report mentioned, civil society organizations are slowly but surely becoming catalyzers of citizen involvement in the decision making process.[5] There is sufficient empirical evidence to support the argument that strong civil society activity is good for democratic development, in that it creates a mechanism for people to participate in economic and social activities and to influence public policies. Civil Society organizations can also provide checks and balances on government power and monitor social abuses, as well as offer opportunity for people to develop their capacity to improve their standard of living. Most importantly, civil society organizations create networks that reduce individual opportunism, improve flows of information, foster trust and make political and economic transactions easier.

In seeking to promote good governance, UNDP's Bulgaria Programme has prioritised civil society support, in order to enhance Bulgaria's civil society involvement in fundamental policy debates. In addition to becoming a means to accelerate change in the

system of values, UNDP Bulgaria believes that the civil society support would also lead to a greater understanding of the reform process underway and its potential benefits. Similarly, that this support would generate greater popular ownership of reforms, a shared vision of the future and a more effective response of government in policy dialogue and continuity, which are essential factors for the success of development. UNDP is drawing not only on its experience and mandate, but also on a keen sense of identifying the right actors and areas of intervention. The context in which these initiatives are being pursue, is a dynamic one, but with a high degree of uncertainty, complexity and risk. This is why the GGSD Cluster projects have provided an initial framework or model that guides programme activities.

[4]Under this model, the State, the private sector and civil society, is each a sphere of good governance with specific responsibilities. The State creates a conducive political and legal environment for good governance. The private sector has the responsibility of generating jobs and income. And civil society facilitates political and social interaction by mobilising groups to participate in economic, social and political activities. For more details see, UNDP. *Governance for Sustainable Development: A UNDP Policy Document.* New York: UNDP, 1997.
[5]See, UNDP. *National Human Development Report: Bulgaria 1998, The State of Transition and Transition of the State.* Sofia: UNDP, 1998.

As can be observed in Figure 1, this framework involves a so-called upstream and down stream approaches. At the top there is an umbrella project (BUL/97/002) which is supposed to provide timely information and highly quality analysis to support government efforts for a constructive policy dialogue with civil society and the international donor community. This project is supposed to be proactive, in terms of its capacity to be creative, as well as reactive in such a way that is flexible enough as to respond to rapidly emerging needs and priorities. Then there is a linkage project, the Sustainable Development and Democracy Network Programme (BUL/97/007 - SDDNP), which aims at establishing a virtual network of government, civil society and private sector organisations, for them to exchange information and experiences regarding all aspects of human sustainable development. This linkage project, in fact, can be thought out to be the main focal point that manages the flows between up and down streams and vice versa. The guiding framework of the GGSD Cluster projects also has two downstream projects. The Capacity Building for a Sustainable Development at National and Community Levels (BUL/96/003), which aims to setting and testing models for sustainable community development. This project establishes mechanisms, which is expected to facilitate the creation of an enabling environment for advancing sustainable development at the national and local levels. And the project that promotes community participation and development through the Chitalishte organization (BUL/97/008).

This model proposed allows for a better understanding of the dynamic and synergy of the GGSD Cluster projects, as well as its current potential. The GGSD Cluster project's projects and activities seem to be focused on one specific category; develop and/or strengthen strategic capacity to promote sustainable development mainly from the bottom-up, working with municipalities and/or local authorities, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and private sector organizations. The effectiveness of this model, however, is highly related to how well these capacities
can articulate and manage goals and systemic change.

E. Organization and Structure of the Evaluation

The evaluation team was composed of an external international consultant, who was also the team leader, and a national consultant. The team leader was responsible for the overall co-ordination and supervision of the evaluation team, as well as for actively participating in all the major activities of the project (interviews, site visits, drafting of the report). The team also had an external national consultant, who actively contributed to all the major phases of this evaluation.

This evaluation report has an Executive Summary, and after this introductory section, the report analyses the main features of the GGSD Cluster projects (concept and design, placing close attention to the context, the projects and the project documents). The underlying cluster logic and central assumptions are also discussed in this section. In the following section of the report, the key questions of the evaluation are analysed, in terms of the six areas of analysis that were established above. This analysis is based to a large extent in the documentation review, discussions with main stakeholders and project management and staff There are finally, three separate sections that deal with strength and weaknesses of the GGSD

figure 1
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Cluster projects, recommendations and lessons learned. At the end of this report, there is the Annex Section, that includes the terms of references, a detailed list of persons interviewed, a list of the materials consulted and other pertinent material.

Throughout the evaluation, the team adopted a participatory approach. Regular meetings and discussions were held at different stages of the process. Relevant comments and observations were aggregated and taken into account in the drafting of the final report.

The evaluation team would like to take this opportunity to thank UNDP Staff and members of the GGSD Cluster projects. Special thanks to Antonio Vigilante, Resident Representative for his insights; Trine Lend-Jensen for her support; Dafina Gercheva, Sustainable Human Development Advisor and Hachemi Bahloul, Programme Coordinator for the GGSD, for their valuable assistance and insights; Constantino Longares, JPO for facilitating information and all the logistics; Maria Zlatareva, Assistant Program Officer for her assistance and insights; Velimira Popova, Programme Secretary for her support in arranging interviews; and Stefan, Djoganov, Stefan Evtimov, and Stoyan Stoymenov, Drivers for their utmost concern to ensure
that the evaluation team would get to their destinations safely.

III. CLUSTER PROJECTS CONCEPT AND DESIGN A.

Context of the Cluster Projects

All four projects of the GGSD Cluster projects started between the end of 1996 and the middle of 1997, coinciding with the so-called Winter Crisis Period, which was

characterised by both economic and political upheaval. The immediate aftermath of this crisis, were harsh reform measures. While the attempts at economic and political reform showed some significant but slow advances, relatively little attention had been given to issues of social reform. In general, UNDP response during this critical period was very important. For example, special UNDP emergency funds were activated to fund a United Nations inter-agency humanitarian needs assessment mission and the establishment of a Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Unit based in Sofia. As a compliment, a series of specific projects were expeditiously designed and approved. All four projects of the GGDS Cluster, were part of these UNDP efforts and in that sense, were very relevant to the context, mainly because the country faced a long process of recovery, which implicitly placed as a common social goal the idea of good governance. Since then, especially in the political arena, the process of democratisation has continued to advance. The civil society sector, since then, has also evolved.

Cluster Projects and Macro-Economic Policy

Since 1997, the economic situation in Bulgaria has slowly recovered. That is to say that, economic growth was reinitiated, the budget deficit was reduced, the inflation rate has been controlled, currency reserves of the Central Bank increased and the budget surplus strengthened and there is even in place a three-year agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to support the balance of payments. However, the overall economic situation is currently still in a process of recovery. For example,

disposable income has not recovered, the level of wages is still one of the lowest in Europe, it is estimated that one-third of the urban population are poor while in the rural areas the percentage is much higher and employment rates have not showed any relevant improvement. Ethnic groups and women have been most affected.

This macro-economic framework, was considered by the GGSD Cluster projects projects, although more implicit than explicit and more indirectly than directly. For example, all four projects had some form of employment generation activities, although these were mainly temporary. All four projects of the GGSD Cluster projects also had some kind of capacity building activity, either in the form of training, access to certain services and information (Internet), planning and some technical assistance. Some rural areas and women (especially through the Chitalishte and the SDDNP projects) were also benefited from the GGSD Cluster projects projects. [1]

Cluster Projects and National Plans

The four projects of the GGSD Cluster projects have different national counterparts. For example, Project BUL/96/003 (Capacity Building for a Sustainable Development) has the Ministry of Regional Development and Construction as the counterpart; Project BUL/97/002 (Governance Umbrella) and Project BUL/97/007 (SDDNP)[6] have as the main government counterpart the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and Project BUL/97/008 (Chitalishte) has the Ministry of Culture as the main government

counterpart. All four projects seem to match the macro-strategies and policies of the national government. The projects are also working with or supporting both, regional and local government entities, as well as non-governmental organizations. The government is not actively supporting the Chitalishte organization
or the Internet connections for poor NGOs, nor it is openly demanding human development reports to strengthen policy dialogue and public policy design and implementation. The projects, nonetheless, are generally contributing in small ways to the general recovery effort not doubt; which is probably right now the most important national policy. These projects are in a sense, opening up new policy avenues for future governmental action.

Cluster and other sources of external assistance

Bulgaria is receiving considerable assistance from the donor community. According to the 1998 Development Cooperation Report, the volume of external assistance during the past three years has increased ten-fold.[7] The Economic Management Sector has the highest share (over 50%) of the external assistance. Almost all donors have been actively involved in supporting the NGOs sector in strengthening its capacities to participate more actively and effectively in the Bulgaria's Development process. UNDP's assistance falls well into other sources of external assistance.

Within the United Nations System in Bulgaria, excluding the World Bank, the UNDP is the largest donor. In addition, in the opinion of many interviewed, UNDP is

[6]Although for this particular project, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is not the executing agency; it is Arc Fund.
'See, UNDP. *Bulgaria: Development Cooperation Report. Sofia,* UNDP, 1998.

one of the only cooperation agencies that in the last five years has been able to design and implement innovative and attractive project initiatives. Also, the UNDP already has participated in cost-sharing experiences with the European Union, the World Bank and the Government of the Netherlands. All four projects of the GGSD Cluster have external cost-sharing.

The results from the GGSD Cluster project projects, which are becoming more visible, are expected to play an important and positive role in attracting additional external assistance.

Cluster and UNDP mandate

The GGSD Cluster projects fully addresses a UNDP central priority theme. Even though the four projects have fairly focused objectives, they not only address the goal of governance and capacity-building, but also poverty issues, women in development, environmental issues and few but significant opportunities for employment and training.

All four projects of the GGSD Cluster projects are creating capacity for sustainable development. They are providing training; access to highly advanced technological

information, and planning capabilities for municipalities, NGOs and Chitalishte. They are also producing human development information, promoting ownership and new partnerships. All four GGSD Cluster projects are also fostering national and/or local execution strategies and at the same time strengthening institutions and human resources. In general these projects have also addressed issues in poverty, gender, inequality and environment.

B. Cluster Projects

As can bee seen in Matrix 1, the projects of the GGSD Cluster projects are diverse, and at the same time related. As can be seen, the chronology of the GGSD Cluster projects has a certain synergy. Below a brief description of each of the projects of the Cluster is provided, and in the Annex Section a more detailed summary of the projects is provided:

1. Project BUL/96/003 - Capacity Building for a Sustainable Development at National and Community Level (Capacity 21)

The Project started in March 1997 and will end at the end of 1999. The Ministry of Regional Development and Construction is the executing agency, and the Ministry of Education and Science, the municipalities of Assenovgrad and Velingrad are also involved in the project implementation. The total budget of the project is US$ 450,000, of which US$250 000 is a contribution of the UNDP and the rest is a Dutch cost-sharing contribution.

The project aims at building institutional and human resources for national sustainable development. It lays the groundwork for a national sustainable development strategy - the Bulgarian Agenda 21 - by promoting and testing models for sustainable human development at the community level and by targeting the Bulgarian press and educational system.

Matrix 1

2. Project BUL/97/002 - Methodologies and Analysis for Good Governance

The Project started in January 1997 and is supposed to end in December 1999. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the executing agency. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Great Municipality of Sofia are the implementing agents. The total budget of the project amounts to US$ 400,853, of which US$364, 374 is UNDP contribution and the rest are cost-sharing contributions of the national government, the government of Canada and NGOs.

The project falls in the area of policy, analysis and formulation. Through the production and dissemination of a series of reports, the project aims at providing timely information and high quality policy analyses in support of government efforts to promote a policy dialogue with civil society and International partners. The publication of these reports is

expected to stimulate the national debate and to mobilise public opinion. The project has an emerging needs component, designed to help UNDP support government reform policies in a timely and efficient manner.

3. Project BUL/97/007 - Sustainable Development and Democracy Network Programme (SDDNP)

The Project started in May 1997 and will end in May 2000. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the executing agency, although the Applied Research and Communication Fund (ARC Fund) is implementing the project on behalf of the Ministry. The total current budget of the project is US$ 693,365, of which UNDP's contribution is US$ 160,000, and the rest is provided by cost-sharing funds from the Open Society Foundation (US 100,000), Arc fund (US$ 363,365) and the Centre for the Study of Democracy (US$ 70, 000).

The project aims at establishing a virtual Internet network of government, civil society and private sector organization which have a common interest in promoting an open society, democratic reform, good governance and sustainable human development. By providing a nation-wide Internet connection for governmental and non-governmental organizations, the project plans to contributee to streamlining the policy and decision making process by enabling a timely and cost-effective access and exchange of information between decision makers and different government institutions.

Project BUL/97/008 - Promotion of Community Participation and Development in Bulgaria

The Project started in July 1997 and will end on July 2000. The Ministry of Culture is the executing agency, and its Chitalishte Department is the implementing agent. The total budget of the project amounted originally at US$ 315,000, of which US$140,000 was UNDP's TRAC contribution and US$120,000 was mobilised from regional projects. The project also mobilised US$257,000 from the Dutch and US$5,000 from Canada. The total budget ended with over US$550,000.

> A priority objective of the project is to build the Chitaliste's capacities to ensure its own survival and sustainability by engaging in income generating activities. The Project aims at exploring and testing Chitalishte's potential to become a center for grassroots community participation and development and a channel for the promotion of sustainable human development.

C. GGSD Cluster Project Documents Parties involved in the design:

- BUL/96/003 - Capacity 21 4 the Project Document of this project was drafted during 1995-1997 with the assistance of national experts. The process of formulation was highly participatory. The Ministry of Regional Development and the Municipalities of Assenovgrad and Velingrad actively collaborated with the UNDP Country Office in project design.
- BUL/97/002 - Umbrella Project 4 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs approved the

Project Document of this project, but it did not participate actively in the design. The Sofia Municipality was involved actively in the design for the Human Development Report.

- BUL/97/007 - **SDDNP 4** an international consultant in close collaboration with the ARC Fund and the UNDP Country Office, formulated the Project Document of this project. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs approved the project document.

- BUL/97/008 - Chitalishte 4 the Ministry of Culture collaborated in the design of project document (it was an advocacy exercise vis a vis the Ministry of Culture). The Chitalishte Department of the Ministry provided relevant comments that were included in the final version. An important consideration was the translation of the project documents into Bulgarian. The sub-projects were designed with the participation of local stakeholders.

It is important to clarify that all the Project Documents were separately formulated before the establishment of the GGSD Cluster projects. Overall, there was collaboration with the stakeholders in the design of the projects, although some projects involved stakeholders more than others. It is good for the project to involve stakeholders, because this opens a space to share common experiences and concepts, as well as to clarify responsibilities and expectations. The involvement in the design phase of stakeholders could positively affect the implementation of the project. The collaboration with the stakeholders could also ensure ownership of the projects.

Definition of the problem

The GGSD Cluster projects support in addressing the governance challenges of the country in the context of the Country Cooperation Framework is mainly focused in two thematic areas: (1) policy analysis and formulation; and (2) Civil society participation. The projects collectively cover three main sectors of governance: context, communication and information, decentralization and support to local governance.

The Project Documents of all the GGSD Cluster projects clearly define the problems, which they intend to solve. For example:

- The Project Document of the Capacity 21 Project (BUL/96/003) places the emphasis on development of national strategy for sustainable development. It correctly focuses on framing the needs for sustainable community development, improving sustainable development education at primary and secondary levels, enhancing the capacity of mass media to understand and communicate clear messages regarding Bulgaria's sustainable development challenges;

- The Project Document of the Governance Umbrella Project (BUL/97/002) outlines the need of multiplying and improving the flow of information from society to decision-makers. It correctly assesses the country's need to gain knowledge of international experience in policy design and implementation;

•The Project Document of the SDDNP Project (BUL/97/007) is based on the findings of two feasibility studies, which point out the necessity of reliable Internet access and of exchange of data and other information resources, as well as the relatively low level of communication and exchange between countries in Balkan region. In general, the SDDNP Project intends to enhance the policy dialogue by establishing a virtual network of Government, civil society and private sector organizations;

• The Project Document of the Chitalishte Project (BUL/97/008), identifies two main problematic areas: the very survival of the Chitalishte institution in a situation in which can no longer rely on substantial funding from the State, and the possibilities for Chitalishte to become a center for grassroots community participation and development and a channel for the promotion of Sustainable Human Development.

All the GGSD Cluster projects place explicit and implicit emphasis on the planning and support for policy formulation, decentralisation and strengthening civil society. Capitalising on the government's trust of UNDP, the GGSD Cluster projects have an enormous potential to encourage interaction and cooperation with civil society and the private sector.

Capacity Assessment

All relevant stakeholders are involved in the implementation of the GGSD Cluster projects. Different governmental entities are part of the implementation process of the projects. Civil society organizations are also involved in all the projects, not only as stakeholders (Chitalishte) but also as implementers (ARC Fund) and financial supporters (Open Society Foundation). In both upstream (Governance Umbrella) and downstream projects (Capacity 21) the local authorities (Great Sofia Municipality, Municipality of Assenovgrad and Municipality of Velingrad) are also partners in the project implementation. The evaluation team observed that, all of the GGSD Cluster projects have chosen the right partnerships. However, the assessment of the partners' capacity is not always explicit in the Project Document.

Nevertheless, each project document has made some capacity assessment. For example:

- BUL/96/003 -Capacity 21, provides an important assessment for the Municipalities of Assenovgrad and of Velingrad.

- BUL/97/008 - Chitalishte, carefully underlines the process by which Chitalishte's capacities will be assessed. In collaboration with the Ministry of Culture's experts, questionnaires, visits and training workshops were planned to really evidence Chitalishte's capacity.

•BUL/97/007 - SDDNP, considered that the Arc fund was the most appropriate executing and implementing agent for the project.

Intended users of projects outputs

In general terms, the GGSD Cluster projects have mainly targeted the local government, the central government and civil society (see Matrix 1 previous page). Indirectly, the small and medium size businesses receive some benefits from the projects. The evaluation mission observed that none of the GGSD Cluster projects projects, with the exception of BUL/96/003, did carry out gender analysis to identify women as main beneficiaries. Nevertheless, women benefited from the projects. This is most clear in the Chitalishte project, where for example 70% of the sub-project managers were women. In addition, through the Chitalishte project women were able to participate in training workshops (75% of participants were women) and receive vocational training (50% of total were women). In fact, women took more than 50% of the permanent jobs created by the Chitalishte project.

All the Project Documents of the GGSD Cluster projects explicitly identified the main beneficiaries. For example:

- BUL/96/003 (Capacity 21) identified as main beneficiaries, communities participating in the development and implementation of pilotdemonstration projects. Also, NGOs and private sector partners of these communities, professional staff of local and central public media organizations, teachers and educational institutions and senior students in secondary schools. The gender issue was considered as one of the reasons for assistance from UNDP. Women and female-headed households in the pilot communities were also considered direct beneficiaries.

- BUL/97/002 (Governance Umbrella Project) identified policy makers, national and local authorities, civil society representatives and donors as main beneficiaries. Since national consultants from the public and private research institutions as well as NGOs carry out most of research and surveys, they also were considered beneficiaries of the project. The Readers Group can also be considered an intended user of the project outputs.

- BUL/97/007 (SDDNP Project) identified government departments and agencies as beneficiaries, as well as NGOs, educational institutions,

  research centers the academic community and business associations of small and medium-size enterprises. The representatives, who sit on the Project Steering Committee, could also be considered intended users. In general, the Project Document did not clearly identify the actual beneficiaries of the project.

•BUL/97/008 (Chitalishte Project), selected as direct beneficiaries a group of Chitalishte, the Ministry of Culture, the National Union of Chitalishte and the municipalities involved in the actual projects. Other beneficiaries identified were other government agencies, local NGOs and community based organizations. During the course of project implementation, project management decided not to approach the existing National Union of Chitalishte. Indirectly, the project has also targeted minorities, vulnerable people and unemployed.

Capacity Building

As was mentioned earlier, capacity building is the main focus of the GGSD Cluster projects, and as was also shown in Matrix 1 this corresponds with the type of project intervention. All four projects of the GGSD Cluster projects share a common goal that at the end of project intervention some capacity building could be obtained. For example:

- BUL/96/003 (Capacity 21) project envisioned: [b] a National Commission for Sustainable Development and a municipal commission on sustainable development to strengthen governmental capacity at the national and local levels. Through information, training workshops and transfer of knowledge, the project also envisioned more capacity among members of the media, teachers, students, community non-governmental and private organizations, to understand their potential roles in supporting sustainable community development.

- BUL/97/002 (Governance Umbrella) project envisioned: [b] that the Government policy makers would have better capacity to incorporate the population's perceptions into policies. The project also envisioned more capacity of civil society to participate in the policy.

- BUL/97/007 (SDDNP) project envisioned: [b] that over 120 civil society organizations will enhance their capacity to access information via Internet and to establish virtual networks to discuss local and global issues related to democracy and development.

- BUL/97/008 (Chitalishte) project envisioned: [b] increased overall capacity for participating Chitalishte, human resources strengthened through formal training and hands-on experience and community better able to cope with transition process.

Monitoring

The Project Documents of all four projects of the GGSD Cluster projects, did provide standard UNDP, but also some innovative mechanisms for project monitoring. For example:

Project BUL/96/003 (Capacity 21) provides annual reviews, quarterly progress reports and some monitoring by participants. The Project Document provides that the monitoring and reporting system should be in line with the Capacity 21 Monitoring and Reporting Strategy. The Governance Umbrella Project (BUL/97/002) and SDDNP Project (BUL/97/008) provided for bilateral (tripartite) review on annual basis. Finally, Project BUL/97/008 (Chitalishte) is subject to the six months tripartite review. According to the Project Documents, all four projects also have Steering Committees or Local Working Groups that are supposed to monitor project progress. However, the evaluation team observed that the most effective experience of these working groups could be found in Project BUL/96/003.

Risks

While no risk existed in any of the four projects of the GGSD Cluster projects with regards to its acceptability and initiation, the Project Documents provided some possible risk issues related to implementation. In general terms for all four projects, some of these risks identified were: political instability and delays, economic stagnation, iinsufficient management capacity at various levels, low interest and trust to participate in the projects (by community and working groups, teachers, journalists), quality of work done by national consultants and the issue of selfsustainability of the project is also mentioned.

The evaluation team noticed that in the Project Document for Project BUL/97/007 (SDDNP), no account was taken of potential risks arising from the technical performance (bandwidth of Internet connection, phone line charges for remote users, etc.) and national context (access and ownership of hardware). Also, the evaluation team observed that in Project Document for Project (BUL/97/008 (Chitalishte) points out that "...there is a risk that some of the pilot programs/activities would fail to achieve the expected results." This seems incorrectly formulated, since it does not stipulate specific reasons for the potential failures.

Logical framework

The logical framework of the GGSD Cluster projects contained in sections C (Development Objectives) and D (Immediate Objective Outputs and Activities) of the Project Documents, define the key components for project management. In this case the evaluation team believed that these were generally well structured, although there were minor deficiencies in the formulation of some items: For example:

> As was seen in Matrix 1, a common deficiency in most of the GGSD Cluster projects was the timetable. In tree of the four projects, the planned starting and completion dates have been modified.

The Development Objectives could have been more focused in all four projects.

Some items formulated as Immediate Objectives did not fit this definition. This was especially common in the Project Documents for Project BUL/97/007 and Project

BUL/97/008.

Certain outputs were incorrectly formulated especially in the Project Documents for Project BUL/97/007 and Project BUL/97/008. For example, Output 2.1. in Project Document for BUL/97/007, should have read "x number of WWW homepages and directories created;" or Output 4.1 in Project Document for BUL/97/008, should have read "developed plans, strategies... created by x year of project duration."

IV. OVERALL FINDINGS OF THE EVALUATION A.

Implementation

The evaluation team observed that in all GGSD Cluster projects' projects the implementation of the main activities was in line with the approved plans. As was already mentioned, in three of the projects the initial schedule was adjusted. Both downstream projects (Capacity 21 Project BUL/96/003/ and Chitalishte Project BUL/97/008) started at the local level but at their second phase they intend to up-scale at the regional level. The Governance Umbrella Project (the upstream project) addressed mostly national issues but its recent products - the Correa Report on Decentralisation and the National Human Development Report for 1999 - are focused on the regional issues.

The activities of the Capacity 21 Project seem very valuable because they are in line with the priorities of the government, especially those of the Ministry of Regional Development and Construction. The evaluation team observed this linkage especially in the case of the mission of Mr. Correa on decentralisation.

Other important activities included three national working groups (NWG) and two local working groups (LWG) of Bulgarian experts to support implementation of the Capacity 21 project. The members of these working groups worked as consultants on a part-time basis. Some of them worked throughout the project, while others were engaged only for a limited time based on specific requirements. This activity has proven to be effective, especially with respect to enhancing participation at all the levels of the project implementation phase, as well as because it attracted a large numbers have volunteers.

Other activities in the course of the project were: a survey among journalists, a study on the challenges to sustainable development in Bulgaria, the realisation of a documentary film for educational purposes and the development of a educational strategy. NGOs were sub-contracted for construction work, as well as small and medium size companies. The costs of the sub-contracts were over 38% of the total project budget, inasmuch that it assured participation, the costs were justified.

The evaluation team considered the decentralisation of the project implementation an important activity and strategy. The experience gained from bidding procedures was also very valuable for the local governments. The

demonstration sub-projects in the two pilot municipalities were innovative exercises as well, because they involved large participation of the community in their design and implementation, as well as capacity building for the local administrations and provision of public service.

The activities of the Governance Umbrella Project (BUL/97/002) were mainly related to report drafting, printing and presentation. In the budget of the project, most activities re related to consulting work (about 70%). Perhaps, more funding should have been reserved in the budget for public relation activities, as a strategy to disseminate the reports.

The SDDNP Project (BUL/97/007) has done procurement activities to purchase all equipment and services necessary to build technical capacity to implement the project; they followed UNDP procedures. Formal bidding was organized when it was required. A Local Contracting Committee was established to evaluate the bidder's results. All the offers submitted were subject to technical and financial evaluations. Activities related to promotion of the policy dialogue were developed in two main directions: 1) generation of local content and 2) empowerment of NGOs, SMEs, and some secondary schools. The project also did training activities.

The Chitalishte Project (BUL/97/008) activities were all in line with policies and approaches, that were acceptable to both the Ministry of Culture and local authorities. In the first phase of the project proposal activities were supported for 10 Chitalishte. There were also evaluation activities of the proposals, based on the potential of the ideas and not so much on the actual elaboration of the sub-project. The lack of experience in drafting the project proposals was compensated through individual work on each of the sub-projects on the spot in each Chitalishte. The method of building
new activities on the basis of the traditions in each Chitalishte - on its previous experience and activities proved to be successful. Whenever possible the transition to the new activities was stimulated. In most of the Chitalishte, the new activities followed the principles of previous work and experience. This project had also training activities.

Another issue of implementation was the level of commitment of different stakeholders. In the case of Capacity 21 Project, the Ministry of Regional Development ensured general political support for the implementation. The Ministry of Regional Development, the Ministry of Environment and Waters and the Ministry of Education provided senior experts. The salaries of trainees, the provision of premises and office equipment and supplies, bilingual secretary and translator were Bulgarian government in kind inputs also. The Ministry of Education is committed to cover about 30% of the overall costs of the development of Sustainable Development Educational Strategy. The Dutch bilateral cooperation program in Bulgaria demonstrated interest to support the community level sustainable development activities in Velingrad and Assenovgrad. In response the project proposals were drafted in cooperation with a Bulgarian NGO "Time." Both the pilot municipalities contributed to the implementation of the demonstration projects - 10% of the funds in Velingrad and 50 % of the funds in Assenovgrad. They also provided local administration staff for project implementation. Under the For free expression of opinions Project (funded by the EU Phare Democracy Program) small grants (about

US$ 4,000) were allocated for implementation of community projects in Velingrad and Assenovgrad.

The evaluation team observed a low level of involvement of the executing agency in the implementation of the Governance Umbrella Project. In the terms of inputs the government committed to provide conference room facilities and all the documentation and data required for the successful implementation of the project. In regard of the Sofia Human Development Report the Sofia Municipality contributed US$ 2,000 and provided. The Open Society and Fridrich Ebert Foundations also supported the project with financial resources. All the donor institutions, which were requested for documentation and data, were in service of the reports drafting team.

In the SDDNP Project Arc fund provided financial and in kind support and qualified staff for the implementation. The Open Society Foundation also contributed with funds and trainers. Its Internet program coordinator (Mr. Orlin Kouzov) produced a training manual. The Technical University in Sofia hosted the Training of Trainers seminar. The computer network equipment in the University laboratory was put to the disposal of the project. The university staff took part as trainers in the educational events and produced useful information materials and training manuals. Senior researchers from the Bulgarian Academy of Science were involved as experts to the project management unit and the local Open Society clubs provided technical assistance in organization of the educational events.

The Ministry of Culture ensured general political support for the implementation of the Chitalishte Project. The Bulgarian Government provided counterpart staff (translators), conference facilities for all workshops and seminars, working facilities for national and international experts and local transportation for international experts. During the first phase of the project, seven NGOs associated and supported project activities. There were also, over 700 volunteers. The evaluation team observed the in the most of the cases the local authorities provided funds and in kind support to the Chitalishte. Finally, local media also got involved in the project, especially providing significant coverage of the project implementation (more than 120 publications).

Other implementation facts about the GGSD Cluster projects are briefly described below:

The Chitalishte Project Management Unit monitors the progress of the subprojects through requiring quarterly substantive and financial reports on their activities and expenditures. In addition, there were visits on spot and assessment of the sub-project. Together with an international advisor, an intermediate assessment was made of the outputs and detailed impact indicators for each subproject. The project has been evaluated twice as whole. An overall review of the progress of the project, including all sub-projects was made by the international consultants Mr. Christopher Wardle (U. K) and Mr. Jiri Duzik (Chech Republic). The recommendations of the evaluators were taken into account. Most of them addressed the need of improving the monitoring and evaluation skills of the managers of the Chitalishte.

An external evaluation was carried out only for the Chitalishte Project. Three sub-projects (mainly with business orientation) were subject to an independent external evaluation conducted by the Business Center "Mesta". The evaluation team observed the some of the recommendations were followed.

The evaluation team considered that the tripartite (bipartite) review was used in effective ways by all the GGSD Cluster projects projects. On the meetings the emphasis was especially placed on the problematic operational issues.

B. Cluster Results 1.

Relevance

The evaluation team found that the GGSD Cluster projects addressed very well key UNDP development issues, particularly those related to UNDP's mission. The mission of UNDP is to promote sustainable human development, which can be defined as an activity that expands the choices for all people in society. Human beings, men and women and particularly the poor and vulnerable, are targeted as main subjects and objects of development. Ultimately, through sustainable human development, enabling conditions are created and/or strengthened, so people can enjoy higher levels of quality of life.

All four of the GGSD Cluster projects had relevance to basic aspects of sustainable human development. For example, the evaluation team found that both, the upstream and downstream GGSD Cluster projects have fostered a significant amount of *empowerment* among men and women involved in the project. Not only did the GGSD Cluster projects strengthen capabilities (through training in project management and planning, knowledge transfer, use of technology), but they are also encouraging more opportunities for project target groups and beneficiaries to organise and participate in economic, social and political activities.

For example in the two pilot municipalities (Assenovgrad and Velingrad) of project BUL/96/003 (Capacity Building for a Sustainable Development at National and Community Levels), the evaluation team found the community to be increasingly empower to participate in the decision making process. Not only did the community participated in the design of the Capacity 21 Agenda, but also in the process of selection and implementation of the demonstration projects. In Assenovgrad and Velingrad, there was a Working Group that actively participated in meetings with the mayor and with the City Council, as well as in several key decision-making events. In the case of Velingrad, in addition to the Working Group, there is a so-called Public Committee (democratically elected by the City Council, which offers another space to participate and discuss issues related to the project, as well as to monitor progress of project-related activities. The mayors of both cities stressed the level of community participation as a key factor of consensus and results achievement. The case is similar for Project BUL/97/008 (Promotion

of Community Participation and Development in Bulgaria - Chitalishte), where local Project Coordinators have been involved in project design and management activities, community mobilisation activities and have also facilitated and articulated the population's demands at the City Council and with the Mayor. In the three Chitalishte project sites that the evaluation team visited, the

important empowerment role the local Project Coordinators enjoyed was very visible, either as contestataries or as partners of the decision-making process.

The upstream projects of the GGSD Cluster projects (Project BUL/97/002 - Methodologies and Analysis for Good Governance/Governance Umbrella and Project BUL/97/007 - Sustainable Development and Democracy Network Program), were also relevant to the development issue of empowerment. Through the Human Development and Human Security reports and the Development Cooperation reports, the Umbrella Project expanded people's capabilities in the collection, calculation and analysis of human development data. Although it is not possible to precisely measure the contribution of the umbrella project to the capabilities of these individuals than have been involved in the process, the evaluation team found that the project empower the participants with additional know-how and knowledge. More than fifty professionals, advisors and academics participated in the production of five National Human Development Reports, one Human Security Report, one Aspirations Report and three Development Cooperation Reports. Since a majority of these individuals are associated with governmental and non-governmental organizations and research and academic institutions the probability of the multiplying effect is high.

The SDDNP project, also empowered people and organizations by providing access to a highly advanced technological service. In a sense, this project shows an effective form of decentralization in favor of voluntary associations and nongovernmental associations. The project provides on-line service, information and technical advice to over 125 organizations, of which a great majority re nongovernmental organizations. Although the project has focused mainly on organizations in or near Sofia, it is still relevant because it is supporting building capacity for a national information system and linkage. This system can be use to support decision-making processes, tap into an array of local, national and global knowledge and experiences, and to build networks for human sustainable development.

Another way, in which the GGSD Cluster projects were relevant to basic aspects of sustainable human development, is *cooperation and partnerships*. All four projects have established strategic partnerships with key development actors, and is positively affecting the way in which people are working together and interacting. The evaluation mission noticed several cooperation and partnership strategies. This is significant; because it is making a critical difference in the way people participate and affect the decision-making process. For example, the outputs produced to date, especially by project BUL/96/003 (Capacity 21) and BUL/97/008 (Chitalishte) show that cooperation and partnerships could be thought as an overall development grassroots strategy, that enables people to participate in all spheres of local public policy. All four of GGSD Cluster projects have built

partnerships and are quickly building a network, which could have positive implications for UNDP's current and future Bulgaria National Programme. Not only are these cooperation arrangements and partnerships promoting a more focused attention to development issues (women in development, environment and good governance) but are also raising the consciousness of key development actors. A small sample of these cooperation partnerships presented below shows the strategic diversity:

Local Chitalishte organizations (BUL/96/003 & BUL/97/008)

• Local municipalities (BUL/96/003 & BUL/97/008)
• Local schools (BUL/96/003 & BUL/97/008)
• Local Media (BUL/96/003 & BUL/97/008)
• Small and medium enterprises (BUL/96/003 & BUL/97/008)
• Center for the Study of Democracy (BUL/97/002 & BUL/97/007)
• Opens Society Fund (BUL/97/007)
• National Academy of Sciences (BUL/97/002)
• Union of Bulgarian Artists (BUL/97/002)
• Union of Scientists of Bulgaria/Sofia & Plovdiv (BUL/97/002)
• Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation (BUL/97/002)
• Center for Liberal Studies (BUL/96/003 & BUL/97/002)
• Arc Fund (BUL/97/007)
• Center of the Council of Europe (BUL/97/002)
• Bilateral and Multilateral Donors (BUL/97/002, BUL/96/003 & BUL/97/008)
• Bulgarian Council of Ministers (BUL/97/002)
• Bulgarian Human Rights Commission of the National Assembly (BUL/97/002)

These cooperation partnerships that the GGSD Cluster projects have fostered to date, are also promoting a mechanism for empowerment, financial support, advocacy and networking. The key principle behind these activities is the promotion of participation as a strategy of development. Participation in turn encourages ongoing debate and discussions, and people involvement in a bottomtop development approach.

Finally, the GGSD Cluster projects were relevant to UNDP development issues, targeted groups and beneficiaries, in that they are all beginning to change attitudes and shape governance. This comes very clear especially in some of the outputs generated by Project BUL/96/003 (Capacity 21) and Project BUL/97/008 (Chitalishte). Not only did the evaluation team observe a high degree of pride among the participants, but also that these projects are fostering the exercise of new economic, political and administrative authority to advocate development at the governmental and civil society levels. Although in a small scale, the projects have tested a new methodology or approach to articulate social organizations, mechanisms, processes and institutions, through which society and government can articulate their interests, exercise and fulfill their legal rights and responsibilities, meet their obligations and turn their differences into "minimum consensus. "

All four GGSD Cluster projects have promoted not only participation as a strategy of development, but also a new, more democratic form of transparency and accountability. This has ensured, especially in the case of the two downstream approach projects (BUL/96/003 - Capacity 21 and BUL/97/008 - Chitalishte), that the development priorities for the resources allocated are the result of a broad process of consensus. The Capacity 21 draft strategies and demonstration projects at Assenovgrad and Velingrad and the proposals of three Chitalishte the evaluation team visited are visible and tangible outputs of the broad process mentioned before.

In sum, the overall evaluation as regards to the main question in the **Relevance** area is that the GGSD Cluster projects collectively addressed very well key UNDP good governance development issues.

2. Performance and Outputs

The GGSD Cluster projects are all making progress toward achieving their objectives. Two of the projects under evaluation (BUL/97/007 - SDDNP and BUL/97/008 - Chitalishte) are about half way completed, whereas the other two projects of the GGSD Cluster projects (BUL/96/003 - Capacity 21 and BUL/97/002 - Umbrella) are entering their final phase. Overall, all four projects have achieved their immediate objectives and have produced the desired outputs.

The Umbrella Project (BUL/97/002) divided is immediate objectives into five modules: This project to date has produced the following outputs:

TABLE 1
OUTPUTS OF UMBRELLA PROJECT - BUL 97/002

Module 1	a
	a
	o
Module 2	o
Module 3	.
	.
Module 4	~
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Bulgaria Human Development Report, 1997 (emphasis on context of transition)
Bulgaria Human Development Report, 1998 (emphasis on the role of the State and Governance)
Bulgaria Human Development Report, 1999 (emphasis on regional development issues)'
Human Development Report of Sofia, 1997
Human Security in Bulgaria Report, 1997
National Aspirations Report, 1999[9]
1995 Development Cooperation Report, 1997 1996-1997
Development Cooperation Report, 1998 1998-1999 Development Cooperation Report, 1999[10]
High-Level Advisory Missions (for example on public administration reform)
Expert Missions (for example of decentralization and regional development
Participation on International and Regional Conference (on issues related to governance, human development and democracy

The Capacity 21 Project (BUL/96/003), had four main immediate objectives:

Immediate Objective 1: To integrate environment, economic and social equity concerns into the national development through a National Commission on Sustainable Development (NCSD).

[8]This report is still being produced and should be ready to be published in October of 1999.
[9]This report is still being produced and should be published along with the 199 Human Development Report in October of 1999.
[10]This report will be ready by August 1999.

Immediate Objective 2: To demonstrate in two pilot communities approaches to sustainable development at grass roots level and to feedback experiences the national level.

Immediate Objective 3: To enhance awareness, knowledge and skills, build capacity for sustainable development in Bulgaria through a new Educational Strategy.

Immediate Objective 4: To build human resource capacity among the Bulgarian journalists to promote sustainable development and motivate the public to participate in the development process.

The evaluation team found that the Capacity 21 project achieved most of the immediate

objectives described above. The National Commission on Sustainable Development (NCSD) has been established, and until the time of this evaluation it had a Chairman but was preparing to be operational. The role that the NCSD will play in the future regarding issues of sustainable development at this juncture is not clear. Nonetheless, the persons the evaluation mission had the opportunity to interview, were all confident that the NCSD will be an important player in integrating environment, economic and social equity concerns into the national development policy. The establishment of NCSD was a difficult and complex process. Considering that in Bulgaria there are only seven other national commissions (one on infrastructure and six regional development commissions), the establishment of NCSD is an enormous achievement. The UNDP's role and leadership in this accomplishment was a key factor.

The Project was also able to fulfill its second immediate objective. Two pilot strategies for sustainable development were produced at two municipalities (Assenovgrad and Velingrad), which are currently being prepared for publication. The evaluation team found that the effectiveness of this output could be assessed not only in terms of the material aspect, but also in terms of the process that made it possible to produce the material aspect. In fact, the arduous process of producing these two local strategies, in itself is part of the other two immediate objectives of this project. The evaluation tam found that, through the process the awareness and capacity for sustainable development was enhance knowledge and skills were transfer and the citizens have been motivated to participate and make a difference in the development process.

This project has also been a means to enhance awareness on issues related to he concept of sustainable development. For example, three manuals for teachers (one for each level-primary, middle and secondary) and additional visual materials were produced." Training workshops and seminars were provided for teachers, journalists and local project participants. More than three dozen such events took place, and according to the Project's Annual Project report more than 1,000 people participated and benefited from these training events (see annex).

Another GGSD Cluster projects Project, BUL/97/008 (Chitalishte) identified four major immediate objectives:

"The Ministry of Education and Science has approved its future usage.

Immediate Objective 1: To select income generating activities and community participation and development programmes for support by the project in five pilot areas where the Chitalishte and other local actors offer the best conditions for the success of the project.

Immediate Objective 2: To strengthen the capacities of the selected Chitalishte, Central Authorities (including the Union of Bulgarian Chitalishte) and professional trainers in management and community development and participation.

Immediate Objective 3: To achieve concrete results in the field of income generation for the pilot Chitalishte and community participation and development in

the areas of each selected Chitalishte.

Immediate Objective 4: To prepare the ground for a significant expansion of the scope of the pilot project to eventually cover Bulgaria in its entirety and to expose the results of the project internationally.

The project has achieved a great part of its immediate objectives, and in some of these it has far exceeded those anticipated. For example, the initial plan called to target and finance only five Chitalishte and in reality, the project in its first phase was able to work with as many as twenty Chitalishte and finance twelve projects. Another example of the effectiveness and efficiency of this project is the fact that it has identified a very dynamic organization that most
people trust. This trust for the Chitalishte is indicated by their readiness to take part in project initiatives, as well as in other ones. The evaluation team found that in a majority of the Chitalishte visited (which did and did non have UNDP support), there is indications that people want the Chitalishte to engage in other activities, especially those that involve resolving municipal issues. This trust and dynamism is also reflected in the fact that, Chitalishte are being connected with the institution of the ombudsman, through an USAID pilot project.

The major achievements to date of this project are impressive, considering its limited inputs. The project has financed a dozen of projects in ten Chitalishte, exceeding the original target of five. The average cost of these projects is about US$9,000, and the average duration of each project has been between 9 to 12 months. The project activities have been both traditional and new, but all have shown creativity. Projects have ranged from Internet Clubs, to cultural and productive activities. The realization of these projects, from design to implementation, has involved participation, consultation and coordination with local authorities and some degree of consensus and compromise. Some of the most important accomplishments of the Chitalishte Project are listed below, and reflect indicators of effectiveness and efficiency:

D The creation of community centres, where citizens seek advice, counseling, training and information. Eight such centres have been created, throughout the different Chitalishte communities in areas such as, Internet Club, tourism information, agricultural advice and arts and crafts. For the period August - December 1998, the project manager reported that

over 5,000 clients used these centers; that over 1,000 people received professional training; and that almost 70 community organizations have been engaged in project activities.

)o Most of the Chitalishte participating in the project, managed to create mechanism for self-financing. The mechanisms used ranged from providing services (photocopying, classes), production activities (potato growing, herbs, jelly, vineyards), and fundraising through folklore and crafts. For the period August - December 1998, the project manager reported that the

Chitalishte from revenue raising activities, donations and sponsorships in kind raised approximately US$25,000.

D The project fostered and promoted civil society participation and involvement. For example, advocacy work in environmental, human rights and citizen awareness; the project has also promoted volunteerism and the creation of citizens committees and working groups; and has helped to open citizen telephone hotlines, for citizen to express their views, grievances and ideas.

The first phase of the Chitalishte Project has very much been completed, and the project is beginning to enter a second phase. The first experiences have confirmed that the Chitalishte are still dynamic organizations that are respected by the community at large. However, like the country the Chitalishte are also in a process of transformation, from being subsidized by the State to self-sustaining organizations. This first phase of the project has also confirmed that with the proper advise, technical assistance and resources, Chitalishte are able to broaden their traditional activities. Nevertheless, they are still thought to be strictly cultural organizations. This view was much stronger found within the municipal authorities, although personnel associated directly with the Chitalishte showed similar but less rigid perceptions about the role of the organization.

This first phase of the project has also proven that the Chitalishte are finding ways to survive in a complex and uncertain scenario. The evaluation mission found that even Chitalishte that were not receiving assistance from external donors, were finding extremely creative mechanisms to raise funds or optimize limited resources. New managerial know-how, as the UNDP project demonstrated, could have a positive effect on the planning and strategic design of the Chitalishte.

The project has also encouraged, as was already mentioned, that Chitalishte play a role of a civil society organization. The evaluation team observed, however, that, the "real" concept of civil society is not yet completed internalized among staff and municipal authorities. Civil Society is the result of a long process that enables to institutionalize people working together for common causes. Ultimately, civil society organizations do not replace the State or local authority, they rather complement their work. For example, the Chitalishte the evaluation team visited, did not quite comprehend the opportunities that provides for them the 1996 National Chitalishte Act, nor did the local authorities. This legislation affects on a positive way, the policy analysis, advocacy, outreach, networking, management and revenue raising activities of the Chitalishte. Perhaps in a second phase of the project, UNDP could test an approach that could bring government and Chitalishte together to discuss policies and

programmes and to help create a safe and impartial space that encourages trust and lasting relationship. While this is somehow already occurring, the project could encourage a much closer and formal partnership, such as those that were promoted under the Capacity 21 project (BUL/96/003).

In an effort to continue to broaden and strengthen Chitalishte activities, UNDP could also test in a second phase of the project more approaches to foster a civic education role for the Chitalishte. These initiatives could be complementary to the income generating, arts and crafts and cultural activities. These may include activities that foster social cohesion, help resolve conflicts, increase people's awareness of their rights and responsibilities and nurture participation in development and good governance. Some other donors may already be looking at Chitalishte as a new actor of democratic development, and as part of the activities to expand the scope of the pilot phase of this project, new partnerships with other donor could be sought.

There is much more work that needs to be done with this potential actor. Nonetheless, the efficient and effective results obtained so far by the Chitalishte project have been able to pave the way for future work.

Last but not least, in the performance of Project BUL/97/007 - SDDNP, some issues of effectiveness and efficiency could also be highlighted. This project had three precise immediate objectives: 1) to establish virtual networking and on-line communication between the target organizations; 2) creation of a body of content of information related to sustainable human developments and democracy; and 3) empowerment and engagement of NGOs in making an effective use of the Internet for substantive dialogue and exchange of information.

In general terms, the project was expected to facilitate policy dialogue and exchange of information between the State and civil society, as well as facilitate the contribution of the business community to the national policy debate and exchange information on substantive issues. The project also aimed at strengthening NGOs. To date the Project has accomplished the following results:

D Creation of an on-line web page network (www.online.bg), which provides information on current events, several general interest areas, business and politics (see Annex). This network also provides linkages to other sites, including the UNDP Bulgaria web page and the SDDN web page. The hits for the web page network have consistently increase in the last year. The last count was approximately 1 million hits per month. [12]

Realization of about 18 one-day training seminars in twelve cities across Bulgaria, where NGOs, professionals, specialists, librarians and the population in general, could obtain information about the opportunities offered by the web page network. Participants would also be informed about how NGOs could establish networks through the web page network, and would be introduced to the usage and applications of Internet. There would

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[12] The evaluation team requested desegregated data on the hits, to have some qualitative indicators. Unfortunately, the project could provide such information due to software limitations. The last Annual Project Report (APR) provided some indicators, which show that Bulgarian NGOs could be the main beneficiaries of the web page network.

also be on line demonstrations. Approximately there were 350 participants in these seminars. 13

- Realization of three specialized and customized training seminars, directed to librarians, public administrators and small and medium size enterprises.

- Realization of a seminar for trainers especially directed to NGOs.

- Creation of training materials to be distributed to seminar participants and any other interested organization and/or individual. These include three education brochures concerning issues of Internet for NGOs and as tools of democratic development, as well as a training manual, which can be downloaded.

- Provided Internet access and services to over 120 organizations, most of which are NGOs. It also provided services to about 70 small business enterprises.
- Created web pages for organizations and an electronic information pool.

- Creation of a searchable database of over 400 NGOs.

This project has made important progress in fulfilling its objectives. Nonetheless, at this stage of implementation is not clear yet if the project is on the right track to fulfill two of its immediate objectives: the creation of a body of content of information related to sustainable human developments and democracy and the empowerment and engagement of NGOs in making an effective use of the Internet for substantive dialogue and exchange of information. This has not been done so far, partially because the context of implementation of the project has not been the most conducive. First of all, there have been technical problems with the service provider. Second, the level of Internet accessibility in Bulgaria is still comparably low, and limited to main urban regions. Third, there were obstacles (high costs mainly) to expand the project beyond the Sofia metropolitan region, due to high costs. [14] Use and acceptance of Internet service is proportionally related to access to computers and hardware, which is still difficult in the case of Bulgaria. Finally, the absence of a higher level of advanced technological knowledge was also a contextual problem. The evaluation team believes these two immediate objectives are key for the overall performance of the project. Unfortunately, the project is still being implemented, so a final evaluation at the end of the project, with a more in-depth evaluation of the results of these two immediate objectives, will be necessary to qualify the overall impact and performance of the project.

To sum-up the findings in the area of **Performance and Outputs,** the evaluation team concludes that the GGSD Cluster projects are succeeding in

13 The evaluation team requested to see the evaluation results of the participants to have some qualitative indicators. We were only provided with the questionnaire, which can bee seen in the Annex section. According to the last Annual Project Report (APR), participants were overall very pleased with these seminars.

"The evaluation team was informed that Arc fund already has applied to the Bulgarian Telecommunication Company to be provided with a national number, which will permit charging communication costs at local rates.

achieving their main objectives. In all four cases, but with much more clarity in the case of the Capacity 21 project (BUL/96/003) and the Chitalishte project (BUL/97/008), the projects have produced the desired outcomes. On the basis of transforming inputs into outputs, the cost effectiveness of the GGSD Cluster projects can be said to be more than adequate. This is mainly due to five reasons: 1) the limited financial resources assigned to each project, which averaged less than US$500,000 per project (optimal use of limited funding); 2) precise and focused objectives; 3) pilot/ demonstration nature of projects; 4) use of local capacities is maximized; and 5) low administrative costs. Together these three elements have created an adequate performance context. This issue may need to be rethought, as some of the GGSD Cluster projects have plans to expand and scale-up operations.

At the beginning, the majority of GGSD Cluster projects did not manage the time and planning factors. Projects took longer to initiate activities, or simply underestimated the actual time it would take to accomplish some objectives. This may have also responded to the critical time period, when the country was facing difficulties and impending priorities (end of 1996 to mid 1997); in such scenario it was sometimes difficult to process projects more effectively. Nonetheless, all four projects eventually found effective ways to manage time within the context of their projects.

The GGSD Cluster projects are a good channel not only for achieving UNDP's mission, but also to promote the concept of good government for sustainable development and test and demonstrate viable and practical approaches to strengthen governance for SHD. Eventually, the Cluster projects could be an efficient systemic mechanism to approach and promote human development. The process of good governance for sustainable development in Bulgaria could benefit from such a systemic approach, in that it could help articulate a number of actors (national and local governments, NGOs, community based organizations, donors and Chitalishte). This process will also involve a learning-by-doing mode rather than a theoretical one, because it calls for a transformation of the modalities of societal interaction. The GGSD Cluster projects have all the potential necessary to undertake and manage this process; this is beginning to emerge.

All GGSD Cluster projects will be as effective and efficient in future phases, as long as they continue involve some form of participatory partnership, which will require on the part of the Cluster a more systemic thinking, strategic design, implementation of multi-actor modalities of action and reflection-in-action. As it continues to consolidate, the Cluster should become more proactively involved in fostering a strategic synergy. All four of the GGSD Cluster projects are currently at a key stage of their cycle, either culminating or entering a second more up-scale phase. These projects would be effective and efficiently, if at the end their results give rise to social experimentation, innovation and learning which will be important to continue consolidating the application of good governance for sustainable development projects.

3. Overall Success

The GGSD Cluster projects so far have had an overall success. The projects have been relevant in their conception and successful in their implementation. Of course,

this seems to be more clear in the two downstream projects -- Capacity 21 Project (BUL/96/003) and the Chitalishte Project (BUL/97/008). One reason for this difference may be the fact that each of the four projects had established different indicators of success. For example, the Umbrella Governance Project (BUL/97/002) has indicators of impact for each of its modules.

- Module 1 (National Human Development Reports)

  - Extent of participation on the part of civil society and academics
  - Quality of the data
  - Extent to which the report address key national issues and recommendations are incorporated in national debate and plans
  - Extent of media coverage

The impact above-mentioned indicators would be mixed for the two reports published in 1997 and 1998 and for the 1999 (which has not been published yet). Civil society, donors and academic have participated in all three processes of elaboration, especially as part of the reader's group. However, the University as an institution has not actively participated. Many people the evaluation team interviewed questioned the reliability and quality of the data, although they found the data useful. (This problem may be more related to the Bulgarian National Institute of Statistics than to UNDP). The reports have addressed key national issues and some recommendations have been incorporated in the national debate and plans. The media also provided extensive, but not continue coverage.

- Module 2 (Sofia Human Development Reports)

  - Extent of participation on the part of civil society and academics
  - Quality of the data
  - Extent to which the report address key local issues and recommendations are incorporated in local debate and plans and resource mobilization
  - Extent of media coverage

In the case of the Sofia Human Development Report, based on the interviews the evaluation team had at the Sofia Municipality (including with the Mayor), the impact seems more clear, especially because of the ownership of the report by he municipality. There was a broad civil society and academic participation, and since this report was mainly qualitative, there was no skepticism. The report addresses key local issues, however the evaluation team did not get any clear indication that some of the recommendations have been incorporated in the local plans. Nonetheless, the Mayor explained that this document has become a useful tool to promote the city.

- Module 3 (Human Security and Aspirations Reports)

  - Quality of the data
  A Extent of media coverage

In the case of the Human Security Report (the Aspirations report will be published in September 1999), based on the interviews the evaluation team noticed a perception of impact. The participation of the Center for the Study of Democracy, the

Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation and the qualitative nature of the report, added to the relative impact this report had among key governmental and none governmental sectors.

> Module 4 (Development Cooperation Reports)

  - Quality of the data
  A Questionnaire to users to assess quality an relevance of the reports
  - Extent to which fruitful debate is generated on coordination of external assistance, possibly leading to a reorganization of the existing institutional framework.

In the case of the two Development Cooperation Reports produced to date (the third one is on production), the evaluation team found the overall perception to be positive. Nonetheless, some senior level governmental staff questioned reliability of data and usefulness. The evaluation team did not see results of questionnaire to users (because information was not provided on a timely basis) to assess quality a relevance of the reports or clear evidence that these reports are leading to a reorganization of the existing institutional framework.

D Module 5 (Emerging Needs)

  - Extent of contribution to good governance needs as reflected by the incorporation of consultant's analysis and recommendations in government policies and programmes.

The evaluation team found in the interviews, that two such consultancies were considered useful. The German Correa's Mission on Decentralization and Manfred Harrer's Mission on Public Administration Reform.

In the case of the SDDNP Project (BUL/97/007), the indicators use to measure impact are very broad:

  - Existence of the virtual network and number of organization connected
  - Quantitative indicators (number of local data bases; number of hits, and volume of traffic to stakeholders WWW home pages; frequency of international accesses.
    - Survey of User Satisfaction

The results are mixed in the opinion of the evaluation team. Whereas the network exists, it is operating and has connected over 120 organizations; the quantitative indicators do not provide sufficient evidence to measure the impact. Furthermore, the evaluation team was not able to obtain reliable qualitative information to assess impact. However, through interviews with different managers, stakeholders and beneficiaries, the evaluators observed that the qualitative dimensions of this project are not yet as clear as expected. What is evident, however, is that the overall impact of this project needs to be considered at this time in the context of use and access of modern technology in the country; which is much greater.

Project BUL/96/003 - Capacity 21, has the following indicators:

• Measures of the quality of participation in the conception, design and implementation of the various activities
• Measures of the Satisfaction of individuals and organizations with their own achievements and learning from this participation
• Measures of the demand for workshops, training and other forms of actors' interaction
• Transformation of some community members into effective trainers or experts for other communities
• Evidence that the two pilot projects have effectively mobilized resources
• Evidence of approaches developed by any of the two pilot projects being used and adapted in other communities
• Measures of the quality of the teaching and training materials developed
• Measures of Students changed attitudes as regard to sustainable development

The evaluation team found that in both pilot municipalities, the level of participation in the conception, design and implementation of the various activities was very high, especially among the municipal authorities, working and/or committee groups, local businesses and other sectors. The same can be said about the participation at the national level of key players, such as representatives from the National Center for Regional Development, from the Ministry of Finance, National Center of Sustainable Development and Environment and the very deputy Minister of Regional Development and Construction. More important than the participation, however, was the high level of satisfaction of the individuals and organizations with their own achievements and learning from this participation. There was a qualitative evolution of attitudes, in that when the project began there was much distrust and skepticism. However, as the project progressed such negative attitudes dissipated, slowly but surely.

With regards to demand for workshops, training and other forms of actors' interaction, the evaluation team noticed the large number of training activities; all in all, more than two dozen. However, there is little evidence to determine weather these were demand or supply driven. This is important because it could help determined the extent of the communities awareness of their needs and capacity.

The evaluation team observed, especially in the case of Velingrad, one clear transformation of a community member into effective trainers or experts for other communities. This is the case of the local coordinator of the Working Group. On the other hand, there is also some evidence that the two pilot projects have effectively mobilized resources (financial and none-financial). Using their experience with the project, they have put forward proposals for other donors and local business to finance related activities. For example, this is the case of the Palaenthological Museum in Assenovgrad and the case of the Business and information center in Velingrad. In a second phase of the project, it is likely that the approaches developed by the two pilot projects will be used as models or replicated in other communities.

The evaluation team found no evidence to assess the quality of the teaching and training materials developed by the project. The team only knows that the Ministry of Education and Science has approved the manuals for usage at schools. Similarly, the

team did not have enough evidence to measure students change in attitudes as regard to sustainable development. Perhaps, later a special assessment can be done of both, materials and attitudes.

Finally, the Chitalishte Project (BUL/97/008) can also be analyzed for impact. In the project document, these were their impact indicators:

- Extent of local participation in the design and implementation of activities
- Financial support mobilized at the central and local levels for specific initiatives
- The success of the activities/programmes initiated in the Chitalishte, as reflected by pre-identified success and impact indicators
- A baseline survey in selected areas to assess people's acceptance and satisfaction with the "new Chitalishte"
- Extent of Government commitment and donor support, for the extension of the pilot activities to a number of other local communities in Bulgaria.

Several sectors of the Chitalishte communities that were part of UNDP assistance actively participated in the design and implementation of their proposed activities. There is also evidence that these sectors were also involved in mobilizing support to raise additional funding. In fact, this also was the case in the Chitalishte communities the evaluation team, which were not part of the UNDP assistance. Chitalishte are by nature dynamic organizations. Nonetheless, receiving UNDP assistance has had, more than anything has motivational and stimulating effects to try new type of activities and strategies of survival. In addition, the Chitalishte receiving UNDP assistance has benefited from training and from external expertise (International Consultant, advisor and trainer Chris Wardle). It would be important at some point, maybe after the second phase of the project, to assess the impact of this training on the Chitalishte as an organization.

The impact of the Chitalishte project can be most clearly measured by the success of

the activities/projects, which are visible and tangible results. A Tourist Information Center, an Internet Club and an arts and crafts exhibition, just to name a few, provide an impressive array of visual impacts. Moreover, when the activities have generated some type of employment or productive opportunities, the impact is even more perceptible among those who have benefited from them. Another impact indicator, although it was not mentioned in the project document, is the attitudes of the project managers. Team evaluators had a chance to talk to and interact with, almost all current project managers and potential new managers. They were all motivated and ready to try new and more intrepid activities and the newer ones seemed ready to take risks and challenges. They shared their experiences with one another, and formed informal information networks. The meetings among themselves were lively, some times heated but always full of enthusiasm. The impact of the project was clearly seen.

The evaluation mission did not observed a baseline survey in selected areas to assess people's acceptance and satisfaction with the "new Chitalishte." This activity is being prepared, and should be completed in August. At the time of this evaluation, the terms of reference were being drafted and finalized, for consultants to start to work by the middle of July. Similarly, the evaluation team was not able to clearly

assess the extent of the national government commitment. At the local level, the general opinion of the mayors was that as long as the Chitalishte continue to be cultural organizations, subsidies would continue. There is also much to be done with potential international donor support. There are some donors who are exploring possibilities with Chitalishte, but probably do not have specific information on the UNDP's pilot project and its accomplishments to date.

The issue of sustainability for the GGSD Cluster projects as a whole can not be clearly analyzed at this time. However, each of the GGSD Cluster projects can deserve a brief assessment. The Governance Umbrella Project (BUL/97/002) shows a static sustainability, in that it flows the same benefits to the same target groups. If the different reports will continue to be produced, perhaps it might be important at this time to redesign a strategy (see section of Recommendations). The products do not have a real massive ownership yet, so probably if the UNDP does not produce these reports anymore, nobody else would. Regarding the SDDNP Project (BUL/97/007), it seems to have some potential to promote a dynamic sustainability, since need, use and access of technology will tend to increase in the near future. In this project what also could make a difference on sustainability, is the implementing agency. Arc fund is a dynamic NGO that enjoys strategic relations with other foundations, such as the Open Society and the Center for the Study of Democracy. After the UNDP project ends, there is good probability that at least some project activities could continue, provided they become price competitive.

In the case of the Capacity 21 project (BUL/96/003) and the Chitalishte project (BUL/ 97/008), the issue of sustainability is an interesting one. Both projects will soon start a second phase, and both have the potential for a dynamic sustainability. In the case of Capacity 21, its dynamic sustainability may be temporarily hampered by the upcoming elections. However, the high levels of involvement of community sectors may counter

balance any political events. In the case of the Chitalishte project, its dynamic sustainability may be conditioned to the ability of the project to make strategic partnerships with other donors and/or obtain additional funding from national or local governments. If the final objective of the Chitalishte project is to stimulate as many of these organizations as possible, it will require mobilizing additional funding. Such mobilization could depend upon how well project management sells the ideas and results of Chitalishte.

A final area of analysis in the overall assessment of the projects, is the extent in which the GGSD Cluster projects succeeded in making contributions to the country's transition process. The evaluation team thinks that such contribution is more discernible in the area of capacity building, not only in terms of institutional development, but also in terms of human resource development and enabling environment. There is still much more to do in capacity building, but here are some examples that are a product of the GGSD Cluster projects projects:

- Institutional Strengthening (Municipality of Assenovgrad, Velingrad and Sofia)
- Improving the professional qualities of personnel and managers through training activities
- Expanding civil society and NGO capabilities

- Strengthening partnerships between government, civil society and the private business sector.
- Developing capacity to replicate pilot experiences in the future
- Capacity to translate ideas into projects
  Capacity to fundraise and mobilize resources

4. <u>Strengths and Weaknesses of the GGSD Cluster projects</u>

The Matrix below summarizes the strengths and weakness of the GGSD Cluster projects identified by the evaluation team.

= local level of government involvement = national level of governmental involvement = community involvement and commitment = flexibility of project to respond to government demands and priorities = potential of creating agents of change	= universities are not involved in process = underestimation of planning and timing of some project activities = awareness of concept is not consolidated yet = two pilot projects are not sufficient = awareness among journalists not as effective
= provides information for strategy, planning public policy and policy dialogue = emerging needs component or module = Involvement of large number of actors in the elaboration process of the reports (readers group, consultants, experts, donors) = flexibility of human development reports as regards to themes = potential instruments to continue to strengthen UNDP's image and position	= universities are not involved in the process = process of elaboration of reports is not institutionalized yet = does not have clear ownership of process and products yet = not sufficient governmental senior policy people involvement = lack of a more efficient dissemination and public relations strategy

= use of highly advanced technology
= strong and dynamic implementing agency (Arc fund = potential for disseminating information
= objectives of its training component, which goes beyond technical use into policy dialogue
= context in which highly advance technological project is being implemented (low Internet usage, low hardware ownership, expensive service)
= does not have capacity to expand beneficiaries
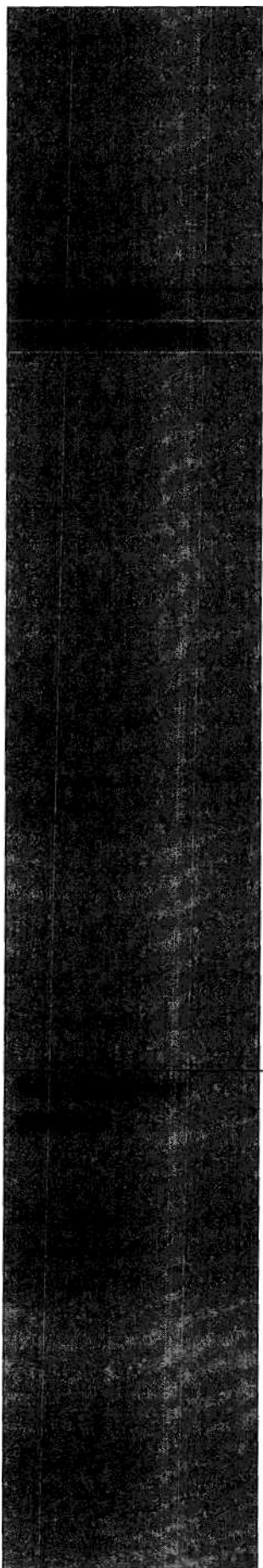
and social marketing

= leadership of UNDP in supporting Chitalishte as a highly innovative project = potentiality of Chitalishte as civil society agents = commitment of project managers = geographic decentralization of projects
= visible and income generating results
= using local tradition as an asset for development = focuses on a gap (lack of genuine grass-roots organizations) in the Bulgarian NGO sector
= the project has devised mechanisms for potential sustainable development
= enable UNDP to bring the issue of Chitalishte to the attention of the donors community

= potential to promote and foster issues and concept of good governance for sustainable development under the upstreamdownstream approach = established leadership in some good governance strategic areas (Chitalishte, umbrella and civil society and capacity building) = potential for programme approach synergy = good record on demonstration and pilot projects = all projects have mobilized resources (three projects have at least 50% of their budget coming

beyond Sofia or tap into more NGOs = universities are not involved in the process = government is not as involved (especially for sustainability)
• lack of policy dialogue component
= there is no clear strategic thinking to transform pilot project into a program
= low level of involvement of government (Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Finance) = project staff is small and overwhelmed with administrative procedures = Chitalishte are still viewed as mainly cultural organizations
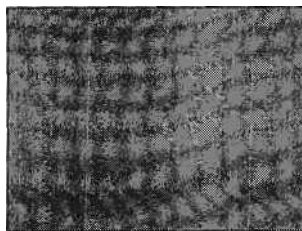• selection mechanism is too rigid
= skills of Chitalishte personnel still insufficient to accept new roles (requires more formal training with hands on experience)

= consolidating cluster = projects were planned before cluster
• lack of cluster strategic thinking
= lack of public relations (external) as a cluster

from cost-sharing)

= all four projects focus on concrete SHD results and processes for good governance promotion

V. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The GGSD Cluster projects were relevant in their conception and to date successful in their implementation. The GGSD Cluster projects are contributing to fostering and promoting the concept and related issues of good governance for sustainable development. The evaluation team considers that the GGSD Cluster projects should begin to capitalize on its success, consolidate its cluster work and synergy and translate current results into future activities. The recommendations provided below are an attempt to further strengthen GGSD Cluster projects activities and strategic thinking. The recommendations are grouped by project, but there are also general recommendations for the whole cluster at the end.

Project BUL/96/003 (Capacity Building for Sustainable Development/Capacity 21)

Expand number of Municipalities involved in the project, to provide more evidence of success or failure and lessons for future projects.
2. Expand project activities into the regional level, in coordination with governmental agencies involved in the National Regional Development Plan.
3. Explore alternative approaches to reach journalists. Special effort should be made to link approaches with journalism departments or faculty at universities and national and local television and radio. Next pilot project should have an especial component for a more strategic public relations campaign as a project activity.
4. Continue strengthening relations with pilot municipalities, but gradually foster the creation of a local solidarity network between participating and non-participating municipalities. During this period, special schemes and strategies should be created to replicate experiences in other municipalities, and ensure the participation of former participants as advisors.
5. Monitor carefully the implementation of sustainable development materials and manuals for teachers and students. A special effort should be arrange to measure awareness and internalization of sustainable development concept.
6. Monitor carefully effect of upcoming municipal elections on project progress and continuation. A challenge for future projects will be the transformation of Capacity 21 Strategy designed during one municipal administration, into policies during another administration.

Project BUL/97/002 (Methodologies and Analysis for Good Governance - Umbrella)

7. Explore new partnerships with universities, especially the social science, economics, geography and international relations department. A more active

participation of universities should be envisaged, not only for the elaboration
phase of the reports, but for the discussion phase as well.

8. Explore possibility to create a bi-monthly (every two months) Human Development
   Newsletter, to be used as a tool of institutionalization of the process of producing the
   reports. The newsletter could be produced in Bulgarian, to ensure its wider distribution,
   and in partnership with a non-governmental organization or governmental organization
   to ensure ownership.

9. Explore new partnerships with the Bulgarian National Television and Radio
   Network to disseminate and discuss results of reports.

10. Design a new strategy to disseminate and market reports, that would involve policy-
    makers of appropriate parliament commission, Ministry of Education and Science,
    Ministry of Health, Ministry of Regional Development and Construction, Ministry of
    Environment and Waters and Opinion Leaders. This would significantly increase the
    policy dialogue and will enhance the ownership process.

11. Explore alternative schemes for involving more civil society and governmental experts
    in the process of elaboration of the reports, with the aim of institutionalizing the process
    and enhancing ownership process. The creation of a Permanent Technical Committee
    could be contemplated, made up of high level representatives from different sectors of
    society (i.e., University, NGOs, National Statistical Institute, the President of Bulgaria,
    Church, ethnic groups, and national business association).

12. During elaboration of the reports, link with SDDNP project to apply interactive
    methods (quick survey and opinion polls) with selective audiences (universities,
    NGOs and government) to obtain updated feedback on issues related to human
    development and democracy.

Project BUL/97/007 (Sustainable Development and Democracy Network Project)

13. Find more adequate approaches to subscribe and link more NGOs outside Sofia. For
    example, establish contact with other donors in Bulgaria to obtain information on
    NGOs and follow-u on possibilities to expand service nationwide.

14. Explore possibility to expand services to some pilot Chitalishte, and monitor and
    report the results.

15. Design and install strategy to expand network linkages to Balkan region. This could
    significantly improve the policy dialogue component of the project and at the same
    time increase opportunity to share Bulgarian interethnic, human sustainable
    development and democracy experiences.

16. Organize several pilot virtual classroom activities with primary, middle and secondary
    schools, and report on results to assess potential expansion.

Project BUL/97/008 (Promotion of Community Participation and Development in Bulgaria - Chitalishte)

17. Provide more training for Chitalishte Staff, in areas such as management, fundraising
    and legal aspects of 1996 Chitalishte Act. This will continue strengthening capacity
    building.

18. Explore new partnerships for Chitalishte with government at national and regional level

(i.e., Minister of Education and Science, Minister of Finance, Regional Council for Development).

19. Explore alternative intervention approaches with Chitalishte, to continue to test the broadening of their functions and actions. Civic education should be a priority area, as well as more activities with young people.
20. Establish and/or strengthen local working groups at each Chitalishte participating in the project, and monitor and report progress.
21. Explore multiplying training activities to other Chitalishte, by sending them copies of training manuals and initiating a "Chitalishte training Chitalishte" experiment, to test capacity of knowledge transfer and multiplying effect.
22. Use already available *Chitalishte Magazine,* as a means to network with other Chitalishte and possible offer services and exchange experiences.
23. Establish a Steering Committee to begin to discuss expansion of activities, and issues of sustainability and strategic planning.
24. Envisage strengthening of capacity building activities and partnerships in the direction of more citizen participation, local NGOs executing projects and ideas for a more active participation of municipal staff should be explored.
25. Integrate and involve first phase experiences with second phase experiences.
26. Every *effort* should be made to do a baseline survey of participating and non-participating Chitalishte, to ensure more strategic knowledge of these dynamic organizations. This information will be used for improving project activities, coordination and future expansion schemes.

Good Governance for Sustainable Development Cluster (GGSD)

27. The GGSD Cluster projects should continue to consolidate internally and externally, by interacting, collaborating and sharing information with Cluster colleagues, members of the other cluster, other UNDP projects and other UN agency projects.
28. Address the issue of GGSD Cluster projects synergy and the upstream and downstream as a mechanism to coordinate and expand cluster activities.
29. Make every effort to have some time reserved on a monthly basis as a cluster to discuss strategic issues and future plans. The result of these meetings should be creative inquiry, innovative leadership, and incubation of new ideas and self-evaluation.

VI. **LESSONS LEARNED**

In general terms, this evaluation proved that it is possible to design and implement successful projects that foster and promote good governance for sustainable development. That a model framework for Cluster work could be extremely potential, especially if it fosters strategic thinking and approaches. On the bases of this exercise, the evaluation team found ten specific lessons that can help to reflect about future interventions.

1. The projects of the GGSD cluster are a good example of an **effective and**

> **fruitful partnership** between UNDP, government and donors, to promote and foster good governance for sustainable development.

> 2. Significant level of **involvement** of local governments and of NGOs could have positive effects in the design and implementation of good governance projects.

3. The **bottom-up approach** ensures both, high level of participation at all levels and stages of the project, and ownership.

4. The application of upstream and downstream approach, can be an **effective mechanism** to build and/or strengthen horizontal and vertical networks and links. The approach could foster social capital, trust and commitment among stakeholders. And, if strategically applied the approach could have a valuable impact on the development of policy dialogue between the central and local governments, government and civil society and private sector and civil society organisations.

5. The training components of GGSD projects could have important **cost effectiveness relevance in capacity building.** That is, developing and/or strengthening human resources could have a direct positive effect for human development and good governance (attitudes and values), without necessarily using large amounts of financial resources.

6. **Underestimating** public relations campaigns and the dissemination of demonstration activities could hamper project success. To demonstrate possible achievements is of key importance to create trust and credibility, as well as to multiply effects and increase positive expectations.

7. GGSD is a **long-term process,** which shows slow but effective results. This is why it requires strategic thinking in terms of policy inputs, at various stages of project implementation. Cluster approach could be the most effective and potential means to translate strategic thinking into new and complementary activities.

8. When project management staff perceive to be overloaded with work, they become more concern with **day-to-day management and co-ordination than with the learning by doing** methodology. This has a negative impact on the overall effectiveness of GGSD projects.

9. **Continuous capacity building** is important for GGSD projects, because the more people learn the more necessity there is to learn more. Capacity building is required no only in terms of understanding what good governance for sustainable development means, but also on technical and managerial issues.