**Independent External Evaluation
Glob@l Libraries—Bulgaria**

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## Acronyms

BLIA – Bulgarian Library and Information Association

BMGF – Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

CIMS – Common Impact Measurement System

CSO – Civil Society Organization

DC – District Coordinator

EU – European Union

GoB – Government of Bulgaria

GLB – Glob@l Libraries Bulgaria

GLI – Global Libraries Initiative

GSFIP – Grants Scheme for Funding of Innovative Projects

HR – Human Resource

ICT – Information and Communication Technologies

IPA – Impact Planning and Assessment

IPAF – Impact Planning and Assessment Framework

ICT4D – Information and Communication Technologies for Development

LAG – Local Action Group, a cohort of 35 organizations in towns across Bulgaria that have been formed (based on proposals) to pursue decentralized development opportunities mainly under the Rural Development Program

MCGA – Micro-Capital Grant Agreement

MoC – Ministry of Culture

MoEYS – Ministry of Education, Youth and Science

MoF – Ministry of Finance

MoH – Ministry of Health

MOU – Memorandum of Understanding

MTITC – Ministry of Transport, Information Technology and Communication

NAMRB – National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria

NRA – National Revenue Agency

PID – Personal Information Device

PMC – Program Management Committee

PMU – Program Management Unit

RDP – Rural Development Program

TAE - Technical Assistance Entity

TCO – Total Cost of Ownership

TASCHA - Technology and Social Change Group

TVET – Technical/Vocational Education and Training

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

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# Summary

## Overview and methodology

This independent external evaluation assesses the performance, relevance, effectiveness and strengths/weaknesses of the GLB[[1]](#footnote-1) program in relation to its stated objectives, summarized as: to accelerate e-inclusion; to enhance Bulgaria’s human capital, to foster community development and improved quality of life, and to sustain activities and build on results following the end of the grant period. Focusing on the period June 2009 to December 2012, the evaluation employs qualitative methods involving interviews and group discussions with representatives of leadership, implementing entities and project partners, field visits to 15 libraries participating in the GLB program, and document review.

## Background

The GLB program is a joint initiative of the MoC, UNDP, MTITC, NAMRB and BLIA—all of which are represented on the governing Program Board. Indicative budget for the period 1 June 2009 – 31 December 2013 is USD 48 million, including USD 15 million in country grant funding from BMGF, USD 18 million in software donations from Microsoft Corporation, and USD 15 million from GoB (with obligations at both the national and municipal levels).

**Scale and scope.** The GLB program has reached 960 target libraries located in 911 settlements, in 260 of Bulgaria’s 264 municipalities. Seventy-one (71) percent of participating libraries are in villages. Ninety-five (95) percent of all target libraries are located in “Chitalishte,” government-supported community cultural organizations typically established 100 or more years ago.

The core service provided by the GLB program to beneficiaries is free access to ICT and the internet, with support via training and consultation provided by local librarians. The GLB program has selected libraries and engaged in outreach, training and other activities so as to build participation by disadvantaged groups, including pensioners, ethnic minorities, job seekers, and people with disabilities, among others. The GLB program has additionally developed partnerships with GoB ministries and agencies (MoH, NRA and others) to enhance the value of ICT and internet access through provision of relevant information and specialized services.

## Performance

The GLB program has been well designed, managed and implemented, with particularly impressive results in relation to procurement of ICT equipment and delivery of training to participating librarians.

**ICT equipment.** Although the procurement process entailed substantial delay, the GLB ICT equipment has performed well and reliably; contracted maintenance and repairs have been effective; in-place insurance policies have supported replacement of damaged or stolen hardware.

**Training.** Training provided by the GLB program to participating librarians has been extremely well designed and implemented, with participants uniformly expressing their satisfaction with their new capacities, with specific and relevant topics addressed in training, and with training logistics and organization. Training was provided via a decentralized model: 11 key trainers were involved in development of five training modules and training of 132 trainers; 3,020 librarians have attended trainings in 39 training bases—meeting outputs targeted during planning and proposal development. The training design engages participants in learning via discussion, role play, hands-on use of technology and other interactive training methods, and in learning from lectures and presentations. Valuable topics include ICT skills, project preparation and “soft skills.”

**Portal.** The prize-winning GLB Program Web Portal delivers valuable service especially in terms of providing information to librarians, including user-support for technology, and library and program news. Although there is need for increased support for networking among librarians—both face-to-face and virtual—the Program Web Portal does not take advantage of available and easy-to-use tools (e.g., blogs, instant messaging, etc.).

**IPA.** Monitoring and IPA have been conducted as outlined in the Grant Proposal and Project Document. Although the BMGF approach to IPA has undergone substantial change during the grant period, the GLB program is continuing to implement up-to-date frameworks and protocols (e.g., the CIMS).

**Advocacy.** The PMU has been active in relation to national advocacy and partnership development over the course of the grant period, with four new partnership MOUs finalized in 2012. These partnerships are too recently established to be valuably assessed, while specific agreements in relation to e-services are limited by underdeveloped e-governance at the central and municipal levels. The value of the 960-library GLB network, however, is clearly stated by MOU signatory-representatives in interviews.

**Governance, leadership and management.** The GLB program has benefitted from effective leadership and management—the performance of the ICT equipment and librarians’ satisfaction with training both attest to the PMU’s ability to plan and manage large-scale and complex activities. Limitations have emerged in areas of strategic planning and timely decision making by the Program Board. In addition, the GoB has fulfilled its commitment to the provision of library staff to target libraries only in part; this partially fulfilled commitment impacts program effectiveness at the local level.

## Relevance and effectiveness

The central outcome of the GLB program is the revitalization of libraries, and the Chitalishte, in the form of: increased membership, new library users and renewed use by former patrons, influxes of schoolchildren, interest-group and development-group meetings, use of the multimedia projector by kindergarten groups and folk-arts groups, and many other activities. This outcome suggests that the GLB program is contributing to program objectives in relation to e-inclusion, community development and enhanced quality of life.

**Usage.** Users of the GLB ICT equipment are primarily schoolchildren—who benefit in terms of homework and school studies, the opportunity to meet with friends, access to entertainment and social networking, and in other ways (e.g. writing with purpose, writing for an audience, etc.). For schoolchildren in remote settlements or who are members of ethnic minorities, these benefits are substantial. Other users include pensioners, job seekers and traders, among others, with strong representation by disadvantaged groups.

**Local-level training.** Local-level training and consultations are provided by librarians in most GLB target libraries, although some librarians lack capacity and confidence in relation to the ICT equipment. As a result of these perceived deficits and other factors, there is currently unmet demand for training—and so for access to the GLB ICT equipment—chiefly on the part of pensioners in villages. To some degree, this unmet demand will be addressed by librarians as they build skills, and as “demand-aggregators” such as pensioners clubs and other CSOs become aware of the potential benefits of the ICT equipment for their members.

**E-services.** At the local level, e-services are as yet not provided effectively by librarians. Several factors influence this situation, notably the newness of the services themselves, incomplete (at this point) roll-out of training for librarians on e-services and the underdeveloped state of e-services among institutional partners and others.

## Sustainability

Local, regional and national outlooks for sustainability have different parameters and are influenced by different factors. Overall, prospects for ongoing activity on the part of the GLB program network, as a network of local libraries providing free access to information and communication, are good. However in the absence of national-level advocacy, effective partnerships and support for ongoing training, among other inputs, the potential of the GLB network will not be fully realized.

**Local sustainability.** Support for the GLB program among municipal and local governments is generally strong, although the financial strength of these bodies is not robust, in part due to the ongoing economic crisis and the low-performing economy of Bulgaria. Some Chitalishte, however, have independent sources of revenue, ranging from farmlands that return rents to associations with local businesses, which provide financial support in exchange for performances by Chitalishte groups at local functions. While Chitalishte finances are never lavish, and many Chitalishte are quite poor, with the completed installation of the GLB ICT equipment and the enthusiasm of library users the target libraries are likely to remain in operation well into the future.

Although the expressly cultural focus of the Chitalishte mission poses no threat to sustainable operations, this focus likely limits the potential impact of the GLB program on social and economic development, especially without effective leadership and continuous inputs. Chitalishte personnel—both the secretary and the librarian—and stakeholders perceive the mission and focus of the Chitalishte to be cultural, as expressed in folk arts and folk performances. Chitalishte personnel in field-visit respondents repeatedly expressed their preference for more support for cultural activities over support for activities in typical development sectors.

**Regional sustainability.** A similar tension poses greater risks for the sustainability of the district / Chitalishte training bases. The missions of the district libraries, in particular, focus on support for library operations and library service. District library personnel are library professionals. Although in many cases district personnel perceive the value of modern library services delivered via ICT, their jobs oblige them to focus on other, more traditional areas of library service.

**National sustainability.** High-demand and high-value activities at the national level include support for training, advocacy in relation to policy and funding environments, elaboration of new partnerships and services, and provision of networking and professional development opportunities for librarians. Without an active, agile organization operating at the national level these activities will neither develop nor continue.

Unfortunately, there are significant threats to the sustainability of national operations that lie outside the sphere of influence of the GLB program. The current fiscal agent and implementing agency, UNDP, will close its office in Sofia at the end of 2013, rendering impossible the simplest means of extending funding for activities after 2013—awarding the remaining BMGF country grant resources (via no-cost extension of the grant). In addition, the GoB is going through a protracted and unexpected political transition, one that began in February 2013 and that has the potential to extend for several months.

The process for renewed funding by BMGF is more elaborate and complex without participation by UNDP, and includes the need to identify a fundable entity as well as the need to develop and file funding proposals. Establishment by the Program Board and PMU of an entity eligible for EU and BMGF funds is in process, but is slowed by, among other factors, the GoB transition. Steps by the Program Board and the PMU to address the need for continued funding lag these events.

The PMU has announced as of March 2013 to its personnel that operations will cease in December 2013, wrapping up in February 2014. That cessation might, and we hope will, be only temporary. However at this point cessation of operations appears possible and perhaps likely.

## Recommendations

Following are summary recommendations for the BMGF Global Libraries Initiatives and for Global Libraries Bulgaria, comprising the PMU and the Program Board.

### Recommendations, BMGF

**Direct recommendations.** The single direct recommendation for BMGF, included as a “lesson learned,” is to include in guidance to future grantees that they assess the presence of active, local CSOs as a factor in relation to the selection of local libraries for participation.

Among the lessons learned included in this report, this lesson refers most specifically to program planning and future activities, and is likely to be extensible even based on our small sample. In Bulgaria, the presence of active, local CSOs stimulates training and services for marginalized groups and for relatively large proportions of disadvantaged sectors.

The presence of active, local CSOs is likely to lead to increased impact and the sustainability of GLI grantee programs in other countries as well. The presence of such CSOs can be considered as a factor during the process of selecting local libraries for inclusion as target libraries. (Accordingly, research by groups such as the Technology and Social Change Group [TASCHA] related to community access to information and communication should address this factor to assess its correlation to impact, sustainability and sub-factors.)

**Indirect recommendations.** The primary recommendations described in the section that follows, while not directly pertinent to planning GLI country grants, are likely to be extensible in some situations, and could be worth sharing.

### Recommendations, GLB

The chief recommendation to the GLB program revolves around the understanding that the GLB network, comprising over 900 local libraries, has high value as a means of disseminating information related to government services. Local-level effectiveness is high, which means that the Global Libraries network as a whole has the potential to help government stakeholders achieve goals and objectives, including development-related goals. Well-conceived messaging and advocacy along these lines should engage with potential government partners based on the strength and value of the GLB network; the existing strength of the network—as well as its effective implementation by GLB—should to the fullest extent possible be leveraged to expand relevant activities and ensure sustainability at all levels.

Specific recommendations are listed here in four groups: local-level activities, central activities to increase local impact (excluding advocacy), advocacy activities to increase local impact and sustainability, and central activities (including advocacy) to increase sustainability of a central organization (PMU and its successor).

### Summary list of recommendations

Recommendations and lessons learned are elaborated in “Section 8. ” The summary list of recommendations includes:

**Local services.**

* + 1. Increase focus of support and activities relevant to pensioners
		2. Develop support for local-level training

**Central services.**

* + 1. Support virtual and face-to-face networking among GLB librarians

**Partnerships and advocacy—E-services**

* + 1. Refine approaches to e-services
		2. Enhance e-services through advocacy and partnerships
		3. Identify and pursue appropriate e-governance activities
		4. Establish “reciprocal” partnership agreements
		5. Include provisions for communication and accountability in MOUs
		6. Improve support for e-services

**Partnerships and advocacy—Library staffing**

* + 1. Intensify advocacy for complete fulfillment of staffing commitment
		2. Initiate advocacy for full-time GLB district coordinator positions

**Partnerships and advocacy—Funding**

* + 1. Initiate advocacy for changes to co-financing and project partnerships
		2. Initiate advocacy for changes to the Complementary Subsidy from the MoC to the Chitalishte

**Impact assessment and monitoring**

* + 1. Increase the reliability of reporting on citizen training results

**Sustainability**

* + 1. Increase project-preparation capacity
		2. Increase decentralized training
		3. Increase networking activities
		4. Focus advocacy activities on strategic goals
		5. Separate financial and technical-assistance functions

## Lessons learned

A summary list of lessons learned includes:

* + 1. Anchor development support at a local sustainable institution
		2. Prioritize participation based on active CSOs
		3. Build decentralized and regional capacities
		4. Support inputs and activities that address marginalized groups
		5. Design simple and straightforward interventions and contributions
		6. Include the local implementing institution in management structures
		7. Frame an impact indicator of librarian status and self-perception
		8. Support linkage of grantee activities to evolving donor practice
		9. Encourage well-structured and proven procurement practices
		10. Frame sustainability goals and objectives during planning

# Evaluation overview

## Introduction

This section describes the independent external evaluation of the GLB program in relation to the evaluation’s goals and objectives, key issues that are addressed, and the structure of this report.

## Evaluation purpose and objectives

The purpose of the evaluation, per the TOR, is to provide recommendations for actions that can be taken prior to the planned project end in December 2013, to investigate sustainability and impact, and to provide lessons learned especially as pertains to program partners. The primary scope of the evaluation encompasses June 2009 to December 2012, however reference is also made to activities in the period January through March 2013 (e.g., Government of Bulgaria [GoB] transition, development of draft Sustainability Strategy, etc.).

### Evaluation objectives

The objectives of the evaluation involve assessment of four program characteristics (relevance, performance, effectiveness, strengths/weaknesses) plus the provision of observations and recommendations regarding sustainability.

* **Relevance**Per the TOR, relevance is assessed in relation to the needs of GLB “target groups” and the needs of “GLB stakeholders.”
* **Performance**
Performance is framed in this report as the relationship between proposed activities and activities that have been implemented. The TOR makes reference to several other aspects of performance, such as the contributions of GLB partners, recommendations regarding impact assessment, and sustainability. While we address partners’ activities and support, our analysis of partners’ financial support is not exhaustive.
* **Effectiveness, strengths/weaknesses**
Effectiveness is considered, primarily, in relation to the outcomes generated by program activities. Many of the findings presented in this report result from our intensive interactions with library personnel, partners and patrons. Considering effectiveness and using outcomes essentially as evidence leads very directly to characterizations of the strengths and weaknesses of the GLB program.

Effectiveness is generally presented as findings in relation to specific components or activities of the GLB program, such as management, advocacy or training. Findings with regard to sustainability, which is not a discrete activity, are also presented, and form the basis for recommendations with regard to sustainability.

* **Recommendations and lessons learned**
In our recommendations we focus on possible future actions, generally related either to ongoing or possible GLB activities (e.g., additional advocacy, follow-on training) or to the sustainability of the GLB network. Our recommendations regarding the sustainability of centralized program activities, such as those undertaken by PMU, faces two challenges: Intense time pressure, resulting from the end of funding by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation[[2]](#footnote-2) (BMGF) in February 2014, is likely to lead to a number of actions (e.g., development of a concept note for follow-on funding and activities in 2014 and after) that will change the situation while this report is being written and finalized; in addition, the ouster of the GoB administration in February 2013 has increased the uncertainty of the political context in which any support for ongoing activities will occur.

Recommendations with regard to improving or augmenting program activities face a related challenge: The unknown future of GLB support makes it unclear whether a central body [e.g., an independent entity along the lines of PMU] will exist and to what extent it will be able to adopt the recommendations that we offer here.

Lessons learned can be seen as recommendations for partners, including BMGF, GoB and UNDP, to consider in relation to design and implementation of similar programs whether in Bulgaria or another country.

The considerations outlined here suggest a report structure, described below.

## Report structure

The overall structure of the report is as follows:

* Section 1: Summary
* Section 2: Evaluation overview
* Section 3: Program background
* Section 4: Methodology
* Section 5: Findings—Performance
* Section 6: Findings—Relevance and effectiveness
* Section 7: Findings—Sustainability
* Section 8: Recommendations and lessons learned

# Program background

## Overview of Glob@l Libraries—Bulgaria

This short chapter provides a brief description of the objectives, assumptions and activities of the Glob@l Libraries—Bulgaria program (GLB). The Program was planned to take place in a 4.5-year period, from June 2009 to December 2013.

The main program goal is to facilitate easy and equitable access to information, knowledge, communication and electronic services at public libraries countrywide via free use of the internet and other technologies. At the level of objective system the GLB program puts forward four long-term objectives as follows:

* Stimulate local / community development
* Enhance the quality of human capital
* Accelerate the integration of Bulgarian citizens into the global information society
* Develop institutional capacities for sustaining and advancing the program results

The GLB program is a joint initiative of the Bulgarian Ministry of Culture (MoC—lead institution), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP—implementing agency / fiscal agent), the Bulgarian Ministry of Transport, Information Technology and Communications (MTITC), the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria (NAMRB) and the Bulgarian Library and Information Association (BLIA). These five institutions form the Program Board.

The GLB program is managed by a Program Management Unit (PMU) operating under the supervision of UNDP and the MoC, and staffed with 20 full-time employees.

The GLB program is supported financially by a USD 15 million grant provided by the BMGF. The indicative total program budget is USD 48 million, which includes the BMGF country grant, a USD 18 million software donation from the Microsoft Corporation, and matching contributions of USD 15 million from the Bulgarian central and local government budgets.

The program provides free-of-charge use of Internet connectivity, ICT equipment, a comprehensive training program for library staff (approximately 33.5 days per trainee), as well as advocacy, networking, public relations, promotion and technical assistance support to its target libraries / librarians. The program has reached 960 target libraries located in 911 settlements, encompassing 260 out of 264 municipalities in Bulgaria. Seventy-one (71) percent of the target libraries are situated in villages. Outputs include:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Output** |
| Computers installed | 4,935 |
| Librarians trained | 3,020 |
| Group trainings of citizens | 5,015 |
| Citizens trained | 29,291 |

Table : Program outputs[[3]](#footnote-3)

In terms of monitoring and evaluation system there is ongoing assessment of progress and results, including internal and external independent monitoring, and online monitoring of the ICT equipment performance. During the period October 2010 – February 2011, GLB implemented a Baseline Impact Assessment Study, followed by an Interim Impact Assessment Study, carried out July to November 2012. A final Impact Assessment study is scheduled for 2013.

# Methodology

## Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology of the evaluation, focusing on the undertaken methodological approach, the sampling approach, the selection of respondents and the evaluation instruments and data analyses.

## Methodological approach

The methodological approach is qualitative bringing together of analytical inputs from semi-structured interviews and review of the program documentation.

The interview component comprised interviews in Sofia with program representatives and program partners and interviews in the field with librarians, library users, local partners and local authorities.

The documentation provided for review comprised 35 folders of files, including project documentation, reports, to the BMGF and the Program Board, training documentation, impact assessment reports, partnership agreements and many others.

The approach adopted was to ensure a high level of independence: the sites are selected independently, there are provided all available documentation on the program, the support received from the PMU is only technical and logistical.

### Sampling

The sampling process is based on the principles of a stratified cluster selection with quota representation and a random selection of respondents at the final stage. However because of the qualitative approach and the very small sample size (15 sites) we deal with a proxy sampling. The objective of the sampling approach is to ensure proxy representation of the following key (for the approach) indicators:

* Regional diversity of the observations
* Representation of libraries, located in small (village) settlements, middle size town libraries, and district libraries
* Representation of settlements of high density of ethnic (Turkish and Roma) population
* Representation of settlements of various level of socio-economic development.

The undertaken selection process followed the following steps:

* Selection of regional clusters (3 districts in the North and 3 in the South)
* Selection of settlement clusters inside the district (libraries in villages and bigger settlements)
* Selection of respondents within the selected cluster (library)

The resulting sampling comprises 15 sites with represented indicators as follows:

* 7 libraries in the North and 8 in the South
* 7 libraries in villages
* 6 libraries in small towns
* 2 in district centers
* 1 municipal, 2 district (training centers) , and 12 chitalishte libraries
* 1 library each in north/south that includes high proportion of Roma and 1 library in South that includes high proportion of ethnic Turkish population
* At least1 library each in north/south that is socio-economically well developed.

For the list of field sites visited, refer to Annex C.

## Respondents

At central level in Sofia the evaluation team had interviews with representatives of the UNDP, the PMU managers and other individual staff, the MoC, the other Program Board Members, the Ministries with which the GLB has signed MOUs and the consultants of the program, involved in drafting e-services documents and the Sustainability Strategy.

At local level the evaluation team met with librarians, library users, volunteers, local authorities and local partnership institutions (e.g., labour schools, kindergartens, pensioners’ and children clubs, local offices of the Employment Agency, etc.). The full list of the respondents is provided in Annex E.

Some of the respondents were invited for interviews by the local team, while others, e.g. library visitors and service users were interviewed ad-hoc on the spot. The interviews in Sofia were organized by the PMU.

## Evaluation instruments and data analyses

The interviews were taken with a semi-structured questionnaire, provided in Annex F.

The questionnaire addressed issues identified in the TOR regarding

* Performance (overview of activities, carried out so far, management perceptions),
* Relevance (perceived importance of the program for users, the community, the librarians)
* Effectiveness and impact (perceived change, potential for a future change)
* Sustainability and partnerships (partnerships activities, services sustainability, local financial inputs to sustainability, institutional inputs)
* Strengths and Weaknesses

The analytical method comprised elaborating summaries of findings, clustering of findings applying cut-and-paste techniques, selecting illustrative quotations from interviews and data from the project documentation.

# Findings—performance

## Introduction

Our section on Performance provides our assessment of actual program inputs and outputs compared with levels proposed; in addition, the Performance section also assesses critical program components, such as advocacy and partnerships. Given the structure of these documents and the intent of this section, assessment focuses primarily on performance by the GLB PMU, the Program Board and other centrally based and organized institutions (e.g., Ministry of Finance [MoF]). Within the framework of this report, activities at the local level are generally treated as outcomes, and are addressed in Sections 6.

Findings presented here are based on evidence from the available program documentation (primarily the Country Grant Proposal and Project Document, with additional reference to progress reports, board minutes, impact assessment surveys, etc.), and on observations made by the evaluation team.

## Outreach and inclusion

The program accomplished its objective in relation to outreach: to perform a significant and nation-wide outreach to the public libraries in Bulgaria.

The GLB program extends to 960 public libraries, comprising more than 30 percent of the public libraries in Bulgaria.

A needs assessment of 2,351 public libraries was conducted for the BMGF country grant planning purposes in 2008, pointing to an indicative list of 1,676 libraries eligible for inclusion in the program. (The role of municipal governments in the establishment and support of the GLB program in public libraries has been critical. This role is addressed in detail in “7. 2. Sustainability at the local level.”)

Program implementation in the 960 target libraries took place in three stages: Stage 2009, in which 455 libraries were selected from 840 applications; Stage 2010, in which 352 libraries were selected from 740 applications, and; Stage 2011, in which 153 libraries were selected from 449 applications.

## Governance, leadership and management

Governance, the inputs of key partners of the GLB program, and leadership (on the part of the Program Board) have been adequate, although several instances and issues have arisen that have impeded performance and thereby limited program effectiveness at the local level. Chief among these instances are the partial fulfillment of financial contributions by GoB and the lack of timely decision-making on the part of the Program Board.

Leadership and management within the GLB program has achieved high levels of effectiveness—and success—in terms of program planning and implementation, while performance has been less effective in relation to strategic issues. Management of program components such as procurement of ICT equipment, contracting of maintenance and repairs, and planning and delivery of training to librarians has been exemplary. Decision making, especially in relation to the sustainability of a central organization after 2013, has not been timely and has led to delay of pursuit of the most likely sources of ongoing support. Given that relevance, these issues, while identified in this section, are addressed in greater detail in “5. 3.3 Decision making and leadership.”

### Governance and organization

The establishment of a governance structure in the form of the Program Board has been accomplished per the Country Grant Proposal; organization of the Program Board, while engaging organizations with different missions, ensures representation of the relevant government and civil-society stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the GLB program.

The program design relies on a “partnership model” that involves various stakeholders at national and local levels, specifically MoC, UNDP, MTITC, BLIA and NAMRB, and incorporating institutional and financial inputs from the partners.

There are intrinsic differences in the institutional roles, development interests and intervention strategies adopted or pursued by the various partners; these differences, in our assessment, create challenges in relation to decision-making: MoC is focused on management and promotion of arts; UNDP pursues development impact; BLIA, as a “professional organization,” is focused on the professional development of its personnel and on improvements to library infrastructure and environment; the NAMRB is a “horizontal player,” being a desired partner by many donors in various community development programs at the local level. For GLB, the NAMRB also represents the “material local host” of the target libraries— as municipal governments are the channels of support for Chitalishte. In terms of the both development and cultural goals, MTITC acts more as a “technical provider” than a core partner.

**Chitalishte.** The Chitalishte are autonomous local entities that are subsidized annually by one of the lead GLB partners, MoC, which exercises general monitoring of the chitalishte sector. The Chitalishte are a uniquely Bulgarian form of grass-roots cultural and community organization, one that emerged in the 19th century to serve as the institutional backbone of the national cultural and educational renaissance following the exit of the Ottoman Empire in the later 1870s. There are registered 3,548 Chitalishte in the country, according to the register of the MoC.

**Regional level coordination.** At regional level, program activities are coordinated by 28 District Coordinators (DCs), providing support in the application and selection process for Stage 2009, Stage 2010 and Stage 2011; facilitating the delivery of ICT equipment to all target libraries; organizing of trainings and district thematic meetings, partnerships, fundraising, and promoting innovative library services. Reportedly, DCs are also responsible for monitoring the implementation of the MOUs and for providing information/advice to the PMU and the MoC in relation to the identification of the need for new library staff positions.

Our observations are that DCs are frequently reported by the Chitalishte librarians as very trusted, supportive and cooperative. DCs are being consulted by the librarians for various reasons including reporting issues, services, selecting information materials. District Coordinators’ support is particularly appreciated in terms of applications to the Grants Scheme for Funding of Innovative Projects ([GSFIP] Kopilovci) and providing information materials (Topolovo).

In terms of initial management set-up, the district coordinator is financed by the GLB program. In later phases, the personal payment to the coordinator is replaced by an “agreement with the district library,” which enables broader opportunities for providing services to the GLB target libraries.

There are, however, some constraints at district level, including:

* Capacity at district level is not sufficient for operating completely independently and for providing all the training support that is currently delivered by the PMU.
* The district coordinator structures are not confident in providing support for elaborating applications to EU programs, although such expectations and demand exist from the target libraries.
* At the district level the capacity centers primarily on library-related skills rather than the “cultural”- or “community”-oriented skills that directly address the Chitalishte profile (and the profile of Chitalishte libraries in many cases).
* The GLB program and particularly its “developmental” objectives are not core to the mission of district libraries.
* There are time and workload constraints at regional level, including unclear incentives for the librarians.

These findings are addressed in relation to sustainability in “7.3.3 Supply factors, decentralized programs.”

### Financial contributions

In general, the financial commitments of the various partners have been met as specified in the program design, however some central and municipal commitments have not been fulfilled.

The overall partnership structure for financial support can be presented in simple terms: BMGF provides the equipment and covers the program operational costs; GoB provides the necessary new staff positions for the libraries; the municipalities and the Chitalishte ensure the adequacy of physical conditions for conducting the activities (e.g., internet connectivity, refurbishment of the premises, wiring of premises, running costs, etc.).

**Partial** **fulfillment of staffing obligations**. The GoB contribution of new staff positions has not yet achieved levels that were originally envisioned, with—as is discussed in “5.3.2 Financial contributions”—some detrimental consequence to GLB activities. According to the Country Grant Proposal the “Ministry of Culture will finance the required additional librarian positions at the target Chitalishte libraries during the grant and post-grant period.” The commitment of GoB in that document is to 600 new positions; as of 31 December 2012, 291 positions have been provided.

The partial fulfillment of the GoB commitment of staff positions is due in part to the lower actual number of required positions and in part to the failure of the GoB to fulfill these lower demands.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Staff positions by program stage** | **Number of target libraries** | **Requested by the PMU** | **Provided to the program by the GoB** |
| Stage 2009 | 455 | 191 | 191, provided in 2011 |
| Stage 2010 | 350 | 236 | 100, provided in 2012[[4]](#footnote-4) |
| Stage 2011 | 154 | 54 | 0 – expected in 2013 |

Table : Staff position targets and realized

Taking into account the data, provided by the PMU, presented in Table 2: Staff position targets and realized, we can offer three observations regarding fulfillment of the GoB commitment:

* The PMU (in consultation with the District Coordinators) requested 481 new staff positions instead of 600 staff positions. This is 119 staff positions (about 20 percent) less than the estimated requirement as presented in the Project Document.
* The realized number of full-time staff positions is 291 which is approximately 60 percent of the current GLB request.
* The new staff positions were provided with delays.

The unfulfilled GoB commitment results in the provision of half-time positions in many libraries, rather than new full-time staff positions. This approach has been adopted by the Program Board and implemented by the PMU to distribute the available resources from GoB as widely as possible.

**Effect of unfulfilled commitment.** Understaffing creates a serious barrier to GLB effectiveness. To support both the GLB program and their communities, half-time librarians sometimes choose to work substantial overtime: A librarian in the Chitalishte library in Krumovgrad (one of the GLB target libraries) described during field visits his need to work full days and weekends to support users of the GLB ICT equipment, despite employment as half-time staff at a pay rate of 150 BGN per month.

The reasons for the unaccomplished commitment by GoB have been characterized as “budget shortages, caused by the continuing economic crises.” Per reports, MoC representatives have met on a yearly basis with MoF personnel, including the Finance Minister, regarding the need to solve this issue.

**Delay in provision of staff**. The provision of staff positions was delayed during the first phase, which combined with delays in performing of other activities inhibited performance at local level in some libraries.

**Municipality commitments largely met.** The commitments of the municipalities have been accomplished to a greater extent. According to the progress reports, 960 cooperation agreements have been signed at the local level. Out of these, there are only eight municipal authorities that have not been involved in the program; in these instances, the agreements have been signed by the Chitalishte only.

Field observations show strong commitment, generally, on the part of the local authorities to sustain the GLB activities. These authorities perceive the Chitalishte/library as a unique community center, one that is normally the only local cultural and community institution, particularly in villages. In many instances, a teacher and the local appointed mayor joined the Chitalishte secretary and the librarian, serving as a unified team that together met the evaluation team and reported on the program (Kopilovci village).

**Some municipal commitments are unmet.** There are, however, observations that show that in some instances the commitments of the municipalities as stipulated in the agreements have not been accomplished, even though these obligations require only small financial inputs.

In some Chitalishte (both in small villages such as Petko Slaveykov, Sevlievo municipality, and in the much larger tourist town of Tryavna, Tryavna municipality), the municipalities leave payment for refurbishment, the Internet and other operating expenses to the Chitalishte. Chitalishte financial resources are very limited

According to the PMU there are in total 72 instances of unaccomplished commitments on the side of the municipalities, including seven serious cases, which have been proposed for review and, in two instances, termination of their participation in the program.

Despite the observed mismatches between committed contributions and overall input, implementation can be considered cost effective and reasonably well balanced among the partners. In the short term the financial inputs for hardware are greater than the contributions of GoB. However, the program activities have triggered lasting commitment on the side of local and central authorities, in terms of sustaining staff positions, refurbishment, and other contributions related to program objectives and more broadly to developing the local communities and their integration in the information society.

### Decision making and leadership

Lack of timely decision making on the part of the Program Board have, in our assessment, affected performance in at least one instance and pose current risks both to performance during 2013 and to sustainability following the closure of the UNDP Sofia office. As discussed in “5.5 Training provided by the PMU,” delay surrounding the design and development of the training program (chiefly centering on training methods) contributed to delayed implementation of the training program. Decision making by the Program Board with regard to training design was one of several factors influencing the timeline for training implementation.

As is discussed in greater detail in “7.4 Additional factors in national-level sustainability,” the need for a decisive approach regarding the constitution of a successor organization to the PMU has intensified to the point that ongoing delay has the potential to affect staffing levels and effectiveness within the PMU and morale both within the PMU and at the local level.

### Summary of governance, leadership and management

The GLB program has benefitted from effective leadership and management in terms of program design and implementation—the performance of the ICT equipment and participants’ satisfaction with training provided to librarians both attest to the PMU’s ability to plan and manage large-scale and complex activities. Limitations have emerged in areas of strategic planning and timely decision making. In addition, while district / Chitatlishte training bases, District Coordinators and the majority of municipalities have met their commitments for service and funding in relation to the GLB program, the GoB has only partially fulfilled its commitment to the provision of library staff to target libraries; this partially fulfilled commitment impacts program effectiveness at the local level.

## GLB ICT equipment

Although the procurement process incurred delays, which have in combination with other factors influenced the effectiveness of the GLB program, the functionality and reliability of the GLB ICT equipment is high. Maintenance and repairs are timely and effective.

### Procurement and installation of hardware

The ICT equipment was procured, delivery was taken and installation completed successfully, with some deviations from the delivery schedules described in the Country Grant Proposal.

The Country Grant Proposal outlined three phases in the delivery of equipment across six library categories. Different categories were designated to receive different numbers of computers, based on each library’s type of settlement, population and available space. According to the Grant Proposal the deliveries were to take place respectively in 2009, 2010 and 2011.

**Completion of procurement and installation.** As of February 2012, procurement and the installation of all specified ICT equipment were completed successfully for all target libraries. One company was selected to install the equipment and to maintain the service it.

According to the progress reports the use of a single source for installation and all service was debated, with alternatives considered. The solution, however, proved to be effective.

**Delays in procurement and installation.** The delivery of ICT equipment, as described above, incurred delays in relation to the schedule as presented in the Country Grant Proposal and the Project Document. The Project Document assumes that the first delivery of equipment would be “procured and installed by May 2010,” while according to the progress reports installation began in November 2010 and was completed in January 2011, a delay of 6-8 months. According to the progress reports, the deliveries following the first phase partially compensated for a degree of the initial delay. The Project Document, however, sets a final deadline for “activity 4.1.3. (Procurement and installment of ICT equipment)” as August 2011. As implemented, installation continued until the beginning of February 2012.

According to PMU, delay in procurement results from the multiple layers of review required by UNDP protocols.

Delays of this order are common to large-scale technology-procurement activities; we do not find procurement delays entailed by the GLB program to indicate limitations in relation to effective program design, management or implementation.

### Performance of the GLB ICT equipment

Librarians and library users reported that computer hardware, software and peripheral equipment (e.g., multimedia projectors) worked well and reliably. In addition, librarians and users reported satisfaction with Internet quality and reliability—no respondents identified problems related to bandwidth or to multiple concurrent users.

The high levels of satisfaction reported by library personnel and users suggests—although to an unmeasurable extent—that delays stemming from multiple review cycles or other institutional requirements were at a minimum constituent elements in a procurement process that was effective.

**Insurance against theft and damage.** Per the Progress Report from the second quarter of 2012 (filed 1 August, 2012[[5]](#footnote-5)), as of 30 June, 2012 thefts or damage to the GLB ICT equipment had been reported by 20 libraries.

Following these incidents: insurance claims for three libraries have been paid and their equipment replaced; payment for claims has been received for seven libraries but new ICT equipment has not yet been ordered; nine libraries have submitted claims that have not yet been paid; 1 library has recovered the stolen equipment and has placed it back in service.

The insurance policy procured by GLB appears to be effective. All thirteen of the older claims have been paid. All seven unpaid claims date from 6 February, 2012, or later, suggesting that these claims will be paid.[[6]](#footnote-6)

### Maintenance and repairs

Library personnel expressed high levels of satisfaction with the timeliness and the effectiveness of maintenance and repair. We received no reports of malfunctioning computers that had gone unrepaired or that would not be repaired (a common finding in technology-for-development projects).

### Summary of GLB ICT equipment

Although procurement of the GLB ICT equipment incurred substantial delays, the equipment itself demonstrates high levels of performance and reliability, evidence that the procurement process was effective. In addition, services contracted for maintenance and repair have been similarly effective.

As of 2013, the importance of the delay in procurement might be magnified in retrospect for partners and for PMU personnel. However, the level of delay in procurement is not unusual for complex projects of this kind; unrelated events, notably the upcoming closure of the UNDP Sofia office and the ongoing transition process with GoB intensify awareness of incomplete or just-initiated activities.

## Training provided by the PMU

The training of librarian personnel was designed, developed, and implemented by the PMU effectively. Librarians reported very high levels of satisfaction with their overall training experience. This experience extends to logistics and organization, design of the training modules (including relevance), and the delivery of training.

Among the key elements of the training program are:

* Design of 18 training modules grouped in five thematic areas
* Development of comprehensive training materials based on these designs
* Contracting of key trainers and conducting of train-the-trainer sessions
* Logistics and delivery

(Training is among the more complex program components in terms of scope, scale and the need to adapt or develop training courseware. Other activities and elements are likely entailed by the GLB program’s approach to training, however the five listed above are salient in relation to relevance and effectiveness.)

Levels of satisfaction reported by librarians support the findings of GLB post-training surveys, which show “feedback scores” of 4.79 or higher out of 5.0 possible points.

(Training provided by librarians to local patrons is considered, within this report, as an indicator of the effectiveness of training provided to librarians. For this reason, training at the local level is addressed in “Effectiveness as shown by local-level training.”)

### Training design and development

During 2012-13, training for librarians addresses five thematic areas:

* Thematic Area 1: Information and Communication Technologies – 90 training hours
* Thematic Area 2: Public Library Management – 32 training hours
* Thematic Area 3: Modern Library Services – 64 training hours
* Thematic Area 4: Soft Skills – 46 training hours
* Thematic Area 5: Advocacy, Fundraising and Project Preparation – 36 hours

As mentioned, overall satisfaction with the training, and particularly with its emphasis on practical and hands-on methods has been confirmed by the field observations. Elements of training design were developed with substantive input from the key trainers.

Per the librarians at field sites, the most valuable modules are:

* Thematic Area 1: Information and Communication Technologies
* Thematic Area 5: Section on project preparation (previously addressed in Area 2)

Librarians’ responses from field visits suggest that most or all topics addressed in training were highly relevant to GLB-related activities.

**Areas of additional need.** Although their satisfaction with GLB training is very high, librarians mentioned several areas addressed by training but in which they felt that their capacities were not yet adequate:

* **Project preparation**Although training in project preparation was perceived as being valuable, several respondents felt that they needed additional training in that area and/or that they lacked adequate skills in that area.
* **Advocacy**In relation to advocacy training, respondents reported a range of problematic issues—including capacity, but also including librarians’ perception of their own lack of standing, and others.
* **ICT skills and ICT-training skills**Several librarians stated they would benefit from additional ICT training; of these, more than half also stated that their lack of confidence in their ICT skills posed a barrier to the delivery of group training.

As noted with regard to advocacy training and local advocacy activities, librarians self perceptions and levels of self-confidence pose barriers (according to the librarians themselves). Gender, income, education levels and community perceptions of libraries are all potential factors in this situation.

**Competency Index.** The design of training modules was based on an elaborate “Competency Index for Public Library Staff,” which was first elaborated in 2010. The Index provides learning objectives that describe competencies targeted for librarian participants in five thematic areas. The Index formed the basis of the training-program design.

Training design was further influenced by results of a 2011 pilot phase, which yielded recommendations, including recommendations to increase practical and hands-on activities, such as “to increase the number of hours for practical exercise with Word, Excel, Power Point, Publisher.”

### Contracting and training of key trainers and trainers

Development of the group of key trainers involved contracting of library, ICT, soft skills and advocacy professionals, as well as professional trainers, a measure that proved invaluable in ensuring the effectiveness of training design and training delivery.

The number of key trainers varied between eight and 23 according to the specific task performed, with 26 different individuals engaged as follows:

* developing training programs and training materials - 15 people;
* training of trainers (Induction, Thematic and Advanced) - 23 people;
* supervision of the trainers - 8 people.

The combination of library, ICT, advocacy and soft skills professionals and professional trainers enabled the training design to credibly and effectively address topics in all five thematic areas. In general, library professionals provided expertise and credibility with regard to library-related practice, especially in relation to Thematic Areas 2 and 3; the ICT professionals provided expertise and credibility with regard to ICT-related practice, professional trainers introduced interactive approaches such as discussions, simulations and role-play. The contributions of the key trainers to the design of the training appears to have been both pivotal—in terms of the introduction of interactive approaches—and effective.

In addition to the key trainers, 132 trainers (including both freelance and library staff) were contracted centrally to form the GLB trainer corps, which provided training for librarians at the training bases countrywide. Performance of these trainers was subject to periodic observation and supervision by the key trainers.

Our field research did not include interviews with key trainers or with trainers at the training bases. However librarians in the target libraries expressed satisfaction with the capabilities of the trainers, which suggests that the key trainers were effective as well.

### Training logistics and delivery

Librarians reported high levels of satisfaction with both the logistics and the delivery of training. Respondents specifically cited the capacities and effectiveness of trainers; respondents also stated that training was well organized and convenient.

Training of librarians took place in 39 training bases located at the 27 district libraries, and 12 Chitalishte libraries (in larger towns). Training bases were designated as such in the hardware-allocation plan, ensuring that participants have access to computers.

The training program was implemented successfully, with outputs corresponding to targets:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Indicators** | **Target** | **Achieved as of December 2012** |
| Number of training bases | 27 district + 50 large municipal and Chitalishte libraries | 27 district + 12 larger local libraries |
| Number of key trainers | 15 | 26 |
| Number of trainers | 150 | 131 |
| Number of trained librarians | 3,000 | 3,020 |
| Number of trained users / citizens | No specified target | 5,015 group trainings29,291, trained users147,572 individual consultations[[7]](#footnote-7) |

Table : Training outputs

Field visits suggest that while these self-reported numbers of users / citizens trained are possible, they are likely to be unreliably high: In only one of the 12 Chitalishte libraries visited had group trainings been conducted; individual training and consultations are conducted on request and occasionally as a result of outreach. It is likely, however, that as librarians gain skills, experience and confidence additional group trainings and outreach to marginalized groups in relation to training will be conducted.

(For additional information, refer to “6.5.2 Training provided in libraries” and “Annex B: Monitoring of patrons trained.”)

**Delay in training implementation.** The implementation of the training component was also delayed, although the delay in comparison with the planned schedule here is less than the delay involved with the ICT installations. According to the Country Grant Proposal and Project Document, the training of librarians (the final output in the training scheme) was to start by the end of 2010, while it was instead initiated on 7 March, 2011, a delay of approximately two months.

According to the PMU Training Manager “the delay was caused by the different understanding about the training profile in the Program Board.” In elaborating on the issue, the Training Manager suggested that a “dispute” occurred among the key trainers, with professional trainers promoting interactive methods and library professionals promoting lecture-based methods. Key trainers contacted the Program Board in this regard, leading to additional delay.

Per UNDP, the delay in training was also linked to two other factors: the need to develop original training aids (methods, manuals, etc.), and; the need to schedule training in relation to the procurement and installation of GLB ICT equipment in the Training Bases.

## Program web portal

The Program Web Portal is supports dissemination of information to librarians and trainers. Traffic levels and a 2012 Site-Contest award conclusively demonstrate the relevance and effectiveness of the program web portal.

Per the TOR for portal development, the Web Portal for GLB is to contribute to “the creation and support of the contemporary face of Bulgarian public libraries as an access point to information, training, communication and services.” The portal is envisaged as containing an “information section,” providing information on program progress, good practices and news and an “administrative section,” providing document and reporting templates and training opportunities.

The developed website, <http://www.glbulgaria.bg/en>, accomplishes these objectives, informing interested users and serving as a distribution point of interactive media for internal users. The portal is simple and user friendly. Its content at the time of the evaluation provides updated information on the program, addressing external and internal audiences. The portal features several interactive tools, such as a web-based survey for usage, satisfaction and impact of e-services provided to library users, web-based mail and a forum zone For internal users the web-site provides information for upcoming training courses, IT equipment instructions, program materials, reporting documents. There is a zone for trainers, providing training materials, manuals and reporting templates.

**Web traffic.** The website has been operational since June 2009. During the program period, the portal has been redesigned, upgraded and improved several times. According to the Progress Reports, the most frequently visited GLB portal section is the “News from Libraries” section, followed by the “Training” page and the “IT Equipment” page—where librarians can download instructions on operating the ICT equipment. According to the Progress Reports, the number of portal hits in 2012 is in total 1,358,989 while the number of unique IP addresses hitting the portal is 247,109.

**Site-Content award.** In 2012 the GLB portal is awarded the audience’s first prize in the Education and Science category in the “BG Site contest,” which distinguishes the best websites in the country selected by a committee of web experts and web users.

### Peer-to-peer communications and networking

While the portal is an effective means of providing information to librarian-users and trainer-users, support for and activity in relation to librarian-to-librarian communication is not adequate to help the GLB program meet local-level demand for networking. (See “5.6.1 Peer-to-peer communications and networking” for more information.)

Although traffic levels are high and users access information provided by the GLB program, librarian-users are not active in the portal’s forum area, where there are few topics and postings). The portal does not currently employ many measures that might increase librarian-to-librarian communication and networking, including blogs and group blogs, Instant Messaging, profiles and features, among others. These measures are outlined in “8.3 Central services.”

### Program Web Portal Summary

The Program Web Portal has achieved sufficient levels of relevance and effectiveness: Support information (e.g., how-to instructions, training materials, etc.) provided to librarian-users and trainer-users is accessed and used; the interface is clear, providing access to information. Opportunities for peer communication and networking among librarians are not fully realized.

## Impact assessment, monitoring and evaluation

Impact Planning and Assessment (IPA) and program Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) have been conducted efficiently and with adequate effectiveness. In terms of performance, quarterly data has been collected from target libraries, aggregated and analyzed, and reported; baseline and interim impact assessments have been conducted, generating reports, and a final impact assessment is in process or planning as of the date of this report.

### Recommendations regarding final impact assessment

Assessment of the effectiveness of IPA activities and recommendations regarding the final impact assessment cannot be reliably or valuably offered, based on the influence of many “confounding factors.”

The TOR for the independent external evaluation represented in this report states that the assessment of performance should include “[r]ecommendations on the Final Impact Assessment of the GLB Program,” (sec. III.1.1.3.d); in addition, the PMU has requested “recommendations on impact assessment related to ways of conducting surveys through third-party contractor (as proposed by the BMGF in the draft CIMS framework).”[[8]](#footnote-8)

**Confounding factors.** However, numerous factors significantly impede our assessment of past practice as a basis for future actions. These factors include but are not limited to:

* The significant evolution of the GLI approach to IPA over the course of the GLB grant period
* The contracting of different firms for the baseline and interim studies (ESTAT Ltd. Research Agency and Alpha Research respectively)
* Personnel changes in PMU in the Monitoring and Impact Manager position after contracting but during start-up of the interim study
* Lack of access to TORs / contracts and communications-records with the research firms
* Mid-project responsiveness of the PMU to change in the form of modifications to the Impact Planning and Assessment Framework
* The timeline for the final impact assessment, which is scheduled to be currently in progress or advanced in the planning / contracting phases[[9]](#footnote-9)
* The release of the draft Common Impact Measurement System (CIMS) by the GLI

These confounding factors also bring into play limitations in our knowledge and understanding of BMGF requirements and GLB decisions in relation to IPA, prior approaches, results, experiences and perspectives of the PMU, and other factors. In a further complicating factor, only a portion of the relevant reports have been translated into English. (As a result, apparently, sampling methods for “at-large” populations are not available for assessment by the lead evaluator.)

The above events do *not* comprise evidence for an assessment of and recommendations in relation to IPA activities by the PMU or the GLB program; many of these circumstances fall well outside the control or influence of PMU. Rather, these circumstances render any such assessment within the scope of this evaluation essentially irrelevant and largely without value.

In response to the PMU request and the TOR, a minimal set of recommendations are offered here with regard to contracting of outside services for the final evaluation.[[10]](#footnote-10)

**CIMS.** Of these factors, the most influential in relation to the final impact assessment is the release of the draft CIMS by GLI. The CIMS effectively outlines a common approach to IPA with regard to: outcomes, indicators, survey populations, data-collection methodology, frequency of data collection and survey questions. (Also indicated are whether items are required or optional.) This approach is to be followed in all current GLI grantee countries.

CIMS is likely to mitigate, for future grantees, many of the challenges that the PMU has faced in relation to IPA. For the GLB program, however, as it nears the end of its country grant period, CIMS mitigates some problems while amplifying others.

**Contracting of services.** For the GLB program, the immediate benefit of the use of CIMS will be found in the contracting and management of an outside evaluation firm. CIMS should be used as:

* The basis for cost estimations by competing firms
* The basis for specifying deliverables by the PMU
* A standard for assessing performance of the contracted firm by PMU

In the longer term, integration of the CIMS in the final interim assessment will also yield value by: enabling the GLB program to feed its data into collective IPA analyses conducted by BMGF and by establishing a “new” baseline that can be used to demonstrate direct impact in assessments conducted after the close of the current country grant period.

## Advocacy

Advocacy conducted at the central level (as distinct from local-level advocacy) has been conducted actively, and in relation to objectives as we understand them, effectively. However, advocacy activities address strengthening of public image and good will among potential partners. These activities are limited in their direct relevance to program objectives (see “6.3 National priorities and needs,”), including Objective 4, “Sustain and further achieve results beyond the current BMGF grant.”

###  Description of advocacy strategy

The GLB program advocacy strategy is framed by PMU as follows:

The strategic goal of advocacy activities at national level was to increase the visibility of the GLB network as an instrument for digital inclusion and social integration, especially for the marginalized groups. In this respect, the institutional partnerships established and the MoUs signed are a clear sign that the ministries and other national institutions have recognized the potential of the GLB network as tool for the implementation of national policies and the achievement of strategic national goals.[[11]](#footnote-11)

While the stated goal is important, and can certainly be considered relevant steps in the conduct of a central-level advocacy campaign, advocacy as typically framed in training and other documentation developed by BMGF generally refers to goals directly related to policy and sustainability.

**Grant Proposal.** The advocacy strategy framed in the Grant Proposal outlines seven objectives, with three related to financial sustainability and tangible institutional support (1, 3, 7). Three others address local activities (2, 4, 5), while one objective specifically addresses media relations (6). While these objectives frame the central advocacy strategy in greater detail, again the policy and regulatory environment is not addressed; activities have not primarily addressed financial sustainability or risk reduction.

**MOUs.** Per the communication cited above, the primary advocacy vehicle at the national level is the partnership of the GLB program with several relevant ministries. As discussed in “6.6.1 MOUs in relation to strategic objectives and partnerships,” these partnerships are as of the time of this evaluation in their early stages.

**Evolution of advocacy within BMGF.** It is essential to bear in mind in relation to this assessment that approaches to advocacy have evolved substantially over the period of the GLB program grant. Although the GLB program would likely benefit in terms of sustainability and impact from a “mature” strategy, as currently promoted by BMGF, using such a strategy as a standard is perhaps unrealistic. (However, as PMU personnel participated in the advocacy train-the-trainer sessions of August 2011, improvements to the initial strategy could realistically be anticipated.)

### GLB program advocacy activities

Per the cited communication with the PMU, advocacy has also comprised:

* **District thematic meetings**, organized by district libraries to explore and discuss themes related to the objectives of the GLB program, such as the role of public libraries as information and communication centers; the provision of innovative library services; the need for partnerships; volunteering; lifelong learning.
* The **Contest “Glob@l Libraries – Bulgaria: a Point to e-Inclusion”** (2012), a contest for libraries organized in 2012 and intended to distinguish target library initiatives, projects and innovative ICT based services implemented in 2011 and 2012 in support of e-inclusion of local communities.[[12]](#footnote-12)
* **National Forum “Glob@l Libraries – Bulgaria: a Point to e-Inclusion,”** which brought together more than 150 representatives of the administration of the President of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Minister of EU Funds Management, the Ministry of Transport, Information Technology and Communications, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, the Employment Agency, NGOs, library and academic communities, business, the media.[[13]](#footnote-13)

These activities have contributed to the positive image of the program and confidently facilitated the partnerships at local and regional levels.

### Advocacy related to policy goals and sustainability

We have not observed or received reports of advocacy efforts directly related to changes in policies or regulations in relation to program activities. Relevant directions of such advocacy efforts could, for example, target changes in legislation regarding Chitalishte funding, the supplementary funding opportunities for Chitalishte under the MoC, the district and municipal library funding regulations and channels, national policies in sustaining librarian capacities and trainings, or the EU programs regulations regarding cultural and educational activities in rural areas. Targets of strategic advocacy efforts are further discussed in “8.6 Partnerships and advocacy—Funding.”

**Barriers to advocacy.** Assessment of strategic advocacy efforts during the period of this evaluation must acknowledge that the GLB program has operated effectively during a period of a modest governmental support and consequent political shifts. Although strategic advocacy must be undertaken during such periods, especially in light of the continued struggle of the Program Board and the MoC to secure the required staff positions, such activities would likely not have changed the potential for central sustainability. Efforts to effect policy or regulatory change, however, might have been less sensitive to financial and resource constraints.

### Advocacy Summary

Active and effective approaches to advocacy have been undertaken on the part of the PMU. However advocacy directly relevant to policy and regulatory change or program sustainability has not been undertaken. A strategy outlining goals, objectives and processes for such activities would be of value.

# Findings—Relevance and effectiveness

## Introduction

This chapter presents findings regarding both the relevance and the effectiveness of GLB program components and program outcomes. We have combined these focal areas (as identified in the TOR) because in the context of the GLB program relevance is one of the determining factors in effectiveness.

Throughout this section, we assess effectiveness and relevance of the GLB activities in relation to Bulgarian national priorities and development needs; these priorities and needs are outlined in “6.3 National priorities and needs.” Relevance and effectiveness at the local level are assessed in this section, based on field visits, and considered as indicators of overall relevance and effectiveness of the GLB design and implementation.

## Revitalization of libraries and Chitalishte

Many respondents—including representatives of municipal governments—stated that the GLB program “revitalized” their library and the Chitalishte.

Librarians, Chitalishte secretaries, representatives of local and municipal government and library users in almost all field sites described the renewed importance of the library and the Chitalishte as a result of the GLB program. Revitalization takes the form of increased membership, new library users and renewed use by former patrons, influxes of schoolchildren, interest-group and development-group meetings, use of the multimedia projector by kindergarten groups and folk-arts groups, and many other activities.

Mobilization of municipal resources for refurbishment has also been extremely effective. Many Chitalishte were previously given very large buildings. With population shifts and reduced funding, these buildings have become burdensome and even impossible to maintain. In some Chitalishte (Krumovgrad), the GLB installation is the only usable and heated room.

## National priorities and needs

The GLB program generally addresses the needs identified during the planning process and corresponding to priorities as identified in national policies, achieving moderate to high levels of effectiveness. Although the effectiveness of some program activities can be increased, many limitations on effectiveness of GLB programs stem from external factors (e.g., regional economic situation, high unemployment, etc.).

Our assessment of the relevance and effectiveness of the GLB program in relation to national priorities and needs is based on the articulation of those needs in the Country Grant Proposal and the draft Sustainability Strategy. Per the Strategy, program objectives include:

* Accelerate e-inclusion and e-participation in Bulgaria
* Enhance Bulgaria’s human capital through training and lifelong learning
* Foster community development and improve the quality of life
* Sustain and further achieve results beyond the current BMGF grant.

The Strategy also states: “The first three objectives completely correspond to respective national policies and the 2011–2015 National Reform Program (including its revised version of April 2012).[[14]](#footnote-14)”

Relevance and effectiveness in relation to national priorities is summarized in this section; supporting evidence from field visits and local-level activities follows.

### Accelerate e-inclusion and e-participation

The GLB program has been both relevant and effective in terms of e-inclusion and e-participation, especially in relation to some of the marginalized groups most affected by Bulgaria’s persistent digital divide. The Interim Impact Assessment, completed in December 2012, characterizes impact in relation to this objective primarily in terms of potential: “Overall, the local public and librarians in the different settlements see the biggest capacity for using target library ICT equipment in their work with children, unemployed, senior people and representatives of minority groups.”[[15]](#footnote-15)

Field visits suggest that local libraries are realizing the potential identified in the Interim Impact Assessment when they fully implement GLB program activities, and through these activities are effectively accelerating e-inclusion and e-participation among marginalized groups. More detailed discussion occurs throughout Section 6.

The report also points to one of the external factors that both limits the impact of GLB activities and increases their relevance: “The operation of the Glob@l Libraries — Bulgaria Program concurs with an accelerated adoption of information technology in Bulgarian society” (op. cit., 4). The rapid increase of access to and use of ICT in Bulgaria does not extend to include many groups that are marginalized due to youth, poverty, lack of access to training and equipment, and geographic isolation.

Because the scale of the GLB program extends to 98.5 percent of municipalities, and because the program eliminates cost to users, both the relevance and the effectiveness of the program are increased.

### Enhance human capital through training and lifelong learning

As described in “Table 3: Training outputs,” target libraries are highly active in terms of providing ICT training to library users. Libraries average more than 30 trainings of users over the course of the period from installation of the GLB ICT equipment to December 2012. Most schoolchildren visiting the library have already developed computer skills; training participants are likely to have been predominantly active-age adults and pensioners.

Program impact on human capital is, to a greater extent than e-inclusion, likely to result from more “mature” program activities, activities that emphasize development of a wider range of skills than just computer use. Lifelong learning, as an example, suggests that beyond learning technology skills, active-age adults and pensioners will participate online in the activities of civil-society groups that have informative or educative functions (e.g., a native-plants club, hobby and crafts clubs, etc.) and in formal education. During field visits, several respondents, such as the kindergarten teacher in Barzia village, described using the GLB ICT equipment to access videos detailing specific crafts-related processes or, as in the village of Kopilovci, presenting video folktales to small children.

(A specific, measurable definition of human capital is likely necessary for assessment of program effectiveness in this regard, and for impact assessment.)

**Social capital.** As determined by both field visits and the Interim Impact Assessment, pensioners frequently access the GLB ICT equipment to use Skype and other tools to communicate with expatriate siblings, children, including adult children, and grandchildren. These personal “communications networks” represent increases in social capital for pensioners and their communities.

### Foster community development and improved quality of life

To date, it is likely that the most influential factor in the relationship of the GLB program to community development is the revitalization of the target libraries and, by extension, of the Chitalishte. In time the public’s access to the GLB ICT equipment might, with the growth of users, the introduction of complementary programs and external factors such as economic recovery, contribute to community development and quality of life. However at present, and for the foreseeable future, inputs into the Chitalishte library, renewed and strengthened relations with municipalities, growth in the number of library users, and strengthening the role of the revitalized library in Chitalishte activities all contribute to community development and quality of life.

This finding is further supported by the Interim Impact Assessment: “Another crucial social effect of the Glob@l Libraries – Bulgaria Program implementation is the building of a more active and self-supporting local community with enhanced social integrity. 92% of library staff report an improved attitude of local communities” (Op. Cit, 6).

## Relevance as seen in usage profiles

This section provides profiles of different kinds of users and their activities.

Usage is a key indicator in terms of the relevance of services; when descriptions of use (e.g., entertainment, communicate with families, etc.) are included, usage also contributes to our understanding of effectiveness. While community-informatics projects such as GLB address limited supply—of information and of the resources needed to find information—they are dependent on demand for impact.

### Comparative use of GLB resources

In the course of field observations, librarians typically described the following user demographic:

* About 70 percent schoolchildren
* About 20 percent pensioners
* About 10 percent youth and “active-age” groups
* Particularly high usage by Roma children
* Particularly high usage by poor people

This general users’ profile is confirmed by the Impact Assessment Interim Study (Dec 2012), particularly in its findings about the prevalence of school children and Roma among the users.[[16]](#footnote-16)

Understanding relevance, however, requires more detailed information.

### Schoolchildren

Both field observations and the data cited above confirm that schoolchildren form a substantial majority of technology users in the target libraries. In part, schoolchildren have more opportunity to visit the library during working hours, and receive training in the use of technology in schools.

The Interim Impact Assessment Study Executive Summary (Dec. 2012, page 29) also shows that in small settlements target libraries have reached high proportions of the people in their communities.

* 67 percent or 166,953 children of the 7-17 age group
* 13 percent or 249,135 people in the adult population

The field observations provide additional information about usage by children:

* **Group use**
Children and students visit the libraries in small groups. The opportunity to use computers and the internet in groups is so important to them that they continue visiting the library even when most members of a given group have computers at home.
* **Entertainment and communication**
Games, Facebook and Skype are the most popular uses of ICT among students. For this reason, some of the visited libraries, particularly in bigger settlements (Ihtiman, Berkovitsa) impose restrictions or limitations on group game usages. In other places (smaller villages, where the demand is lower) librarians require that children read books, do homework or complete other activities before using social media, watching movies or playing games. In several of the libraries visited, children are not allowed to play computer games.
* **Homework and assignments**Teachers routinely assign homework to students that requires access to computers and the internet; for many disadvantaged schoolchildren, GLB libraries are the only places that afford such access.
* **Group visits organized by teachers**
Students also visit libraries in groups organized by their teachers. This is particularly typical for villages where school computer equipment is old, the internet access is poor and IT classes occupy school facilities. Teacher-organized visits are particularly prevalent in villages with high densities of Roma, in which children are engaged in full-day programs in their schools.[[17]](#footnote-17) After the morning classes, teacher often bring students in the afternoons to libraries to help the children prepare for the next day and simply to have fun. Positive collaborations of this type, between the libraries and the schoolchildren, were observed in Blatets, Kopilovci, Drangovo and other villages.
* **Collaboration with kindergarten teachers**
Similar practices are encountered in kindergarten classes. In Kopilovici, younger children enrolled in kindergarten visit the library; the librarians use the multimedia equipment to project stories and films to them. On a national level, according to the Interim Impact Assessment Study Executive Summary (Dec. 2012, page 6), 55 percent of the young respondents “respond that the access to the worldwide web helps them acquire new knowledge and 38 percent indicate that it is also a useful tool for managing school duties and homework.”

Collaboration with the educational institutions, however, is limited, in part because there is no partnership or agreement organized between the GLB program and MoEYS.

### Ethnic minorities

The Interim Impact Assessment Study Executive Summary (Dec. 2012, page 4) confirms that ethnicity is another determinant of target library use. The data show that “77 percent of registered children from the Roma ethnic group use the equipment at least several times a week, compared to 60 percent among the Bulgarian children in the same age.”

The ethnic determinant interacts with other factors of ICT usage such as poverty, low education and the degree to which settlements are isolate or remote. This interaction confirms the multiple vulnerabilities of Roma populations (not only in Bulgaria, but in other Central and East European countries[[18]](#footnote-18)).

In the case of library usage, Roma respondents report that they use GLB ICT equipment as a result of factors such as “lack of computer at home,” “living in remote and isolated village or town,” and ”studying in a school with no computers.” Teachers and librarians confirm that Roma users, including schoolchildren, have far fewer options for accessing information and communications tools; village teachers (in Blatets, for example) also report that Roma schoolchildren face additional barriers in that limit their opportunities to success in school.

Many of the Roma users encountered in the field visits are youth, including students and recent secondary-school graduates. Use typically focuses on entertainment, including games, movies and social networking.

While Turkish minorities apparently use the GLB installation for reasons similar to Roma users, field visits suggest that the most typical benefit for the Turkish minorities is the opportunity to “communicate with relatives working abroad.” This is particularly true in remote villages, including those in the Rhodope Mountains visited as field sites. Drangovo, for example, is an ethnically Bulgarian village, but Turkish minority people come from the neighboring villages to use the ICT equipment as a communication tool, frequently in large groups.

### Pensioners

Pensioners form another important group of users, one that could be substantially larger were trainings carried out more systematically at the local level.

Currently pensioners visit the libraries most often for the reasons to:

* Communicate via Skype with children and grandchildren, living abroad
* Search for medical information online (e.g., checking results from blood and other medical tests, searching for information on specific diseases, such as diabetes, blood diseases and others)
* Search for other information, such as cooking recipes, information related to the profession of the pensioner, online shopping and others

Some of these uses, perhaps all of them, have positive impacts on the pensioners’ quality of life. (Active-age adults, in addition, use the GLB ICT equipment for health-related reasons, including to check their medical insurance status.)

However, pensioners face many more barriers to use of the GLB facility than do schoolchildren. Observations regarding these barriers add to our understanding of relevance.

**Lack of technology skills.** In particular, pensioners more typically lack prior technology skills. Student users receive IT training in school, and perhaps are more ready (cognitively) to learn new tools; lack of ICT skills does not pose a barrier to them. Pensioners, however, are more frequently dependent on the library—either the librarian or volunteers—for training or coaching.

Partly as a result, pensioner usage is higher in settlements with active pensioners clubs or pensioner-related CSOs, such as those addressing particular diseases.

**Lack of access to computers at home.** As mentioned, the numbers of Bulgarian families own computers in both urban and rural areas are increasing. Pensioners, however, face more barriers to ownership and use at home: low incomes and lack of familiarity prevent pensioners from purchasing computers on their own; pensioners in multi-generational households must “compete” for access with active-age and school-age users.

### Other users

Other users comprise primarily “active-age” demographic groups, predominantly but not only male respondents. These groups and their activities include:

* **Job seekers**
Job seekers do take advantage of postings from relevant employment offices, however private-sector employment sites such as jobs.bg, which include jobs outside of Bulgaria, are perhaps more widely used
* **Farmers**
Farmers, among other activities, keep updated regarding calls for proposals that are opened under the Rural Development Program of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food
* **Single traders, offices, government and CSOs**
Notably a man in Krumovgrad uses the GLB installation to trade cars; in Tryavna a local business has used the library’s computer, printer and photocopier; village governments and CSOs use the library’s multimedia projector during meetings; a LAG in Rakovski uses the GLB facility to meet to develop proposals
* **On-line shoppers**
Adults, particularly in rural and isolated areas, use the GLB facility for online shopping (and as a delivery point for online shopping)[[19]](#footnote-19)

### Usage of multimedia projector

The multimedia projectors provided to all target libraries are particularly important factors in relation to relevance. Projectors significantly increase the value of the GLB installation and services to a wide range of local organizations, including: the Chitalishte itself; CSOs; clubs (e.g., pensioners, diabetes); kindergarten teachers and students; other teachers; local government (in villages). The value of the projector to Chitalishte activities should not be underestimated: In several of the Chitalishte visited, projector use strengthens the relationship between the Chitalishte (e.g., secretary, board, membership, etc.) and the library (and by extension, GLB).

### Summary of usage profiles

**Pensioners.** Program relevance to pensioners is very high. Seen in relation to the preceding barriers, the relevance of the GLB program to pensioners is higher than it is for schoolchildren, although schoolchildren are the largest user group. The GLB program provides benefits not only in terms of free access—the most relevant component for schoolchildren—but also in terms of training, mentoring and coaching of inexperienced users and in terms of management of usage. (GLB installations often build up a group of waiting users. Librarians manage this group by imposing time limits on computer use, and possibly by giving adult users preference.)

It is likely that there are many more pensioners who would use GLB facilities if outreach and training were directed more specifically to them. Many communities have much larger populations of pensioners than of schoolchildren. Although both groups have free time during the workday, pensioners have fewer constraints on their time than do students.

**Schoolchildren.** Although schoolchildren form an overwhelming majority of GLB users in the libraries visited, the educational uses of computers and the Internet are under-developed. In part, this situation results from librarians’ and teachers’ unfamiliarity with effective uses of technology for learning. Although some teachers organize small-group projects among their own classes—research and reporting involves static collecting and distributing of information, primarily available on Wikipedia, with limited emphasis on original work. Very few respondents mentioned znam.bg or other Bulgarian education websites.

**Ethnic groups.** Membership in minority populations by GLB users is a “crosscutting” category, with relevance determined by other (frequently correlated) factors. Overall usage varies in part as a result of a range of social factors, such as poverty, age, employment status, geographic location, as well as ethnicity.

In any event, access to information and communication provided by the GLB Program is integrative and community-focused, with various social outcomes that are important to members of ethnic populations, primarily as a result of poverty, isolation and other factors.

**Other adult users.** Although uses by other groups are important—and they expand our profile of the potential value of the GLB program especially in combination with other programs—various factors limit the extent of these uses. First, employed users generally cannot visit during library hours, which overlap workday hours. Second, while these uses are important and in some cases have the potential to affect local economic and social development, they are infrequent.

**Development-related services and uses**. As mentioned pensioners and other adult users (including adult members of ethnic groups) do use GLB ICT equipment to accomplish objectives related to social and (to a lesser extent) economic development; however, for development-related uses to achieve their full potential, inputs are required. First, librarians must have motivation and capacity to deliver training to pensioners.[[20]](#footnote-20) (See “5.2–Training provided in libraries” for more information.) Second, GLB partners should be strongly encouraged to provide better conceived e-services centrally. (See “8.4” for more information.)

## Effectiveness as shown by local-level training

The training delivered by GLB program to librarians and the training (and other assistance) provided by librarians to patrons comprise the best available evidence of effectiveness at the local level: Librarians’ characterizations of their experiences in training indicate strong and weak aspects of the capacities they’ve developed, as do the responses of library users who participate in training and coaching.

### Training provided by the GLB program

As discussed in “6.5 Effectiveness as shown by local-level training,” the GLB training program resulted in high levels of participant satisfaction and was effectively designed and implemented; specific aspects of the training program also have bearing on our analysis of local effectiveness, with specific regard to the capacities built by local librarians.

The most highly valued topics addressed in training for librarians were development of ICT skills and project preparation.

However, several other aspects bear mentioning in relation to the effectiveness of the GLB training program.

**Working with vulnerable groups**. This training topic—while mentioned by only two librarians—is valuable. Because Roma patrons of all ages, and possibly to a lesser extent Turkish patrons, use the GLB ICT equipment in very large groups, and because those groups have limited experience in libraries, they can be perceived by librarians as disruptive, unruly and even threatening. The GLB training, however, provides librarians with opportunities to learn that these groups are acting under different norms and assumptions, and with different objectives, that make social use of computers compelling—especially in terms of communication with expatriate relatives.

**Lack of capacity in advocacy and project preparation**. Two training topics, advocacy and project preparation, are linked to each other and to sustainability; librarians’ capacities in these areas, while improved by training, are not yet adequate.

Librarians and Chitalishte secretaries in the village-library field sites rarely engage in advocacy. Some village-based librarians (in Kopilovci, among other villages) state that they do not yet have the skills they need to engage in advocacy; many also feel blocked by barriers to project-based funding. Several village librarians also stated that they feel that they do not have the status to engage in advocacy activities.

Librarians in towns and municipalities did not make similar statements about their relations with local decision-makers. Factors such as proximity to decision-makers, greater visibility, and more secure connections to municipal objectives reduce the barriers to advocacy in larger towns.

### Training provided in libraries

The training of local users is defined as a separate activity in the Project Document (Activity 3.2.1.[[21]](#footnote-21)) but outputs of the activity are not linked to a specific and measurable indicator; the current IPAF, however, specifies output indicators for group trainings and for individual consultations.

In the Country Grant Proposal, central support (including funding) was to be provided for training of librarians, would constitute indirect support for local-level training to be provided by librarians. In our assessment, this approach is appropriate and entirely relevant to the capacities of library personnel and the missions of the Chitalishte and, as mentioned, has been conducted very effectively.[[22]](#footnote-22)

Based on these data and from observations during field visits, training is more likely to be delivered semi-formally—at a scheduled time, but without a formal agenda or set of defined or sequenced objectives.

Individual training and consultation is most frequent. The observations of the evaluation team in the field confirm librarians’ reports that most of the ICT support provided to users takes the form of individual consultations. These consultations are best seen as practical, ad-hoc “coaching” for internet search or for the use of particular applications.

**Limited group training.** Only in highly active GLB libraries is training delivered to larger groups. While this situation is not troubling, there is evidence that in many libraries the lack of outreach for training results in unrecognized and unmet demand on the part of pensioners and other groups. Several factors influence this situation: Unless CSOs are active—serving as demand aggregators for training and access—demand for training is only expressed by individuals. Many librarians are also unsure of their own ICT skills, or at least sufficiently unsure that they hesitate to provide formal training to groups. In addition librarians lack training supports (e.g., a training agenda, participant workbooks, etc.) for working with groups, further limiting their ability to conduct group training.

Well-organized group trainings, including those with active-age people, were reported mainly by the district libraries (Plovdiv and Montana) visited by the evaluation team, and by library personnel in Rakovsky. In smaller villages, group trainings were rarely reported. Pensioners are on occasion trained in groups, however not very frequently. Villages and towns with well-organized pensioners clubs are more likely to have held or be planning to hold group trainings.

**Training by volunteers.** In libraries that have active volunteers, those volunteers provide training in individual and, less frequently, group sessions. Notably, the four youth library volunteers in Vrachesh have provided group training to younger students and at least two groups of active-age adults and pensioners.

**Unmet demand for training.** As discussed in “5.2–Training provided in libraries,” as a result of several factors it is likely that there is tacit unmet demand for ICT training among pensioners. And as training is a barrier to use of technology, there is also likely to be unmet demand to use the GLB installation on the part of this critical group of users.

However as pensioners, pensioners clubs and advocates for pensioners become aware of the benefits of access to the GLB ICT equipment, and as librarians gain skills, experience and confidence, it is likely that demand for training will become more explicit and that target libraries will meet that demand.

**The role of CSOs.** Active CSOs serve as “demand aggregators” for their members. In small settlements, CSOs frequently take the form of groups with a common interest, such as pensioners and people with specific health conditions (e.g., diabetes), among other. Field visits show that when these organizations have active relationships with Chitalishte, and particularly when those relationships predate the GLB installation, it is more likely that the libraries will provide group training or, at a minimum, will combine outreach and individual training to extend access to technology to the CSO members.

### Summary of local-level training

Librarians in target libraries vary in terms of their interest in and provision of training and consultation to library users; in most instances, training is delivered individually and informally, at this point, although it is likely that librarians’ capacities will grow and that unmet demand for training and access will be met as a result.

The approach designed by the GLB program—central support to build librarians’ capacities, with local-level activities at librarians’ discretion—is appropriate and is, given the project’s current stage, effective. Effectiveness will likely increase over time; additional inputs in the form of training aids and additional training of librarians will accelerate and amplify that increase.

## Effectiveness of e-services partnerships

The main functional GLB partnerships have been established via Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with government agencies, and support the development of e-services. MOUs with the national Employment Agency (within the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy), the National Revenue Agency, the Ministry of Health and the District Information Centres under the Minister of EU Funds Management are currently in effect. Discussion of MOUs is underway with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science (MoEYS) and the Bulgarian Food Safety Agency.

(Discussion in this section will be confined to the four current MOUs.)

### MOUs in relation to strategic objectives and partnerships

It is critical to note that the MOUs under discussion are intended to serve as the foundations of evolving partnerships with the respective ministries and agencies. Although this section focuses on the provision of e-services, these partnerships will eventually extend beyond these specific services.

Moreover, the four currently enacted MOUs were finalized on 31 December, 2012. We believe that assessment of the proposed e-services is valuable, insofar as these have bearing on local-level relevance and effectiveness and on central sustainability. However in all cases both the MOUs and the e-services that are their most prominent outcomes to date are not yet fully developed.[[23]](#footnote-23)

### Summary of local and regional activities

The intent underlying the MOUs is to support the use of e-services by GLB library patrons. Field-level activities include:

* **National Revenue Agency:** The MOU addresses dissemination of information related to the agency’s activities, including: tax education (including the Taxes for the Young program, aimed at schoolchildren) and access to e-services via Personal Identification Code (PIC).
* **EU Funds Directorate:** The Directorate has established a system of 27 district “info-points” that increase awareness of and coordination with EU funding opportunities in relation to the EU programming granting cycles; GLB librarians have participated in training or orientation, enabling their libraries to serve as additional, local centers for dissemination of this information; additional training in “e-applications” for funding for librarians is planned.
* **Ministry of Health:** As part of the “Informed and Healthy” programs and other MoH programs, the GLB libraries have access to video presentations on health topics; additional relevant activities, such as screening programs, are planned.
* **Employment Agency:** Under the terms of the MOU, regional job listings are emailed to GLB librarians, who print and post these listings; job seekers in some cases visit the nearest Employment Agency office, and in other cases telephone, to follow-up on jobs.

Of these, the arrangement with the Employment Agency is currently the most actively used at the local level.

**Other local-level services.** Per information provided by the PMU and UNDP, librarians in target libraries are developing and/or providing innovative services to users as a result of tools introduced at district thematic meetings. These services are not linked necessarily to institutional partnerships such as those formalized in the MOUs.

### Central-level findings

Findings at the central level point to the value of the GLB network in terms of scope and scale, and to the effectiveness of GLB personnel in relation to partnership activities:

* **Overall satisfaction.** Representatives of all four organizations expressed high levels of satisfaction with the partnership arrangements.
* **Smooth relationships and interaction.** Several respondents spoke of the speed, flexibility and attentiveness of the PMU in relation to establishing and implementing the MOUs.
* **Extensive scope of GLB network.** The chief value that the GLB program provides to partners is its extensive “reach” into 960 settlements (of which 681 are villages) and almost all municipalities (98.5 percent). In comparison, the Employment Agency has offices in only 105 settlements.

### Local-level findings

Findings at the local level are somewhat more varied.

* **Employment Agency partnership is active.** Of the four, only the Employment Agency MOU results in activity in the field-site libraries. Job listings are (for the most part) regularly received and posted; job seekers do refer to those listings.
* **Other partnerships are not actively supported.** The other partnerships thus far have sparked little activity at the local level.
* **Non-partner e-services are more valuable.** Per statements by both librarians and library users: job-seekers are more successful using actual online job listing (as these are more current, and more abundant); pensioners do use e-services related to health (checking the medical test results) and governance (checking utility bills and matters related to social-security); members of disadvantaged ethnic groups also check status (perhaps of health care) online.
* **Municipal-level e-services are not yet valuable.** No respondents (including representative of municipal governments) referred to e-services provided by municipalities, although progress toward the provision of such services has been recently mandated. (For more information, refer to “Municipal e-services.”

**Evaluation scope in relation to e-services.** Local-level findings reflect our experience in the 15 field sites *only.* Most critically, the field sites do not include libraries in the district (Dobrich) that participated in pilot-testing of awareness building, training or other inputs intended to increase the utility and value of the e-services.

### Analysis of e-services provision

Although partnerships are essential and the intention to provide e-services to library patrons has merit, the four current MOUs have characteristics that limit their effectiveness significantly. Most critically, the e-services provided by the partnering organizations are at this point underdeveloped. Although the Employment Agency representatives regularly email job listing, the listings are frequently filled by the time they are sent, require costly travel to the Employment Agency for registration and application. A more effective alternative (and one that more germane to concept of e-services) would be for the Agency to post all job listings to a searchable online database. While the Employment Agency does maintain a searchable, online database, the Agency reports that the database is difficult to use; this database will be addressed in advanced training for librarians prepared at end 2012 and planned for 2013. The email notifications, then, should be considered an interim approach.[[24]](#footnote-24)

Some larger municipalities (and some other municipalities as well) provide e-services that are likely to be of value to library users. Although it is difficult to characterize municipal e-services with certainty, based on our initial review such services are still being developed. (For a detailed discussion of municipal e-services, refer to Annex C.)

Activities of the other MOU signatories to date are most properly considered as outreach, awareness raising and informational events—the dissemination of information—rather than the provision of services in any real sense.[[25]](#footnote-25)

The partnership agreements appear to be asymmetrical. The partners meet their organizational objectives, at least in terms of dissemination across the GLB network, however at present there is little return of value to patrons, libraries and librarians, or the PMU.

In addition to this asymmetry, the partners’ general approach to e-services has the potential to negatively impact the GLB libraries. Areas of risk include:

* **Librarian status and self-perception**When services are ineffective or unappealing, librarians who promote them jeopardize their status among patrons and local stakeholders, and jeopardize their self-image (see “5.5.1 Training design and development” and “8.3.1 Support virtual and face-to-face networking among GLB librarians”). Although the service offered by the Employment Agency should be considered an interim step in advance of training, and although provision of e-services is optional for librarians, this consideration in our opinion remains valid.[[26]](#footnote-26)
* **GLB Program status and perception**Similarly, when the PMU introduces services that are not perceived as effective by librarians or library users, as in the Employment Agency postings (refer to 6.4.5), PMU risks its own credibility as an “honest broker” and a representative at the central level.
* **Potential management confusion**At one district training base (district library) field site, both the GLB district coordinator and the library director expressed their disapproval of arrangements whereby librarians show videos on healthcare and medicine, as this is an area in which the librarian lacks knowledge, expertise or authority: The *actions* of arranging an event, committing library resources, and projecting the video are perceived as, in a sense, endorsing the information that is being provided. Regardless of the virtue of their opinions, these librarians reveal the potential for confusion in relation to management and authority.[[27]](#footnote-27)
* **Mission-related issues.** The disapproval of the district librarians suggests that ill-conceived e-services agreements can also exacerbate lack of definition or agreement in other areas of the program, such as the gap between the Chitalishte mission and GLB activities (especially as understood at the local level).[[28]](#footnote-28) Please refer to “7. 2. Sustainability at the local level” for more information about this issue.

It is critical to note that the e-services, and the MOUs that undergird them, are in very early stages. Understandably, given the position of this evaluation in relation to the timeline of the GLB project, PMU introduced both MOUs and e-services as topics for our consideration (via sharing of information and scheduling of interviews). Insofar as the e-services directly address development-related goals arising from the provision of access to information and communications, these activities *are* potentially highly relevant to the GLB program, GLB libraries and patrons. As of the date of this evaluation, however, the potential returns of these relationships and activities that emerge from them have not been realized. [[29]](#footnote-29)

### Summary of e-services partnerships

Current partnership agreements for e-services are hampered by the underdeveloped e-services offered by partnering organizations, and by the tendency of these organizations to see the GLB network as “information infrastructure” that can help them meet targets for outreach and dissemination. However, the agreements do point to the significant potential value and effectiveness of the GLB network, while partners’ representatives describe very effective interactions arising from high levels of collaboration and competence on the part of PMU.

At the local level, current e-services are not relevant, generally, or if relevant are not effective. Seen as information infrastructure, the GLB network suffers no harm from participating in these activities; when the network is seen as a group of individuals who are charged with serving members of their communities, and often disadvantaged members, these partnership activities appear likely to incur unknown costs at the local level.

# Findings—Sustainability

## Introduction

This chapter provides findings regarding the prospects for sustainability at the local, regional and national levels, and regarding critical factors that affect sustainability. These include institutional, financial and activity-related factors. The framework for this approach is a demand-supply analysis.

## Sustainability at the local level

Sustainability at local (library) level is to a significant extent ensured by the institutional organization of the program activities: As the GLB program is mostly anchored in Chitalishte libraries (and municipal libraries,) prospects for sustainability are linked to the traditional commitments of the local and the national authorities for support of the Chitalishte over the long term.

Given the strong commitments of municipal and local authorities to the GLB program, core activities such as basic ICT use, partnerships with local educational institutions, and other activities addressing marginalized groups, primarily, will continue sustainably on the local level in the absence of a central program. Field observations show the commitment of the municipal and local authorities to sustain GLB program activities. These authorities perceive the Chitalishte/library as a unique community center, one that is frequently the only local cultural and community institution, particularly in villages. In many of the villages visited (e.g., Kopilovci village), together with the teacher and the local appointed mayor, the Chitalishte secretary and the librarian formed a unified group that met the evaluation team and reported on their programs.

### Supply factors

The simplicity of the GLB program provides a strong advantage: Primary inputs are equipment, training and the support of national and local government, plus some “hints” as to how the equipment can be used by the community. This simplicity links the sustainability of local activities to the sustainability of the Chitalishte. Critically, as a result of the engagement of government, the staff position provided by MoC is guaranteed; local authorities have refurnished the premises and have agreed to fund internet connectivity.[[30]](#footnote-30)

### Potential sources of Chitalishte revenue

Beyond annual operating funds provided by the MoC, several Chitalishte have other sources of revenue.

* **Complementary Subsidy program for Chitalishte**
State financing of Chitalishte is not lavish, however the MoC manages a “Complementary Subsidy ” program that regularly provides opportunities (for motivated and capable) Chitalishte to apply for additional funding. These subsidies currently fund purchases of books and refurbishment of facilities. Although applications were accepted in 2012, no subsidies were awarded. (For additional information about the Complementary Subsidy, refer to Annex A.)
* **Chitalishte rental property**A few Chitalishte own relatively substantial tracts of land (up to 40 decares), which they rent to agriculture businesses and cooperatives. These Chitalishte have more discretion and flexibility with regard to their budgets.
* **Business support for Chitalishte**Many Chitalishte earn support from the local businesses through both their support of the community—which is enhanced by the GLB program—and through cultural activities. These Chitalishte establish very basic “private public partnerships,” exchanging cultural services (e.g., dance and musical performances at celebrations and local business events) for small financial support. These partnerships with local business are limited, and linked to cultural celebrations.
* **Support from local government**Local authorities appear to be dedicated to the Chitalishte, as it is “the only remaining community centers.”[[31]](#footnote-31) In such a situation it is very unlikely that a government would decide to cut access to its last entry point to the (voting) community.

**Risks.** There are however several risks, regarding institutional and financial sustainability. One is that the National Government and some of the local authorities simply do not comply with their agreed-upon commitments. Particularly critical for sustainability are the missing staff positions, which jeopardize program activities and compromise impact.

The project-proposal capacity at the level of Chitalishte and libraries is very low. Most of grants and other programs require that co-funding be provided in advance of receiving the grant. Although some municipalities and other partners are willing to provide such co-funding, these are rare instances. The GLB program is building some project-proposal capacity through the GSFIP, launched in 2013. However some libraries report that they will not apply as a result of low capacity and/or low motivation on the part of librarians.

On the “supply” side the sustainability prospects at the local level appear ensured as long as the Chitalishte institution exists.

### Supply factors and hardware replacement

Although BMGF protocols and good practice in ICT4D projects emphasizes Total Cost of Ownership (TCO), the role hardware-replacement needs as a factor in sustainability is unclear in the GLB program. Several factors are salient:

* **Replacement costs of single units are affordable.**In all but the most disadvantaged villages, the perception of the local authorities and personnel of the Chitalishte is that the cost of replacing (or upgrading) the equipment is comparatively small and is “affordable” for most of the Chitalishte.

Of some importance, in Chitalishte where respondents had some prior experience of technology, replacement was considered to be a “one-by-one” process: All of the computers would not need to be replaced at one time.

* **Service life of computers is extended.**Older computers already in place in Chitalishte remain in service long after their accepted service life has been exceeded. It is likely that the GLB installation will continue to be used to a similar extent.

This finding is consistent with observations of computer installations in other developing countries. In part, computers’ extended service-life results from the lack of affordable alternatives, and from the relatively basic tasks and activities that are conducted with them. Certainly, the public-access GLB computers will be used more intensively than older computers, which are used primarily for administrative and management tasks. However usage of the GLB installations is not so intensive as to produce “out-of-range” failure times.

* **Replacement costs of “e-appliances” are low.**In as much as most uses of the GLB computers are for communication, entertainment and information access, rather than for productivity, some portion of the need for replacement hardware will be met through procurement of hardware that is less powerful and less costly. In particular, the development of newer tools—in particular, netbooks and “e-appliances” such as tablet computers—has the potential to meet the needs of many GLB users for 50 percent of the cost of replacement with current-equivalent hardware.

(Note, however, that tablets and netbooks are not adequate for the multi-user interactive games that are popular among older, male schoolchildren.)

There are, however, several factors that maintain the risks that hardware replacement poses for local sustainability. These include:

* **Emerging donor dependency**In some Chitalishte, the evaluation team encountered “donor dependency”—expectations that BMGF will continue to “take care” about the equipment.
* **Experience over time**Within the field of ICT4D, the history of hardware failure, and the failure to replace hardware, is extensive. The relevance of that history to the GLB program should not be dismissed lightly.

### Demand factors

On the “demand side,” the sustainability of the local activities initiated by the GLB program hinges on the needs of library patrons, of local government, the Chitalishte and their personnel. In all of these instances, but particularly at the level of Chitalishte personnel, the prospects of sustained, long-term demand are complicated by different factors.

**Library patrons, general services.** Thus far, demand from patrons is dominated by social factors: GLB services are used mainly by poor children and poor elderly people, including but not only marginalized ethnic communities (Roma and Turks).

Services such as Skype communication, search for information by pensioners and children, group visits of pupils after classes, will likely continue even without being supported by regional or national program bodies.

As long as such social strata exist and as far as ICT equipment price is unaffordable or not a priority for marginalized groups, demand for these services will continue. However, with reasonable increase in the socio-economic status of the people living in the Bulgarian rural areas, and with private-sector extension of rural broadband internet services, demand for current GLB services will eventually fall.[[32]](#footnote-32)

(The Chitalishte in Drangovo, which experiences very high use by students after school, is considering establishing a “wireless plaza” that will allow users within range of a Chitalishte 802.11 network to use personal information devices [PIDs] to access the internet. The local mayor and Chitalishte librarian see this measure, in part, as a way to keep the library relevant to the community as home-based internet connectivity spreads.)

**Library patrons, e-services.** With regard to the e-services currently being introduced as a result of partnership MOUs, various factors suggest that without consistent and ongoing inputs from the central level, these services will likely be unsustainable.[[33]](#footnote-33)

Relevant factors, addressed elsewhere in this report, are more closely related to supply issue than to demand, and include:

* Lack of mature e-services at the central (governmental) level
* Lack of correspondence of e-services with librarians’ core responsibilities
* Lack of correspondence with Chitalishte mission and tradition

Of these issues, the most critical is the supply of e-services at the central level.

The demand-aggregation activities of local CSOs (“where the Chitalishte partners with diverse CSOs (clubs), has the potential to increase demand for e-services of value to pensioners and others if and when supply issues are resolved.

**Local government.** Local-government support for the GLB program suggests high levels of awareness of the role that the program has played in revitalizing both the library and the Chitalishte. In smaller villages, the importance of this function is underscored, from the point of view of local government, by the absence or diminishment of other community institutions (e.g., kindergartens, schools, etc.).

**Chitalishte and Chitalishte personnel.** The Chitalishte are intertwined with local GLB programs, however their missions, self-perceptions of personnel, perceived roles in their communities and channels to national government all exist “in tension” with GLB activities. These tensions create a degree of risk for the local-level sustainability of the GLB program.

To summarize this complex topic: The traditional and express mission of the Chitalishte is to support local cultural activities, with these activities typically comprising folk arts, celebration of holidays, and serving as meeting space and coordinating point for CSOs, among others. State funding of Chitalishte operations, especially as seen in the complementary subsidies, supports these activities directly.

Most critically, in their positions as state-funded organizations, with boards of directors, that operate for the benefit of their communities, the most active Chitalishte should be seen as quasi-membership organizations: The local populations, including influential representatives of business and government, quite reasonably consider the Chitalishte to be *their* institutions or organizations. Less-active Chitalishte are less likely to give rise to this sense of local ownership.

Chitalishte libraries and library staff support these cultural activities, in part by organizing complementary activities for children (maintaining knowledge of traditions), and in some cases by serving as publishers or repositories for books and other content by local authors. Chitalishte librarians *also* perceive the importance of their roles as librarians in a traditional sense: Many respondents describe the time required for their library activities—updating catalogues and membership rolls, maintaining books, helping youth and elderly patrons find books and printed information—as core activities, with GLB activities characterized as additional or supplementary.

While the GLB program has revitalized many of the Chitalishte libraries (per Section 6.2) its core activities and extensions into e-services aren’t seen at the local level as corresponding directly with the Chitalishte mission and its activities; in many instances, GLB activities are not considered “core” activities by librarians as well.

It is essential to state clearly that this situation does *not* undercut the strong and widely held positive perceptions of the GLB program, or the impact of the program in terms of revitalizing the libraries (and the sometimes-moribund Chitalishte).

However, in considering the future role of national and regional organizations in relation to local sustainability, it is no less essential to improve the correspondence of supply (e.g., new training, new services, etc.) with demand.

**Chitalishte personnel, project preparation.** As a result of their self-perception and other factors described in the preceding section, Chitalishte personnel are more likely to prepare project proposals to acquire support for cultural activities (e.g., fabrication/restoration of costumes, audio equipment for performances, etc.) than for library-based technology. Over the course of the evaluation activities, as the importance of self-perception of Chitalishte secretaries and librarians emerged, this finding was confirmed consistently across all field visits.

**Municipal librarians.** Based on field visits—which are inconclusive due to their small sample size—municipal (or professional[[34]](#footnote-34)) librarians will in some instances give preference to the traditional aspects of their jobs as opposed to technology-supported and modern-library services.[[35]](#footnote-35) (Interaction with librarians in district libraries supports this finding, at least inferentially.)

### Summary of local-level sustainability

Seen in terms of demand/supply, the GLB program is sustainable at the local level based on local demand for information access especially among disadvantaged groups and demand among other stakeholders for “revitalized” Chitalishte and libraries. These demand factors are likely to remain constant until economic growth is widespread. Other demand factors, such as demand for e-services, are less stable.

Provision of “supply” at the local level, based on GLB association with the Chitalishte, and on the support for Chitalishte at the local and national levels, is also reasonably secure. Risks to sustainability in terms of Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) and hardware replacement *appear* to be minimal to moderate, however this situation is subject to many factors that are external to the project (e.g., economic growth, hardware development in the private sector, etc.).

Local sustainability will be enhanced by any measures that increase the perceived correspondence of GLB activities with the cultural mission of the Chitalishte.

## Sustainability at regional and national levels

While the “local level” is situated in a positive sustainability scenario, the sustainability of the program activities and institutions, located at regional and national levels is more tenuous. Again, the approach to understanding sustainability at these levels involves demand/supply analysis. Supply is addressed in terms of current and planned centrally managed initiatives and in terms of the potential for meeting local libraries’ needs through a decentralized, regional approach.

Additional factors conditioning the sustainability of centralized operation are outlined separately within this section.

### Demand factors

The key task with regard to analysis of the sustainability of regional and national institutions is to identify their unique responses to local Chitalishte needs. In other words, what are the essential forms of support that regional and national entities uniquely provide?

(While responsiveness to the needs of the community is critical to achieve desired impact, local-level sustainability is tightly bound to the relation of the GLB program and the Chitalishte. Chitalishte personnel must assume direct responsibility for financial and operational sustainability of GLB program activities.)

To summarize previous observations, demand from the local libraries for external services and extra-local support focuses primarily on:

* + 1. Upgrading Human Resource (HR) capacities, particularly in relation to:
			1. Project skills
			2. Library skills (particularly for new librarian staff)
			3. ICT skills (for existing and new library staff)
		2. Providing networking activities, including activities at the regional and national levels, for:
			1. Exchange of good and bad practices
			2. Creation of joint initiatives and projects
			3. Increasing professionalism (including motivation)
		3. Carrying out advocacy activities, with objectives that include:
			1. Increasing and diversification of state support for the Chitalishte and the libraries (e.g., expanding the complementary subsidies; improving legislation for the Chitalishte and the specialized legislation for the district and municipal libraries; ensuring the staff positions needed for the libraries at the regional and local levels)
			2. Connecting the libraries to new national partners (e.g., EU Operational Programs, Ministries, nationally based NGOs, etc.)
			3. Improving relevant e-services (e.g., improving the supply/provision of e-services and e-governance at the national and regional levels; developing effective partnerships in relation to e-service provision at the local level)

The position of technology and technology-related activities is not entirely clear. Our summary of demand does not contain any emphasis on technology-supported activities *per se.* Demand for capacity-building in relation to e-services, notably, is not listed. However, librarians consistently cited the need for additional technology training (per item 1.3, above), while at the same time characterizing the ICT training that they have participated in as among the most valuable of the training modules. It is possible that librarians’ self-perceptions of their technology skills comprise a barrier to increased focus on GLB activities.

### Supply factors, centralized programs

Current and planned supply-focused approaches at the central level that are intended to meet local demand and to support the GLB network include:

* A micro-grant mechanism (Micro-Capital Grant Agreements [MCGAs] over the period 2011-2013 with the 27 District Libraries and selected Chitalishte acting as GLB training bases)
* Support for face-to-face networking
* Continuation of media relations, general advocacy
* Support for partnerships (continuing and new)
* The completion of impact-assessment activities
* Continuation of coordination/management (in “Supply via decentralized programs”)

We assess these activities in relation to demand factors presented previously. In addition, we assess the potential effectiveness of decentralization, especially with regard to training and coordination/management, as an approach for supporting local sustainability.

Of the activities listed, the micro-grant mechanism and networking most directly address local demand for central support.

* **MCGAs**Although we are not entirely familiar with details of the current solicitation of project proposals under the GSFIP, launched in March 2013, these grants appear to be well-positioned in relation to the GLB program and the missions of the Chitalishte. Local-content projects can, if well specified or well designed, help build perceived correspondence between GLB activities and traditional library/Chitalishte functions.

Lack of motivation, confidence and capacity on the part of librarians each poses a separate barrier to participation by GLB target libraries, with the number of submissions serving as an (aggregate) indicator of the importance of these barriers.

* **Networking and web portal**While valuable, networking is primarily seen as a face-to-face activity by librarians; virtual networking can be less expensive, more easily sustained, more effective, and can support the integration of library functions and the GLB program. From the point of view of librarians, networking during training has been extremely valuable—one of the primary benefits of training participation, in fact. Planned and in-process activities, such as the 2013 Workshops for Young Librarians, directly meet demand for networking.

As discussed (“5.6.2 Program Web Portal Summary”) the Web-Portal has responded to the needs of librarians, however it has not provided effective support for peer-to-peer networking. (For recommendations in this regard, see “8.3.1 Support virtual and face-to-face networking among GLB librarians.”)

Media relations, current advocacy efforts, partnerships focused on e-services and impact assessment, while potentially valuable for many reasons, do not address local demand efficiently or effectively. Coordination and management at the national level and regional levels is problematic, as discussed in this section.

* **Media relations and general advocacy**Advocacy at the national level, unless it targets very specific outcomes such as re-alignment of the Complementary Subsidy or additional funding for library personnel, also has an unclear relationship to local demand. These two activities, subsidy re-alignment and staffing, do address local-level demand directly, however they also pose further questions regarding advocacy at the national level. (See “5.8 Advocacy” for more information.)
* **Partnership development**For reasons previously discussed, partnership activities as expressed via MOUs/e-services do not directly address local-level demand for support (“7.2 Sustainability at the local level”). Also as discussed, supply of e-services at the central level has yet to reach a level that makes these services meaningful to patrons (“6.6 Effectiveness of e-services partnerships.”)
* **Impact assessment.** Except insofar as impact assessment supports efforts to increase support for local-demand issues such as HR upgrades, networking, Chitalishte operations, among others, impact-assessment activities have no bearing on local-level demand.

We are not questioning the value of these activities—media relations and advocacy, partnership development, impact assessment—in relation to the sustainability of a central implementing agency (UNDP/ PMU); we are attempting to assess the *future need for and structure of* such an agency with regard to the sustainability of the GLB network at the local level.

### Supply factors, decentralized programs

The structure of the GLB program includes a degree of decentralization, with responsibility for training and coordination shared between the PMU and district libraries. Accurate assessment of sustainability, then, requires analysis of regional or decentralized supply-side activities that support local libraries in the GLB network.

In relation to the local-level demand factors previously identified, proposed district and decentralized activities appear well conceived—at least in terms of training and networking. The potential of district libraries to engage in effective, tightly focused advocacy is limited. While, however, this decentralized model is effective currently, its long-term prospects—especially if central operations are curtailed—are potentially limited by lack of correspondence to the district training bases’ missions and capacities.

**Training.** Training is currently delivered at district and a few Chitalishte libraries in larger municipalities very effectively, notably at the district training bases.[[36]](#footnote-36) The PMU Training Manager, appropriately, considers development of training capacity at the district training bases a key objective.

However, challenges to the sustainability of decentralized training include cost, the capacities of district coordinators, administrative structures, and library mission:

* **Costs**Funding for training (e.g., participants’ travel, trainers, etc.) must be met either at the local level, via participant fees (which is unlikely) or at the central level via state funding; training costs present a significant barrier to the ability of district training bases to initiate training.
* **Capacity, skills**In some instances in which district coordinators have standing and motivation to pursue project-based funding for costs of training or other initiatives, they lack skills. One director of a district library stated that she would require external assistance, specifically mentioning support from the PMU, to prepare proposals.
* **Capacity, job profile**District coordinators can also face dilemmas arising from conflicts between opportunities provided under the GLB program and the parameters of their employment at the district libraries. District coordinators are specialists, in many instances, with advanced training in library and information sciences. For district coordinators who are library directors and for those who are library-science or methodology specialists, however, expanding support for GLB activities—through project-based funding, for example—can fall outside their levels of expertise and responsibility. In addition, for library directors, expanding the presence of the GLB program fall outside of the mission of the district library; to the extent that such expanded presence draws on library resources, such expansion poses risk without offering reward.
* **Capacity, workload**Monitoring grant and other funding opportunities by the district coordinators falls outside of their day-to-day responsibilities, and is essentially a voluntary contribution to the GLB program. The Plovdiv district coordinator, asked about this activity, stated that such activity was outside the parameters of her job; she did not have time for it.
* **Administrative structures**
District libraries and other libraries are, again, not constituted to initiate projects independently.
* **Library and Chitalishte missions**
Consideration of the district training bases in a more decentralized GLB network again highlights the incomplete correlation of GLB goals and activities with the missions of the local and regional organizational stakeholders. District libraries, insofar as they act outside of their municipalities and communities, chiefly provide support for the Chitalishte libraries; the central mission of the Chitalishte and their libraries, as discussed (“2.4 Sustainability at the local level is more focused on cultural activities.

Reliance on a decentralized model to support the GLB network will, to be successful, likely require ongoing inputs from a central entity. While we have analyzed the potential for *regional* *supply* of support and services in relation to local demand, this analysis points to *regional demand* for centralized support for local activities, regional training and networking, and advocacy.

### Summary of sustainability at regional and national levels

This section has focused on sustainability of the GLB network, comprising primarily the 960 target libraries, plus additional regional and national supporting structures and activities. At the national level, activities that most effectively meet the needs of local libraries include training, networking among librarians, and advocacy efforts directed at increasing state support for Chitalishte and libraries both directly and via opportunities for project-based funding. Among the activities currently in progress under the PMU (funded by the BMGF country grant), the 2011-2013 MCGA mechanism, and support for face-to-face networking and training address these demands. At the regional level, specifically the level of the district training bases, current activities (many of which receive essential support from the PMU and funding from the BMGF country grant) are currently effective and have the potential to strengthen the sustainability of the GLB network. However the sustainability of these activities, itself, is at risk due to issues surrounding from the capacity of district coordinators, library missions, and cost.

## Additional factors in national-level sustainability

At the national level, there are several factors that pose significant challenges to the sustainability of centralized activities.

The primary national-level entities currently supporting the GLB program are the PMU, UNDP, the Program Management Committee (PMC) and the Program Board. External factors complicating the sustainability of activities by these national-level actors are:

* The upcoming closure of the UNDP office at end February, 2014
* The resignation of the then-current GoB on 20 February, 2013
* Lack of timely decision-making by the Program Board

Funding of central activities in 2014 and beyond is currently not in place; these and related factors make the pursuit of such funding challenging.

### Impact of uncertainty on current activities

The uncertainty surrounding the GLB program and PMU has clear and immediate effects on motivation (and morale) and on current activities throughout the GLB network.

Personnel within PMU are aware of the imminent shut-down of operations (recently announced as scheduled for January 2014); this awareness affects planning for future activities, of course, but also current activities insofar as individual staff perceive the need to find new employment. We (and PMU respondents) anticipate that the departures of staff will accelerate over the next several months.

At the local level, librarians and other stakeholders are also aware of the impending cut-off of funds, and are fearful (the term is precise) of its implications: Many stakeholders at field sites, including librarians and Chitalishte secretaries, representatives of municipalities, and others expressed high levels of concern regarding the end of GLB funding by BMGF. These expressions ranged from urging that BMGF provide renewed funding to fears that the GLB ICT equipment would be removed.

Central and field-level uncertainty surround post-2013 activities of the PMU and the GLB program arise, in part, from factors that are external to the program itself. However these uncertainties will increasingly affect program operations and impact over the remainder of this year.

### Decision making and leadership

These high levels of uncertainty result from the three factors identified above—planned closure of the UNDP Sofia office, the resignation of the previous GoB administration, and the lack of timely decision-making on the part of the Program Board. Given that the first of these factors has been known for several years, while the second falls outside the control of the Program Board, the need for decisiveness is intensified.

**No-cost extension and additional funding.** Interviews in the PMU offices with stakeholders at all levels revealed misconceptions and/or confusion regarding the processes and potential for the provision of additional funding for GLB by BMGF.

All other programs under the Global Libraries Initiative (GLI) of the BMGF that have reached the end of their initial funding lifecycles have received “no-cost extensions” of funding.[[37]](#footnote-37) In part, grantees who have calculated budgets conservatively have in many instances not expended all program funds; some or all of these funds can be released as no-cost extension grants.

However, the no-cost extension of funding must be made to the original grantee organization; in the case of GLB, that organization is the fiscal agent (and implementing partner) UNDP. In light of the planned closure of the UNDP Sofia office, award of such funding, including funds that remain unspent due to cost savings, is impossible. (Note that BMGF has discussed the possibility of UNDP continuing as fiscal agent, however UNDP has stated that such an arrangement is not possible.)

Although the situation as described is reasonably clear, several PMU staff during our visits discussed the possibility of a no-cost extension as one means of continuing operations. In addition, one representative to the Program Board mentioned the unspent funds and suggested that these funds were essentially owed to GLB by BMGF.

The desire for additional funding from BMGF is understandable, especially in light of the transitional situation within GoB and the interplay of procurement and other delays with the original grant lifecycle. However, the existence of misconceptions regarding the possibility of such funding as late as March 2013 suggests the need for improvements to decision making, communication and/or leadership.

**Additional funding by BMGF.** Additional funding of GLB by BMGF remains a possibility, however the award of such funding is contingent on, among other factors, actions by the Program Board that as of March 2013 have yet to be completed:

* Establish or identify a fundable entity
* Create a concept memorandum outlining what GLB proposes to do with additional funds
* File a proposal by or on behalf of the fundable entity

To avoid interruption of funding, these actions should be completed in the early part of autumn, 2013, based on review cycles and other procedural factors within BMGF.

Our understanding is that development of a concept memorandum, describing 18 months of additional implementation, was in internal review among Program Board members at the end of March 2013. This action is extremely welcome. However, establishment or identification of a fundable entity, discussed further in “8.8 Sustainability,” faces several challenges, including the ongoing GoB transition.[[38]](#footnote-38)

**Sustainability strategy.** GLB has commissioned development of a sustainability strategy, however that development has also been limited by factors within GLB related to leadership/management, decision making and/or communication.

The Sustainability Strategy, commissioned from Bulgarian consultants (V. Shopov and K. Popov), has undergone a very long development cycle, remains in draft form, and does not at present provide concrete and prioritized guidance in relation to approaches, opportunities and risks both at the level of activities and institutional set-up. The Sustainability Strategy and our discussions within PMU personnel and Program Board members, addressing the proposed “concrete beneficiary”[[39]](#footnote-39) status of the new entity, suggest to us a strong focus on EU funding opportunities and short-term program-based sustainability. During these discussions, concerns as to how program activities could be durably integrated in the national governmental system, and particularly in the Chitalishte network appeared to be of secondary importance.

In interviews, the contracted consultants acknowledged that the Sustainability Strategy requires further development, however in their opinion such development is contingent on GLB stakeholders finalizing critical decisions and clarifying priorities. [[40]](#footnote-40) Factors underlying the lack of specific recommendations surrounding the current draft of the sustainability strategy are, within the scope of this evaluation, indeterminate. It is possible, in any case, that improved oversight of and communication with the sustainability consultants would have led to a more valuable or timely report.[[41]](#footnote-41)

**Summary.** Various factors have led to a situation of some urgency with regard to the award of additional funds to the GLB by BMGF and to the formulation and implementation of a strategy for sustainability after 2013. These factors arise from a combination of anticipated and unanticipated events. To an indeterminate but likely important extent, the response of the GLB program to these factors has been affected by untimely decision making on the part of the Program Board.

# Recommendations

## Introduction

Recommendations are grouped by outputs rather than actors: Thus, the recommendation to improve support for education is linked first to local services, as this is the area in which such support will have effect, although central program components such as advocacy and partnerships would be required by this action

## Local services

Recommendations in this section focus on improving services to two core groups of users—pensioners and schoolchildren.

### Increase focus of support and activities relevant to pensioners

GLB services are highly relevant to pensioners, while pensioners are under-represented in terms of overall usage levels. Thus, focus on meeting the needs of this group can be (and should be) increased.

### Develop support for local-level training

Per “6.5 ,” one of the barriers to the delivery of technology training at the local level is the lack of supports for such training. This barrier particularly affects pensioners, limiting the impact of the GLB program in relation to this core group of beneficiaries. Such supports should include:

* An agenda and trainers guide;
* Participant resources to hand-out such as a glossary of terms;
* Screen animations of common tasks, and;
* Poster-templates for outreach to local groups

Training should, in the appropriate module, introduce librarians to these supports and to basic techniques for facilitating group training.

### Improve education services for schoolchildren

Per “6.4 Relevance as seen in usage profiles,” the integration of GLB libraries with schools is limited, although schoolchildren comprise the majority of users. To a large extent, this situation stems from limited engagement with technology-supported learning by MoEYS. Pathways to improvement can include both formal and informal programs, supporting: tele-collaborative projects; game-based learning; school-related group blogs; MoEYS-sponsored e-learning.

**Advocacy.** These pathways likely require skilled technical assistance and, critically, effective advocacy and partnership building. GLB libraries currently provide valuable services to local schools and kindergartens—most notably providing access to computers and online materials to groups of students and teachers, and providing access to computers and the internet to disadvantaged children. (Teachers and students generally make very limited use of school computer facilities, as these are dedicated to IT classes.)

**Adult and vocational education.** Additional efforts in partnership with MoEYS and other relevant agents in GoB should address development of technology-supported educational opportunities for adults. Such efforts can policy goals for partners, which likely include Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and e-inclusion efforts targeting isolated pensioners (e.g., courses in culture, cooking, current politics, etc.). (Our understanding per interviews with PMU personnel is that discussions with MoEYS regarding partnerships to address lifelong learning are in progress.)

## Central services

The recommendation addresses librarians’ need for a virtual networking environment.

### Support virtual and face-to-face networking among GLB librarians

Librarians’ sense of professionalism affects local-level proposal preparation, advocacy, library management and other activities; one means of helping to build professionalism of librarians is increased support for networking, a key item identified by local-level demand analysis (see “7.2.4 Demand factors”) and one that requires central-level inputs.

Existing communications tools such as the web portal should be extended by enhanced support for peer-to-peer communications, enabling librarians share resources, success stories and suggestions.[[42]](#footnote-42) Enhanced virtual networking should be augmented by ongoing support for face-to-face networking and professional development (as in the current Young Librarians Workshops).

## Partnerships and advocacy—E-services

Recommendations in this section focus on partnerships and MOUs for the provision of e-services by GLB libraries. In general, partnerships, agreements and proposed activities are unspecific and ineffective; worst-case instantiations are disadvantageous to GLB, with the potential for negative impacts on local programs. As an example, the GLB MOU with the employment agency is based at least initially on the printing and posting of official listings each week. When such listings are sent incorrectly, feature jobs that have already been filled, or are generally ineffective the credibility of the GLB program and the engagement of the GLB librarian are affected.

### Refine approaches to e-services

Both central partnerships and local-level impact will be enhanced by more precise understanding of and commitment to e-services. The goal of e-services should be generally to position the GLB program as an essential distribution channel for e-governance, with particular reach into disadvantaged communities and populations. E-services arrangements should be accompanied by clear descriptions of the expectations placed on librarians. Typically, those expectations should focus on facilitating access to information. Thus, e-services should link people to information, opportunities and existing services.

### Enhance e-services through advocacy and partnerships

One of the key challenges confronting the facilitation of e-services by GLB librarians is the immature state of e-services at government level. Given the current under-developed state of e-governance and e-services at the national, regional and municipal levels, a realistic and important goal for partnerships in relation to e-services might be framed as an initiative to: “Undertake information campaigns, media relations and efforts to raise awareness of e-government among the general public and librarians.”

An effective policy regarding e-services will require agreement by the partner agency to transition to the central provision of job listings on the internet, and will entail mechanisms for feedback and accountability (see below).

### Identify and pursue appropriate e-governance activities

As mentioned in the preceding recommendation, e-services and e-governance at the institutional level in Bulgaria remains underdeveloped. An appropriate partnership objective might be to address this situation, and could be framed as: “Contribute to the development of municipal and other e-governance services that require lower levels of security, such as references to information, checking processing of statements and forms, checking tax status, etc.”

### Establish “reciprocal” partnership agreements

As exemplified by the current employment-agency MOU, some current agreements with partners regarding the provision of e-services are out of balance or asymmetrical; future partnership agreements should engage both partners in activities that are mutually beneficial and commensurate.

To potential GoB partners such as MoEYS, MoF and the Ministry of Health (MoH), among others, the GLB program offers an extremely valuable resource: a community-focused network for free public-access internet that extends to 960 settlements in 98.5 percent of municipalities, and that engages pensioners, minorities, schoolchildren, job seekers and others. At present, again in consideration of the state of e-services at the institutional level, this resource is likely to be under-valued by potential partners. At this point, there might be considerable pressure to create partnerships regardless of the returns they offer to the GLB program. However it is advisable to negotiate symmetrical, effective, transparent and accountable partnerships that maintain and increase the value of the GLB network. (Deployment of this network as a resource should, first, lead to *effective* provision of local-level services and, second, merit the effort required of the GLB librarians.)

### Include provisions for communication and accountability in MOUs

MOUs and partnership agreements should include mechanisms for effective channels of communication that link local players from all organizations and that ensure supervision and support. As an example, librarians at field sites are unaware of mechanisms to resolve problems in relation to the provision of e-services: Some target libraries receive listings from the Employment Agency for distant regions. In one such library, the librarian and the Chitalishte secretary said that they had no channel to communicate this situation, and that the situation could not be changed.[[43]](#footnote-43)

Librarians should know their points-of-contact, either facilitators within PMU or at the municipal level within the employment offices; in any case, the librarians’ points of contact must be part of a chain of communication that extends to the local employment offices. In addition, personnel in those offices must be made aware that support of the Chitalishte libraries in the GLB program is a priority for their organization

### Improve support for e-services

Engaging GLB librarians in provision of additional services, even if their engagement is voluntary, should be accompanied by effective support. As an example: The Employment Bureau operates several initiatives that could be of benefit to job seekers and the unemployed, such as “incubation” grants for entrepreneurs of BGN 12,000.[[44]](#footnote-44) No chitalishte librarians at field sites mentioned their awareness of these programs, despite participation by some (an unknown number) in advanced training in this area in 2013. Several means, such including preparation and distribution of fact sheets, conducting webinars and improving training, can help address this issue.

## Partnerships and advocacy—Library staffing

Field observations confirmed that undelivered staff positions creates serious challenges to smooth program operations at the local level. (See “5.3.2 Financial contributions.”)

### Intensify advocacy for complete fulfillment of staffing commitment

As mentioned (“8.4 Partnerships and advocacy—E-services”), the GLB network should be positioned and seen as a resource of real and potential value to partners, central stakeholders and relevant entities within GoB. As part of that positioning, the importance of full staffing should be maintained and that objective achieved as swiftly as possible.

### Initiate advocacy for full-time GLB district coordinator positions

Per “7.3.3 Supply factors, decentralized programs, ”district coordinators are limited by other work commitments, by their focus on methodological and library-management issues, by lack of project-preparation capacity, and by lack of decision-making responsibility. The first three of these would be addressed by funding of full-time staff positions at the GLB program’s 39 training bases. The fourth limitation *might* be overcome by a management structure that locates oversight for the new hire with MoC personnel in Sofia.

**Support for training-base activities.** In the short run the institutional and financial sustainability of the regional services can be financed by another program external to the libraries (or by smaller and more-numerous projects) that would replace the support currently provided by the GLB program within the BMGF country grant. In the long run, however the main financial sustainability for regional services needs to be ensured by the MoC, including through national and EU funds. Additionally the long-term sustainability scenario requires regional capacity for applications to EU financed projects and programs; as mentioned, building this capacity requires not only training, but additional resourcing for personnel and prioritization through policy or other means.

## Partnerships and advocacy—Funding

Advocacy efforts can focus on two possible improvements funding prospects for GLB libraries.

### Initiate advocacy for changes to co-financing and project partnerships

Advocacy efforts can address barriers to independent and collaborative development of project proposals by Chitalishte and local governments. At present, proposals are frequently subject to requirements for partnership with the relevant municipality, however municipalities are limited in terms of the number of proposals they can make with regard to specific programs.[[45]](#footnote-45) The most relevant and appropriate programs should be made open to proposals offered independently by local governments or Chitalishtewhen those proposals request support for activities using the GLB installation.

We were informed that the funds available under EU sources for the Chitalishte are mainly constrained to refurbishment and infrastructure activities within the Regional Development and the Rural Development programs. According to our investigations, these EU funded programs during the 2007 – 2013 program period did not finance staff and cultural activity costs for Chitalishte projects. As an example: The working group, elaborating the draft of the new Rural Development Program (RDP) could be requested to anchor “soft” or cultural activities under its provisions. Previously, RDP was not allowed to fund “soft” activities, although such opportunities exist in EU regulations.[[46]](#footnote-46)

**Co-financing.** A second barrier, the requirement for co-financing (and advance co-financing) from municipal or other partners should be revised to permit proposals (again from entities connected to GLB libraries) that can cite in-kind support from partners or stakeholders equal to co-financing requirements.[[47]](#footnote-47) Although regulatory and policy change is challenging, it is precisely in this area that national-level advocacy efforts are critical: If political will can be built via strong advocacy, regulations regarding co-financing can be changed—even during current program periods. For example, the co-financing problem of the farmers under the Rural Development Program (Measures 121, 122 and 123) was solved by introducing a guarantee fund. More importantly the regulations for the next program period are being currently developed. In our assessment, then, if there is a systematic advocacy pressure on behalf of the Chitalishte, they and by extension GLB program activities will be able to benefit from EU funds to a greater extent.

### Initiate advocacy for changes to the Complementary Subsidy

Thus, because of the limitations under the EU financed programs, currently the main available source for funding the Chitalishte educational and cultural activities is the supplementary funding with the MoC.

Per “7.2 Sustainability at the local level,” local activities, and sustainability, could be enhanced through changes in the Complementary Subsidy administered by MoC. At present, Chitalishte can apply for support for books, refurbishments, and possibly costumes and other items related to cultural activities. By adding a proposal category for technology-related or GLB-related activities, especially technology-supported arts and cultural activities, MoC could create a channel for funding to the GLB libraries that could support sustainable participation in training, procurement of hardware (e.g., PIDs, replacement computers, etc.) and other relevant goods and services.

## Impact assessment and monitoring

Library-reported numbers of patrons, per Table 3: Training outputs, appear likely to be unreliably positive as a result largely of response bias. See “Annex B: Monitoring of patrons trained” information about the potential for response bias.

### Increase the reliability of reporting of training results

In our assessment, it is possible that the specification regarding group and individual trainings and individual consultations is one factor contributing to over-reporting in these categories. (See “5.5 Training provided by the PMU.”) We suggest that this specification or other procedures in relation to quarterly reporting be reviewed and revised, as appropriate, to better reflect local-level activities.

At present, the measuring of performance in relation to training and coaching must reflect specifications contained in the Performance Metrics document (BMGF, released April 2013). Other potential factors in over-reporting should be analyzed as well. (For a brief review of response bias in this regard, refer to “Annex B: Monitoring of patrons trained.”

## Sustainability

We have structured recommendations regarding sustainability to reflect two different models:

* **Short-term model**: Describes activities to be undertaken by the Program Board and PMU in preparation for transition to the long-term organizational model; assumes that the Program Board and PMU secure financing opportunities to extend operations in the current “Program mode.”
* **Long-term model:** Assumes that the “Program mode” is sustained only for a short period of time (e.g., through 2013) and the activities are then anchored in an organizational model that is sustainable.

These two models as we present them *do not* provide consultation regarding sources of funds or the relative feasibility of different models.

### The role of EU funds

We have engaged with stakeholders and other respondents in much discussion of the potential for access to EU funds, and their potential in relation to sustaining GLB activities.

Under both models and under any circumstances, including mainstreaming of GLB activities within state programs, financing should be sought from EU operational programs.

EU funds normally support existing institutions, enabling them to pursue new interventions. Such funds, then, are perhaps better conceived as financing for the strengthening of government agencies, rather than for the replacement of those agencies. Current discussions promote the placement of the GLB program’s central functions in an independent organization that would be a concrete beneficiary of EU funding; this approach turns the EU model inside out—proposing essentially to channel funding for state-supported local entities through a new, independent organization.[[48]](#footnote-48)

With support for proposal preparation in an evolving policy environment—achievements that should be the highest priorities over the short term—GLB libraries will be well-positioned to access EU funds either via MoC or in partnership with other local actors.

## The short-term sustainability model

In the short term, the GLB program should prepare for transition to the long-term model. “Short-term” as used here signifies a period of any length—but likely ranging from eight months to three years—during which funding supports central, regional and local operations under an organization structure similar to the present one. Key elements in that structure are a Program Board including GoB stakeholders and other organizations (e.g., BLIA, NAMRB, etc.), the PMU, district / Chitalishte training bases, and the GLB libraries.

All short-term actions described here are intended to promote strengthening of the GLB network at the local level and while strengthening sustainable program support at the national and regional levels. These recommendations are intended for implementation by the PMU and/or the Program Board; inputs are classed as local, regional and national in their focus.

Local inputs should:

### Increase project-preparation capacity

* Support for project preparation: additional training, if possible; work aids (guides / handbooks); incentives (training, networking, hardware, etc.)
* Offering or securing additional opportunities for project-based funding (including reissue of the call for local-content projects under the GSFIP)
* Encouragement of partnerships with CSOs: pensioners and other clubs, schools, kindergartens, subsidiaries of state institutions, LAGs, businesses

Especially during this period, and going forward, local inputs should be designed to minimize “friction” with the cultural missions of the Chitalishte.

Regional inputs should:

### Increase decentralized training capacity

* Support for independent contracting of experienced trainers; pursuit of sector-specific training funds (e.g., rural development, e-inclusion, etc.)
* Support for demand-based training, such as: community development, e-culture (and project preparation)

### Increase networking activities

* Micro-grant opportunities for collaborating libraries
* Interest-focused meetings (e.g., “Books and software for children,” “Digitizing village heritage,” etc.)

National-level activities should address:

### Focus advocacy activities on strategic goals

* Advocacy for local and regional actions, such as: completion of the staffing obligation for libraries; full-time regional coordinator position at regional training bases; improvements to existing e-services agreements; agreements for e-services with new partners
* Advocacy for national actions such as: improved policy environment (e.g., with regard to co-financing and partnership requirements); cooperation in e-government activities at the local and national levels, advocacy for direct connections of GLB libraries and district training bases to EU operational programs; establishing new, relevant and sustaining partnerships.

Other measures should also be pursued as discussed previously in this section.

## The long-term model

Donor programs are normally implemented over short time periods in support (via governments and NGOs) of societies that have failed to accomplish particular objectives in terms of social development, economic development, or inclusion of specific social groups or territories. The model presented here assumes that long-term sustainability lies outside such program-based financing; long-term sustainability will be achieved by the GLB program and network when essential GLB activities are sustained by routine societal or market operations.

Out of respect for current and future GoB funding of the Chitalishte/libraries, this model also assumes the separation of financial support and management from activities categorized as technical assistance.

**Current configuration.** UNDP, via the PMU, operates both as a fiscal agent and as a Technical Assistance Entity (TAE). As an operational arm of the fiscal agent, PMU manages contracts for the maintenance of the hardware, makes payments to district / Chitalishte training bases (via the 2011-2013 MCGA mechanism), and provides monitoring in relation to impact assessment and performance. In addition, PMU provides general management and operational support for activities in relation to GLB. As a TAE, the PMU provides training, networking and advocacy.

### Separate financial and technical-assistance functions

We maintain that in the long run these functions are best undertaken by separate entities.

**Financial management.** To ensure sustainability and to take advantage of existing organizational and financial structures, the financial-management function should “return” to MoC. As an institution within the GoB, the MoC currently, and sustainably, performs “fiscal-agent” functions for the Chitalishte and for all library program components outside of the GLB program (including, of course, payment of newly hired GLB librarians). Chitalishte funding is channeled to the local level via municipal budgets, but these originate as and remain state funds. Via the Complentary Subsidy program, decentralized “project-based” funding is also currently channeled via MoC.

Over the long term, support for GLB activities should be “mainstreamed” into the existing financial system, with funding focusing on support at the local and regional levels.

(Adoption of this model should be preceded by review of the existing financing and institutional channels, consideration of the feasibility and likelihood of changes, and consideration of the mechanisms for mainstreaming GLB activities inside those channels. In addition, the political environment both among GLB stakeholders and the Program Board, and within relevant elements of GoB, should be assessed.)

**Technical Assistance Entity (TAE).** Specific functions—training, networking support, advocacy, support for project-based funding—fall outside the parameters of financial management and fiscal agency. These functions are normally fulfilled by NGOs or by private-sector service providers or consulting companies. Such functions, as we maintain in Section 7. (“Findings—Sustainability”), should be strongly connected to local demand; depending on several factors, including relevant mechanisms within MoC, fulfillment of these functions should be subject to competition among potential providers.

Based *in part* on determinations of the Program Board, a TAE entity can be established either as an NGO or as a private-sector firm to meet the need for the technical-assistance functions we have described. However, board support should not ensure this entity’s “institutionalization” as a monopoly service provider for GLB libraries. Nor should such membership restrict the entity’s operations *only* to GLB libraries. (Should, for example, a GoB agency establish telecenters in local government offices, the new entity should be enfranchised to pursue providing services to those telecenters as well as to GLB libraries.) Ideally, core members and stakeholders of the new entity should be given the freedom to establish the entity as they see fit, and according to their capacities, goals and assessment of prospects for sustainability.

(If there is a demand for services such as those to be offered, other NGOs or companies are likely to be established or registered without the sanction of the Program Board. The new entity emerging from GLB should be free to configure itself to best meet both local demand and central competition.)

**Additional arguments for separation of functions.** An alternative approach, establishing an independent entity to support the GLB network through both financial and technical-assistance functions runs the risk of creating a parallel structure to the current governmental system.

This parallel structure increases risks at the central level: of competing interests both with and within the MoC; of sclerotic decision-making among board members; of separation from local demand. Most critically, “ownership” of the GLB program will at times be contested, and in other political climates will be disavowed; the much-needed “champion” for the program within GoB will not emerge.

Such a parallel structure also increases local-level risks. Already, one threat to local-level sustainability is the lack of correspondence between the (state-funded) Chitalishte mission and the (externally funded) activities of the GLB program. In light of the potential for lack of clear ownership and effective decision-making, the continuation of this tension at the local level will curtail activities that benefit the neediest groups, and will cut off the transformation and revitalization of the libraries that the GLB program has begun.

## Lessons learned

The following lessons learned are derived from the analyses of program strength and the weaknesses,and observed inputs, outputs and outcomes as assessed in this evaluation. Lessons learned address various stakeholders—some of them regard implementation of similar programs in Bulgaria, while others can be applied in a broader developmental context.

### Anchor development support at a local sustainable institution

A major factor contributing to the sustainability of the GLB program is its anchoring within already-sustainable community based institutions—the Chitalishte. This situation has ensured both local “demand” from the community and “supply” support from various local, regional and national institutions, including the MoC, BLIA, NAMRB, and the district libraries, among others. Operating in a wide network the Chitalishte attracts the support of other national players (such as the Employment and the Revenue agencies, line ministries), which see in the program an opportunity to outreach distant locations through the Chitalishte.

### Prioritize participation based on active CSOs

The level of activity of civil-society organizations (CSOs) in a community is likely to correlate with the usage and impact of the GLB installation and the engagement and impact of GLB librarians. When CSOs such as pensioner’s clubs, clubs of people with disabilities, local museums and others are already active within a community these clubs make use of GLB installations. They also serve as “demand aggregators” for services such as ICT training and coaching.

We did not find evidence that the GLB program leads to the formation or increased activity of CSOs. Where CSOs do not exist or are minimally active, these conditions are not affected by introduction of the GLB program.

Including relations with active CSOs as a factor in accepting libraries into GLI programs will likely increase levels of activity, impact and sustainability.

### Build decentralized and regional capacities

The training component is one of the GLB program’s best-articulated successes. This outcome has much to do with the component’s appropriate design, but also with the involvement of decentralized implementers, including the district/Chitalishte training bases and locally based trainers. The training component has also introduced other decentralized instruments such as the MCGAs with the training bases, which include optional funding for a micro partnership project. These instruments keep the program in direct contact with local librarians and beneficiaries (the local communities), create ownership and build capacity at local and regional levels. (As mentioned, additional support for personnel at the training bases would further strengthen this necessary and effective approach and improve sustainability.)

### Support inputs and activities that address marginalized groups

Successful programs address social groups for whom the society and/or markets have failed to provide access to development in through routine mechanisms.The GLB program interventions are demanded by and address specific social strata with members who cannot otherwise afford access to ICT equipment: the poor, ethnic minorities, pensioners, schoolchildren in remote and poor villages, job seekers, disabled and other disadvantaged groups. As demonstrated by experiences in local libraries, use and benefit from ICT equipment is affected by outreach, cooperation from schools and other institutions, and partnerships with CSOs. Program inputs, such as “soft skills” training for librarians, encourage outreach and other activities and increase program effectiveness.

###  Design simple and straightforward interventions and contributions

Another major factor in the success of the program is its simple and straightforward design. The program is designed is to deliver equipment and trainings that promote “real access” at the local level, plus some “hints” about how the equipment can be used by the communities. The GLB program does not create *new institutional structures* that require special or parallel management at the local level, nor is the program over-burdened by requirements for “external-expert” support (such as specialists in ICT, healthcare, agriculture or other areas) for these basic activities.

### Include the local implementing institution in management structures

While the Chitalishte network is a major factor contributing to the success of the GLB program, the Chitalishte are not represented on the Program Board. This situation exacerbates issues arising from the integration of development objectives and cultural objectives.

### Frame an impact indicator of librarian status and self-perception

The self perceptions and self-confidence levels of village librarians have the potential to influence the effectiveness, impact and sustainability of local-level library programs such as the GLB program. (See “8.3.1 Support virtual and face-to-face networking among GLB librarians.”) Local-level initiatives, especially initiatives that require outreach or other “public-facing” efforts, should be assessed in relation to their impact on these factors. “Equitable evaluation” methods, such as those promoted by UNESCO, have the potential to discover impact on librarians’ self perceptions in a timely manner. (Equitable evaluation generally is participatory and features strong formative components.) Framing improvement to librarians’ self perceptions as an impact indicator is another means, and one that is likely to be more germane to GLI projects.

### Support linkage of grantee activities to evolving donor practice

BMGF approaches to IPA and advocacy, both of which are critical activities, underwent significant evolution during the period of the BLG program grant. PMU has made substantial efforts to integrate these changes into program activities. However additional capacity building, technical assistance and possibly oversight/accountability measures could have more strongly influenced current strategies and improved prospects for sustainability.[[49]](#footnote-49) As an example, advocacy activities as presented in the Country Grant Proposal (Sections 4.2 – 4.4) emphasize Press Relations (PR) without addressing influencing of the policy or regulatory environment and with minimal to moderate emphasis on financial sustainability, both elements that receive strong focus in later approaches to advocacy adopted by GLI; those elements remain under-emphasized in current advocacy activities and plans undertaken by the GLB program.

### Encourage well-structured and proven procurement practices

Another significant factor in the success of the GLB program is in the effectiveness of technology procurement (“5.4 GLB ICT equipment”), a process that benefitted from following proven UNDP procurement practices. Although these practices contributed to delay in procurement, the GLB ICT equipment (hardware and peripherals, software, networking, etc.) has performed well, and maintenance and repairs have been conducted effectively.

### Frame sustainability goals and objectives during planning

The Country Grant Proposal addresses sustainability at various points, separating local-level sustainability (Sections 1.3.3 and 2.2.4) from sustainability of central activities (2.1.2 and 3.1.7), however this separation is implicit and priorities or emphasis are unclear. During interviews conducted for this evaluation, key UNDP and BMGF respondents[[50]](#footnote-50) stated unequivocally and eloquently that the critical sustainability goal of the GLB program is, at least from their perspectives, the sustainability of local-level activities and capacities of the GLB network. Concurrent discussions with PMU personnel, other Program Board representatives and the consultant team developing the Sustainability Strategy, however, emphasized central/organizational sustainability. While such emphasis by PMU personnel is entirely understandable, at this point, other respondents might be expected to reflect the perspective of BMGF and UNDP. More detailed articulation of goals, objectives and priorities for sustainability during planning and the development of grant proposals—probably with guidance from BMGF—would contribute to improved strategic decision-making and likely increase sustainability of critical activities at both the local and the central levels.

1. Note on the Complementary Subsidy

Overview

The Complementary Subsidy is a program of MoC, the lead-partner organization; reforming that subsidy to better support GLB activities would appear to be a matter of internal planning and program development, not advocacy. Staffing and the subsidy, although administered by MoC, are dependent on MoF budget allocations. As discussed in “5.3.2–Financial contributions,” MoC representatives have made intensive efforts to influence MoF allocations, but have not been entirely successful. Without more information about barriers within MoF, no reliable conclusion can be drawn about the need for better-supported advocacy (e.g., through video success stories, impact assessments, etc.).

The Complementary Subsidy represents a potentially effective means of securing funds for GLB activities, and is discussed in “8.6 Partnerships and advocacy—Funding.

1. Monitoring of patrons trained

Overview

Table 3: Training outputs presents PMU aggregated data showing that a very large number of patrons have participated in training at the local level. However, PMU and others should be circumspect in citing these figures, as they are likely to be unreliable.

These library-reported numbers of participants trained are possible. However, to have achieved these numbers, target libraries must have completed on average 22 individual training sessions and 115 individual consultations.[[51]](#footnote-51) (Average group trainings are more difficult to estimate, as library capacity varies with the number of computers in each GLB installation.) Again, while feasible, these averages are unlikely—several of the libraries visited have delivered no individual adult trainings (Drangovo, Kopilovci).

There are several possible factors in the over-reporting of the numbers trained. Most of these factors involve a form of response bias, based the respondent’s perception of a “correct” or “most-favored” response.

* **Overly general definitions**Although PMU has—per conversation with Branimira Vezhdarova, Monitoring and Impact Manager—refined the definition of “training” in relation to quarterly reports by and surveys of library personnel have several reasons, including the desire to have their contributions counted, to use a broad, expanded or “relaxed” definition of training when they complete their reports.
* Many smaller libraries have fewer than the requesite average 115 regular patrons, however one patron could receive individual consultation of any duration and on many occasions, with each occasion reported.)
* **Including schoolchildren**Frequent use of the GLB installation by schoolchildren also has the potential to distort self-reported individual consultations by librarians. Schoolchildren, typically the most frequent users of the library computers, in many instances require less training and support in relation to technology, however they frequently require consultation in relation to the content of school assignments and other areas. It is possible that librarians report content-related consultations with school children who are using technology to find information as ICT consultations.

GLB and its partners should be circumspect in making use of the numbers of patrons trained and participating in consultation.

1. Municipal e-services

Overview

Theoretically the introduction of ICT equipment and internet in the target libraries can facilitate the use of existing e-government services, provided by the Municipal administration and consequently can serve as a demand factor for developing new services. These services supposedly could be in at least three domains:

* **E-services, involving financial transactions, including payments of local taxes and fees**
Services related to issuing of certificates, permissions and other documents such as Certificate for current address, Certificate of marital status and family relations, Certificate of marriage – duplicate, Requests for access to information, Categorization of dining and entertainment businesses and other business permissions and other documentation;
* **Services, related to checking the progress and the processing status of documentation and statements.**
That involves checking the status of local tax statements, local fines, waste taxes, criminal warrants fines and others.

Review of municipal e-services

A quick (and unrepresentative) overview on the provided e–services by some Bulgarian municipalities on internet shows that the introduction of such e-services has just recently started in Bulgaria through EU financed projects and is available mainly in big municipalities, but occasionally in some smaller municipalities too. In the Bulgarian press[[52]](#footnote-52) there a publications, pointing that the municipalities would be obliged to provide such e-services, but there no information how far this has gone by now. In Sofia the Municipality is planning to introduce 50 e-services, but there is no particular timeline for that.[[53]](#footnote-53).

Constraints

While there is a need for a deeper research we identify three main constraints for applying municipal e-services in Bulgaria. Firstly, such a project is expensive for municipal budgets and is feasible only through EU Operational Program such as “Administrative Capacity”. Secondly, the main municipal e-services such as related to financial transactions need to be integrated in a national e-government, which is still pending. Thirdly, e-services such as financial transactions and issuing of certificates and statements would need high level of security, likely including private-key encryption of network communications and user-level security such as electronic signatures or PIN systems. This last constraint, “security,” is particularly constraining the use of e-government and municipal services in public ICT equipments, including in libraries.

Field observations

The evaluation team addressed this issue on the field, but the there was not reported any use of municipal e-services in the 15 visited libraries. More importantly the Governmental partners of the GLB program do not demonstrate a convincing vision for involving the libraries in the delivery of actual e-government services. The interviews with the Governmental officials both at national and local level point to an understanding of the Glob@l libraries network as a network of PR extension services points.

On the whole the observations of the team regarding municipal e-services are that e-government is underdeveloped in Bulgaria, though there is a declared political will for that. This makes it unrealistic to expect a significant impact of the project on improving e-government services. The project has however contributed to the awareness of this issue, e.g., mainly in terms of providing information and PR.

1. List of sites visited

Overview

Table 4: List of sites visited displays the date, the name of the library (and the Chitalishte, if different) and the name of the settlement that the Chitalishte and library serve. Field visits were conducted in two sequential missions. For more information, refer to “4.2.1 Sampling.”

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **FIELD MISSION 1** | **Settlement** |
| **Monday, 11 March 2013** |  |
| Chitalishte Library “Slantse - 1879”  | Ihtiman |
| Chitalishte Library “Nikola Ionkov Vaptsarov- 1894”  | Topolovo |
| **Tuesday, 12 March 2013** |  |
| National Library “Ivan Vazov”  | Plovdiv |
| Chitalishte Library “St. st. Cyrill and Methodius” | Rakovski |
| **Wednesday, 13 March 2013** |  |
| Chitalishte Library “Hristo Botev- 1914”  | Krumovgrad |
| Chitalishte Library “Vassil Levski- 1952” | Drangovo |
| **FIELD MISSION 2** |  |
| **Monday, 18 March 2013** |  |
| Chitalishte Library “Sabuzhdane - 1895”  | Vrachesh |
| District Library “Geo Milev” | Montana |
| **Tuesday, 19 March 2013** |  |
| Chitalishte Library “Ivan Vazov - 1911”  | Barzia |
| Chitalishte Library “Iordan Radichkov” at Chitalishte “Ivan Vazov -1872” | Berkovitsa |
| **Wednesday, 20 March 2013** |  |
| Chitalishte Library “Vazrazhdane – 1927” | Petko Slaveykov |
| City Library “Pencho Slaveykov” | Tryavna |
| **Thursday, 21 March 2013** |  |
| Citalishte Library “Kanio Merakov”  | Blatets  |
| Municipal Library “P. Mateev” | Kotel |
| **Friday, 22 March 2013** |  |
| Chitalishte Library “Anastas Kipilovski - 1909”  | Kopilovci |

Table : List of sites visited

1. List of respondents

Overview

This annex lists interview respondents. The names of librarians and other persons interviewed in field visits are not included.

* Ms. Maria Zlatareva, UNDP Head of Office
* Ms. Emiliana Zhivkova, UNDP Program Officer
* Ms. Ogniana Glavoussanova, UNDP Program Officer
* Mr. Trendafil Meretev, Program Manager, Global Libraries Bulgaria Program
* Atanas Tzanov, Deputy Program Manager (in conjunction with Mr. Meretev)
* Ms. Diana Andreeva, Training Manager
* Ms. Natalya Georgieva, Manager, PR and Advocacy
* Ms. Krassimira Kaneva, Regional Manager
* Ms. Branimira Vezhdarova, Manager, Monitoring and Impact Assessment
* Ms. Albana Ramizi-Baleeva, Training Specialist
* Ms. Siri Oswald, Senior Program Officer, BMGF
* Mr. Igor Chipev, Chief of Directorate of Books and Libraries, MoC
* Mr. Daniel Kalchev, Member, Management Board of Bulgarian National Television (MoC)
* Ms. Ginka Tchavdarova, Executive Director, NAMRB
* Ms. Maria Kumanova, Team Leader and Policy Representation Specialist, NAMRB
(in conjunction with Ms. Tchavdarova)
* Mr. Hristo Hristov, Director, Information Technology Directorate, MoTITC
* Mr. Boyko Lechev, Chief Expert, Information Technology, MoTITC
* Ms. Snejana Ianeva, President, BLIA
* Ms. Nikoleta Efremova, Associate Assistant MEPP, Information and Management (Representative of the Ministry of EU Funds Management)
* Ms. Katia Ivkova, Site Expert
(Representative of the Ministry of Health)
* Mr. Rosen Simeonov, Representative of the Employment Agency
* Mr. Rosen Bachvarov, Head of Communications Directorate
(Representative of the National Revenue Agency)
* Ms. Tashka Gabrovska, Consultant in e-employment
* Ms. Denitsa Sacheva, Consultant in e-health
* Mr. Yuriy Vukolvski, Consultant in e-culture
* Mr. Vladimir Shopov, Founder, Analytica Ltd., Consultant on sustainability
* Mr. Kasimir Popov, Consultant on sustainability

Group meetings were also held with:

* The GLB PMU team as a whole
* PMU Regional Managers
	+ Mr. Krasimir Hristov
	+ Mr. Nikolay Markov
* PMU IT department
	+ Mr. Evtim Yanakiev, Manager
	+ Mr. Daniel Dakovsky, IT Specialist
* PMU Operations department
	+ Mr. Atanas Tzanov, Deputy Program Manager
	+ Mr. Iliya Popov, Administrative Manager
	+ Ms. Takuhi Elmokian, Finance Manager
* PMU Monitoring and Impact department
	+ Ms. Branimira Vezhdarova, Manager
	+ Ms. Vassilka Shishkova, Specialist
* PR and Advocacy department
	+ Ms. Natalia Georgieva, Manager
	+ Ms. Silvina Furnadzhieva, Portal Specialist
	+ Desislava Marinova, PR and Events Manager
* Librarian members of the BLIA
	+ Ms. Emilia Staneva-Milkova, Director, Varna Public Library
	+ Ms. Spaska Trandova, Deputy Director, Sofia City Library
	+ District coordinators and library-based trainers
1. List of documents consulted

Overview

The documents listed in this section comprise those documents directly relevant to the conduct of the independent external evaluation of the GLB program that were consulted in whole or in part. Other professional documents and reports (e.g., advocacy frameworks, etc.) were consulted on an ad hoc basis.

* + 1. Country Grant Proposal and Project document
		2. Project Document
		3. Global Libraries CIMS Workbook\_Nov 30 (filename)
		4. Global Libraries PM Workbook\_Nov 30 (filename)
		5. IPAF\_ENG.doc (filename)
		6. Original and updated Country Grant Timelines (2009-2013)
		7. Annual Work Plan, 2010, 2011, 2012
		8. Reports to the GLB Program Board (2009, 2010, 2011, 2012)
		9. Reports to BMGF on Program Implementation (2009, 2010, 2011, 2012)
		10. Quarterly financial reports to BMGF on Program Implementation (2009, 2010, 2011, 2012)
		11. CITICA Report
		12. Competency Index of the Librarian Working in Public Library
		13. Training Program 2011 – 2013
		14. Training Schedule 2011
		15. Training Pilot Phase Analysis
		16. Training Program 2012 – 2013
		17. Analysis of 2012 training first period ( March – July, 2012)
		18. Results from the analysis on the effect of the 2011 training program
		19. Baseline Impact Assessment Study (February 2011)
		20. Interim Impact Assessment Study (December 2012)
		21. MOUs (Lovech, Plovdiv, Targovishte)
		22. MCGAs with Target Libraries
		23. MOUs with Ministries and State Agencies (Employment Agency, Ministry of EU Funds Management, MoH, NRA)
		24. Concepts on the Introduction of E-Services in the Target Libraries (e-culture resources and e-culture portal, e-health resources and e-health portal, and e-employment and e-employment portal)
		25. Draft strategy for sustainability of program results
1. Structured interview outline

Introduction

Following are draft notes and guidelines that were employed during interviews and Focus Group Discussions at field sites. Appropriate for a formative evaluation, questioning strategies evolved in response to information encountered during field visits.

Performance

Brief overview on activities so far, re:

* ICT installed / used / sustained
(problems with hardware, software, Internet, security)
* Trainings – for librarians and users
(Trainings completed, organization and convenience, interest in additional training with the same organization)
* Partnerships
* Events and PR
* Usage content and rates, incl. services
* Management perceptions - Local coordinators, district library, PMU roles

Relevance

* Perceived importance of the program for users and the community. Justifications.
* Descriptions (concrete, anecdotes) about ways that users engage with the information and communications tools
* Challenges related to users’ access to content, to communication
* Ideas for improvement – “if you could have access to specific information, or services, that you don’t have access to now, what would it be?”
* Perceived importance of the program for the library, and the chitalishte.
* User groups:
* Which groups of users (e.g., students, general pubic, youths, seniors, unemployed, minorities) have derived the most benefit from ICT at the library?
* Are there any groups that could be benefiting but that aren’t? What keeps them from these benefits?

Effectiveness and impact

[in your work, in your relationships, in the community; for the individual users]

Adequacy of training:

* What activities are performed most frequently? Are skills adequate?
* Activities that are difficult or too challenging? Would more training help?
* Ability to train and guide library users in relation to ICT?
* Perceived change up to now
* Potential for a future change

Sustainability and partnerships

[ Attitudes]

* Content; services sustainability – associated with local needs and policies
* Financial sustainability – incl. local inputs
* Continued payment of cost of connectivity? Possible replacement of hardware? Other costs?
* Institutional set-up and management relationships - improved , more efficient
* Partnership relationships – mutual benefits
* National and regional partners: What other organizations (Association of Libraries? Association of Municipalities? Union of Chitalishte?) have been most important partners over the past five years? (Describe these relationships.)
* Which of these organizations (if any) have been engaged in working with the library’s ICT capability?
* Local partners: (What organizations (Municipal government? NGOs? Other local organizations?) are most important to the library? (Describe these relationships.)
* Which of these organizations (if any) have been engaged in working with the library’s ICT capability?

Strengths and weaknesses

* What should be preserved / changed in the future of the GLB program?
* What is your vision of the future in relation to ICT and this library?
* What will happen next year that is different from this year?
* What the ICT installation and activities be like five years from now?
* What has been your most significant challenge in relation to the ICT installation and ICT use in your library?
* What has been the greatest success that has been achieved in relation to the ICT installation and use?
1. Evaluation TOR

**TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**Independent External Evaluation**

**Glob@l Libraries – Bulgaria Program**

**Project No: 00071115**

# *International Evaluator – 1 (one)*

**National Evaluator – 1 (one)**

1. **CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

I.1 General context

Despite its status of a middle-income country and member of the European Union, Bulgaria continues to experience a digital divide and an underdeveloped information society. Public access to computers and the Internet are insufficient, uneven across the territory, and inequitable among population groups. Two-thirds of the Bulgarian population remains isolated from the new access to on-line information channels. This constitutes a vicious tendency, which can be interrupted by enabling a wider and more effective access to ICT for the general population, and for various particularly vulnerable population groups.

The general population in Bulgaria does not possess enough information literacy skills. Due to the scarcity of electronic resources, Bulgarian citizens do not have an understanding of the whole spectrum of information sources and search tools in today’s information age. Hence, the opportunities for personal development and education are not fully utilized.

Over 40% of Bulgaria’s population resides in rural areas that are usually geographically isolated or economically depressed. Still at present, their inhabitants have radio, a few TV channels and telephone as their single means to access information and “connect” to the global world. As the population in such areas is generally poor, it is facing information deprivation and digital divide.

The public libraries network stands closest to the general population and covers the entire national territory more or less evenly, thus becoming the most natural place for citizens to access information, services and opportunities offered through the web.

In order to address the above challenges, the “Bill & Melinda Gates” Foundation (BMGF) awarded a country grant implementing a project titled *“Bulgarian Libraries – Access Points to Information and Communication for All*” (the Glob@l Libraries – Bulgaria Program). Part of the Foundation’s Global Development Program, Glo@l Libraries works with select countries that demonstrate a need and readiness to help public libraries provide free access to computers and the Internet, and training on how to make full use of these tools. The initiative strives to transform public libraries into vital resources that can help improve the lives of millions of people.

I.2 The Glob@l Libraries – Bulgaria Program

Glob@l Libraries – Bulgaria (GLB) was designed in the period 2008-2009 in the framework of a Planning Phase (funded by the BMGF). The envisaged duration of the BMGF-funded full-scale project (Implementing Phase) is 4.5 years: June 2009 – December 2013. GLB aims to facilitate easy and equitable access to information, knowledge, communication and electronic services at public libraries countrywide via free use of the Internet and other information and communication technologies (ICT). GLB’s vision of success is to enable Bulgarian citizens integrate into the global information society, have access to life-long learning and training opportunities, form a more vibrant civil society and enjoy a better quality of life. /See more on the GLB web portal: [www.glbulgaria.bg](http://www.glbulgaria.bg)/

 As a program, GLB has four long-term objectives, reaching beyond the 2009-2013 project:

* Stimulate local / community development;
* Enhance the quality of human capital;
* Accelerate the integration of Bulgarian citizens into the global information society;
* Develop institutional capacities for sustaining and advancing the program results.

GLB is a joint initiative of the Bulgarian Ministry of Culture (lead institution), the United Nations Development Programme (implementing agency), and three more official program partners: the Bulgarian Ministry of Transport, Information Technology and Communications, the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Bulgarian Library and Information Association. These five institutions form the Program Board – GLB’s steering body.

From June 2009 to December 2013, GLB is supported by a USD 15 million grant provided by the BMGF. The indicative total program budget is USD 48 million, which includes the BMGF country grant, a USD 18 million software donation from the Microsoft Corporation, and matching contributions assessed at USD 15 million from the Bulgarian central and local government budgets. A Program Management Unit - the GLB PMU - was formed in mid-2009 and staffed with 20 full-timers.

The program provides: free-of-charge use of ICT equipment for visitors, a comprehensive training program for library staff (approximately 17,4 days per trainee), as well as advocacy, networking, public relations, promotion and technical assistance support to its target libraries / librarians. GLB enables free-of-charge access to information for visitors at its 960 target libraries, located in 911 towns and villages across the entire national territory. 71 % of the target libraries are situated in villages. For the population in these settlements, the GLB library is the sole public access point to information and online / ICT services.

The GLB target libraries were selected in three stages (2009, 2010 and 2011) based on applications and specific criteria for each stage. They had all received their ICT equipment under the program by 30 January 2012 (4,935 computers in total are installed). Approximately 3,000 librarians will be trained in computer literacy, library service delivery, library management, soft skills, and project cycle management / fundraising. By October 2012, GLB had trained 2,567 library workers (approximately 17,4 days per trainee). In addition the total number of citizens trained in computer skills at the target libraries, at their own initiative, is 25,089.

I.3 Impact planning framework and impact assessment of the GLB Program

The successful implementation of the program is secured by a system for ongoing assessment of progress and results, and for internal and external independent monitoring of the identified success indicators that will enable to trace the reaching of the program’s objectives. The program outputs, outcomes, objectives and desired impact, together with the respective indicators, are organized in an Impact Planning and Assessment Framework (IPAF). The IPAF indicators include required and recommended metrics based on instructions provided by the BMGF. The rest of the indicators are country specific. The approved Country Grant Proposal envisages conducting baseline, interim and final impact assessments for the program.

In the period October 2010 – February 2011, GLB implemented its Impact Assessment Baseline Study with the purpose of measuring the values of IPAF indicators at the outset of implementation. The baseline study included four components:

* exhaustive observation of 798 out of 807 target libraries under Stages 2009 and 2010
* national representative study of Bulgaria’s adult population (aged 18 +)
* national representative study of Bulgarian children and young people (aged 7-18)
* focus groups for qualitative analysis of the above results.

The analytical reports and Executive summary of the baseline study are available in Bulgarian at: <http://www.glbulgaria.bg/bg/node/610>.

The Executive summary of the baseline study is available in English at: <http://www.glbulgaria.bg/en/node/3978>.

GLB’s Impact Assessment Interim Study was conducted from July to November 2012. The collected data will be used to report the interim program impact to the BMGF, the GLB Program Board, decision-makers, and other program stakeholders in Bulgaria. The objective is to repeat, as well as to expand the measurement effected through the baseline study from early 2011, assessing the program´s impact on library users, local communities and the general population after the installation of ICT equipment at the GLB target libraries.

The interim impact study included five components:

* survey among GLB’s target librarians covering all 960 target libraries
* survey of the GLB target library users covering three age categories: 7-10; 11-18; 18+
* national representative survey of the adult population (aged 18+)
* national representative survey of children and young people (aged 7-18)
* focus groups with librarians, target library users and local community representatives.

The results of the interim impact study indicate that at a time of general increase in ICT usage throughout Bulgaria GLB contributes via its 960 target libraries to improve local livelihoods in several directions:

* target libraries transform into modern information centers providing vital information to their users:
* over 60 % of adults and youths consider the public library as a modern institution offering innovative ICT-based services /national representative surveys/;
* children public access computing (PAC) users in the libraries have increased 5 times / national representative survey of children and young people /;
* most of the adult and young library users highlight the ICT as the main incentive for their more frequent library visits.
* target libraries stimulate the integration of vulnerable social groups:
* minorities /80 % of the Roma young library users are active PAC users in the library/
* unemployed people /20% of adult library users have searched for jobs online in the library and 8 % of them have started a new job/;
* people in villages and small towns in the country’s rural areas facing information deprivation;
* elderly people /lifelong learning opportunity - 38 % of elder library users /aged 51-60/ have participated in computer courses organized in the library/;
* children and youths /every one of 10 young library users has participated in computer courses organized in the library/.
* target libraries show a strong potential to deliver innovative ICT-based services to the general public and to the above-mentioned vulnerable social groups:
* culture and leisure activities (18%); / survey of adult target library users /;
* e-government and e-banking (16%); / survey of adult target library users /;
* e-employment, social security and health related services (14%) / survey of adult target library users /;
* health promotion (14%). / survey of adult target library users /

The analytical reports of the interim study are available in Bulgarian at <http://www.glbulgaria.bg/bg/node/11081> [[54]](#footnote-54).

The key impact findings shall feed both into the present external evaluation exercise and into the initiated sustainability efforts. As GLB is entering into its last year the efforts of the program partners have been concentrated in two main directions:

* preparation of a Strategy for Sustainability of the Program Results[[55]](#footnote-55);
* establishment of a new legal entity as a successor and legacy holder of the GLB program[[56]](#footnote-56).
1. **PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE OF THE INDEPENDENT EXTERNAL EVALUATION**

II.1 Evaluation purposes

This Independent External Evaluation is intended to assess the relevance, effectiveness, performance, lessons learned and sustainability of the GLB Program. The evaluation should provide recommendations for enhancements to be effected before the planned project end (December 2013), so as to facilitate a smooth transition of the GLB activities to a post-project framework. The evaluation should also look at impact and sustainability of results, including the contribution to capacity development of the program stakeholders.

The evaluation should also identify/document lessons learned and provide concrete recommendations to the GLB program partners for the sustainability and for the future development of the GLB network.

This evaluation will be used as an advocacy tool vis-à-vis the relevant Bulgarian governmental and non-governmental bodies, in view of the necessity to position GLB as an important national endeavor to be sustained post-2013 and in the long-term.

II.2 Evaluation audience

Bulgaria’s Country Grant Proposal to the BMGF envisages conducting the evaluation in compliance with the principles of evaluation adopted by UNDP, serving in the capacity of Implementing Agent for Glob@l Libraries – Bulgaria.

The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Bulgaria (as lead agency), UNDP Bulgaria (as implementing agency), and the BMGF as a project donor, as well as the GLB PMU (as unit in charge of the project’s daily operations), are primarily interested in analyzing how successful the project implementation has been, what impacts GLB has generated, and whether there are early signs that the project benefits will be sustained in the long run.

All other GLB partners and stakeholders share the same interest in the evaluation results and could benefit from them as a means to join their efforts towards the areas identified as key issues for ensuring the program’s sustainability in the long run.

1. **EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE**

III.1 Evaluation objectives

*Specifically this Independent External Evaluation has the following objectives:*

1. To assess the **relevance** of the GLB Programme approach with respect to the national development priorities/country needs:
2. Extent to which the programme has met the specific needs of the GLB target groups;
3. Extent to which the programme has met the specific needs of the GLB stakeholders.
4. To analyze and evaluate the **effectiveness** of the results that the GLB programme has been able to achieve against its objectives, targets and indicators;
5. Extent to which the expected results have been achieved. What factors have contributed to achieving or not achieving the intended results?
6. Extent to which strategic partnerships have been established. Has the GLB partnership strategy been appropriate and effective? What factors contributed to its effectiveness/ineffectiveness?
7. Contribution to capacity development of the program target groups and stakeholders.
8. To evaluate overall **performance** of the GLB programme:
9. Efficiency and effectiveness in producing the expected outputs;
10. The extent to which results have been delivered with the least costly resources possible;
11. Contribution of GLB partners, including financial contribution;
12. Recommendations on the Final Impact Assessment of the GLB Program;
13. Prospects for sustainability.

4. **Strengths and weakness** and **lessons learned**:

a. Identify strengths and weaknesses of the GLB programme;

b. Draw lessons learned for the future development of the GLB programme.

5. Recommendations for **sustainability** and **future development** of the GLB programme.

1. Identify risks to sustainability – institutional, financial, socio-economic;
2. Formulate concrete recommendations to the GLB partners for ensuring sustainability and future development of the GLB network;
3. Review and provide recommendations to the GLB Sustainability Strategy;
4. Provide recommendations for the institutional development and activities of the GLB Foundation.

III.2 Evaluation scope

##### *Geographical Scope*

##### The GLB target libraries network covers 260 of Bulgaria’s 264 municipalities. The program is present in 911 towns and villages across the entire national territory.

*Time Scope*

June 2009 – December 2012

*Content Scope*

While keeping in mind the evaluation objectives set above, the evaluation implies a thorough analysis, assessment, advice and/or formulation of forward-looking recommendations on the program implementation and the program’s future development by end-2013 and post-2013.

1. **ASSIGNMENT DELIVERABLES**
2. Meetings and Field Visits;
3. First-draft Independent External Evaluation Report in English;
4. Final Independent External Evaluation Report and Report Annexes in English;
5. Executive Summary of the evaluation report in English.
6. Bulgarian versions of the Final Independent External Evaluation Report, together with Report Annexes and the Executive Summary of the evaluation report.[[57]](#footnote-57)

The following indicative contents structure is proposed:

Executive Summary

* Brief description of the program
* Purpose and key parameters of the evaluation
* Main conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations

Evaluation Report

* Introduction
* Program background
* Purpose of the evaluation
* Key issues addressed
* Methodology of the evaluation
* Structure of the evaluation
* Assessment of the program
* Relevance of program approach towards target groups/stakeholders specific needs
* Effectiveness of program results against its objectives, targets and indicators
* Program performance (reaching expected outputs; cost-effectiveness; quality of partnership)
* Findings and conclusions on:
* Program relevance
* Program effectiveness
* Program performance
* Lessons learned and vision for future sustainability options based on the evaluation findings
* Recommendations, including forward-looking recommendations on the program sustainability vision

Mandatory report annexes

* Terms of reference (TOR) for the evaluation assignment
* Field visits itinerary
* List of interviewed parties
* List of reviewed documents.

##### *Technical notes for production of the Evaluation Report*

Formatting: Times New Roman – Font 12; single spacing; paragraph numbering and table of contents (automatic); page numbers (centered); graphs and tables and photographs (where relevant) encouraged.

Length: maximum 30 pages in total excluding annexes

Timeframe of submission: as per indicative Work Plan (*see point VII.2.*)

Should be submitted to: the GLB Program Manager, UNDP Bulgaria, the Ministry of Culture and the BMGF

The finalized Evaluation Report, all its Annexes and the Executive Summary shall be provided in electronic form in English to the GLB Program Manager, UNDP Bulgaria and the Ministry of Culture.

In the case of discrepancies between the impressions and findings of the evaluation team and the key evaluation stakeholders, these should be explained in an annex to the final report.

The finalized evaluation report shall be approved by the GLB PMU, UNDP Bulgaria and the Bulgarian Ministry of Culture. The finalized Evaluation Report, all its Annexes and the Executive Summary shall be provided to the BMGF.

1. **EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY**

An outline of an evaluation approach is provided below. It should be made clear that the evaluation team is responsible for adjusting the approach as necessary. Any changes should be in line with best international professional norms and standards. They must also be cleared by the GLB Program Manager, Ministry of Culture and UNDP before being applied by the evaluation team.

The evaluation must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. It must be easily understood and applicable to the remaining period of the project duration.

The methodology to be used by the evaluation team should be presented in the evaluation report in detail. It shall include as a minimum:

* **Desk review** – a full list of materials for desk review will be provided as an annex hereto. The materials will be delivered electronically to the evaluators by the GLB PMU upon signature of the contracts for conducting the evaluation assignment;
* **Interviews** to be held with the following organizations and individuals at minimum:

BMGF representatives;

UNDP Bulgaria management and staff responsible for the program;

GLB PMU – Program Manager, Heads of Department, other PMU staff;

National Program Director;

Ministry of Culture management and staff;

GLB Working Group Members;

GLB Program Board Members;

GLB District Coordinators;

Local partners of the target libraries;

Local authorities’ representatives;

Target library management and staff;

Program experts and representatives of key contractors;

Representatives of line ministries / other national institutions / non-governmental organizations partnering with / relevant to GLB;

End project beneficiaries – target library users and citizens in general

Meetings shall be organized by the GLB PMU further to agreeing an in-country program with the evaluators upon signature of the contracts for conducting the evaluation assignment.

* **Field missions to target libraries sites**

The choice of locations and participants shall meet the following requirements:

* Include participants from all relevant stakeholders on national/local level – national institutions, relevant non-governmental organizations on national/local level, representatives of library staff, library users, local community representatives, local government sector, etc.;
* cover small and large settlements, villages and towns, better and less developed regions, urban and rural environments;
* encompass all types of target libraries (District Libraries, Municipal Libraries, Chitalishte Libraries);
* **Questionnaires, participatory techniques and / or other approaches for collection and analysis of data**

To be designed and processed by the evaluators.

* **Analytical work and report writing**

The distribution of analytical work and reporting writing among the evaluation team members shall be organized in compliance with the proposed task distribution in point VI.2.

1. **EVALUATION TEAM COMPOSITION AND REQUIREMENTS**

VI.1 Evaluation team composition

A team of two independent evaluators will conduct the evaluation. The team will be composed of one International Evaluator who will act as the Team Leader and one Bulgarian National Evaluator. The incumbents should not have participated in the program preparation and/or implementation and should not be in conflict of interest with any GLB related activities.

VI.2 Task distribution

The International Evaluator will have overall responsibility for the delivery and quality of the evaluation products. Specifically, the International Evaluator will perform the following tasks:

* Lead and manage the evaluation mission;
* Design the detailed evaluation scope and methodology (including the methods for data collection and analysis);
* Decide the division of labor within the evaluation team;
* Desk review of documents;
* Conduct an analysis of the outcome, outputs and partnership strategy (as per the scope and objectives of the evaluation described above);
* Lead the drafting of the evaluation report;
* Finalize the whole evaluation report.

The National Evaluator will provide support to the International Evaluator in the evaluation. Specifically, the National Evaluator will perform tasks with a focus on:

* Desk review of documents;
* Prepare a list of the outputs achieved under project;
* The mission programme;
* Participate in the design of the evaluation methodology;
* Conduct an analysis of the outcome, outputs and partnership strategy (as per the scope and objectives of the evaluation described above);
* Draft related parts of the evaluation report;
* Assist International Evaluator in finalizing the evaluation report through incorporating suggestions received on draft related to his/her assigned sections.
* Responsible for the preparation and quality of the Bulgarian versions of Final evaluation report, annexes and Executive summary.

VI.3 Required competencies

The incumbents shall have prior experience in evaluating programs of similar scope. The selection of incumbents will aim to maximize the evaluation team qualities in the following areas:

* Knowledge and experience with results-based program evaluation methodologies;
* Experience in applying participatory monitoring approaches;
* Competence in issues such as information society development, digital literacy, digital inclusion, public access to ICT, ICT for development, community / local development;
* Demonstrable analytical skills;
* Proven track record in evaluation report production;
* Relevant professional experience of at least 10 years;
* Full proficiency in English.

Any previous association with the program, the GLB PMU, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Transport, Information Technology and Communications, the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Library and Information Association, UNDP Bulgaria or other program partners / sub-contractors / stakeholders must be disclosed in writing during the application process for the present assignment.

If selected, failure to make the above disclosures will be considered just grounds for immediate contract termination, without recompense. In such circumstances, all notes, reports and other documentation produced by the evaluator will be retained by UNDP Bulgaria.

VI.4 Evaluation ethics

The evaluation shall be undertaken in line with the ethical principles outlined in the United Nations Evaluation Group’s *Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation*:

* Independence
* Impartiality
* Transparency
* Partnership
* Competencies and Capacities
* Credibility
* Utility

While working on the evaluation design, the incumbents should incorporate procedures to safeguard the rights and confidentiality of information providers, such as measures to ensure compliance with local legal codes governing the rules for collection and use of personal data.

1. **IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS AND TIMEFRAME**

VII.1. Management arrangements

The principal responsibility for managing this evaluation lies with UNDP Bulgaria through the GLB PMU.

UNDP Bulgaria will contract the evaluators separately under Individual Contract. The incumbents will report to UNDP Bulgaria and work in close coordination with the GLB PMU in Sofia.

The incumbents will submit to UNDP Bulgaria through the GLB Program Manager the requested outputs as per the indicative Work Plan in point VII.2, to be agreed upon commencement of the evaluation assignment.

The evaluation team shall take into account all comments and inputs provided by the GLB PMU, the Ministry of Culture, UNDP Bulgaria and the BMGF.

The evaluation team shall liaise with the GLB Monitoring and Impact Manager who will act as the Evaluation Focal Point, reporting to the GLB Program Manager.

The evaluation team shall cooperate with the External Consultant hired by the BMGF to support GLB’s Impact Planning and Assessment Framework upgrade process, as relevant.

The GLB PMU will organize logistical support to the evaluation team (translator / interpreter, office space and equipment, hotel bookings in Sofia / Bulgaria, in-country transportation for all meetings and field visits).

VII.2. Timeframe and deadlines

The evaluation exercise is planned to be completed in the period February – April, 2013.

**Indicative Work Plan**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Task**(list of tasks may be amended / expanded when elaborating the work plan together with evaluators) | **Responsible** | **Deadline**(indicate date) | **Notes**(state number of work days envisaged and other relevant info) |
| Provision of documents / materials for desk review | GLB Program Manager and UNDP | at contract signature | - |
| Desk review and clarifications via e-mail  | Desk review - International EvaluatorNational Evaluator /Clarifications – UNDP and GLB Program Manager | prior arrival of the evaluators to Sofia | **10 days** |
| Elaboration of draft in-country program for the evaluators (meetings and field visits) | UNDP and GLB Program Manager | prior arrival of the evaluators to Sofia | **2 days** |
| Arrival of the evaluators to Sofia | International EvaluatorNational Evaluator | date to be fixed when known | - |
| Inception meetings in SofiaFinalizing schedule and itinerary for the field missions | UNDP and GLB Program Manager International EvaluatorNational Evaluator |  | **5 days** |
| Field Mission 1 – visits to target library sites | GLB PMUInternational EvaluatorNational Evaluator |  | **4 days** |
| Analytical work and more meetings in Sofia Distribution of work / issues to be addressed among the evaluatorsAgreeing on evaluation report structure | International EvaluatorNational EvaluatorUNDP, MC and GLB Program Manager, International EvaluatorNational Evaluator |  | **4 days** |
| Field Mission 2 – visits to target library sites | GLB PMUInternational EvaluatorNational Evaluator |  | **4 days**Evaluators may split and follow different itineraries. |
| Analytical work and debriefing meetings in SofiaPresentation of evaluation findings and report outline | UNDP, MC and GLB Program Manager International EvaluatorNational Evaluator |  | **4 days** |
| Departure of evaluators from Sofia |  |  | - |
| Preparation of first draft report, draft mandatory annexes and draft executive summaryInteraction with the GLB PMU and other evaluation stakeholders via e-mail as needed | International EvaluatorNational Evaluator |  | **14 days** |
| Provision of consolidated comments on the first draft report | UNDP BulgariaMinistry of CultureBMGFProgram Manager/GLB PMU |  | **7 days** |
| Production of final evaluation report, mandatory annexes and final executive summary | International EvaluatorNational Evaluator |  | **5 days** |
| Approval of the final evaluation report, annexes and executive summary | UNDPMinistry of CultureGLB Program Manager |  | **5 days** |
| **Total work days International Evaluator** | **Up to 50 days** |  |
| **Total work days National Evaluator** | **Up to 60 days[[58]](#footnote-58)** |  |

1. **TERMS of PAYMENT**

**Advance payment**

Upon signature of the contracts:

Airfare (most economic route) and DSA for Bulgaria (Sofia and in-country travel) for the International Evaluator

DSA for in-country travel for the National Evaluator

**Interim Payment**

30% of the total amount upon presentation of the evaluation findings and report outline and their approval by UNDP Bulgaria, MC and the GLB Program Manager

**Final payment**

70% of total amount upon approval of the final draft of the evaluation report by UNDP Bulgaria, Ministry of Culture and the GLB Program Manager.

## Annex

## *List of documents for desk review*

1. Country Grant Proposal and Project document (BG/ENG) XX
2. [Final Report on the Planning Phase](http://www.glbulgaria.bg/en/node/4014) (2008-2009) (BG/ENG) XX
3. Original and updated Country Grant Timelines (2009-2013) (BG/ENG) X
4. Annual Work Plans (2009 – 2012) (BG/ENG) X
5. Reports to the GLB Program Board (2009, 2010, 2011, 2012) (BG)
6. Minutes of Program Board Meetings (2009, 2010, 2011, 2012) (BG)
7. Reports to BMGF on Program Implementation (2009, 2010, 2011, 2012) (ENG)
8. Quarterly financial reports to BMGF on Program Implementation (2009, 2010, 2011, 2012) (ENG)
9. Financial procedures and instructions
10. Documents on GLB target libraries selection (Stage 2009, 2010, 2011 ) and applicable selection criteria (Libraries Selection Methodology, Library Needs Assessment Summary) (BG/ENG)
11. Invitation to Bid / Contract for Delivery, Installation and Support of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Equipment for Public Libraries (ENG)
12. Request for Proposals / Contract for Software Support Services for ICT Equipment at 960 Public Libraries (ENG)
13. CITICA Report.doc – Bulgarian, CITICA summary Report.doc (ENG)
14. Regional IT specialists ToR (ENG)
15. Request for Proposals / Contract for Computer Monitoring Software
16. Competency Index of the Librarian Working in Public Library (BG/ENG)
17. Training Program 2011 – 2013 (BG/ENG)
18. Training Schedule 2011(BG/ENG)
19. Training Pilot Phase Analysis (BG/ENG)
20. Training Program 2012 – 2013 (BG/ENG)
21. Analysis of 2012 training first period ( March – July, 2012) (BG)
22. Results from the analysis on the effect of the 2011 training program (BG)
23. Documents from the District Thematic Meetings (BG)
24. A sample of the Quarterly Reports of Target Libraries (2011, 2012) /size to be determined by the evaluators/ (BG)
25. Sample of Field Visit Reports (2011, 2012) /size to be determined by the evaluators/ (BG)
26. Baseline Impact Assessment Study (February 2011), including access to SPSS database (BG/ENG)
27. Interim Impact Assessment Study (December 2012), including access to SPSS database (BG/ENG) XX
28. Memoranda of understanding (2009, 2010, 2011) (BG/ENG)
29. Micro Capital Grant Agreements with Target Libraries (BG/ENG)
30. Financial and Operational Reports on the Implementation of the Micro Capital Grant Agreements (BG/ENG)
31. Memoranda of understanding with Ministries and State Agencies (BG/ENG)
32. Concepts on the Introduction of E-Services in the Target Libraries (E-culture, E-Health and E-Employment) (BG)
33. Draft strategy for sustainability of the program results(BG/ENG)
34. Concept for the establishment of a legacy entity and incorporation act. (BG/ENG)
1. For the sake of brevity, acronyms are used throughout this summary. First usage in the body of the report is spelled out. A list of acronyms used in this report and their referents is provided at the beginning of the document. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Unless noted, reference to BMGF refers generally to that organization’s Global Libraries Initiative. However, when reference is made to specific practices or policies of the Global Libraries Initiative, a separate acronym (GLI) has been used. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Output data is from the document with filename, “Annual Progress Report for 2012\_Submission to BMGF 31 Jan 2013.doc.” [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Per comment from UNDP/PMU: “100 full-time positions were provided and distributed to 196 libraries. Four libraries received full-time positions and 192 received half-time positions.” [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Filename for this document is “2Q\_Progress Report GLB April June 2012\_Submission to BMGF\_1 August 2012.doc.” [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. There is no information provided in the Progress Report as to whether the seven libraries for which payment has been received, for losses reported between 3 August, 2011, and 29 January, 2012, will have their equipment replaced. This lack of information should not be interpreted as suggesting that libraries will not replace stolen equipment. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Cumulative data for the period January 2011- December 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Comment on draft report, received 26 April, 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Per information provided informally by the PMU Manager of Monitoring and Impact Assessment, 25 April, 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Per our TOR these recommendations are included here; they are not repeated in “Section 8." [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Email message from the PMU with attachment “PMU clarifications 26 04 13,” received 26 April, 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Detailed information is available on <http://www.glbulgaria.bg/en/e-inclusion> as well in the Annual Progress Report for 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Detailed information and a video recording of the forum are available at: <http://www.glbulgaria.bg/en/node/10890>. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Draft Sustainability Strategy (February 2013), section II.1.3. Deviation from the wording in the Grant Proposal is slight; the wording in the Sustainability Strategy is used here to support the statement linking objectives to national policies. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Interim Impact Assessment Executive Summary, 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. According to Report of the Nationally Representative Survey among Young People (7-18 Years), developed within the Impact Assessment Interim Study, 2012, the ICT equipment is used most frequently for computer games (71 percent), listening to music, watching movies (61 percent) and keeping in touch with friends (41 percent) [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. For the past few years, Bulgarian basic schools have been able to opt to keep children in school for a full day. This is particularly important for children in poor families, whose parents are not able to provide after-school care for their children. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. See UNDP Regional Human Development Reports, 2003, 2005, <http://www.undp.bg/publications.php?id=1163> [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. A respondent in Drangovo stated that it is less expensive and more effective to buy clothes from UK websites than to travel to Zlatograd to shop. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Provision of training to marginalized groups of active-age adults, such as such as job seekers (including mothers returning to the job market) would also increase the value realized from development-related services. However in our estimation demand, relevance, and barriers addressed by training are most commonly found in villages among pensioners; this group should be a priority for local-level training in most circumstances. (Note that as mentioned [6.4.3], ethnic minorities should be considered as represented in all disadvantaged and marginalized groups, including pensioners and job-seekers.) [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Numbering of activities here and generally is taken from the Project Document: Annex 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. In a comment to a draft of this evaluation, UNDP has stated, “The rationale of the country grant was that the target libraries would engage in systemic training and innovative service provision for users by mobilizing additional (non-BMGF) funding and by leveraging local-level partnerships thanks to skills promoted among the librarians community by GLB.” During field visits, we did not find evidence of mobilizing of funds, and as discussed in this section librarians likely require more training and support for this objective to be achieved; however, as discussed in this section and elsewhere, *existing* relationships/partnerships with CSOs have tended to lead to increased numbers of trainings and consultations. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Our attention to e-services reflects in part our discussions and meetings with PMU personnel during March 2013, in which e-services as an outcome of the MOUs were highlighted. Subsequently in comments on draft versions of this report, the MOUs have been identified in comments as outcomes of advocacy activities for purposes of this evaluation. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Per comments of the PMU on a draft of this evaluation (received 26 April, 2013), the Employment Agency also provides training to librarians on a pilot basis: “currently, on the basis of the MoU, representatives of the EA [Employment Agency] and ‘Labour Offices” Directorates’ train the librarians how to use the portal of the EA for online jobs search as well as how to use the EURES portal during the meetings at regional and local level on e-employment services.” [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Per comments by UNDP to a draft of this evaluation (received 24 April, 2013) it is important to note that the most important services provided by GLB target libraries are based on use of the GLB ICT equipment to access available information. “E-services” as such are considered less critical during this phase. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. As discussed very briefly in 6.5.1, several librarians have expressed self-perceptions of low status—mentioned as a barrier to advocacy and outreach in this report. Any initiative that risks reinforcing that self-perception should be carefully weighed. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. The PMU, in comments to a draft of this evaluation (received 26 April, 2013) states: “The PMU has always clearly stated that events which require expert knowledge, such as health or taxation issues, must be held in cooperation with local branches of respective institutions, and expert speakers from such institutions must be invited. Librarians are not expected to have any knowledge in specific issues but to act as information brokers only.” As mentioned, the issue arising from medical-information events, as expressed by the two librarians at the district library, is *not* one of practice or protocol, but one of perception and potential confusion. Clearly, the librarians in question are not fully aware of PMU protocols. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Of interest, the position of these senior, professional librarians also highlights conflict with the framing of the GLB libraries within the MOUs: While the MOUs frame the libraries as information-distribution terminals, the librarians at the district library see their local colleagues as having standing and responsibilities in relation to their institution and the library patrons. Again, regardless of the accuracy of the professional librarians’ opinions, that standing is of value to the GLB program and should be conserved by PMU. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Per comments by PMU to a draft of this evaluation (received 10 May, 2013), “‘The GLB program provides equal access to information, knowledge, communication and electronic services in public libraries via free usage of ICT equipment and Internet’ (<http://www.glbulgaria.bg/upload/docs/Final_Executive_Summary_Baseline_Study_19_Aug_2011_EN.pdf> ). .... We believe that this is exactly where the GLB program goals, the library and librarians goals and the respective institutions’ goals meet and we create synergies.” This evaluation completely supports the statement with regard to the complementarity of goals; at this point, as mentioned, those goals are not effectively addressed. It remains to be determined whether the MOUs as structured and activities of the MOU signatories, other than the GLB program, will lead to increased effectiveness. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. We do not want to minimize the logistical and political demands of a technology project on the scale of GLB. However to a large extent, the most challenging demands involve establishing library capacity at the local level, as has happened via the GLB program. To accurately see prospects for *local* sustainability, it is important to consider local installations independently from these “establishing” activities. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. One could argue that in some (or many) villages Chitalishte are actually the *only* public institutions that have remained operating, outside of the Mayor’s office. In the smallest villages, other insitutions, such as the kindergarten, school, medical center and police, have already closed due to out-migration. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. There is no evidence suggesting that social and economic improvements as described will take place within the next three to five years. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. As mentioned (6.6. these services have for the most part not been fully introduced. Planning for their effective implementation, however, should include ongoing inputs from the central level. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. As a function of the sampling method and the limited number of municipal libraries in Bulgaria (17), we visited only one municipal library (Kotel). The librarian whom we encountered in that visit has occupied her position for more than two decades, is soon due to retire at the end of 2013. While our visit cannot be considered reliable in relation to municipal libraries, due to the very small sample, we can suggest that this librarian is representative of some portion of the professional librarians in target libraries. Her level of activity in relation to the GLB program was low, but cannot be considered reliably representative. That said, and she mentioned on several times that her responsibilities as librarian were somewhat in conflict with, and superseded, her responsibilities to the GLB program. Again, the issue here is less one of accuracy—are “traditional” library activities in conflict with modern library services—but one of perception and its potential influence on the GLB program. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Again, our sample of municipal libraries is very small, and does not support reliable assessment. Although the municipal library in Kotel (our field site) is not active in terms of the GLB program, we have been informed (UNDP comment on draft evaluation, received 24 April, 2013) that municipal libraries such as those in Asenovgrad and Samokov have been very active. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. We use the terms “district training bases” (and “district / Chitalishte training bases”) and “district coordinators” in this discussion and throughout to refer to libraries and persons who serve the GLB program throughout specific broader areas. At PMU, there is a distinction made between “regional managers”—three PMU staff who communicate directly with local librarians—and “district coordinators”—28 librarians (staff of the district libraries) who also communicate with local librarians. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. This information and much of the information in this section is based on our telephone conversation with Senior Program Officer Siri Oswald of BMGF, 7 March, 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Information about current activities in relation to additional funding from BMGF is based on the aforementioned conversation with Siri Oswald and on conversation with the GLB Program Manager and Deputy Program Manager, 26 March, 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. A particular institution, listed in an EU financed Operational Program as a beneficiary, exceptionally entitled to financing outside the normal competitive process. These are normally Ministries and State Agencies. The only NGO-type institution that is financed in such a way, to our knowledge, is the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria (NAMRB). Its exceptional legitimacy and after 12 years experience in EU financed projects has allowed it to be listed as a “concrete beneficiary” [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. The consultant Mr. V. Shopov, it should be noted, stated in interviews (7 March, 2013) that a concrete beneficiary is only likely to be recognized after 2015. Short-term sources of funding per his statements are BMGF and GoB. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. It is essential to note that we, the evaluation team, are not endorsing the statements of the sustainability consultants. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Specific tools and approaches might include librarian blogs and group blogs, profiles of librarians, instant messaging and topic-based wikis. Technical requirements for such support are slight—there are many proprietary and open-source solutions for online communities, including Microsoft 365 and Wikispaces (which is highly rated by the American Association of School Librarians). [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Again, the issue should be considered one of perception: It’s possible that the respondents could communicate with regional or district coordinators to effect change; however, such a possibility appeared closed to them. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Information about grant amounts is inconclusive, and ranges from 2,000 BGN to 20,000 BGN. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. NAMRB states in a comment (received 24 April, 2013) on a draft of this evaluation that this statement is not accurate. Please refer to our subsequent text for our clarification and support. Also mentioned by NAMRB: “Under the current regulations the Chitalishte can apply for funding under some of the programs as NGOs. However, they do not have the capacity to prepare and implement projects on their own and this is why they do this jointly with the municipalities. Some programs require co-financing and the Chitalishte lack financial resources to provide co-financing on their own.” [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. See regulation No 1698/ 2005, Article 57b, related to investments in rural cultural heritage [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. NAMRB (comment received, 24 April, 2013), states that “All funding programs have their specific rules. The requirements for co-financing cannot be changed.” [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Comments on a draft of this evaluation by PMU (received 24 April, 2013) state: “It should be noted that as the new entity concept is elaborated in such a way as to unite in the board of the new NGO structure at least 4 national institutions this certainly provides enough level of credibility to consider the option of advocating for this new entity to be identified as a concrete beneficiary.” While we do have doubts as to the potential for swift establishment of a new organization as a concrete beneficiary, our concern in this section is whether such an entity is the most appropriate, efficient and effective means of providing central support for the GLB network. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. We are aware that BMGF has provided support in these areas—notably consultation by David Streatfield in relation to IPA and participation by PMU personnel in Advocacy train-the-trainer sessions in August 2011. Without greater familiarity with the interactions of BMGF and GLB program personnel, we cannot pinpoint specific areas where additional support would be effective. Development of a strategic approach to advocacy, as discussed in “5.8 Advocacy” is a clear need. The PMU has, in addition, expressed the desire for guidance in relation to contracting of outside services for IPA activities (comment to draft evaluation, received 26 April, 2013), indicating that this very specific activity could also benefit from additional inputs. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Interview with Maria Zlatareva and Ogniana Glavoussanova, 14 March, 2013, and interview with Siri Oswald, 8 March, 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Individual consultations are not required to be unique; in other words, each time a library user participates in an individual consultation, that consultation is counted. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. http://www.segabg.com/article.php?id=637226 [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. <http://btvnews.bg/bulgaria/stolichna-obshtina-s-plan-za-predlagane-na-50-elektronni-uslugi.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. The detailed analytical reports will be translated in English and will be available on the GLB web portal. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. The document is currently finalized and will be made available to the evaluators for the desk review. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. The document is currently finalized and will be made available to the evaluators for the desk review. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. The national evaluator will be responsible for the preparation and quality of the Bulgarian versions of documents. Additional resources will be allocated for this. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Up to 10 additional days are envisaged to be allocated to the National Evaluator for the preparation of the Bulgarian version of the Final evaluation report, Annexes and Executive Summary. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)