**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report presents evaluation findings of all activities of the EU/UNDP *Support to the Regional*

*Development of Crimea (SRDC)* project carried out between March 2012 and the end of June 2013 at both republican and local levels. The objective of the evaluation was to assess the relevance and quality of outputs of the EU/UNDP funded SRDC Project and to identify likely outcomes/impacts. Moreover, the evaluation also generated lessons and experiences that could feed into the implementation of other similar interventions in the region and on the national level as well. The main objective of the EU/UNDP funded Project (second phase of the Support to the Regional Development Agency of Crimea) was to contribute to the regional and local development of the peninsula.

Evaluation was conducted during May 28 – June 30 of 2013 and came to the following **conclusions**.

The evaluation has demonstrated that the second phase of the SRDC project was relevant as it was focused on capacity building of regional and local governments in project design, development investment projects, promotion investment capacities of towns and districts; and that was extremely important and relevant for the needs of target groups and beneficiaries. At the same time all expected results were achieved. The project managed to have achieved all the planned results at the local level and in some instances it went even beyond the expected results. In particular, a number of events, trainings, seminars, consultations and studies delivered under the project framework has exceeded and in some instances substantially exceeded the baseline indicators, namely: the training program has helped train and certify

29 experts instead of 20 experts as originally planned; the project experts have assisted with the

preparation of 73 project proposals instead of 21 as originally planned. At the time of the evaluation 12 project proposals were approved and at least 10 more project proposals are expected to be approved for funding; four local development agencies were established and registered in the districts of Kirovskoye, Nyzhnegorskoye, Chornomorskoye and the town of Feodosia; the Memorandums of Cooperation on regional development were signed by i) six NGOs from Bakhchisaray district and the Bakhchisaray District Public Administration, the Bakhchisaray District Council, the Executive Committee of the Town Council of the Town of Bakhchisaray and ii) three NGOs from the town of Yevpatoria and the City Council and the Public Administration of the Yevpatoria Town. In spite of a tight timetable of the SRDC

project the communities managed to quickly get engaged in the project implementation and the project events as well as the preparation of project proposals.

Since the project targeted mainly the local level, the regional and national governments received less attention and were only engaged in the preparation and organization of the regional events. Unfortunately the Council of Ministers and other key ministries were not as interested in the project due to its shift from the regional to the local level. Although the intention to form the Regional Development Coordination Council and make it operational was voiced by the Council of Ministers, it somehow just remained an intention and the Council went unnoticed among other councils engaged in similar activities.

The project was a success as it has changed the understanding of investments by the local communities. The project made sure that all pilot communities had the community investment passports prepared as well as the investor’s road-maps; the project developed attractive promotional materials and identified greenfield and brownfield. However, the support to FDI promotion has identified the lack of district master plans in the communities and that hinders the preparation of land plots and municipal facilities for perspective investments.

The findings of the evaluation demonstrate that the SRDC project results make a solid foundation for a coherent institutional architecture for regional development in Crimea. Effective approaches that can be applied in other districts of Crimea and in other regions of Ukraine taking into consideration the lessons learned from the project were identified during the implementation of the second phase of the project.

The evaluation identified the SRDC project's best practices that can be used or replicated in the other districts of Crimea and throughout Ukraine. They include: quality of the group of selected pilot communities; the approach the local regional development agencies started with; the project work with communities on investment activity; monitoring and researching reports; a joint database of projects and project ideas; study visits.

The evaluation summarized the lessons learned from the SRDC project implementation. The main takeaway is that more time is needed for capacity building, in particular at the local and regional level.

In conclusion, with respect to programming in regional development, achieving tangible results in a short period of time is a complex task because of the breadth of stakeholders and the necessity of working with civil society and different levels of government. District administrations are the level of government responsible for delivering many of the services that citizens see and need on a daily basis. In this sense, local authorities lack the institutional capabilities and budgets to implement their own policies and are heavily dependent on decisions and transfers from the central level. A major challenge is the identification and implementation of projects. The necessity for capacity building in project management and needs assessment, operational planning and building partnerships with NGOs and community members are especially needed at the local level closest to the citizens and their problems firstly, and at the regional level where most of the planning processes are originated and where national resources are collected secondly. From a development perspective, achieving concrete results in regional development

requires a long-term approach and an integrated approach where national/regional/local levels are all included in project design.

The following **recommendation** i**s** proposed - EU and UNDP should continue to support regional and local level programming in the peninsula to strengthen their significant investment already made inregional development and to complement their other projects in this area in Crimea.

**Future support** is required to:

* continue to strengthen local and regional capacities to implement and adjust the local and regional strategic plans; to show concrete results through local and regional economic development; and to strengthen the institutional capacity of local and regional administrations to incorporate strategic planning more effectively into their decisionmaking processes. Emphasis should be placed on in-service mentoring and coaching of technical personnel at the regional and rayon levels and seed grant funds should be available for support of selected projects
* expand the project to other districts of Crimea and support those districts in more effective and efficient means of implementing their strategic plans based on best practices and lessons learned from the SRDC project. Special attention should be given to strengthening the link between strategic planning and a project based approach
* strengthen relations between the region and the districts in a more systematically institutional way by using various means and activities continue capacity building of regional and local development agencies in order to transform them into more sophisticated institutions and to disseminate the project experience to other districts of Crimea
* develop a network of the regional development actors both in Crimea and across Ukraine to initiate exchange