



Wider Europe: Aid for Trade for Central Asia, South Caucasus and Western CIS (Phase II)

Final Evaluation Report

April 2016

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of the final evaluation of “Wider Europe: Aid for Trade for Central Asia, South Caucasus and Western CIS (Phase II)”. The evaluation was conducted from January to March 2016 and included field visits to four out of nine participating countries.

The findings show that the project was successful and achieved (in many cases exceeded) all targets in all countries. This conclusion was reached as a result of analysis of project documents (quarterly and final operational and financial reports), interviews and exchanges with project staff, stakeholders and clients and feedback received from 681 respondents from 7 countries who replied to the questionnaires circulated for the purposes of this evaluation.

The project was evaluated in terms of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact. The analysis was conducted both at global and country levels. The respondents’ replies are grouped per criterion and provided for each level and country. The report also presents evidence from the field visits testifying to the sustainability and success of the business ideas supported by the project two – three years after its completion.

Finally, the report also contains a section on the lessons learnt, the best practices and recommendations for Phase III.

INTRODUCTION

The final evaluation report contains five chapters and annexes. The document intends to provide readers with a clear understanding of where the project started, what it achieved, and what is left behind several years after its completion.

Chapter 1 presents the objectives and scope of the evaluation. It provides the definitions of the criteria used during the evaluation. It explains the methodological tools used as well as the limitations encountered during the process and how they were dealt with.

Chapter 2 sets the context. It gives an overview of the economic and trade perspectives at the regional and national levels of the countries that participated in the project. The aim is to put the project, its activities and clients into context. It also contributes to a better understanding of the relevance of project targets and activities.

Chapter 3 presents the project and gives information about its objectives, geographical scope and outputs.

Chapter 4 contains the findings of this evaluation. First, it presents the overall findings at the global level concerning all project components. Second, it analyses every participating country individually. Third, it looks at the project design and makes recommendations as to the weakness identified. This chapter also analyses the feedback received from respondents to the questionnaires.

Chapter 5 looks at the lessons learnt during the implementation of the project. It refers to best practices but also to gaps / weaknesses and the ensuing recommendations.

The concluding remarks are grouped in the last section of the report.

The Evaluator would like to express gratitude to the Project Manager in the UNDP Istanbul Regional Office Ms. Daniele Gelz and the project and task managers in all the participating country offices. Their support, availability and prompt reactions throughout the evaluation process were key to the success of the mission. Special gratitude goes to the project staff in Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan whose help in organising meetings and project visits was crucial in reaching out to a maximum number of clients and stakeholders.

The report was prepared by Cristina Mosneaga, independent consultant (cristina.mosneaga@gmail.com), hereinafter Evaluator. The information and views set out in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the UNDP. All photos included in this report were taken during field visits by the Evaluator herself with permission from the concerned clients.

CHAPTER 1: EVALUATION SCOPE, CRITERIA, METHODOLOGY

1.1 OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation was conducted at the request of UNDP to provide information about how the project was implemented and to ensure accountability for the expenditures incurred. The recommendations and lessons learned will be used by the managers in order to make any necessary adjustments under phase III of the project. The results of this evaluation will be shared with the Project Board and relevant UNDP country offices, and will inform project implementation under phase III. Particular attention will be paid to the successes and failures of the Wider Europe project.

The evaluation covered the activities implemented under the *Aid for Trade for Central Asia, South Caucasus and Western CIS* project (phase II) during the period February 2011 – March 2014. It covered all the countries concerned (Western CIS: Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, South Caucasus: Armenia and Georgia, Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan), the stakeholders and clients involved in the project, as well as the country project teams.

The evaluation has the following objectives:

- Assess the extent to which the project achieved its overall objectives and outputs as identified in the project documents and annual working plans;
- Review effectiveness of the overall project interventions, their main achievements, compliance with expanding country's needs;
- Review and evaluate the extent to which project activities have reached the intended clients;
- Assess the likelihood of continuation and sustainability of project outputs and benefits after completion of the project - analyse how far the system of exit policy in the project ensures the sustainability of the project benefits;
- Identify gaps/weaknesses in the project design and provide recommendations as to their improvement;
- Identify lessons learnt from projects interventions.

1.2 DEFINITIONS AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

The following criteria were used during the evaluation:

Relevance: Consistency of activities and targets with national and local development programmes and priorities and the needs of intended clients. This also relates to the relevance to UNDP's corporate and human development priorities. In the context of this final evaluation, the question of relevance also refers to whether the objectives or intervention logic of the project were still appropriate if circumstances had changed.

Effectiveness: The manner in which the intended output targets were achieved. Measuring effectiveness involved an assessment of cause and effect in that how far can observable changes be attributed to project activities. This included the following steps:

- Measuring change in the observed output and outcome;
- Attributing observed changes or progress towards the project;
- Assessing the value of the change (positive and/or negative).

Efficiency measured how economically resources (funds, expertise and time) were converted into results.

Sustainability is the continuation of benefits from an intervention after it has been completed, the probability of continued long-term benefits. Assessing sustainability also involved evaluating to what extent the capacity (existing and created as a result of project intervention) could be maintained.

Impact, especially from UNDP's perspective, measured the changes on human development that were caused by the projects activities. Impact evaluation not only provides useful information for the continuation of phase II, it will also allow evaluating the success of the projects.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

The methodology for the evaluation followed the United Nations Evaluation Group Guidelines and was conducted in line with OECD/DAC criteria. The methodological approach included the following steps:

1. Questionnaires to obtain structured information across countries and stakeholders & clients have been developed (Annexes I and II). The Questionnaires guided the evaluation process, in addition to data collection from other sources and analysis. Both questionnaires were translated into Russian and other local languages and distributed by the country offices via email, in person, or via Google forms. The intention was to reach a maximum number of project clients.
2. Desk Review: Review of existing documentation and reference materials such as reports and any other data and information provided by the UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub Office (AWPs, RRFs, quarterly reports, visibility materials, and project briefs).
3. Interviews with project staff, selected stakeholders and partners, and direct clients.
4. On-site observations and visual data collection (field and project sites visits, see Annex V for meeting schedules and interlocutors).

The table below summarises per country the number of project clients and stakeholders & staff who replied to the questionnaires:

Country	No. of Clients	No. of Project Stakeholders & Staff	Comments
Armenia	39	5	
Belarus	11	1	
Georgia	60	6	
Kazakhstan	-	-	Questionnaires not distributed, but results from a survey conducted at the end of the project in 2014 were used.
Kyrgyzstan	58	2	
Moldova	15	2	
Tajikistan	401	13	
Ukraine	-	-	Questionnaires not distributed.
Uzbekistan	55	13	
TOTAL	639	42	Overall 681 respondents took part in the survey.

Table 1: Overview of respondents per category and country

Sampling criteria:

For activities that had more than 100 direct clients the Evaluator sought to have a sample of at least 10% of the clients. The sample consisted of at least 50% women.

For activities that had less than 100 direct clients the Evaluator sought a sample of at least 20% of the clients. The sample consisted of at least 50% women.

In both cases indirect clients were also consulted.

Samples included participating communities, associations, government representatives at national and regional levels, but also ordinary clients.

In addition to direct partners, the evaluation also included project staff, country office staff, private sector, and relevant development partners.

Ethics:

The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the UNEG “Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation”¹. The evaluation is compliant with the standards set forth in these guidelines.

1.4 LIMITATIONS

Two years (in some countries two and a half years) after the end of the project (in February - March 2014) the main limitation encountered in the evaluation process referred to accessing direct clients and clients of the project. This was due to the following reasons:

- geographical distance (some areas are too remote to be visited during the field trips that are limited in time);
- unavailability of stakeholders, clients or clients due to time constraints or ceasing of their activity;
- in Kazakhstan and Ukraine the collection of data through questionnaires was not possible due to reasons external to the evaluation process.

In order to address these limitations the Evaluator generated supporting evidence and data from other sources: interviews and exchanges with project staff, reports and video testimony, feedback from stakeholders, observations during site visits.

¹ <http://www.uneval.org/search/index.jsp?q=ethical+guidelines>

CHAPTER 2: THE CONTEXT

This chapter looks at the economic and trade perspectives at the regional and national levels of the countries involved in the project. It gives an outlook per country and highlights the main trends and challenges. The aim is to put the project, its activities and clients into context in particular with reference to the relevance of project targets and activities.

2.1 CENTRAL ASIA



Figure 1: Central Asian countries participating in the project: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan

The economies of the countries in the region remain closely linked to Russia. Recession in Russia has set off a steep contraction in the remittances sent home by Central Asian workers, and the local-currency value of this income is being eroded further by appreciation against the Russian rouble. The Russian recession affects trade in the region. A return of some workers from Russia has added to unemployment and put downward pressure on wages. These developments have hit consumption and domestic trade. Relationships within the region are tense, often provoked by disagreements over transport links and border demarcations.

The Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), comprising of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia, was officially launched in January 2015 and aims at harmonising the regulatory regimes, removing non-tariff barriers and allowing for the free movement of labour, goods, services and capital. The Kyrgyz Republic joined the EEU in May 2015. Within the EEU, administration of certain issues will be delegated to supranational bodies.

The regional influence of China is growing. China's involvement in energy exploration is increasing, and the country's investments are expected to expand.

Kazakhstan

Country data:

Area	2,717,300 sq. km
Population	17.4m (December 31st 2014)
Main towns (in '000)	Almaty: 1,366, Astana: 613, Shymkent: 603, Karaganda: 460, Aktobe: 346, Taraz: 321, Pavlodar: 318, Ust-Kamenogorsk: 304
Climate	Continental
Elections	April 2015 (presidential). Next elections: 2017 (lower house parliament); 2017 (upper house parliament); 2020 (presidential)
Currency	Tenge

Kazakhstan's political system has so far been broadly stable. The authorities have succeeded in significantly raising living standards. Kazakhstan has a growing population and labour force, as well as considerable catch-up potential, but the business environment, a high level of state involvement in the economy (which limits competition) and large distances to global markets remain significant constraints. Incomes have risen rapidly over the past ten years, supporting strong growth in the services sector. However, the government has struggled to diversify industrial production away from mining and expand the tradeable sector. Kazakhstan retains good relations with the West, China, Russia and the Islamic world. Kazakhstan became a member of the WTO in November 2015.

Kyrgyz Republic

Country data:

Area	198,500 sq. km
Population	5.55m (end-2013 official estimate)
Main towns (in '000)	Bishkek city (capital): 865; Osh oblast: 999; Jalalabad oblast: 938; Chui oblast: 790
Climate	Continental high mountain
Elections	October 2015 (parliamentary), October 2011 (presidential); next presidential elections in 2017 and next parliamentary election in 2020.
Currency	Som

Russia is the main trading partner for Kyrgyzstan and the main destination for the country's migrant labour force. A surge in gold production in 2015 has supported growth. The gold sector is a key element of the economy, accounting for 7% of GDP, 23% of industrial production and around 40% of exports in 2014. Remittance transfers from migrant workers accounted for

around 29% of GDP in 2014 and fell by one third in 2015. Non-gold export competitiveness has been helped by steep depreciation of the Som in 2015, as well as the rechannelling of domestic demand to domestic products as a result of the same development. The country is trying to diversify its economy and boost agricultural production (fresh and dried fruit). The gradual adjustment of tariffs to EEU norms may weaken import trade with China and damage re-exports to neighbouring Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Tajikistan

Country data:

Area	143,100 sq. km
Population	8.41m (IMF, end-2014)
Main towns (in '000)	Dushanbe (capital): 562; Khujand: 173; Qurghonteppa: 103; Kulob: 101.2;; Istaravshan: 60; Khorog: 28.9
Climate	Continental high-mountain
Elections	November 2013 (presidential); March 2015 (legislative). Next legislative election in March 2020; next presidential election in November 2020.
Currency	Somoni

About 40% of Tajikistan's GDP is comprised of remittances sent home by around 1 million Tajik migrants working in Russia. Russia's poor economic outlook and the tightening of migrant worker legislation have led to migrant workers returning home and to a marked contraction in remittance flows (down by 65% in 2015). With more people in Tajikistan competing for limited jobs, wages are weakening, further undermining domestic demand growth, and thus reducing sales opportunities for domestic producers. The authorities remain keen to develop energy resources and infrastructure, although progress in these areas is limited, owing to the weaker investment climate and the opaque business environment. Aluminium and cotton – the two main export commodities – will not bring a big contribution to the trade balance as global prices continue to fall. The services sector, which accounts for around 40% of total GDP, will be affected by the fall in remittance flows from Russia.

Uzbekistan

Country data:

Area	447,400 sq. km, of which 9% is arable
Population	27.6m (January 2009)
Main towns (in '000)	Tashkent (capital): 2,400; Samarkand: 392; Namangan: 378
Climate	Continental desert
Elections	December 2014 (parliamentary); March 2015 (presidential)
Currency	Sum

The falling global prices of gas, cotton and gold—Uzbekistan's main export commodities—have slowed down economic activity. In the short term economic growth will continue to come from public investment and energy export volumes. Announcements from the government to attract foreign investment include a major privatisation programme of 1,247 state-owned enterprises by the end of 2016. The president has also ordered the government to facilitate trips to Uzbekistan and its localities by international investors, so that they can examine investment opportunities at joint-stock companies.

2.2 SOUTH CAUCASUS



Figure 2: South Caucasian countries participating in the project: Armenia and Georgia

Russia's political and economic influence in the region remains strong. Russia's ongoing integration with the breakaway territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia is a barrier to further détente with Georgia. Given these fundamental contradictions, there is a significant risk that relations between Russia and Georgia could worsen again, leading to the re-imposition of a trade embargo; the limited progress that has been achieved in normalising relations with Russia could be rapidly reversed.

Armenia

Country data:

Area	29,800 sq. km, of which around 80% is mountainous
Population	3m (mid-2011)
Main towns (in '000)	Yerevan (capital; population 1.1m); Gyumri; Vanadzor
Climate	Continental and dry
Elections	May 2012 (legislative) and February 2013 (presidential); next elections due in May 2017 (legislative) and February 2018 (presidential)
Currency	Armenian dram

The country has a relatively poor economic performance. The economy's main structural weaknesses remain unchanged: lack of domestic competition, restricted access to international markets, weak institutions, high emigration, low investment and a high level of dependence on remittances. The government has made progress in reducing technical hurdles to business but further reforms are needed to make the economy attractive for new businesses. A new comprehensive tax code is being formulated. Economic recession in Russia will have negative implications for Armenia's economic performance. Money transfers from Russia to Armenia fell by 38% in 2015. Growth in the agricultural and mining sectors should continue to contribute to growth. Membership in the EEU obligates Armenia to replace its traditionally liberal trade regime with higher external tariffs, which could have a negative impact on exports to non-EEU countries.

Georgia

Country data:

Area	69,700 sq. km
Population	4m (2014)
Main towns (in '000)	Tbilisi (capital): 1,153; Kutaisi: 193; Zugdidi: 175; Batumi: 124
Climate	humid, subtropical climate
Elections	October 2012 (legislative); October 2013 (presidential). Next elections: October 2016 (legislative); October 2018 (presidential).
Currency	Lari

Since 2012 the Georgian government has achieved a partial détente in its relations with Russia, enabling the reopening of trade and transport links, which had been severed following the war in 2008. The country pursued further integration with the EU, culminating in the signing of an Associate Agreement and deep and comprehensive free-trade agreement (DCFTA) in June 2014. The agreement is unlikely to have a transformative impact on Georgia's economy, and

there is currently no strategy on the EU's side for further integration. Despite the weak currency and the recent trade agreement with the EU, the prospect for export-led growth and import substitution is limited in the short-term. Georgia has a small manufacturing sector and outside the agricultural sector its exports are of little added-value (such as used cars and scrap metal). However, the depreciation of the lari will continue to drive the expansion of service exports.

2.3 WESTERN CIS



Figure 3: Western CIS countries participating in the project: Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine

Russia remains a major political and economic player in the region. The impact of Western sanctions and a dive in global oil prices may have curbed Russia's ability to offer extensive funding in the short term, but aid from Russia to Belarus will continue for political reasons, albeit perhaps on a lower scale. The Western CIS is experiencing an economic slowdown exacerbated by Russia's economic crisis.

Belarus

Country data:

Area	207,600 sq. km
Population	9.46m (end-2012)
Main towns (in '000)	Minsk (capital): 1,729; Gomel: 480; Mogilev: 369; Vitebsk: 350; Grodno: 321; Brest: 320
Climate	Continental
Elections	September 2012 (legislative); October 2015 (presidential); next legislative election due in 2016; next presidential election by 2020.
Currency	Belarusian rouble

The incumbent president Alyaksandar Lukashenka won a fifth term as president in October 2015. Belarus is experiencing a fall in real wages, rising industrial unemployment and rising government debt. Belarus is unlikely to undertake significant economic reforms, precluding a lasting improvement in ties with the EU. Recession in Russia—Belarus’s main market—was behind the fall in export revenue (down by 27% in 2015).

Moldova

Country data:

Area	33,700 sq. km
Population	3.56m (excluding Transdniestri; end-2010)
Main towns (in ‘000)	Chisinau (capital): 665; Tiraspol (capital of Transdniestri): 148; Balti: 144; Tighina: 93
Climate	Continental
Elections	November 2014 (legislative). Next parliamentary election due in 2018. The president is elected by parliament; next presidential election due in March 2016.
Currency	Moldovan Leu

In the past three years Moldova has found itself in a multidimensional crisis—at once political, economic, financial and social. The major bank scandal in 2014 has undermined already low public trust in the political establishment. It involved large suspicious transactions (equivalent to around 16% of Moldova’s GDP) between three banks. As a result several international bodies, including the EU and the World Bank suspended grants and loans to Moldova. The main problems lie in dysfunctional political and state institutions. In June 2014 Moldova signed an association agreement with the EU, along with the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement. This signalled the formal economic and political reorientation to the West. In retaliation, in 2013 Russia banned a range of Moldovan imports and tightened conditions for Moldovans working in Russia. Moldova’s EU integration has stalled and the lower trajectory of the Russian economy will dampen Moldova’s economic prospects.

Ukraine

Country data:

Area	603,700 sq. km, of which about 55% is cultivated
Population	45.25m (end-2014)
Main towns (in ‘000)	Kiev (capital): 2,602; Kharkiv: 1,470; Dnipropetrovsk: 1,065; Odessa: 1,029; Donetsk: 1,016
Climate	Moderate continental climate
Elections	Early presidential election in May 2014, early parliamentary election in October 2014; next presidential and parliamentary elections due in 2019.
Currency	Hryvnya

Ukrainian politics have been transformed over the past three years following the overthrow of the government of Viktor Yanukovich in February 2014. Russia annexed Crimea in March 2014. Growth will depend on success in institutional and financial reforms but vested interests may prevent this. In January 2016 the free-trade part of Ukraine's EU association agreement came into force. In response, Russia has suspended its own free trade deal with Ukraine and banned imports of Ukrainian food. In the short term, any positive impact of the EU free-trade deal could be offset by Russia's counter-measures. However, the imposition of Russian tariffs on Ukrainian products will speed up Ukraine's trade reorientation and should help to lift Ukraine's economic potential, chiefly through gradual movement towards EU business norms.

CHAPTER 3: THE PROJECT

3.1 PROJECT INFORMATION

Status	Closed
Type of evaluation	Final
Level	Regional (multi-regions)
Title	Wider Europe: Aid for Trade for Central Asia, South Caucasus and Western CIS (Phase II)
Countries	Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan
Project Duration	February 2011 – March 2014
UNDP office in charge	Istanbul Regional Hub
Project Manager	Daniele Gelz
Evaluator	Cristina Mosneaga
Mission Dates	February – March 2016
Field sites visited	Belarus (Minsk), Georgia (Batumi), Kyrgyzstan (Osh, Batken), Uzbekistan (Tashkent, Namangan)

Financial Data:

Overall budget	4,6 million EUR
Funding Authority	Government of Finland
Other contributions	Various contributions at country level

3.2 PROJECT OBJECTIVES, SCOPE AND OUTPUTS

The Wider Europe project (phase II) was initiated by the UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub for Europe and the CIS (*former Bratislava Regional Centre*) in partnership with several UNDP country offices within the Regional Programme for Europe and the CIS 2011-2013.

Overall objective: foster inclusive economic growth in the region through the promotion of trade and the enhancement of country's competitiveness.

Geographical scope: Western CIS (Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine), South Caucasus (Armenia, Georgia) and Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan)

Project outputs:

Component I- Support to the economic development along trade corridors linking countries of Central Asia, South Caucasus and Western CIS with key markets for their products

Specific Objective: support the development of trade related capacities and help small and micro entrepreneurs in remote urban and rural areas, as well as farmers and farmers' associations to gain from the opportunities that expanded trade possibilities may bring to the regions and local communities.

Geographical scope: Armenia (Tavush), Georgia (Adjara), Kazakhstan (Semey), Kyrgyzstan (Batken), Tajikistan (Khujand and Sughd) and Uzbekistan (Namangan).

Component II: Trade development: Technical assistance for a better use of trade opportunities

Specific Objective: facilitate international trade on the national and local level by supporting the development of strategic documents to develop trade, optimizing the institutional framework, and providing technical assistance to exporters.

Ukraine: support to the government through strategic trade related advisory services, focusing on international trade agreements, foreign trade logistics, information on foreign markets, gathering and granting access to trade information, the role of foreign trade missions, export guarantees and export financing.

Belarus: support the establishment of an electronic trading facility (ETF) for the promotion of Belarusian light industry products on regional and international markets.

Moldova: support the production and export capacities of the agricultural sector.

Geographical scope: Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova

Component III: Understanding informalities and overcoming informal trade barriers faced by small enterprises and micro businesses, especially women entrepreneurs

Specific objective: articulate national and sub-regional AfT issues with special reference to the challenges faced by small entrepreneurs and micro businesses operating in local areas, informal cross border trade, and facilitate transfer of best practices in developing productive capacities of small enterprises and micro businesses, knowledge sharing, and in trade capacity development through trainings on national and regional trade policies and diffusion of best practices.

Geographical scope: across countries and regions

Component IV: Creating opportunities for small enterprises and micro-businesses to benefit from trade

Specific Objective: create opportunities for micro-businesses to gain from international trade and improve knowledge regarding the application of new technologies in small enterprises,

and tools for better market access. In addition, the component will support selected farmers to achieve fair trade certification for their production.

Geographical scope: across countries and regions

CHAPTER 4: EVALUATION FINDINGS

4.1 OVERALL FINDINGS

This section evaluates the project at the global level and concerns all four components. The Evaluator based findings on observations made during field visits, direct exchanges with the project and task managers and the replies to questionnaires submitted by project staff and stakeholders. The reports and documentation produced during the project implementation phase also constitute an important source of information.

Components I and II of the project have a clear geographical scope and are therefore analysed in section 4.2 at the individual country level. Components III and IV of the project did not have a specific geographical scope and concerned all countries. Activities carried out under these components refer to the whole project and are therefore included in this section.

Component III: Understanding informalities and overcoming informal trade barriers faced by small enterprises and micro businesses, especially women entrepreneurs

Overall target	Status	Results
Up to 2 analytical studies conducted and presented to stakeholders. Number of stakeholders interested in the result of the studies.	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two studies conducted: on the fruit subsector in Moldova “Quantifying Internal Barriers to Trade” and “Feasibility Study on Sustainable Organic Fresh Fruit growing and exports”. The recommendations of the internal barriers study were integrated in Moldova’s National Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development. The fruit study was presented to more than 80 stakeholders in 2 meetings, in the local press and on national TV. Participants provided positive feedback. Both studies were presented to various potential donors.
At least one teaser course took place in at least 2 of the 4 Central Asian countries, with at least 10 decision makers per country.	Achieved	The activity was completed in 2013 and the activity partner WB/InfoDev will continue its training programme in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, focusing on agribusiness marketing.

At least one Human Development Paper on Trade for Central Asia was produced and published.	Achieved	Published in March 2014 and distributed to stakeholders and international donors in 4 separate workshops in Almaty (Kazakhstan), Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), Ashgabat (Turkmenistan), Dushanbe (Tajikistan) and in Tashkent (Uzbekistan).
At least 20 members from Central Asian (CA) governmental and economic research institutions, and from civil society organizations were involved in and contributed to drafting the Paper, of these at least 10% were female and at least 10% from each CA country.	Exceeded	During each of the presentations up to 40 representatives from governments and economic research institutions contributed by providing recommendations to the report, articulated further research topics, specifically on identifying opportunities and challenges from economic integration and membership experiences and expectations in the WTO and Eurasian Customs Union. This resulted in requests for national HD Reports on Trade in Kyrgyzstan and on HD impact of trade integration agreements in Tajikistan.
At least 70% of the participants in the preparatory and distribution meetings were satisfied with the content of the Paper.	Achieved	Four economic research institutions are committed to conduct a serial of corporate studies on these and further topics related to economic integration between Central Asian countries.

Component IV: Creating opportunities for small enterprises and micro-businesses to benefit from trade

Overall target	Status	Results
Support to fair trade initiative in Uzbekistan, including selection of and training for farmers and/or farmer associations to grow organic and fairly traded (certified) agricultural products (providing an opportunity to farmers in	Exceeded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 42 participants trained on certification procedures and requirements • 4 presentations made by certified producers on bio-cotton (Kyrgyzstan), fruit (Pakistan,

Uzbekistan to access international Fairtrade markets to help increase revenues and living standards).		<p>Tajikistan, Iran)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finnish resellers established links with Central Asian producers. • 6 million people reached through print, web and radio during the Fairtrade week; • Farmers met some +1000 people in 7 towns; • 550 workplaces and 100 parishes received material related to Fairtrade and Central Asia; • 10 blogs created on Fairtrade and/or Central Asia. Blogs and news about Central Asia and farmers visiting Finland also shared in Facebook (+20 000 fans) and 7 times in the newsletter (3000 readers); • 93 % consumers know Fairtrade, 75% can say what Fairtrade in product means and 22% of them knew that products are available from Central Asia as well; • Participating farmers from Central Asia provided a positive feedback on their tour in Finland and felt empowered;
Organization of a study tour for participants from Central Asia.	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One trip was organised to Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan jointly with FLO International. Farmers were trained in FLO standards; • Two new brochures were developed: on cotton targeting consumers and on the composite approach targeting businesses. Both brochures showcased examples from CA; • Two blogs were published on Uzbekistan and one blog was published on FLO International's website;
Number of participants in study tours is	Exceeded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tour to international exhibitions

at least 20 with at least 30% female participation. At least 75% of received evaluation reports assessed the study tour as “good” or better; at least 50% of the impact assessments at work show demonstrable better skills (where feasible). At least 10 enterprises/organizations visited.		<p>on Agriculture and Mechanization and on animal breeding, equipment, poultry and dairy industry (Turkey);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study tour to Agriculture Trade Fair focusing on stock breeding, poultry, fishery, and greenhouses (China); • Tour to Agro-Expo focusing on agricultural production inputs, small machinery, agriculture equipment, and food packing (Kyrgyzstan); • More than 70 booths of exhibitors visited.
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The evaluation of all four project components using the defined criteria yielded the following results applicable to the project in its entirety:

Relevance: high

The activities and targets of the project across countries were consistent with national, regional and local development priorities. Baseline studies were conducted in all participating countries and the project activities and targets were determined accordingly. National governments approved the project documents and regional authorities endorsed them in those countries where a specific region was targeted. The feedback provided by stakeholders and project staff across countries confirms this finding. The overall relevance of the project is therefore ranked ‘high’.

RELEVANCE	Yes	No	Comments
Did the project respond to the needs of the target groups ?	42	0	Some respondents in countries where specific regions were targeted noted that more funds would have allowed covering a bigger geographical area.
Was the project adequate vis-à-vis the capacity of the local partner ?	42	0	In some cases the capacity of the local partner was built in the process of implementation. In some other cases the local partners were sufficiently mature.
Do key stakeholders still demonstrate effective commitment (ownership)?	35	7	Some respondents noted that due to changes in senior management after completion of the project, ownership was reduced in particular with regard to web platforms (e.g. Armenia, Belarus).

Was there an effective coordination system at national/regional/international level including partner governments, donors and other relevant stakeholders?	42	0	Many respondents noted that relationships with regional and national authorities were very good and it allowed for smooth implementation of project activities. In some countries (e.g. Armenia, Kyrgyzstan; Kazakhstan) it was possible to create synergies with on-going projects in the same sector funded by other donors (USAID, OXFAM, other UNDP projects).
Were there any complementarity issues with other past/ongoing/planned projects that need to be addressed?	0	42	
Have changed circumstances (including critical contextual constraints) been taken into account by updating the activities ?	41	0	
Indicators Were the indicators to measure results well defined and relevant to measure the achievement of the objectives? Were all related data available? Were all indicators sex-disaggregated if relevant? Were baselines set and updated for each indicator? Were target values set for the indicators and are they realistic or do they need to be updated?	42	0	Many respondents noted that the indicators were realistic as they were determined as a result of baseline assessments in the countries. However, some data was more difficult to obtain and aggregate as different indicators per country, different levels of availability.
TOTAL number of respondents	42		

Effectiveness: high

In all countries the project has delivered on the set targets and exceeded some of them. Only in a few cases the targets were partially achieved (with regard to the total estimated number of participants or the percentage of women participation). The Evaluator estimates that the overall effectiveness of the project was high since in all countries a direct cause-effect link between project activities and resulting positive change could be established. The degree of change may vary per country and is considered in detail in Section 4.2.

EFFECTIVENESS	Yes	No	Comments
Has the expected progress in terms of outputs been properly achieved?	42	0	
Is the quality of outputs satisfactory?	42	0	Many respondents noted that the project managed to establish viable business models that were taken over by governments or donors (e.g. dried fruit collection centre).
Is there evidence that the project supported the implementation or the development/change of the partner country's policy ?	42	0	

Efficiency: high

The funds, expertise and time allocated to the project in all countries have converted into tangible, measurable and sustainable results. Project activities in all countries helped to create hundreds of new jobs, both permanent and seasonal. In Central Asia, women employment has been particularly noticeable. The gender balance was generally respected and depending on the type of activities women participation was at least 50% and more. In terms of financing, the project has contributed to many viable business ideas and secured co-financing from clients' own sources.

In all but one case (Moldova, project manager replaced due to unsatisfactory performance), the recruited project teams were very professional, committed and delivered high quality outputs in a limited timeframe. Therefore the efficiency of the project is ranked 'high'.

EFFICIENCY	Yes	No	Comments
Did the chosen implementation mechanisms (e.g. choice of implementation modalities or contractual arrangements, etc.) conduct to achieving the expected results?	40	0	
Did local partners effectively participate in the planning of the project beyond formal endorsement?	42	0	
Inputs Did the resources correspond to the needs of the action? Did local partners provide the required inputs (human or physical) for the project to be effective? To what degree were resources (inputs) available on time from other stakeholders?	42	0	
Delays How important were the delays incurred? Have the reasons been identified? Have revisions of planning been properly implemented?	5	37	Some respondents noted delays in delivery of equipment, but those were external to the project and were handled on a case by case basis.
Have the outputs been produced/ delivered in a cost-efficient manner?	42	0	
Was the action adequately monitored and/or assessed by the partners?	42	0	
TOTAL number of respondents			42

Sustainability: high

The Evaluator estimates that sustainability is high across the board. The benefits of the project continue to exist after the completion of activities. All the business ideas co-financed by the project continue their activity and have grown in the past two or three years. The business

ventures supported by the project are self-sustainable and make profit. The equipment purchased with support from the project is still in use and so are the didactical material and studies published. The human and technical capacity of the clients has been largely preserved and increased as business people take interest in self-learning and developing. In some cases, the Evaluator observed that clients still keep in touch with some of the trainers and refer to the notes taken during the training courses two or three years ago.

SUSTAINABILITY	Yes	No	Comments
Was an adequate level of human and institutional capacity put in place in order to continue delivering the project's benefits?	39	0	In some cases the institutional and personnel changes that took place in some countries were external to the project.
Did the role of the UNDP in the management and the monitoring of the project enhanced partners' capacities?	42	0	
Is there a financial contribution needed for continued access to the benefits of the project? If so can target groups afford such a payment?	42	0	Not all target groups can afford such payments. In some cases funds have been mobilized via governments and / or donors.
Have the relevant authorities taken the financial measures to ensure the continuation of services after the end of the project?			Some respondents in some countries have noted the absence of funding at the local/regional and/or national levels.
Has the private sector been involved to ensure the sustainability of the action?	34	0	The private sector was associated and involved in the project activities across the board whenever possible. However, not all activities were targeted at the private sector. The respondents who did not answer noted that in some cases it was beyond the scope/
Have the necessary measures been taken to address the environmental sustainability ?	42	0	
Have the necessary measures been taken into account to ensure equal participation and benefit for women and men?	42	0	All participating countries have undertaken a maximum effort to ensure equal participation. The level of interest and participation of either women or men varied according to the type of activity or topic covered.
TOTAL number of respondents			42

Impact: high to medium

Across all countries the impact on human development is visible. The project trained numerous entrepreneurs and public officials in view of facilitating the environment for doing business and boosting trade opportunities. In many cases clients have noted that the project activities were the push they required to engage or explore business activities. The Evaluator estimates that the impact is higher in the short and medium-term. In the long-term the impact will depend

on external factors such as the willingness of authorities to continue pursuing trade opportunities, the motivation of people to keep up and further develop the techniques and knowledge acquired during the project. Therefore overall impact is ranked 'high to medium'.

IMPACT	Yes	No	Comments
Have the project activities resulted in any changes on the human development level (has it improved quality of life / improved access to markets, etc.?)			Some respondents noted the increase in willingness to export.
Any other impacts you would like to share?			Many respondents noted the spirit of 'sharing good practices' and 'new skills in management and marketing'.
TOTAL number of respondents	42		

Management: excellent

The Evaluator observed a positive team spirit and good working relationships among project staff in the countries. Regular joint meetings have been organised throughout the implementation of the project. This allowed staff from various countries to establish direct contacts and exchange on project developments and approaches. Similar problems may have similar solutions. The coordinating manager from the Regional Office in Istanbul paid regular visits to each country project. The communication flows were excellent; issues were anticipated and / or resolved. Overall the Evaluator estimates that the project was well managed and benefited from a strong professional team across countries.

MANAGEMENT	Yes	No	
Do the country office staff and national project staff perceive the workflow between them and UNDP as satisfactory?	42	0	All respondents were positive about the co-operation with UNDP whether at country or regional levels.
What was unsatisfactory? What can be done to improve this?			
What were the reasons for implementation delays and was UNDP's response satisfactory to mitigate these?			
TOTAL number of respondents	42		

Co-operation with donors: good

Overall the Evaluator established that the project team took the necessary steps to ensure co-ordination with on-going projects funded by other donors. It should be noted that the extent of co-ordination depends on the mechanisms in place at the country level. In some countries donor co-ordination has a more regular and structured character (e.g. regular meetings, including sector meetings). In other countries donor co-ordination is more ad-hoc and happens during launching or closing of projects when representatives of the donor community are invited (e.g. in Belarus). There is no perfect mechanism for co-ordination, but a certain degree of information sharing is required in view of avoiding overlaps, ensure synergies. Some good examples in that sense can be quoted in Armenia, where the project collaborated with USAID's

“Partnerships for Rural Prosperity”, which supported some of the clients and replicated the business models developed by the AfT Project.

4.2 FINDINGS PER COUNTRY

Component I- Support to the economic development along trade corridors linking countries of Central Asia, South Caucasus and Western CIS with key markets for their products

ARMENIA

Geographical scope: Tavush region



Overall goal: support economic development in the region through trade promotion.

Budget: 330.000 EUR (excluding GMS)

Overall target	Status	Results
At least 150 government officials, self-employed people, entrepreneurs, stakeholders trained. At least 30% of participants are female; 75% of the evaluation reports assess activities as positive; at least 50% of impact assessments at work show improved skills	Exceeded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 253 individuals trained (including 84 women i.e. 33.20%) • Satisfaction rate: above 95%

5% increase in the number of clients of Tavush Marketing and Information Centre upon completion of the project. Two new service lines established.	Exceeded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The centre's client based increased 6 fold (255 in 2011 up to 1600 in 2013) • 2 new service lines developed: support to farmers for primary agricultural production (greenhouses) and support to agro processors • 100 jobs created (70 women)
At least 3 business ideas implemented that create added value for the exporting sector with a total turnover of 150.000 USD annually. Encourage participation of women	Exceeded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 45 clients served (including 18 women, i.e. 40%) • 4 value chains • Financial turnover in 2013 was 170.000 USD

Relevance: high

The activities and targets were consistent with the national and local development priorities. Around half of the total area of the region is arable lands; however Tavush had a low share in the total annual agricultural output of Armenia. The population in rural communities is mainly involved in agricultural activities and farming. The project supported two of the most promising sectors: greenhouse vegetable production and fruit drying. The project also supported the Marketing and Information Centre which helps farmers sell their products and support entrepreneurs in developing viable business ideas. The activities of the project were highly relevant to the region and its population.

RELEVANCE	Yes	No	Comment
Do you feel the project responded to your needs?	39	0	All respondents noted the high relevance of activities to their needs.
Were the activities you participated in commensurate with your capacity?	39	0	
Do you think the targets set for the activities you participated in were realistic?	39	0	
TOTAL number of respondents			39

Effectiveness: high

The project exceeded all the set targets. The participating farmers noted that the new techniques resulted in positive changes in their professional activity. Many increased the quantity and hence the revenues for their households. For some farmers it represented additional income, for others the greenhouses are their main source of income. Positive change and a direct link with project activities could also be established with regard to the Market and Information Centre. As a result of project intervention, the Centre has become a resource and reference point for farmers and entrepreneurs in the region. The business ideas supported by the project

appear to have been all successful and increased the processing capacity and profits of participating communities.

EFFECTIVENESS	Yes	No	Comment
If you participated in several project activities over a longer period of time, did you feel any progress as compared to the start of the activities?	38	1	
In your opinion, was the quality of the outputs delivered to you satisfactory (were the trainers or visiting experts good)?	37	2	One respondent noted that the experts should have provided more information specific to the climate of the region.
Can you say that the project activities contributed to some change in the sector of your activity (policy, law, communication, practice?)	38	1	
TOTAL number of respondents			39

Efficiency: high

The funds, expertise and time allocated to the project in Armenia converted into tangible, measurable and sustainable results. In addition to capacity building activities including elaboration of manuals and practical guidelines, the project supported 29 greenhouses (14 women), 17 fruit drying facilities (4 women), 1 collection centre for dried fruit and 1 cheese production centre. It is understood that the equipment provided is still in use.

EFFICIENCY	Yes	No	Comment
Do you think that the way the activities were organized contributed to achieving the expected results?	38	1	Most respondents noted their absolute satisfaction with the way activities were organised. No delays were reported. The respondents who answered 'no' did not provide additional comments.
What is your opinion overall about the quality of activities (venue, organization, information, logistics, etc.)?	38	1	
Were there any delays with regard to the activities you were involved in and if so how were the handled?	0	39	
Did you feel that the feedback you provided at the end of an activity was taken into account for any future similar activities?	39	0	
TOTAL number of respondents			39

Sustainability: high to medium

The benefits of the project appear to exist after the completion of activities. The production facilities supported by the project continue their activities and created new jobs. The Marketing and Information Centre continues support to its clients. However, the online information platform appears to have encountered difficulties with regard to maintenance including regular updates. Although the Government considered it a success story and decided to scale it up nation-wide, the required follow-up (human and financial resources) seems to have lacked.

SUSTAINABILITY	Yes	No	Comment
If the project has helped you set up a business activity, are you likely to continue it after the project end?	38	1	Most respondents showed confidence in keeping up with the practices and knowledge acquired during the project.
Would you be willing to pay a small fee in order to continue benefiting from project services?	38	1	
How likely are you to continue using the practices / technologies / approaches you learnt during the project?	38	1	
TOTAL number of respondents			39

Impact: high

The impact on human development appears to be visible. The growing and processing techniques and facilities have improved the capacity and livelihoods of participating communities. Many respondents have noted the positive impact on their income and referred to greenhouses as ‘a stable source of income for my family’. A certain multiplier effect can be noticed as many farmers noted that they share the skills and information received during trainings and advisory sessions with their neighbours who were not directly involved in project activities.

IMPACT	Yes	No	Comment
Do you feel that the project activities had an impact on your life (or the life of your peers active in the same sector)?	37	2	Overall highly positive return from respondents.
Any other impacts you think are a result of the project activities and you would like to share?	39	0	
TOTAL number of respondents			39

GEORGIA



Geographical scope: autonomous region of Adjara

Overall goal: support the development of trade capacities of SMEs, farmers, processing industries and local authorities.

Budget: 359,723 EUR

Overall target	Status	Results
<i>Batumi Business Incubator</i>		
Train Batumi Business Incubator (BBI) staff	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 workshop for BBI management conducted (company exit strategies, new ways of partnership with private sector, selection of new tenants)
80 hours of trainings and consultations delivered to BBI tenants	Exceeded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1631 hours of individual consultations delivered to 10 BBI tenants (accounting, tax code)
At least 4 group information and consultation sessions are held	Exceeded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 group sessions delivered to 225 business entities
Database and information recourses created	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website for TPC/BBI services created
<i>Vocational Education Training</i>		
VET trainings delivered to at least 167 students	Exceeded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VET trainings delivered to 585 students (386 women, 65%) • Employment rate among trainees 65%
VET textbooks developed	Exceeded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 VET textbooks developed and distributed to vocational colleges (IT skills, hospitality services, tourism guides and IT)
<i>Farmers</i>		
Extension and consolidation services for farmers developed	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extension services were developed and are being provided on a regular basis through the Agri-Service Centre.
Demonstration spots set up and managed	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nursery of 2620 citrus and 1050 fruit trees (1860 fruit trees planted by project; Purchased and installed equipment; • Informational brochures published and distributed
3380 hours of trainings and field consultations delivered to farmers (at least 35% women)	Exceeded (but not achieved for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 504 hours of training in five municipalities for 985 farmers; • 271 farms received direct help with artificial insemination (185 hours);

	women participation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 hours phone consultation to 156 households; • Female participation less than 10%
Assessment of marketing opportunities for at least 4 agricultural products	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment done for most promising products (citrus, dried apples, persimmons, pears, plums, oranges and various berries); • Business plan developed for 4 products: 2 dried fruit and 2 frozen and equipment provided.
<i>Adjara Tourism Agency (ATA)</i>		
Conduct survey on tourism sector services; develop ATA's operational guide and manual handbook, staff job descriptions and training	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainings delivered (30 participants including 12 women)
Introduce information technologies	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New webpage designed and new portal for online booking developed (hotels, tours, etc.) and linked to global booking tools
<i>Trade Promotion Centre (TPC)</i>		
Develop TPC operations guide and train staff	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training of Trainers for TPC staff (methodology, delivery tools)

Relevance: high

The activities and targets were consistent with regional and local development priorities. Adjara region is a major tourist destination for the neighbouring countries including Russia and Turkey. The region's capital city Batumi has a population of 160,000 inhabitants that expands to 1-1.5 million during the tourist season (May – September). Tourism & hospitality services and agriculture are the main economic activities in the region. Promoting trade in services and supporting farmers is highly relevant. The region also has a growing community of small and medium enterprises active in both agricultural and tourism sectors.

RELEVANCE	Yes	No	Comment
Do you feel the project responded to your needs?	58	2	
Were the activities you participated in commensurate with your capacity?	56	4	
Do you think the targets set for the activities you participated in were realistic?	54	6	

TOTAL number of respondents	60
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Effectiveness: high

The project delivered on all the targets and exceeded some of them. During the field visits the Evaluator noted positive changes, which can be linked to the project. For example, the enterprises that left the BBI have grown and employ their own staff. The manuals developed for the VET College are still in use and have served to train several cohorts of graduates since the end of the project.

EFFECTIVENESS	Yes	No	Comment
If you participated in several project activities over a longer period of time, did you feel any progress as compared to the start of the activities?	52	8	
In your opinion, was the quality of the outputs delivered to you satisfactory (were the trainers or visiting experts good)?	60	0	
Can you say that the project activities contributed to some change in the sector of your activity (policy, law, communication, practice?)	57	3	
TOTAL number of respondents	60		

Efficiency: high

The funds, expertise and time allocated to the project in Georgia have converted into tangible, measurable and sustainable results. The project supported several institutional partners, provided advice and capacity building including equipment. Considerable results have been achieved with the funds made available to the project in Georgia.

EFFICIENCY	Yes	No	Comment
Do you think that the way the activities were organized contributed to achieving the expected results?	59	1	
What is your opinion overall about the quality of activities (venue, organization, information, logistics, etc.)?	60	0	All respondents noted the high quality of activities.
Were there any delays with regard to the activities you were involved in and if so how were the handled?	8	52	
Did you feel that the feedback you provided at the end of an activity was taken into account for any future similar activities?	50	10	
TOTAL number of respondents	60		

Sustainability: high

The benefits of the project continue to exist after the completion of activities. The TCP and BBI continue to exist and have become financially sustainable due to clients' fees and financial support from the regional Government. To date 41 companies were incubated and over 80% of the tenants have become successful companies that continued their activity

outside. More than 1500 persons were trained and benefited from legal advice. The success of the BBI is also owned to the project, which built its capacity in view of expanding services to external companies. The VET College has increased its popularity among the local students and has signed co-operation agreements with local service providers (hotels, restaurants, etc.) in view of preparing specialists. The Tourist Agency has also grown and appears to have consolidated capacity.

SUSTAINABILITY	Yes	No	Comment
If the project has helped you set up a business activity, are you likely to continue it after the project end?	55	5	
Would you be willing to pay a small fee in order to continue benefiting from project services?	44	16	
How likely are you to continue using the practices / technologies / approaches you learnt during the project?	60	0	
TOTAL number of respondents			60

Impact: high

The impact on human development is visible. Above all the project has built the confidence and capacity during difficult times. Georgia's main market for its agricultural products and tourism industry was Russia. In the aftermath of the conflict, the economic downturn was almost immediate. The project has contributed to increasing the quality of products and services and hence gaining new clients and access to new markets.

IMPACT	Yes	No	Comment
Do you feel that the project activities had an impact on your life (or the life of your peers active in the same sector)?	58	2	
Any other impacts you think are a result of the project activities and you would like to share?	60	0	
TOTAL number of respondents			60

PROJECT CLIENTS TWO YEARS LATER: EVIDENCE FROM FIELD VISITS

The Trade Promotion Centre (TPC) and the Business Incubator (BBI) in Batumi



Photo 1: Business Development Centre, entrance (February 2016)



Photo 2: the Wall of Fame: enterprises that successfully 'graduated' from the Business Incubator (February 2016)

The project strengthened the management capacity of the BBI and supported it in providing advisory services to the tenants and external enterprises. The TPC was established under the BBI to ensure financial sustainability. This objective was achieved. The trainings offered by the TPC are highly popular (in particular the trainings on the Georgian Tax Code, accounting and software for business) and have become a mark of quality. Some companies require that their staff or potential candidates follow the courses offered by TPC. The BBI and TPC have built a reputation for quality; the manuals and advice received from the project have contributed to that. There is no shortage of clients and their number is growing every year.

VET College Black Sea in Batumi



Photo 3: IT Training Classroom (February 2016)



Photo 4: Cooking Classroom (February 2016)

The College is the main institution offering vocational education in the Adjara region. It trains waiters, tourist guides and service providers, IT and building & construction. The project supported the College to build capacities (staff, equipment and handbooks) in three areas: guides, waiters and IT (CISCO Academy). The vocational training takes from several months to one year. Around 560-570 students graduate from the College yearly. The College capacity has doubled in the past few years (e.g. in 2008 about 200 students graduated). The College assists them with career planning (traineeships) and monitors progress 6-12 months after graduation. A growing network of alumni helps young graduates to find employment. With the help of the project, the College has become more proactive and contacts companies regularly to inform them of the trainings on offer but also to identify potential needs in view of accommodating them. The handbooks developed with the help of the project have become part of the official curriculum and are used until the present day.

Agriculture Service Centre (Branch office in Kobuleti, 20 km from Batumi)



Photo 5: Fruit tree nursery (February 2016)



Photo 6: Calibrating machine (February, 2016)

The Agriculture Service Centre (ASC) was established by the Adjara Government and the project has developed its capacity. Over 1860 fruit trees were planted in the ASC nursery. Two years later the nursery is thriving and has become the training ground for many farmers in the region. The project has also equipped the Centre with fruit dryers, refrigerators and a calibrating machine. The equipment is used for demonstrating and training purposes and is in use to this day.

KAZAKHSTAN

Geographical scope: Eastern Kazakhstan



Overall goal: In the East Kazakhstan region support small-scale entrepreneurs at the local level, as well as actors at the national level to benefit from trade opportunities.

Budget: 280,000 EUR

Overall target	Status	Results
An action plan on SME/trade development and potential of different sectors to produce is elaborated and integrated into the Regional Strategy for 2010-2015	Achieved	A baseline survey and analytical study were conducted. The recommendations of the study were integrated in the local development programme for the Eastern Kazakhstan region and into the Mono-towns Development Programme 2012-2020.
The SME Service Centre establishes a network of focal points in 13 regions of Eastern Kazakhstan.	Achieved	A network of 13 focal points in the 13 regions of the Eastern Kazakhstan region was established by the project. The network worked with the state owned DAMU fund.
200 SMEs received consultative support from the SME service centre	Exceeded	The focal points conducted 7976 consultations (with at least 4032 women, i.e. 50.53%)
At least 2 inclusive projects funded by the small grants programme	Exceeded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 business ideas were jointly supported by the project (10%) and State Programmes (20%) • 16 business ideas were fully financed by the project • 83 new jobs were created • Business consultations were provided

		to 129 entrepreneurs (joint activity with state programme)
Domestic trade model is elaborated and discussed	Achieved	The study "Development of Trade in Eastern Kazakhstan" conducted. Seminars on applying trade models were conducted for 116 participants.

NB. No questionnaires collected in Kazakhstan. However, a satisfaction survey carried out at the end of the project in December 2013 received feedback from 428 respondents. Issues covered by the survey include relevance, effectiveness and impact and are detailed below under the respective criteria.

A separate survey was conducted among the clients who benefited from the project grant scheme and those whom the project supported in securing microcredits for business development. A total of 191 respondents took part. With regard to impact, 43% answered that they could increase their income, 17% could recruit new employees, and 16% increased their trade, volume of production and livestock. 4% of entrepreneurs answered that they sold their products and livestock to other regions and countries. 64% of the respondents assessed the work of the project as “Excellent”, 27% as “Good”, and 8% as “Satisfactory”.

Operational bottlenecks: The partners identified at the on-start of the project lacked capacity to undertake the activities and identifying new partners caused some delay. The SME Service Centre could not establish a network of focal points and it was extremely difficult to find a suitable partner able to run the small grants component. The project overcame these obstacles by setting up the network by itself (later on supported by the Government).

Relevance: high

The activities and targets were consistent with the national and local development priorities. There are over ten thousand registered enterprises in Eastern Kazakhstan. Few had access to financial services and information on how to run a business, which hampered the development of entrepreneurship. Supporting small-scale entrepreneurs in a region that borders two major players (Russia and China) in order to be able to benefit from trade opportunities is therefore highly relevant. Analysing the local context and developing a tailored trade model is a useful tool.

According to the satisfaction survey, the project offered trainings covering highly relevant topics (98% satisfaction rate). The most relevant topics included drafting of business plans (38%), start-up of business (30%), and obtaining loans for business development (30%).

Effectiveness: high

The project delivered on all the set targets and exceeded some of them. The SME support network covered all the districts in the region and provided advisory services to thousands of aspiring and existing entrepreneurs. In a sample survey 44% of respondents indicated that they started a new business activity and 34% expanded their business. The networked proved to be very effective as the Government decided to continue financial support to it. The 16 business ideas supported under small grant scheme created 83 new jobs in 2013.

In the survey 63% respondents assessed the work of the project as “Excellent”, 31% as “Good”, and 4% as “Satisfactory”.

Efficiency: high

The funds, expertise and time allocated to the programme in Kazakhstan appear to have resulted into tangible, measurable and sustainable outputs. Despite operational difficulties at the start of the project, an extensive network of consultants has been established and 16 business ideas benefited from financial support (grant scheme).

Sustainability: high

The benefits of the project appear to continue after the completion of activities. Due to the positive results achieved by the project, the Government decided to finance and support the continuation of the SME support network and co-financed half of the business ideas selected under the small grants component. The project activities also continued in the frame of the Joint UN Semey programme. This indicated that the support and funding are very likely to continue in the long-term.

Impact: high to medium

The Evaluator estimates that the project had a considerable impact on human development. Based on the video feedback from the clients and the satisfaction survey, it can be concluded that the project provided the services that were most needed. According to the survey, 78% of respondents thought that the raining received contributed to improvements in their life. 80% of the clients who gave feedback started their own business after participation in trainings. The project offered small entrepreneurs access to information in a way that is accessible to the population (rural population and farmers) and encouraged them to pursue their business ventures. The success of the business ideas funded the by the project can serve as a source of inspiration and example for others. The long term impact will depend on the willingness of authorities to pursue trade development and continue support to the region.

KYRGYZSTAN



Geographical scope: Batken Region

Overall goal: Support small-scale entrepreneurs at the local level to benefit from trade opportunities

Budget: 384,030 EUR

Overall target	Status	Results
Batken Market Information Centre (BMIC) fully operational and sustainable	Achieved with some delay	BMIC achieved financial sustainability in 2014.
5000 farmers increased incomes through the information system and supply channels	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4500 farmers use BMIC services • 3409 entrepreneurs have sold their products via BMIC • Project trained brokers supported the sale of 2113 tons of agricultural goods from 1163 farmers
20 trainings and study tours conducted to increase knowledge on trade and entrepreneurship	Exceeded	28 trainings conducted (531 participants/243 female - 45.7%)
2 pilot cooperatives successfully promote products on the external market	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 pilot cooperatives and several entrepreneurs successfully promoted and sold their goods. All cooperatives increased sales volumes (mostly in the country) • <i>Molthushum</i> cooperative sold 26 tons of rice and 18 tons of apricots to Russia • 45 new jobs were created (31 female)

2 new processing lines established for export products	Exceeded	• 4 new processing lines established
Batken Association of Entrepreneurs fully operational and sustainable	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Association of businesswomen has a clear organisational structure. It counts 550 members (entrepreneurs from Batken region) including 150 new members • The Association and its members are integrated in the BMIC information marketing system • The Association established partnership with national associations of entrepreneurs in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan

Relevance: high

The activities and targets were consistent with the national and local development priorities. In a largely agricultural region increasing the quality of fruit and vegetable production and processing, as well as finding new markets for local farmers and cooperatives is a high priority. The business ideas supported by the project are pertinent. Training farmers and accompanying them in transition to modern fruit growing and processing techniques is imperative. This contributed to boosting employment of local population including women who traditionally are home makers and do not have formal employment.

RELEVANCE	Yes	No	Comment
Do you feel the project responded to your needs?	58	0	
Were the activities you participated in commensurate with your capacity?	57	1	Many respondents noted that what appeared to be 'complicated' at first was well explained and became useful knowledge as result of trainings.
Do you think the targets set for the activities you participated in were realistic?	57	1	Many respondents expressed the wish to have 'more trainings' on a long-term basis.
TOTAL number of respondents	58		

Effectiveness: high

The project delivered on all the set targets and exceeded some of them. The farmers' cooperatives that benefited from financial support in the project achieved their targets and became self-sufficient. Based on observations during the field visits, the Evaluator established direct cause-effect link as the clients not only preserved the equipment provided with support

from the project but also expanded their activity to employ more people (some 45 jobs were created as a result of the project, but the number doubles during the harvest season) and purchase more equipment on their own. All participating farmers' cooperatives continue their activity after completion of the project.

EFFECTIVENESS	Yes	No	Comment
If you participated in several project activities over a longer period of time, did you feel any progress as compared to the start of the activities?	55	3	Many respondents expressed their appreciation for the fact that trainings were organised in their region (i.e. no need to travel to the capital city)
In your opinion, was the quality of the outputs delivered to you satisfactory (were the trainers or visiting experts good)?	53	5	Many respondents requested that more such trainings be delivered in their region
Can you say that the project activities contributed to some change in the sector of your activity (policy, law, communication, practice?)	58	0	Many respondents referred to 'positive changes' in their personal and business development
TOTAL number of respondents			58

Efficiency: high

The funds, expertise and time allocated to the programme in Kyrgyzstan have converted into tangible, measurable and sustainable results. The project supported 4 new processing lines, two fruit storage facilities, 1 processing and packaging line and 1 processing line for jam. All these lines and equipment are still in use. The cooperatives supported during phase II continue to grow and increase the quantity of sold products, the geographical area of their products and the number of employees (during the harvest and processing seasons the number of staff doubles or triples depending on the quantity).

EFFICIENCY	Yes	No	Comment
Do you think that the way the activities were organized contributed to achieving the expected results?	57	0	One respondent did not fill in this part of the questionnaire.
What is your opinion overall about the quality of activities (venue, organization, information, logistics, etc.)?	57	0	All respondents ranked the quality of activities as "excellent"
Were there any delays with regard to the activities you were involved in and if so how were the handled?	57	0	No particular problems or delays reported
Did you feel that the feedback you provided at the end of an activity was taken into account for any future similar activities?	57	0	Many respondents requested that the project 'be continued' and that more trainings tailored to 'women activities' be delivered
TOTAL number of respondents			58

Sustainability: high

The benefits of the project continue to exist after its completion. The cooperatives and farmers associations supported by the project continue their activity and have grown to include more members in the past two years. The production lines and other equipment purchased by the project are still in use and in very good condition. Many clients still use the agricultural and trade guides developed by the project. Many of these publications are available in local libraries and became a reference. Despite concerns regarding the financial sustainability of BMIC, the Evaluator established that not only has the Centre preserved its staff and premises, but it has also developed services tailored to the local needs that prove profitable. One of the most popular services is the 'market radio' that advertises products and services and conveys useful information to farmers (weather forecasts, market prices, etc.) Another successful service provided by BMIC is the business matching whereby clients willing to purchase produce (mainly agricultural) are put in contact with farmers looking to sell. BMIC retains a small percentage / fee for the services.

SUSTAINABILITY	Yes	No	Comment
If the project has helped you set up a business activity, are you likely to continue it after the project end?	58	0	
Would you be willing to pay a small fee in order to continue benefiting from project services?	58	0	Many respondents were open to the idea of paying some fee for receiving training or information
How likely are you to continue using the practices / technologies / approaches you learnt during the project?	58	0	The degree varies from 'sometimes' to 'all the time', but all respondents noted that they are using the knowledge acquired during the project
TOTAL number of respondents	58		

Impact: high

The impact on human development is visible. The programme has trained numerous farmers and entrepreneurs on how to conduct business, improve productivity and increase sales. All respondents met during the field visits noted how grateful they were for the trainings, which not only provided information unavailable before but also encouraged them to dare. Women noted how the project activities 'opened their eyes' and empowered them to launch small but profitable business ventures that add to their family income (i.e. bakeries, sewing ateliers). Two years after the completion of project activities in Kyrgyzstan the clients remembered their experience fondly and spoke highly of the exchange visits. In some cases the visits to neighbouring countries (Tajikistan, Turkey) helped to re-establish connections.

IMPACT	Yes	No	Comment
Do you feel that the project activities had an impact on your life (or the life of your peers active in the same sector)?	58	0	
Any other impacts you think are a result of the project activities and you would like to share?	-	-	Many respondents used the word 'courage' to describe the impact of the project activities

		on personal and professional levels.
TOTAL number of respondents		58

PROJECT CLIENTS TWO YEARS LATER: EVIDENCE FROM FIELD VISITS

Batken Information Market Centre (BIMC)



Photo 7: The view on the market from the Information Centre (February, 2016)



Photo 8: Meeting with the clients of BIMC (February, 2016)

The BIMC was established in 2008 and during the project has benefited from capacity building of its staff and consolidation of its services. The Centre is well known to the farmers in the region as 70% of the population earns its living from agriculture. The Centre acts as focal point for the region's farmers and provides information through its website, the market radio, as well as regular matchmaking meetings for farmers and business people (generally four meetings a year). BIMC enjoys excellent working relations with the regional authorities and has been given office space in the centre of Batken. Most of its activity though is run from a small rented office at the heart of the Batken market (as shown on the photo), so that it stays close to its customers. The Centre is financially sustainable. Income is generated by members who pay a small membership fee and by other clients who pay for information services.

“Moltushum” Cooperative



Photo 9: Cooperative “Moltushum” (February, 2016)



Photo 10: Rice packaging equipment (February, 2016)

The cooperative is up and running and two years after the completion of the project it is still benefiting from the rice packaging equipment it purchased. The cooperative is profitable, but the quantity of rice sold depends on the harvest and the number of contracts it manages to secure with retailers. “Some years are better than others”, the owner says. The main market is Bishkek and the neighbouring regions, but Batken rice also finds its way to the Russian supermarkets especially in cities where the Kyrgyz diaspora is largest. Together with other participating cooperatives, it sells its product under the registered trade mark “Dary Batkena” (as seen on photo 10), which has been promoted on international fairs and translates as ‘the gifts of Batken’.

Cold storage unit at “Tash – Biy” cooperative



Photos 11 and 12: the women of the cooperative posing next to the cold storage unit (February, 2016)

Located in a village on the national route between Batken and Osh, this cooperative gathers a couple of hundreds of farmers from several villages. The project helped them purchase a cold storage unit. This has been of assistance to the farmers, as it allows them to store fruit and vegetable during the season and sell it on the market off season when prices are the highest. The cooperative also rents out space in the unit to non-members. The members of the cooperative, both men and women, consider buying an additional unit as it turns out to be a profitable investment especially during the very hot summer months in Kyrgyzstan.

“Batken Jemishi” Cooperative in Kadamjay district (funded by the Government of Luxembourg)



Photos 13 to 15 (clockwise): the entrance to the cooperative; fruit washing equipment; vacuum packaging machine; dried apricots ready to be shipped out (February, 2016)

The cooperative specialises in dried fruit (mainly apricots) and nuts. With the support from the project, the cooperative purchased a processing line and a packaging unit. The dried apricots are popular on the local market, but also in Bishkek and Russia. One of the members of the cooperative, who has been trained as a rural broker by the project, has moved to Bishkek in order to identify clients and promote the product on external markets (mainly Russia). The quantities sold depend on harvest (2015 was a bad year because of severe frosts in March that killed most of the crop), however the cooperative manages to make profit and continues to be a successful venture.

TAJIKISTAN



Geographical scope: Sughd region

Overall goal: foster inclusive economic growth in the region through the promotion of trade and the enhancement of country's competitiveness

Budget: 384,030 EUR

Overall target	Status	Results
40 entrepreneurs practically applied the received skills and knowledge on export activities	Exceeded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 63 entrepreneurs demonstrably applied their newly acquired skills • 121 new jobs created (33 for women)
16 workshops conducted and at least 160 entrepreneurs trained on general business, export issues through the established Export Capability Building and Mentoring Programme	Exceeded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 59 workshops/trainings held for 753 entrepreneurs (52.5% female)
At least 2 proposals from the business associations incorporated in the regional policy and adopted by the Government	Exceeded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four proposals were adopted by the Government (free movement of cargo, seals, changes in tax code, and tax exemption for important economic sectors)
Trade Development Strategy for the Sughd region elaborated and approved by the Government	Achieved	Trade development programme (TDP) for period 2013-2015 and its Action Matrix adopted by government. Seven priorities of TDP' Action Matrix implemented
The Trade Export Promotion Centre is financially sustainable by end of 2012	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TEPC achieved full financial sustainability

The AIMS system is expanded to Khatlon (funded by TAJ CO)	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 37 issues of the news bulletin • 4 special tariffs for the SMS packages • 2000 farmers subscribed to the SMS packages • SMS packages for 13 crops in 8 districts of Khatlon region • Electronic version of “Handbook of Plant Protection” and mobile applications “Green Pages” (m-GreenPages) and “Mobile Marketplace” (m-Marketplace) developed and accessible on the web and via mobiles
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Relevance: high

The activities and targets were consistent with the national and local development priorities. The region relies largely on agriculture and the ability to export products is key to increasing revenues and creating employment. The project supported HACCP certification, which is vital for exports to Russia and Kazakhstan. The project has taken on the important task of showing businesses that the investments required to meet phytosanitary standards will pay off in the long-run. The two business ideas supported by the project are pertinent. The equipment purchased with the project support increased the production capacities of both firms and allowed them to export juices to Russia. Until 2011 none of the companies exported. The AIMS information system has benefited a wide number of farmers offering regular information on crops, weather, and market prices.

RELEVANCE AIMS	Yes	No	Comment
Do you feel AIMS responded to your needs?	298	0	
Are you still using AIMS?	121	177*	Some respondents who answered ‘no’ changed their area of activity, some others forgot to renew the subscription or no longer considered relevant to their activity.
TOTAL number of respondents	298		

** This number refers to 2012 subscribers and doesn’t reflect the use of AIMS over the following years. Data from January 2016 show that the number of AIMS users have increased since January 2014 as follows: web-portal annual unique visitors 164,924 (increased by 173%), annual newspaper subscribers 3,225 (increased by 29 %); subscribers of SMS-agroconsulting 2,309 (increased by 260 %); annual unique users of mobile apps 4,805 (increased by 300%).*

RELEVANCE PROJECT OVERALL	Yes	No	Comment
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Do you feel the project responded to your needs?	101	2	Participants stated that training content was based on their requests, e.g. food safety standards, lab analysis, technology choice and improving staff skills.
Were the activities you participated in commensurate with your capacity?	95	8	
Do you think the targets set for the activities you participated in were realistic?	100	3	
TOTAL number of respondents			103

Effectiveness: high

The project delivered on all the set targets and exceeded some of them. The two firms that benefited from financial support through the Business Challenge Fund increased their production by 20% and exported almost half of their juice production to Russia. Both firms are financially viable and reimbursed the loans.

EFFECTIVENESS AIMS	Yes	No	Comment
Were the results from using AIMS satisfactory?	296	2	The respondents who answered 'no' were unsure.
Has AIMS contributed to the success of your business and/or establishing new partnerships?	279	19	The respondents who answered 'no' could not establish a link between the success of their firm and AIMS.
TOTAL number of respondents			298

EFFECTIVENESS PROJECT OVERALL	Yes	No	Comment
If you participated in several project activities over a longer period of time, did you feel any progress as compared to the start of the activities?	93	2	Some clients stated that introducing new quality standards helped to obtain certification. Other comments referred to improvements in the enterprise working environment such as production flows, staff hygiene, and document management.
In your opinion, was the quality of the outputs delivered to you satisfactory (were the trainers or visiting experts good)?	102		Most respondents were satisfied with the consultants.
TOTAL number of respondents			103

Efficiency: high

The funds, expertise and time allocated to the project in Tajikistan appear to have translated into measurable and sustainable results. The bulk of project activities consisted in technical advice and capacity building measures. It is therefore more challenging to measure the efficiency. However, the fact that with support from the project the private sector developed

concrete measures that resulted in new legislation improving the business environment is a major achievement in a region that does not have a tradition of public-private consultations. In addition, the workshops, trainings and exchange visits organised by the project contributed to creating awareness of the challenges business faces when exporting.

EFFICIENCY AIMS	Yes	No	Comment
Did AIMS help you to achieve the expected results?	293	5	One respondent answered 'no' as information was provided on other similar companies, i.e. his competition.
Were AIMS services provided in a timely manner?	280	18	The main reason given by 'no' respondents was the delays in the national postal service (newspaper).
TOTAL number of respondents	298		

EFFICIENCY	Yes	No	Comment
Do you think that the way the activities were organized contributed to achieving the expected results?	100	1	
What is your opinion overall about the quality of activities (venue, organization, information, logistics, etc.)?	101	1	
Were there any delays with regard to the activities you were involved in and if so how were the handled?		99	
Did you feel that the feedback you provided at the end of an activity was taken into account for any future similar activities?	72	4	
TOTAL number of respondents	103		

Sustainability: high to medium

When it comes to technical advice, sustainability is hard to gauge in the long-term. Tajikistan like many other developing countries is becoming more connected to Internet and it is therefore expected that some of the advice provided during the project life lose its pertinence due to the changes in the business environment, standards, export rules, etc. However, the sustainability of the project in Tajikistan lies in the groundwork that has been laid and the awareness that has been created, which was largely absent or limited before the project intervention. Giving farmers and business people the tools of accessing the right information is an important achievement that should not be underestimated. Since 2014 the AIMS information service has gained clients as it created a need for daily information. According to the feedback from the respondents to the questionnaires (401 clients in all) most of the project's clients continue their activity after completion of the project.

SUSTAINABILITY AIMS	Yes	No	Comment
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Will you continue using AIMS including for a small fee?	203	95	Many respondents who answered 'no' do not have the need for the service anymore; some others have indicated Internet as their source of information.
TOTAL number of respondents			298

SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT OVERALL	Yes	No	Comment
If the project has helped you set up a business activity, are you likely to continue it after the project end?	96	4	Some respondents expressed their intention to install production lines and / or automatize management systems (e.g. sales).
Would you be willing to pay a small fee in order to continue benefiting from project services?	63	37	On average clients would be ready to pay 7-10 USD for the services.
How likely are you to continue using the practices / technologies / approaches you learnt during the project?	90	1	Most respondents were convinced they would continue to apply the practice they learnt or would make efforts to implement the practices in their business activities. Some respondents noted that they are or will prepare their business plans based on knowledge received during trainings.
TOTAL number of respondents			103

Impact: high

The Evaluator estimates that the project had a positive impact on human development. The project has trained numerous farmers and entrepreneurs on how to conduct business in order to be able to export their products. It has provided access to information that was unavailable or limited before. Giving voice to the private sector and achieving positive changes in a region where participatory tradition is low can be considered as high impact.

IMPACT	Yes	No	Comment
Has using AIMS had an impact on improving the quality of your life or increasing the access to markets?	249	49	The majority of respondents noted that access to information, news and up-dates has had a positive impact on the way they run their business. Some respondents noted that they were happy to share the information with their neighbours who were not subscribed. The respondents who answered 'no' were unsure and not able to

		establish a direct cause-effect link between their business activity and AIMS.
TOTAL number of respondents		298

IMPACT	Yes	No	Comment
Do you feel that the project activities had an impact on your life (or the life of your peers active in the same sector)?	90	8	Some respondents noted that the knowledge received helped to develop new visions and understanding of business and the impact on work - life balance for example. It also helped to enhance networking and communication among peers in similar sectors.
Any other impacts you think are a result of the project activities and you would like to share?	26	41	
TOTAL number of respondents		103	

UZBEKISTAN



Geographical area: Namangan region

Overall goal: Increase competitiveness and alleviate poverty in rural communities of Namangan Region: build capacity to increase quality of produce, facilitate trade opportunities with bigger markets

Budget: 330.000 EUR

Overall target	Status	Results
Conduct baseline assessment to determine the local context and capacity development needs	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baseline assessment completed in 2011. Findings used by programme to identify sectors and activities and by Namangan City for its Development Strategy

At least 90 self-employed & entrepreneurs trained in trade related subjects (at least 30% of participants are female)	Exceeded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 681 (211 women) entrepreneurs participated in the trainings • Overall 441 indirect jobs were created as a result of the trainings and business support activities • 6 training modules on business and trade development topics are developed;
At least 50 government officials trained on improved service delivery to entrepreneurs, trade related issues, building business-to-business relationships, and negotiation skills	Exceeded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 77 (12 women) government officials and experts from business support institutions participated in the trainings
At least 10 business ideas identified and implemented	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 +1 business ideas implemented
Report on developing trade capacities of SMEs, including recommendations, published and distributed among stakeholders	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One analytical report produced • Guideline on "How to Export" published and distributed in Uzbek and Russian (500 copies each) • Guideline on marketing published in Uzbek and distributed to entrepreneurs (500 copies) • Trade missions resulting in contracts worth 300 000 US\$

Relevance: high

The activities and targets were consistent with the national and local development priorities and programmes. The central government and regional authorities have confirmed that creating employment and generating revenue through business remains a major priority. This is particularly relevant outside the capital city Tashkent. The focus is equally on encouraging production oriented towards exports both inside and outside the country. The trainings delivered by the project and the business ideas supported are therefore relevant and pertinent. This has been confirmed both during interviews with authorities and business people. The feedback collected through questionnaires also supports this finding. All of the 55 clients who replied to the questionnaire thought the programme activities were relevant to their needs.

RELEVANCE	Yes	No	Comment
Do you feel the project responded to your needs?	55	0	
Were the activities you participated in commensurate with your capacity?	55	0	
Do you think the targets set for the activities you participated in were realistic?	55	0	
TOTAL number of respondents	55		

Effectiveness: high

The project has delivered on the set targets and exceeded them with regard to training activities. In particular in the Namangan region, where ten business projects were implemented, the Evaluator could establish direct cause-effect link as the clients not only achieved the set targets but continued to grow even after the completion of the project.

EFFECTIVENESS	Yes	No	Comment
If you participated in several project activities over a longer period of time, did you feel any progress as compared to the start of the activities?	54	1	1 respondent participated only in one training
In your opinion, was the quality of the outputs delivered to you satisfactory (were the trainers or visiting experts good)?	55	0	
Can you say that the project activities contributed to some change in the sector of your activity (policy, law, communication, practice?)	55	0	10 respondents referred to 'significant changes' for their personal development and business venture
TOTAL number of respondents	55		

Efficiency: high

The funds, expertise and time allocated to the project in Uzbekistan have converted into tangible, measurable and sustainable results. Due to the project 191 new jobs were created, of which 64% permanent and 36% seasonal. In terms of gender, 65% of clients were women and 35% were men. Ten business ideas were implemented in three sectors: 5 in textile, 4 in agro processing and 1 in light industry. In terms of funding, the project contributed 41% of the total value of business ideas, 59% of funds came from clients' own sources. Overall over 600 people were trained of whom 30% were women.

EFFICIENCY	Yes	No	Comment
Do you think that the way the activities were organized contributed to achieving the expected results?	55	0	Respondents particularly highlighted the usefulness of exchange visits. In some cases clients concluded sale deals or purchased equipment.
What is your opinion overall about the quality of activities (venue, organization, information, logistics, etc.)?	55	0	All respondents ranked the quality of activities as 'very high'.
Were there any delays with regard to the activities you were involved in and if so how were the handled?	0	55	No delays or other impediments were reported.
Did you feel that the feedback you provided at the end of an activity was taken into account for any future similar activities?	54	1	One respondent expected trainings on how to manufacture shoes (i.e. technical training), which was not in the scope of the project.
TOTAL number of respondents	55		

Sustainability: high

The benefits of the project continue to exist after the completion of activities. All the business ventures supported by the project continue their activity and have grown in the past two years. They are all self-sustainable and make profit. The equipment purchased with support from the project is still in use and so are the guides and other supporting material published. The human and technical capacity of the clients has not only been preserved but has increased. In some cases the Evaluator observed that clients still keep and refer to the notes taken during the training courses two or three years ago. The deputy head of the Namangan Municipality who participated in an exchange visit to China has produced a video explaining and illustrating his experience and the things learnt during the visit and broadcasted it on local television.

SUSTAINABILITY	Yes	No	Comment
If the project has helped you set up a business activity, are you likely to continue it after the project end?	55	0	Several respondents noted that they the project gave them confidence to expand their business activity.
Would you be willing to pay a small fee in order to continue benefiting from project services?	39	16	Respondents who answered 'yes' agree to pay for high quality trainings tailored to their needs.
How likely are you to continue using the practices / technologies / approaches you learnt during the project?	55	0	All respondents ranked the probability as 'high'.
TOTAL number of respondents			55

Impact: high

The impact on human development is visible. The programme has trained numerous entrepreneurs and public officials in view of facilitating the environment for doing business and encouraging people to engage in business activities. The evaluator noted that one of the most frequent remarks in that sense was: "The project showed me it was possible and gave me the courage to do it". Two years after the completion of the project activities in Uzbekistan the clients still remember the trainings they took part in and the guidance and manuals they received.

IMPACT	Yes	No	Comment
Do you feel that the project activities had an impact on your life (or the life of your peers active in the same sector)?	55	0	Some respondents noted changes for the better in terms of self-development and financial independence (in particular for unemployed women)
Any other impacts you think are a result of the project activities and you would like to share?	-	-	Respondents shared their desire to expand their business and create more jobs
TOTAL number of respondents			55

PROJECT CLIENTS TWO YEARS LATER: EVIDENCE FROM FIELD VISITS

All the business projects supported by the project are financially sustainable and have increased their staff and production output. Below are some of these success stories.

Business Training Centre (BTC)



Photo 16 and 17: The Business Training Centre – training room (March, 2016)

The BTC is part of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Namangan and has over 1700 members, including 700 enterprises and more than a 1000 individual entrepreneurs. The BTC provides specialized trainings and consultancy to start-ups and mature businesses. The BTC also connects with relevant state institutions, such as the Customs, the Ministry of Trade, the Agency for Intellectual Property and offers entrepreneurs the possibility to interact with them directly. The BTC intends to extend trainings to young graduates who consider launching business activities. The project supported the BCT by purchasing equipment, furniture and providing training materials and expertise. In 2013 the BTC provided consulting services to 847 companies, in the first quarter of 2014 some 278 companies benefited from their services. Over 100 clients have been served and over 300 people benefited from trainings on standards, quality, business planning, marketing, advertising, legal compliance, cold storage, ICT for business, sewing, exporting, business English. Client satisfaction questionnaires show that 70% of participants perceive trainings as “very useful” and 30% consider them to be “useful”. At least 30% of participants were women. This participation rate may be explained by the fact that women tend to participate in trainings of direct interest to them (e.g. fewer women participated in ICT training, but almost all participants were women in sewing trainings).

Sewing enterprise *Chust Uktamjon Servis* (Chust District, Namangan Region)



Photos 18 and 19: Children wear and the sewing shop (March, 2016)

This is the smallest business venture funded by the project (7265 USD) which helped them buy 11 sewing machines. The enterprise was set up by a former school teacher and started with 3 sewing machines and 4 employees. Three years later the enterprise has 46 machines and employs 19 permanent staff and 12 trainees. They specialize in textile manufacturing and sew clothes for children and women mostly. “At first it was difficult to sell our products because competition was high, especially with the cheaper products from China”, says Mrs. Sanobar Tojibaeva the founder and manager of the enterprise. “However, with the encouragement of the project staff we kept up the quality of our products and explained to vendors on the local markets that our products will last longer”. The customer base grew and so did the demand for their products. The enterprise partnered up with another local enterprise and is now sewing for the Russian market. In 2016 the company has registered its own brand. “The project has helped me to find confidence to grow my business and aspire for more”. The absolute majority of employees are women including orphans and handicapped.

Shoe factory ‘Dambog Poyabzali Savdo’ (Namangan)



Photos 20 and 21: Work in progress; Spring 2016 collection (March, 2016)

This was the largest business idea funded by the project (73150 USD). The enterprise started as a small family venture. The tradition of shoemaking has been passed in the family along generations. The project purchased two pieces of equipment that automatized the production process and allowed the enterprise to increase volumes and expand nation-wide. It is now one of Uzbekistan's largest shoe factories and, according to the locals, "a trend setter". The company employs 43 staff, both men and women. Their aspiration is to export their products to the neighbouring countries, including Russia.

Component II: Trade development: Technical assistance for a better use of trade opportunities

BELARUS

Geographical scope: nation wide

Overall goal: promote Belarusian light industry products in international commodity markets by utilising ICTs and enhancing capacity in trade, exporting and marketing.

Budget: 330,000 EUR

Overall target	Status	Results
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Electronic Trading Facility (ETF) designed, launched and fully operational	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ETF designed, launched and fully operational www.tradebel.com Additional widget developed allowing to create separate websites for companies
At least 85 enterprises of BelLegProm Concern are using ETF	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 200 companies joined ETF, including 86 (of 92) BelLegProm members 1300 products were uploaded on ETF by end of 2013
Seminars on e-trade and/or promoting products to external markets conducted in all regions	Exceeded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 70 trainings organised; 1138 people participated (809 women)

Relevance: high

The activities and targets were consistent with the national and local development priorities. Light industry in Belarus is an important sector of economic activity; over 80% of people working in this sector are women. The export capacity is high; however access to markets other than the CIS (mostly Russia) is limited mainly due to lack of knowledge about export requirements, tariffs, and trade agreements. Almost half of the 2172 enterprises in the light industry sector in Belarus do not have a website. Over 80% do not use internet as a means of promoting products and identifying new buyers. The seminars on export and e-trading reduced this knowledge gap. The e-platform offering Belarussian enterprises the opportunity to advertise their products was a useful tool.

RELEVANCE	Yes	No	Comment
Do you feel the project responded to your needs?	10	1	
Were the activities you participated in commensurate with your capacity?	8	3	
Do you think the targets set for the activities you participated in were realistic?	10	1	
TOTAL number of respondents	11		

Effectiveness: high to medium

The project delivered on all the targets and exceeded one of them. The enterprises appreciated the fact that trainings were carried out in all major cities of the country. Based on observations during the field visit, the Evaluator established some cause-effect links. The interest for the trainings and seminars delivered by the project was very high and the clients acknowledged their usefulness. This point is particularly relevant since the tradition of staff training and continuous learning is not wide spread. Several enterprise managers spoke of the shift in attitude and acknowledge the need to stay informed in a fast changing world. Some shift in the perception of trainings occurred too. According to some clients, at first the trainings were perceived as too 'West oriented'. However, the Russian crisis has changed that perception as

Belarus business people realise the downside of dependence on one market and the need to diversify. Many clients deplored that lack of a national label and referred to internal trade barriers. The high level of intervention from the State in the business environment makes changes in policies often unpredictable and the private sector lacks a clear voice and lobbying power.

EFFECTIVENESS	Yes	No	Comment
If you participated in several project activities over a longer period of time, did you feel any progress as compared to the start of the activities?	6	3	
In your opinion, was the quality of the outputs delivered to you satisfactory (were the trainers or visiting experts good)?	10	1	
Can you say that the project activities contributed to some change in the sector of your activity (policy, law, communication, practice?)	7	4	One respondent noted that the training helped him to choose his career path after graduation (transport logistics)
TOTAL number of respondents			11

Efficiency: high

The funds, expertise and time allocated to the project in Belarus converted into measurable results. 95 training events involved 1456 participants (74% women) and benefited both members and non-members of BELLEGPROM (a state enterprise replacing the former Ministry of Light Industry and financed from membership fees). Some 200 enterprises registered on the ETF and over 1300 items were uploaded on the platform.

EFFICIENCY	Yes	No	Comment
Do you think that the way the activities were organized contributed to achieving the expected results?	11	0	
What is your opinion overall about the quality of activities (venue, organization, information, logistics, etc.)?	10	1	Those who answered 'yes' ranked the quality of activities as "very good". One responded answered 'medium'.
Were there any delays with regard to the activities you were involved in and if so how were the handled?	2	9	
Did you feel that the feedback you provided at the end of an activity was taken into account for any future similar activities?	10	1	
TOTAL number of respondents			11

Sustainability: medium

Some of the benefits of the project continue to exist after the completion of activities. The ETF exists but is not maintained or updated anymore. This is partly due to the fact that BELLEGPROM, the owner of the platform, has gone through major restructuring and personnel changes in the past two years. The management has completely changed and the

platform was not a priority. The ETF has never become a fully-fledged e-trading platform. It serves more as a website allowing enterprises to advertise their products and publish their contact details. Although the representatives of BELLEGPROM assured the Evaluator that the platform would be picked up and brought back to life in the nearest future, doubts remain as to whether this is going to happen.

SUSTAINABILITY	Yes	No	Comment
If the project has helped you set up a business activity, are you likely to continue it after the project end?	5	4	
Would you be willing to pay a small fee in order to continue benefiting from project services?	3	5	
How likely are you to continue using the practices / technologies / approaches you learnt during the project?	10	1	Those who answered 'yes' ranked the probability as 'very high'.
TOTAL number of respondents			11

Impact: high to medium

The impact on human development is visible. The project trained a large number of business people in the light industry and gave them the tools to obtain further information on export opportunities and how to avoid trade barriers. An exporters' guide was published and distributed. All respondents met during the field visit expressed their gratitude for the trainings, which provided information on topics that were never explored before (some 80% of the companies in the light industry never considered Internet as a useful tool for business promotion and trading). Two years after the completion of project activities in Belarus the clients still remembered their experience positively and spoke highly of the experts who delivered the trainings.

IMPACT	Yes	No	Comment
Do you feel that the project activities had an impact on your life (or the life of your peers active in the same sector)?	8	1	Many noted that the trainings encouraged them to consider business aspects they had never thought of before.
Any other impacts you think are a result of the project activities and you would like to share?	0	0	
TOTAL number of respondents			11

MOLDOVA

Geographical scope: nation wide

Overall goal: At national level strengthen capacities of existing associations of agricultural producers with special focus on the needs of fresh fruit growers / producers and exporters, members and non-members.

Budget: 330,000 EUR

Overall target	Status	Results
Up to 1800 farmers trained	Off track	Overall 475 farmers trained, including 52 women
5 demonstration and learning spots set up and managed by the two associations	Exceeded	10 demo spots set up and used for training. Demo spots are sustainable as they are run and financed by the members of the association
At least 2 study tours organised and up to 30 farmers participate in international fairs/trade exhibitions	Exceeded	6 study visits to Italy, Turkey, Germany, Poland, the Netherlands and Greece, 70 participants. 45 participants to international fairs in Russian and Germany (4 editions)

Operational bottlenecks: Implementation of project activities delayed due to difficulties in recruiting the Project Manager (PM) who only started in March 2012. More delays were caused when the PM had to be replaced due to unsatisfactory performance. Reaching an agreement with the Moldova Investment and Export Promotion Organisation (MIEPO) - one of the institutional partners of the project – was difficult and therefore less trainings for developing farmers' capacity could be organised.

Relevance: medium

The activities and targets were consistent with the national and local development priorities. In a largely agricultural country developing the capacity of farmers most of whom still follow old Soviet-time techniques and equipment is clearly a high priority. However, the number of study visits and international fairs attended by farmers and officials seems to prevail over trainings and practical activities. The value of participating in international fairs and exchange visits while the agricultural sector lags behind both in terms of human and technical capital appears to be limited. Moldova's main markets for its agricultural products are the non-EU neighbouring countries as it lacks capacity to ensure the required standards in order to export to other markets. Therefore relevance was ranked 'medium'.

RELEVANCE	Yes	No	Comment
Do you feel the project responded to your needs?	15	0	

Were the activities you participated in commensurate with your capacity?	15	0	All respondents referred mainly to their participation in international fairs and study tours.
Do you think the targets set for the activities you participated in were realistic?	15	0	
TOTAL number of respondents			15

Effectiveness: medium

The project delivered on all but one of the set targets. The operational bottlenecks reduced the effectiveness of project activities. Since the bulk of activities in the project consisted of study visits and participation in trade fairs it is difficult to gauge the precise value of the change generated by these activities. However, one could assume that some positive change occurred. As a result of trade fairs some 18 sales contracts worth 1.5 MEUR were signed for over 3000 tons of products. The level of knowledge regarding production and post-production agricultural techniques also increased due to the trainings and practical workshops organised in many rural areas of the country.

EFFECTIVENESS	Yes	No	Comment
If you participated in several project activities over a longer period of time, did you feel any progress as compared to the start of the activities?	13	2	Those who replied 'no' mentioned that they had only participated in one project activity.
In your opinion, was the quality of the outputs delivered to you satisfactory (were the trainers or visiting experts good)?	15		
Can you say that the project activities contributed to some change in the sector of your activity (policy, law, communication, practice)?	15		
TOTAL number of respondents			15

Efficiency: medium

The funds, expertise and time allocated to the project in Moldova have converted into results. Some of the results are measurable (e.g. the number of contracts signed, the number of demonstration plots and trainings). Some other results are more difficult to measure as it is unclear whether the farmers who benefited from training continue to use the technologies and whether the study visits have resulted into concrete changes. Efficiency is therefore marked 'medium'.

EFFICIENCY	Yes	No	Comment
Do you think that the way the activities were organized contributed to achieving the expected results?	15	0	
What is your opinion overall about the quality of activities (venue, organization, information, logistics, etc.)?	15	0	All respondents noted that the overall quality of activities was "very good" or "good"
Were there any delays with regard to the activities you were involved in and if so how were the handled?	0	15	
Did you feel that the feedback you provided at the	13	2	

end of an activity was taken into account for any future similar activities?			
TOTAL number of respondents			15

Sustainability: medium to low

One can assume that some benefits of the project continue to exist after the completion of activities. The experience and knowledge acquired as a result of trainings and/or visits will remain. However application into practice is questionable given the limited technical means and financial resources needed to do so. In order to attract buyers at international fairs Moldovan farmers / producers require high production capacity. Whether the local farmers / producers are able to achieve that both in terms of quantity and quality remains doubtful.

SUSTAINABILITY	Yes	No	Comment
If the project has helped you set up a business activity, are you likely to continue it after the project end?	15	0	
Would you be willing to pay a small fee in order to continue benefiting from project services?	13	2	
How likely are you to continue using the practices / technologies / approaches you learnt during the project?	15	0	Some respondents noted that they were 'very likely' to continue using the knowledge acquired during the project.
TOTAL number of respondents			15

Impact: medium to low

The Evaluator estimates that the impact on human development is medium. While the value of training sessions and practical activities on demonstration plots is surely positive, it is more difficult to estimate the impact resulted from participation in international fairs and visits (beyond the exchange of information).

IMPACT	Yes	No	Comment
Do you feel that the project activities had an impact on your life (or the life of your peers active in the same sector)?	14	1	Some respondents noted the positive impact the project activities had on their professional activity.
Any other impacts you think are a result of the project activities and you would like to share?	14	1	
TOTAL number of respondents			15

UKRAINE

Geographical scope: nation wide

Overall goal: Advice and support with macro trade issues and implications of free trade agreements on the different sectors of economy.

Budget: 180,000 EUR

Overall target	Status	Results
At least 5 analytical documents developed; at least 100 national and regional stakeholders benefit from advisory services	Exceeded	7 analytical papers prepared and advisory support delivered to the Government on trade, WTO and other trade related matters.
At least 10 stakeholders received targeted technical assistance in preparation of the legislation on establishment of SME export guarantee and insurance schemes	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •20 stakeholders (government agencies and business associations) received recommendations on how to develop export finance based on best European practices •20 public servants and other stakeholders participated in workshop on international practices in export financing, focus on SME. The export finance system was not launched as relevant draft law was vetoed.
One study on the impact of the administrative reform on trade issues and human development	Achieved	The findings of the report were integrated in the 2013 national Action Plan for the Implementation of the Presidential Programme of Reforms 2010-2014
One survey assessing the capacity development needs conducted	Achieved	Report on the “Assessment of training needs of SMEs and local authorities regarding export development” concluded. A training programme was developed.
2 capacity development events for local authorities conducted; at least 40 representatives of local administrations, business associations and media trained of which at least 30% are female; at least 50% of the impact assessments at work show improved skills.	Achieved	8 seminars on “Liberalisation of the trade regime in Ukraine: opportunities and challenges for improving the export potential of the region” conducted. 365 participants (41% women), including 180 representatives of local and district administrations, business associations, and

		chambers of commerce.
7 capacity development events for local SMEs conducted; at least 150 representatives of local SMEs trained on trade related issues (at least 30% women); at least 50% of the impact assessments at work show improved skills.	Partially achieved	
At least 10 consultancy companies and law firms trained on how to support SMEs to access external markets.	Achieved	10 representatives of consulting/law firms attended the workshop “Best International Practices on Export Financing”.

NB: No questionnaires were collected in Ukraine.

Relevance: high

The activities and targets were consistent with the national development priorities. Ukraine’s integration into regional/European and global trade flows has been on the priority list for quite some time. The project activities provided the advisory support where it was most needed – at the decision-making level both nationally and regionally, including representatives of the private sector, in particular SMEs. Based on the documentation review the Evaluator concluded that the overall targets reflected the policy priorities of the country.

Effectiveness: medium

The project delivered on all the targets and partially achieved one of them. One has to bear in mind the difficult and changing political context in Ukraine during the project implementation period in 2011 – 2014. These external challenges limited the effectiveness of the project. It is difficult to gauge the extent to which the project contributed to positive change, as the recent political and economic developments in Ukraine have completely altered the playing ground and presumably some of the stakeholders and participants are no longer holding the same positions.

Efficiency: medium

The funds, expertise and time allocated to the programme in Ukraine have converted into results. The expertise provided has reached the target audience. The Evaluator has estimated efficiency to be ‘medium’ as some of the outputs and deliverables were not followed through by the authorities (e.g. after all the preparatory work and trainings, the law on export financing was vetoed).

Sustainability: medium to low

The Evaluator doubts that the benefits of the project continue to exist after the completion of activities. Given the radical change in the political setting of the country and the instability and postponed reform process that it has entailed, it is doubtful that the studies, reports and training materials developed by the project are used. It is unclear whether the public officials who participated in project activities remain in service and whether they are able to use the acquired knowledge. Sustainability is therefore ranked as 'medium to low'.

Impact: medium to low

The impact on human development is medium to low. The project advised and trained numerous public officials and private sector representatives. It is unclear though whether the people who participated in trainings and received advice remain in place and are able to exercise their activity in order to benefit from the positive impact.

4.3 PROJECT DESIGN

One of the objectives of the evaluation was to identify gaps and / or weaknesses in the project design and provide recommendations as to their improvement. The Evaluator identified the following aspects that could be improved:

- The overall project objective and the four components appear to be interconnected. However, the evaluation has showed that in practice the project lacked a clear line transcending all project components and countries. Connecting the dots between various levels of interventions (national in some countries and regional in some others) and various types of activities (ranging from technical advice to study tours to micro financing) has been difficult as a result.
 - Efforts should be made to ensure vertical and horizontal coherence between the project components and the countries. Having fewer targets and fewer types of interventions can improve this. The project document should set more global targets and not go into too much detail. This would allow the project to remain demand driven and take into account country needs while achieving the objectives.
- Multiple changes in project activities and targets in particular for Components III and IV over the course of the project. This reflects the challenge of a regional project trying to accommodate the realities of different countries while maintaining a certain level of flexibility. This may result in lack of measurable impact as data vary greatly across countries and it is difficult to compare.
 - One solution would be to narrow the focus of such multi-country interventions. It is recommended to choose two or three objectives relevant to all the countries. This would allow the project to be consistent and have coherent data that are comparable across the board.
- The targets selected at country and global project level were very different in nature and measured different things (e.g. the number of participants in trainings/tours in some cases, the number of produced documents in others). While this may provide useful information as to the level of involvement of clients, it does not allow gauging the bigger picture and measuring the change that occurred as a result of project activities.
 - The quality of selected targets can be improved by focusing on fewer targets on a higher level. For example, one target for all countries could be the number of new jobs created as a result of project activities. Another target could be the volume of products sold or exported by the clients. Such targets allow comparison across countries and are more useful in assessing impact.

CHAPTER 5: LESSONS LEARNT, BEST PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 LESSONS LEARNT

- Several months (up to a year) may pass between the formulation of the project idea and the approval of the project document. Priorities may shift and reality in the field may be different from estimations. However, co-ordination and communication with national and regional authorities at all stages of project implementation is key to conducting successful activities and reducing the gap between ‘theory’ and ‘practice’.
- Collecting and comparing data on indicators and targets across nine countries is a complex task mainly because of the amount of data gathered during several years and the variations across countries.
- Implementing activities related to agriculture, including phytosanitary and quality standards, requires expert knowledge (e.g. on different crop cycles, growing and processing techniques and technologies, climate peculiarities, use of fertilisers, pest control).
- Setting up web platforms for e-trading is a useful tool for boosting and promoting trade especially in regions that are largely ‘disconnected’ and conduct business in traditional ways (i.e. selling on the local markets or seeking out buyers through direct or personal contacts or word-of-mouth). However, such platforms require commitment from the stakeholder who is going to take over after completion of the project. The stakeholder needs to have sufficient human and financial resources in order to keep such platforms up and running. Evidence from this evaluation has shown that such endeavours tend not to be sustainable at present.
- Participation in trainings and other project activities, in particular of women, is highest when the topics are tailored to the needs. In some cases, targets of female participation fell short mainly because they were not interested in the seminars (e.g. IT, business software).
- Evaluation has shown that in all project countries many targets have been exceeded. It is not necessarily a bad thing as more clients could be involved and served without additional funding. However, it also indicates that estimations could be adjusted mid-term in view of taking stock of field realities and developments since the initial baseline studies had been conducted (normally at least one or two years before the start of project activities)².

² Another reason why the targets were exceeded is due to the exchange rate between the USD and the EUR. Since the project budget was calculated in EUR but payments were done in USD, the weaker USD rate at the time resulted in having more funds.

- Evidence from field visits shows that small grant schemes or ‘micro-financing’ has delivered excellent results that are highly sustainable. It proved to be one of the most appreciated and helpful activity of the project.
- Donor co-ordination is important as it increases opportunities for synergy, avoids overlapping and allows for sharing of positive results and / or models that can be replicated. In some cases it may also provide additional sources of funding for project activities. The level of donor co-ordination varied and depended on the co-ordination mechanisms put in place at country level.

5.2 BEST PRACTICES

- Transferring ownership of equipment purchased with financial contribution from the project after completion. This allows keeping up clients’ motivation and involvement until the end of the project and ensures a safeguard in case of bankruptcy or cessation of clients’ business activity.
- In many countries the project has joined forces with other donor – supported projects in the same sector or on-going UNDP projects. This has allowed consolidating the efforts, providing additional value to clients and in some cases ensuring continuation of business models / trainings developed by the project.
- Keeping communication and feedback channels open with clients after completion of project activities. Some countries have opted for regular newsletters or updates via social media, some other countries maintained contacts via email or telephone. Such practices have been welcomed by clients and allowed follow-up for project staff.
- Regular exchanges between project staff in all countries and the Istanbul Regional Office is a good practice. It allows for team building but also for consolidation of results (similar problems may have similar solutions).

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Keep national and regional authorities and stakeholders involved in the project. This could take the form of regular meetings, involving representatives in board meetings, participation in field visits and other activities. It allows a direct channel of communication and personal involvement of decision-makers. In some countries the private sector is not sufficiently organised to communicate with authorities on bottlenecks and solutions. Involving both public and private in project activities may provide a useful opportunity to convey these messages.

- When a project concerns several countries, putting in place common reporting and monitoring procedures can facilitate the task of data collection and consolidation. Having a 'red thread' running throughout all project components (e.g. comparable targets and indicators) will make it easier.
- Exchange visits and study tours inside the country (i.e. between regions) and direct neighbours should be encouraged. This evaluation showed that business and trade opportunities can often emerge 'next door'. Indirectly such visits also contribute to improving relationships with neighbours in regions where such relations are often strained. Although useful and enriching, study tours and exchange visits should not represent the bulk of activities.
- Increase the share of financing of business ventures in the project (grants, microfinance). It has a high impact and provides immediate positive change to the clients.
- In a project funds are limited and so is time allowed for implementation. However, it could be useful to foresee interventions covering the full production cycle, i.e. from growing to selling. This could contribute to building up capacities and competitiveness of small and medium farmers.
- Baseline studies were carried out in all countries. For the projects focusing on sectors that require high level of expert knowledge (i.e. agriculture) it is recommended to conduct specialized studies (e.g. focusing on specific crops, taking into account the seasonal nature).
- Keep working with small and medium clients (farmers, producers, SMEs, etc.) in 'remote' areas. This is a more challenging task that may not result in high export numbers, especially not in the short and medium terms. However, the evaluation has shown that in all countries, in particular in Central Asia, this is the group of clients that needs support most. In order to avoid desperation of resources, the project could consider encouraging small and medium farmers / producers to consolidated (e.g. create co-operatives or farmers associations).
- Trainings need to be 'gender aware', i.e. the project should seek to tailor the training topics to women needs and recruit women trainers to facilitate feedback and communication (e.g. in rural areas women may feel more comfortable to speak up and participate more actively when the trainer is a woman).
- The project staff should be encouraged to seek out synergies whether with on-going UNDP projects or initiatives & schemes put in place by other donors.

CONCLUSIONS

The final evaluation of “Wider Europe: Aid for Trade for Central Asia, South Caucasus and Western CIS (Phase II)” was conducted at the request of UNDP during January – March 2016.

The evaluation was successful despite some limitations addressed in Chapter 1. Overall 681 respondents from 7 countries, including project clients, stakeholders and staff participated in the survey. The majority of respondents ranked the project as highly relevant, effective and efficient. Both clients and government officials agreed that the project managed to generate positive impact and contributed to the integration of the participating countries in the regional trade flows. Evidence collected during the field visits to Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan testifies to the sustainability of project results more than two years after the completion of its activities (Chapter 4).

At the country level the evaluation concluded that the targets were achieved and in many cases exceeded. The analysis revealed that the activities implemented in some countries were more sustainable or effective than in others. There are several reasons for that, including major changes in political and/or economic landscape (e.g. Ukraine), shifts in the management of project stakeholders (e.g. Belarus), change of sector of activity for some clients (Armenia, Tajikistan). Notwithstanding, a tremendous job has been done by the project teams in all countries.

Conducting a final evaluation several years after the completion of the project is a challenging but rewarding task. It is precisely this distance in time that allows objectively assessing what was achieved and more importantly what is left.

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