

**Final evaluation of EU-UN Joint
project
“Operationalising Good
Governance for Social Justice”**

Second draft by Charles Buxton
and Gulnara Ibraeva

10 November 2014

Final evaluation of the programme "Operationalizing Good Governance for Social Justice"

Contents

1. Executive summary

- Brief description of project
- Context and purpose of the evaluation
- Main conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned

2. Introduction

- Purpose of the evaluation
- Key issues addressed
- Methodology and structure of the evaluation

3. The project(s) and its development context

- Project start and duration
- Problems that the project seek to address
- Immediate and development objectives of the project
- Main stakeholders
- Results expected

4. Findings and Conclusions

- Introduction
- Outcomes 1-3
- General conclusions

5. Recommendations

- Corrective actions for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project
- Actions to follow up or reinforce initial benefits from the project
- Proposals for future directions underlining main objectives.

6. Lessons learned

- Best and worst practices in addressing issues relating to relevance, performance and success.

7. Evaluation report Annexes

Annex 1: Evaluation TORs

Annex 2: List of persons interviewed

Annex 3: Notes of field visits

Annex 4: List of documents reviewed

Annex 5: Questionnaire used

1. Executive summary

- Brief description. The project “Operationalizing Good Governance for Social Justice” ran for three years from October 2011 till October 2014, funded by the European Union and UN agencies (UNDP, UN Women, UNESCO and UNICEF). It aimed to demonstrate the operationalization of good governance in the context of social justice initiatives aimed at improving access to public service delivery and addressing the rights of the most vulnerable elements of three thematic constituency groups in Kyrgyzstan - children, women and youth. The total budget was EUR 5,318,899.00, of which 54% was contributed by the EU and 46% by UN agencies.
- Context and purpose of the evaluation. The evaluation was carried out during October 2014 - that is in the final month of project activities - by a team of two: a lead international consultant and a national consultant. The purpose was to assess the relevance, performance and success of the project.
- Main conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned

Conclusions

1. The project provided a good platform from which to support local self-government (LSG) development and community initiatives in rural parts of Kyrgyzstan, as well as cooperation and interaction mechanisms at many levels of government. The project succeeded in promoting a new image and role of LSG as a provider of local services.
2. The project came at a good time, that is, it met an urgent need for better local services and fitted into a number of other initiatives for LSG reform and services standards improvement.
3. Cooperation at national level was good between the four UN Agencies via an efficiently managed PMU, but at local level problems remained. A lot depended on UNDP’s seven regional coordinators and the level of commitment among individual AO officials and their readiness to work with UNDP and its NGO partners.
4. Key progress in legislation, policy development and government planning was made in the adoption of the Child Law 2012, the Law on Government and Municipal Services, and in the work to inventorize and create standards for government and municipal services. The youth component did not have such a strong policy focus, and can be seen more as a part of the LSG, community participation and local services component.
5. The views of villagers and in particular the three focus vulnerable groups (women, children and youth) were obtained in a baseline survey in the 30 municipalities chosen for the project. All groups were mobilized in working and initiative groups that helped to create local service improvement plans and take part in a range of other activities. However, not all of them contributed to the main themes of the project.
6. The Social Justice Demonstration Fund approved over 80 local projects for a wide variety of locally-determined purposes, and over three phases the contribution of local stakeholders moved from 20/80% to 80/20% showing commitment and potential for effect and sustainability – though many projects were only just completed (and some not yet operating) at the end of the EU project.
7. The scattered nature of the project (30 municipalities spread across 7 oblasts, often in remote rural and mountainous areas) means that results in LSG development depend on further replication and integration with government policy. Hopefully, clients / users of government and municipal services will continue to lobby for improvements – as well as the maintenance of project gains – but further

work will be needed to integrate new mechanisms and approaches at LSG level with the district and oblast level.

8. The capacity building work carried out with LSG staff, NGOs and communities was invaluable in supporting the development of quality services at municipal level. However, the experience of setting up community service rooms (CSRs) shows that a functional analysis of staff roles in AOs is necessary so as to ensure more efficient use of limited human resources – and indeed sufficient budgets are needed too.
9. Working groups at AO level (IWGGGs) successfully brought together local activists, elected deputies and officials for a well-defined aim – to create service improvement action plans (SIAPs). The activity level of the groups varied between AOs and not all villages covered by the AOs were equally represented in the working groups. The further activity of these working groups (also the sectoral and territorial committees set up within the project) will depend on their commitment to monitoring the SIAPs and local budgets, plus the openness of the AOs to continued transparent and accountable systems. The popularity of the new “one-stop” approach gives these committees a clear potential focus – if they are committed enough to keep monitoring and supporting it.
10. The project’s gender component was many-sided and included an overall gender “watching brief” and a number of useful initiatives by and for women. Geographically it was uneven (focused in 8 AOs) and the main function was to ensure women were fully involved in the project. The aims of Social Fund Demonstration Fund projects involving women and girls were quite varied, too. The end-line results for the programme as a whole show a medium level of success in mobilisation of women for participation in local decision-making across the 30 AOs.
11. The work to increase registration of births was very important and successful, for children, women and families, as were the materials produced for social workers identifying and supporting vulnerable families (training materials, handbooks, information posters etc).
12. A community radio component envisaged in the project design could not be implemented due to the government’s move to digitalisation of broadcasting. The project instead set up eight community radio centres in AOs and schools and this project gave a useful opportunity for youth to take part in local activities – citizens journalism, rights promotion and monitoring and services improvement.
13. An attempt was made to improve the interaction between the Ombudsman’s office and LSG structures, for example to make citizens’ complaints mechanisms more transparent and effective; however, more needs to be done in this area.
14. The project kept useful statistics on local opinion and services access and quality. This data was brought together in a newly created Municipal Index of Social Justice. However, it is not clear how useful this tool will be or who will take the lead in using it in the 30 municipalities or more widely in future. The data may be quite difficult to collect and need to be placed in an ongoing programme or policy frame.

Recommendations

1. Actively promote the experience and achievements of the programme (in particular, new mechanisms and approaches for access to quality local services) with GAMSUMO and other central government agencies, as well as at district and oblast level
2. Support the process of inventorisation, standard-setting and implementation of government and municipal services; including the monitoring of services provided by municipalities and NGOs (via social contracting), with a special focus on the access of vulnerable groups to services
3. Work with government at national and local levels to develop a mechanism / algorithm for

intersectoral (mezhhvedomstvenny) cooperation that is essential for the coordination of staff and other inputs into reformed services

4. Make a list of exceptionally valuable local projects created by the SJDF and CMCs (also other community groups) within the project that could be supported by UN agencies or others in the future
5. Some SJDF projects were not yet operational at the end of the EU project. Make a list of these incomplete projects so as to ensure that they “open their doors” and start work as soon as possible
6. Write up the one-stop model in an attractive way (from principles to practice) for use in the next round of pilots and more widely later
7. Consider the results of the end-line report against the baseline report and our evaluation. The end-line survey had only just been completed when we wrote this report and though we saw the main results, it deserves wider discussion among the main project partners
8. Translation our report into Russian and/or Kyrgyz and distribute it to the partners and other stakeholders, for questions and comment that could be useful for us or the project coordinators.

Lessons learned

1. The project reinforced the lesson that municipal and government services are intimately connected and that reforms at all levels need to be carefully connected with each other.
2. Coming immediately after very dramatic political events in Kyrgyzstan and during a period of continuing economic problems, it shows the need to take fully into account these external risk factors.
3. The project showed the readiness of the rural population to take part in local initiatives, pilot projects and reforms, and also the importance of including practical (visible) benefits or rewards for this involvement (such as were provided through the SJDF).
4. Gender and youth mainstreaming was an important element.
5. The development of information and complaints mechanisms were important but the lesson here is that more work will be needed to make systems fully effective.

(For some more detailed comments see section 6)

2. Introduction

- Purpose of the evaluation. According to the TOR, “The Final Evaluation is intended to assess the relevance, performance and success of the project. It looks at signs of potential impact and sustainability of results, including the contribution to capacity development and achievement of global and national goals towards good governance and social justice. The Final Evaluation also identifies/documents lessons learned and makes recommendations that project partners and stakeholders might use to improve the design and implementation of other similar projects and programmes.” (For full TOR see Attachment 1). At approximately the same time, the project organized an endline assessment, key results of which are included in this report.

- Key issues addressed. The evaluation takes a holistic view of the project – its context, aims and objectives, process and results. The evaluators sought the views of as many stakeholders, from national to local level, from government, civil society and international agencies, as was possible in the time available. Our focus was on the projects main outputs, which were:

- i. Demonstrated and practiced improvements in good governance, at national and municipal levels,

for the three target groups – women, youth and children, in seven procedural areas¹ – to ensure access to quality and appropriate service delivery

- ii. Strengthened Capacities of Government Agencies and Thematic Civil Society Networks to effectively support good governance and dialogue initiatives and of Capacity Development Agents to support governance initiative working groups
- iii. Increased Awareness of the Requirements and Results of Democratic Governance and Social Pressure for Good Governance

- Methodology of the evaluation

The evaluators were asked to conduct “a comprehensive assessment of the project” and to assess its “strategies, results, problems and limitations”, on the basis of the indicators presented in the logical framework of the project (Attachment 2).

Following the TOR, the evaluation was based around the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact – with a particular focus on the effectiveness and efficiency of project activities. It aims to provide evidence-based, reliable and useful information, using a consultative approach and working closely with the main project partners and the project management unit. We hope that the evaluation will help promote the results, ideas and approaches to good governance and social justice emerging from the project and will support further steps to ensure the accountability of government for quality public services.

The main data collection tools employed were 1) document review, 2) expert interviews, 3) group interviews and focus groups, 4) observation of the final conference and visits to project locations.

- Structure of the evaluation

The evaluation report is organized around an assessment of the three main outcomes (outputs) of the project. Each planned outcome is examined against the factors specified in the TOR, such as 1) Stakeholder involvement, 2) Progress towards results, 3) Sustainability, 4) Gender perspective. This begins with a descriptive analysis of the various components led by different UN agencies, Government and NGO partners and includes the views of project participants and other stakeholders.

The final section of the Findings and Conclusions chapter provides an evaluation of the project as a whole against the five criteria listed above using an assessment scale provided by UNDP.

3. The project and its development context

- Project start and duration. The project lasted three years (36 months) from October 15, 2011 till October 15, 2014. Year 1 included a lengthy preparation phase including the selection of target municipalities and the conduct of four baseline assessments, as well as work by the UN agencies and their partners on laws and policies at national level. The main project activities at local level began at the end of year 1 and continued up to the end of year 3, including measure such as the development of NGO networks aimed at ensuring sustainability of results. The project does not have an extension.

- Problems addressed by the project. The project’s main ideas were first developed in 2008-09, that is, on the eve of the 2010 revolution in Kyrgyzstan, at a time of increasing social tension including a mass mobilisation against rises in energy tariffs and government repression of political opponents. The

¹Project documents list the seven procedural areas as follows: mechanisms of legislation, policy development, planning and budgeting, coordination, resource allocation, oversight / accountability and recourse.

documents submitted to the EU a couple of years later reflect this by posing the question of “social justice”. Indeed, the new (interim) government that came to power in April 2010 stated on many occasions its aim to guarantee social justice via a new constitution and free and fair parliamentary elections. These two major changes had been delivered by the end of 2010. However, delivering practical and visible improvements to the lives of ordinary people remained a huge challenge. The documents submitted by UN agencies to the EU for this project outline the following main problems: 1) serious decline in GDP before and after the 2010 revolution, with over 30% of the population remaining in poverty; 2) poor governance systems at national and local level; 2) weaknesses in public service delivery and citizens’ awareness of their rights; 3) exclusion of vulnerable people in three constituency groups - children, women and youth. All leading to increasing social injustice.

During the evaluation we heard more about these problems. For example, government had to change substantially after 2010 to adapt to a new national constitution and parliamentary system. This affected almost every aspect of government at national level. At local level, the responsible agencies changed too. The EU project’s main government partner organization, GAMSUMO, only came into being in 2012². During the period 2012-14, intensive work was undertaken by central government to define and improve delivery of services at local level. However, there were big problems in deciding who was responsible for them and this inevitably affected the attempts to create better mechanisms at local level.

For example, one of the major initiatives of this project is the creation of community service rooms (CSRs) in the project’s 30 pilot AOs. The link between these “one-stop shops” and higher government agencies was still not formalised at the end of the project. The link between local self-government (LSG) and government administration at the district level is vital – but the latter has its own rules and procedures which are often different. The services required in villages around Kyrgyzstan may have a municipal designation (ie fall within the remit of the AO) or they may fall within the remit of government departments at a higher level. The average citizen will probably not be aware of what is a municipal or a government service. But this was a major challenge for the project – how to encourage better coordination of government functions at different levels.

In civil society, too, the project faced major challenges. The popular mobilization that led to the removal of the Bakiev regime was thrown into disarray by the widespread violence that took place, not just in the South but in the North of Kyrgyzstan that summer. The campaign for a new constitution and the parliamentary elections channeled political energies; during the election period almost 70 parties took part (though the majority did not pass the criteria for registration). But a number of studies show that disillusion began to set in fairly soon, seen most dramatically in the very high level of emigration by people from both urban and rural areas to Russia and other countries in search of work. This particularly affects one of the target groups for this project – young people; and it is often said that in many villages there are almost no men left to be seen.

At the project’s final conference in October 2014, civil society activists and local officials were still talking about the barriers to public participation in services development and monitoring that they face every day. The passivity of the general public. The lack of belief in the ability of LSG to provide necessary services (so people have got used to fending for themselves). The fact that the richer elements in villages are not interested in community activities. The lack of competence or will among

² In this report we are using the Russian abbreviation for the State Agency on Local Self Government and Ethnic Relations (GAMSUMU).

some LSG officials to involve people. Some people see the many problems in their village as “normal” and can’t imagine anything different. Others are afraid to complain to local officials.

- Immediate and development objectives of the project. The UN agencies defined objective of the project as being to institutionalise good governance reforms and practices at all levels by Government and civil society organisations towards poverty reduction, protection of rights and sustainable human development. This is clearly a very broad and long-term aim, to which many different projects and initiative, both by international agencies and the government of Kyrgyzstan, will contribute.

The UN agencies and the EU defined their main purpose – that is, immediate objective - as being “to increase and render more equitable access to quality public services by repartition of benefits to vulnerable groups in three target groups (women, youth and children – with a strong consideration of minorities’ representation) in 30 selected municipalities, through improved local and national good governance processes”. The municipalities are called Aiyl Okmutu (local self-government units) or Aiyl Aimak (territory covered by the unit). There are 454 Aiyl Okmutus in Kyrgyzstan, so these pilot Aiyl Okmutus (henceforth AOs) made up just 6-7% of the total.

- Main stakeholders. The Implementing Agencies were UNDP (the lead or administrative agency in EU terms), UN Women, UNICEF, and UNESCO. According to the project plans and mandates,
 - UNDP builds up the capacity of the Government agencies and rural municipalities to provide good quality and addressed services and enhance civil society and the youth participation in good governance dialogue;
 - UNICEF focuses on children and their families to provide them with social services via working on supporting the Government to improve legal and budgetary framework and capacity building of the Institute of Ombudsman on monitoring and report on child rights violation and civil society networks on advocacy, policy analysis and children rights;
 - UN Women provides gender expertise to review programme interventions from gender equality perspectives and to ensure incorporation of gender issues into documents and methodologies developed within the project;
 - UNESCO works towards diversity of media sources and disseminates information among local population through introduction of community radio/community media in pilot municipalities;
 - And finally, a Social Justice Demonstration Fund is established within the project to finance service delivery improvement interventions in the following areas: mechanisms of legislation, policy development, planning and budgeting, coordination, resource allocation, oversight / accountability and recourse mechanism.

The main government stakeholders were: GAMSUMO, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Labour, Migration and Youth, the Ombudsman’s office, 30 Aiyl Okmutus around Kyrgyzstan. The NGO partners in the project were: A Family for Every Child and (UNICEF), Kloop Media, Precedent, Association of Community Media (UNESCO), Center of Gender Research, Alliance for Budget Transparency (UN Women) and Ayil Demilgesi, and Development Policy Institute (DPI). The NGO partners in this list (plus a handful of others) were brought together by UNDP in a Good Governance Network (GGN) to work at national level to develop CS monitoring of government and municipal services, including equal access to services for vulnerable groups.

GAMSUMO’s role was central. As Mikhail Khalitov, deputy director, noted in an interview for the

evaluation, the new agency became a member of the coordination committee working with the various UN agencies. “We took part in all decision making, and I myself participated in a huge number of meetings and expert discussions. The centre for provision of services was discussed in detail at these meetings, pluses and minuses. The project was very constructive. We asked local self-governments (LSGs) to create their own services improvement plans rather than impose them from above, then these plans were submitted for public discussion. The UN experts were very useful throughout and indeed we need external support for our LSG development strategy.”

The population of Kyrgyzstan is defined in the EU project documents as the final beneficiary of project outcomes; and the population of the 30 AOs as not just beneficiaries but active partners and participants in its activities.

- Results expected (as defined in project documents):

- ✓ Increased public awareness about ‘right of access to information and public services’ in a participatory democracy;
- ✓ Increased political will to accept ‘right of access’ as a human right guaranteed in law;
- ✓ Enhanced appreciation of a culture of transparency in central and local governments and within the civil society;
- ✓ Improved implementation of the ‘right of access to information’ law;
- ✓ Enhanced role of the media as a key pillar of the national integrity system, through skills-upgrading in accurate, balanced and non-partisan reporting for development;
- ✓ Improved availability and access to good quality social services for all target groups (women, children, and youth).

The formulation of expected results shows a high level of ambition, in a situation where Kyrgyzstan had just gone through a major political upheaval and the economy had consequently suffered a significant set-back. We have already given an example where the new reality affected plans. First, the radical reforms in representative democracy (the new parliamentary system) inevitably affect government structures and political participation. Second, the interim government and new set of deputies in the Jogorku Kenesh (national parliament) were concerned to retain control and ensure some level of stability. Unfortunately, this led to some reluctance to open up rights and information.

4. Findings and Conclusions

- Introduction.

The project’s Overall Objective was defined as “Good governance reforms and practices institutionalized at all levels by Government, civil society organisations and the private sector towards poverty reduction, protection of rights and sustainable human development”. Its Purpose was “Increased and more equitable access to public services by repartition of benefits to vulnerable groups in three target groups (women, youth and children – with a strong consideration of minorities’ representation) in 30 selected municipalities, through improved local and national good governance processes”.

The formulation of the planned results or outcomes was changed during the course of the project. We were told by UN managers that the EU considered the first version as rather ambitious. In this section

we will consider the project's achievements, first, under its three main outcomes.

- Result 1: Mechanisms for access to and quality delivery of key services at national and local levels improved. Good governance practices and mechanisms for access to and quality delivery of key services for target groups at national and municipal levels institutionalized.

At national level the project represented a further step in UNDP's long-term support to local government decentralization in Kyrgyzstan. GAMSUMO emerged during the life of the project as the key agency for support to LSG. UNDP's Democratic Governance unit played an active, ongoing role in support of the government programme for the development of LSG. They were also active in expert committees working with government on electronic management and the electronic-Aiyl Okmutu project.

Another central area was services development. Project reports refer to initial resistance from state bodies in the, but after much lobbying the law "On strengthening the state government bodies" was passed in December 2013³. As a senior government official noted, the government is "on its way to decisions about quality services" that put the individual citizen at the centre. There are three main stages in this process: 1) inventory of services, 2) introducing the standards, 3) provision of services. Kyrgyzstan is at the second stage at present. Meanwhile, LSG has to administer a huge number and range of services from simple forms and certificates of different kinds upwards. While the "one-stop shop" can help coordinate this work, the system as a whole needs to be simplified, speeded up and pared down. This should take place with the government programme 2011-14 and the sustainable development programme 2013-17. So the project helped improve the enabling environment for municipal services' improvement.

However, the same government official was very open about the problems that still exist, from corruption to poor administration, from a weak legal base to the absence of clear social services standards. An important factor is that citizens now have the right to complain about services, and a June 2014 regulation has defined some of them more tightly. "This will raise the level of responsibility of government officials. We need behaviour change in the public sector", she noted⁴.

From a civil society angle, Roza Gaibulina from the Alliance for Budget Transparency commented to us: budget decentralisation is a key condition for LSG development. Almost 80% of AOs are dotational at present and this restricts their freedom and abilities to improve services. Institutional reorganisations have changed the pattern in recent times but not the essential problems. For example in 2012 education services were taken out of local budgets. This relieved the budgets but still people apply to LSG for childcare places. More kindergartens have been opened but there is still a queue for places.

When the government started its inventory, over 21,000 services were listed. The commission on standards has now rationalized this list down to 346 main ones to be specified in detail. Here UNDP played a big role, in part through its matching contribution from the Capacity Development Facility (a project funded by the Open Society Institute). UNDP also helped work out an evaluation tool for effectiveness of local government activities – still pending adopted by government. They also helped draft a law on public advisory councils (ie the link with civil society) that has now been agreed. This provides a framework for the policy and services monitoring work that the EU project was all about.

³ Interim Report to EU October 2013-April 2014.

⁴ Aidai Kurmanova, Ministry of Economy, conference presentation, October 2014

But the reform process is complicated and unfinished.

Similar gains can be seen in the area of social protection at national level. Once again, the EU project fitted into a long series of support initiatives by UN agencies, this time UNICEF. These were listed by a top official in the Child protection department, Ministry of Social Development. UNICEF has been a key ally, she said in promoting and adopting a number of key laws, regulations and plans: 1) The new edition of the Child Code 2012. This covers every aspect of child protection; 2) The 2011-14 Social development strategy; 3) The programme for optimisation of children's institutions, approved by the government in 2012; 4) The development of new courses for social workers and specialists piloted in the 30 AOs and in Osh city with the help of local NGO partners; 5) Instructions for social services case management with children and families (still being developed). Once agreed, they will have legal status⁵.

However, the the project really prioritizes changes at local level. As the EU's Head of Cooperation Johannes Madsen commented during the final conference, grassroots work with citizens was at its heart and success depended on improving the regulatory frame for local government and services. Pradeep Sharma, UNDP, was upbeat about the results. The project, he said, "reinforces our belief in the local". Local community representatives are the "drivers of change".

The gains at municipal level can be listed as follows:

- Service Improvement Action Plans (SIAPS) – the work of local NGO partners and Good governance Initiative Groups in each AO – were adopted in 70% of the 30 AOs by the end of the project;
- UN Women organized a gender assessment of the SIAPs via NGO partners the Centre of Gender Studies, working with local women's committees and the Good Governance Initiative Working Groups established by UNDP.
- Community Service Rooms (CSRs) were set up in 30 AOs. This operation had a number of sides relating to premises, equipment and staff. As one local informant told us, in introducing the one-stop shop concept, "we had to work with a range of basic human resource and management issues in the municipalities. That is, tackle people and things that were not working even within the previous system".
- Municipal Index of Social Justice (MISF). This new index was created by a national NGO, the Development Policy Institute for the EU project, adapting a global index used in the Scandinavian countries. The first assessment using MISF was carried out in November 2013⁶.

The implementation of work at municipal level was the responsibility of UNDP's partners NGO Ayil Demilgesi. Its director Ainura Madaimova described their role in the project as a "very difficult task" because they had to make contacts with all the local stakeholders without having worked with before in UN projects at local level. The central task was to set up Good Governance Initiative Working Groups (GGIWGs) in the 30 AOs. This they did through 18 local contact people, working closely with UNDP's 7 regional specialists. There was a continual problem with staff turnover in the AOs. The NGO's local contacts not only organised events, they also worked as trainers/mentors for different parts of the programme⁷. Project support was very important because of the low level of experience in some of

⁵ Interview with Marina Kadyrbaeva, Head of Child Protection Department, Ministry of Social Development, October 2014.

⁶ Project managers decided that it was too early to use the index again and compare results in 2014.

⁷ Our field visits in October 2014 suggested that a great deal depended on the seven regional coordinators.

the initiative groups. Ayil Demilgesi staff reported direct to the UN agencies when dedicated officers from the agencies were not present. Coordination meetings at oblast level took place 2-3 times per annum, often combined with running a training workshop for project staff.

The 30 AO working groups were made up of individual citizens, representatives of community groups, AO officials and local deputies. The level of motivation and activity varied. According to Ayil Demilgesi, some 80% of AOs were interested from the start, 10% interested but afraid of citizens' activism, while 10% were against. The choice of AOs took place soon after the 2010 revolution when several leaders of AOs and districts were replaced. Some of those resisting the scheme were afraid that citizens' action might give their political opponents more power; others doubted the ability of village meetings to make sensible decisions. The most successful work was carried out by AOs that were keen from the start.

Another insight from this NGO: Good Governance in the 2000s was often a top-down mechanism aimed at rooting out corruption. It took time to convince AO heads that the EU-UN programme, by contrast, encouraged a bottom-up discussion of options for service improvement. Unlike in other donors' programs, AOs were not offered substantial funding. But it was not so difficult to set up the community services centres physically, because the AO already has a building and most staff work from there. It was more a matter of changing attitudes and creating a client orientation among LSG staff and experts: better client relations, more information to the public, more efficient coordination of AO staff functions. The AOs were given computer equipment but many had reasonable equipment already and this was not the key aspect.⁸ However, we would argue that if the new computers helped expedite the implementation of the "electronic ayil-okmutu", this was indeed a vital opportunity.

According to one of UNDP's seven specialists coordinating work on a regional level, this was an intensive programme with workshops almost every week at AO or oblast level depending on the topic. The most effective element was its bottom-up approach; the service improvement action plans (SIAPs) for each AO were put together after local discussion of the latest information and needs. Whereas government plans are often very formal, tending to copy large amounts of information from the previous year, these new plans had much more concrete detail and paid more attention to quality of services. Social workers for example in the past spent much of their time filling in "social passports" and administering money benefits; but the new plans include more active client work. Themes that got more attention now included child and maternal mortality.

As a result of the project, 30 SIAPs were created in the pilot AOs. A slightly smaller number of Territorial Community-based Self-Governance (TCSG) councils were set up - 28 in all – and in early 2014 the concept was submitted to GAMSUMO for wider application around the country.

The development of a complaints mechanism was undertaken on a number of levels. Thus, in AOs complaints boxes were installed and (with the assistance of project partners LBD) an appropriate procedure for examining complaints and responding to them. At higher levels, measures were taken to improve the work of the Ombudsman's Office with women and the rural population. Thus, the 2013-14 project report notes that UNDP's partner LBD Consulting (ex-LARK) assisted in preparation of 278 complaints to various state bodies – many of them relating to property disputes and complaints about

⁸ Interview with Ainura Madraimova and Iskander Bainazarov, NGO Ayil Demilgesi, October 2014. AD had previously been involved in the USAID land reform programme that operated all around Kyrgyzstan, so they already had a countrywide network of activists at the outset of the EU project.

social services. As we will see under Outcome 3, the community media component also helped spread information and encourage debate around problems in local services delivery. The community media project, too, helped mobilise opinion about current problems in the villages. For example, loudspeakers were installed to give out local news (not just in front of the AO building but in other districts too) and we heard of instances where local officials had to respond to complaints.

A Social Justice Demonstration Fund was set up to support a variety of community projects under Output 2.1 in the project logframe. At the final conference it was reported that a total of 184 applications received and 83 projects supported for quality services during the project. Of these, 38 were awarded in the first tranche, 24 in the 2nd, and 21 in the 3rd. They were for up to 5,000 euros and could last 12 months. The 1st tranche only started working at the beginning of year 2, and some grants approved in 2012 were extended and are only just finishing now. Thus the phases overlapped. The PMU's grants expert commented to us that grantees were very motivated and grateful for the EU/UN support; in many cases they contributed much more than was shown on paper. Monitoring was done by the project's regional specialists and staff in the relevant UN agencies. In many cases there was a large learning element – how to write projects, manage finance etc. Most grants were awarded to AOs (not to NGOs or community groups) and some 85% of them were issued through the government treasury – so the recipients had to learn how to claim the money, write official reports etc. Most concerned management of local services rather than spending on infrastructure.

Some examples of successful SJDF projects have been written up as success stories by UNDP. In one, local deputy and activist Berdaly Konurbaev from Ylay-Talaa village in Osh oblast, describes how the fund help his initiative group bring drinking water from a spring 5 kilometers away and create a 90-ton reservoir and install 37 water pumps. In another, the head of a family doctors unit in Zhonaryk village, Talas oblast, Bakyt Atabekov, recounts how staff and villagers collected money and voluntary contributions to renovate the mother and child room and provide vital health information. In a third, biology teacher Zebo Arzykulova from Kumush-Aziz village in Jalalabad oblast describes the benefits of an interactive board that was provided by SJDF at her secondary school. SJDF staff were particularly pleased that matching funds were contributed by local communities, on an increasing curve. Thus the breakdown of funding was 80% from EU, 20% from local sources in the 1st year; 50/50 in the 2nd year; and 20/80 in the 3rd year. Respondents told us that this is indeed a significant contribution from hard-pressed AO and family budgets.

For further detailed notes from our field visits, please see Attachment 3.

- Result 2: Capacities of government agencies, local self-government bodies and civil society to jointly improve service delivery and access in key areas strengthened

In the previous section we have described the setting up of working groups and production of service improvement plans. The efforts of government and civil society partners were directed towards improving access for three target groups: women, children and Youth. Here the use of PRA methods was effective in establishing priorities (eg pre-school education) and the training programme vital in converting “wishes” into plans.

Women

For UN Women, this project was first and foremost about village women. Working through NGO

partners the Gender Studies Centre, Alliance for Budget Transparency, Women Entrepreneurs Support Agency and a range of other national and local experts, UN Women organised capacity building for village women to bring them into local decision-making for quality services. Eight AOs were chosen, all of them new to the agency. Criteria included some practical ones – the first two (Orok, Karasuu) were close to Bishkek and it was here that gender budgeting was piloted in 2012. In 2013 UN Women took on 6 more AOs in different oblasts. The main problems facing village women, they told us, were 1) access to documents, certificates required in order to receive services, 2) local women's poor knowledge of AO administrative and finance systems. UN Women made a significant financial contribution to the programme: 172,000 euros. The total cost of this component was 378,000 euros.⁹

The second main component was cross-cutting. UN Women organized a gender analysis of the 30 pilot AOs as part of the baseline assessment, and later made an analysis of the SIAPs from a gender point of view. "We found that they were gender-blind. The problem was that they had already been adopted. So we worked on the indicators and expected results. Later the SIAPs were reviewed and some changes were made", we were told¹⁰. Gender sensitivity workshops were carried out for the working groups and youth media groups. The trainers encountered a general unwillingness to consider gender because of the increasing influence of patriarchal and religious thinking. Nonetheless, the gender budgeting pilot in Chui oblast went well and UN Women's experts were able to tie in this work with the national plan for gender mainstreaming. They supported the gender section in the Ombudsman's institute, making a number of suggestions for gender reports and carrying out a study on the economic consequences (costs) of domestic violence.

Another important initiative tackled the question of women's participation in public life by working with Zhensoviets (local women's committees), with the objective of bringing in new blood to support the few stalwarts that remain in these soviet-era institutions. Activists created street groups or "sectors", each with an elected representative (using network marketing techniques known to many women). However, this initiative ran into some opposition from men in the villages, and after discussion men were admitted to the sectors, too. "We consider this is correct because women's strategic aims can't be realised without alliances with men", the activists told us.

Women activists had a number of interesting comments on the community services rooms. For example, they noted that a single general office does not provide a good location for confidential discussions with social services clients. When a new member of staff is employed to run the one-stop functions, it worked better than when there was a rota made up of existing staff. Later experts working with UN Women made their own analysis of the best mechanism for monitoring services access and quality at AO level.

Under this component women took part in the Women Unite! Campaign in eight selected AOs. This included some "flash mob" demonstrations in Batken in November 2013, plus the setting up of a tele-bridge bringing together women from rural areas with officials from the Ministry of Health. A letter-writing campaign was organized to inform parliamentarians and others about the many problems still facing rural women in Kyrgyzstan. A collection of these stories issued by UN Women contains touching and sometimes frankly shocking stories of work, social, health problems, as well as several cases

⁹ Group interview at UN Women with Nurgul Baiburaeva, Gulnara Baimanbetova, Janyl Addyldabek Kyzy, Roza Gaibulina, October 2014

¹⁰ In the EU project, gender was cross-cutting alongside ecology and conflict sensitivity. However it was given far more prominence than the other two themes.

showing women's determination to overcome the problems.

The projects approved under the Demonstration Fund address some important gender issues. We have mentioned preschool education initiatives. There were other interesting ones with a particular focus on women and families – eg a project in Issyk-Kul oblast bought some wool working machines; in another AO a new medical point was set up.

Children

According to Elena Zaichenko, UNICEF's lead expert in the project, civil society-government engagement was very effective in promoting amendments to the Child Code (2012) and in drafting the new regulation on identification of children at risk and case management. The latter was piloted in all 30 Ayil Aimaks – as well as in over 50 other AAs where UNICEF had other funding. "We hope it will be formally adopted by the end of 2014", she said. However, many AOs are not active enough in identifying children in difficult life situations, eg birth not registered, children not attending school, family poverty. The aim, UNICEF considers, should be to prevent children going into residential care via effective case management by social workers in the community. Problems include the high turnover of social care staff; poor communications between local authority staff and social pedagogues in schools; the poor conditions in residential facilities. NGOs play a crucial educational function in child care and welfare issues.

To improve access to services, experts from Women Entrepreneurs Support Agency led a campaign to increase registration of new-born babies. This work raises issues around traditional and religious weddings and how different communities approach the question of marriage and children. On the one hand there is pressure to go back to traditional practice (arranged marriages, elaborate ceremonies and gifts etc); on the other the husband's family may resist a formal marriage ceremony so as to avoid becoming liable to claims for share of property if the marriage does not work out. And many women are not keen to fill out a birth certificate if the father's name is not on it¹¹. Local activists discovered that AOs frequently refuse to issue a birth certificate if the baby is over one year old, so mothers had to go to the district centre to get a certificate. Emigration of biological fathers complicates the process of issuing a birth certificate, and here a significant success was achieved: project workers managed to lobby a new rule that the father can give his assent at a distance. We were told that the Ministry of Justice has agreed a number of changes to streamline the system. The project made three videos in two languages to raise awareness on this and they were shown on national and local TV.

UNICEF calculated that 6,000 children in the south of the country were without a birth certificate at the start of the project. Some 50% of these now have them. Elena Zaichenko considers that the planned focus on vulnerability was achieved in the project. Women benefitted from the work around maternity services. Children began to receive proper attention for local social services (previously tightly focused on the elderly and people with disabilities), and the focus on youth was particularly important after the conflicts of 2010.

Youth

The project's youth component came under UNDP, working with partners in GIZ and the Ministry of

¹¹ We were also told that parents sometimes don't fill out a birth certificate for children with disabilities due to shame and taboos.

Labour, Migration and Youth so as to ensure youth engagement in good governance and policy development at national and municipal level. On the municipal level, NGO Ayil Demilgesi was contracted to form and train up youth initiative groups. At national level, the youth component was represented in the Good Governance Network (see below). According to UNDP's youth expert, an attempt was made to influence both local and national policies and plans for youth. The project supported a Youth Forum and brought youth into budget hearings. The latter resulted in the allocation of local funds for small scale youth initiatives. This effort helped young people to systemize their priorities and get engaged in decision making processes and community development.

This component faced a number of challenges. For example, participants at the 2013 Youth Forum listed as barriers to youth activism 1) a lack of support from some LSGs, 2) high competition for donor funds, 3) lack of specific and properly funded government youth programs. Another problem mentioned by staff at Ayil Demilgesi was that so many young people leave for work migration soon after finishing school. Many participants said "we really like this project but we have to earn some money so goodbye", and it is often precisely the most active and talented who are leaving the country in this way. Youth like adults were offered training opportunities, exchange visits, a chance to take in local projects etc. However, youth work is located in the "other items" section of the AO budget and often spent on one-off expenditure linked to events, sports uniforms etc, rather than longer term initiatives. One of the project's services was to help young people write a formal letter to the local authorities asking for information on budgets and expenditure on youth. Sometime AO officers resisted giving out information and NGO mentors had to help lobby an answer.

At national level, the Ministry of Youth was highly involved at the outset of the project. However, as it moved into the rural municipalities, the contacts reduced – as with the Ministry of Social Development. Our interviews with officials from both of these ministries showed that they are keen to hear the final results of the programme (and indeed this evaluation)¹².

At national level, the work with the three main target groups was brought together by the partner NGOs in the newly established Good Governance Network. This took shape in the second half of Year 2, with the aim of increasing sustainability. Project staff place hope for the sustainability of results on the shoulders of the NGO partners, alongside the local level community groups established – the working groups, sectoral and territorial committees.

Minorities

EU project documents contain a commitment to pay attention to minorities' access to rights and services. We should mention here that the project paid special attention to the problems of families with adults, children or young people with disabilities and their access to local services. All the evidence shows that this remains a huge problem in rural and remote areas. The position with regard to national and ethnic minorities in the project is less clear. UNDP made sure at the AO selection stage that locations with ethnic minority populations were included among the 30 AOs (eg Shark, Yrys). There were discussions about access of all groups to services, we were told, but these are not covered in the reporting. It seems to have been assumed that access of ethnic minorities in the three target groups to basic services was not a major issue. And UNDP's Pradeep Sharma noted: "We have to be careful not to cause problems in the way we work" – ie conflict sensitivity played a role.

¹² Interviews with Marina Kadyrbaeva (see above) and Murataly Uchkempirov, head of international section, Ministry of Labour, Migration and Youth, October 2014.

For further detailed notes from our field visits, please see Attachment 3

- Result 3: Awareness and participation of the general public and target groups for greater Social Accountability and Good Governance in the area of public service delivery raised

As community and AO representatives at the final conference noted, this was a complex project. About 20 different types of CSOs are active at village level – with very different memberships and functions. A dozen main government agencies are providing services to the population. All this means a complicated set of actors for any dialogue on services and governance.

In this component the project suffered a setback: the UN agencies did not get government approval for the community radio services they planned. Officially the reason was digitalization of radio broadcasting in Kyrgyzstan, but in reality, so we were told, officials were not keen on it anyway. The State Agency on Communications did not issue any radio licenses in 2013. So UNESCO changed their plans and created eight community media centres (CMCs), funding a mixture of equipment and know-how costs (10,000 USD to each centre). Sergei Karpov, UNESCO's project manager, explained that they started each CMC with a single mobile phone. Matching funding was sought from the AOs, and local NGOs implemented the projects.¹³

The locations chosen for the CMC were various – mainly AO buildings and schools. Some only got funding quite late in the project and had hardly established themselves.

“The emotional energy level was very high in many of the CMC projects”, Sergei told us. In most of the centres, the main media users were schoolchildren from the 10th-12th classes. NGO Kloop Media played an important role in technical support. NGO Precedent established a regional training centre and passed on information about the right of access to information. The Trade Union of Communication Workers ran workshops on citizens' journalism; the news material that they produce is placed on Kloopmedia sites. An Association for Community Radio was set up to develop local broadcasting in the future and to help support the community media centres in the meantime. All this involved considerable flexibility and liaison between the partners in the project.

The communications component also served other players. For example, Kloop activists analysed and published complaints about local services coming collected in complaints boxes in the AOs. Serious rights infringements were sent to the Ombudsman and 3-4 topics even made it into the national media, eg a discussion on school catering sparked by a 2nd class student's complaint about the *pryaniks* (sugar buns) served at her school! Another interesting example: a group of school students wrote a story about a *vagonchik* (wagon on wheels) that is serving as a school in a remote area of Batken oblast. They made a video of it – dramatizing this way the problem with school premises and resources in remote rural areas.

A technical point: internet based information is not classified as “media” in Kyrgyzstan, so the relatively lower use of radio in this project compared to what was planned had an effect on its media results.

¹³ Interview with Sergei Karpov UNESCO, October 2014. Just two weeks before the project closed, a village in Toktogul, Tekuen Dobo, was granted a radio license, but by then it was too late for UNICEF to buy equipment...

The end-line survey conducted by the Alliance for Budget Transparency in autumn 2014 in all 30 AOs has some interesting results for all three Outputs:

From a starting level of 49% of village people active in some way in community affairs in 2012, the percentage had risen to 63% of by the end of 2014. Women's participation in decision-making had increased by 14 percentage points (to 55%), youth participation - by 10 points (to 55%)¹⁴. Similar percentages of children and youth now said they know about their rights to participate in public affairs. The percentage of village women involved in community groups went up by 17 points to 68%. However, the percentages of women involved in political parties or youth involved in youth organisations remained low – only around 10% for each.

For further detailed notes from our field visits, please see Attachment 3

- General conclusions.

In this section we will consider the project's strategy, implementation and results against five criteria: of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. In this we are taking into account comments made in the EU's Results Oriented Monitoring reports at the end of 2012 and 2013.

Relevance and design

The project aimed to reduce poverty and promote social justice via improving access to local services. There are various definitions of the "social justice" and the Kyrgyzstan government does not have its own official definition or concept. Our view as evaluators is that improving access of vulnerable groups to local services is probably not all that is needed to achieve social justice in its full sense. Some element of redistribution of economic resources and political power would be necessary in Kyrgyzstan. However, after the 2010 revolution it was a top priority to improve Kyrgyzstan's performance with regard to child and maternal mortality, poor communal services, unemployment and so on. There was serious concern that the level of disillusionment among young people could spark more conflict. So the project was certainly relevant in the municipalities where it took place, and it also gave the new government vital support in developing policies, laws and regulations for the longer term.

Looking at the different components, it is clear that, first, each has a logic and meets real needs; second, they were always going to be hard to coordinate. The first year almost reached crisis point with delays in getting activities going, but years 2-3 picked up pace. The logframe was complicated and a draft version remained in effect to the end of year 1, but some flexibility here was probably necessary because of the main components and players involved; it was good that changes could be made during project implementation. The baseline data collected in year 1 were fresh and useful (the fact sheets produced by UNDP on the results of the baseline studies are bright and concrete and will have been useful in focusing attention on weaknesses in both services and community participation.)

From a relevance point of view, there are questions about the community media centres. They sparked creativity and gave a new outlet for the youth component (including girls who made up 60% of users) but they did not provide the community radio element originally envisaged. Nonetheless, UNESCO and its partners made a number of useful decisions helping to promote rights to services and publicize failings in this area. So a relevance to the rest of the project was maintained. However, the overall

¹⁴ The endline assessment is based on the views of 1,416 respondents including 60 experts.

success of the project reinforces our view that it was highly relevant and the design satisfactory.

Efficiency

According to GAMSUMO, the programme could have been better coordinated with government. On the other hand, UN officials commented to us that government representatives on expert and coordinating committees changed regularly, as the new regime after 2010 began to make administrative and personnel changes. This is seen in almost every development project and programme in Kyrgyzstan today. In the last 18 months of the project GAMSUMO itself played an active role.

GAMSUMO's view is that the scattered nature of the pilot villages was a weakness, really they need to be grouped so that links with higher levels of government could be developed. This may be true, but on the other hand, the project achieved a trial run for its main components in every oblast and avoided any accusations of favouring particular regions (this was a political risk factor in 2010-12). The monthly coordinating meetings for UN agencies and NGO partners played a key role in supporting the PMU. We heard from several sources that UNDP's seven regional specialists helped hold the project together at oblast level. At AO level, there was some confusion between the different initiative groups, but there was a clear focus on setting up the one-stop shop and services improvement plan; and this brought people together.

The project's expenditure budget shows that the SJDF was set at 300,000 euros (10% of the total), while equipment for local community services in the AOs was 236,000 euros (7.7% of the total). One half of the budget was devoted to regional, national and international staff and experts and workshop and conference participants. The costs of the UN agencies were significant but a lot of the costs went in sub-contracting to individual experts and local NGOs. The budget for project offices was 10% of the total. While the project underspent significantly in the 1st year, it had caught up by the end of year 3.

One of the challenges in increasing efficiency of government services is improving electronic governance. Attempts were made in many pilot AOs to improve databases and computerize basic operations relating to services. But our impression was that many gaps and inefficiencies still remain; for example there is a tendency for one person in each office to become the source of expertise and confidence in using these systems. IT-literate staff are in big demand and we were told that staff turnover is a particular problem here. On the question of efficiency GAMSUMO's director Naken Kasiev out the ball back in the LSG officials' court: agreeing that many reforms are incomplete and government inspections are onerous, he stressed "it is still up to you (LSG) to work more professionally and efficiently".

Effectiveness

How effective was the multi-agency aspect of this programme? We were told by Pradeep Sharma that this is increasingly the tendency in UN programming in Kyrgyzstan – where UN agencies have taken on the approach of "deliver as one". The EU required a lead agency and UNDP took on this role and made sub-agreements with the other agencies. They all had different systems and in some the key decisions were not made in Kyrgyzstan; but we did not hear of coordination that significantly reduced the final results of the programme. UNDP created a joint PMU with five staff posts led by Anara Alymkulova, and this seems to have worked effectively - albeit the EU ROM reports showed up some serious

weaknesses at the start.

From the EU side, there were less project staff involved and some staff changes during 2012-14. Johannes Madsen highlighted the issue of limited visibility for the EU since UN agencies were “closer to the action”. However he conceded that project visibility also depends on efforts made by the EU to inform itself and publicize it. EU staff were active in project support from the start, pressed hard for the improvements to the logframe and regular reporting. There were several UN and EU joint missions and a group of EU parliamentarians also visited the program.

Undoubtedly, the capacity building activities of the project had a real effect. This can be seen in the production of 30 SIAPs and in the women’s component, as highlighted above. The end-line assessment results show a significant increase in participation by villagers in general and the target groups too. In the communications component as elsewhere, we heard that the project effectively created and supported mechanisms for citizens’ voices to be heard. Villagers were provided with different ways of engaging with government – not just writing complaints. Through involvement with the work of the AO, they could see all sides of a given problems and help solve it. Some of the Public Territorial Self-Governance groups have been very successful and have already won new grants to continue work (eg from GIZ and ARIS). Results and success stories were written up by a Knowledge Management officer in the final year of the project to be posted on the UN website. UNESCO has a set of video stories too. CMC activists said that they can see changes taking place in society, for example, “children and young people ask serious questions to the authorities and to us”. Their journalism products in 2014 were much better quality than in 2013. Community media have become a tool for intersectoral discussion – “in fact stimulating discussion was our main aim”. The SJDF was an undoubted catalyst for community action.

As for quality and access to local services, there has been progress but there is a long way to go. Thus the end-line assessment quotes village opinion to the effect that access to services 67% - some 23% better than in 2012 but still not excellent by any means. Worst are administrative services (54% satisfaction rate) and we can guess that poor administration lies behind some of the problems with other services, too.

At the end of the project, staff were confident that it had been effective. UN’s Pradeep Sharma said, the project “reinforces our belief in the local”. UN Agencies have already started replicating the successes of our partnership, and GAMSUMO staff have started meeting other LSGs in the south that are interested in this model of work. A replication decree is being worked on at national level. Local community representatives remain key to any change through the Good Governance Network at national level, the sectoral NGOs in the project’s thematic areas, and the coalitions of citizens and community groups at AO and village level. We have rated effectiveness highly.

Impact

How can these gains be maintained? How many of the results are for the long-term? Here we see the importance of new policy, laws and regulations at national level. They do not guarantee proper implementation, but without them gains cannot be sure. The views of government officials in GAMSUMO and the Ministries of Social Development and Labour, Migration and Youth were positive in this respect. Here the question of how future activities will be financed is key and the continuing commitment of EU (on social development and the “social order” contracting system) and UNDP (on

good governance and decentralisation issues) gives some room for optimism. At the local level, while budgets remain very tight and there is no obvious “light at the end of the tunnel”, an element of new thinking has been introduced into services provision; and we heard of several cases where AO heads have applied successfully to other funding sources¹⁵.

All this in turn helps to maintain the activism and energies of local citizens. Here the final conference in October 2014 gave cause for confidence. It was clear that a number of AO heads and officials have truly become experts on various aspects of services provision and the legislation at both national and local level; they are now able to negotiate from a position of knowledge and confidence with their government colleagues. To judge by mentions in the media, the one-stop shop concept is gaining in popularity around Kyrgyzstan – and not only at AO level. The efforts to promote citizens monitoring championed by President Otunbaeva after the 2010 revolution are also having an impact. Here it is important not to duplicate or sideline the system of representative / elected democracy through all kinds of local committees or a failure to involve elected deputies – as many have noted about the self-government level. If the community services rooms work (and they do not fully work yet, it must be admitted) then there will be pressure from citizens to keep them going and improve their performance.

The capacity of individuals and organisations in the 30 AOs has been raised and we heard of cases where neighbouring AOs have spontaneously (ie without special funding) set up their own CSCs after visiting the UNDP project. All this is impact. (In other areas, networking encountered difficulties. For example, the group of young activists working in the CMC generated synergy when working together. However, being separated by such huge distances from each other geographically, it was not always possible to transfer this synergy to work locally.)

Perhaps the most clear impact is the development of the one-stop shop idea. The EU continues to give support in this area and we were told that its budget support to the social order programme in the next few years is 13 million Euros; also that another big new social sector programme worth 30 million euros will be launched by the end of 2014. As Aida Kurmanova noted, future effectiveness depends on government ministries and agencies supporting dissemination and replication of the project results (and not giving different instructions as they do so often). So we have rated impact as satisfactory.

Sustainability

The issue of sustainability is closely linked to impact. As we have noted, the continuing commitment of international partners is vital while Kyrgyzstan's economy is in such a fragile state. On the government side, GAMSUMO's head Kasiev took the opportunity at the final conference to outline some ideas for dissemination of project results and practices. We have to start with the ministries and their rules and plans, functions and resources, and work out what is available to work on the LSG level, he said. We will finish a study on this at the end of this year. Meanwhile we see a tendency for AOs outside the Sustainable Justice programme to open their own one-stop shops, informally. For example, Yrys AO recently held a workshop with AO heads from five oblasts to discuss experience of liaison with the district level, and a new community services room was opened in I-Kul oblast last week, with assistance from UN and GAMSUMO, and a wider pilot across Issyk-Kul oblast is being planned.

LSG should ensure citizens empowerment but this is not always happening, Kasiev admitted. The

¹⁵ Some of these are from new philanthropic sources: eg a drinking water project in Orok AO has raised money from an Arab benefactor.

program had good examples of work with the three target groups but this “does not have a mass character yet, it hasn’t entered our culture yet, the reason lies in our history, mentality, level of citizens’ activity.”¹⁶ His opinion was that the proportional representation electoral system has not worked well at local level – where parties are weakly represented – maybe a return to the “first past the post” system would be best at this level. Local CSOs are often temporary and unsustainable in nature, AOs rarely call them in to give advice or to pass on information to the public. So here we have some warnings about continuing barriers.

Unfortunately, fundamental decisions affecting the sustainability of projects often depend on individuals. The future of the gender department in the Ombudsmen’s institution is a case in point. We heard that the department is under threat as the new Ombudsman considers other urgent priorities. Hopefully, women’s and civil society networks around Kyrgyzstan will campaign to prevent this. At local level, our field visits showed how much some of the SJDF projects depend for implementation on ongoing commitment from key officials. Thus, in one village in Batken a new kindergarten requires education department approval before children can be admitted; and in this unit plus a nearby FAP (medical point) the project relies on AO or private sector sources to pay the salaries of staff. And these have not been committed yet.

On the civil society side, the Good Government Network was set up to support the sustainability of project results, by creating a common platform for NGO partners. This network unites organisations with a huge range of experience and during late 2013 developed a long term strategic plan in this field. However, our feeling was that it will be difficult to keep representatives of the three target groups together. Added to which the Good Governance Network did not have a direct link with the 30 communities. So sustainability of joint actions probably depends on finding some new opportunities and stimulus. The strength of the network lies in its capacity building resources and many contacts in government and with international agencies at national level.

Basic computer and office equipment was funded in all the AOs. It will be up to AO staff to make more efficient use of them, but central government decisions and support are going to be crucial here – especially where e-governance is concerned. The CMCs and their equipment were set up on the base of existing NGOs, territorial groups or jamoats – some of them located in schools. They have a constitution, Kloop told us, and the general meeting makes the rules for use of the equipment, which was transferred to the balance of the NGO at the end of the UNESCO project. As so often with resources centres created within international development projects, there is a risk that the owner of the premises could take over control of the CMC if it begins to lose its own momentum. But here the setting up of an association for community radio and new projects arranged with the German Wave radio station will help – plus a new 2-year project that Kloop has gained with the United Nations Democracy Fund.

- Overall assessment

The evaluators made an assessment of the project according to five main criteria using a four-level rating Highly Satisfactory, Satisfactory, Marginally Satisfactory, and Unsatisfactory:

¹⁶ Here we can note that sometimes the reason is simply economic hardship. As informants in Kloop told us, one of the reasons for the lower participation rates among boys and young men is the long hours they work in the fields. This kind of example could be multiplied many times.

Criteria	Our Rating
Relevance and design	Highly Satisfactory
Efficiency	Satisfactory
Effectiveness	Highly Satisfactory
Impact	Satisfactory
Sustainability	Satisfactory

5. Recommendations

General recommendations were given in the executive summary.

The evaluators were also asked to produce recommendations on: 1) the key elements of success of the project and further steps to be taken to secure successful initiatives in all project sites; 2) any gaps remaining after the project implementation to be addressed in further initiatives by the partners and the Government; 3) identifying risks to the sustainability of the project initiatives to be considered by the partners in the course of management in future. In this section we have looked carefully at the recommendations coming from participants at the final conference in October 2014, building on them wherever possible.

- Corrective actions for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project
 - Some SJDF projects were not yet operational at the end of the EU project. Make a list of these incomplete projects so as to ensure that they “open their doors” and start work as soon as possible
 - Consider the results of the end-line report against the baseline report and our evaluation. The end-line survey had only just been completed when we wrote this report and though we saw the main results, it deserves wider discussion among the main project partners
 - We agree with the following participants’ recommendations: 1) Ensure sufficient finance for new and old tasks place on LSG; 2) Make quicker progress to a national database available for all government agencies and LSG; 3) Define the cost of all services to be offered by LSG and inform the population about the costs, use a single tariff chart and give it the force of law; 4) Clarify how LSG should liaise with other village level institutions eg FAP that report up to national ministries; 5) Carry out advocacy on topics raised by monitoring; 6) Sign a memorandum with the relevant government agencies before the project begins; 7) Improve electronic systems at all levels. Ensure stable internet connection in every AO
- Actions to follow up or reinforce initial benefits from the project

- Actively promote the experience and achievements of the programme (in particular, new mechanisms and approaches for access to quality local services) with GAMSUMO and other central government agencies, as well as at district and oblast level
 - Support the process of inventurisation, standard-setting and implementation of government and municipal services; including the monitoring of services provided by municipalities and NGOs (via social contracting), with a special focus on the access of vulnerable groups to services
 - Write up the one-stop model in an attractive way (from principles to practice) for use in the next round of pilots and more widely later
 - Translation our report into Russian and/or Kyrgyz and distribute it to the partners and other stakeholders, for questions and comment that could be useful for us or the project coordinators.
 - We agree with the participants' recommendations: 1) Encourage the government to use participation methodology in services design, delivery and monitoring; 2) Ensure that AO services plans are inserted into their strategic plans (ie official government plans) and linked where necessary to higher level plans – eg at district and oblast level; 3) Review job descriptions of AO staff and ensure funding for their salaries. GAMSUMO and LSG to review the basic training offered to local officials.
- Proposals for future directions underlining main objectives.
- Work with government at national and local levels to develop a mechanism / algorithm for intersectoral (mezhvedomstvenny) cooperation that is essential for the coordination of staff and other inputs into reformed services
 - Make a list of exceptionally valuable local projects created by the SJDF and CMCs (also other community groups) within the project that could be supported by UN agencies or others in the future

6. Lessons learned

For general lessons, see the executive summary at the start of this report. Here we highlight some good and less successful practices in addressing issues relating to relevance, performance and success.

- What went well
 - Setting up of CMCs and the engagement of CSOs in their work, use of CMCs to support the various project activities, many different training topics offered
 - Joint work to improve access to services at local level: people believed in the project and worked hard to improve AO services.
 - Capacity building of AO staff, GGIWGs, YIGs, TPSGs via training and exchange visits.
 - Implementation of new forms of collective planning, surveys and monitoring.
 - Training in new ICT methods.
 - Development of consultative groups including youth, reconstituted Zhensoviets in eight AOs; creation of sector groups at AO level focusing on needs of particular vulnerable groups
 - Improvements to the system of public information
 - Use of street theatre and cultural activities to promote key messages

- Gender approach worked flexibly
- What could have been done better (or is still a problem)
 - Access to local services is still poor in many locations
 - Better coordination on baseline assessment and SIAP design at the start
 - Difficulty of involving people in CMCs, people don't know their rights to information
 - Organisation and support of youth initiative groups
 - Better planning of the community radio element (since the digitalization programme had been planned for some years before the EU-UNDP project started)
 - Better liaison with existing CSOs like water users and pasture associations
 - Clearer results in the cross-cutting themes – gender, interethnic relations and ecology

7. Evaluation report Annexes

Annex 1: Evaluation TORs

Annex 2: List of persons interviewed

Annex 3: Notes of field visits

Annex 4: List of documents reviewed

Annex 5: Questionnaire used