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Sida Decentralised Evaluation

Erik Bryld
Riccardo Polastro
[Name protected]
[Name protected]

Evaluation of the Afghanistan Sub-National Governance Programme (ASGP) phase II

Final Report

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**Final Report
October 2014**

**Erik Bryld
Riccardo Polastro
[Name protected]
[Name protected]**

Authors: Erik Bryld, Riccardo Polastro, [Name protected] and [Name protected]

The views and interpretations expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida.

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SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY

Address: S-105 25 Stockholm, Sweden. Office: Valhallavägen 199, Stockholm

Telephone: +46 (0)8-698 50 00. Telefax: +46 (0)8-20 88 64

E-mail: info@sida.se. Homepage: <http://www.sida.se>

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ANDS	Afghanistan National Development Strategy
ASGP	Afghanistan Sub-National Governance Programme
CSC	Customer Service Center
DGO	District Governor's Office
DIM	Direct Implementation
GoA	Government of Afghanistan
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
IDLG	Independent Directorate of Local Governance
MAB	Municipal Advisory Board
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Reconstruction and Development
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NIM	National Implementation
NPP	National Priority Programme
NSP	National Solidarity Programme
PBGF	Performance Based Governors's Fund
PC	Provincial Council
PDP	Provincial Development Plan
PGO	Provincial Governor's Office
RAMP-UP	Regional Afghan Municipalities Program for Urban Populations
RBM	Results-Based Management
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SIKA	Stability in Key Areas
SNG	Sub-National Government
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

Preface

This evaluation was commissioned by *Sida's Afghanistan Unit, Department for Asia, North Africa and Humanitarian Assistance* in June 2014, through Sida's framework agreement for reviews and evaluations managed by Indevelop. The evaluation covers the Afghanistan Sub-national Governance Programme (ASGP) phase II.

The users of the evaluation are Sida, UNDP and the Government of Afghanistan, specifically the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG).

Indevelop (www.indevelop.se) and Tana Copenhagen (www.tanacopenhagen.com) undertook the evaluation between August – October 2014, with a field visit to Afghanistan.

The evaluation was carried out by a team of four evaluators:

Erik Bryld, Tana Copenhagen ApS

Riccardo Polastro, Indevelop AB

[Name protected], Tana Copenhagen ApS

[Name protected], Indevelop AB

Quality assurance was provided by Adam Pain while Jessica Rothman managed the evaluation process at Indevelop.

Elisabet Hellsten was the responsible evaluation manager at Sida.

Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of the evaluation of the Afghanistan Sub-national Governance Programme (ASGP) phase II. The evaluation assesses the extent to which UNDP/ASGP has fulfilled the goals and expected outputs and outcomes as defined in the project proposal and the results assessment framework of the programme document.

The methodology and approach of the evaluation was designed based on the need to make the evaluation a learning opportunity for UNDP, Sida and the Government of Afghanistan (GoA). This meant involving UNDP, Sida and IDLG (Independent Directorate of Local Governance) throughout the evaluation in different stages to provide ‘learning points’, which at the same time served as guidance for the evaluation team.

The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with OECD-DAC quality standards and the report is structured according to OECD-DAC evaluation criteria. The team adopted a theory-based approach to the evaluation with qualitative methods. Triangulation has been sought by applying a broad range of tools both during the data collection and the analysis process. The team has used desk-based studies combined with semi-structured individual and group interviews and a workshop in Kabul and a visit to three of the four provinces funded by Sida. The field mission faced a number of limitations due to access and security constraints as well as issues around data availability and comparability due to a lack of solid programme baseline and end-line data.

The team found the overall programme objective(s) to be fully aligned with GoA priorities as expressed in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and National Priority NPP 4, as well as with Sweden’s strategy for Afghanistan and Sida’s thematic policies related to poverty reduction, democracy and gender equality. However, the relevance of the programme to the current political context in Afghanistan cannot be confirmed by the team. The Sub-National Government (SNG) institutions in Afghanistan currently do not have any significant budget for providing local government service delivery; the political representation and accountability to the people is limited; and there is no political will to move a process of devolution forward. The design of the programme, which focuses on building SNG capacities and drafting laws (outputs) cannot in the present context of local government in Afghanistan establish a link between these outputs and the overall objective of a democratically accountable local government service delivery. Thus, the assumptions underpinning the theory of change cannot be confirmed. In other words, the programme outputs will not be able to meet, or substantially contribute to, the overall objective of the programme.

In terms of effectiveness, the ASGP II has been able to deliver an extensive number of specific activities and outputs such as draft laws and a very extensive list of capacity development activities at national and SNG level in the Northern provinces. This progress in the last three years is substantive in light of the challenges the programme has faced with, among others things, a lack of human resources. The limited effectiveness to date should be seen in light of this challenging start-up and context.

The effectiveness is limited primarily as a consequence of poor political commitment to devolution. At the same time there is no consistent tracking of outcome level achievements of capacity development activities documenting effectiveness, thus limiting evidence of progress. None of the laws drafted with the assistance of ASGP have so far been passed. The ASGP has provided coaching assistance in SNGs as well as the IDLG through the provision of so-called Letter of Agreement (LoA) staff outside the Afghanistan civil service (the *tashheel*) but given the limited capacity at SNG level, several of these LoA staff have *de facto* engaged in substitution through specific output generation for the SNGs rather than capacity transfers. There are some successes at the individual output level, such as improved ICT access and skills, the introduction and use of Customer Service Centres, as well as improved revenue generation in some of the municipalities visited. However, the contribution of these outputs to anticipated outcomes is (a) unclear given the poor measurement of results, and (b) in any way limited given the fault in the design of the capacity development approach. Finally, the design fault in the theory of change means that these results will have very limited contribution to meeting the overall ASGP II objective.

The team found that part of the poor effectiveness record is attributable to the efficiency challenges of the programme. These include internal factors such as poor communication between IDLG and ASGP which often appear to be working as parallel entities; delay in payments from ASGP to SNG level; strong indications of favouritism in LoA recruitment on the side of IDLG; and difficulties in hiring qualified staff at a management level at initial stages of ASGP II.¹ Externally, the programme has been challenged by poor leadership within GoA in terms of coordinating SNG programmes compounded by the lack of a joint donor strategy towards SNG, reflected in the substantial use of donor's earmarking support to particular provinces. This is reflected in Sida's earmarking support to the Northern Provinces. This risks contributing to regional inequality in Afghanistan and limits ASGP/IDLG flexibility in programme implementation.

In relation to Sida's principles, the programme suffers from poor implementation of gender equality and women's empowerment elements that were proposed in the

¹ See also Assessment of Development Results: Afghanistan, UNDP (2014), p 61.

ASGP application to Sida. There has been limited progress in applying a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) to development particularly with respect to accountability and participation. The programme has failed to explicitly reach out to and include vulnerable groups.

The challenges to contextual relevance of the programme combined with the limited effectiveness towards meeting the programme objectives, also means that the programme has not been in a position to produce tangible evidence of significant impact.

This is linked to the fact that donors and UNDP have not taken a coordinated approach in their support to sub-national governance in Afghanistan in general nor in the four Northern Provinces funded by Sida. Without a clear government led SNG strategy, both bilateral and multilateral donors have introduced and implemented different state building and SNG approaches in a piecemeal fashion.

At the same time, the faults in the intervention logic and the absence of an outcome focus in the monitoring and evaluation system has both limited the results and their measurement in the ASGP II programme. Furthermore, donors and their implementing partners have insufficiently strategised their approach to achieve longer-term results.

From a sustainability perspective, the programme suffers from the lack of a sustainability plan and a proper exit strategy. Multiple activities, including the setup of different accountability fora, as well as the hiring of more than 350 contract staff for IDLG and SNGs, have not planned for a strategic phase-out of these inputs.

The challenges outlined above means that all three key stakeholders: Sida, UNDP and GoA will need to reconsider their approach to SNG support in Afghanistan and substantially redesign the ASGP to ensure that the objectives of the support are met and an exit strategy is properly planned from the outset. This will require first and foremost, political will, and that all parties agree on a joint strategy for sub-national governance that promotes decentralisation reform; coordinated approaches; and a programme which is focused on achieving and measuring results on an outcome level. This process should be initiated by October 2014 to provide a basis for replacing the ASGP during the first trimester of 2015. At the same time the donors should engage more directly in policy dialogue and technical assistance with GoA for decentralisation reform aimed at enhancing local level accountable governance and service delivery.

1 Introduction and Methodology

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of the evaluation of the Afghanistan Sub-national Governance Programme (ASGP) in Afghanistan, undertaken by Tana Copenhagen and Indevlop.

The assignment has been initiated to provide input to Sida's upcoming assessment and the possible new agreement with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the ASGP for the period 2015-2017.

The evaluation aims to assess if UNDP/ASGP has/has not fulfilled the goals and expected outputs and outcomes as defined in the project proposal and the results assessment framework of the programme document. The evaluation covers Sida's contribution to central level activities carried out in the period between October 2012 to July 2014 and in the four Northern Provinces, which were Swedish priority areas.

The team would like to express its appreciation of the substantial logistical support provided by ASGP/UNDP and in particular the regional office in Mazar-e-Sharif during the course of this evaluation.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

The methodology and approach was designed based on the need to make the evaluation a learning opportunity for UNDP, Sida and the Government of Afghanistan (IDLG, Independent Directorate of Local Governance, in particular). These meant involving UNDP, Sida and IDLG in different stages in the evaluation to provide 'learning points', which at the same time served as guidance for the evaluation team.

A key element of the evaluation methodology, drawing on qualitative methods, was the use of a Theory of Change (ToC). The Theory of Change is a reflection tool and results-focused approach for elaborating and describing the logical change pathways or linkages that are embedded in programmes seeking to produce change.

To properly assess change over time of the ASGP ability to support the local governance policy and reform agenda through IDLG and various Afghan sub-national governance authorities and eventually evaluate outcomes and possible impact, the evaluation team constructed a ToC for the support, based on a document review (presented in the inception report). The assumptions for this ToC were presented and discussed at a joint Sida, IDLG, UNDP and ASGP workshop in Kabul during the evaluation. The emphasis on the use of a ToC was for it to serve as a learning tool for the part-

ners as well as facilitate reflection of the results framework (and its assumptions of cause-effect relations).

The major overall tool designed and used for this evaluation was the evaluation matrix (see Annex 5). The matrix was aligned with the OECD-DAC criteria, and the team used the OECD-DAC definitions of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact (see Annex 5).

The questions in the matrix were based on the ToR. Against these revised questions, indicators were developed to help guide the team in identifying evidence for the matrix. The indicators were designed to optimise the use and collection of the information when reviewing the existing documentation in the desk review, and to identify the data for each indicator. The indicators were developed based on review of available reports and data from UNDP and outside sources and were subject to initial review by UNDP.

All team members systematically used the same format for the data collection to ensure that all areas were covered and that there was consistency in the application of the methodology.

To collect evidence for the indicators identified in the evaluation matrix, the team applied different evaluation data collection tools. These included:

- Desk review of UNDP as well as external documentation
- Review of available documentation at local authority level
- Semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders (see section 6)
- Group discussions with beneficiaries (women and men in targeted provinces)
- ToC workshop with UNDP and Sida
- Debriefing in Mazar-E-Sahrif
- Validation Workshops with UNDP regional office in Mazar-E-Sharif and UNDP and Sida via Skype and in Stockholm

A major element of the evaluation was an assessment of capacity development achievements. Given the lack of baseline data and reporting on outcome-level achievements, the team has had to rely on desk documentation and interviews for capacity assessments. In practice this means that the team has based its assessment on:

- i) Desk assessment of key products developed by the institutions supported such as the quality of development plans, capacity development plans, financial data, physical transparency measures as well as providing a rudimentary assessment of the quality of these.
- ii) Interviews with stakeholders and their stories and examples of capacity enhancements.
- iii) Assessment of capacity development strategies and the extent to which these are based on proper needs assessment and suggested plans according to OECD-DAC identified practices.

Evidence from key stakeholders and beneficiaries (i.e. women and men obtaining services from the local authorities) was obtained through semi-structured and group discussions using the interview guide that was developed in accordance with the evaluation matrix.

The evidence from these six different types of sources was triangulated and verified in the final analysis phase of the evaluation. To assess validity, the team furthermore tested preliminary findings through three meetings:

- 1) A joint workshop with IDLG, Sida, ASGP and UNDP, with a three-fold objective of (i) identifying programme causalities and assumptions and inspire reflections on the current design against the contextual realities, (ii) assessment and discussion of lessons learned and needs for improvements, and (iii) reflections on future direction of the programme (see Annex 6 for workshop outline).
- 2) Debriefing and validation with the regional ASGP office. This debriefing was originally planned to be a joint SNG-ASGP debriefing, but as security did not allow for this, the debriefing was limited to the head of the regional office.
- 3) Debriefing and validation with IDLG, Sida, UNDP and ASGP at national level. However, as the security did not allow for the return of the team to Kabul, an online debriefing was arranged instead from Sida in Stockholm.

1.3 LIMITATIONS

Limitations of this evaluation essentially result from **data availability and comparability as well as staff turnover, limited access and security**. These, together with the absence of rigorous intervention logic limited the evaluation teams' capacity to attribute results and change directly to the ASGP.

Constraints to the **data collection** process principally related to the availability of critical data, and availability of key stakeholders for interviews (both from international and Afghan organisations). Most staff interviewed in Kabul and in the field were either directly funded by UNDP or benefited from ASGP support. To counter-balance this potential bias the team managed to interview several donors that were funding ASGP II. Furthermore, the team also undertook a workshop involving middle management from UNDP, IDLG and Sida so that participants could jointly share views on the key successes and weaknesses of the programme in an attempt to generate learning and reconcile polarised views.

Another challenge of evaluating the ASGP in Afghanistan has been that the programme design was rather focused on activities more than outcomes and that indicators used were only appropriate to measure inputs and outputs. Outcomes and impact indicators as well as comparable baselines, midline and end line information, both from decentralised government structures sources and from UNDP were generally missing.

Attribution. Clearly, any potential changes (or lack thereof) in Afghanistan’s sub national governance are due to many factors including the interventions and programmes of a large number of security and development actors, informal but powerful players, the private sector and the diaspora’s level of involvement. The particular circumstances characterising Afghanistan, with limited access and little reliable data, made it a challenge to attribute results or changes to the ASGP/UNDP programme.

Specific data limitations were reported:

- In several documents, including ASGP programme proposals, the results assessment frameworks as well as annual reports often refer to different data sets and indicators that are not comparable.
- Most internal and external evaluations as well as progress reports focus on the ASGP programme as a whole and not on the specific areas funded by Sweden. Nevertheless these documents enabled the team to understand key issues that systematically affected the programme.
- Limited secondary information, apart from the programme document, planning and training documents and a progress report that specifically focused on the areas and components of the programme funded by Sweden.
- When UNDP has provided reports on progress of the ASGP in the areas funded by Sida, the reporting has mainly focused on the level of implementation of activities rather than the extent to which results have been achieved. Indicators in the results assessment framework and the progress report appear to differ.
- So far the national ASGP programme documents and UNDP independent evaluations appear to be more consistent than the documentation provided to Sweden to date.

Security regulations and compliance / MOSS. The team travelled with UNDP logistic support both in Kabul and the Northern Provinces and travel was MOSS compliant during the field mission. This limited the evaluation team capacity and ability to randomly select field visit locations. As a result, the team ended up only visiting sites that were more accessible and less problematic. Provincial governors' offices, provincial councils and municipalities were highly appreciative of ASGP, and as anticipated in the inception report, were the “locations where the best case practices were generally reported from”. Nevertheless, the team could carry out consultations and short field visits only in Mazar-e-Sharif, Jazwjjan and Samangan. Saripul, even though a field visit had been planned, could not be visited following UNDSS advice.

On the Masoud’s Day, while still waiting for an official announcement of the June 2014 Afghan presidential elections results, Gen. Atta rejected the election results and UNDSS security briefings started foreseeing potential civil unrest. As a precautionary measure, on September 9 UNDSS declared both Kabul and Mazar Er Sharif as a

“white city²” limiting all UN vehicle movement. According to the information received by the team this security measure would be in place during most of the week and UN agencies reportedly started downsizing their international presence in the country. This forced the team to cancel the field visit to Balkh district. Following the development of a specific evacuation plan for UNICEF, UNOPS and UNHCR in Mazar where the evaluation was hosted and in light of how rapidly the situation on the ground could develop^{3,4} the team cut short its field mission on September 10th some two days before the original planned departure date. This forced the team to cancel the debriefing in Kabul. The debriefing with Swedish Embassy and UNDP took place via Skype.

The security limitations mean that the team has primarily visited more safe areas. The results in areas not visited may be less progressive given the security constraints on the UN staff in these areas as well. Having said that, faults in the design are evident in more well-functioning parts of any programme. The team assesses that the data collected has been sufficient to support the findings of the evaluation and respond to the questions of the ToR.

² The name "White City" refers to a security status imposing on all UN personnel a strict curfew during a period of high security tensions.

³ Protests blocked Jalalabad road on September 9, where the UNOCA and UNDP country office are located.

⁴ Upon request, the team assisted the Designated Officer of the UNICEF Guest House with the development of evacuation plans for the guesthouse.

2 Background

2.1 CONTEXT

The context of decentralisation and sub-national governance in Afghanistan is challenged formally by limited devolution, low capacities (marred by 30 years of civil war) and weak legislation, and informally by the competing legitimacy and exercise of informal authority by local and regional clan leaderships as well as warlords.

Formally, the country is administratively divided into 34 provinces (*wilayats*), with each province having its own capital and a provincial administration. The provinces are further divided into 398 smaller districts, each of which in most cases includes a district centre or town and a number of villages. Each district is represented by a district governor. There are 153 municipalities in the country. Out these 34 of them are at the capitals of the provinces and the rest are district municipalities.

The provincial governors are appointed by the President of Afghanistan. As representatives of central government they are responsible for all provincial administration and management issues. There are also Provincial Councils which, are elected through direct and general elections for a period of four years. While Provincial Councils provide recommendations and inputs to planning and budgeting prior to submission to the governor and central government, their oversight role has remained unclear.⁵

The level of decentralisation governing the rural areas of Afghanistan can best be described as deconcentration. There is no financial devolution to rural SNGs, and while they engage in planning processes, they do not hold budgetary responsibility and services are implemented through deconcentrated units from the respective line ministry. The draft legislation has been improved over the last years, but the will to engage in decentralisation in the form of devolution in GoA and among politicians at national level remains vague, according to interviewees.

The degree of devolution is in principle greater at municipal level. Municipalities can levy their own taxes and are authorised to plan and implement services accordingly.

⁵ The sub-national governance policy describes that the SNG has 'authority', however the legal framework provides them a more minimal role of participation in discussions, but no formal influence on decisions.

In principle, this should be undertaken by democratically elected representation. According to article 140 of the constitution and the presidential decree on electoral law, mayors of cities should be elected through free and direct elections for a four-year term. However, mayoral and municipal elections have never been held. Instead, mayors have been appointed by GoA.

This unfavourable sub-national governance situation furthermore suffers from a range of factors, including poor internal communication between leading Government institutions such as IDLG and MRRD on the prioritisation and coordination of sub-national governance initiatives⁶; the establishment of competing decentralisation support programmes by the Government and the donor community (see efficiency section in the next chapter), and the limited ability and interest of coordination of these by Government institutions.

Improvements have been made, including the establishment of the IDLG and with it, the *de jure* anchoring of sub-national governance with one entity⁷. However, the IDLG remains accountable to the President with minimal oversight by the legislature. While MRRD has a substantially larger budget for service delivery through its district and village based National Solidarity Programme (NSP)⁸ and other services in rural areas are still implemented by line ministries, the establishment of IDLG has improved the communication between the centre and the provinces and enabled dialogue on improved legislation. However, most of the legislation remains to be approved.

At a more informal level, sub-national governance is challenged by competing informal authorities, as well as corrupt and nepotistic practices. According to interviewees and background documents⁹ reviewed rent-seeking occurs at every available opportunity, which combined with limited capacities and ability to manage affairs at sub-national level, undermines the already limited legitimacy of authorities in the rural areas. This practice is compounded by appointments based on allegiances rather than merit, with the President traditionally using the appointments as part of the power sharing game in Afghanistan. This practice has contributed to the undermining of central state legitimacy at local level, which continues to give way for informal power

⁶ The IDLG-MRRD duplication and communication challenge has partly been resolved with the new policy on District Coordination Councils, though the policy still needs to be fully implemented.

⁷ *De jure*, as MRRD is still implementing SNG type activities at district and village level through NSP.

⁸ However, several interviewees as well as D. Saltmarshe and A Mehdi (2011) see NSP as successful but at the same time undermining local government by bypassing it. With new legislation on District coordination this complementarity may improve in the future.

⁹ See among others Biljert (2009), Mukhopadhyay (2009), Nixon (2008), and Jackson (2014).

structures. At the same time the vague definition of local governments provides opportunities for exploitation by informal power structures.¹⁰

Informal power relations and influence at sub-national level are pervasive throughout the Northern provinces supported by Sida. Giustozzi (2012) argues that this area is dominated by two major oligopolists who compete for power (mostly peacefully) in the North (Atta and Dostum, with the former increasing his status since 2011), and that Kabul in effect has *become* the third oligopolist. According to Giustozzi (2012), and confirmed by interviewees, state institutions in this region are strongly influenced and infiltrated by these strongmen.

2.2 ASGP

The Afghanistan Sub-national Governance Programme (ASGP) has since 2006 worked as a multi-donor¹¹ assisted project that supports the Government of the Independent Republic of Afghanistan (GoA) to enhance local governance at the operational and policy levels. It is implemented by UNDP as the international partner and the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) as the Afghan partners.

In 2012, Sida decided to support ASGP with 116 MSEK for the period 2012-2014, of a total approved budget of USD 95,633,704.

Now in its second phase (2010 –2014), the ASGP continue its involvement in institutional development and capacity building of the IDLG, which is (and has been) the major national partner and also works at lower levels to support the provincial and district governors' offices, provincial councils and municipalities. Support to the Civil Service Commission was discontinued in 2011, following recommendations of a 2010 review¹².

The programme has in phase II aimed at scaling up existing interventions in policy development and implementation, national capacity development of IDLG, assistance to provincial, district and municipal administrations and respective councils; and support to local coordination mechanisms at the provincial and district levels.

¹⁰ See also Biljert (2009) and Jackson (2014).

¹¹ Donors are: European Union, Italy, Japan, DFID, SDC (Switzerland), Sida (Sweden), UNDP (CCF), UNDP (Core Fund), Finland, and France. Sida is currently the largest contributor to the ASGP, with a financial commitment of just above USD 17 million of a total budget of roughly USD 79 million as of March 2014 according to the first quarter progress report 2014 from ASGP.

¹² 2014 UNDP Evaluation Report.

Its overall objective was defined to contribute to the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) Outcomes 2 and 3 focusing on building local institutions and providing service delivery to the populations with emphasis on the most vulnerable, while the Country Programme (CP) outcome refers to service delivery and oversight (See table 2.1 below as well as relevance section further below for more detailed discussion on the programme objectives).

Table 2.1 Objectives in ASGP programme document

UNDAF Outcome(s)	Expected CP Outcome(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome 2: Government capacity to deliver services to the poor and vulnerable is enhanced. • Outcome 3: The institutions of democratic governance are integrated components of the nation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome 3: The State has improved its ability to deliver services to foster human development and elected bodies have greater oversight capacity.

The activities of the ASGP may be divided into four main areas:

1. Assisting in drafting of new legislation for sub-national governance.
2. Capacity development of national level institutions (primarily the IDLG) to perform tasks related to SNGs.
3. Capacity development of local level SNGs with emphasis on provinces and municipalities and some activities at district level as well. This includes improved revenue generation in municipalities.
4. Promotion of outreach and accountability mechanisms of SNGs vis-à-vis its constituency.

During the years 2007-2009 ASGP expanded its activities from Kabul to provincial areas establishing its presence and launching several sub-national institutional capacity development initiatives. The provincial approach decentralises ASGP implementation to the sub-national level through a partnership between UNDP, IDLG, and each provincial governor. ASGP has expanded its activities into the Balkh, Faryab Jawzjan, Samangan and Saripul provinces in Northern Afghanistan and worked in partnership with the Provincial Governor's Offices (PGO), the Provincial Councils and Municipalities, as well as in a few piloted districts, to improve Sub-National Governments (SNG) for effective and efficient public services delivery. Swedish support to ASGP II has been earmarked to Balkh, Jawzjan, Samangan and Sar-e-Pul province in the North in accordance with its Afghanistan policy at the time, which is also the geographical focus of this evaluation.

3 Evaluation Findings

The findings of the evaluation are presented in accordance with the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability.

3.1 RELEVANCE

The relevance of the programme is assessed against context, Afghan priorities and needs and Sida policies and priorities.

To understand the relevance of the ASGP in the context of Afghanistan requires an understanding of the overall subnational governance context (see context section), the programme as well as the decentralisation framework in the country and the way the two are linked.

The ASGP Theory of Change

When reviewing the ASGP Theory of Change (ToC), one must first understand the overall objective, which the programme seeks to contribute to. The team considers this overall objective of the ASGP too ambitious, considering the Afghan context and internal power sharing dynamics. When looking at the ASGP programme document¹³ it contains a myriad of partly complementary, partly overlapping objectives. Yet these reflect the UNDAF as well as the UNDP country development frameworks for Afghanistan, and alignment to the ANDS. In the UNDP ASGP project proposal for Sida funding, a new UNDAF objective was introduced to which the programme was aligned (see Sida proposal), adding a new objective to the programme. And, finally, according to the programme document, the ASGP is aligned with NPP 4, though the explicit alignment in terms of objectives and indicators have not been included in the programme document. The different objectives are presented in table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1 ASGP overview of objectives and goals and synthesis objective agreed at the evaluation workshop with IDLG, Sida and ASGP

¹³ GoA and UNDP: Afghanistan Sub-National Governance Programme, Phase II (January 2010 - December 2014). Project Document.

NPP 4 Objectives

(to which the ASGP is aligned. These are not explicitly referenced in the document)

- To establish national-level policies, laws, systems and mechanisms to provide an effective and efficient framework for subnational governance.
- To develop the capacity of Provincial and District-level institutions to lead and coordinate local affairs, ensure service delivery and bring good governance.
- To develop the capacity of Municipal institutions to deliver services to Municipal populations and bring good Municipal governance.
- To promote representation, participation, accountability and transparency, especially through Local Councils and other representative bodies.

Objectives from ASGP II Programme document (cover page)

UNDAF level:

- Government capacity to deliver services to the poor and vulnerable is enhanced
- The institutions of democratic governance are integrated components of the nation

UNDP Country Programme outcome level:

- The state has improved ability to deliver services to foster human development and elected bodies have greater oversight capacity

ASGP application to Sida paraphrasing new UNDAF objective 2

- An effective, more accountable and more representative public administration is established at the national and sub-national levels, with improved delivery of services in an equitable, efficient and effective manner



Synthesis of the above objectives. This synthesis present the basis for the ToC and the evaluation. The synthesis was initially suggested by team, then presented, refined, and agreed at workshop

- Effective and representative accountable local government service delivery to the people (with attention to vulnerability)

To arrive at an acceptable synthesis of these objectives and the rationale highlighted in the proposal to Sida, the evaluation team has analysed the objectives and identified a common denominator which was presented to and agreed with UNDP, ASGP, IDLG and Sida at a joint workshop during the mission (see Annex 7 for presentation and assessment of objectives and Annex 6 for information on the joint workshop).

This common denominator, which was realistic, was identified as: *Effective and representative accountable local government service delivery to the people (with attention to vulnerability)*¹⁴ (see table 3.1 above).

The next level in the results matrix of the ASGP focuses on the output level with four specific outputs¹⁵ related to:

- 1) National systems, procedures and frameworks in place
- 2) Provincial and district governor's office capacity in place to manage governance and security
- 3) Provincial Councils have capacity to represent citizens interest and monitor local governance
- 4) Municipalities have the institutional and organisational framework and capacity to collect revenue and deliver basic public services.

The four ASGP defined outputs lay the ground for the change processes to be instituted towards meeting the programme objective. However, the existence of frameworks and capacities, which is the core of all four outputs, do not by themselves contribute to achieving the programme objective. To be complete, the programme will need to identify outcomes based on how these outputs are put into practice. Outcomes that more clearly explain how the capacities and frameworks will be put into use (i.e. that the laws are implemented, the capacities used to make the institutions work and change behaviours, the provincial and municipal plans are implemented etc.).

During the joint workshop participants recognised the 'missing' outcomes and agreed that the extent to which these would be achievable depends on four mutually reinforcing assumptions about the theory of change:

- 1) That the laws and frameworks established actually enhance local level accountable service delivery
- 2) That there is political will to implement policies and laws favouring accountable local level service delivery and representative governance
- 3) That there are the resources needed to enable the capacities be made into use.
- 4) That the people of Afghanistan have an interest in engaging in participatory local governance.

¹⁴ Vulnerability is challenging to identify in the Afghan context, and is dependent upon ethnic and regional affiliation. In addition to women, which are assessed to be defined as vulnerable across the country, vulnerabilities refer to ethnicities which are minorities or historically marginalised within the region/district in which they are present.

¹⁵ UNDP defines these as outputs, but can arguably also be described as towards outcomes, if the capacities and laws are being put into use.

During the field visit and the workshop the team has found that several of these assumptions could not be confirmed. In effect this means that the programme in its current design will not be able contribute effectively to meeting the objectives, and thus eventually questioning the relevance of the programme in the present context.¹⁶

As observed during the field mission one key limitation is that the SNGs play a very minor role in ensuring service delivery in the legal and institutional setup of decentralised local governance in Afghanistan.¹⁷ Furthermore, at the lowest level, the districts are consulted in provincial service delivery planning but with limited participation in the actual planning process¹⁸; at provincial level the elected Provincial Council are invited to take part in the planning process, but has no legal authority over the service delivery budget¹⁹; while the municipalities do have authority to provide very basic infrastructure services but have no elected oversight²⁰. Instead basic social services to the women and men in Afghanistan at local level are provided by deconcentrated units of the line ministries who hold the final budgetary responsibility and authority over the resources together with the governors.²¹

The programme design and theory of change is further challenged by the limited accountabilities to the citizens in the decentralisation setup and the informal power structures on the ground. The provincial governors are appointed by the President of Afghanistan who is the ultimate authority for all provincial administration and management issues. While the governor chairs the Provincial Development Committee (PDC), his²² formal accountabilities are to the President.

The formal power of the governor is further strengthened by the informal power relations in the provinces and districts. Governors are part of the power sharing between

¹⁶ As stated in the 2014 ASGP evaluation report: The 'project lacked a clear logic model, which derives from exhaustive and comprehensive analysis of the strategic implications of the Government's agenda'. (p 9). And UNDP failed 'to take into account the government's model of deconcentration and key drivers of change' (p 10)

¹⁷ See also UNDP Independent Evaluation of ASGP phase II (2014)

¹⁸ IN ASGP districts, district governors have several times taken part in PDC meeting, while the PDP is being drafted a team will in principle travel to the districts in order to include district priorities and needs and have a dialogue with district governors and District Development Council. See however also: D. Saltmarshe and A Mehdi (2011): Local Governance in Afghanistan - a view from the ground.

¹⁹ According to the law the PC must assess and monitor the planning and the budget, but the final decision rests with the Governor and the line ministries, endorsed by the Ministry of Finance. ASGP is facilitating conference in support of this process.

²⁰ Elections for Municipal Councils has still not been implemented.

²¹ In addition to the legal basis for this setup, the practical implementation of this was confirmed by PC members, SNG officials and external resource persons interviewed.

²² In only one instance has there been a female provincial governor in Afghanistan.

the President and the regional and local informal power holders and there is often an overlap between the two. With limited formal accountability of the governors to the people, the programme is at risk of further strengthening the warlords and tribal informal power structures²³ and thus challenging the democratic space, which is the ultimate objective of the programme.

Relevance to political context and developments

The relevance to the context should be seen in light of the faulty Theory of Change. As described in the political context section in chapter 2, the current multiplicity of institutions with authority at local level and competing legal frameworks, combined with the limited willingness to engage in devolution of authority to SNGs (a thing that may change with the coming change of President) only makes the programme partly relevant to the political context.²⁴

Relevance to Afghanistan priorities and ownership by GoA

The ASGP is in full alignment with the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) governance, human rights and rule of law pillar²⁵ and the National Priority Programme 4 (NPP 4)²⁶, which specifically addresses local governance and decentralised service delivery. It is also fully aligned with the SNG policy of IDLG, drafted with the support of ASGP in phase 1.

Ownership on the side of GoA is mixed. On the one hand, IDLG is generally in agreement with the programme activities designed. However interviewees complained of lack of access to information on the DIM implemented part of the programme. At the same time ASGP as well as IDLG interviewees,²⁷ documented how the communication between the two entities have soured over the years resulting in dissatisfaction with ASGP and UNDP on the side of the central level Government, eventually limiting ownership of the Government as this becomes disenfranchised with the ASGP.

At local level, there is strong appreciation of the ASGP support from the SNGs. While there are some cases of criticism and lack of ownership by the SNGs to the ASGP-funded Letter of Agreement staff (i.e. ASGP contracted staff), there is agreement with the approach taken by ASGP and strong appreciation of all the different

²³ As a consequence of the fact that the informal power structures have captured the formal positions of power in the society. See also Dr Douglas Saltmarsh and Abhilash Medhi AREU Local Governance in Afghanistan A View from the Ground (2011) on the rent-seeking of local government officials.

²⁴ See also Bijlert (2009) p.5

²⁵ Note that the ANDS expired in 2013 and the national priorities are therefore defined by the NPPs.

²⁶ See also Sida's own: Underlag för Beslut om insats for ASGP II

²⁷ As well as previous evaluations and field mission reports.

types of support, but in particular there is strong appreciation of the hardware support. The appreciation has become stronger with the phase-out of other SNG support programmes such as RAMP-UP²⁸.

Relevance to Sida

The ASGP is aligned with the 2012-2014 Swedish Government development cooperation strategy for Afghanistan. This strategy focuses specifically on the Northern Provinces in Afghanistan with the specific objective of *Development of local democracy and public administration at provincial and district level*. The ASGP programme supports democracy at provincial level (as one of four programme outputs), as well as public administration at all SNG levels (at least in the design of the programme).

However, the key challenges that arise given the limited devolution and democratic oversight, is an impediment to the alignment of ASGP with Sida overall policies of democratic governance and equity. When there is no democratic authority over key decisions concerning budget allocations at SNG level and this rests with the appointed governors at provincial and district level the support eventually assists in further strengthening non-democratic structures. As there are in many cases an overlap with governorships and local warlords (i.e. being one and the same), the support eventually risks undermining the policies of enhancing democracy and reaching the most vulnerable groups (see also section on effectiveness below).²⁹

While the earmarking of Sida support to ASGP is in line with the 2012-2014 Swedish Government strategy for Afghanistan, it runs counter to Sweden's commitments to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (and the follow-up in Accra and Busan), to enhance alignment, ownership and harmonisation that propose to limit the use of bilateral earmarkings. Interviewees from GoA in multiple cases (as well as ASGP representative) referred to the earmarkings as an obstacle for the implementation of NPP 4, and ensuring an equitable distribution of resources in the country.

The overall objective of the ASGP as synthesised in the beginning of the chapter is assessed to be relevant to the new Government of Sweden Strategy (2014) for Afghanistan. In short, the support will fall under the first objective, which focuses on: *Strong democracy and equality; increased respect for human rights and freedom of expression*.

²⁸ Several SNG interviewees were concerned with the fact that most programmes had been stopped, and while the appreciation of RAMP-UP was higher among many interviewees, there was a recognition that ASGP was a more long-term programme, which they appreciated.

²⁹ Interviews as well as Biljert (2009) and Mukhopadhyay (2009a).

Relevant to ASGP is the Swedish strategy's focus on:

- The participation of more women and men in democratic processes, holding the Government to account and representative democracy
- Strong capacity in public institutions for the provision of basic services.

The ASGP does support women and men's participation in provincial councils and the prospects of support for future municipal elections and possible district elections are present and relevant. On the other hand, the overall ASGP II design has limited focus on non-discrimination, gender equality and women's empowerment (see section on efficiency).

3.2 EFFECTIVENESS

Generally the effectiveness of the programme is assessed to be limited, as documented below. These findings should be seen in light of: (i) the challenging context in which the programme is implemented, (ii) the lack of political will to engage in devolution, and (iii) the programme difficulties in hiring qualified staff at the programme outset.

The effectiveness of the programme may be divided into two areas: (1) the effectiveness against meeting the overall objective, and (2) the effectiveness against the individual four programme output areas. In both areas effectiveness has been limited.

Effectiveness against overall objectives

As detailed in the relevance section above, the overall objective of the programme is to ensure *Effective and representative accountable local government service delivery to the people (with attention to vulnerability)*. The extent to which the programme is able to be effective from a Theory of Change perspective depends on the extent to which the underlying assumptions of the programme can be confirmed. These include the assumptions that there are laws and policies in place that ensure devolved authority based on local level representative democracy and the political will to implement these. The analysis in the context as well as the relevance section suggest that there is little evidence to support these assumptions.³⁰

While the municipalities have some (if limited) discretionary authority to provide some basic services to the citizens, elections at district level have yet to take place and the authority at local level rests with the executive.³¹ At provincial level elections

³⁰ The vast majority of interviewees as well as the desk study clearly identified the limitations to these assumptions, and confirmed the current and past lack of political commitment to devolution.

³¹ For all three SNG levels, the authority of the governors or mayor to approve as well as implement plans and budgets means that the legislative and executive powers rests with the same authority.

have taken place, though the PC currently has no budgetary discretionary authority, and at district level there is still no democratic representation and currently no budget for service delivery. At provincial as well as district level the final decision-making thus rests with the governor.

The lack of democratic representation is exacerbated by a range of related external factors.³² These include:

- The limited legislative oversight of IDLG (where the ASGP is anchored) given that the institution is accountable to the President and not Parliament.
- The political appointment of governors at provincial and district level and their accountabilities to the President.
- The fact that several governors are former warlords and current strongmen. In the case of this latter point, the capacity development risks further strengthening and legitimising informal power structures and their monopoly of violence.

ASGP has tried to address these democratic deficiencies by supporting the Provincial Councils, the Municipal Advisory Boards and informal accountability mechanisms such as ‘Meet the Governor’ radio programmes, complaint boxes, PC member visits to districts, and public hearings. These have created points of accountability, where a sense of dialogue with the public has been established. However, these activities are temporary measures and with the current lack of political will and limited legal basis for permanent local representative democratic governance, the ASGP will not be effective in meeting the overall objective of the programme, and provide long-term accountability of SNGs.

Reforms, laws, systems and procedures

A key output of ASGP II is the continued support to the SNG reform agenda in Afghanistan with improved legislation, policies and procedures, which the programme was successful in pursuing in phase I. The introduction of relevant laws and policies is the first step towards devolution, which could eventually enable the programme to engage in a more targeted approach towards meeting the overall objective. The effectiveness of this output therefore depends on:

- 1) The degree to which the laws, policies and procedures support a reform process towards representative democratic devolution.
- 2) The extent to which the quality of the laws and policies are sufficient and drafted with no ambiguities, and that existing laws and policies are refined to reflect the changes in the new laws.

³² See also: Dr Douglas Saltmarsh and [Name protected] [Name protected] Local Governance in Afghanistan A View from the Ground (2011)

- 3) That the laws, policies and procedures are approved by the relevant authority, i.e. Parliament, then signed by the President.

The current laws drafted with assistance of the programme, and currently awaiting approval, do all to some extent provide a basis for movement towards democratic local governance. However, the extent to which the laws make considerable contributions to devolution (its progressiveness) is minimal and thus the effects when implemented are, furthermore, assessed to be limited in light of the needs.³³ One of the more progressive laws is the draft revised provincial council law which will - if approved - provides each PC with a separate limited budget for service delivery prioritisation (fiscal decentralisation). While the amount devolved represents a fragment of the budget for local service delivery at provincial level, it provides a first important step towards fiscal decentralisation. ASGP has thus contributed effectively to meeting the ASGP desired output.

In terms of approval of laws, policies and procedures, the programme has effectively assisted IDLG with the process of ensuring approval of, most importantly, the policy on District Coordination Councils together with MRRD³⁴, the anti-harassment policy of IDLG (together with the UNDP GEP programme), and manuals for PGOs and DGOs. However, when it comes to approval of laws favouring devolution, none of these three major laws have been approved. The laws are currently being debated in Cabinet or in Parliamentary committees. The delay is thus outside the hands of ASGP.

Capacity development of IDLG and the use of LoAs at all levels

In addition to the systems and procedures, the capacity development support provided to IDLG may be divided into three categories:

- 1) Support to office and operational equipment to enable IDLG operations
- 2) Support to workshops, conferences and related capacity development activities
- 3) The provision of subsidies to hire additional staff for capacity development activities outside the *tashkeel*, labelled Letter of Agreement (LoA) staff.

The capacity development of IDLG is based on different sets of needs assessment, followed by a more holistic plan launched in May 2014.³⁵ The ASGP is providing

³³ The law is drafted by IDLG assisted by UNDP and thus reflects the Government's vision. The evaluation team recognise that the limited degree of devolution in the laws is more a reflection of the Government's limited commitment to devolution than ASGP's advice.

³⁴ The law effectively removes the legal basis for some of the duplication of work of IDLG and MRRD at district level.

³⁵ The 2014 Capacity Development Plan provides the basic background for capacity development to the

office equipment, ICT as well as office rent to the IDLG through the National Implementation Modality (NIM) system, which has enabled IDLG equipment and space to operate. As the organisation has grown, this has included the renting of new offices in different parts of Kabul. This support is assessed as sufficient to enable operations, but has also resulted in an inflation of the number of IDLG staff and offices.³⁶

In addition, support has been provided to more *ad hoc* activities such as conferences and workshops as well as training activities through the UNDP Direct Implementation Modality (DIM). According to ASGP's own capacity development scoring system, the individual capacities of a selection of *tashkeel* staff³⁷ is progressing according to plan, and thus enhancing the capacities of these. ASGP is thus meeting part of its planned outputs at national level. Neither ASGP nor IDLG have an overall organisational capacity outcome assessment of this component of the programme, which limits the options for assessing actual outcomes at this level.

The use of Letter of Agreement (LoA) staff³⁸, funded by ASGP, is intended to assist with capacity development of IDLG as well as SNGs. In the case of IDLG 87 staff members are funded through this scheme. At the SNG level close to 300 LoAs have been employed.

The share of LoA staff in itself illustrates that these perform activities beyond coaching of counterparts. At IDLG the bulk of the work is undertaken by ASGP funded staff, including most of the directors, while interviews in the field showed that most LoA staff do not have equal counterparts, but contribute directly to SNG operations by producing specific outputs. The whole SNG system is thus dependent on LoA staff to operate. At the same time the pressure on LoA staff to deliver products, combined with the lack of immediate counterparts, limits the opportunities for transfer of capacity to the *tashkeel*. The ASGP funded LoA staff has thus become an integral part of the SNG structure and are needed to sustain operations to produce outputs.

organisation and introduces an adapted generic UNDP capacity development scoring system. This provides an overview of basic capacity 'levels' in accordance with different standard organisational capacity categories. The plan however lacks a proper assessment of capacities in terms of the organisation's ability to fulfill its specific mandate.

³⁶ The capacity challenges should be seen in light of: (1) That IDLG themselves state in the 'Making NPP 4 Implementable' that: IDLG state that they have a fragmented organisation with 'confusing' lines of reporting and responsibility (p 3), and (2) the UNDP 2014 ASGP evaluation finding that: 'There has been no significant transfer of authority or resources from central government levels. IDLG has not effectively demonstrated any capacity and results to fulfill its mandate to advocate for, and coordinate formulation and implementation of policies for subnational governance' (p 14).

³⁷ The first quarterly progress report 2014 on the capacity development improvements of 18 coachees. The number is assessed as limited in light of the 495 *tashkeel* staff members of IDLG, according to the IDLG capacity development plan.

³⁸ Relabelled National Technical Advisers but still referred to as LoA staff by IDLG, ASGP and SNG staff and officials.

The capacity development abilities of the LoA is furthermore challenged by what multiple interviewees from Government and SNGs described as low capacities of LoA staff, which according to the same interviewees is a product of IDLG favouritism in the recruitment process.³⁹ The accusations of favouritism are substantial among interviewees, further documented in previous assessments, questioning the degree of merit-based recruitment.⁴⁰

Irrespective of whether the allegations of favouritism are merited, the distrust this process has created among SNGs undermine the LoA initiated capacity development process at provincial and district level. The team however did encounter a number of qualified LoA staff at PGO level, who contributed with substantial outputs and were appreciated by PGO management. The LoA staff thus currently provide an important resource inputs to SNGs allowing them to deliver outputs, however the LoA system in its current design is insufficient to transfer capacity to local and national level as was originally envisaged.

Capacity development at provincial and district level in Northern provinces

ASGP is providing a range of different capacity development services and activities aimed at improving the effectiveness of the provincial and district governments.⁴¹ The capacity development is based on capacity development plans for each institution. The quality of these plans are assessed to be poor, with limited substantive analysis and generic format and content.^{42 43} The strategic foundation for the capacity development implementation is thus poor, which poses a risk of low quality capacity development initiatives.

Capacity development activities for the provincial and district level (as well as municipal level) comprise multiple different inputs. In addition to the LoA staff capacity

³⁹ Most SNGs have not taken part in the recruitment of LoA staff for their own institution, but have in several cases approved the ToRs.

⁴⁰ See also Assessment of Development Results: Afghanistan, UNDP (2014), p 61

⁴¹ Though the support to district governments only covers a few pilot districts for now.

⁴² The team has had access to three different capacity development plans (Mazar-E-Sharif Municipality; Blakh Province; and Jawzjan Province), and have found the following flaws:

- With a few exceptions, the assessment of capacities are not qualified by analysis or data.
- Several of the text pieces in the plans provided are identical across the three plans.
- Several assessments parts do not make sense (e.g. 'There is 20% vehicles and machinery which is a real challenge for service delivery and inadequate').
- Incorrect information in assessment (e.g. Mazar-e-Sharif, the capacity plan (2011 p 16) state that there are no meeting facilities. However, prior to ASGP's implementation the municipalities had two general meeting facilities.

⁴³ See also Independent evaluation UNDP ASGP (2011), which point to fact that SNG plans are developed in a 'one size fits all fashion'.

provision, the ASGP provide topic specific trainings such as media training, ICT training, financial management training, to mention a few. In addition, the programme makes use of training courses in neighbouring countries, and exchange visits between provinces and municipalities. While there is feedback from LoA staff and some reporting back from some of the training sessions, there is not a more thorough assessment of the effectiveness of the different inputs, and no baseline to judge progress against.

Results are observed, by the team, in the form of improved use of ICT⁴⁴ and the production of outputs such as development plans, brochures and CSC plans (though some of these can be directly attributed to the work of LoA staff and not capacity enhancement of the institution). Results remain mostly at an individual level. There is evidence of outputs at an organisational level, but limited evidence to suggest outcomes at an organisational or institutional level. Results are not measured or reported on the organisational or overall institutional level. This in spite of the fact that the omission of more substantial capacity tracking and measurement of contribution to tangible outcomes has been highlighted in previous evaluations.⁴⁵

Another way of measuring effectiveness and quality of capacity development activities is through the assessment of outputs. A review of major printed outputs, such as capacity development plans, provincial development plans, provincial strategic plans, brochures to the public etc. have been undertaken by the team (see overview in 7). Overall the quality is very varied. A short summary of the assessment:

- 1) Provincial development plans have a good overall (if gender blind) presentation of the provincial situation. However, as a tool for planning, the plans are mostly prioritised wish lists without a link to the provincial budget (in one case the planned budget was Afs 177 million).
- 2) The brochures contain general information about projects, but mostly long presentations of official visits, poems etc. There is a lack of publication of plans, budgets, audits, key SNG decisions and description of services expected and how to access these. The programme has thus failed to utilise the communication initiative for enhancing SNG transparency accountability towards citizens.

In provincial headquarters in the Sida funded provinces, ASGP has established Resource Centres as part of the capacity development plan. These are aimed at assisting with training, planning and providing information to citizens through access to library

⁴⁴ Including the establishment of internet facilities, equipment and websites.

⁴⁵ See 2011 ASGP evaluation, 2014 SDC portfolio evaluation, and 2014 UNDP ASGP evaluation.

and internet. The ambition is high and provincial officials like to attribute capacity development successes to the existence of these centres. However, in practice the centres primarily serve as extra (and very well equipped) meeting rooms. Planning processes and trainings do require meeting rooms, but in the PGOs visited these already existed, questioning the rationale for establishing new ones. From a citizens' service perspective the utilisation rate was low.⁴⁶

The Customer/Citizen Service Centres (CSCs)⁴⁷ established at provincial and municipal level, were found to be used in most of the sites visited⁴⁸ and assessed relevant by users interviewed in the centres. The centres provide an innovative approach to reaching out to citizens and provide an easier entry into municipalities.⁴⁹ In Mazar Municipality, the Government bank is also operational allowing for direct payment of fees and thereby limiting opportunities for corruption by officials.

Provincial councils in Northern Provinces

A key focus of the programme, and in principle the most direct link to the overall objective of ASGP, is the support to the Provincial Councils (PCs). To enhance accountability and transparency, the programme in the North has engaged extensively in outreach activities, bringing the PCs closer to the people through bottom-up planning, public hearings and meetings. A challenge to effectiveness in at the individual level is the fact that there has been a high turnover of PC members in elections and thus a need to restart capacity development activities with these.

A key output of these activities at the more institutional level has been the development of provincial development plans through a participatory process involving all districts as well as informal shuras. These have resulted in a long wish list of projects to be implemented. However, the PCs complain of the lack of implementation of the plans given the centralised budget approval process of GoA. According to interviewees, the limited results combined with the reduction of ASGP resources for outreach activities have resulted in dwindling interest in the PCs from the people and lack of faith in the delivery of services planned. Trust and expectations have thus been raised

⁴⁶ As an example, according to the powerpoint presentation provided to the team 40 non-PGO related individuals had used the resource center of Balkh since its establishment in May this year, or one person every third day (according to a updated figure from the PGO provided by e-mail a total of 502 persons had been registered using the facilities since inception, 4 per day). The limited level of usage was evident from the equipment which was still covered in plastic, laptops not connected to electricity and without trace of usage.

⁴⁷ The centers are labelled 'customer service centers at municipal level and citizen service centers at provincial level, both aimed at providing a 'one stop shop' solution and improve communication with citizens.

⁴⁸ Note that some of these have been installed by RAMP-UP.

⁴⁹ Note, that in one place the CSC was provided by the USAID funded RAMP-UP project and not ASGP.

initially, but is now on the reverse, as planned service delivery has failed to materialise. This fundamentally illustrates the challenge of the programme in terms of enhancing local level accountability and transparency when democratic institutions in the SNGs have no real authority.

Municipalities in Northern provinces

As the only SNG entity, the municipalities have discretionary authority to provide some degree of basic service provision related to solid waste management and basic infrastructure such as roads, culverts and water points. The support to municipalities is thus substantially more relevant as it is possible to work with improved local service delivery.

The relevance is however at the same time limited by the stalled democratic processes at municipal level, which means that the municipal councils are still not formally elected. To compensate for this, ASGP has been able to establish temporary Municipal Advisory Boards (MABs). These are selected by the Nahia boards (one member from each Nahia). Interviews show a high degree of satisfaction with the representation and perception of influence in the municipal decision-making at MAB level. Furthermore, interviews with mayors and municipal staff indicate a high level of respect for the MABs as well as evidence of influence on the development of the municipal strategic plans. The Mayors are thus to some extent following the MAB guidelines, which is applicable to the ASGP funded municipalities.

At the Nahia level, this representation is equally appreciated, creating a coherent community, which – with the support the municipality, facilitated by ASGP - has taken action to plan for their own quarters and mobilise resources for implementation at this level. However, the Nahia members also expressed frustration with the limited support received from the municipalities in terms of resources for implementing these local level plans. There is at this level a more recent loss of faith in the municipality's ability to deliver services planned.

ASGP II, together with a number of other programmes, positively supported revenue collection such as RAMP-UP. According to the mayors interviewed in the Municipalities visited in the Northern provinces such as Aibak and Sheberghan have seen their revenue grew exponentially in the last years⁵⁰, due to the census, verification of the number of households residing in the district, and the public awareness campaigns. Nevertheless, the extent to which service delivery has improved and is sustainable cannot be properly judged with the evidence collected by the team.

⁵⁰ The exponential raise cannot be fully documented. According to an in-house revenue table from ASGP there is revenue increases up to 50% depending on the municipality. Most however, have seen a significant positive trend over a three-year period.

At the municipality level, both from service providers and service recipients, views concerning the improved service delivery were generally mixed and were insufficient to draw a clear conclusion on the extent to which service delivery has improved. According to the citizens' municipality advisory board, established in 2013 in Aibak, and the few citizens randomly interviewed in Samangam Province, despite the increased revenue collection the municipality service delivery has not improved. However, the deputy mayor of Aibak and mayor of Sheberghan clearly pointed out that the increased revenue allowed his municipality to improve water delivery through water trucking and garbage collection.

As in the provinces, the municipal staff have been subject to an extensive number of trainings and workshops. This has undoubtedly contributed to an increase in the capacity of the municipalities, which includes the now extensive use of e-mails. However, as elsewhere, the capacity improvements influence and contribution to improved outcomes has not been properly documented, and the approach suffers from the same activity input-orientation as in the provinces and lack of more strategic direction.

3.3 EFFICIENCY

The efficiency of the programme will be assessed in two ways:

- 1) Overall efficiency related to the efficiency in programme operations. I.e. the extent to which practices and procedures enhance the input vs. output ratio, and
- 2) Programmatic efficiency in terms of ensuring implementation in accordance with the Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA), conflict sensitivity and the inclusion of gender equality and women's empowerment.⁵¹

Overall efficiency of the programme

The programme suffered from a range of efficiency challenges due to internal as well as external factors. Most importantly these include:

- 1) Delay in implementation due to absence of a Chief Technical Adviser in the beginning of phase II, and lack of manning of other key staff positions in the same period.⁵²

⁵¹ HRBA and gender equality are arguably also effectiveness issues, and can be applied to effectiveness as well.

⁵² From an operational perspective the new management of the ASGP were focused on getting the programme operational and effective within a limited time-frame.

- 2) Substantial delay in payments to the SNG level as well as LoA staff salaries (partly a fault at IDLG), limiting the window for implementation and demotivating partners as well as LoA staff.⁵³
- 3) Poor communication between the IDLG and UNDP effectively resulting in delayed implementation and lack of mutual trust.

The latter two points are in practice a consequence of the DIM/NIM implementation distribution. Roughly half of the budget is implemented through NIM implementation with IDLG responsible for hiring of additional LoA staff and procuring rented office space. In total more than 350 staff members at SNG and IDLG level are funded by ASGP. IDLG thus has a substantial ownership to this part of the budget. And as IDLG refers to the President rather than parliament, there is little oversight of the implementation of this. The latter part of the funding (including software implementation) is funded using DIM, controlled by the ASGP. This funding is fully controlled by the programme, and the SNGs and IDLG complain about the lack of transparent utilisation. Both parties accuse the other of a lack of transparency and ineffective funds utilisation. The issue has been brought up in previous assessments of the programme, but is still not resolved.

The fact that the ASGP has a well-functioning regional office has substantially enhanced the efficiency in terms of getting the activities implemented. The office is active in assisting with arranging conferences, planning meetings and workshops as well as training sessions. As in the rest of the programme, the focus is on ‘getting things done’, which limits the focus on more sustainable outcomes. Instead there is evidence of the regional offices together with the LoAs tending to implement activities directly limiting opportunities for sustainable outcomes.⁵⁴ Furthermore, the presence of a fully staffed UNDP office to implement the programme in the north, substantially increases the programme’s operational costs.

On a more positive note, the programme is well aligned with GoA systems and procedures. The NIM implementation fully follows GoA systems and the DIM implementation at SNG-level is implemented in accordance with SNG work schedules, enhancing the efficiency of the programme.

Finally, the overemphasis on input, activity and output level of the programme, described under relevance and effectiveness above also influences the reporting of the

⁵³ Delays in implementation may be attributed to IDLG for NIM implementation, and to UNDP/ASGP for DIM implementation.

⁵⁴ As an example, several documents bear the logo of UNDP only, and some SNG outputs explicitly bear the names of LoA staff on the cover, indicating their substantive direct involvement in the output production.

programme. All reporting is basically input and activity reporting, with long references to number of workshops and trainings held and little reflection on the outcome of these activities. This approach is also evident from interviews with staff at headquarters and in the field. The discussion of results is constantly referred to in terms of operational capacity and activities implemented, mirroring the lack of attention to outcomes and longer term achievements.

Donor and programme harmonisation

While the ASGP is currently the only major programme supporting SNGs in Afghanistan, the programme phase II has had several competing donor programmes during the course of implementation. Several of these, including RAMP-UP, NDI and SIKA have been undertaking activities, which are duplicates and often uncoordinated.

While there has been information sharing between programmes at the local (Northern region) level, there has been no joint national attempt to try and reconcile the different programme and utilise synergies. Consequently, different SNGs have, as an example, received training in planning processes from different programmes; are operating with competing revenue database systems; or have implemented CSCs through competition rather than complementarity (see table 3.1 below for examples of duplication).⁵⁵

Table 3.2 Overview of programmes supporting decentralisation in Afghanistan, with overlaps with ASGP programme activities

Programme	Examples of duplicative sub national governance activities
RAMP-UP	Provincial development planning, Customer Service Centres, supply of office equipment, revenue generation registration and database development
UN-Habitat	Municipal planning, revenue generation registration and database development
SIKA	Communication strategy planning, basic service planning
NSP	District level planning
NDI	Provincial development planning, capacity development of provincial council members, gender related training
PBGF	Provincial Governor's Office capacity development

Note: The list of programmes and activities is not a complete overview. According to interviews, some activities have been coordinated during implementation, mostly at local level. None have been planned in advance.

The primary responsibility of this lack of coordination rests with IDLG, as the coordinating Government institution.⁵⁶ However, in the context of Afghanistan with weak

⁵⁵ See also Assessment of Development Results: Afghanistan, UNDP (2014), pp 60-61.

⁵⁶ The IDLG recognises this in its update and comment on the NPP 4: Making NPP 4 Implementable

government structures, the strong donor preference often related to previous military engagements, means that donors have opted for multiple approaches for support to SNGs as well as frequent use of earmarkings. While NPP4 does provide a basis for a common denominator for SNG support, there is still no strategic joint donor approach. This lack of strategy, has also resulted in missed opportunities to provide a coordinated policy dialogue pressing for SNG reforms, which would promote devolution and accountable local government service delivery.

Conflict sensitivity and HRBA

The programme does not explicitly pay attention to conflict sensitivity in its implementation although implicitly there are activities which support such an approach. First and foremost the accountability mechanisms established and the efforts to increase participation ensures a broader outreach of the state and thus contributes to a general inclusion, which may have a conflict mitigating effect. At the same time, the programme supports SNGs' role in engaging in family related conflict mitigation⁵⁷, which may assist as a conflict reducing activity. However, three issues stand out as possible unintended conflict enhancing effects:

- 1) Sida has earmarked the funding to just four of 34 provinces, effectively limiting development to some areas only.⁵⁸
- 2) The extensive planning processes at provincial, and to some extent municipal level, has raised expectations among citizens to an unrealistic level. The state will not be in a position to deliver against these causing enhanced dissatisfaction with the authorities.
- 3) The programme is, in some cases, effectively empowering governors and PC members who are previous or current warlords, effectively strengthening and legitimising their position in a context where there is limited public oversight of the SNG institutions.⁵⁹

From a Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) Perspective the programme aims to compensate for the democratic deficits in the current SNG framework, by introducing alternative accountability, participation and transparency mechanisms. Most successful is the MAB, which has enhanced the accountability of the mayors towards the

from (2011).

⁵⁷ PC members interviewed stated that they had a conflict mitigating role in the communities and that the participation in the programme had helped them formalise this role.

⁵⁸ According to World Bank statistics on poverty on a provincial level, the provinces supported in the north cover poor as well as more well-off provinces. There are several provinces outside the Sida earmarking areas, which are assessed to be considerably poorer than several of the districts supported by Sida. See <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/SOUTHASIAEXT/Resources/223546-1328913542665/8436738-1340096876009/StatPlanet.html>

⁵⁹ Though it should be noted that the member base of PCs are becoming increasingly younger and more educated.

citizens. Similarly, ASGP has tried to enhance the accountability of the governor and line ministries by supporting transparent and accountable processes in the Provincial Development Committee. However, the mechanisms have not resulted in improved service delivery as per the plan, according to Nahia, SNG and PC interviewees, and fail to become sustainable without these being turned into policy or legislation. In terms of accountability and participation, the programme has so far had limited interaction with civil society or aimed to involve these in governance activities⁶⁰.

The programme has not actively been engaged in non-discrimination activities. The ASGP application to Sida specifically refers to the inclusion of vulnerable groups, including marginalised ethnicities and poor sections of society. These have not been translated into practice in terms of inclusion in ASGP outputs. As an example, none of the plans produced refer to such groups, and no reference has been made to this issue by ASGP, SNG and IDLG interviewees during the evaluation.⁶¹

Gender and women's empowerment

The ASGP application to Sida specifically refers to gender equality as a separate intervention, which ASGP will pilot in the Sida funded provinces. Some progress was identified at activity level, but outcomes were limited.

ASGP has in the programme documents as well as agreed objective showed commitment to supporting GoA in achieving gender-related targets of the ANDS and the National Action Plan for Women (NAPWA). ASGP's strategy focus have been on three main aspects of gender with the view of promoting gender equality in Afghanistan: Equal participation of men and women in subnational decision making; equal access of men and women to and benefit from public services; and, equal job opportunities within subnational government institutions.

With the aim of ensuring good representation of women, ASGP in the North has established PC female networks to improve their knowledge and skills. By the end of 2013, ASGP established a joint committee to advocate for gender equality and women's participation in local governance, including members of civil society. The decision making role of the committees and the PC female networks was found to be minimal and their activities were limited to meetings, seminars and workshops⁶².

⁶⁰ The exception is the planned cooperation between IDLG and [Name protected].

⁶¹ This point is further substantiated by the fact the team in interviews at Nahia level, was made aware of poorer service delivery (non-delivery) in a more poverty ridden parts of the specific Nahia in the municipality.

⁶² Several of these activities were undertaken jointly with UNDP Gender Programme and DOWA.

At district level, in the North there has been some progress in creating awareness about the role of women and women's rights. Dehdadi's district councils have two female members; one of them is the deputy president of the council. The ASGP's role in involving women and creating awareness about women and their involvement in local governance has been fruitful. The female members regularly take part in Shura meetings. They mostly represent issues related to women, which are brought to them either by village elders or by women themselves and mediate in family issues. However, they are also involved in issues that involve household matters e.g. water and security. It should be noted that there are all in all 56 projects in Dehdadi supported by donors, and many of them either directly or indirectly work with women. Thus, it cannot be verified how substantial the contribution of ASGP has been.

Gender equality and women's empowerment go beyond the input indicator level. Part of this is to ensure that gender is mainstreamed into the outputs and outcomes of the programme. The team assessed a number of outputs from the SNGs that ASGP has assisted in developing. None of the documents assessed (e.g. provincial and municipal strategic and annual plans as well as capacity development plans) had specific analysis or recommendations pertaining to gender equality and women's empowerment. Nor were there efforts to introduce gender budgeting practices. The team recognises the challenges of these efforts in the context of Afghanistan.

3.4 IMPACT

The ToR of this results-oriented evaluation do not specifically call for an assessment of the impact of the programme. Nevertheless considering that the focus of this evaluation is on learning the team presents some observations on this evaluation criteria on two distinct levels: (1) the strategic level (2) the programmatic level.

Within these levels the team outlines a number of factors that limited the changes that can be attributed directly or indirectly to the programme. The desired changes expressed in the overall objective and the specific limitations in achieving the outputs and outcomes of each of the four programme areas have been analysed more in the previous sections of the report.

At a **strategic level**, donors and UNDP did not take a coordinated approach in their support to sub-national governance in Afghanistan nor in the four Northern Provinces funded by Sida. Without a clear government led SNG strategy, both bilateral and multilateral donors introduced and implemented different state building and SNG approaches in a piecemeal fashion.

Furthermore, each donor tightly earmarked funding both at geographic and programmatic level. To a certain extent this has had a negative impact as different structures

with overlapping mandates were established making coordination and planning particularly difficult on the ground.

Additionally there has been a lack of political will from the Government in Kabul to fully support SNG in terms of the devolution of power to democratic and accountable sub-national institutions (see effectiveness and efficiency sections above).

At a **programmatic level**, the design at the outset was not able to meet the objective given the limited will and thus legal foundation for devolved accountable SNG providing services to the people (see relevance section). At the same time, the intervention logic is inadequate to describe change over time and the absence of an outcome focus in monitoring and evaluation has both limited the results and means for their assessment in the ASGP II programme. Furthermore, donors and their implementing partners insufficiently strategised their approach to achieve longer-term results.

Even if the legislation had been supportive of devolved local government service delivery, the overall objective of ASGP is too broad and extremely ambitious and therefore difficult, if not impossible, to achieve in the indicated period (see effectiveness section p. 21).

In addition to this, as mentioned above, a clear intervention logic of the programme has been missing and the outcomes have been not properly spelled out and measured throughout the intervention. In this sense, a point to highlight is the divergence between how UNDP/ASGP presented results at outcome level anticipated in the program documents and applications and how the program has essentially reported on activity basis back to Sida.

Decentralisation and SNG programmes are state-building priorities in fragile and conflict affected states but tend to take considerable time⁶³ to achieve and may be achieved in a much longer timeframe than the current programme.

During the first and second phase of ASGP, bilateral donors (except the Swiss Development Cooperation) earmarked their funding to provinces (where their provincial reconstruction teams were operating) according to their political agenda rather than based on the specific governance needs or specific sub-national governance thematic or geographical priorities.

⁶³ <http://browse.oecdbookshop.org/oecd/pdfs/free/4311031e.pdf>; Service Delivery in Fragile Situations KEY CONCEPTS, FINDINGS AND LESSONS (2008) <http://www.oecd.org/dac/incaf/40886707.pdf>

As a result, ASGP both during its first and second phases was largely donor driven and failed to address the specific needs among provinces. Tight earmarking and uneven level of donors' contributions exacerbated uneven progress in capacity development at sub-national level. According to UNDP senior management interviewed, ASGP may even have contributed to deepening inequalities among provinces and their capacity to respond to the citizens' needs (see relevance and efficiency sections). The team could not verify this point as it travelled only to Northern provinces that were accessible, and were the focus of the evaluation. However, should this be the case, the programme may have had a negative impact and more substantially represented a mandate breach for UNDP.

Furthermore, as outlined in other sections of this report as well as several independent evaluations of ASGP recently undertaken (SDC 2014 and UNDP 2014), the impact has been limited as the programme was plagued by poor design and performance and anticipated results in the different components of the programme have not been achieved at neither the central level nor the provincial level.

In addition, IDLG middle management expressed their frustration with ASGP performance. This was supported in the 2014 SDC governance evaluation⁶⁴ that critically outlined a number of issues related to process that further limited impact. (see table 3.3).

⁶⁴ Swiss Development Cooperation Afghanistan Governance Portfolio Prospective Evaluation (2014). Paul Lundberg and [Name protected].

Table 3.3 Key findings of SDC evaluation 2014

- ‘ASGP’s fame mongering approach in taking credit for the work of the government,’
- ASGP’s dominating nature of support – ‘only logistical and salary,’
- and ‘creation of parallel structures at regional level that take the ownership of the process away from Afghan institutions.’
- ‘ASGP staff spend most of their time on project management rather than technical advisory services.’
- ‘ASGP has, over the years, enabled IDLG to appear as though it has built its internal capacity, but the fact remains that, by taking a capacity substitutional approach, ASGP has created a façade that will quickly disappear when the external staff are eventually removed from the payroll.’
- ‘In addition, despite all of this support, IDLG has manifestly failed to deliver on the promised sub national governance reform. As a result, some donors are beginning to state clearly that ‘we have backed the wrong horse’.’

Impact has been further limited as most of the human and financial resources of the programme have been invested in substituting poorly qualified IDLG national civil servants with advisors rather than developing the capacity of civil servants⁶⁵.

According to several interviewees UNDP insufficiently leveraged its global sub-national governance good practices⁶⁶ either in the design or in the implementation phase of ASGP II to achieve better results.⁶⁷ However, several senior UN officials interviewed in the northern region noted that “without chairs, computers and capacity building you cannot create sub-national governance in a country in transition”.

There has been insufficient attention to performance monitoring, evaluation and reporting from the start of the program. Both evidence in the documents reviewed and the information given by key informants showed that this was a key weakness⁶⁸. Several factors contributed to this:

⁶⁵ See also 2014 UNDP Evaluation of ASGP.

⁶⁶ For more information see: Decentralised Governance for Development: A Combined Practice Note on Decentralisation, Local Governance and Urban/Rural Development http://www.undp.org/content/dam/aplaws/publication/en/publications/democratic-governance/dg-publications-for-website/decentralised-governance-for-development-a-combined-practice-note-on-decentralisation-local-governance-and-urban-rural-development/DLGUD_PN_English.pdf and A Guide to UNDP Democratic Governance Practice (2010) http://www.undp.org/content/dam/aplaws/publication/en/publications/democratic-governance/dg-publications-for-website/a-guide-to-undp-democratic-governance-practice-DG_FinalMaster2-small.pdf

⁶⁷ Also confirmed in the recent SDC evaluation: ‘UNDP did not take a strategic approach in its support for subnational governance in Afghanistan; and did not leverage on its knowledge of global best practices to influence the form and content of subnational governance in Afghanistan.’ SDC Independent evaluation UNDP ASGP (2014) p. 3

⁶⁸ As noted in both the UNDP mid-term and final external evaluation of ASGP.

- Indicators originally chosen to measure the progress of the program were too often activity based and output focused such as the number of laws and policies approved or number of trainings undertaken.
- Outcomes of a sub-national level program are difficult to measure in the short-term in terms of capacity development and verify ways on how skills and knowledge have been transferred, incentives have been put in place and behaviours have changed. Baseline, mid-line and end-lines as such are often absent to measure progress against the indicators chosen.
- Furthermore, progress has been variable within in terms of geographic location with the north proportionally receiving more resources.⁶⁹
- Data collected from the UNDP ASGP staff and from IDLG at times was not consistent.⁷⁰

Few donors interviewed in Kabul, as well as sub national governance authorities interviewed in Balkh, Jawzjan and Samangan provinces, considered that ASGP, combined with other programs such as RAMP-UP among others, contributed to lay the ground for an accountable local service delivery to citizens. Nor did the team identify any direct effect of ASGP on strengthened democratic culture, peace, security and stability within the country and the provinces funded by Sida.

3.5 SUSTAINABILITY

Considering that the focus of this evaluation is on learning the team presents some observations on sustainability on two distinct levels: (1) the strategic level (2) the programmatic level. This helped the team to better understand whether the benefits of the ASGP are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn.

Strategic level

Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world and most of its development budget is externally funded by international donors, and it is likely to remain dependent on international aid in the coming years.⁷¹ Public finances remain inadequate to

⁶⁹ Interviews with IDLG and UNDP staff.

⁷⁰ Interviews with IDLG and ASGP. See also UNDP ASGP Evaluation (2014): 'inconsistencies in the financial data reported by the project in various reports' (p 21)

⁷¹ "The large aid inflows that have benefited Afghanistan have also brought problems. Aid has underpinned much of the progress since 2001—including that in key services, infrastructure, and government administration—but it has also been linked to corruption, fragmented and parallel delivery systems, poor aid effectiveness, and weakened governance. Reflecting steep increases after 2005, civilian aid and spending on the ANSF in 2010/11 (together, "aid"), came to an estimated \$15.7 billion—about the same as GDP (figure 1). While the bulk was security spending, civilian aid is estimated at

sustain ongoing programmes. In overall terms, a World Bank lessons learned synthesis of ten years of aid in Afghanistan showed that sustainability of development aid projects and programs systematically has been a concern in all internal and independent bilateral and multilateral donor evaluations.⁷² So far, few donor agencies and their implementing partners have incorporated clear exit strategies to mitigate the negative impact of the eventual termination of external support.

Overall the sustainability of ASGP has been limited by the absence of a consolidated SNG strategy, as several international donors and their implementing partners approached the challenges at hand with different philosophies, interests and constraints. Sustainability has been further inhibited, as the Afghan government did not “consistently take the lead in defining the state-building agenda, nor in directing its implementation”⁷³ due to an overall lack of ownership and political willingness to support the needed reforms for devolution.

Programmatic level

The programme has applied different approaches to SNG support since 2007. Originally there was a clear exit strategy based on capacity development of staff and slow phase-out. However, due to security concerns staff were withdrawn from SNGs and the programme adopted a 'task-order' approach. In 2011, the programme shifted to the LoA approach. However, IDLG interfered in the recruitment process, which resulted in delays as well as the recruitment of non-qualified LoA staff based on favouritism rather than opting for a merit based approach. As a result municipalities were not able to participate in recruitment processes limiting the overall ownership of the process and overall sustainability of the capacity development component. (see also box 3.1 below).

more than \$6 billion a year, or nearly 40 percent of GDP. Such aid dependency is almost unique (only a few smaller entities, such as Liberia and the West Bank and Gaza, have on occasion received more aid per capita)” (World Bank 2012 p. 15).

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTAFGHANISTAN/Resources/Vol1Overview8Maypm.pdf>

⁷² Sud and Rankin (2013).

⁷³ [Name protected] (2009a), p 7

Box 3.1 ASGP sustainability challenges

Despite that the ASGP II programme document stated “*that activities were designed to achieve long term sustainability through institutional reform, organisational restructuring and individual skills development at central provincial and district level*”, overall the sustainability of this programme has been weak due to several key factors that affected the four key components of the programme:

1. A sustainability and an exit strategy plan was not included either in the design phase or in the inception phase.
2. At institutional level IDLG receives limited support from the central government and is fully dependent on ASGP/UNDP funding. According to a number of key informants “IDLG lights would go off” without ASGP support: the benefits of the programme would not continue after donor funding ceased.
3. ASGP has not effectively transferred administrative responsibility to strengthen the Governments’ ownership so far.
4. Laws and policies as well as provincial development plans designed have not been implemented.

Over-reliance on LoA staff, a second civil service

While technical support has been already embedded with the Government both at central, provincial and municipality level in order to ensure that permanent civil servants are trained and involved in all activities, the over-reliance on qualified and well paid international and national ASGP staff and funded staff, to support IDLG and provincial councils has been basically fostering substitution rather than capacity development. As a result, sustainability at the institutional and financial level has been severely limited.

During the field mission the team found that that in Kabul and in Provinces such as Samagan PGO LoA salaries were 5 to 6 times higher than those normally paid by the civil service. The evidence gathered during the desk review and field visit shows that GoA is not likely to finance this high cost ‘second civil service’ of qualified staff from its own resources.

Working from separate offices?

Both ASGP/UNDP staff and IDLG have been working from different premises as two parallel structures, as observed in Kabul with ASGP working at UNOCA on Jalalabad Road and IDLG staff in premises nearby the Presidents’ palace. Interviewees pointed out that issues arising in meetings between the two different organisations most often were not acted upon, showing the existing level of miscommunication between the two organisations as well as the lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities among staff. Furthermore, communication between the Provinces and Kabul was not always clear and regular.

4 Evaluative Conclusions

Sub-national governance is a key element in any state-building process enhancing the legitimacy of the state and providing democratic space at local level through the outreach to the citizens and provision of basic services. In many post-conflict situations, there has been a tendency to focus on developing the capacity of the centre (e.g. South Sudan and South-Central Somalia), while the decentralised level is often neglected with few exceptions (e.g. Nepal). In the case of Afghanistan, all major donors have engaged in some sort of support to local governance since 2006/2007 either through the formal system (such as ASGP and RAMP-UP) or more informally (such as through NSP). In this scenario, the ASGP is (with the exception of NSP) the largest joint donor intervention in the sector. As the main partner to IDLG and with the backing of some of the largest donors, the programme in principle had the basis for ensuring impact in at SNG level.

Nevertheless, the evaluation has not been able to identify noteworthy progress towards meeting ASGP's overall programmatic objective, namely to ensure *effective and representative accountable local government service delivery to the people (with attention to vulnerability)*. The failure to meet this objective has been found at the strategic as well as the programmatic level. These are influenced by a combination of poor design, challenges to the implementation, and contextual as well as operational complications. The latter in particular refers to the security situation, the lack of staff at the programme initiation. Irrespective of this, the programme has been able to implement an extensive number of activities in the provinces targeted by the evaluation.

Meeting the overall objective of the ASGP is currently not feasible given the weakness of the design as well as the lack of legal foundation as well as political will with GoA to promote devolved decentralised service delivery, which is accountable to a local representative body. Thus, the basic premises of the design of the programme and the assumptions underpinning its theory of change do not hold true.

Strategically, the programme furthermore suffered from the lack of a coherent coordinated strategy to decentralisation and sub-national governance among the lead donors in Afghanistan, which failed to ensure a joint policy dialogue and common programmatic approach in support of this. Instead, the ASGP has been implemented with limited upstream policy support and different degrees of duplication among competing SNG programmes. At the same time, the substantive use of earmarkings in the ASGP (and in other development interventions) is non-compliant with the OECD-DAC donors' international commitments to aid effectiveness. Sida's earmarkings for the North, according to interviewees, risks exacerbating regional inequalities in the country.

Programmatically, the programme objective is relevant to the Government of Afghanistan policies and priorities as well as those of Sida. However, the political context and the realities on the ground, means that the ultimate authority at a local level, the governors, are appointed by and refer to the President rather than the Legislative. The majority of these are local warlords or tribal leaders, and the programme is thus at risk of reducing the already existing limited democratic space at local level.⁷⁴

In terms of effectiveness, the programme suffers from overemphasis on inputs and activities, resulting in the implementation of an extensive number of activities with a focus on meeting specific input indicators. There is limited attention to the outcome level, and no substantial evidence in place to suggest longer-term effects of the programme. There are some positive results such as the Customer Service Centre and individual capacity enhancements in e.g. the use of ICTs, but at the more strategic organisational level progress is meagre. The lessons learned, is that before funding such large programmes there is a need to more explicitly design a programme with clear causalities in the expected theory of change and link this to indicators with clear baseline data, followed by the use of mid-term and end-line studies as well as adapting the programme to contextual changes.

The limited progress in terms of effectiveness towards meeting the programme objective, is in part explained by multiple efficiency challenges. These include internal efficiency challenges in terms of gaps of human resources and management in ASGP in the initial stages of ASGP II combined with faults in the design pertaining to LoA staff application and delays in payments to the implementing partners. Finally, the overemphasis on reporting on activities and outputs, rather than outcome has resulted in an overemphasis on the first and limited attention to measuring longer term results. Externally, the efficiency as well as impact have been hampered by the lack of donor harmonisation, donor earmarkings, and duplication of work across different SNG programmes.

From a Sida perspective the limited progress in terms of achieving advances for gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as the challenges in terms of applying a Human-Rights Based Approach, is a concern. According to the UNDP application to Sida, the programme has in principle been designed to address gender specifically, but no noteworthy results can be documented in the field. At the same time there are elements of HRBA in the approach in terms of accountability and participation, but results are meagre and there is no reflection in the design of implementation on non-discrimination. The programme documents have been adapted to receive Sida's funding but it's specific requirements have not been met.

⁷⁴ See also: [Name protected] (2009a), p 12.

In terms of sustainability, the programme suffers from the lack of an exit strategy. If Sida decides to terminate its funding to the programme by the end of the current phase, there is a high probability that several SNGs as well as IDLG will face major difficulties in fulfilling their mandate.

The combination of the fault in the programme theory of change given the lack of commitment to democratic devolution, combined with the challenges of ensuring effective programme implementation, means that the programme is not in a position to produce expected impact. To achieve a long term effect, sub-national laws and policies developed by IDLG with the support of ASGP as well as the provincial plans need to be implemented.

As a whole, subnational governance calls for continued and coherent political and financial support with emphasis on democratic devolution. Otherwise the State, despite initial progress, will not be in a position to deliver services to its citizens and is likely to progressively lose its legitimacy to represent the people. To achieve this, emphasis needs first and foremost to be on ensuring that the political will and framework is in place. An effective SNG programme in Afghanistan should use this as its basis and then move from policy to implementation, once the necessary political changes have materialised.

5 Recommendations

The recommendations have been designed for Sida, the UNDP as well as the Government of Afghanistan.

For Sida:

- Aligned with the newly approved Swedish Government development cooperation policy for Afghanistan, Sida should continue to prioritise support to democratic devolution of the delivery of services in Afghanistan in the coming years. Focus should be on accountability and the delivery of services to the most vulnerable parts of the population. The support should also be seen in light of the benefits of decentralised local democratic governance in terms of state-building and legitimacy in the context of stabilisation. In this sense, Sida should consider by the end of the year two: Together with other likeminded donors (e.g. Finland, Switzerland and others) engage more actively in establishing a common strategy to SNG programme implementation and joint policy dialogue. The engagement should aim at producing:
 - (i) a joint policy framework favouring democratic local governance within the framework of the relevant NPPs, which the donors will use in policy dialogue discussions with GoA; and
 - (ii) the design of a single programme (or as a minimum complementary programmes) with a clear theory of change aimed at meeting the common agreed objective, aligned with ANDS. The joint donor discussion should also include a specific consideration as to the appropriate place of anchoring such a joint programme
- Before reengaging in a possible next phase or a new joint programme, attention should be made to ensuring that the design of the programme ensures that HRBA is applied and that the programme will contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment. Specific indicators and reporting on these two areas should be requested in the design phase, and the results should be closely monitored by Sida during implementation, supported by policy dialogue if required.
- If Sida decides to continue funding ASGP or its successor, Sida must engage in the redesign process and ensure that the findings in this report are addressed.
- In line with Sida's commitments to Aid Effectiveness, Sida should refrain from introducing earmarkings in a possible upcoming programme.

For UNDP:

- Consider the appropriate anchoring of the programme within the newly elected Government set up and priorities. The current situation with basic services delivered through deconcentrated units of the line ministries should be taken

into consideration (if fiscal decentralisation is not imminent), as well as the prioritisation of the new President.

- Continue with the redesign its sub national governance programme, taking into considerations the new government's institutional changes together with the findings of this, as well as previous evaluation reports. The redesign should be complete by end-2014 and should:
 - Reflect the challenges with the current context and the current limited ownership to reform, and use this as the basis for expected progress.
 - Include a more comprehensive theory of change that should be designed based on the achievement of realistic overall objectives and a logical path of meeting this at all levels from activities, over outputs and outcomes. Further, this theory of change needs to be fully informed by understanding of existing local governance practices and power structures;
 - Develop and include clear indicators at all levels in the results matrix and in alignment with the overall theory of change. The indicators should be SMART and based on measurable progress and based on obtainable evidence.
 - Adopt a systematic approach to capacity development effectively involving stakeholders at different level, including donors and their implementing partners as well as civil society and the private sector.
 - Roll out stronger accountability mechanisms enabling proper joint performance monitoring utilising benchmarks and indicators to properly measure outcomes.
 - Include gender and women's empowerment as well as more specifically target the vulnerable beneficiaries, this should not be driven by donors priorities. Specific indicators should be developed to document progress within this area.
 - Ensure that the programme at local level are aligned with legislation to ensure sustainability. This in practice means that the capacity development and accountability measures implemented should follow current legislation, or alternatively be limited to piloting, which can be used as examples for future legislation.
 - Ensure that development of outputs are designed and produced by the PGOS, municipalities and districts take full responsibility of implementation, and that ASGP (and in the future LoA staff) only serve as advisers to the implementation.
- A redesign of ASGP should furthermore be undertaken in partnership with existing and future programmes in the sector to ensure complementarity. Mechanisms for ongoing coordination with any such programmes should be established under the leadership of GoA.
- UNDP and IDLG need to work together to develop an exit strategy of the current ASGP, how it will phase out defining clear milestones and how long will it take. To define an exit strategy UNDP and IDLG, should opt either for direct implementation or national implementation as suggested in the efficiency section of the report. In its new design of its sub national governance pro-

gramme, UNDP should clearly adopt a sustainable approach to capacity building. To do so, UNDP should:

- Work from the same premises and review the organisational structure of ASGP, UNDP and IDLG staff defining clear roles and responsibilities.
- Opt for reducing international staff, kick start national implementation with regional support.
- Phase out the LoA approach and make tashkeel positions more attractive
- move towards streamlining project management in favour of technical expertise collocated with national counterparts to provide hands-on advisory services and mentoring.
- Finally, in terms of a proper capacity development approach, UNDP should consider phasing out of substituting local capacities and adopting a more holistic approach from the start. In this sense, UNDP should make use of existing best practice in capacity development from its experience in e.g. South Sudan.
- All these recommendations are preconditioned by UNDP and GoA overcoming current disagreements and working constructively to find solutions for the benefit of the people of Afghanistan. This should include solving issues pertaining to DIM vs NIM implementation, taking into consideration the above recommendations.

For GoA:

- In line with the commitments made in ANDS, NPP4, and TMAF, the Government should move forward with endorsing the draft legislation on SNGs developed with assistance from ASGP/IDLG.
- To further live up to its policy commitments and in this way meeting the needs for accountable local governance, the Government should move the devolution reform agenda forward. Part of this process should include considerations of making IDLG accountable to the legislature as is the case of other Government institutions in Afghanistan.
- Similarly, to live up to devolution commitment and support the ongoing reform process, the Government should focus on local level devolution and effectiveness through:
 - Implementation of elections for municipal level committees
 - Implementation of the already approved reforms at the district level
 - Formalisation of local level accountability mechanisms piloted by ASGP
 - Alignment of line ministry laws with the approved policy for Sub-national governance
- GoA should set SNG priorities, defining and coordinating bilateral and multi-lateral donor funded interventions. As part of this process the Government should coordinate the different SNG interventions and ensure that these are implemented in a complementary way, so as to avoid duplication and unnecessary transaction costs.

- Finally, GoA should apply a more rigorous results-based management approach to its decentralisation reform initiatives, including in regards to the support received for decentralisation and SNGs. The quality and progress should be used to guide policy, decision-making and reform implementation.

Annex 1 – Terms of Reference

2014-05-15

Terms of Reference

Result-oriented evaluation of UNDPs Afghanistan Sub-national Governance Program (ASGP)

1 BACKGROUND

1.1 Information about Sida

The point of departure for Swedish Development Cooperation is the perspective of poor people on development and the rights perspective: participation, non-discrimination, accountability, openness and transparency.

The overall objective of Swedish development cooperation in Afghanistan is to enable people living in poverty, particularly women, girls and young people, to enjoy better living

conditions in a peaceful, democratic and legally secure society. Within the current strategy the main sectors for Swedish support are: 1) *democracy, human rights and gender equality*, and 2) *education*.

In addition to the objectives set for Afghanistan as a whole, Sweden has the following specific objectives for northern Afghanistan in the provinces of Balkh, Samangan, Sar-e-Pul and Jowzjan:

1. Strengthened administrative capacity at provincial and district level so that basic social services can be delivered in a democratic and legally secure manner.
2. A growing private business sector able to help improve livelihoods and boost employment, particularly among women and young people.

According to the Swedish strategy 1/3 is earmarked to the four Northern provinces.

Afghanistan remains one of the poorest countries in the world, one that will be dependent on international aid for years to come. An autonomous and modern Afghan state requires governance systems that are effective and accountable. Heavy investments have been made to build the government where the central state has been the focus and less attention has been given to provincial and local governance. The creation of the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) and the sub-national governance policy are key achievements in the development of the local government.

Development of local democracy and public administration at provincial and district level is one main component within the support for democratic development. Support to democratic institutions and administrative bodies at provincial and district level should be linked to on-going reforms at central government level as well as to reform work under way in the ministries at provincial level, with the aim of strengthening their ability to effectively implement reforms at local level.

2.1 UNDP/ASGP

UNDP's Afghanistan Sub-national Governance Program (ASGP) aims at support the local governance policy and reform agenda through their main cooperation partner, the IDLG, as well as provincial and district governor offices, provincial councils and municipalities. UNDP/ASGP together with IDLG, work towards the development of the institutional framework required to maintain sub – national governance system that provides security, economic opportunity and basic government services to its people. The program shall build the policy, operational framework and systems necessary to improve Afghanistan's capacity to govern, with a focus to strengthen linkages between the citizen and the state. The primary focus is to empower governors, mayors at the provincial and district level as well as Provincial Councils to oversee and coordinate all provincial and district governance, public, administration reform and donor activities in the province or district. It is crucial to have a sub – national governance system in place. When such a structure is working the government can deliver basic services to its people and will build confidence among its citizens. This will lead to a more stable country. Without functional subnational governance legitimacy, the state can be questioned.

ASGP's central office in Kabul provides support for capacity development of IDLG through a technical and policy advisory team as well as capacity development to the provincial and districts local governance through IDLG staff (Letter of Agreement-staff).

The overall objective is to support an effective, more accountable and more representative public administration at the national and sub-national levels to improve delivery of services in an equitable, efficient and effective manner.

The UNDP/ASGP work toward four key outputs:

- 1) To assure that national systems, procedures and legal frameworks to implement, coordinate and monitor the sub-national governance policy are in place.
- 2) Provincial and District governor Offices have the capacity to manage provincial and district governance as well as to manage the development and security of the provinces and districts in accordance with the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS).
- 3) Provincial Councils have improved the capacity to represent citizen's interests and monitor sub-national governance.
- 4) Municipalities have the institutional and organizational capacity to collect revenues and deliver basic public services.

The ASGP is aligned with the goals and objectives of the ANDS and the National Priority Program (NPP).

UNDP has in addition developed components in the program for information and communication technology for development (ICT4D) for better results, particularly to empower women.

The UNDP/ASGP is funded to support the four Northern provinces Balk, Samangan, Jawzjan and Sar-e-Pul.

2 SCOPE OF ASSIGNMENT

2.1 General information

As a part of, and in preparation of, Sida's possible assessment and new agreement with UNDP and the ASGP it has been decided that a result oriented evaluation shall be undertaken. The evaluation should cover ASGP II activities carried out during October 2012- July 2014 in the four provinces of Samangan, Balkh, Jawzjan and Sar-e-Pul, including the ICT4-component.

The evaluation will consist of the following:

1. A desk study, as a first step to compile and *critically* analyze the findings and recommendations from already existing evaluations (both external and internal), studies, applications and reports from 2012 and onwards.
2. As a second step, field visit should be conducted in the provinces as a complement to the desk study. Interviews should be done with relevant stakeholders. These interviews should include UNDP-staff in Kabul and Mazar, representatives of national, province and district authorities, local communities, direct beneficiaries, Sida-staff in Stockholm and Swedish embassy staff.
3. Findings and results from the evaluation and the field visits should be synthesized in a final report focusing on the assessment of *relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and how the rights based perspective is implemented* by the UNDP/ASGP.

2.2 Purpose

The overall purpose of the evaluation is to assess if UNDP/ASGP has/has not fulfilled the goals and expected results as specified in the application and RAF⁷⁵. The evaluation will have a critical and learning approach. **The intended direct users of the evaluation are Sidas Unit for Afghanistan and UNDP. Other stakeholders selected are the Swedish Embassy in Kabul.** The evaluation is expected to provide findings, conclusions and recommendations for Sida to use in Sida's assessment of UNDP/ASGP and the possible renewal of the agreement for 2015-2017. **The evaluation is also intended to provide UNDP with recommendations for its future work.**

For above mentioned purposes, the assessment will (i) document experience of UNDP/ASGP programme activity in Balkh, Jazwjjan, Samangan and Sar-e-Pul; (ii) discuss and provide evidence of how programme activity has met agreed targets, (iii) summarize lessons learned and provide recommendations for programme design and management going forward. New inputs for consideration include, inter alia, recommendations from risk and conflict analyses covered under the contribution agreement.

2.3 Stakeholder involvement

This framework for evaluation has been generated in consultation with UNDP/ASGP country office in Kabul and the Regional Office in Mazar e Sharif. A more elaborate evaluation strategy and methodology developed by the implementing team should also take into account necessary interactions with key local stakeholders such as the IDLG.

The evaluators should, during the course of their work, carry out a sufficient number of interviews with relevant UNDP/ASGP/IDLG staff and management functions, as well as a representative sample of beneficiaries randomly selected. Beneficiaries are both beneficiaries at the different governmental offices as well as the people that the program is supposed to reach. Other international donors should also be interviewed.

⁷⁵ Result Assessment Framework

2.4 Evaluation questions

1. To what extent are UNDP/ASGPs interventions effective in terms of achieving objectives/outputs stipulated in applications and reports in relation to the application to Sida and its goals and expected results?
2. To what extent is the ASGP relevant in terms of meeting the Afghan context and the demands from beneficiaries and stakeholders?
3. To what extent does UNDP/ASGP present results at outcome level as compared to those anticipated in the program documents, applications and reports to Sida.
4. To what extent are UNDP/ASGP results at outcome level sustainable?
5. How does UNDP/ASGP implement the rights perspective based on the four principles *participation, non-discrimination, transparency, and accountability* with beneficiaries and civil society?
6. How does UNDP/ASGP implement a gender perspective in the program? More specific, how does the ASGP address:
 - Equal participation of men and women in subnational decision making.
 - Equal access of men and women to and benefit from public services.
 - Equal job opportunities within subnational government institutions.
7. How does UNDP/ASGP contribute to sustainable administration reform and a merit based approach?
8. How has UNDP/ASGP integrated conflict sensitivity in planning, implementation and reporting?

Unintended effects should be identified and captured in this evaluation. Such effects can relate to targeting errors, recoil effects, fungibility or substitution effects. Substitution effects materialize when the intended positive effects for a particular target group are realized, but only at the expense of other groups or broader systems equally deserving of support.

Recommendations and lessons

The evaluation is primarily expected to provide findings, conclusions and recommendations for Sida to use in Sida's Assessment of UNDP/ASGP and Sida possible renewal of the current agreement ending 31 December 2014. Also conclusions and recommendations of use for UNDP/ASGP shall be provided.

Recommendations given on the basis of findings in this review should focus on key ways and opportunities of achieving maximum outcomes given comparative advantages and potential of the program.

Clear references to related underpinnings, observations, and applicable global, regional and local best practice should be given for each recommendation.

2.4 Methodology and Implementation, Work plan and schedule

The budget for the evaluation is maximum **SEK 800 000**.

The evaluation will be:

1. Based upon documentation, discussions with stakeholders and staff.
2. Field visits to some selected project sites.
3. Interviews with key interlocutors in IDLG, PGO, PC, districts governor offices and municipalities.

Proposed methodology should be articulated in the inception report. Due to the cultural context, at least one team member should be a woman, preferably with local language skills.

Appropriate methodology and methods to be used in the execution of the evaluation will be worked out in detail during the Inception Phase of the evaluation by the Evaluation Team and be documented in an Inception Report which has to be approved by Sida.

The inception report shall include:

- A model for analysis of the ASGP theory of change,
- A model for how the *evaluation process* will be applied,
- Further elaboration of evaluation questions and of how the selected evaluation criteria will be applied,
- The evaluation will be based upon reviews of documentation and interviews,
- An overall evaluation design showing how evaluation questions will be answered,
- An account of baseline data identified,
- A basic analysis of stakeholders, influencing and/or affected by UNDP/ASGP program, directly or indirectly,
- An account of how stakeholders will participate in the evaluation (who, how, when, why),
- Possible key issues to be further looked into in the evaluation,
- Possible delimitations to be agreed upon with Sida and UNDP,
- A detailed work programme,
- A budget.

The Inception report shall be approved by Sida prior to the initiation of the evaluation exercise. A Final Inception Report shall be submitted within one week of the receipt of comments on the draft from Sida and UNDP.

Overall the team shall:

- Review and analyze UNDP/ASGPs external evaluations, program documents, strategy, program proposal, narrative reports and financial reports.
- During the field visit the consultant has to give relevant feedback on and discuss the initial observations/findings with Sida and UNDP.
- Before leaving Afghanistan the consultants shall carry out a debriefing with UNDP Regional Office and country office in Kabul, the Swedish Embassy in Kabul and if possible, also with representatives from beneficiaries, both men and women, in the four provinces.
- Findings and results from the desk study and the field visits shall be synthesized in a final report focusing on the assessment of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and how the right based perspective is implemented in the UNDP/ASGP funded by Sida.
- Prepare a final report based on comments shared by UNDP as per the validation meeting and based on subsequent comments by Sida.

Deadline for final evaluation report is October 15, 2014. The draft report is due by September 30, 2014. In-field work and report writing will therefore partly take place in Afghanistan.

2.6 Reporting and documentation

Upon signing of the contract with the consultant, time and budget for the evaluation will be approved by Sida. The Evaluation Team shall present a draft inception report to Sida and UNDP/ASGP for discussion and approval. The final inception report should be approved by Sida, and will serve as a guiding document for the rest of the evaluation. A draft report should be delivered to relevant stakeholders four weeks before deadline for the final review. Stakeholder feedback should be collected during the succeeding three weeks. By the time a final report is submitted, one day of work from the lead consultant should remain, to be used for any necessary post deadline revisions or for a 0,5 day review-based workshop held for relevant stakeholders.

Format and outline of the Final Report shall follow the guidelines in **Sida's Review Report – a standardized Format**. Subject to decision by Sida the review will be published. The final report must be presented in a way that enables publication without further editing. When the draft report has been submitted the consultants will present the report at a seminar at Sida for all stakeholders interested.

The report must include a presentation of the process in drawing up the evaluation design and choosing methodology. It shall also list all contributors to the evaluation (excepting those that have opted for anonymity).

The report shall be written in English and the summary and recommendation should be translated to Dari. The format and outline of the report shall therefore follow, as closely as is feasible, the guidelines in Sida Evaluation Manual – a Standardised Format. Subject to decision by Sida, the report might be published in the series *Sida Evaluation*.

The evaluation has been commissioned by Sida's Unit for Afghanistan. The Senior Advisor on democracy and human rights, Elisabet Hellsten, is responsible for the evaluation.

An over-all de-briefing of findings to date is expected to be delivered at the Swedish embassy in Kabul at the end of the in-field part of the review. A presentation of the draft report should be presented and discussed at Sida Stockholm before the final report is submitted. Related inputs from Sida and Embassy staff, as well as UNDP's representatives participating in this review, should be collected.

The review reports should adhere to the OECD/DAC Glossary on Evaluation and Results-Based Management, and the format should correspond to the benchmark structure presented in Sida's Evaluation Manual Annex B.

The final report should be presented by October 15 and not exceed 30 pages excluding annexes.

Evaluation team

The evaluation team should be constructed to have a solid set of qualifications of Monitoring and Evaluation, governance, gender, democracy and human rights, as well as a good understanding of development in conflict and Post Conflict Environments and of Afghanistan. Due to the country context it is mandatory that at least one of the evaluation team members must be an afghan woman with experiences of similar projects and the ability to carry out interviews in local languages. The consultant team should have exhibited skills in interviewing and analyzing qualitative data gathered through interviews.

2.7 Schedule

The evaluation will be undertaken during seven weeks from June 15 and be finalized by October 15, 2014. An Inception report should be presented to Sida within 7-10 days after the evaluation is initiated. Minimum 2 weeks of the evaluation should be spent in Afghanistan for interviews and field visits. Sida and UNDP/ASGP should approve the Inception Report within ten days.

The draft report shall be submitted to UNDP/ASGP and Sida electronically no later than three weeks before deadline. Sida and UNDP/ASGP will comment the draft report within 10 working days, after which the Consultant shall prepare the *final report* within ten working days.

2.8 Profile of the Supplier and requirements for personnel

Required competences of the team members are:

- I. Academic degrees in Development Studies and/or Political science or equivalent.
- II. Vast experience in working and/or evaluating within the sector of governance.
- III. Minimum 5 years of experience of evaluation of international development work, particularly in the governance area.
- IV. All team members must be fully professionally in English.

- V. At least one of the team members must be a woman and a local consultant, fluent in Dari.
- VI. Good understanding on the Afghan context.

The Consultant should use a participatory approach and have a gender balanced team. The Team Leader should have thorough experience of Swedish Development Cooperation including good governance issues, gender issues and documented experience of conducting evaluations.

Curriculum Vitae must contain full description of the team members' theoretical qualifications and professional work experience. The CV must be signed by the persons proposed.

2.9 Proposal Frame Tenders

Tenders must submit two written specifications of previously performed similar projects by the proposed persons. The specifications must contain information according to the annexed form "Reference for Project Performed by an Individual", Appendix 2.1, and relate to projects performed and concluded within the past three years.

The proposal must include:

- a) A description in the form of Curriculum Vitae for the personnel who is/are to participate in the performance of the project. The CV must contain a full description of the person's or persons' theoretical qualifications and professional work experience.
- b) The working methods employed in order to complete the assignment and secure the quality of the completed work; use a participatory approach and if possible a gender based team including local consultants;
- c) State the total cost of the assignment, specified as fee per hour for each category of personnel, any reimbursable costs, any other costs and any discounts (all types of costs in SEK and exclusive of VAT);
- d) A proposal for time and working schedules according to the Assignment, including suggestions and criteria for selecting countries/programmes to be examined;

Annex 2 - Inception Report

INTRODUCTION

This report reflects the team's assessment and suggestions on the methodology, approach and implementation of the Sida funded UNDP implemented Afghanistan Sub-national Governance Programme (ASGP) in Afghanistan. The evaluation will be implemented during July-October 2014.

In the following, we first present an assessment of the scope of the evaluation, outlining objectives and contextual issues. In chapter 3, we discuss the evaluability and present revised evaluation questions for the implementation phase. In chapter 4, we present the suggested methodology and approach to be applied. In chapter 5, we present a first draft Theory of Change (ToC) of the ASGP to be discussed with UNDP and Sida during the evaluation. In chapter 6, we undertake an initial stakeholder presentation to inform the field mission research. And finally, in chapter 7 we present a draft programme for the field mission.

ASSESSMENT OF SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

This section provides an overview of the background for the evaluation.

Sida's objectives in Afghanistan

The overall objective of the Swedish development cooperation in Afghanistan is to enable people living in poverty, particularly women, girls and young people, to enjoy better living conditions in a peaceful, democratic and legally secure society.

The past Swedish cooperation strategy for the evaluation focuses on 1) democracy, human rights and gender equality and 2) education. The Specific objectives for the Northern Afghanistan (in the provinces of Balkh, Samangan, Sar-e-Pul and Jowzjan) are:

- Strengthened administrative capacity at provincial and district level so that basic social services can be delivered in a democratic and legally secure manner.
- A growing private business sector able to help improve livelihoods and boost employment, particularly among woman and young people.

The new 2014-2019 focuses on strong democracy and equality, improved respect for human rights, and freedom of expression. Among the focus areas relevant for this evaluation are:

- More women and men participate in democratic processes and demand accountability from public institutions
- Strong capacity of public institutions enabling these to provide basic services.

The Afghanistan Sub-national Governance Programme (ASGP) – Phase II

The Afghanistan Sub-national Governance Programme (ASGP) has since 2006 worked as a multi-donor⁷⁶ assisted project that supports the Government of Afghanistan to enhance local governance at the operational and policy levels. It is implemented by UNDP as the international partner and the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) and the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC) as the Afghan partners.

In 2012, Sida decided to support ASGP with 116 MSEK for the period 2012-2014, of a total approved budget of USD 95,633,704.

Now in its second phase (2010 –2014), the ASGP continue its involvement in institutional development and capacity building of the IDLG, which is (and has been) the major national partner and also works at lower levels to support the provincial and district governors' offices, provincial councils and municipalities. Support to the IARCSC was discontinued in 2011⁷⁷.

The programme aims to scale up existing interventions in policy development and implementation, national capacity building of IDLG, assistance to provincial, district and municipal administrations and respective councils; and support to local coordination mechanisms at the provincial and district levels.

Its overall objective was defined (and continues to be) to contribute to the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) Outcomes 2 and 3 (see figure 2.1 below).

UNDAF Outcome(s)	Expected CP Outcome(s)	Expected Output(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome 2: Government capacity to deliver services to the poor and vulnerable is enhanced. • Outcome 3: The institutions of democratic governance are integrated components of the nation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome 3: The State has improved its ability to deliver services to foster human development and elected bodies have greater oversight capacity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3.1 Inclusive legislation, policies and programmes are in place and government institutions are strengthened to improve the quality of service delivery. • 3.3 Improved capacity of elected bodies to provide effective oversight.

Figure 2.1 - Objectives of the ASGP

⁷⁶ Donors are: European Union, Italy, Japan, DFID, SDC (Switzerland), Sida (Sweden), UNDP (CCF), UNDP (Core Fund), Finland, and France.

⁷⁷ 2014 UNDP Evaluation Report.

During the years 2007-2009 ASGP expanded its activities from Kabul to provincial areas, and during 2013, the ASGP in the north region of Afghanistan, has established its presence and launched several sub-national institutional capacity development initiatives. The provincial approach decentralises ASGP implementation to the sub-national level through a partnership between UNDP, IDLG, and each provincial governor. ASGP has expanded its activities into the Balkh, Faryab, Jawzjan, Samangan and Saripul provinces in Northern Afghanistan and worked in partnership with the Provincial Governor's Office (PGO), the Provincial Council and Municipality to improve sub-national governance for effective and efficient public services delivery. Swedish support to ASGP II has therefore gone to the Northern provinces, which will also be the geographical focus of this evaluation.

The assignment

The intervention to be evaluated, UNDP's Afghanistan Sub-national Governance Programme (ASGP)⁷⁸ aims at supporting the local governance policy and reform agenda through their main cooperation partner, the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) and provincial and district governor offices, provincial councils and municipalities. The overall objective is to support an effective, more accountable and more representative public administration at the national and sub-national levels to improve service delivery.

We understand that the assignment has been initiated to provide input to Sida's upcoming assessment and the possible new agreement with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the ASGP for the period 2015-2017. It will furthermore inform the sub-national governance institutions evaluated and external stakeholders as well. This should be done, by providing findings, conclusions and recommendations for Sida as well as recommendations to UNDP as well as IDLG and the sub-national governance stakeholders. The intended users of this evaluation consist of the Sida Unit for Afghanistan, UNDP, the Swedish Embassy in Kabul, IDLG, and related stakeholders.

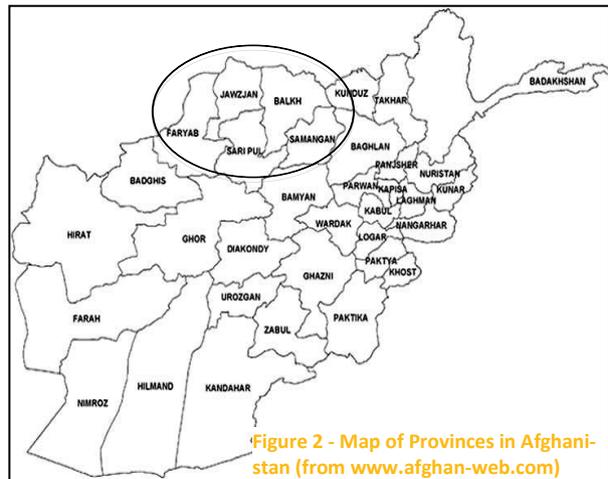


Figure 2 - Map of Provinces in Afghanistan (from www.afghan-web.com)

The evaluation should assess if UNDP/ASGP has/has not fulfilled the goals and expected outputs and outcomes as defined in the project application and the results as-

⁷⁸ While the ASGP is a national programme, this evaluation only focuses on the Northern Provinces where Sida has earmarked funding. The map indicates Faryab province as well, Sida is not funding Faryab province only four of them.

assessment framework. It is furthermore noted that the evaluation should cover ASPG II activities carried out in the period between October 2012 to July 2014 in the four Northern Provinces (see Figure 1) including the information and communication technology for development component.

Afghanistan

The period covering this evaluation ranges from 2012-2014. This period is characterised by a faltering transition period, with some progress, but mainly with continuing immense development challenges, human rights violations and an Afghan government that continues to pledge reforms in dealing with corruption, the control of funds, security issues, and the use of aid without making the progress that is necessary.

International donors along with the Afghans have made efforts to try to establish a national-level political system, expand the reach of its national courts and police, build a stronger army and give support to all officials appointed by the Kabul government. In spite of such efforts, government authority at the provincial and district levels remains challenged⁷⁹. Donors continue to fund development projects that are increasingly delegated for implementation by the Afghan government as well as economic development initiatives but Afghanistan will most likely remain dependent of foreign aid for many years to come.

Most recently, after months of election dispute in the aftermath of the second round of the Afghan presidential election in April and June 2014⁸⁰, the country is now seeing the two rival presidential candidates sign a deal to form a government of national unity. While the deal is not public yet, it essentially means that the presidential candidates should accept whoever appears as the winner after the election audit is finished. The undermining of the Afghan elections and the need for a brokered deal of a unity government, coupled with the on-going weak Afghan governance shows that Afghanistan still has some way to go to become a mature and stable democracy.

Sub-national governance in Afghanistan

After the Bonn conference and the establishment of an interim administration in the late 2001 and early 2002, which followed with couple of Loya Jirgas “Great Consultation” (Emergency Loya Jirga in 2002 and later Loya Jirga on the Afghan constitution in 2004), Afghanistan has struggled over the decision of whether it should be a centralised or a decentralised state.

⁷⁹ <http://mepc.org>.

⁸⁰ The April 2014 elections (and the run-off in June 2014) were largely managed by the Afghan electoral institutions themselves and are widely regarded as having been a success, with a much higher voter turn-out (including amongst women) than in previous elections.

Heavy investments to bring in Afghan and international experts to write up the most decent policy documents on local governance and so-called empower the sub-national entities to fully represent the provincial inhabitants needs were made. There were dozens of national and sub-national capacity building efforts to enhance the institutional development of those Afghan institutions that are responsible to harmonise the individual and institutional development across the country. However, the current institutional and legal framework – as spelled out in the Afghan Constitution, makes Afghanistan one of the more centralised states globally.

While the potential misuse of funds and poor capacity at local level remains a key argument for the limited decentralisation, capacities have improved over the years. Improved systems and procedures within the Government are increasingly targeting corrupt practices and misuse of funds. Afghanistan has recently undergone a Public Financial Management and Accountability Assessment in accordance with the Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) approach⁸¹. Overall, the assessment is very positive, documenting continued progress against key PEFA indicators. However, according to Transparency International ranking Afghanistan is still ranked near the bottom at 175 out of 177 in the Corruption Perceptions Index (2013)⁸². Furthermore, the lack of a clear coherent strategy for subnational governance has also proved an impediment⁸³, as individual donors address their work in different ways with limited harmonisation.

Sub-national governance remains a challenge in Afghanistan, but with pockets of positive developments. There is a need to enhance the degree of service delivery at local level, in particular in rural areas where access to services is limited. Improved sub-national governance will assist in enhancing the legitimacy of the Government. However, there are still competing local level governing structures and competition between different branches of the Government, which has resulted in multiple uncoordinated sub-national governance projects.

The development and implementation of the National Priority Program (NPP) for Local Governance initiated by IDLG in 2011 and the revised version of NNP4 – presented in Tokyo conference 2012 - is a significant step towards establishing a genuine multi-tier governance system for the country⁸⁴. The development of democratic insti-

⁸¹ World Bank (2013): *Afghanistan Public Financial Management and Accountability Assessment*, August

⁸² <http://www.transparency.org/country#AFG>.

⁸³ A Synthesis Paper of Lessons from Aid to Afghanistan, January 24, 2013, Independent Evaluation Group of the World Bank.

⁸⁴ USAID's Office Democracy and Governance funded study (2008) by Joseph Siegle and Partrick

tutions of local governance (along all three dimensions, political, administrative and fiscal) is seen as the primary objective of the National Priority Program for Local Governance. Similarly, democratic local governance is stated as a condition to achieve the further objective of genuine local development defined by the stated goal of the NPP4, which is “to strengthen local government institutions for effective, efficient and accountable delivery of services”.

Gender issues in Afghanistan

Afghanistan has signed and ratified all relevant human rights instruments that protect women’s rights⁸⁵. The Afghan Constitution states, “*The state shall adopt necessary measures to attain the physical and spiritual health of the family, especially of the child and mother, upbringing of children, as well as the elimination of related traditions contrary to the principles of the sacred religion of Islam*”⁸⁶. The National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA) 2007-2018 provides a framework for the implementation of women’s constitutional rights, the Conventions on Elimination all Forms of Racial Discriminations (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action. It has also been endorsed in the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS) 2008-2013.⁸⁷ ANDS recognises the importance of full participation of Afghan women in the reconstruction and development of the country and thus their involvement in political, social, cultural and economic life. Furthermore, Afghanistan’s Constitution guarantees non-discrimination and equality of women and men, reserves a 25% share of seats for women parliamentarians in the National Assembly, pledges to promote educational programs and health care for women, and guarantees the rights of vulnerable women⁸⁸. The ANDS specifically states that Afghanistan’s government goal is to: *Eliminate discrimination against women, develop their human capital, and ensure their leadership in order to guarantee their full and equal participation in all aspects of life.*⁸⁹

O’Mahony points to “greater citizen participation and a belief that citizen actions can help shape the nature and priorities of (local) government are also commonly felt to foster greater social and political stability. If citizens believe government is concerned and responsive to their needs (which can be best realized at the local level) and citizens have recourse when grievances have occurred, then there is little cause for armed struggle.”

⁸⁵ As for example the Conventions on Elimination all Forms of Racial Discriminations, on Elimination of Torture and other Oppressive, Inhuman and Degrading Treatments, on Elimination of all Forms of Discriminations against Women, the Declaration of Elimination of Violence against Women, Convention and the Child Rights Convention.

⁸⁶ Article 54, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, (Ratified) January 26, 2004.

⁸⁷ UN Women 2013.

⁸⁸ Afghanistan National Development Strategy, p. 90.

⁸⁹ According to the United Nations Development Programme’s Gender Inequality Index (2012), Afghanistan ranks at 147 out of 148 countries. In the parliament 27.6 percent of the seats are held by women (2012), and in the labour market female participation make up for 15.7 percent against an 80.3 for men. 5.8% of adult women have reached a secondary or higher level of education compared to 34% of their male counterparts. For every 100,000 live births, 460 women die from pregnancy related causes; and the adolescent fertility rate is 99.6 births per 1000 live births. Female participation in the

Nonetheless, the GoIRA has been criticised for not fully implementing steps necessary in ensuring gender equality. The ratification of international and national laws by the government is according to women’s networks and advocacy groups not driven by a real commitment to implement gender equality.

As one of the poorest countries in the world⁹⁰, Afghanistan has some of the worst indicators globally for the situation of women and their rights. Gender gaps in health, education, access to and control over resources, economic opportunities, justice and political participation remain pervasive.

While the attention to the position of women in key policy documents of GIROA is there, it needs to be translated into adequate and effective instruments to implement and drive these changes and enable women to be active in building their nation and communities. Currently, the state, regional and local institutions have limited capacities to handle and mainstream gender issues at each level.

Capacity building for gender mainstreaming so far has been limited to gender awareness training and training related activities for selected staff members of public institutions. To ensure increased and sustainable capacity of the institutions in the field of gender equality and actual improvement in the position of women they need access to better education, practical tools and demonstrated and workable examples to model after. This requires a systematic and comprehensive approach towards the gender mainstreaming process and its management. Also, collaboration and partnership (horizontal) between government institutions both on national and sub-national level should be strengthened to ensure increased and sustainable capacity⁹¹.

RELEVANCE AND EVALUABILITY OF EVALUATION QUESTIONS

According to the observations made in the other sections, the team considers that the program can be evaluated following the methodology and implementation plan outlined in this inception report. The team considers, that the time and resources available are sufficient to make a credible and reliable evaluation of the extent UNDP has met or not its ASGP targets. To do so, the team will mainly focus on four of the five

labour market is 15.7% compared to 80.3 for men.

⁹⁰ UNDP HDI Index 2013.

⁹¹

http://www.undp.org.af/WhoWeAre/UNDPinAfghanistan/Projects/dcse/Prodoc_DCSE/Gender_Prodoc_2007.pdf

key OECD-DAC evaluation criteria. Considering the length of the assignment and the resources available the evaluation will focus on outcome rather than impact.

As the focus of the evaluation is on lessons learning, there will be regular feedback on findings as they emerge from the combined evidence from the desk studies, key informant interviews and field visits. To measure progress and distil the evidence of how the programme activity has met agreed targets and summarise lessons learnt, the evaluation will primarily rely on qualitative and (when available) quantitative data. To summarise lessons learned and provide recommendations on the way forward the team will essentially use qualitative assessments (and participatory workshops).

Assessment of evaluation questions

Overall the team finds the evaluation questions clear and finds the evaluation feasible if the questions are further elaborated according to the suggestions made in table 3.1. The revised questions are based on the purposes of the evaluation and Sida evaluation questions as outlined in the ToR, the initial desk review and briefing with Sida and UNDP on key issues, evaluation uses and users as well as on the evaluation team judgement. The revised questions also suggest pertinent questions missing in the ToR.

Of a total of 8 evaluation questions outlined in the ToR, the team reviewed and further elaborated the questions. Now the suggested evaluation question contain a total of 5 overarching questions and 27 sub-questions. These are presented in full in the draft evaluation matrix presented in Annex 3. This does not mean that the team will not be answering the evaluation questions outlined in the ToR to the same level of detail, but it will allow for a more coherent approach focusing on the individual questions as part of a larger evaluation issue. Questions in the matrix will be used to structure the desk review, guide the interview guide and then the report accordingly.

Recommendations regarding evaluation questions

The questions are aligned with the objectives outlined in the Swedish Development Cooperation in Afghanistan, the specific objectives of the ASGP for Northern Afghanistan as well as the cooperation agreement/UNDP Programme document. In the set of suggested evaluation questions, each evaluation criteria⁹² (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact) has a corresponding overarching question and several sub-questions. The Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) adopted by Sida will be looked into both the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency criteria. Furthermore some key questions are included to draw conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned

⁹² To ensure consistency each evaluation criteria has been defined using OECD-DAC definitions.

As mentioned above, the team has further elaborated the evaluation questions. To do so, it has developed overarching questions outlined in bold and sub-questions in table 3.1. This will enable the team to gather evidence around each key issue and under each evaluation criteria used during both desk review, interviews and field visits. This combined with the evaluation matrix described in the methodology section will also allow the team to capture key issues and better structure its findings, conclusions and recommendations accordingly.

Assessment of available data

The team has searched for key documents on decentralised governance in Afghanistan and received key documents both from UNDP and Sida including external evaluations, program documents, strategy, program proposal, narrative reports and financial reports.

Based on a very preliminary review of the data and documents provided so far, and initial briefing, the team would like to point out that:

- Several documents, including ASGP programme proposals; the results assessment frameworks as well as annual reports often refer to different data sets and indicators that are not comparable.
- Most internal and external evaluations as well as progress reports focus on the ASGP programme as a whole and not on the specific areas funded by Sweden.
- So far, there is limited secondary information, aside from the programme document and a progress report that specifically focuses on the areas and components of the programme funded by Sweden.
- When UNDP has provided reports on progress of the ASGP in the areas funded by Sida, the reporting has mainly focused on the level of implementation of activities rather than the extent to which results have been achieved. Indicators in the results assessment framework and the progress report appear to differ.
- So far the national ASGP programme documents and evaluations appear to be more consistent than the documentation provided to Sweden.

These findings were confirmed in initial interviews with UNDP and Sida.

The team will review the evidence gathered from the desk in depth and assess the reliability of available data contained in the above-mentioned documents. If necessary the team will request both UNDP and Sida with requests for further documentation.

In addition to the desk review and analysis, the team will be collecting data during the field visit, as well as in the interactions with UNDP and Sida and other donors. Finally, Skype-interviews with selected interviewees will provide additional qualitative data.

PROPOSED APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The team assess the importance of the evaluation as a learning opportunity for UNDP, Sida and the Government of Afghanistan (IDLG in particular), and the methodology and approach applied is focused on ensuring the same. The learning elements means involving UNDP, Sida and IDLG in different stages in the evaluation to provide ‘learning points’, which at the same time will serve as guidance for the evaluation team.

Theory of Change approach

A key element in the evaluation methodology is the Theory of Change (ToC). Theory of Change is a reflection tool and results-focused approach to describing the logical change pathways or linkages that are embedded in programmes seeking to produce change.

To properly assess change over time of the ASGP ability to support the local governance policy and reform agenda through IDLG and various Afghan sub-national governance authorities and eventually evaluate outcomes and possible impact, the evaluation team has identified the ToC of the support, based on documents review (presented in the next section). The ToC is context related but also reflects the underlying assumptions or hypotheses of UNDP and Sida about how change occurs.

The emphasis on ToC will serve as a learning tool for UNDP as well as facilitate a reflection of the results framework (and causality). The programme has been operating for multiple years and the results framework and the ToC is likely to have evolved over time to meet the realities. This change can be reflected – as well as the relevance of this – through a looking at the ToC as part of the evaluation.

The draft ToC has been developed by the team (and presented in the following section). This ToC will then be validated with UNDP and Sida at the initial workshop to ensure that the team assess the programme in accordance with the understanding of planned change and assumptions by the implementing part and the donor.

Evaluation matrix

The major overall evaluation tool designed for this evaluation is the evaluation matrix (draft attached in Annex 3). The matrix is aligned with the OECD-DAC criteria, and the team will use the OECD-DAC definitions of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact.

The questions in the matrix are based on the ToR as described in the section above. Against these revised questions indicators have been developed to help guide the team in identifying evidence for the matrix. The indicators have been designed to optimise the use of existing documentation to allow for substantial data backing of each indicator. In practice, the indicators are developed based on review of available reports and data from UNDP and outside sources and have been subject to initial review by UNDP.

All team members will use the same format for the data collection to ensure that all areas are covered and that there is consistency in the application of the methodology.

Evaluation tools

To collect evidence for the indicators identified in the evaluation matrix, the team will apply different evaluation data collection tools. These include:

- Desk review of UNDP as well as external documentation
- Review of available documentation at local authority level
- Semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders (see section 6)
- Focus group discussions with beneficiaries (women and men in targeted provinces)
- ToC workshop with UNDP and Sida
- Validation Workshops with UNDP regional in Mazar-E-Sharif and UNDP and Sida in Kabul

The desk review is based on the documentation received from UNDP and Sida as well as those obtained through other sources by the evaluation team. The documentation has been prioritised based on inputs from UNDP as well as the team's own assessment. Findings from the documentation are added to the evaluation matrix in accordance with the relevant indicator.

In the field, the team will furthermore identify the existence of outputs from the UNDP programme capacity development support at the local authorities. In practice, this means that the team will verify the existence of plans, financial management systems, physical transparency measures as well as a rudimentary assess of the quality of these.

Evidence from key stakeholders and beneficiaries (i.e. women and men obtaining services from the local authorities) will be obtained using semi-structured and focus group discussion interview guidelines designed based on the evaluation matrix.

The evidence from these five different types of sources will be triangulated and weighed in the final analysis phase of the evaluation. To assess validity, the team will furthermore test preliminary findings through two validation workshops: one at the end of the Northern Region field mission at the UNDP regional headquarter, and one in Kabul with UNDP and Sida at the end of the field mission.

Limitations

Limitations may derive from remote management, data availability and comparability as well as staff turnover, limited access and security. This may well limit the evaluation teams' capacity to attribute results and change to the ASGP.

International presence in the northern Afghanistan may be limited, meaning that program is remotely managed by international staff from Kabul and is largely managed regionally and locally by national staff and local implementing partners. It is there-

fore crucial to involve these managers and organisations as far as possible in the data collection and consultation process. This will be done through the different consultations done by team members in Mazar-e-sharif , Balkh, Jazwjan, Samangan and Sar-e-Paul and, if relevant, through their representations in Kabul.

Constraints to the data collection process relate principally to the availability of critical data, planning sequence and availability of key stakeholders for interviews (both from international and Afghan organisations).

Another challenge of evaluating the ASGP in Afghanistan is the availability of precise and valid secondary data as well as the potential absence of comparable baselines, midlines and end lines information, both from decentralised government structures sources and from UNDP. Furthermore there also could be a loss of institutional memory due to the level of technical assistance and high staff turnover in a fast changing environment such as Afghanistan.

Attribution: Clearly, any potential changes (or lack thereof) in Afghanistan's decentralised governance are due to many factors including the interventions and programmes of a large number of security and development actors, but also the war lords, the private sector and the diaspora. The particular circumstances characterising Afghanistan, with limited access and little reliable data, make it a challenge to attribute results or changes to the programme that have been provided by UNDP.

Security regulations and compliance / MOSS: The team will be travelling with UNDP logistic support and travel should be MOSS compliant. This may limit the evaluation team capacity and ability to select randomly field visit locations. As a result, the team may end up only visiting sites that are more accessible and less problematic. These locations are likely to be where best case practices are generally reported from. Nevertheless this should allow the team to gather primary sources information and observation and understand the program successes and challenges.

ASGP DRAFT THEORY OF CHANGE

The following presents a first draft ToC developed by the evaluation team to be discussed and validated at the ToC workshop with the UNDP and Sida in Kabul. The ToC is based on a set of *a priori* assumptions about the benefits of (good) local governance and the means to improve the same.

The ASGP is based on an overall set of conceptual assumptions underpinning local governance interventions in developing context globally. These refer to improve-

ments in accountability, transparency, participation and eventually service delivery for poverty reduction. There is an inherent perception in decentralisation theory that moving governments closer to the people by default produces the anticipated results.⁹³ The ASGP is designed with these basic assumptions of how enhanced capacities of the local government system in Afghanistan will reap some of these benefits.

With this in mind, the ToC of the ASGP has been developed and implemented with assumptions related to ownership, commitments and resource availability at all levels of authority within GIRoA to enable the programme to meet its objectives. For change to take place these assumptions will need to be fully or partly confirmed by the evaluation team. Table 5.1 presents the draft ASGP ToC, with programme specific assumptions to be tested by the evaluation team. This ToC is subject to review in the ToC workshop in Kabul 31 August 2014.

Table 5.1 ASGP draft ToC and assumptions

Causality level	Expected change	Assumptions
Input	<p>If...</p> <p>1) The local government is supported with introducing improved systems, laws</p>	<p>1) Programme is staffed and operational</p> <p>2) Funds are provided to the programme by donors</p>

⁹³ See among others:

Crook, Richard (2003): "Decentralisation and Poverty Reduction in Africa: The Politics of Local-Central Relations", Public Administration and Development

Crook, Richard, and Manor, James (1998): "Democracy and Decentralisation in South Asia and West Africa". Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Goetz, Anne Marie and Gaventa, John (2001): "Bringing citizen voice and client focus into service delivery", IDS Working Paper 138, Institute of Development Studies

Johnson, Craig (2001): "Local democracy, democratic decentralisation and rural development: theories, challenges and options for policy." Development Policy Review, 19

Katsiaouni, Olympios (2003): "Decentralization and Poverty Reduction: Does it Work?" Paper submitted to the Fifth Global forum on reinventing government, Mexico City, November

Manor, James (2002): "The Political Economy of Democratic Decentralization" World Bank, Washington D.C.

Manor, James (2004): "Democratisation with inclusion". Journal of Human Development, 5

Steffensen, J., Tiedmand, P. & Mwaimpopo, E. (2004): "A comparative analysis of experiences from decentralisation in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. Final Report - Volume I, August 2004

UNDP-PAD (2003): "Decentralisation and Poverty Reduction: Africa and Asia experience". Report from conference in Dakar, Senegal, 1-2 July

UNDP (2005): "Democratic decentralization and poverty reduction. The Bolivian case", Oslo Governance Centre.

See also World Bank: <http://www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/decentralization/what.htm#2>

Causality level	Expected change	Assumptions
	<p>and policies at central level</p> <p>2) Training at local government institutional and individual level</p> <p>3) Introduction of new planning and financial management systems is ensured</p> <p>4) Mechanisms for enhanced awareness raising and information provision for citizens is introduced</p> <p>5) Capacity to generate resources at local level is enhanced</p> <p>6) Merit based recruitment with emphasis on employing women is installed</p>	<p>3) Local governments are provided with the (non-UNDP funded) resources from the Government to effectively engage in ASGP activities</p> <p>4) Security allows for the implementation of planned activities</p>
Output	<p>Then...</p> <p>1) Local government laws are passed and implemented across the country</p> <p>2) Local governments are planning, budgeting and implementing strategic and annual plans</p> <p>3) Local governments monitor and react to the implementation of plans</p> <p>4) Local governments actively reach out to, inform and consult citizens about their services, obligations and performance</p> <p>5) More women access local government jobs</p>	<p>1) Improved laws and regulations are owned and endorsed by the legislative institutions and that there is a willingness in the Government to implement these</p> <p>2) Capacity development activities are relevant and demanded by staff who are present and motivated to engage in these</p> <p>3) There is willingness among local governments to engage citizens and willingness among citizens to be engaged</p> <p>4) There is willingness and openness towards employing women in local governments</p>
Outcome	<p>Leading to...</p> <p>1) Increased local level service delivery</p> <p>2) Improved perception of government performance, accountability and transparency</p>	<p>The enhanced capacities, systems and procedures are relevant to the needs and used and implemented at all tiers in the local government system</p>
Impact	<p>Eventually resulting in...</p> <p>Democratic local government institutions that are an integrated component of the nation; eventually contributing to democratic development, enhanced service delivery and poverty reduction</p>	<p>Contextual development allows local governments to operate and deliver outputs and outcomes</p>

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

The team will ensure to engage with all relevant stakeholders in the analysis and use the information from these to weigh the evidence according to their role in the programme. In addition to the direct programme relevant stakeholders, i.e. IDLG, local level authorities and UNDP ASGP management entities, the other primary stakeholders may be divided into four main categories (The categories of stakeholders at different levels are illustrated in figure 6.1):

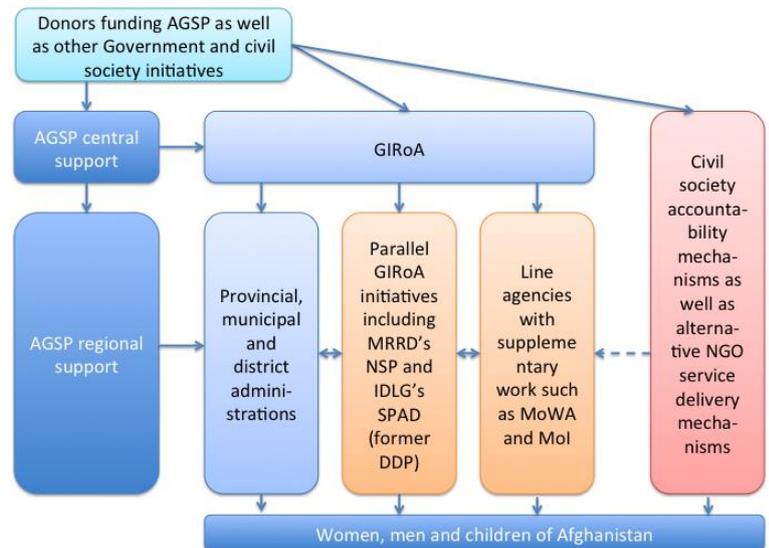


Figure 6.1 - overview of key categories of stakeholders relevant for the ASGP evaluation

- Other government entities who engage in decentralisation activities or thematic activities relevant for the ASGP objectives. This also includes other programmes supporting decentralisation type activities such as the National Solidarity Programme (NSP);
- Civil society involved either in strengthening demand-side governance at decentralised levels or which is otherwise engaged in service delivery provided in parallel to those of the local authorities;
- Donors providing funding to these activities; and finally, but most importantly;
- Women, men and children accessing the decentralised services.

To identify more clearly whom the team may meet, a detailed stakeholder's list has been developed with a description of the link to ASGP as well as sample issues to be tested with the given stakeholder (table 6.1).

Table 6.1 Overview of ASGP related stakeholders relevant for the evaluation

Stakeholder	Formal relation to ASGP	Sample issues to be tested by the evaluation
ASGP directly related		
IDLG	Overall GIRoA responsible for local authorities and ASGP implementation	Full set of ASGP related questions
UNDP national level	Overall management and coordination of programme together with IDLG and provision of central level capacity development and policy work for GIRoA	Full set of questions related to output 1
UNDP regional level	Regional management and coordination together with local authorities and capacity development of local authorities	Full set of questions related to output 2-4

Stakeholder	Formal relation to ASGP	Sample issues to be tested by the evaluation
Province (council and staff)	Partner and recipient of ASGP capacity development activities	Full set of questions related to output 2 and 3
Municipality (council and staff)	Partner and recipient of ASGP capacity development activities	Full set of questions related to output 4
District	Partner and recipient of ASGP capacity development activities	Full set of questions related to output 2
Non-ASGP GIROA		
IDLG-SPAD	Separate decentralisation programme in same GIROA institution, which should complement ASGP	Degree of complementarity and cooperation as well as exchange of lessons learned
MRRD-NSP	Separate decentralisation programme in different agency, which should complement ASGP	Degree of complementarity and cooperation as well as exchange of lessons learned
MoWA	Engaged in promotion of women's affairs	Success in promotion of women in local governance as well as in their access to local government services
Civil Service Commission	ASGP supports merit-based and increased gender recruitment in the offices of subnational entities	Full set of questions related to output 1 and 2
Civil society		
Civil society (tbd)	Monitoring sub-national governments' performance	Assessment of degree of transparency and accountability of local governments vis-à-vis citizens
Donors		
EU	Donor to ASGP	Assessment of ASGP performance and complementarity to other decentralisation programmes
SDC	Donor to ASGP	Assessment of ASGP performance and complementarity to other decentralisation programmes
Finland	Donor to ASGP	Assessment of ASGP performance and complementarity to other decentralisation programmes
DFID	Donor to separate decentralisation programme and former donor to ASGP	Assessment of ASGP performance and complementarity to other decentralisation programmes (notably SPAD)
USAID	Donor to separate decentralisation pro-	Assessment of ASGP perfor-

Stakeholder	Formal relation to ASGP	Sample issues to be tested by the evaluation
	gramme	mance and complementarity to other decentralisation programmes (notably ***)
Citizens		
Women	Recipient/demander of local government services	Assessment of access to services, transparency and accountability of local governments. In addition, specific emphasis on women's access to local governments and services
Men	Recipient/demander of local government services	Assessment of access to services, transparency and accountability of local governments

Annex 3 – Documents Consulted

A) Document set sent by SIDA.

- Islamic Republic of Afghanistan/ UNDP ASGP Project Document phase II
- Budget
- SIDA, Underlag fbr Beslut om insats
- SIDA, Underlag fbr Beslut om insats B.
- Third party cost-sharing agreement UNDP SIDA
- UNDP, ASGP 2013 ANNUAL PROJECT PROGRESS REPORT NORTH REGION (Balkh, Faryab, Jawzjan, Samangan and Saripul provinces)
- UNDP, AFGHANISTAN SUBNATIONAL GOVERNANCE PROGRAMME 2013 ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT
- UNDP, Proposal for Sweden Support to Northern Region of Afghanistan, ASGP, Phase II
- Three travel reports 2013 and 2014, which include references to ASGP
- Resultatstrategi för Sveriges internationella bistånd i Afghanistan 2014-2019

B) Documents shared by Adam Pain:

- Sarah Lister: (2005) Caught in Confusion: Local Governance Structures in Afghanistan
- Hamish Nixon (2008) Subnational State-Building in Afghanistan
- Martine van Bijlert (2009) Between Discipline and Discretion: Policies Surrounding Senior Subnational Appointments
- [Name protected] (2009a) Warlords as Bureaucrats: The Afghan Experience
- [Name protected] (2009b) Disguised warlordism and combatant hood in Balkh: the persistence of informal power in the formal Afghan state
- Douglas Saltmarsh and [Name protected] (2011) Local Governance in Afghanistan: A View from the Ground
- Antonio Giustozzi (2012) The Resilient Oligopoly: A Political Economy of Northern Afghanistan 2001 and Onwards
- Ashley Jackson (2014) Politics and Governance in Afghanistan: the Case of Nangarhar Province

C) Gender related document provided by PG

- Afghanistan National Development Strategy
- Chona R. Echavez & Jennefer Lyn L. Bagaporo, "Does Women's Participation in the National Solidarity Programme Make a Difference in their Lives?" A Case Study in Balkh Province
- [Name protected] et. al. "Women's Economic Empowerment in Afghanistan", 2002–2012 (Situational Analysis)
- OECD: Gender and Statebuilding in Fragile and Conflict Affected States

- http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/ocd/development/gender-and-statebuilding-in-fragile-and-conflict-affected-states_9789264202061-en#page1
- World Bank Report on "Social Development and Gender Afghanistan, 2013) – Women's Role in Afghanistan's Future

D) Documents searched online

- ASGP Mid-term 2011
- ASGP Final evaluation 2014
- Performance based governance evaluation fund
<http://www.pbgf.gov.af/evaluations.html>
- See note on ICAI evaluation on decentralized governance
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmintdev/403/40307.htm>
- [Name protected], John O. Rankin IEG, World Bank, Afghanistan: A Synthesis Paper of Lessons from Ten Years of Aid
http://ieg.worldbankgroup.org/Data/reports/Afghanistan_Lessons_Ten_Years.pdf
- Assessment of Development Results: Afghanistan, UNDP (2014)

DI) Received from SDC:

- Swiss Development Cooperation Afghanistan Governance Portfolio Prospective Evaluation (2014). Paul Lundberg and [Name protected].

DII) Received from UNDP Afghanistan CO/ASGP, in Kabul:

- Strategy for Sub national governance and development (2013)
- Concept Note Programmatic Intervention on Subnational Governance and Development in Afghanistan (2014)
- ASGP first quarterly report 2014
- National Priority Programme for Local Governance - NPP 4
- Sub-National Governance Policy of Afghanistan (2010)
- Nijat, A (2014): Governance in Afghanistan, AREU
- IDLG (2013) Guideline for Provincial LoA Staff (Personnel Manual)
- UNDP. Standard Operating Procedure for Letter of Agreement (LoA)
- Draft municipal law 1391
- Draft PC laws sent to Parliament February 2014
- Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Independent Directorate of Local Governance Far-yab Province; Maimana, Capacity Development Plan (2011)
- Municipal Assessment Questionnaire
- IDLG Municipality Customer satisfaction survey form
- Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Independent Directorate of Local Governance Deputy Minister Office for Policy and Coordination General Directorate of Municipal Affairs (2010) School Municipal Committee
- Revenue Analysis Northern Region
- [Name protected], TRANSITION & GOOD GOVERNANCE – Some Thoughts Pre-Bonn Conference December 03, 2011
- IDLG, Supplementary Note to NPP4 011211-2.doc.pdf
- [Name protected], Afghanistan Post 2014.pdf

- Capacity Development Plan of IDLG (2014)
- Making NPP€ Implementable, IDLG (2011)

G) Received from SNGs in the North:

- Independent Directorate of Local Governance , Provincial Government of Balkh, Mazar-i-Sharif Municipality, Construction Department “ Strategic Plan 2012, 2013 and 2014”
- Independent Directorate of Local Governance , General Directorate of Municipal Affairs, Balkh Province, Mazar-i-Sharif Municipality, Capacity Development Plan (CDP)
- Independent Directorate of Local Governance , Jawzjan Provincial Council “ Public Communication Strategy and Outreach Plan”
- Independent Directorate of Local Governance , Jawzjan Provincial Council “ Capacity Need Assessment and Capacity Development Plan”
- Balkh Provincial Development Plan 2013
- Jawzjan Provincial Development Plan for 2014
- Public Communication Strategy, Jawzjan 2011
- Mazar-E-Sharif Municipality Capacity Development Plan (2011)

H) Received from ASGP regional Office in Mazar-E-Sharif

- Office Procedures Manual for District Governor Office
- Facilitation Skills Development – A Hand book, ASGP (2012)
- Guideline for Annual Planning Process of Sub-national Governmental Institutions in Afghanistan, first draft, ASGP
- Handbook on Public Outreach, ASGP North Region
- Handbook on Project Development and Proposal Writing, ASGP North Region

Annex 4 – List of Persons Met

Interviewees, international

No	Name	Position	Organization
1	Elisabet Hellsten	Senior Advisor Democracy and Human Rights Afghanistan Unit Department for Asia, North Africa and Humanitarian Assistance	Sida
2	Begona Birath-Barrientos	Senior Adviser, Afghanistan Unit Department for Asia, North Africa and Humanitarian Assistance	Sida

Interviewees, Kabul

No	Name	Position	Organization
1	Duncan Douglas	Partnerships, M&E, and Reporting Specialist	UNDP/ASGP
2	Christopher Carter	Chief Technical Assistant	UNDP/ASGP
3	[Name protected]	Regional Project Manager (Central Region)	UNDP/ASGP
4	[Name protected]	Executive Associate	UNDP/ASGP
5	[Name protected]	Acting Head of Municipality component	ASGP
6	[Name protected]	Head of Provincial Councils Component	ASGP
7	Aimal Feroz Zalland	In Charge of CSC and M&E	ASGP
8	[Name protected]	District Governor of Faizabad, Jawzjan	GIROA
9	[Name protected]	Director of Policy and Planning	IDLG
10	[Name protected]	Head of Programs	IDLG
11	Renaud Meyer	Senior Deputy Country Director (Programs)	UNDP
12	[Name protected]	Director of National Solidarity Program	NSP/MRRD
13	[Name protected]	General Director	IDLG
14	[Name protected]	Director of Strategic Cooperation	IDLG
15	Ulrika Josefsson	Director of Development Cooperation	SIDA/ Swedish Emabassy
16	Petri Lehtonen	Consellor Development Cooperation	Embassy of Finland
17	Marianne Huber	Director of Cooperation	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
18	[Name protected]	Capacity Development Officer	UNDP/ASGP
19	[Name protected]	Executive Associate (provincial component)	UNDP/ASGP
20	Birte Brugmann	Municipal Governance Advisor	IDLG/GDMA

Interviewees, North - Samangan

No	Name	Position	Organization
1	[Name protected]	Provincial Governor, Samangan	Government
2	[Name protected]	Deputy Governor, Samangan	Government
3	[Name protected]	Head of Sectorial Department , Samangan	Government
4	[Name protected]	Deputy Provincial (PC) , Samangan	PC
5	[Name protected]	PC member, Samangan	PC
6	[Name protected]	PC member, Samangan	PC
7	[Name protected]	PC member, Samangan	PC
8	[Name protected]	Deputy Mayor, Aibak city	Municipality
9	[Name protected]	Head of Municipality Advisory Board Aibak (MAB)	MAB
10	[Name protected]	Deputy of MAB, Aibak city, Samangan province	MAB
11	[Name protected]	Member of MAB, Aibak city, Samangan province	MAB
12	[Name protected]	Member of MAB, Aibak city, Samangan province	MAB
13	[Name protected]	Member of MAB, Aibak city, Samangan province	MAB
14	[Name protected]	Mayor Sheberghan city, Jawzjan Province	Municipality
15	[Name protected]	Deputy Mayor, Admin / Finance, Sheberghan	Municipality
16	[Name protected]	Deputy Mayor, Technical Affairs, Sheberghan	Municipality
17	[Name protected]	Provincial Council Chair, Jawzjan	PC
18	[Name protected]	Provincial Council member, Jawzjan	PC

ANNEX 4 – LIST OF PERSONS MET

19	[Name protected]	Municipality A. Board Member , Sheberghan city	MAB
20	[Name protected]	Municipality A. Board Chair, Sheberghan city	MAB
21	[Name protected]	Municipality A. Board Member , Sheberghan city	MAB
22	[Name protected]	Head of Citizens Service Center, Sheberghan	Municipality
23	[Name protected]	Municipality A. Board Chair, Sheberghan city	MAB
24	[Name protected]	Faizabad district Governor, Jawzjan Province	IDLG

Interviewees, North - Balkh

No	Name	Position	Organization
1	[Name protected]	Deputy Mayor, Mazar city	Municipality
2	[Name protected]	Head of Admin / Finance, Mazar	Municipality
3	[Name protected]	Head of Construction Unit, Mazar	Municipality
4	[Name protected]	Mentor of School Municipality Committee (SMC)	Mirwali Girls School
5	Students	10 Students, Members of SMC	Mirwali Girls School
6	[Name protected]	Economic Development Specialist , Mazar	LoA /ASGP
7	[Name protected]	Information Management Specialist, Mazar	LoA / ASGP
8	[Name protected]	Urban Development Specialist, Mazar	LoA / ASGP
9	[Name protected]	Fiscal Management Specialist, Mazar	LoA / ASGP
10	[Name protected]	Head of Nayiya # 8, Mazar city	Municipality
11	[Name protected]	Head of Nayiya Council, # 8, Mazar city	Municipality
12	[Name protected]	Member of Nayiya Council # 8, Mazar city	Municipality
13	[Name protected]	Member of Nayiya Council # 8, Mazar city	Municipality
14	[Name protected]	Chairman	Provincial Council
15	[Name protected]	Balkh Deputy Governor	Balkh PGO
16	[Name protected]	Programme Officer	NDI
17	[Name protected]	12 Nahia Council members	Municipality
18	[Name protected]	HR Director	Balkh PGO
19	[Name protected]	Head of Technical Service	Balkh PGO
20	[Name protected]	Member of Nayiya Council # 8, Mazar city	Municipality

Interviewees, UN, Mazar-E-Sharif

No	Name	Position	Organization
1	[Name protected]	Regional Project Manager	ASGP/UNDP

ANNEX 4 – LIST OF PERSONS MET

2	[Name protected]	Field Security Coordination Officer	UN / UNDSS
3	[Name protected]	Regiona Coordinator Noth	UNDP
4	[Name protected]	Provincial Manager	UN-Habitat
4	[Name protected]	Civil Affairs Team Leader- Northern Region	UNAMA
5	[Name protected]	Head of Office	UNAMA

Interviewees, Dehdadi District, Balkh

No	Name	Position	Organization
1	[Name protected]	District Governor	Dehdadi DGO
2	[Name protected]	Member of Dehdadi Shura (Council) and head of villages	Dehdadi District
3	[Name protected]		
4	[Name protected]		
5	[Name protected]		
6	[Name protected]		
7	[Name protected]		
8	[Name protected]		
9	[Name protected]		
10	[Name protected]		
11	[Name protected]		
12	[Name protected]		
13	[Name protected]		
14	[Name protected]		
15	[Name protected]		
16	[Name protected]		
17	[Name protected]		
18	[Name protected]		
19	[Name protected]		
20	[Name protected]		
21	[Name protected]		
22	[Name protected]		
23	[Name protected]		
24	[Name protected]		
25	[Name protected]		
26	[Name protected]		
27	[Name protected]		
28	[Name protected]		
29	[Name protected]		
30	[Name protected]		
31	[Name protected]		
32	[Name protected]		
33	[Name protected]		
34	[Name protected]		
35	[Name protected]	Member of District Council	
36	[Name protected]	Deputy Head of Karmalak Village	

Annex 5 – Evaluation Matrix

Evaluation criteria	Evaluation question identified in ToR	Suggested evaluation question	Key issue	Indicator	Source	Questions for the Afghan population
	Overarching question	<i>To what extent are the objectives of the programme still valid?</i>				
Relevance	1 To what extent is the ASGP relevant in terms of meeting the Afghan context and the demands from beneficiaries and stakeholders?	1.1 How relevant is ASGP to the political and contextual developments in Afghanistan?	Context		Desk review WB lessons learned, AREU documents, interviews with key donors including DFID, CIDA and	
<i>The extent to which the aid activity is suited to the priorities and policies of the target group, recipient and donor</i>		1.2 To what extent are the strategic priorities of ASGP aligned with the goals and objectives of the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and the National Priority Program	Alignment of ANDS/PDP/NPP.	Convergence of ASGP with ANDS/NPP/PDP strategic priorities	ASGP/PDP/NPP programme document refer to specific priorities defined in ANDS .	

		(NPP) and the Provincial Development Plans (PDP) ?				
		1.3 To what extent is the programme owned by Afghan authorities both at central, regional and municipal level?	Ownership and alignment and validity of objectives.	Level of ownership of ASGP objectives at central, regional and municipal level	ANDS (in particular its Governance, Rule of Law and Human Rights Pillar). And interviews with Afghan Government officials in Kabul and Mazar El Sherif	
		1.4 (from 2.) Are ASGPs areas of engagement relevant to Sweden's country strategy sectoral objective of democracy, human rights and gender equality and Sweden's overall policies related to democracy, human rights and gender equality, including attention to the perspectives of the poor?	Alignment and harmonisation	Complementarity of ASGP and Sweden objectives	Underlag fbr Beslut om insats: In depth project relevance assessment	

	Overarching question	•To what extent were the objectives achieved / are likely to be achieved?				
Effectiveness	2. To what extent are UNDP/ASGPs interventions effective in terms of achieving objectives/outputs stipulated in applications and reports in relation to the application to Sida and its goals and expected results?	q.2.1 To what extent has the ASGP program supported governance reforms at provincial level and government capacity to deliver basic services?	Reforms and delivery	Key achievements in the development of the local government and increased confidence among citizens.	Desk review of project documents (project proposals and annual reports), evaluations and Interviews with provincial councils, municipalities and districts and Afghan on the above issues,	
<i>A measure of the extent to which an aid activity attains its objectives</i>		<i>Sub-questions: How effective are UNDP/ASGPs interventions in terms of:</i>			as well as assessment of documents at decentralised authorities (compliance of these with central level legislation)	
		2.2.-Assuring that <u>national systems, procedures and legal frameworks</u> to implement, coordinate and monitor the sub-national govern-	Policy support	2.2 Level of policy TA support provided to IDLG, PC for municipal legislation and regulation development and OD		

		ance policy are in place?			
				# of regulations and laws (drafted and approved) at Local Admis-tration, PC and municipality level, and evi-dence of adapta-tion	
				Awareness of SNG roles and responsibilities increased	Public perception of SNG roles and responsibili-ties
				ASGP capacity assessments	
				Number of pro-vincial and dis-trict governor’s offices with effec-tive interaction mechanisms between subna-tional govern-ment and the public allowing improved access to information	

				Level of implementation of sub-national governance policy/national priority programme for local governance.	
		2.3.-Ensuring that <u>Provincial and District governor Offices</u> have the capacity to manage provincial and district governance as well as to manage the development and security of the provinces and districts in accordance with the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS)?	Local Governance capacity development (in terms of governance, social services and security)	2.3 and 2.4 Extent of organizational restructuring in provincial and district governor’s offices % of staff that received training on: # of PC that have regular meetings conducting oversight meetings	Public perception of security

			<p># of provinces with provincial strategic planning (PSP) and provincial development plans (PDP) . PSP and PDP should explicitly refer to needs & solutions in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Social services II) Governance iii) Security <p>Establishment of capacity development hubs Level of orientation received by Provincial Councils in relation to the Sub National Governance Policy</p>	
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				<p>Number of provinces where development planning is guided by a strategic plan covering the areas of security, governance, and development</p>	
				<p>Clarity of roles and responsibilities and level of awareness on the civil service code of conduct for subnational employees.</p>	

				Over 50% citizens are aware of basic roles and responsibilities of subnational authorities as described by policy by end of 2014.	Public perception of responsiveness of provincial and district governments and public access to services
				Availability of a functioning knowledge-sharing system for Provincial and District Councils	
				Adaptation of Minimum Stadrads and/or performance measurements systems for municipalities and provinces	

		<p>2.4- Ensuring that <u>Provincial Councils</u> have improved the capacity to represent citizen's interests and monitor sub-national governance?</p>	<p>Improved capacity to represent citizens</p>	<p>Increased capacity of provincial and governors office to: i) Oversee local Governance and resolve local disputes (# of oversight visits with minutes, public hearings and public grievances systems) ii) M&E system for subnational governance established</p>	<p>Asking the population and citizens: i) Level of PC public reporting ii) Extent has public participation been promoted? ii) Do you have an increased voice in decision making? Iii) Do you have an increased trust and participation in local institutions?</p>
				<p>Percentage of Provincial and District Councils compliant with rules of procedure and conducting public outreach and communication</p>	<p>To what extent do PCs report to the public?</p>

				Types of measure in place to: a) build trust and public accountability in place b. Increase financial management transparency c. public outreach mechanisms (# of brochures and magazines as well as evidence of easily accessible district, municipal or provincial government information to citizens including plans, budgets, accounts d. # citizens service centres established and functioning	To what extent has confidence in PC improved? Public perception of corruption
		2.5 <u>Municipalities</u> have the institutional and organizational capacity to collect revenues and deliver basic public services improved in	Capacity of municipalities to generate their own source revenues	2.5 # of municipalities with capacity development implementation plans developed with specific reference to: a. proper-	

		municipalities.		ty registration b. business registration c. waste manage- ment	
				Management systems in place at municipal level	
				Minimum service standards and performance measures in place and monitored	
				All the Provincial and district mu- nicipalities of north (100%) have revenue action plans and a 60% increase in revenue by 2014	
				Establishment of customer services in Mazar El Sherrif	
				# of female staff at municipal level	
		2.6 To what extent has revenue improvement action planning	Revennue planning and mapping	% in the increase of revenue from its own sources in Mazar	

		and tax mapping in Samangan, Balkh, Jawzjan and Sar e Pul?		El Sherrif, Samangan, Balkh, Jawzjan and Sar e Pul	
				# and % of municipalities with revenue enhancement plan	
				All municipalities in north provinces use the approved minimum service standards and have operational financial management complaint with applicable rules and regulations by 2014	
	Overarching question	<i>What are the major factors influencing the achievement or non achievement of the objectives?</i>	Enabling factors and stumbling blocks		

	Overarching question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<i>Were activities cost-efficient?</i> •<i>Were objectives achieved on time?</i> 	Cost-efficiency & timeliness		
Efficiency	How has UNDP/ASGP integrated conflict sensitivity in planning, implementation and reporting?	3.1 To what extent is conflict sensitivity integrated in UNDP/ASGP RBM?	Conflict sensitivity	Conflict analysis is regularly updated (context, dynamics and cause); conflict analysis is linked to programme cycle; conflict sensitive planning, implementation and M&E (re-design intervention)	

<p><i>Efficiency measures the outputs -- qualitative and quantitative -- in relation to the inputs. It is an economic term which signifies that the aid uses the least costly resources possible in order to achieve the desired results. This generally requires comparing alternative approaches to achieving the same outputs, to see whether the most efficient process has been adopted</i></p>	<p>How does UNDP/ASGP implement the rights perspective based on the four principles participation, non-discrimination, transparency, and accountability with beneficiaries and civil society?</p>	<p>3.2 (from 2) To what extent does UNDP/ASGP report in relation to Swedish cooperation overall objective in Afghanistan and specific objectives in Northern Afghanistan?</p>	<p>Reporting & RBM</p>	<p>General ASGP reports and specific UNDP reports to SIDA</p>		
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	How does UNDP/ASGP implement a gender perspective in the program? More specific, how does the ASGP address:	3.3. How efficiently does UNDP/ASGP implement the rights based perspective?	Rights based approach (participation, non-discrimination, transparency, and accountability with beneficiaries and civil society)	Level of awareness among the population of participatory planning and M&E processes in governance Measure in place to prevent ethnic discrimination	
	- Equal participation of men and women in subnational decision making.	How does UNDP/ASGP implement a gender perspective in the program? More specific, how does the ASGP address:	Gender and equal access		
	- Equal access of men and women to and benefit from public services.	- Equal participation of men and women in subnational decision making.		# of PGO, DGO and municipalities with female employees women # Empowerment and Capacity Building Workshop	
		- Equal access of men and women to and benefit from public services.		All the municipalities (100%) in north region have restructured their organization to include at least 20% of female	

				employees by end of 2014	
	- Equal job opportunities within subnational government institutions.	- Equal job opportunities within subnational government institutions.		# and types of governance initiatives that directly and positively impact women's economic livelihoods.	
				Gender breakdown (# and %) of PGO and PC, DGO staff and evolution since 2010	
	Overarching question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •To what extent did the benefits of a programme or project continue after donor funding ceased? •What were the major factors which influenced the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the programme or project? 			

Sustainability	How does UNDP/ASGP contribute to sustainable administration reform and a merit based approach?	3.2. To what extent does UNDP/ASGP contribute to administration reform?		Funding trend analysis and capacity of the Afghan government and IDLG to generate revenue to fund its running costs	WB lessons learned!
<i>Sustainability is concerned with measuring whether the benefits of an activity are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn</i>		3.2. What factors will determine the medium - to long-term financial sustainability of UNDP/ASGP?	Financial sustainability	Level of Earmarking and reliance on external donors AusAid, EU, Italy, SDC, SIDA and Japan.	
	To what extent are UNDP/ASGP results at outcome level sustainable?	3.3. To what extent does UNDP/ASGP contribute to sustainable results?			
		3.4. To what extent does ASGP use government led approaches?			
		3.5. How does UNDP/contribute to a merit based approach?		Level of merit based recruitment of district governors	

	Overarching question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •What has happened as a result of the programme or project? •What real difference has the activity made to the beneficiaries? 			
Impact		4.1 How has ASGP strengthened administrative capacity at provincial and district level so that basic social services can be delivered in a democratic and legally secure manner?		Extent to which financial management systems in place have improved Improved government legitimacy	Are people benefiting from improved security, economic opportunities and basic government services?
<i>The positive and negative changes produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended</i>		4.2 To what extent is sub-national governance contributing to peace and stability (democratic and legally secure society) in Afghanistan?	Peace, democracy and stability	evolution of the # of security incidents reported in the area level of participation in elections in the areas of concern	

		4.3 How and to what extent has ASGP contributed to influence policies and policy process in Afghanistan?		Strengthened local democratic culture		
				Strengthened national unity		
Lessons learned	Overarching question	<i>What are the key lessons learned?</i>	Global, regional and local level			Maybe we need to separate these indicators better
Recommendations	Overarching question	<i>Should SIDA renew it's funding agreement?</i>	Design and management			

Annex 6 - Evaluation Workshop with ASGP, IDLG, Sida and UNDP

ASGP Workshop with stakeholders		
✓	AIMS	<p>The overall objective of the workshop is to bring the key ASGP stakeholders (UNDP, IDLG and Sida) together and reflect on lessons learned and provide inputs to what has worked and what can be further improved.</p> <p>To do this, the stakeholders will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on the objective of the programme and the causality between the activities and the objective • Based on this discuss where the programme success and weaknesses • Reflect on the next years including exit strategy. And as part of this reflect on the process, stakeholders, opportunities and challenges
⌚	TIME	3 hours
✂	MATERIALS	Post-its, flipcharts, pens and markers (projector?)
📖	LITERATURE	ASGP documents
✍	PREPARATION	

WHEN?	WHAT?	WHERE?	WHO?	
8.30-8.40	10'	Introduction and framing the workshop and objective and method	Forum	Erik and Riccardo
	20'	A general discussion and sharing reflection on the on the causality of the programme: How are the objectives supposed to be met? Details on each of the four main pillars of the programme linking activities with objectives Assumptions underpinning this expected change	Reflection in plenary	Erik
	5'	Introduction to group work on success and weaknesses on the four ASGP pillars till date		Erik
	20'	What has been achieved? What has worked and what has not worked? How far did ASGP come in reaching the outcomes in the four areas of interventions? Successes and challenges?	Group work per pillar	
	20'	Feedback/presentation per core area. Feedback discussed with evaluation team		
	15'	Coffee break		
	5'	Introduction to group work on way forward		Riccardo
	25'	Looking ahead, how can the programme move forward towards meeting the objectives? What are the key elements to enable an exit strategy?	Group mixed by group and pillar	
	20'	Sharing group reflections	Forum	
	10'	Landing the Workshop and Sum Up	Forum	Riccardo
	5'	Next steps in evaluation process		Riccardo

Annex 7 - ASGP Objective Assessment

Overview of ASGP objectives

Objectives from the Phase II programme document

UNDAF level:

- Government capacity to deliver services to the poor and vulnerable is enhanced
- The institutions of democratic governance are integrated components of the nation

UNDP Country Programme outcome level:

The state has improved ability to deliver services to foster human development and elected bodies have greater oversight capacity

ASGP application to Sida paraphrasing new UNDAF objective 2

An effective, more accountable and more representative public administration is established at the national and sub-national levels, with improved delivery of services in an equitable, efficient and effective manner

NPP4 objectives

- To establish national-level policies, laws, systems and mechanisms to provide an effective and efficient framework for subnational governance.
- To develop the capacity of Provincial and District-level institutions to lead and coordinate local affairs, ensure service delivery and bring good governance.
- To develop the capacity of Municipal institutions to deliver services to Municipal populations and bring good Municipal governance.
- To promote representation, participation, accountability and transparency, especially through Local Councils and other representative bodies.

Suggested common denominator of the above

Effective and representative accountable local government service delivery to the people (with attention to vulnerability)

Possible indicators

If this objective is agreed, then possible the indicators against which this objective should be measured may include:

- Service delivery recipients per poverty category
- Quantity of services delivered by SNG
- SNG performance indicators
- Local people engagement in planning and downwards accountability (accountability tracking)



Evaluation of the Afghanistan Sub-National Governance Programme (ASGP) phase II

This report presents the findings of the evaluation of the Afghanistan Sub-national Governance Programme (ASGP) phase II. The team found the programme to be well aligned with Government of Afghanistan and Sida priorities. However, the relevance of the programme to the current political and legal context and the assumptions underpinning the theory of change could not be confirmed. The programme outputs will thus not be able to substantially contribute to the overall programme objective. The ASGP II has been able to deliver an extensive number of specific activities and outputs, but with limited contribution to the programme objective. The challenges to contextual relevance combined with the limited effectiveness means that the programme has not been in a position to produce tangible evidence of impact. Based on the findings the team recommends that the three key stakeholders: Sida, UNDP and the Government of Afghanistan reconsider their approach to sub-national governance in Afghanistan and substantially redesign the ASGP.