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Sida Decentralised Evaluation

Nordic Consulting Group

Evaluation of 'Support to Serbian Municipalities on the Road to EU Accession'

Final Report

Evaluation of ‘Support to Serbian Municipalities on the Road to EU Accession’

**Final Report
March 2020**

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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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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ER	Expected result
EU	European Union
GCN	Gender Champion Network
IPA	The EU's Instruments for Pre-accession Assistance
LAP	Local Action Plan
LSG	Local self-government
MSP	Municipal Support Packages
NGO	Non-government organisation
OECD/ DAC	Development Assistance Committee
PUC	Public Utility Company (Javno komunalno preduzece)
SALAR	Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions
SCTM	Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities
SEK	Swedish Crown (Swedish currency)
Sida	Swedish International Development Assistance Agency
UN	United Nations
WMP	Waste Management Plan

Executive Summary

Introduction

Implemented as a partnership between the Serbian and Swedish local government associations, the *Support to Serbian Municipalities on the Road to EU Accession* is a four-year project assisting local self-government in Serbia with improving the quality of services, enhancing dialogue with stakeholders and improving the efficiency of local administration. The project has two main components: Hands-on support for services to citizens and business through Municipal Support Packages. MSPs focus on *direct support to a limited number* of selected local self-governance entities; Support to Serbia's Standing Conference on Towns and Municipalities (SCTM), and municipalities collectively, at policy level to represent local interests and enhance the capacity of all local authorities.

This is the project's first evaluation and while programmed as a mid-term evaluation it was postponed and now encompasses some formative and some summative aspects. The evaluation is intended to provide inputs relevant to a potential extension. The evaluation covers the period from 15 April 2016 through 30 June 2019 although given that evaluation fieldwork took place in January of 2020 the evaluation's effective period extended to 31 December 2020 as it was not possible to separate out data/ comments related to the final 6 months of 2019. The primary intended users of the evaluation are the Embassy of Sweden in Serbia, SCTM and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR). The purpose of the evaluation is to help Sida, SCTM and SALAR to assess overall progress of the project.

Findings and Conclusions

The project has significant relevance to Municipalities in Serbia, generally in their developmental processes and improvements to services for citizens and, specifically, in relation to their preparation for and contribution to EU accession. The project is directly relevant to the priorities of Sweden as defined in the Swedish results strategy for the Western Balkans for 2014-2020.

The logic and effectiveness of the 2-component approach contributes to a broadening of potential impacts that are based on local solutions. The two components as currently defined are supportive of each other at the thematic level and also in terms of practical implementation. Some refinements should be considered however, including a more direct correlation between MSP thematic areas and the focus areas

of the policy component, i.e. ensuring that each thematic area covered by an MSP is also a focus of the policy component.

A strategic thinking/ planning process, involving reflection on the current project, as well as detailed consideration of the potential project extension, would facilitate the implementation team/ implementing partners in drawing together more defined approaches to the extension. Such a reflection/ planning process could be of significant importance to future directions for the project as there are a number of areas where agreement on direction or priority is not in place, areas that should be determined internally, and jointly, by the implementing partners in a strategic level planning process. This strategic process would also provide an opportunity to consider how SALAR and SCTM senior management can be involved.

The results framework has strong support from stakeholders for its contribution to ensuring a results focus, as well as in the planning and monitoring of the project. It is, however, large and complex, with some structural weaknesses. In preparation for an extension/ follow-up, some further developmental work of the results framework is indicated, work that would address a need for better structuring of the logic between outputs and short-term outcomes, as well as looking to define a smaller number of short-term and medium-term results.

The project demonstrates a strong likelihood of sustainability of results, visible in the leadership provided by the SCTM's staff and the commitment of both staff and SCTM leadership to developmental processes. Sustainability is also visible in the continued partnership between SALAR and the SCTM, including the ongoing commitment on both sides to develop and grow the partnership. Sustainability is visible within Municipalities, in terms of built capacity (knowledge and skills), including in the development of local expertise. Sustainability also comes from the strategic framework provided by EU accession priorities and the EU Acquis, as well as the consistent and ongoing financial commitment from the EU and other donors. Also indicative of sustainability, although in less evident ways, is the development of inter-municipal cooperation, particularly in support of smaller or less well-developed Municipalities.

The project is clearly on the road to delivering longer-term change in the knowledge and skills of the staff of the SCTM and how these staff work professionally and effectively with Municipalities. There are also good indications of potential for impact in a number of areas of system and process at the Municipal level, although this will take more time before it can be assessed as impact.

The definition of and approach to cross-cutting issues requires further elaboration. Project design, implementation and reporting would benefit from clearer statements on the areas considered cross-cutting, and why they are deemed to 'cut across' the whole of the project. From there, specific approaches for each area are needed to

ensure an effective addressing of the issue/ priority. Finally, the design and implementation aspects should be visible and clearly discussed in project reporting.

Recommendations

Strategic planning. It is recommended that the SCTM and SALAR ensure a strategic, longer-term focus through a strategic thinking/ planning process/ workshop. It is worth considering the engagement of an external facilitator to lead the workshop. This would enable project staff and management to concentrate on the discussions and would ensure objectivity in the design and facilitation of the workshop. The agenda should include:

- A reflective component on the functioning and future directions of the partnership.
- Achieving consensus on thematic focus areas.
- Achieving consensus on the interconnections between components.
- Ensuring a well-developed and agreed approach to the selection of Municipalities, including a model for the related questionnaires and assessments for Municipal selection.
- Contributing to sustainability through detailed consideration of how to further develop local expertise in thematic areas.
-

Cross-cutting areas. It is recommended that the project give detailed consideration to:

- The real intent of designating cross-cutting areas.
- Defining in detail what these cross-cutting areas are.
- Based on the above, elaborate a strategy and plan for ensuring an appropriate focus in each designated cross-cutting area.

The key to this approach is to understand and clearly state why any particular area is seen to ‘cut across’ project design/ implementation. Once this is clear, building activities into project implementation, across both components and all thematic areas, will be more straightforward. Moreover, reporting will be facilitated by having intent and detailed plans clearly stated.

Results framework. It is recommended that the project re-examine its results framework with the intention of further refining its structure and content. This will assist in increasing the effectiveness of the results framework as a planning, implementing and reporting tool.

1 Introduction

1.1 RATIONALE FOR THE EVALUATION

The *Support to Serbian Municipalities on the Road to EU Accession* is a four-year project assisting local self-government in Serbia with improving the quality of services, enhancing dialogue with stakeholders and improving the efficiency of local administration. All this is done with a related focus on good governance and gender equality. The project fits specifically within Result 4 of the Swedish Government Results Strategy for Eastern Europe, Western Balkans and Turkey - *Public services delivered with better quality based on principles of non-discrimination and equal rights and with less corruption*. The project is being implemented as a partnership between the Serbian and Swedish local government associations (the Standing Conference on Towns and Municipalities – SCTM in Serbia and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions – SALAR).

This is a mid-term evaluation. While this is the first evaluation of this particular project, an earlier phase (from 2011-2015) was evaluated. Originally scheduled for 2018, the present evaluation was delayed as the project now being evaluated received an extension.

2 The Evaluated Intervention

2.1 OBJECT OF THE EVALUATION

The project being evaluated is *Support to Serbian Municipalities on the Road to EU Accession*. The project's intention is to support Serbian municipalities in preparing for the EU accession, improve conditions for high-quality service delivery to citizens, enhance dialogue with stakeholders from the central and local administration as well as strengthen capacities of the SCTM and its members to apply principles of good governance and gender equality.

The project has two main components:

- Hands-on support for services to citizens and business (Municipal Support Packages) to selected municipalities. A municipal support package (MSP) is a set of activities tailored to local needs and designed to help selected municipalities to solve a particular problem or to achieve a key local policy goal. MSPs focus on *direct support to a limited number* of selected local self-governance entities.
- Support to SCTM and municipalities collectively at policy level to represent local interests and enhance the capacity of all local authorities. This component is intended to assist local self-governments to improve their work in environmental protection, the business climate, EU integration, international cooperation, gender equality, prevention and management of emergencies.

The project has a focus in two cross-cutting thematic areas - gender equality and good governance (including transparency and anti-corruption).

While project documentation notes that the 'long-term beneficiaries of the Program are the citizens and businesses of local self-governments in Serbia'¹, per the Terms of Reference the primary beneficiaries of the project are towns and municipalities in Serbia (members of the SCTM) and staff employed in local administrations. The project provides capacity building to municipal administrations in order to contribute to improvement of the services they provide to citizens. This contribution builds on the achievements of a previous project also funded by Sweden and implemented by SCTM and SALAR: *Support to Local Governments in Serbia in the EU Integration Process (December 2011 – September 2015)*, but the overall approach in the current contribution has shifted to more concrete and direct support to municipalities.

¹ December 2015. Project document revision.

Per the Terms of Reference² of the evaluation, as well as the project design document³ and budget⁴ and the project's extension proposal⁵ and its budget⁶, the project's initial implementation period was from 15 April 2016 through 15 April 2020. In April of 2019, it was proposed (and agreed) to extend the project to 31 December 2020.

Per the Amendment to the Agreement SALAR June 2019, the budget of the project is SEK 47,411,027, with the total budget being provided by Sweden. This budget is divided into two parts:

- One part managed directly by SCTM with a budget of 24 468 446 SEK. This budget component is for activities implemented in Serbia – capacity-building exercises, workshops, and roundtable discussions.
- One part managed by SALAR with a budget of 22 942 581 SEK. This budget component is for costs associated with Swedish experts and study visits by Serbian delegations to Sweden.⁷

2.2 EVALUATION SCOPE

This is the project's first evaluation. The precursor project *Support to Local Governments in Serbia in the EU Integration Process* (December 2011 – September 2015) was externally evaluated and the evaluation report has been provided to the evaluation team.

Per the Terms of Reference, the evaluation covers the period from 15 April 2016 through 30 June 2019. Given evaluation field processes took place in January 2020, the evaluation's effective period was extended to 31 December 2020 as it was not possible to separate out data/ comments related to the final 6 months of 2019.

The primary intended users of the evaluation are the Embassy of Sweden in Serbia, SCTM and SALAR.

² Terms of Reference for the Evaluation of *Support to Serbian Municipalities on the Road to EU Accession*. Embassy of Sweden, Belgrade.

³ Support to Serbian Municipalities on the Road to EU Accession: Enabling High-Quality Services, Stakeholder Dialogue and Efficient Local Administration (2015-2019). *Programme Document*. The Standing Conference on Towns and Municipalities and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions.

⁴ Ibid, *Annex 3 – SCTM Budget and Budget Explanations*.

⁵ 17 April 2019. Support to Serbian Municipalities on the Road to EU Accession: Enabling High-Quality Services, Stakeholder Dialogue and Efficient Local Administration (2015-2019). *Request for Amendment No 2*.

⁶ Support to Serbian Municipalities on the Road to EU Accession: Enabling High-Quality Services, Stakeholder Dialogue and Efficient Local Administration (2015-2019). *SCTM Revised Budget and Budget Explanations-Extension 2*.

⁷ Second Amendment to the Agreement on Support to Serbian Municipalities on the Road to EU Accession: Enabling High-Quality Services, Stakeholder Dialogue and Efficient Local Administration (2015-2019) between Sida, represented by the Embassy of Sweden in Belgrade and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR).

2.3 EVALUATION PURPOSE

Per the Terms of Reference, the purpose of the evaluation is to help Sida and its partners (SCTM and SALAR) to assess overall progress of the project. In this context, specific emphasis was given to learning *what works well and what works less well*. The Terms of Reference called for provision of a ‘constructive way forward for the project, including concrete recommendations that can inform decision-making during the remaining implementation period and the design of the next phase’. The evaluation team sees in this statement the clear emphasis on a utility approach – ensuring the evaluation is of use to stakeholders. Further, the Terms of Reference specify that in consideration of the long-term partnership between SCTM and SALAR, and the design of the project, that the evaluation:

- Assess the contribution and added value of the partnership as well as identify potential adjustments and reinforcements that could strengthen the partnership.
- Assess and provide concrete recommendations on how the linkages between the two different components can be optimised and used more strategically to achieve the project objectives.

This perspective was further strengthened in the inception phase of the evaluation. Although the implementation period for the project ends in December 2020 and the evaluation covers the April 2016 – June 2019 period, the donor and implementing partners emphasised the importance of focusing the forward-thinking components of the evaluation on the likely new phase of the project which will not begin until 2021. In this context, while findings and conclusions have a necessary focus on design and implementation to date, there is a clear priority on implications for the future, and on providing lessons learned and recommendations that can be of particular importance for strengthening perspectives, approaches and measures for the future phase.

2.4 EVALUATION APPROACH

The evaluation used a ***theory-based approach***. The approach is based on articulation of the programme theory and the use of this as a guide for the evaluation. This approach also sets out the assumptions underlying the intervention’s phased sequencing of inputs and outputs/ outcomes - the programme theory.⁸ In order to undertake this approach, during the inception phase the evaluation team analysed the provided documentation and, using this documentation, prepared a project theory of change (see below and Annex 5). This theory of change provides the basis for understanding the context in which the project is operating (preconditions and assumptions), current priorities within this context, what results the project (and SCTM, SALAR and the Swedish Embassy) intended to achieve and why, and how these results were intended to be achieved through different implementation

⁸ 2013. AM Nkwake, *Working with Assumptions in International Development Program Evaluation*, page 71. Springer.

modalities (the activities/initiatives associated with components 1 and 2 of the project).

The evaluation took a **cross-cutting approach** to gender equality and good governance, noting also that both have a specific programmatic focus as well as cross-cutting aspects. Two types of analysis will be undertaken to address these areas:

- Result-wise: assessing the extent to which the project is guided by *organisational and system-wide objectives* on gender equality and good governance.
- Process-wise: examining how, and to what extent, gender equality and good governance are *mainstreamed in the programming process*.

The evaluation took a **utility approach**⁹. The focus here was on usefulness. This approach began with the evaluation questions and followed through to focusing on conclusions and recommendations that are *of use to* SCTM, SALAR and the Swedish Embassy. Conclusions were drawn from the specific data derived from the document review and key informant interviews and were formulated against the evaluation framework, objectives and purpose. Recommendations are focused on improving project design and implementation in the future and are framed specifically to address the utility focus of the stated purpose: learn what works well and what is less well; and provide a constructive way forward.

2.5 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Methodologically, the evaluation team undertook secondary (document-based) and primary (field interview-based) enquiry/ research. The secondary research was used to develop the theory of change and was further analysed in the context of the evaluation's enquiry framework/ questions. The primary research focused on stakeholder interviews and is structured against the set of agreed evaluation questions.

2.5.1 Evaluation questions

Evaluation questions were proposed in the Terms of Reference and agreed during the inception phase. The agreed evaluation questions are in line with the OECD/ DAC criteria. In the Findings section they are answered in detail, using a more narrative approach for ease of reading and narrative flow. In order to ensure that each evaluation question has been answered, they are presented in table format in Annex 4 – Evaluation matrix where short answers are provided for each evaluation question, together with a cross-reference to where more detail can be found.

⁹ A useful summary of utility in evaluation can be found here:
https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/utilization_focused_evaluation

2.5.2 Theory of change

The work on ensuring a clear understanding of the theory of change for the project clarified the project's intervention logic. The attached theory of change (see *Annex 5: Theory of change*) provided the analytical framework for addressing OECD DAC criteria (and the evaluation questions). Largely, but not strictly, this will be as follows:

- **Relevance** – Preconditions are particularly relevant here, as are underlying assumptions.
- **Effectiveness** – The 'logical flow' of the intervention logic (the results-based logic) is a significant component of this analysis. Aspects of results and process in terms of cross-cutting issues will be informed through the implementation logic and related evaluation questions.
- **Efficiency** – The evaluation looked at the use of the project's results-based management framework as a management tool (results-based *management*) including in implementation and in reporting, as well as the role and effectiveness of the implementation partnership.
- **Sustainability** – Sustainability questions will be informed by discussions on preconditions, underlying assumptions and a number of aspects of the intervention logic.
- **Impact** – Impact was not initially a component of enquiry as defined in the Terms of Reference. Including it allows for an understanding to be developed as to whether or not there is an aspect of 'road to impact' in the project's design and implementation.

2.5.3 Secondary research – document review

The evaluation team undertook a study of all relevant project documentation including the project design document and all project and evaluation reporting. The team analysed this documentation against the theory of change and the evaluation's analytical framework defined in the evaluation questions.

2.5.4 Primary research – field enquiry

Stakeholder mapping

Stakeholders were mapped during the inception phase with assistance from the Swedish Embassy, SCTM and SALAR. This process formed the basis for the evaluation's field enquiry of stakeholders to be approached for interview during the field phase.

The evaluation then sought detailed inputs through interviews with project stakeholders and, as appropriate, knowledgeable non-stakeholders defined during the stakeholder mapping process. A particular focus of interviews were four Municipalities involved in MSPs, with each having a link to one of the four thematic focus areas of the project. The four Municipalities were:

- Kladovo – Business thematic area.
- Bečej – Gender thematic area.
- Čajetina – Environment thematic area.
- Osečina – Emergency thematic area.

Other stakeholders to be included in field enquiry include:

- The Swedish Embassy in Belgrade.
- SCTM – including
 - The Secretary General and two deputies.
 - The project managers.
 - Representatives of the 4 thematic teams, done as a group interview.
- SALAR – the three key personnel located in Sweden were interviewed individually.
- Knowledgeable non-stakeholders – from the perspective of triangulation and a specifically external view of the project, the following knowledgeable non-stakeholders were interviewed.
 - A representative of the Delegation of the EU to Serbia.
 - A representative of the Swiss Embassy, who are engaged in similar initiatives.
 - Representatives of two different Serbian Government Ministries (Environment and Local Self Government).

A total of 27 meetings were undertaken with a variety of stakeholders, including interviews with 62 people during field research, 33 women and 29 men. A list of interviewees can be found in Annex 3 – List of interviewees.

2.5.5 Evaluation report

The evaluation report (this document) synthesises the evaluation's enquiry against the agreed evaluation criteria and questions. This final deliverable of the evaluation includes these synthesised findings, the conclusions of the evaluation team based on these findings and a set of recommendations that flow from the findings and conclusions. Lessons learned from the project's implementation are also described.

2.5.6 Limitations

The evaluation's enquiry is limited in the feedback able to be acquired directly from citizens due to constraints in time and defined scope. The analysis is therefore heavily dependent on the project's implementation team and direct beneficiaries of the project (Municipal staff in particular). The evaluation approach and methodology were designed as much as possible to address this by ensuring some feedback and inputs from 'knowledgeable non-stakeholders' and also by as wide a sample of beneficiaries as possible (to ensure at least a perspective beyond that of the implementing organisations).

2.5.7 Triangulation

Denzin (2006)¹⁰ identified four basic types of triangulation. Of the four, this evaluation used two types (investigator and method):

- *Investigator* – involving multiple researchers in enquiry. Three researchers, each with different backgrounds, education, experience, knowledge and skills

¹⁰ Denzin, N. (2006). *Sociological Methods: A Sourcebook*. Aldine Transaction. (5th edition).

undertook the evaluation. They worked together and, in their analytical processes as a team, triangulated the evaluation's data.

- *Method* – involving use of more than one method of data gathering. This evaluation used a theory-based analytical framework, secondary research (document review) and primary research (interviews/ focus group discussions) as three different methods contributing to triangulation.
- *Theory* – involving the use of more than one theoretical scheme in interpretation. This method of triangulation was not used in this evaluation.
- *Data* – involving time, space and persons. This method of triangulation was not used in this evaluation.

3 Findings

3.1 RELEVANCE

There is a wide range of data gathered from the evaluation that provides strong evidence of the relevance of the project to Serbia, Sweden, the SCTM and to Municipalities. This evidence is visible in both design documents (describing how the project is designed to respond to stakeholder needs and priorities) and reporting documents (addressing how the design and implementation has been of importance to stakeholders). Specific examples of this documentary evidence are discussed below.

The role of the SCTM and the quality of its work is strongly supported by stakeholders and knowledgeable non-stakeholders with whom interviews were held during the field phase. The SCTM was founded in 1953 and has worked continuously with Municipalities, in different stages of development, since that time. The MSP approach itself is an accepted, well-supported methodology/ tool for Municipal development, as noted by a number of non-SCTM interviewees. The SCTM been working with MSP and similar methodologies, with Municipalities, since 2004, including with the EU in the implementation of grant schemes.

The SCTM is in daily contact with Municipalities, in a variety of ways, including with conferences, roundtables, etc., with engagement at the political level as well as with Municipally engaged professional staff. This engagement with Municipalities by a range of SCTM staff contributes significantly to the SCTM's understanding of Municipal needs and priorities. SCTM management also noted the contribution of the project to the SCTM's overall work and understanding of Municipal needs and priorities. The programme was designed on the basis of specific research done with Municipalities (extensive questionnaire, draft conclusions, the follow-up with Municipalities through focus groups), as well as other, related research, and national strategic documents – with results of the research evident in design documents. SCTM also has a database that contributes to understanding the needs and priorities of Municipalities.

The project's design gave direct and specific consideration to the SCTM's own Strategic Plan, the Swedish Results Strategy for the Western Balkans 2014-2020,¹¹ comments on Serbia's EU accession from EU progress reporting, Serbian Government strategic documents and a blending of SCTM/ SALAR discussions on

¹¹ <https://si.se/app/uploads/2017/10/results-strategy-e-eur-wb-and-turkey-2014-2020.pdf>

priorities and design with lessons learned previously from similar work implemented by SCTM and SALAR.¹²

SCTM's Strategic Plan was developed with inputs from a survey of local politicians, officials and civil society organisations with the intention of ensuring an alignment between the SCTM's priorities and activities and the interests and priorities of member Municipalities. In the context of the project, the most notable priority needs visible in the survey included capacity needs in relation to the Municipal role in EU Accession processes, as well as priorities related to environmental protection, gender equality action plans and the strengthening of professional services.¹³

In relation to the Swedish Results Strategy, the programme document notes the alignment with the three broad areas of focus of the strategy: democracy and human rights, economic integration in the EU and environmental sustainability, and points directly to ways in which the project's activities and anticipated results will contribute to addressing these focus areas.¹⁴ Environment and gender have always been core areas for Sweden in the Balkans, as has a focus on EU integration, so there is a real correlation between the project and Sweden's established frameworks. One important aspect of the project is in transferring and sharing Swedish experience, including introducing new tools and topics with a relevance to the Serbian situation.

The project's design provides context on how the project will respond directly to a number of noted weaknesses in Serbia's preparation for EU accession: strategic planning, administrative capacity, linking of investments to strategic priorities in the environment, climate action and civil protection sectors, and a particular mention of administrative and management capacity at the local level.¹⁵ In this context the project document also indicates a number of Serbia's strategic documents that frame the context and priorities of the project: frameworks, such as the Public Sector Reform Strategy and e-Government reforms, are important in this regard. The evaluation also heard that, in relation to EU accession, everything ends at the local level – so anything that contributes is relevant and important.

Finally, and of particular importance, is the way in which the project's design draws on lessons learned from the earlier project. The use of these lessons in informing design has ensured that the project has been responsive to the specific needs of local

¹² Support to Serbian Municipalities on the Road to EU Accession: Enabling High-Quality Services, Stakeholder Dialogue and Efficient Local Administration (2015-2019). *Programme Document*. The Standing Conference on Towns and Municipalities and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, page 4. SCTM/ SALAR.

¹³ Ibid, page 4.

¹⁴ Ibid, page 4.

¹⁵ Ibid, page 5.

self-government in provision of services to members and better reflects the requirements of local authorities.¹⁶

As well as evidence from documents, the evaluation heard a wide range of comments confirming/ emphasising this relevance in the context of stakeholder needs and priorities. This acknowledgement of relevance is visible across all types of stakeholders and confirmed by knowledgeable non-stakeholders as well. It is worth noting the consistent priority was placed on EU accession, and related processes, for all interviewees, not least given the direct relationship between this clear priority and the activities and intended results of the project. This has been particularly important to the project, both in its relevance and in its design, as the priority of EU accession extends to national agencies, the SCTM and Municipalities.

Representatives of Serbian Government Ministries note the appropriateness of engagement by SCTM staff and Municipal representatives in defining and refining Serbia's negotiating position in relation to Chapter 27 of the EU Acquis¹⁷ on environmental policy. The Environment Ministry noted the valuable role of SCTM staff in linking the Ministry, the Working Group on Chapter 27 and relevant Municipal representatives, and the fact that the negotiating position was changed based on the inputs of these Municipal representatives, particularly in relation to waste management and wastewater. Environment was noted as being one of the most demanding areas of the Acquis, and that it is largely to be implemented at the local level - a focus of the project is to enhance local capacities to cope with the tasks required to be performed by Municipalities according to Serbian Law and the requirements of EU integration.

Given the significant focus of the SCTM, generally, and the project, specifically, on Municipalities, the view of these local partners is also critical to a well-developed understanding of project relevance. Feedback from Municipalities during the field research provides strong confirmation of the relevance of the project, relevance that came from both the framing of the project, and its subsequent design and implementation. In one location specific mention was made in this context to how project participation was wide, and inclusive, which was referred to as the project being 'organised professionally.' Specific mention in different Municipalities was made to business people, local associations, the Roma community, women/ women's organisations and young people. Similarly, it was noted in field research that the

¹⁶ Ibid, page 5.

¹⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/policy/conditions-membership/chapters-of-the-acquis_en. 'EU environment policy aims to promote sustainable development and protect the environment for present and future generations. The acquis comprises over 200 major legal acts covering horizontal legislation, water and air quality, waste management, nature protection, industrial pollution control and risk management, chemicals and genetically modified organisms (GMOs), noise and forestry. A strong and well-equipped administration at national and local level is imperative for the application and enforcement of the environment acquis.'

project's processes, and focus on inclusiveness, contributed to animation of citizens that was linked to training processes and awareness-raising activities (discussed in the Effectiveness section below). In one Municipality a connection was made between the changes they brought in with their involvement in the Exchange Programme and the project, and how the project built on and enhanced those earlier innovations.

It was noted during field enquiry that the majority of the Acquis is expected to be implemented at the local level, providing impetus to work that links national and Municipal efforts related to EU accession. Legislative alignment is fundamental to this, and the role of the SCTM and the project in the legislative agenda, with both national and local authorities, was seen by interviewees as both relevant and important. One interviewee noted the importance of the role of the SCTM's staff in 'modulating' the experience and inputs of other nations so that this experience becomes more relevant in Serbia's Municipalities.

The key point in support of the partnership between the SCTM and SALAR in relation to relevance is the role SALAR is able to play in supporting the SCTM and Municipalities in those defined priority areas where local knowledge and experience is limited. This was particularly noted in fieldwork in relation to the environment. There is some, but not a great deal, of tension in the partnership, tension which possibly contributes to relevance as it has ensured detailed discussions in relation to design and specific areas of content. The partners come from different experience and perspectives, and the partnership had to grow and evolve in order for the best qualities of each to be understood and effectively contribute to the project.

The project is designed with two components, the MSPs (hands-on support for services to citizens and business) and support to the SCTM and municipalities collectively at policy level, to represent local interests and enhance the capacity of all local authorities. The two components support each other and are interlinked thematically, in implementation and in reporting.

3.2 EFFECTIVENESS

There is a wide range of data gathered from the evaluation that provides strong evidence of the effectiveness of the project. This evidence includes the implementation of activities and the achievement of results. There is also an apparent and visible link to longer term effectiveness that points to capacity growth, sustainability and a contribution to impact. Although there are other projects addressing the local level, the work done by the SCTM addresses the capacities of the local level in ways that are different to other initiatives. Capacities include individuals involved in different thematic areas – desk officers and their capacity to understand the area and widen their view of their responsibility as a Municipal official. There is also development of capacity in the Municipality as a unit, although this is somewhat more difficult to see. In Čajetina for example, stakeholders from the Municipality have developed a different view of what they are doing and are working jointly, as opposed to working 'in parallel'. This working jointly was not the approach earlier. In

Becej, the Municipality has created a steering body for gender budgeting that operates similarly, i.e. across the Municipality, but in this instance also involves stakeholders from outside the Municipality.

Component 1 and component 2 clearly correlate with each other in terms of content and results, and in how one supports the other in strengthening of results. It is also clear that the component approach reflects how the SCTM operates more generally. The evaluation heard how MSPs address what is relevant for each specific Municipality, how the focus is on local needs related to the EU integration process, and how this provides a concrete link between the project and both local and national priorities. This was described as the project being focused at the level of the system of local government – reform at the Municipal level and at the level of national policy, drawing the Serbian government, the SCTM and Municipalities together in addressing the needs and requirements of the path to EU accession. It is also worth noting a mentioned focus on inter-municipal cooperation, cooperation that shows up specifically in relation to emergencies and the environment. The evaluation heard these views expressed particularly in terms of sustainability of small Municipalities as they will ‘stay on the right path’ only where they participate in the inter-municipal cooperation chain.

The narrative below draws on studied documents (largely project design and reporting documents) and feedback from stakeholders and looks at what has been achieved, against plans, in both components.

3.2.1 Component 1 – Municipal Support Packages

As noted in the Fourth Annual Narrative Report¹⁸, in relation to component 1, 7 of 19 MSPs have been finalised, four related to business, one in emergency, one in environment and one with a gender focus. The report notes that an MSP is ‘envisaged to assist selected local authorities to upgrade their concrete performances, improve capacities and provide services in an innovative, efficient and sustainable way, harmonized with EU standards’¹⁹ and provides specific examples for each of the comments quoted below, discussing the good results that have been achieved in all established MSPs:

... particularly in terms of creating participative processes and dialogue with citizens and the local business sector on service delivery. Increased collaboration between municipal departments and improved conditions for inter-municipal cooperation can also be seen as results of the work in the MSPs in the areas of environment and emergencies.

¹⁸ January 2020. Support to Serbian Municipalities on the Road to EU Accession: Enabling High-Quality Services, Stakeholder Dialogue and Efficient Administration - Fourth Annual Narrative Report (for period January – December 2019) – (early draft).

¹⁹ Ibid page 13.

... good examples of how MSPs have resulted in adoption of formal plans and concrete measures that provides conditions for improved service delivery for citizens and follow EU standards.

Gender Equality and human rights principles are increasingly addressed within the different thematic areas of the MSPs.

The work on communication with citizens through citizens surveys and inclusion of public information in plans and analysis is producing good results.²⁰

The evaluation heard that the concept and implementation of the MSP approach has wide support in the donor community as it reflects donor priorities in Serbia. The MSP approach is acknowledged as an SCTM methodology and is being implemented with both Swiss and German funds, in addition to the project's Swedish contribution, in a number of Municipalities across Serbia, with different donors focusing also on different thematic areas. The evaluation heard from donors a clear vote of confidence in the MSP concept, the role of the SCTM in delivery of local projects and the successes from these initiatives, notably in terms of local capacity building and the role of training, mentoring and exchanges in this.

Strategic/ implementation vision – there are differences of opinion within the project team, with SCTM management, and between SALAR and the SCTM about thematic content of MSPs, the size and length of any given MSP and the selection process for Municipalities. These differences arise in relation to a tailor-made approach, compared to a pre-defined methodology with a set of fixed outputs and a fixed timeframe, and also in relation to length and cost for each MSP. There is also some discussion here as to the relationship between thematic focus areas in the MSP component and thematic focus areas in the policy component. There seems to have been an aligning, which is supported by stakeholders, as it can be clearly seen how work on a thematic area in the policy component can have a direct impact on a related MSP, and vice versa.

In order to assess the project, and specifically the MSP component, the evaluation team undertook field research in 4 different Municipalities. Feedback from this field research in each of these 4 Municipalities, as well as relevant project reporting, is summarised below.

i. Kladovo

The MSP in Kladovo has only recently been established. A 'Business Council in Kladovo was established in 2019, with 19 members and 10 business community representatives.'²¹ According to field research, key players in the Municipality and the business community have been included in the work of the project and in forming

²⁰ Ibid, page 6.

²¹ Ibid, page 19.

the Business Council. The expressed opinion was that the engagement of all relevant stakeholders and the use of a focus group approach in development of an action plan were important and successful approaches, and that engagement between the business community and the Municipality is itself an accomplishment. It is felt that greater inputs from external sources of experience and knowledge will be important to ensure more sustainable success, including a higher level of cooperation with Swedish businessmen and local councils in order to further develop an understanding of effective cooperation on a business-enabling environment.

While there is a specific focus on a good link between the business and public sectors, specific successes of relevance to stakeholders include ongoing development of e-Government, taxi-service related procedures, e-Kindergarten, instant payments through the payment terminal and electronic document filing.

ii. Bečej

The MSP in Bečej is focused on development of gender-responsive budgeting and a Local Action Plan (LAP) for gender equality. The evaluation team heard strong supportive evidence about the project, its role in the LAP and gender budgeting and, more importantly, in changing the local approach to gender equality, as well as inclusiveness. Interviewees in Bečej noted the change in how the Municipality approached its work, initially in signing the *European charter for equality of women and men in local life*, and then through its commitment to development of the LAP for gender equality. The LAP has 5 strategic goals and shared responsibilities:

- Safety – emphasis on footpaths and access roads.
- Improving the position of rural women.
- Improvement of services to citizens (institutions and public enterprises).
- The position of women and girls in sports.
- The capacity of decision-makers and awareness of the importance of the topic and of institutionalisation of gender equality.

The Local Action Plan for the Improvement of Women's Position was adopted by the local Assembly in December 2018.²²

During 2019 Bečej received two awards related to gender equality. The first was an award for local self-government in the area of good governance – Bečej won in the category of ‘equality and absence of discrimination’. The second was from the Gender Equality Coordination Body: the Gender Improvement Award at the local level.²³ It is intended that the LAP process in Bečej will serve as a basis for developing LAPs in other Municipalities.²⁴ It is worth noting that, as a result of these developments in the Municipality, there has been further engagement with other

²² Ibid, page 56

²³ Ibid, page 6.

²⁴ Ibid, page 15.

organisation, both in terms of technical support and financing. Particular reference is made to a project being implemented through/ with UN Women, a project which came directly from the LAP.

iii. Čajetina

The Čajetina MSP is focused on waste management. The Municipality has a strong desire to be the first green Municipality in Serbia, beginning its work with adoption of a new waste management plan in 2019. The development of this Plan involved all municipal staff, the PUC, NGOs, schoolchildren and entrepreneurs. The plan includes household rubbish bins, as well as rubbish bins on the streets, a larger number of trucks for collecting both wet and dry waste, waste islands for primary selection and development of a waste treatment area, a wastewater treatment plant and a facility for treating animal waste.

The MSP in Čajetina is a very strong example of the value and success of a tailored MSP package, particularly how it was developed with the local Municipality, how the Municipality (both its governance and its technical and working staff) has embraced the external inputs (both from SCTM and from SALAR) and how there are indications of long-term sustainable change in the way that the Municipal government and citizens will address waste management in the Municipality in the future.

‘In Čajetina, the evidence-based and participative process of the MSP resulted in the formal adoption of a new waste management plan (WMP) in 2019. The plan is produced in line with all relevant EU Directives related to waste and the next step of the program will be to concretely support the municipal administration in management and in implementation of parts of the WMP through feasibility studies.’²⁵ The project is using the Common Assessment Framework²⁶ in its work with the Čajetina Municipality. Municipal inspectors did note a need for feedback from citizens on the waste management systems – a process that is not in place yet.

A number of aspects of the Čajetina MSP require highlighting as they are indicative success factors. They include:

- Readiness. Čajetina Municipality and its citizens were interested in and open to the kind of waste management changes being implemented through the MSP.
- Type and level of participation from Municipal staff. Municipal staff recognise and commented on the importance of a participatory approach built on learning. All parts of the administration and other staff were engaged, and developed their own knowledge and skills, which contributed to the commitment to change now found in the Municipality.

²⁵ Ibid, page 6.

²⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_Assessment_Framework

- Level of participation in study visits. The Municipality sent all relevant staff to Sweden on study visits, including waste truck drivers, due to the importance of their role in primary selection of waste. This level of participation has been important in MSP success as Municipal staff are demonstrating a high degree of knowledge about necessary changes and commitment to the change. It is important to note that the study tour was the key to success – all change became possible after the study tour.
- Confidence in SCTM and SALAR expertise. Interviewees in the Municipality note the high levels of confidence they have in communication received from project staff, and their willingness to respond quickly and effectively as a result of this confidence. Similar feedback was noted regarding Swedish and local expertise, both those that regularly visited Čajetina and those encountered in Sweden.
- Appropriateness of the Swedish experience. Feedback from the field indicates that knowledge and experience gained in study visits and the inputs from visiting Swedish experts were all appropriate to the Municipality and have provided useful directions for waste management systems and administration processes in Čajetina.

iv. Osečina

Unlike the other MSPs visited by the evaluation team, the Osečina MSP was completed in 2018 (and reported on in the earlier annual report of the project). It was also different in another way – it focused on emergencies, which is an inherently different focus to the thematic areas of the other MSPs visited, in that emergencies by definition take place only intermittently while the other MSPs focused on areas of regular and consistent activity.

The evaluation heard the importance to the Municipality of the work the project did in engendering an approach of proactivity, and about preventative approaches, as well as raising the awareness of both the Municipal government and local residents. The project involved a wide range of local residents, including in civil protection training (focused on hazard scenarios). Interestingly, from both an effectiveness and sustainability perspective, as a result of the training there is now an ongoing project being implemented with the city of Loznica and the Ugljevik Municipality in Bosnia and Herzegovina related to emergency readiness and action. According to feedback from the field, the Municipality is much better prepared for future problems, and for protecting property and saving people.

According to the 2018 Annual Report of the project, ‘In Osečina (Emergencies), the project managed to achieve the cooperation of different parts of local administration, local public utility companies and local NGOs and to include vulnerable groups in the

risk assessment process.’²⁷ Further, ‘Within the MSP for Osečina Municipality in the field of emergency management, based on the expressed interest, the work plan was prepared in order to provide support related to the development of project proposals for applying to EU funds. Bearing in mind that the improvement of the inter-municipal cooperation was one of the envisaged outcomes in general and in MSPs, the SCTM supported Osečina to invite the City of Loznica to be a partner in the project preparation.’²⁸

3.2.2 Component 2 – Support at the policy level

The project, and the SCTM generally, maintains a significant focus on national representation of Municipalities, and of the needs and priorities of Municipalities with the Serbian Government, as well as with international organisations – most notably the EU Delegation to Serbia. The evaluation heard evidence of the importance of the role of the SCTM in lobbying on behalf of local interests, the role of the SCTM in representing local interests in negotiation processes and working groups, as well as in building knowledge about and commitment to priority thematic areas.

In relation to component 2, the Annual Report also notes that component 2 ‘is envisaged to be a vehicle of improvement of the local government sector in Serbia’²⁹ in the thematic areas covered in component 1 and comments that SCTM ‘actively participated and represented local interest in various negotiations and working groups by providing credible policy recommendations and concrete suggestions in relation to regulations, new legal frameworks and bylaws’ and notes furthermore the importance of policy recommendations related to environment and emergencies of inter-municipal cooperation.³⁰ Specific mention is also made of a number of critical policy, legislative and EU accession areas:

Regarding gender equality, SCTM has strengthened its position with the establishment of the Gender Champion Network (GCN) including representatives from both the SCTM Presidency and various SCTM Committees.

... participation in Working Group and preparation of Negotiation Position for Chapter 27...

A model for Waste Management Plans (Environment) and tools for roadmap and communication in emergency management have also been developed.

²⁷ January 2019. Support to Serbian Municipalities on the Road to EU Accession: Enabling High-Quality Services, Stakeholder Dialogue and Efficient Administration - Third Annual Narrative Report (for period January – December 2018), page 5.

²⁸ Ibid, page 19.

²⁹ Ibid, page 13.

³⁰ Ibid, page 6.

A methodology on customer satisfaction drafted for the Zrenjanin cluster (Environment) and used in other MSPs as well. Gender equality and transparency aspects have also been considered in this methodology...³¹

Environment – Environment is a priority of EU accession and has its focus, in this context, on implementation at the local level. It is therefore an area of priority for Municipalities in Serbia. Additionally, both SALAR and the SCTM have good knowledge and skills in this area, encouraging a focus in this sector. The evaluation heard from the Ministry for the Environment regarding the important and welcome role played by the SCTM and Municipalities in developing the Government's negotiating position on Chapter 27 – the Environment, including specific mention of quality inputs from the SCTMs environment staff and inputs from PUCs at a technical level in each of the working groups drafting the negotiating position. As well as at the level of working groups, other inputs from Municipalities were noted in relation to the waste framework directive and the wastewater framework. The Ministry recognises a strong cooperation with the SCTM, and Municipal participation is recognised as a significant and serious contribution to the negotiation process. The Ministry anticipates that this cooperation will continue in the same way in the future, specifically when Chapter 27 is opened.

Gender – the project works specifically on gender budgeting (Bečej and Aleksandrovac MSPs), which is also framed in Serbian legislation, so there is a clear linkage between the project and Municipal needs. The project works on analysis, and provides benchmarking to assess progression, and the specific work on action plans is key to developments in this area. The role of SALAR is particularly important in this thematic area as it has developed a strong knowledge, experience and profile, globally, in gender mainstreaming with local self-governance, and has provided analysis and statistics in support of the work of SCTM. The project has a longer-term focus as well, using the work with current Municipalities to gain knowledge and examples that can be used in a wider scope of implementation for other Municipalities in Serbia. The Annual Report notes in relation to gender equality that

SCTM has strengthened its position with the establishment of the Gender Champion Network (GCN) including representatives from both the SCTM Presidency and various SCTM Committees. SCTM committees have also increased knowledge on human rights-based approach and gender equality thanks to trainings conducted during the year (SCTM Committee for Environment).³²

³¹ Ibid, page 7.

³² January 2020. Support to Serbian Municipalities on the Road to EU Accession: Enabling High-Quality Services, Stakeholder Dialogue and Efficient Administration - Fourth Annual Narrative Report (for period January – December 2019) – (draft), page 7.

EU accession – An important component of the focus on EU accession was discussed earlier in the comments on the environment and contributions for the SCTM, the project and Municipalities related to the development of Serbia’s negotiating position on Chapter 27. These constructive contributions, in collaboration with Serbia’s national institutions, are examples of the projects approach on EU accession. Similarly, all work done with MSPs on environmental priorities at the Municipal level are done within the framework of the EU’s environmental priorities. This work includes MSP activities in the City of Sombor, where an environmental project has been submitted in accordance with EU procedures. This project saw the development of a number of new methods and tools that have been applied in other Municipalities as well. Methodologies developed in other Municipalities are also being shared and utilised, including the customer satisfaction methodology developed by the Zrenjanin MSP, a manual for the preparation of gender-sensitive budgets, a waste management plan model and tools for communication in emergency management that have been developed. This inter-municipal cooperation is a highlight of the work of the project and was noted by numerous interviewees as a valuable tool.³³

3.2.3 Stakeholder perspectives on potential adjustments to priority or process

The evaluation was specifically tasked with ascertaining stakeholder perspectives on the priorities, implementation logic and approaches of the project with a view to developing recommendations for future refinements. A number of areas are summarised below and are then addressed in later sections of the report.

Business environment – for Municipalities and the SCTM, a focus on a business-enabling environment is an important priority. There are currently 5 active MSPs in this thematic area, each of which will be completed during 2020. These MSPs focus on improvements to efficiency in providing services to businesses, improvements in business orientation, development of proposals for public-private partnerships and development of local economic development programmes with the assistance of the national government, the private sector, the academic sector and civil society.³⁴ The work in the business sector has not been supported by SALAR during the current phase.

Definitions, and application, of cross-cutting areas – Cross-cutting areas are not clearly agreed and expressed in documentation and in interviews. The Terms of Reference for the evaluation state ‘gender equality and good governance (including transparency and anti-corruption),³⁵ the project document describes EU integration, public awareness, communication and outreach and then specifically mentions gender

³³ Ibid, page 7.

³⁴ Ibid, page 62.

³⁵ Evaluation Terms of Reference, page 2.

equality and inclusiveness, as well as anti-corruption and transparency.³⁶ Furthermore, the 2019 Annual Report states ‘such as gender equality, human rights and good governance (including transparency and anti-corruption).’³⁷ The evaluation also heard discussion regarding gender equality, good governance and EU integration during field interviews.

Linkages between the two components – The evaluation was directed to look specifically at links between component 1 and component 2 (How can the linkages between the two components be optimised and used more effectively to achieve project objectives?) The components are clearly understood by SCTM and SALAR staff, as is the reasoning for approaching project design and implementation in this way. There is a very close correlation between the content of the two components (the thematic focus), and they do reinforce each other, although possibly not to the extent desired or anticipated. There is a perspective that the MSP methodology is much clearer and more developed than the policy-focused approach. There is simply no clear perspective from relevant parties on the balance between and potential and/ or actual synergies that can be (further) developed. The use of focus thematic areas in MSPs and with the policy component has general agreement, and the current thematic areas are also generally supported. In some project documentation discussion of thematic focus areas appears to draw together activities and results in both components. The evaluation’s document and field research indicate a general support for thematic focus areas and a clear understanding of the reasoning for a component approach.

3.3 EFFICIENCY

During the evaluation’s inception phase it was agreed to look at project efficiency in two ways: the implementation partnership between SALAR and the SCTM, and through a focus on the project’s results-based framework. Each of these is discussed below.

3.3.1 The partnership between SALAR and the SCTM

The partnership between SALAR and the SCTM has now been in place for a number of years, and has evolved in knowledge, skill and role in that time. The evolution has not just been on the side of the SCTM – learning and growth have happened on both sides, in parallel with a development of trust, particularly within thematic areas. As mentioned above, there is some tension in the partnership, although the clear sense

³⁶ Support to Serbian Municipalities on the Road to EU Accession: Enabling High-Quality Services, Stakeholder Dialogue and Efficient Local Administration (2015-2019). *Programme Document*. The Standing Conference on Towns and Municipalities and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, page 8.

³⁷ January 2020. Support to Serbian Municipalities on the Road to EU Accession: Enabling High-Quality Services, Stakeholder Dialogue and Efficient Administration - Fourth Annual Narrative Report (for period January – December 2019) – (draft), page 13.

from field research is that the tension is creative and positive and is characteristic of the tensions present in any partnership.

There was no sense during field research of difficulties, or of one partner having a stronger or ‘more important’ role, although the partners have had to develop an understanding of each other’s capacities and role. Indeed, the evaluation team heard that the partners are good for pushing each other out of their comfort zones. One example of this is thematic areas. There is general agreement about good governance, gender and the environment, three areas of SALAR expertise and focus and also important to the SCTM. However, the focus on emergency management, and the decision to enter into the business-enabling environment with MSPs were areas not strongly supported by SALAR, to the extent that they are not involved in MSPs focusing on the business environment.

The evaluation also heard from partners that there is an imperative for the relationship to continue evolving, that the implementation relationship moving forward should not be exactly the same as it is now. There are a number of points brought up in field research that provide insight into the current relationship and provide a framework for potential focus in the future. These include:

- A need for there to be more interaction between SALAR and the SCTM at the strategic level. The expressed view was that the partnership should not just be reactive, within in an implementation context, but should share and develop the more strategic aspects of Municipal development through MSPs and the policy initiatives, as well as in framing the project’s directions. The lack of a joint understanding of an agreement about the business-enabling environment is a case in point.
- A related priority of further partnership development at the senior management level, between SALAR and the SCTM, as opposed to the current emphasis at the project implementation level.

3.3.2 The results-based framework

The evaluation was specifically tasked with ascertaining whether the project’s results-based management framework was contributing to results. In this context the evaluation team heard a wide range of comments on the results framework, its size and complexity and its contribution to planning and reporting. There is a consistent view among stakeholders that the results framework contributes to project management. Included in this is the use of the results framework in planning and in analysing results and reporting. A number of interviewees referred to it as a useful tool, and interviewees also specifically noted that they are aware of the short-term and medium-term outcome statements and that this contributes to their sense of responsibility for achieving these outcomes. These are all important findings, as they are indicative of the results framework actually providing practical assistance in planning and reporting.

There is however another view, also consistent across stakeholders, that the results framework is very large and very complex, and the evaluation team heard that for this reason it is not easy to follow. In the context of a four-year project with a budget of some 47 million SEK, the framework defines 9 results areas with 30 medium-term results, 100 short-term results and 122 outputs, which indeed is large and complex. Is it actually possible to achieve 100 short-term results, or even to give appropriate focus of time and money across so many result areas? While it can be argued in a results-based management context that the project only needs to contribute to the 30 medium-term outcomes, this is less the case with the short-term outcomes which should flow fairly directly from the project's outputs.

Analysis of the results framework provides a slightly different perspective on this area of discussion – firstly, can the project deliver the intended 122 outputs and secondly, if it does will these outputs contribute directly to achieving the defined short-term results? The results framework is not designed in this way – there is no direct logical relationship between any single output or set of outputs and any single short-term outcome statement. The project team is focused, as noted above, on short-term and medium-term outcomes, which is a positive perspective as they have been drawn away from having an activity focus. However, where the results framework is not well-enough defined is in relation to outputs, and the flow of outputs towards short-term outcomes. In project processes, teams have control over inputs of time and money (activities) and therefore have control over how these inputs deliver outputs. It is at this point that they are able to analyse how they are contributing to outcomes.

From the perspective of an external reader, there is one other area of concern in relation to the project's result logic and reporting. The results framework is laid out according to the two components – all discussion about Component 1 is first, followed by all discussions about Component 2. This is not the case with reporting, which is done according to thematic areas, looking at each of the components within the thematic area. This does not make sense logically when we consider the need for our reporting to include reporting on results, which are done according to components, not thematic areas.

3.4 SUSTAINABILITY

The evaluation's research indicates three areas where discussions on sustainability should be focused: the SCTM itself, the partnership between SCTM and SALAR and the actual work and focus of the project in/ with Municipalities. Each of these is discussed below.

3.4.1 The SCTM

The evaluation team heard, based on data from a range of different types of interviewee that the SCTM is a strategic thinking, strong, professional organisation that operates with good integrity. A good indication of the perspective that other organisations have about the SCTM is that they are also working with the German Government and the Swiss Government on MSP projects in other Municipalities and

have a good, effective relationship with the EU Delegation in Serbia on similar initiatives. It is also notable that Municipalities have been instructed by the Serbian Government to work with the SCTM on MSPs.

Ownership of the project by SCTM leadership is strong and committed, with the project being well-integrated into the SCTMs structures and strategies, with permanent staff working on the project. There are indications from field interviews that this ownership also represents ownership by Municipalities, through the SCTM's governance structures.

3.4.2 The SCTM/ SALAR partnership

The SCTM/ SALAR partnership was discussed previously; in addition, in terms of sustainability it is worth noting the reflections from partners on the length of the partnership and how the partnership has grown and evolved over the years. They are different organisations with different strengths and ways of operating and are not always able to appreciate the perspective of the other. However, all indications from fieldwork are that there is a strong commitment from both sides to operate transparently and with a strong commitment to implementing change processes for Municipalities in Serbia.

3.4.3 Municipal development

Of most importance in any discussion on sustainability is the sustainability of the Municipal development that is the focus and intent of the project. Here, most indications suggest a strong sustainability potential. There are a number of factors that contribute to this likely sustainability.

- The framework provided by the EU Acquis and the importance of local self-governance in implementation of the Acquis. This also provides a link between the Serbian Government and Municipalities with the SCTM facilitating that link.
- The strategic and financial commitment of the international community, including the EU, Germany, Switzerland and of course Sweden. These organisations are committed to Serbia's accession processes, provide funding to directly support this and appear to work with some coordination in support of this development.
- The clear and visible benefits for citizens, which encourages Municipalities to work towards change.
- Capacity has been built. While the evaluation heard that a continuing issue with Municipal staffing is staff changeover, there are still indications that the new knowledge and skills gained from project initiatives are being retained. Any capacity that has been built contributes to sustainability. Capacity growth, in the form of local expertise in thematic areas, has significant potential for impact and sustainability in providing opportunities for experts from one Municipality to share their expertise, whether in emergencies or in gender, in other towns and regions.
- The inter-municipal cooperation is likely to contribute to sustainability, particularly where a smaller or less well-developed Municipality can benefit from linkages with a neighbouring Municipality that has better conditions, knowledge and skills.

- The visible good cooperation between Municipalities and the SCTM, and the expressed view of interviewees that the methodology is of value to local self-governments.
- There are indications of sustainability in mechanisms being introduced by the SCTM, such as the network of experts, e-Training and models for policies and procedures prepared for Municipalities.

More needs to be done however in ensuring the necessary levels of commitment across all Municipalities. This has not yet been possible; ownership at the Municipal level varies and there are examples of Municipalities relatively uninterested in a committed engagement in an MSP.

3.5 IMPACT

Stakeholders and non-stakeholders alike point to growth in knowledge and skills within the SCTM as indicators of impact. Interviewees note the capacity of SCTM Secretariat staff in articulating strategic perspectives, in understanding their role and in performing their role. Mention was also made of the thematic teams/ experts and the important role they play in contributing to Municipal development. This is supported by levels of satisfaction with the SCTM by Municipalities who respond to SCTM questionnaires.

On the other side, there are also indicators of potential impact through the MSPs, in how Municipalities operate and in how they provide services to citizens. Specific examples of this noted change in servicing, change that is indicative of potential for impact, include:

- Reform in administrative procedures – the ongoing development of earlier Swiss support that includes the development of 188 models of administrative procedures for local self-governance. These models became the basis for digitalisation of administrative procedures towards citizens and businesses at the local level and save money for Municipal clients.
- Čajetina's improved service delivery within waste management, including the involvement of citizens in the development of waste management planning.
- Approaches that improve Municipal communication with citizens, and related examples of citizens assessing that they are being listened to.
- E-Permits and other changes to procedures.
- The longer-term approach being taken, such as with Krusevac's approach to management of Celija lake.
- The 'One Stop Shop' approach to addressing citizen enquiries and needs.
- Bečej's gender LAP development process which is now accepted as a format for inclusive and participatory process for other LAPs and strategic documents – it has already been used for the Local Health Plan.

3.6 CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

The evaluation approach undertook to analyse the project's approach to cross-cutting areas through both a process and a result perspective.

3.6.1 Process - examining how, and to what extent, gender equality and good governance are *mainstreamed in the programming process*

As noted in section 3.2.3, cross-cutting areas are not clearly agreed and expressed in documentation and interviews. While gender is agreed, and is also recognised, as having a specific programmatic focus, good governance is not as clearly visible as gender in documentation or discussions. Good governance is mentioned 7 times in the 2020 Annual Report while gender equality is mentioned 71 times, and three of the 7 mentions of good governance are made in reference to gender equality as a form of good governance. A similar imbalance is visible in the project document. From time to time other areas are also mentioned as cross-cutting priorities, including EU integration, public awareness, human rights and anti-corruption and transparency (within a good governance context).

This is not to imply that good governance is not an actual project priority – it can be argued that the project's overall intent is specifically about good governance. More is needed though to bring into focus the undeveloped nature of good governance as a cross-cutting area in programming and reporting. This includes a clearer definition of what the project means by good governance, in general and in terms of project processes.

The evaluation team has collected evidence acknowledging the processes within the SCTM for implementing a gender focus, within a rights-based approach, and also heard evidence that participants in workshops and other activities do not experience the gender focus as a 'box ticking' exercise but as a real priority of the project.

3.6.2 Result - assessing the extent to which the project is guided by *organisational and system-wide objectives on gender equality and good governance*

i. *Good governance*

There are clearly positive results in good governance from project initiatives, including each of those items mentioned in reference to potential impacts: Čajetina's improved service delivery within waste management; Osečina's developed understanding of the roles and duties of Municipal officers; improving Municipal communication with citizens, and related examples of citizens considering that they are being listened to; E-Permits and other changes to procedures, etc. Having said this, the evaluation's research indicates that while process change is visible, what is not so visible yet is transparency, including the sharing of information within different Municipal departments and with citizens.

ii. *Gender equality*

The 2019 Annual Report notes an ongoing contribution to Municipal implementation of gender equality principles in local policies. The report provides more detailed

evidence, noting positive developments in gender-responsive budgeting, the two Local Action Plans for the improvement of the position of women (Bečej and Aleksandrovac) and the establishment of the Gender Equality Champions Network. Field research also highlighted work within the SCTM – namely, advocacy work being done to increase the level of awareness and practice on gender equality related matters. The view was expressed that awareness of and commitment to gender equality in the SCTM is significant. Feedback from field research indicates that progress is real, and can be built on going forward, but as yet is not being transformed into significant results.

4 Evaluative Conclusions

Conclusions are drawn from the data gathered in the document review and key informant interviews. They have been formulated against the evaluation framework, objectives and purpose.

4.1 RELEVANCE

The project has significant relevance to Municipalities in Serbia, generally, in their developmental processes and improvements to services for citizens and, specifically, in relation to their preparation for and contribution to EU accession. This relevance is visible in a number of ways, most significantly the engagement the SCTM has with similar projects funded by other donors including the EU. The project is directly relevant to the priorities of Sweden as defined in the Swedish results strategy for the Western Balkans for 2014-2020, particularly in relation to the environment and gender equality as core areas for Sweden in the Balkans and also economic integration with the EU.

4.2 EFFECTIVENESS

The logic and effectiveness of the 2-component approach contributes to a broadening of potential impacts that are based on local solutions. The two components as currently defined are supportive of each other, both at the thematic level and in terms of practical implementation. Some refinements should be considered however, including a more direct correlation between MSP thematic areas and the focus areas of the policy component, i.e. ensuring that each thematic area covered by an MSP is also a focus of the policy component.

Project processes lack detailed comment from citizens on the content, activities and results of each MSP. The SCTM questionnaire processes, including in the performance evaluation system, provide a general level of feedback on competences and satisfaction. However clear data on Municipal initiatives through MSPs, and how these initiatives are impacting on and are perceived by citizens is underdeveloped.

A strategic thinking/ planning process, involving reflection on the current project as well as detailed consideration of the potential project extension would facilitate the implementation team/ implementing partners in drawing together more defined approaches to the extension. Embassy/ Sida involvement in the thinking/ planning process is indicated, as a way of ensuring alignment with Swedish strategic priorities per the Swedish result strategy. Such a reflection/ planning process could be of significant importance to future directions for the project as there are a number of areas where agreement on direction or priority is not in place, areas that should be

determined internally, and jointly, by the implementing partners as part of a strategic level planning process. While future involvement in the business-enabling environment is an obvious area for discussion, so too are potential changes to MSP thematic areas to focus on urbanism and urban development, while also clearly including gender as a thematic area, ensuring that it is incorporated across all intervention areas. In addition, the system and process for the selection of Municipalities, the direction of tailor-made or ready-made approaches and the relationship between thematic areas in the MSP and policy components all require detailed discussions.

4.3 EFFICIENCY

Particularly in the context of the likely extension/ follow-up to the project, and in light of the feedback on the partnership, it will be important for the implementing partners to make a conscious effort to move the partnership forward and to build on the current situation. There are clear priorities here for the Embassy/ Sida as well, as all areas that impact on implementation effectiveness and efficiency are of specific importance to the Embassy. The strategic thinking/ planning process mentioned above provides an opportunity to also look in depth at the nature of the partnership and how it can continue to grow and be strengthened over the coming period. Consideration should also be given to how SALAR and SCTM management can be involved in this process.

As outlined in the Findings section, the results framework has strong support from stakeholders for its contribution to ensuring a result focus, as well as in the planning and monitoring of the project. It is however large and complex, with some structural weaknesses. In preparation for an extension/ follow-up, some further developmental work of the results framework is suggested, work that would address a need for a better structuring of the logic between outputs and short-term outcomes as well as looking to define a smaller number of short-term and medium-term results.

4.4 SUSTAINABILITY

The project demonstrates a strong likelihood of sustainability of results, visible in the leadership provided by the SCTM's staff, and the commitment of both staff and SCTM leadership to developmental processes. Sustainability is also visible in the continued partnership between SALAR and the SCTM, including the ongoing commitment on both sides to develop and grow the partnership. Sustainability is visible within Municipalities, in terms of built capacity (knowledge and skills), including in the development of local expertise. Sustainability also comes from the strategic framework provided by EU accession priorities and the EU Acquis, as well as the consistent and ongoing financial commitment from the EU and other donors. Also indicative of sustainability, although in less clear-cut ways, is the development of inter-municipal cooperation, particularly in support to smaller or less well-developed Municipalities.

4.5 IMPACT

The project is clearly on the road to delivering longer-term change in the knowledge and skills of the staff of the SCTM, and how these staff work professionally and effectively with Municipalities. There are also good indications of potential for impact in a number of areas of system and process at the Municipal level, although this will take more time before it can be assessed as impact.

4.6 CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

The definition of and approach to cross-cutting issues requires further elaboration. Project design, implementation and reporting would benefit from clearer statements on the areas considered cross-cutting, and why they are deemed to ‘cut across’ the whole of the project. From there, specific approaches for each area are needed to ensure an effective addressing of the issue/ priority. Finally, the design and implementation aspects should be visible and clearly discussed in project reporting.

5 Lessons Learned

5.1 COMMUNICATION IN THE THEMATIC TEAM

The implementation team has learned that it is important for prioritising, planning and implementing that they make a conscious effort to communicate amongst themselves within the team, as well as internally to SCTM and also between SCTM and SALAR. The team has noted that there is a correlation between good communications practice and good results.

5.2 MUNICIPAL CAPACITY

While the implementation team knew that Municipal capacity was low, it was not so clear that this lack of capacity extended to the management level as well as the technical matters. This resulted in a weakness at the Municipal level in ways of working, taking on responsibility, understanding mandates, weaknesses that have had to also be addressed within the project's activities, even though the project approach did not include a ready-made package in this area. This has brought to the fore the necessity of finding a balance between a tailor-made and ready-made approach, which is linked with the balance between flexibility and efficiency.

5.3 QUALITY MUNICIPAL INPUTS

The success of MSPs is seen to be directly related to the readiness of any given Municipality to accept and adopt proposed changes. The implementation team has learned the key issues in project implementation at the Municipal level are not, primarily, a factor of local motivation but more about facilitating Municipal staff in seeing the broader picture; to look beyond activities and responsibilities demanding immediate attention and to address these matters in the wider context of Municipal development.

6 Recommendations

Recommendations are focused on improving project design and implementation in the future and are framed specifically to address the utility focus of the stated purpose: learn what works well and what less well; provide a constructive way forward.

6.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

6.1.1 Strategic planning

It is recommended that the SCTM and SALAR ensure a strategic, longer-term focus through a strategic thinking/ planning process/ workshop. This would enable project staff and management to concentrate on the discussions and would ensure objectivity in the design and facilitation of the workshop. The agenda should include:

- A reflective component on the functioning and future directions of the partnership.
- Achieving consensus on thematic focus areas.
- Achieving consensus on the interconnections between components.

It is worth considering the engagement of an external facilitator to lead this workshop. Such an approach would ensure that all workshop participants can actually participate, without the need for consideration of methods, working session design and logistics, session planning and session leadership. It also provides an objective presence and leadership that will facilitate open and creative discussions and decisions.

6.1.2 Municipal capacity

It is recommended that the specific focus on Municipal capacity be further developed through detailed consideration by the implementation partners of specific approaches. It may well be that this work is incorporated into the strategic planning process discussed above. Key components include, but are not limited to:

- Ensuring a well-developed and agreed approach to the selection of Municipalities, including a model for the related questionnaires and assessments for Municipal selection.
- Of particular importance is formulating a methodology for assessing
 - Readiness of the Municipality
 - Potential for future peer networking and knowledge sharing
 - Possibility of shared MSPs with smaller and/ or neighbouring Municipalities

- Developing a balanced approach to implementation (including balancing a tailor-made and ready-made approach) that addresses Municipal-level ways of work, understanding of mandates and taking on responsibility.
- Contributing to sustainability through detailed consideration of how to further develop local expertise in thematic areas.

6.1.3 Cross-cutting areas

It is recommended that the project give detailed consideration to:

- The real intent of designating cross-cutting areas.
- Defining in detail what these cross-cutting areas are.
- Based on the above, elaborate a strategy and plan for ensuring an appropriate focus in each designated cross-cutting area.

The key to this approach is to understand and clearly state why any particular area is seen to ‘cut across’ project design/ implementation. Once this is clear, building activities into project implementation, across both components and all thematic areas, will be more straightforward. Moreover, reporting will be facilitated by having intent and detailed plans clearly stated.

6.1.4 Results framework

It is recommended that the project re-examine its results framework with the intention of further refining its structure and content. This will assist in increasing the effectiveness of the results framework as a planning, implementing and reporting tool.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EMBASSY

6.2.1 Extension/ next phase

It is recommended that the Embassy/ Sida provide financial support for an extension to the project. Given the close alignment with Swedish strategic priorities in the Western Balkans and the clear effectiveness of the implementing partnership and project results, such ongoing support is warranted and will strengthen effectiveness, contribute to sustainability of outcomes and has the potential to make a significant contribution to the potential for impact.

6.2.2 Engagement in the strategic thinking/ planning process of the implementing partners.

It is recommended that the Embassy/ Sida participate in the thinking/ planning session (see 6.1 above) of implementing partners as a contributing participant. There are a number of strategic areas, as well as practical implementation issues, where donor inputs to discussions can contribute to the completeness of discussions. It is not suggested here that the donor set directions or make specific demands, but that they are engaged openly at the strategic level to contribute context and content in the framing of priorities and directions.

Annex 1: Terms of Reference for the Evaluation of “Support to Serbian Municipalities on the Road to EU Accession”

Date: 2019-10-01

1. Introduction

The program “Support to Serbian Municipalities on the Road to EU Accession” is a four-year intervention to support Serbian local self-governments with the overall aim of preparing them for EU accession, with improved conditions for high quality services, enhanced dialogue with stakeholders and more efficient local administrations, in accordance with the principles of good governance and gender equality. This corresponds very well with the Result 4 of the Swedish Government Results Strategy for Eastern Europe, Western Balkans and Turkey: “Public services delivered with better quality based on principles of non-discrimination and equal rights and with less corruption”. The intervention is implemented as partnership between the Serbian and Swedish local government associations, Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM) and Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR).

2. Evaluation rationale

The mid-term evaluation (“A Mid-Term Review”) of the project was envisaged in the agreements that Sida signed with SCTM and SALAR (respectively). The evaluation was originally planned to take place in spring 2018 but the three sides agreed to postpone it for 2019. Among the key reasons for this change are the following: 1) a cost extension of the project was approved by Sida in December 2017 so the implementation period was extended from originally agreed April 14th, 2020 until December 31st, 2020 and 2) partners agreed that when the evaluation is conducted, it would be beneficial to have all Municipal Support Packages (MSPs) up and running including those granted after the approval of the cost extension. The fact that they would be in different phases of implementation is seen as an advantage.

3. Evaluation object: Project/programme to be evaluated

The evaluation object is project “Support to Serbian Municipalities on the Road to EU Accession: Enabling High-Quality Services, Stakeholder Dialogue and Efficient

Local Administration” supported by Sida. The project is jointly implemented by SCTM and SALAR as a partnership-type intervention. The implementation period for the contribution started in April 2016 and will be finalized in December 2020. Total budget for the project amounts 42 311 027 SEK completely financed by Sweden. The contribution aims to support Serbian municipalities in preparing for the EU accession, improve conditions for high-quality service delivery to citizens, enhance dialogue with stakeholders from the central and local administration as well as strengthen capacities of the SCTM and its members to apply principles of good governance and gender equality. The main goal of the project corresponds with the Result 4 of the Swedish Government Results Strategy for Eastern Europe, Western Balkans and Turkey: “Public services delivered with better quality based on principles of non-discrimination and equal rights and with less corruption”.

First beneficiaries of the project are towns and municipalities in Serbia (members of the SCTM) and staff employed in local administrations. The project provides capacity building to municipal administrations in order to contribute to improvement of services they provide to citizens. This contribution builds on achievements of the previous project also funded by Sweden and implemented by SCTM and SALAR: “Support to Local Governments in Serbia in the EU Integration Process (December 2011 – September 2015), but the overall approach shifted to more concrete and direct support to municipalities in the current contribution.

The project has two main areas of work:

1. Hands-on support for services to citizens and business (Municipal Support Packages – MSPs) to selected municipalities with focus on:

- Environmental protection and services
- Improvement of the business climate at local level
- Improved prevention and management of emergency situations at local level.

A municipal support package (MSP) is a set of activities tailored to local needs and designed to help selected municipalities to solve a particular problem or to achieve a key local policy goal. The packages are envisaged to assist selected local authorities to up-grade concrete performances, improve capacities and provide services in an innovative, efficient and sustainable way, harmonized with EU standards. Support packages include hands-on engagement from relevant experts in specific fields as well as trainings, coaching, workshops, seminars and other types of support.

2. Support to SCTM and municipalities collectively at policy level to represent local interest and enhance the capacity of all local authorities with focus on:

- Environmental protection
- Improvement of business climate at local level
- EU integration and international cooperation
- Gender equality
- Improved prevention and management of emergency situation at local level
- Capacity development and sustainability of SCTM.

While the first work area focuses on direct support to a limited number of selected local authorities, the second one is envisaged to serve as a vehicle of improvement of LSGs in all above-mentioned thematic areas. This is to be achieved through support to local authorities in implementing laws, providing arguments for SCTM advocacy work aimed at improvement of policies and legislation, improving cooperation with national and EU institutions and raising level of administrative efficiency of local authorities to respond to needs of businesses and individuals.

The project puts special emphases on two cross-cutting issues: gender equality and good governance (including transparency and anti-corruption), expected to be promoted throughout all project activities with specific activities and results where appropriate.

The project budget is divided in two parts: the one managed directly by SCTM with a budget of 21 986 446 SEK and the one managed by SALAR with the budget of 20 342 581 SEK. The budget managed by SCTM deals with activities that are implemented in Serbia, such as local capacity building, workshops and roundtable discussions while the one managed by SALAR is related to costs for Swedish experts and study visits of Serbian delegations to Sweden. SCTM and SALAR are responsible for preparing and submitting financial reports for their respective contributions as well as for contracting of auditors and submission of annual audit reports. Narrative progress reports for the project are prepared jointly by SCTM and SALAR and submitted to Sida on annual bases. These reports are discussed and approved at the Annual Review Meetings attended by all three sides: Sida, SCTM and SALAR.

For further information, the project document is attached in the list of key documents under Annex A.

This will be the first evaluation of this project. It is worth mentioning that the previous phase (“Support to Local Governments in Serbia in the EU Integration Process”; December 2011 – September 2015) was evaluated (a mid term review) in spring 2014 by external consultants commissioned by Sida.

This evaluation will cover period from April 15, 2016 until June 30, 2019. Progress reports produced within the project are available for the envisaged evaluation period and will be shared with the evaluation Team.

As already stated, the implementation period for the project ends in December 2020. At this point in time, Sida, SCTM and SALAR are at the very initial considerations on possible continuation of support. In May 2019, SALAR and SCTM conducted a first joint workshop with the purpose of discussing the strategic direction of a possible next phase. Further discussions and consultations on a potential next phase is expected to take place during 2019-2020.

The intervention logic or theory of change of the project shall be further elaborated by the evaluator in the inception report.

4. Evaluation scope

The evaluation scope will cover the following implementation period of the project: from April 15, 2016 - June 30, 2019.

Evaluators shall visit two towns/municipalities – recipients of the MSPs.

If needed, the scope of the evaluation may be further elaborated by the evaluator in the inception report.

5. Evaluation purpose: Intended use and intended users

The purpose or intended use of the evaluation is to help Sida and its partners (SCTM and SALAR) to assess overall progress of the on-going project “Support to Serbian Municipalities on the Road to EU Accession: Enabling High-Quality Services, Stakeholder Dialogue and Efficient Local Administration” to learn what works well and less well. The evaluation should provide a constructive way forward for the project including concrete recommendations that can inform decision-making during remaining implementation period and the design of a next phase.

Considering the long-lasting partnership between SCTM and SALAR and the design of the project, the more specific purpose of the evaluation would also be to:

- Assess the contribution and added value of the partnership as well as identify potential adjustments and reinforcements that could strengthen the partnership.
- Assess and provide concrete recommendations on how the linkages between the two different components can be optimised and used more strategically to achieve the project objectives.

The primary intended users of the evaluation are the Embassy of Sweden in Serbia, SCTM and SALAR.

The evaluation is to be designed, conducted and reported to meet the needs of the intended users and tenderers shall elaborate in the tender how this will be ensured during the evaluation process. Other stakeholders that should be kept informed about the evaluation include Sida/EUROLATIN.

During the start-up phase, the evaluator and the users will agree on who will be responsible for keeping the various stakeholders informed about the evaluation.

During the inception phase, the evaluator and the users will agree on who will be responsible for keeping the various stakeholders informed about the evaluation.

6. Evaluation objective: Criteria and questions

The objectives of this evaluation are to:

- Evaluate relevance, effectiveness and outcome of the implementation of the project and formulate concrete recommendations on how to improve and adjust implementation.
- Evaluate relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the project and formulate concrete recommendations as an input to future discussions concerning preparations of a new phase of support.

The evaluation questions are:

Relevance

- To which extent has the project conformed to the needs and priorities of SCTM's members and SCTM as an organisation?
- Are the respective project components relevant to achieve the project objectives? Would it be relevant to reinforce or adjust some aspects of the project to make it more relevant for SCTM's members and SCTM in a next phase?

Effectiveness

- To which extent have the project contributed to intended outcomes? If so, why? If not, why not?
- According to partners and stakeholders – what is working well and what changes or adjustments are needed to make the project more effective overall and at component level?
- How can the linkages between the two components be optimised and used more effectively to achieve project objectives?

Sustainability

- What is the ownership of project interventions: to what extent do implementation partners and stakeholders demonstrate ownership of the interventions and activities? If so why, if not why not?
- What is the likely sustainability of project interventions and what measures could be taken to improve sustainability?

Cross-cutting issues

Considering the focus on cross-cutting issues in the project, the following questions should also be addressed:

- To what extent have the project's strategies and activities related to gender and human rights contributed to intended outcomes? If so, why? If not, why not?
- How could these perspectives be further strengthened or integrated during the current project period and in a potential next phase? What alternative measures for addressing these issues could be relevant in a potential next phase?

Lessons Learnt

- What are the main lessons learned so far from the project as well as the partnership and what can be relevant to consider when planning for a potential next phase?

Key questions are expected to be further developed by the evaluation team during the start-up phase of the assignment and be presented in a first consultative meeting with the Steering Group (see below for more information).

7. Evaluation approach and methods

It is expected that the evaluator describes and justifies an appropriate evaluation approach/methodology and methods for data collection in the tender. The evaluation design, methodology and methods for data collection and analysis are expected to be fully developed and presented in the inception report. Limitations to the methodology and methods shall be made explicit and the consequences of these limitations discussed. A *gender responsive* methodology, methods and tools and data analysis techniques should be used. A clear distinction is to be made between evaluation approach/methodology and methods. The evaluator should also identify limitations and constraints with the chosen approach and method and to the extent possible, present mitigation measures to address them.

Sida's approach to evaluation is *utilization-focused*, which means the evaluator should facilitate the *entire evaluation process* with careful consideration of how everything that is done will affect the use of the evaluation. It is therefore expected that the evaluators, in their tender, present i) how intended users are to participate in and contribute to the evaluation process and ii) methodology and methods for data collection that create space for reflection, discussion and learning between the intended users of the evaluation.

In cases where sensitive or confidential issues are to be addressed in the evaluation, evaluators should ensure an evaluation design that do not put informants and stakeholders at risk during the data collection phase or the dissemination phase.

8. Organisation of evaluation management

This evaluation is commissioned by the Embassy of Sweden in Belgrade. The intended users are; the Embassy and its partners, SCTM and SALAR. The intended users of the evaluation form a Steering Group which has contributed to and agreed on the ToR for this evaluation.

For the management of the evaluation, a consultative process will be applied including a series of consultative meetings between the Steering Group and the evaluator. The main purposes of these meetings will be to: make sure that the evaluation focus is in line with Steering Group expectations; make sure that information is correctly understood; keep the pace of the evaluation process; and make sure that recommendations are relevant and feasible. During this consultative process, the role of the Steering Group will be to monitor the process and approve suggested approaches and steps forward by the evaluator.

9. Evaluation quality

All Sida's evaluations shall conform to OECD/DAC's Quality Standards for Development Evaluation³⁸. The evaluators shall use the Sida OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation³⁹. The evaluators shall specify how quality assurance will be handled by them during the evaluation process.

10. Time schedule and deliverables

It is expected that a time and work plan is presented in the tender and further detailed in the first consultative meeting between the Steering Group and the evaluator. The evaluation shall be carried out during the period November - December 2019. The timing of any field visits, surveys and interviews need to be settled by the evaluator in dialogue with the main stakeholders during the start-up phase.

The table below lists key deliverables for the evaluation process. Deadline for final inception report and final report must be kept in the tender, but alternative deadlines for other deliverables may be suggested by the consultant and negotiated during the start-up phase.

Deliverables	Participants	Time frame/Deadlines
1. Start-up meeting (Virtual)	Steering Group (Embassy of Sweden in Belgrade, SCTM, SALAR) and evaluator.	Week 46
2. Interviews with key project stakeholders	Desk officer Sida, Project Managers at SCTM and SALAR	November 20
3. Desk Research	Evaluator	Week 46-47
4. First Consultative Meeting (Stockholm/Virtual) - A proposed evaluation approach - Key questions & focus areas to investigate - Methodology for field study - A draft theory of change - List of people to interview - Triangulation plan - Tentative assumptions - A specific time and work plan	Steering Group and evaluation team	Week 48

³⁸ DAC Quality Standards for development Evaluation, OECD, 2010.

³⁹ Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management, Sida in cooperation with OECD/DAC, 2014.

5. Field Visit in Serbia	Evaluator with local support	To be agreed with SCTM/SALAR
6. Second consultative meeting (Belgrade/Virtual) - Triangulation - Tentative findings - Tentative assumptions - Tentative recommendations	Steering Group and evaluator	To be agreed with the Steering Group
7. Draft evaluation report	Evaluator	January 20, 2020
8. Comments from Steering Group on draft report	Steering Group	January 31, 2020
9. Third consultative meeting. Discussion of findings, conclusions and recommendations	Steering Group and evaluator	First week of February, 2020
10. Final draft evaluation report	Evaluator	February 15, 2020
11. Final comments from Steering Group	Steering Group	February 28, 2020
12. Final evaluation report	Evaluator	March 15, 2020

The deliverables presented in the first consultative meeting will form the basis for the continued evaluation process and shall be approved by the Steering Group before the evaluation proceeds to implementation. After the start-up meeting the evaluator should start the desk research phase after which the first consultative meeting can take place between the evaluator and the Steering Group. The time plan shall include dates for consultative meetings and space for reflection and learning. All deliverables in the first consultative meeting should be written in English and manifested in some form of written documentation (Summary/Meeting minutes/PPT).

On completion of the review, the evaluator will prepare a draft evaluation report. After discussions and feedback from the Steering Group, the final evaluation report will be prepared.

The final report shall be written in English and be professionally proofread. The final report should have clear structure and follow the report format in the Sida Decentralised Evaluation Report Template for decentralised evaluations (see Annex C). The executive summary should be maximum 3 pages. The evaluation approach/methodology and methods for data collection used shall be clearly described and explained in detail and a clear distinction between the two shall be made. All limitations to the methodology and methods shall be made explicit and the consequences of these limitations discussed. Findings shall flow logically from the

data, showing a clear line of evidence to support the conclusions. Conclusions should be substantiated by findings and analysis. Recommendations and lessons learned should flow logically from conclusions. Recommendations should be specific, directed to relevant stakeholders and categorised as a short-term, medium-term and long-term. The report should be no more than 35 pages excluding annexes (including Terms of Reference) of which most attention should be dedicated to: findings, conclusions and recommendations. Descriptive elements should be kept to a minimum. The evaluator shall adhere to the Sida OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation.

The evaluator shall, upon approval of the final report, insert the report into the Sida Decentralised Evaluation Report for decentralised evaluations and submit it to Nordic Morning (in pdf-format) for publication and release in the Sida publication data base. The order is placed by sending the approved report to sida@nordicmorning.com, always with a copy to the responsible Sida Programme Officer as well as Sida's Evaluation Unit (evaluation@sida.se). Write "Sida decentralised evaluations" in the email subject field. The following information must always be included in the order to Nordic Morning:

- The name of the consulting company.
- The full evaluation title.
- The invoice reference "ZZ980601".
- Type of allocation "sakanslag".
- Type of order "digital publicering/publikationsdatabas".

11. Evaluation team qualification

In addition to the qualifications already stated in the framework agreement for evaluation services, the evaluation team shall include the following competencies:

- Professional work experience in conducting reviews and evaluations of institutional and capacity development projects and programmes.

It is desirable that the evaluation team includes the following competences:

- Good understanding and proven experience of local government development in an international cooperation context
- Project design and planning experience
- Project management experience
- Professional experience of working in Serbia and/or the Balkans will be considered an advantage
- Experience of working with an HRBA approach and gender perspectives will be considered an advantage.

A CV for each team member shall be included in the call-off response. It should contain a full description of relevant qualifications and professional work experience.

It is important that the competencies of the individual team members are complimentary. It is highly recommended that local consultants are included in the team if appropriate.

The evaluators must be independent from the evaluation object and evaluated activities, and have no stake in the outcome of the evaluation.

12. Financial and human resources

The maximum budget amount available for the evaluation is 300 000 SEK.

The contact person at the Swedish Embassy is Snezana Vojcic (snezana.vojcic@gov.se). The contact person should be consulted if any problems arise during the evaluation process.

Relevant Sida documentation will be provided by Ms. Vojcic from the Swedish Embassy in Belgrade.

Contact details to intended users (cooperation partners, Swedish Embassies, other donors etc.) will be provided by the Embassy.

The evaluator will be required to arrange the logistics such as booking interviews and preparing visits, including any necessary security arrangements.

13. Annexes

Annex A: List of key documentation

- Project proposal including results matrix and annexes
- Inception report dated 2016
- Reviewed results matrix
- Annual Reports (2016, 2017, 2018) including annexes
- Agreement Sida – SCTM
- Agreement Sida – SALAR
- SCTM Strategic Plan 2018-2021
- Reports and baselines from MSPs are available upon request

Annex B: Data sheet on the evaluation object

Information on the evaluation object (i.e. project or programme)	
Title of the evaluation object	“Support to Serbian Municipalities on the Road to EU Accession: Enabling High-Quality Services, Stakeholder Dialogue and Efficient Local Administration
ID no. in PLANIt	55100203

Dox no./Archive case no.	UM2015/26116
Activity period (if applicable)	15/04/2016 – 31/12-2020
Agreed budget (if applicable)	42 311 027 SEK
Main sector	Decentralisation and support to subnational government
Name and type of implementing organisation	SCTM and SALAR; civic society organizations
Aid type	Project type
Swedish strategy	Results Strategy for Eastern Europe, Western Balkans and Turkey

Information on the evaluation assignment	
Commissioning unit/Swedish Embassy	Embassy of Sweden in Belgrade
Contact person at unit/Swedish Embassy	Snezana Vojcic, programme officer
Timing of evaluation (mid-term, end-of-programme, ex-post or other)	Mid-term evaluation
ID no. in PLANIt (if other than above).	55100203

Annex C: Decentralised evaluation report template

Annex 2: List of key documentation

- Project Cost Extension documentation
 - 190625 SALAR revised budget final draft
 - Budget Note SALAR April 2019 -proposal
 - Request 2 for Amendment (6)
 - SALAR revised budget - proposal
 - SCTM budget and explanations extension 2 (April 2019)
 - SCTM total budget with extension no 2 (APRIL 2019)
- 2015-12-22- ANNEX 4- SALAR BUDGET AND BUDGET EXPLANATIONS REV
- 2015-12-22- PROGRAM DOCUMENT REV
- 2015-12-22-ANNEX 3 - SCTM Budget and budget explanations
- 2016-10-28 Activity plan
- 2016-10-28 Brief account of inception period
- 2016-10-28 Result based matrix
- 2016-11-02 Selection process criteria
- 2017_09_12 Request for Amendment of Program final
- 2017-04-03 Budget year 2 with re-allocation 2
- 2017-09-12_ Annex 5 - Revised result matrix
- 2017-09-14_Annex 1-SCTM additional budget for extension
- 2017-09-14_Annex 2 -SCTM revised budget
- 2017-09-14-Annex 2 -SCTM revised budget and budget explanations
- 2018_Report (8)
- 2018-02-07 Second Annual Report (for 2017)
- Annex 1 - Work Plan 2017-2018
- Annex 2- Activity progress for 2016
- Annex 3 SALAR revised budget final 170914
- Annex 4 Proposed budget for extension 170914
- Annex 6 Budget Notes SALAR 170914
- Final Report In depth review of support to Local Governments in Serbia in the EU integration process
- First Annual Report
- MSP Evaluation Committee Report – final
- WORKPLAN FOR 2018 ALL IN ONE (07-02-2018)
- WORKPLAN FOR 2019- ALL COMPONENTS
- Amendment to the Agreement SCTM December 2017
- Amendment to the Agreement SCTM June 2019
- General Conditions Feb 2015
- Grant Agreement SCTM
- ToR Annual audit (ENG)
- Amendment to Agreement SALAR 2017 signed

- Amendment to the Agreement SALAR June 2019
- General Conditions Feb 2015-1
- Grant Agreement SALAR
- ToR Annual audit (ENG)-1

Annex 3: List of interviewees

No	Name and Surname	Position	Organization
1	Snežana Vojcic	Programme Officer	SIDA
2	Zorica Vukelic	National Project Director	SCTM
3	Vladimir Jovanovic	Program Manager of the project	SCTM
4	Lena Falcon	Project Manager	SKL
5	Annakarin Lindberg	Coordinator for Environment and Emergency	SKL
6	Paul Dixelius	Gender and EU integration	SKL
7	Aleksandra Vukmirovic	Head of European Integration and International Cooperation Department	SCTM
8	Miodrag Gluscevic	Program Director for Urban Development, Environment and Communal Services	SCTM
9	Slobodan Milivojevic	Coordinator for EU Integration and International Cooperation	SCTM
10	Jana Pavlovic	Advisor for Environment	SCTM
11	Jelena Mihajlović-Tanasijević	Coordinator for IMPROVEMENT OF BUSINESS CLIMATE AT LOCAL LEVEL	SCTM
12	Anita Popovic	Advisor for improvement of the business climate at the local level	SCTM
13	Natasa Okilj	Gender	SCTM
14	Milos Alavanja	Emergency	SCTM
15	Milos Obradovic	Program communication officer for cross-cutting issues	SCTM
16	Marica Skrlatovic	General administration	Kladovo Municipality
17	Nevenka Boldorac	Chief of the Cabinet	Kladovo Municipality
18	Dusan Belevic	Assistant to the Mayor	Kladovo Municipality
19	Sasa Nikolic	Mayor	Kladovo Municipality
20	Mina Novakovic	Member, Independent Associate, Department for Economy, Social Affairs and Local Economic	Kladovo Municipality

		Development of Kladovo Municipal Administration	
21	Sanja Brlozanovic	Member, chief of protocol, municipal administration of Kladovo	Kladovo Municipality
22	Mirjana Brlozanovic	local tax administration	Kladovo Municipality
23	Gordana Gramic	Head of the Department for Economy, Social Affairs and Local Economic Development of the Municipal Administration of Kladovo	Kladovo Municipality
24	Radovan Milovanovic	Administrator	Kladovo Municipality
25	Boris Popovic	Member, Department for Economy, Social Affairs and Local Economic Development of Kladovo Municipal Administration	Kladovo Municipality
26	Snezana Radanovic	Member, Department for Economy, Social Affairs and Local Economic Development of Kladovo Municipal Administration	Kladovo Municipality
27	Daniel Negucic	Conal Energy – international trade	Kladovo Municipality
28	Miroslav Balasevic	LLC production and trade Balas, Kupuziste	Kladovo Municipality
29	Dalila Dujakovic	Deputy President of the Municipality of Bečej	Bečej Municipality
30	Zoran Kovac	Head of the Administration of the Municipality of Becej	Bečej Municipality
31	Jelena Brankov - Cerevicki	Head of the HR Department and coordinator for Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities Policies	Bečej Municipality
32	Goli Piroška	Rural Women Association CIRKULUM FEMINAE, Backo Petrovo Selo	Bečej Municipality
33	Biljana Jovanovic	President of Health Council of the Municipality of Bečej	Bečej Municipality
34	Dobriša Djin	Roma coordinator	Bečej Municipality
35	Zdravko Petrovic	Director of the City Theatre Bečej	Bečej Municipality

36	Ana Acimov	Journalist of the Internet portal "My Bečej" and a member of NGO BUM (Bečej Youth Association)	Bečej Municipality
37	Djordje Stanicic	Secretary General	SCTM
38	Ivan Milivojevic	Deputy Secretary General for Services	SCTM
39	Nikola Tarbuk	Deputy Secretary General for Advocacy	SCTM
40	Marija Todorovic	Construction inspection activities, Working group	Osečina Municipality
41	Branko Stanimirovic	working group leader, emergency management consultant	Osečina Municipality
42	Nenad Stevanovic	Deputy Mayor (ex Mayor)	Osečina Municipality
43	Petar Vasilev	National Programme Officer for Governance	Embassy of Switzerland, Swiss Cooperation Office in Serbia
44	Darinka Borcevic	Ministry for the Environment	Integrator, Sector for international cooperation and EU integration
45	Vladica Bozic	Ministry for the Environment	Senior Advisor, Head of section for implementation and monitoring of projects financed by EU fund and international assistance
46	Ivan Karic	Ministry for the Environment	State Secretary
47	Srdjan Pantovic	KJP Zlatibor Čajetina Director	KJP Zlatibor
48	Bojana Guduric	Water Supply Officer	KJP Zlatibor
49	Srdjan Radovic	PUC Zlatibor, Railway Fleet Manager	PUC Zlatibor

ANNEX 2: LIST OF KEY DOCUMENTATION

50	Kristina Milutinovic	General Legal and Personnel Manager	Municipality Čajetina
51	Sladjana Vulovic	Municipal Office	Municipality Čajetina
52	DuskoStanic	Municipal Waste Management Manager, KJP	KJP Zlatibor
53	Vera Blagojevic	Utility Manager and Project Coordinator	KJP Zlatibor
54	Radisa Jankovic	KJP, Driver	KJP Zlatibor
55	Rosic Dragana	KJP Zlatibor, Public Relations Associate	KJP Zlatibor
56	Julija Antonijevic	Municipal inspector	Municipality Čajetina
57	Danka Nikolic	Municipal inspector	Municipality Čajetina
58	Milan Stamatovic	President of the Municipality Čajetina	Municipality Čajetina
59	Radisic Aleksandar	President of the Association “Inclusion of disabled people” and he is employed in the Touristic organisation of Zlatibor	CSO sector
60	Zorica Milosavljevic	President of the Citizen Association “Zlatiborski krug” and biology professor in the primary school	CSO sector
61	Danka Bogetic	Project Manager, Operations	EU Delegation
62	Sasa Mobic	Assistant Minister	Ministry of LSG

Annex 4: Evaluation matrix

The evaluation matrix below provides summarised answers to each evaluation question. Further narrative analysis can be found in each related chapter of the Findings section above.

Relevance	
EQ1 - To what extent does the project align with the needs and priorities of - SCTM's member organisations? - the SCTM? - Sweden in Serbia?	See 3.1 for more detail. - Strong alignment with priorities of Municipalities. - Well-structured strategy within SCTM's strategic documents. - Clear alignment with Municipal and Serbian priorities towards EU accession. - Clearly linked to Swedish priorities in Serbia and the Western Balkans.
EQ2 - What refinements to the project theory of change/ intervention logic would have a positive impact on its relevance to stakeholders?	See 3.2 for more detail. - Definitions of cross-cutting areas, and application of a focus in these areas, is insufficiently well-defined. - Linkages between the two components require improvement. This would increase the effectiveness of each by ensuring work at the national level supports work at the local level, and vice versa.
Effectiveness	
EQ3 - To what extent are the project's activities contributing to intended results (outputs/ outcomes)? - What factors are contributing to effectiveness? - What role do the project's two components play in effectiveness?	See 3.2 for more detail. - MSPs are assisting Municipalities in improving their way of work, are building Municipal capacity and are assisting in improvements to service provision for citizens. - The SCTM with Municipalities is actively participating in negotiations and working groups related to EU Accession. - The project is a recognised positive contributor by national Ministries. - Improvements in knowledge and skills is a contributing factor. - Formal plans and concrete measures for improving services is a contributing factor. - Support from the EU and other donors contributes to effectiveness. - The two components contribute to a strategic approach and are supportive of each other's effectiveness.
EQ4 - What changes or adjustments are indicated that can	See 3.2 for more detail. Inter-municipal cooperation could be enhanced in the coming period; finding systematic ways for

contribute to project effectiveness – • Overall? • At the component level? How can the linkages between the two components be optimised to improve results?	smaller Municipalities to be supported/ mentored is one area of potential. • Linkages between the two components can to improved. This would increase the effectiveness of each by ensuring work at the national level supports work at the local level, and vice versa.
Efficiency	
EQ5 - In what ways is the implementation partnership contributing to (or detracting from) project results? What changes in the partnership relationship would contribute to greater effectiveness of implementation?	See 3.3.1 for more detail • The partnership has been in place for many years and has evolved in that time. It continues to evolve. There is learning and growth on both sides. It appears to be a solid, effective partnership. Evaluation research indicates it is imperative for the partnership to continue to move forward.
EQ6 - Is the project's results-based management framework and approach contributing to results? • In what ways? Including feedback on result definition and the chain of results? • Are there areas for improvement?	See 3.3.2 for more detail • The project's results framework is recognised as a management tool and is used by the project in this way. • The framework provides and encourages a results orientation. • It contributes to planning and reporting. • It is however very large and very complex and as a result is not easy to follow. • There is insufficient logical connection between defined outputs and short-term outcomes.
Sustainability	
EQ7 - To what extent do implementation partners and stakeholders demonstrate ownership of the project and its activities? What factors are contributing to stakeholder ownership of the project?	See 3.4 for more detail • The SCTM is a strategic thinking, strong, professional organisation with strong support from the international community and the Serbian Government. • The SCTM/ SALAR partnership shows strong signs of health and sustainability. • Municipal development (the project's key focus area as well as an indicator of success) demonstrates a range of indicators of sustainable success. Municipalities note citizen satisfaction. • The strategic commitment of the EU, Sweden, Switzerland and Germany is both important in practice and a sustainability indicator.
EQ8 – What indicators are there of sustainable results from the project's activities? How can the potential for sustainability be improved?	• There are many indicators which point to sustainable results from project interventions. They are detailed in section 3.4.3 and in section 3.2.1. • These results are also visible in project reporting. • There are indications of improved sustainability from a greater focus on municipal cooperation. • Detailed planning on how the SALAR/ SCTM partnership can grow and develop will contribute to sustainability.

Impact	
EQ9 – What indications are there that the project is contributing or will contribute to longer term change (impact)?	See 3.5 for more detail • Stakeholders and non-stakeholders alike point to growth in knowledge and skills within the SCTM as indicators of impact. • There are also impact indicators coming through the MSPs, in how Municipalities operate and how they provide services to citizens.
Cross-cutting issues	
EQ10 - To what extent have the project's strategies and activities contributed to greater gender equality within municipalities (the SCTM and SALAR)? Includes both results and approach (process - way of working).	See 3.6.1 (and 3.2.3) for more detail • Cross-cutting areas are not well-enough defined, specifically 'good governance'. • Results are being achieved in both good governance and gender however. • Results in relation to gender equality are more visible than in good governance.
EQ11 - To what extent have the project's approaches and activities contributed to good governance and transparency within municipalities?	

Annex 5: Theory of Change

6.2.3 Preconditions

According to project documentation, the following points provide historical and geographical context that justify the intervention:

- EU integration is the overarching context for Sweden's support, including the need to strengthen the capacity of public administration to implement reforms needed to approach EU membership.
- Serbian national strategic documents that inform the project: NAD, PAR strategy, National plan for adoption of the Acquis, Fiscal strategy, IPA II Strategy.
- The project fits within a framework of similar, relevant initiatives, funded by a range of donors – these include institutional support to the SCTM, the Exchange 5 programme, the Human Relations Management in the LSG programme, Support for Implementation of the PAR Strategy Action Plan, the Swiss-funded Improvement for Businesses at the Local Level Through Regulatory Reform programme and Enabling Local Democracy and Inclusive Urban Planning through the SymbioCity approach programme.
- The Program is based on a partnership between two LSG associations - SCTM and SALAR entered into a new phase of bilateral cooperation, focused on creating a better overall framework for strengthening the local government sector in the process of Serbia's integration into EU.
- The SCTM has implemented or is implementing several significant projects which are directly or indirectly aimed at the introduction of good governance principles and various anti-corruption measures in local self-governments.
- SCTM is providing support to LSGs related to the EU integration process, through capacity-building, information-sharing and awareness-raising activities related to the negotiation process, implementation of EU standards and the use of EU funds.
 - Strengthening recognition and influence of Serbian LSGs at EU and international levels is an important precondition, but also a challenge to SCTM and its member municipalities on the road to EU.
 - LSGs are not always equipped to deal with requirements coming from the laws regulating horizontal issues such as environmental impact assessment, strategic impact assessment and public participation in terms of administrative organization and know-how.
 - The lack of LSG capacities to plan, formulate and attract investment funds is also a major problem in the field of environment. While the knowledge and awareness of citizens has increased, as have the capacities and awareness of LSGs to a certain extent, more work needed.
 - Even though the majority of LSGs have established LED offices, as a form of institutional support to economic development, their capacities are still rather weak, especially in terms of providing adequate support to existing business communities and for evidence based management, as a prerequisite for a more

accurate and information based development of policies, instruments and measures related to LED.

- Previous capacity building support has empowered the SCTM to competently implement complex and demanding Programs and projects.
 - Sida support to the SCTM was initiated in 2003 and two phases of capacity building support to SCTM have been implemented through UNDP as the implementing partner.
 - The SCTM also needs to further build its capacity in order to take a strong role and provide valuable inputs in the EU accession negotiation process and support LSGs in implementing EU standards and making use of EU funds for their projects.
 - As an organisation gathering all local government units in the country and maintaining daily contacts with them through its institutional mechanisms, the SCTM is in the position to fully respond to the requirements of this comprehensive Program intervention.
 - SCTM has defined a Strategic Plan for the period 2014–2017 based on the strategic commitments of its members.
 - The number of projects the SCTM is implementing strains the resources of the organisation, particularly in relation to environmental priorities.
- The program will apply a rights-based approach. This means that it will contribute to the realisation of human rights standards as enshrined in the international human rights conventions and treaties ratified by Serbia and will apply the human rights principles underpinning these conventions (non-discrimination and equality, participation and inclusion, accountability, transparency) in all phases of the program.
 - The primary duty bearers of the program are the LSGs.
 - The rights holders are individuals residing in Serbia who have the right to benefit from LSG services.
- Gender equality means that the services offered by the local government should be equitable, evenly distributed and of the same quality for women and men. Mainstreaming entails taking gender equality into account in all activities and throughout consequence analysis plans, budgets, activities and attitudes of the local government administration. It also means specific gender-related activities and results under each sub-component.
- Gender equality is both a cross-cutting area and a focus area of the programme – this is seen as an appropriate approach to addressing this priority area.
- The program phases will pay particular attention to the principles of participation through the emphasis on meaningful and effective inclusion and influence of marginalized groups, consultation forums and local councils.

6.2.4 Underlying assumptions

The project's design assumes a number of things, a summary of which is found here:

- There is a complementary aspect to the approach of two Components – each support the other.
- There is a need to raise the work at the local level to the national level.
- The project assumes that municipalities will be so interested in improving their capacities that they will commit resources (people) to work with the project.

- EU integration will permeate all aspects of the program but will be addressed within component 1 in the context of the specific issues arising within municipal support packages.
- As Serbia approaches a potential date for EU accession, the need for preparations within municipalities, as well as within the SCTM, will grow.
- EU accession-related issues – from administrative simplification to inter-municipal cooperation in waste management – are most effectively addressed through hands-on projects that involve municipal staff responsible for the thematic areas in question, with extensive on-ground support from international and local experts and from SCTM.
- Meeting EU environmental standards will represent a major challenge for local authorities in terms of administrative capacity and financial resources.
- There is a need to additionally support LSGs in their efforts aimed at creating better conditions for investments and business development.
- A focus is needed in all of the environment, business and emergency management, reflecting priorities at the local level and encouraging the inter-municipal communication that is a focus of the project.
- Higher-quality services, enhanced dialogue with stakeholders and more efficient local administrations will be essential if municipalities, and indeed the country as a whole, are to meet EU standards and make the most of the opportunities that accession will bring.
- Anti-corruption and transparency, and principles of good governance more broadly, will be addressed through improvements in public information in the targeted areas.
- There is a strategic value in having and developing the partnership between SALAR and SCTM, notably in the role of local governance associations in the EU accession processes.

6.2.5 Intervention logic

In its design the project has two components:

- Component 1: Hands-on Support for Services to Citizens and Business (MSPs), which includes work on
 - The environment
 - The business environment
 - Emergency management
- Component 2 - Support for SCTM and LSGs Collectively to Pursue Local Interests and Enhance the Capacity of All Local Authorities, which includes work on
 - The environment
 - The business environment
 - Emergency management
 - Gender equality
 - EU and international cooperation
 - Capacity development and sustainability of the SCTM

As can be seen above, the three aspects of Component 1 are the same as the first three of Component 2, and in project reporting these three are actually reported on jointly.

It is also worth noting that gender equality has both a programmatic focus and is seen as cross-cutting. Similarly, it can be argued that the whole of the programme's focus is on good governance while it too is seen as cross-cutting.

Expected result 1 – Environment. Selected municipalities are complying with (and enforce) the EU environmental acquis, engaging the public and stakeholders on local environmental issues, and delivering sustainable public services in the sectors of water and sanitation and waste management.

Component 1: Hands-on Support for Services to Citizens and Business (MSPs)	
Short-term/ intermediate outcome level	Medium-term outcome level
ER1.1.1 - Politicians, PUC management and civil servants have started using evidence based and participative approaches in planning and implementing service delivery.	ER1.1 - PUC have improved management and LSG is providing clear and informed guidance, directives and governance for the services
ER1.1.2 - Recognition by LSG of current status of governance as given in analysis.	
ER1.1.3 - Recognition by PUC of current status of management as given in analysis.	
ER1.1.4 - PUC management plans developed and implemented taking into account new methods and recommendations	
ER1.2.1 - Administration staff in pilot LSGs have increased capability to develop and manage infrastructure project in sectors of waste management, water and sanitation with focus on environmental, socio- economic, financial and institutional aspects.	ER1.2 - Progress in selected areas of preparation of infrastructure projects/areas of service delivery in sectors of water and sanitation and/or waste management
ER1.2.2 - PUC staff have increased capability to deliver sustainable services in waste management, water and sanitation	
ER1.2.3 - Relations between targeted LSGs and potential infrastructure financiers established	
ER1.3.1 - Environmental department cooperates with other relevant departments	ER1.3 - Environmental departments are implementing the EU environmental acquis
ER1.3.2 - Acquired knowledge on EU acquis in areas of water and sanitation and waste	
ER1.4.1 - Politicians and civil servants recognize benefits of implementing rights-based approach in environmental planning and services	ER1.4 - Municipality, PUC and citizens collaborating towards improved policymaking and service delivery in sectors of water and sanitation and/or waste management based on community needs and available resources
ER1.4.2 - LSGs are actively enabling dialogue with the public and local business sector.	
ER1.4.3 - Citizens, PUC and LSG understand the benefits of collaboration	
ER1.4.4 - Politicians and civil servants have started using evidence based and participative approaches in environmental planning and decision-making	

Expected result 2 - Business climate. Business climate in selected LSGs improved through high-quality administration, access to finance and stakeholder dialogue.

Component 1: Hands-on Support for Services to Citizens and Business (MSPs)

Short-term/ intermediate outcome level	Medium-term outcome level
ER2.1.1 - Selected LSGs establishing and maintaining cross- sectorial cooperation and dialogue.	ER2.1 - Selected LSGs improved their efficiency in business related services and are more business friendly oriented
ER2.1.2 - Four LSGs established/ improved operating and maintained functional Business Council as channel for cooperation with private and civil sector	
ER2.1.3 - Selected LSGs understand and upgraded core municipal functions that improve local competences including key aspects of EU acquis	
ER2.2.1 - Selected LSG is capable to attract finance through issuing municipal bond through public placement	ER2.2 - Selected LSGs improved capacities to attract finances, through alternative sources of financing
ER2.2.2 - Greater involvement of citizens and private sector in financing local services and infrastructure.	
ER2.2.3 - Two selected LSGs raised capacities for removing main obstacles in establishing partnership between public and private sector - PPP.	
ER2.3.1 - Two, or two groups of LSGs, apply new approach of development based on value chain analyses of competitive economy sector, targeted support and promotion through cooperation with public, private, academic and civil society sectors	ER2.3 - Selected LSG promote and support local competitive advantages through cooperation between public, private, academic and civil society sectors

Expected result 3 - Emergency management. Selected municipalities improve their capacity to react in emergencies and prevent disasters.

Component 1: Hands-on Support for Services to Citizens and Business (MSPs)	
Short-term/ intermediate outcome level	Medium-term outcome level
ER3.1.1 - Mayor, Head of Administration and emergency HQ accept findings in given in Risk assessment	ER3.1 - Risk prevention and planning for protection in selected LSGs improved and implemented
ER3.1.2 - Local administration and related services better able to effectively implement municipal protection and rescue plans	
ER3.1.3 - RAPRP based on official methodology completed by selected LSGs through consultative and inclusive process	
ER3.2.1 - LSGs understand the importance of protection against and prevention of disasters in spatial and infrastructure planning procedures	ER3.2 - Citizens of supported LSGs well informed on measures to be undertaken during emergencies
ER3.2.2 - Cooperation of LSGs departments functional	
ER3.3.1 - Mayors and decision makers understand importance of emergency management	ER3.3 - Quality of local emergency management in selected local governments upgraded
ER3.3.2 - Emergency HQ functioning improved	
ER3.3.3 - Politicians and civil servants recognize benefits of implementing rights- based approach in emergency management	
ER3.3.4 - LSGs better informs citizens on emergency management	

Expected result 4 - Environment. Active and evidence-based representation of local interests in the development of public policies and legislation in the environmental field -SCTM plays a central role preparing LSGs to fulfil their responsibilities, implement EU acquis and apply best practices in environmental protection and services

Component 2 - Support for SCTM and LSGs Collectively to Pursue Local Interests and Enhance the Capacity of All Local Authorities	
Short-term/ intermediate outcome level	Medium-term outcome level
ER4.1.1 - SCTM is providing credible inputs to policy and legislation in environmental protection also reflecting a rights-based approach	ER4.1 - LSGs interests in environmental sector are reflected in national policy, legislation and negotiation positions in EU-accession process
ER4.1.2 - SCTM is providing credible contribution to defining negotiating positions on specific parts of the EU environmental acquis	
ER4.1.3 - SCTM is using experiences from implementation of MSPs in LSGs for policy formulation	
ER4.2.1 - Enhanced capacities of administration for service provision in the environmental sector	ER4.2 - LSG decision makers and staff have better understanding of environmental related issues and more oriented towards fulfilment of environmental acquis requirements
ER4.2.2 - Level of awareness of local politicians about obligations and benefits of EU accession process in field of environment	
ER4.2.3 - SCTM strategic plan 2018-2022 reflects new positions and sets appropriate measures in area of environment	
ER4.3.1 - SCTM environmental related plans and documents reflect gender equality, anti- corruption and transparency aspects	ER4.3 - Gender equality, inclusiveness, transparency and anti-corruption are promoted throughout all SCTM activities in environmental sector, with specific activities and results where appropriate
ER4.3.2 - SCTM environmental related committees and networks promote gender equality, anti- corruption and transparency aspects	

Expected result 5 - Business climate. SCTM and LSGs are better able to promote and provide a favourable environment for local economic development and to efficiently deliver services to businesses and individuals.

Component 2 - Support for SCTM and LSGs Collectively to Pursue Local Interests and Enhance the Capacity of All Local Authorities	
Short-term/ intermediate outcome level	Medium-term outcome level
ER5.1.1 - Policy recommendations related to improvement of business climate prepared and used by SCTM Advocacy Sector in lobbying activities	ER5.1 - SCTM actively contributes to improvement of the policy and legal framework for local economic development through credible policy recommendations addressed to national authorities, based on inputs from LSGs
ER5.1.2 - Cooperation established among national and local authorities and businesses with a view to improving the business climate	

ER5.2.1 - LSGs acquired knowledge in implementing new legislation related to the business climate and enforcing LED-related laws	ER5.2 - LSGs improved their services for business community by addressing the issues of administrative efficiency and by taking into account expectations and proposals from business community
ER5.2.2 - LSGs use models of administrative procedures to secure simplified and rapid service delivery to businesses and individuals	
ER5.2.3 - LSGs apply evidence- based planning and policy making related to LED, based on improved and accessible indicators	
ER5.2.4 - Line ministries and national institutions find evidence- base planning and LED indicators important	
ER5.2.5 - SCTM strategic plan 2018-2021 reflects new positions and sets appropriate measures in area of improvement of business climate	
ER5.3.1 - SCTM promotes gender equality, anti-corruption and transparency aspects through its work on business climate	ER5.3 - Positive examples exist where gender equality, inclusiveness, transparency and anti- corruption have been integrated in LSGs practical work on business climate

Expected result 6 - Emergency management. SCTM contributes actively to upgrading the national and local legislative and policy frameworks for risk prevention and emergency management. LSGs better prepared to manage risks.

Component 2 - Support for SCTM and LSGs Collectively to Pursue Local Interests and Enhance the Capacity of All Local Authorities	
Short-term/ intermediate outcome level	Medium-term outcome level
ER6.1.1 - SCTM has increased internal capacity for DRR and emergency management with human rights perspective	ER6.1 - SCTM is influencing national policy on emergency management and DRR based on experiences from LSGs
ER6.1.2 - Products and results from MSP made available to all SCTM member municipalities and put to use in number of LSGs by support from SCTM	
ER6.1.3 - Lessons learned and initiatives in the implementation of support packages taken on board by Advocacy sector	
ER6.1.4 - Credible inputs and initiatives prepared by SCTM for improvement of current legal framework	
ER6.1.5 - Based on experience from MSP packages, credible inputs prepared to improve relevant legislation in other areas (for ex: building regulations, spatial and infrastructure planning) to reduce risk and consequences of disaster	
ER6.2.1 - Majority of LSGs have a better understanding of risks and response systems	ER6.2 - Capacities of LSGs for risk reduction and emergency management improved
ER6.2.2 - Legislative and policy framework for risk prevention and emergency management at local level improved	
ER6.2.3 - Improved local regulations and practical solutions provide for better implementation of the new	

framework for emergency management at local level, including operationalization of municipal emergency HQ	
ER6.2.4 - LSGs effectively communicate with all stakeholders (men, women, youth, businesses and civil society) on risk prevention and emergency management	
ER6.2.5 - SCTM has provided action-oriented capacity building of LSGs officials in strategic and systematic way	
ER6.2.6 - Inter-municipal cooperation improved in area of civil protection	
ER6.2.7 - SCTM strategic plan 2018-2022 reflects new positions and sets appropriate measures in area of emergency management	

Expected result 7 - Gender equality. Gender equality principles respected in the everyday practice of SCTM and LSGs. SCTM is recognized as a leader in gender mainstreaming and promoter of gender equality values.

Component 2 - Support for SCTM and LSGs Collectively to Pursue Local Interests and Enhance the Capacity of All Local Authorities	
Short-term/ intermediate outcome level	Medium-term outcome level
ER7.1.1 - Gender mainstreaming initiatives visible in LSGs (Eg: gender budgeting, active measures of LSGs that support women entrepreneurship, support to women that suffered violence etc.)	ER7.1 - LSGs are implementing GE principles in local policies
ER7.1.2 - Two municipalities apply principles of gender sensitive budgeting and implement their Action plan for CEMR Charter	
ER7.1.3 - SCTM Presidency embraces and agrees to apply GE principles in work of LSGs	
ER7.1.4 - SCTM Committees sensitized to recognize gender aspects in their respective areas	
ER7.2.1 - SCTM GE Mechanism (Task force) functional	ER7.2 - Principles of gender equality and gender mainstreaming pursued and promoted in SCTM work
ER7.2.2 - SCTM staff applies GE principles in policy positions (draft laws and bylaws)	
ER7.2.3 - SCTM strategic plan 2018-2022 reflects new positions and sets appropriate measures in area of gender equality	
ER7.3.1 - Policy positions with integrated GE principles based on MSP experiences defined and lobbied for	ER7.3 - SCTM is influencing national policies and/or legislation
ER7.3.2 - Lobbying for amendments of relevant laws and bylaws in order to influence GE	
ER7.3.3 - Established cooperation with national bodies and institutions in charge for GE	
	ER7.4 - Gender sensitive data from local level available and used in further implementation of GE principles

Expected result 8 - EU and international cooperation. Serbian LSGs implement EU standards, are better able to access EU funds and are recognized at EU and national level

Component 2 - Support for SCTM and LSGs Collectively to Pursue Local Interests and Enhance the Capacity of All Local Authorities	
Short-term/ intermediate outcome level	Medium-term outcome level
ER8.1.1 - SCTM internal structure for support to accession negotiations advocates policy positions related to targeted chapters	ER8.1 - Policy positions and contributions proposed by SCTM and LSGs are integrated by national institutions in EU accession negotiation and IPA programming processes.
ER8.1.2 - SCTM staff provide high quality support to members in the EU accession process	
ER8.1.3 - SCTM capacities to follow and support members in the EU accession process upgraded	
ER8.1.4 - Fostered communication between national level and LSGs on progress in accession negotiations and IPA programming process through regular consultations	
ER8.1.5 - LSGs thematic priorities for financing within IPA re-defined and advocated towards national level	
ER8.1.6 - SCTM provides / analyse data from local level on different topics regarding negotiations and IPA programming process	
ER8.1.7 - Findings from Municipal support packages implementation used as an input for policy positions in targeted chapters and IPA programming process	
ER8.1.8 - Methodology and categories of data for measuring effects of IPA and other international aid interventions at LSGs defined by the SCTM and national stakeholders	
ER8.1.9 - LSGs/SCTM are involved and consulted about the future EU financial perspective	
ER8.2.1 - Proposal for establishment of system for pre-financing and co- financing of EU projects for LSG taken in account/passed to the legislative procedure by national institutions	ER8.2 - National government introduces system for pre-financing and co- financing of EU projects for LSGs
ER8.2.2 - Majority of LSGs decision makers understand the need to provide financial resources for pre- financing and co- financing EU projects	
ER8.3.1 - Capacity of LSG representatives in EU and regional organizations built to perform their role in these organizations	ER8.3 - EU and regional organizations (EC, CoR, CEMR, NALAS, CLRAE, etc.) take into account inputs and positions of Serbian LSGs, especially based on exchange and cooperation with LSGs from EU countries
ER8.3.2 - Policy positions of LSG advocated in the EU and regional organizations	
ER8.3.3 - Key findings on relevant LSGs issues in negotiation process and EU funds programming presented to targeted DGs by the SCTM	
ER8.3.4 - Work of the Secretariat of Joint Consultative Committee of Serbia with the Committee of Regions supported by SCTM	
ER8.3.5 - More frequent presence in Brussels by SCTM to represent LSGs on EU level	
ER8.3.6 - Politicians understand the importance of being present in Brussels	
ER8.3.7 - SCTM contributes to advocacy activities towards EU institutions regarding EU policies, legislation and funding through regional networking (NALAS, CEMR, etc)	

ER8.3.8 - LSGs understand procedures and possibilities of twinnings thus create more twinnings and partnerships with LSGs in EU countries	
ER8.4.1 - Establishment of EU officers (offices) started in LSGs, thus creating functional Network	ER8.4 - LSGs better understand obligations and follow EU principles and standards in specific accession chapters
ER8.4.2 - LSGs and other stakeholders (citizens, business, etc.) discuss specific EU standards and necessary resources for their implementation	
ER8.4.2 - Inter-municipal cooperation and cross- sector partnerships at local level recognized by LSGs as crucial for conducting EU related reforms, especially for improving services for citizens	
ER8.4.4 - Involvement of vulnerable/minority groups by LSGs in consultation processes regarding EU standards increased	
ER8.4.5 - SCTM strategic plan 2018-2022 reflects new positions and sets appropriate measures in area of EU and international cooperation	
ER8.5.1 - LSGs are aware of possibilities for EU funding through SCTM information channels	ER8.5 - LSGs are better prepared for using EU funds (IPA/EU programmes) to address the requirements of EU accession process
ER8.5.2 - LSGs create twinnings and partnerships (especially from EU member states), including inter-municipal and cross sectoral, on different EU topics, particularly to develop project ideas	
ER8.5.3 - LSGs are defining project ideas and applying for relevant EU programmes (Horizon 2020, Europe for Citizens, EaSI...) and funds	

Expected result 9 - Capacity development and sustainability by the SCTM. By the end of the program, SCTM is in a position to continue providing the types of support envisaged on a self-sustaining basis.

Component 2 - Support for SCTM and LSGs Collectively to Pursue Local Interests and Enhance the Capacity of All Local Authorities	
Short-term/ intermediate outcome level	Medium-term outcome level
ER9.1.1 - Action plan for organizational development agreed	ER9.1 - SCTM has raised its capacity to meet challenges identified in the thematic areas of the program
ER9.1.2 - Challenges in thematic areas of the program analysed from an organizational perspective.	
ER9.1.3 - Innovative approaches and inputs from SALAR and outcomes from the program used in process of developing new Strategic Plan of SCTM (2018-2022).	
ER9.1.4 - Implementation of Work plan for revenue generating unit.	ER9.2 - Revenue-generating unit or subsidiary company functioning.
ER9.1.5 - Revenue-generating unit or subsidiary company established	
	ER9.3 - SCTM strategy for increased financial sustainability accepted and approved by SCTM Presidency.



Annex 6: Data sheet on the evaluation object

Information on the evaluation object (i.e. project or programme)	
Title of the evaluation object	“Support to Serbian Municipalities on the Road to EU Accession: Enabling High-Quality Services, Stakeholder Dialogue and Efficient Local Administration
ID no. in PLANIt	55100203
Dox no./Archive case no.	UM2015/26116
Activity period (if applicable)	15/04/2016 – 31/12-2020
Agreed budget (if applicable)	47 411 027 SEK
Main sector	Decentralisation and support to subnational government
Name and type of implementing organisation	SCTM and SALAR; civic society organizations
Aid type	Project type
Swedish strategy	Results Strategy for Eastern Europe, Western Balkans and Turkey



Evaluation of 'Support to Serbian Municipalities on the Road to EU Accession'

The Support to Serbian Municipalities on the Road to EU Accession is a four-year project assisting local self-government in Serbia with improving the quality of services, enhancing dialogue with stakeholders, and improving the efficiency of local administration. All this is done with a related focus on good governance and gender equality. The project fits specifically within Result 4 of the Swedish Government Results Strategy for Eastern Europe, Western Balkans, and Turkey - Public services delivered with better quality based on principles of non-discrimination and equal rights and with less corruption. This is a mid-term evaluation, the purpose of which is to help Sida and its partners (SCTM and SALAR) to assess the overall progress of the project and to give specific emphasis to learning. The evaluation provides a constructive way forward for the project, including concrete recommendations that inform decision-making during the remaining implementation period and the design of the next phase.

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