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Sida Review

Vera Devine

Review of UNDP Georgia Good Governance project

Final Report

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October 2011**

**Assignment undertaken by:
Vera Devine**

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Final Evaluation Report

Review of UNDP Georgia Good Governance project

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Assignment performed by

Vera Devine

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Acronyms

CEGSTAR	Centre of the State Commission on Effective Governance System and Territorial Arrangement Reform
CoE	Council of Europe
EChLSG	European Charter of Local Self-Government
DGP	Democratic Governance Programme
EUD	European Union Delegation in Georgia
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German International Cooperation Agency)
ICA	Irish Cooperation Agency
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
MRDI	Ministry for Regional Development and Infrastructure
OSI	Open Society Institute
Sida	Swedish International Development Agency
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Executive Summary

In summer 2011, Sida Georgia commissioned Indevelop AB to conduct an evaluation of UNDP's Democratic Governance Programme. The Programme, which consisted of 7 separate, yet thematically inter-related projects, was, with a financial contribution of 291.00000 SEK from Sida in the period from January 2007 to April 2010, mainly funded by Sida. There was co-funding from the Georgian government, from UNDP core funds, as well as from other donors.

The main aim of the evaluation was to inform Sida decision-making on funding of a further programme, to be implemented by UNDP, in the area of decentralisation and local self-governance, a thematic area that the Democratic Governance Programme had explicitly targeted through 3 of its 7 projects. The evaluation therefore focussed mainly on these 3 projects. Sida's Terms of Reference for the evaluation put specific emphasis on an examination of the Democratic Governance Programme against the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. Sida also wanted the evaluation to reflect on the likely bearing of the specific political context of Georgia on the success of a future programme on decentralisation and local self-governance.

The evaluation was conducted 17 months after the last projects under the Democratic Governance Programme were finished (i.e. April 2010; some projects had concluded even earlier). While this presented a number of challenges—mainly caused by a loss of institutional memory of the beneficiary institutions—it also was a rare opportunity to assess the outcomes of technical assistance interventions after programme and project activities have ended.

The main **conclusions** from the evaluation are as follows:

a) Against the background of the foreseen Outcomes of the Programme

- It is difficult to come to conclusive statements with regards to the stated **Outcomes** of the Programme as laid down in the initial Project Proposal. Some capacities have been created, through most of the Programme components, at the **central** level in terms of **enhanced results-oriented planning and coordination capacities of the government** (Outcome I) and **enhanced government capacity for effective implementation of economic and public administration reforms** (Outcome II), though in absence of an initial baseline measurement, it is difficult to substantiate this claim. Another challenge is that of attribution of these Outcomes to any particular programme.
- Outcomes have been assured on **legislative reform** in the area of **decentralisation and local self-government**, and **gender issues**, where key legislation is now in place.
- With regards to achieving the Outcomes at the **local** level of **enhanced results-oriented planning and coordination capacities of the government** (Outcome I) and **the enhancement of national and local capacities of legislative and executive branches of the government in delivering public services** (Outcome III), these would seem mainly not to have been achieved. This risk had been identified in the Programme design process, and reflects the fact that the programme was operating in an environment where political backing for decentralisation and local self-government reform was mainly notional to begin with, and has seen a marked countercurrent in recent years in Georgia, i.e. there is a move to a stronger, more consolidated central government. There has been some improvement, though, at the local level in the participating municipalities to deliver services to citizens through the Citizens' Service Bureaus. Equally, transparency of the legislative process in parliament would need a more decisive backing in the overall political discourse in order for programmes to achieve their stated outcomes.

- b) With specific regards to the 3 projects in the area of local self-governance and decentralisation:
- The project/component **“Support to the Centre of the State Commission on Effective Governance System and Territorial Arrangement Reform (CEGSTAR) in its decentralisation effort”** (implemented during 2007 and 2008), followed by the project/component **“Support to Local Governance Reform in Georgia”** (implemented in 2009 and early 2010) have had a lasting **impact** through the provision of expertise in the drafting of core pieces of legislation pertaining to local self-governance and decentralisation. The Georgian government’s ambition to formally comply with obligations emanating from its membership in international governmental organisations provided the context necessary for effective work on this legislation, which is now fully in line with the European Charter on Local Self-Governance.
 - Both projects have also laid the ground for the development of the State Strategy for Regional Development, and an initial Action Plan for the implementation of this Strategy, and for including provisions, in these documents, foreseeing the involvement of stakeholders from the local/municipal level in the implementation.
 - While the two projects constituted the centre of expertise for local self-government and decentralisation efforts, all experts save one have left CEGSTAR or the Ministry for Regional Development and Infrastructure (MRDI), respectively. In the medium term, then, the capacity built through the project has been lost to the government and the central administration. In the rapidly changing environment of Georgia, however, it is possible that experts will come back in the longer term and provide input into the government’s decentralisation agenda.
 - The impact of interventions under the project/component **“Strengthening Local and Regional Governance in the Kvemo Kartli Region”** varied considerably across municipalities.
 - Impact was recorded in those municipalities where the local political leadership had articulated visions of local self-governance and the needs of the local councils on the one hand, and the local administration on the other hand. In this respect, *Rustavi* was the most successful of the participating municipalities, as there was evidence of all outputs having left a lasting trail. At the other end of the spectrum, *Gardabani* municipality had made the least use of the project, and there was no evidence of the project outputs having survived in any form whatsoever.
 - In the other municipalities, the impact of the interventions varied considerably:
 - Training seems to have been useful for most of the municipal administrations, in particular as they pertain to the Citizens’ Service Bureaus; the training needs appear to have been covered, at least for the time being. The trainings have followed the same pattern across all municipalities, and have been perceived as being mainly useful and relevant to the participating civil servants. Some criticism concerned the ad-hoc nature of the trainings, with an articulated wish for medium-term training at the workplace.
 - Citizen’s Service Bureaus have been opened in six out of the seven municipalities, in four of the municipalities this has been the result of the project. The reorganisation of municipal services in a way that establishes a clear interface between the administration and the citizen and the introduction of predictability of the administration cannot be underestimated and is a success in itself. However, the existence of Citizens’ Service Bureaus is no indication of the efficiency of the municipal administration, or the transparency of the decision-making processes.

- Functional analyses were carried out for two of the seven municipalities. While in Dmanisi, the municipal administration is continuing the use its analysis for understanding and addressing the evolving needs of the administration, in Bolnisi, there is no recollection of this effort among stakeholders.
- Except for Rustavi, the Municipal Development Plans elaborated for six out of the seven municipalities have not had any impact in the municipalities, neither in terms of contributing to more participatory planning processes in the municipalities, nor in terms of the actual Plans being used by the local authorities.
- Pilot activities' impact, too, varied. In Bolnisi, the numbering of streets provided a unique address to many citizens, an outcome that has been welcomed by many. Similar activities have been replicated in other municipalities, with the support of other donors. In Bolnisi, on the instigation of the local authorities, the Ministry of Justice is continuing the numbering of streets in the villages surrounding Bolnisi town.
- Study tours have been well received by participants from the local councils, but it has been difficult to ascertain what precisely the impact has been from these visits.
- Beneficiaries from the Kvemo-Kartli region have consistently pointed out the benefit of the project for peer cooperation across municipalities, which they have cited as one of the lasting outcomes of the project.
- More synergies could have been created between the projects at the central level (CEGSTAR and MRDI) on the one hand, and the local-level project in Kvemo Kartli region on the other hand. There was potential for better incorporation of gender as a cross-cutting issue, and minority issues—one of the initial arguments for a project in the region—remained a largely uncharted territory.

c) With specific regards to the Project on Gender and Politics, Phase II

- The project leaves a clearly attributable track record of facilitating the passing of gender legislation in Georgia, as well as of the creation of an institution in charge of gender issues.
- Synergies have been strong between this component of the Programme, and the project in support of parliamentary effectiveness and transparency.

With regards to Sida's decision-making process on funding a new programme, to be implemented by UNDP, the evaluator **recommends** to fund such a programme, taking into account the following arguments and considerations:

- In line with the Swedish vision that a) decentralised and strong local self-governments are a core prerequisite for genuine democratic societies, that b) such societies can more effectively serve the people and their interests, and that only c) democratic societies are stable in the long-term, it is important that Sweden contributes to keeping this item on the agenda in a context where the government would rather not take any more steps towards genuine reform. It seems more advisable to be able to influence the debate from the inside than to contemplate the lack of genuine government commitment from the outside.

- Sida would need to ring-fence expectations from the onset: success will be incremental, rather than quick, and the proposal that is on the table currently should be seen as a possible way to advance decentralisation in Georgia by proxy—through encouraging local/municipal voices in the implementation of the State Strategy on Regional Development as laid out in the current proposal—rather than in a direct way.
- Sida might also want to keep in mind that there is a risk that the programme could be hijacked for the opposite purpose: successfully delivering the State Strategy on Regional Development could also strengthen the central government. It is therefore important to insist, and possibly strengthen, those aspects of the current proposal that make clear the need for involvement of local players in the implementation process of the State Strategy.
- A programme of this kind can serve to keep reminding Georgia of the commitments it entered internationally. The programme would use the few windows of opportunity in the existing Georgian legislation to work with local governments in a targeted way, and specifically on programme-based budgeting.
- UNDP is a strong partner for implementation. The organisation is being recognised as coordinating the international community's views on decentralisation and strengthened local self-government. Individuals leading this process on behalf of UNDP are highly regarded among peers.
- Sida might want to make clearer its own position, and the expectations it has vis-a-vis UNDP in implementing a programme the objectives of which are not immediately popular with the respective government counterparts. This could help to avoid perceptions (voiced by several interlocutors) that UNDP is accommodating government demands more than necessary.

With regards to UNDP as an implementing partner for this programme, the evaluator recommends the following:

- The programme proposal that is currently on the table should be modified to reflect the findings of the evaluation and recent developments. This concerns in particular the geographic coverage of the components at the local (municipal) level. Against the background of the evidence found on the ground, the evaluator recommends a more strategic approach to a selected number of municipalities, rather than aiming for a broad coverage of a large number of localities.
- If funding is approved, UNDP should conduct another round of consultations in particular with stakeholders at the local level about their needs. This would be in line with avoiding one of the criticisms of the DGP, namely, that involvement of local stakeholders had been limited. UNDP should also consult other projects or programmes that it is currently implementing in different regions of Georgia to ensure if not synergies between interventions, so at the minimum intelligence-sharing on local players/circumstances/windows of opportunity.
- Consideration should be given, in a reworked project proposal, to improve the monitoring and evaluation of programmes of this kind inside UNDP. Equally, there is scope for reflection on how to ensure better gender-mainstreaming, as well as thematic work on minority issues.

1. Background and context of the DGP and a future programme

In early 2006, UNDP Georgia proposed, upon request by Sida, the funding of its Democratic Governance Programme (DGP) to Sida. The proposal initially consisted of 25 separate projects and eventually, Sida and UNDP filtered this down to seven projects where the Swedish Strategy for development cooperation with Georgia (2006-2009) closest matched the UNDP's Georgia Country Action Plan from 2006 to 2010, which, in turn, supported the Georgian governments own strategic and policy reform plans, namely Georgia's Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Programme.

Sida had worked through UNDP on smaller projects before, but this was the first funding of a much more complex programme in Georgia. The experience of successful implementation of previous projects made partnering up a coherent choice; Sida also acknowledged, at the time, the unique access that UNDP had to government stakeholders, which made it the most appropriate choice of implementing organisation of such a programme in Georgia. Kvemo Kartli was chosen as a region for the implementation of a project at the very local level, in part because it had a significant percentage of ethnic minorities, as well as IDPs.

The overall objective of the DGP was to build capacities at the central and local levels of government, and in the parliament and to advance key reforms in the public administration and to strengthen democracy in Georgia. This was to be achieved through the following projects:

- "Strengthening the Effectiveness and Transparency of the Parliament" (the second phase of ongoing Sida-UNDP collaboration)
- "Gender and Politics in Georgia" (also a continuation of a previously started joint effort between Sida and UNDP)
- "Support to the Centre of the State Commission on Effective Governance System and Territorial Arrangement Reform (CEGSTAR) in its Decentralisation Efforts"
- "Capacity Building Fund (for the) Governance Reform Programme" (this, too, a continuation of previous efforts in a similar format)
- "Provision of On-Demand Consultancy Services in the Area of Public Sector Reform"
- "Strengthening Local and Regional Governance in the Kvemo Kartli Region"
- "Support to Local Governance Reform in Georgia"

The latter project replaced, in 2008, an initial one on "Support to National and Sub-national Strategy Planning". This project had been foreseen to work with the government on poverty reduction and MDG-related issues. It was cancelled early on during the inception phase, as it became clear that there was no ownership from the government of this project.

The issue of government ownership for the various components of the DGP does merit a separate discussion, not least because it is one of the key criteria stipulated in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness as a precondition for the success of development assistance.

Georgia is, probably more so than other countries in the region, deeply concerned about its international image. The Georgian government wants to be seen to comply with international standards, and this has been to a great extent the driving force behind the harmonisation of Georgian legislation with international instruments and standards.

For the DPG this has meant that work on bringing Georgian legislation into line with the Council of Europe standards as set out in the European Charter on Local Self-Government (EChLSG) was the immediate and urgent objective of the government, while the implementation of this new legislation is clearly less of a priority. The same can, to some degree, be said about the new legislation, brought about to a great extent by the DPG, on gender issues, as well as the creation of a new institution dealing with gender equality.

At the planning stage, most of the DGP did meet the criteria of ownership, alignment (with government strategies), and (donor) harmonisation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

Ownership of poverty reduction-related interventions was probably from the onset lowest of all (as acknowledged in the Sida Assessment Memorandum in November 2006), which led to abandoning the one of the components soon after the programme had started.

In the event, three out of seven sub-projects dealt with decentralisation and local self-governance issues. At the planning stage, i.e. throughout 2006, local self-government ... had been one of the top priorities for the government, and to that date 1.800 units of local self-government were radically consolidated. This ownership became fickle after the new legislation was vetted by the Council of Europe and received the official approval of being in line with EChLSG standards. The August 2008 war with Russia became another caesura in the debate on the extent to which Georgia wants to embrace decentralisation and more powers for local self-governance units.

One key argument put forward by the government is that of the need of a strong central-level government against the background of the ongoing threat to the territorial integrity of the country. But by far the most frequent reason cited for not accelerating the reforms in the area of decentralisation are the extremely low capacities of the units of local self-governance at present. Although in legal terms, there are only very few competencies that are on that level, the government argues that local self-governments are not even able to cope with these and that therefore, it would be very premature to advance reforms at this point in time. In parallel, there are indications (f.e. through the improvement of service delivery through the central level of government) that the government is working on consolidating and strengthening the central level, while publicly upholding the commitment to decentralisation.

This trend is unlikely to change in the next couple of years: elections are scheduled for 2012 and 2013. What, then, are the windows of opportunity to keep decentralisation on the agenda of the dialogue between the government and Georgian partners?

First, it is not in the interest of the government to entirely abandon decentralisation, as the local self-governments form the power base for the governing party

Second, as the government works on a broader agenda of increasing the standard of living and the revenue base of the state, and where the implementation of the State Strategy for Regional Development and a corresponding Action Plan are tools to this end, it needs assistance in translating this Strategy into regional segments, as well as in hammering out the specific provisions in which these segments will then be delivered. At this stage, international partners do have some scope to influence the set up—the EUD says that it will make participation from the municipal level of the regions concerned one of the benchmarks to be met in order to benefit from the flexible tranches of its budgetary support to Georgia.

Third, a legal novelty obliges local self-governments to comply with new budgeting rules; this new provision will come into force in 2013, and requires attention to capacity building at that level. It would, at this stage seem to be very important to take advantage of the limited opportunities provided by the second and third arguments. Involving local representatives in the decision-making on the regional development strategies could, according to various international interviewees, develop demand, from the bottom up, to have a greater say in local matters beyond the implementation of the regional strategy. And working on increasing the capacity of local self-government to effectively deliver a programme-based budget to the Ministry of Finance could disarm the argument that there is no point in entrusting that level of government with more authorities, as they are unable to meet the limited authorities and competences they have.

1.1. *Purpose and scope of the evaluation*

In summer 2011, Sida Georgia commissioned Indevelop AB to conduct an evaluation of UNDP's Democratic Governance Programme (DGP). The Programme, which consisted of 7 separate, yet thematically inter-related projects, formally concluded in April 2010, after having been extended twice on a no-cost basis.

The Terms of Reference (see Annex I) set out for the evaluation to be both backward and forward looking: by assessing the outcomes and impact of the DGP, Sida was wishing to inform its own decision-making process on the funding of another programme in the area of decentralisation and local self-government, which has been elaborated and would be implemented by UNDP.

In the context of the evaluation, Sida wanted a couple of questions to be specifically looked at. These questions related, on the one hand, to the capacity of UNDP as a past and future implementing agency/partner based on the experience with the DGP, as well as to the compliance of the programme with the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

On the other hand, Sida wanted to receive an independent assessment of the prospects of success of a future programme that would operate against the background of a lack of genuine political will and resolve to advance decentralisation and local self-government reform, as well as an assessment of the proposal tabled by UNDP and considered for funding by Sida.

While the Terms of Reference specifically set out that all of the seven sub-components should be covered by this evaluation, this requirement was somewhat modified during the briefing with Sida at the beginning of the evaluator's in-country mission, when it was agreed that the overwhelming emphasis of the evaluation would be on the three DGP components that had dealt specifically with decentralisation and local self-government as the programme proposal under consideration is focusing on this topic.

1.2. *Executing modalities of the programme or project*

Four of the seven subprojects used the National Implementing Modality (the projects on Gender, Parliament, CEGSTAR, and Local Self-Government projects), while the subproject on local self-governance in Kvemo Kartli used the Direct Implementing Modality, as capacity was too limited to entrust local counterparts with the implementation. The Direct Implementing Modality was also used for the CBF and the On-Demand-Services project, in order to avoid conflicts of interest, as the government counterparts would have had sole discretion as to where to spend the allocated funds.

The National Implementing Modality (or NEX) is more in line with the spirit of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness as a modality that gives greater ownership of a programme to the national authorities of the partner country. However, the choice of the Direct Implementing Modality in three of the seven cases seems to be entirely justified by the specifics of these three projects. UNDP is clear that any future programme would make use of the NEX modality wherever sensible. During one of the interviews, , however, a senior government counterpart made clear to the evaluator that his institution would prefer the Direct Implementing Modality for a variety of reasons, including, it seems, that it would release them from the resource burden associated with being mainly in charge of implementation. UNDP has, however, made clear that NEX remains the preferred choice of implementation modality, and that it is better reflecting the ambition of government ownership of a programme or project.

Steering Groups (SG), or project boards, were in place for all the sub-projects, consisting of UNDP programme management, national counterparts, and Sida. Time ; was too short to ascertain, in-depth, the impact of these SGs but counterparts confirmed that they have worked well, and that they did provide an important forum to discuss achievements and to agree on directions and activities for forthcoming periods.

2. Evaluation methodology

The evaluation consisted of an initial desk review of documents covering the various stages from the planning and assessment phase in late 2006 to final programme reporting, as well as a (limited) review of documents produced as outputs under the programme. Secondary documents were consulted, too, in order to obtain information about recent political developments in Georgia. Three (the Capacity Building Fund; the project dealing with Strengthening the Effectiveness and Transparency of the Parliament; and the project on Strengthening Local and Regional Governance in the Kvemo Kartli Region, respectively) of the seven sub-projects/components had been subject to separate independent evaluations immediately after completion of the respective interventions; the evaluations were commissioned by UNDP. These evaluations have provided a useful baseline against which to assess the impact, after time, of the projects.

From 4 to 10 September 2011, the evaluator visited Georgia, where she conducted interviews with a total of 45 (confirm) stakeholders from the donor/international community, UNDP programme and project managers, and stakeholders at central and local government level (the schedule of meetings is in Annex II to this report). The evaluator visited six out of the seven municipalities covered by the local self-government component, namely Bolnisi, Dmanisi, Gardabani, Marneuli, Rustavi, and Tetritskaro municipalities in the Kvemo Kartli region.

At the end of the in-country visit, a debriefing was held with Sida summarising the main findings and presenting the evaluator's recommendations in line with the ToR. There was also a de-briefing with UNDP, one of the key purposes of which was to talk through the potentially critical points in the report so as to a) give an opportunity to present another perspective on these points and b) to avoid any unpleasant surprises when UNDP would be presented with the report.

As the in-country visit was limited in terms of timing, the evaluator would need to conduct a further round of interviews with stakeholders that were not available during the above mentioned period, as well as in order to verify and ascertain a number of findings and key data represented in this draft report.

2.1. *Limitations to the evaluation*

The time earmarked for this evaluation was, in retrospect, overly ambitious. As the ToR pointed out, with 7 sub-components or projects (some of which can be argued to have been full-fledged programmes in their own right), the DGP was a complex effort, and the question is whether the evaluator can do it justice in the framework of a 15 day assignment.

As mentioned earlier, the evaluation was commissioned almost one and a half years after the last component had been closed (in April 2010), while other components had finished considerably earlier (for example, the component “Strengthening the Effectiveness and Transparency of the Parliament” ended in December 2008). This provided a rare opportunity to look back at the DGP’s legacy over time. At the same time, this presented a limitation—it was not always easy to identify stakeholders that could speak with knowledge about the project, or stakeholders had already only little recollection about the specifics of the project and their part in it.

While coming as an outsider to Georgia to evaluate a past programme, and to assess the merits of a new programme, was in many ways an advantage, this, too was a limitation: Georgian stakeholders do not readily open up to unknown counterparts, and were therefore very often cautious in their statements, frequently asking the evaluator’s interpreter not to translate certain parts of the conversation they had among each other trying to answer the evaluator’s questions. This might also be due to an overall climate of political consolidation of power of the governing party and the increasing loss of voices of even cautious dissent among citizens and politicians alike.

3. Major findings and analysis

3.1. *Relevance of the programme*

Despite achieving only parts of the objectives, and given the complexity of the intended Outcomes against the background of the country situation discussed below, the programme has been highly relevant for the context of Georgia.

3.2. *Attainment of the programme objectives*

The main objective of the programme was “to strengthen the efficiency and accountability of the governance structures at the central and local levels, towards an inclusive and participatory decision-making process.”¹

This objective has been achieved to some, albeit limited, extent:

- While far from being perfect, the introduction of Citizens’ Service Bureaus has laid the ground for local governance structures to become more accountable;
- Local municipalities in Kvemo Kartli have had the opportunity to be involved in an inclusive and participatory decision-making process in the framework of the elaboration of their municipal development strategies; while this has not resulted in a sustainable change of decision-making processes in these municipalities, they have had some exposure to this working method, and it might be possible that these skills could be activated again in future planning processes.

¹ See UNDP Project Proposal to Sida, page 11.

Initially, the attainment of the main objective was, by proxy, to contribute also to the achievement of MDGs “through fostering democratic governance and thus, creating a conducive environment for the realisation of the MDGs”. As discussed above, reference to the MDGs was largely abandoned in the course of implementation.

Previous sections have discussed the difficult political context in which the DPG operated. This needs to be kept in mind, as the achievement of the main objective was to a great extent dependent on political will to put the assistance offered to use.

3.3. *Achievement of the individual projects’ outputs*

This section will discuss the outputs of the individual projects as far as they could be ascertained in the framework of this exercise, and their bearing on a subsequent project as proposed by UNDP for Sida-funding.

a) Projects on decentralisation and local self-governance

The project/component “Support to the Centre of the State Commission on Effective Governance System and Territorial Arrangement Reform (CEGSTAR) in its decentralisation effort” (implemented during 2007 and 2008), followed by the project/component “Support to Local Governance Reform in Georgia” (implemented in 2009 and early 2010) have had a lasting impact through the provision of expertise in the drafting of core pieces of legislation pertaining to local self-governance and decentralisation.

The Georgian government’s ambition to formally comply with obligations emanating from its membership in international governmental organisations provided the context necessary for effective work on this legislation, which is now fully in line with the European Charter on Local Self-Governance.² The drive to work now on remaining gaps in the legislation is less pronounced, as is the will to move decentralisation forward in practical terms. While the commitment of the government to decentralisation is notionally there, in reality, the government is seen by many stakeholders consulted in the framework of this exercise to undermine this agenda by strengthening central government, including on the delivery of public services.

A milestone, clearly attributable to the project, is the introduction of a special chapter on Local Self-Government in the revised Georgian constitution in 2010, which is a first in any Georgian constitution. It is important as it ring-fences how far any government of Georgia could go to reverse the results of the reforms to date.

Both projects have laid the ground for the development of the State Strategy for Regional Development, and an initial Action Plan for the implementation of this Strategy. The project proposed by UNDP would continue to work in this direction, in particular through helping the Ministry for Regional Development and Infrastructure (MRDI) to set up the specific mechanisms for the elaboration of the regional-level strategies and in particular for defining the membership of the Regional Councils foreseen to oversee, in a consultative process, key decisions on infrastructure projects.

This is a sensible direction for future work for a number of reasons: the DGP has invested a lot of resources in working on the State Regional Strategy through both of the above mentioned projects, and continuing this engagement would be provide continuity to this effort and draw on institutional memory

² See <http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/en/Treaties/Html/122.htm>.

about this process to date. Second, as discussed above, work on the specifics of the implementation of the State Strategy does provide an opportunity to leverage the voices of the affected communities. There is, however, also a danger of the government's hijacking of these efforts: one could argue that working with the government on the State Strategy might have the inadvertent effect of strengthening the central government's role and increasing legitimacy to this centrally-led effort. If the government is seen to successfully deliver large and highly visible infrastructure efforts and in addition, can point to structures that, at least at the surface, appear to be participatory,³ this is likely to strengthen the argument in favour of a strong central government; it will certainly not strengthen the argument in favour of increased local self-governance.

Another important achievement from this project was the development of a training facility/mechanism for the needs of local civil servants, and which would fill an important gap in identifying, and addressing, capacity issues at that level. This facility is considered by all stakeholders identified in the framework of this project as extremely useful. The government has approved the idea, too, and is committed to contribute funds to this effort. It is planned that one of the key areas of activities of the proposed project will be on the development of this facility.

While both projects under DGP constituted the centre of expertise for local self-government and decentralisation efforts, all experts save one have left CEGSTAR for the Ministry for Regional Development and Infrastructure (MRDI), respectively; two other experts are working in the parliament and the diplomatic service, respectively. In the medium term, then, the capacity built through the project has been lost to CEGSTAR and the MRDI. In the rapidly changing environment of Georgia, however, it is possible that experts will come back in the longer term and provide input into the government's decentralisation agenda.

The impact of outputs under the project/component **"Strengthening Local and Regional Governance in the Kvemo Kartli Region"** varied considerably across municipalities and it is impossible to say that *one* intervention was comparatively successful in *all* locations.

A tentative conclusion—and potentially pointing out a direction for future projects—of is that impact could be recorded in those municipalities where the local political leadership had articulated visions of local self-governance and the needs of the local councils on the one hand, and the local administration on the other hand. In this respect, *Rustavi* was the most promising of the participating municipalities, as there was evidence of all outputs having left a lasting trail. There was ownership by the mayor of the project in that he showed an articulated interest in his colleagues participating and applying the skills acquired through various outputs of the project. The mayor was also able to provide ideas on future areas of activity, and had a medium-term vision of where and how local self-governance should evolve in Georgia.

At the other end of the spectrum, *Gardabani* municipality had made the least use of the project, and there was no evidence of the project outputs having survived in any form whatsoever. This finding has been confirmed in interviews with project management staff, who confirmed the difference in working in the two municipalities.

³ It is foreseen that the Regional Councils will include representatives of civil society organisations and some observers anticipate that this will trigger the establishment of NGOs close to the government.

In the other municipalities, the impact of the interventions varied considerably:

Training seems to have been useful for most of the municipal administrations, in particular as they pertain to the Citizens' Service Bureaus; the training needs appear to have been covered, at least for the time being. The trainings have followed the same pattern across all municipalities (and included communications training, management, computer training), and have been perceived as being mainly useful and relevant to the participating civil servants. Some criticism concerned the ad-hoc nature of the trainings, and the fact that the trainings could have been more specific to the local context. There was, by some stakeholders, an articulated wish for medium-term training, through coaching or "shadowing staff" at the workplace. In Rustavi, Bolnisi, and Marneuli, almost all training participants still worked in the local administration, while in Gardabani, no training participant was left. In Dmanisi, out of the four participants in the training, only one was still working in the municipality, who is, however, fully able to train newcomers on the job. IT equipment is in the most being used, and staff has highlighted the electronic filing system as one of the key advantages of the new way of working.

Citizen's Service Bureaus (the result of pilot activities under the project) have opened or are in the course of being opened in six out of the seven municipalities, in three of the municipalities this has been the result of the project. The reorganisation of municipal services in a way that establishes a clear interface between the administration and the citizen, and the introduction of predictability of the administration cannot be underestimated and is a success in itself. However, the existence of Citizens' Service Bureaus is no indication as to the efficiency of the municipal administration, or the transparency of the decision-making processes. The Bureaus that were visited in the framework of the evaluation seemed to be somewhat overstaffed. In one municipality, four staff are working in the Citizens' Service Bureau with 12 requests for services by citizens on average per day. Similar ratios of staff to actual requests were confirmed in the other municipalities. In at least one municipality, the actual installation of the Bureaus has not changed the handling of requests inside the administration – what has changed, though, is that citizens clearly have no longer to navigate their own way through the administration. Staff working in the Bureaus did, by and large, give a positive assessment of the new working methods and reported higher job satisfaction.

Functional analyses were carried out for two of the seven municipalities. While in Dmanisi, the municipal administration is continuing the use its analysis for understanding and addressing the evolving needs of the administration, in Bolnisi, there is no recollection of this effort among stakeholders. In Dmanisi, the functional analysis has been the basis for staff job descriptions – something that had not been in place previously.

Except for Rustavi, the Municipal Development Plans elaborated for six out of the seven municipalities have not had any impact in the municipalities, neither in terms of contributing to more participatory planning processes in the municipalities, nor in terms of the actual Plans being used by the local authorities. With the exception of Rustavi, staff had no working copies of the Plans, and during a number of meetings, it was clear that stakeholders were looking at unused copies for the first time. The mayors and local councillors had by and large no recollection at all of the process that led to the elaboration of the strategies, which, in part, might be a reflection of the change in the composition of the local councils as a result of the May 2010 local self-government elections; however, the finding is somewhat surprising given the fact that the process of elaboration took approximately 12 months in each municipality.

Pilot activities' impact, too, varied. In Bolnisi, the numbering of streets provided, for the first time, a unique address to many citizens, an outcome that has been welcomed by many. Similar activities have been replicated in other municipalities, with the support of other donors. In Bolnisi, on the instigation of the local authorities, the Ministry of Justice is continuing the numbering of streets in the villages surrounding Bolnisi town.

Study tours have been well received by participants from the local councils, but it has been difficult to ascertain what precisely the impact has been from these visits, despite local councillors pointing out that they would like to receive the opportunity for more such study tours. In general, local councillors have participated in study tours, while local civil servants underwent training.

Beneficiaries from the Kvemo Kartli region have consistently pointed out the benefit of the project for peer cooperation across municipalities, which they have cited as one of the lasting outcomes of the project. They cite frequent contacts with colleagues from the neighbouring municipalities and appreciate that the project has paved the way for these contacts.

More synergies could have been created between the projects at the central level (CEGSTAR and LSG) on the one hand, and the local-level project in Kvemo Kartli region on the other hand. While a strong legal component hinged at the central level of government was necessary in order to advance the passing of crucial legislation, there is also the impression of detachment of this strand of the DPG with the core constituency of the reforms the project targeted. Given the amount of expertise that was accumulated in CEGSTAR, this could have been an example of a genuinely participatory legislative drafting process.

There was potential for better incorporation of gender as a cross-cutting issue. For example, the overwhelming majority of participants in the study tours were men; in total, only three women councillors participated in the three study tours in total. While the project management stipulated a requirement for female participants to be nominated, the requirement was not specified in writing, and not rigorously followed up.

Minority issues—one of the initial arguments for a project in the Kvemo Kartli region⁴—remained a largely uncharted territory, which is a somewhat lost opportunity, all the more that the issue is an issue that has been readily identified by all stakeholders as problematic and pressing, as it has a direct impact on the life in the communities. For example, the study tours could have thematically included minority issues in the studied countries. IDP issues, too, were eventually not touched by the project.

b) Project on Gender and Politics (Phase II)

Phase I (a regional programme funded by Sida and covering Georgia as well as Armenia and Azerbaijan) and Phase II were co-funded by the Georgian government with 250.000 USD.

⁴ See also the Final Report of the DPG of 5 June 2010 by UNDP, which, too, mentions the “ethnically diverse region” of Kvemo Kartli. UNDP, in meetings during the evaluation mission, stated that the ethnic minority angle had not been a focus of the project, which is somewhat contradicted by this quote, as well as by the independent evaluation of the Kvemo Kartli project component. This evaluation also highlighted the fact that ethnic minority issues had not sufficiently been touched during implementation.

This component/project leaves a clearly attributable track record of facilitating the passing of gender legislation in Georgia, as well as of the creation of an institution, at the central level, in charge of gender issues. The Gender Equality Law was adopted in 2010, and there is now a permanent structure under the Chair of the Parliament, the Gender Advisory Council. In the context of Georgia, these are substantial achievements. The challenges ahead are in some way comparable with those surrounding the decentralisation agenda: with the adoption of the necessary legislation to bring Georgia in line with international standards, the will of the government to decisively move forward with implementation of the new legal provisions is less pronounced. The Gender Advisory Council, for example, suffers from a lack of resources; and the adjustment of other pieces of legislation (such as the Labour Code, the Election Code and others) will require more efforts, as will the formulation of gender-oriented policies on the whole. It is difficult to see, in the context of present Georgian politics, that these efforts will be taken care of by the Georgian side without pressure and support from the outside, and therefore, in the opinion of the evaluator, assistance programmes with a gender focus should be considered for funding both in order to preserve gains made, as well as to keep some momentum on this issue.

The Gender and Politics project did not receive an explicit focus in the framework of the evaluation; therefore, a number of the outputs produced were not looked at in detail. The public relations campaign on gender equality (“Gender Equality – Our Choice”) in the framework of the 2009 Gender Week might deserve a closer look for learning purposes and future project activity design.⁵

Synergies have been strong between this component of the Programme, and the project/component “Strengthening the Effectiveness and Transparency of the Parliament”, which helped to lobby for the Gender Equality Law.

c) Strengthening the Effectiveness and Transparency of the Parliament (II)

This project/component has been independently evaluated in July 2008, i.e. six months before the project ended.⁶ It concluded with an overall positive assessment of the output and outcomes, stating that the project had assisted in the creation of the necessary infrastructure and management systems that would allow the parliament to function efficiently. The evaluation report also made clear that the beneficiary institution did not fully utilise the assistance that had been on offer from the project – this concerned specifically the introduction of e-governance principles in parliament, which were not embraced by parliamentarians.

The evaluator was scheduled to meet with counterparts, in parliament, who had been involved in the project at the time, but the meeting was cancelled at short notice, mainly as a result of the shift in focus of the evaluation. In retrospect, it is clear that such a meeting could have been useful in that it could have provided feedback, for example, on the impact the recommendations, which had been produced in the framework of the project (there had been 23 methodological recommendations on general management, including on HR management procedures including staff recruitment, career management, training systems etc.) and related training modules produced as part of the project. Such information was not available from alternative sources, indicating a potential area of future attention,

⁵ The concern of the evaluator is about what looks like overly simplistic slogans that do not provide any identifiable opportunities for the public to act. I.e. what is the supposed action to be taken by a citizen after reading “Gender Equality – Our Choice”? This was not linked to a referendum, for example, or advocacy for a specific law in which citizens could express a preference or choice.

⁶ All evaluations were annexed to the June 2010 UNDP Final Report to Sida, and Sida had been consulted in the framework of the evaluation missions.

confirmed also during the assessment of the other components of the DGP: with the closure of activities, contacts and the flow of information between UNDP and former beneficiaries had more or less stopped, leading to a lack of insight into the longer term impact of project activities. While this would be understandable with an implementing agency that closes operations after the project finished, in the case of UNDP, it would seem relatively easy to keep an eye on developments after programme closure, given that the organisation has a permanent basis in Georgia, and that it has comparatively easy access to government, executive, and legislative counterparts. It would also help UNDP to be in a better position to report on the long-term impact of their interventions, and provide additional arguments when applying for donor funding.

The project assisted the parliament in the creation of a specific web-portal,⁷ which is maintained, updated, and developed to this day. The project also provided assistance to set up a parliamentary library, both real and digital,⁸ which constitute resources that are widely used by parliamentarians and journalists, according to the former UNDP Project Manager. According to the former Project Manager, the material outputs (publications, websites, library) have a lasting impact, with the impact of the trainings less certain, in particular as there is a substantial turnover of staff in the parliament, and those targeted by the project are likely to have mainly left the apparatus.

d) Capacity Building Fund Governance Reform Programme (CBF), Phase II and Provision of On-Demand Consultancy Services in the Area of Public Sector Reform

CBF operated under a call-for-proposals structure, and institutions from the government applied for policy advice or technical assistance on a competitive basis. CBF was co-funded by Sida (whose contribution was 500,000 USD), Development Cooperation Ireland (DCI; 615,020 USD), American International Group (AIG; 113,910 USD) and the Open Society Institute (OSI; 71,306 USD). The CBF component of the DGP has, on commission by UNDP, been independently evaluated in 2007; the evaluation provides a wealth of key lessons learned and best practices that can be taken over into other areas of programming and project design, including how to predict and mitigate implementation problems caused by senior-level shift in commitment to the policy reforms undertaken, as well as the need for a closer and more effective monitoring and management of the funds by the beneficiaries.

DPG also ran a component on the “Provision of On-Demand Consultancy Services in the Area of Public Sector Reform”, the main strength of which was the fact that it was a flexible, quick-turnover facility for targeted requests for advice by the government. During the initial briefing of the evaluator, it was made clear that this project/component would not be the focus of the evaluation, in part because its overall financial share was comparatively small (270,000 USD), as well as the fact that Sida was overall satisfied with this component based on the feedback it had received from government counterparts.

3.4. Institutional and management arrangements and constraints

The choice of UNDP as the implementing organisation was based on the experience to date that Sida had with implementing projects through UNDP, and on the premise that UNDP had considerable experience in carrying out large-scale governance programmes; the Sida Assessment Memorandum of autumn 2006⁹ describes UNDP as “possibly the only development partner that could give coordinated

⁷ See http://www.parliament.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=1.

⁸ See Parliament web-portal at http://www.nplg.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=4, and the National Parliamentary Library of Georgia at http://www.nplg.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=4.

⁹ Supplied to the evaluator by UNDP Georgia.

support to a broad programme like that proposed. UNDP's experience in the sector is expected to be translated into effectiveness in the implementation of the individual projects and efficient use of resources."

The size of the projects/components, then, might to some extent explain, and confirm, the impression that the DGP has been very staff-intensive – Sida had asked, in the ToRs for the evaluation, as well as during the evaluation mission, whether the management and resources employed by UNDP to run the various projects was justified. As mentioned above, the Programme had seven individual projects or components. Most of these components were so complex in terms of the thematic strands, amount and sequencing of activities that they could be described as programmes in their own right. For example, the project/component "Gender and Politics in Georgia" organised, over its lifetime, over 200 individual activities, at central level, and in various other regions in Georgia. The project on "Strengthening Local and Regional Governance in Kvemo Kartli Region" covered seven, separate municipalities, with an ambitious set of activities for each of them. This might, to some extent, confirm the impression, and explain the fact that the DPG required substantial numbers of staff to run the individual projects.

The numbers of staff engaged at any one time during the project seems to have been one issue, while staff moving from one component to the other component of the DPG was another concern raised by Sida, as well as the fact that a number of those involved in the DPG were now waiting to apply for positions that might open up in a future project. With regards to the transition of staff from one project to the other, UNDP is facing the same recruitment challenges as other international organisations not only in Georgia, but in development cooperation in general. In order to implement programmes, one of the necessary conditions is the command of those working on the project of English, something that still narrows the pool of candidates to mainly those that are comparatively young – and even then, it is difficult to identify suitable candidates. This shortage of staff with project management experience, topical expertise, and sufficient English explains, according to UNDP, why candidates applied to project positions, when they arose, that had previously been involved in other parts of the project.

UNDP has convincingly argued, during the evaluation mission, that recruitments under the DPG have been well documented, as well as having fully complied with UNDP recruitment procedures. One suggestion coming from UNDP senior management is to involve Sida closely in the hiring and recruitment process in a future project or programme¹⁰ which would illustrate/demonstrate the process and alleviate any concerns that Sida might have in this respect.

With regards to the above mentioned impression that previous project staff are waiting to apply for openings under a new project, this impression is certainly correct (and put somewhat of an emotional burden on the evaluator, as counterparts rightly understood the evaluator's mission to give a recommendation on the funding of such a project and, consequently, of their prospect of employment under such a project). One previous project manager has been kept on a part-time (20%) post funded from other sources, although UNDP stresses that neither he, nor any of the other former staff, has had any guarantees of being re-hired, as any new recruitment will have to undergo the same established UNDP procedures.

There are various angles to look at this, the most important of which is that this situation is not unusual in a country where public sector salaries are outdone by salaries paid in international organisations or

¹⁰ For example through notifying Sida specifically about vacancy announcements, and including Sida in the interview process for shortlisted candidates.

donor-funded NGOs. While from a development point of view, donors would want to see qualified young people to contribute to change within their country's administrations, it is also true that these jobs do not provide a decent living wage (in contrast to that paid by internationals). Also, posts in national institutions are often political appointments even at the lower or medium technical level, and thus, not necessarily accessible to those who do not have specific contacts or political affiliations. It is therefore not surprising that former project staff might not have found other employment since the closing of the DPG, or that they are waiting for another opportunity to apply for what for their circumstances are more attractive conditions. Should they fit the qualifications, there is also an argument in favour of re-recruiting such candidates, as they, by now, are acquainted with rules and procedures, have experience in project management, and know the specific subject area well.

The impression of the evaluator is that the above described concerns with regards to staff numbers and associated costs are a fallout of a somewhat unfortunate coincidence of Sida's approval for funding of the DPG and a comprehensive salary review initiated by UNDP HQs. This resulted in UNDP presenting to Sida a readjusted budget which reflected the new salary scales of existing project-staff—with the difference being significant, in addition to the management fee that is standard for any UNDP contract (in this case, 7% of the overall programme budget). Sida did not agree to such a budget revision, and in the event, UNDP bore the difference from its own resources. While there is nothing that UNDP can do at the Country Office level with regards to salary scales that are set by HQs, in hindsight, it might have been wiser not to try to have the donor make up for the difference, and clearly, this episode has somewhat overshadowed relations between Sida and UNDP.

A number of interlocutors have pointed out the relative weight of UNDP in the dialogue with the government, including on the crucial topic of decentralisation, being the result of most of UNDP CO Georgia's staff being Georgian nationals, a fact that allows UNDP a much more immediate access to government officials and stakeholders (compared to representatives of other international organisations). While this more direct access was in the main seen to be an advantage, various stakeholders also conveyed their impression that UNDP was too easily giving in to government demands. Perceptions do matter, and UNDP might want to examine what leads to such a perception.

Sida had, in their ToRs, requested the evaluator to give an assessment of the quality of UNDP programme and project reporting. The timeframe for the evaluation has been such that it has been impossible to look into detail on this parameter at this stage (1st draft). Based on an in-depth study of the key programme documents, which had been mainly prepared by UNDP, the following observations can be made:

- The final reporting has been of high quality, and contains a significant portion of self-reflection and self-criticism on shortcomings and analysis of the reasons why certain parameters of the DGP have not worked well. Reporting has been thorough and comprehensive, allowing for a holistic picture of the achievements of the programme against output and outcome indicators.
- The evaluator rates the quality of the Final Report as high, also against the background of experience of reporting evidenced in other programmes and projects. At the same time, the view point of the evaluator might be irrelevant if this type and format of reporting does not suit the donor, but time has been too limited to ascertain this. The question to the donor would be whether Sida has made use of previous evaluations to inform their assessment of the DGP, and what level of feedback there has been on annual or interim reporting as submitted by the implementing organisation.

3.5 Outcomes, impact and sustainability

Outcomes

The expected Outcomes of the DPG were as follows:

- Enhanced results-oriented planning and coordination capacities of the government at national and sub-national levels;
- Enhanced government capacity in effective implementation of economic and public administration reforms;
- Enhanced national and local capacities of legislative and executive branches of the government in delivering public services.

To come to conclusive statements with regards to these stated outcomes of the Programme as laid down in the Programme Proposal, there are two obvious challenges. One is the challenge of attribution of outcomes to a specific programme or project in a landscape that is marked by a comparatively strong international presence and a high density of donors. Second is the challenge resulting from the fact that these outcomes reflect planning assumptions against the political situation and context at the time, i.e. the end of 2006.

With regards to the first Outcome (“Enhanced results-oriented planning and coordination capacities of the government at national and sub-national levels”), the prevailing consensus among international observers is that capacity at the central level remains very low; it is significantly lower at sub-national levels, and in particular at the level of local self-government.

With regards to the second Outcome (“Enhanced government capacity in effective implementation of economic and public administration reforms”) it is difficult to draw a definitive conclusion on this, and particularly one where a clear attribution to the programme could be made. There is still considerable fluidity in the composition of government institutions, with appointments and dismissals at ministerial level and the level of Deputy Ministers being comparatively frequent. The same applies to the technical staff of the ministries, where there is a significant turnover of staff. Stakeholders interviewed in the framework of this evaluation have, however, indicated that this situation is slowly changing, and that working with the top technical layer of a ministry is now more promising than previously, as the rate of turnover appears to have somewhat slowed down providing for more continuity with regards to counterparts.

With regards to the third expected Outcome (“Enhanced national and local capacities of legislative and executive branches of the government in delivering public services”) where it relates to the capacities at the local level, as discussed above, government commitment to decentralisation and strengthened local self-government had to a great extent been notional even back in 2006 and 2007. Although passing legislation that provides the basis for decentralisation and strengthened local self-government in accordance with the European Charter for Local Self-Government, there has also been a noticeable tug towards a stronger central-level government in Georgia in recent years. The Programme, then, has operated against a background of weak political will to see through genuine decentralisation and local self-governance reform, and provided assistance at a level of government that has had traditionally a minor role to play, and where there is very little vision, and very little demand for change.

In this sense, and not unlike most other international assistance efforts, the project tried to provide technical solutions and approaches to questions that are principally of a political nature, and where therefore, the scope for achievement is influenced by the political context. The establishment of

Citizens' Service Bureaus –partly an output of the DPG, but supported also by other donor as well as by the government—has certainly made a change at the interface between the citizens and the local authorities. Caution should be applied as to whether this formally new way of interacting has led to more democratic decision-making at the local level; there should also be question marks as to whether service delivery has become more efficient as a result of the Citizens' Service Bureaus. But it is a significant change for Georgian citizens to be able to approach the local administration and to receive a predictable service to be delivered within a timeline stipulated by the law.

With regards to the third Outcome where it relates to the capacities at the national/central level, this, too, is difficult to assess. There are developments that do indicate the ability of the central levels of government to effectively deliver public services, and that the government is even willing to set aside significant resources for this. This increased capacity would not, however, seem to be the Outcome of this programme.

In view of the evaluator, and against the specific focus of the evaluation on a number of sub-projects the DGP, then, had the following outcomes: (or outputs?)

- Legislation, in line with international (UN and CoE) standards is now in place in the areas of decentralisation and local self-government, and gender equality;
- Legislation has also been influenced through the CBF and the on-demand consultancy services components of DGP;
- An institution specifically in charge of overseeing gender equality issues has been created under the auspices of the chair of the parliament;
- Decentralisation and gender have been placed prominently and visibly on the agenda of the political dialogue between the government of Georgia on the one hand, and the international community on the other hand;
- A coordinating mechanism among international donors and implementing agencies on decentralisation has been established, with UNDP in the lead of these efforts, which is shaping consensus-building and 'speaking with one voice' to the government on decentralisation, as well as agreeing to the division of work among donors on the subject;
- The opening of Citizens' Services Bureaus at local level, supported through targeted training, has created a more predictable interface between the authorities and the citizens in some of the municipalities targeted by the regional project in Kvemo Kartli;
- The training has, in some municipalities targeted by the regional project in Kvemo Kartli, influenced the way in which the work of the administrations is organised;
- Across a number of projects/subcomponents (local self-governance in Kvemo Kartli; project on work with the parliament), the creation of web-portals and websites has resulted in a more modern way of working and reaching out to the public.

Sustainability

In view of the evaluator, and against the specific focus of the evaluation on a number of sub-projects, sustainability has been achieved as follows:

- With regards to the above mentioned legislative reform, the newly adopted legal acts are unlikely to be abandoned and as such, sustainable; however, there is now a requirement to adjustments in related legislation both on decentralisation and on gender equality issues.

- The Gender Equality Council under the Chair of the Parliament, too, is unlikely to be disbanded, but ensuring sustainability would mean to continue engaging with the Council for it to deliver tangible work and results on gender issues.
- The likelihood of sustainability of some of the efforts of DGP is going to be increased if there is further, continued engagement on the subject, specifically in the area of decentralisation and gender. On decentralisation, this would concern the work on ensuring local participation in regional development strategies through hammering out details on the work of the planned Regional Councils and empowering the local level to participate effectively and efficiently in the work of the Councils-to-be.
- Sustainability appears to be in place where the DGP delivered material outputs, such as the setting up of the parliamentary library, or the creation of web-portals and websites.
- Sustainability of the training at the local level seems to be ensured in those municipalities where there has been political will and commitment to put to use the assistance on offer.

3.6 *Lessons learned*

Lessons learned can be extrapolated across the various components of the DGP:

- With respect to the local governance project in Kvemo Kartli, there is an argument in favour of greater involvement of the beneficiary municipalities' authorities in the project design process and specifically, on the identification of their needs. The lack of consultation with local stakeholders had been one of the weaknesses identified during the programme approval procedure in Sida. In view of the evaluator, this has caused some initially important issues (addressing needs in municipalities with a strong ethnic minority population) not being included in the eventual project implementation, although stakeholders in all municipalities interviewed highlighted problems in this area as being pressing. The project has delivered training that has been, by and large, useful for this initial stage of engaging with local administrations. Future training efforts might have to be more specific to be useful for the participating municipalities, and it would have to be defined clearer with the municipalities where the needs lie. The above mentioned training facility for local self-government can be a strong contribution to addressing these needs.
- The fact that the engagement, at the local level, the project interventions varied so widely, would seem to argue not for full geographical coverage, but rather for a strategic approach to working with local municipalities. Windows of opportunity (reform-minded mayors etc.) should be identified to achieve progress rather than to spread resources too thinly.
- The DGP, and in particular the components on gender and on decentralisation, highlighted the potential the international community has to advance, even though incrementally, topics that are not of immediate popularity with the government. Discussing difficult topics with counterparts in the government is a difficult balancing act, and results will be achieved incrementally in a context where there is no genuine political will for reform.
- There is untapped potential to better share intelligence and information across UNDP projects, as well as install some even light monitoring or evaluation mechanism by which UNDP stays in contact with previous project beneficiaries to track medium to longer-term impact of the organisation's interventions.

3.7 *Best practices*

- Clearly, the coordinating role that UNDP has played among the donor community on advancing a common stance on decentralisation is an important best practice. UNDP CO Georgia seems to have achieved a genuinely accepted leadership in this process, and it is important that the organisation keeps carrying forward the subject.

4 Recommendations

The evaluator shares the concerns that Sida has with regards to funding an effort on decentralisation that seems to have no obvious backing by the government other than in a general notional commitment. But in line with the Swedish vision that a) decentralised and strong local self-governments are a core prerequisite for genuine democratic societies, that b) such societies can more effectively serve the people and their interests, and that only c) democratic societies are stable in the long-term, it is important that Sweden contributes to keeping this item on the agenda in a context where the government would rather not take any more steps towards genuine reform. It seems more advisable to be able to influence the debate from the *inside* than to contemplate the lack of genuine government commitment from the *outside*.

Sida would need to be realistic on expectations from the onset: success will be incremental, rather than quick, and the UNDP funding proposal that is on the table currently should be seen as a possible way to advance decentralisation in Georgia by proxy—through encouraging local/municipal voices in the implementation of the State Strategy on Regional Development as laid out in the current proposal—rather than in a direct, immediate way. The proposed training facility which aims at systematic addressing of capacity gaps for the local self-government level can, over time, make a significant contribution to strengthen the capacities at the local level and thereby potentially create local demand for reform.

Sida might also want to keep in mind that there is a risk that the programme could be hijacked for the opposite purpose: successfully delivering the State Strategy on Regional Development could also strengthen the central government. It is therefore important to insist, and possibly strengthen, those aspects of the current proposal that make clear the need for involvement of local players in the implementation process of the State Strategy.

Also, there are arguments in favour of specifying under which conditions the programme would be discontinued or withdrawn (i.e. should it become clear that local involvement in the Regional Councils does not work, or that the government rejects a formal role for local representatives in the Councils).

A programme of this kind can serve to keep reminding Georgia of the commitments it entered internationally. The programme would use the few windows of opportunity in the existing Georgian legislation to work with local governments in a targeted way, and specifically on programme-based budgeting.

UNDP is a strong partner for implementation. The organisation is being recognised as coordinating the international community's views on decentralisation and strengthened local self-government. Individuals leading this process on behalf of UNDP are highly regarded among peers.

Sida might want to make clearer its own position, and the expectations it has vis-a-vis UNDP in implementing a programme the objectives of which are not immediately popular with the respective government counterparts. This could help to avoid perceptions (voiced by several interlocutors) that UNDP is accommodating government demands more than necessary.

With regards to UNDP as an implementing partner for this programme, the evaluator recommends the following:

- The programme proposal that is currently on the table should be modified to reflect the findings of the evaluation and recent developments. This concerns in particular the geographic coverage of the components at the local (municipal) level. Against the background of the evidence found on the ground, the evaluator recommends a more strategic approach to a selected number of municipalities, rather than aiming for a broad coverage of a large number of localities.
- If funding is approved, UNDP should conduct another round of consultations in particular with stakeholders at the local level about their needs. That such a local-level needs assessment has not taken place so far is somewhat in the nature of process, as it is completely understandable that UNDP would need assurances that funding will come through prior to discussing details with local partners. This would be in line with avoiding one of the criticisms of the DGP, namely, that involvement of local stakeholders had been limited. UNDP should also consult other projects or programmes that it is currently implementing in different regions of Georgia to ensure if not synergies between interventions, so at the minimum intelligence-sharing on local players/circumstances/windows of opportunity.
- Consideration should be given, in a reworked project proposal, as to improve the monitoring and evaluation of programmes of this kind inside UNDP. Equally, there is scope for reflection on how to ensure better gender-mainstreaming, as well as thematic work on minority issues.

Annex A: Terms of Reference for the Evaluation

Review of UNDP Georgia Good Governance project

Evaluation Purpose: Sida wishes to procure a consultant for reviewing Sida funded project “Democratic Governance Programme in Georgia” that was implemented by UNDP in 2007-2010 with overall budget of 29100000 SEK. Apart of Sida interest in effectiveness of the project and evaluation of results achieved the planned review should be forward looking, as Sida is in a dialogue with UNDP on a matter of possible support to a contribution that would target governance and decentralisation in Georgia. In that context it is expected that the consultant will review and comment on the UNDP submitted draft project document. Outcome of the review will be used by Sida Eastern European Unit, also by Swedish Embassy in Georgia and will be shared with UNDP as the implementing partner but also as possible future implementing partner.

Intervention Background: Sida is active in Georgia since late nineties and especially after Sida opened its office in Georgia in 2006. In both Strategy documents that governed Sida interventions in Georgia Democratic Governance and human rights have been one of the most important focus areas. In this context Sida supported rather complex project implemented by UNDP called “Democratic Governance Programme in Georgia”. The objective of the project was: Strengthen the effectiveness, efficiency and accountability of the government at national, regional and local levels.

The project initial duration was 2007- 2008. The project was prolonged two times and finally was completed in March 2010. It comprised of seven components, each with its own objectives and log-frames (output indicators) contributing towards the Key Objective. Namely those components were:

- A) Strengthening the Effectiveness and Transparency of the Parliament
- B) Gender and Politics in Georgia
- C) Support to the Centre of the State Commission on Effective Governance System and Territorial Arrangement in its Decentralisation (CEGSTAR)
- D) Capacity Building Fund under the Governance Reform Programme
- E) Provision of On-Demand Consultancy Services in the Area of Public Sector Reform
- F) Strengthening Local and Regional Governance in the Kvemo Kartli Region
- G) Support to the local governance reform in Georgia

Of these components only Parliamentary and CEGSTAR were closed as planned in December 2008.

Currently Sida started a dialogue with UNDP on possible funding of decentralisation related project. UNDP submitted a draft of Decentralisation project document. Also Sida may consider continuation of support to the Capacity Building Fund and On-Demand Consultancy Services, those two components were designed as rapid response mechanisms primarily targeted executive agencies to provide the required support to the governance needs in the country.

Evaluation questions: the consultant is expected to answer following questions

- What has happened as a result of the programme. Especially assess how the implementation of capacity building through the Sida project has succeeded in increased knowledge and delegated responsibilities of local and regional authorities.
- To what extent are the objectives/results for EACH component achieved
- What are the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives

- Was the project implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternatives
- How good is internal project monitoring and quality assurance including qualitative and quantitative assessments
- Quality of project documents, reports and logframes (result charts/output indicators) produced by the project
- To what extent did the benefits of a programme continue after the programme funding ceased
- What is a level of the project ownership from Georgian side, are they ready to build on the project achievements and carry on providing their own resources

Recommendations and Lessons: it is expected that the consultant will make forward looking recommendations based on findings and analyses of the completed project.

- The consultant should come up with assessment of EACH component recommendations if Sida should consider further support to those components.
- The consultant should come up with assessment and recommendations of the draft Project Document on Decentralisation.
- Based on lessons learnt the consultant should recommend how possible UNDP governance projects effectiveness and efficiency to be improved.
- How better sustainability of results to be achieved.
- What should be most critical areas Sida to look at during project preparation stage and afterwards.

Methodology: A consultant will need to conduct desk study of the project related documentation, e.g. Project Document, Reports including Final Report and project produced documents and products, e.g. project supported Municipal Development Strategies, draft of Decentralisation Strategy, etc. Also a consultant will need to travel to Georgia and conduct interviews with Sida relevant officers, with UNDP officers, with different Georgian Government officials that worked with project and with some selected donors and civil society representatives.

Work Plan and Schedule: It is expected that review will happen in September 2011 and will take fifteen working days including about five working days in Georgia for conducting interviews and visiting project sites. Before leaving Georgia update and debrief Sida and/or Swedish Embassy about early findings. Consultant should produce a draft report by the end of September 2011. After receiving comments from Sida the consultant will finalise the report.

Reporting: The consultant shall write a report of maximum 20 pages long (excluding appendices) with a three page executive summary. The report must be concise. The consultant first will produce a draft report that will be shared with Sida and after receiving comments and questions from Sida the draft will be finalised. The report should be forward looking and having recommendations for possible future contributions implemented by UNDP. The report should be submitted in Microsoft Word format.

Annex B: Field visit schedule

Mon, 5 Sep	Tue, 6 Sep	Wed, 7 Sep	Thurs, 8 Sep	Fri, 9 Sep
8.00 – Sida Ambassador Diana Janse; Alf Eliasson; Kakha Khimshiashvili; Khatuna Zaldastanishvili	10.00 -11.00 George Vashakidze, Ketu Bakradze, Programme Specialists, USAID Democratic Governance Unit. USAID Office, (US Embassy) 11 George Balanchine Street, Tbilisi	9.00 – 10.00 Philipp Eichler, GIZ, Georgia Country Director of the Local Governance programme 19, Viktor Jorbenadze, str.	Trip to Kvemo Kartli region Translation will be required for ALL meetings	10.00-11.00 Ms. Tamar Dalaqishvili, Deputy Chairperson of Sakrebulo and Staff Venue: Office of Rtsmunebuli (representation of municipality in administrative unit of Koda) Contact Info: 599 90 56 68
11.00 – 12.30 UNDP, Natia Natsvlishvili UNDP Office: 9 Eristavi str. Tbilisi All consequent meetings on Monday also will take place at the UNDP office	11.30 – 12.30 Manana Salukvadze, Parliament PM UNDP office	10.15 Depart for Rustavi 11.00 Meeting with Mrs. Marika Pirosmanishvili and staff of the Citizen's Service Bureau in Rustavi Also present Mr. Dato Jiqia and Ms. Nato Molodini, the Mayor's Office. Contact info: 577 95 30 66 - Ms. Marika Pirosmanishvili	11.00 – 12.00 Mr. Mamuka Chikovani, Deputy Governor Address: Ave. Megobroba. Governor's Office Contact Person: 555 61 87 76 - Ms. Nino Chitorelidze	11.30 – 13.30 Natia Natsvlishvili, UNDP
12.30 – 13.30 Lunch	13.00 – 13.45 Lunch	11.45-12.30 Meeting with Mr. Kakha Gurgenidze, Chairman of Rustavi Sakrebulo Contact Information: 577 95 44 55 – Mr. Kakha Gurgenidze		
13.30 – 14.00 David Chichinadze CEGSTAR	14.00 - Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure Mr. Lasha Magradze, Deputy Minister, Ms. Nino Danibegashvili, Head of International Relations		13.00-14.00 Working Lunch with Mr. Zaza Dekanoidze, Head of Marneuli Gamgeoba 14.00-14.45 Visit to the	14.00-15.30 Philip Behrnard, EU Delegation, Programme manager

	Department; Other staff involved 12 Al. Kazbegi Ave; Tbilisi		Citizen's Service Division and meeting with staff/ KK Project training participants Contact Info: 577 40 59 59 – Mr. Zaza Dekanoidze	
15.00 – 16.30 PM, Irakli Kobakhidze, Support to LG reform PMs		13.30 – 14.30 Lunch	14.45 Depart for Bolnisi 15.30-16.30 Meeting with Mr. Soso Laliashvili, Head of Bolnisi Gamgeoba Meeting with staff/KK Project training participants Contact Info: 577 96 80 80 – Soso Laliashvili	
16.30 – 18.00 Ivan Shamugia, Kvemo Kartli Project manager a.i., Project Experts			16.30 Depart for Dmanisi 17.00-18.00 Meeting with Mr. Bakur Mgeladze, Chairman of Dmanisi Sakrebulo - Visit to the Citizen's Service Division and meeting with staff/ KK Project training participants Contact Info: 599 56 86 15 – Mr. Bakur Mgeladze	16.00 – 17.00 Sida debriefing Alf Eliasson; Kakha Khimshiashvili; Khatuna Zaldastanishvili
		16.00 – 18.00, Meetings in Gardabani municipality		17.30 – 18.30 UNDP Debriefing, , Natia Natsvlashvili, Sophie Kemkhadze

Annex C: Reference Documents

- Administration Agreement between Sida and UNDP Georgia, no date, e-copy supplied by Sida Georgia (19 December 2007?)
- Amendment of Administration Agreement for the Democratic Governance Programme in Georgia, 17 September 2008, e-copy supplied by Sida Georgia
- Sida Decision on Contribution, no date, e-copy supplied by Sida Georgia
- Sida Georgia Assessment Memo on UNDP Democratic Governance Programme, 24 November 2006, e-copy supplied by Sida Georgia
- Revised Decision on No-Cost Extension, no date, e-copy supplied by Sida Georgia
- UNDP/Sida Trust Fund for Assistance to UNDP, no date, e-copy supplied by Sida Georgia
- Various documents produced in the framework of the project (such as Municipal Development Plans etc.)



REVIEW OF UNDP GEORGIA GOOD GOVERNANCE PROJECT

Sida funded UNDP's Democratic Governance Programme in Georgia in the period 2007-2010. The Programme, which consisted of 7 separate, yet thematically inter-related projects, was mainly funded by Sida with co-funding from the Georgian government, from UNDP core funds, as well as from other donors. This evaluation was commissioned by Sida Georgia to inform decision-making on funding of a further programme, to be implemented by UNDP, in the area of decentralisation and local self-governance. The evaluation puts specific emphasis on an examination of the Programme against the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. The evaluation reflects on the likely bearing of the specific political context of Georgia on the success of a future programme on decentralisation and local self-governance.

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