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Sida Decentralised Evaluation

FCG Sweden

Final evaluation of the framework agreement regarding direct grant support and consultancy to the Agency for Gender Equality, Kosovo

Final Report



Final evaluation of the framework
agreement regarding direct grant support
and consultancy to the Agency for
Gender Equality, Kosovo

**Final Report
February 2021**

**Bente Topsøe-Jensen
Ariana Qosaj-Mustafa**

Authors: Bente Topsøe-Jensen, Ariana Qosaj-Mustafa

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

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SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY

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

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

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

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AGE	Agency for Gender Equality
CEDAW	Committee of the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
GEO	Gender Equality Officer
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting
LGE	Law on Gender Equality
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
TA	Technical Assistance
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference

Preface

This evaluation was contracted by the Embassy of Sweden in Kosovo through the Sida Framework Agreement for Evaluation Services, and conducted by FCG Sweden. The evaluation took place from November 2020 to January 2021.

The evaluation team consisted of Bente Topsøe-Jensen, team leader and Ariana Qosaj-Mustafa, gender expert. The final report was quality assured by Susan Tamondong, whose work was independent of the evaluation team. Kajsa Österberg Åström provided project management support.

The evaluation was carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic and the evaluation team is thankful to all persons contacted who have demonstrated exceptional flexibility and forthcomingness to accommodate the requests for virtual meetings. A particular thank to the Embassy of Sweden for its flexibility when also an evaluation team member was affected by COVID-19.

Disclaimer. The present report has been prepared by a team of independent evaluators and the content, findings and recommendations reflect the views of the evaluators, and not necessarily those of the Embassy of Sweden or the Agency of Gender Equality in Kosovo, or any other entity consulted during in the evaluation.

Executive Summary

Introduction. The final evaluation of the Swedish support to Agency for Gender Equality (AGE) in Kosovo was commissioned by the Embassy of Sweden in Kosovo. It took place from November 2020 to February 2021, i.e. towards the end of the project agreement activity period. The final evaluation covered the entire project period of 2015 to 2020. It was based on document review and more than 30 virtual interviews with key stakeholders from AGE, the Kosovo government and municipal partners, civil society organizations, academia, donor agencies and the Embassy of Sweden. It was undertaken as a virtual exercise due to COVID-19 with the implicit limitations in terms of lack of personal contact and triangulation of information against observation.

Evaluation objectives. The objectives of the evaluation were to evaluate achieved results against agreed project objectives, to identify key success factors or constraints, to provide practical suggestions to AGE on embedding results, and to inform future priorities for gender capacity strengthening. A special attention was paid to assess AGE's institutional capacity and provide examples to sustain the argumentation.

AGE and the project. AGE was established in 2005 and is based on the Law of Gender Equality. The executive agency is based under the Office of the Prime Minister with responsibility for promoting equal participation of men and women in political, economic, social and cultural life. The total Swedish support of SEK 16,130,000 was divided in SEK 4,550,000 allocated for direct budget support and SEK 10,580,000 for technical assistance provided by an international consultant in the form of a fulltime adviser and short-term consultancy inputs. The project start was delayed awaiting the recruitment of the technical adviser, who was in place only by mid-2016. The de facto implementation period was therefore short of one year compared to the overall period from 2015 where the agreement was signed. The technical support terminated as planned by May 2020, whereas the activity period of project was extended on a no-cost basis into 2021 due to underspending in 2020 caused by the COVID-19 slowdown of activities.

Project objectives and focus. The overall objectives of the project were to ensure that gender equality would be prioritized and integrated into national policy and legal frameworks, that partnership and network platforms would contribute to institutional strengthening of gender mechanisms, informed policies and effective coordination of resources, and that gender equality values would be publicly promoted and gender stereotypes addressed. The project addressed two main focus areas, i.e. building internal capacity with AGE, and providing a platform for developing and strengthening innovative gender equality tools among the Kosovo public.

Relevance. The project was relevant to international conventions on gender equality, and also the EU-accession process and the Sustainable Development Goals (especially #5 Gender Equality), the Swedish Reform Cooperation Strategy 2014-

2020, and the national strategic framework and political context. The project supported AGE in growing and fulfilling its mandate on promotion of gender equality through the implementation of the Law on Gender Equality. Beneficiaries from AGE, government institutions, Gender Equality Officers and partners confirmed the relevance of a strong focus on gender equality.

Coherence. Sida's support to AGE enhanced the agency's visibility and legitimacy in relation to government and other donors. AGE's coordinating role grew stronger, albeit still with room for a more pro-active profile in coordinating government and donor led initiatives, as well as CSO initiatives. The study on official development aid provided valid recommendations for strengthening the policy dialogue on gender equality and AGE's pivotal role in this.

Effectiveness. The project successfully resulted in *strengthening AGE's capacity* to take a leading role and strengthen the government gender mechanisms in general. There was, however, still substantial capacity gaps, especially when it came to the roll-out of instruments prepared during the project period. Although the Kosovo government was not yet fully committed to the requirements of the Law on Gender Equality, a situation reinforced by the patriarchal culture in the country and predominance of men in decision-making, the increased internal capacity and external visibility of the agency resulted in a higher degree of gender awareness. Gender was no longer seen as a "women's issue", but increasingly as a cross-cutting responsibility relevant to all institutions. When the project started there were no *instruments for gender mainstreaming*, and major efforts were invested in producing these instruments (manuals and guidelines). They filled a vacuum and became reference instruments for holding government institutions to account on gender mainstreaming. The project achieved the expected results (outputs) in terms of implementing the planned activities plus a number of additional tasks commissioned to AGE during the implementation.

Efficiency. The financial monitoring based on annual audit report from OPM/AGE and external audits provided a systematic paper trail on budget execution. Also, management letters and corresponding management responses from AGE documented a systematic follow-up of recommendations from one year to the next. The documentation of the Embassy's monitoring activity was uneven and presented gaps in monitoring and securing documentation on key decisions.

Challenges. In spite of major challenges related to frequent change of government, lack of tradition for inter-institutional collaboration among government institutions, delayed procurement processes and general work overload, the project successfully navigated in the political and administrative context and managed to achieve its objectives against these odds.

Impact. Changes and indications of impact were fragile, and implementation and roll-out still needed to take place to demonstrate outcomes and indications of impact. This would require a momentum in terms of follow-up activities and resources. Most of the results so far were characterized as "paving the ground" for a roll out of gender equality in Kosovo. In spite of engagement of Gender Equality Officers in ministries and municipalities, the geographical outreach was limited and activities concentrated at central level, leaving lasting impact in terms of gender equality mainstreaming in

public institutions still at an incipient stage and Gender Equality Officers with limited influence on planning and budgets processes and implementation.

Sustainability. In spite of efforts vested in capacity building and institutional recognition, prospects for sustainability remained fragile towards the end of the project. Capacity building efforts resulted in increased gender equality awareness beyond AGE and into government institutions, academia, civil society and media, but there was little, if any, evidence that this would continue without a substantial future input. For AGE to maintain momentum and grow further, human and financial resources would be a must. Continued gender equality implementation with AGE as the driving force would require government priority and a guaranteed long-term budget.

Mains lessons learned. The evaluation drew lessons learned related to the importance of establishing partnerships to secure future sustainability; the need for enhancing public visibility through multiple channels on a continuous basis for rural reach-out; the need for a systematic approach to capacity building and the value of learning-by doing as a supplementary capacity-building method; the risk of technical assistance becoming a gap-filler and the need for structured hand-over plans; the inbuilt risk of delays when adhering to government procurement procedures; and the need for allowing sufficient time for change to take roots in a volatile political environment.

Recommendations to OPM

1. Take lead in holding all government institutions accountable for the implementation of legal and strategic gender equality priorities. Such action should include explicit support to AGE in fulfilling its mandate as the institution responsible for supervising the implementation.
2. Guarantee a gradual increase of AGE's annual budget to maintain momentum and possible increase of activity level through government allocations.

Recommendations to AGE

1. Address capacity building systematically and based on individual and institutional needs assessment with set targets to ensure compliance with the institution's mandate.
2. Strengthen the internal *technical* gender equality capacity to take independent initiatives and seek new ways for enhancing gender equality mainstreaming.
3. Address individual training needs during annual staff development talks, and establish individual plans for upgrading and possible increase of responsibility.
4. Assess the institutional capacity and de facto degree of delegation of responsibility on an annual basis as a framework for the individual staff assessments.
5. Establish closer, more frequent and more proactive contact with the Gender Equality Officers, especially in the municipalities.
6. Break down the gender equality mainstreaming instruments and manuals into reader-friendly short versions to facilitate the dissemination of gender relevant legislation to untrained or non-academic readers in lower-level government administration, civil society actors and private sector.

7. Focus on wider outreach to rural areas in collaboration with civil society organizations to make information on the Law on Gender Equality accessible to a broader population and counterbalance the lack of knowledge and awareness and the increasing mistrust to government.
8. Explore the possibilities for establishing sector specific partnerships in future as a safeguard for institutional sustainability and an effective vehicle for roll-out and replication of gender equality initiatives.
9. Prioritize a continuation and upscaling of communication through videos, TV-spots and social media and consider the identification of media gender ambassadors.
10. Prioritize the roll-out and implementation of already existing gender equality instruments e.g. KPGE, GEIA manual, GRB concept document, and the work on preventing gender stereotypes in educational material.

Recommendations to Sida

11. Consider a gradual phase over to Kosovo government budget to enhance the perspectives of institutional and financial sustainability at project end and include - along with other donors - the need for increased government budget to AGE in the policy dialogue with the Kosovo government.
12. Use the support to AGE as a leverage for promoting gender equality mainstreaming in other sectors benefitting from Swedish support.
13. Prioritize consolidation in a possible second phase, i.e. the roll-out of instruments already produced and a decentralized focus.
14. Ensure that technical assistance is targeted and provided periodically, not as a permanent presence to allow AGE to “take the driver’s seat” by using the technical assistance primarily for periodic sparring and facilitation of next steps, and short-term input for specific technical issues, trainings etc.
15. Follow up on agreed initiatives, e.g. the establishment and operationalization of a project Supervision Committee with participation of external objective actors such as CSOs and other donors, and ensure a systematic paper trail is kept to document decisions during implementation.

1 Introduction

The final evaluation of the Swedish support to Agency for Gender Equality (AGE) in Kosovo was commissioned by the Embassy of Sweden in Kosovo. It took place from November 2020 to January 2021, i.e. towards the end of the project agreement activity period planned to terminate by 31 December 2020. A no-cost extension into 2021 was negotiated while the final evaluation took place.

The final evaluation is based on document review and interviews with approx. 30 key stakeholders from AGE, Kosovo government and municipal partners, civil society organizations (CSO), academia, donor agencies and the Embassy of Sweden in Pristina. The present report presents the findings, lessons learned and recommendations. A draft version of the report was discussed with the Embassy and AGE and comments incorporated in the final version.

This chapter provides information on the evaluation objectives, evaluation object and scope, evaluation criteria and questions, approach and methods and the structure of the report.

1.1 EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The **purpose of the evaluation** is stated in the terms of reference (ToR) as follows:

“.....to evaluate achieved results against set objectives and to provide the donor with recommendations based on lessons learned for future cooperation. The evaluation shall also analyse the lessons learned, the challenges faced, weakness and strengths of the project and best practices obtained during the implementation of the Swedish support to AGE. The emphasis of the evaluation is on understanding what has worked well, what has not worked well and the underlying reasons that [might have] affected performance. The Evaluation also needs to assess the sustainability of the interventions and changes that have been introduced.”¹

In short, the **specific objectives of the evaluation** were to:

1. Evaluate achieved results against agreed project objectives
2. Identify key success factors or constraints
3. Provide practical suggestions to AGE on embedding results
4. Inform future priorities for gender capacity strengthening

During the inception phase, the Embassy of Sweden stressed the need for a specific focus on assessing the institutional capacity of AGE, as well as provision of examples to sustain the argumentation.

¹Annex 1: Terms of Reference, p. 3.

The **scope of the evaluation** comprised the period from 2015 to 2020 and included AGE, relevant government institutions, partner institutions and organizations, as well as selected municipal mainly the institution of AGE as assessed by external partners and users of its gender equality officers (GEO).

1.2 EVALUATION CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS

The evaluation explored the evaluation questions listed in the ToR and structured according to the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. Each of these criteria included a number of evaluation questions and respective indicators, which guided the data collection and analysis. The evaluation questions were discussed and revisions agreed upon during the inception phase.

The majority of the revisions were minor and focussed on detailing the indicators. It was agreed that comparing efficiency level with *similar processes in other countries* (evaluation question # 4) would not be possible, and also that it would still be too early to undertake *impact assessment* (evaluation question #5). Even though substantial outcome harvesting would be difficult after only four years of implementation, indications of outcome could be identified.

The evaluation questions focussed on the following main issues:

1. **Relevance** of the project to beneficiaries and to the Kosovo gender policies and strategies
2. **Coherence** in terms of compatibility and duplication in relation to AGE's overall gender policy objectives
3. **Effectiveness** in terms of achieving planned objectives
4. **Efficiency** in terms of timely and economic delivery of results
5. **Impact** in terms of indications of long-term effects
6. **Sustainability** aimed at lasting change and the probability of continuation

The revised evaluation matrix is attached in Annex 2.

1.3 APPROACH AND METHODS²

The evaluation approach was backward and forward-looking with a distinct **utilization and learning focus**. Active engagement of AGE management staff as well as Embassy staff was stimulated by on-going discussions and served to explore the evaluation questions, test information from document review and validate preliminary findings. However, as all interviews and meetings were virtual, there were certain limitations to the extent of participatory and engaging facilitation of discussions.

² The detailed presentation of intended approach and methods from the Inception Note (December 2020) is included in *Annex 3: Approach and methods*.

The following **data collection methods and tools** were applied:

- **Document review** of documentation provided by the Embassy, AGE and other informants. The Evaluation Team received a substantial volume of documents, including project progress reports, agreements, TV spots etc.
- **Stakeholder mapping** served to get an overview of key informants and was based on consultation with the Embassy and AGE for identification of stakeholders. Key stakeholders included the following categories: informants from the Embassy, Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and the Ombudsperson institution, AGE staff, technical assistance staff, Gender Equality Officers (GEO) from line ministries and municipalities, selected donor agencies, partners from networking platforms, academia and civil society organizations (CSO), as well as selected participants in training sessions undertaken by AGE.
- **Interview checklists** were tailored for the following categories of informants: AGE staff, GEOs from ministries and municipalities, government institutions, partners and third parties, i.e. donors and CSOs.
- **Interviews** were all conducted virtually by means of different platforms, depending on the accessibility of the individual informant. All interviews were individual, except for the focus group discussion held with AGE staff and meetings with the Embassy.
- **Tools for data analysis** included the evaluation matrix; a brief context analysis; cross-reading of progress reports (content analysis); application of Most Significant Changes to establish key benchmarks for institutional capacity and networks and outreach; SWOT analysis as a simple institutional capacity assessment tool; and triangulation of data from different sources to test validity of information and guarantee cross-checking of information. Measurement of achievements was made through analysis of results framework and theory of change (TOC) held against progress reports.

Limitations and constraints. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the evaluation was conducted entirely as a virtual exercise, as physical meetings and in-country data collection were not possible due to international and domestic travel restrictions and limitations on face-to-face meetings. A plethora of virtual platforms (Viber, Google Meet, Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp, mobile phone calls) were used, depending on the accessibility of the individual informant. Although the interviews went well and provided the required information, the lack of opportunity to informally exchange ideas and opinions before and after meetings, during coffee breaks and transport time turned the evaluation into a one-dimensional exercise. This lack of opportunity to triangulate findings against observations represented a methodological weakness in the analysis of findings, which were alone triangulated against documents and information from interviews. In addition, a number of the proposed informants were unavailable as they suffered from COVID-19, which also affected one of the team members during the latter part of the evaluation. Language barriers were solved by dividing the interviews and interpretation within the team. Initial delays in making available information from AGE on training participants were solved by intervention from the Embassy.

1.4 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The evaluation report contains in addition to the present introductory chapter with a brief account of the applied approach and methods, a description of the evaluation object, i.e. a short description of the AGE, the Swedish support to AGE, the TOC and project management set-up (chapter 2). Chapter 3 contains the analysis of the main findings structured according to relevance, coherence, effectiveness and efficiency. Chapter 4 deals with indications of lasting change, i.e. impact and sustainability, as well as challenges and lessons learned. Finally, recommendations to AGE and the Embassy of Sweden are presented in chapter 5. Annexes include the terms of reference for the evaluation; an evaluation matrix with detailed evaluation questions; a description of evaluation approach and methods; a list of documents received; a list of interviewees and work schedule; the SWOT analysis 2020; and a summary of quantitative project achievements.

2 The Swedish support to AGE

2.1 AGENCY FOR GENDER EQUALITY

After the Kosovo Law on Gender Equality (LGE) was passed in 2004, the Agency for Gender Equality (AGE) was initially established as an office in 2005 and in 2006 transformed into an executive agency under the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM). The establishment was supported by prominent female ministers and civil society, as well as donors among which UN Women (then UNIFEM) with funds from Sida.

The AGE is responsible for promoting the equal participation of men and women in political, economic, social and cultural life, which is an important determinant for the democratic functioning of institutions.³ The AGE operates with four divisions, responsible for 1) Legislation, 2) Cooperation and Coordination, 3) Monitoring and Reporting; and 4) Finance and Administration. AGE operates within the premises of the OPM with limited office space, limited online access for staff and a total staff of 17 (13 women and four men).⁴ A network of Gender Equality Officers (GEO) is established in line ministries (23 women and four men) and municipalities (32 women and six men).⁵

AGE reports annually on activity implementation funded by government and donors to the OPM based on internal weekly, monthly and quarterly reporting. This is the responsibility of the Division of Monitoring and Reporting, whereas the compilation of reporting from the ministerial and municipal GEOs is the responsibility of the Division of Cooperation. Project monitoring based on the agreed results framework was handled by the project adviser in coordination with AGE management.

Agency for Gender Equality - mandate

The Agency for Gender Equality within the Office of the Prime Minister, as provided for in Articles 7 and 8 of the Law on Gender Equality, is responsible for the process of implementing and coordinating all the priorities identified in the National Gender Policy Framework, respectively the Kosovo Program for Gender Equality.⁶

In accordance with the LGE the agency is in charge of the promotion, implementation of and monitoring of the LGE that contributes and ensures that Kosovo proposed policies and legal frameworks are gender

³ Evaluation of UN Women's Contribution to Increasing Women's Leadership and Participation in Peace and Security and Humanitarian Response, by Marta Foresti and Adriana Gashi, ODI, September 2013, pp. 158-159.

⁴ [AGE organizational chart](#); and list of AGE staff provided by AGE, December 2020. AGE is short of two staff due to a government employment stop since 2019.

⁵ Lists of Gender Equality Officers - municipalities and ministries, AGE, 2016.

⁶ 2015 Law on Gender Equality Ex-post evaluation of the regulatory impact, AGE, 20xx, p.18.

mainstreamed and guarantee the progress and establishment of gender equality. The AGE also leads the process for the formulation, implementation, monitoring of national and international obligations, namely the Kosovo Program for Gender Equality and Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). It contributes to the reporting process of other international mechanisms that concern gender equality. Within the scope of its mandate, the Agency shall also provide training on gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting for institutions, conduct research and studies pertaining to gender equality issues in Kosovo and take adequate measures for raising awareness on Kosovo gender equality policies and values. Organization, structuring and functioning of the Agency are regulated by sub-legal act proposed by the Agency and approved by the Government. It includes but is not limited to Government of Kosovo Regulation No. 06/2017 on Internal Organisation and Systematisation of Jobs in the Agency for Gender Equality; Government of Kosovo Regulation No.12/2016 on Duties and Responsibilities of relevant officials for Gender Equality in Ministries and Municipalities.⁷

2.2 PROJECT HISTORY AND FINANCING

The Swedish support to AGE during the period of 2015 to 2020 aimed at building capacity to fulfil its gender related requirements enlisted under the EU integration process requirements and the requirements of the Kosovo Law on Gender Equality. In particular, the project undertook capacity building to implement this legislation, support the work of the AGE to mainstream gender in policies and legislation, and to build its research capacities. The project supported AGE in collaborating with a wide range of government and municipal institutions, as well as academia, civil society and media companies.

Prior to the Swedish support, AGE was supported by UN Women (then UNIFEM) on the awareness raising on Resolution 1325 and from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) for reporting to the Committee of the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).⁸ In March 2015, AGE presented a proposal to the Embassy of Sweden (Sida) for support to institutional strengthening of national gender mechanisms.⁹

In June the same year, a **grant agreement** was signed for the period of 1 June 2015 to 31 December 2019 with an overall budget of SEK 16,130,000.¹⁰ The agreement was amended in November 2017¹¹, extending the project activity period to 31 December 2020 and the agreement period to 30 September 2021. The budget remained unchanged and was divided with SEK 4,550,000 allocated for direct budget support to AGE and SEK 10,580,000 for technical assistance (TA). The TA-support ran from mid-2016 to May 2020. The project inception period ran from July to October 2016 – extended from the initially planned two months to four due to “delays

⁷AGE Inception Report, March 2016, p.22. See also <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=14867> and <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=12897> in Albanian.

⁸ Evaluation of UN Women’s Contribution to Increasing Women’s Leadership and Participation in Peace and Security and Humanitarian Response, by Marta Foresti and Adriana Gashi, ODI, September 2013, pp. 158-159 and p. 161.

⁹Institutional strengthening of Gender Mechanisms in Kosovo the AGE, GAO and MGEO, AGE, March 2015.

¹⁰Grant Agreement AGE, Sida, June 2015

¹¹ Decision on Amendment of Agreement, 14.11.2017

in establishing a baseline of contacts and information necessary to properly place the Project in the context of the AGE and overall Kosovo public administration.” These delays were caused inter alia by the summertime period and the fact that five AGE staff members were on maternity leave and no budget for replacements was available.¹²

Although the Embassy disbursed the first instalment immediately after the signing of the grant agreement in June 2015, there were no project activities and no budget execution during the first 13 months, as project implementation awaited recruitment of the international consultant providing the TA support. The inception period therefore only started in July 2016, when the TA tender process was concluded and an international consultancy company was awarded the contract for the entire project period. The TA contract included the deployment of a fulltime team leader and various short term consultancy inputs.

In late 2019, an exit plan was prepared with the support of the TA and presented in January 2020. The exit plan assessed AGE’s institutional capacity and resilience and concluded that it was “premature to consider a total *phase out* or *phase over* of the external input, in other words of donor’s support to AGE’s mandate and implementation of major initiatives initiated during the 2016-2020 project assistance that directly contributed to the implementation of the Law on Gender Equality, European integration process, Kosovo public administration reform, human rights and rule of law”.¹³ Based on this, it was agreed that AGE would prepare a draft project proposal/request for future support to Sida and present by June 2020.¹⁴ Due to underspending in 2020 caused i.a. by the COVID-19 pandemic, budget execution was below expectations, and a no-cost extension into 2021 was signed between the Embassy and AGE in December 2020 based on a request presented by AGE in November 2020.¹⁵

2.3 RESULTS FRAMEWORK AND THEORY OF CHANGE

The initial project proposal from AGE¹⁶ was based on a detailed draft **results framework**, which was revised substantially during the inception phase and then

¹²Project for Institutional strengthening of Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality and Gender Mechanisms Inception Report, NIRAS Indvelop / DADAG 02.11.2016, p. 11 and p.14.

¹³Agency for Gender Equality proposed Exit Plan, NIRASs & CPM, 16.12.2019 / 09.01.2020, p.4, and explorative interview with the NIRAS project manager, November 2020.

¹⁴AGE Notes from the meeting 29 January 2020.

¹⁵Interview with current and former Embassy staff, November 2020. Request from AGE to Embassy of Sweden, 16.11.2020. Second Amendment to Agreement, signed 16 December 2020.

¹⁶Institutional strengthening of Gender Mechanisms in Kosovo the AGE, GAO and MGEO, AGE, 16.03.2015.

maintained with only minor adjustments (mainly rephrasing and adjustment of indicators and targets) during the implementation phase.¹⁷

The project **theory of change** (TOC) was prepared only during the inception phase. It reflected directly the revised project results framework and contained specific outputs (activities) considered within the control sphere of the project; immediate results corresponding to the three project components considered within the indirect influence sphere of the project; and finally the impact results related to each component and the development objective, both partially outside the project's control sphere. While it is recognized that the TOC was based on the thorough context analysis presented in the Inception Report, there was no explicit narrative of the TOC, and except for the reference to the control/influence sphere of the project, it contained no reference to contextual issues, e.g. actors, stakeholders, political and legal contexts, availability of human and financial resources, possible risks etc. It was basically a graphic reflection of the project results framework, where the intervention logic was linear in the sense that if project activities were implemented, they would lead to the expected results and eventually to lasting change in terms of increased capacity of AGE and national gender mechanisms, which again would influence on gender equality in Kosovo at large.

The **overall development objective** of the project was defined in the project TOC: “To strengthen the institutional capacities of AGE and national gender mechanisms to effectively and efficiently fulfil their mandate in mainstreaming the gender mainstreaming agenda in all Kosovo policy frameworks and systems and increasingly network and partner with local and external partners for advancement of the gender equality agenda in the Kosovo society.”¹⁸

The specific **project objectives** (immediate results) were:¹⁹

1. Gender equality objectives are prioritized and integrated into policy and legal framework,
2. Partnership and networking platforms contribute to institutional strengthening of gender mechanisms, informed policies, and effective coordination of resources, and
3. Gender equality values are publicly promoted and gender stereotypes addressed.

These objectives were expected to lead to the following corresponding **impact results**:

1. Kosovo policy and institutional frameworks provide equal access to rights and opportunities for all men and women in Kosovo,
2. Result oriented dialogue and action platforms to expand support, coordinate resources and diversify capacities for the advancement of gender equality, and

¹⁷Cross-reading of results frameworks presented in AGE Project Proposal (2015), Inception report (2016) and annual progress reports (2017, 2018 and 2019).

¹⁸Project for Institutional strengthening of Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality and Gender Mechanisms Inception Report, NIRAS Indevelop / DADAG 02.11.2016, p.38.

¹⁹Ibid. p.6. The immediate results are referred to as “impact results” in the final project report.

3. Gender equality values are embraced by the Kosovo society.

The project had two **main focus areas**:²⁰

1. Building internal capacity through a combined and tailored approach, and
2. Providing a platform for developing and strengthening a partnership and networking and working closely with the AGE to develop innovative tools to enhance awareness of gender equality among the Kosovo public.

Main project stakeholders were defined as AGE, civil servants in line ministries and municipalities, and selected civil society representatives.²¹

2.4 PROJECT MANAGEMENT SET-UP AND AUDITS

The project operated within AGE with a full-time TA adviser and short term national and international consultancy inputs for specific activities, e.g. training and drafting of documents. The TA referred to the project director based in Sweden. A number of monitoring visits were carried out by the international consultant, but the planned final project visit in 2020 was not possible due to the COVID-19 situation.

At the Embassy of Sweden in Kosovo, the project was managed by a program officer in coordination with the Head of Cooperation. The management included discussion of and feedback to annual reports, as well as regular contact with AGE. Financial monitoring was the responsibility of the Sida Financial Controller and based on external audits of the Swedish funds, as well as annual audit statements from the OPM. The latter, however did not contain specific details for AGE, for which reason it was difficult to follow which recommendations and findings were addressed to AGE.²² Cross-reading of audit reports and management letters revealed a satisfactory follow-up of recommendations, including the establishment of procedures for risk management and a Supervision Committee in January 2018.²³

The full-time TA was the same throughout the project period, whereas the person holding the project director position with the international consultant was changed several times. At the Embassy, the continuity was interrupted in 2018-19 due to secondment and sick leave of key staff, and was only reestablished in early 2020 towards the very end of the project. The former Embassy project officer was director at AGE during the period of 2005-07 for which reason the appraisal of the AGE project proposal in 2015 was handled by another embassy staff to avoid any potential conflict of interest.

²⁰ibid., p.7.

²¹ibid., p.9.

²² Statement on Audit Report, Sida, 20.04.2017, p.1.

²³ Independent Auditor's Report and financial report for the Project "Support to Agency for Gender Equality in Kosovo", for the period 1st January 2017 to 31st December 2017 Financed by Embassy of Sweden in Pristina, AGE, February 2018; Audit report 2018, Audit & Consulting Associates March 2019, p.9; and Decision on Supervision Committee, AGE, 26.01.2018. For a discussion of the Supervision Committee, see section 3.4.1 below.

3 Main evaluation findings

The analysis of data collected from document review and interviews responded to the evaluation questions as stated in the Terms of Reference. The evaluation questions were clustered according to the six OECD/DAC evaluation criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability, which provided the structure for the present chapter.

For each of the evaluation criteria, detailed evaluation questions guided the data collection with the aim of providing evidence for the indicators defined for each cluster.²⁴ Interviews represented a major source of information, which was triangulated against document sources. Anonymized quotes and illustrative cases were used to sustain the analysis of findings.

3.1 RELEVANCE - IS THE INTERVENTION DOING THE RIGHT THING?

In this chapter, the relevance in relation to the policy and strategy framework, the national context, and the perception of beneficiaries is discussed. Beneficiaries are defined as AGE staff (internal) and the stakeholders with whom AGE interacted, i.e. the government institutions and network partners (external). The assessment of relevance is measured through the *Kosovo government institutions' satisfaction with AGE's performance*, as well as *network partners' and training participants' application of gender equality knowledge*.

3.1.1 Strategic and policy relevance

Kosovo is characterized by a patriarchal tradition in which women have limited access to public voice and influence. Gender equality is important to address in all sectors e.g. education and health, as well as the labour market, where awareness on gender equality as well as structural conditions are needed for women to be an active part of public life and production. Gender equality is likewise important in the legislative framework on marriage age, inheritance, property rights etc. However, in spite of rather advanced legislation related to gender equality, main challenges remain with implementation.

The support to AGE was established under the Swedish Reform Cooperation Strategy for Eastern Europe, Turkey and Western Balkan 2014-2020, i.e. results area 2 *Strengthened democracy, greater respect for human rights and more fully developed state under the rule of law*, under which women and men are expected to a

²⁴See Annex 2: Evaluation matrix.

greater extent to obtain the same power to shape society and their own lives.²⁵ In addition to the regional strategy, also the Swedish feminist foreign policy, the SDGs (especially SDG #5) and Sida's general focus on gender rights²⁶ as part of the overall commitment to a Human Rights Based Approach, were part of the strategic framework for the project.²⁷ The project was part of the Swedish support to the public sector reform in Kosovo with emphasis on gender equality and good governance/participatory democracy (Sida policy markers) aimed at sustaining the EU accession process.

The project was implemented during the period when Kosovo was intensively working on fulfilling its requirements from the Visa Liberalisation Roadmap with Kosovo, signed between the EU and the Kosovo government in 2012 for visa free travel regime for its citizens.²⁸ In total, there were 95 requirements to be met by the Kosovo government including the adoption and implementation of the Kosovo Law on Gender Equality in 2015. Further, in October 2015 Kosovo also signed the first contractual agreement with the EU, known as the Stabilisation and Association Agreement and adopted its first Action Plan on the Implementation of the agreement. The Action Plan enlisted a set of gender related requirements on human rights, good governance and public administration reform.²⁹

Kosovo political environment

The 2016-2020 period was characterized by political turbulence in the form of frequent elections and changes in government. There were two rounds of general elections - in 2017 after a no-confidence vote for the government, and in October 2019 after the resignation of the prime minister in June 2019. The winner of the October 2019 elections was voted out of power in March 2020 after less than three months in power. A new prime minister was elected in June 2020, but in December the same year, the Constitutional Court ruled the vote invalid, as one Member of Parliament at the time of the vote was convicted of fraud. The June 2020 voting of the government was therefore considered null, as there were no longer the necessary majority of votes to form a government.³⁰ As a result, new elections were called for 14 February 2021, while the government continued as a caretaker government. Consequently, the project will have been implemented under four different governments. The volatile political situation continues to create a politically unstable environment. Most recently, also Kosovo's president resigned to face charges for war crime and crimes against humanity at the UN special court in the Hague.³¹

²⁵Results strategy for Sweden's reform cooperation with Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and Turkey, 2014-2020, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Sweden.

²⁶<https://www.sida.se/English/how-we-work/our-fields-of-work/gender-equality/>

²⁷https://www.sida.se/globalassets/documents/_portfolio_gender_equality_2019_.pdf

²⁸See at <https://www.schengenvisainfo.com/news/timeline-eu-visa-liberalization-with-kosovo/#:~:text=Kosovo%20accepted%20the%20roadmap%20for,Kosovo%20citizens%20to%20be%20removed>

²⁹See <http://mei-ks.net/en/kosovo/kosovo-signs-the-saa-on-27-october#:~:text=Minister%20of%20European%20Integration%20Mr,the%20Stabilization%20and%20Association%20Agreement>

³⁰https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2021_Kosovan_parliamentary_election#cite_note-1

³¹<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/05/hashim-thaci-kosovos-president-resigns-to-face-war-crimes-charges-in-the-hague>

3.1.2 Beneficiaries' perception of the project

Interviews with government institutions confirmed that AGE is acknowledged for its perseverance and cooperation in the areas of gender analysis and gender responsive budgeting (GRB), as well as extensive efforts to raise awareness and disseminate information and knowledge about gender equality. Government and municipal GEOs also stressed their general satisfaction with the role and performance of AGE, as did donor agencies and CSOs. However, critical voices mentioned that AGE could take a more active role in reaching out to e.g. civil society and private sector, and ensuring better geographical coverage.

The number of instruments produced by the project in the form of policy papers, manuals, and training courses in gender equality and gender budget analysis during the project³² was appreciated and applied by government respondents. In spite of the limitation in data collection among training participants, the interviews left the impression that the documents produced were appreciated and considered highly relevant by providing a solid background to gender equality mainstreaming. The full application is, however, yet to be seen, as many of these tools were only finalized towards the end of the project period.

Several ministry officials interviewed during the evaluation expressed their satisfaction with the training received: “The information prepared by AGE is distributed by us as well as the manuals for gender budgeting and gender impact assessment. The training organized by AGE was one of the best trainings in gender equality, since 2007, as it was a direct training in the identification of where gender aspects should be included - in general, the approach was clear in all trainings.” And “the training provided the basic knowledge for principles of gender budgeting, and although we do not do gender budgeting, we review the budget annex from a gender analysis perspective.”

The project was relevant to international conventions on gender equality, including the EU-accession process and the Sustainable Development Goals (especially #5 Gender Equality), the Swedish Reform Cooperation Strategy 2014-2020, and the national strategic framework and political context. Within this context, the project supported AGE in growing and fulfilling its mandate on promotion of gender equality. Beneficiaries from AGE, government institutions, GEOs and partners confirmed the relevance of a strong focus on gender equality.

3.2 COHERENCE - HOW WELL DID THE PROJECT FIT?

This section presents the findings on the *project's complementarity with other donor initiatives* to support AGE, as well as AGE's role in coordinating support to gender equality initiatives.

³² See section 3.3.2 below for a discussion of these instruments.

3.2.1 Other donors supporting gender equality

The Swedish funding to AGE was unique in the sense that no other donor provided core budget support and technical assistance to AGE. AGE recognized that the core funding from Sida boosted the agency's visibility in relation to other donors, and resulted in an increased interest to support specific complementary interventions. According to the final report from the international consultant³³, AGE also received technical assistance from European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and the IMF (trainings in Vienna) and participation in their network activities were covered by EIGE and the IMF respectively. Also GIZ, UNFPA, UNWOMEN, JICA and the UK Foreign Office covered a variety of activities at AGE's request.

The evaluation team interviewed a number of donor agencies,³⁴ who supported AGE activities or worked in similar fields, e.g. gender responsive budgeting (GRB) mainly at municipal level (GIZ and Helvetas); a study tour to Berlin on municipal gender budgeting (GIZ), and dissemination of information on early marriages³⁵ among the Roma population, including advocacy through radio spots for changing the law on marriage minimum age (UNFPA). The UN Women stressed that AGE was their primary focal institution with whom they interacted almost on a daily basis.

AGE maintained strong communication with various international partners and women's organizations, which was a safeguard in a politically volatile environment. Albeit strategically positioned within the OPM, there were government interests to move AGE out of the OPM in late 2019 as part of the public sector reform. This was avoided, allegedly due to the intervention from various donors and gender actors, inter alia Sida, UN WOMEN and civil society in favour of maintaining AGE in the strategically strong position within the OPM, which allows AGE to operate with a certain independence in relation to ministries, municipalities and other government institutions.

3.2.2 Coordination of donor funding

There are several donors working on gender in Kosovo, among which Sida and GIZ are the most prominent. The project supported AGE to take the initiative in donor coordination on gender equality. The close interaction with donors was used by AGE in their policy dialogue with government where the donor contact has leveraged the gender equality agenda in relation to government initiatives on policies and legislations.

The exchange of information on and coordination of gender initiatives was primarily among government, multilateral donors and CSOs, and included regular meetings, and coordination of specific initiatives on e.g. prevention of domestic and

³³Final Project Report, Institutional Strengthening of the Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality, NIRAS, 27 May 2020, pp. 36-37.

³⁴ A planned interview with the EUD in January 2021 was not possible due to COVID-19.

³⁵The official marriage age is 18, but with permission from parents, a medical doctor or a psychologist it is possible to get a dispensation and marry at 16 years of age. An early marriage application has never refused by any of the authorities, but it may have severe health implications for the girls.

gender based violence, and coordination of pandemic initiatives. CSOs interviewed mentioned the need for strengthening the coordination of gender equality initiatives implemented by CSOs and other agencies. An example of lack of such coordination was given, in which 4-5 organizations had worked uncoordinated on promotion of parental leave. This caused unnecessary confusion with the line ministry, which could have been avoided, had a proper coordination taken place.

Some interviewees raised the question whether AGE could be more proactively engaged in identifying where new initiatives could fit rather than acting responsively to other entities' initiatives, e.g. on donor projects. AGE itself recognized the problems related to overlapping initiatives, but also acknowledged that pro-active coordination would require human resources and increased analytical capacity.

A key project result in relation to donor coordination was the analysis of *Official Development Aid for Gender Equality to Kosovo*³⁶, which was finalized in March 2020. The report presented a thorough analysis of the 1,870 projects implemented in the period of 2015-18 of which only 7% of the budget volume was targeted gender equality. It presented specific recommendations to the Kosovo government on the importance of gender data and implementation of the Kosovo Program for Gender Equality (KPGE) 2020-2024³⁷; to donor agencies on the importance of focussing on gender equality in policy dialogue with government and to support AGE; and to AGE on how to play a stronger role in the policy dialogue between government and donors.³⁸ This study was published only in March 2020, and although presented in various high-level meetings, the follow-up of recommendations was not yet tangible at the time of the evaluation. There is, however no doubt about the relevance of the recommendations and the fact that the study provided well-founded indications on how to improve policy dialogue and joint focus on gender equality during the coming period of the KPGE implementation.

Sida's support to AGE enhanced the agency's visibility and legitimacy in relation to government and other donors. AGE's coordinating role grew stronger, albeit still with room for a more pro-active profile in coordinating government and donor led initiatives, as well as CSO initiatives. The study on official development aid provided valid recommendations for strengthening the policy dialogue on gender equality and AGE's pivotal role in this.

3.3 EFFECTIVENESS - DID THE PROJECT ACHIEVE ITS OBJECTIVES?

Project implementation was well-documented throughout the four years implementation. AGE provided annual progress reports submitted to the Swedish

³⁶Official Development Aid for Gender Equality. The State of Alignment with Kosovo Government Priorities 2015-2018, AGE, March 2018.

³⁷ Kosovo Programme for Gender Equality 2020,-2024, AGE, June 2020.

³⁸Ibid. pp.29-32.

Embassy and also the technical adviser prepared detailed quarterly and annual project reports. The AGE reports covered the broader operations of the agency, whereas the project reports from the TA had a specific focus on the project accomplishments. A comprehensive final project report was provided by the international consultant in May 2020, presenting a detailed record and analysis of project implementation and achievements.

This section is based on a careful analysis of the project results framework, the TOC and progress reports from AGE as well as from the international consultant. It assesses the achievements of the project in terms of accomplishment of agreed plans and results related to the **two main focus areas** of the project:

1. Building *internal capacity* through a combined and tailored approach, and
2. Providing a platform for developing and strengthening a partnership and networking and working closely with the AGE to *develop innovative tools to enhance awareness of gender equality* among the Kosovo public.

On request from the Embassy of Sweden, the evaluation paid major attention to the results of the project's efforts to build AGE's internal capacity. Evaluation indicators for this were defined as *guarantee and availability for resources (budget and staff) in 2021*, and the *level of capacity of the AGE staff*.

3.3.1 Building AGE's capacity

In terms of **human resources**, the 17 staff members (13 women, 4 men) had relevant university degrees and a stable employment record. Within the staff group there were 13 with a diploma and four with a master degree; among these five had a degree in law, five in public administration, management or economy, three in political science and sociology and four in languages, literature or pharmacy; and ten were employed before 2010, four between 2010 and 2015 and only three after 2015. The high degree of staff retention safeguarded the institutional memory of AGE, while also new staff members were welcomed as they brought new perspectives.

During the first years of the project - and with a predominantly female staff group - there were no funds for maternity leave substitution, which caused break of momentum in terms of available staff for different activities and processes. This was apparently solved with increased government allocations for salaries. What was still unsolved was the government employment stop enforced since 2019 which prohibited the employment of the remaining staff (one of which an information officer) to fulfil the standard of 21 staff members, for which AGE was entitled. Procurement of government staff was a long process; AGE gave an example of the substitution for a retired staff member, which took one and a half years, and also a number of management positions being "acting" for extended periods as the administrative procedures were not finalized.

In the **organizational set-up** with four divisions, the delegation of responsibility to heads of division was recognized and mentioned as a factor contributing to agile implementation and an inspiring working environment. Delegation of responsibility is a sound management principle, which is necessary in an organization with a diverse portfolio as AGE's. However, the evaluation team had limited opportunity to explore the extent to which the delegation goes beyond the heads of division. Several sources

recognized the prominent role of the current chief executive officer (CEO), who demonstrated expertise, commitment and integrity to stand up for the principles of gender equality, even in difficult situations. The CEO, who worked with AGE since 2005, i.a. in the capacity of Head of Monitoring and Reporting, was contracted in 2017 after an open recruitment procedure based on professional gender competences, opposed to the predecessors, who were politically appointed. The CEO's contract was renewed in April 2020.

Limited office space during the project period was mentioned by both AGE staff and partners as a constraint to a proper working environment. During the current COVID-19 lock-down the limited online access for virtual meetings at the AGE office was also a limitation, as access was only possible from the CEO's office.

SWOT analysis

The initial project proposal from AGE (2015) contained an analysis of AGE's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). At that time, main *strengths* were listed as the institutional and legislative framework, the staff and the network of GEOs, whereas *weaknesses* related to limited recognition of the importance of gender equality, limited law enforcement, weak position of GEOs and lack of international exposure for AGE staff, as well as limited budgets. The *opportunities* included a general reach-out to key stakeholders and decision-makers in government, and donor coordination, whereas *threats* were mainly created by the volatile political environment, the patriarchal culture, the gender stereotypes reflected in the media, and lack of communication with media on AGE's role and work. Although there was no direct follow-up or revision of the initial analysis, the SWOT served to provide input in the later design of capacity building activities during implementation; inter alia to identify a number of key capacity development activities, i.e. training of focal points, development of a new work plan for gender equality, study tours, donor meetings and support, media promotion, gender budgeting and women's economic empowerment training etc.³⁹

During the evaluation, the 2015 SWOT-analysis was revisited and a new set of SWOTs was discussed with and confirmed by AGE in a workshop.⁴⁰ The updated SWOT analysis reflected the main evaluation findings on the capacity of AGE.

The **list of strengths** has grown since 2015 and reflected the increased capacity in a number of key areas: AGE has developed into an institution with increased authority, legitimacy and strong voice. Informants often referred to this as "institutional self-confidence". The recognition by government was manifest in increased budgets which were however still insignificant to cover the expected level of activities. AGE had a broad outreach through the GEOs to government institutions and municipalities, and to international organizations and donor agencies, civil society, academia and the media. On the internal lines, administrative procedures for

³⁹ p.45

⁴⁰ See Annex 6: SWOT analysis.

human resource and financial management were in place; the stable group of staff had well-defined job descriptions and work plans as required by the Law on Gender Equality to draft the regulation on internal organization and systematization of jobs; there was an increased capacity and experience on gender responsive budgeting and capacity to disseminate information through a variety of channels was considered as strengths; and activities were increasingly based on research and evidence.

Weaknesses identified mainly related to lack of sufficient human and financial resources to respond to the expectations and demand for inputs to policy and legislative revisions, as well as lack of internal analytical and research capacity in key gender areas. Cumbersome government procurement procedures, limited office space and insufficient capacity to maintain the GEO network, were also identified as weaknesses. **Opportunities** were mainly related to the roll-out of some of the key outputs from the project, i.e. the KPGE, the GRB and the implementation of the GEIA, as well as the different strategies and guidelines produced, e.g. in collaboration with the Faculty of Economics, and the research on gender stereotypes in education with corresponding recommendations. Finally, **threats** were mainly external and related to the political environment, limited government budget, too many ad hoc activities being imposed on the agency, and the current COVID-19 restrictions.

Approach to enhance institutional capacity and the role of Technical Assistance

The important role of the **long-term adviser** was recognized by all people spoken to during the data collection for the evaluation. The fact that the adviser combined a high level of professional gender expertise with strong personal dedication impacted positively on the level of performance and substantial results (see section 3.3.2 below). The adviser was aware of the delicate balance between on the one hand coaching and training for capacity building, and on the other hand doing, and stated to have “kept an extremely low profile”.⁴¹

However, in a situation of high expectations for AGE to deliver on government requests and limited human resources, the adviser was instrumental in drafting documents, arranging study tours, managing local consultants etc. For the balance to tip towards lasting capacity, a number of structural features must be in place, e.g. individual training plans and capacity goals, plans for handover of responsibilities, and sufficient staff to allow the adviser to step back. Although some handover gradually took place and capacity e.g. to prepare and undertake external and public presentations happened, the evaluation found that systematic structures for handover were not sufficiently established. As a consequence of lack of staff - often worsened by temporary leaves - the adviser became directly engaged in implementation and functioned as an additional, highly qualified reinforcement to AGE’s own staff.

AGE staff also benefitted from training and other services, e.g. drafting of documents, production of information material etc. provided by **short-term consultants**. AGE reported difficulties in recruitment of competent local gender

⁴¹Interview with former technical adviser, December 2020.

consultants, a challenge reinforced by the cumbersome government procurement procedures, which in many cases delayed the recruitment for up to three months. Delays in recruitment of international short-term consultants were reportedly due to frequent change of project management staff with the international consultant.

Internal capacity achieved

Capacity building of AGE staff, GEOs and government officials was primarily undertaken in the form of coaching and learning-by-doing accompanied by the long-term adviser. As a result, the **technical capacity of AGE staff** improved as a result of project activities. All staff benefited from gender awareness training during the project - on-the-job as well as specific trainings in gender responsive budgeting and gender analysis, and preparation of manuals. AGE staff referred to the coaching received and on-the-job training from the long-term adviser, which included introduction to gender equality training, gender analysis, gender responsive budgeting and presentation skills. The process of drafting the KPGE, which included mobilization participation and data collection, was referred to as a comprehensive learning experience.

A number of study tours were organized and served the purpose of international exposure and inspiration, as well as establishment of institutional partnerships. The selection of participants for study tours was questioned by some informants who felt that AGE staff was prioritized at the expense of e.g. GEOs. The value of the study tours was questioned, arguing that funds would have been better spent on concrete activities on the ground. It was difficult for the evaluation to assess the concrete capacity outcome of the study tours, but the impression remained that any future support ought to consider the cost-benefit of such activities.

The hands-on and close interaction approach was valued by AGE staff, while it was also recognized that more structured and formal capacity building may be required in future to meet professional demands on e.g. legislation, research capacity, GBV prevention and GRB techniques.

Preparation of the manual on preventing gender stereotypes in education. It is a step-wise process, where the training went level by level. For the staff from Ministry of Education, this was the first time they had this obligation to follow-up on gender issues. The ministry had approached AGE for advice on implementation, especially for drafting curriculum and text books, but also other documents, e.g. draft policies and law texts. The manual was a pilot test - it was difficult and took time, and it was only finalized by mid-2019 after a long process of discussions, working groups and comments – a process which in itself was an important training.⁴²

In terms of AGE's **internal administrative capacity** and capacity to implement plans, the situation changed considerably since 2015, where AGE's capacity allowed implementing only 50% of its budget. In 2019, the budget - which increased by 30%

⁴²From interview with Division of Legislation, December 2021.

since 2015⁴³ - was fully implemented, in addition to the implementation of the Sida activity budget. The Sida direct budget support made it possible to increase the activity level, but it remained a challenge that AGE was underfunded from government, in spite of a relatively high level of performance. In case of any future funding, a gradual transition to government funding should be considered.

In this context it was important to look at the recent boost in implementation funds allocated to AGE under the COVID-19 crisis. AGE received EUR 2 million⁴⁴ based on the Planning and Implementation Programme for Economic Recovery Measure to projects improving the position of women in society and particularly in economy, to support female entrepreneurs, women in businesses and women NGOs as well as kindergartens. Of this, AGE supported in November 2020 initiatives of private kindergartens at the amount of EUR 1 million. In 2021, EUR 1 million will be applied for NGOs working with women victims of violence, women businesses, etc. It is worth noting is that the AGE's annual implementation budget was normally approx. EUR 70.000, which meant that the EUR 2 million stretched AGE's administrative and implementation capacity to the maximum, especially with no funds allocated for administration and management. Not only did the allocation put pressure on AGE's administrative capacity, but critical voices also pointed to the fact that these additional funds diverted AGE's human resources and capacity from policy making and lobby, advocacy and dissemination of information towards implementation of service delivery in a typically female sphere.

This said, AGE demonstrated capacity to administer and handle the funds, even under pressure. The additional funds were appreciated and seen as recognition of their capacity and role as a central player in gender equality efforts. The allocation was a signal from Ministry of Finance to all other government institutions that AGE has legitimacy and authority.

Outreach capacity

Within the short timeframe of the project, there were many changes in government and administrative and institutional set-up. In spite of this turbulence, AGE has gained a prominent role and a strong position within the OPM, and has become an institution which politicians and government officials listen to, albeit the impact of their voice was still not consolidated. Compared to previously, interviewees acknowledged the increasing, yet relative, institutional independence from OPM and increased capacity in terms of knowledge and experience. This provided a unique position to increasingly influence legislation and promote law enforcement of gender

⁴³ The total budget for operation is approx. EUR 240,000 (salaries, subsidies etc.) and EUR 69,000 for operations (goods and services). Based on information from the AGE Division of Administration, Budget and Finances, December 2020.

⁴⁴ See AGE's website in Albanian: [https://abqi.rks-gov.net/assets/cms/uploads/files/ABGJ%20Programi%20p%C3%ABr%20rim%C3%ABkemie%20Eko%20nomike%20Masa%2010%2C%20Faza%20II%2C%20Masa%204%20te%20mirtuar%20nqa%20Qeveria%20e%20Republik%C3%ABs%20s%C3%AB%20Kosov%C3%ABs\(1\).pdf](https://abqi.rks-gov.net/assets/cms/uploads/files/ABGJ%20Programi%20p%C3%ABr%20rim%C3%ABkemie%20Eko%20nomike%20Masa%2010%2C%20Faza%20II%2C%20Masa%204%20te%20mirtuar%20nqa%20Qeveria%20e%20Republik%C3%ABs%20s%C3%AB%20Kosov%C3%ABs(1).pdf)

relevant legislation, e.g. on early marriages, women's property rights, prevention of gender-based and domestic violence; and sexual violence during the war.

The enhanced visibility and credibility was a result of the project support, and AGE has developed into a dedicated agency supporting the formulation and revision of policies with gender equality perspectives aligned to the legislative framework. However, this boost in capacity was to a large extent carried by the project and there was still a need to consolidate and further develop the technical capacity and resources of AGE to be able to sustain the momentum.

The increased capacity and recognition provided strength to AGE, but being surrounded by less competent government institutions weakened its capacity to influence and move gender equality agendas. An example provided was the Kosovo Institute for Public Administration responsible for training of civil servants, which in principle was supposed to be an important partner in gender training of government staff. But the trainers had only very basic gender knowledge, the institute operated from temporary premises, and there was a lack of updated training material and equipment. Another problem encountered in terms of outreach was the low priority given by government institutions to prioritize gender training within their limited training budgets.

Although the position within the OPM offered legitimacy and clout in AGE's relation to other government institutions, interviews pointed to the barrier this institutional set-up might have in relation to the necessary collaboration and outreach to e.g. **civil society organizations** (CSO) and private sector actors. Civil society in Kosovo has gained strength over the last five years, mainly due to donor support, and there was an incentive to be more open and active, as the freedom of expression and access to government was relatively better in Kosovo than in many other countries in the region. With a civil society gradually getting better organized and working evidence based, there was an opportunity for AGE to increase the work with civil society as an important gender equality change agent. In the area of gender equality, the Kosovo Women Network⁴⁵ with 175 member organizations was of particular importance for AGE's outreach. So far, AGE was recognized for establishing network and partnerships through thematic working groups, e.g. on GBV, which involved also media and academia. Especially the Kosovo Women's Network and the Faculty of Economics stressed the collaboration and coordination with AGE in terms of publishing research studies as an important experience to avoid duplication.

The **GEOs in ministries and municipalities** were an important part of AGEs outreach under the responsibility of the Division of Cooperation. Their roles and responsibilities were clarified after the adoption of the Law on Gender Equality as well as the drafting and adoption of the Government of Kosovo Regulation No.12/2016 on Duties and Responsibilities of relevant officials for Gender Equality in Ministries and Municipalities. However, depending on the specific set-up in the institutions, the GEOs were reported to have limited influence and a tendency to be

⁴⁵ <https://womensnetwork.org/>

left alone within their respective institutions. Municipal GEOs reported difficulties in obtaining specific budget lines for gender equality initiatives, as a code for specific gender activities was not allowed in the system. In principle, they should operate with a mainstreamed gender budget, but making gender explicit in the budget would be easier for the GEOs, whose capacity to bargain a mainstreamed budget was often not sufficiently strong. According to AGE, there were other barriers as well, as GEOs' plans and budgets have to be aligned with relevant policies of their respective institutions. The shortcomings in quality and acceptance of GEOs' plans and budgets indicate a need for further training and support.

Except for support to revise municipal plans to ensure incorporation of gender equality⁴⁶, the contact with AGE was ad hoc and responsive rather than proactive from AGE's side. GEOs interviewed⁴⁷ complained of lack of physical visits from AGE to the municipalities. Contact mainly consisted of provision of promotional material and on specific event. A stronger connection and closer interaction with the GEOs would have required government and municipal funding, but also a deliberate prioritization from AGE's side. The often irregular contact with the GEOs was reinforced during the COVID-19 pandemic, as access to online communication including social media was limited. In terms of geographical outreach, AGE reported particular problems in mobilizing the GEOs in the Northern part of Kosovo, mainly due to cultural restrictions. GEOs reported to their respective institutions and to AGE only on specific events or campaigns.

See also section 3.3.2 below on AGE's communication activities and media outreach.

The project successfully resulted in strengthening AGE's capacity to take a leading role and strengthen the government gender mechanisms in general. There were, however, still substantial capacity gaps, especially when it came to the roll-out of instruments prepared during the project period.

The project successfully resulted in strengthening AGE's capacity to take a leading role and strengthen the government gender mechanisms in general. There was, however, still substantial capacity gaps, especially when it came to the roll-out of instruments prepared during the project period. Although the Kosovo government was not yet fully committed to the requirements of the Law on Gender Equality, reinforced by the patriarchal culture in the country and predominance of men in decision-making, the increased internal capacity and external visibility of the agency resulted in a higher degree of gender awareness and the fact that gender was no longer seen as a "women's issue", but increasingly as a cross-cutting responsibility relevant to all institutions.

⁴⁶This activity was carried out by the Division of Cooperation with support from theta.

⁴⁷ The municipal GEOs interviewed by the evaluation had been involved in the formulation of the KPGE and were as such some of the GEOs with closer contact than those not directly engaged with the KPGE process.

3.3.2 Innovative tools for gender equality

Under the focus area related to development of innovative tools for enhancing gender equality, the project was implemented under three specific results areas with corresponding objectives and expected (impact) results. This was reflected in the project TOC and results framework, and project progress reports were systematically structured according to these.

In this section, the discussion of results follows the structure of the results areas. The analysis focuses mainly on the quality and approach, and less on the quantitative results (outputs), which are documented in details in project progress and final reports. A summary of quantitative project achievements is included in Annex 7.

Results area 1: Gender equality objectives are prioritized and integrated into policy and legal framework

Activities implemented under results area 1 included a variety of activities, i.a. evaluations of the former KPGE and drafting of the new; ex-post evaluation of the implementation of the 2015 Law on Gender Equality, and drafting of a concept document for gender responsive budgeting. A number of key gender equality mainstreaming instruments were produced, and capacity development events (workshops, trainings, seminars, roundtables and study visits) were undertaken with the aim of enhancing gender equality capacity. Approx. 1,500 participants were involved in these activities, which represented the roll-out of the gender equality mainstreaming instruments developed by the project. In addition to these activities, the project also engaged in the review of policy frameworks (concept documents, sector documents, normative acts and national policy planning and reform instruments) and provided recommendations on gender equality mainstreaming.

AGE's capacity to screen, comment and improve various legal documents, policies and strategies increased. As stated by one of the evaluation informants: "Before, when concept documents came from different institutions, they just passed, as we did not have the capacity to do gender screening and suggest improvements, but now we look at everything from a gender perspective."⁴⁸

The development of gender equality mainstreaming tools represented an important result (output) of the project, as they provided solid reference and training material for the further mainstreaming of gender equality in the government sphere in Kosovo. The development of these instruments was the foundation for future roll-out and amplification of the initial training undertaking during the project. The instruments included i.a. *Integrated Annual Planning System Guidelines for AGE and Gender Mechanisms in Kosovo*⁴⁹ which provided best practices and standards for integrated planning. It targeted AGE staff and GEOs and contained a thorough introduction to the legal framework relevant for gender equality, an introduction to international gender mechanisms, and a practical part with easy-access planning templates.

⁴⁸Interview with AGE Division of Monitoring and Reporting, December 2020.

⁴⁹*Integrated Annual Planning System Guidelines for AGE and Gender Mechanisms in Kosovo*, AGE, March 2018.

Another key instrument aimed at introducing gender equality as part of the general ‘rights and obligations in a democratic society’ was a basic reader (the so-called “*Vademecum*”): *What we need to know about Gender Equality in Kosovo*.⁵⁰ This was another comprehensive “handbook for public servants and decision-makers, constituents and tax payers, trade union members and activist, and anyone else residing in Kosovo.”

Finally, there was reason to highlight also the production of the ambitious *Kosovo Program for Gender Equality 2020-2024*.⁵¹ “The KPGE is an umbrella document for planning institutional actions, of public and private sector, which should serve as a reference platform for undertaking actions followed by allocation of sufficient budgetary funds to mainstream the gender perspective into policy-making, as a complex process necessary for the improvement of lives of girls and women, boys and men in Kosovo.”⁵² The KPGE was one of the major achievements of AGE; as expressed by one of the informants to the evaluation: “When the KPGE was renewed, it was the first time to see the full power behind the Agency.” The formulation process, driven by AGE with support from the project, was a highly interactive process based on comprehensive situational analyses, involvement of working groups through workshops and engagement of government institutions, NGOs, donor agencies, as well as local and international partners in feedback prior to the public discussion and approval of the document.

The KPGE outlines three pillars for the coming years: economic empowerment and social welfare; human development, roles and gender relations; and women’s rights, access to justice and safety. The KPGE is the overarching policy framework for gender equality mainstreaming in Kosovo for which AGE is the main responsible institution to secure dissemination, roll-out and implementation in the period of 2020-2024.

Results area 2: Partnership and networking platforms contribute to institutional strengthening of gender mechanisms, informed policies, and effective coordination of resources

The activities under Results Area 2 included participation in regional gender networks, as well as the organization of a number of workshops, seminars and a study tour to Italy on prevention of GBV. Approx. 370 participants attended and benefitted from these activities. Also this results area produced a number of comprehensive documents, which in addition to the comprehensive study of official development aid (discussed in section 3.2.2 above) also counted a methodological guide produced for the Ministry of Education on *Preventing Gender Stereotypes and Promoting Gender Equality in School Textbooks and Material*.⁵³

⁵⁰ *What we need to know about Gender Equality in Kosovo*, AGE, 2018.

⁵¹ *Kosovo Program for Gender Equality 2020-2024*, AGE, June 2020.

⁵² *Ibid*, p. 4.

⁵³ *Preventing Gender Stereotypes and Promoting gender equality in School Textbooks and Material*, AGE, n.d.

Finally, AGE with support from the project established a partnership (Memorandum of Understanding) with the Faculty of Economics at the Prishtina University to develop a course on Gender & Economics. The joint initiative resulted in the development of a new course curriculum, the establishment of a gender library and the rights to translate and publish a comprehensive introductory book on gender and economics. A study tour for three faculty members to Rotterdam University provided inspiration for mainstreaming gender in all courses, including also the macro-economics and entrepreneurship courses.

University course in Gender & Economics. The course was developed with support from an international consultant who held several meetings with faculty staff and also met with students. This resulted in a syllabus based on the faculty template which was approved in 2019. The consultant also identified key literature. The course will be taught in Albanian, but the master level will be approved also in English. A basic text book by an international author was identified and the translation is planned, but delayed, as AGE is still looking for a translator. There are problems with the government procurement procedures, whereby the cheapest offer will be chosen. But translation of academic text books requires quality and competent translation, which should also be considered when choosing the translator. Although the Faculty suggested Sida to undertake the procurement, Sida decided that this should be done by AGE.⁵⁴ The course will be offered for the first time this academic year (2020-21). So far two introductory sessions with master students were held in late 2020, and the Faculty was still waiting to know the number of students that have enrolled for the course, which was delayed due to COVID-19 delays.⁵⁵

Results area 3: Gender equality values are publicly promoted and gender stereotypes addressed

Under results area 3, the project developed the AGE Communication Strategy⁵⁶ which was still being implemented. The strategy guided AGE's public communication and includes a range of activities, e.g. website, social media presence, annual bulletin, video and printed information material, public awareness campaigns and press releases. Also training activities took place under this results area, including training of e.g. public information officers in ministries and municipalities and AGE staff. A small resource center with gender related books was established at AGE, and research activities on the gender portrayal in media were undertaken.

AGE's capacity to communicate and disseminate information through traditional and social media increased, especially during the last two years of the project. AGE had an active website and a Facebook page with almost 2,000 followers, as well as the production of 15+ TV-spots in 2020.⁵⁷ These were based on either reports or research or are launched in connection with campaigns, e.g. the 2020 campaign on 16 days of activism against GBV. The production of TV-spots was based on specific terms of reference for which professional media people were contracted. Working with professional media companies demonstrated to be a challenge, as there was little

⁵⁴Conclusion of Performance, Sida, June 2020, p.3.

⁵⁵Interview with School of Economics, University of Prishtina, December 2020.

⁵⁶ Communication Strategy 2017-2021, AGE, 2017 (in Albanian).

⁵⁷AGE as a state agency can only work with the public television channels, but UNFPA has funded the dissemination through private tele companies.

awareness and understanding of gender stereotypes within the media branch. Consequently, AGE undertook training of marketing professionals from private media houses. Some of the challenges encountered with genderblind media people were for instance the choices of appropriate colors, situations and illustrations.

Awareness Raising Initiatives 2015-2020. With support from the project, AGE developed and published a number of video spots produced by external media companies. They were published at national TV stations⁵⁸ with a range of topics from e.g. raising awareness on reporting of domestic violence; Gender Equal Representation for the Local Elections; awareness related to Gender Responsive Budgeting; information related to the Administrative Instruction for property registration and the right to equal inheritance; Sexual harassment in the workplace; Verification on the Status of cases of sexual rape during the war; Selective abortions; Promotion of successful women that were awarded with international awards during 2018 and also health institutions roles in identifying cases of violence. The messages developed were user friendly with short clear messages developed from existing laws and policies, adapted for further dissemination for the general public. The majority of the interviews confirmed their relevance and importance, and also recommended that in the future, the AGE should regularly continue to disseminate this kind of information. In future, also the use of radio for awareness raising messages could be included.

Additional task - the GEIA

The *Gender Equality Impact Assessment*⁵⁹ (GEIA) manual was an important output of the project, albeit not an activity initially included in project plans. It required extraordinary efforts and a lot of resources were allocated for this task. However, AGE recognized that lifting the task of roll-out will require additional resources in future, not the least because there is a lack of experience in the public institutions. “Gender is always seen as additional”, and the institutions fail to have gender data available.

AGE was concerned that specific expertise available and qualitative research related to specific area of gender impact was missing: “During GEIAs we often needed specific expertise available and research related to special area of the gender impact. One example is when we provided comments to a law initiated by the Ministry of Health on providing hip prostheses for women and men. There were no specific gender requirements, but women’s need may differ as women have to give birth and therefore need different prostheses - and for that further research was needed. This expertise is not available in Kosovo, and we would need external specialized reports on gender impacts.” In other words, AGE needed to have a multidisciplinary network of experts to draw upon, when dealing with multi-sector policies. But likewise important was the training of government officials from ministries and other institutions to be able to integrate from the onset a gender equality perspective when drafting official documents.

When the project started there were no instruments for gender mainstreaming, and major efforts were invested in producing these instruments (manuals and guidelines).

⁵⁸ See for example YouTube links to check the materials at, for example:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3SZvRv99VIq&list=UUIZLXm5dGq68Zneb_larujq&index=2;
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dairhASIVYE&list=UUIZLXm5dGq68Zneb_larujq&index=7

⁵⁹ *Gender Equality Impact Assessment*, January 2018.

The instruments filled a vacuum and were useful in the sense that they became reference instruments for holding government institutions to account on gender mainstreaming. However, implementation and roll-out still needs to take place to demonstrate outcomes and indications of impact.

The project achieved the expected results (outputs) in terms of implementing the planned activities plus a number of additional tasks commissioned to AGE during the implementation.

3.4 EFFICIENCY - HOW WELL WERE RESOURCES USED?

As discussed in the previous chapter, the present evaluation focused on the achievement of results and outcome, i.e. whether the *project objectives were achieved* and whether the results were delivered in an economic and timely way. This involved only to a limited extent an assessment of the allocation of funds, as the overall picture in terms of accomplished results is positive. Consequently, the focus in relation to efficiency mainly addressed the Swedish project supervision and financial monitoring. The present chapter briefly deals with the Embassy's monitoring of project activities and financial execution.

3.4.1 Activity and financial monitoring

The project monitoring framework was prepared during the inception phase and presented in the inception report (2016). The monitoring framework “presents a systematic and on-going monitoring process linked to the following results-based management components: overall objective and results at all levels (impact objectives, outcomes and intermediate outcomes and outputs).”⁶⁰ Activity monitoring was carried out by AGE with the support from the project adviser, and progress reports from both entities documented progress according to plan, as well as solid reflections on challenges met and decisions taken. The quality of the progress reports appeared to be high and offered a solid and very detailed evidence base of accomplished activities.

The documents available for the evaluation included:

For the year 2016: *Statement of narrative and financial report*⁶¹ and *Conclusion of Performance*⁶² on the calendar year 2016. Both documents stated the delayed implementation for the project due to the late recruitment of the international consultant. In addition, the *Statement on Audit*⁶³ and *Statement on Narrative and Financial Report*,⁶⁴ also for the year 2016, stated the late start of activity implementation and consequent low budget execution. Concerns related to the government procurement procedures and the risk of slow competence development were raised.

⁶⁰Inception report, 2016, p.19.

⁶¹Statement of narrative and financial report, Sida, April 2017.

⁶²Conclusion on Performance, Sida April 2017.

⁶³Statement on Audit, Sida, April 2017.

⁶⁴Statement on Narrative and Financial Report, Sida, April 2017.

For the year 2017: There was no narrative statements for the year 2017, but only the external audit report⁶⁵ and corresponding management letter⁶⁶, as well as AGE's management response⁶⁷. The external audit report stated that "Donor funded programmes are reported as a separate line item allocated to the Unit or Agency and break downs of the cost items are available from the system. The final financial reports have to be manually made in excel based on Donor requirements and formats." The report also concludes in the follow-up matrix attached that "AGE set up a steering committee as it was planned. The decision was made in 26 January 2018. The committee is composed of five persons."⁶⁸ Actions on the recommendation on a proper risk management system remained pending. For the year 2018: External audit⁶⁹, and the AGE's management response (in Albanian). The comments were very similar to previous year's audit report. AGE contracted a consultant to draft a risk management document.

For the year 2019: *Conclusion of Performance*⁷⁰ for the year 2018 included only a list of activities, and no qualitative assessment. External audit report⁷¹ and management letter⁷² with no new information, except for the fact that the risk environment is considered low-risk.

In 2020: Short minutes from a meeting held in January 2020 to discuss operational issues and a possible exit phase. The *Conclusion of Performance* from June 2020 was a hand-over note from the previous program officer at the Embassy.

The Embassy's responsibilities in terms of project monitoring and review were set out in the *Grant Agreement* from 2015⁷³ and included annual review and planning meetings, additional consultation meetings, a mid-term review and the final evaluation. Project progress reports were the basis for the Embassy's monitoring of the project, and interviews with embassy officials demonstrated that the momentum of activities was satisfactory.

In January 2018, a Supervision Committee (Steering Committee)⁷⁴ was established to respond to the auditor's recommendation and with the objective of overseeing project implementation. The five-member committee was led by the Head of Legislation Division at AGE and counted two other AGE heads of division, a GEO and the program manager from the Embassy of Sweden, i.e. only internal member and no representatives from CSOs or other AGE partners. The Supervision Committee met only once in 2018 and was never operational in spite of an ambitious

⁶⁵ Independent Auditor's Report and financial report for the Project "Support to Agency for Gender Equality in Kosovo", for the period 1st January 2017 to 31st December 2017 Financed by Embassy of Sweden in Pristina, AGE, February 2018.

⁶⁶ Management Letter For the year ended December 31, 2017 – Audit & Consulting Associates, March 2018.

⁶⁷ AGE Management response to auditors' report, 12.07.2017.

⁶⁸ Independent Auditor's Report and financial report for the Project "Support to Agency for Gender Equality in Kosovo", for the period 1st January 2017 to 31st December 2017 Financed by Embassy of Sweden in Pristina, AGE, February 2018, p.9.

⁶⁹ Audit report 2018, Audit & Consulting Associates March 2019.

⁷⁰ Conclusion on Performance, Sida, January 2019.

⁷¹ Independent Auditor's Report and Financial Report for the Project "Support to Agency for Gender Equality in Kosovo", for the period 01 January 2019- 31 December 2019, AUDIT - CONSULTING - ADVISORY, February 2020.

⁷² Management Letter 2019 from Auditor, n.d.

⁷³ Grant Agreement between Sida and AGE, June 2015, p. 5.

⁷⁴ Decision on Supervision Committee, AGE, 26.01.2018.

monitoring and oversight mandate. There is no documentation from the one meeting⁷⁵ and neither AGE nor the Embassy took initiative to follow-up.

The evaluation also noted that the planned mid-term review was cancelled, a fact explained by delays and a decision to wait for the final evaluation. The evaluation found no paper trail on this decision.

The evaluation found that there was a limited and uneven paper trail available to document the dialogue between the project / AGE and the Embassy. The evaluation found no documentation on the annual review and planning meetings and only minutes from one additional consultation.⁷⁶

The uneven documentation of the on-going dialogue and the lack of systematic and official assessment of performance may be due to change of staff, temporary secondment and sick leaves for key program staff at the Embassy - a situation that affected the institutional memory in terms of systematic project monitoring.

The documentation of the Embassy's monitoring activity was uneven and presented major gaps, e.g. in the follow up on the Supervision Committee and securing documentation on key decisions. The financial monitoring based on annual audit report from OPM/AGE and external audits provided a better and more systematic paper trail. Also management letters and corresponding management responses from AGE documented a systematic follow-up of recommendations from one year to the next.

⁷⁵ E-mail correspondence from AGE, 01.02.2021.

⁷⁶ Summary of the meeting, AGE, 29 January 2020.

4 Lasting change - Impact and sustainability

After a *de facto* project implementation period of four years, it is still early to demonstrate impact in the form of lasting change. This chapter includes an analysis of challenges encountered during project implementation, conclusive thoughts on indications of impact and perspectives for sustainability; and finally draws up a number of key lessons learned.

4.1 MAIN CHALLENGES DURING IMPLEMENTATION

The project encountered a number of challenges during implementation, some related to the political and socio-cultural context in which AGE operated, others related to the administrative obstacles, and some were due to issues related to the implementation pace of the project. General for most of the challenges was the external character. Some of the main challenges encountered which affected the implementation of the project and caused delays were:⁷⁷

- The frequent change of government caused an instable political and administrative environment with frequent changes in policy and reforms, as well as budget and financial administrative changes.
- There was a lack of tradition for collaboration and coordination between government institutions, which influenced negatively on the gender equality mainstreaming efforts, as there was limited exchange of experience and good practices.
- The application Law on Public Procurement turned out to be inflexible when it came to contracting of specialized services, e.g. translations, media service providers etc. where level of expertise and not costs alone is an important selection criteria.
- Staff recruitment procedures were experienced as extremely slow with the results of periodic understaffing, which influenced the pace of implementation.
- Work overload for AGE staff and the technical adviser caused by unplanned tasks, e.g. the Gender Equality Impact Assessment and related training of government officials, as well as the lack capacity and willingness from other government institutions to participate in working groups with a qualitative input.

⁷⁷ AGE Project Management Report 2018, pp. 6-9 and draft Final Project Report, Institutional Strengthening of the Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality, NIRAS, 27 May 2020, pp. 13-14.

- The application of gender equality in municipalities with Serbian majority remains a political challenge.

In addition to these challenges identified by AGE and the project, the evaluation found that the relative lack of systematic monitoring from the Embassy of Sweden represented a challenge in terms of documentation and consistent communication.

The evaluation found that the project successfully navigated in the challenging context and managed to achieve its objectives against these odds.

4.2 IMPACT

As mentioned above, impact in the form of lasting change may be difficult to identify after the short implementation period. The evaluation looked for changes in understanding and perceptions of gender equality, as well as recognition of the role and mandate of AGE. Examples of gender awareness and recognition of AGE's mandate by government institutions were identified, and indications of change of practice in line ministries' and municipalities' work were identified.

Interviews confirmed that AGE increased its visibility and recognition through the project. In particular, interviews confirmed the increase of authority and good reputation of the agency. The comprehensive documents on gender equality and mainstreaming targeted different sectors and target groups contributed to AGE's legitimacy. The fact that the number of requests for gender screening and gender proofing of law texts, policies and other official documents increased - and not the least the fact that AGE's capacity to respond to these request also increased - contributed to the image of a professional agency.

Interviews also confirmed that the production of a number of materials and publications by the AGE with support from the project was very valuable and had potential for a long-term impact if followed up and trainings were offered. Also, expanding the outreach of trainings that could target mid and senior level management within ministries and municipalities, were mentioned as a means to follow up and implement further the publications developed.

There was, however, no doubt that these changes and indications of impact were fragile, and dependent on a momentum in terms of follow-up activities and resources. Most of the results so far could be characterized as "paving the ground" for the full implementation of the Law on gender equality in Kosovo. It was also a fact that in spite of engagement of GEOs in ministries and municipalities, the geographical outreach was limited and activities concentrated at central level, leaving lasting impact in terms of gender equality mainstreaming in public institutions still at an incipient stage and GEOs with limited influence on planning and budgets processes and implementation.

4.3 SUSTAINABILITY

The inception report stated that “it is a combination of internal capacity and external recognition that will provide the basis for sustainability for AGE”.⁷⁸ Based on this, the project intentionally worked with a learning-based approach, the integration of external inputs into national priorities, processes and systems, and the facilitation of a multi-stakeholder dialogue process. There was no doubt that project positioned AGE in the cross field between increased capacity and external recognition. The question at the end of the four years period was whether there was enough of both - internal capacity and external recognition - to guarantee sustainability beyond the project support.

The issue of internal capacity was discussed extensively in section 3.3.1 above, with the conclusion that the project succeeded in strengthening AGE’s general capacity, albeit with gaps in terms of specific technical gender capacity to match the mandate and assume the responsibility for roll-out of the gender equality instruments produced with support from the project. AGE was increasingly recognized for its role and mandate in gender equality mainstreaming, but the demand for action was higher than the response capacity, and as such the institutional sustainability was at high risk.

The government budget for AGE grew over the past years, but in a situation with frequently changing governments and constant budget adjustments and instructional restructuring, AGE needed a guarantee from government for its operation and further expansion. The evaluation did not see solid indications of such future security for AGE.

In December 2019, AGE staff held a meeting to discuss the project exit plan. The conclusion from the meeting was that sustainability was still fragile: “It is premature to consider a total *phase out* or *phase over* of the external input, in other words of donor’s support to AGE’s mandate and implementation of major initiatives initiated during 2016-2020 project assistance that directly contribute to the implementation of the Law on Gender Equality, the European integration process, and the Kosovo public administration reform, human rights and rule of law”.⁷⁹

The 2020-situation affected by a drastic slow-down in implementation due to COVID-19 made it difficult to reach sustainability, as most of AGE’s resources were allocated to the implementation of the additional COVID-19 funds, thereby diverting the attention from the core mission of the agency, i.e. advocacy and promotion of the legislative, policy and strategic framework for gender equality.

Therefore - and in spite of efforts vested in capacity building and recognition - the evaluation found that the sustainability remained fragile towards the end of the project. Capacity building efforts resulted in increased gender equality awareness

⁷⁸ Project for Institutional strengthening of Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality and Gender Mechanisms Inception Report, NIRAS Indevlop / DADAG 02.11.2016, p.45.

⁷⁹ Agency for Gender Equality proposed Exit Plan, Niras & CPM, 09.01.2020, p.4.

beyond AGE and into government institutions, academia, civil society and media, but there was little, if any, evidence that this would continue without a substantial future input. For AGE to maintain momentum and grow further, human and financial resources would be a must. Continued gender equality implementation with AGE as the driving force would require government priority and a guaranteed long-term budget.

4.4 LESSONS LEARNED

Based on the analysis of findings, a few lessons learned were deduced:

- Establishment of partnerships based on shared responsibility for the implementation of specific activities was a way of providing a solid platform for future sustainability.
- Enhancing public visibility through multiple channels was an important part of awareness raising and must be a repetitive and constant activity to maximize the results in terms of outreach, also to rural areas.
- The capacity building undertaken by the project was predominantly learning-by-doing, on-the-job training and coaching with the aim of raising the general knowledge and awareness on gender equality. For capacity building to take root, a systematic approach based on institutional and individual needs assessment would be required.
- However, learning-by-doing as applied e.g. in the KPGE process was a valuable experience, which engaged a broad group of stakeholders, as it was conducted as an open, transparent and consultative process.
- Technical assistance easily runs the risk of becoming an additional hand, especially in situations where staff capacity in numbers and skills is limited. If the hand-over to national staff is not properly planned and integrated in project work plans and goals the sustainability is at high risk. Technical assistance input must be adjusted to the specific needs over time and be calibrated over time with the increasing institutional capacity to avoid dependency and aim for sustainability.
- Adherence to government procedures, e.g. in terms of procurement, was a sound principle in the optics of sustainability, but may in the short run cause unnecessary delays and disruptions. Contingency plans for urgent or technically specific procurement processes may be a solution.
- Establishing the basis for a national response to gender equality and strengthening of national gender mechanisms takes time, especially in a volatile political environment characterized by a strong patriarchal culture. In such a context, four years was therefore a short period and for initial investments to yield lasting results, a longer term engagement would be needed.

5 Recommendations

The recommendations address three different stakeholders involved in the implementation of the project: the OPM, AGE and Sida. The responsibility of implementing the responsibilities does not necessarily lie exclusively with one of these stakeholders, but will depend on the collaboration and joint effort to follow-up and take the necessary action. The recommendations include a short justification and as much as possible also examples of how to implement them.

5.1 RECOMMENDATIONS TO OPM

The OPM as the government host institution for AGE holds responsibility for securing the optimal institutional framework for AGE's operations. In this context, the following recommendations are addressed to the OPM:

1. Government institutions in general demonstrate a low level of responsibility towards the implementation of key gender priorities, i.e. the Law on Gender Equality and the KPGE. It is important that government institutions are held to account on their specific responsibilities and mandates in relation to these key legislative and policy frameworks. The OPM should take lead in holding all government institutions accountable for the implementation of legal and strategic gender equality priorities. Such action should include explicit support to AGE in fulfilling its mandate as the institution responsible for supervising the implementation.
2. Securing a financially sustainable institution requires budget guarantee in a medium to long term perspective. During the project period, a gradual increase of AGE's annual budget was verified, but there is a need for securing momentum and possible increase of activity level through government allocations. In order to phase in the government responsibility for the activity budget, it is therefore recommended that the financial support from Sida is gradually phase over to Kosovo government budget. With a gradual increase of the government share of the budget, matched by a corresponding decrease of Sida contributions towards project end, the perspectives of institutional and financial sustainability are increased.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS TO AGE

The evaluation found that the project supported AGE to establish a solid platform and equipped the agency with a series of comprehensive instruments for mainstreaming gender equality in Kosovo government institutions. It is, however, important that these initiatives are properly applied and efforts are made to roll out the instruments in all government institutions, and in particular with a focus on municipalities and rural areas.

The following recommendations address three main focus areas for AGE in the next couple of years.

Gender equality capacity

3. AGE's internal capacity was strengthened during the project to the extent that gender equality awareness existed, instruments were in place, and the institutional profile was sharpened. But a systematic focus on enhancing technical capacity is needed - to respond to the demand from other institutions, and to proactively engage in gender equality research and provision of evidence for future activities. Capacity building should be addressed systematically, i.e. be based on institutional and individual training needs assessment, securing that technical capacity is developed in response to the mandate of the agency. Institutional and individual capacity targets must be set and serve as guidance for professional upgrading of staff.
4. One area which needs attention is the internal technical capacity, which will allow AGE to take the lead on promoting the gender equality agenda, rather than responding to demands from government and other stakeholders. Strengthening the internal technical gender equality capacity will provide AGE with the strength needed to take independent initiatives and seek new ways for enhancing gender equality mainstreaming.
5. Attention to individual capacity building needs should be addressed at annual staff development talks, where strengths and weaknesses are addressed and matched against the job descriptions. Based on this, individual plans for upgrading and possible increase of responsibility must be defined and used for next year's staff evaluation.
6. The institutional capacity should be assessed on an annual basis as a framework for the individual staff assessments. This will allow AGE to monitor that the resources are used in the best possible way, drawing upon existing competences and planning for needed change. It will also allow assessing the degree of de facto delegation of responsibility within the institution, not only to heads of division, but also beyond.

Implementation and dissemination of information

7. AGE has an extensive network of GEOs, who were trained, but there is a need for closer, more frequent and more proactive contact with the GEOs, especially in the municipalities. A closer contact will maintain acquired skills and strengthen the GEOs' authority and legitimacy within their respective institutions. Such closer contact could include the setting of targets and/or performance indicators as part of agreed annual plans for the GEOs, monitored and supported by AGE on a regular basis.
8. With support from the project, AGE produced comprehensive gender equality mainstreaming instruments and manuals. The manuals are developed for different audiences, some of which are untrained or non-academic readers. To enhance the use and dissemination of the content of the manuals, AGE should prioritize the brake-down of these into reader-friendly short versions and thereby contribute to

- the dissemination of gender relevant legislation that reaches the lower level of government administration, civil society actors and private sector.
9. Much effort was concentrated at central level, but considering the urban-rural gap, AGE should focus on wider outreach to rural areas, whereby information on the Law on Gender Equality becomes accessible to a broader population. This outreach could with benefit be combined with an enhanced collaboration with civil society networks and organizations to ensure a broad based constituency by using them as entry points. The continued dissemination of information on the Law on Gender Equality also to the broader population will counterbalance the lack of knowledge and awareness and the increasing mistrust to government.
 10. During the project, AGE successfully established partnerships with e.g. the Faculty of Economics. Such partnerships are effective vehicles for implementation of relevant gender equality mainstreaming activities in key sectors. The partnership approach safeguards the institutional sustainability and provides a solid platform for roll-out and replication of the gender equality initiatives. AGE should explore the possibilities for establishing similar sector specific partnerships in future.
 11. Communication through video, TV-spots and social media was successful. It is important to maintain the momentum, and AGE should prioritize a continuation and upscaling of this activity. To enhance the media work, identification of media gender ambassadors is a possibility to explore.

Government dialogue

12. AGE with the support from the project produced a substantial number of key gender equality mainstreaming instruments. Before embarking on new major projects, AGE should prioritise the roll-out and implementation of already existing gender equality instruments e.g. KPGE, GEIA manual, GRB concept document, and the work on preventing gender stereotypes in educational material.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS TO SIDA

Sida's project support to AGE in the period of 2015 to 2020 was very important, as it helped AGE become a recognized gender equality institution with a clear mandate and legitimacy among government institutions, civil society, media, academia and donor agencies. There is, however, no doubt that the changes induced are still not consolidated. The investments made so far may easily be wasted, if an effort to consolidate and build further on the base established is not made. There is furthermore a risk that a decision of not funding a second phase may have an advert impact on achieved results, as AGE may lose credibility among government institutions, who will interpret the situation as AGE having failed and not qualified for further support.

Based on this, the evaluation recommends exploring the possibilities of a continued collaboration and financial support to AGE taking the following considerations into account:

Government agreement and policy dialogue

1. In order to secure medium and long-term financial sustainability of AGE, there is a need for a gradual increase in the government's share of the project budget, matched with a corresponding decrease of Sida funds. Sida and other donors should include the need for a gradually increased government budget to AGE in their continuous policy dialogue with the Kosovo government.
2. Sida should use the support to AGE as leverage for promoting gender equality mainstreaming in other sectors benefitting from Swedish support. Development assistance provided to different sectors and institutions should mutually reinforce gender equality efforts.

Project approach

3. A possible second phase of the project should - within the context of existing policy framework - prioritize the roll-out of instruments produced during the first phase and prioritize a decentralized focus.
4. While the fulltime technical assistance during the first project period was justified, it should be considered in a possible second phase to provide a more flexible and periodical technical assistance. Not having a permanent presence throughout the project period, would allow AGE to "take the driver's seat" in various development processes, using the technical assistance primarily for periodic sparring and facilitation of next steps. Short-term input should be applied for specific technical issues, trainings etc.

Project monitoring and oversight on implementation of activities?

5. Based on the experience with the first phase of the project, Sida should follow up on agreed initiatives, e.g. the establishment and operationalization of a project Supervision Committee including with participation of external objective actors such as CSOs and other donors in order to enhance AGE's cooperation, and ensure that a systematic paper trail is kept to document decisions during implementation.

Annex 1 – Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference for the Final Evaluation of the Framework Agreement regarding direct grant support and consultancy to the Agency for Gender Equality, Kosovo

- **BACKGROUND**

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the Agency for Gender Equality in Kosovo (AGE) agreed on a Direct Grant Support (DGS) that started in June 2015 and Technical Assistance (TA) project that started on July 2016. The DGS will continue until 31 December 2020 while the Technical Assistance was concluded on 31 May 2020.

The final evaluation will be conducted with the purpose to: 1) inform Sida about the achievements under the DGS and TA and the manner in which the originally agreed objectives are met; 2) define the key components that contributed to the success of the DGS and the project or lack of such success to inform the design of future support; 3) provide AGE with practical suggestions on how to ensure that achievements reached as a result of the DGS and TA are embedded in a sustainable manner; and 4) inform AGE about the possible future priorities regarding the strengthening the capacities of AGE in Kosovo, including proposals on how to fully implement objectives in the future in case these are not reached or only partially.

- **PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION**

The purpose of the external evaluation is to evaluate achieved results against set objectives and to provide the donor with recommendations based on lessons learned for future cooperation. The evaluation shall also analyse the lessons learned, the challenges faced, weakness and strengths of the project and best practices obtained during the implementation of the Swedish support to AGE. The emphasis of the evaluation is on understanding what has worked well, what has not worked well and the underlying reasons that affected performance. The Evaluation also needs to assess the sustainability of the interventions and changes that have been introduced.

The evaluation is expected to be designed, conducted and reported in order to prepare the donor and AGE with a set of recommendations for future cooperation. Tenderers shall elaborate on how this will be ensured during the evaluation process.

- **SCOPE AND METHOD OF WORK**

The object of this evaluation is the ‘Specific Agreement for the Support for Improving Gender Equality in Kosovo 2015-2020’ signed by Sida and the AGE in June 2015. This agreement was the basis for the Direct Grant Support (DGS). Subsequently Sida signed the “Framework Agreement Covering Consultancy to the

Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality” managed by a consortium that consists of two consulting companies: Niras Sweden AB and CPM International.

Based on the Specific Agreement, Sida provided Direct Budget Support (DBS) for the implementation of AGE program activities. In addition, Sida conducted a public procurement in order to contract a service provider to support the implementation of the Technical Assistance (TA) with qualified experts. The composition of the project team for the TA was one Team Leader and the team of experts local, regional and international who are contracted on the need call off basis.

The main beneficiaries of the DBS and TA are the staff working at AGE. Because AGE’s work is closely related to other appointed gender officers in ministries and municipalities, this support could have a direct impact on those institutions as well.

The direct support started with a delay due to the change of management and unclarity of the future position of AGE. In 2016 AGE delivered its first annual report, which followed with other required reporting such as inception report and bi-annual reports.

The key objectives to be achieved within the four-year **project framework** are:

- All AGE's employees, including the Gender Equality Officers in line ministries and municipal Gender Equality Officers, have increased knowledge in gender equality in public administration.
- New Human Resource and Staff Policy is in use. New staff satisfaction study conducted.
- The communication strategy is designed, updated and effectively implemented.
- AGE and the institutionalized network increasingly collaborate and advocate for gender equality.

Intermediate Result 1. Gender equality objectives are prioritized and further introduced and gradually integrated into policy and legal frameworks, and systems.

Overview of Intermediate Result 1

To achieve the accomplishment of the intermediate result (1), four outputs were identified and expected to be delivered during the project lifecycle:

- **Output 1.1.1** AGE and GEOs practice gender mainstreaming and analysis in policy making processes
- **Output 1.1.2** Increased coordination of AGE with GCS, LAO and SPO in the OPM to support gender mainstreaming processes and their implementation into policies and normative acts.
- **Output 1.1.3** Kosovo line ministries and municipalities have improved methodology on gender data gathering and reporting.
- **Output 1.1.4** GRB is initiated and piloted to selected Kosovo central and local level institutions.

Intermediate Result 2. Partnership and networking platforms contribute to the institutional strengthening of gender mechanism, inform policies and effective coordination system.

Overview of Intermediate Result 2

To achieve the accomplishment of the intermediate result (2), the following outputs were identified and expected to be delivered during the project lifecycle:

- **Output 2.1.1** AGE develops partnership for professional development and policy tools in the following areas: gender statistics and institutional strengthening.
- **Output 2.1.2** AGE develops partnership with academia to access expertise and improve gender mainstreaming.
- **Output 2.1.3** AGE establishes and leads at least two national networks with participation of CSOs and other partners.

Intermediate Result 3. Gender equality is publicly promoted, and gender stereotypes are addressed.

Overview of Intermediate Result 3

To achieve the accomplishment of the intermediate result (3), the following outputs were identified and expected to be delivered during the project lifecycle:

Output 3.1.1 AGE develops and implements a four-year communication strategy for promoting the Kosovo gender equality agenda to Kosovo public.

Output 3.1.2 AGE's capacities to monitor and counteract media gender stereotypes enhanced.

Summary of Activities Undertaken:

- Development of a Four-Year of Communication Strategy of AGE on communicating gender Equality Agenda of Kosovo.
- Three trainings on gender and media with public information officers in line ministries and municipalities, advertising firms and one seminar with students of journalism from the School of Journalism from Prishtina University.
- One research on Gender Representation on Print Media in Kosovo.
- Two round tables with journalists and students of journalism presenting the results of Gender Representation on Print Media in Kosovo.
- Established AGE Resource Center with gender literature covering diverse studying areas.

AGE - DBS Overall Objective:

- The overall objective of this project is the advancement of gender equality, through a leading role from AGE and the gender mechanisms in the government of Kosovo

Direct objectives of the DBS:

- Increase institutional capacity of AGE and the Public Gender Mechanisms to ensure they have capacity, knowledge and instruments to fulfill their mandate and to increase their capacity for networking with external actors to improve the gender equality situation in Kosovo

The expected DBS results:

- **Result 1.** Increased Institutional Capacity of the Agency of Gender Equality and the Public Gender Mechanisms of Kosovo, and their networking within Public Sector.
- **Result 2.** Strengthening of AGE’s Network and lobbying capacity outside the government, for the advancement of the gender equality situation in Kosovo

Expected Outcomes of the DBS

- AGE’s staff has in-depth knowledge and use gender mainstreaming and gender analysis tools
- Gender Mechanisms are doing public networking to strengthening all focal points in AGE, municipal and ministerial gender officers
AGE is recognized among donor as the driver for gender equality in Kosovo
- AGE is recognized for its collaboration with Civil, Private and Academic Sectors when it comes to Gender Equality
- AGE management provide better support to staff, municipal and ministerial gender officers
- AGE is recognized as important institution by all Ministries
- AGE is recognized as important institution by all Municipalities
- Ministries change procedures to include Gender Equality Officers in decision making
- Municipalities change procedures to include Municipal Gender Officers in local decision making
- NGO’s collaborate with AGE, municipal and ministerial gender officers for the development of the gender equality index in Kosovo.

The scope of the evaluation needs to cover the preparation process of the project and the development of the Specific Agreement between Sida and the AGE. The focus of the evaluation should be on the transformation of knowledge and capacity building of AGE. The evaluation shall report on how AGE’s capacity has improved during the Swedish support. The evaluation needs to determine to what extent the objectives were met and determine the reasons behind why targets were reached and/or why targets could not be achieved.

- **EVALUATION OBJECTIVE AND QUESTIONS**

The Evaluation must follow the OECD/DAC criteria for evaluating development assistance: relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. These criteria are linked to key evaluation questions that are presented in the table below.

Table 1. Evaluation Criteria and key evaluation questions

Evaluation Criterion	Key evaluation questions
Relevance	To what extent did the intervention’s objectives and design respond to beneficiaries’ needs?

	<p>How did the intervention relate to existing policies and priorities, notably the advancement of gender equality, through a leading role from the AGE and the gender mechanisms in Kosovo?</p> <p>To what extent did the intervention guarantee its relevance for the beneficiaries during the intervention timeframe?</p> <p>To what extent were the outputs and activities relevant for beneficiaries?</p>
Coherence	<p>To what extent was the intervention compatible with other interventions?</p> <p>Was there a duplication of support?</p> <p>How did the intervention link to the overall policy objectives of AGE, related to women’s economic empowerment, gender impact assessment, women in decision making positions, gender-based violence, EU integration process and social inclusion?</p>
Effectiveness	<p>To what extent did the intervention achieve (or can still be expected to achieve) its objectives and results?</p> <p>What are the direct effects of the intervention?</p> <p>To what extent did the outputs and activities contribute to reaching the objectives?</p>
Efficiency	<p>To what extent did the intervention deliver (or can still be expected to deliver) the results in an economic and timely way?</p> <p>Were the planned activities implemented as expected?</p> <p>To what extent was the process during which the outputs and activities were developed and implemented efficient, e.g. when compared to similar processes in other countries?</p>
Impact	<p>To what extent has the intervention generated significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects?</p> <p>What are the expected long-term effects of the intervention?</p>
Sustainability	<p>To what extent are the net benefits of the intervention likely to continue?</p> <p>What measures need to be taken still to ensure sustainability?</p> <p>What new demands did arise that could affect sustainability?</p>

In addition to answering the evaluation questions listed in the above table, the evaluation must provide recommendations about strengthening capacities in the future in order to improve implementation, monitoring and reporting of the Law on Gender Equality. This needs to be a forward-looking component of the evaluation that is based on the current projections defined in various documents and plans. This component needs to be based on the lessons learned that the evaluation is expected to provide. The list of recommendations should be presented in order of priority.

- **METHODOLOGIES AND METHODS FOR DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

The evaluators shall describe and justify an appropriate evaluation methodology together with evaluation methods in the proposed tender. The tender will be the basis

for completing the evaluation design, methodology and methods for data collection during the Inception phase and will be laid down in the inception report.

The evaluators should take into consideration appropriate measures for collecting data in cases where sensitive or confidential issues are addressed and avoid presenting information that may be harmful to individuals or stakeholder groups.

The evaluators are expected to carry out field visits and meet with stakeholders outside of Pristina. The evaluation team shall be composited of local and international consultants in order not to limit the team from travel restrictions posed by Covid 19. At least one member of the evaluations team must be able to speak the official local languages Albanian and Serbian.

Relevant documents will be made available to the evaluators by Swedish Embassy and AGE. The evaluators are also expected to independently search for data and documents when this is deemed necessary.

The way the indicators are expected to be evaluated are to a great extent defined in the Results Framework and the description of the means of verification. The evaluators need to ensure this verification is followed and need to assess the appropriateness of the indicators. The evaluators are asked to complement the information gathered for these indicators and, based on the evaluation findings, suggest alternative indicators for similar projects in the future.

The evaluators are expected to apply a range of methodologies for performing the evaluation such as document review and analysis, field visit, data analysis, user-surveys, interviews with relevant professionals and focus group meetings. AGE will provide the necessary statistics and data to the consultants.

The most relevant organisations that must be involved in the evaluation process and their key role in the project are presented in the overview below. The list of organizations will be provided to the consultants during the evaluation process.

- ORGANIZATION AND EVALUATION MANAGEMENT

The evaluation is commissioned by Swedish Embassy in Kosovo through Sida framework agreement.

The consultants are responsible for arranging all meetings. AGE will to the extent possible provide support in regards to relevant people and organisations to meet. In this regard, the Evaluator shall appoint one contact person that will communicate and cooperate with AGE.

The consultants shall plan for a start-up meeting together with the Swedish embassy including debriefing of the initial findings and conclusions after field visit and before submission of fist draft. The final report shall be presented in a final workshop together with AGE. Age will be given the opportunity to comment on factual errors.

- Evaluation Quality

All Sida’s evaluations shall conform to OECD/DAC’s Quality Standards for Development Evaluation⁸⁰ and ‘Sida’s Evaluation Handbook’ from April 2018. The evaluators shall use the Sida OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation⁸¹. The evaluators shall specify how quality assurance will be handled by them during the evaluation process.

- **QUALIFICATION AND PROFESSIONAL REQUIREMENTS**

The team of consultants should demonstrate a strong expertise in the following areas:

- Good knowledge (preferably international comparative) in the area of gender equality;
- Good knowledge of context in the Western Balkans and in-depth understanding of political and social context of Kosovo including gender equality.
- Good knowledge of gender equality concepts and support mechanisms;
- Excellent and proven experience in reviewing similar programs in the above mentioned area;
- Good understanding of OECD criteria for evaluation
- Excellent and proven experience in similar assignments (5-7 years);
- Excellent analytical skills, ability to propose recommendations;
- Excellent coordination, communication and reporting skills;
- Excellent in both spoken and written English.
- At least one team member should have knowledge of at minimum one local language.

- **TIMEFRAME**

Due to the COVID19 pandemic, the assignment shall be designed in a way that permits a combination of digital and physical meetings based on the health recommendations of WHO.

The evaluators are expected to present their evaluation schedule and work plan as part of the tender. The evaluation of activities shall start mid-October 2020 and be finalised not later than 10th of December 2020.

The timing of interviews, surveys, workshops and other activities need to be agreed between the evaluators and Swedish embassy at the start-up meeting.

The table below lists the key deliverables and activities for the evaluation process. The evaluators can expand on this overview based on their proposed evaluation methodology and methods.

Table 2. Indicative schedule for the evaluation

⁸⁰ DAC Quality Standards for development Evaluation, OECD, 2010.

⁸¹ Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management, Sida in cooperation with OECD/DAC, 2014.

Deliverables	Participants	Deadlines	Revised dealines
Kick-off meeting (virtual)	Evaluators, Swedish embassy (SE)	October 12, 2020	01.Nov.2020
Document analysis and preparation of Inception Report	Evaluators	October 17, 2020	02-20.Nov.2020
Submission of the Draft Inception Report	Evaluators	October 24, 2020	20.Nov.2020
Inception Meeting through online platform and/or in Pristina	Evaluators, SE	October 27, 2020	24.Nov.2020
Evaluation activities, field visits and interviews that need to be performed in Pristina	Evaluators and relevant counterparts in Kosovo	November 2, 2020	30.Nov.2020
Debriefing and discussion on the initial findings from the evaluation activities and interviews in Pristina	Evaluators, SE	November 14, 2020	11.Dec.2020
Submission of the Draft Evaluation Report	Evaluators	November 21, 2020	11.Jan.2021
Meeting to discuss comments on the Draft Evaluation Report (virtual)	Evaluators, SE, AGE	November 27, 2020	14.Jan.2021
Submission of the draft Final Evaluation Report	Evaluators	December 1, 2020	21.Jan.2021
Provision of data update Draft Final Evaluation Report related of number of trainings organised, civil servants trained etc.	AGE	December 5, 2020	25.Jan.2021
Presentation of the findings from the Final Evaluation Report	Evaluators, Swedish embassy and AGE not TA	December 7, 2020	27.Jan.2021
Submission of Final Evaluation Report	Evaluators	December 10, 2020	29.Jan.2021

- **RESOURCES**

The maximum budget amount available for the evaluation is SEK 500 000.

The contact person at the Swedish Embassy is program manager Elmaze Gashi. Relevant Sida documentation will be provided by the contact person. The contact person should be consulted if any problems arise during the evaluation process at elmaze.gashi@gov.se

The contact person at the Office for Gender Equality of the Prime Minister is Edi Gusia. The evaluator will arrange the logistics (booking interviews, preparing visits etc.) in coordination with the contact person at the Office for Gender Equality of the Office of the Prime Minister.

Annex 2 – Evaluation matrix

The evaluation matrix was developed during the Inception Phase and discussed with the Embassy of Sweden.

OECD/ DAC evaluation criteria	Evaluation Questions in ToR	Indicators	Data collection instruments & Sources of information
1 Relevance <i>Is the intervention doing the right things?</i>	a. To what extent did the intervention’s objectives and design respond to beneficiaries’ needs? b. How did the intervention relate to existing policies and priorities, notably the advancement of gender equality, through a leading role from the AGE and the gender mechanisms in Kosovo? c. To what extent did the intervention guarantee its relevance for the beneficiaries during the intervention timeframe? d. To what extent were the outputs and activities relevant for beneficiaries?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kosovo government (OPM, Ombudsman, line ministries and municipalities) satisfaction with AGE’s performance • Satisfaction from network partners and training participants illustrated through practical examples of gender knowledge application 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief context analysis to understand the political, legislative and cultural setting for the support to AGE • Document review(policies and strategies, project documents and reports) • Interviews with key informants (Sida, AGE, other donor agencies supporting AGE (GIZ) • Interviews with OPM, Ombudsman and selected line ministries and municipalities • Interviews with selected training participants)
2 Coherence	a. To what extent was the intervention compatible with other interventions? b. Was there a duplication of support?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of complementarity with other interventions and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review (government policies and strategies)

<i>How well does the intervention fit?</i>	c. How did the intervention link to the overall policy objectives of AGE, related to women's economic empowerment, gender impact assessment, women in decision making positions, gender-based violence, EU integration process and social inclusion?	with AGE's mandate and authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with Sida, EUD and AGE, other donor agencies supporting AGE (GIZ) • Interviews with OPM, Ombudsperson and selected line ministries and municipalities
3 Effectiveness <i>Is the intervention achieving its objectives?</i>	<p>a. To what extent did the intervention achieve (or can still be expected to achieve) its objectives and results?</p> <p>b. What are the direct effects of the intervention?</p> <p>c. To what extent did the outputs and activities contribute to reaching the objectives?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guarantee and availability of resources (budget and staff) for 2021 • AGE staff capacity to implement mandate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review (project documents, progress reports, reviews and evaluations, studies etc.) • Interviews with AGE staff and gender equality officers in line ministries and municipalities
4 Efficiency <i>How well are resources being used?</i>	<p>a. To what extent did the intervention deliver (or can still be expected to deliver) the results in an economic and timely way?</p> <p>b. Were the planned activities implemented as expected?</p> <p>c. To what extent was the process during which the outputs and activities were developed and implemented efficient?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project objectives achieved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review (project documents, financial and progress reports, audit reports) • Cross-reading of progress reports • Interviews with key informants
5 Impact <i>What difference does the</i>	a. To what extent has the intervention generated significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of gender awareness and recognition of AGE's mandate by 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review (project reports and studies) • Interviews with key informants, e.g. former training participants

<i>intervention make?</i>	b. What are the expected long-term effects of the intervention?	government institutions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered change of practice in e.g. line ministries' and municipalities' work. 	
6 Sustainability <i>Will the benefits last?</i>	a. To what extent are the net benefits of the intervention likely to continue? b. What measures need to be taken still to ensure sustainability? c. What new demands did arise that could affect sustainability?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guarantee and availability of resources (budget and staff) for 2021 • AGE's own vision for the future reflects sustainability considerations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document review (project documents, progress reports, studies) • Interviews with key informants

Annex 3 – Approach and methods

The following chapter from the Inception Note (December 2020) describes the planned evaluation approach and methods.

Overall approach

In the technical proposal presented for the tender of this evaluation assignment, the evaluation team outlined the main approach of the evaluation, as well as specific data collection and analysis methods. The information gathered so far has confirmed the proposed approach: “The final evaluation will be **backward and forward-looking** with a distinct **utilization and learning focus**. We will seek to apply an iterative and flexible approach, where the proposed methodology is not a blue print but an indicative framework for how we will address the evaluation. To ensure a utilization focus, we will involve evaluation users, in particular Sida and AGE, during all stages of the evaluation process, from the evaluation design during the inception phase to the co-formulation of recommendations and review of the draft evaluation report. Specific opportunities for consultations and to provide input include the kick-off meeting, the inception meeting, opportunities for commenting on the draft inception note, during interviews, the debriefing and validation meeting and the period for providing comments on the draft evaluation report. The utilization focus will ensure that recommendations emerging from the evaluation are operational and rooted in shared analysis of key findings.”

Methods and tools for data collection

After having discussed the different options with key stakeholders from Embassy and AGE, the list of methods and tools presented in the technical proposal has been adjusted to match the focus on internal capacity as well as the specific conditions for data collection among e.g. government officials and participants in training sessions.⁸² Based on these considerations, the evaluation will make use of the following methods:

Document review. The Embassy has provided the evaluation team with a substantial volume of documents, which has been organized and saved in a shared Dropbox folder. The evaluation team has started the document review with key program documents and will also undertake a systematic cross-reading of progress reports to trace changes over time and identify achievements and challenges in relation to institutional capacity and implementation of planned activities. The team keeps a shared record of notes from the document review, which facilitates sharing of key information within the team. The evaluation team has requested additional documents from the Embassy and AGE, i.a. the Annual Progress Report 2018 and

⁸² See *Section 4.5 Limitations* below.

Quarterly Reports 1 and 3 2019, as well as grant agreement amendment documents and minutes from annual management meetings between AGE and the Embassy. A particular part of the document screening is related to the screening of TV spots, which have been provided as background information for the communication and media activities. See *Annex 2: List of documents received*.

Stakeholder mapping. Based on a stakeholder mapping format, the evaluation team has consulted the Embassy and AGE for identification of stakeholders, including contact details and language options. Key stakeholders include the following categories: informants from the Embassy, Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and the Ombudsperson institution, AGE staff, technical assistance staff, Gender Equality Officers (GEO) from line ministries and municipalities, selected donor agencies, partners from networking platforms, media, academia and civil society organizations (CSO). Also participants in training sessions undertaken by AGE will be included in the list of stakeholders. For each key stakeholder, the language – Albanian or English – to be used in the interview is identified in order to make a division of work within the evaluations team. See *Annex 3: Stakeholder mapping*.

Selection of informants and sampling. With point of departure in the stakeholder mapping, informants will be selected in close collaboration with the Embassy and AGE. Due caution will be taken to ensure gender balance in the sampling, albeit in this specific context, most informants are expected to be women, due to the nature of the project. AGE has proposed to provide the evaluation team with a list of the “best informed” officers among the GEOs in line ministries and municipalities, as well as former training participants. The evaluation team will make use of the proposed informants, but in order to ensure objectivity, also a similar number of randomly selected informants from the available lists will be contacted for interviews. The selection will be based on geographical criteria as well as time for their engagement with AGE to ensure coverage in terms of geographical outreach and over time. The total number of interviews will be approximately 35 to 40 – which is a considerably high number based on the time available and considering the seasonal constraints. A tentative distribution per category of stakeholders is presented in the matrix below.

Category of institutions	Category of staff	Tentative # of interviews planned	Interviews completed
Embassy of Sweden	Head of cooperation, current and former program officer	2	1
OPM	Permanent Secretary	1	
Ombudsperson institution	The Ombudsperson Gender Unit	1	
AGE	CEO, Heads of Divisions, other relevant staff	6	1
TA	NIRAS project manager, Project team leader	1	1

Selected government institutions	Policy, planning or gender officers in ministries and Statistical Office	5	
Line ministries	GEOs	4	
Municipalities	GEOs	4	
Donor agencies	Gender responsible program officers	2	
University of Prishtina	Faculty of Economics	1	
Media		1	
CSOs	Staff working on gender issues	2	
Training participants		5	
Total # interviews		36	3

Interviews and checklists. Tailored interview checklists are being prepared for different categories of informants. The level of detail will depend on the character of the informants, the type of data to be collected and the format for the interview. The checklists are not questionnaires but guiding questions which will ensure that the interviewer as a minimum covers the listed issues. The checklists contain a column for writing up notes as soon as possible after the interview. Checklists are/will be prepared for the following categories of informants:

- **AGE staff** (quantitative, open-ended interviews with a checklist of topics to ensure that evaluation questions are responded and strengths and weaknesses identified)
- **GEOs** (relatively closed questions with the aim of providing a quantifiable set of responses which will allow for comparison and summarizing of information)
- **Government institutions** (few targeted and closed questions with the aim of exploring AGE’s network and outreach, and results in terms of practices and procedures)
- **Partners**, i.e. University of Prishtina and media (open-ended questions to explore the partnership and achievements)
- **Third parties**, i.e. donor agencies and CSOs (open-ended, explorative checklists to explore AGE’s network and outreach).

Draft interview checklists for GEOs, Government institutions and third parties are included in *Annex 4: Interview checklists*, whereas interview checklists for the AGE staff and partners are still being elaborated, as they require more detail.

Most interviews will be individual, but focus group interviews with AGE staff may be organized to allow for interaction and exchange of information, e.g. a SWOT-analysis and revisiting the project TOC. All interviews will be virtual due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Process of analysis and developing conclusions

The process of analysis will be organic and incremental during the data collection phase, and the evaluation team will maintain a constant dialogue to ensure that ideas

and information are discussed and analysed throughout with the aim of ensuring that knowledge generation is iterative.

The evaluation will be **based on qualitative data**, supplemented by limited quantitative data (e.g. number of trainings, publications, media spots, budget execution etc.). The focus is primarily on the institutional capacity and sustainability perspectives, and secondary on the project achievements in terms of outputs.

Tools for data analysis

- **Context analysis.** Based on the indication from the Embassy, the context analysis will be limited to a brief overview of the changed settings in terms of legislation and institutional insertion of AGE in the government structure and budget in the period of 2015 to 2020. A broader analysis of the national political and socio-economic context will not be included.
- **Content analysis** may be applied in the cross-reading of progress reports to make sure that specific topics are traced over time.
- Use of **Most Significant Changes** to establish key benchmarks both in terms of institutional capacity and in terms of network and outreach.
- **SWOT analysis** will be applied as a simple institutional capacity assessment tool. This will be done with AGE key staff and take point of departure in the 2015-SWOT from the project proposal.
- **Triangulation of data** from different sources will be undertaken to test validity of information and guarantee cross-checking of information.

Measurement of achievements

- **Revisiting the result framework and theory of change** will be done by means of cross-reading of progress reports. A systematic reading and tracing of specific expected results over time will facilitate the establishment of timelines in terms of achievements and challenges. This exercise will mainly verify project outputs, but indications of lasting change (outcome) will be explored.
- Sample interviews on perceived outcome in terms of changed behaviour and practice among selected training participants will be undertaken

Team coordination in analysis

- The **evaluation matrix and evaluation questions** will serve as a guide for interviews and data collection and ensure the collection of relevant and targeted information.
- **Systematic registration of information** from interviews and document review will ensure shared knowledge within the team and a continuous reflection on the incremental amount of information.
- **Regular team meetings** (as a minimum weekly) will ensure discussion of preliminary findings and an iterative and co-creative analysis.

Formulation of recommendations

- The formulation of recommendations will be **based on the analysis of findings** and with a forward-looking scope.
- The formulation should be **in close collaboration with Sida** - and to the extent possible also with AGE – to ensure operational recommendations

Ethics and participation

The evaluation team will Interviews will treat all information with **the professional confidence and ethical integrity**. All interviews will be strictly confidential and the informants will be informed up-front if the meetings are recorded. The evaluation team will ensure respect to people’s right to provide information in confidence and make participants aware of the scope and limits of confidentiality. Sensitive information will not be traceable to its source so that the relevant individuals are protected from reprisals. The evaluation team will further ensure respect for dignity and diversity, fair representation and avoidance of harm should be ensured.⁸³

The question of a **possible conflict of interest** was flagged in the technical proposal and also raised at the start-up meeting, as one of the evaluation team members has had prior engagement with AGE and is currently undertaking an assignment with the MCC-program under the Office of the Prime Minister. Albeit the risk of a real conflict of interest is considered minimal, it was agreed that a case-by-case assessment will be made for said team members assigned tasks, especially in regard to conducting interviews. It is important that the team as well as the Embassy pays attention to the risk and FCG Sweden is ready to immediately take measures in case there is a problem. The evaluation team and FCG Sweden’s project manager welcomes an ongoing dialogue with Sida on the matter.

Limitations

The evaluation team may **face problems accessing information on training participants**. According to AGE they will have to “abide to the law on data protection since the lists of participants have personal data.”⁸⁴ The lists can only be made available for the evaluation team to look at in the AGE premises in the presence of AGE staff.

The evaluation takes place from November to January, and may encounter constraints in terms of **availability of informants** due to the holiday season. The evaluation team will seek to book as many interviews as possible in the beginning of December to mitigate this risk.

The limitations are mainly related to the current **restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic**, as face2face interviews and meetings are not possible. All interviews – even those conducted in Kosovo – will therefore be virtual, and there will be limited use of focus group discussions. It is anticipated that this may cause problems in terms of reaching all identified informants, e.g. among former training participants and GEOs from municipalities.

AGE strongly recommended against the use of **e-questionnaires** with e.g. government and municipal gender equality officers officials, as it will be difficult to receive answers. It has therefore been decided to leave this method of data collection out.

⁸³ FCG Evaluation Manual, Sida Framework Agreement 2019-2021, August 2020, pp. 31-32

⁸⁴ Email correspondence with AGE, 18.11.2020.

There will be **language barriers** in terms of the team leader’s participation in interviews conducted in Albanian. This is reinforced by the fact that the interviews are virtual. The evaluation team has therefore applied a division of tasks based on language, as it is considered difficult to manage translations in the virtual interviews. The possible challenge of accessing information is mitigated by means of sharing detailed notes from interviews within the team. There is particular reason to be aware of the linkage between this risk in matrix with mitigation of the possible conflict of interest as mentioned under 4.4.

One of the **evaluation questions related to efficiency** (evaluation question # 4.c – see Evaluation Matrix below) refers to the possibility of comparing to what extent the process during which the outputs and activities were developed and implemented to similar processes in other countries. The evaluation team sees that it may be difficult to identify comparable projects that can serve as a comparison.

Although this is a final evaluation, it is still **too early to undertake any impact assessment** (evaluation question # 5 – see Evaluation Matrix below). Even outcome harvesting is difficult after only four years, considering the changes in the institutional setting of AGE. Measures to seek indications of effects will be taken, e.g. in relation to perceptions of changed practices by former trainees.

Annex 4 – List of documents received

AGE project documents

1. Institutional strengthening of Gender Mechanisms in Kosovo the AGE, GAO and MGEO, AGE, Project Proposal, AGE, 16.03.2015
2. AGE Organizational Chart
3. MF Raporti Përmbledhës ABGJ 2016
4. AGE Working Plan 2017
5. AGE Project Management Report, 20.07-2015 – 08.03.2017
6. AGE Project Management Report, 03.2017 - 12.2017
7. AGE Project Management Report, 2018
8. AGE Government annual work plan 2019
9. AGE Project Management Report 2019
10. AGE Financial report 2019
11. AGE Work plan 2020
12. AGE – new project proposal to Sida, 20.06.2020
13. AGE's breakdown budget for Jan-June 2021 (proposal for no cost extension, 16.11.2020)
14. Regulation (grk) no. 06/2017 on internal organization and systematization of jobs in Agency on Gender Equality, Government of Kosovo, 2017
15. Supervision Committee, Decision document, AGE, 26.01.2018
16. AGE Notes from meeting with Sida, 29 Jan 2020

AGE publications

1. Evaluation of the Kosovo Program for Gender Equality 2008-2013, AGE/Embassy of Sweden, Kosovo, December 2016
2. 2015 Law on gender Equality, Ex-post evaluation of the regulatory impact; AGE, 2017-2018.
3. Gender Equality Impact Assessment Manual, AGE, January 2019
4. Integrated annual planning system guidelines for the Agency for Gender Equality and gender mechanisms in Kosovo, AGE, April 2018
5. What we need to know about Gender Equality in Kosovo, AGE, May 2018
6. Official development aid for Gender Equality. The state of alignment with Kosovo Government Priorities (2015-2018), AGE, March 2020
7. Kosovo Program for Gender Equality 2020-2024 Action Plan, AGE, June 2020
8. Preventing Gender Stereotypes and promoting Gender Equality in school textbooks and materials. A methodological guide, AGE, n.d.
9. Communication Strategy, draft, 2020, only available in Albanian.

Sida agreements and reports

1. Grant Agreement Sida-AGE, signed, June 2015

2. Decision on amendment of agreement, 14.11.2017
3. Statement on narrative and financial report, Sida, 20 April 2019
4. Agency for Gender Equality Kosovo 2015-2019, Conclusion on Performance, Sida, 28 April 2017
5. Conclusion on Performance - Summary of Results. Institutional support to the Agency for Gender Equality Kosovo 2015-2019, Embassy of Sweden, 11.01.2019
6. Conclusion on Performance - Assessment of performance, Institutional support to the Agency for Gender Equality Kosovo 2015-2020, Embassy of Sweden, 29.06.2020
7. Second Amendment to Agreement, signed 16 December 2020.

Audit reports

1. Statement on AGE audit report, Sida, 20 April 2017
2. Statement on AGE audit report, Sida 28 April 2017
3. AGE Audit report 2017, February 2018
4. Management Letter for the year ended 31 December 2017, March 2018
5. AGE management response to auditors report, AGE, 12 July 2017
6. Annual Audit Report 2018, March 2019
7. Management response 2018 (in Albanian)
8. Annual Audit Report 2019, February 2020
9. Management Letter, 2019

Project reports

1. Project for Institutional strengthening of Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality and Gender Mechanisms Inception Report, NIRAS Indevelop / DADAG 02.11.2016
2. AGE support, monthly report, July 2016
3. AGE support, monthly report, August 2016
4. AGE support, monthly report, September 2016
5. Institutional Strengthening of the Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality, Quarterly report, January – March 2017
6. Institutional Strengthening of the Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality, Quarterly report, April - June 2017
7. Institutional Strengthening of the Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality, Quarterly report, July – September 2017
8. Institutional Strengthening of the Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality, Annual report 2017, 12.03.2018
9. Institutional Strengthening of the Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality, Quarter 1 report, January – March 2018, 27.04.2018
10. Institutional Strengthening of the Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality, Quarterly report, quarter 2, April – June 2018
11. Institutional Strengthening of the Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality, Quarterly report, quarter 3, July – September 2018
12. AGE work plan 2018

13. Institutional Strengthening of the Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality, Quarterly report, quarter 2, April – June 2019
14. Institutional Strengthening of the Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality, Quarterly report, quarter 4, October – December 2019
15. Agency for Gender Equality proposed Exit Plan, Niras & CPM, 16.12.2019 / 09.01.2020
16. Strengthening the Institutional Capacities of the Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality and Gender Mechanisms, 2016-2020, PPT, Niras, n.d.
17. DRAFT FINAL PROJECT REPORT, Institutional Strengthening of the Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality, NIRAS, 27 May 2020.

Sida strategy and reports

1. Results strategy for Sweden's reform cooperation with Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and Turkey, 2014-2020, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Sweden
2. In-depth Strategy Report for Kosovo implementing the Results Strategy for Sweden's Reform cooperation with Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and Turkey 2014-2020, Sida, 2016
3. Strategy Report for Kosovo implementing the Results Strategy for Sweden's Reform cooperation with Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and Turkey 2014-2020, Sida, 2016
4. Reform Cooperation in Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and Turkey – a summary of Sweden's strategy for 2014-2020 (1 pager)
5. Evaluation of the Reform Cooperation with Eastern Europe, Western Balkan and Turkey 2014-2019, final report, NIRAS Sweden AB / Sida Decentralized Evaluation, 2020:8.
6. Gender Equality Mainstreaming gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment, Portfolio overview, Sida, 2017

Other documents

1. Kosovo Gender Equality Strategy 2014 – 2017, UNDP, August 2014
2. Evaluation of UN Women's Contribution to Increasing Women's Leadership and Participation in Peace and Security and Humanitarian Response, Kosovo case study, by Marta Foresti and Adriana Gashi, ODI, 2014
3. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING IN KOSOVO, Kosovar Gender Studies Center, ERAC Coalition, January 2017

Websites

- <https://kryeministri-ks.net/en/the-prime-minister-office/agencies/agency-on-gender-equality-age/>
- https://abgj.rks-gov.net/en/lajmi_single/439
- <https://www.sida.se/English/where-we-work/Europe/Kosovo/>

TV and media links - 2019

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3SZvRv99VIg&list=UUIZLXm5dGg68Zneb_larujg&index=2 (Thuaj jo ngacmimeve seksuale ne vendin e punë)

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dairhASIVYE&list=UUIZLXm5dGg68Zneb_larujg&index=7 (Përfaqësimi i barabartë gjinore 50%)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CKLM5prE7Tw&list=UUIZLXm5dGg68Zneb_larujg&index=6 (Institucionet shëndetësore ne identifikimin e rasteve te dhunës)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WgYDNoMjL-4&list=UUIZLXm5dGg68Zneb_larujg&index=5 (Martesat e Hershme)

TV and media links - 2018

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vHu7WhKCTgc&list=UUIZLXm5dGg68Zneb_larujg&index=4 (Promovimi i grave te suksesshme qe u nderuan me çmimet ndërkombëtare 2018)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zm_rTBMaZQk&list=UUIZLXm5dGg68Zneb_larujg&index=5 (Aborti selektiv 2018)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zfq8XdcacqM&list=UUIZLXm5dGg68Zneb_larujg&index=7 (Verifikimi i Statusit të Personave të Dhunuar gjatë Luftës Çlirimtare të Kosovës 2018)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3SZvRv99VIg&list=UUIZLXm5dGg68Zneb_larujg&index=2 (Thuaj jo ngacmimeve seksuale ne vendin e punës 2018)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PRdiqxsqkOo&list=UUIZLXm5dGg68Zneb_larujg (E drejta ne trashëgimi 2018)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hPB3_Hzx-i0&list=UUIZLXm5dGg68Zneb_larujg&index=6 (Udhëzimi Administrativ për regjistrimin e pronës 2018)

TV and media links - 2017

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b1rIRrupQsQ&list=UUIZLXm5dGg68Zneb_larujg&index=11 (Buxhetimi i përgjegjshëm gjinor 2017)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c0OZD2XCaH4> (JO te gjitha plagët janë te dukshme -2017)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2caE0UW6M0&list=UUIZLXm5dGg68Zneb_larujg&index=12 (Përfaqësim e Barabartë Gjinor për Zgjedhjet Lokale të 22 tetorit 2017)
- Ndriçimi i ndërtesës se qeverise 2018
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjCGv9tHkEM&list=UUIZLXm5dGg68Zneb_larujg&index=3 (Sekuenca nga ndriçimi i ndërtesës se Qeverise 2018)

Annex 5 – List of interviewees and work schedule

In addition to the people met listed below, the evaluation team tried to set up another ten interviews, but did succeed in e-meeting these people due to the COVID-19 situation in Kosovo during the data collection period.

Date of interview	Name	Position	Organisation
12.11.2020	Edi Gusia	Chief Executive Officer	Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality
16.11.2020	Khalil Ansara	Project Manager	Niras
	Anastacia Yermoschenko	Project Assistant	Niras
18.11.2020	Visare Gorani	Former Project Manager	Embassy of Sweden in Kosovo
02.12.2020	Blerinda Idrizi	Former Technical Adviser	Niras
03.12.2020	Leonora Selmani	Head of Division - Legislation	Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality
	Fatime Jasiqi	Former Gender Officer	Ministry of Education, Science and technology
04.12.2020	Lindita Piraj	Gender Equality Officer	Dragash Municipality
	Elmaze Gashi	Project Manager	Embassy of Sweden in Kosovo
	Basri Kastrati	Head of Victim Advocacy Office	State Prosecutor Office
07.12.2020	Fatime Lumi	Senior Public Relations Officer	Ministry of Finance
	Leunora Ahmeti	Head of Division	Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare Labor division
	Adelina Kajtazi	Acting Head of Division - Monitoring and Evaluation	Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality
	Shpresa Sheremeti	Gender Equality Officer	Ministry of Economy and Environment

ANNEX 5 – LIST OF INTERVIEWEES AND WORK SCHEDULE

08.12.2020	Karl Weber	Project Leader for Legal and Administrative Reform Project (LARP)	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)
09.12.2020	Shpresa Zariqi	Head of Division - Cooperation	Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality
	Nasrin Pourghazian	Head of Cooperation	Embassy of Sweden in Kosovo
10.12.2020	Ardiana Gashi	Consultant / Professor	School of Economics, University of Prishtina
	Nita Luci	Consultant / Associated professor	Faculty of Philosophy, University of Prishtina
	Shpend Emini	Program manager	Helvetas
11.12.2020	Vlora Tuzi Nushi	Programme Specialist/Head of Office	UN Women
	But Dedaj	Former Dean of Faculty of Economics	Faculty of Economics, University of Prishtina
	Igo Rogova	Executive Director	Kosovo Women's Network
14.12.2020	Isa Hajdari	Head of Procurement Office	Government Procurement Office
	Krenare Bektashi	Officer for Cooperation	Office of Cooperation and Development
	Mirlinda Lushtaku	Senior Policy Coordination Officer	Coordination Secretariat, Office of the Prime Minister
	Qemajl Marmullakaj	Former Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Justice/Head of Strategic Planning Office	Ministry of Justice
15.12.2020	Yllka Kotorri	Head of Division - Budget and Administration	Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality
16.12.2020	Visare Nimani	Head of Office	UNFPA Office in Kosovo
17.12.2020	Focus group meeting / verification workshop with AGE management		
18.12.2020	Besa Veseli	Gender Equality Officer	Mitrovica South Municipality
	Adile Shaqiri	Head of Division for Social Welfare	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare

21.12.2020	Interim debriefing with Embassy of Sweden		
23.12.2020	Vjollca Jashanica	Acting Head of Public Information	Ministry of Local Public Administration
24.12.2020	Hilmi Jashari	Former Ombudsperson	Ombudsperson Institution
18.01.2021	Ariana Veliu	Financial Analyst	Office for Budgetary Policies, Ministry of Finance

Annex 6 – SWOT analysis 2020

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats - summary used in Focus Group Discussion with AGE 18.12.2020

Based on interviews with AGE staff in December 2020.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visibility/legitimacy/recognition/authority increased and strong voice• Government recognition• Increased government budget• Institutional set-up within OPM• Institutional self-confidence• Well-qualified staff• Steady staff group and professionalism• Well-organized with job descriptions• Good work plan• System for financial management and administration in place• Increased administrative and implementation capacity• Experience / capacity on gender budgeting• Research / evidence based information activities• Capacity to disseminate information through media (SoMe, TV-spots, presentation skills)• Documents, manuals and procedures in place• Network of ministerial and municipal GEOs• Outreach to CSOs and academia• Driver's seat in donor coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Insufficient budget to fully implement the mandate• Government procurement procedures often cause delays• Shortage of number and of permanent staff (the standard is 21, but only 17/18)• Limited formal gender and general training• Difficulties in recruiting competent consultants• Difficulties in fulfilling the mandate due to lack of human resources• Insufficient capacity to respond to demand for support on policy and legislation revisions• Limited office space• Irregular contact with GEOs• Lack of political back-up to GEOs

OPPORTUNITIES

- More in-service and external training in future (staff training # technical assistance) → staff-empowerment
- External budgets → more activities
- COVID-19 funding for SMEs - based on capacity - creates outreach
- Collaboration with private sector and marketing services
- KPGE roll-out
- Gender Budgeting
- GEIA implementation
- Implementation of documents, strategies, guidelines produced (e.g. on stereotypes in education)
- Additional external funding

THREATS

- Norms and mentality - not gender friendly
- Limited government budget
- Frequent government re-structuring
- Fragile political recognition
- Lack of awareness on gender requirements within institutions
- Government procurement procedures
- Volume of work does not match staff capacity
- Need for additional support to GEIA
- Low maintenance of capacity
- Lack of funding for Gender Budgeting
- Too many ad hoc activities imposed on AGE
- Discontinued Sida-support may lead to loss of credibility and break of momentum
- COVID-19 restrictions

Annex 7 – Summary of quantitative project achievements

The following tables on project achievements are copied from the *Final Project Report: Strengthening Institutional Capacity of the Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality*, Niras, May 2020.

Summary of 2016-2020 Project Achievements under Impact Result 1:

Gender equality objectives are prioritized and integrated into policy and legal framework → Kosovo policy and institutional frameworks provide equal access to rights and opportunities for all men and women in Kosovo.

Key Project Achievements:

- ✓ Drafting of the Kosovo Programme for Gender Equality
- ✓ Drafting of the Gender Responsive Budgeting Concept Document
- ✓ 88 policy frameworks reviewed and received recommendations:
 - 38 concept documents leading to regulatory frameworks
 - 10 sectoral and cross-sectoral development policy frameworks and instruments
 - 37 normative acts (draft laws and draft regulations)
 - national policy planning and reform instruments, annually re-viewed and updated: Medium Term Expenditure Framework, Economic Reform Programme and National Action Plan for the Implementation of Stabilisation and Association Agreement
- ✓ 2 Ex-post exercise undertaken:
 - Evaluation of the former KPGE
 - Ex-post of the Law on Gender Equality Implementation
- ✓ 7 gender equality mainstreaming instruments produced to advance gender equality in policy drafting and application, policy planning and consultation instruments:
 - Methodology for the Drafting of the Kosovo Programme for Gender Equality
 - Integrated Annual Planning System Guidelines for AGE and Kosovo Gender Mechanisms
 - Gender Equality Impact Assessment Manual and GEIA Toolkit
 - Introductory Package of Legal and Policy Framework on Gender Equality in Kosovo – A Vademecum for Gender Equality Officers and Civil Servants
 - Monitoring Framework for the Implementation of LGE – A User’s Guide to the LGE Indicators Monitoring Framework and Reporting
 - Commentary on the Law on Gender Equality

- ✓ 53 capacity building events for systemically expanding the effective application of gender mainstreaming instruments at all levels of policy cycles and policy frameworks:
 - 14 workshops on policy formation such as: KPGE, GRB Concept Document, LGE Monitoring Framework
 - 4 trainings on policy planning, annual planning and GRB application
 - 14 trainings and 11 orientation session on GEIA concepts and GEIA application for drafting regulatory frameworks in Kosovo public administration
 - 4 seminars on policy instruments and ex-post policy results,
 - 8 roundtables on the introduction of LGE and Kosovo gender policy framework
 - 3 study visits focusing on the application of the GRB and GEIA
- ✓ 1503 individuals (AGE staff and gender mechanisms, civil servants in line ministries and municipalities, member of parliaments, CSOs, rule of law entities, and donor community) have participated and benefited from the Project activities.

Summary of 2016-2020 Project Achievements under Impact Result 2:

Partnership and networking platforms contribute to institutional strengthening of gender mechanisms, informed policies, and effective coordination of resources → Result oriented dialogue and action platforms to expand support, coordinate resources and diversify capacities for the advancement of gender equality.

Key Project Achievements:

- ✓ AGE regularly participates and contributes in two networks: EIGE – Western Balkan Countries and Turkey network, IMF/JVC Gender Responsive Budgeting Network for the Western Balkans and CIS countries network
- ✓ Policy Note on Internship Placement, Selection Criteria and Working in Modalities in Assisting AGE and Gender Mechanisms
- ✓ “Preventing Gender Stereotypes and Promoting Gender Equality in School Textbooks and Materials” A Methodological Guide for Pre-Tertiary Education
- ✓ “Gender & Economics” - teaching course established at the School of Economics of Prishtina University
- ✓ 2015-2018 Kosovo ODA and its Alignment with the Kosovo Gender Equality Agenda - Assessment Report
- ✓ 2 two-day workshops organized on data computation methodology for the preparation of the Kosovo Gender Equality Index, with the participation of the GEI working group members
- ✓ 2 one-day seminars organized on gender stereotypes and the promotion of gender equality values in the textbooks of the pre-tertiary education level
- ✓ One workshop on Gender & Economics and its Mainstreaming in the Tertiary Education Levels – Challenges and Opportunities
- ✓ One study visit focusing on the inter-institutional, anti-domestic violence model of Apulia in Italy organized with the participation of AGE, GEOs and General Prosecutor’s Office

- ✓ A total of 372 participants attended and benefited from the Project activities.

Summary of 2016-2020 Project Achievements under Impact Result 3:

Gender equality values are publicly promoted and gender stereotypes addressed → Gender equality values are embraced by the Kosovo society.

Key Project Achievements:

- ✓ AGE's Four-Year Communication Strategy, 2017-2021 designed and under implementation
- ✓ 4 public awareness campaign on 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence
- ✓ 3 public awareness campaigns on Property Rights
- ✓ 3 public awareness campaigns on the observance of gender parity representation during general and local elections and in the elected bodies (2017, 2019)
- ✓ 15 video spots produced and broadcasted in Albanian and Serbian languages,
- ✓ 42 billboards and 440 posters printed and distributed in Albanian and Serbian languages
- ✓ 3 two-day training events on Gender and Audio-visual Storytelling
- ✓ 58 percent of public information officers in Kosovo line ministries and municipalities trained on Gender and Audio-visual Storytelling subject
- ✓ 16 AGE staff member and 12 advertising and marketing profession-also from private sector were trained on Gender Audio-visual Storytelling subject
- ✓ 2 research activities undertaken on gender portrayal and representation in the Kosovo print media:
 - Gender Portrayal and Presentation in the Print Media (2014-2015),
 - Gender Portrayal and Presentation in the Print Media (2016 – 2018).
- ✓ AGE's Gender Resource Centre established with 33 book titles from prominent authors and experts, covering a broad range of issues, such as: health, care work, media, domestic violence, transitional justice, social welfare, parental leave, gender budgeting, economics, etc.
- ✓ 158 individuals (AGE staff and gender mechanisms, public information officers in line ministries and municipalities, member of parliaments, CSOs, journalists, students of journalism) have participated and benefited from the Project activities.



Final evaluation of the framework agreement regarding direct grant support and consultancy to the Agency for Gender Equality, Kosovo

This report covers the final evaluation of the 2015-2020 Swedish support to Agency for Gender Equality (AGE) in Kosovo, with the purpose to evaluate achieved results against project objectives, identify key success factors or constraints, provide suggestions, and inform future priorities. AGE was established with a responsibility for promoting equal participation of men and women in political, economic, social and cultural life. Swedish support included direct budget input and technical assistance, and it enhanced the agency's visibility and legitimacy in relation to government and other donors. The project strengthened AGE's capacity to take a leading role in strengthening government gender mechanisms, being one main result the creation of gender mainstreaming instruments. Indications of impact were fragile, but most of the results are paving the ground for a roll out of gender equality in Kosovo. Geographical outreach was limited, leaving lasting impact in public institutions at an incipient stage. Capacity building efforts resulted in increased gender equality awareness beyond AGE, but there was little evidence that this would continue without a substantial future input.

SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY

Address: SE-105 25 Stockholm, Sweden. Office: Valhallavägen 199, Stockholm
Telephone: +46 [0]8-698 50 00. Telefax: +46 [0]8-20 88 64
E-mail: info@sida.se. Homepage: <http://www.sida.se>

