

## MINUTES (DRAFT)

### Local Partners Appraisal Committee (LPAC) Virtual MEETING

#### Women in Politics, Public Administration & Civil Society (WiPPACS)

Date: 28.07.2022

#### Attendance:

Ashot Giloyan	RA MTAI, Head of Department on Local Self-Government Policy
Tatevik Stepanyan	RA MLSA, Deputy Minister
Anna Gharibyan	Head of Analysis and Development Projects Department of Civil Service Office (CSO), Prime-Minister's Office of the Republic of Armenia
Aneta Babayan	Advisor to the DPM
Neil Ghandi	Governance Adviser, Good Governance Fund (GGF)
Oksanna Abrahamyan	Head of Programmes, UK Embassy in Armenia
Hamazasp Danielyan	Senior National Programme Officer for Governance and Climate Change, SDC
Margarita Hakobyan	OxYGen Foundation, Executive Director
Natia Natsvlishvili	UNDP, Resident Representative
Konstantin Sokulskiy	UNDP, Deputy Resident Representative
Natalya Harutyunyan	UNDP, Gender Equality (GE) Portfolio Manager
Anna Nersesyants	UNDP, Task Leader, GE Portfolio
Davit Harutyunyan	UNDP, Policy Adviser, Police Reform Project
Marianna Avdalyan	UNDP, GE Programme Associate

#### Purpose:

The main objective of the meeting was to present the “Women in Politics, Public Administration and Civil Society” project, its strategic areas and objectives to the LPAC members and partners, discuss strategic developments and current context in which the project will operate, and get endorsement of the LPAC participants on the project activities.

The insights and feedback shared by the LPAC participants will be integrated in the final version of the ProDoc, as well as considered throughout implementation of the project.

## **Overview of the Meeting Discussions:**

On 28 July 2022, the virtual LPAC meeting for “**Women in Politics, Public Administration and Civil Society**” (WiPPACS) project took place in zoom with participation of the representatives from Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, the Civil Service Office, RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure, RA Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Yerevan Municipality, UK Good Governance Fund, UK Embassy in Armenia, UNDP Armenia, SDC and OxyGen Foundation.

**Natalya Harutyunyan (NH), Gender Equality (GE) Portfolio Manager** opened the meeting and greeted the participants, presented the purpose and objective of the LPAC meeting.

**Natia Natsvlishvili (NN), UNDP Resident Representative**, greeted the meeting participants and thanked representatives from MTAI, MLSA, DPM Office, UK Good Governance fund, UK Embassy, , Oxygen Foundation for continuous and productive partnership. Corporate gratitude was expressed to the UK Government and GGF for partnership during the previous “Women in Politics” project, as well as in the upcoming cooperation. Being an important corporate modality of endorsement for a programmatic intervention for UNDP, the LPAC implies a broad representational and stakeholder discussion. At the meeting the main areas, strategies and priorities are brought forward UNDP for profound discussion with main partners and stakeholders and receiving recommendations.

WiPPACS is a flagship project within UNDP Armenia focusing on women empowerment at all three levels – policy, national, and grassroots. The project also enters new niche – collaboration with civil society. The project will capitalize on earlier achievements and results of two previous UNDP projects – Women in Politics (WiP) funded by UK GGF and Gender Equality in Public Administration in Armenia (GEPAA) funded by UNDP. The project will build on the results of the comprehensive work within the previous interventions including the data and evidence collected, the solid cadre of powerful women and youth and on the partnership with the key government institutions. The project will be implemented in coordination with other UNDP projects, particularly projects on women empowerment and gender equality funded by SDC and UN Women, the project on strengthening the Parliament and others.

The project comes at an opportune moment to be in line with the reform agenda and processes happening in the country, including the recent adoption of the Public Administration Reform (PAR) strategy, ongoing Territorial and Administrative Reform (TARA). The project will surely make its relevant and necessary contribution to the processes through strengthening and empowering the gender dimension of the reform agenda.

UNDP team is well established and committed to take forward the collaboration with the objective of enjoying impressive achievements in three-year’s time from now.

NN presented the agenda and invited project counterparts for the opening remarks.

**Tatevik Stepanyan (TS), RA MLSA, Deputy Minister** greeted the participants. TS emphasized joining efforts between MLSA and UNDP around the National Women Empowerment Accelerator and national gender profile for coordinated action and shared results.

**Ashot Giloyan (AG), RA MTAI, Head of Department on Local Self-Government Policy** mentioned the long and positive track-record of fruitful work with UNDP Gender Equality team. After the large-scale TARA reform, the capacity building of community councils, both women and men, LSG staff and other community workers is very essential. Now women representation in community councils is in place,

but there is a need for building their capacity as local political leaders. The MTAI would be thankful if the project considers this request to engage broader groups of LSG representatives in the project capacity development activities. AG reaffirmed the readiness of MTAI for continuous cooperation.

**Aneta Babayan (AB), Advisor to the DPM** greeted the participants and highlighted the importance of the project and previous productive track-record with the UNDP Gender Equality team. **AB** suggested to update the statement in the ProDoc relating to PAR and mention that it is already adopted in May 2022.

**Natalya Harutyunyan** made a presentation on project general context, main data, objective and activities of the Strategic Focus 1. Further, **Anna Nersesyants** presented objective and activities of the Strategic Focus 2, and **Margarita Hakobyan** from OXYGen Foundation presented the objective and activities of the Strategic Focus 3.

**Natia Natsvlshvili** thanked the presenters and opened the floor for discussion.

#### **Q&A and observations:**

**Davit Harutyunyan (DH)**, UNDP, Policy Advisor, mentioned that UNDP Police Reform Project implements Gender Seal in the police, which is the 1<sup>st</sup> effort in the country within the low enforcement agencies. Currently, the online survey on “Gender Equality at the Workplace” is being conducted and in September the full Gender Seal process will start. Hence, the GEPAA earlier achievements paved way for cross-portfolio cooperation.

AG informed that in September local elections will be held as 13 communities were amalgamated into 5, and communities where majoritarian elections have been held should now hold proportionate elections. The upcoming elections are a good and timely opportunity for the project to support various aspects including correct formation of the proportionate lists. AG informed that in Aparan community women were elected to the community council by the quota, however all resigned after elections. Efforts should be made to prevent such practices.

The Central Electoral Committee has already publicized the election timeline so the project team can already plan the possible interventions. The MTAI is ready to support in the process to achieve positive results.

To reiterate what was mentioned during the opening remarks, the capacity of the communities is limited, and the request from the Ministry is to support building up local capacity on local governance aspects.

**NH** mentioned that the issue raised is essential and is paid much attention to since besides Aparan, Garni and several other communities also have zero representation. Discussions are under way with the partners on how to address the issue including making amendments to the law to prevent such harmful practices. **NH** informed that both the presented project, as well as the SDC-funded “Women and Youth in Innovative Local Development” (WYILD) work with LSGs, the community being, distributed between the two projects. While working with women, much attention has been given to raising their activism during elections. For this reason, the pre-electoral support scheme was changed from 3- to 5-tier approach since the proportional system required also work with political parties. The new project has envisaged such components too.

**MH** informed that the possible mechanisms were discussed at the National Assembly to prevent the issue raised, including amending the law in a way that the women who withdraw themselves are replaced with other women.

**NN** asked **TS**, as the representative of the responsible institution how she would imagine mainstreaming some of the achievements of the project into the national gender machinery.

**Response:** **TS** replied that the role of the state institutions is indeed the coordination and mainstreaming of the gender equality in governance processes. Council on Women's Affairs under the DPM's office is operational and thus is an important toolkit for coordination of gender equality work at the national level. The first session under DPM Hambardzumyan will be held in September 2022, the agenda will include wide range of topics. The international partners can participate as observers. MLSA will assume secretary role.

Strengthening the role of Council on Children and Women's Affairs in the regional governors' s offices is another important dimension.

The gender mainstreaming mechanisms should be well developed and connected to the National Gender Strategy.

**Response:** Regarding the coordination of the projects related to women empowerment and gender equality **NH** informed that the platform of the External Gender Thematic Group (eGTG, co-chaired by MLSA, UNDP and World Bank) is used. The next meeting is planned for September, and all partners implementing gender equality and women empowerment initiatives can share the respective information during it. The results of this exchange can be shared also broadly, including among the government, since only MLSA involved in the eGTG from the Government side

**HD** informed that the new data for Global Gender Gap Index are released according to which the Armenia's ranking in several dimensions has considerably improved, which is to large extent attributable to the gender quota, adopted and applied.

**Response:** **NH** ensured that the respective update will be made in the Project Document.

The Council on Women's Affairs under the DPM's office is another great platform for partners to exchange on the ongoing projects and ideas.

**Anna Gharibyan (AGh)** indicated that Civil Service Office looks forward to cooperation and will present written inputs to the ProDoc. She also mentioned as an additional information that 5 division heads at the CSO are women.

**Closing remarks:**

**NN** was pleased to note that based on the discussion results, all partners involved expressed commitment to the gender aspect of the ongoing reforms – TARA, PAR and, in general –, to determination to ensure that women take their own roles in politics, public administration, economics and civil society.

**NN** thanked also SDC representative Mr. Danielyan for participating in the meeting and providing feedback.

**NN** expressed her appreciation to all the partners once again. Special thanks was expressed to the UK Government and GGF for being a consistent partner of UNDP and Armenia.

**NH** thanked all partners and stakeholders for their commitment, constant engagement and participation at the LPAC.

The project was recommended for signature with no changes.

Based on the written feedback from UNDP Operations Manager and RBM Analyst, the Project Document was reconciled with provisions of the corporate template. In regard to the *On-Granting Provisions Applicable to the Implementing Partner*, UNDP team will address it if/when the issue actualizes with the project partner – OxYGen Foundation.

*The LPAC has validated the commencement of the project and endorsed the proposed activities for 2022-2025.*

*Endorsed by Natia Natsvlshvili, UNDP Resident Representataive*

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