

## **Building Back Better through Strengthening Resilience of Rural Communities in Ararat, Aragatsotn, Armavir and Kotayk regions Project Appraisal Committee Meeting Minutes**

**VENUE: Zoom online meeting**

**DATE AND TIME: 11:00 -12:00; 16 December 2020**

**SUBJECT: LPAC Meeting**

### **Participants:**

- 1. Mihaela Stojkoska, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative (Chair)**
- 2. Ashot Giloyan, Head of Department, Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure (MTAI)**
- 3. Ira Panosyan, Ministry of Economy, Department of Agricultural Programs Elaboration, Resource Use and Cooperative Development, (Acting) Head of Department**
- 4. Natalia Viktorova, Embassy of Russian Federation to Armenia**
- 5. Anna Gyurjyan, UNDP Socioeconomic Portfolio Manager**
- 6. Arman Valesyan, Sustainable Communities Program Manager**
- 7. Marina Mkhitarian, UNDP Project manager**
- 8. Hovhannes Ghazaryan, CER Portfolio Manager**
- 9. Garik Khachatryan, Policy Advisor**

### ***Summary of the points discussed, and the decisions taken***

#### **Chairperson**

1. Opened the meeting and welcomed the participants;
2. Highlighted that the proposed Project centers upon the findings of research conducted by UNDP to assess the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the communities;
3. Stressed the importance of cooperation with Russian partners given their strategic and advanced approach to the new developments in the country and their rapid response;
4. Noted that project will closely cooperate with RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure (MTAI) alongside the RA Ministry of Economy and other relevant ministries and institutions;
5. Emphasized the importance of LPAC meeting and discussion about the current scope of the project and the possible expansion of the borders and potential spin-offs of the project;
6. Outlined the importance of the meeting for the further development and successful implementation of the project.

#### **UNDP/Arman Valesyan**

- Presented project major objectives, activities, intervention logic, beneficiaries and expected outcomes.

Particularly the following objectives were outlined:

**Objective 1: Research, Plan, Monitor**

The Project will support communities to develop crisis prevention and socio-economic recovery planes compatible with 5-year community development plans. The Project will assist the RA Government to strengthen the data collection and storing. The database developed previously for the RA MTAI, gives an exceptional start base to enhance the data management capacity of the RA MTAI in times of emergencies.

**Objective 2: Food Security**

The experience with Sustainable Communities project in Gegharkunik and Vayots Dzor regions proved that in lockdown the country is exposed with the risk of food security because of the high reliability on seed import. Based on the lessons learnt and good case practices, it is envisaged to replicate the model of seed reserve logistics centers for facilitating local food production and processing. This will create new opportunities for diversification and inter-regional cooperation. It was underlined that a high importance is given to alternative approaches with the use of new technologies where Russian expertise on the subject matter would be highly valuable and needed.

**Objective 3: SME support**

As a result of piloting of 70/30 co-financing model in Gegharkunik and Vayots Dzor regions for small-scaled start-ups as well as cluster solutions implemented during the Integrated Rural Tourism Development project for gastro yards, partnerships with the private sector proved to be a sustainable model for jobs creation and income generating opportunities. Leveraging home-made food production and processing, establishing bread bakeries, would be one way to support SMEs in the target communities of 4 regions. Technical assistance would also be provided in terms of marketing and sales. UNDP's Kolba Lab would be the key partner for reaching out to women and youth members. New employment opportunities will be created and skills enhanced.

**Objective 4: Enhance public services/infrastructure**

This will include renovation and technical supply for rural medical facilities, energy efficient street lighting, school and kindergarten water pipe renovation etc.

**MTAI**

1. Welcomed the initiative;
2. Noted that MTAI has an ongoing two partnerships and two completed ones with UNDP and RF and registered tangible results for providing better opportunities to communities to create added value;
3. Stressed the importance of supporting diversification of production in the communities as well as joining to other efforts with RA Government as in the case of Smart Barn subvention program;

4. Requested to consider a possibility to expand project efforts of SME development to Syunik region in addition to target regions, more specifically focusing on the needs of the displaced people from NK that will remain in Armenia and are in need of employment and income generating opportunities.

### **RA Ministry of Economy**

1. Greeted and congratulated all participants with the new upcoming project that was in line with Government priorities ensuring food security and seed multiplication;
2. Highlighted the successful results of already established partnership in the framework of Support to Gegharkunik and Vayots Dzor project: co-financing of smart barns, logistics center, etc. and stressed the importance to replicate the models in other regions.
3. Noted the importance of the partnership establishment and mutual projects.

### **Hovhannes Ghazaryan**

- Welcomed the initiative and stressed the importance of the project especially considering the dual crisis the country is facing.
- Noted the importance of sustainable green energy solutions to be implemented in the project and suggested to coordinate efforts between the programmes to have a better impact.

### **Chairperson**

- Noted that the project corresponds to the needs of communities and is based on the comprehensive socio-economic analysis;
- Stressed that the project will not be implemented in isolation but rather in partnership with local and international stakeholders and other UNDP projects;
- Noted that UNDP has demonstrated strong commitment in providing sustainable solutions for community development and can leverage that impact in other regions as well;
- Thanked everyone for active participation and lively discussion.

### **Follow up actions:**

- Consider incorporating the inclusion of some especially affected communities of Syunik region (Goris and Kapan) in the support to SMEs component of the project so that especially displaced population from NK is included in the project support schemes as target beneficiaries.

### **LPAC Chairperson**

  
**Mihaela Stojkoska**  
**UNDP DRR**