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EVALUATION REPORT

FINAL PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY (SEDA) FEATURING OUTCOMES HARVESTING

April 2020

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ACRONYMS

Acronym	Description
AZN	Azerbaijani Manat
AzRIP	World Bank-supported Azerbaijan Rural Investment Project
BTI	Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index
CDC	Community Development Council
COE	Council of Europe
CSEP	Civil Society Empowerment Program
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSOSI	Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index
CSSN	Council on State Support to Non-Governmental Organizations under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan
DRG	Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance
EQ	Evaluation Question
ET	Evaluation Team
EU	European Union
EWMI	East-West Management Institute
ExCom	Executive Committee
GD	Group Discussion
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GOAJ	Government of Azerbaijan
ICNL	International Center for Not-for-Profit Law
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IL	Intervention Logic
IP	Implementing Partner
IREX	International Research & Exchanges Board
KI	Key Informant
KII	Key Informant Interview
LLC	Limited Liability Company
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOE	Ministry of Economy (former MOED)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OH	Outcome Harvesting
OR	Operational Recommendation
PEC	Project Evaluation Committee
PMP	Performance Management Plan
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
PPS	Public Perception Survey
PR	Public Relations
R-NRTC	Regional NGO Resource and Training Center
SEDA	Socio-Economic Development Activity
SO	Site Observation
SOW	Statement of Work
SR	Strategic Recommendation
TA	Technical Assistance
TOC	Theory of Change
U.S.	United States

Acronym	Description
UMID	Support to Social Development Public Union
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EVALUATION PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS

The purpose of the Final Performance Evaluation of the Socio-Economic Development Activity (SEDA) Activity, conducted from October-December 2019, was “to establish, using a mixed-methods evaluation to include desk review, key informant interviews (KIs), and Outcomes Harvesting (OH), the most significant outcomes for increasing civic participation in governance to address social and economic needs in the regions of Azerbaijan, achieved by the SEDA activity.”¹ The evaluation’s main scope was to determine the community mobilization and civic participation outcomes related to SEDA activities by answering the following four evaluation questions (EQs):

EQ 1: What outcomes from the SEDA activity are: a) most evident, and b) sustainable? Distinguish between outcomes, including: the empowerment of local communities, Community Development Councils (CDCs), and local government officials to engage in democratic processes; CDCs’ ability to engage in and influence public policy decisions; and factors affecting women and youth participation.

EQ 2: What aspects of SEDA’s methodology, if any, are proven to be effective or not effective and how?

EQ 3: What distinguishes sustainable CDCs from the unsustainable ones?

EQ 4: Based on the outcomes harvest and evaluation of SEDA’s performance, what are the evaluation team’s (ET) observations or recommendations for areas of opportunity for future programming?

At the request of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the ET also included a general assessment of outcomes within the Components II and III of the SEDA project.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

SEDA is a 10-year (2011-2021), \$20 million-dollar USAID-funded program, co-financed by the Government of Azerbaijan (GOA), designed to increase citizen participation in governance and address the socio-economic needs of rural communities across Azerbaijan. Implemented by the East-West Management Institute (EWMI), and working in partnership with the Ministry of Economy (MOE) and local government officials, the project initially focused on advancing “citizen-driven development” through three main objectives: 1) establishing CDCs to increase civic participation in socio-economic development at the local and regional levels; 2) strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) to engage with citizens and government officials on local, regional, and national social and economic priorities; and 3) strengthening the capacity of the GOA to engage with stakeholders on key socio-economic development issues.

During project implementation, there was a shift in focus and scope of project activities away from direct capacity-building of CSOs and government institutions (Components II and III) toward supporting CDCs and local executive and municipal authorities to work together to identify, design, and implement small-scale infrastructure projects to address priority socio-economic needs through citizen mobilization (Component I). SEDA therefore revised its overarching objectives to:

1. Improve democratic practices at the local level; and
2. Contribute to solutions to socio-economic problems at the local level.

EVALUATION METHODS

The evaluation featured the OH method to help identify outcome-level results. The OH methodology - defined as changes in behavior, relationships, actions, or policies across SEDA interventions and across the time period of their implementation - allowed the ET to identify and substantiate outcomes across

¹ Statement of Work (SOW), p. 3.

sectors, geographic locations, levels of engagement, and diversity of stakeholders in such a complex program like SEDA. In line with the methodology, the ET performed OH as a series of steps to map outcomes from primary activity documents and through a workshop with the SEDA project team. The workshop and follow-up work with the SEDA team resulted in a total of 36 harvested outcomes.

In addition, the ET employed traditional qualitative and quantitative methods to establish and validate outcomes, including: a thorough review of SEDA program documents; a total of 25 KIIs with 30 stakeholders at the national, regional, and rayon levels; group discussions (GDs) with CDC members and, in some cases, project beneficiaries of 54 infrastructure projects; site observations (SOs) of community infrastructure projects; and three separate surveys directed at CDC members, government authorities (municipal authorities, local/rayon Executive Committees, [ExComs]), and other beneficiaries, respectively. For the GDs and SOs, the ET conducted site visits to 37 communities (or 25 percent of the current 146 project communities) across five regions of the country. The ET used a heterogeneous purposive, non-probability sampling methodology to select the sample of communities.

The ET encountered several limitations, including: very limited reflection on outcome-level results in SEDA project documents; the need for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the President's Administration to grant the ET permission for visits to site communities; difficulty in identifying and meeting final beneficiaries of SEDA-supported infrastructure projects; some degree of social desirability bias;² and limited data and sources of information on SEDA's Components II and III, which ended in 2015. The ET took steps to mitigate these limitations, where possible.

FINDINGS

EQ I Findings

1. The rapidly changing political environment over the course of project implementation has not been conducive for achievement of SEDA's outcomes related to the enhancement of democratic practices.
2. SEDA's investment in infrastructure produced the most evident and sustainable outcomes across SEDA project communities. The ET found ample evidence that local infrastructure delivers the improved services and public utilities demanded by citizens. Variations exist, but SEDA's contribution to improvement of living conditions and livelihoods has been positive and has added value to local community development.
3. New and/or renovated roads improve accessibility, bringing improvement of investment and potential for income generation, household savings for community members (on transport costs), and improved access to services (medical, educational, other).
4. Providing or upgrading household water and electricity supply has improved living conditions through reliable electricity supply for lights and other appliances and better water and sanitary conditions, resulting in enhanced productivity and quality of life for household members.
5. Enhanced access to medical services by constructing medical centers in local communities has brought significant positive results, not only improving health but also indirectly contributing to sustainability because they are linked with the state health system.
6. Improved conditions in schools and kindergartens have increased attendance and enhanced the safety and health of students. However, the ET found less utility of sports fields.
7. Other types of projects, e.g., roof replacement and solar lighting, were also supported. While benefits from roof replacement were evident, the solar lighting project did not bring long-term results.
8. SEDA contributed to increased income generation. The direct contribution to generation of jobs was important yet limited to small numbers of people (a total of 93, mostly seasonal, jobs). Economic

² The tendency of key informants and survey respondents to answer questions in a manner viewed favorably by others.

infrastructure such as feed grinding and egg incubation facilities as well as milk collection points directly contributed to improved livelihoods of local populations.

9. A total of 48 of SEDA-supported income-generation Civil Society Empowerment Programs (CSEPs) have been registered as businesses by the respective municipalities. Three are public-private partnerships (PPPs) and the rest are owned by the respective municipalities. According to SEDA, municipalities have the legal authority to run such businesses, most of which are small enough to operate under simplified tax laws. However, feedback from the field notes different levels of understanding of ownership and type of registration of such small businesses.
10. SEDA's work with local communities promoted participatory processes and community mobilization to plan and implement infrastructure projects, which were valued by stakeholders. SEDA applies standard methodology for community mobilization through assistance to establish CDCs and encouraging all communities to go through a process of identifying the top priority projects through either a door-to-door survey or a community meeting in which people present their priorities and then jointly select the top three. However, across the project, stakeholders view SEDA first and foremost as a local infrastructure development project, which relies upon community participation mechanisms (e.g., local election of CDCs, community participation in the prioritization process, social mobilization, etc.) as tools to achieve the end goal of improved services through infrastructure, and not necessarily as a project that promotes empowerment of local communities, CDCs, and local government officials to engage in democratic processes.
11. Community members participating in CDCs have built greater confidence in their ability to work collectively to identify and address community problems. However, there is limited evidence that this empowerment leads to sustained democracy and civic mobilization in targeted communities.
12. There is ample evidence of improved relationships between CDC members and municipal authorities and local ExComs, but less evidence of the extent to which this resulted in a shift in government decision-making, especially at the rayon level and above.
13. Women community members take part in SEDA-supported participatory processes and women CDC members are vocal in expressing their interests and needs, although the extent of their direct influence on decision-making was not clear. Yet, although some women were strong and respected leaders in CDCs, and others are serving as the municipal authority or local ExCom in some communities, it was not possible to attribute this outcome to SEDA's interventions.
14. There is little evidence of SEDA's contribution to youth engagement. Youth was not mainstreamed by the project and youth engagement, in the few places where it happened, was not attributable to SEDA.
15. SEDA's activities under Component II led to results at the output-level, in terms of building CSOs' capacity and conducting successful advocacy campaigns.
16. Discontinuation of activities under Components II and III had a negative impact on Component I by ending complementary efforts to promote more open, participatory government decision-making. The discontinuation, however, was beyond SEDA's control.
17. Under Component III, SEDA played a significant role in shaping, supporting, and promoting the 2014 Law on Public Participation, which established Public Councils as a central mechanism for citizen participation among other provisions, a notable outcome of the program. However, so far, the implementation of the law has been weak, with only a limited number of Public Councils established and their performance has not been particularly strong.
18. Other SEDA initiatives under Component III to expand opportunities for citizen participation in decision-making at the local and central government level produced no tangible outcomes, mainly because many activities under Component III were never fully operationalized.

EQ 2 Findings

19. SEDA has a standard methodology for selection of community priorities that is applied across the project target areas. While the methodology enables the project to be efficient and allows consistent approach across communities, it presents deficiencies in terms of ensuring full engagement of local constituencies and relevance to local needs. The decision to expand the pool of targeted communities (breadth), rather than concentrating assistance in a smaller number of communities over a longer period of time (depth), spread SEDA's resources thin, preventing the project from achieving deeper and more sustainable results through Component I. In addition, the discontinuation of Components II and III prevented a more holistic approach to the empowerment of communities and enhancement of democratic practices. These factors might have affected SEDA's focus of deeper and long-term promotion of local democracy practices toward infrastructure.
20. SEDA's approach to CDC trainings, mentoring, and exchanges between communities is viewed as highly effective by CDC members and local government authorities. However, other standard SEDA approaches (e.g., the annual conference for CDC members, long-term development plans) were cited much less often as significant by stakeholders in communities.
21. SEDA's approach to building a practice of local democracy through Component I activities was effective for the purposes of planning and implementing the infrastructure project, but not as effective in transforming the dynamics of citizen participation in local decision-making overall.
22. SEDA's monitoring and reporting approaches are rather weak. Review of SEDA's reports and other publications shows that SEDA succeeds in collecting and presenting good account of outputs and outcomes of its support to infrastructure in its reports, but achievements of results in terms of its contribution to outcomes relating to its first objective, "Improving democratic practices at the local level," ranges from limited to none.
23. SEDA's organizational structure secures a strong regional presence, adding value to engagement with targeted local communities and regions. However, periodic contact by SEDA's regional representatives after the completion of an infrastructure project leaves communities anticipating future investments from SEDA, which often do not materialize.

EQ 3 Findings

24. The sustainability prospects for CDCs are often fragile. The CDCs are still informal bodies, which mainly engage with full membership in preparation for a new project by SEDA. The main driver of CDC sustainability appears to be high-quality leadership in the local community; the pre-existing level of organization in a community was also a large factor in sustainability.

CONCLUSIONS

1. SEDA has effectively contributed to solutions to socio-economic problems at the local level, fulfilling its second overarching objective. SEDA helped increase the capacity of elected CDC members and local government actors to apply civic participation practices in identifying and addressing local socio-economic development priorities. Such an approach enhanced delivery of services and public utilities demanded by citizens, reaching approximately 304,000 people across six targeted regions of Azerbaijan thus far, helping to improve living conditions and livelihoods.
2. SEDA's contributions to the improvement of democratic governance practices (its first overarching objective) is limited at the time of this evaluation. SEDA assisted in building links between local community members, authorities, and ExComs. However, actual change towards more participatory government prioritization and decision-making processes has not materialized, particularly at the rayon level or higher, despite SEDA's efforts. Thus, SEDA's contributions are generally limited to bringing participatory, democratic processes centered around specific infrastructure projects.
3. The sustainability of results is fragile except for those derived from supporting specific infrastructure projects.

4. SEDA has not invested sufficient efforts in cultivating women's and youth participation in CDCs, empowering women and youth leaders, and ensuring that CDC processes adequately considered women's and youth's specific interests and barriers. This has been a missed opportunity of the project.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. Projects that seek to address key bottlenecks/barriers to good governance and participatory democracy require integrated cross-sectoral/cross-government programming and careful examination of externalities and change processes to sustain optimized results.
2. Projects supporting long-term change in democratic practices need to consolidate rather than broaden their support efforts by focusing on key themes and priority support areas founded on precise project theory.
3. Implementing organizations can maximize their comparative advantage towards effective project implementation through an operational structure that stimulates and enables strategic partnering, and long-term, hands-on support.
4. Projects need to put participatory democratic practices at the center of their interventions to ensure that project results are not jeopardised by entrenched social roles or driven by closed group of highly motivated, competent, and trusted leaders in the community.
5. A participatory process of decision-making around a single community development project does not necessarily translate into broader democratic practices. Long-term intentional and targeted efforts to empower citizens and local change agents are needed to help make such processes a habit.
6. For such multidimensional projects such as SEDA, in order to ensure a smooth process, the monitoring and reporting on project interventions needs to be strong and ensure reporting at output and outcome levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strategic Recommendations

1. SEDA should reset its approach to ensure that the social mobilization and participatory democratic governance practices are at the heart of the intervention, rather than a means toward infrastructure as the goal. It should also incorporate local leadership development as well as capacity-building approaches to support CDC advocacy with higher-level authorities at the rayon, regional, and state levels, perhaps through collaboration among communities within the rayon on common goals.
2. SEDA should focus on the depth, rather than the breadth, of support, by focusing on a limited number of communities over a longer period of time. Such an approach will deepen the commitment to and practice of participatory democracy by allowing CDCs to cultivate community participation and mobilization in a variety of settings.
3. SEDA should also invest efforts in building upstream partnerships and links with main service providers and decision-makers at the rayon level and above, to ensure full buy-in not only for the achievement of infrastructure projects, but also for the participatory, citizen-driven process.
4. SEDA should develop a gender and youth strategy, outlining opportunities and approaches in these areas. The strategy should cover both organizational and programmatic aspects, *i.e.*, by strengthening its team with gender expertise, undertaking a thorough analysis of barriers and opportunities for greater participation of women and youth in CDCs, and reorienting itself to advocate and lead by example.

Operational Recommendations

1. SEDA should strengthen its outcome-level monitoring and reporting practices, more closely tracking the results of supported interventions over time, as well as what change they generate at the local level and factors contributing to their longer-term sustainability.
2. SEDA should collect and promote best practices on participatory socio-economic development and democracy to stimulate exchange of ideas and debate and set standards for CDCs' operations.

I.0 INTRODUCTION

I.1 EVALUATION PURPOSE

The purpose of the Final Performance Evaluation of the Socio-Economic Development Activity (SEDA) Activity was “to establish, using a mixed-methods evaluation to include desk review, key informant interviews (KIs), and Outcomes Harvesting, the most significant outcomes for increasing civic participation in governance to address social and economic needs in the regions of Azerbaijan, achieved by the SEDA activity.”³ The evaluation was conducted from October-December 2019 and focused on: 1) assessing the strategies applied in SEDA to identify changes that occurred at the community and local government level(s) in community mobilization, local government participatory processes, and citizen participation as a result of SEDA program activities and the extent of the contribution made by SEDA’s activities to these changes in behavior; and 2) exploring unanticipated/unplanned outcomes as well as those expected by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The evaluation findings will be used to: a) inform future programming by better understanding the process of change or the causal linkages between community mobilization/civil society programming, and improvements in democracy and governance factors (like citizen participation and the engagement of government in communities); and b) test the efficacy of outcome harvesting (OH) as a methodology that could be used to evaluate other complex USAID/Azerbaijan programs.

I.2 EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The Statement of Work (SOW) for this evaluation (see Annex I) included four Evaluation Questions (EQs):

EQ 1: What outcomes from the SEDA activity are: a) most evident, and b) sustainable? Distinguish between intentional and unintentional outcomes including but not limited to these areas: the following stakeholders’ empowerment to engage in democratic processes—local communities, Community Development Councils (CDCs), and local government officials; CDCs’ ability to engage in and influence public policy decisions; and factors affecting women and youth participation.

EQ 2: What aspects of SEDA’s methodology, if any, are proven to be effective or not effective and how?

EQ 3: What distinguishes sustainable⁴ CDCs from the unsustainable ones?

EQ 4: Based on the OH and evaluation of SEDA’s performance, what are the evaluation team’s (ET) observations or recommendations for areas of opportunity for future programming?

Per USAID’s request, the ET also included assessment of outcomes within Components II and III of SEDA to ensure the full scope of the project was considered.

2.0 PROJECT BACKGROUND

SEDA is a 10-year (2011-2021), \$20 million-dollar USAID-funded program, co-financed by the Government of Azerbaijan (GOAJ), designed to increase citizen participation in governance and address the socio-economic needs of rural communities across Azerbaijan. Implemented by the East-West

³ SOW, p. 3.

⁴ For the purpose of assessing sustainability within the framework of this evaluation, the ET proposes to apply USAID’s definition of sustainability: “Sustainability refers to the ability of a local system to produce desired outcomes over time. Discrete projects contribute to sustainability when they strengthen the system’s ability to produce valued results and its ability to be both resilient and adaptive in the face of changing circumstances.” USAID (2014); Local Systems: A Framework for Supporting Sustained Development, p. 5, <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/LocalSystemsFramework.pdf>.

Management Institute (EWMI), and working in partnership with the Ministry of Economy (MOE) and local government officials, the project initially focused on advancing “citizen-driven development” through three main objectives:

1. Revitalizing or establishing CDCs to increase civic participation in socio-economic development at the local and regional levels;
2. Strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) to engage with citizens and government officials on local, regional, and national social and economic priorities; and
3. Strengthening the capacity of the GOAJ to engage with stakeholders on key socio-economic development issues.

During the course of the project implementation, the focus and scope of project activities shifted away from direct capacity-building of government institutions toward mobilizing and supporting CDCs and local executive and municipal authorities to work together to identify, design, and mobilize resources from citizens and local governments, and implement small-scale infrastructure projects to address priority socio-economic needs. SEDA therefore revised its overarching objectives to:

1. Improving democratic practices at the local level; and
2. Contributing to solutions to socio-economic problems at the local level.

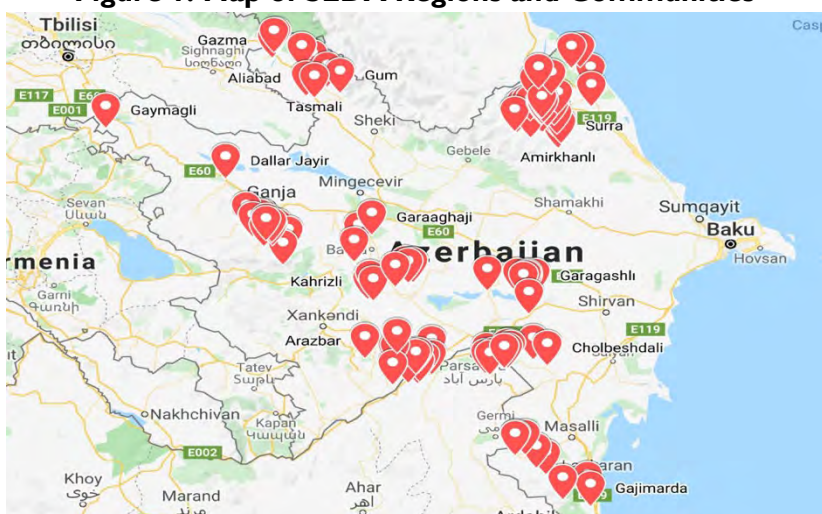
To date, SEDA has implemented small-scale infrastructure projects benefiting approximately 304,000 people from 146 communities across six economic regions of Azerbaijan—each with several implementation sites, with some communities benefiting from more than one project (see Figure 1). While the scope and scale of the project changed over the course of its implementation, SEDA remained consistent in its belief that citizen participation in the governance and development of their communities helps both meet local and regional socio-economic needs and

promotes transparent, accountable and sustainable service delivery, to help build trust between the government and its citizens. This evaluation offers insights across the entirety of SEDA activity, including components that were discontinued at an earlier stage of implementation.

2.1 DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

Azerbaijan’s economy has witnessed strong growth over the last decade, while making substantial progress in poverty reduction; it is now an upper middle-income country with a gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of \$4,721 in 2018.⁵ Azerbaijan’s rapid economic development is mainly attributed to the exploitation of hydrocarbon resources. However, the reliance on petroleum revenues places the country at risk of volatility and raises concerns about long-term sustainability and macroeconomic stability. Azerbaijan’s key economic challenge is to develop a diversified economy that has new and sustainable sources of growth and becomes more competitive in global and regional markets. The GOAJ is resolved to address critical

Figure 1: Map of SEDA Regions and Communities



⁵ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=AZ>.

economic challenges and has adopted a number of state programs to facilitate economic development, with specific focus on developing rural areas.

Despite the achievements of the past decade, important disparities remain between the oil-rich capital agglomeration and the rest of the country and, more generally, between its urban centers and the rural areas. The Absheron region takes up only 3.9 percent of Azerbaijan's territory but produces 80 percent of overall industrial output and accounts for about 90 percent of all oil and non-oil investments in the country. GDP per capita in the non-oil sector is still three times higher in Baku than the national average and disparities are also evident with regard to other socio-economic indicators. Yet, the agriculture sector is a key contributor to job creation, food security, and poverty reduction. While accounting only for about 5 percent of the GDP, it provides income and employment for about 40 percent of the employed population and remains the second largest export sector after oil and gas, averaging 50 percent of exports in the non-oil sector.

Despite the substantial increase in government investment in basic infrastructure over the past few years, gaps in terms of access and quality of public services for the rural population remain. A key constraint is the infrastructure deficit, the lack of rural roads, irrigation, drainage, and household water systems. Over the past decade, foreign investments have been made by USAID, the European Union (EU), the World Bank (WB), British Petroleum, the Asian Development Bank, and other international organizations to improve access to basic infrastructure in the regions. These investments led to the creation or reinforcement of representational structures capable of and responsible for community mobilization and maintenance of the installed infrastructure. However, legal persecutions launched in 2013 against non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which culminated in legislative changes in 2014, forced the majority of foreign organizations implementing socio-economic development projects in the regions (e.g., OXFAM, Save the Children, the International Research & Exchanges Board [IREX], etc.) to withdraw from Azerbaijan, leaving a funding vacuum for the implementation of small-scale community projects.

Historically, there are some traditional forms of civil society within Azerbaijani culture, such as urban and rural communities (mahalla) and elders' councils.⁶ However, even though Azerbaijan's legislation provides for the basic prerequisites of public participation, most of the population continues to view the state as the main defender of public interests. Laws and regulations are not properly followed on all social levels; and most citizens act like passive observers to socio-political processes having not yet taken full advantage of the newly installed democratic system by exercising their right to participate in elections or the other freedoms guaranteed by law.

Data from the 2016 Public Perception Survey conducted for EWMI/SEDA by a team of three experts show that the respondents' participation in voluntary groups and organizations in communities included in the research was extremely low.

The government's restrictions on civil society and introduction of the 2014 legislation on NGOs has also had an impact on the extent of public influence on public policy decisions, and on civic activism in general. National independent and international NGOs working in Azerbaijan faced both administrative and judicial problems, which eventually changed the whole civil society landscape. Administrative problems faced included administrative fines, unclear tax claims, and challenges using bank accounts. Judicial problems related to criminal investigations and arrests of NGO leaders on charges of treason, tax evasion, illegal entrepreneurship, and abuse of power.

Additionally, women's participation in politics and in leadership positions remains a topic of contention in Azerbaijan. Despite laws upholding gender equality, women, at times, suffer from gender stereotypes,

⁶ Mahalla and aqsaqqals' unions are informal structures of mutual support in which people get together to undertake common social tasks and create a system of informal social service provision.

which pervade public perception and generate situations where women are marginalized and overlooked for promotion to decision-making positions.

3.0 EVALUATION METHODS

3.1 OVERALL APPROACH

The evaluation methodology adhered to USAID Evaluation Policy⁷ and applied a mixed-methods approach,⁸ using the OH method to help identify outcome-level anticipated and unanticipated results.⁹ The SOW stipulates that the evaluation is to be used to “*test the efficacy of Outcome Harvesting as a methodology that could be used to evaluate other complex USAID/Azerbaijan programs.*”

The ET designed the methodology to feature OH, at the same time also integrating other methods. The OH methodology allowed the ET to identify and substantiate outcomes across sectors, geographic locations, levels of engagement, and diversity of stakeholders in such a complex program like SEDA. The methodology applied in this particular evaluation followed the standard steps, as elaborated below, and also integrated other qualitative and quantitative methodological elements that helped respond to EQs. As basis of the OH process, the ET reconstructed a SEDA Intervention Logic (IL) during the inception phase (see Annex 10). The reconstructed IL helped to understand the envisioned/anticipated outcomes of SEDA’s assistance as presented in the main program documents (e.g., Logframe, Performance Management Plans [PMPs] and Work Plans). The IL was of critical importance in understanding and categorizing not only the anticipated and unanticipated outcomes but also linkages between these and their joint contributions to change across target groups and communities.

As shown in the IL diagram in Annex 10, SEDA’s anticipated outcomes relate to strengthening participatory and democratic practices in local government decision-making, as well as strengthening the role of civil society and citizens in this process. In order to ensure a systematic approach to categorization and analysis of outcomes relating to local governance and democratization, OH adhered to the good governance objectives as recognized by USAID’s Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG) Strategy¹⁰ (i.e., promotion of participatory, representative, and inclusive governance processes, and fostering greater accountability of institutions and leaders to citizens). The Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index (CSOSI) elements (i.e., organizational capacity, advocacy, service provision) were also used to guide more structured outcome classification and analysis of findings relating to civil society support to inform the evaluation conclusions and recommendations.

During the Inception Phase, the ET created an OH matrix as a tool to capture, categorize, and elaborate outcomes harvested through the document review, and updated and validated during the workshop with the SEDA team, the field, and the synthesis phase (see Annex 14).

The ET performed OH as a series of steps to map outcomes from primary activity documents validated through a workshop with the SEDA project team and interviews with key activity stakeholders, which were then winnowed down, substantiated, and verified by outside experts (substantiators) and secondary studies. The OH approach allowed for an elaboration of a full set of outcome definitions, i.e., identifying key **outcome statements**, explaining their **significance**, assessing SEDA’s **contribution** (partial/whole, direct/indirect), and examining any **consequences** (primary/secondary, intended/unintended, positive/negative). Detailed steps are presented in Section 3.1.1 below. Also, Annex

⁷ <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/USAIDEvaluationPolicy.pdf>

⁸ See Stern et al. (2012), “Broadening the range of designs and methods for impact evaluations,” Department for International Development (DFID), Working Paper 38.

⁹ Defined as changes in behavior, relationships, actions, or policies across SEDA interventions and across the time period of their implementation.

¹⁰ https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/USAID-DRG_fina-_6-24-31.pdf.

I5 offers an analysis of the utility of OH methodology and main issues to be taken into account in planning evaluations that feature this methodology.

The ET conducted 37 site visits across the country: 10 communities in the Guba-Khachmaz region, 16 communities in the Aran region, 2 communities in the Lankaran region, 3 communities in the Shaki-Zagatala region, and 6 communities in the Ganja-Gazakh region. These site visits were critical for substantiating and validating the most significant stories of outcomes in the framework of the final evaluation. The ET used this technique while looking to examine a diverse range of communities and gain as much insight from different angles.

See Annex 6 for the full list of sampled communities included in the field inquiry and a map of visited communities.

3.1.1 Qualitative Research and Analysis

The qualitative evaluation was conducted primarily through:

Document and Literature Review

The ET reviewed documents related to the SEDA project, including the project work plans, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan, PMP, annual reports, quarterly reports, data sets, and other relevant documents (see Annex 3 for the list of reviewed documents). A total of 91 outcomes were harvested in the literature review, mostly elaborating outcomes of individual infrastructure projects. This initial list of outcomes was used as basis for the OH workshop with the SEDA team. The quality of the outcomes harvested during this phase was affected by the reporting quality and methodological issues (see Section 3.3. for limitations).

Outcome Harvesting Workshop with the SEDA Team

In line with the methodology, an OH workshop was held in Baku on October 30-31, 2019, with the SEDA team to: harvest the outcomes; share the OH method principles and approaches; and validate and elaborate outcomes harvested during the document review, ensuring that the definitions and elaboration are clear and based upon evidence. Due to the limited number and quality of outcomes harvested within the document review phase, the ET worked intensively with the SEDA team to harvest and elaborate further outcomes. Following the workshop, the ET continued working with the SEDA team to finalize the outcomes harvested list towards their validation and substantiation during key informant interviews (KIs), group discussions (GDs), and site observations (SOs) across 37 sampled communities (one more than the requested 36 communities stipulated in the SOW) and in Baku. The workshop and follow-on work of the SEDA team resulted in a total of 36 harvested outcomes.

Key Informant Interviews

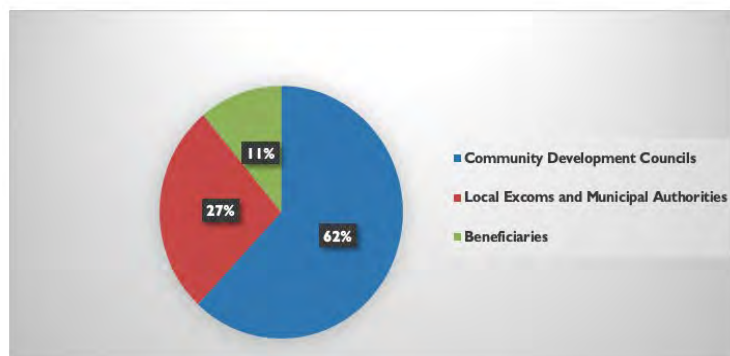
The ET collected data from key informants (KIs), comprised of the SEDA team, USAID, one development partner (the United Nations Development Programme, or UNDP), executive committee (ExCom) officials at the village and rayon levels, municipal authorities' representatives, CDC members, and representatives of local CSOs. Information was collected through in-depth, semi-structured KIs based on outcomes harvested with the SEDA team and the EQs for this evaluation. In total, 30 stakeholders were interviewed through 25 KIs. ET members took detailed notes from all KIs to assist substantiation and validation of outcomes.

Group Discussions

The ET met with CDC members and, in some cases, project beneficiaries of 52 infrastructure projects to learn about their perception of SEDA's performance and achievements. The ET used the outcome matrix as the basis for GDs to assist substantiation and validation of outcomes but also explore views and feedback on other relevant EQs. In total, 41 GDs (13 GDs in the Guba-Khachmaz region, 7 GDs in the Ganja-Gazakh region, 16 GDs in the Aran region, 3 GDs in the Shaki-Zagatala region, and 2 GDs in the

Lankaran region) with 185 project stakeholders were conducted (see Table I below). The ET conducted a very small number of interviews and discussions with project beneficiaries who were not CDC members, which is a limitation of the evaluation (see Figure 2), due to the time limitations for setting the meetings and visits to a large number of communities but, importantly, also due to ET's lack of independent access to citizens in communities (see Evaluation Limitations below). The ET relied upon a contact list from SEDA as well as coordination through rayon ExComs provided by the government to arrange community meetings, and there was no opportunity to meet with community members or even CDC members separately.

Figure 2: KIs and Participants in GDs (n=208)



The ET met with CDCs (but did not succeed in interviewing final beneficiaries) in a number of communities in the Guba-Khachmaz region (10), Lankaran region (2), Shaki-Zagatala region (3), Ganja-Gazakh region (6), and Aran region (16). However, the team was able to meet final beneficiaries in the following regions: Guba-Khachmaz region (4), Aran region (1), and Ganja-Gazakh region (1), generally because they participated in the ET meetings with the CDCs, although they were not members of the CDC.

Table I: Number and Type of GDs Conducted

Types of GD	Guba-Khachmaz	Ganja-Gazakh	Aran	Shaki-Zagatala	Lankaran	Total
GD with CDC members	9	6	15	3	2	35
GD with beneficiaries	4	1	1	0	0	6
Total	13	7	16	3	2	41

Site Observations (SOs)

The ET conducted SOs of (re)constructed infrastructure in nearly all 37 sampled communities in five regions. These SOs were useful to observe utility of (re)constructed infrastructure in real-time and the extent to which these have been beneficial to local population.

Table 2: Number and Type of Infrastructure Projects in the Conducted SOs

Type of Infrastructure	Aran	Guba-Khachmaz	Ganja-Gazakh	Shaki-Zagatala	Lankaran	Total
Milk collection point	0	1	0	0	0	1
Medical center	1	5	1	0	0	7
Feed-grinding	2	4	2	0	1	9
Road rehabilitation	4	3	0	1	0	8
Kindergarten repair	1	0	0	0	1	2
Sport facility	2	0	1	0	0	3
Electrical supply	1	2	0	0	0	3
Carpet weaving	1	0	0	0	0	1
Water supply	1	1	3	0	1	6
School heating	1	1	1	0	0	3
Solar street lighting	1	0	0	0	0	1
Irrigation water	1	0	0	0	0	1

Type of Infrastructure	Aran	Guba-Khachmaz	Ganja-Gazakh	Shaki-Zagatala	Lankaran	Total
School fence	0	1	0	0	0	1
Roof replacement	0	1	0	0	0	1
Mobile tent	0	1	0	0	0	1
Residential roof	0	1	0	0	0	1
Egg incubation	0	0	1	1	0	2
Kindergarten heating	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total	16	21	10	2	3	52

3.1.2 Quantitative Research and Analysis

Surveys

To complement qualitative data collection methods, the ET designed three separate surveys directed at CDC members, government authorities (municipal authorities and local/rayon ExComs), and other beneficiaries, respectively. In total, 119 CDC members completed a survey for CDCs; 54 ExComs and municipal authorities responded to the survey for government authorities; and 23 questionnaires were collected from beneficiaries. These surveys contained closed-ended questions. The surveys were anonymous and were distributed to participants in Azerbaijani language at the end of each KII or GD. In total, 196 KIs or GD participants took part in surveys (see Table 3).

Table 3: Respondents to Surveys Per Type of Survey

Type of Survey	Guba-Khachmaz	Ganja-Gazakh	Aran	Shaki-Zagatala	Lankaran	Total
Survey with CDC members	32	10	62	6	9	119
Survey with ExComs and municipal authorities	13	13	20	2	6	54
Survey with beneficiaries	18	2	3	0	0	23
Total						196

Analytical reports for each survey are presented in Annex 13.

Sampling Methodology

SEDA is active in six out of 10 economic regions in Azerbaijan: Guba-Khachmaz, Aran, Ganja-Gazakh, Lankaran, Shaki-Zagatala, and Upper-Garabagh. In the course of its 10-year lifespan, SEDA has benefited 146 communities in these regions.

The ET used a maximum variation or heterogeneous purposive, non-random sampling methodology to select a sample of 37 communities for the evaluation, or 25 percent of the 146 communities in which SEDA has supported projects. The sample included a diverse group of communities in terms of geographic location, types of implemented projects, years passed since project completion, and SEDA's identification of "champion" communities. The sampling was made based on the list provided by SEDA through USAID (which included 120 communities). The ET used this technique while looking to examine a diverse range of communities and gain as much insight from different angles. As in all purposive samples, the selection of communities was based on the ET's judgement rather than randomization. Such judgmental sampling can be considered in some way "representative" of the population of interest (all SEDA communities) without sampling at random. The choice of the heterogeneous purposive sampling methodology was justified by the fact that variability with random selection was expected to be excessively large and, therefore, potentially more damaging to the evaluation outcomes than the bias inherent in selection by judgement. The ET considers that the evaluation outreach through a sample of 25 percent of communities across SEDA-targeted regions, combined with a mix of elements of outcome mapping and standard evaluation methodologies was generally sound to establish credible evidence and draw conclusions and

recommendations for this evaluation. The main limitation was the difficulty to reach to final beneficiaries as explained in Limitation 7 below (see Table 4).

See Annex 5 for the list of visited communities and Annex 4 for the list of persons interviewed.

Data Analysis and Synthesis of Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The ET based substantiation and validation of outcomes on all the information available, including project documents, interviews and discussions with project staff, meetings and GDs with stakeholders, field visits to SEDA's sites, and SOs—visits to (re)constructed infrastructure. The ET also took factors beyond SEDA's control (such as the economic crisis and political complexities) into account in considering shortcomings. Data analysis was iterative across the evaluation; however, the team initiated it in earnest during the internal ET workshop on November 21, 2019. During this time, the team began analyzing data collected during the 20-day fieldwork phase and organized preliminary findings for further synthesis in the report writing phase. The ET triangulated data received from the different sources listed above to ensure that the findings, conclusions, and recommendations are evidence-based. In particular, triangulation of data assisted validation of outcomes harvested within the scope of this evaluation. In addition, the ET conducted a thorough contribution analysis to enable the team to arrive at conclusions about the main contributions of the project as well as its individual components through, among other things, substantiation of harvested outcomes. Data were then further cleaned and organized under each outcome in the OH matrix and by EQ. The ET conducted the content and frequency analyses to establish a list of validated and substantiated outcomes. The overview of harvested outcomes with SEDA and their validation is presented in Annex 15. Quantitative data from survey responses were entered into SurveyMonkey for easier processing and analysis.

3.2 EVALUATION LIMITATIONS

Table 4 below includes the evaluation's limitations and the measures taken by the ET to mitigate them.

Table 4: Evaluation Limitations and Mitigation Measures

Limitation	Mitigation Measure
1. Lack of a comprehensive Theory of Change (TOC) for the project	The ET reconstructed the TOC for the SEDA project as part of the evaluation inception phase.
2. Weak reporting in terms of analysis and presentation of outcome level results	SEDA's annual and quarterly reports are activity- and output-based, with very limited reflection on outcome-level results. This negatively affected the extent to which the ET could harvest outcomes during the desk review, but also negatively impacted the next steps in OH methodology. To mitigate this risk, the ET worked closely with the SEDA team to jointly elaborate and improve outcomes harvested during the workshop, although time constraints hampered this process.
3. Limited availability of reliable, disaggregated data particularly for outcome-level results	Related to the above limitation, SEDA's annual and quarterly reports provided scant information on program outcomes, making the ET more reliant on the SEDA team for identification of outcomes. To the extent possible, the ET gathered outcome-level data from a range of sources. One strategy used to gather additional data was primary data collection through interviews and GDs. During the analysis and reporting phase, the ET assessed assumptions about pathways to results based on the revised TOC. Nevertheless, these limitations affected the team's ability to provide a comprehensive assessment of outcomes of SEDA.

Limitation	Mitigation Measure
4. Consistency of data across various documentation	The ET received a vast amount of documentation which, at times, presented contrasting and inconsistent information (in terms of data accuracy, inconsistent labeling, etc.). To address this challenge, the ET worked closely with USAID and the SEDA team to obtain data and conducted a side-by-side analysis to reconcile information. In instances where discrepancies remained, data quoted in this report are provided with references to the original source.
5. Lack of data on Components II and III of the SEDA Project	SEDA Components II and III were discontinued in 2015, which resulted in absence of any data on SEDA's contribution to these components beyond the 2015 SEDA evaluation. The evaluation SOW did not require assessment of these two components. However, during the meetings with USAID, it was decided that the ET should attempt to assess these outcomes to the extent possible, taking into account the absence of more recent factual data. As mentioned in Limitation 2, due to the weaknesses in SEDA's reporting, very little substantive data was found in the review of reports prepared pre-2015 while components were still ongoing. The ET attempted to overcome this limitation by identifying key stakeholders (e.g., NGO grantees for advocacy interventions, NGO regional resource centers, etc.). However, this proved difficult due to weaknesses in records on these stakeholders. Due to these limitations, only very limited data were collected through KIIs or GDs, resulting in limited assessment of these two components.
6. GOAJ requirement that permission be granted to visit sample communities	Prior to visiting project communities, the ET was required to obtain permission from the central Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the President's Administration, which in turn notified rayon ExComs about the ET's planned visits. During visits to communities, the ET observed that some interviewees or groups appeared to be prepared for the lines of inquiry, particularly starting from the second week of visits to communities. A difference in terms of preparation for the interviews and provided responses by local communities was visible between Guba region (the first visited region) and the other communities visited from the second week of community visits. This was concerning but the ET was unable to take steps to mitigate this situation given above mentioned prerequisites and permissions for community visits.
7. Lack of possibility to meet with final beneficiaries of SEDA-supported infrastructure projects	The ET encountered difficulty in identifying and meeting final beneficiaries of SEDA-supported infrastructure projects due to a variety of reasons, including logistics, time constraints, and lack of easy access to these groups. This is mainly due to the reason that ET was required to ensure independence in its approach, which also entailed that arrangement of field inquiry is conducted solely by the team without external support by SEDA or the government. This affected the extent to which the ET could collect primary quantitative and qualitative data on the outcomes of these projects on services/response to the needs as well as social mobilization perspectives.
8. Few independent/external substantiators identified	OH methodology calls for validating outcomes through external substantiators who have no direct stake in the program. The ET received a list of two proposed external substantiators from USAID with sufficient knowledge of the project to provide independent perspective. The team managed to meet one; however, the second proposed substantiator was not available at the time of the field mission. Additionally, the ET used stakeholders who had been active in Components II and III activities to substantiate outcomes in Component I.

Limitation	Mitigation Measure
9. Social desirability bias in the survey responses and more generally across KIIs and GDs	This evaluation encountered a degree of “social desirability bias,” i.e., the tendency of survey respondents to answer questions in a manner that will be viewed favorably by others. As noted in the previous section, surveys were distributed in hard copy to all participants of KIIs and GDs. KIIs completed the survey by themselves, but the GD participants often filled in the survey together, possibly due to issues with literacy or more general comprehension of the survey. This collective response to surveys might have resulted in over-reporting of “good behavior” or under-reporting of “bad,” or undesirable behavior. The ET attempted to mitigate this by explaining the questions to respondents. In addition, the survey is used as only a complementary data source, not as a main data source for data triangulation. It may be assumed that, during the entire OH process, there was a social desirability bias limitation, particularly due to the requirement to self-report on contribution to outcomes and mid-term and longer-term change.

4.0 EVALUATION FINDINGS

4.1 EQ 1: WHAT OUTCOMES FROM THE SEDA ACTIVITY ARE A) MOST EVIDENT AND B) SUSTAINABLE?

4.1.1 Main Findings

Finding 1: Operational framework has not been conducive for achievement of outcomes from SEDA's investment in enhancement of democratic practices.

Review of documentation from SEDA and other sources (USAID, United Nations [UN], EU, and other country reports and assessments) and KIIs indicated a rapidly changing political environment during SEDA implementation, characterized by the increasingly volatile political context in Azerbaijan and a sharp decrease in presence of international actors, particularly those active in the democracy field (e.g., the United States' [U.S.] National Democratic Institute, IREX,¹¹ and multilateral organizations like the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe [OSCE]). Freedom House ratings of Azerbaijan show the country's deterioration of democracy from 6.46 in 2011 to 6.93 in 2018 (on a rating scale of 1-7 where 1 is democratic and 7 is authoritarian),¹² while the Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) governance index remains low, with a score of 3.84 in 2018 (on a scale of 1-10, where 10 is high governance performance), bringing Azerbaijan to 97th position out of 129 countries.¹³ Studies note that one reason was the introduction of more restrictive legislation for NGOs, as well as restrictions of foreign funding and support and limits on donor space and investment in the field of democratic governance. According to KIIs, SEDA (and EVMII) was among the only remaining international (U.S.-funded) projects at one point of time between 2014-2016.

These contextual issues had repercussions for the SEDA project and its holistic approach working in partnership with stakeholders (see Intervention Logic, Annex 10). However, during the implementation of the project, cooperation with the GOAJ was increasingly complex due to the previously cited reasons. The ET's review of SEDA'S reports found that due to “protracted and ultimately unsuccessful negotiations with the Ministry of Economy and Industry (MOEI), former Ministry of Economic Development, and the Council on State Support to Non-Governmental Organizations under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan (CSSN) for

¹¹ <https://www.bti-project.org/en/reports/country-reports/detail/itc/AZE/>.

¹² <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2018/azerbaijan>.

¹³ <https://www.bti-project.org/en/reports/country-reports/detail/itc/AZE/>.

the approval of SEDA's Year Two Work Plan,"¹⁴ the full approval of the Work Plan was not granted even after two years of project implementation. The GOAJ allowed activities under Component I to move forward in late 2013 but, by April 2014, had only approved some activities in Components II and III. Ultimately, the project results framework and approach were reshaped in 2015, with "a shift in focus and scope of project activities away from the direct capacity-building of government institutions toward focusing on mobilizing and supporting CDCs and local executive and municipal authorities to work together to identify, design, mobilize resources from citizens and local governments and implement small-scale infrastructure projects to address priority socio-economic needs."¹⁵ In other words, a volatile political context resulted in the discontinuation of Components II and III and the consequent inability of the project to support various actors (e.g., NGOs, central, regional, and local governments, and others) to engage in participatory development processes. Document review and KIIs indicate the changing political context with regards to donor relations with the government also had strong implications on the project approach and its shift to a stronger focus on infrastructure over time. KIIs confirmed that focusing on infrastructure was a win-win for all sides (communities, the GOAJ at the central, regional, and local levels, SEDA, and USAID), as investment in infrastructure provided for strong visibility for all partners, particularly U.S. support to the Azerbaijani people, raising the awareness and profile of USAID as supporter of Azerbaijan's development.

However, these challenges have had repercussions on achievement of outcomes, particularly in terms of achievement of the desired result "Improving democratic practices at the local level" as envisaged in the revised SEDA results framework. Most of the substantiated outcomes of SEDA'S assistance materialized from investment in infrastructure.

*Finding 2: SEDA's investment in infrastructure brought about the most evident and sustainable outcomes for the local population across SEDA's project communities, as validated through the OH process. The evaluation found ample evidence that local infrastructure delivers improved services and public utilities demanded by citizens. Variations exist; however, SEDA's contribution to improvement of living conditions and livelihoods has been positive and has added value to local community development, thus substantiating the two respective harvested outcomes.*¹⁶

SEDA's initial intended investment in infrastructure aimed to serve as a tool to enhance participatory governance in local communities and rayons; however, as mentioned above, investment in infrastructure became the center of SEDA's interventions. Subsequently, most outcomes validated by the evaluation derive from SEDA's support across all types of infrastructure projects (see Annex 14). SEDA's interventions brought visible and tangible contributions to changes in living conditions in communities that are struggling with poverty and lack of investment, with a total of approximately 304,000 people across the six targeted regions of Azerbaijan (approximately 3 percent of the total population)¹⁷ benefiting from infrastructure projects, as per SEDA's records (see Table 15, Annex 7).

Investment in infrastructure brought improved living conditions and livelihoods to targeted communities through improvement of medical and educational facilities; improvement of roads, water supply, electricity, and agriculture services; and income generation initiatives. KIIs in local communities indicated that, in many cases, the local population did not have access to a stable water and electricity supply, medical services, or roads, so providing access to such services directly improved living conditions for these households. Furthermore, KIIs with CDC members and beneficiaries of SEDA's assistance suggest that they also highly valued investments in community infrastructure (e.g., renovation of schools, kindergartens, community or cultural centers, and pedestrian bridges).

¹⁴ SEDA Annual Report Year 2, p. 4.

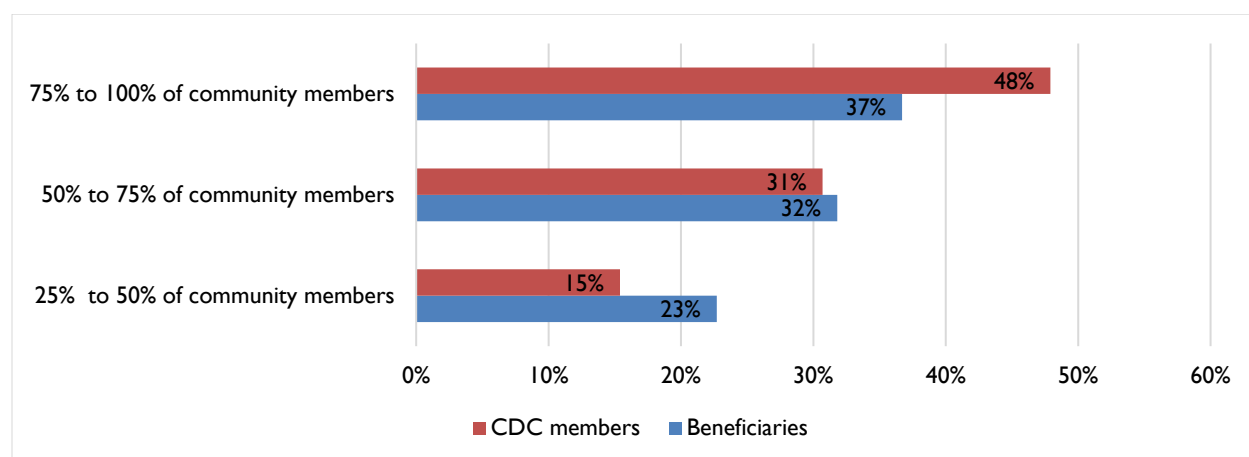
¹⁵ Project background section, SOW.

¹⁶ Two outcomes harvested with the SEDA team are directly focusing on these positive changes, i.e., Outcome: Improved living conditions; and Outcome: Improved livelihoods.

¹⁷ According to State Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan, total population of Azerbaijan was 9,981,500 in 2018; See <https://www.stat.gov.az/source/demography/ap/?lang=en>.

Surveys completed for this evaluation by 119 CDC members as well as by 23 community beneficiaries who were not CDC members indicate that most respondents believed that the SEDA-supported infrastructure projects met the needs and priorities of at least half of the local population, although beneficiaries were somewhat less inclined than CDC members to believe that the projects met the needs and priorities of at least three-quarters of the population (see Figure 3). These survey findings confirm the findings of the Public Opinion Poll conducted in 2016, which noted that “a considerable majority in Guba-Khachmaz (69.7 percent) and Aran (76.3 percent) believe that citizens in their community are positively affected by the SEDA [Civil Society Empowerment Programs] CSEPs, while more than half (50.6 percent in Guba-Khachmaz and 54.8 percent in Aran region) think that ‘CSEPs in my community address communities’ priority needs.’”¹⁸

Figure 3: Survey Responses to the Question “In your opinion, what proportion of community members has the SEDA infrastructure project benefited?”



Sub-finding 2(a): New and/or renovated roads improve accessibility, which in turn brings improvement of investment and income generation potential, as well as household savings for community members in terms of transport costs and improves access to medical, educational, and other services.

The ET observed eight road rehabilitation projects during the process of substantiation of the harvested outcome “Road projects bring communities access to markets, help to reduce car maintenance expenses, allows traders to come to the farmgate, and increase school attendance,” finding that improvement of the road infrastructure has brought important benefits for 50,063 residents of respective SEDA communities where such projects were implemented, as well as for the residents of neighboring communities. In almost all communities (except in Amirkhanli, Shabran),¹⁹ local citizens were satisfied with the selection of community priority and the quality of construction, validating the harvested outcome. KIs emphasized that improvement of roads has improved access to schools and other local services as well as overall local transport conditions. Furthermore, it has also brought savings in the time and cost of transportation and increased access to markets or other opportunities. For example, citizens of the Zangana, Ashaghi Chamanli, Muyra, and Surra communities noted that investment in roads improved accessibility within local communities (as well as outside them) and, in particular, improved access to schools for children. As CDC members in Surra shared, “Before, it was more difficult to reach places without a good road. Now children of two villages are coming to school no matter what the weather is. The road also helps save money for car owners, because they don’t spend as much on car repair.” Ashaghi Chamanli CDC members in Beylagan rayon also

¹⁸ Faradov et al. (2016), Public Perception Survey (PPS), SEDA, conducted for the two regions Guba-Khachmaz and Aran where SEDA was active at the time when the PPS was conducted.

¹⁹ The road in Amirkhanli was constructed in the early years of SEDA support using gravel as road material, which was considered a substandard quality material and was later not used by SEDA in newer similar projects. Also, local stakeholders and field observation noted that the road is steep and not very safe to use, particularly in the winter.

noted, “Before the road construction project, the roads were in bad shape, the children could not go to school, cars and trucks could not get through, animals could not easily go to different grazing fields.” Some interviewees noted that due to the high costs of road construction and repair, the communities were not in a position to invest in roads prior to SEDA; therefore, SEDA’s contribution added value to improve living conditions in targeted communities which would not have been possible otherwise.

Sub-finding 2 (b): The provision and/or improvement of household water and electricity supply has brought benefits for local households in terms of improved living conditions through reliable electricity supply for lights and other appliances and improved water and sanitary conditions, which results in enhanced productivity and quality of life for household members.

According to studies, a “large percentage, if not a majority, of Azerbaijan’s 8.2 million citizens lacks easy access to drinkable water. Water quality in Azerbaijan is thus a major issue.”²⁰ The fact that a large proportion of local communities prioritized water supply projects confirms this is one of the most challenging issues for local communities in Azerbaijan today. SEDA supported 27 water-related projects, including improvement of access to household water supply or projects that ensure access to irrigation water. The ET observed six household water supply projects during the field phase, whereby all of the beneficiary communities confirmed high utility and positive outcomes of such investment, demonstrating its relevance and substantiating the harvested outcome, “Improved supply of clean water to communities, with positive impacts on health, livelihoods, and women’s work burdens.” Project documents indicate that a total of 38,125 people have benefited from this type of assistance. In most cases, SEDA extended the water supply network through artesian wells or other water supply connections by establishing or improving water supply either in the form of drinkable or service water.²¹ KIs and beneficiaries of water supply projects noted that having access to water supply in their houses or in close proximity of households has brought important improvements in household health and sanitary conditions as well as significant savings of time and effort in the burden of fetching water—enabling women, in particular, to have more time and improved quality of life. KIs in Ahmadbayli, Samukh rayon and Yukhari Chradakhtar, Zagatala rayon benefiting from water supply (tap and service water) introduced fee collection for the maintenance of local water system networks, a measure that contributes to sustainability of supported infrastructure. This community had to repair the water supply equipment and managed to collect funds through individual contributions to repair it, as emphasized in the GD.

In some cases, communities were not able to ensure co-funding for projects to construct or improve water supply systems, despite the fact that having access to water is their highest priority, due to the high cost of such investments (e.g., Gahramanli community, Beylagan rayon; Ashagi-atuc community, Guba rayon). The Fakhrli community (Garanboy rayon), an exemplary community with strong leadership and community cohesion, managed to raise enough funds and mobilize enough labor to cover 60 percent of the cost of the SEDA-supported water supply project in order to extend its reach to a larger number of people—far beyond SEDA’s required community contribution of 25 percent. Yet, even so, the community was unable to reach some sections of the community, causing some tensions within the community among those who did not benefit.

Besides water supply to households, SEDA also supported irrigation water supply projects to enhance agriculture production and the prospects for improving the use of arable land. Document review and the OH workshop offered a positive perspective of such projects for increasing the volume of agriculture products across communities. SO of one such project in the Khaspoladoba community in Khachmaz only partially substantiated the identified outcome by SEDA, “Irrigation projects contribute to the quality and volume of agriculture products, which in turn generate higher income.” In Khaspoladoba, two irrigation wells were drilled but the quality of one was very poor (providing for only a fraction of expected water),

²⁰ <https://borgenproject.org/water-quality-in-azerbaijan/>. Note that this population figure dates from 2017. The current population of Azerbaijan is 10.1 million, according to the World Population Review.

²¹ Service water is water that does not meet drinking water quality standards, while it can still be used for some household needs.

while the second well produced only a half of expected amount of water. KIs noted that the wells serve only five out of an expected 20 families whose plots were planned to be covered by this irrigation water supply. It is interesting that this community is included in the list of champion communities with successful projects shared by the SEDA team. The ET did not observe other irrigation projects, so wider findings from other such supported projects are not available.

The ET observed three projects for improvement of the electricity supply to substantiate and validate the harvested outcome “Electricity supply upgrades gives community reliable electricity supply.” The evaluation found positive outcomes of investment in the electricity supply, which benefited 7,825 citizens, according to project documents. KIs with the beneficiaries of such projects substantiated the harvested outcome noting that, before the project, the electricity supply was unstable and of poor quality of supply. KIs, beneficiaries of such support, pointed out that ensuring a stable and regular electricity supply improves the lifespan of appliances and overall efficiency of resource use. Such improvements directly affect household budget savings, enhancement of household productivity, and improvement of overall living conditions.

Sub-finding 2(c): Investment in enhancing access to medical services in local communities has brought significant positive results, improving health and livelihoods but also indirectly contributing to other outcomes.

Access to medical services in close proximity is scarce in many communities across Azerbaijan, so this was a priority in a number of SEDA-targeted communities. SEDA supported 22 projects related to medical facilities across the country, serving 46,967 people. The ET observed six such projects to substantiate the harvested outcome “Medical points increase communities’ access to healthcare services.” Newly established medical points offer primary health care services for the local population—basic adult and child health check-ups and services, pre- and post-natal care, immunization and other pediatric care, first aid, and referral services to regional hospitals. CDC members and beneficiaries of such services noted that having these services in close proximity saves time and costs, preventing visits to faraway health centers (common in the past), thus substantiating the harvested outcome. All medical points are linked with local hospitals and are part of the network of the Ministry of Health, as confirmed by KIs, which helps achieve a degree of sustainability.

Sub-finding 2(d): Investment in improving conditions in schools and kindergartens has increased school/kindergarten attendance and improved attainment of educational tasks. However, the evaluation found less utility of sports fields.

According to project documents, SEDA supported projects focusing on improvement of heating systems in schools (4 schools); building additional schoolrooms, school assembly halls, or school fences (3 schools); or renovating kindergartens (8 projects), serving 6,071 children and youth. The ET observed 12 such projects in the process of substantiation of the harvested outcome “Improved access to education.”²² KIs and GDs in Lecet community (Khachmaz rayon), Gobaktala and Otuzikilar communities (Imishli rayon), Khoylu and Garadaghli communities (Garanboy rayon), and Gum community (Gakh rayon) confirmed that SEDA’s investments in kindergarten and school facilities directly contributed to improved attendance by creating a cleaner, safer, and, in some cases, larger school or kindergarten facility. KIs and document review show that, before SEDA’s support, targeted schools and kindergartens were: a) using wood for heating, negatively affecting the classroom environment (smoke); b) rundown facilities in very bad shape (lack of investment in renovation or repair); or c) inadequately fenced around the yards. Across all observed communities with investment in heating, KIs confirmed improved school conditions thanks to better heating options (gas instead of wood). From the field inquiry findings and KI responses, the related outcome “Improved access to education”²³ is substantiated. In one observed kindergarten in Lacat

²² During the OH workshop, SEDA’s full suggested outcome was: “Improved access to quality education,” but as SEDA did not work on quality of education, the ET removed this part of the outcome.

²³ During the OH workshop, SEDA’s full suggested outcome was: “Improved access to quality education,” but as SEDA did not work on quality of education, the ET removed this part of the outcome.

community in Guba, the repair directly resulted in an increase in attendance thanks to improved conditions in the facility. KIs confirmed that the kindergarten was in very bad shape before renovation, with one of two kindergarten rooms not in use due to mold and bad insulation. The renovation included changing the windows and doors, roofing, painting, etc. The Lacat community kindergarten repair project also benefited from a private sector contribution, an example of good practice. Field inquiry in those observed communities where road repair projects were implemented also showed that SEDA-supported improvements in roads in proximity of schools additionally contributed to accessibility by students and teachers.

SEDA also supported six infrastructure projects focusing on the construction of sports facilities, serving

Box 1: Attracting Additional Funding for Kindergarten Repair

CDC in Gum community of Gakh rayon, populated mainly by Avar minority, managed to attract additional funding far beyond SEDA's requirement for cost sharing for their project of kindergarten construction. When the project was handed over in September 2019, the CDC celebrated successful collaboration with SEDA, the ExCom, a private company Monte Ferro LLC, individual entrepreneurs, the State Road Agency and the villagers, all putting in their efforts in construction of the long awaited kindergarten, which along with the Gum community currently serves two other neighboring villages. Because of the CDC's effort in reaching out to different actors, the community managed to not only construct the kindergarten itself, but also the pump station and the access road as well as the greening of the surrounding territory. According to the CDC, the contribution by the Monte Ferro LLC reached 25,000 Azerbaijani manat (AZN) with another 50,000 AZN contributed by the ExCom.

approximately 13,519 citizens. The SEDA team asserted that investment in sports facilities contributes to the outcome "Creating opportunities for young people to creatively use their time (self-realization)." However, the ET found that sports facilities were relatively low on the list of community priorities [in the case of two of three such projects in sampled communities, the sports facility was a third priority (Amirkhanli, Shabran and Govlarsari, Samukh rayon)] so they were funded after SEDA rejected the first or the second options.²⁴ This might have affected the utility of the resulting infrastructure. For example, a sports facility in Amirkhanli, Shabran rayon was underutilized and in an advanced state of decay. It is located in a remote part of the village, so it is not easily accessible for

Amirkhanli or the nearby communities; as a result, its utility and sustainability are questionable. On the other hand, a sports facility observed in Govlarsari community, Samukh rayon, was located in the school yard. KIs reported that the facility is used by the school and for local tournaments; in the past, such tournaments used to be organized in other communities. A third, in Agyazi-Buduq, Khachmaz rayon, was centrally located but its sustainability was in question due to the termination of activities of the local CDC, which had assumed responsibility for maintaining the facility through the collection of funds from community members. Per stakeholder interviews, the CDC had been inactive in this community for years, due to poor CDC leadership and weak commitment from the community.

Sub-finding 2(e): Other types of projects, such as roof replacement, solar lighting, etc. were also supported. While benefits from roof replacement were evident, the solar lighting project did not bring long-term results.

SEDA supported three projects related to roof replacement (two renovations of residences' roofs in Birlik, Shirvan rayon and a roof replacement project of a cultural center in Ashigli, Beylagan rayon). SEDA added Shirvan City as a new target rayon in SEDA's Aran region based on an official request received from six communities located in the city, which were forwarded to SEDA by USAID. Once SEDA received this request by the communities via USAID, it proceeded to working with these communities through the same procedures for community mobilization, CSEP development, implementation, and monitoring that SEDA applies to its work across all communities. In addition, SEDA supported construction of solar street

²⁴ For instance, SEDA decided not to invest in a water supply system in Amirkhanli (Shabran rayon) because water testing showed that the water did not meet service water standards. Stakeholders find water testing a commendable and justified measure by SEDA, even in case where the community of Amirkhanli did not get water supply, which was first priority project.

lighting in Rustov, Guba region, for the benefit of 2,200 community residents. The ET conducted a SO of the project and found that the solar lighting is no longer functioning. KIs emphasized, but also highlighted the fact that at the time of planning and implementation of this project solar lighting appeared most cost-efficient, environmentally friendly, and innovative and the choice had strong community support. However, once the system broke down, its repair was considered too costly and neither the local community nor the regional ExCom would fund it. This points to a lack of elaboration of mechanisms for sustainability and maintenance of infrastructure that do not generate income that could be used for maintenance, or that are not connected to state or private sector utility institutions.

Sub-finding 2(f): SEDA contributed to enhancement of income generation activities overall. Contribution to generation of jobs was important yet limited to small number of people. As per SEDA's records, a total of 93 jobs were created, most of which were seasonal. Economic infrastructure such as feed grinding and egg incubation facilities, as well as milk collection points, directly contributed to improvement of the livelihoods of the local population. As per SEDA records, supported income-generation CSEPs are reported to be registered as businesses by the respective municipalities and they operate under simplified tax laws. The other type of businesses supported by SEDA are public-private partnerships (PPPs). While community members where limited liability companies (LLCs, a kind of PPP) were established are aware and knowledgeable of the type of business and profit handling, in most cases, local interlocutors in communities where small municipality owned businesses are active were not aware of the type or existence of registration of such supported income generation activity. Also, feedback from the communities where income generation activities were supported was unclear on the notion of how profits were handled.

Over the period of project implementation, there has been a shift from social to economic and income-generating infrastructure, as also noted in SEDA's documentation and KIs with donor and government representatives. SEDA was encouraged by its government partners to invest more in economic infrastructure, based on recognized priorities in some communities for specific types of infrastructure (e.g., milk collection points, feed grinding facilities, etc.). Overall, a variety of such economic infrastructure was supported, including three milk collection points, 31 feed grinding facilities, two mobile tents (for hosting festivities or funerals and other local events), six egg incubation projects, and one carpet weaving workshop, benefiting 136,576 citizens according to project documents. As per SEDA's records, 48 of SEDA-supported income generation projects have been reported to be registered as businesses by the respective municipalities and three projects were PPPs. The ownership of the PPP type of CSEPs registered as an LLC is regulated by standard LLC procedures, meaning that is owned by partners based on shareholding. The field inquiry in communities that received such type of support shows that communities are satisfied with the chosen projects, and the reason for this may be found in the fact that any type of support to community would be accepted by local residents.

The evaluation found mixed evidence of the utility and community benefit from these investments. Across types of income generation investments, the ET recorded benefits for communities in terms of the proximity of service and savings (cheaper service, transport, handling costs). In some cases—e.g., feed grinding facilities or the rental of mobile tents—the evaluation found the service resulting from investment in such infrastructure is as much as 50 percent cheaper than other commercial competitors. In cases of milk collection points, the projects resulted in better organization of milk collection and less waste, directly increasing income from milk production (e.g., the Milk Collection Point Construction Cluster Project in the Memishler area communities—Memishler, Asadli, Gafarli, and Garalar—where families sold excess milk increasing income and preventing waste).

As per SEDA's records, across all types of income generating investments, 93 jobs were created although they are mainly seasonal jobs and do not bring continuous income. For example, the feed grinding facilities operate only during feed grain harvest months. In addition, interviews about the carpet weaving facility also confirmed that these jobs are also seasonal and/or *ad hoc*—jobs exist only if an order of carpets is

placed, until carpets are delivered, and only during summer due to lack of heating for the facility.²⁵ Employed workers receive their salaries, and the surplus funds are reportedly contributed to a community fund, but it is not clear how the records on profit and resulting funds are kept and handled. KILs and SOs show that profits are usually kept by a local CDC coordinator (e.g., feed grinding facility in Gachrash community, Guba or in Ahmadli community, Beylagan rayon), or a local ExCom (e.g., mobile tent in Garalar community, Sabirabad). One CDC member noted that the “funds are kept safe at his house.”

SEDA also supported six egg incubation projects, contributing to income generating activity in the targeted communities. According to SEDA’s records, 27,975 residents of five different communities benefited from these projects. In addition, SEDA supported a farmer’s market project in Gendov in the Shabran region; unfortunately, this project failed because the community selected an inadequate location for the market, which was beyond SEDA’s control.

Another project, the carpet weaving workshop in Alpan, was considered to be a priority both locally and regionally given that the region is renowned for its carpet weaving tradition. According to SEDA records, 1,650 people benefited from the project. However, the SO found that the workshop is mostly not operational. The facility itself is located on disputed land, which prevents it from being connected to gas and other utilities and contributes to a KI’s sense of insecurity. At the time of planning of the project, a stakeholder interview revealed that “[CDC] suggested one location that would be acceptable, but on request of women to have the facility in the village center, CDC constructed the facility centrally. But now this place belongs to Property Ministry and they cannot register a LLC due to the fact that the land is disputed.” Therefore, the facility could not be registered and cannot get connected to utilities. The SO showed that the business has no officially employed persons. Transparency of profit flows and sustainability of this business also seem to be limited, based on KILs and the SO.

However, exceptions exist. For example, the above-mentioned cluster milk point collection in Memishler area communities (Memishler, Asadli, Gafarli, and Garalar) was established as an LLC in 2016, through a partnership between the municipality and a local entrepreneur, and has been successfully sustained, creating five new jobs and generating income for milk producers across the region. The LLC plans to expand its production facilities to include also milk processing elements (production of other types of milk-based products). SEDA reports that two other SEDA-supported economic projects were also established as LLCs through PPPs. This is commendable and could be taken as a best practice example, offering good lessons learned for consideration of viable options for other income generation projects.

4.1.2 EQ 1: Assessment of SEDA outcomes with regard to the empowerment of local communities, CDCs, and local government officials to engage in democratic processes.

Finding 3: The evaluation found that SEDA’s work with local communities promoted participatory processes and community mobilization to plan and implement infrastructure projects, which were valued by stakeholders. However, document review and field inquiry show that, across the project, stakeholders view SEDA first and foremost as a local infrastructure development project, which relies upon community participation mechanisms (establishment of CDCs, local elections, community participation in prioritization process, social mobilization, etc.) as tools to achieve the end goal of improved services through infrastructure, and not necessarily as a project that promotes empowerment of local communities, CDCs, and local government officials to engage in democratic processes.

As previously noted, the context within which SEDA works towards empowering democratic processes is marred by reverse and concerning trends in terms of political rights and civil liberties, as reflected by Azerbaijan’s international ratings. SEDA started from the premise that infrastructure investments would serve as a useful “tool” to practice local democracy, contributing to SEDA’s two overarching objectives: “Improving democratic practices at the local level” and “Contributing to solutions to socio-economic problems at the local level.” During the OH workshop, an outcome relating to elections as an element of

²⁵ The facility is built on disputed land so it cannot be connected to gas.

the practice of democracy was harvested: “Citizens gain a basic understanding of, and practice in democracy, through the organization of CDC elections. They get an experience of what democracy means through an open voting system. They use these skills and understanding later in a broader context, e.g., in forthcoming municipal elections.” According to document review and KIs, investment in infrastructure was envisaged to result in both improved services (infrastructure) and more engaged communities expressing their interests and needs through democratic mechanisms (e.g., elections of CDCs members as representatives, the participatory process of prioritizing infrastructure needs, etc.).

However, the ET found the reverse phenomenon happened across most communities (32 out of 37): communities fulfilled all necessary SEDA preconditions (organizing community meetings, elections, establishment of a CDC) primarily as tools to win infrastructure projects. Exceptions were observed in Lacat (Khachmaz), Surra (Shabran); Ashaghi Chamanli (Beylagan), Uzunboyad (Shabran); and Murya (Lankaran). KIs and GDs indicate that communities were well aware of SEDA’s infrastructure support, but SEDA’s support for democratic and governance practices appeared to be too implicit and rarely articulated, so this support was not well understood or embraced.

For example, SEDA-promoted democratic mechanisms in selection of community priorities²⁶ did not take hold as a regular practice in most communities. With several exceptions, GDs with communities suggest that they generally do not embrace re-elections as a means to either bring fresh representation or hold existing CDC members accountable for their performance. SEDA reported that communities are required to repeat the entire CDC election when they decide to apply for a second or a third infrastructure project with SEDA if two years have passed since the last CDC election. SOs and GDs suggest that, in the majority of cases, local communities consider SEDA’s CDC election requirement merely as a prerequisite for an investment project. According to SEDA’s records, until the end of 2019, 45 communities have had a re-election of the entire CDC, which makes up 30.8 percent of the total of 146 SEDA communities. Six sampled communities (or 16.2 percent of the total sample) had carried out full reelections of the council (Alpan community in Guba, Garalar community in Aran, Khyolu community in Ganja-Gazakh, Ziyadli community in Samukh rayon, Uzunboyad community in Shabran, and Lecet community in Khachmaz). Other CDCs either never organized reelections or CDCs tended to appoint individual new members themselves (e.g., Ahmadbayli and Govlarsari in Samukh, Amirkhanli in Shabran). Many CDC members do not see the need for re-elections because, as KIs in one community mentioned, “*people are still alive,*” explaining that changes in CDC membership commonly happen only in cases when their members pass away or leave the community as most CDC members are elderly men (see Section 4.1.3 for an analysis of factors affecting women and youth participation). In case of the Shahseven Tazakend community (Agiabadi rayon), however, elections never took place at all, since the CDC simply built itself upon a previous project committee created for the Azerbaijan Rural Investment Project (AzRIP).

The community of Khaspoladoba (Khachmaz) was presented as a champion, noting that “*SEDA-supported Irrigation Water Wells CSEP managed to establish an efficient mechanism of water distribution for one of these wells that currently helps 27 households, that is more than the number of households that were expected to benefit from this well, as planned for in this CSEP’s PTD.*” However, SO in this community showed minimal use of irrigation water due to problems with construction of the wells (elaborated in the report). Another community, Aghyazi Budug community (Khachmaz) was presented as a community in which

“CDC led the community mobilizing work that led to the implementation of the SEDA-supported Construction of Sport Facility CSEP. This CDC later worked with the local Road Department and managed

²⁶ SEDA’s approach to selection of community priorities is to draw a list of priority needs for the community to vote by CDC members during the roundtable on *Needs Identification and Community Survey* that is the part of SEDA’s capacity building activities targeting the CDCs. At this roundtable, SEDA facilitates brainstorming and discussion among CDC members that lead to the identification of five priority community socio-economic needs. SEDA assists the CDC members to prepare the Community Needs Survey based on these five priorities and CDC members conduct the survey among at least 50 percent of community households. The three needs that collect the most votes by the community are then developed into CSEP ideas profiles that are submitted for approval.

to get the department to repair a 6 km long asphalt road that connects the main road to the Sport Facility. This project was fully funded from the State Budget. The repaired road also helped neighboring communities to benefit from the SEDA-supported Sport Facility.”

However, the ET could not meet the CDC because they were no longer viable.

The 2016 Public Perception Survey (PPS) also found that “More than half of respondents in Guba-Khachmaz and nearly half of respondents in Aran participated in elections/re-elections of CDC in their community (respectively, 55.8 percent and 45.5 percent).”²⁷ Detailed analysis of data collected through field inquiry showed that the harvested outcome, “Citizens gain a basic understanding of and practice in democracy,” as elaborated above, was partially substantiated with 34 percent of communities offering evidence for its full or partial substantiation (14 percent and 20 percent respectively) (see Table 18 in Annex 14).

KIs, GDs, and SOs suggested that, in general, the CDCs are composed of already active and locally renowned people, in most cases those with more education or influence in the community, such as municipal representatives and or local ExComs, school principals and teachers, doctors or nurses, and successful businesspeople. However, in some cases, such as in Amirkhanli, a cleaner and a housewife were also elected. In other cases, such as in Otuzikilar (Imishli rayon) or Ahmadli community both in the Aran region, the CDC mostly consisted of staff of the local school. As stated by an interviewed regional ExCom representative, “These are natural leaders who are then elected to become the CDC leaders. SEDA pays attention to who is selected in the communities, for [their] ability to mobilize the community.” For instance, a KI from Govlarsari noted “the CDC includes the local municipal person and local ExCom, so this helps.” GDs with some communities noted that CDCs in some cases excluded members that were not active (e.g., in Amirkhanli, Shabran). In many cases, following the finalization of the infrastructure project, the CDCs go dormant until another opportunity for a SEDA project (or another that requires similar structure) appears. For instance, one community, Govlarsari, conducted reelections for the purpose of the AzRIP project in 2016.

Box 2: CDCs and Broader Democratic Practices

Spillover effects on broader democratic processes are usually very hard to determine. The impact of any given project on broader democratic understanding and processes depends on a whole set of intermediate instances and processes, such as understanding of democracy and its roots in a given society, political culture, power relations within communities and wider gender relations, etc.

The ET found limited evidence indicating that there was spillover from the CDC election processes to broader democratic processes, such as the municipal elections—although this did occur in the case of the CDC in Gavran community (see Box 4, in Section 4.3). GDs with CDC members suggest that local communities consider CDC elections not only as a SEDA requirement but also as a representative structure for planning and implementing the infrastructure project. However, longer-term change would entail building stronger and longer-term representation and civic mobilization structures within communities that are generally not in place at the moment, as observed by this evaluation.

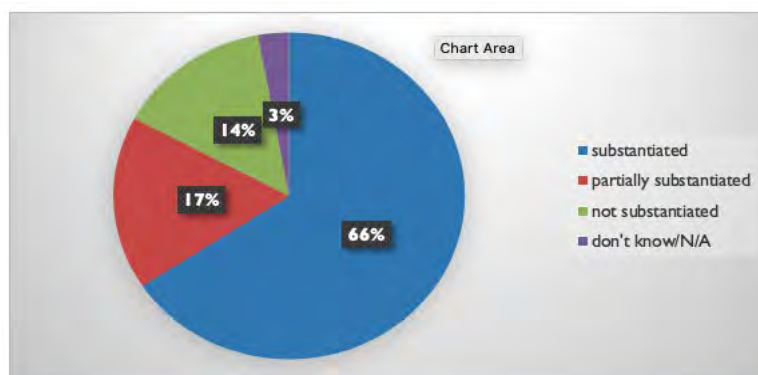
Finding 4: The evaluation found evidence that community members participating in CDCs have built greater confidence in their ability to work collectively to identify and address community problems. However, it found limited evidence that this empowerment led to a sustained practice of democracy and civic mobilization in targeted communities.

The OH workshop produced an outcome relating to increased self-confidence of communities: “Community members have built greater trust and confidence in their ability to affect their own development through work with municipal authorities and ExComs.” During the field inquiry, CDC members in 83 percent of sampled communities spoke highly of the way that the SEDA-supported participatory process built trust in their own ability to collectively address pressing community needs (see Figure 4). The communities that substantiated the outcome noted that the process often also contributed

²⁷ Faradov et al. (2016), PPS, SEDA, p. 19.

to a positive spirit of unity among citizens, CDC representatives, and local government authorities (see also Box 3 below). This is confirmed by the findings of the 2016 PPS, which noted that “The considerable part of respondents (59.5 percent in Guba-Khachmaz and 64.3 percent in Aran region) believe that ‘citizens in my community benefited from CDC.’ More than half of respondents in Guba-Khachmaz and in Aran expressed satisfaction with work of CDC in their community (respectively, 59.8 percent and 57.8 percent).”²⁸

Figure 4: Outcome Substantiation Through Field Inquiry
“Community members have built greater trust and confidence in their ability to affect their own development through work with municipal authorities and ExComs”



Box 3: Building Trust and Confidence in Collective Action – Perspectives from CDC Members

“In the past, if there were problems, we waited for state intervention, now we act collectively to address problems.” – Ashagi-atuc CDC members (Guba)

“The community began to trust that SEDA was interested in working closely with the community... As CDC members saw projects implemented in other villages, they began to trust they could do the same.” – Gobaktala CDC members (Imishli)

“SEDA taught us that if we come together as a community, we can do anything ourselves. It brought us unity.” – Muyra CDC members (Lerik)

“Before, the people had doubts and thoughts that SEDA project had some self-interest, that the CDC members would split the SEDA funds among themselves. When they observed transparency, their trust grew. Also, before it was difficult to ask people to work collectively, now it is possible.” – Ahmadli CDC members (Beylagan)

“Before SEDA it was difficult to gather people to discuss. It is now much easier to communicate and gather them. Now the community believes that things can change and that projects can be implemented. There is more confidence by people. When the CDC was created, they thought that municipality should candidate projects to SEDA but with time when CDC members saw that their voices are heard they become more confident to also candidate priorities and needs. Now, through CDC they can disseminate all information about municipal affairs.” – Lacat CDC members (Khachmaz)

At the same time, it was not clear that this trust and confidence could be sustained well beyond the relatively brief time period of SEDA’s intervention (an average of approximately one year per infrastructure project) and the relatively small level of investment (generally about \$15,000-\$20,000), especially in communities that only benefited from one SEDA project and therefore received less financial support over less time. Some CDCs rode the momentum of confidence to organize small locally-supported initiatives, others sought additional SEDA projects or external assistance from the state or donors (mostly unsuccessfully, due to external factors as elaborated above), while still others went dormant after the SEDA project was completed. The ET found limited evidence that CDCs, social mobilization, and associated participatory mechanisms were sustained at the community level (see Section

²⁸ Faradov et al. (2016), PPS, SEDA, p. 19.

4.3 for more on sustainability). Yet, although some CDCs became inactive following the completion of the project, exceptions were found. For instance, in Zardabi community, Guba rayon, Lacat community, Khachmaz rayon, and Fakhrli community, Garanboy rayon, the CDCs appear to be very active years after SEDA's initial investment. However, in most communities visited by the ET, change is not so pronounced.

In addition to the brief period of SEDA's intervention as well as the limited financial support for a completed infrastructure project, factors such as the local socio-economic context, citizens' general interest and engagement in community affairs, the quality of CDC leadership, and cultural differences among geographic regions might have influenced the variation in levels of trust among communities, as noted in KIIIs.²⁹

4.1.3 EQ 1: Assessment of SEDA Outcomes with Regards to CDCs' Ability to Engage in and Influence Public Policy Decisions

Finding 5: The evaluation found ample evidence of improved relationships between CDC members and municipal authorities and local ExCom representatives, but somewhat less evidence of the extent to which this resulted in a shift in government decision-making, especially at the rayon level and above.

Review of available studies of governance practices and participation in Azerbaijan revealed a very low level of participation of citizens in decision-making processes overall. Research conducted in Azerbaijan by Caucasus Barometer in 2013 found that 83 percent of respondents reported that they had not attended a public meeting and 77 percent said that they had not volunteered without compensation in the previous six months. The two consecutive PPSs, commissioned by SEDA in 2012 and in 2016, showed varying trends with regards to participatory practices across the two SEDA-targeted regions at the time of the survey (see Table 20 in Annex 16). For instance, the 2016 PPS found that only 9.3 percent of respondents in the Aran region participated in various types of activities concerning the socio-economic problems/issues of their community, particularly when it came to activities such as meeting with

Box 4: Citizen-Government Relationship in Zardabi

"At the beginning of cooperation with SEDA, municipal authorities participated very little in the process of selection and implementation of the project. But, in the latest round of support they are participating actively, voluntarily seeking out SEDA and contributing local funds to the project.

Also, as people in the community see that international organizations are bringing these positive changes to the communities, they begin questioning the local and regional authorities, why are you not helping us? This puts pressure on the local authorities.

In general, municipalities are more supportive of the SEDA project, rather than ExComs, even local ones. Before, projects that we presented to ExCom were rejected, but recently there is more positive reception to NGOs." – Zardabi CDC members

officials, attending a public meeting in the community, and speaking in public at the meeting. In Guba-Khachmaz, comparative analysis of findings from 2012 and 2016 showed "a small progress in the sphere of distributing information ("yes, once" and "yes, a few times"), as well as in the spheres of meetings with officials ("yes, a few times"), attending a public meeting in community ("yes, a few times"), public speech at meeting ("yes, a few times") and signing a petition, collective appeal ("yes, a few times")."³⁰ However, there was a decrease of participation in activities such as attending a public meeting, speaking in public, or signing a petition or a collective appeal. From that perspective, SEDA's support to building capacities and tools to help CDC members actively engage with government representatives has been very relevant, as it helps create a critical mass of leaders who have stronger convening and engagement power.

One outcome was harvested with regards to CDCs' ability to engage in and influence public policy decisions: "Local and central government authorities' attitudes and practices have changed as a result of engaging communities. ExComs have started to recognize community groups as a legitimate informal

²⁹ Ibid, p. 19.

³⁰ Faradov et al. (2016), PPS, SEDA, p. 29.

group that has valuable input into decision-making. They realize that community opinions matter.” The outcome substantiation process through document review and field inquiry showed that there is an increasingly positive relationship between CDCs and local authorities at the municipal level in most communities (see Figure 5). This can partially be explained by the fact that local municipal representatives are CDC members, as outlined in SEDA Year I Work Plan, which stipulates that *“A municipal representative will serve as a member in each CDC. He/she and other municipal representatives will also be invited to attend CDC meetings, to benefit from training provided to CDC members, and get involved in the development of the CDC’s proposals.”*³¹ Per SEDA’s explanation, municipal leaders and other local officials residing in the community can become CDC members, if the community chooses.

Almost 84 percent of 118 CDC members responding to the survey said that the CDC had made “a significant improvement” in forging a strong, trusting relationship between community members and the local authorities, while 91 percent of beneficiaries who were not CDC members agreed that the SEDA project had “significantly improved” the communities’ relationship with local government authorities. For their part, a large majority of municipal authorities, village-level and rayon-level ExComs responding to the survey (89 percent) indicated that they found CDCs to be “very helpful partners.”

With regards to the harvested outcome “In some regions, there has been a shift in government priorities as a result of hearing from the communities about their needs,” CDCs’ sense of their influence on government authorities’ decision-making was slightly less strong than their sense of the quality of the relationship with government authorities (see Figure 5). Through surveys, 78 percent of CDC members indicated that the CDC had “significant” input and another 19 percent “moderate” input into decisions by municipal authorities and local ExComs. When asked about the extent to which this input was ultimately reflected in decisions, slightly lower percentages of respondents judged this influence “significant” or “moderate,” 66 percent and 29 percent, respectively.

Among examples cited during field inquiry where government priorities shifted in response to community mobilization were:

- CDC members in Memishlar community (Sabirabad rayon) reported that they advocated for various services with the rayon ExCom, who responded by ensuring that they received water supply, gas, electricity, Internet, and phone connection from the state.
- In Birinci Ashigli community (Beylagan rayon), a village women’s group formed in May 2019, partly inspired by the CDC’s example. The local ExCom representative introduced the group to the rayon Excom, who facilitated state support for their entrepreneurship and income-generation project.
- In Alpan and Gobaktala communities, following SEDA’s support for their carpet-weaving and school heating projects, respectively, the CDCs successfully appealed to the rayon ExCom to gain state assistance to expand and improve local water supply systems.

Municipal authorities and local and rayon ExComs, who completed a separate survey, were somewhat less positive in their assessment of the degree of regular consultation of CDC members on decisions related to socio-economic development. Altogether, 61 percent said that they “almost always” sought the ideas and opinions of community members on socio-economic development decisions, while 37 percent responded, “most of the time.” The same 61 percent attributed any positive change in regular consultation of communities to SEDA, while 24 percent said that although SEDA was mostly responsible, there were other influences (however, the survey did not ask respondents to elaborate on types of other influences). Over half of officials (53 percent) responded that they almost always shared information critical to decisions more openly with communities; another 38 percent said that they did so most of the time. However, the analysis of the anonymous survey was unable to distinguish between the responses of municipal authorities, ExCom representatives at the community level, and ExComs at the rayon level,

³¹ SEDA Year I Work Plan.

although KIs and GDs suggested that there were differences in their perspectives and in their responsiveness to communities, especially between community-level government officials and those at a higher level. KIs and GDs point to strong CDC leadership in relation to the SEDA project, but less so in consultations with government authorities on wider issues. Therefore, the ET found shifts in government priorities as a result of hearing from the communities happened, yet this is a part of the general government approach to planning, and not necessarily due to the strong influence of CDCs on these priorities *per se*.

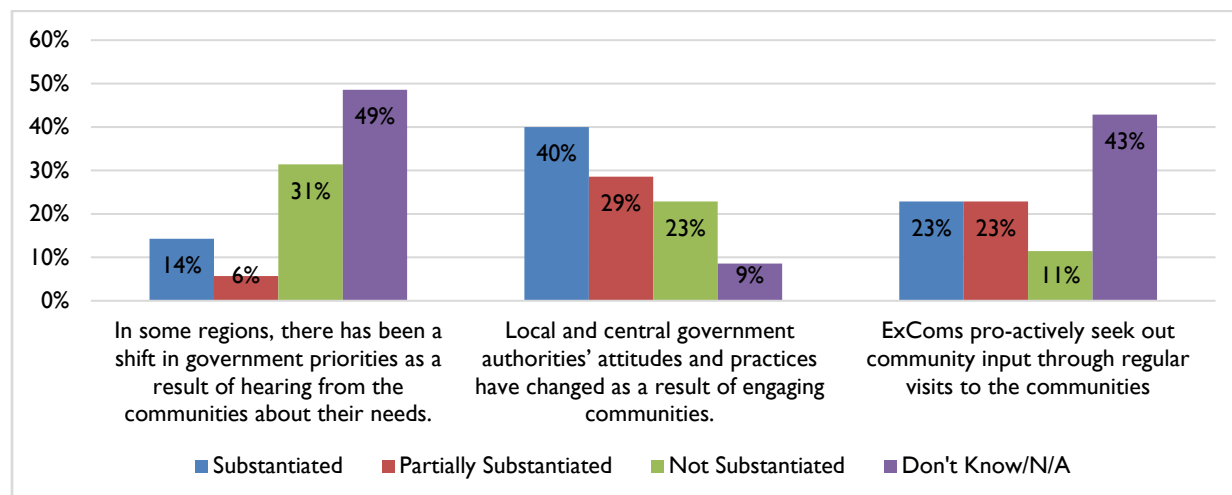
An interrelated outcome is “ExComs pro-actively seek out community input through regular visits to the communities, rather than waiting for communities to seek them out” (see Figure 5). KIs and GDs suggested that ExCom representatives at the community level in many cases grew closer with and more responsive to communities as a result of the SEDA process. However, in some cases, such as in Gachrash community, Guba rayon, or in Lacat community in Khachmaz, there was a difference in understanding of local priorities between the ExCom and the CDC. For instance, in Lacat community, CDC members noted that the ExCom was not responsive to their suggestions and prioritization of a water supply project for a long time.

Not surprisingly, ExComs at the rayon level generally indicated less change in their attitudes and behavior toward communities as a result of SEDA projects. In a small number of cases, rayon-level ExComs cited examples where they responded to community requests or facilitated interventions with state utilities as a result of a CDC demand. However, most rayon-level ExComs view CDCs primarily as an effective means for mobilizing community labor and financial contribution for SEDA-funded infrastructure projects, rather than as a mechanism for grassroots, democratic assertion of communities’ interests and priorities in their decision-making process, especially beyond the specific SEDA infrastructure project. For instance, one rayon ExCom interviewee noted *“We have never changed our priorities based on CDC requests, but we take into account their inputs in planning.”* Indeed, rayon-level ExComs regard SEDA infrastructure projects primarily as a source of finance that relieved them of the responsibility to address infrastructure needs at the community level. One rayon ExCom representative voiced the general sentiment shared by many others, noting, *“If SEDA can meet some of those needs, we and other state authorities can take that off our list.”* It was telling that members of the Zardabi CDC (Guba rayon) requested that SEDA intervene more actively with the rayon and regional ExComs in support of its priorities, given SEDA’s strong reputation with government officials.

There are exceptions that are worthy of note, however. In Fakhrali community, Garanboy rayon, the municipal authority remarked, *“One of the benefits that we gained from SEDA is that government structures at the rayon level started recognizing us as a community that is capable, that can unite when needed. Thus, they are more responsive.”*

The rayon ExComs do seek out community input through regular visits to the communities but SEDA’s contribution to this outcome seems to be minimal or nonexistent. Instead, ExComs mentioned a recent President’s demand that rayon ExComs visit each local community in their rayon at least once per month as means to explore local needs and priorities in a more structured and systematic manner. As a result, regional and rayon ExComs now invest more effort in consulting with communities, as mentioned by many rayon ExComs in KIs. With a few exceptions, rayon ExComs do not specifically seek out CDCs when they visit communities, but instead hold general community meetings that CDC members, as individuals and not as CDC members, may attend.

Figure 5: Overview of Substantiation of Outcomes Relating to CDCs' Ability to Engage in and Influence Public Policy Decisions Through Field Inquiry in Communities



4.1.4 Factors Affecting Women and Youth Participation

Gender reports and research studies show a large gender gap in empowerment of women in Azerbaijan. According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2020, measurement of women's political empowerment (capturing women's representation in Parliament, ministerial positions, and related positions)³² shows that the country ranks only 140 of 152 countries. Obstacles for women's participation are rooted in traditional norms and structures, education attainment, and economic opportunities. The 2016 PPS found minimal or no participation of respondents in women's organizations in either of the two surveyed regions (0.2 in Guba-Khachmaz and 0.0 in Aran),³³ although the survey did not disaggregate between male and female respondents in this regard.

Finding 6: The evaluation found evidence that women community members take part in SEDA-supported participatory processes and that women CDC members are vocal in expressing their interests and needs, although the extent of their direct influence on decision-making was not clear. Yet, although some women were strong and respected leaders or coordinators in CDCs, and others served as a municipal authority or as the local ExCom representative in some communities, it was not possible to attribute this leadership to SEDA interventions.

During the OH workshop, one of the two outcomes defined by the SEDA team with regards to women's empowerment stated that "Women participating in SEDA are more vocal in expressing their interests/needs" (see Figure 6 for overview of substantiation of outcomes relating to women's empowerment per community). Women community members reportedly participated actively in CDC elections and in other SEDA-supported processes, such as the prioritization of projects. Surveys conducted for this evaluation found that 72 percent of 118 CDC member respondents believe that members of the community who were not very active before, such as women and youth, are "much more active" in community discussions and in setting community priorities through the CDC, while another 22 percent believed they were "moderately more active."

Women also make up a substantial share of those elected to CDCs, in response to SEDA's pre-determined requirement that women comprise at least 30 percent of CDC membership in order to qualify for support under the project. SEDA considers attainment of this quota as a solid measure to ensure women's

³² Global Gender Gap Index (introduced by World Economic Forum in 2006) measures national gender gaps on economic, education, health, and political criteria, and provides country rankings to allow for comparisons across regions. For global performance in 2020, please see http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf.

³³ Faradov et al. (2016), PPS, SEDA, p. 29.

participation in CDC decision-making processes at the local level. Virtually all CDCs interviewed appeared to meet that formal requirement. In about a quarter of communities visited by the ET, women CDC members outnumbered men (for example, in Birinci Ashigli, Beylagan rayon; Ziyadli community, Sumukh rayon; Lacat community, Khachmaz rayon; Fakhrali community, Garanboy rayon; Garadaghli community, Garanboy rayon; and Khoylu community, Garanboy rayon, among others). The 2016 evaluation of SEDA project found that, at that time, half of CDCs had 41-50 percent female membership and 12 percent of CDCs had more than 50 percent female members.

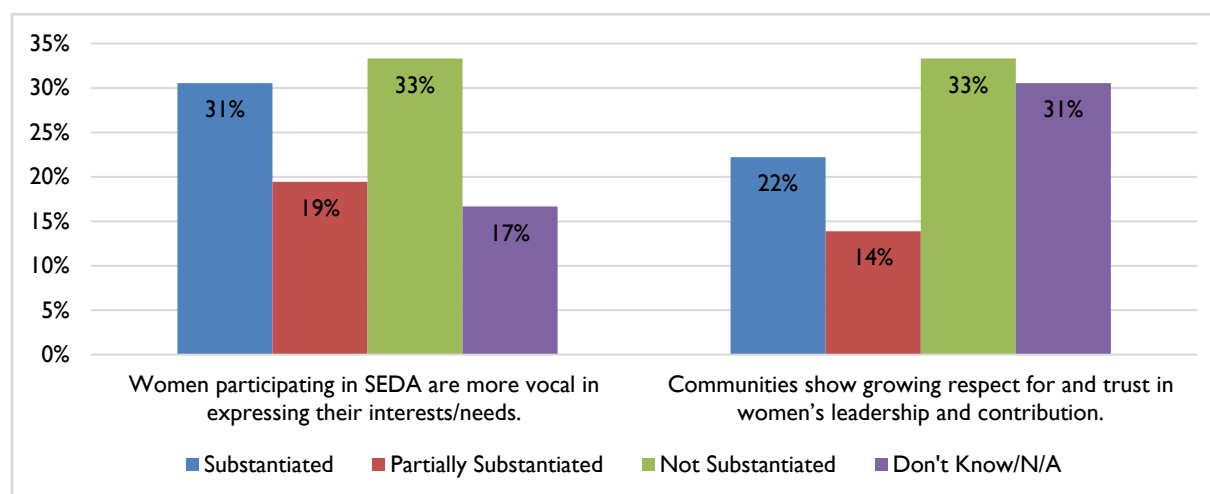
Field observation showed that the majority of women participating in GDs with the ET did not speak up unless directly questioned, which may be attributed to traditional cultural norms, and lack of empowerment of female CDC members to take more active part in the discussions, as observed by ET. There were notable exceptions to this pattern, and ET observed that the level of women's empowerment differed from one region to the other. For instance, women in Ganja and in some communities in the Guba-Khachmaz region were more outspoken than women in the Aran region. An explanation for these differences may be found in the varying level of women's roles and status in different areas of the country. CDC members agreed that women bring their concerns and priorities to attention in community prioritization meetings for SEDA-funded local infrastructure projects. In particular, water supply infrastructure, kindergartens, or school renovation were sometimes cited as examples of priorities that especially met women's interests and needs. The field inquiry therefore partially substantiated the harvested outcome statement focusing on women's expression of their needs, i.e., "Women participating in SEDA are more vocal in expressing their interests/needs" (see Figure 6).

With regard to the second, related outcome, "Communities show growing respect for and trust in women's leadership and contribution," women's leadership at the community level varied across the sampled communities. Certainly, in several communities, women served as CDC coordinators or active members (for example, in Birinci Ashigli community, Beylagan rayon; Ziyadli community, Samukh rayon; Govlarsari community, Samukh rayon; and Fakhrali community, Garanboy rayon). In other cases, women were municipal leaders (Ashagi-atuc community, Guba rayon; Tazakand community, Agjabadi rayon; and Fakhrali community, Garanboy Rayon) and, in at least two cases, the local ExCom representatives were female (Govlarsari community, Samukh rayon and Otuzikilar community, Imishli rayon). The mere fact of election or appointment of women to these positions suggests trust in their leadership, although women's leadership or the community's respect for their leadership cannot be directly attributed to SEDA. There is no evidence of SEDA's direct contribution to this outcome. Women's leadership in these communities might have pre-dated SEDA's intervention, and socio-cultural factors that vary by region are likely to play a role. In GDs and KILs, women leaders themselves did not specifically credit the SEDA project with their leadership role.

In addition to the formal requirement that women comprise 30 percent of CDC members, SEDA held one two-day gender equality training for women CDC members in each targeted region during 2015-2016. Encouraging women's leadership was reportedly one focus of the training. However, attributing change in women's leadership in CDCs to this very limited investment is not possible. Furthermore, the gender trainings were organized only for women CDC members, not for the wider CDC membership. This is a weakness, as studies³⁴ conducted in Azerbaijan and elsewhere show progress toward gender equality and women's empowerment requires changes in deeply rooted attitudes, behavior, and practices among men at least as much if not more than among women. To the ET's knowledge, there was no effort to identify women's specific needs and interests related to local development, or barriers to women's participation and leadership in CDCs or community decision-making structures. Beyond the single gender training, the ET learned of no systematic effort by SEDA to support changes in gender relations among CDC members once they were elected.

³⁴ Gender Gap report; Gender Assessment commissioned by UNFPA; etc. See more on https://azerbaijan.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNDP-AZE-Gender-Assessmnet-kitab-eng_v4_view.pdf.

Figure 6: Outcomes Relating to Women's Empowerment



Finding 7: The evaluation did not yield evidence of SEDA's contribution to youth engagement. Youth was not mainstreamed by the project and youth engagement, in the few places where it happened, was not attributable to SEDA.

The participation of youth in CDCs was not mentioned in the outcomes harvested by SEDA, nor was it reflected in SEDA Component I program activities (with the exception of infrastructure projects that would directly benefit youth, such as sports grounds and school renovation). The SEDA team admits that it had no youth participation strategy, remarking that “SEDA is not a youth leadership project” and that “Naturally, people wanted to see people with more experience and status be elected to CDCs.” Consequently, with rare exceptions, the ET observed and heard little about youth participation in CDCs. On the contrary, most CDCs interviewed by the ET appeared to be composed primarily of middle-aged and elderly men in the community.

Yet it is worth noting the exceptions: in Zardabi community, Guba rayon, a young person was selected a CDC coordinator, replacing the previous elderly coordinator; in Lacat, most CDC members are women and young people; in Alpan, new elections saw refreshment of the CDC with more young people and women; and in Gavran community, Yardimli rayon, seven out of the nine CDC members were under the age of 35. Interestingly, as noted in Box 4 in Section 4.3, the Gavran CDC demonstrated an extraordinary level of initiative, suggesting a potential correlation between the CDC members' ages and the level of activism. Also worth noting is that elections (or internal selection by the CDC) usually occur either due to a new opportunity for SEDA infrastructure support or to the death of CDC members. GDs revealed that, in most cases, another elderly person was elected to replace a member who died, although in a handful of cases a younger leader was elected.

4.1.5 Component II Findings

Due to discontinuation of Components II and III since 2015, and the fact that most of the activities within Component II happened in the period of 2012-2014, this section is based on desk review of the available historical records and two interviews with the Regional NGO Resource and Training Centers (R-NRTCs) in Shirvan and in Guba, which partially verified the preliminary findings derived from the desk review. Due to lack of contacts between SEDA and CSOs funded within this component, no interviews were held with beneficiaries of this component as elaborated in the limitation section above.

Finding 8: Document review and interviews with R-NRTCs indicate that SEDA activities under Component II led to results at the output level, in terms of building CSOs' capacity and conducting successful advocacy campaigns.

Component II was essentially terminated with the no-cost extension of the SEDA project that began on October 1, 2016 and was completed on December 31, 2017. The Cost and Time Extension that began on January 1, 2018 and spanned until September 30, 2019, did not include any mention of Component II (or Component III). The termination of Component II and III activities were due to the legislative changes in the country, which created tremendous obstacles for NGO activities and, more importantly, narrowed the space for operation of foreign donors supporting civic activism and local initiatives.

In the first five years of implementation, SEDA, according to the reports, was able to: a) conduct organizational and advocacy capacity assessments of 39 CSOs; b) award grants to six CSOs and select 14 other CSOs to receive SEDA's Civic Engagement Grants; c) provide training and mentoring to 1,063 CSO representatives in the target regions; d) organize three study tours abroad, respectively to Bulgaria, Italy, and Spain, for CSSN and CSOs' representatives, as well as government authorities; e) organize 33 workshops on Establishing Public Councils; and f) support the R-NRTCs in Shirvan and Guba.

The six CSO grantees conducted advocacy and awareness-raising activities related to citizens' access to social services, environmental protection, citizens' access to credit, improving seed registration procedures, and improving potable water management. The outreach by the six SEDA grantees was also considerable: 4,361 citizens, of which 3,032 men, 1,329 women, 1,672 youth, 376 internally displaced persons (IDPs), 171 businesspersons, 140 CSO representatives, and 318 government officials participated in SEDA Civic Engagement Grant program-funded activities. In addition, 233 families gained access to sustainable potable water; 77 credit applications for start-up businesses were approved by relevant credit institutions; 12 environmental information tables providing resources for children on environment were established in schools; over 80 citizens gained access to social services; and a government agency involved farmers in the procedure for seed testing. Most notably, as the result of SEDA's capacity building, one of SEDA's grantees, Beylagan YESDPU was able to win three new government grants, as stated in SEDA reports and in the previous evaluation of SEDA assistance.

The two R-NRTCs in Shirvan and Guba also benefited from cooperation with SEDA, which assisted the centers in preparing a Grants Manual, M&E Toolkit, and Gender Mainstreaming Policy, as well as a long-term strategic plan. The directors of both R-NRTCs both attested that these materials have been very useful in their work and are being utilized, even after the discontinuation of Component II activities of SEDA project.

Finding 9: Discontinuation of the two components had a negative impact on Component I, by ending complementary efforts to promote more open, participatory government decision-making. The discontinuation, however, was beyond SEDA's control.

Component II was originally well designed to interweave with the Component III activities toward a comprehensive approach to enhancing the enabling environment for civil society toward wider impact on community development and social issues. The two components also aimed to support and scale up the results of Component I. As such, Component II was envisaged to help NGOs to engage effectively with government officials and advocate for a citizen-driven, socio-economic development agenda through providing training, mentoring, and grants to NGOs in SEDA target regions and assisting them in establishing Platforms for Regional Dialogue on Socio-Economic Development to discuss and develop common strategies and plans for promoting socio-economic growth at the regional level.

Various activities under Component II were planned to logically follow and feed into one another. As such, the Civic Engagement Grants were preceded by the Organizational and Advocacy Capacity Assessment, which was designed to identify the CSO Advocacy Index (AI) score for individual CSOs and an overall score for CSOs in each region to serve as a baseline to measure the impact of SEDA's support for CSOs' advocacy efforts and as a basis for the development of Civil Society Organizations Advocacy Training Program. The advocacy training program itself was delivered in mid and advanced levels and was complemented by a mentoring program to provide on-the-job and distance technical assistance (TA) to

SEDA grantees. These components, in a holistic way, contributed to increased capacity of regional CSOs, as was attested by the two R-NRTCs' directors.

Documentary records show that, since the start of the project and before the Component II was terminated, SEDA made multiple attempts to move forward with the planned civil society strengthening activities, even as the political space for CSOs and foreign donors tightened. There was a high degree of flexibility in adapting to the changing environment and addressing concerns of different government stakeholders, such as a strategy employed by SEDA to partner with the CSSN, which later took part in shaping of and deciding on essentially every activity under Component II, such as the selection of CSOs to participate in the CSO Advocacy Capacity Assessment, and advising on timing and program focus for SEDA training and grant activities. However, this strategy of partnering with an Azerbaijani NGO to implement Component II activities did not prove to be very successful and after a five-year period of implementation and limited progress towards set goals, the Component II activities were eventually terminated, without any clear outcomes to point to.

4.1.6 Component III Findings

As mentioned above, Component III activities, which aimed to strengthen the capacity of the GOAJ to engage with stakeholders on key socio-economic development issues, ended by the end of 2015 together with Component II. Planned activities included initiatives to enhance the national legislative framework for citizen participation, mentorship of local and central government on developing participatory budgets and strategic development plans, exposure to international models for citizen participation, promotion of a PPP pilot program, and promotion of a gender equity budget initiative. However, while some of these activities were successfully implemented, others ended at an early stage or before implementation, either at the request of the GOAJ or due to the changed political environment that dramatically reduced the space for citizen engagement with government.

The ET harvested one outcome during the document review relating to the Component III, i.e., "The Milli Majlis (National Parliament) of Azerbaijan passed, in the second reading, the new Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Citizen Participation which reflected 87 SEDA's recommendations." No further outcomes related to Component III were harvested directly with the SEDA team, because most current SEDA staff were either hired since 2016 or had no past experience with Component III. Neither were Component III outcomes explored during the ET field visits to the regions. Therefore, outcome described below is based upon a review of program documents, the 2016 performance evaluation of SEDA, and an interview with SEDA's implementing partner (IP) for Component III.

Finding 10: SEDA played a significant role in shaping, supporting, and promoting the 2014 Law on Public Participation establishing Public Councils as a central mechanism for citizen participation among other provisions, a notable outcome of the program. However, so far, the implementation of the law has been weak, with only a limited number of Public Councils established and their performance has not been particularly strong.

SEDA conducted almost 50 workshops, roundtables, conferences, and meetings in various regions of the country to help frame the national legislation on public participation. For example, SEDA held regional public hearings on the draft law and organized national conferences showcasing international best practice on citizen participation, facilitating professional relationships between government officials, members of Parliament, international and local experts, CSOs, international donors, and more. The events generated dozens of recommendations, many of which were further developed by SEDA's partner, the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL), and submitted to the government. Ultimately, 87 recommendations submitted by ICNL were reflected in the final text of the enacted legislation and accompanying administrative regulations.³⁵ The 2016 performance evaluation of SEDA noted "Those 87 recommendations derived from the SEDA-sponsored events were included in the final text of the enacted legislation also demonstrates the openness of the process and the effective professional relationships SEDA helped build with its counterparts

³⁵ Performance Evaluation of the SEDA Activity, p. 21.

and implementing partners.”³⁶ Among the recommendations promoted through the SEDA project and accepted by the legislation’s drafters were: 1) mandatory written consultations with the public on all legal acts; 2) adoption of procedures for the establishment and operations of public councils; and 3) introduction of various additional mechanisms for public consultations, such public hearings and discussions, public opinion studies, etc.

As one stakeholder interviewed noted, “SEDA was very effective in shaping the [Public Participation] law. Without its interventions, the quality of the law would not be as strong. The government has acknowledged this on a number of occasions.” Following the adoption of the law, SEDA spearheaded efforts to promote the legislation with not only with central government bodies, but also with those at the regional, rayon, and municipal levels, as well as with representatives of civil society, through roundtables, awareness-raising workshops, and training workshops. It also produced a handbook on establishing Public Councils.

Although SEDA’s activities in Component III ended in 2015, at present 11 central-level state bodies have established Public Councils based upon the law, including the Ministries of Justice, Health, Labor, Migration, and Family, Women, and Children’s Affairs, and at least one rayon (Shamkir) has established a Public Council. These outcomes can partially be attributed to SEDA’s efforts within a wider pool of social agents providing inputs into the law drafting process as well as promotion of the law after its enactment. However, according to one stakeholder interviewed, Public Councils are neither as numerous nor as active as some of the law’s proponents had hoped and some members of Public Councils lack expertise in the sectors addressed by the councils. Moreover, although the law permits CSOs and NGOs to demand consultation with ministries, the demand has not been strong due to the weakened state of CSOs and NGOs. Weak implementation has some implications for CDC sustainability as elaborated in Section 4.3 of this report.

Finding 11: Other SEDA initiatives to expand opportunities for citizen participation in decision-making at the local and central government level produced no tangible outcomes, mainly due to the fact that many activities under Component III were never fully operationalized.

SEDA sought to develop the capacity of local and central government officials to engage in participatory decision-making through a series of interventions, including annual seminars on participatory policy development reaching more than 50 central and local government officials and CSO representatives, international study tours to Croatia and Bulgaria in 2014 and Italy in 2015 to learn from models of participatory socio-economic development planning for 14 government officials as well as CSO representatives, 12 trainings with attendance of 377 persons on establishing Public Councils, and publication of several handbooks on access to information and best practices from international experience on citizen participation.

SEDA also sought to introduce decision-makers to the concept of PPPs, holding an introductory workshop on the concept for 42 government representatives, local ExComs, private sector representatives, and CDC leaders in 2015. However, this activity was discontinued because of lack of interest on the part of government authorities. Other planned initiatives under Component III—e.g., establishing Platforms for Regional Dialogue on socio-economic development convening local government officials, CSOs, and the private sector, launching an e-government initiative, training and mentoring municipalities in various areas, such as developing participatory budgets as well as gender equity budgets—were never even begun, due to lack of interest or approval from the GOAJ.

Yet, other than the important work related to the Public Participation Law mentioned in the previous finding, there is little evidence that the other Component III interventions that were implemented led to concrete or measurable changes in the practices of government officials at either the central or local level.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 21.

4.2 EQ 2: WHAT ASPECTS OF SEDA'S METHODOLOGY, IF ANY, ARE PROVEN TO BE EFFECTIVE OR NOT EFFECTIVE AND HOW?

The findings and analysis below pertain only to SEDA approaches under Component I. As the activities under Components II and III ended four years ago, the ET was unable to obtain independent sources of information to explore the most effective or ineffective approaches to promoting its objectives related to these components.

Finding 12: The evaluation found the decision to expand the pool of targeted communities (breadth), rather than concentrating assistance in a smaller number of communities over a longer period of time (depth), spread resources thin. The short duration of in-community project activities also prevented the project from achieving deeper and more sustainable results through Component I. This decision might have shifted SEDA's focus from deeper and long-term promotion of local democracy practices towards infrastructure.

SEDA's outreach through Component I has expanded, particularly since discontinuation of Components II and III in 2015, to 146 communities across the six targeted regions from an initial three regions, with plans to reach a total of 162 communities by September 2021. This decision and approved cost extension to increase the number from the originally planned target of 96 communities was made by USAID and SEDA in close consultation with the GOAJ, which had expressed strong interest in reaching a larger number of communities and also in projects focused more on economic development than social development. The SEDA team feedback has been that the decision to expand did not affect their resources to be too widely spread, thanks to the cost extension. However, in the view of the ET and based on stakeholder interviews and SOs, this is a staggering number that, even with strong regional representation, can be challenging for SEDA staff to follow up and offer ongoing support to all communities across the period of project implementation. The decision to expand the reach provided access to more communities to benefit from infrastructure but might have compromised the effectiveness and sustainability of results with regards to participatory democratic practices, since the latter generally require substantial investment of time and ongoing mentoring support in order to bring about sustainable change, especially in contexts where there is little democratic tradition. As mentioned above, SEDA tends to work with a community on a project over the course of one year or so, which is a relatively short duration of time to achieve more substantial change of behaviors and practices when it comes to participatory decision-making and governance.

Another factor that, as found by the evaluation, affected the results is the fact that SEDA eventually chose to expand the pool of targeted communities under Component I, rather than concentrating assistance in a smaller number of communities over a longer period of time. This expansion and wide outreach to such a huge number of communities with relatively short period of time invested in each community (approximately 6 months to one year), might have affected SEDA's focus on strengthening local participatory democratic practices due to a lack of more space and time for hands-on mentoring, training, and tailor-made solutions, and instead placing support to infrastructure at the center of intervention.

Finding 13: Under Component I, SEDA's approach to CDC trainings, mentoring, and exchanges between communities are viewed as highly effective by CDC members as well as by local government authorities. However, other standard SEDA approaches, such as the annual conference for CDC members and long-term development plans were cited much less as often as significant by stakeholders in communities.

In Component I, many approaches employed by SEDA to form and build the capacity of CDCs appeared to be very well received by communities: support for election of CDC members by community members; trainings and roundtable discussions for CDC members; exchange visits between SEDA communities; community needs assessment and prioritizations; assistance in developing proposals for infrastructure projects; and, following award of a project grant, mentoring and support through the process of project

procurement and implementation. For instance, the 2016 PPS found that “26.7 percent in Guba-Khachmaz and 32.6 percent in Aran region participated in capacity training for CDC members.”³⁷

GDs with CDCs indicated that a significant majority of members greatly appreciated the high-quality trainings provided by SEDA. CDC members reported that trainings gave them greater knowledge and skills in applying participatory processes to address community problems through the infrastructure projects. As the CDC coordinator in Khoylu (Garanboy rayon) remarked, “*The SEDA trainings were so detailed and engaging...the process of setting priorities was not something we knew how to do previously, so we learned new skills. We also learned how to speak on behalf of community.*” In addition, the municipal head in Fakhrli community commented, “*The trainings allowed us to mobilize the community and to work toward a common goal. In the process of prioritizing projects and going through the entire process, SEDA helped us gain the support and trust of the whole village.*” CDC members echoed similar sentiments in many other communities.

Furthermore, increased understanding of sustainability and the need for transparency, as well as skills for project planning, management, and monitoring were among the particular emphases of SEDA training highlighted by some CDC members. Some CDC members pointed to SEDA’s approach to mobilizing community support through financial and labor contributions as significant to fostering a sense of community ownership. As a CDC member in Garadaghli community (Garanboy rayon) commented, “*If we receive even one manat contribution from each household in the village, the collected money can resolve issues.*” However, others regarded SEDA’s requirement for a 25 percent community contribution as too onerous.

A number of CDC members also highlighted the intra-regional and inter-regional exchange visits among CDC communities as particularly valuable, because they provided inspiration as well as practical exchange of knowledge, experiences, and ideas for organizing around community development. According to SEDA, 83 such visits have been organized to date. Beyond the project-specific skills, some CDC members also mentioned that they learned how to interact with international donors, and how to meet the technical requirements of grant proposals as a result of the SEDA project. For instance, various KIs reported that in a small number of cases, SEDA project communities had successfully secured funding from international donors following the SEDA project. For example, the Cocuq Mercanli community reportedly received additional investment from the Turkish international aid agency, the Govlarsari and Rustov communities have received support from the Japanese embassy, the Ziyadli community as well as the Fakhrli community both received support from an Austrian INGO, and many communities had benefited from the VVB-funded AzRIP project either before or after SEDA intervention. However, as elaborated below, many more communities have tried yet failed to attract additional donor support or state government support.

Some approaches proved to be less effective. Only a few CDC members mentioned the annual community development conferences that SEDA has organized for the past five years and none highlighted it as especially valuable. Only a couple made reference to the long-term development plan that each CDC develops to extend beyond the period of SEDA support as an important instrument for sustainability; most did not refer to it.

One outcome harvested with the SEDA team was “Many communities now understand the need for environmental sustainability and plan and implement projects with attention to the environment.” However, the ET was unable to validate this outcome. Although SEDA requires CDCs to create an environmental sustainability plan for infrastructure projects to meet USAID program standards, the ET observed and heard almost nothing that indicated greater environmental awareness or practices among CDC members, beyond the required separation of medical and other waste at medical centers and the improvement in indoor air quality when school heating systems were upgraded from wood stoves to gas. Rather, CDC members considered the environmental sustainability plan as a necessary (and time-consuming) hoop to jump through for project implementation, as referenced in many SEDA reports.

³⁷ Faradov et al. (2016), PPS, SEDA, p. 19.

As noted above, SEDA's minimalist approach to promoting women's empowerment through CDC structures did not appear to yield strong results, and its approach to promoting youth participation was non-existent.

Finding 14: SEDA's approach to building a practice of local democracy through Component I activities was effective for the purposes of planning and implementing the infrastructure project, but not as effective as a general approach to local decision-making. SEDA has a standard methodology for selection of community priorities that is applied across the project target areas. While the methodology enables the project to be efficient and allows consistent approach across communities, it presents deficiencies in terms of ensuring full engagement of local constituencies and relevance to local needs.

Perhaps most important, the extent to which SEDA's Component I approaches were designed as a means to instill a stronger appreciation for general practice of democracy in communities did not seem to be greatly effective, as noted in findings and analysis presented in EQ 1. SEDA's major methods for promoting democratic practice were organizing the election of CDCs, and participatory methods for identifying and prioritizing community infrastructure projects (through community surveys and community meetings). However, the evaluation found that SEDA's approach to community voice and participation might not have lived up to its potential. The project selection in communities follows the following steps as outlined by SEDA:

"The original list of priority needs for the community to vote on is drawn up by CDC members during the roundtable on Needs Identification and Community Survey that is the part of SEDA's capacity building activities targeting the CDCs. At this roundtable, SEDA facilitates brainstorming and discussion among CDC members that lead to the identification of five priority community socio-economic needs. SEDA assists the CDC members to prepare the Community Needs Survey based on these five priorities and CDC members conduct the survey among at least 50 percent of community households. The three needs that collect the most votes by the community are then developed into CSEP ideas profiles that are submitted for evaluation by the [Project Evaluation Committee] PEC." The approach to which CDC members choose five priorities that are then taken up to community has its positive side, mainly in terms of efficiency of process and ensuring that the CDC members are capacitated to hold internal informed discussions on the community needs. On the other hand, the fact that community members themselves are not those who generate the initial list of priority projects prevents a deeply inclusive (democratic) process whereby the broader community is provided space to discuss needs and priorities and jointly select top priorities. As noted above, the CDC is usually comprised of members of a local elite and this raises questions about the extent to which more marginalized members of the community have a voice. This approach can also mislead the community prioritization process to those priorities that a group of CDC members find to be needed, but which may not be those representing wider community priorities at the same time. From this point, the relevance of selected projects may be questioned. Following the prioritization process, in some cases, communities were also not granted their first-priority project, usually because the cost exceeded SEDA's threshold, or due to questions surrounding technical or environmental feasibility, the feasibility of raising community's contribution, and the "relevance" of the proposed project (often determined by consultation with local government authorities). The refusal to grant a community's first priority might undermine the degree of trust that community members have in the participatory process, as well as their ownership in the project finally selected. During field inquiry communities noted that the selected projects were needed, even though for those communities that did not get their desired priority project (in many cases water) there was a degree of disappointment.

Evaluation found that CDC establishment and prioritization may be effective approaches for achieving immediate goals and only a minority of communities carried on the practices following the end of SEDA project activities (Alpan, Lacat, Birinci Ashigli, Fakhali, Khoylu, and Gavran communities). In most communities, the participatory process did not seem to have a larger impact beyond the infrastructure project.

Finding 15: SEDA's monitoring and reporting approaches are rather weak. SEDA public relations (PR) are strong, albeit focusing mainly on infrastructure.

The evaluation found that SEDA has managed to integrate solid capacity-building components across CDCs, yet there is little or no analysis of results of capacity-building efforts beyond activities and outputs or reflection on outcomes of SEDA's assistance in SEDA's reports and other documents. Review of SEDA's reports and other publications shows that SEDA succeeds in collecting and presenting good account of outputs and outcomes of its support to infrastructure in its reports, but achievements of results in terms of its contribution to outcomes relating to its first objective, "Improving democratic practices at the local level," ranges from limited to none. Document review revealed that there is no real attempt to aggregate results achieved by the project towards improving democratic practices and the focus of M&E activities is more on compliance and output achievement rather than on the measurement of behavioral change and impact on the ground. Reviewed SEDA annual and quarterly reports show no systematic presentation of new community participatory practices (e.g., local CDC elections, new projects prepared and implemented by CDCs following "graduation" from SEDA support), i.e., no relevant analysis of outcomes with regards to improved democratic practices at the local level. Lack of more analytical presentation of such achievements has reflected in difficulties to harvest outcomes beyond infrastructure during document review.

Part of the problem might be found in the design of the PMP. Most indicators listed in the PMP are input/output level indicators, and even those designated as outcome indicators appear in some cases to measure outputs, rather than outcomes, e.g., number of CSEPs or cluster projects completed. Furthermore, existing outcome and impact indicators focus heavily on the implementation, completion, and sustainability of infrastructure projects, while those measuring *improved democratic practices* are weak or almost nonexistent (with exceptions such as the indicator: "CDCs maintain activities without SEDA facilitation" or "number of mentored municipalities producing participatory budgets.") It is assumed that such an indicator would serve to measure the number of communities which apply more participatory practices following SEDA's supported interventions. Weaknesses in the indicator framework create obstacles to organizing monitoring (and evaluation) practices towards systematically measuring the level of change across SEDA communities, especially with regard to the participatory democracy practices. Weak or absent indicators related to participatory democracy might themselves influence program focus by signaling to program implementors that performance in this area is not important.

Review of the EWMI global website and PR material prepared for the project by USAID as well as SEDA reports (and annexes with success stories, including those reported in media) indicates that SEDA invests in its PR and promotion of results, albeit primarily those coming out from support to infrastructure. Wider areas of intervention contributing to improvement of democratic practices are not so pronounced, beyond results in establishment of CDCs and their work.

Finding 16: The SEDA structure secures a strong regional presence. This adds value to SEDA's engagement with targeted local communities and regions. However, periodic contact by SEDA regional representatives with communities after the completion of an infrastructure project leaves communities anticipating future investments from SEDA, which often do not materialize.

SEDA's operating structure ensures a strong presence across the six regions targeted by the project. The main office, based in Baku, assumes responsibility for overall management, coordination, and quality control of all SEDA activities. SEDA's regional offices and teams in Imishli, Ganja, and Guba, and SEDA's Project Management Units in Lankaran and Zagatala help to secure day-to-day management and support to communities, across all activities.³⁸ KII's show that the SEDA organizational structure provides for

³⁸ According to SEDA documentation, these duties include, but are not limited to: organizing CDC elections; providing training to CDC members; assisting CDCs to carry out the community needs assessments; assisting CDCs in their interactions with relevant local officials; organizing PEC meetings in the respective regions; monitoring implementation of projects in the respective communities; and organizing SEDA-related events, such as inauguration events, in the respective regions.

efficient and effective support to CDCs and communities particularly throughout preparation and implementation of infrastructure projects. Community interlocutors and regional ExComs, in particular, value SEDA's presence in their regions as it allows efficient response to the needs or problems arising in the implementation of projects. SEDA teams also attempt to remain in contact with local communities after finalization of projects through occasional phone calls or visits to communities.

This is conceptually a good and commendable approach, yet it also creates certain unintended problems: KIs in a majority of visited communities indicate a certain level of anticipation of new investment projects by SEDA. Interviewed stakeholders in at least half of the communities view follow-up calls and visits from SEDA staff—and indeed, even the visits by the ET for this evaluation—as promise of further investment. When asked directly about this situation, SEDA indicated that it purposely keeps communities in anticipation of future projects to encourage them to keep up with CDCs as citizen-driven participation mechanisms. From the perspective of this evaluation, this strategy places communities, but also the project, into a problematic context. As indicated above, SEDA is now prioritizing the expansion of the project to new communities over deeper and longer-term involvement with communities that have already received SEDA support. A clearer message from the SEDA teams about opportunities for communities (or lack thereof) might help manage expectations.

4.3 EQ 3: WHAT DISTINGUISHES SUSTAINABLE CDCS FROM THE UNSUSTAINABLE ONES?

As mentioned in the introduction, the ET applied USAID's definition of sustainability for the purpose of assessing sustainability within the framework of this evaluation: *"Sustainability refers to the ability of a local system to produce desired outcomes over time. Discrete projects contribute to sustainability when they strengthen the system's ability to produce valued results and its ability to be both resilient and adaptive in the face of changing circumstances."*

In line with this definition, the ET assessed the extent to which the CDCs created, with the support from SEDA, locally-grounded structures capable of carrying on their initial function of representing the community and responding to community needs after SEDA initial engagement.

Finding 17: The sustainability prospects for CDCs are often fragile. The CDCs are still informal bodies, which mainly engage with full membership in preparation for a new project by SEDA. The main driver of CDC sustainability appears to be high-quality leadership in the local community and the pre-existing level of organization in a community was also a large factor in sustainability.

Evidence collected through document review, KIs, and GDs as well as field observation points to the following critical features that support sustainability and activism of a CDC:

- 1. A longer period of involvement with SEDA, which corresponds to more capacity building opportunities for CDC members, more mobilization of community beneficiaries and a higher level of financial investment in infrastructure projects.** Responding to immediate material needs, such as constructing a well, or a school or medical clinic building, in an area in need is exceptionally appealing to elected CDC members, local government authorities, and the community as a whole. It is, however, the longer process of capacity building for each community, independence, and civil society strengthening that provide for a sustainable structure that results in lasting change, which SEDA could not provide across all communities. SEDA's investment in the capacities of CDC members and their increased understanding and motivation to convene and mobilize communities is a strong sustainability input.
- 2. Formal status of CDCs.** Despite SEDA's desire to have CDCs with more formal recognized roles, CDCs remain informal structures without legal status. Contextual analysis, document review, and KIs emphasize a range of challenges for CDCs to take on a more formal role, which would enhance their sustainability and potential to participate in government decision-making processes. SEDA asserts that

CDCs could be registered as NGOs, while the 2016 SEDA evaluation recommended that “[a]ssistance should be provided to CDC members in transitioning to roles as members of local Public Councils.”³⁹ The support through Component III, and in particular to the Public Participation Law, was envisaged to directly contribute to the creation of preconditions for CDCs to be institutionalized as local development mechanisms through some sort of formal registration. The findings of the 2016 Performance Evaluation of SEDA recognized the importance of these legislative solutions towards establishment of Public Councils by the Law supported through Component III of the project, concluding that establishment of Public Councils at the municipal level would “clearly build upon and institutionalize the CDC development mechanism,”⁴⁰ also offering a recommendation mentioned above. The evaluation also recommended that “If establishment of Public Councils is delayed, further assistance to CDCs is advisable to support their sustainability and maintain community morale.”⁴¹ However, thus far, only a few Public Councils appear operational—almost none at a local level—and there is no timetable in the law mandating the actual establishment of these bodies. The formalization of the CDCs as NGOs is still under consideration by SEDA and also by CDCs in a number of communities. However, KIs emphasize the difficulty registering as NGOs due to restrictive legislative regulations, even for NGOs that do not have an explicit political purpose.

3. **High quality of leadership and increased capacities of CDC, including good management capability, and skills, and their status as the most respectful community members, help strengthen convening power of CDCs.** As a coordination and community mobilization mechanism for SEDA-supported infrastructure projects, CDCs have had high utility and value, particularly as a result of quality CDC leadership and capacities and strong convening power. All KIs agree that having such a mechanism to coordinate and deliver results across each SEDA milestone was of critical importance for successful delivery of the outcomes of a community infrastructure project serving community needs. At the same time, the fact that CDCs most often include more affluent community members, many of whom have a higher education level, or include local municipal or ExCom representatives, was a driver of efficiency of CDCs in the social mobilization process and is a factor for CDCs’ ongoing engagement. This is a relevant measure for the sustainability of CDCs as such personalities have the power to convene local members and engage with municipal authorities and/or ExComs, as also observed in the field inquiry process. Closely tied to this is a sense of community ownership of the supported project, which brings commitment and willingness from the community and municipality to pay for capital costs of maintenance and repair. This is in itself tied to the quality of leadership and the effectiveness of social mobilization efforts.
4. **Level of social cohesion and the level of engaging all CDCs members, including women.** Some observed CDCs, such as the CDCs in Lacat, Zardabi, Alpan, Rustov, Uzunboyad, Birinci Ashigli, Gavran, etc. gathered all or the majority of CDC members who engaged in discussions and were very enthusiastic about describing experiences and sharing plans and next steps with the ET.
5. **Sustained funding or funding prospects for local socio-economic priorities.** Document review and KIs emphasize the challenging context in Azerbaijan with regards to donor funding or investment, with only a handful of donors actively supporting community development. A generally low presence of international donors in Azerbaijan (particularly from 2013 onward) was also a strong factor that affected CDCs’ sustainability. Initially, the rationale for building the capacities of local CDC members was, among other things, for them to be more successful in attracting other funds for their community priorities. However, communities face a shortage of funds from the government or donors, which prevents them from fulfilling local priorities. This is confirmed by the survey results, which show that approximately 32 percent of 119 of respondents to the survey for CDC members

³⁹ Recommendation No. 6 of the Performance Evaluation of the SEDA Activity, p. 25.

⁴⁰ Performance Evaluation of the SEDA Activity, p. 22.

⁴¹ Recommendation No. 7 of the Performance Evaluation of the SEDA Activity, p. 25.

mentioned other project interventions that were initiated following the SEDA intervention⁴² and many of those were very small projects with very limited resources contributed by the municipality or local residents. KIs and GDs also emphasize that lack of prospective funding from any source, including the GOAJ, is a demotivating factor for CDCs to continue actively mobilizing communities to jointly identify local priorities in cases where no funding pipeline is in sight. These have been important factors affecting achievement of outcomes with regards to mobilization of communities and their active work towards seeking and receiving additional investment for projects without SEDA's support. For most of the sampled communities, SEDA was and remains the only (prospective) source of donor funding. This presents a challenge for CDCs to ensure sustained funding for their local initiatives or community projects. Indeed, only 38 of 119 CDC respondents surveyed by the ET noted some additional projects after SEDA completed its activities in their respective communities. This is a demotivating factor for CDCs to continue being active, but also a challenge for continuous mobilization of local communities by CDCs.

Box 4: Gavran CDC – Exception to the Rule

The CDC in Gavran community (Yardimli rayon) is exceptional in many ways. Among its nine members, seven are under the age of 35—a striking contrast with most other CDCs that are composed chiefly of middle-aged and older men. Only one of the members had served on a previous project committee, so most are representing the community for the first time.

The CDC also distinguishes itself in its remarkable level of initiative on local development projects in a short period of time. The CDC was elected in 2018, a little more than a year ago. Yet since that time, it not only launched an egg incubation facility in July 2019—a community priority identified and completed with SEDA support—but it has also accomplished two of five projects identified in the long-term development plan it wrote through SEDA training: repair of the local mosque and upgrading the water supply lines. Using skills learned through SEDA trainings, the CDC successfully applied to state water agency to extend the water supply lines to more households in the village. And, inspired by the SEDA trainings to mobilize financial contributions to cover part of the cost for these additional projects, the CDC managed to raise 50,000 AZN (more than \$29,000) from local contributions as well as former community members that are living in urban centers or abroad.

Yet another unusual feature of the Gavran CDC is that several current members are using their CDC experience as a springboard for election into government office. In the December 2019 municipal elections, three of the nine CDC members were standing for election.

The CDC credits SEDA with the inspiring the community's new-found energy, commitment, and staying power. "SEDA brought a community spirit in this place," one CDC member remarked. "We learned collective action and we are a sustainable CDC."

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

The following sections of the report present sets of cross-cutting conclusions and recommendations that have derived from the findings and answers to the EQs.

Conclusion 1: The SEDA project has effectively contributed to solutions to socio-economic problems at the local level, thus fulfilling its second overarching objective.⁴³ SEDA helped increase capacity of local community members engaging in CDCs to apply civic participation practices in identifying and addressing local socio-economic

⁴² Those projects included cleaning irrigation channels, cleaning the streets, tree planning, road reconstruction, cemetery renovation, kindergarten renovation, drinkable water lines, and graveling the roads. From the survey, it is not clear whether some of these projects were local community voluntary actions (e.g., cleaning of irrigation channels, roads, and tree planting were mentioned as usual local volunteer actions during GDs).

⁴³ SEDA's overarching objectives following revision of the project as per the SOW were: 1) improving democratic practices at the local level; and 2) contributing to solutions to socio-economic problems at the local level.

development priorities. Such an approach brought outcomes in terms of improved delivery of services and public utilities demanded by citizens, reaching approximately 304,000 people across six targeted regions of Azerbaijan thus far, contributing to improvement of living conditions and livelihood.

Conceptually, SEDA project integrates elements of governance and social mobilization towards addressing local social and economic development priorities. SEDA's support is providing very necessary assistance to communities across Azerbaijan in their attempt to respond to demands of their citizens for better local services by investing in improvement of infrastructure. Within these efforts, SEDA assisted in establishing and building the capacity of CDCs as mechanisms for community participation in socio-economic development. This approach proved very effective in leading to infrastructure projects that had a high degree of community ownership and utility of such improved infrastructure. As a result, key improvements are noted in improved delivery of communal services (water supply, road infrastructure, improved education facilities, more stable electricity, etc.) and enhancement of income generation potential, directly contributing to improvement of living conditions and livelihoods for targeted communities benefiting from support. However, SEDA's achievements need to be counterbalanced with the size of investment needs for the communities and region in which SEDA works, which is far beyond the possibilities of the SEDA project and affected by limited support from other prospective donors and/or the government. There is a difference in approach to business registration between smaller size business activities and PPPs, and it is evident that PPPs (registered as LLCs) have more clear ownership and transparent handling of profits. Small businesses registered by municipalities do bring profits; however, due to the fact that they function per simplified tax regulations, transparency of profit handling and registration itself is weak.

Conclusion 2: Evidence of contributions to the improvement of democratic governance practices (SEDA's first overarching objective) is limited at the time of this evaluation. SEDA assisted in building links between local community members and local authorities and ExCom representatives. However, despite SEDA's efforts, longer-term change towards more participatory government prioritization and decision-making processes on investments has not materialized, particularly at the rayon level or higher. SEDA's contribution is thus generally limited to bringing a participatory, democratic process centered around specific infrastructure projects.

Despite its oil wealth and the economic growth experienced after the 2015 crisis, Azerbaijan still faces a number of challenges related to its unbalanced economy (where most of the income comes from sectors which provide little employment to the population), partial enjoyment of full political and civil rights, and very limited practice of participatory governance. Considering this national context, important progress has been achieved in terms of building understanding and capacities of CDCs to apply civic participation practices. Stronger contribution to overall changes of democratic practices has been challenged by changes in SEDA's conceptual design resulting from discontinuation of complementary activities to influence government actors under Components II and III, and the decision to expand to 146 communities rather than invest more resources in a smaller number of communities with a longer period of time in each community. As a result, infrastructure emerged as an ostensible comfort zone for SEDA, preventing the project from supporting a longer-term practice of democracy beyond that employed for the immediate infrastructure projects. Local democratic processes (elections and establishment of CDCs, community prioritization processes, etc.) were carried out in fulfillment of prerequisites to win a local infrastructure projects, but they have not taken deeper roots as of yet.

SEDA project undoubtedly resulted in promoting collaborative, trusting relationships between CDCs as representatives of local communities and government officials at the community level (municipal authorities and community ExComs). In some cases, this experience resulted in additional local community-driven initiatives beyond the SEDA-funded infrastructure projects supported by municipal authorities, and in a handful of cases supported by state agencies or external donors. However, CDCs do not perceive themselves as potential actors in decision-making processes outside of SEDA project activities, and their influence on priorities and decisions beyond the community level is fairly restricted or absent altogether. SEDA's bottom-up approach in promoting community voice and participation through

CDCs ran up against its limits in the face of a strong top-down government decision-making structures at the rayon level and above, and interruption of the project support to encourage greater citizen participation in the top-down governance structures.

Conclusion 3: The sustainability of achieved results is fragile beyond the results achieved through support to specific infrastructure projects.

Most of the supported infrastructure projects are likely to maintain their results in a sustainable way and can be expected to remain functional into the near future, assuming that organizational structures and qualified staff operating and maintaining new investments are in place.

At the same time, the sustainability of CDCs and those local democratic practices promoted by SEDA are fragile. SEDA has invested considerable efforts in developing the local capacities to mobilize communities and implement local democratic practices in selection of local socio-economic practices, as well as to use new models, practices, methodologies, and tools. The skills and knowledge acquired through SEDA's training and the experience of community mobilization and participatory development are mostly retained. However, their larger potential to be applied in addressing local development outside of SEDA's framework is affected by the fact that SEDA has not had the capacity to engage with communities more deeply for longer periods of time and beyond support to infrastructure, which could have supported sustainability by more consistently addressing rooted social norms and public attitudes towards promotion of local democratic practices.

The long-term sustainability of many interventions is also threatened by other factors outside of SEDA's control, such as the lack of new investment opportunities for CDCs and local communities. Across the period of implementation of the SEDA project, the donor and foreign landscape has shrunk significantly, which prevented the communities (and their CDCs) from benefiting from further support to their recognized socio-economic priorities. The top down government investments have been important, yet insufficient to address variety of needs and priorities. The lack of funding prospects demotivates CDC teams and limits the use of the newly acquired competencies, skills, and knowledge in preparing and implementing further developmental interventions. Another sustainability challenge is the lack of opportunity for CDCs to formally register and thus become more prominent local actors. SEDA's initial support of the central government to enhance its public participation mechanisms has brought important outcomes through adoption of improved legislative solutions, introducing the concept of public councils; CDCs would have been a natural resource for the establishment and functioning of such councils at the local level. However, the legislation implementation has been slow, particularly with regards to formation of such councils at the local level. At the same time, the potential for registration of CDCs as NGOs has been challenged by the restrictive legislative framework for registration and funding of such bodies.

Conclusion 4: SEDA has not invested sufficient efforts in cultivating women's and youth participation in CDCs, empowering women and youth leaders, and ensuring that CDC processes adequately considered women's and youth's specific interests and barriers. This has been a missed opportunity of the project.

SEDA did not make a strong or sustained effort to cultivate women's participation and leadership in CDCs. A 30 percent quota for women's participation in CDCs by itself is unlikely to strengthen women's voices or to foster greater gender equality; rather, it often leads to tokenism, which occurs in most CDCs. Furthermore, only one gender equality training, provided only to female members of CDCs, without engaging men, is likely insufficient to empower women or to challenge prevailing gender norms in a context of traditional culture. To the extent that the ET did encounter strong women's participation and leadership in CDCs—which it found in a significant minority of communities—it is hard to attribute that outcome to SEDA, but rather to the pre-existing socio-cultural conditions.

Similarly, with no strategy to identify youth-specific needs and interests or to foster youth participation in CDCs, it is not surprising that youth were greatly under-represented or even absent in most CDCs.

Lacking dedicated efforts to challenge existing power structures in local communities that tend to be dominated by older men, SEDA's approach therefore likely reinforced these structures. Failure to establish more comprehensive strategies for promoting women's and youth empowerment in the project is a missed opportunity from the perspective of this evaluation. Engaging women and youth in a more structured manner in CDCs could have contributed to stronger and more sustainable results for building democratic structures and strengthening community mobilization.

In fairness to SEDA, USAID's requirement that programs adopt women's and youth empowerment as cross-cutting issues, without a corresponding program focus and adequate program budget resources, is highly unlikely to yield strong results in a specific context like that in Azerbaijan. Successful examples, such as the case of Gavran community, show the path for medium to long-term success through measures in support of enhancing youth political participation, local self-initiative, and more general community mobilization.

6.0 LESSONS LEARNED

1. Projects that seek to address key bottlenecks/barriers to good governance and participatory democracy require integrated cross-sectoral/cross-government programming and careful examination of externalities and change processes to sustain optimized results. A community-driven, bottom-up process of decision-making on socio-economic development can have positive impacts for the community. However, projects are unlikely to make a significant impact on higher-level decision-making structures without a more explicit, complementary strategy.
2. Projects tackling issues that require change towards community-driven, bottom-up process of decision-making need to consolidate rather than broaden their support efforts. Focusing on key themes and priority support areas with deeper reach in a select number of communities, particularly in combination with precise project theory that includes precise definition of causal linkages within and across its components, may bring higher return in terms of achievement of such objectives.
3. To maximize their comparative advantage and implement projects effectively, implementing organizations require an operational structure that stimulates and enables strategic partnering, and long term, hands-on support that goes beyond one supported central intervention.
4. Change processes in communities that demonstrate a high level of activism and commitment to participatory decision-making and community development are usually led by highly motivated, competent, and trusted leaders in the community. To maximize the potential of leaders while at the same time ensuring that communities are engaged in identifying and solving issues, projects need to put participatory democratic practices at the center of interventions. These will ensure that their results are not jeopardized by entrenched social roles.
5. A participatory process of decision-making around a single community development project does not necessarily translate into broader democratic practices. Long-term intentional and targeted efforts to empower citizens and local change agents are needed to help make such processes a habit.
6. For such multidimensional projects such as SEDA, in order to ensure a smooth process, the monitoring and reporting on project interventions needs to be strong and ensure reporting at output and outcome levels.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 EQ 4: BASED ON THE OH AND EVALUATION OF SEDA'S PERFORMANCE, WHAT ARE THE TEAM'S OBSERVATIONS OR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY FOR FUTURE PROGRAMMING?

These recommendations derive from extensive consultations with key stakeholders across the evaluation process, analysis of documentation, and the findings and conclusions of this evaluation. The ET used KIs and GDs to generate ideas for improvement and for future USAID strategic directions in further supporting social mobilization efforts.

Recommendations are divided into two categories, as follows: 1) strategic recommendations (SRs), informing overall strategic direction of future USAID support; and 2) operational recommendations (ORs), meant to inform operational planning and improve efficiency and effectiveness of implementation.

Table 5: Evaluation Recommendations

No.	Recommendation
Strategic Recommendations	
SR 1	SEDA needs to reset its approach to ensure that the social mobilization and participatory democratic governance practices are at heart of the intervention. SEDA must adjust its capacity-building approach to place community participation and empowerment as an end in itself and rather than a means towards infrastructure as the goal. The remaining period of implementation and, in particular, the potential next cycle of intervention should seek more intensive engagement with targeted communities, especially those that need greater support. SEDA should ensure that its processes regularly engage and empower community members beyond those elected to the CDC in priority setting, as well as project planning and implementation processes. It should also incorporate local leadership development as well as capacity-building approaches for CDC advocacy with higher-level authorities at the rayon, regional, and state levels, perhaps through collaboration among communities within the rayon on common goals.
SR 2	SEDA should focus on “depth” rather than on the “breadth” of support. Building citizenship, engaging communities in democratic decision-making process, and supporting community-based management of infrastructure requires a serious and sustained engagement in building local capacity. SEDA’s engagement with any selected community should be extended to a longer period of time to: a) deepen the commitment to and practice of participatory democracy and sustain it over time; and b) allow newly formed CDCs to cultivate community participation in a variety of settings, instead of focusing on what can be perceived as one-off project installing new infrastructure or economic development facility. The potential next cycle of intervention should focus on a smaller number of communities selected for further in-depth investment toward establishing and strengthening positive community democratic practices. Such an approach would ensure achievement of stronger outcomes that go beyond infrastructure towards empowerment of change agents in local communities.
SR 3	SEDA should also invest all efforts to build upstream partnerships and links with main service providers and decision-makers to ensure full buy-in not only for the achievement of infrastructure projects, but also for the participatory, citizen-driven process. The bottom-up approach already applied by SEDA should work in close connection with efforts at the regional and central system level. SEDA should develop a strong conceptual framework (and TOC) of its approaches and the potential for uptake of systems and approaches. SEDA should take action to keep regional and rayon ExComs and their local representatives, respective ministries, and government agencies providing community services for water, gas, roads, electricity, etc. well informed of and prepared to work with the newly established CDCs. SEDA must ensure that sufficient effort is invested in appropriate measures to promote recognition of CDCs by government authorities. In this vein, the political context permitting, SEDA might consider revisiting some of the activities and approaches previously applied under Components II and III, especially those aimed at sub-national government actors.

No.	Recommendation
SR 4	SEDA should develop a gender and youth strategy which outlines the project's opportunities and approaches in these areas. The strategy should cover both organizational and programmatic aspects. It is recommended that SEDA invest significant efforts in integrating gender and youth more systematically across project design, implementation, monitoring, and reporting. This needs to be done by going beyond the mere formal requirement for a quota of female CDC members and one-off trainings, toward ensuring that women and youth are empowered to take a more active role in CDCs, and/or community prioritization processes. In this regard, SEDA should develop a comprehensive gender and youth strategy and consider strengthening its team with gender and youth expertise. Within these efforts, SEDA should undertake a thorough analysis of barriers and opportunities for greater participation of women and youth, incorporating capacity-building processes that allow CDCs to explore women's and youth's specific interests and needs in local community development, and reorienting itself more strongly to advocate and lead by example in this regard. Where CDCs have set exceptionally strong examples of women or youth participation or leadership, their experience should be shared as best practices with other CDCs through exchange visits, video documentation, or other approaches, as a standard part of capacity building Additionally, SEDA should consider partnering or exploring synergies with other USAID-funded projects that have strong gender component (e.g., the USAID-funded and UNDP-implemented Economic Empowerment for Entrepreneurship and Employment (E4) project which has a strong women empowerment focus).
Operational Recommendations	
OR 1	SEDA should strengthen its outcome-level monitoring and reporting practices in order to track more closely what happens to the supported interventions over time, what change they generate at the local level, and how their impact can be sustained in the long run. This requires more effective tracking systems grounded in the SEDA's results-based management systems as follows: ⌘ Based on TOCs to be developed by area of intervention (e.g., establishment and capacitation of CDCs, application of democratic practices, support to infrastructure, etc.), SEDA should formulate clear outcome-level indicators with robust baselines to be tracked across the project. ⌘ Tools to track the effectiveness (in terms of outcomes) and sustainability of its interventions, such as the absorption of training to CDCs, performance of CDCs, and maintenance of infrastructure and performance of income-generation facilities over time, should be more systematically developed and applied. ⌘ Annual performance reporting structures should be enhanced to improve aggregate analytical presentation of outcome-level results of the project against outcome-level indicators and baselines.
OR 2	SEDA should invest in promotion of best practices to stimulate debate on participatory socio-economic development and democracy. SEDA should collect and promote best practices of participation decision-making through engagement and convening power of CDCs (e.g., the Gavran community) to serve as visible role models and stimulate debate on participatory development at the local level. Higher visibility of success stories narrated and promoted through SEDA channels can indirectly support or help in setting standards in implementing projects in a participatory, well-planned, and sustainable manner as well as democratic participation in general. Promotional activities could include the following types of tools: a) direct communication between people; b) communication through conventional printed or electronic media (press, radio, television, etc.); and c) communication through a wide range of new media and multimedia (Facebook, YouTube, websites, text messages, etc.).

ANNEXES

ANNEX I: STATEMENT OF WORK

FINAL PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY (SEDA) FEATURING OUTCOMES HARVESTING

I. SCOPE

The Contractor shall provide non-personal services for a performance evaluation of the following Project:

Project Title: Socio-Economic Development Activity (SEDA)

Cooperative Agreement Number: AID-112-A-11-00002

Period of Performance: September 30, 2011 to September 29, 2021

Total Estimated Cost: \$19,899,462

Recipient: East-West Management Institute

Period to be evaluated: September 30, 2011 to September 29, 2019

2. PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The purpose of the evaluation is to establish, using a mixed-methods evaluation to include desk review, key informant interviews (KIIs), and Outcomes Harvesting, the most significant outcomes for increasing civic participation in governance to address social and economic needs in the regions of Azerbaijan, achieved by the SEDA activity. Over 220,000 people around six regions of Azerbaijan directly benefited from SEDA activities which implemented over 130 small infrastructure projects in 146 communities. SEDA also partnered with the Ministry of Economy as well as local government officials associated with each locality.

The evaluation will review information provided by the Mission, including but not limited to documents from the SEDA project such as performance monitoring plan, quarterly reports, and the partner's beneficiary surveys. By using a mixed method approach that includes outcomes harvesting, we hope to determine changes that occurred at the community and local government level(s) as a result of SEDA program activities, and the extent of the contribution made by SEDA activities to these changes in behavior, exploring unanticipated/unplanned outcomes as well as those USAID expected. The evaluation will focus on determining the community mobilization and civic participation outcomes, anticipated and unanticipated alike, related to SEDA activities. As the civic participation is the main goal of the activity, the evaluation team must assess the scope and effect of SEDA interventions with this regard. However, given the specific nature of the outcome harvesting technique, the evaluation team may identify other (anticipated or not) "fruits", including solution of certain economic and/or social problems that are results of this intervention. This may not be the case across the board, but the likelihood of having such pattern is high (ex.: cluster projects that may have had larger impact going beyond their initial target and bringing larger economic or social change in the region or a part of it). USAID believes outcomes harvesting is appropriate for this evaluation as we seek insights into distinct perspectives of key groups (communities and local government officials). The SEDA project is complex and has had multiple modifications and experienced significant changes in the country context over its lifetime, and USAID seeks further insight into hard to measure constructs like "trust" and "cooperation" between citizens and their governments for future design work and to adapt its current portfolio in advance of a Country Development and Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) process.

The evaluation findings will be used to: a) inform future programming by better understanding the process of change or the causal linkages between community mobilization/civil society programming, and improvements in democracy and governance factors (like citizen participation and the engagement of government in communities); and b) test the efficacy of Outcome Harvesting as a methodology that could be used to evaluate other complex USAID/Azerbaijan programs.

3. BACKGROUND

A. Description of the Problem and Context

Citizen participation in decision-making process, specifically at the regional level, continues to be a major area that needs improvement in Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani citizens, particularly those in rural areas, remain disenfranchised and have little opportunity or tools to influence political decisions that impact their daily lives. A very centralized decision-making structure leaves little space for meaningful citizen participation and limits their ability to influence decisions. This, in turn, reduces chances to address communities' immediate needs and ensure their active participation in the processes. Therefore, the Socio-economic Development Activity (SEDA) has two-fold objective: 1) improve democratic practices at the local level; and 2) contribute to solution of socio-economic problems at the local level.

Initially, the project was designed to address the following three objectives:

- Revitalize or establish village-based Community Development Councils (CDCs) to increase civic participation in socio-economic development at the local and regional levels;
- Strengthen the capacity of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to engage with citizens and government officials on local, regional, and national social and economic priorities; and
- Strengthen the capacity of the Government of Azerbaijan (GOA) to engage with stakeholders on key socio-economic development issues.

Over time, the focus of the activity was directed primarily towards mobilization and capacity building of the communities to advocate for their immediate needs. The activity pushed communities to work with their local executive and municipal authorities to solve urgent socio-economic priorities through the identification, design, resource mobilization, and implementation of small infrastructure projects. CSO involvement in this process became more difficult in 2014 due to restrictive NGO-related legislation that made NGO and grant registration more difficult and restricted access to funding. The initial scope and intensity of the activities aimed at strengthening the capacity of the government institutions to better engage with stakeholders on key socio-economic development issues was reduced, and currently includes local executive and municipal authorities involvement in the processes led by CDCs. This practice indirectly contributes to the development of the capacity of those authorities, but has a much smaller impact compared to the initial scope of the activity.

B. Description of the Intervention to be evaluated and Theory of Change

East-West Management Institute has been implementing Socio-Economic Development Activity (SEDA) since September 2011. The aim of SEDA is to increase civic participation in governance, to address social and economic needs in the rural regions of Azerbaijan. The main mechanism for civic engagement under this activity is supporting mobilization of target communities into informal groups called Community Development Councils. The Councils are trained to lead the process of identification of socio-economic needs of their communities, work closely with citizens, executive and municipal authorities, other relevant stakeholders for successful implementation of small social and economic infrastructure projects. Provided with finances and raising contributions from citizens, as well as receiving material support from government authorities, the communities come together to arrive at solutions to prioritized challenges. So far, SEDA has covered 5 economic regions of Azerbaijan and has been working in 146 communities. In the course of implementation, the activity project description as well as duration of the award has been amended. Cost and time extension for SEDA is planned.

SEDA was co-financed by the Government of the United States and the Government of Azerbaijan and reflects the parties' strong intention to cooperate under the Economic Partnership Commission, based on the intergovernmental MoU signed in 2009.

All background documents, including the program description, the award, and the monitoring, evaluation and learning plan will be given to the evaluation team following award.

4. EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The evaluation questions presented below may be further refined by the evaluation team in coordination with the COR, based on what can practically be achieved within the time available and USAID/Azerbaijan requirements.

1. What outcomes from the SEDA activity are a) most evident and b) sustainable? Distinguish between intentional and unintentional outcomes including but not limited to these areas: the following stakeholders' empowerment to engage in democratic processes -- local communities, CDCs, and local government officials; CDC's ability to engage in and influence public policy decisions; factors affecting women and youth participation.
2. What aspects of SEDA's methodology, if any, is proven to be effective or not effective and how?
3. What distinguishes sustainable CDCs from the unsustainable ones?
4. Based on the Outcomes Harvest and evaluation of SEDA's performance, what are the team's observations or recommendations for areas of opportunity for future programming?

5. EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

USAID required a mixed method evaluation approach that includes outcomes harvesting. Outcome

Harvesting is a technique that will allow USAID to determine what outcomes have occurred – whether intended or not - and how the SEDA program interventions contributed to the change. For the purposes of this evaluation, Outcome Harvesting must be considered a participatory and iterative approach that does not necessarily measure progress towards predetermined outcomes, but rather collects evidence of what has been achieved by a community/CDC and works backward to determine whether and how SEDA contributed to the change. Over the life of SEDA, the project description was continually adapted due to changes in the country context and new foreign policy priorities. USAID believes an outcomes harvesting approach can better contribute to our understanding of SEDA's overall effect on Azerbaijani rural communities and their government counterparts. With respect to SEDA, an outcome is defined as a change in behavior, relationships, actions, activities, policies, or practices in the communities that SEDA has worked to influence. This change may be identifiable in individuals, groups, communities, organizations, or institutions (government or non-government, including the private sector) that CDCs Accordingly, the evaluation will harvest 2 outcomes to which SEDA directly and indirectly contributed. and/or local government entities have in turn influenced.

The Team Lead Evaluator, the USAID SEDA Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR), the Mission M&E Specialist, and other USAID staff as necessary, will design the evaluation collaboratively. The Mission's M&E Specialist will manage the evaluation and be the COR. The Contractor will draft the initial outcome descriptions using the reference documents referred below under Section B. Following consultations with the COR, the evaluation team will spend time in the field assessing and substantiating the outcomes. The process of analyzing and interpreting data will be led by the Team Lead Evaluator, with the Deputy Team Lead, the USAID team, and co-evaluators. Initial findings will be briefed to USAID/Azerbaijan at the conclusion of the field work, prior to the departure of the Team Lead Evaluator from Azerbaijan. The final report will be agreed upon and presented to the COR via digital video conference.

The proposal resulting from this SOW must outline how the SEDA outcome evaluation will follow the six Outcome Harvesting steps as described in "Outcome Harvesting" by R. Wilson-Grau and H. Britt. These steps are more guiding principles than rigid formula to follow. Nonetheless, the rigorous consideration of all six steps is necessary for a sound and credible outcome harvest:

Note that this evaluation approach and methodology is subject to change if agreed upon by the Team Lead and the COR.

A. Design the evaluation using Outcome Harvest: At a minimum, this harvesting involves obtaining information from a purposive sample of 36 out of the 146 SEDA-assisted communities ensuring geographic diversity in the sample. The specific design tasks are:

1. Define and refine the evaluation questions identified in Section 4 (in collaboration with USAID)
2. Specify how the methodology will be applied
3. Specify the parameters for analyzing, interpreting, presenting and disseminating quantitative and qualitative data
4. Define the roles and responsibilities of each evaluator
5. Define the following for each evaluation question:
 - i. the information required,
 - ii. sources of information,
 - iii. procedure for collecting data and ensuring its validity and credibility,
 - iv. the method of analysis, interpretation and synthesis.
6. Then the instruments and process for data collection are tested and finally agreed.

B. Review documentation and draft outcome descriptions: From reports, previous evaluations, press releases and other documentation, the evaluators will identify potential outcomes that can be assessed during the field portion. These potential outcomes will be discussed with the COR and other stakeholders, and then refined prior to the data collection.

The following documents are available for the desk study and as background information, especially for initial identification of potential outcomes:

- Initial approved program description
- Year 1 – 8 SEDA implementation plans
- SEDA Performance Monitoring Plan
- Baseline and midline data reports
- Quarterly and weekly reports
- M&E and program staff site visit reports
- SEDA Performance Evaluation report, 2015

The magnitude of this documentation is significant. SEDA has 32 twenty-page quarterly reports, plus dozens of internal monthly and monitoring reports. The evaluation team will sift through this documentation to identify the documents that have the richest outcome information.

C. Data Collection and Outcome Verification: In Baku, and in the selected 36 community sample, the evaluators will engage directly with other project partners (as advised by the COR), Ministry of Economy staff, regional executive and municipal authorities, CDC members, and community members to gather data to formulate the final outcome descriptions. In the field, the evaluation team must collect a combination of qualitative data - gathered from various stakeholders - and observable data from visiting activity locations. Evaluators must attempt to verify the accuracy of the draft outcomes, whether there were unintended outcomes, and assess SEDA's role in achieving the outcomes.

D. Substantiate Final Outcomes: The COR and the Contactor evaluators will review the data collected and determine how to finalize the outcomes - whether through a collaborative multi-stakeholder process, or through a smaller group that can analyze and interpret the data, and then provide recommendations.

E. Analyze and interpret the outcomes: The evaluators will classify all outcomes, which may be done in stages throughout the evaluation steps. For the purposes of the utilization of the evaluation, it will be more useful to have fewer, high level outcomes, rather than dozens per community. These higher level outcomes can be explained through multiple community examples to substantiate the findings. At this

point the evaluators will interpret the data and information and provide evidence-based answers to the harvesting questions.

F. Support use of findings: The evaluators present their report to the users and propose issues for discussion grounded in the evidence-based answers to the evaluation questions. They facilitate discussions with the users, which may include how they can make use of the findings.

6. FINAL REPORT FORMAT

The Final Evaluation Report must include an abstract, executive summary, evaluation purpose, background on the context and the strategic/projects/activities being evaluated, evaluation questions, evaluation methodology, the limitations of the evaluation, findings, conclusions, and recommendations on the directions and adjustments (if any) for successful implementation of future civic participation activities, annexes.

The evaluation abstract of no more than 250 words must describe what was evaluated, evaluation questions, methods, and key findings or conclusions.

The executive summary must be 2-5 pages and summarize the purpose, background of the project being evaluated, main evaluation questions, methods, findings, and conclusions (plus recommendations and lessons learned, if applicable).

The evaluation methodology shall be explained in the report in detail. Limitations to the evaluation shall be disclosed in the report, with particular attention to the limitations associated with the evaluation methods (e.g., in sampling; data availability; measurement; analysis; any potential bias such as sampling/selection, measurement, interviewer, response, etc.) and their implications for conclusions drawn from the evaluation findings.

Annexes to the report must include:

- Evaluation SOW (updated, not the original, if there were any modifications);
- Evaluation methods;
- All data collection and analysis tools used in conducting the evaluation, such as questionnaires, checklists, and discussion guides;
- All sources of information or data, identified and listed;
- Statements of difference regarding significant unresolved differences of opinion by funders, implementers, and/or members of the evaluation team, if applicable;
- Signed disclosure of conflict of interest forms for all evaluation team members, either attesting to a lack of or describing existing conflicts of interest; and
- Summary information about evaluation team members, including qualifications, experience, and role on the team.

11. REPORTING RELATIONSHIP

The Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) will provide direction to the Evaluation Team, including identify key documents and primary contacts.

12. CRITERIA TO ENSURE THE QUALITY OF THE EVALUATION REPORT

Per ADS 201 maa, Criteria to Ensure the Quality of the Evaluation Report, draft and final evaluation reports will be evaluated against the following criteria to ensure quality.

- Evaluation reports should represent a thoughtful, well-researched, and well-organized effort to objectively evaluate the strategy, project, or activity;
- Evaluation reports should be readily understood and should identify key points clearly, distinctly, and succinctly;

- The Executive Summary should present a concise and accurate statement of the most critical elements of the report;
- Evaluation reports should adequately address all evaluation questions included in the SOW, or the evaluation questions subsequently revised and documented in consultation and agreement with COR;
- Evaluation methodology should be explained in detail and sources of information or data properly identified;
- Limitations to the evaluation should be disclosed in the report, with particular attention to the limitations associated with the evaluation methodology (selection bias, recall bias, unobservable differences between comparator groups, etc.);
- Evaluation findings should be presented as analyzed facts, evidence, and data and not based on anecdotes, hearsay, or simply the compilation of people's opinions;
- Conclusions should be specific, concise, and include an assessment of quality and strength of evidence to support them supported by strong quantitative and/or qualitative evidence;
- If evaluation findings assess person-level outcomes or impact, they should also be separately assessed for both males and females; and
- If recommendations are included, they should be supported by a specific set of findings and should be action-oriented, practical, and specific.

13. ASSUMPTIONS:

Azerbaijan is a dynamic country context that features a restrictive environment for civil society organizations to operate and a formalized set of processes around travel outside of Baku. USAID/Azerbaijan's belief is that the local and central governments will be amenable to the conduct of this final evaluation, particularly since the SEDA award features close coordination and a history of co-financing with the Ministry of Economy. The evaluation team will need to coordinate closely with the COR and with the US Embassy, to ensure that diplomatic notes are formally submitted for all travel to the communities, and for all meetings with center and/or local government officials. USAID/Azerbaijan believes but cannot assure that diplomatic, security, and operational environment conditions will be conducive to the conduct of this evaluation. Finally, the assumption is that the implementing partner will collaborate with USAID/Azerbaijan and the evaluators towards the success of the evaluation.

ANNEX 2: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS TOOLS

FIELDWORK GUIDE

The guiding document for interviews and GDs in communities will be the OH matrix. The harvested outcomes will need to be substantiated through interviews and GDs, to ensure that the ET can evidence the outcomes from different sources and triangulate findings.

The ET will perform interviews and GDs to allow people time to reflect main changes that happened in their communities and then to prompt the extent to which SEDA has helped make it happen. ET role is to facilitate reflection and prompt questions that can help them recollect. The guiding questions for the field inquiry that will be founded on outcomes to be substantiated are the following:

Degree and type of change

1. When you think about the period between 2011 (or year when SEDA started working in the respective community) and today, what has been the main change in terms of opportunity for you/your group to take more active part in prioritization of needs in your community? How did this change occur? Please elaborate.
2. What difference has it made for your communities? (If necessary, prompt on socio-economic outcomes, citizen engagement outcomes, local government responsiveness outcomes).
3. Who has benefited the most from this change?
4. When did it happen (which years)?
5. To what extent has SEDA helped make it happen?
6. Were there any other factors that helped this change to happen? Any hindrances?
7. What is happening now – is this result [repeat which one they mention] still in place? Is it still working well? If not, what happened and why?

Local citizen/government consultative mechanisms

8. When you think about the period between 2011 (or year when SEDA started working in the respective community) and today, what has been the main change in terms of local government's approach and mechanisms to engage with people? What is in place now that was not there before? Is the CDC the primary mechanism? Are there others? What about public councils?
9. Who in the community engages with local government on decisions affecting the community? Whose voice is raised in these community discussions? Are there some that do not engage in the discussion? If yes, why? (If necessary, prompt on women, youth, IDPs)
10. How did this change occur? Please elaborate.
11. When did this occur?
12. To what extent has SEDA helped make it happen?
13. Were there any other factors that helped this change to happen? Any hindrances?
14. What is happening now – is this new approach [repeat which one they mention] still in place? Is it still working well? If not, what happened and why?
15. Would your CDC have been created without SEDA support? Is it still active? Do you think it will continue to work in the future? Why?

Civic participation

16. Your [infrastructure project] was developed thanks to a consultative process of prioritization. Did your community have other infrastructure project in the past? If yes, what role did your community play in the identification and development of the infrastructure project? What was different this time? After this experience, does your community continue to work in such consultative manner?
17. Which groups in the community have participated in the process? Are there some groups that don't participate? Why? (Prompt on business people, men, women, youth, IDPs, any other key groups)

18. Are there any other effects in your community – positive or negative – by working in this consultative, participatory way?
19. To what extent has SEDA helped make it happen?
20. Were there any other factors that helped this change to happen? Any hindrances?
21. What is happening now? Is this new approach [*repeat which one they mention*] still in place? Is it still working well?

Infrastructure leading to improved services

22. Tell us about your infrastructure project – what change did it bring to your family/community? Did it trigger some other further changes in the ways your business/family/community operates?
23. Who has benefited the most from the project? Are there any groups who might have benefited but have not? If yes, why?
24. To what extent has SEDA helped make it happen?
25. Were there any other factors that helped this change to happen? Any hindrances?
26. What is happening now – is this new [infrastructure] still in place? Is it still working well? Who maintains/takes care of it?
27. Did you try to attract any new investment for this project or any others? If yes, how much and from whom? Were you successful?

Civil society (prompt at meetings with CSO beneficiaries)

28. When you compare your organisation before [state year when SEDA started working with the CSO] and today, do you see a difference in the way you operate in terms of your advocacy capacities? What changed?
29. To what extent has SEDA helped make it happen?
30. Were there any other factors that helped this change to happen? Any hindrances?
31. What is happening now – taking into account the context for CSO work? Do you see a role for SEDA-type activities in the future supporting NGOs and CSOs?

Local authorities (Excoms and municipal/village authorities) (prompt at any meetings with local authorities)

32. When you compare your work with local communities before [state year when SEDA started working in the community or rayon] and today, do you see a difference in the way that you relate to and cooperate with local communities? What changed?
33. To what extent has SEDA helped make it happen?
34. Were there any other factors that helped this change to happen? Any hindrances?
35. What is happening now? Has the change been maintained or shifted over the years?
36. Do you see a role for SEDA-type activities in the future in helping with local and regional socio-economic development?

Final questions (for communities, CSOs and local authorities)

37. In terms of any of the changes we have been discussing, are there any changes that are negative? Did your efforts produce any unexpected results or other changes?
38. To what extent did SEDA contribute to the negative changes or unexpected results? Is there anything you would have wanted SEDA to do differently?
39. Overall what was SEDA's contribution to the changes for the community, CSO or local authorities (use the scale when writing the notes from this meeting so we can have some quantification)

No contribution at all _____ **2** _____ **3** _____ **4** _____ **5** _____ **Strong contribution**

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CDC MEMBERS

Introduction: Since October 2011 the Socio-Economic Development Activity (SEDA) Project has been helping local communities and local authorities work together to identify and address social and economic development needs of their communities. SEDA has helped to elect and strengthen Community Development Councils (CDCs) in their capacity to mobilize communities to engage in their own development.

Each of you live in a city, town or village where SEDA has worked and may have participated in a SEDA sponsored activity. The aim of this short questionnaire is to enable us to learn about your views on the results of SEDA efforts.

Please be assured that the we are not requesting any names, and all responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.

1. How many years ago was the SEDA activity introduced in your community?
☐ **More than 5 years ago**
☐ **Between 3 and 5 years ago**
☐ **Between 1 and 3 years ago**
☐ **Less than one year**
2. Compared with the time before the SEDA project, how much difference has the SEDA Project made in the way local community members, CDCs, municipal authorities, and ExComs work together to address key needs and priorities in their villages and regions?
☐ **Significant difference**
☐ **Moderate difference**
☐ **Slight difference**
☐ **No difference**
3. In your opinion, to what extent do members of the community who were not very active before, for example, women and youth, participate more actively in community discussions and in setting community priorities through the CDC?
☐ **Much more active**
☐ **Moderately more active**
☐ **Slightly more active**
☐ **No difference**
4. In your opinion, to what extent does CDC have possibility to provide input in local decision-making by municipal authorities and ExComs?
☐ **Significantly**
☐ **Moderately**
☐ **Slightly**
☐ **No change**
5. In your opinion, to what extent are such inputs integrated in new decisions of municipal authorities and ExComs?
☐ **Significantly**
☐ **Moderately**
☐ **Slightly**
☐ **No change**
6. Compared with the time before the SEDA project, to what extent have CDC members increased their knowledge and skills about the processes for planning and implementing local socio-economic development initiatives?

- ☐ **Significant increase**
- ☐ **Moderate increase**
- ☐ **Slight increase**
- ☐ **No increase**

7. In your opinion, the SEDA project has resulted in the completion of a local service or infrastructure that meets the needs and priorities of what proportion of people in the community?

- ☐ **0-25%**
- ☐ **25-50%**
- ☐ **50-75%**
- ☐ **75-100%**

8. Has the SEDA project inspired members of the CDC and other community members to develop and implement other such projects without SEDA support? If yes, please specify the project and donor.

- ☐ **No**
- ☐ **Yes**
- ☐ **If yes, please identify the project**
- ☐ **If yes, please identify the donor**

9. To what extent has the CDC helped to create a strong, trusting relationship between community members and local municipal authorities and/or ExComs?

- ☐ **Significant improvement in the relationship**
- ☐ **Moderate improvement in the relationship**
- ☐ **Slight improvement in the relationship**
- ☐ **No improvement in the relationship**
- ☐ **A deterioration in the relationship**

Thank you!

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EXCOMS AND MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES

Introduction: Since October 2011 the Socio-Economic Development Activity (SEDA) Project has been helping local communities and local authorities work together to identify and address social and economic development needs of their communities. SEDA has helped to elect and strengthen Community Development Councils (CDCs) in their capacity to mobilize communities to engage in their own development.

The aim of this short questionnaire is to enable us to learn about your views on the results of SEDA efforts. **Please be assured that we are not requesting any names, and all responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.**

1. How many years ago was the SEDA activity introduced in your community?
☐ **More than 5 years ago**
☐ **Between 3 and 5 years ago**
☐ **Between 1 and 3 years ago**
☐ **Less than one year**
2. Compared with the time before the SEDA project, how much difference has the SEDA Project made in the way local community members, CDCs, municipal authorities and ExComs work together to address key needs and priorities in their villages and regions?
☐ **Significantly positive difference**
☐ **Mostly positive difference**
☐ **Slight difference**
☐ **No difference**
3. Compared with the time before the SEDA project, to what extent do ExComs and municipal authorities regularly seek out the opinions and ideas of local community members on decisions related to socio-economic development?
☐ **Almost always**
☐ **Most of the time**
☐ **Occasionally**
☐ **Hardly at all**
4. If communities' input is sought out more regularly, how much of that change has been due to the SEDA project?
☐ **Totally**
☐ **Mostly, but there were also other influences**
☐ **Moderately**

Thank you!

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR BENEFICIARIES

Introduction: The Socio-Economic Development Activity (SEDA) Project has been helping local communities and local authorities work together to identify and address social and economic development needs of their communities. SEDA has trained and mentored Community Development Councils (CDCs) and helped them facilitate local infrastructure projects addressing identified community needs.

Each of you live in a city, town or village where SEDA has worked and may have participated in a SEDA sponsored activity. The aim of this short questionnaire is to enable us to learn about your experiences and views on this Project. **Please be assured that the we are not requesting any names, and all responses will be treated with strict confidentiality.**

1. How many years ago was the SEDA activity introduced in your community?

☐ **More than 5 years ago**
☐ **Between 3 and 5 years ago**
☐ **Between 1 and 3 years ago**
☐ **Less than one year**

2. Compared with the time before the SEDA project, how much difference has the SEDA Project made in the way local community members, CDCs, municipal authorities and ExComs work together to address key needs and priorities in their villages and regions?

☐ **Significant difference**
☐ **Moderate difference**
☐ **Slight difference**
☐ **No difference**

3. Did the infrastructure project supported by SEDA involve all interested community members in the process of deciding which project to select, including those community members who have not always spoken up in past?

☐ **Yes, they were much more involved**
☐ **Yes, they were somewhat more involved**
☐ **No, there is no difference with the past**

4. What proportion of community members has the infrastructure project benefited?

☐ **0-25%**
☐ **25-50%**
☐ **50-75%**
☐ **75-100%**

5. Is the infrastructure still in use?

☐ **Yes**
☐ **No**

6. If not, what is the reason? Please, choose one:

- ☐ The quality of the construction was poor, so it did not last long
- ☐ The infrastructure or service was badly managed
- ☐ The project was not very helpful for our community, so it was abandoned
- ☐ In the meantime, we received better infrastructure that serves our needs better.
- ☐ Other

7. Has the socio-economic project improved or worsened the community's relationship with local government authorities, such as the municipal authorities and ExCom?

- ☐ **Significantly improved the relationship**
- ☐ **Somewhat improved the relationship**
- ☐ **Made no difference to the relationship**
- ☐ **Worsened the relationship**

8. Has the experience with the infrastructure project led the community to develop and implement other such projects to help the community?

- ☐ **Yes**
- ☐ **No**

Thank you!

ANNEX 3: LIST OF CONSULTED DOCUMENTS

Table 6: USAID-Provided Documents

#	Type	File Name (as appears in the shared Google Drive)	Description	Period Covered	Date (if indicated)
1	WORK PLANS	<i>EWMI-SEDA Year 1 Work Plan Nov15-2011.pdf</i>	YEAR 1 WORK PLAN	October 1, 2011 – September 30, 2012	x
2		<i>EWMI-SEDA Y2 Work Plan_USAID Revised_2013-01-23-FINAL.docx</i>	YEAR 2 WORK PLAN Revised on January 21, 2013	October 1, 2012 – September 30, 2013	x
3		<i>EWMI SEDA Y3 WP consolidated (February 2014).pdf</i>	YEAR 3 WORK PLAN Revised	October 1, 2013 – September 30, 2014	February 7, 2014
4		<i>EWMI SEDA_Year 4-5 Work Plan_2014-08-29.pdf</i>	YEAR 4-5 WORK PLAN	October 1, 2014 – September 30, 2016	August 31, 2014
5		<i>EWMI SEDA_NCE Work Plan_FINAL.docx</i>	YEARS 6-7 WORK PLAN	October 1, 2016 – December 31, 2017	August 30, 2016
6		<i>EWMI SEDA_WP Years 7-8_final.docx</i>	YEARS 7-8 WORK PLAN	January 1, 2018 – September 30, 2019	February 22, 2018
7		<i>EWMI SEDA_Work Plan_Year 9_Revised_11 August2019.pdf</i>	YEAR 9 WORK PLAN	October 1, 2019 – September 30, 2020	July 11, 2019
8		<i>_EWMI SEDA_Work Plan_Year 9_11July2019_Annex 3.pdf</i>	Annex 3: SEDA Year 9 Work Plan Timeline	October 1, 2019 – September 30, 2020	July 11, 2019
9		<i>_EWMI SEDA_Work Plan_Year 9_11July2019_Annex 1.pdf</i>	Annex 1: SEDA's Organizational Chart for NCTE	October 1, 2019 – September 30, 2020	July 11, 2019
10	QUARTERLY REPORTS	<i>EWMI SEDA Q1 report Oct-Dec 2011.pdf</i>	FIRST QUARTERLY REPORT Award Period: October 1, 2011 – September 29, 2016 DRAFT	October 1, 2011 – December 31, 2011	x
11		<i>EWMI-SEDA Q2 report January-March 2012.pdf</i>	SECOND QUARTERLY REPORT Award Period: October 1, 2011 – September 29, 2016	January 1 – March 31, 2012	x
12		<i>EWMI SEDA 3rd Quarterly Report April-June 2012.pdf</i>	THIRD QUARTERLY REPORT Award Period: October 1, 2011 – September 29, 2016	April 1 – June 30, 2012	x
13		<i>SEDA 4th Quarterly Report_July-Sept 2012_2012-10-31.pdf</i>	FOURTH QUARTERLY REPORT Award Period: October 1, 2011 – September 29, 2016	July 1 – September 30, 2012	x
14		<i>EWMI SEDA 5th Quarterly Report Oct-Dec 2012.pdf</i>	FIFTH QUARTERLY REPORT Award Period: October 1, 2011 – September 29, 2016	October 1 – December 31, 2012	x

#	Type	File Name (as appears in the shared Google Drive)	Description	Period Covered	Date (if indicated)
15		<i>EWMI SEDA 6th Quarterly Report Jan-March 2013.pdf</i>	SIXTH QUARTERLY REPORT Award Period: October 1, 2011 – September 29, 2016	January 1 – March 31, 2013	x
16		<i>EWMI-SEDA 7th Quarterly Report Apr-June 2013.pdf</i>	SEVENTH QUARTERLY REPORT Award Period: October 1, 2011 – September 29, 2016	April 1 – June 30, 2013	x
17		<i>EWMI SEDA 8th Quarterly Report July-Sept 2013.pdf</i>	EIGHTH QUARTERLY REPORT Award Period: October 1, 2011 – September 29, 2016	July 1 – September 30, 2013	x
18		<i>EWMI SEDA 9th Quarterly Report October-December 2013.pdf</i>	NINTH QUARTERLY REPORT Award Period: October 1, 2011 – September 29, 2016	October 1 – December 31, 2013	x
19		<i>EWMI SEDA 10th Quarterly Report January-March 2014.pdf</i>	TENTH QUARTERLY REPORT Award Period: October 1, 2011 – September 29, 2016	January 1 – March 31, 2014	x
20		<i>EWMI SEDA_11th Quarterly Report_April-June 2014.pdf</i>	ELEVENTH QUARTERLY REPORT Award period: October 1, 2011 – September 29, 2016	April 1 – June 30, 2014	x
21		<i>EWMI SEDA_12th Quarterly Report_July-September 2014.pdf</i>	TWELFTH QUARTERLY REPORT Award period: October 1, 2011 – September 29, 2016	July 1 – September 30, 2014	x
22		<i>EWMI-SEDA_13th Quarterly Report_Oct-Dec 2014.pdf</i>	THIRTEENTH QUARTERLY REPORT Award period: October 1, 2011 – September 29, 2016	October 1 – December 31, 2014	x
23		<i>EWMI-SEDA_14th Quarterly Report_Jan-March 2015.pdf</i>	FOURTEENTH QUARTERLY REPORT Award period: October 1, 2011 – September 29, 2016	January 1 – March 31, 2015	x
24		<i>EWMI-SEDA_15th Quarterly Report_April-June, 2015.pdf</i>	FIFTEENTH QUARTERLY REPORT Award period: October 1, 2011 – September 29, 2016	April 1 – June 30, 2015	x

#	Type	File Name (as appears in the shared Google Drive)	Description	Period Covered	Date (if indicated)
25		<i>EWMI-SEDA_16th Quarterly Report_July-September 2015.pdf</i>	SIXTEENTH QUARTERLY REPORT Award period: October 1, 2011 – September 29, 2016	July 1 – September 30, 2015	x
26		<i>EWMI-SEDA_17th Quarterly Report_October-December 2015.pdf</i>	SEVENTEENTH QUARTERLY REPORT Award period: October 1, 2011 – September 29, 2016	October 1 – December 31, 2015	x
27		<i>EWMI-SEDA_18th Quarterly Report_January-March 2016.pdf</i>	EIGHTEENTH QUARTERLY REPORT Award period: October 1, 2011 – September 29, 2016	January 1 – March 31, 2016	x
28		<i>EWMI-SEDA_19th Quarterly Report_April-June, 2016.pdf</i>	NINETEENTH QUARTERLY REPORT Award period: October 1, 2011 – September 29, 2016	April 1 – June 30, 2016	x
29		<i>EWMI-SEDA_Q20 Report_July-September 2016.pdf</i>	TWENTIETH QUARTERLY REPORT Award period: October 1, 2011 – September 29, 2016	July 1 – September 30, 2016	October 30, 2016
30		<i>EWMI-SEDA_Q21 Report_October-December 2016.pdf</i>	TWENTY-FIRST QUARTERLY REPORT Award period: October 1, 2011 – December 29, 2017	October 1 – December 31, 2016	January 30, 2017
31		<i>EWMI-SEDA_Q22nd Report_January-March 2017.pdf</i>	TWENTY-SECOND QUARTERLY REPORT Award period: October 1, 2011 – December 29, 2017	January 1 – March 31, 2017	April 28, 2017
32		<i>EWMI - SEDA 23rd Quarterly Report_April-June 2017.pdf</i>	TWENTY-THIRD QUARTERLY REPORT Award period: October 1, 2011 – December 29, 2017	April 1 – June 30, 2017	July 30, 2017
33		<i>EWMI - SEDA 24th Quarterly Report_July-September 2017.pdf</i>	TWENTY-FOURTH QUARTERLY REPORT Award period: October 1, 2011 – December 29, 2017	July 1 – September 30, 2017	October 30, 2017
34		<i>EWMI SEDA_25th Quarterly Report_Oct-Dec 2017.pdf</i>	TWENTY-FIFTH QUARTERLY REPORT Award period: October 1, 2011 – December 29, 2017	October 1 – December 31, 2017	January 30, 2017

#	Type	File Name (as appears in the shared Google Drive)	Description	Period Covered	Date (if indicated)
35		<i>EWMI SEDA_26th_QR_Jan - Mar 2018.pdf</i>	TWENTY-SIXTH QUARTERLY REPORT Award period: October 1, 2011 – September 30, 2019	January 1 – March 31, 2018	April 30, 2018
36		<i>EWMI SEDA_27th_QR_April - June 2018.pdf</i>	TWENTY-SEVENTH QUARTERLY REPORT Award period: October 1, 2011 – September 30, 2019	April 1 – June 30, 2018	July 18, 2018
37		<i>EWMI SEDA_28th_QR_July - September 2018.docx</i>	TWENTY-EIGHTH QUARTERLY REPORT Award period: October 1, 2011 – September 30, 2019	July 1 – September 30, 2018	October 29, 2018
38		<i>EWMI SEDA_29th_QR_October - December 2018.pdf</i>	TWENTY-NINTH QUARTERLY REPORT Award period: October 1, 2011 – September 30, 2019	October 1 – December 30, 2018	January 30, 2019
39		<i>EWMI SEDA_30th_QR_January - March 2019.pdf</i>	THIRTIETH QUARTERLY REPORT Award period: October 1, 2011 – September 30, 2019	January 1 – March 31, 2019	April 30, 2019
40		<i>EWMI SEDA_31st_QR_April - June 2019.pdf</i>	THIRTY-FIRST QUARTERLY REPORT Award period: October 1, 2011 – September 30, 2021	April 1 – June 30, 2019	July 25, 2019
41	PMPs	<i>SEDA Performance Monitoring Plan - 01-25-2013.xls</i>	SEDA Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP)	x	x
42		<i>Annex 1 SEDA Annual PMP Year 3 Oct 29-2014.xlsx</i>	SEDA Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP)	x	x
43		<i>PMP Revised March 17-2015.xlsx</i>	SEDA Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP)	x	x
44		<i>EWMI SEDA_NCE Y6-7 PMP_FINAL_11-24-2016.xlsx</i>	SEDA Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP)	September 2016 – December 2017	x
45		<i>Annex 4 - EWMI SEDA_Cost and time Extension Work Plan_PMP Table_rev_12Feb2018.xlsx</i>	SEDA Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP)	x	x
46	OTHER	<i>Initial PD - SEDA_2011-2016.pdf</i>	ATTACHMENT B PROGRAM DESCRIPTION SOCIO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY	x	x

#	Type	File Name (as appears in the shared Google Drive)	Description	Period Covered	Date (if indicated)
47		<i>FINAL REPORT SEDA Feb_Evaluation.pdf</i>	USAID/AZERBAIJAN PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF THE SOCIO ECONOMIC ACTIVITY Final Report	September 30, 2011 – September 30, 2015	February, 2016
48		<i>PPS-2016 FINAL Report - 30 DECEMBER_ 2016.doc</i>	Public Perception Survey (PPS) on Community Participation ANALYTICAL REPORT	x	December 30, 2016

Table 7: Other Relevant Documents

#	Title/Description	Origin	Publication Date
1	State Program on Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development in the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2008-2015	GOAJ	2008
2	State Program on Socio-Economic Development of Regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2014-2018 years	GOAJ	2014
3	Law on NGOs	GOAJ	2014
4	Law on Public Participation	GOAJ	2013
5	Country Development Cooperation Strategy 2011-2020 Azerbaijan USAID	USAID	2011
6	CSOSI Report 2016	USAID	2016
7	CSOSI Report 2017	USAID	2017
8	Bringing the Law and Practice Relating to NGOs in the Republic of Azerbaijan into Compliance with European Standards_CoE_April 2017	Council of Europe (COE)	2017
9	Civil Participation in Decision-Making Process Handbook_Azerbaijan_CoE_August 2018	COE	2018
10	Civic Freedom Monitor_Azerbaijan_ICNL_February 2019	ICNL	2019
11	Civic Freedom Monitor_Azerbaijan_ICNL_March 2018	ICNL	2018
12	Gender Equality and Gender Relation in Azerbaijan_UNFPA_2018	United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)	2018
13	Women in the Private Sector in Azerbaijan_UNDP_2018	UNDP	2018

ANNEX 4: LIST OF INTERVIEWED PERSONS

Table 8: Interviewed Persons

Name, Position	Institution
Eileen Lawless, Program Manager	USAID
Parviz Musayev, Project Management Specialist	USAID
Tamilla Mammadova, M&E and Project Design Specialist	USAID
Kenul Salimova, Acquisition and Assistance Specialist	USAID
Samir Hamidov, Project Management Specialist	USAID
Delina Fico, Director for Civil Society Programs at East-West Management Institute	SEDA Project, EWMI
Ahmad Shirinov, Chief of Party (COP)	SEDA Project, EWMI
Jabir Alizade, Program Manager	SEDA Project, EWMI
Ahmad Mammadzade, Operations Manager	SEDA Project, EWMI
Bahram Javadov, Lead Engineer	SEDA Project, EWMI
Aytan Poladova, Environmental Manager	SEDA Project, EWMI
Sardar Huseynov, M&E and Public Outreach Officer	SEDA Project, EWMI
Gunay Zeynalova, Regional Director for Ganja-Gazakh region	SEDA Project, EWMI
Emin Kazimov, Regional Director for Aran region	SEDA Project, EWMI
Aflatun Verdiyev, Regional Director for Guba-Khachmaz	SEDA Project, EWMI
Zohrab Zohrabov, Regional Coordinator for Shaki-Zagatala region	SEDA Project, EWMI
Aynura Miriyeva, Regional Coordinator for Lankaran region	SEDA Project, EWMI
Nadir Guluzada	UNDP
Hikmat Nabiye, Regional Development and State Program Department Director	MOE
Javid Gadimov, contact point for the SEDA Project	
Israyil Isgandarov, Head	UMID Organization
Mahammad Guluzade, Director	ICNL/MF Consulting
Name, Position	Region/Rayon/Community
Khanlar Heybatov, Regional Deputy of ExCom	Guba ExCom
Ruslan Hajiyev, CDC Coordinator CDC Members Beneficiaries	Gachrash community in Guba
Eynulla Kheyrollayev, Director of Resource Center Humaye Mammadova, CSO providing support to women social-economic development Yusif Hajiyev, CSO, Environment and Ecology Center	Guba Resource Center and CSO
Rasim Shahmuradov, CDC Coordinator Elman Ahmadov and Hilal Mutallimov, Local ExCom and Municipality Gamar Muradova, Tural Nazirov Ofeliya Babakishiyeva, Shahana Garibova, Zemfira Abiyeva, Sara Huseynova, Dilruba Alasgarova, Gandab Hamidova, Tunzala Kamilova, Tarana Babayeva, Beneficiaries	Alpan community in Guba
Ayaz Amiraslanov, CDC Coordinator Shukufa Abilova, Sevinj Babayeva, Mobul Ahmadov, CDC Members Ramin, Local ExCom	Zardabi community in Guba

Name, Position	Region/Rayon/Community
Rafik Khanmadoy, CDC Coordinator Amid Khamatov, Municipality Natig Shahbazov, Deputy of Local ExCom Sabira Bayova, Zumrud Shahbazova, Ruslan Nematov, Rubaba Gadimova, Tunzala Abudllayeva, Maina Khanmatova, Azad Jafarov, Farid Savziyev, CDC Members and Beneficiaries	Lacat community in Khachmaz
Adalat Jarullayev, CDC Coordinator Polad, Local ExCom 2 CDC members	Khaspoladoba community in Khachmaz
Ahmad Taghiyev, CDC Coordinator Beybud Rahimov, Local ExCom Najafali Gulaliyev, Sultan Gadiorv, Idris Abasov, Aydin Kazimov	Rustov community in Guba
Nasif Abbasov, CDC Coordinator Elshad Safaraliyev, Najmaddin Mehraliyev, Aydin Bayramov, CDC Members Mokhsa Murshudova, Municipality Parviz Murshudov, Deputy of Local ExCom	Ashagi-Atuj community in Guba
Ilkin Aghayev, Representative Head of ExCom	Shabran ExCom
Musa Sardarov, CDC Coordinator CDC Members	Uzunboyad community of Shabran
2 CDC Members	Amirkhanli community of Shabran
Malik Aliyev, Municipality Amirshah Gubadov, Local ExCom	Aghyazi-Budug community in Khachmaz
Asaf Alasgarov, Mughan Alizada, Local ExCom, and Deputy Karim Hasanov, Municipality Jamalladin Gasimov, CDC Coordinator Afug Heydarov, Fakhrat Garashov (responsible for feed- grinding), CDC members	Cafarli community of Imishli
Malik Azimov, Municipality Aladdin Abbasov, CDC Coordinator Javad Musayev, Famil Ahmadov, Alsafa Atashov, Eldar Dadashov, Aghamusa Naghiyev, Behbud Khalilov, Rukhsara Musayeva, Vafa Musayeva, Gamat Musavi, Zakir Mammadov, CDC members	Gobaktala community of Imishli
Huseyn Ibrahimov, Deputy of ExCom	Imishli ExCom
Naziragha Guliyev, Municipal Head Niyammaddin Mammadov, CDC Coordinator Hasanov Faraj, Almaz Mammadova (Doctor), CDC members	Memishler community of Sabirabad
Kamran Abuzarov, CDC Coordinator Aghahasan Rustamli, Local Deputy Municipality Rasim Karimov, Local Deputy ExCom	Zangana community of Sabirabad
Azar Abdulov, CDC Coordinator Lutfiyar, Local ExCom	Garalar community of Sabirabad
Elchin Ismayilov, Deputy of ExCom	Goranboy ExCom
Vahid Hasanov, Deputy of ExCom	Sabirabad ExCom
Shovgu Asadov, CDC Coordinator Nazli Nazarova, Aida Safarova, Gulsum Ibrahimova, Sayyat Shammadov, Balanisa Guliyeva (director of school), Yagub Balayev, CDC Members Garanfil Dadakshiyeva, Local ExCom	Otuziki community of Imishli

Name, Position	Region/Rayon/Community
Azar Abbasov, CDC Coordinator Surra Mursal Khalofov (also working as an accountant with the municipality), CDC Coordinator of Garali Gizilgul Hashimova, CDC (Garali) member, doctor of medical center Shirali Mammadov, CDC (Garali) member	Surra and Garali community of Sabirabad
Tahir Garayev, First Deputy of ExCom	Samukh ExCom
Orkhan Aliyev, Municipality Representative Ulviyya Tagiyeva, CDC Coordinator (temporary) Kapaz Ganbarov, CDC Member 2 other CDC Members 3 doctors	Ziyadli community of Samukh
Mahira Bagirova, CDC Coordinator (ExCom Representative) Mushvig Akhmedov, Municipality Representative	Govlarsarı community of Samukh
Parviz Yusifov, Municipality Representative Seymur Shukurov, ExCom Representative 2 women CDC Members	Ahmadbayli community of Samukh
Ilgar Guliyev, Head of Department	Beylagan ExCom
Jafarov Aladdin, Municipality Head Galandar Alishov, CDC Coordinator: Masdali Aliyeva, Ifrat Hashimova, Bika Huseynova, Khayal Mirzayev, Rahila Jafarova, Ilkin Rustamov, Taleh Allahverdiyev, CDC Members	Ashaghı Chamanli community of Beylagan
Mazahir Nazarov, Municipality Head Yusif Hasanov, CDC Coordinator Shafiga Orujova, Nazila Guliyeva, Zakir Orujov, CDC members	Ahmadli community of Beylagan
Yegana Mammadova, CDC Coordinator Mehriban Baylarova, Gamar Mahmudova, Leyla Mammadova, CDC members Sadullah Eyvazov, Local ExCom Avaz Abbasov, Municipality Ramziyya Imanova, Azat Gurbanova, Ruhangiz Hasanova, Vafa Hasanova, Almaz Mammadova, Zarnigar Mammadova, Nusaba Mammadova, Beneficiaries	Birinci Ashigli community of Beylagan
Gurban Babayev, Head of Department	Agjabadi ExCom
Fazil Jafarov, CDC Coordinator Panah Mammadov, CDC Member (Municipality Representative) Sahiba Veliyeva, CDC Member Yunesh Rustamova, CDC Member	Shahseven Tazakend community of Agjabadi
Namat Gasimov, CDC Coordinator Kamila Gasimova, CDC Member (Municipality Representative)	Tazakend community of Agjabadi
Vagif Ismayilov, CDC Coordinator Samandar Musayev, CDC member and Municipal Deputy Tarana Khalilova, CDC member Elmir Huseynov, Municipal Head	Garadaghli community of Goranboy
Rasim Nabiyev, CDC Coordinator Naila Mammadova, Shalala Kazimova, CDC members Tofiq Guliyev, Local ExCom	Khoylu community of Goranboy

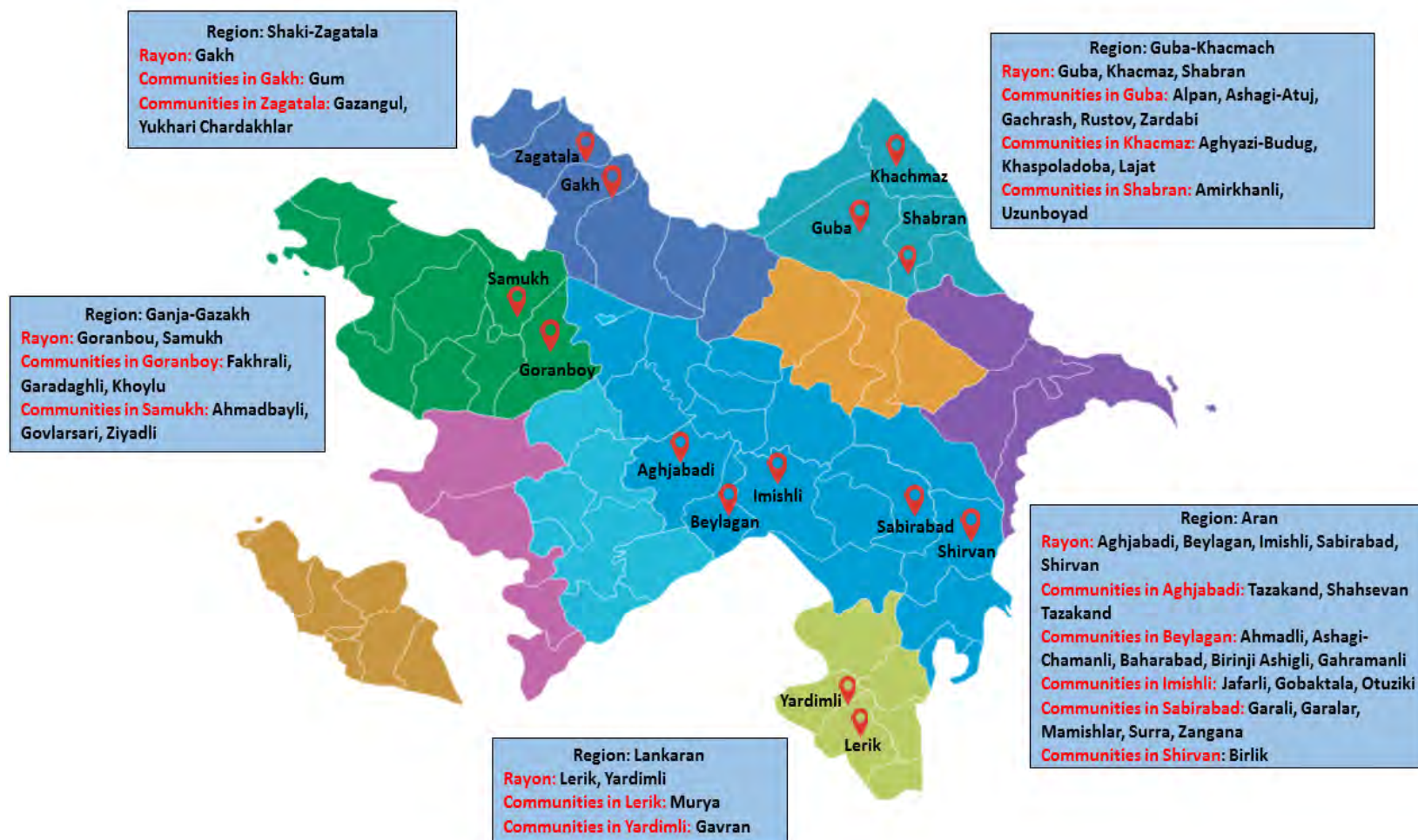
Name, Position	Region/Rayon/Community
Nazakat Hamidova, CDC Coordinator Balakishi Abbasov, CDC Members, Sevda Valiyeva, Municipal Head (female)	Fakhrali community of Goranboy
Elbrus Taghiyev, Region ExCom Deputy	Gakh ExCom
Gulbahar Muradova, CDC Member, Kindergarten Director Rashad Isayev, CDC Coordinator Farid Hashimov, Municipality Representative Abdulla Aliyev, ExCom Representative	Gum community of Gakh
Azar Abdullayev, CDC Coordinator Azar Bayramov, Rizvana Alakbarov, Shargiyya Orujova, Shahnaz Shirinova, Bakhtiyar Bayramov, CDC members Tehran Sadigov, Municipal Head Anvar Jafarov, Local ExCom	Gahramanli community of Beylagan
Alizar Binaliyev, CDC Coordinator Mahaddin Arifov (doctor), Nuraddin Arifov, Ramil Dursunov, Mikail Gadirov, Albina Shahmanova, Hajar Jalilova, CDC members	Baharabad community of Beylagan
Ilkin Sharifzade, Deputy of Head of ExCom	Zagatala ExCom
Ismayil Shabanov, CDC Coordinator Islam Sardarov, CDC Member	Yukhari Chardakhlar community of Zagatala
Ilkin Khiyalov, CDC Coordinator, Municipal Representative Elvusal Mammadov, CDC Member Akif Hushanov, CDC Member	Gazangul community of Zagatala
Habil Malikov, Deputy of Head of ExCom	Lerik ExCom
Joshgun Naghiyev, Fikrat Ganiyev, Rafiq Hasratov, Tofiq Mammadov, Aydin Manafov, CDC members Navai Zaidov, Municipal Head	Murya community of Lerik
Ahad Baghirov, Senior Adviser	Yardimli ExCom
Farman Mustafayev, CDC Coordinator Vafa Farmanli, Alibanda Masiyev, Vugar Mustafayev, CDC members Seyran Mustafayev, Municipal Head Huseynagha Abishov, Local ExCom	Gavran community of Yardimli
Samid Abiyev, First Deputy of ExCom Adam Huseynov, Deputy of Socio-Political and Humanitarian Issues Department	Shirvan ExCom
Mehriban Aliyeva, CDC Coordinator Shakir Gulaliyev, CDC Member	Birlik community of Shirvan

ANNEX 5: LIST OF VISITED COMMUNITIES

Table 9: List of Communities According to Each Rayon and Region

Region	Rayon	Communities
Guba-Khacmach	Guba	Alpan
		Ashagi-Atuj
		Gachrash
		Rustov
		Zardabi
	Khacmaz	Aghyazi-Budug
		Khaspoladoba
		Lajat
	Shabran	Amirkhanli
		Uzunboyad
Aran	Aghjabadi	Tazakand
		Shahsevan Tazakand
	Beylagan	Ahmadli
		Ashagi-Chamanli
		Baharabad
		Birinji Ashigli
		Gahramanli
	Imishli	Jafarli
		Gobaktala
		Otuziki
	Sabirabad	Garali
		Garalar
		Mamishlar
		Surra
		Zangana
	Shirvan	Birlik
Lankaran	Lerik	Murya
	Yardimli	Gavran
Ganja-Gazakh	Goranboy	Fakhrali
		Garadaghli
		Khoylu
	Samukh	Ahmadbayli
		Govlarsari
		Ziyadli
Shaki-Zagatala	Gakh	Gum
	Zagatala	Gazangul
		Yukhari Chardakhlar

Figure 7: Field Inquiry Map



ANNEX 6: SAMPLE OF COMMUNITIES

Table 10: Sampled Communities in Guba-Khachmaz Region

#	Region	Rayon	Municipality	Community	Handover Date	Type of Projects
1	Guba-Khachmaz	Shabran	Amirkhanlı	Amirkhanlı	22/08/2013 19/10/2015	1. Road Rehabilitation 2. Sports Facility
2	Guba-Khachmaz	Shabran	Uzunboyad	Uzunboyad	29/07/2016	3. *Medical Point
3	Guba-Khachmaz	Guba	Gachrash	Gachrash	22/08/2013 26/01/2016 03/06/2019	4. Road Rehabilitation 5. Electrical Supply 6. Feed Grinding Facility
4	Guba-Khachmaz	Guba	Alpan	Alpan	20/05/2013 19/10/2017	7. Road Rehabilitation 8. Carpet Weaving Facility
5	Guba-Khachmaz	Guba	Zardabi	Zardabi	30/06/2013 19/04/2016 03/06/2019	9. Road Rehabilitation 10. Water Supply 11. Feed Grinding Facility
6	Guba-Khachmaz	Guba	Rustov	Rustov	09/06/2016	12. Solar Street Lighting
7	Guba-Khachmaz	Guba	Ashagi-atuc	Ashagi-Atuc	27/04/2016	13. School Heating
8	Guba-Khachmaz	Khachmaz	Aghyazi-Budug	Aghyazi-Budug	13/11/2015	14. Sport Facility
9	Guba-Khachmaz	Khachmaz	Lacat	Lacat	01/06/2016	15. *Kindergarten Repair
10	Guba-Khachmaz	Khachmaz	Khaspoladoba	Khaspoladoba	01/03/2019	16. Irrigation Water

Table 11: Sampled Communities in Aran Region

#	Region	Rayon	Municipality	Community	Handover Date	Type of Projects
1	Aran	Imishli	Muradallı	Otuzikilar	15/09/2015	1. School Fence
2	Aran	Imishli	Cafarli	Cafarli	02/05/2017	2. Feed Grinding Facility
3	Aran	Imishli	Gobaktala	Gobaktala	06/07/2015 25/05/2016	3. Medical Point 4. School Heating
4	Aran	Beylagan	Ashaghi Chamanli	Ashaghi Chamanli	22/08/2013 14/07/2016	5. Road Rehabilitation 6. Electrical Supply-Cluster
5	Aran	Beylagan	Ahmadli	Ahmadli	23/02/2015	7. Feed Grinding Facility

#	Region	Rayon	Municipality	Community	Handover Date	Type of Projects
6	Aran	Beylagan	Birinci Ashıqlı	Birinci Ashıqlı	18/12/2015 15/07/2016	8. Roof Replacement 9. Feed Grinding Facility
7	Aran	Beylagan	Gahramanlı	Gahramanlı	14/07/2016	10. Electrical Supply
8	Aran	Beylagan	Baharabad	Baharabad*	05/10/2016	11. Medical Point
9	Aran	Sabirabad	Cavad	Zangana	30/04/2013	12. Road Rehabilitation
10	Aran	Sabirabad	Garalar	Garalar	22/08/2013 08/05/2015	13. Mobile Tent 14. Medical Point
11	Aran	Sabirabad	Garalar	Mamishlar	15/07/2015 14/12/2016	15. *Medical Point 16. Milk Collection Point
12	Aran	Sabirabad	Surra	Surra	20/09/2017 06/07/2017	Road Rehabilitation 17. Medical Point
13	Aran	Sabirabad	Surra	Garalı**	20/09/2017 06/07/2017	18. Road Rehabilitation 19. Medical Point
14	Aran	Agjabadi	Shahseven Tazakend	Shahseven Tazakend	18/10/2017	20. Water Supply
15	Aran	Agjabadi	Tazakend	Tazakend	29/03/2019	21. Feed Grinding Facility
16	Aran	Shirvan city	Birlik	Birlik***	06/04/2016	22. Residential Roof

*Community included in the sample to replace the community of Jojug Marjanli inaccessible for the ET due to its distance from the rest of the sampled communities and the location of the respective ExCom

**Community included in the sample to replace the community of Cholbeshdali, in Sabirabad region to which the ET was not able to establish contact

***Community which was not included in the initial list received from SEDA

Table 12: Sampled Communities in Ganja-Gazakh Region

#	Region	Rayon	Municipality	Community	Handover Date	Type of Projects
1	Ganja-Gazakh	Samukh	Ahmadbayli	Ahmadbayli	11/12/2015	1. *Water Supply
2	Ganja-Gazakh	Samukh	Ziyadlı	Ziyadlı	15/12/2015	2. Medical Point
3	Ganja-Gazakh	Samukh	Govlarsarı	Govlarsarı	17/11/2015	3. Sports Facility
4	Ganja-Gazakh	Goranboy	Garadaghlı	Garadaghlı	15/03/2015 05/12/2018	4. School Heating 5. *Feed Grinding Facility
5	Ganja-Gazakh	Goranboy	Khoylu	Khoylu	10/12/2015 10/12/2015 18/09/2019	6. Water Supply *Kindergarten Heating 7. Incubation
6	Ganja-Gazakh	Goranboy	Fakhralı	Fakhralı	14/09/2016 05/12/2018	8. Water Supply 9. *Feed Grinding Facility

Table 13: Sampled Communities in Lankaran Region

#	Region	Rayon	Municipality	Community	Handover Date	Type of Projects
1	Lankaran	Lerik	Livadirga	Murya	03/07/2019	1. Road Rehabilitation
2	Lankaran	Yardimli	Shilavanga	Gavran	31/07/2019	2. *Incubation

Table 14: Sampled Communities in Shaki-Zagatala Region

#	Region	Rayon	Municipality	Community	Handover Date	Type of Projects
1	Shaki-Zagatala	Zagatala	Zagatala	Gazangul	29/05/2019	1. Feed Grinding Facility
2	Shaki-Zagatala	Zagatala	Yukhari Chardakhlar	Yukhari Chardakhlar	13/06/2019	2. *Water Supply
3	Shaki-Zagatala	Gakh	Gum	Gum	19/09/2019	3. *Kindergarten Repair

ANNEX 7: LIST OF INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

Table 15: Overview of Infrastructure Projects Supported by SEDA

#	#	Completed Projects	District	Region	Type of Project	Handover Date
1	1	Orujlu	Imishli	Aran	Mobile Tent	23/05/2013
	2	Orujlu	Imihli	Aran	Electrical Supply	23/02/2015
	3	Orujlu	Imihli	Aran	Milk Collection Point	10/02/2016
2	4	Ashagy Zeyid	Khachmaz	Guba-Khachmaz	Road Rehabilitation	04/06/2013
3	5	Zardabi	Guba	Guba-Khachmaz	Road Rehabilitation	30/06/2013
	6	Zardabi	Guba	Guba-Khachmaz	Water Supply	19/04/2016
	7	Zardabi	Guba	Guba-Khachmaz	Feed Plant	03/06/2019
4	8	Piramsan	Shabran	Guba-Khachmaz	Electrical Supply	25/02/2015
5	9	Zangana	Sabirabad	Aran	Road Rehabilitation	30/04/2013
6	10	Nurulu	Imihli	Aran	Road Rehabilitation	22/08/2013
	11	Nurulu	Imishli	Aran	Feed Plant	02/03/2018
7	12	Pashaoba	Guba	Guba-Khachmaz	Road Rehabilitation	22/08/2013
8	13	Alpan	Guba	Guba-Khachmaz	Road Rehabilitation	20/05/2013
	14	Alpan	Guba	Guba-Khachmaz	Carpet Making Workshop	19/10/2017
9	15	Amirkhanli	Shabran	Guba-Khachmaz	Road Rehabilitation	22/08/2013
	16	Amirkhanli	Shabran	Guba-Khachmaz	Sports Facility	19/10/2015
10	17	Aliyetmazli	Imishli	Aran	Road Rehabilitation	22/08/2013
	18	Aliyetmazli	Imihli	Aran	Medical Point	26/02/2015
11	19	Ispik	Guba	Guba-Khachmaz	Road Rehabilitation	22/08/2013
12	20	Gachrash	Guba	Guba-Khachmaz	Road Rehabilitation	22/08/2013
	21	Gachrash	Guba	Guba-Khachmaz	Electrical Supply	26/01/2016
	22	Gachrash	Guba	Guba-Khachmaz	Feed Plant	03/06/2019
13	23	Arzu	Khachmaz	Guba-Khachmaz	Road Rehabilitation	22/08/2013
	24	Arzu	Khachmaz	Guba-Khachmaz	Water Supply	01/03/2019
14	25	Garagashli	Sabirabad	Aran	Road Rehabilitation	22/08/2013
15	26	Charkhi	Khachmaz	Guba-Khachmaz	Road Rehabilitation	22/08/2013
16	27	Imamverdiler	Imamverdiler	Aran	Road Rehabilitation	22/08/2013
17	28	Ashagy Chemenli	Beylagan	Aran	Road Rehabilitation	22/08/2013
	29	Ashagy Chemenli	Beylagan	Aran	Electrical Supply-Cluster	14/07/2016
18	30	Ashigalilar	Beylagan	Aran	Road Rehabilitation	22/08/2013
	31	Ashigalilar	Beylagan	Aran	Electrical Supply	14/07/2016
19	32	Ahmedabad	Sabirabad	Aran	Road Rehabilitation	22/08/2013
20	33	Garalar	Sabirabad	Aran	Mobile Tent	22/08/2013
	34	Garalar	Sabirabad	Aran	Medical Point	08/05/2015
21	35	Aghamammadli	Imishli	Aran	Medical Point	25/02/2015
22	36	Shahnezerli	Shabran	Guba-Khachmaz	Water Supply	21/03/2015
23	37	Gam-Gam	Guba	Guba-Khachmaz	River-Crossing System	13/07/2015
24	38	Memishler	Sabirabad	Aran	Medical Point	15/07/2015
	39	Memishler	Sabirabad	Aran	Milk Collection Point	14/12/2016
25	40	Gobektala	Imihli	Aran	Medical Point	06/07/2015
	41	Gobektala	Imishli	Aran	School Heating	25/05/2016
26	42	Niyazoba	Khachmaz	Guba-Khachmaz	Additional Schoolroom	25/11/2015
27	43	Surra	Shabran	Guba-Khachmaz	Pedestrian Bridge	09/12/2015
		Surra	Shabran			
28	44	Akhiskha	Sabirabad	Aran	Kindergarten Repair	15/09/2015

#	#	Completed Projects	District	Region	Type of Project	Handover Date
29	45	Pustegasim	Guba	Guba-Khachmaz	School Assembly Hall	15/12/2015
30	46	Sarisu	Beylagan	Aran	Water Supply	23/11/2015
31	47	Seyidler	Samukh	Ganja-Gazakh	Road Rehabilitation	06/09/2015
32	48	Gusarchay	Khachmaz	Guba-Khachmaz	Electrical Supply	15/12/2015
33	49	Ziyadli	Samukh	Ganja-Gazakh	Medical Point	15/12/2015
34	50	GovlarSari	Samukh	Ganja-Gazakh	Sports Facility	17/11/2015
35	51	Otuziki	Imihsli	Aran	School Fence	15/09/2015
36	52	Khujbala	Guba	Guba-Khachmaz	Water Supply	18/09/2015
37	53	Agyazi-Buduq	Khachmaz	Guba-Khachmaz	Sports Facility	13/11/2015
38	54	Balakurd	Goranboy	Ganja-Gazakh	Water Supply	06/10/2015
39	55	Khoylu	Goranboy	Ganja-Gazakh	Water Supply	10/12/2015
	56	Khoylu	Goranboy	Ganja-Gazakh	Kindergarten Heating	10/12/2015
	57	Khoylu	Goranboy	Ganja-Gazakh	Incubation	18/09/2019
40	58	Garadagli	Goranboy	Ganja-Gazakh	School Heating	15/03/2015
	59	Garadaghli	Goranboy	Ganja-Gazakh	Feed Plant	05/12/2018
41	60	Ahmadbeyli	Samukh	Ganja-Gazakh	Water Supply	11/12/2015
42	61	Goranli	Goranboy	Ganja-Gazakh	Medical Point	06/10/2015
	62	Goranli	Goranboy	Ganja-Gazakh	Library Construction	14/03/2016
43	63	Alibayramli	Samukh	Ganja-Gazakh	School Heating	11/12/2015
44	64	Nadirkent	Goranboy	Ganja-Gazakh	Feed Plant	10/12/2015
45	65	Chol-Beshdeli	Sabirabad	Aran	Kindergarten Repair	18/12/2015
46	66	Ahmadli	Beylagan	Aran	Feed Plant	23/02/2015
47	67	Chahar	Imihsli	Aran	Feed Plant	23/02/2015
48	68	Neftchiler/Birlik	Shirvan city	Aran	Road Rehabilitation	27/01/2016
49	69	Birlik Phase I C-1351	Shirvan city	Aran	Residential Roof	06/04/2016
	70	Birlik Phase II C-1353	Shirvan city	Aran	Residential Roof	06/04/2016
50	71	Muradalli	Imihsli	Aran	Road Rehabilitation	18/12/2015
51	72	I Ashigli	Beylagan	Aran	Roof Replacement	18/12/2015
	73	I Ashigli	Beylagan	Aran	Feed Plant	15/07/2016
52	74	Garabaghar	Samukh	Ganja-Gazakh	Service Water Supply	15/03/2016
53	75	Ughur	Shirvan city	Aran	Community Center	06/04/2016
54	76	Jemiiyet	Shirvan city	Aran	Community Center	06/04/2016
55	77	Dirchelish	Shirvan city	Aran	Community Center	06/04/2016
56	78	Kheyriyye	Shirvan city	Aran	Community Center	06/04/2016
57	79	Orengala	Beylagan	Aran	Electrical Supply	15/07/2016
58	80	Gahramanli	Beylagan	Aran	Electrical Supply	14/07/2016
59	81	Yerguj	Khachmaz	Guba-Khachmaz	Road Rehabilitation	21/04/2016
60	82	Ashaghi Atuj	Guba	Guba-Khachmaz	School Heating	27/04/2016
61	83	Azizbayov	Goranboy	Ganja-Gazakh	Medical Point	05/05/2016
62	84	Gadili	Samukh	Ganja-Gazakh	Water Supply	12/05/2016
63	85	Rustov	Guba	Guba-Khachmaz	Solar Street Lighting	09/06/2016
64	86	Lacat	Khachmaz	Guba-Khachmaz	Kindergarten Repair	01/06/2016
65	87	Uzunboyad	Shabran	Guba-Khachmaz	Medical Point	29/07/2016
66	88	Govharli	Imihsli	Aran	Medical Point	30/06/2016
67	89	Gudechuhur	Sabirabad	Aran	Medical Point	26/07/2016
68	90	Gendov	Shabran	Guba-Khachmaz	Farmer's Market	29/07/2016
69	91	Lek	Samukh	Ganja-Gazakh	Service Water Supply	14/09/2016
70	92	Ashaghi Khuj	Guba	Guba-Khachmaz	Water Supply	02/09/2016
71	93	Talabigishlaq	Guba	Guba-Khachmaz	Water Supply	02/09/2016

#	#	Completed Projects	District	Region	Type of Project	Handover Date
	94	Talabigishlag	Guba	Guba-Khachmaz	Feed Plant	03/06/2019
72	95	Tap Garagoyunlu	Goranboy	Ganja-Gazakh	Water Supply	15/09/2016
73	96	Baharabad	Beylagan	Aran	Medical Point	05/10/2016
74	97	Fakhrali	Goranboy	Ganja-Gazakh	Water Supply	14/09/2016
	98	Fakhrali	Goranboy	Ganja-Gazakh	Feed Plant	05/12/2018
75	99	Gimilgazma	Guba	Guba-Khachmaz	Water Storage Tank Construction	11/10/2016
76	100	Surra	Sabirabad	Aran	Road Rehabilitation	20/09/2017
77	101	Jafarli	Imishli	Aran	Feed Plant	02/05/2017
78	102	Javadkhan	Ganja	Ganja-Gazakh	Sports Facility	15/05/2017
79	103	Natavan	Ganja	Ganja-Gazakh	Sports Facility	18/05/2017
80	104	Gushchular	Goranboy	Ganja-Gazakh	Water Supply	18/05/2017
81	105	Garali	Sabirabad	Aran	Medical Point	06/07/2017
82	106	Shahverdili	Imishli	Aran	Medical Point	29/06/2017
	107	Shahverdili	Imishli	Aran	Feed Plant	02/03/2018
83	108	Hajigasimli	Saatli	Aran	Road Rehabilitation	19/07/2017
84	109	Garajalar	Saatli	Aran	Road Rehabilitation	02/08/2017
	110	Garajalar	Saatli	Aran	Feed Plant	25/10/2018
85	111	Varkhan	Saatli	Aran	Water Supply	13/10/2017
	112	Varkhan	Saatli	Aran	Road Rehabilitation	12/09/2018
86	113	Kamalli	Saatli	Aran	Medical Point	27/10/2017
87	114	Alisoltanli	Saatli	Aran	Kindergarten Rehabilitation	07/11/2017
	115	Alisoltanli	Saatli	Aran	Road Rehabilitation	12/09/2018
88	116	Godakgobu	Zardab	Aran	Feed Plant	27/10/2017
	117	Godakgobu	Zardab	Aran	Medical Point	17/04/2019
89	118	Deligushchu	Zardab	Aran	Feed Plant	18/10/2017
90	119	Shahseven Tazakend	Agjabedi	Aran	Water Supply	18/10/2017
91	120	Arazbar	Agjabedi	Aran	Feed Plant	19/10/2017
92	121	Huseynkhanli	Zardab	Aran	Feed Plant	11/12/2017
	122	Huseynkhanli	Zardab	Aran	Kindergarten	17/04/2019
93	123	Alibeyli	Zardab	Aran	Medical Point	11/12/2017
94	124	Kahrizli	Agjabedi	Aran	Medical Point	11/12/2017
	125	Kahrizli	Agjabedi	Aran	Feed Plant	29/03/2019
95	126	Hindarkh	Agjabedi	Aran	Medical Point	11/12/2017
96	127	Gelme	Zardab	Aran	Feed Plant	07/03/2018
97	128	Jojug Merjanli	Jabrayil	Upper-Garabagh	Feed Plant	02/02/2018
	129	Jojug Merjanli	Jabrayil	Upper-Garabagh	Incubation	10/10/2019
98	130	Turkler	Beylagan	Aran	Water Supply	02/02/2018
99	131	Koyuk	Agjabedi	Aran	Water Supply	14/03/2018
100	132	Saglam Hayat	Hajigabul	Aran	Sport Facility	20/04/2018
101	133	Guneshli	Saatli	Aran	Milk Processing Facility	11/05/2019
102	134	Serkerli	Khachmaz	Guba-Khachmaz	Water Supply	01/03/2019
103	135	Khaspoladoaba	Khachmaz	Guba-Khachmaz	Water Supply	01/03/2019
104	136	Azad Garagoyunlu	Tartar	Upper-Garabagh	Feed Plant	16/03/2019
105	137	Yeni Dashkand	Barda	Aran	Feed Plant	16/03/2019
106	138	Gaymagli	Gazakh	Ganja-Gazakh	Feed Plant	15/03/2019
107	139	Tazakand	Agjabedi	Aran	Feed Plant	29/03/2019
108	140	Alikhanli	Fizuli	Upper-Garabagh	Feed Plant	17/04/2019
109	141	Gajimarda	Astara	Lankaran	Water Supply	21/05/2019

#	#	Completed Projects	District	Region	Type of Project	Handover Date
110	142	Gullar	Balakan	Sheki-Zagatala	Kindergarten	29/05/2019
111	143	Gazma	Balakan	Sheki-Zagatala	Feed Plant	29/05/2019
112	144	Gazangul	Zagatala	Sheki-Zagatala	Feed Plant	29/05/2019
113	145	Tasmali	Gakh	Sheki-Zagatala	Feed Plant	30/05/2019
114	146	Yukhari Chardakhlar	Zagatala	Sheki-Zagatala	Water Supply	13/06/2019
115	147	Gedezeykhur	Gusar	Guba-Khachmaz	Feed Plant	29/06/2019
116	148	Murya	Lerik	Lankaran	Road	03/07/2019
117	149	Garakli	Balakan	Sheki-Zagatala	Incubation	17/07/2019
118	150	Aliabad	Zagatala	Sheki-Zagatala	Feed Plant	17/07/2019
119	151	Baylar	Saatli	Aran	Medical Point	26/07/2019
120	152	Gavran	Yardimli	Lankaran	Incubation	31/07/2019
121	153	Sirig	Yardimli	Lankaran	Feed Plant	31/07/2019
122	154	Motlayatag	Astara	Lankaran	Medical Point	01/08/2019
123	155	Garaaghaji	Tartar	Upper-Garabagh	Incubation	18/09/2019
124	156	Dallar Jayir	Shamkir	Ganja-Gazakh	Incubation	17/09/2019
125	157	Gum	Gakh	Sheki-Zagatala	Kindergarten	19/09/2019
126	158	Gimilgishlag	Khachmaz	Guba-Khachmaz	Water Supply	26/09/2019
127	159	Jangamiran	Lerik	Lankaran	Medical Point	02/10/2019
128	160	Fidanlar	Khachmaz	Guba-Khachmaz	Kindergarten	28/10/2019
129	161	Chilagir	Gusar	Guba-Khachmaz	Water Supply	28/10/2019

ANNEX 8: EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS

Team Leader, Ms. Zehra Kacapor-Dzihic, is an Evaluation Expert and Civil Society Specialist with more than 19 years of experience designing, conducting, leading, and providing oversight and quality control for evaluations around the world. She has significant experience implementing and evaluating civil society projects focused on community mobilization and development, good governance, socio-economic issues, and civil society development, as well as conducting evaluations in politically sensitive and challenging environments. She has worked in many countries—including Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Moldova, Turkmenistan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and Macedonia, among others—for a range of international donors, such as USAID, EU, UNDP, UNICEF, The World Bank, and others.

Ms. Kacapor-Dzihic has 10 years of experience of designing robust evaluation methodologies, including theory-based evaluations that include OH and contribution analysis elements. Currently, as the Team Leader for the Cluster Evaluation of UNDP Country Programs in Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan), she is using OH and contribution analysis to generate findings and recommendations for each country. For the UNICEF Country Program in Serbia, she led the development of an overall evaluation framework and design methodological approach as per theory-based evaluation guidelines, including OH, and assessed the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the strategies adopted to achieve the Program's results. She was Team Leader and/or Evaluation Expert for the: Outcome Evaluation of UNDP Country Program Document Outcome 2: Sustainable Development mainstreamed in economy in Saudi Arabia; Outcome Evaluation of the UNDP Country Program Outcome 2: Sustainable local and regional development in Moldova; and Outcome Evaluation of the UNDP Country Program Outcome 1: Poverty reduction and economic development in Tajikistan. For all the above evaluations, she used OH methodology to establish programs' outcomes.

Ms. Kacapor-Dzihic has worked extensively in the region, and specifically in Azerbaijan. There, she led the Outcome Evaluation of UNDP Country Program Outcome 1: National policies and institutions strengthened to increase private sector competitiveness, remove trade barriers, especially for exports, while reducing vulnerability of the economy and population to external shocks; the Outcome Evaluation of UNDP Country Program Outcome 4: By 2015 civil society, media, and vulnerable groups enjoy an increased role in policy formulation and implementation processes in Azerbaijan; and the final evaluation of the "Enabling civil society to play a greater role in advancing gender equality and women's rights" program. She was also Evaluation Expert of the performance evaluation of SEDA for the period 2013-2015, that ME&A conducted for USAID in 2015 and was praised by the USAID COR for the support, cooperation, and quality of the report.

Ms. Kacapor-Dzihic has extensive experience evaluating projects similar to SEDA. She was the Evaluation Expert in the EC/Final Evaluation of the Advocacy Initiatives for Minorities (AIM) Project in Serbia, which aimed to measure effectiveness and impact of project to improve minority rights and interethnic dialogue by strengthening the existing local civil society initiatives. For the World Bank, Ms. Kacapor-Dzihic conducted a study on Local Governance and Service Delivery in Bosnia and Herzegovina, focused on the political dimension of local governance, social inclusion, good governance, and human rights, in order to provide an analytical basis and policy recommendations to support ongoing efforts within the local governance sector. For the USAID/Mid-Term Performance Evaluation of the G-PAC Project, Ms. Kacapor-Dzihic assessed Georgia's civil society, supervised data analysis and worked jointly with a local research company for data collection. As an Evaluation Expert, she assessed the EU's support to civil society in the Western Balkans and Turkey and evaluated Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance to civil society in Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania and Turkey.

Ms. Kacapor-Dzihic holds an M.Sc. in Public Administration and Development and an M.A. in Human Rights and Democracy. She speaks fluent English and Serbian, and fair Russian.

Deputy Team Leader, Ms. Kathleen Selvaggio, is a civil society and gender expert with more than 20 years of experience working on international development policy, advocacy, and programs focused on civil society, economic development, human rights, equality, empowerment, and integration of women, youth, people with disabilities, ethnic and religious minorities, LGBT, and other marginalized groups, including field experience in Georgia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Nepal, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, South Africa, and Peru.

As Team Leader on the USAID/Georgia Promoting Integration, Tolerance and Awareness (PITA) Program, a five-year civil society strengthening program, Ms. Selvaggio led a team of two international and two local staff, designing and implementing the evaluation using both qualitative and quantitative methods. As Senior Evaluator for a Department of State Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) program, Ms. Selvaggio led an evaluation of the Bureau's success in including marginalized populations, including religious and ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, women, and LGBT, in its overseas programs. In this role, Ms. Selvaggio created appropriate tools and resources for DRL program officers to target marginalized populations and compiled and constructed indicators that track activities targeting marginalized populations. In Kenya, Ms. Selvaggio designed and implemented a social inclusion analysis identifying key social inclusion gaps through synthesis of quantitative and qualitative data for USAID Planning for Resilience in East Africa for Policy, Adaptation, Research and Economic Development. The analysis was used to assist project staff and partners to develop a social inclusion and tolerance strategy for the five-year program. The previous year, she served as Team Leader to develop a strategy and tools for inclusion of marginalized populations, especially ethnic and religious minorities, women, and youth, in the USAID/Uganda Enabling Environment for Agriculture Activity. Also in Uganda, as Gender and Social Analysis Specialist, Ms. Selvaggio designed and conducted a gender and social inclusion assessment for the USAID Governance, Accountability, Participation, and Performance (GAPP) project, to inform a project action plan for enhancing the participation and empowerment of women, youth, religious and ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities. As Program Director with Mercy Corps on the BRIDGE Program, Ms. Selvaggio provided leadership, management, and strategic vision, focusing on integrating gender and social inclusion, including differences due to caste, religion, and ethnicity, into program design for Nepal, Indonesia, and Niger. She provided technical assistance on gender and social inclusion assessment, analysis, program design, and implementation. Also for Mercy Corps, she identified gender constraints and opportunities to inform the design and implementation of PROSPECTS, an employment and entrepreneurship project aimed at reaching 8,000 Liberian youth. In this position, she designed and conducted quantitative survey as part of a formative evaluation to address opportunities and constraints for women in the formal labor force. As Senior Policy Advisor for UN Women in Vietnam, Ms. Selvaggio focus on developing national gender indicators and gender mainstreaming, focusing especially on women in Vietnam's several dozen ethnic minority groups.

Local Technical Expert, Naila Hashimova, has over 20 years of professional experience in international development assistance in the Caucasus and Central Asia, with particular expertise in non-profit management, monitoring and evaluation, strategic planning, and public policy development. She has extensive experience working with international institutions such as the European Commission (EC), USAID, the World Bank, DFID, Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and a wide range of private donors. Ms. Hashimova established and supervised the Baku IdeaLab with the aim of hosting, promoting and incubating local social enterprises. The Lab provides the enterprises with access to a public space, and a package of targeted skills workshops and mentoring schemes, supplemented by a pool of funding available to promising small-scale projects.

Ms. Hashimova has been involved in evaluation of a number of civil society programs including the Evaluation of the EU Support to Civil Society in Azerbaijan and the Final Evaluation of the EU-funded project of "Power to Women!"— Empowering Women in Social, Economic and Political Participation, etc. She has also supervised programs aimed at strengthening civil society's ability to advocate effectively for public oversight of and engagement with the government around issues of civic participation, good

governance, human rights, and democratization. Ms. Hashimova has been extensively involved in building capacity of CSOs, both in Azerbaijan and a wider Caucasus region, as well as the countries of Central Asia, and has designed training modules and delivered numerous trainings for civil society organizations to address capacity gaps, including the areas of effective advocacy and public campaigning around the issues of social policy, monitoring and evaluation of development assistance programs, CSO governance, and financial management.

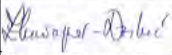
Ms. Hashimova is proficient in quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, and has overseen household surveys in Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia to obtain comparable data on household composition, social and political attitudes, and practices across the South Caucasus. She has also consulted with State institutions on effective engagement with CSOs and drafted multiple strategy plans, country reports, multi-year program proposals and evaluation reports. In addition, Ms. Hashimova has managed large-scale rehabilitation and community development projects in IDP camps and urban settlements, promoting durable solutions and ensuring respect for social, political and economic rights of the displaced populations.

ANNEX 9: DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST FORMS

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest for USAID Evaluation Team Members

Name	Zehra Kacapor-Dzihic			
Title	Team leader			
Organization	ME&A			
Evaluation Position?	☒	Team Leader	☐	Team Member
Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument)	72011219F00001			
USAID Project(s) Evaluated (Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)	Azerbaijan Socio-Economic Development Activity (SEDA)			
I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.	☐	Yes	☒	No
If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts: <i>Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:</i> 1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation. 3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project. 4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation.				

I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change. If I gain access to proprietary information of other companies, then I agree to protect their information from unauthorized use or disclosure for as long as it remains proprietary and refrain from using the information for any purpose other than that for which it was furnished.

Signature	
Date	April 23, 2020

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest for USAID Evaluation Team Members

Name	Kathleen Selvaggio			
Title	Deputy Team Leader			
Organization	ME&A			
Evaluation Position?	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Team Leader		Team Member	
Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument)	72011219F00001			
USAID Project(s) Evaluated (Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)	Azerbaijan Socio-Economic Development Activity (SEDA)			
I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.	☐	☐	☒	☐
	Yes		No	
If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts: <i>Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:</i>				
1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation. 3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project. 4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation.				
I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change. If I gain access to proprietary information of other companies, then I agree to protect their information from unauthorized use or disclosure for as long as it remains proprietary and refrain from using the information for any purpose other than that for which it was furnished.				
Signature	Kathleen Selvaggio			
Date	April 23, 2020			

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest for USAID Evaluation Team Members

Name	Naila Hashimova			
Title				
Organization	ME&A			
Evaluation Position?	☐	Team Leader	☒	Team Member
Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument)	72011219F00001			
USAID Project(s) Evaluated (Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)	Azerbaijan Socio-Economic Development Activity (SEDA)			
I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.	☐	Yes	☒	No
If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts: <i>Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:</i> 1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation. 3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project. 4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation.				

I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change. If I gain access to proprietary information of other companies, then I agree to protect their information from unauthorized use or disclosure for as long as it remains proprietary and refrain from using the information for any purpose other than that for which it was furnished.

Signature	
Date	April 23, 2020

ANNEX 10: SEDA ACTIVITY INTERVENTION LOGIC

Figure 8: SEDA Activity Intervention Logic Diagram

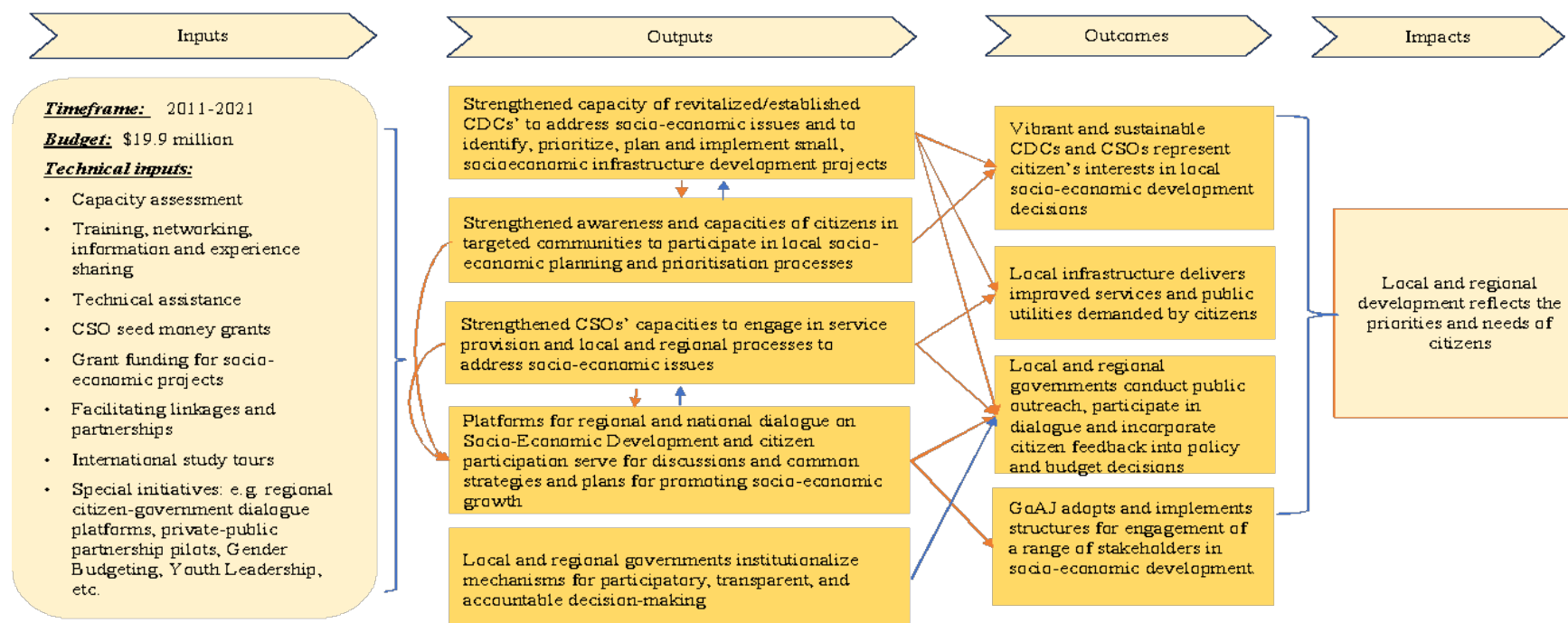
Project title: Socio-Economic Development Activity (SEDA)

Rationale for Project engagement: Azerbaijani citizens, especially in rural areas, are disenfranchised and have few opportunities to influence political decisions that affect them.

Overview of main project activities:

- Reactivate or establish CDCs and strengthen their capacity to identify priorities, plan and implement socioeconomic infrastructure development projects in participatory manner

- Strengthen CSOs to engage in local, regional and national development strategies
- Support local, regional and national level governments' ability to engage citizens in socio-economic development



Assumptions:

- Mutual interest on the part of local citizens, CSOs and local governments to collaborate with each another for the welfare for the community
- Sufficient political stability to build trusting relationships between local government, citizens, CSOs and the private sector

ANNEX 11: EVALUATION SCHEDULE

Table 16: Evaluation Calendar

SEDA– Evaluation Schedule						
October 2019 – January 2020						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
29	30	Oct. 1, 2019 Home Initial document review	2 Home Initial document review	3 Home Initial document review	4 Kick off meeting Initial document review and preparation of the Inception report	5
6	7 Home Initial document review and preparation of the Inception report	8 Home Preparation of the Inception report	9 Home Preparation of the Inception report	10 Home Preparation of the Inception report	11 Home Preparation of the Inception report	12
13	14 Document review	15 Home Document review	16 Submission of the draft Inception report Document review	17 Document review	18 Document review	19
20	21 Document review	22 Document review	23 Document review	24 Document review	25 Document review	26 Arrival in Baku, Azerbaijan
27 Initial team meeting	28 Finalization of the sample; OH matrix and Internal desk note for the evaluation	29 In-briefing with USAID Team preparation for Outcome Harvesting Workshop	30 Outcome Harvesting Workshop with the SEDA Team Scheduling	31 Outcome Harvesting Workshop with the SEDA Team Scheduling	NOV 1 Revision of the Outcome harvesting matrix Scheduling	2 Revision of the Outcome harvesting matrix

SEDA– Evaluation Schedule						
October 2019 – January 2020						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
3	4 Meetings with SEDA team Preparation for the field mission	5 full team Preparation for the field mission	6 full team 10:00 am - Meeting at Guba Regional EXCOM 2:00 pm - Meeting in Gachrash community in Guba (CDCs, Road Rehabilitation Electrical Supply Feed Grinding Facility projects implemented, beneficiaries). Overnight in Guba	7 Team 1: 10:00 am - Meeting with Guba NGO Resource Center and CSOs 2:00 pm - Meeting in Zardabi community in Guba (CDCs, see Feed Grinding project implemented, beneficiaries). Team 2: 2 pm - Meeting in Alpan community in Guba (CDCs, see Road Rehabilitation, Carpet Weaving Facility project implemented, beneficiaries). Overnight in Guba	8 full team 10:00 am - Meeting with Lacat community in Khachmaz CDCs, see Kindergarten Repair project implemented, beneficiaries). 2:00 pm - Meeting with Khaspoladoba community in Khachmaz (CDCs, see Water supply project implemented, beneficiaries). Team 1: 4:00 pm - Meeting in Rustov community in Guba (CDCs, see Solar Street lighting project implemented, beneficiaries). Team 2: 4:00 pm - Meeting Ashagi Atuj community in Quba (CDCs, see School heating project implemented, beneficiaries). Overnight in Guba	9 Team 1: 10:00 am - Meeting at Shabran EXCOM 2:00 pm - Meeting in Uzunboyad community in Shabran (CDCs, see Medical point project implemented, beneficiaries). 4:00 pm - Meeting in Amirkhanli community in Shabran (CDCs, see Road Rehabilitation, Sports Facility project implemented, beneficiaries). Team 2: 11:00 am - Meeting in Aghyazi-Budug community in Khachmaz CDCs, see Sport Facility project implemented, beneficiaries). Return to Baku

11 full team 12:00 am - Meeting with Cafarli community of Imishli (CDCs, see Feed Grinding Facility project implemented, beneficiaries). 2:00 pm - Meeting in Godektala community in Imishli. (CDCs, see Medical Point, School Heating project implemented, beneficiaries). Overnight in Sabirabad Team 2: 10:00 - Meeting in Birlik community in Shirvan (CDCs, see Residential roof project implemented, beneficiaries). 2:00 pm - Meeting in Akhiska community in Sabirabad. (CDCs, see Kindergarten project implemented, beneficiaries) Overnight in Sabirabad	12 full team 10:00 am - Meeting at Imishli ExCom 2:00 pm - Meeting with Memishler community of Sabirabad (CDCs, see Medical Point, Milk Collection Point project implemented, beneficiaries). 4:00 pm - Meeting with Zangana community of Sabirabad (CDCs, see Feed Road Rehabilitation project implemented, beneficiaries). Overnight in Sabirabad	13 Team 1: 11:00 am - Meeting with Garalar community of Sabirabad (CDCs, see Mobile Tent, Medical Point project implemented, beneficiaries). 3:00 pm - Meeting at Goranboy ExCom Overnight in Ganja Team 2: 9:00 am - Meeting at Sabirabad ExCom 11:00 am - Meeting with Otuziki community of Imishli (CDCs, see School Fence project implemented, beneficiaries) 2:00 pm - Meeting with Surra and Garali community of Sabirabad (CDCs, see Road rehabilitation and medical point project implemented, beneficiaries) Overnight in Beylagan	14 Team 1: 9:00 am - Meeting at Samukh ExCom 11:00 am - Meeting with Ziyadli community of Samukh (CDCs, see Medical Point project implemented, beneficiaries). 2:00 pm - Meeting with Govlarsari community of Samukh (CDCs, see Sports Facility project implemented, beneficiaries). 4:00 pm - Meeting with Ahmadbayli community of Samukh (CDCs, see Water Supply project implemented, beneficiaries). Overnight in Ganja Team 2: 9:00 am - Meeting at Beylagan ExCom 11:00 am - Meeting with Ashaghi Chamanli community of Beylagan (CDCs, see Road Rehabilitation, Electrical Supply-Cluster project implemented, beneficiaries).	15 Team 1: 10:00 am - Meeting at Aghjabadi ExCom 2:00 pm - Meeting with Shahseven Tazakend community of Aghjabadi (CDCs, see Water Supply project implemented, beneficiaries). 4:00 pm - Meeting with Tazakend community of Aghjabadi (CDCs, see Feed Grinding Facility project implemented, beneficiaries). Overnight in Ganja	16 Team 1: 11:00 am - Meeting with Garadaghi community of Goranboy (CDCs, see Feed Grinding project implemented, beneficiaries). 2:00 pm - Meeting with Khoylu community of Goranboy (CDCs, see Water Supply, Kindergarten Heating, Incubation project implemented, beneficiaries). 4:00 pm - Meeting with Fakhrali community of Goranboy (CDCs, see Water Supply, Feed Grinding Facility project implemented, beneficiaries). Return to Baku
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SEDA– Evaluation Schedule						
October 2019 – January 2020						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
10				2:00 pm - Meeting with Ahmadli community of Beylagan (CDCs, see Feed Grinding Facility project implemented, beneficiaries) Overnight in Ganja 4:00 pm - Meeting with Birinci Ashighli community of Beylagan (CDCs, see Roof Replacement, Feed Grinding Facility project implemented,		

SEDA– Evaluation Schedule						
October 2019 – January 2020						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
17 Team 2: Travel from Ganja to Shaki-Zagatala and overnight in Zagatala	18 Team 1: Meetings in Baku with UNDP and MOE Team 2: 12:00 pm - Meeting at Gakh ExCom 2:00 pm - Meeting in Gum community in Gakh (CDCs, see Kindergarten project implemented, beneficiaries). Overnight in Gakh Team 3: 12:00 pm - Meeting with Gahramanli community of Beylagan (CDCs, see Electrical Supply project implemented, beneficiaries). 3:00 pm - Meeting with Baharabad community of Beylagan (CDCs, see Medical point project implemented, beneficiaries). Overnight in Lankaran	19 Team 1: Meeting in Baku with Support to Social Development Public Union (UMID) organization Team 2: 12:00 - Meeting at Zagatala ExCom 2:00 pm - Meeting in Yukhari Chardaklar in Zagatala. (CDCs, see Water supply project implemented, beneficiaries). 4:00 pm - Meeting in Gazangul community of Zagatala (CDCs, see Feed Grinding Facility project implemented, beneficiaries). Team 3: 9:00 am - Meeting at Lerik ExCom	20 Team 1: 4:00 pm - Meeting at Shirvan city ExCom 5:00 pm - Birlik community of Shirvan (CDCs, see Residential Roof project implemented, beneficiaries).	21 10:00 am Meeting with SEDA team Internal team meeting, agreement on next steps	22 9:00 am Out-Briefing with USAID Departure	23 Departure

SEDA– Evaluation Schedule						
October 2019 – January 2020						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		11:00 am - Meeting in Murya community in Lerik (CDCs, see Road rehabilitation project implemented, beneficiaries). 3:00 pm - Meeting at Yardimli ExCom 4:00 am - Meeting in Gayran community in Yardimli (CDCs, see Incubation facility project implemented, beneficiaries). Return to Baku				
24	25 Document review, validation, analysis	26 Document review, validation, analysis	27 Document review, validation, analysis	28 Document review, validation, analysis	29 Document review, validation, analysis	30
Dec. 1, 2019	2 Report writing	3 Report writing	4 Report writing	5 Report writing	6 Report writing	7
8	9 Report writing	10 Report writing	11 Report writing	12 Report writing	13 Report writing	14
15	16 Report writing	17 Report writing	18 Report writing	19 Report writing	20 Report writing	21

SEDA– Evaluation Schedule						
October 2019 – January 2020						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
22	23 Submit Draft Report	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	Jan. 1, 2020	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9 Receive comments from USAID	10 Incorporate comments	11
12	13 Incorporate comments	14 Incorporate comments	15 Incorporate comments	16 Incorporate comments	17 Incorporate comments	18
19	20 Incorporate comments	21 Incorporate comments	22 Incorporate comments	23 Incorporate comments	24 Incorporate comments Submit Final Report	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	Feb. 1, 2020

ANNEX 12: EVALUATION MATRIX

Table 17: Evaluation Matrix

SEDA Evaluation Matrix				
#	EQs and Sub-Questions	Data Source	Data Collection Method & Sample Size	Data Analysis
I.	What outcomes from the SEDA activity are a) most evident and b) sustainable? Distinguish between intentional and unintentional outcomes including but not limited to these areas: the following stakeholders' empowerment to engage in democratic processes—local communities, CDCs, and local government officials; CDCs' ability to engage in and influence public policy decisions; and factors affecting women and youth participation.	☞ SEDA documents: annual and quarterly reports, M&E data, assessments, studies, and surveys ☞ Documents related to SEDA's direct beneficiaries (recipients of TA, grants, and trainings; CDC-led infrastructure projects, etc.) ☞ USAID/Azerbaijan staff ☞ SEDA project staff ☞ Local/community-level stakeholders—individuals/organizations with direct/indirect knowledge of SEDA including CDCs, CSOs, community members benefiting from support, and local government officials ☞ Government line ministries and their regional/local structures: MOE, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population ☞ ExComs	☞ Document search and review sourced from USAID and SEDA ☞ OH ☞ Secondary data search and analysis from publications in the public domain—government, donors, private organizations, and CSOs ☞ Feedback from KIIs pre-identified as potential sources of relevant information re: SEDA, its methodologies and attribution ☞ Feedback from KIIs in the regions ☞ GDs with direct beneficiaries ☞ Site visits to selected CDC-led constructed or rehabilitated infrastructure projects—subject to logistics	☞ Verification of SEDA reporting ☞ Analysis of USAID/Azerbaijan, SEDA, and secondary data ☞ OH verification and substantiation ☞ Content analysis of KII and GD notes from team members and assimilation into the draft evaluation report ☞ Synthesis and triangulation of data gathered to inform finalization of the outcome harvest and findings, conclusions, and recommendations for the draft evaluation report.

SEDA Evaluation Matrix				
#	EQs and Sub-Questions	Data Source	Data Collection Method & Sample Size	Data Analysis
2.	What aspects of SEDA's methodology, if any, are proven to be effective or not effective and how?	⌘ SEDA documents: annual and quarterly reports, M&E data, assessments, studies, and surveys ⌘ Documents related to SEDA's direct beneficiaries (recipients of TA, grants, and trainings; CDC-led infrastructure projects, etc.) ⌘ USAID/Azerbaijan staff ⌘ SEDA project staff ⌘ Local/community-level stakeholders—individuals/organizations with direct/indirect knowledge of SEDA including CDCs, CSOs, community members benefiting from support, and local government officials ⌘ Government line ministries and their regional/local structures: MOE, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population ⌘ ExComs	⌘ Document search and review sourced from USAID and SEDA ⌘ OH ⌘ Secondary data search and analysis from publications in the public domain—government, donors, private organizations, and CSOs ⌘ Feedback from KIIs pre-identified as potential sources of relevant information re: SEDA, its methodologies, and attribution ⌘ Feedback from KIIs in the regions ⌘ GDs with direct beneficiaries ⌘ Site visits to selected CDC-led constructed or rehabilitated infrastructure projects—subject to logistics	⌘ Verification of SEDA reporting ⌘ Analysis of USAID/Azerbaijan, SEDA, and secondary data ⌘ OH verification and substantiation ⌘ Content analysis of KII and GD notes from team members and assimilation into the draft evaluation report ⌘ Synthesis and triangulation of data gathered to inform finalization of the outcome harvest; and findings, conclusions, and recommendations for the draft evaluation report.

SEDA Evaluation Matrix				
#	EQs and Sub-Questions	Data Source	Data Collection Method & Sample Size	Data Analysis
3.	What distinguishes sustainable CDCs from the unsustainable ones?	⌘ SEDA documents: annual and quarterly reports, M&E data, assessments, studies, and surveys ⌘ Documents related to SEDA's direct beneficiaries (recipients of TA, grants, and trainings; CDC-led infrastructure projects, etc.) ⌘ USAID/Azerbaijan staff ⌘ SEDA project staff ⌘ Local/community-level stakeholders—individuals/organizations with direct/indirect knowledge of SEDA including CDCs, CSOs, community members benefiting from support, and local government officials ⌘ Government line ministries and their regional/local structures: MOE, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population ⌘ ExComs	⌘ Document search and review sourced from USAID and SEDA ⌘ Secondary data search and analysis from publications in the public domain—government, donors, private organizations, and CSOs ⌘ Feedback from KIIs pre-identified as potential sources of relevant information re: SEDA, its methodologies, and attribution ⌘ Feedback from KIIs in the regions ⌘ GDs with direct beneficiaries ⌘ Site visits to selected CDC-led constructed or rehabilitated infrastructure projects—subject to logistics	⌘ Verification of SEDA reporting ⌘ Analysis of USAID/Azerbaijan, SEDA, and secondary data ⌘ Content analysis of KII and GD notes from team members and assimilation into the draft evaluation report ⌘ Synthesis and triangulation of data gathered to inform finalization of the outcome harvest and findings, conclusions, and recommendations for the draft evaluation report.

SEDA Evaluation Matrix				
#	EQs and Sub-Questions	Data Source	Data Collection Method & Sample Size	Data Analysis
4.	Based on the Outcomes Harvest and evaluation of SEDA's performance, what are the ET's observations or recommendations for areas of opportunity for future programming?	⌘ SEDA documents: annual and quarterly reports, M&E data, assessments, studies, and surveys ⌘ Documents related to SEDA's direct beneficiaries (recipients of TA, grants, and trainings; CDC-led infrastructure projects, etc.) ⌘ USAID/Azerbaijan staff ⌘ SEDA project staff ⌘ Local/community-level stakeholders—individuals/organizations with direct/indirect knowledge of SEDA including CDCs, CSOs, community members benefiting from support, and local government officials ⌘ Government line ministries and their regional/local structures: MOE, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Population ⌘ ExComs ⌘ Other relevant sources	⌘ Document search and review sourced from USAID and SEDA ⌘ OH ⌘ Secondary data search and analysis from publications in the public domain—government, donors, private organizations, and CSOs ⌘ Feedback from KIIs pre-identified as potential sources of relevant information re: SEDA, its methodologies, and attribution ⌘ Feedback from KIIs in the regions ⌘ GDs with direct beneficiaries ⌘ Site visits to selected CDC-led constructed or rehabilitated infrastructure projects—subject to logistics	⌘ Verification of SEDA reporting ⌘ Analysis of USAID/ Azerbaijan, SEDA, and secondary data ⌘ OH verification and substantiation ⌘ Content analysis of KII and GD notes from team members and assimilation into the draft evaluation report ⌘ Synthesis and triangulation of data gathered to inform finalization of the outcome harvest; and findings, conclusions, and recommendations for the draft evaluation report.

ANNEX 13: RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRES FOR CDCS, LOCAL EXECUTIVES AND MUNICIPALITIES, AND BENEFICIARIES

I. Introduction

The surveys for three groups of local stakeholders were designed to complement primary qualitative data collection methods. The surveys were envisioned as a sort of rapid score card, with nine questions included in the questionnaire for CDC Members, 11 questions included in the survey for Local Executives, and eight questions in Beneficiaries survey questionnaire (see Annex 2). The survey questionnaires were distributed in hard copy to KIs and participants in group discussions, by the end of respective meetings. The surveys were anonymous, while the ET noted the locality of collected questionnaires for its records. Overall, 196 people participated in the three surveys.

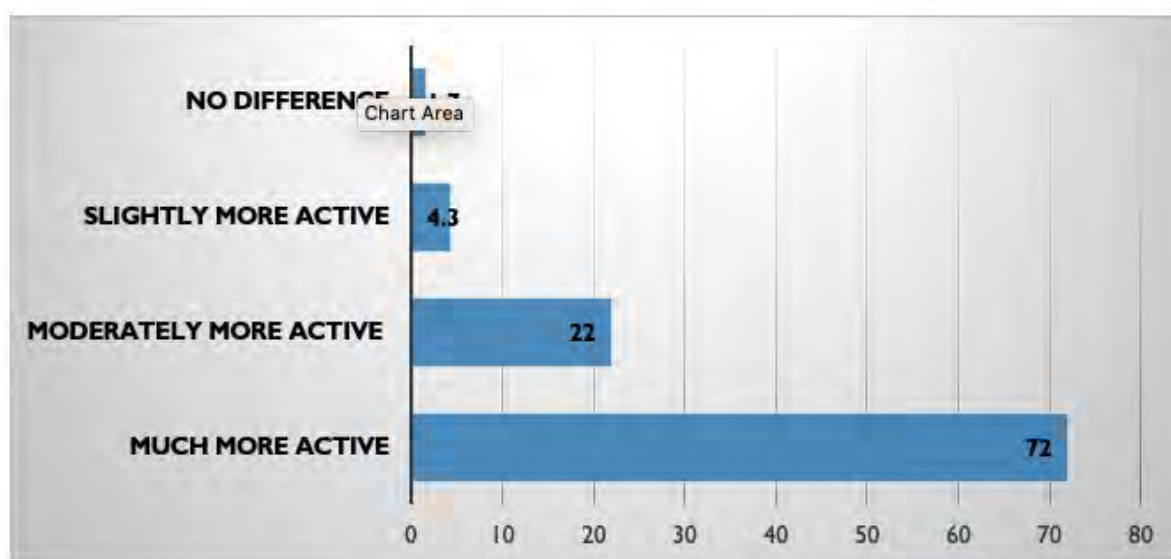
RESULTS OF THE SURVEY FOR CDC MEMBERS

One hundred and nineteen (119) respondents filled the survey; however, some questions were not answered by the respondents.

The survey shows that the CDC members consider that SEDA has made significant difference in their communities with regards to the way local community members, CDCs, municipal authorities, and ExComs work together to address key needs and priorities in their villages and regions. Approximately 80 percent of respondents marked “significant difference” and 14.3 percent of respondents noted “moderate difference.” Only 2.5 percent of the respondents chose “slight difference” and “no difference” answer options.

Survey showed that 72 percent of 118 respondents consider that members of the community who were not very active before (e.g., women and youth), participate more actively in community discussions and in setting community priorities through the CDC. 22 percent of the respondents marked “moderately more active,” while 4.2 percent chose “slightly more active” and 1.7 percent answered as “no difference” (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: Results for Question “In your opinion, to what extent do members of the community who were very active before, for example, women and youth, participate more actively in community discussions and in setting community priorities through the CDC?” (n=118)

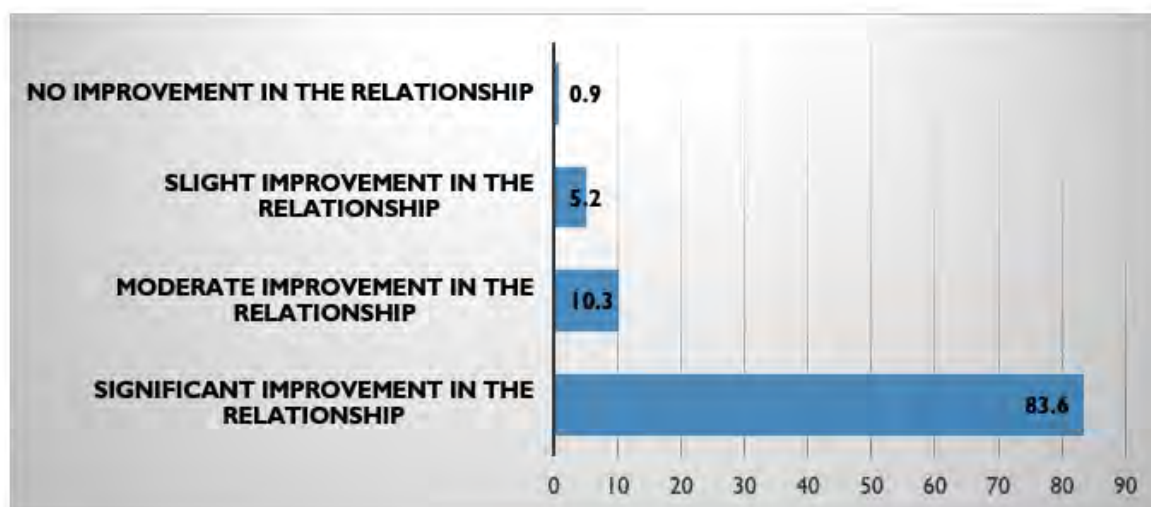


The survey respondents believe that a CDC has, to a significant extent, a high possibility of providing input into local decision-making by municipal authorities and ExComs with 78 percent of the responses, while 19.5 percent of respondents consider it as moderate, 2.5 percent consider it was slight or no change. Further, 66.4 percent of respondents consider that the CDC inputs has been integrated in new decisions of municipal authorities and ExComs significantly, while 28.6 percent noted integration was moderate, and 2.5 percent answered “slightly” and “no change.”

There is positive perspective about the extent to which CDC members have increased their knowledge and skills about the processes for planning and implementing local socio-economic development initiatives. 74.8 percent of 119 respondents marked it as “significant increase.” 23.5 percent of the people answered as “moderate increase” and 1.7 percent answered as “slightly increase.” Almost half of the respondents consider that SEDA project has resulted in the completion of a local service or infrastructure that meets the needs and priorities of 100 percent of people in the community. In addition, 30 percent believe SEDA improved service that meets the need of 50-70 percent of their respective community population. A further 15.4 percent believe that the SEDA-supported project covered the needs of a quarter to half of the local population, and 6 percent noted that it covered 0-25 percent of local population.

Over 80 percent of respondents believe that the CDC has helped to a significant extent in the creation of a strong, trusting relationship between community members and local municipal authorities and/or ExComs; the remaining 10.3 percent chose “moderate improvement in the relationship,” 5.2 percent chose “slight improvement in the relationship,” and 0.9 percent answered by choosing “no improvement in the relationship” (see Figure 10).

Figure 10: Results for Question “To what extent has the CDC helped to create a strong, trusting relationship between community members and local municipal authorities and/or ExComs?” (n=119)



Only thirty-eight (38) respondents mentioned other project interventions that were initiated following those the CDC has done without SEDA. Those projects included cleaning irrigation channels, cleaning streets, tree planning, road reconstruction, cemetery renovation, kindergarten renovation, drinkable water lines, and graveling the roads (AZKIL, FRAK, IDP Development Fund).

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY FOR LOCAL AND REGIONAL EXCOM AND MUNICIPALITY REPRESENTATIVES

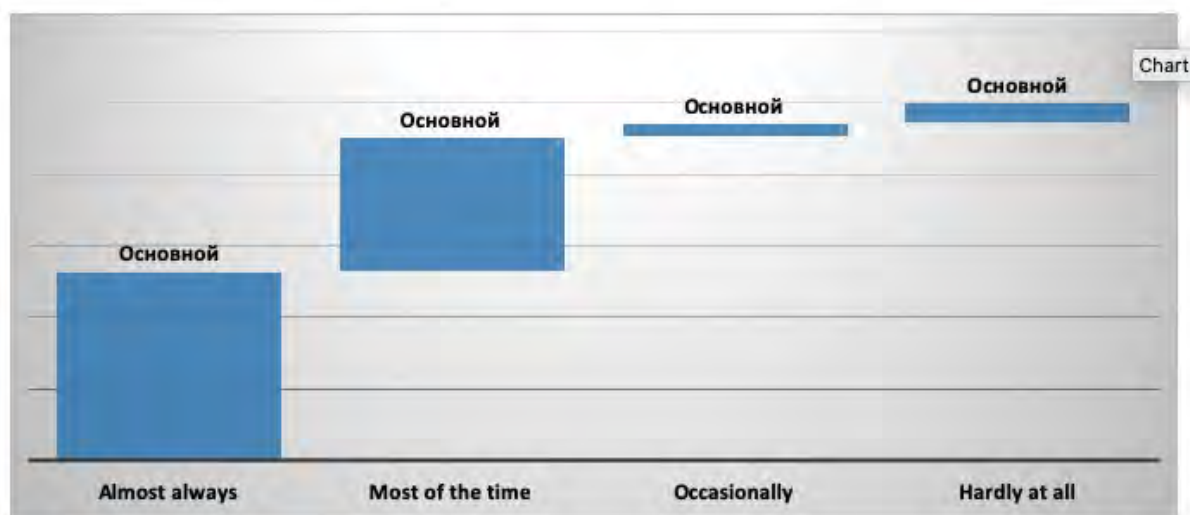
Fifty-four (54) people participated in the survey that was distributed to local and regional ExComs, as well as representatives of municipal authorities. Almost 76 percent of these respondents marked significantly positive change with regards to the difference the SEDA Project made in the way local community members, CDCs, municipal authorities and ExComs work together to address key needs and priorities in their villages and regions. Additionally, 20.4 percent of the respondents answered as “mostly positive change,” and 3.7 percent of them answered as “slight positive change.”

The respondents were asked about the extent to which ExComs and municipal authorities regularly seek out opinions and ideas of local community members on decisions related to socio-economic development. 61.1 percent chose “almost always,” 37 percent “most of the time,” and 1.9 percent “occasionally.”

When asked, 61.1 percent of respondents believe that if communities’ input is sought out more regularly, that change has been totally due to the SEDA project. On the other hand, 24.1 percent of them stated “mostly, but there were also other influences,” and 14.8 percent chose “moderately” answer to this question.

Those ExComs and municipal authorities who responded to this question (n=55) have varying views on the extent to which they share information critical to government decisions more openly with communities. Slightly over half of respondents (52.8 percent) said they almost always do, 37.7 percent noted it happens most of the time, 3.8 percent stated it happens occasionally, and 5.7 percent noted it hardly happens (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Results for Question “Compared with the time before the SEDA project, to what extent do ExComs and municipal authorities share information critical to government decisions more openly with communities?” (n=53)



Over half of the respondents (58.5 percent) consider that “If information is shared more regularly, that change has totally been due to the SEDA project.” A quarter of respondents consider SEDA contribution was mostly important, but there were also other influences, and 17 percent consider it is to some extent.

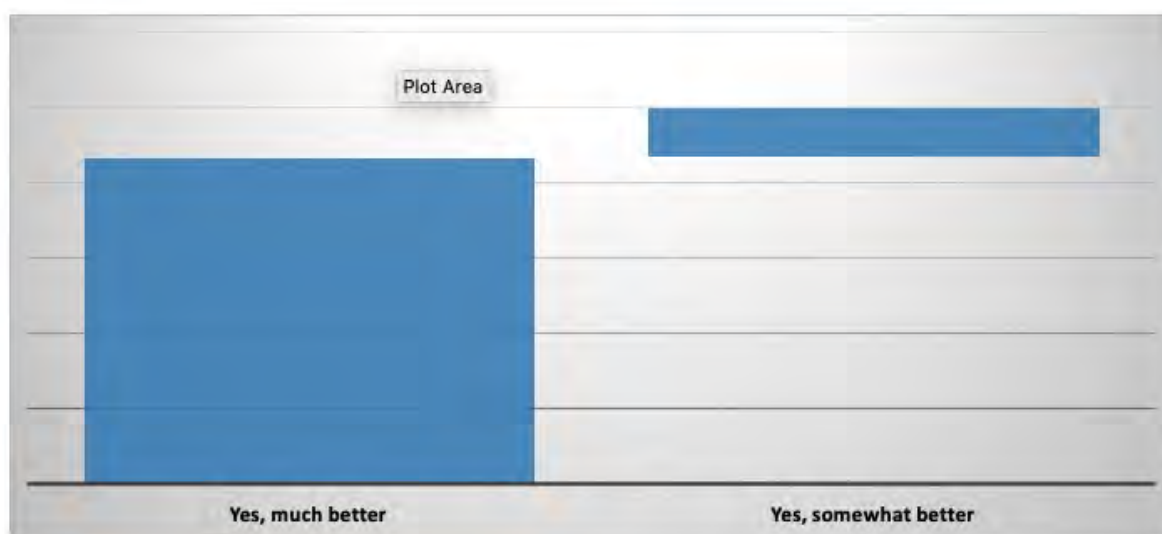
The respondents were also asked to what extent local and district government authorities see CDCs as helpful partners in planning and implementing socio-economic development projects. 88.9 percent answered, “CDCs are very helpful partners,” and 11.1 percent answered, “CDCs are moderately helpful partners.”

Almost all respondents believe that very strong and trusting relationship between local communities and municipal authorities and/or ExComs has been built, 7.4 percent responded as “somewhat trusting and collaborative relationship,” and 1.9 percent answered, “occasionally collaborative relationship.”

Half of the respondents believe that the relationship has been due to the SEDA project, while 35.9 percent said “mostly, but there were also other influences,” and 9.4 percent noted “moderately.”

When asked, 86.8 percent of the respondents (n=53) answered “yes, much better” to the question whether they believe that local socio-economic projects better reflect the needs and priorities of community members. The “yes, somewhat better” answer option was chosen by 13.2 percent of the respondents (see Figure 12). Over half of respondents (60 percent) consider that this change has been due to the SEDA project, while 34 percent choose “mostly, but there were also other influencers,” and 5.6 percent responded by choosing “moderately” (n=53).

Figure 12: Results for Question “Compared with the time before the SEDA project, do you believe that local socio-economic projects better reflect the needs and priorities of community members?” (n=53)



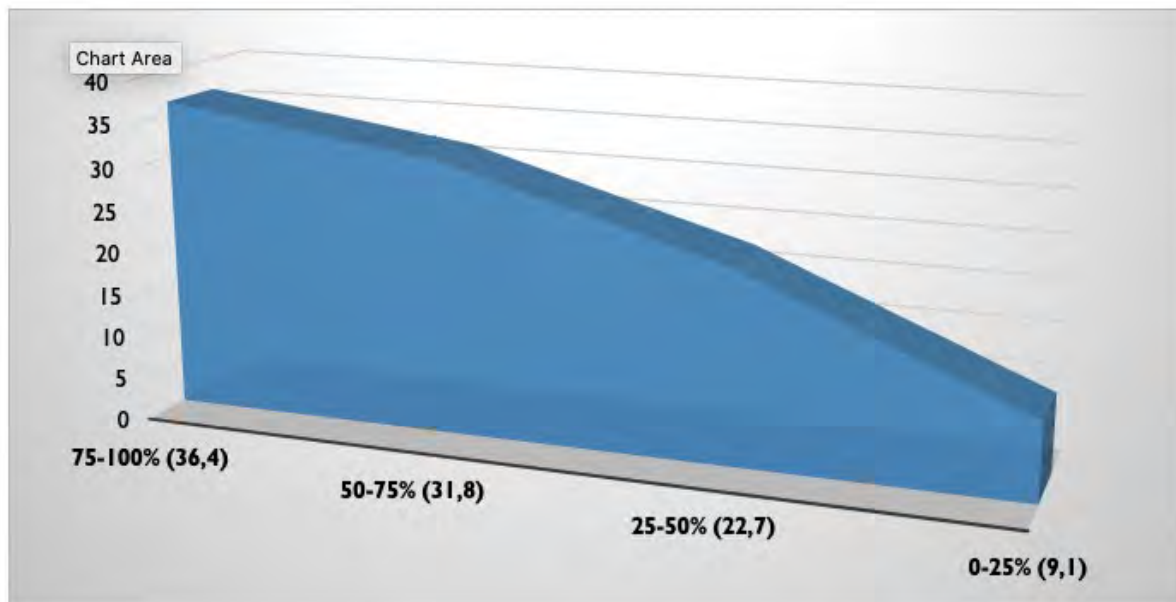
RESULTS OF THE SURVEY FOR BENEFICIARIES

In total 23 beneficiaries filled out the survey. Out of this number, 78.3 percent consider that the SEDA project has made a significant difference in the way local community members, CDCs, municipal authorities, and ExComs work together to address key needs and priorities in their villages and regions. Remaining 17.4 percent chose “moderate difference,” and 4.3 percent chose “slight difference.”

When asked, 43.5 percent of the respondents answered “yes, they were much more involved” to the question about whether the infrastructure project supported by SEDA involved all interested community members in the process of deciding which project to select, including those community members who have not always spoken up in past. In addition, 13 percent of the respondents chose “yes, they were somewhat involved,” and 43.5 percent chose “no, there is no difference with the past.”

The question of what proportion of community members the infrastructure project has benefited also was included in the questionnaire. Participants answered as follows: “0-25 percent” 9.1 percent of respondents, “25-50 percent” 22.7 of respondents, “50-75 percent” 31.8 percent of respondents, and 36.7 percent of the participants responded “75-100 percent” (see Figure 13).

Figure 13: Results for Question “What proportion of community members has the infrastructure project benefited?” (n=23)



Whether the infrastructure is still in use question was answered by 100 percent of the respondents as “yes.”

When asked, 90.9 percent of the respondents answered “significantly improved the relationship,” and 9.1 percent of them chose “somewhat improved the relationship” to the question whether the socio-economic project has improved or worsened the community’s relationship with local government authorities, such as the municipal authorities and ExComs.

ANNEX 14: ASSESSMENT OF OUTCOMES HARVESTED WITH THE SEDA TEAM

Table 18: Results of Field Inquiry Towards Substantiation of Outcomes Relating to Democratic Practices and Sustainability Per Community

Outcome	Substantiated	Partially Substantiated	Not Substantiated	Don't Know/ N/A
Greater trust and self-confidence	23	6	5	1
Citizens gain a basic understanding of and practice in democracy	5	7	7	16
Increased pool of local leaders	9	9	5	12
Local and central government authorities' attitudes and practices have changed as a result of engaging communities.	14	10	8	3
In some regions, there has been a shift in government priorities as a result of hearing from the communities about their needs.	5	2	11	17
ExComs proactively seek out community input through regular visits to the communities	8	8	4	15
Citizens gain a basic understanding of and practice in democracy	5	7	7	16
Women participating in SEDA are more vocal in expressing their interests/needs.	11	7	12	6
Communities show growing respect for and trust in women's leadership and contribution.	8	5	12	11
Greater sustainability of projects and of CDCs due to greater ownership by communities	18	10	4	3
Mobilized communities seek and receive additional investment.	23	2	10	0
More sustainable funding for CDCs is available.	4	2	22	7
Local and central government authorities' attitudes and practices have changed as a result of engaging communities.	14	10	8	4
In some regions, there has been a shift in government priorities as a result of hearing from the communities about their needs.	5	3	11	17
ExComs proactively seek out community input through regular visits to the communities.	8	9	4	15

Table 19: Results of Field Inquiry Towards Substantiation of Other Outcomes (per KII/GD)

Note: For infrastructure projects, only those KIs in communities which received respective types of assistance were interviewed about the outcomes of such assistance (e.g., only communities benefiting from road infrastructure projects responded to questions with relation to outcomes of investment in roads).

Outcome	Substantiated	Partially Substantiated	Not Substantiated	Don't Know/N/A
From aid to partnership. Some communities have changed their perception of foreign aid, from something that “gave fish” to communities to something that teaches communities how to fish.	1	1	0	34
Some communities come together to plan and implement cluster projects, with a bigger impact on their own and neighboring communities.	6	9	1	36
Many communities now understand the need for environmental sustainability and plan and implement projects with attention to the environment. Each community creates a sustainability plan for their project.	4	0	3	
A related outcome is that some communities separate garbage, e.g., hazardous waste and medical waste is separated from other garbage.	4	0	1	
Networking between communities has increased.	5	3	7	37
Increased income earning and employment opportunities, including for women.	15	3	5	28
Reverse migration in one community. Example: local doctor and wife, returned to local community from Baku after community revitalized, reversing the trends of brain drain.	0	0	0	52
CDC engaged with private sector through a PPP in some communities.	0	0	0	52
Grain and feed processing facilities help community members to save time, increases their agricultural productivity.	12	0	1	0
Road projects bring communities access to markets, helps to reduce car maintenance expenses, allows traders to come to the farm gate, and increase school attendance.	13	0	0	0
Irrigation projects contribute to the quality and volume of agriculture products, which in turn generate higher income.	0	5	0	0
Medical points (22 in total) increase communities' access to healthcare services.	11	0	0	0

Outcome	Substantiated	Partially Substantiated	Not Substantiated	Don't Know/N/A
Improved supply of clean water to communities, with positive impacts on health, livelihoods, and women's work burdens.	10	0	1	0
Communities begin paying fees for utilities.	3	2	0	0
By working in frontline communities, SEDA has created a positive environment for development in these areas.	0	0	0	52
There has been a shift from social infrastructure to economic and income-generating infrastructure. This came about partly because of the work of the CDCs, but also because of the government push for economic development diversifying away from oil and gas.	12	1	0	0
Increased efficiency of using USAID resource, through collaboration between SEDA and another USAID irrigation project.	0	0	0	52
Improved access to quality education	12	0	3	0
Improved livelihoods	13	0	3	0
Creating opportunities for young people to creatively use their time (self-realization).	7	2	1	0
Living conditions improved.	17	1	0	0
Improved ease of movement and social interaction among for community members through community infrastructure such as pedestrian bridges, community centers.	8	0	0	0
Electricity supply upgrades	5	0	0	0
Improved professional skills of local community members in construction budgeting engineering/safety fields	0	0	0	52
<i>The Milli Majlis (National Parliament) of Azerbaijan passed, in the second reading, the new Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Citizen Participation which reflected 87 SEDA's recommendations*</i>	5	0	0	0

*Substantiation of this outcome was not inquired during the KIIs/GDs with community representatives.

ANNEX 15: OBSERVATIONS ON OUTCOME HARVESTING PROCESS

Outcome harvesting methodology was stipulated in the SOW as the approach that should be used for this evaluation. The SOW stipulates that the evaluation is to be used to “test the efficacy of Outcome Harvesting as a methodology that could be used to evaluate other complex USAID/Azerbaijan programs.” This section offers analysis of the utility of OH methodology and main issues to be taken into account in planning evaluations that feature this methodology.

The ET designed the methodology to feature OH as its central approach, at the same time also integrating other methods. The OH as a methodology, allowed the ET to identify and substantiate outcomes across sectors, geographic locations, levels of engagement, and diversity of stakeholders in such a complex program like SEDA. The methodology applied in this particular evaluation followed the standard steps, as explained above, and also integrated other qualitative and quantitative methodological elements that helped respond to evaluation questions. As basis of the outcome harvesting process, the ET reconstructed a SEDA Intervention Logic (IL) Project during the inception phase (see Annex 10). The reconstructed IL helped to understand the envisioned/anticipated outcomes of SEDA’s assistance as presented in the main program documents (e.g., Logframe, Performance Management Plans [PMPs] and Work Plans). The IL was of critical importance in understanding and categorizing anticipated and unanticipated outcomes, but also linkages between these and their joint contributions to change across target groups and communities.

As shown in the IL diagram in Annex 10, SEDA’s anticipated outcomes relate to strengthening participatory and democratic practices in local government decision-making, as well as, strengthening the role of civil society and citizens in this process. In order to ensure a systematic approach to categorization and analysis of outcomes relating to local governance and democratization, outcome harvesting adhered to the good governance objectives as recognized by USAID’s Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG) Strategy⁴⁴ (i.e. promotion of participatory, representative, and inclusive governance processes, and fostering greater accountability of institutions and leaders to citizens). The Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index (CSOSI) elements (i.e. organizational capacity, advocacy, service provision) were also used to guide more structured outcome classification and analysis of findings relating to civil society support to inform the evaluation conclusions and recommendations.

During the Inception Phase, the ET elaborated an OH matrix as a tool to capture, categorize, and elaborate outcomes harvested through the document review, and updated and validated during the workshop with the SEDA team, the field, and the synthesis phase (see Annex 14). The matrix is organized as per OH standards and includes the IL elements, as well as the above-mentioned good governance and civil society areas of inquiry.

Thus far, OH methodology was mainly applied on projects that have fewer comprehensive sets of interventions with less stakeholders (e.g., projects implemented by and for networks). The OH and pertinent validation was easier to conduct thanks to the ability of ETs to engage with the full “universe” of stakeholders. The OH process conducted within the scope of this evaluation offered a number of positive features that assisted establishing evidence on a number of areas of inquiry for this evaluation, and in particular the EQ 1 and 3. The most relevant positive features of the OH for this evaluation have been the following:

- **Enabling participatory evaluation process.** The OH methodology is designed to enable participatory approach to evaluation as it enables the implementing teams to reflect on their own achievements by defining and elaborating a set of outcomes across their field of intervention. This OH process with SEDA Team has been productive and also created space for the team to discuss and reflect beyond output-level results.

⁴⁴ Ford Foundation (2012); Outcome Harvesting Brief, p. 7.

- **Enabling rigor and structure to the evaluation.** The OH methodology requires strict following of the methodology in order to ensure that the harvested outcomes can be validated across KIs and GDs. This helped organize the field inquiry in a way to ensure that all communities were explicitly or implicitly inquired about SEDA's perceived outcomes, with the aim to substantiate them. The team did not inquire about outcomes which clearly did not apply to a respective community (e.g., about outcomes of a road project where such project was not supported). In such way, the methodology enabled the ET to ensure all important features of SEDA's support are explored and assessed as per the framework set by OH with the SEDA team conducted at the onset of the evaluation field inquiry.
- **Enabling the team to provide quantified record of perceptions and feedback from KIs,** thus helping to provide robust evidence of effective or less effective SEDA approaches. During the analysis and synthesis phase of the evaluation, the ET coded and calculated the responses from communities to establish also a quantitative record of the level of substantiation of outcomes.

However, the evaluation process for SEDA confirmed various limitations of the methodology when it comes to the complex programs with not-so-linear interventions such is SEDA. The project design integrated various types of bottom-up and top-down interventions to ensure a holistic approach to participatory socio-economic development based on principles of inclusiveness and democratic decision-making. However, during the project implementation a lot of changes and adaptations of the project happened to respond to increasingly volatile political context, resulting in discontinuation of Components II and III by 2015. This affected the realization of a number of anticipated results in the original design, but also affected the outcome harvesting process.

Furthermore, the OH process was challenged by limited or absent reflection on outcome-level achievements across the intervention in program documents, due to activity/output-based monitoring and reporting. The result was that the OH process was initiated by a very limited number of outcomes harvested in the document review phase, combined with an insufficient definition of outcomes harvested in the workshop with the SEDA team. Namely, a number of the outcome statements that the SEDA team came up with were not sound (e.g., electricity supply upgrades). Number of outcomes that were harvested with the SEDA team were unrealistic (e.g., reverse migration of professionals to villages due to improved socio-economic conditions), or not sufficiently elaborated to ensure a common understanding of the meaning (e.g., certain overlap and lack of clarity related to outcomes "livelihoods improved" and "improved living conditions") or definitions that could not qualify as outcomes (e.g., outcome related to PPPs; networking between communities increased; and a shift from social to economic development projects). There were also some outcome definitions that packed too many elements into one outcome (e.g., Citizens gain a basic understanding of and practice in democracy, through the organization of CDC elections. They get an experience of what democracy means through an open voting system. They use these skills and understanding later in a broader context, e.g., in forthcoming municipal elections).

Such complex projects as SEDA, which ensures a tailor-made approach to each community, also creates difficulty in substantiating and validating outcomes that do not apply to all communities targeted by the project. Some outcomes (mostly infrastructure) might have occurred only in one or two places (e.g., outcomes related to solar street lighting, roof replacement, mobile tents, etc.), or some outcomes harvested with SEDA were relevant to only one community (e.g., outcomes related to communities began paying fees for utilities, or increased efficiency of USAID resources through one joint project with other donors). The ET devised sampling in such a way to ensure that at least one of such cases was observed, except in case of the outcomes focusing specifically on frontline communities. However, the natural sample selection meant that not all communities could have been visited so such outcomes could not be fully validated.

This points to important lessons learned for the OH methodology:

1. For such multidimensional projects such as SEDA, in order to ensure a smooth process, the monitoring and reporting on project interventions needs to be strong and ensure reporting at output and outcome levels. In cases where reporting is weak, the Project teams should produce a more comprehensive outcome level report for the reference period of evaluation as preparation for the evaluation process. This would enable an ET to conduct a thorough OH and prepare “outcome cards” to be substantiated and further elaborated in the workshop with the team.
2. Ideally, the workshop should be divided in two slots: 1) OH training; and 2) OH workshop with the team that should have at least two full days, followed up by further engagement with the ET to finalize those that have not been finalized. This is the approach that the ET took for this evaluation and it proved to be beneficial, despite the fact that the outcomes were still rather ambitious. Such process should be divided in two phases to allow the Project implementing team to take time for more detailed elaboration of the outcomes, which would then be jointly finalized with the ET. Based on the final set of outcomes, ET would be in position to conduct a sample selection for the field inquiry and further substantiation and validation of harvested outcomes.
3. In sensitive contexts such as Azerbaijan and for projects like SEDA, but also overall when the OH method is applied, it is critical to make sure that the questions are prompted in such a manner to ensure that they are not leading the respondents, yet to ensure that the outcomes may be substantiated and validated.
4. Finally, the OH process conducted for SEDA also confirms the challenge recognized by scholars and practitioners in the field of evaluation, i.e., the fact that “*only those outcomes that the informant is aware of are captured*”⁴⁵ and the difficulty for a majority of evaluation participants to understand the logic of “*starting with the outcomes and working backward*.”⁴⁶

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

ANNEX 16: 2016 PUBLIC PERCEPTION SURVEY DATA

Table 20: Participation in Activities Concerning Socio-Economic Problems/Region⁴⁷

#	Participation in Activities Concerning Socio-Economic Problems	Guba-Khachmaz		Aran		
		2012	2016	2012	2016	
1	Attended a public meeting in community	Yes, once	16	3.6	4	13.0
		Yes, a few times	6	6.3	22	23.6
		No	78	90.0	74	63.5
2	Public speech at meeting	Yes, once	6	3.2	2	8.3
		Yes, a few times	1	1.4	8	7.4
		No	92	95.5	90	84.2
3	Signing a petition, collective appeal	Yes, once	5	1.8	2	7.1
		Yes, a few times	1	2.0	5	0.2
		No	94	96.1	92	92.8
4	Distributing Information	Yes, once	2	3.2	3	6.3
		Yes, a few times	0	0.9	11	2.6
		No	98	95.9	86	91.1
5	Meetings with officials	Yes, once	4	1.1	3	10.6
		Yes, a few times	1	4.3	11	11.1
		No	95	94.6	86	78.3
6	Writing a letter to mass media (newspaper, etc.)	Yes, once	1	0.5	0	1.7
		Yes, a few times	0	0	1	0.2
		No	99	99.5	99	98.1
7	Writing a letter to an authority	Yes, once	8	1.4	3	6.3
		Yes, a few times	2	1.6	4	0.4
		No	90	97.1	94	93.3

⁴⁷ Faradov et al. (2016), PPS, SEDA, p. 29.

ANNEX 17: STATEMENT OF DIFFERENCE

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Date: February 19, 2020

To: Tamila Mammadova, Monitoring & Evaluation and Project Design Specialist,
USAID/Azerbaijan

From: Ahmad Shirinov, Chief of Party, EWMI SEDA
Delina Fico, EWMI home office Program Director for SEDA

Re: Statement of Differences in response to the
“Final Performance Evaluation of the Socio-Economic Development Activity (SEDA)
featuring Outcomes Harvesting”

The East-West Management Institute, Inc. (EWMI) has completed its review of the report titled “*Final Performance Evaluation of the Socio-Economic Development Activity (SEDA) featuring Outcomes Harvesting*” (hereinafter referred to as “the Report”). EWMI welcomes many of the Report’s insights and recommendations, and is committed to working with USAID to adjust SEDA’s approaches and activities as appropriate. At the same time, however, EWMI has identified a wealth of misstatements and misperceptions included in the report that must be corrected. Until needed corrections are made, EWMI recommends that USAID/Azerbaijan **not make the Report public**. The Report’s release will cause serious damage to USAID’s and SEDA’s relations with its counterparts in the Government of Azerbaijan because it identifies objectives for SEDA, such as improving democratic practices at the local level, that were not in the Cooperative Agreement and as such were never approved by the Government. Moreover, further misunderstandings will arise due to findings and recommendations that are based on incorrect facts presented as conclusive findings. Public presentation of these as the final result of SEDA, absent corrections, will damage EWMI’s professional reputation.

This Statement of Difference is submitted in order to correct these misstatements. Given the number of errors, however, EWMI is also submitting a copy of the Report with corrections embedded as comments. We look forward to discussing the following and our comments with USAID/Azerbaijan at its earliest convenience.

I. The Report evaluates SEDA utilizing incorrect program objectives, thereby undermining and invalidating most of the findings and conclusions.

The Report states that:

“During project implementation, there was a shift in focus and scope of project activities away from direct capacity-building of CSOs and government institutions (Components II and III) toward supporting CDCs and local executive and municipal authorities to work together to identify, design, and implement small-scale infrastructure projects to address priority socio-economic needs through citizen mobilization (Component I). SEDA therefore revised its overarching objectives to:

1. Improve democratic practices at the local level; and
2. Contribute to solutions to socio-economic problems at the local level.”

This statement is incorrect – these are not and never were SEDA’s objectives. Yet these incorrect objectives serve as the basis upon which SEDA’s work is measured and evaluated throughout the Report. SEDA’s objectives in the original Cooperative Agreement were as follows:

“The aim of the Socio Economic Development Activity (SEDA) is to increase civic participation in governance to address social and economic needs in the regions of Azerbaijan. East-West Management Institute, Inc. (EWMI) and its partners will implement three complementary components to achieve this goal.

- Revitalize or establish village and/or rayon based Community Development Councils (CDCs) to increase community participation in socio-economic development at the local and regional levels (Component 1);
- Strengthen the capacity of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to engage with citizens and government officials on local, regional, and national social and economic priorities (Component 2); and
- Strengthen the capacity of the Government of Azerbaijan (GoAJ) to engage with stakeholders on key socio-economic development issues (Component 3).¹

The statement of a “shift in focus and scope of project activities” is also incorrect. Component 1 has always been part of the SEDA program. The change referred to occurred under Modification 6, dated April 5, 2016, when Components 2 and 3 ended, and only activities under Component 1 continued. The aim of the program, however, remained unchanged: “The aim of the Socio Economic Development Activity (SEDA) is to increase civic participation in governance to address social and economic needs in the regions of Azerbaijan.” This modification specifically states “this revised Program Description (PD) will cover 15 months period from September 30, 2016 to December 31, 2017, and build on previous 5-year Program Description (PD) mainly focusing and following on the activities under Component 1 of the original Program Description.”²

The two “overarching objectives” that are listed in the Report, and serve as the basis of SEDA’s evaluation, were never SEDA’s stated objectives. Furthermore, Objective 1 as stated in the Report, *improving democratic practices at the local level in Azerbaijan* is a significantly more complex and ambitious objective as compared to the actual goal of SEDA – *increasing civic participation in governance to address social and economic needs in the regions of Azerbaijan*.

The fact that this evaluation assessed SEDA’s activities and outcomes: (i) based on two objectives that SEDA was not mandated to achieve; and (ii) based on an incorrect Objective 1 that is much larger and much more complex than SEDA’s main goal as stated in all its key documents, significantly undermines the accuracy of the Evaluation Report’s key findings, including the findings laid out in point 2 of the *Conclusions* section of the Evaluation Report’s *Executive Summary* (page i), and in Section 4.1.2, EQ 1: *Assessment of SEDA outcomes with regard to the empowerment of local communities, CDCs, and local government officials to engage in democratic processes* (page 10).

Reliance on incorrect program objectives permeates the Report and must be corrected before it is released.

II. The validity of the Report’s findings and conclusions is called into question by the ambiguity of the evaluation’s approach

On page 1, Introduction, section 1.1 *Evaluation Purpose*, the authors state:

“The evaluation findings will be used to: a) inform future programming by better understanding the process of change or the causal linkages between community mobilization/civil society programming, and improvements in democracy and governance factors (like citizen participation and the engagement of government in communities); and b) test the efficacy of outcome harvesting (OH) as a methodology that could be used to evaluate other complex USAID/Azerbaijan programs.”

This statement includes three points: (i) SEDA was evaluated on the extent to which it achieved its stated goal of increasing civic participation in governance to address social and economic needs in the regions of Azerbaijan; (ii) The Evaluation Team evaluated the extent to which programs like SEDA serve the larger goal of USAID/Azerbaijan future programming on improving democracy and

¹ USAID Cooperative Agreement AID-112-A-11-00002, dated September 30, 2011. Page 15.

² USAID Cooperative Agreement AID-112-A-11-00002 Modification 06, dated April 5, 2016. Page 5.

governance; and (iii) SEDA's evaluation was a test to assess the efficacy of applying the outcome harvesting approach to similar programs.

These three perspectives for SEDA's evaluation would lead to different findings, conclusions, lessons learned, and recommendations, depending on the evaluation's perspective. EWMI's work could be held accountable only for findings, conclusions, lessons learned, and recommendations that stem from SEDA's evaluation from the first perspective: the extent to which SEDA achieved its stated goal of increasing civic participation in governance to address social and economic needs in the regions of Azerbaijan. If the two other perspectives are applied, then the Report's findings, conclusions, lessons learned, and recommendations go beyond EWMI's reach in its work to implement SEDA. For example, in several places the Report finds that extending SEDA's work to 146 communities has diluted the impact and/or sustainability of SEDA's work on citizen participation at the local level (see, for example, section 5.0 *Conclusions*, *Conclusion #2*, page 37). While this might be a legitimate recommendation for USAID/Azerbaijan future programming, this perceived failure is not a result of EWMI's work in implementing SEDA, which relied on goals and targets set by and approved by USAID/Azerbaijan.

Furthermore, if the findings do not stem from the assessment of SEDA's work and the efforts to achieve the stated program goal, this further compromises the validity of conclusions, lessons learned, and recommendations that are based on a misunderstood goal and a non-legitimate (in terms of evaluation's relation to SEDA's mandate/goal) perspective.

III. EWMI's differing views and clarifications regarding findings, conclusions, lessons learned, and recommendations.

EWMI's comments in this section address the sections on findings, conclusions, lessons learned, the recommendations presented in the Executive Summary (pages i – v) and the sections on findings, conclusions, lessons learned, and recommendations presented in the body of the report (pages 10 – 43). For ease of presentation, in this section EWMI is referring to the findings, conclusions, lessons learned, and recommendations presented in the Executive Summary. Please note that the Report uses a different numbering system for the findings in the Summary (pp. ii-iv) than in the body of the Report; the numbering below follows the numbering in the Summary.

EQ 1 Findings

Finding #7: Other types of projects, e.g., roof replacement and solar lighting, were also supported. While benefits from roof replacement were evident, the solar lighting project did not bring long-term results.

EWMI: The Report states that the solar lighting system broke down and repairs were considered too costly. We would like to clarify that is in fact working and the repairs of the system were funded by the community in December 2019, meaning that the model worked as planned.

Finding #9: A total of 48 of SEDA-supported income-generation Civil Society Empowerment Programs (CSEPs) have been registered as businesses by the respective municipalities. Three are public-private partnerships (PPPs) and the rest are owned by the respective municipalities. According to SEDA, municipalities have the legal authority to run such businesses, most of which are small enough to operate under simplified tax laws. However, feedback from the field notes different levels of understanding of ownership and type of registration of such small businesses.

EWMI: First a clarification – CSEPs stands for Community-driven Socio-Economic Projects and not for “income-generation Civil Society Empowerment Programs”. Regarding the understanding of CSEPs' ownership and registration, it would be expected that heads of municipalities and relevant experts have a clear understanding of the type of ownership of the SEDA-supported CSEPs, when these CSEPs are taken over by the municipalities. However, it is unclear to whom the Evaluation Team is referring to in the last sentence of the finding, and a teacher or a farmer, that would be a member of the community or the CDC, would not necessarily be expected to describe in accurate terms the type of the ownership – PPPs or simplified tax type of business –, but he/she would be expected to know that the particular CSEP is owned by the municipality.

***Finding #10:** SEDA's work with local communities promoted participatory processes and community mobilization to plan and implement infrastructure projects, which were valued by stakeholders. SEDA applies standard methodology for community mobilization through assistance to establish CDCs and encouraging all communities to go through a process of identifying the top priority projects through either a door-to-door survey or a community meeting in which people present their priorities and then jointly select the top three. However, across the project, stakeholders view SEDA first and foremost as a local infrastructure development project, which relies upon community participation mechanisms (e.g., local election of CDCs, community participation in the prioritization process, social mobilization, etc.) as tools to achieve the end goal of improved services through infrastructure, and not necessarily as a project that promotes empowerment of local communities, CDCs, and local government officials to engage in democratic processes.*

EWMI: If CDC members recognize SEDA as a program that, as stated in the finding, “relies upon community participation mechanisms (e.g., local election of CDCs, community participation in the prioritization process, social mobilization, etc.) as tools to achieve the end goal of improved services through infrastructure”, this contradicts the fact that, according to the finding #10, they see SEDA “first and foremost as a local infrastructure development project”. This finding states that EWMI is implementing the SEDA program as designed and following SEDA's stated objective of increasing civic participation in governance to address social and economic needs in the regions of Azerbaijan.

SEDA's aim is to increase civic participation in the decision making process of how to address social and economic needs in the regions—exactly what SEDA did and continues to do — a smaller and more concrete goal that engaging in democratic processes. From the Finding's statement it is clear that SEDA did in fact increase civic participation in governance through “local election of CDCs, community participation in the prioritization process, social mobilization.”

Furthermore, SEDA promotes empowerment of local communities and CDCs, and creates opportunities for communities to interact with local government officials. However, since 2015, when Component 3 ended, it does not carry out activities that directly target the empowerment of government officials and even less so engage these officials in democratic processes.

***Finding #11:** Community members participating in CDCs have built greater confidence in their ability to work collectively to identify and address community problems. However, there is limited evidence that this empowerment leads to sustained democracy and civic mobilization in targeted communities.*

EWMI: Again, EWMI achieved SEDA's goal of mobilizing the community – the Report found that 83% of sampled communities spoke highly of the SEDA-supported process. Achieving “sustained democracy” is neither a stated goal nor an objective for SEDA.

***Finding #12:** There is ample evidence of improved relationships between CDC members and municipal authorities and local ExComs, but less evidence of the extent to which this resulted in a shift in government decision-making, especially at the rayon level and above.*

EWMI: This Finding should include the fact that as stated in Section 5.0 *Conclusions* #2, (page 36 of the Report): “With the original Component 3 ended in 2015, working directly with government officials so that they better engage citizens in their decision-making is no longer a SEDA objective.” This would make it clear that the lack of shift in government decision-making was outside SEDA's work starting in 2015 – in reality, since 2013. The Report in fact notes this under Findings #16 and 18. At a minimum, these findings should be combined.

***Finding #13:** Women community members take part in SEDA-supported participatory processes and women CDC members are vocal in expressing their interests and needs, although the extent of their direct influence on decision-making was not clear. Yet, although some women were strong and respected leaders in CDCs, and others are serving as the municipal authority or local ExCom in some communities, it was not possible to attribute this outcome to SEDA's interventions.*

EWMI: While we acknowledge that more could have been done to empower women in the communities where SEDA works, it is important to note that women's participation, role, and leadership in CDCs can be, to a significant degree, attributed to EWMI's work as: (i) EWMI requires

that at least 1/3 of CDC members are women (a quota that is surpassed as currently 42% of SEDA-supported CDC members are women); (ii) in preparation for the community meetings that elect CDCs, SEDA staff proactively seek women, encourage them to be active at the community meetings, and stand as candidates for the CDC; and (iii) EWMI's staff continuously support women that are engaged in the CDCs and community activities and highlight their contribution to the community, for example, at CSEP inauguration events.

***Finding #17:** Under Component III, SEDA played a significant role in shaping, supporting, and promoting the 2014 Law on Public Participation, which established Public Councils as a central mechanism for citizen participation among other provisions, a notable outcome of the program. However, so far, the implementation of the law has been weak, with only a limited number of Public Councils established and their performance has not been particularly strong.*

EWMI: While we agree that the establishment and support for Public Councils as a central mechanism for citizen participation among other provisions is a notable outcome of SEDA, the report should make it clear that establishing Public Councils and allowing SEDA to support them was a prerogative of the Government of Azerbaijan and SEDA had absolutely no opportunity to affect these decisions. The Report even notes that "although SEDA's activities under Component 3 ended in 2015, at present 11 central-level bodies have established Public Councils based on the law." The Report should make it clear that further support for the implementation of the law, was beyond SEDA's control, and strictly the purview of the Government of Azerbaijan, and USAID that ended Component 3.

EQ 2 Findings

***Finding #19:** SEDA has a standard methodology for selection of community priorities that is applied across the project target areas. While the methodology enables the project to be efficient and allows consistent approach across communities, it presents deficiencies in terms of ensuring full engagement of local constituencies and relevance to local needs. The decision to expand the pool of targeted communities (breadth), rather than concentrating assistance in a smaller number of communities over a longer period of time (depth), spread SEDA's resources thin, preventing the project from achieving deeper and more sustainable results through Component 1. In addition, the discontinuation of Components II and III prevented a more holistic approach to the empowerment of communities and enhancement of democratic practices. These factors might have affected SEDA's focus of deeper and long-term promotion of local democracy practices toward infrastructure.³*

EWMI: The evaluation team misread the Cooperative Agreement and its modifications. The number of communities and the regions where SEDA would work was decided by USAID in cooperation with the Government of Azerbaijan. The actual rayons and the communities within those rayons that SEDA would work, were proposed by SEDA and were approved by USAID and the Government of Azerbaijan. Similarly the decision to discontinue Components 2 and 3 was a decision made by USAID and beyond EWMI's control. Finally and most importantly, deeper and long-term promotion of local democracy practices was never a SEDA goal or objective.

***Finding #22:** SEDA's monitoring and reporting approaches are rather weak. Review of SEDA's reports and other publications shows that SEDA succeeds in collecting and presenting good account of outputs and outcomes of its support to infrastructure in its reports, but achievements of results in terms of its contribution to outcomes relating to its first objective, "Improving democratic practices at the local level," ranges from limited to none.⁴*

EWMI: We dispute the fact that SEDA's monitoring and reporting approaches are weak. SEDA applies a multifaceted monitoring and evaluation of its activities that includes:

- Implementing a USAID-approved Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP);
- Putting in place and using PMP includes performance reference sheets for all PMP indicators;

³ This Finding is presented differently in the body of the Report, as compared to the Summary, i.e., in the body of the Report there is no discussion of Components 2 and 3 or the holistic approach.

⁴ This Finding is presented differently in the body of the Report, as compared to the Summary.

- Assigning a staff member that spends 50% of his time on the implementation of PMP and other monitoring and evaluation activities, including post-training evaluations for CDC members and post-implementation assessments for CSEPs six month after these activities have been completed;
- Training all SEDA staff on PMP and their respective role in collecting data for the PMP indicators;
- Preparing quarterly narrative and PMP reports that provide data based on SEDA's continuous monitoring of its activities;
- Preparing and distributing 2 to 3 success stories each quarter, for a total of 9 to 11 success stories per SEDA year, as a tool to highlight the impact of SEDA's interventions;
- Preparing 5 video clips that highlight impact of SEDA's interventions,
- Putting in place *SEDA's Environmental Compliance and Technical Control (ECTC) Unit* comprised of the following SEDA staff members: the Operations Manager, the Environmental Manager, the Lead Engineer, and the respective Regional Directors, Regional Engineer and Evaluation Specialists, Community Mobilizers, and Regional Coordinators in each of the five SEDA regional offices and program management units. The Operations Manager is the head of the ECTC Unit. The ECTC Unit is responsible for: (i) supervising and overseeing all CSEPs' monitoring activities in accordance with CSEP Monitoring Protocol; (ii) visiting CSEP's sites to ensure that all environmental and technical design requirements are met; and (iii) ensuring that all required corrective actions based on CSEP monitoring are addressed and implemented by the respective SEDA staff and contractors. The ECTC Unit also conducts unannounced spot checks of the CSEPs during their implementation to ensure that all procedures and requirements are being adhered to. The ECTC Unit conducts onsite visits together with the respective representatives of the community and municipality. The ECTC Unit members sign off on any installment or progress payments to the contractors (except for the first advance payment), as prescribed for in the CSEP Monitoring Protocol, thereby assuring that the necessary corrective actions have been taken.

The Report notes that "part of the problem might be found in the design of the PMP.... outcome and impact indicators measuring improved democratic practices are weak or almost nonexistent." Again, the Report does not apply the correct objective for SEDA; "*Improving democratic practices at the local level*" is not SEDA's objective. SEDA reports on the outputs and outcomes related to the activities that serve to achieve SEDA's stated goal.

Finding #23: SEDA's organizational structure secures a strong regional presence, adding value to engagement with targeted local communities and regions. However, periodic contact by SEDA's regional representatives after the completion of an infrastructure project leaves communities anticipating future investments from SEDA, which often do not materialize.

EWMI: SEDA's staff contacts with communities that SEDA has supported serve to, in-part, advise these communities in their efforts to advance their needs without SEDA's support. This contributes to the sustainability of the outcomes of SEDA's work with these communities. While it is normal that these communities may expect future investments, we fail to discern the potential harmful impact of these contacts of SEDA staff with these communities. This finding also conflicts with Finding #22 that states that SEDA's monitoring approaches are weak. The SEDA staff follow-up contacts with the communities that SEDA serve as and remain part of the follow-up monitoring activities that the Evaluation Team found to be "weak."

Conclusions

Conclusion 2: SEDA's contributions to the improvement of democratic governance practices (its first overarching objective) is limited at the time of this evaluation. SEDA assisted in building links between local community members, authorities, and ExComs. However, actual change towards more participatory government prioritization and decision-making processes has not materialized, particularly at the rayon level or higher, despite SEDA's efforts. Thus, SEDA's contributions are

generally limited to bringing participatory, democratic processes centered around specific infrastructure projects.

EWMI: The improvement of democratic governance practices is not the overarching objective of SEDA. The stated goal for SEDA is to increase civic participation in governance to address social and economic needs in the regions of Azerbaijan. With respect to changes within the government prioritization and decision making process, (activities envisioned under Component 3) these activities succeeded to some extent with the creation of the Public Councils. Unfortunately, all activities under this component of SEDA ended in 2015.

Conclusion 3: The sustainability of results is fragile except for those derived from supporting specific infrastructure projects.

EWMI: The Report states that engaging the communities “more deeply for longer period of times... could have supported sustainability by more consistently addressing rooted social norms and public attitudes towards promotion of local democratic practices.” While this may be true, addressing rooted social norms and public attitudes towards promotion of local democratic practices was not SEDA’s objective and beyond the scope of SEDA and its activities. EWMI also takes issue that sustainability is only derived from specific infrastructure projects. Several SEDA-supported CDCs have undertaken initiatives to address their community’s socio-economic needs without SEDA’s support. SEDA’s introduction of the concept of public councils has been implemented in 11 central government agencies. In addition, SEDA is exploring ways to create more permanent solutions for the CDCs, possibly registering them as NGOs.

Finding #4: SEDA has not invested sufficient efforts in cultivating women’s and youth participation in CDCs, empowering women and youth leaders, and ensuring that CDC processes adequately considered women’s and youth’s specific interests and barriers. This has been a missed opportunity of the project.

EWMI: While SEDA could have done more to cultivate women’s and youth participation in the CDCs, EWMI takes issue with the statement that the CDC process did not adequately consider the women’s and youth’s needs. During the CDC process SEDA staff ensure that CDCs pay particular attention to women’s and youth’s needs. In fact, most of the CSEPs that addressed school and kindergarten repairs, building sport fields, installing or repairing irrigation water systems, and building community medical points were all developed in response to women’s priority interests.

Lessons Learned

Most of the lessons learned and recommendations included in this section, while legitimate in principle, fail to account for the political constraints under which a U.S. government-funded program such as SEDA operates under in Azerbaijan. Interestingly enough, the Evaluation Team itself experienced these constraints when conducting the evaluation, and yet failed to take them into account when making recommendations. The approaches discussed in these lessons learned can be put in place only if the Government of Azerbaijan enables the needed political and administrative space for these actions to take place.

Lesson learned #5: A participatory process of decision-making around a single community development project does not necessarily translate into broader democratic practices.

EWMI: While EWMI agrees that this is absolutely true, the relevance of this statement to SEDA is unclear, as “broader democratic practices” is not the objective of the SEDA program. In addition, SEDA worked within the local constraints, and was only allowed to work through a participatory process of decision-making around a single community development project. The statement is also incorrect as in at least 27 communities, SEDA has supported community mobilization that has led to the implementation of 2 or 3 SEDA-supported CSEPs, therefore affording more time and reiterations for the citizen engagement practices to take deeper roots in the respective communities. Furthermore, the report should take in consideration that for the first five years SEDA was co-funded by the Government of Azerbaijan and the Government repeatedly made it clear that they wanted to see this funding go towards CSEPs.

Strategic Recommendations

It is EWMI's understanding the strategic recommendations are meant to inform the overall strategic direction of future USAID programming. Any recommendation regarding the current implementation of SEDA, would be difficult to realize as the program is approaching its last year of implementation.

SR1: SEDA should reset its approach to ensure that the social mobilization and participatory democratic governance practices are at the heart of the intervention, rather than a means toward infrastructure as the goal. It should also incorporate local leadership development as well as capacity-building approaches to support CDC advocacy with higher-level authorities at the rayon, regional, and state levels, perhaps through collaboration among communities within the rayon on common goals.

EWMI: It is unclear what resetting SEDA's approach mean in concrete terms as SEDA is obligated to work to achieve its stated goal. Also, improving the infrastructure of the regions of Azerbaijan was never a SEDA objective. The CSEPs are the issue around which SEDA works with communities to increase of civic participation in governance to address social and economic needs in the regions of Azerbaijan.

SEDA's capacity development work with CDC member serves to develop their leadership role in the community. As part SEDA's current cost and time extension (October 2019 – September 2021), SEDA is assisting six CDCs to register as NGOs. SEDA will also pilot the Community Development House in Guba, to provide capacity development assistance to CDCs in Guba – Khachmaz rayon, share best practices, strengthen collaboration between communities in the Guba – Khachmaz rayon, and advocate within the rayon on behalf of the communities.

SR2: SEDA should focus on the depth, rather than the breadth, of support, by focusing on a limited number of communities over a longer period of time. Such an approach will deepen the commitment to and practice of participatory democracy by allowing CDCs to cultivate community participation and mobilization in a variety of settings.

EWMI: SEDA is in the process of identifying 10 mobilized communities and 26 new communities that it will target during the current cost and time extension. Changing this at this late stage of the process will likely cause more harm than any benefit that may arise from a deeper engagement with a limited number of communities. In addition, the Government of Azerbaijan has already approved the current approach, and changing this will also require that USAID and SEDA request the Government's concurrence of this change, a process that: (i) will take time and slow down the implementation of SEDA activities; and (ii) goes against the Government's desire to see SEDA work in more and not in less communities. For future activities a more targeted and in depth approach may be appropriate, but it will be very limiting and potentially more risky as more resources are concentrated on a limited number of communities.

SR3: SEDA should also invest all efforts in building upstream partnerships and links with main service providers and decision-makers at the rayon level and above, to ensure full buy-in not only for the achievement of infrastructure projects, but also for the participatory, citizen-driven process.

EWMI: SEDA has engaged and continues to engage government officials on an all levels to support the participatory, citizen-driven process to address socio-economic needs of the communities where SEDA works. SEDA's work in the regions and at the rayon level is carried out in close cooperation with ExComs; municipal heads and officials attend SEDA's training for CDCs; SEDA engages municipal officials in CSEPs monitoring; representatives of the Ministry of Economy participate in SEDA's Offer Review Committee and in SEDA's Project Evaluation Committees; various representatives of the Ministry of Economy, the ExComs, and other government agencies participate in SEDA's annual community development conference and CSEP inauguration events, etc.

Although SEDA can identify additional ways to engage government officials, ensuring their *buy-in to the participatory, citizen-driven process*, as the recommendation states, would require the reinstatement of activities implemented under Components 2 and more importantly Component 3. Re-starting these components is beyond SEDA's decision-making and resources, and given the more restrictive environment, may be counter-productive.

SR4: SEDA should develop a gender and youth strategy, outlining opportunities and approaches in these areas. The strategy should cover both organizational and programmatic aspects, i.e., by strengthening its team with gender expertise, undertaking a thorough analysis of barriers and opportunities for greater participation of women and youth in CDCs, and reorienting itself to advocate and lead by example.

EWMI: SEDA understands the need to step up effort for engaging women and youth in its activities. However, EWMI takes issue with the statement that we should “lead by example in this regard.” EWMI has in place and implements a Gender Mainstreaming Policy for SEDA; has trained staff in this policy, as well as on EWMI’s anti-harassment policy; 10 out of 30 SEDA staff members are women, and most importantly these individuals are in leadership positions including one of the three regional directors, one of two Regional Coordinators, and three other women in senior management positions – Environmental Manager, Procurement Adviser, and Procurement Manager. In addition, SEDA continuously engages women as experts and trainers in all of its activities.

Operational Recommendations

OR2: SEDA should collect and promote best practices on participatory socio-economic development and democracy to stimulate exchange of ideas and debate and set standards for CDCs’ operations.

EWMI: As mentioned above, SEDA is piloting the Community Development House in Guba, to provide capacity development assistance to CDCs in Guba – Khachmaz rayon. One of the goals for this pilot is for it to serve as a resource of best practices, initially for the Guba-Khachmaz rayon, but also for the development and strengthening of participatory socio-economic development in Azerbaijan. SEDA will also continue to develop success stories, organize CDC exchange visits, as well as an annual conference on community development, all activities that serve to identify and promote best practices on participatory socio-economic development. However, collecting and promoting best practices on democracy is beyond SEDA’s goal.



Date: April 22, 2020

From: USAID/Azerbaijan Mission

Re: **Statement of Differences in response to the
“Final Performance Evaluation of the Socio-Economic
Development Activity (SEDA) featuring Outcomes Harvesting”**

USAID/Azerbaijan commissioned final performance evaluation of the Socio-Economic Development Activity (SEDA) featuring outcomes harvesting to better understand the relationship between activities that use small infrastructure projects to build civic participation in pursuit of the higher level objective of supporting a country’s movement along the democratic development trajectory. USAID has designed and implemented programming very much like the Socio Economic Development Activity (SEDA) around the world for decades and USAID/Azerbaijan sought to understand more of the intended and unintended outcomes of such programming to inform our future programming and contribute to the community of practice.

USAID/Azerbaijan acknowledges that the SEDA’s specific award objectives do not include the two objectives USAID included in the statement of work (SOW) for the evaluation: 1. Improve democratic practices at the local level; and 2. Contribute to solutions to socio-economic problems at the local level. However, SEDA’s formal award objective of *increasing civic participation in governance to address social and economic needs in the regions of Azerbaijan* is not drastically different from the two objectives laid out in the SOW. USAID’s articulation is indeed worded slightly differently, but the core intent of the programming and spirit of the evaluation do not vary significantly. SEDA has always been aligned within the framework of USAID’s democracy and governance programming, has used democracy and governance earmarked funds, and served as the Mission’s flagship democracy and governance activity. The purpose of increasing civic



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participation in governance is part and parcel of improving democratic practices at the local level. Addressing social and economic needs through civic participation in governance does in fact contribute to solutions to socio-economic problems. Civic participation in the context of SEDA is focused around the identification and prioritization of socio-economic needs and funds are directed to implementing the identified solutions to those needs in tandem with communities, and local and central government officials and agencies.

USAID/Azerbaijan would like to acknowledge that the context in Azerbaijan changed drastically from the time the Mission designed and solicited the applications which led to the award with East West Management Institute (EWMI). The Mission chose to pursue an outcomes harvest methodology as part of this evaluation precisely because the context changed and we sought to identify both intended and unintended outcomes from the activity, since the original theory of change was no longer entirely applicable. As the evaluation states, two additional components, which were critical to the design of the activity, were dropped due to changes in the operating context. USAID suspects that these two components, had they continued along with the civic participation for social and economic needs addressing, would have propelled SEDA along the democratic processes trajectory contributing to higher level democracy and governance outcomes. It bears noting that USAID/Azerbaijan does not fault EWMI for the somewhat limited outcomes around civic participation through small infrastructure projects leading to improved democratic processes specifically because the other two components -- a top down government capacity-focused one and a civil society organization-oriented one -- were unable to provide the necessary complementarity.

USAID/Azerbaijan also wishes to state that the decision to “go broad” and cover more geographies versus “going deep” in a more limited number of communities was our choice and reflected the shifting operational context and bilateral relationship between USAID and the host country government. Considering the context, USAID made the calculation that a broader investment covering more ground would accomplish more of the Mission and the Embassy’s objectives than investing more deeply in limited numbers of communities. EWMI does not bear



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responsibility for the finding that going deeper in communities would have likely led to a more significant improvement in democratic processes. The evaluation highlights the drawbacks of that approach and this is instructive to the Agency's learning agenda, the Mission's decision making as it considers possible follow on activity designs, and for other USAID Missions considering the use of Outcome Harvest methodology. Despite the evaluation limitations, the Mission does consider the evaluation to have been well implemented, and it provides a substantial number of recommendations to inform the Mission's current and future programming.