Evaluation of projects from the call for proposals technological platforms to strengthen public sector accountability and citizen engagement

Final report

Client: Global Affairs Canada (GAC)

Rotterdam, 30 Augustus 2022

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Rotterdam, 30 Augustus 2022

ECORYS

Table of contents

List of Acronyms 7

List of Tables and Figures 10

Executive summary 11
- Rationale and Purpose of the Evaluation 11
- Development Context 12
- Intervention 13
- Evaluation Approach and Methodology 13
- Key Findings 14
- Key Conclusions* 16
- Key Recommendations* 16
- Key Lessons 17

1 Rationale, Purpose and Specific Objective of the Evaluation 18
- 1.1 Introduction 18
- 1.2 Background and rationale 18
- 1.3 Purpose and specific objectives of the evaluation 19

2 Development context 21
- 2.1 Policy background 21
- 2.2 ICT for government accountability and citizen engagement 21
- 2.3 Gender equality 23

3 Project descriptions 25
- 3.1 Expected results 26
- 3.2 Overview of technologies used in the projects 26

4 Methodology and Approach 29
- 4.1 Review questions, review matrix and project selection 29
- 4.2 Methods of data collection and analysis 30
- 4.3 Limitations and challenges 31

5 Main Findings and analysis 34
- 5.1 EQ 1 To what extent have the projects achieved the expected immediate and mandatory intermediate outcomes? 34
  - 5.1.1 Intermediate Outcome 1100: Enhanced equitable and inclusive participation in democratic decision-making process, especially by women and marginalized groups, through the use of technology 34
  - 5.1.2 Intermediate outcome 1200: Increased use of technology by citizens, especially women and marginalized groups, to hold their local government to account 36

5.1.3 Intermediate Outcome 1300: Increased responsiveness of public institutions to the diverse needs and rights of people, especially women and marginalized groups through the use of technology. 38
5.2 EQ 2 What results have been obtained by each project? 40
5.3 EQ 3 Were results achieved relevant to the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries, especially women and marginalized groups? 42
5.3.1 What is the added value of using digital solutions for the target groups, including women and youth, compared to other more traditional tools? 43
5.3.2 Gender equality 44
5.4 EQ 4 Were the innovative ICT tools and approaches designed and implemented in a way that they will continue to be used beyond the life of the project? 45
5.4.1 Plan for sustainability from the start 46
5.4.2 Develop a definition of sustainability for your initiative. 46
5.4.3 Identify and implement a sustainable business model. 48
5.4.4 Use and invest in local information technology service providers. 48
5.4.5 Engage local governments and integrate national strategies into programming. 49
5.4.6 Collaborate instead of compete, and partner to identify the best approach with the greatest impact. 49
5.4.7 Build a program that can be adapted as user needs and the context change 49
5.5 Questions 5 and 6 50

6 Conclusions 55

7 Recommendations 57

8 Lessons 59

List of Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AMEJ	Association Marocaine pour l'Éducation de la Jeunesse
APCMM	Assembly of the Chambers of Trade in Mali
BTI	Bertelsmann Transformation Index
CATI	Computer-Assisted Telephone Interview
CECI	Centre for International Studies and Cooperation
CERRHUD	Research Center for Human Reproduction and Demographics
CICIG	International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala
CFCA	Change for Children Association
CH	Centro Humboldt
CHUM	Centre Universitaire Hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal
CLD	Centre for Law and Development
CPAC	Central Project Advisory Committee
CRC	Citizens Report Card
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CWC	Community Water Committee
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DFATD	Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development
DPAC	District Project Advisory Committee
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EEM	Evaluation Evidence Matrix
EGDI	E-Government Development Index
ENACAL	Nicaraguan Company of Aqueducts and Sanitary Sewers
EQ	Evaluation Question
EIU	Economist Intelligence Unit
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
FISE	Nicaraguan Emergency Social Investment Fund
FNAM	Fédération Nationale des Artisanes et Artisans du Mali
GAC	Global Affairs Canada
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GE	Gender Equality
GES	Gender Equality Strategy
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GOVNET	Network on Governance
GRMS	Grievance redressal management system
HRBA	Human Right Based Approach
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
ICT4D	Information and Communications Technologies for Development
INIFOM	Nicaraguan Institute for Municipal Development
IRD	Institute for Research for Development
IT	Information Technology
IVR	Interactive Voice Recording
JES	Justice Education Society
KAP	Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices

KONSEPSI	Konsorsium untuk Studi dan Pengembangan Partisipasi
KPI	Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia
MDO	Malika Development Organization
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MoFALD	Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MP	Ministerio Público (Guatemalan Attorney General)
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NIMD	Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy
NTB	Nusa Tenggara Barat
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAC	Project Advisory Committee
PANB	Plan d'Action National Budgétisé
PBF	Performance Based Financing
PDSS	Health Sector Development Project
PF	Planification Familiale
PIP	Project Implementation Plan
PKBI	Perkumpulan Keluarga Berencana Indonesia
PMF	Performance Measurement Framework
PMU	Project Management Unit
PNC	National Civil Police
PNDS	National Health Development Plan
QA	Quality Assurance
QCA	Qualitative Comparative Analysis
RACHEL	Remote Area Hotspot of Education and Learning
RBF	Results-Based Financing
RDRC	Rural Development and Research Centre
REDC	Rural Environment Development Centre
RENADEF	National Network of NGOs for the Development of Women
RUWWAD	Arab Foundation for Sustainable Development
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIMAS	Mesoamerican Information Service for Sustainable Agriculture
SMS	Short Message Service
SUSASAN	Sustainable Use of Technology for Public Sector Accountability in Nepal
TMT	Tactical Mapping Tool
ToC	Theory of Change
TOPICS	Technology Platforms for the Democratisation and Improvement of the Health System
ToR	Terms of Reference
TSAM	Technologies for the artisanal sector
TSWRG	Technology for sustainable water resource governance
UMA	Water and Sanitation Unit
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USI	Unité de Santé International
VCB	Village Consultative Body
WHO	World Health Organisation

WMG	Women and Marginalized Groups

List of Tables and Figures

Table 1. Overview Technological Context **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
Table 2. The seven projects funded under the Call for Proposal **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
Table 3. Overview Ultimate and Intermediate Outcomes **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
Table 4. Selected Case Country Studies **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Figure 1. Ranking 12 projects countries in Democracy Index (year 2020 and 2021) **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
Figure 2. Ranking 12 project countries in Global Gender Gap Index (year 2020 and 2021) **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
Figure 3. Gender Gap sub-indexes scores in the 12 project countries (year 2021) **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Executive summary

Evaluation Title: The evaluation of projects from the call for proposals 'Technological Platforms to Strengthen Public Sector Accountability and Citizen Engagement'
Evaluation Type: Summative
Commissioned by: Global Affairs Canada - Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD)
Consultant: Ecorys Netherlands
Date: Augustus 2022

Rationale and Purpose of the Evaluation

On July 20, 2015, the Partnerships for Development Innovation Branch of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada (DFATD) launched a $25 million call for proposals entitled 'Technological Platforms to Strengthen Public Sector Accountability and Citizen Engagement'.

The purpose of the call for proposals was to fund initiatives that would support public sector institutions and civil society to advance equitable democratic reform, deliver effective and sustainable development results for citizens, improve service delivery, combat corruption, and engage meaningfully with citizens through the use of technological platforms. The call for proposals resulted in the funding of seven projects, each implemented by a Canadian civil society organization in partnership with local organizations in developing countries.

Increasingly, information and communication technologies (ICT) are being promoted as new ways to improve governance, through the use of innovations such as mobile applications, transparency portals, open data portals, and citizen participation mechanisms (interactive vocal servers, social media, etc.). However, as the OECD-DAC Network on Governance (GOVNET) cautions, ICT only works if it is utilised properly, if there is the ability and resources to sustain it, and if the structures are in place to receive it. There is also the risk of increasing the marginalization of citizens without access to ICT and of governments using ICT as a way to evade substantial reforms. It is not yet clear what works in which context and under which conditions, and more needs to be done to better understand and evaluate innovation in public sector governance.

Given that the seven projects are testing potentially innovative ICT approaches and tools, an evaluation could contribute to filling the knowledge gap mentioned above, and take stock of results achieved. Thus, the purpose of the evaluation is to:

- Inform stakeholders of results achieved;
- Inform stakeholders about key factors that have contributed to or hindered results;
- Inform the design and implementation of development assistance programming that seeks to use ICT approaches and tools to achieve inclusive governance results.

Specific Objectives of the Evaluation are the following:

1. Assess the achievement of immediate and intermediate outcomes for each of the seven projects, including the mandatory expected results statements specified in the call for proposals.
2. Assess key factors that have contributed to or hindered the achievement of results.

3. Examine how the innovative ICT tools and approaches may have enhanced or hindered the participation and inclusion of women and marginalized groups.
4. Provide findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons to fulfil the evaluation purposes as stated above.

The scope of the evaluation covers all seven of the development interventions funded under the calls for proposals.

Development Context

Canada is committed to improving public sector accountability and inclusive governance as part of its development assistance. Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy Action Area 1, Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls, and Action Area 5, Inclusive Governance, demonstrates this commitment. Agenda 2030 represents the international community's commitment to building peaceful, just and inclusive societies (SDG 16) that provide access to justice and that are based on respect for human rights, good governance and transparent, effective and accountable institutions, in addition to realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (SDG 5). Further, the Open Government Partnership (OGP) is a leading global, multilateral initiative focused on open government and has been co-chaired by Canada since October 2018. Its core objective is to secure commitments from governments to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption and harness new technologies to strengthen governance in partnership with civil society and the private sector.

Good governance, often measured in terms of transparency, accountability and responsiveness, is a prerequisite to the successful management of economies, effective policy implementation, delivery of citizen services and the maintenance of security and stability. Increasingly, information and communication technologies (ICT) are being promoted as new ways to improve governance, through the use of innovations such as mobile applications, transparency portals, open data portals, and citizen participation mechanisms (interactive vocal servers, social media, etc.). ICTs have been successfully used to enhance citizen, government and civil society engagement, to provide greater access to information and to enable communities to hold governments to account for the quality and responsiveness of service delivery. ICTs also have the potential to play an important role in advancing feminist principles and empowering woman and girls and other marginalized groups. Given that women and girls are often excluded from decision-making processes, ensuring equal access to and inclusion of women in digital technologies can enable greater participation of women in social fora, ensure they have access to important information relevant to their needs, provide a platform for their voices to be heard and included in decision-making processes, and enable them to hold their governments to account.

However, not all ICTs are innovative and they do not always work. As the OECD-DAC Network on Governance (GOVNET) cautions, ICT only works if it is utilised properly, if there is the ability and resources to sustain it, and if the structures are in place to receive it (such as physical infrastructure, technical capacity, etc.). There is also the risk of increasing the marginalization of citizens without access to ICT and of governments using ICT as a way to evade substantial reforms. It is not yet clear what works in which context and under which conditions, and more needs to be done to better understand and evaluate innovation in public sector governance . Thus, the proposed evaluation is an opportunity to contribute to this gap via lessons learned and best practices in order to further the effectiveness of development programming in the governance sector.

Intervention

The seven projects funded under the call were each implemented by a Canadian civil society organization in partnership with local organizations across 12 developing countries. Each project planned to implement a technological innovation that would contribute to achieving the objectives of the call. All seven initiatives integrate gender equality, in particular by supporting women's participation in democratic decision-making and the realization of the human rights of women and girls.

All the initiatives contribute to the ultimate outcome result of increased empowerment of women and marginalized groups to engage in democratic processes and enjoy and exercise their human rights. The call also required that each project contribute to one or more of three mandatory intermediate outcomes:

1. Enhanced equitable and inclusive participation in democratic decision-making processes, especially by women and marginalized groups, through the use of technology.
2. Increased use of science and technology by people, especially women and marginalized groups, to hold their governments to account.
3. Increased responsiveness of public institutions to the diverse needs and rights of people, especially women and marginalized groups, through the use of technology

Evaluation Approach and Methodology

The evaluation used a theory-based mixed-methods approach, applied through a contribution analysis, using the reconstructed Theory of Change of each of the projects as starting point. Comparisons between project contributions is made using a realistic approach to identify the underlying mechanisms that explain 'how' the outcomes were caused and the influence of the identified context factors. This systematic analysis supports a better understanding of transferability by learning from success and failure.

The evaluation followed the six questions listed the Terms of Reference, corresponding with the evaluation criteria of effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, and sustainability. Elements of the Digital Investment Tool to assess the platforms were used to assess the initiatives according to the Principles of Digital Development.

The evaluation used mixed-methods for data collection and analysis, drawing on a combination of qualitative and quantitative data: Desk Review comprises a document review of project documentation and literature, Content analysis of the digital tools, websites, blogs and social media; participatory Theory of Change workshops, Key Informant Interviews, Focus Group Discussions, Survey Questionnaires via telephone interviews and Field observations.

Implementation of the evaluation started with a desk-based review of all seven projects. Next, four in-depth country case studies, including field visits were made. The case country cases (Jordan, Nepal, Mali and Nicaragua) were selected based on the following criteria: i) Geographic coverage of all four regions: MENA, Asia, West Africa and Central America; ii) Accessibility: iii) Prioritizing of larger projects, iv) Concentration of activities and v) Evaluability.

In conducting the evaluation, the team has been confronted with a number of challenges and limitations. In terms of availability of data key limitation were i) the early stage of some of the

projects at the time of the desk review and ii) the limited availability of consistent M&E data, including disaggregation of data.

Limitations for the case country studies were the fact that two of the countries, Nepal and Nicaragua could not be visited by the international consultant due to Covid-19 and the tense political situation in Nicaragua. In the last country also the strong social control exerted by the ruling party, restricting stakeholders to speak openly about their opinions with respect to authorities' performance. Unforeseen events during the field data collection, flooding and landslides and political events reduced availability of respondents in Nepal. During the visit to Mali, only part of the project areas could be visited due to the security situation. As for the field work in Jordan, a limitation was that the evaluation team during the field data collection could only meet with a small representation of the beneficiaries in the FGDs due to the limited availability of contact information.

Next, the implementation of the survey in the four case country studies encountered many limitations in terms of outreach which could imply some degree of potential selection biases in the samples used. In two of the countries Mail and Jordan is was not possible to reach out the planned sample of 300-350 beneficiaries, with a random stratified selection of 70% women and marginalized groups. These limitations and also the limited number of questions that could be asked to ensure commitment of respondents, influence the findings of the evaluation. The phone surveys still provided valuable information, however not all target groups (especially women and marginalized groups without access to technologies) were well represented.

Key Findings

The seven projects are very diverse in their focus and activities with two of the projects the focusing more on an increased participation of the target groups in the intermediary organisations themselves.

The initiatives have partly been successful, particularly at the municipal level in increasing equitable and inclusive **participation in democratic decision-making processes**, using technological solutions. Reaching out to women and marginalized groups for their direct involvement has been less effective. In the projects intermediary organisation such as CSOs, established women's groups etc have been the main mechanisms promoting WMG positions more favourably in governance processes. A number of the projects show that the use of technology can open up decision making processes, but in the projects the use of technology was not always directly linked to participation in decision making processes. Hindering factors preventing women and also marginalized groups to raise their voice and share their opinion include psychological and/ or cultural barriers. On the other side it was stated that the digital tools also helped to overcome psychological and cultural barriers, in providing the opportunity to directly make complaints and get a response from authorities, increasing confidence. .

Four of the six projects provide evidence of increased use of social media, open data initiatives and other technology by CSOs and individuals in assessing information **to hold (local) government to account and influence change**. Technological tools particularly, improved the flow of information along with increasing understanding of the democratic processes and human rights. The extent to which the projects and use of technology resulted in actual lobby and advocacy actions are to some extent linked to the viability of the political context.

Projects have developed specific tools, systems and applications to support use of technology increasing the coverage of beneficiaries. Results in reaching out to the target groups however have

been mixed across projects due to the selected systems, but also due to socio-economic factors limiting use and access to ICT such as (digital) literacy, costs and connectivity and the selected outreach strategies, which were not sufficient.

The use of technology has partly **enhanced capacity of public institutions to respond** to the different needs and rights of people, including the target groups. Two of the projects seem to have more decidedly fostered responsiveness of public institutions at the local level to citizens' needs, although the extent to which this is anchored differs, which can to some extent be linked to broad ambitions of the projects and the limited timeframe. In the case of the two projects that focus more on internal accountability, developed technological platforms in improving management contributed to strengthened accountability of the institutions which reflected positively on their visibility and prestige with decision-makers.

Capacity (and willingness) of institutions to work with the data provided through the technological tools was mixed. Not only (political) will to address citizens' needs and requests, but also the actual capacity to use the data to this purpose, influenced the responsiveness of institutions. While technology can be an important tool to convey information to decision-makers, the sector policy environment, e-governance ambitions, the prior openness of public institutions to concepts and practices of transparency and accountability, and the pre-existing relations between stakeholders make the main difference in terms of institutional response to demands of citizens, including women and marginalized groups. Next, project experiences point at more bureaucratic obstacles to change processes for higher levels of government.

In terms of **relevance of the results achieved,** the case country projects addressed key needs of the different beneficiaries, particularly related to knowledge and information barriers to increase their participation in local governance structures. The project further contributed to **changed attitudes towards women and marginalized groups**, which also supported an increased inclusiveness of activities implemented by the CSOs and other institutions. The use of ICT tools contributed to an increased (indirect) participation of the target groups in local governance structures. However, although most of the projects carried out users' assessments, qualitative data is limited and not sufficiently systematized to allow a thorough appreciation of the extent to which the target groups can use consistently and also safely the technological solutions provided. All projects seem to have been implemented in a gender-sensitive way, to different degrees, but there is little evidence that gender equality performance was systematically tracked, putting in place measures to address challenges and produced recommendations for redress.

In terms of **sustainability of tools and approaches**, none of the projects created a formal sustainability plan from the beginning, although most projects did address different elements of sustainability. Institutional and technological sustainability was addressed by building long term relationships, local ownership and capacity building of local partners and to a lesser extent financial sustainability by choosing open source solutions, free tools like social media and by budgeting maintenance cost into the government budget, which supported continuation after the project. In the case of the two institutions the developed tools are the core business of the organisation, which fosters continuation even more. Most projects did work with local service providers for at least part of their technology solutions; if local presence was ignored this affected the success in the projects digital solution. In three cases, tools were not adequately designed with users, and particularly the target group and will not (fully) be continued, because they do not serve a clear need. In all projects local partners and/or governments were engaged in the project in a participatory way, although not always with regard to solution development which affects sustained use.

Key Conclusions

With regard to the main evaluation question: *how the innovative ICT tools and approaches may have enhanced or hindered the participation and inclusion of women and marginalized groups*, the following can be concluded:

Conclusion #1 The projects, sometimes after adjustments, adopted useful technological solutions responding to the needs of the beneficiaries, but capacity building of the target groups was less effective. This involved mostly adopting generally available tools such as WhatsApp, Facebook and Google. Specifically, the three projects that did not involve beneficiaries and or/ local ICT experts from the start, were too ambitious by involving more advanced digital tools, which proved to be too complex for the target groups and/ or context. Overall the projects, however did not provide sufficient outreach, training and follow up to the target groups to support (continued) use of the digital tools for a wider group.

Conclusion #2 On- and offline tools were often complementary for the achievement of increased involvement including of the target groups in decision making whilst non-technological factors still played an important role. The combination of technological solutions including on- and off line allowed for a larger involvement of groups and institutions, in more remote and weak connectivity areas. Projects also performed a range of non-technology related interventions and activities, such as providing face-to face trainings, awareness raising, organising events etc.

Conclusion #3 The use of ICT tools improved access to information with intermediary organisations as the main mechanism to position women and marginalized groups more favourably. In all projects the use of ICT tools helped to overcome knowledge and information barriers, including on rights and needs of women and marginalized groups, enhancing CSO and citizen engagement and participation, as well as awareness of government officials in some cases.

Conclusion # 4. Projects addressed and partly improved gender equality but did not carry out transformative actions to address the root causes of gender inequality and injustice. Most projects supported increased representation, participation of women. Although all projects produced a gender strategy, no gender analyses were done for the digital sector, including the gender divide. Projects did not or only to a limited extent address gender norms and stereotypes and challenge gender power relations.

Conclusion # 5 Most projects have addressed technical, financial and institutional sustainability of the digital tools introduced adequately resulting in continued access and use, while lack of contextualization and participatory approach has limited sustained use for others. The use of local technology partners supported contextualisation. in the case projects did use participatory methods sustainability seems better embedded through local ownership and alignment with policies. Only limited attention was given to data privacy in social media, where users are not always aware of the security risks.

Key Recommendations

Recommendation #1 Innovation in ICT tools and approaches should be linked to tools/ solutions that are easily accessible for the target groups. The use of generally available communication tools should be prioritized since the start, even if this implies renouncing the “project-branded” tools.

Recommendation #2 Interventions should include an exit-plan form the start and aim to support existing policies. Ask project partners to create a sustainability plan at the beginning that could be updated during the project phases. In the plan all five aspects of the FIETS model should be included: Financial, Institutional, Environmental, Technological and Social.

Recommendation #3 A more comprehensive approach to gender equality is necessary for a stronger impact of the projects on gender dynamics. Projects should not only be implemented in a gender-sensitive way but also develop a clear strategy on how to address gender norms, roles and stereotypes that constitute barriers to change for gender equality.

Recommendation #4 Data collection, including disaggregated data, should allow for monitoring and assessment of results Having data disaggregated by sex, age and other relevant attributes, where relevant, is among the essential criteria of to ensure results for the targeted populations.

Recommendation #5 The identification of mandatory indicators should be linked to a coherent project design to prevent less valuable data collection at project level
GAC should reflect on the use of mandatory intermediate outcomes and indicators with the exact same formulation in case a call for proposal results in such diverse initiatives in terms of context and intervention as those assessed in this evaluation.

Key Lessons

Lesson #1 Simple technologies (e.g. WhatsApp) instead of ad hoc platforms will be more used. The choice to use common technological tools largely used in the project's context was key to assure participation and motivation of particular the target groups.

Lesson # 2 Involving local ICT expertise and co-creation with the target groups and relevant public actors is key for ensuring easier and greater accessibility.

Lesson # 3 Establishing social accountability mechanism require considerable time, and particularly outreach and capacity building to women and vulnerable groups in the area of digital literacy but also data protection. Building a solid digital foundation is a long process and to achieve accountability results will take considerable time The focus on the target groups requires for project to reserve sufficient time and resources including for follow up and monitoring

Lesson # 4 Technology alone without non-digital measures is not effective considering the target groups, next both online and offline applications should be included. Differences perceptions about the utility of using technologies, to some extent related to generational gap in terms of digital literacy and prior knowledge about technology, next to limited access and use within the target groups require an combination of measures and applications. .

Lesson # 5 Technology can be useful for women and people in vulnerable situations also if employed by intermediaries. Technology also indirectly – through intermediary mechanisms such as CSOs – can support the rights and needs of the target groups.

Lesson # 6 A clear policy concerning rights-holders' data management was missing as well as clear project monitoring guidelines for partners and provision of tools/guidance. This will also support projects M&E supporting adaptive management.

1 Rationale, Purpose and Specific Objective of the Evaluation

1.1 Introduction

Ecorys has been selected on the basis of its Technical proposal to conduct the evaluation of projects under the call for proposals 'Technological Platforms to Strengthen Public Sector Accountability and Citizen Engagement.' The Terms of Reference (ToR) provide the guiding framework for this evaluation.

1.2 Background and rationale

On July 20, 2015, the Partnerships for Development Innovation Branch of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada (DFATD) launched a $25 million call for proposals entitled 'Technological Platforms to Strengthen Public Sector Accountability and Citizen Engagement'. The purpose was to fund initiatives that would support public sector institutions and civil society to advance equitable democratic reform, deliver effective and sustainable development results for citizens, improve service delivery, combat corruption, and engage meaningfully with citizens through the use of technological platforms. In total seven projects were selected under this call, implemented in their own, independent way by a Canadian civil society organization in partnership with local organizations across 12 developing countries. All the initiatives are to contribute to the ultimate outcome result of *increased empowerment of women and marginalized groups to engage in democratic processes and enjoy and exercise their human rights.* Initiatives are to integrate gender equality, in particular by supporting women's participation in democratic decision-making and the realization of the human rights of women and girls, and are testing a technological innovation that would contribute to achieving the objectives of the call.

ICT4D (Information and Communications Technologies for Development) is seen as a powerful tool for economic and social development around the world. For women all over the world, information and communication technologies (ICT) can be leveraged for personal security, better access to education and jobs, financial inclusion or to access basic healthcare information. But benefits such as these rely on women having meaningful access to ICT which can be facilitated or prevented by several factors, including affordability, relevant content, skills and security.[1]

However, not all ICTs are innovative and they do not always work. There are risks, as the OECD-DAC Network on Governance (GOVNET) clearly mentioned. ICT only works if people have the capacity to access and use it and if there is the ability and resources to sustain it. Today, around the world, some 250 million fewer women than men are online. While the digital transformation provides new avenues for economic empowerment and can contribute to improving gender equality, the digital gender divide is tangible also in the use of ICT by women and men. For example, worldwide, some 327 million fewer women than men have a smartphone and access the mobile internet. Also, women are underrepresented in ICT jobs, management and academic careers. Women-owned start-ups receive 23 percent less funding and are 30% less likely to have a positive exit compared to male-owned business.[2] In developing countries, limited access often

[1] United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (2018)
[2] OECD, 2018. Bridging the digital gender divide. Include, upskills, innovate.

concerns women living in Sub-Saharan Africa and in rural parts of Asia.[3] It is not yet clear what works in which context and under which conditions, and more needs to be done to better understand and evaluate innovation in public sector governance.[4]

Given that the seven projects concluded at various points and that they were testing potentially innovative ICT approaches and tools, this evaluation could contribute to address the knowledge gap mentioned above, and to take stock of results achieved. Furthermore, the evaluation is to generate lessons learned and best practices in order to further the effectiveness of development programming in the governance sector and take stock of results achieved.

1.3 Purpose and specific objectives of the evaluation

The ToR indicates that the evaluation has both an accountability and learning purpose with the aim to:

- Inform stakeholders of results achieved;
- Inform stakeholders about key factors that have contributed to or hindered results;
- Inform the design and implementation of development assistance programming that seeks to use ICT approaches and tools to achieve inclusive governance results.

The specific objectives of the evaluation are the following:

- Assess the achievement of immediate and intermediate outcomes for each of the seven projects, including the mandatory expected results statements specified in the call for proposals.
- Assess key factors that have contributed to or hindered the achievement of results.
- Examine how the innovative ICT tools and approaches may have enhanced or hindered the participation and inclusion of women and marginalized groups.
- Provide findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons to fulfil the evaluation purposes as stated above.

[3] Empowering women in the digital age United Nations (UN) Commission on the Status of Women (2018)
[4] GOVNET, 2015. Quick Guide to Innovation in Public Sector Reform.

2 Development context

2.1 Policy background

Canada is committed to improving public sector accountability and inclusive governance as part of its development assistance. Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy Action Area 1, Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls, and Action Area 5, Inclusive Governance, demonstrate this commitment. The policy recognises that to be effective, international assistance must respond to local needs and priorities. Canada's Policy for Civil Society Partnerships recognises Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) as key stakeholders in the development agenda and underpins the policy approach to develop new partnerships between Canadian, international and local CSOs to develop new, innovative creative solutions to development challenges.[5]

In addition, Canada co-chairs the Open Government Partnership, a global, multi-lateral initiative focused on open government. The initiative aims to secure commitments from governments to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption and use new technologies to strengthen governance in partnership with civil society and the private sector. Increasingly, the Open Government Partnership is looking to expand beyond its initial successes in opening access to data and information, to also supporting more meaningful engagement between citizens and the governments that serve them. In this respect, ICT4D (Information and Communications Technologies for Development) is seen as a powerful tool for economic and social development around the world.

2.2 ICT for government accountability and citizen engagement

In recent times, the COVID-19 pandemic rather abruptly eliminated some of the traditional methods of engaging large groups of people. Canvassing, rallies, and large public events have either been taken entirely off the table or drastically reduced in size. The long-established contours of public hearings have been ground down by distancing and remote participation. Covid-19 could therefore dramatically boost the use of digital platforms for public sector accountability and citizen engagement.

An important report to show how countries and specifically how the 12 project countries perform in general with regard to ICT4D is the report "*E-Government Survey 2020 Digital Government in the Decade of Action for Sustainable Development*". This report presents an overview of trends in e-government and a ranking of the 189 countries according to the E-Government Development Index (EGDI). E-participation is a key dimension of governance and one of the pillars of sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development highlights the importance of participatory processes.

According to the report, in many countries the take-up of e-participation remains low. Beyond reasons related to technology access and digital skills, a lack of understanding of motivations to participate online and the reluctance of public institutions to share agenda setting and decision-

[5] Canada's Policy for Civil Society Partnerships for International Assistance: A Feminist Approach. Available at CSO-OnePager-ENG.pdf.CSO-OnePager-ENG.pdf.

making powers seem to play an important role in the observed limited progress, among many other factors.

Three indicators provide a good idea of the e-readiness of countries: i) % mobile phone percentage (sometimes higher than 100% because people own more than one sim-card), ii) % internet users and the iii) # of Facebook subscribers. In Table 2.1 below an overview is given for the 12 countries relevant for this study (see chapter 3) and how they perform regarding these indicators and EGDI.

Table 2.1 Overview technological context

Country	e-Governance index (EGDI)[6]	% mobile phone penetration	Mobile Gender Gap[7]	% internet users[8]	Internet Gender Gap	% Facebook subscribers[9]
Egypt	111	95%	7%	57%	17%	47%
Jordan	117	77%	n/a	67%	13%	61%
Morocco	106	128%	11%	74%	17%	58%
Tunisia	91	126%	6%	67%	6%	69%
Guatemala	121	119%	4%	65%	13%	39%
Indonesia	88	128%	8%	48%	11%	62%
Nepal	132	139%	20%	34%	30%	41%
Mali	171	115%	33%	13%	38%	10%
Burkina Faso	164	100%	24%	16%	36%	9%
Benin	157	88%	35%	29%	32%	12%
DRC	184	43%	33%	9%	31%	4%
Nicaragua	123	88%	n/a	28%	n/a	31%

This clearly shows the immense difference between participating countries and the type of digital solutions projects can offer. For example the countries from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region have a much higher penetration of Facebook subscribers than the West Africa countries. The Asian countries clearly have a much higher access to internet than the African and Latin American countries.

Another factor influencing e-participation is the political governance culture in a country. The Economist Intelligence Unit's (EIU) "Democracy Index 2021"[10] provides an indication of civil liberties and political culture. The respective ranking of the 12 countries relevant to this study shows particularly low scores for DRC, Nicaragua and Egypt, whilst Indonesia, Tunisia and Morocco provide much more favourable scores.

Between 2020 and 2021 the Democracy Index score decreased in most of the country case studies with the exception of Indonesia, Burkina Faso and DRC where the scores improved, and Morocco and Egypt where they remained the same.

6 2020 EGDI index

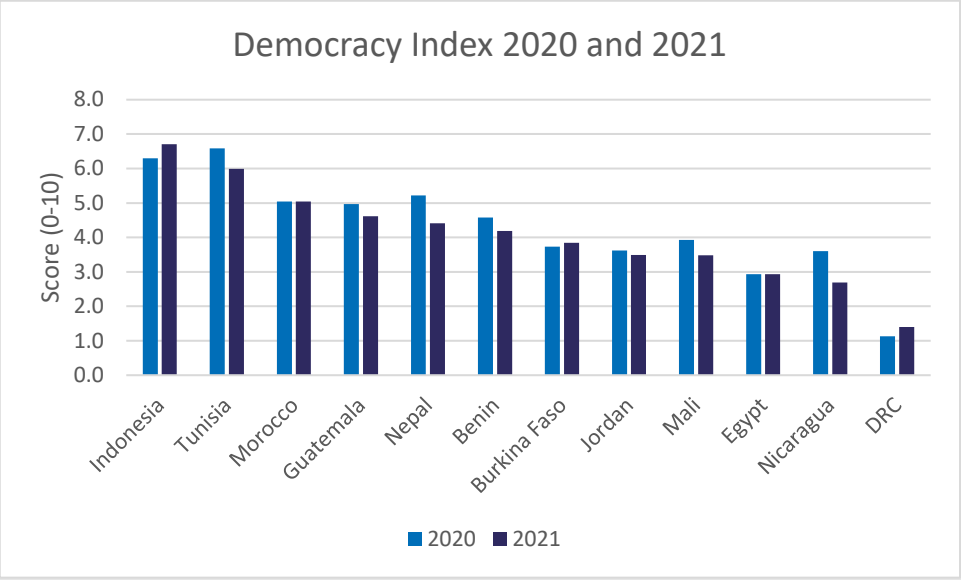
7 2020 Digital Gender Gaps data. The gender gap is reported in percentages reflecting the gap between the number of women and the number of men.

8 2019 World Bank data

9 2020 Internet World stats.

10 The EIU Democracy Index covers 167 countries and focuses on several components of democracy, namely electoral processes and pluralism, the functioning of government, political participation, political culture, and civil liberties, see for more information https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2021/?utm_source=eiu-website&utm_medium=blog&utm_campaign=democracy-index-2021

Figure 2.1 Ranking 12 project countries in Democracy Index (year 2020 and 2021)

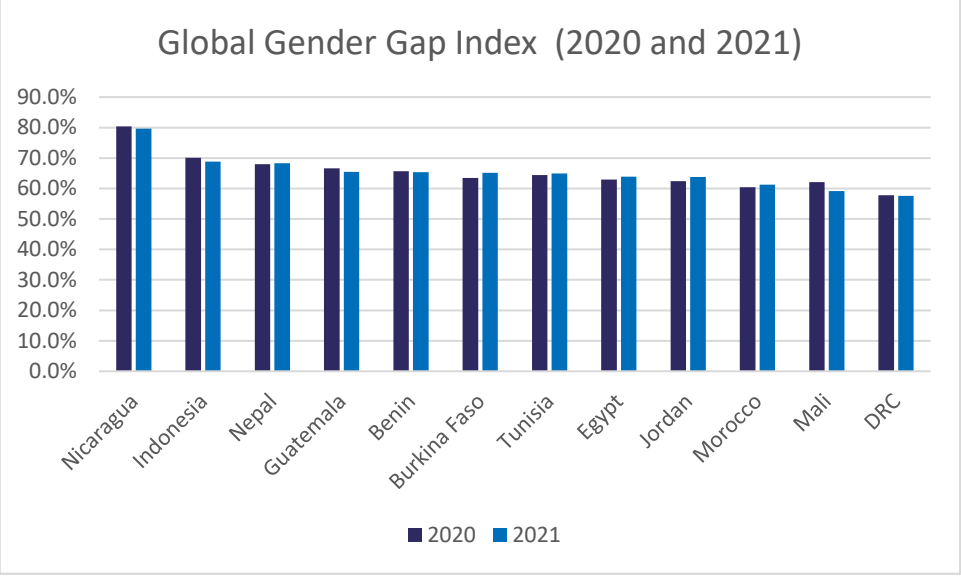


2.3 Gender equality

The Global Gender Gap Index[11] presented by the World Economic Forum analyses the gender gaps among four key dimensions: i) Economic Participation and Opportunity, ii) Educational Attainment, iii) Health and Survival, and iv) Political Empowerment.

The index also tracks progress towards closing these gaps over time. The Global Gender Gap Index presents scores on a 0 to 100 scale. The scores can be interpreted as the distance to parity.

Figure 2.2 Ranking 12 project countries in Global Gender Gap Index (year 2020 and 2021)



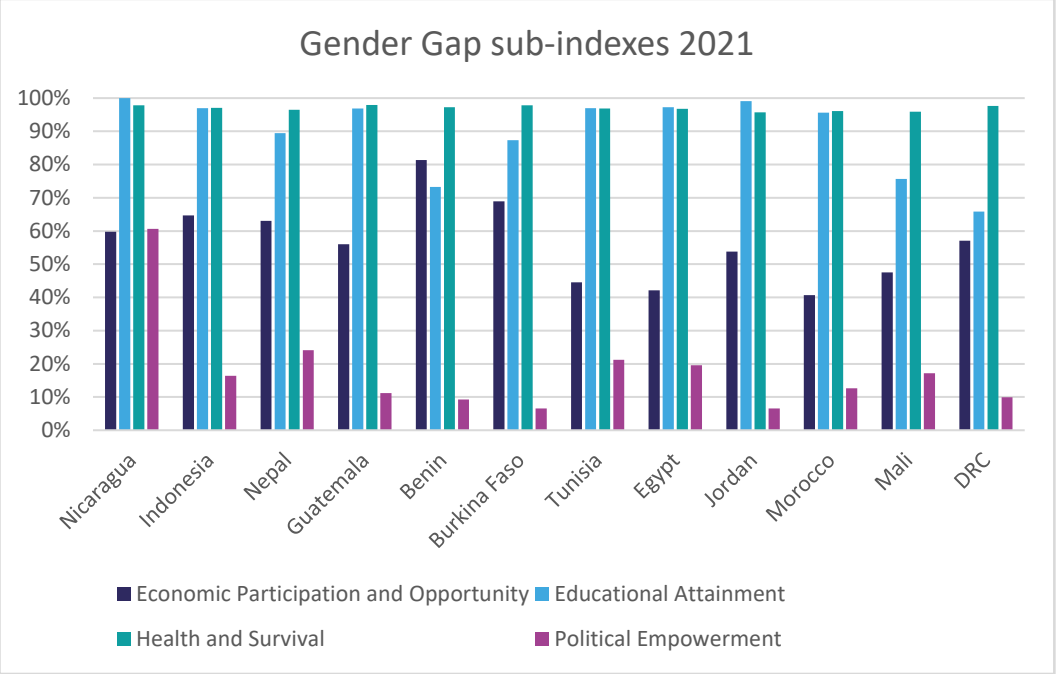
Amongst the case study countries the composite index shows a particularly high value for Nicaragua which is ranked 12th amongst the 156 countries included. Mali and the DRC are both in the ten lowest ranking countries. The three aforementioned countries as well as Indonesia and

[11] https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf

Benin have had a fall in their score, i.e., the gender gap has increased between 2020 and 2021. The remaining 7 countries have seen an improvement in the gender gap, albeit quite small.

When looking at the sub-indexes of the gender gap it is more difficult to rank the countries of interest, as a small gap in one of the sub-indexes is offset by a large gender gap in the other. Overall health and survival as well as educational attainment are the dimensions closest to parity, while disparity is the largest in political empowerment.

Figure 2.3 Gender Gap sub-indexes scores in the 12 project countries (year 2021)



3 Project descriptions

In total seven projects were selected under the call for proposals, implemented by a Canadian civil society organization in partnership with local organizations across 12 developing countries. Below, an overview of the seven projects funded under the initiative and their main focus is provided. A summarized description of the seven projects (e.g. the time period; budget; geographical area; programming; stakeholder mapping; organizational set-up; implementation arrangements) can be found in Annex I.

Table 3.1 The seven projects funded under de Call for Proposal

Project	Country	Lead implementing partner	Main objective
Technological Bridges for Citizen Engagement (Rawabet)	Egypt, Jordan, Morocco Tunisia	Equitas	Equip civil society organisations and youth leaders with tools and skills to effectively use technology to engage in democratic processes, promote transparency and human rights as well as to hold governments accountable.
Building a Technological Platform to Support Victim Services	Guatemala	Justice Education Society (JES)	Increase the responsiveness of public institutions to the needs and rights of victims of crime (especially women and marginalised groups) and create an integrated approach to victim services through the use of technology.
Power Up: Women Shaping their Future with Technology	Indonesia	Oxfam Canada	Empower citizens (particularly women and marginalised groups) to engage in democratic decision making at the local level by improving their ability to 1) participate in village development and budget processes via technology and, 2) to hold their governments accountable using technology as well as 3) supporting responsiveness of public institutions
Sustainable Use of Technology for Public Sector accountability (SUSASAN) in Nepal	Nepal	Centre for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI)	Improve access and skills in using technology of marginalised groups to be able to voice concerns and influence decision-making in local and federal/ provincial government structures, strengthening public sector accountability, transparency and quality of service delivery to citizens.
Technologies for the artisanal sector (TSAM)	Mali	C2D Services	Increase participation of artisans (especially women) in democratic processes, promote networking and share information through the use of technology tools.
Technological platforms for the democratization and improvement of the health system (TOPICS)	Burkina Faso, Benin and DRC	Unité de santé international du centre universitaire hospitalier de l'université de Montréal (USI-CHUM)	Improve the health care systems for citizens, particularly women by improving citizen engagement, by improving the responsiveness of public institutions to the needs and rights of citizens through the use of technology. This will enable the population to express opinions about the health system, health staff to register complaints and decision makers to better understand the needs of citizens.
Technology for sustainable water resource governance (TSWRG)	Nicaragua	Change for Children Association (CFCA)	Improve public participation, government accountability and increased responsiveness of public institutions through technology with respect to water supply needs and water system management at the local level.

3.1 Expected results

Following the call for proposals the projects were to contribute toward the ultimate outcome and toward one or more of the intermediate outcomes. The three intermediate outcomes are included in the figure below. Five of the seven projects have developed a logical framework identifying activities, outputs and immediate outcomes linked to these three mandatory intermediate outcomes. The exceptions are the *Building a Technological Platform to Support Victim Services* project (focuses only on one: 1300) and the *Technological Bridges for Citizen Engagement* project (focuses on two: 1100 and 1200). The call announcement identified one indicator per mandatory intermediate outcome which was to be used by the implementing organisations.

Table 3.2. Overview Ultimate and Intermediate Outcomes

3.2 Overview of technologies used in the projects

Specifically the seven projects included the following technological solutions and tools:

The *Technological Bridges for Citizen Engagement* project developed a Tactical Mapping Tool (https://tmt.newtactics.org) to support intermediaries in the four countries to track, monitor and report on human rights issues. The tool develops relationships diagrams of stakeholders, rights-holders and duty-bearers that help overview problems and challenges about human rights abuses and draw pathways towards change. Other technological tools used in the four countries were:

- Social media: Facebook, Messenger, Instagram, Twitter and WhatsApp groups
- YouTube
- Video-communication platforms such as Zoom, Google Meets and Skype

The *Building a Technological Platform to Support Victim Services* project developed a Web App which allows victims' service professionals to securely access and add information to victim files from multiple technological devices, including their phones. The progressive Web App is to accomplish both the goal of a public-facing "website" and a platform for victims' service providers (MP and CSOs).

The original project design of the *Power-Up* project in Indonesia was focused on using an Interactive Voice Recording (IVR) approach using mobile- and/or web-based technology as the principal means for engaging stakeholders in democratic processes. The project also promoted the use of WhatsApp, Google Forms, and Facebook to disseminate information and communicate village development planning and budgeting and health issues within communities, especially among women. The ICT tools developed for the Power Up project included:

- Duren Bangdes (e-learning module on village development planning and budgeting),
- Keran Desa (a feedback tool for village governments),
- Keran Yankes (a feedback tool for community health centers) and
- 26 Daya Kelin (an information tool on high-risk pregnancy) .

The *SUSASAN* project in Nepal involved design and development/use of a large number of technological systems and tools:

- Online platform and website: Covid Transparency Portal and Open data Portal;
- Mobile app: Municipal Mobile App (online/ offline), IMS mobile App;
- Short Message Service (SMS) providing text messages;
- Interactive Voice Recording (IVR): Audio Messaging Broadcasting system to reach illiterate citizens;
- Social media: Facebook, YouTube Blogs;
- Other digital systems and tools: 41 Techno-hubs, Participatory Budget & Policy analysis (online/ offline), Community Score Card (platform), Judicial affairs management system, Agricultural program management, electronic recommendation system (online/ offline), SDGs marker (online/offline), Municipal Exit Poll (online/ offline), Citizen's report card, Data Hub and Document Library (online), Decisions & Policies & Plan and budget system (online), Citizens Report Card (CRC online/offline)), Point of Interest (online), e-Profile, Infrastructure Management System (online/offline), Grievance redressal management system (GRMS-online/offline), Electronic citizen's charter, Public Account Committee (PAC -online).

The *TSAM* project in Mali project implemented the Paradox Platform, that includes member registration, mobile link, consultation device, electronic portal and monitoring-evaluation platform. The learning management system and a YouTube channel provide also online training modules for artisans and provides information on the handicraft sector and opportunities for promoting crafts in the sub-region. Social media channels (WhatsApp and Facebook) were used to communicate with associations and members. C2D Services Inc. has introduced a Smartkit including a mini laptop, a video projector (rechargeable using a solar panel and a battery to store the energy) to facilitate the administration of training modules in areas without electricity and internet connectivity.

The *Technological platforms for the democratization and improvement of the health system* project design drew on the experience of a pilot toll-free number that was operational for a 4-month period in the target district of Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso, financed by the Grade Challenges Canada (the funding did not allow for continuation beyond 4 months given media and communication expenses). The new toll-free number is similar in operability and has been tested in rural areas, but has extended functionalities (additional local languages, and the possibility to hear messages that convey information on the health system, as well as having a shared system to collect and share data). The project design also drew on the experience of the Open Data results-based funding

platforms set up in the three countries by Bluesquare. Appropriate technologies were also being used to increase accessibility of key information for target groups (e.g. right to health care, free toll-free number, geographic proximity, etc.). The opinions of patients, women and the poor on health services will then be available on platform.

Finally, the *Technology for sustainable water resource governance* project uses a digital platform linked to mobile computer devices deployed to the 368 CWCs and 13 municipal governments, as a tool for learning, monitoring, communicating, collaborating, and advocating for water rights. The digital platform has 5 interconnecting components:

- Communications Webpage - a news, events calendar and information-sharing webpage
- A CWV Learning App - a Google Play learning tool accessible only by participating CWCs
- Mapping of Actors – an interactive real-time database for CWC profiles, including demographic characteristics, water data, and geographic coordinates, as well as profiles of other key water actors.
- Progress Monitoring - a public webpage reporting project progress in real-time,
- Networking and Advocacy - using tablets with data plans, to enable CWC members to communicate with municipal technicians, project staff, and government authorities

4 Methodology and Approach

Following the ToR the evaluation is to serve both accountability and learning purposes. The backward-looking part of the assignment mainly served **accountability** purposes as it takes a step back and assesses independently the performance of the seven projects implemented. The forward-looking part of this evaluation has focused on **lessons learned**, identifying contributing and hindering factors for the four country case studies. The evaluation also identified lessons learned from the other projects' approaches, and promising practices in the other countries.

The evaluation used a theory-based mixed-methods approach, applied through a **contribution analysis**. As a starting point the evaluation reconstructed aTheory of Change (ToC) for each of the seven projects with results chain(s), external factors and underlying assumptions based on a "logic of inquiry". During the inception phase initial interviews and document review were used to make a reconstruction of the ToCs, whilst a workshop was organised at the start of the desk review for validation (see section 4.2). The ToCs were tested during the research to see if they hold true by showing evidence of what has changed at each level of the ToC.

This evaluation approach has put emphasis on what works for whom in which type of context, specifying the processes and drivers through which change comes about in a specific context, identifying assumptions underlying the intervention logic and identifying the components that appear to be most responsible for producing specific outcomes. Given the **gender-sensitive** nature of the evaluation, special attention was given to the need to devise quantitative and qualitative indicators which are appropriate to 'measuring' social change and transformation in gender-power relations.

Comparisons between project contributions is made using a **realistic approach**[12] to identify the underlying mechanisms that explain 'how' the outcomes were caused and the influence of the identified context factors. This systematic analysis supports a better understanding of transferability by learning from success and failure.

4.1 Review questions, review matrix and project selection

The ToR lists six questions to guide the evaluation, corresponding with the OECD DAC evaluation criteria of effectiveness, efficiency,[13] relevance, and sustainability.

- To what extent has each of the seven projects achieved the expected immediate and mandatory intermediate outcomes?
- What results have been obtained by each project?
- Were results achieved relevant to the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries, especially women and marginalized groups?
- Were the innovative[14] ICT tools and approaches designed and implemented in a way that they will continue to be used beyond the life of the project?

12 It was not possible to use planned qualitative comparative analysis (QCA).as the number of cases was limited to four (countries) and it was not possible to focus the research on sufficient interventions in the respective countries

13 "Efficiency" defined as the extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way, to some extent also applies to EQs 4, 5 and 6. The primary criteria for these questions pertain to the effectiveness of the interventions however.

14 Innovation in international assistance can be defined as a process, mindset, and means to enable new or improved locally-driven solutions for better results and greater impact, which benefit and empower the poorest and most vulnerable, including women and girls. Innovative solutions can include business models, policy practices, approaches, partnerships,

- What key factors hindered the achievement of expected results?
- What key factors contributed to the achievement of the obtained results (as measured by question two)?

These evaluation questions guided the interrogation of the seven logic models of the projects, leading to further defining of specific sub-questions and corresponding qualitative and quantitative indicators, methods and data sources which are included in the Evaluation Matrix.

Elements of the Digital Investment Tool[15] to assess the platforms according to the Principles of Digital Development was used in the analysis under EQ3 (design with the user/ privacy) and EQ4 (sustainability/ use open-source software/ be collaborative).

Country case study selection

Implementation of the evaluation started with a desk-based review of all seven projects, particularly focused on evaluation questions 1 to 4. Next, four in-depth country case studies were made. The case study approach was essential for conducting the full contribution analysis. The case country cases were selected based on the following criteria:

- Geographic coverage of all four regions: MENA, Asia, West Africa and Central America;
- Accessibility: limited security restrictions and access to diverse beneficiary groups;
- Project size: prioritising the larger project in the same region to be selected (i.e. proposing Nepal over Indonesia);
- Concentration of activities: prioritising countries with relatively more activities (i.e. proposing Jordan rather than Morocco or Egypt).
- Evaluability: projects are sufficiently advanced to allow for assessment of results achieved and to conduct a contribution analysis (to allow for learning possibilities).

Based on the last criteria the TOPICS project and the Technological Platforms for Enhanced Victim Service could not be selected, resulting in the below case country study selection.

Table 4.1 Selected Case Country Studies

Project and lead agency	Country for Case Study Fieldwork
Technological Bridges for Citizen Engagement. - Equitas	Jordan
Sustainable Use of Technology for Public Sector Accountability in Nepal - CECI	Nepal
Technologies for the Artisanal Sector – C2Dservices	Mali
Technology for Sustainable Water Resource Governance – CFCA	Nicaragua

4.2 Methods of data collection and analysis

The evaluation drew on a combination of qualitative and quantitative data, using the following data collection methods.

- **Desk Review** comprises a document review of project documentation: proposals, baseline studies, project implementation plan, sustainability plan, (bi)annual reports, final reports, lessons learned report, Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) data collection sets, ICT user data etc., as well as available literature, such as policies on digital development and access to ICT in beneficiary countries, research papers, news articles, blog posts, etc.

technologies, behavioural insights, financing mechanisms or ways of delivering products and services. It can be either an entirely new solution (transformational) or an improvement to an existing development practice (incremental).

[15] The Digital Investment Tool assess digital tools if they comply to the 9 principles of digital development

- **Content analysis** of the digital tools, websites, blogs and social media;
- **Participatory ToC Workshops** for the projects selected for the case country studies to discuss the project's logic model and underlying assumptions and the different interpretations and experiences.
- **Key Informant Interviews** with stakeholders that are important to the success of the intervention and more independent stakeholders. Interviews were planned as part of the desk-based project review to complement the document review and during the country case studies. The interviews with GAC staff and implementing partners provided an overview of key informants to be interviewed during the field visits. Sampling of KII informants was purposive and conducted in advance; in some instances, snowball sampling techniques were used during fieldwork.
- **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)** were organised for specific groups of stakeholders, such as the target groups, community members and CSOs to contrast individual respondents' stances in relation to group dynamics, and also to assess levels of agreement or disagreement on certain key aspects.
- **Survey Questionnaires** were used to support the case country studies in collecting quantitative data from a larger group of respondents ((in)direct beneficiaries) with a focus on the use of digital tools and sustainability thereof, the achievement of results and supporting and hindering factors. The beneficiary survey was conducted via telephone interviews by an enumerator using a Computer-Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) interface. It was not possible to include the intended sample of 300-350 beneficiaries in all diversity ensuring that 70% are WMG for all four countries (see limitation and challenges section below). The quantitative data collection and data quality control was conducted via the software and platform developed by AKVO.
- **Field observations**: More tacit and informal dynamics next to the interview and FGDs sessions provided important clues including of (continuation of) project activities and demonstration of the technological tools showing outputs and use thereof by the target group.

To gather sufficient and appropriate evidence we have combined the above data collection methods and information sources for validation and triangulation. For the assessment of achievements we used a 5-point rating scale to show the extent to which results have been achieved: fully achieved, to a large extent achieved, partly achieved, to a limited extent achieved and not achieved.

4.3 Limitations and challenges

In conducting the present evaluation, the team has been confronted with a number of challenges and limitations some of which are outlined below.

The four case country studies in combination with the desk-based review of all projects can never be fully representative for all projects and countries of implementation, but the sample is considered sufficiently illustrative. In addition, the interviews with stakeholders during the desk-based reviews (JES, Power-Up, TOPICS) were used to collect additional information including at country level, although this could not be validated. Next, at the time of the desk review due to delays in implementation of the projects, it was too early to make an assessment of the extent to which two of the seven projects (the TOPICS and JES project) would be able to achieve the expected outcomes, explaining why specifically the JES project is not much mentioned in this synthesis report.

A further limitation concerns the limited availability of consistent M&E data on the direct and indirect beneficiaries of the projects, with often limited systematic disaggregation of beneficiaries' data e.g., by gender, sub-groups of activities, beneficiary's categories (and by country). Next It was not

possible to make aggregates for the mandatory indicators as the projects have been too diverse in their focus and activities. Linked to this the approved results frameworks did not also measure results at the right level. For instance the TSAM project had indicators that should have measured outcome, but in fact were only at output level.

Next, for a number of projects, the achievement of the approved indicators in the performance measurement framework did not cover fully whether a result was achieved. In the reporting, the focus was on measuring the agreed indicators and not on the outcomes itself, which hindered proving the achievement of outcomes.

A partial limitation of the field work has been the impossibility for the core evaluation team to travel to Nepal and Nicaragua, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and in the case of Nicaragua the tense political situation in the country, being the current moment especially hostile to foreign actors. Although the core evaluation team developed guidance documents, questionnaires and monitored the field work, which was successfully carried out by the local consultants on a regular basis, direct observations in the field and follow up were not possible.

Specifically a further limitation for the field work in Nicaragua comes from the political situation in the country, and the strong social control exerted by the ruling party, which is present also at local level. In practically all FGDs involved members of the ruling party some of which exerted influence over the discussion, often leading it, consequently restricting the freedom of the other participants to speak openly about their opinions with respect to authorities' performance.[16] As regards field work in Mali a limitation was that the international consultant was unable to travel outside Bamako during the field mission in July, due to the tense security situation in Mali. At the time, it was especially hostile to foreign actors. The project is implemented mainly in Bamako, but includes deployment in Koulikoro, Ségou, Sikasso, Kayes, Mopti, Gao and Timbuktu. The National consultant was able to visit Segou later in October, but was unable to visit other FNAM offices outside Bamako. As for the field work in Jordan, a limitation was that the evaluation team during the field data collection could only meet with a small representation of the beneficiaries in the FGDs. Precisely because it was impossible to retrieve the exact quantitative data, and contact information of the indirect beneficiaries in the country, even after several requests, the evaluation team was not able to collect a broader range of qualitative information from the direct beneficiaries. Field work in Nepal was postponed in view of the Covid-19 situation and took place in festive months. The public holidays around these festivals affected availability of respondents. Next unforeseen events during the data collection, flooding and landslides in Western Nepal (affecting properties and harvests, road connection and digital connectivity) and the nation -wide convention of all political parties made it very difficult to collect people for interaction and meetings. The flooding in Western Nepal led to reduced availability of respondents.

The implementation of the survey in the four case country studies encountered many limitations in terms of outreach which could imply some degree of potential selection biases in the sample used, in spite of its relatively large size in Nepal and Nicaragua. Also, since the survey was voluntary, potential systematic correlation between interest in participating in the survey and relevant characteristics of the respondents (such as higher engagement with the project or organisation, education level, use and appreciation of digital solutions etc.) cannot be ruled out.

- In Nicaragua it was not possible to reach the totality of CWCs involved in the project, and despite the large percentage of CWCs covered, full representativeness of the population of interest cannot be assumed. For instance, CWCs with the worst connectivity could not be covered due to the lack of phone connections available.

[16] In some cases, they were members of the selected CWC boards as well as party members, and in other cases there were sent explicitly by the local government to control the content of the sessions.

- In Mali, some areas in Mali had low mobile connectivity during the data collection phase (due to security reasons) and could not be covered (Gao) and others did not pick up the phone. The list provided was also too limited (in terms of numbers) to carry out a sampling method (although several times more phone numbers were requested). The selected group was therefore not representative (although a good geographical and gender spread was achieved), which implies a degree of selection bias.
- In Nepal it was not possible to reach the totality of beneficiaries involved in the project, as for instance, beneficiaries with the worst connectivity could not be covered due to the lack of phone connections available.
- For Jordan only limited contact details for (in)direct beneficiaries could be made available, representing only a small percentage of the total number of (in)direct beneficiaries as compared to a desired sampling.

These limitations influence the findings presented in the report. The phone surveys still provided valuable information, however not all target groups (especially women and marginalized groups without access to technologies) were well represented.

A further limitation was due to the limited number of questions that could be asked during a computer-assisted telephone survey to avoid a lengthy survey which would have negatively impacted commitment and motivation to complete the survey.

5 Main Findings and analysis

5.1 EQ 1 To what extent have the projects achieved the expected immediate and mandatory intermediate outcomes?

5.1.1 Intermediate Outcome 1100: Enhanced equitable and inclusive participation in democratic decision-making process, especially by women and marginalized groups, through the use of technology

Finding #1 The initiatives have partly been successful in increasing equitable and inclusive participation in democratic decision-making processes, using technological solutions, but reaching out to women and marginalized groups for their direct involvement has been less effective

As mentioned the seven projects are very diverse in their focus and activities. Two of the projects (TSWRG and TSAM) focused on increased participation of the target groups in the intermediary organisations themselves (e.g. the community water committees (CWCs) and the Federation Nationale des Artisan(e)s du Mali (FNAM)). According to the interviews and FGDs the biggest gain for these projects was the organisational empowerment of these organisations, with the representatives better equipped through the use of technology also to support the target groups. Participation was increased through holding of regular assemblies (TSWRG) and better information dissemination (TSAM) from the national to the regional and local level through the use of the Paradox platform and through alternative technology like social media channels. Although in the last case most members, particularly the target groups could still not be reached directly via channels like Facebook, WhatsApp and SMS, but had to receive the information from the members with access to these channels. As for more inclusive participation, M&E data shows that both projects saw an increased participation of (elected) women, but proof of a sustainable process will be in the next election(s) which will need to show whether there are lasting results in terms of an increased number of women selected, also in terms of their position (e.g. secretary position versus more influential positions). In both cases direct participation, including by the target groups in decision making with the use of technological tools was not achieved as the project either did not plan for this (TSWRG) or the intended interactive platform was not used for this purpose (TSAM).

Project documentation and the field research provide evidence for an enhanced participation in decision making at the municipal level of women and marginalized groups either via direct involvement of the target groups or more indirectly via established women's groups and/ or intermediary CSOs, for two of the other projects. In case of the Power-Up project in Indonesia project observations are that women are better than before represented in village development planning and budgeting in terms of quantity and quality.[17] The desk review and field interviews show that in the SUSASAN project a large percentage of the local CSOs actually participate in the democratic decision-making process through the developed technology, including needs and demands from the community including the target groups. However in both cases insufficient (digital) literacy, accessibility of the technical tools and lack of knowledge still hinder direct participation of citizens, especially women and marginalized groups to a large extent, next to more internal factors of the projects such as limited outreach activities.

[17] This finding is based on the desk-based review only, but With no other interventions ongoing in the region attribution of this result to the project appears valid

In both cases as well as the TSAM project in Mali, findings from the interviews and FGDs show that although the target groups did not participate (always) directly, they are better represented (participating in an indirect way) because the CSOs/ representatives are better equipped (e.g. training and information and/or the development of a GESI policy) to inform the target groups and take their needs and demands into account. For instance, in Mali, direct communication through social media, especially WhatsApp, with associations and members in difficult-to-reach parts of the country strengthens the voice of the FNAM members.

In the case of the Rawabet project the survey data shows an increase in beneficiaries' awareness of the human rights issues in Jordan and Tunisia, largely supported through the online trainings provided. The respondents had an high level of confidence (83%) that their opinions would be taken into account, which was confirmed by the interviews and FGDs. However, having a level of confidence is not equivalent to demonstrating that duty-bearers take recommendations into account and that rights-holders are therefore ability to influence decision-making. The human rights situation in the four beneficiary countries is such that governments themselves do not respect and/or can harm these rights. The authorities are very difficult to reach and no strategy was developed to assure that beneficiaries are able to influence decision-making, which requires tactics and time.

For the TOPICS project (in Benin, Burkina Faso and DRC) based on the design of the project enhanced participation can only be achieved to a limited extent through involvement of their representative CSO in workshops and meetings. Whilst the general population, including the target groups have mostly been involved through one-way information and surveys which do not represent forms of participation in decision making.

As mentioned previously in chapter 4, the available M&E data, but also our survey data collecton, do not allow to establish actual outreach to the target groups. Observations, interviews and FGDs during the fieldwork have been used to collect more qualitative data for validation.

Finding #2 A number the projects show that the use of technology can open up decision making processes, but the use of technology was not always directly linked to participation in decision making processes

While the use of technology can open up decision making processes to a larger and more inclusive group, this will depend on the extent to which institutions are providing avenues for involvement using digital tools. Results in this respect are to some extent linked to whether the political context in the different countries is conducive to more equitable participation in decision making.

The projects in Nepal and Indonesia increased the capacity of CSOs/ women's groups as well as worked with local governments supporting them in opening up information to citizens/ target groups, using digital tools. The SUSASAN project in Nepal has established techno-hubs, with some of them funded by municipalities directly, to facilitate access to the integrated technologies developed. In total the project provided access to over 20 digital tools, platforms and mechanisms, co-created with government and CSO stakeholders, facilitating the implementation of accountability and transparency mechanisms in local governance processes. Similarly the Power-Up project in Indonesia according to the documentation and interviews succeeded in raising women's knowledge and ability to use mobile telephony for receiving information on village development planning and budgeting processes, and for simplified electronic/ mobile phone voting procedures when participating in village planning and budgeting processes. Project observations are that women are – also due to the formation of women's caucuses which provide them with more confidence – are applying the knowledge and are voicing their aspirations and bring these to bear on development planning and budgeting.

In contrast in the case of the Rawabet project the focus was to a large extent on training and information provision to CSOs and WMGs, with limited or no engagement with government. Although the government had been consulted in the project at the design and inception phase, engagement with these institutions at both local and national level was very limited.

As mentioned above also the TOPICS project only included one of the elements of social accountability methods and mostly targeted general population through one-way information and dissemination activities which does not represent forms of participation in decision-making. Also in the project in Nicaragua (TSWRG) the use of the technological tools focused solely on the internal organization of the water committees and on advocacy efforts, not on facilitating participation in decision making. Similarly the TSAM project worked directly with the FNAM in opening avenues to communicate and discuss with the members. Originally the TSAM project wanted to use the Paradox Platform also as a participatory platform to communicate and discuss with the members. As this did not work as planned mainly due to low internet connectivity in rural areas and low literacy of members, the project changed its approach to low-tech approaches such as Facebook, WhatsApp and SMS, which only allowed for more limited participation and interaction. In Benin, Burkina Faso and DRC (TOPICS) digital solutions only played a role in creating data on the quality and accessibility of services.

5.1.2 Intermediate outcome 1200: Increased use of technology by citizens, especially women and marginalized groups, to hold their local government to account

Finding #3 The use of technology in the projects improved access to information to a large extent by which supported citizens in holding government to account, (developed) direct feedback mechanism had more mixed results.
Four of the six projects provide evidence of an increased use of social media, open data initiatives and other technology by CSOs and individuals in assessing information to hold (local) government to account and influence change. Technological tools particularly improved the flow of information along with increasing understanding of the democratic processes and human rights. The extent to which the projects and use of technology resulted in actual lobby and advocacy actions were linked to the viability of the political context.

In Jordan (Rawabet) the tools supported integration of the Human Right Based Approach (HRBA) in community action plans. After the initial training, the educators/ implementers involved mainly used Whatsapp, google drive and Facebook groups and programmes such as Zoom and Google meet to exchange. Interviews and FGDs confirm that this was not done before the project. The project paid less attention to strengthening capacities for actual lobby and advocacy actions towards the government as these are difficult to carry out due to the unfavourable political environment in the country. More positively, in Nepal, CSOs and citizens have been able to raise issues and present evidence obtained from the technological tools. About 62% of the survey respondents felt that the use of technological tools will lead to improved accountability and transparency. Stakeholders involved in the interviews and FGDs mention that the particular value added of technology is that everything can be found easily.

In Nicaragua, the interviews and FGDs confirm that before the project, the use of technology for CWC tasks was negligible. Through the support of the project, the CWCs have been using technological tools to demand interventions to address administrative and technical issues concerning WASH services. The use of technology (mainly WhatsApp) has allowed a more direct contact between the CWCs and the technical staff at municipalities that have little resources and are not able to visit all communities regularly. This helped to solve practical problems of the CWCs.

However, advocacy in a broader political or policy-related sense has not sensibly changed due to the political situation in Nicaragua. There is practically no evidence that engagement with local governments is happening at a higher governmental level beyond the technical staff, therefore progress in advocacy capacity is considered to be achieved partly.

In the case of the Power-Up project the desk-based review shows that the level of accountability in terms of development planning and budgeting and health services had improved in the targeted villages in Indonesia due to an increased use of technology supporting an increased accessibility of information and data using pre-existing popular ICT tools such as WhatsApp. The tools also allowed for community feedback, with about 50% of the targeted beneficiaries using the tools at the end of the project .

In the two other projects the evaluation could not find evidence that individuals were directly involved in lobby and advocacy activities, although in one case (TSAM) technology is used to receive input from members to better lobby and advocate on behalf of the members. The project (Mali) supported the use of technology to inform members about their rights and receive input from members and is thus able to better lobby on behalf of its members, but there is no evidence of members using technology to directly hold government to account.

In Benin, Burkina and DRC (TOPICS), statistical reports show that a significant number of people (in line with targets) has called the toll-free number to provide their opinion, in the form of a complaint or other unstructured comment. Only a small number of the callers however provided (complete) answers to the questions according to the satisfaction questionnaire. Given that only questionnaire data are processed and aggregated to provide information to decision-makers, the desired accountability impact only concerns a limited number of people who call the toll-free number. Similarly, for the project in Indonesia data collected at the end of the project gave a sobering perspective on the use of the developed ICT feedback tools beyond project activities, including the ability of certain groups of beneficiaries (e.g. elderly and housemakers) to use the tools beyond sensitization. The proportion of community members that provided online feedback on the community health centers was small, with a larger proportion providing feedback either directly or through the suggestion box. In Nepal, co-creation in developing the different tools with municipal government and CSOs provided stakeholders with digital tools that were accessible, although not to the full target groups, to directly make complaints and get a response from government.

Finding #4 Projects have had mixed results in increasing the use of technological tools to influence public policy for specifically the target groups of women and marginalized people. Projects have developed specific tools, systems and applications to support use of technology and data by the target groups, including IVR systems and offline applications, increasing the coverage of beneficiaries. Results in reaching out to the target groups however have been mixed across projects due to the selected systems, but also due to socio-economic factors limiting use and access to ICT such as (digital) literacy, costs and connectivity and selected outreach strategies.

For the TSAM project in Mali the Whatsapp groups, social media, women cybercafé, the distribution of Smartkits and the IVR system improved the use of technology by women and marginalized groups according to the documentation and confirmed in the interviews and FGDs but could not reach all members directly if they did not have a (smart)phone. In the SUSASAN project in Nepal, project data shows that both physical techno-hubs and android cell phone compatible technologies (online and offline) have triggered the use of technologies for both CSOs and citizens. Accessibility of integrated digital solutions was more difficult for the target groups. Evaluation findings show that the tools are useful, but not used extensively by the target groups as many people still have problems using android applications and due to digital literacy. Also the less effective outreach of

the project in terms of sensitizing and training played a role as indicated in the interviews and FGDs. Due to the Covid-19 situation, the outreach activities of the CSOs were often limited to one session only with no follow-up and monitoring of change, which in many cases was found too limited to enhance capacity, particularly for the target groups.

As mentioned above the Rawabet involved women and marginalized groups in the four countries in community actions, capacity building activities and discussions on human rights issues; participation was facilitated via the project Facebook page, Facebook groups and WhatsApp groups. Telephone calls were very occasionally used to convey meetings. Following the interviewsa FGDs the development of an innovative tool to support advocacy for human rights, such as the Tactical Mapping Tool (TMT), did not really deliver for reasons attributable to the complex concept behind it which made its use difficult by final users. Similarly for the Power-Up project in Indonesia as mentioned above outreach to certain groups of beneficiaries (e.g. elderly and housemakers) was not sufficient to support use of the tools beyond the sensitization phase. The specific focus of the CFCA project (Nicaragua) is on the CWC members, not the community members.

In countries such as Indonesia and Nepal confidence within the target groups to speak out and/ or that their voices will be heard is still is at a low level which is a hindering factor for their participation. Interviews and FGDs in Nepal show that the potential of ICT to raise their voice, however, is valued, with stakeholders indicating that the technical solutions also helped to overcome psychological and cultural barriers preventing women and marginalized groups to speak out. ICT provided them with an accessible way to directly make complaints and get a response.

5.1.3 Intermediate Outcome 1300: Increased responsiveness of public institutions to the diverse needs and rights of people, especially women and marginalized groups through the use of technology.

Finding # 5 The use of technology has partly enhanced capacity of public institutions to respond to the different needs and rights of people/ WMG .
The projects in Nepal and Indonesia have more decidedly fostered responsiveness of public institutions to citizens' needs, although the extent to which this is anchored differs, which is to some extent linked to the broad ambitions of the projects and the limited timeframe. These two projects focus on accountability of institutions at the local level. Similarly the project in Mali has increased responsiveness of public institutions, partly due to technology in combination with traditional activities. Also the project in Nicaragua contributed to increased responsiveness through improved (remote) communication. It has to be taken into account that these two projects (TSAM and TSWRG) are more focused on internal accountability of CSOs than on government accountability. In both cases, according to the interviews, technological platforms in improving management contributed to strengthened accountability of the CSO which reflected positively on their visibility and prestige with decision-makers.

In terms of strengthening CSOs, the (Nicaragua) Community Water Committees – whose membership extends to the whole communities - are managed in a more transparent and accountable manner by the board, also thanks to the use of the technological platform, including for managing accounts and communication with community members. According to the documentation and confirmed by the fieldwork, in the TSAM project (Mali), the Paradox Platform provides more reliable statistics about the number of individuals and union associations under the FNAM umbrella and allowed for a more equal distribution of information to all members. Also the services of the FNAM to its members and to artisans beyond their own members have been improved, to a large extent due to technology. The organisation has gained more visibility and has been appointed in important committees and positions due to an improved reputation. Through FNAM, artisans are

now seen by the government as actors in policy development to improve the conditions of work, needs and rights.

In Nepal, an increased responsiveness of municipalities to the diverse needs and rights of citizens, especially women and marginalized groups, supporting quality of services was observed in the documentation and confirmed in the interviews and FGDs. The integrated technologies to implement accountability mechanisms such as Electronic Citizen Charter and E-Sifarish, (E-recommendation) have been rolled out in the targeted local governments and allow use based on need and requirement, including for women and marginalised groups. As mentioned above these mechanisms were developed in a participatory manner, making them more relevant to all users. A large majority of the respondents in our survey (80%) states that the use of technology has increased the capacity of local government to respond to the needs and rights of citizens, including those of WMG (93%), referring both to understanding and ability to respond. Developed tools are seen as a considerable improvement and allow for prompt responses of government to requests of citizens.

The desk-review shows that the Power-Up project (Indonesia) has contributed to an increased responsiveness of village planning and budgeting to the wider community, including women, among others in health and sanitation, economic empowerment, and support to women's groups. The capacity of district and sub-district health offices to disseminate information on high risk pregnancies to communities through an ICT tool also increased considerably; however, there was limited evidence that the district and sub-district health offices used the statistics and feedback in the ICT tool on high risk pregnancy to improve their services. The aim to increase the responsiveness of public institutions to better respond to women's diverse (health) needs using technology – was ambitious in its targets given the project timeframe and resources.

As stated in the documentation and agreed in the interviews, the TSAM project (Mali), created more awareness in ministries (notably the local and regional branches of the Ministry of Women, Family and Children) and other public institutions about the different needs and rights of FNAM (female) members and fostered the development of a framework collaboration agreement, partly due to technology in combination with traditional activities. FNAM has used WhatsApp and Facebook groups to create awareness on their legal rights among members and the IVR is potentially a tool for this as well as seen as a potential channel to communicate between the artisans and the government.

At the times of the desk-based reviews the two remaining projects (TOPICS and JES) were not sufficiently advanced to draw any conclusion in this respect.

Finding # 6 Capacity (and willingness) of institutions to work with the data provided by technological tools was mixed, with main differences due to (political) will and capacity
Not only the (political) will to address citizens' needs and requests, but also the actual capacity to use the data to this purpose, influences the responsiveness of institutions. While technology can be an important tool to convey information to decision-makers, the sector policy environment, e-governance ambitions, the prior openness of public institutions to concepts and practices of transparency and accountability, and the pre-existing relations between stakeholders make the main difference in terms of institutional response to demands of citizens, including women and marginalized groups. Next, project experiences point at more bureaucratic obstacles to change processes for higher levels of government.

Four of the projects directly worked with (local) government. As mentioned earlier, in the case of Nicaragua, the interaction was with the technical staff from the municipalities and there is practically

no evidence that engagement with local governments is happening at a higher governmental level beyond the water agency. The interviews and FGDs in the field show that the SUSASAN project (Nepal) contributed to an increased but varied responsiveness of municipalities through the use of technologies, with varied willingness (and ambition) of local government but overall clear ambitions for e-governance and gender. Particularly responsiveness to women and marginalized groups is seen as a new development. The different tools developed such as the technology-based grievance and feedback mechanisms have given space to the local governments to be more responsive and improved the quality of public services. the project did not succeed in developing tools at federal/ provincial level, hindered by the more bureaucratic decision making at this level. In addition, project efforts including dissemination of results were discontinued due to Covid-19.

Based on the desk-based review:

- The Power-Up project (Indonesia) project was premised on the national Government of Indonesia's decentralisation of services, particularly health services to local municipal level, and on its intention to create smart digital villages. However, the implementation of the smart villages policy were limited. This meant that there was limited digital infrastructure or evidenced-based decision making within local governments. The shift in organisational culture towards evidence-based decision making in health care services at the community level, required that district and sub-district health offices would have strengthened their analytical data capacity to use results to inform health service improvements, particularly around maternal health care, which was not the case at the time of project implementation.
- For the JES project in Guatemala it was too early to assess increased responsiveness of the MP to the needs of the target groups using technology. Project experiences, show a slow and bureaucratic approval process within the MP (Ministerio Publico)
- In the TOPICS project (RDC, Benin, Burkina Faso), evidence of Increased responsiveness of public institutions to the diverse needs and rights of people, especially women and marginalized groups, was so far found in Benin only, and it was triggered more by community surveys and face-to-face meetings than by technology. A concrete example of this was the establishment of a reception information point for patients at a hospital facility following the analysis of survey data. However, even there, a favourable attitude by decision makers towards the theme of social accountability existed before the project and this facilitated its implementation.

5.2 EQ 2 What results have been obtained by each project?

This Evaluation Question (covering effectiveness) refers to what results were obtained. As such, results may correspond with expected results as per the logic model (see the previous section) but not necessarily.

Finding # 7 Projects contributed to changed attitudes towards women and marginalized groups, which in turn contributed to an increased inclusiveness of activities.

The evaluation found that the projects in Nepal, Mali and Jordan, as well as in Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia contributed to changes in attitudes towards marginalized groups, including their increased participation and leadership (for two projects). According to the project documentation and confirmed in the interviews and FGDs, the SUSASAN project in Nepal contributed to the adaptation and mainstreaming of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) policies in the key implementing partners and CSOs involved, and to a changed focus of some of the targeted Local Governments, by supporting the formulation/ revision of the policies. The adaption of the policies reportedly led to an increased inclusiveness of the CSOs, with an increased number of women of marginalized groups (lower castes, single women etc.) in decision making positions. Next, the different technological tools designed allowed local governments to send messages specifically to the target

groups, and according to the interviews the use of these tools made them more sensitive towards these groups, involving for instance recording messages specifically for the target groups in local languages on gender-based violence. In Mali, the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children and the Family now takes the concerns of women artisans into account, which was not the case before the project.

Finding # 8, project implementation resulted in (potential) scale up of technology tools and approaches and support to Covid-19 information provision

In terms of scalability, the SUSASAN project resulted in considerable interest from other municipalities to replicate all or part of the technical tools and instruments, including the Covid-19 portal. The potential for scale up was mentioned in the project proposal. This however materialized earlier than anticipated. According to the project documentation and interview, dissemination of results and learnings by the targeted local governments resulted in replication of technological tools outside the project area. Project support was extended to the non-targeted local governments to facilitate and support replication of SUSASAN tools. Reportedly, 23 local governments outside the SUSASAN area have replicated at least one tool, with troubleshooting support provided also to replicating municipalities regularly to enhance the use of technological solutions. As for the project in Nicaragua stakeholder interviews point to likely spill-over effects of the strategies developed by the project.

With regard to the Covid-19 situation, according to the documentation the SUSASAN project has played a key role in supporting information provision by local governments with the development of a specific Covid-19 transparency portal, which was confirmed in the interviews. Similarly in the TSAM project, technologies helped the FNAM to support its members, in reassuring craftswomen and craftsmen during the outbreak of the pandemic. Messages were sent via the groups to inform and reassure people, talk about barrier measures, provide information and recommendations. The groups were also used to mobilise artisans to propose products to the state to combat the spread of the virus. This advocacy has led to several contracts being awarded to the artisans.

Finding #9 other results include alternative use of the introduced technological tools for exchange and capacity building and sustained CSOs structures

Next, the TSAM technology has offered added value to the FNAM and its members, also for new business opportunities and capacity building. After the introduction to among others WhatApp and Facebook, numerous craftsmen and women bought a smart phone to communicate with their clients and suppliers after the project showed them the value of social media also for their business. Capacity building activities also resulted in sharing of best practices, tips and advice between artisans who practice the same trade.

Other results identified based on the desk-based reviews include:

- Power up: Continued existence of the Self-governing Women's Groups/Caucuses established, providing lasting local CSO structures. At the start of the project, there were no structures present in the target area. The project facilitated the formation of open, informal or formal caucuses in each of the 52 targeted villages, depending on the local context, with all caucuses still active at the end of the project, involving on average about 40 women.
- TOPICS: In Benin, the project allowed to comparatively assess three different technological tools for collecting users' opinions, the results of which may be of use also for other projects and/or health care systems.

5.3 EQ 3 Were results achieved relevant to the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries, especially women and marginalized groups?

The projects specifically aimed to benefit women and marginalized people both as direct beneficiaries and indirect beneficiaries. In addition, direct beneficiaries included CSOs and Government officials.

Finding # 10 The four projects included in the case country studies addressed key problems for the beneficiaries using technological solutions.

The projects addressed key problems for the beneficiaries. Their design was based on baseline studies that helped identify target groups characteristics and needs. Although these baselines differ in terms of including gender analyses and gender-specific data. The projects, sometimes after (some) adjustments, adopted useful technological solutions responding to the needs of the final beneficiaries. The use of ICT tools (indirectly) helped women and marginalized groups to overcome knowledge and information barriers to increasing their participation in local governance structures.

- In Nepal, the SUSASAN project was relevant in view of the Nepalese governments' E-Government program which aimed to provide better services to citizens, improving transparency and good governance, with a focus on marginalized groups. At the start of the project citizens, including the target groups were generally not aware of accountability and transparency mechanisms in different aspects of local governance processes and lacked an enabling environment to meaningfully participate in decision-making processes.
- In Nicaragua, the CFCA's Technology for Sustainable Water Resource Governance project considered the practical needs of the CWCs for water management in the design and adjustment of the technological tools. The use of technology provided by the project has addressed to a large extent key needs of CWCs in terms of communication, learning, management and participation. The Municipal water and sanitation agencies have also benefited to a large extent from the use of technology provided by the project.
- In Mali, the TSAM project was relevant to a large extent and addressed several needs identified in the baseline study (more professionalism, more women participation in decision making and better communication by the FNAM), however specific technology related challenges of the target groups like low access to internet, low digital skills and low literacy levels were partly addressed early in the project via training of members and partly addressed only in the last year of the project (Smartkit and IVR)
- In Jordan, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia, the Rawabet project used social media to mobilize youth, women and marginalized groups (i.e., people with disabilities) in capacity building and community actions on human rights, particularly concerning gender issues such as child marriage, sexual harassment, domestic violence, economic and employment discrimination, women's participation in democratic decision-making, and political leadership. At the level of intermediaries and implementers, the project helped young people, women, people with disabilities and civil society organizations' volunteers raise their voice through technological tools and learn how to advocate for human rights. At the level of final beneficiaries, the project contributed to their equal participation through use of technology and created opportunities to involve the communities in discussing sensitive issues that threaten women's and girls' rights, particularly child marriage and violence against women.

Finding #11 Most of the projects contributed to the gender equality commitments of the countries where they were implemented.

Most of the projects contributed to the countries' gender commitments although based on the case country studies there is evidence of concrete outcomes only for three of them (Rawabet, TSAM and SUSASAN). In most cases, based on the interviews there seems to be no specific strategy for the

projects to consistently contribute to the gender equality commitments and strategies, neither at the partner level nor between partners and governments.

In Jordan, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia, according to the documentation and the interviews the Rawabet project contributed to several country gender Strategies such as the National Strategy for the Empowerment of the Egyptian Women 2030 (Egypt) and the Jordanian National Action Plan for advancing the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security,

In Mali, the TSAM project developed a FNAM gender policy and contributed to the adaptation and mainstreaming of the national Gender policy. The gender policy was implemented in the action plans of the women offices and integrated in the training of the supervisory committees. According to the interviews, at the level of the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children and the Family concerns of women artisans are taken into account in the same way as those of women working in formal sectors, which was not the case before the project.

In Nepal, the SUSASAN project supported the formulation/revision of Gender Equality and Inclusion Policies (GESI) policies for the key implementing partners and CSOs involved, and a changed focus of some of the targeted Local Governments. Interviews with different stakeholders in the field show that the GESI policy has been mainstreamed in the targeted CSOs leading to more inclusive decision-making processes. This included the inclusion of women and marginalized groups (lower casts) in decision-making positions. Some of the local governments decided to formulate GESI policies as well. In addition, the achieved results also contribute to the implementation of the gender policy of the municipalities. Following the country's gender commitment public positions are gender balanced, but women in practice often do not have the capacity to exercise power of authority. According to the interviews the projects' capacity building activities and results achieved are strengthening the position/ ability of women in different positions.

5.3.1 What is the added value of using digital solutions for the target groups, including women and youth, compared to other more traditional tools?

Finding #12 The target groups, including women and youth, to some extent perceive an added value of the digital tools to address their needs for involvement in local governance processes.

The four projects included in the case country studies provided technological solutions that proved useful to improve the involvement of target groups, including women and youth, in local governance processes. However, although most of the projects carried out users' assessments, qualitative data are limited and not sufficiently systematised to allow a thorough appreciation of the extent to which the final beneficiaries can use consistently and safely the technological solutions provided.

According to the case country studies:

- In Nepal, the target groups of the SUSASAN project increasingly participate in the budget planning process, and are now aware of how the information can be used to get budget allocated specifically for women and other target groups. Findings from some of the technological tools such as the Infrastructure Management System (IMS), also brought out data showing the positive effects of involving women in chair positions supporting the inclusion of women in leadership roles which may benefit more equal gender relations.
- In Nicaragua, communication with government authorities and other water stakeholders is more efficient and transparent through social media and digital platforms. Connectivity and networking between CWCs within each municipality and within the region have increased

mainly through WhatsApp and the project's website. Awareness of water issues and rights through public campaigns on social media has improved.

- The Rawabet project in Jordan and Tunisia provided evidence of increased use of social media and, limitedly, other technology to raise human rights debates, particularly gender issues, within the target communities to influence change in the communities and at the national level in Jordan and Tunisia. Some of the digital solutions adopted by the project can be scaled up and are replicable, such as the Rawabet Educational Platform, while others, such as the TMT, was not the most appropriate for the target group
- The TSAM project (Mali) contributed to an improvement participation of women association, both through the use of technology and by capacity building, which were complementary. Capacity building was needed for women especially in leadership and for men to accept women as elected members. The Paradox Platform helped to spread the gender policy and made training capsules available for elected representatives to use in their associations and the social media were used to send refresher messages, and invitations via the women's offices to stand for election.

5.3.2 Gender equality

Finding #13 All the projects were implemented in a gender-sensitive way but did not develop a clear strategy on how to address gender norms, roles and stereotypes that constitute barriers to change for gender equality

All projects seem to have been implemented in a gender-sensitive way, to different degrees. However, there is little evidence in the analysed documentation and from the interviews, for most of them, that they systematically tracked gender equality performance, put in place measures to address challenges and produced recommendations for redress. The projects reported sex disaggregated data, but more gender specific and qualitative data should have been generated and reported on. In cases civil society actors working on gender equality were involved but the outcomes of this partnership to achieve change to advance gender equality were not reported. From the documents analyzed, as well as the interviews, it is not clear if and how the projects intended to address gender norms and stereotypes and challenge gender power relations in the communities.

Evidence collected from the case country studies can be summarized as follows:

- The Rawabet project put in place actions that contributed to increased awareness about child marriage, sexual harassment, domestic violence, economic and employment discrimination, women's participation in democratic decision-making, women's rights to access social security and political leadership. The project adopted a gender-sensitive approach but did not structure it through a systematic involvement of women's rights organizations and groups whilst no strategy on how to address challenges to achieve change for gender equality was formulated. In this the project promoted more equitable gender representation at the community level but did not address underlying causes of gender-based discrimination, gender stereotypes and power imbalances.
- The SUSASAN project in Nepal involved a gender expert to support gender equality and inclusiveness within the design and implementation of the project. The inclusion of the target groups in the different activities and events was combined with, as mentioned earlier, a focus also on more qualitative improvement with the adoption of GESI-policies and sensitizing and empowering of the different target groups.
- In Nicaragua, the TSWRG project's Gender Strategy and Action Plan addressed barriers to women participation such as the choice of the location of the workshops to allow easy transportation and access or the provision of basic childcare during the workshops. However,

women continue to be in the traditional female roles with only one-third of presidents of CWCs being female. The project is encouraging women to take up more presidencies as elections are due to take place.

Based on the desk-based reviews:

- In Guatemala, the JES project has undertaken considerable efforts towards gender sensitive implementation and ensuring that the visual content of the website and technological platform accurately reflects the gender and cultural diversity of the country. The project team aims to apply a gender and inclusive, including LGTBIQ, perspective at every stage of development and implementation of the project website and platform, for example by improving the demographic fields that victims use to self-identify for the victim services platform and the prosecutor's system. However, the documents available do not allow any further analysis on results for gender equality.
- In Benin, Burkina Faso and DRC, TOPICS pursued equal involvement of women and men, but did not look in-depth at causes of gender imbalances, nor challenged gender roles and stereotypes or power relations. The project aims at empowering decision-makers by informing them on the opinion of health care users and workers and aims at having at least 40% of female decision-makers involved. However, the analysis of users and health workers' responses included in the first statistical reports with opinion data has not been conducted with a gender lens, to verify if women and men have different views on the health care system.
- In Indonesia, the Power-Up project integrated the gender equality strategy in the project design and implementation to work on transforming gender relations including awareness-raising, the transformation of attitudes and norms, improvements in available resources and services, and strengthening the capacity of CSOs and WROs to work for gender justice. The project contributed to more equitable gender power relations with the increase of women's participation in village planning and budgeting. However, the improvement in social gender norms related to women's participation and leadership in democratic processes has not completely shifted the conventional thinking of men, specifically their attitude that women's role is primarily domestic. Furthermore, the analyzed documentation as well as the interviews do not show a project's plan to carry out a more strategic action to address gender norms, roles and stereotypes.

5.4 EQ 4 Were the innovative ICT tools and approaches designed and implemented in a way that they will continue to be used beyond the life of the project?

Finding #14 Most of the ICT tools and approaches were designed and implemented in a way that they will be continued beyond the life of the project.

Based on the different findings from the seven tenets it is clear that although none of the projects created a formal sustainability plan from the beginning, most projects did address different elements of sustainability, especially institutional and technological sustainability through ownership building and capacity building and to a lesser extent financial sustainability by choosing open source solutions, free tools like social media and by budgeting maintenance cost into the government budget, supporting continuation after the project. In some of these cases, like the TSAM project and for the CWCs in Nicaragua the developed tools are the core business of the organisation, which will foster continuation even more. In other cases, like in the Power-Up project in Indonesia some tools were not adequately designed with users and will not be continued, because they do not serve a clear need. Some of the digital solutions adopted by the Rawabet project can be scaled up and are replicable, such as the Rawabet Educational Platform, while others, such as the TMT was not the most appropriate for the target group.

The sustainability of the innovative ICT platforms designed and implemented for all seven projects funded by the 'Technological Platforms to Strengthen Public Sector Accountability and Citizen Engagement Initiative' was evaluated in the desk-based review using the following seven tenets of the Principle for Digital Development "Build for Sustainability" :

1. Plan for sustainability from the start
2. Develop a definition of sustainability for your initiative.
3. Identify and implement a sustainable business model.
4. Use and invest in local information technology service providers.
5. Engage local governments and integrate national strategies into programming.
6. Collaborate instead of compete, and partner to identify the best approach with the greatest impact.
7. Build a program that can be adapted as user needs and the context change.

5.4.1 Plan for sustainability from the start

Finding # 15 Most projects did not have a formal sustainability plan, certainly not from the start that could be updated if context would change.

None of the projects developed from the design phase of the project a formal sustainability plan. This might hinder to look at continuation of the innovative tools in a more strategic way. Elements were described in the proposal and Annual Plans. The two Latin American projects developed sustainability plans at a later stage in their projects. In the Nicaragua project, a complete Sustainability and Transition plan was not formally elaborated since the start, but sustainability elements were taken into account in the design and implementation of the project. Sufficient attention was paid to transferring responsibilities including the hosting of the platform and the app to partners; however, the turnover of CWC board members raises some concerns. The JES project in Guatemala early-on signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the government to host the victim support service website and platform, ensuring institutional responsibility at the end of the project. TSAM did not develop a sustainability plan, but included sustainability measures which supported both financial sustainability and operational sustainability of the developed technologies. For Rawabet, partners will be able to continue the project activities as they have embedded them in their programs, although the continued presence of human rights educators might not be assured due to the voluntary basis of their involvement. In the SUSASAN Project, co-creation and an inclusive design and implementation and a focus on capacity building and ownership support the continued use of the ICT tools; the project however did not develop an exit plan from the start which has limited the attention for institutionalisation.

5.4.2 Develop a definition of sustainability for your initiative.

Finding #16 Most projects addressed different elements of sustainability but not all elements were addressed equally.

For the Evaluation the consultant team looked at Financial and institutional sustainability. The projects themselves did not define clearly what their definition of sustainability is. Not all elements of sustainability were equally addressed.

Financial sustainability was addressed in terms of avoiding recurring costs through the choice of open source or free social media tools, for example the TSAM project in Mali, the SUSASAN project in Nepal and the Rawabet project. In the latter project, the choice to use common social media was based on intermediaries and implementers' wishes and abilities but financial sustainability and security were addressed only to a limited extent. Financial sustainability was also achieved by embedding the maintenance cost into the government budget like in the Technological Platform for Victim Services project in Guatemala, where the government committed to fund the ongoing maintenance, the upkeep of the victim support website and the online platform after the

project's life-span. In the TSWRG project in Nicaragua the project has pre-paid for future data plans for the CWC and the website domains to make sure these tools can remain available after the ending of the project although the financial sustainability is not fully assured as many CWCs might not be able to afford the data plans without the support of the project. In the TSAM project in Mali the project negotiated a contract to use the Paradox platform with a licence free of charge, renewable every 5 years (and unlimited renewal) and a two-year free access to the IVR system of Orange. They also use open-source systems (WordPress for their website) without subscription and free social media tools (FaceBook, WhatsApp and YouTube). The project has also increased the visibility of the FNAM and therefore their value for members. Around 100 additional associations joined, which will increase the financial sustainability of the FNAM as an organisation. Also the reputation of FNAM improved , generating further interest from donors in funding activities.

Institutional sustainability was to a large extent well addressed by most projects, except for the Power-Up project in Indonesia, through the creation of local ownership and capacity building of local partners. For example, in the TSAM project in Mali the FNAM fully owns the Paradox Platform and the Wordpress website and they have been trained to operate the social media channels they have set up (content development and dissemination). In Nicaragua the CWCs felt ownership from the start due to a gradual transfer of responsibilities to them like maintaining the apps and start using data plans. The local governments have been engaged in the project, engagement with institutions at national level has been more limited though. In the case of the SUSASAN project the extent to which the project and its results are well anchored in the municipalities differed. The municipalities did not have a dedicated counterpart for the project next to the IT officer, and trainings to strengthen capacities for different line departments are mostly provided by district CSOs, with very limited trainings organized by the government itself, limiting sustainability perspectives. The projects however did not make (extensive) political economy and stakeholders analysis, to support the continuation of the social accountability process.

Technical sustainability was in most projects addressed through capacity building and through collaboration/ partnerships with local ICT partners to support the project partners. The Power-up project in Indonesia ensured the accessibility of the content of ICT tools developed in the project beyond the project implementation phase. Some information tools were expected to continue because they were reviewed positively by women due to offline access options and others because they were embedded in a free national telephone service. In the Project in Nicaragua the hosting of the platform is guaranteed in the short run, but it is more uncertain what will happen in the longer run when tablets need to be replaced or some water committees might have difficulties in paying for the data plans. The Rawabet project is able to maintain the distributed computers after the project due to capacity building of their intermediaries. However, the project did not put in place a sustainability and exit strategy so it is not clear whether the direct beneficiaries will be able to access the training and the community actions online beyond the life end of the initiative. In the SUSASAN project in continuation is supported by handing over the technological property to the local governments and the local ICT partner Young Innovation and by the use of open source solutions, but capacity of the Local Government is an issue. The field work showed that the plan for transferring ownership of technologies to local governments is not clear in every municipality visited, but it was too early to draw any conclusions as the outcomes will very much depend on the interest of (newly) elected officials. In the TOPICS project in Benin, Burkina Faso and DRC sustainability of the technology was defined especially in terms of the intrinsic characteristics of the chosen solutions (e.g. no need for human resources) while sustainability of the whole social accountability process received less attention.

5.4.3 *Identify and implement a sustainable business model.*

Finding #17 Projects did not create commercial sustainable business models but did address continuation of services.

The word business model was not used as such as most projects were not commercial projects but were public sector or social impact related. So a sustainable business model implies continuation of services or the ability to pay for maintenance and scaling up. For the CWCs in Nicaragua a business model could add value to support them to continue to pay for maintenance and the data plan. Now it is not yet clear if financial sustainability will be achieved by the water committees. Most other projects are either internally focused like the FNAM (where they do have to budget for the continuation of some of the technology tools and others are licence free) or they are public goods built in government budgets like the victims system in Guatemala. SUSASAN in Nepal followed a sustainability approach by strengthening the capacity of the stakeholders and creating ownership. Continuation is supported by handing over the technological property to the local governments and the local ICT partner Young Innovation and by the use of open source solutions, but capacity of the Local Government is an issue. The projects (SUSASAN and TSAM) did not always allow sufficient time for proof of concepts and institutionalization might have furthered adaptations and institutionalization of proven successes.

(potential) scale up and/or replicability was only described in the SUSASAN and TSWRG projects, next in the case of FNAM artisan unions from other Western African countries are interested in the Paradox platform.

5.4.4 *Use and invest in local information technology service providers.*

Finding #18 Most projects did work with local service providers for at least part of their technology solutions; if local presence was ignored this affected the success in the projects digital solutions.

In two cases, projects did not involve a local service provider which has affected the success of ICT implementation. In the Rawabet project the TMT was not developed with the involvement of local expertise, as confirmed in key informants' interviews and FGDs in Jordan. The fact that only an expert with local digital expertise was hired, represents a missed opportunity for capacity building and ownership. Similar in the Power-Up project in Indonesia the project did not have local presence at the start of the project. The technology provider Viamo did not have a local presence nor access to associated ICT infrastructure in Indonesia at the time the project started. The project initially used VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol) to connect to mobile phones. This did not work well and caused delays in the project.

In other cases local service providers were included supporting the sustainability of the digital tools: In TSAM in Mali Orange Mali and DFA Communication were used as a local technical service provider in combination with a foreign ICT service partner from the UK OneWorld. The voice recording was carried out in a participatory manner with the artisans of the FNAM. The messages were recorded by local people in French and Bambara. In the SUSASAN project in Nepal an ICT provider with a good presence was used to support co-creation and contextualisation. The TOPICS project in Benin, Burkina Faso and the DRC used ICT providers with strong presence in the region/countries and, in Benin, a local company. They first did this in combination with a French technology provider who also planned to do monthly maintenance and regular remote checks to ensure continuous functioning of the platform, but it withdrew from the project. Another technology provider/partner for the community surveys is a Belgian company with several offices in the region which is heavily involved in developing information systems for health care in Africa.

5.4.5 *Engage local governments and integrate national strategies into programming.*

Finding #19 In all projects local partners and/or governments were engaged in the project in a participatory way, although not always for solution development

In all projects local partners and/or governments were engaged in the project in a participatory way, both in the design of project to ensure contextualisation and alignment with national policy and in the implementation stage to build local ownership. In the Technology for Sustainable Water Resource in Nicaragua the communication between the CWCs and local government was set up via WhatsApp and via Water Round Tables and in the SUSASAN project in Nepal via co-creation by project partners and local government of the different tools. The project adapted the digital tools for 12 local governments to the capacities of the local governments with limited ICT expertise and high staff turnover. The TOPICS project in Benin, Burkina Faso and DRC was designed to fit into national health policies and strategies but developed effective collaboration with institutions mainly in Benin. It was unclear how the dialogue between civil society organisations and decision-makers should be structured after the end of the project to ensure social accountability. They did work with local technology service providers, just like the TSAM project in Mali. This helped also to contextualize content and translate the messages into local language messages. In Nicaragua the project did not manage to work on a national level, but in Mali the TSAM project was also able to collaborate with several ministries from the start of the project to embed the project within national structures and participate in policy development to work jointly on the empowerment of women artisans; the project has strengthened its links with relevant agencies and ministries. The Power-Up project in Indonesia did work with district, sub-district and village level government authorities, but not in a participative way regarding solution development. This limited the success of the IVR system, next to the technological issues the systems faced. Similarly in the Rawabet project Important external factors, such as the election processes in Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan, resulted in unviable environments to allow intermediaries and beneficiaries to meaningfully involve their governments into the project cycle.

5.4.6 *Collaborate instead of compete, and partner to identify the best approach with the greatest impact.*

This tenet was already adequately addressed under EQ 3 “Were results achieved relevant to the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries, especially women and marginalized groups?” There it was already addressed to what extent beneficiaries and relevant CSOs (and in particular WMG) were involved in the design of the technological solutions.

5.4.7 *Build a program that can be adapted as user needs and the context change*

This tenet is also in detail described in chapter 3. One aspect that was not addressed was privacy. In this paragraph therefore the focus is on how privacy was addressed in the different projects.

Finding #20 Most projects address privacy in their projects well and use GDPR as the gold standard.

If projects collect personal data, they consider privacy as an important issue. Some projects try to avoid collecting sensitive data like the Power-Up Project in Indonesia. The project did not collect any personal data and made efforts to ensure non traceability of data, for instance the system for high-risk pregnancy was an info service rather than asking questions, and the google forms feedback mechanism is anonymous. Sometimes privacy was also a protection against government officials like in Nicaragua. They also collected only a very limited amount of personal information from the users, only information like gender or age. The only sensible information stored in the platforms were the names and telephone numbers of the president of each CWC. This was with consent and for practical communication reasons, but this information is only accessible for registered users of the platform, mainly water committee members. In the Rawabet project the TMT was fully secured and with data consent to use personal data and photos, however, when they started to use social media, data protection was less ensured. The SUSASAN project in Nepal took

privacy also seriously. During the project period security of data was safeguarded using the local project server. After the handover a vulnerability assessment/ security tests of Local Government systems was made to make sure the safeguarding of data is compliant. The TSAM project in Mali considered the privacy of their members as well. No sensitive data was made publicly available, nor culturally sensitive personal data (age, business income, marital status, number of children) because it seriously blocked the artisans' willingness to cooperate. For the Technological Platform for Victim Services privacy was even a key reason to develop the platform. Before, sensitive information was shared via paper-based case files of victims of domestic violence (with the risk of attacks, when women carried them in person) and also the first digital system had a very low data privacy with referrals via WhatsApp and mobile phones. The TOPICS project in Benin, Burkina Faso and DRC did not address privacy as far as the consultants could establish, based on the desk review.

5.5 Questions 5 and 6

EQ 5 What key factors hindered the achievement of expected results and EQ 6 What key factors contributed to the achievement of the obtained results[18]?

Based on the reconstruction of the Theory of Change for each of the seven projects (see Annex document) and the document/ literature review and interviews the following six key assumptions could be identified. The materialisation of these assumptions is needed in order to achieve the immediate and intermediate outcomes:

- Target groups/ CSOs are motivated to share their views, believing that they will be taken into account;
- There is an added value of the new technological solutions and channels vs. existing modalities, including for the target groups' involvement in decision making/ holding public institutions to account;
- Technology is available and accessible including for the target groups, including public institutions;
- Consultation translates into actually taking up views in decision-making;
- Public institutions are open to acquire relevant data of especially marginalized groups and women;
- Decision-makers are in a position to respond to the needs of the target groups (have authority, tools, resources) and have willingness to act.

Below we discuss the different assumptions and key factors that have hindered and contributed to materialization in the four case study countries

1. Target groups/ CSOs are motivated to share their views, believing that they will be taken into account

In one of the case study countries (Nepal) the assumption has only materialized to some extent, but also in other countries (Nicaragua) full materialization was not achieved. Summarizing, the hindering and contributing factors that could be identified relate to:

- Psychological and/ or cultural barriers, preventing women and also marginalized groups from raising their voice and sharing their opinions. In Nepal, FGDs and interviews point at a complex Theory of Change to ensure change in behaviour (motivations to share views) in entrenched psychological and cultural complexities. FGDS with the target group showed that confidence within the groups is still at a low level, although the potential of ICT to raise their voice is valued

[18] The evaluation team decided to combine the two questions as addressing the questions separately resulted in largely overlapping analysis

and found beneficial. The Power-Up project in Indonesia achieved an increased support for women's participation in village planning and budgeting processes, but women's time for participation was limited by domestic chores. In Nicaragua, the cultural beliefs and prejudices about women's roles in the community limited their influence, although long-term data would be needed in this respect. Women's participation is strong at users level, because in Nicaragua women are generally active, although less in rural communities. It was expressed frequently in FGDs that women are often more afraid of being criticized, are sometimes constrained by lack of permission from their husbands, and that the general perception of female management is less positive than that of men, particularly of older men in the community (which are the ones normally taking up the chairperson role in the CWCs).

- Next also a viability of the environment to allow target groups/ CSOs to share their views can be considered a key factor.
  - For the Rawabat project overall the socio-political situation in the project's countries (Jordan, Tunisia, Egypt Morocco) was not conducive. The political contexts require both caution in dealing with the governments and the adoption of a strategic modus operandi to bring forward sensitive human rights issues while safeguarding the interests and security of right-holders. One of the effects of the Covid-19 outbreak in terms was an increase in social tension and insecurity which was met, sometimes, by police repression, prosecution of bloggers and activists criticizing official institutions, and threats to freedom of expression. This situation demanded increasing carefulness by partners in dealing with sensitive issues and the need to lower expectations by focusing only on specific gender equality issues. Advocacy to hold accountable on human rights certain national authorities was not implemented as it would jeopardise the safety of beneficiaries. Also, the project could not assure the gathering and mobilization of civil society and only two national forums (in Tunisia and Jordan) were held rather than a regional forum, as initially planned.
  - Similarly, in the TSWG project a key hindering factor for the achievement of the expected results as discussed above was the political context in Nicaragua which made it more difficult to carry out activities related to accountability, advocacy or citizens' empowerment and achieve results in terms of public accountability and citizen engagement. In terms of accountability, the CWCs did not use the information on water status and water rights 'to hold government to account' (the policy level was rarely questioned or discussed). The socio-political situation in Nicaragua and the general lack of an accountability culture constrained the achievement of the outcomes. Communication remained at a technical level as vocal advocacy on policy issues would not be appreciated by the authorities.
  - The situation was different in countries like Indonesia and Nepal. In Nepal, the project built on the e-governance and gender ambitions of the Nepalese (local) government and momentum of the newly established (rural) municipalities. The project was thus introduced at the right moment and developed digital tools to facilitate increased citizen-State dialogue. Next, the country has a long tradition of civil society engagement in society and politics. Prior capacity of the CSOs might have played a role, although the contribution of the project and the developed technologies to improved capacity was perceived by stakeholders as significant. The leading agencies' long-term involvement with Nepalese CSOs and with the country in general was also a facilitating factor.

2. There is an added value of the new technological solutions and channels vs. existing modalities, including for the target groups' involvement in decision making/ access to information;

Overall there are some differences in the perception about the utility of using technologies, to some extent related to a generational gap in terms of digital literacy and prior knowledge about technology (SUSASAN, TOPICS, Power-Up). Gender differences in the interest towards technology have not been observed. In Nepal the interviews and FGDs showed that in many cases the

traditional modalities are still preferred for exchange and communication, while technological channels are appreciated to make publicly available information. Next, the design of effective tools that can work offline is a contributing factor for the materialization of the assumption. Furthermore, the eruption of the Covid-19 pandemic has reinforced the positive perception about the use of technology. For instance in Mali, during the Covid-19 crisis the FNAM, according to the interviews, felt an urgency to communicate with members, which made it possible to develop online modules, expand the WhatsApp groups and organize virtual trainings; this in turn has encouraged beneficiaries to use the technologies. In Nepal, as discussed above, the digital tools also helped to overcome psychological and cultural barriers preventing women and marginalized groups from complaining and raising their voice. The ICT solution provided the opportunity to directly make complaints and get a response from authorities, and the success of their actions increased the target groups' confidence.

3. Technology is available and accessible for the target groups and involved public institutions

In three of the four case study countries this assumption only materialized to some extent. In the other country -- Nicaragua -- the technological ambitions of the project focused on the water committees only.

The section in Chapter 2 on ICT for government and citizen engagement shows clearly the huge differences between participating countries in technology availability/ accessibility. Although there is an increasing number of citizens -- including women and marginalized groups -- that have access to (smart) phones, in most countries there are areas with limited internet connectivity. Next, access and use by the target groups are hampered by high costs and limited (digital) literacy. Also in Jordan, which scores relatively high looking at e-readiness, factors related to access to technology, digital divide and data protection hindered achievements. Data from the fieldwork confirmed that not all beneficiaries have full access to technology. The issue of data protection and security also remains challenging. The project, as well as many of the other projects, is using common social media in order to facilitate use by beneficiaries. While this strategy is well explained and is the result of participatory rounds with intermediaries and implementers, concerns remain with respect to the controllability of these technologies as it happened during the protests in Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia leading to accusations and arrests of many human rights activists. These hindering factors required the projects to adapt and to introduce a combination of online and offline tools to increase accessibility also for the target groups.

In line with the above, in the case of the TSWRG project (Nicaragua) the simplicity and versatility of the hardware provided, the tablet, was a positive contributing factor; furthermore, the strong adaptation of the technological tool to the local context, including the scarce connectivity, by allowing the use of the platform offline, was another key of success of the platform as a knowledge repository and training tool. In the TSAM project (Mali) the complexity of the developed portal, which was also intended to be used as a discussion and consultation platform, due to low connectivity, low access to smart phones, low literacy of the members the platform, required the project to move some activities to WhatsApp, Facebook etc, which were accessible for a larger group. Something similar happened in the Rawabet project.

A further hindering factor for achievement was more internal to the projects (SUSASAN, TSAM, Rawabet), I.e. the insufficient attention or time and capacity reserved for the outreach to the target groups or to fully test the digital tools. This can in part be explained by the design of the projects, but also Covid-19 and other sources of delay played a role.

On a final note, external factors such as the slow increase over time in different countries of the number of internet and social media users due to increased digital literacy makes technologies

used in the different projects increasingly more accessible. This result is likely to continue in the coming years.

4. Consultation translates into actually taking up views in decision-making.

Evidence of the extent to which the opinions of the target groups are taken into account by decision-makers is often anecdotical (case stories) or not yet existent. In the case of Rawabet (Jordan), the fieldwork showed a high level of confidence among beneficiaries that their opinions would be taken into account. However, such confidence does not demonstrate that duty-bearers actually take recommendations into account and that rights-holders are therefore able to influence decision-making. As shown by the data in chapter 2, the human rights situation in the beneficiary countries is such that governments themselves do not respect and/or can harm these rights. This is a key hindering factor. Looking at the projects, accountability processes were often developed at community level, rather than at national level, also due to the limited coordination with higher level authorities. As mentioned above in Nepal, a key contributing factor to the achievement were the countries' ambitions in terms of e-governance and gender.

In the case of the RSWRG project (Nicaragua) and TSAM (Mali), as mentioned earlier, the focus was on strengthening of the community organisation/ artisan association. In both cases a key factor contributing to the achievements of the projects was the fact that it built on an already existing organisations, already experienced with the delivery of services and sufficiently endowed with legitimacy to be recognised and listened by authorities.

5. Public institutions are open to acquire relevant data of esp. marginalized groups and women;

The extent to which this assumption has materialized differs between countries, with some question marks on the ability of institutions to analyse specific data, or maintain the technological solutions developed. In Nicaragua, political rights have been undermined in the past years and dealing with authorities is a sensitive issue, especially at higher levels with the general lack of an accountability culture. However, the water agencies within municipalities proved willing to engage in increased coordination and communication with the communities and in water round tables. In Mali relevant government institutions were open to strengthen their links with the FNAM and to work jointly on the empowerment of women artisans.

For the TSAM project (Mali) a key hindering factor also for materialization of other assumptions was the security situation in the country. Mali has experienced various outburst of localized violence, undergone two military coups and, all in all, this insecurity has led to significant delays in the collaboration with several ministries and the organization of events. The projects were often obliged to replace originally planned locations or change activities; as a result, also activities and relationships with government institutions were limited. Next, the Covid -19 crisis did not favour advocacy gatherings either, nor it facilitated the trading activities and travel of FNAM members.

This assumption materialized better in presence of e-governance, transparency and governance ambitions at (local) government level, which was the case in Nepal (but also in Indonesia and Benin); the projects supported different government institutions in delivering on their promises with the introduction of digital tools. For instance in Benin, the more favourable policy context with a clear commitment of the Ministry of Health to gather feedback from health care users was a success factor for the TOPICS project in the country.

A key contributing factor is also the extent to which projects are affiliating with public and/ or government institutions in the design and implementation of their activities as was the case for TSWRG and SUSASAN. In the case of the latter, according to the interviews also the project

support to digitalisation of municipal documents and information and co-creation of the tools played a role according to the stakeholders.

6. Decision-makers are in a position to respond to the needs of the target groups (have authority, tools, resources) and have willingness to act

Like for the previous assumption, the materialization of this assumptions is affected by the political context, including elections and changes in government positions. For instance in Guatemala the current Attorney General (AG) has prioritised the JES project as part of her administrative and political legacy to address the high levels of violence against women and children in Guatemala and to advance victim support services, being the platform an important part of such services. At the same time the AG may deter trust for users to engage with the platform (which is affecting his authority).

As mentioned above the current socio-political situation in Nicaragua is a key constraining factor. The water agencies are generally open for collaboration, however their resources are very limited, which reduces their intervention capacity. Moreover, their willingness to respond to population demands varies from town to town, and the concept of “social audit” is not perceived positively by authorities in general. In more favorable political situations political will, but also available resources and capacity play a key role. In Nepal, the SUSASAN project saw cases in which municipal officials were not willing to act upon requests from people from the opposition parties.

Internal factors that affected achievement of results seem to be the rather ambitious set up of some of the projects (SUSASAN) with as mentioned above limited time and resources available for a wider outreach to the communities but also to engage with local government. The desk-based reviews show similar findings for the Power-Up project In Indonesia and in case of the TOPICS project the multi-layered partner organisation with key staff in three countries did not support efficient and effective project implementation at the start of the project .

6 Conclusions

Within the limitations specified in chapter 4, the evaluation found that In terms of achievements the projects made contributions towards all the three intermediate outcomes. Yet, due to the diversity of the projects expected results are very different, which makes it difficult to draw any firm conclusion on the achievement of the mandatory outcomes.

With regard to the main evaluation question: *how the innovative ICT tools and approaches may have enhanced or hindered the participation and inclusion of women and marginalized groups*, the following can be concluded:

Conclusion #1 The projects, sometimes after adjustments, adopted useful technological solutions responding to the needs of the beneficiaries, but capacity building of the target groups was less effective

Projects, sometimes at a later stage, included the technologies that were most accessible for the beneficiaries, including women and marginalized groups, based on a need assessment and/ or feedback received. This involved mostly adopting generally available tools such as WhatsApp, Facebook and Google. Specifically, the three projects that did not involve beneficiaries and or/ local ICT experts from the start, were too ambitious by involving more advanced digital tools, which proved to be too complex for the target groups and/ or context. Overall the projects, however did not provide sufficient outreach, training and follow up to the target groups to support (continued) use of the digital tools for a wider group. Specific technology-related challenges of the target groups like low access to internet, low digital skills and low literacy levels, but also data security were in general only partly or in cases not addressed.

Conclusion # 2 On- and offline tools were often complementary for the achievement of increased involvement including of the target groups in decision making whilst non-technological factors still played an important role

Projects adapted to scarce connectivity and limited digitalisation, by allowing the use of offline tools and options in cases providing support and explanation to familiarize citizens with the tools (techno-hubs) to engage particularly women and marginalized groups. Projects achievements were obtained using technology – although some to a lesser extent as well as through non-technological interventions. The combination of technological solutions including on- and off line allowed for a larger involvement of groups and institutions, in more remote and weak connectivity areas. Projects also performed a range of non-technology related interventions and activities, such as providing face-to face trainings, awareness raising, organising events etc. Projects did support participatory dynamics, and involvement of communities including women, but did so mostly through non-technological means, including the update of GESI policies and organising of offline meetings.

Conclusion #3 The use of ICT tools improved access to information but did not always directly reach and empower the target groups; intermediary CSOs have been the main mechanism to position women and marginalized groups more favourably

In all projects the use of ICT tools helped to overcome knowledge and information barriers, including on rights and needs of WMG, enhancing CSO and citizen engagement and participation, as well as awareness of government officials in some cases. Yet, in most cases this did not imply that individual people, especially women and marginalized groups, directly and actively used technology to hold their governments to account. In all projects, intermediary organisations played a key role in influencing decision making in favour of WMG. The limited availability of consistent M&E data on the direct and indirect beneficiaries of the projects, with often limited systematic

disaggregation of beneficiaries' data in this affected result measurement and adaptive management.

Conclusion # 4. Projects addressed and partly improved gender equality but did not carry out transformative actions to address the root causes of gender inequality and injustice

The projects reported sex-disaggregated data, but the level of accuracy is uneven among them. Most projects supported increased representation, participation of women. Although all projects produced a gender strategy, no gender analyses were done for the digital sector, thus losing a chance to address the drivers of gender discrimination and gender-based exclusion in the communities, including the gender digital divide. Projects did not or only to a limited extent address gender norms and stereotypes and challenge gender power relations.

Conclusion # 5 Most projects have addressed technical, financial and institutional sustainability of the digital tools introduced adequately resulting in continued access and use, while lack of contextualization and participatory approach is limiting sustained use for others

The projects did not include an exit-plan from the start, but developed an sustainability plan only towards the end of the projects. Financial sustainability was mainly addressed by embedding the recurring cost into budgets of public institutions and associations and not as part of a commercial business model. Institutional and technical sustainability was addressed by building long term relationships, local ownership and capacity building of local partners. This is however not sufficient to sustain the social accountability processes, which would require more political economy and stakeholders analysis. The use of local technology partners supported contextualisation. Projects were able to engage with local governments, but not always as co-creation partners. For projects that did use participatory methods sustainability seems better embedded through local ownership and alignment with policies. Only limited attention was given to data privacy in social media, where users are not always aware of the security risks. And if they do consider the security risks, it could cause self-censoring of topics.

Conclusion # 6 In contrast to the mandatory intermediate outcomes and corresponding indicators, not all project used technological tools to develop social accountability processes and for advocacy in strict sense. This resulted in ambiguities in results measurement, among other.

The fact that the three intermediate outcomes or some of them at least were mandatory for partners to take up in their project forced some partners to fit their project ideas into the framework of the Call. Similar performance measurement was linked to three mandatory indicators. In practice, however, various limitations in the possibility of conducting advocacy without exposing beneficiaries to dangers in the context of authoritarian regimes made so that proper advocacy could not be conducted in many cases and that the influence on decision-making and responsiveness of authorities were neither actually achieved, nor entirely pursued. Next, in some of the projects the focus was on influencing decision-making in intermediary organisations (internal accountability) and not directly on social accountability, which would be a more long-term outcome. This led to very broad interpretations of indicators to accommodate the common results framework, among others.

7 Recommendations

Recommendation #1 Innovation in ICT tools and approaches should be linked to tools and solutions that are easily accessible for the target groups.
The use of generally available communication tools should be prioritized since the start, even if this implies renouncing the “project-branded” tools. This may internationally not always be seen as an innovation, but can be an innovation for the country and/ or target group. It is Important to link up to existing government initiatives and systems. Adequate training should be provided to target groups for the use of any proposed technological tool, with attention to women and marginalized groups. At the same time, although contributing to digital literacy is important to increase the direct involvement of women and marginalized groups, attention should be paid on how intermediary organisations can help to improve living conditions of vulnerable groups and empower them, through a coherent strategy mixing online and offline, technological and non technological participation and empowerment tools.
Targeted party: GAC, implementing partners
Priority level: high
Link to conclusion: #1, #2, #3

Recommendation #2 Interventions should include an exit-plan form the start and aim to support existing policies.
Project partners should be required to create a sustainability plan at the beginning, to be updated during the project phases. In the plan all five aspects of the FIETS model should be included: Financial, Institutional, Environmental, Technological and Social. Based on the plan the business owner, who will be responsible for the technology solutions after the project, can already start budgeting and plan for the hand over. Innovation in ICT tools and approaches should be linked to national policy reforms and e-government ambitions or at least organisational policies. The link with existing government policies in the field of e-government and social accountability should be verified in the assessment of the project proposals, as a key effectiveness and sustainability factor. If the government is not involved, the link with some organisational policies of agencies should be ensured.
Targeted party: GAC, implementing partners
Priority level: medium
Link to conclusion: #5

Recommendation #3 A more comprehensive approach to gender equality is necessary for a stronger impact of the projects on the eradication of gender-based discriminations and unequal power relations in the target countries. Projects should not only be implemented in a gender-sensitive way but also develop a clear strategy on how to address gender norms, roles and stereotypes that constitute barriers to change for gender equality. Hence, projects should adopt a more robust intersectional approach and propose the use of technologies in a way that is consequential with the diversity and life experiences of rights-holders. In this sense, the Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) tool allows for the analysis of systemic inequalities related to intersectional differences. Using this tool would allow interventions to be differentially calibrated according to the rights-holder characteristics, needs, and interests, which would in turn allow provide the technological tools or training or support for the use of such technologies in a differentiated and more sustainable manner. Also, the use of such a tool would allow to better assess how different identities experience public policies and programmes and to plan responsive actions more conducive to transformative change to achieve gender equality.
Targeted party: GAC, implementing partners

Priority level: medium
Link to conclusion: #4

Recommendation #4 Data collection, including disaggregated data, should allow for monitoring and assessment of results

Having data disaggregated by sex, age and other relevant attributes, where relevant, such as ethnicity or disability is among the essential criteria of management for results to ensure the targeted populations. It should be an integrated practice in program management, even more for those programs having a gender component. Sufficient internal capacity of those responsible for monitoring within the partner organization should be assured to this purpose.
Targeted party: Implementing partners
Priority level: medium
Link to conclusion: #4 and #3

Recommendation #5 The identification of mandatory indicators should be linked to a coherent project design to prevent less valuable data collection at project level

GAC should reflect on the use of mandatory intermediate outcomes and indicators with the exact same formulation in case a call for proposal results in such diverse initiatives in terms of context and intervention as those assessed in this evaluation. Forcing projects into mandatory intermediate outcomes makes it more difficult to monitor and evaluate the projects, as there remain level gaps and ambiguities in the Theory of Change. Or otherwise, if homogeneity in the intermediate outcomes is considered important, GAC should provide clearer guidelines of what can and cannot be considered “accountability”, “advocacy” and “rights” in the calls for proposals and be more selective with projects, funding only those that correctly interpret these terms.
Targeted party: GAC
Priority level: high
Link to conclusion: # 6

8 Lessons

This evaluation is expected to formulate lessons that are relevant to other initiatives supporting the use of digital tools as well. The analysis has led to the following lessons:

- **Lesson #1 Simple technologies (e.g. WhatsApp) instead of ad hoc platforms will be more used.**
  The choice to use common technological tools largely used in the project's context is key to assure participation and motivation. This depends off course on the digital literacy level of the users. The solution should be suitable for the user group. If the user group is not literate (and not digital literate) simple tools are better than if you have a solution for a group of people with a university degree and access to smart phones and internet. In this case the focus was on vulnerable mostly rural without good connection. A simple solutions can already offer a big difference for them.
  Link to conclusion # 1

- **Lesson # 2 Involving local ICT expertise and co-creation with the target groups is key for ensuring easier and greater accessibility community-wide.**
  Involvement of local service providers, who are aware of the local context, target groups and relevant public actors from the start in a participative way will ensure contextualisation, more ownership and the option to scale up.
  Linked to conclusion # 5

  Lesson # 3 Establishing social accountability mechanism requires considerable time, and even more outreach and capacity building to women and vulnerable groups in the area of digital literacy but also data protection.
  Building a solid digital foundation is a long process and results will take considerable time to move from more participation/ connecting people to high level results by using technology to change government behaviour around social accountability/ hold them accountable or to change working conditions. The focus on the target groups requires an even larger investment of more time and resources, for follow up and monitoring. The design of the projects in most cases did not allow sufficient time for implementation, with also external conditions such as political will and CoVID-19 effecting project implementation. As a consequence a lot of the findings/evidence reported remains at the output level or aspirational.
  Linked to conclusion # 1

- **Lesson # 4 Technology alone without non-digital measures is not effective considering the target groups, next both online and offline applications should be included.**
  Overall there are differences in the perception about the utility of using technologies, to some extent related to a generational gap in terms of digital literacy and prior knowledge about technology. Next access to and use of technical solution, particular for the target groups, is still a hindering factor for their involvement in the different countries the projects were active. Too broaden the outreach and build confidence a combination of different measures and applications is most effective.
  Link to conclusion #2

- **Lesson # 5 Technology can be useful for women and people in vulnerable situations also if employed by intermediaries.**

The projects in their intention were “ideological” on direct use of tools by vulnerable groups as a goal in itself. Findings show that technology also indirectly – through intermediary mechanisms such as CSOs – can benefit the target groups.
Link to conclusion #1 and #3

- **Lesson # 6 A clear policy concerning rights-holders’ data management was missing as well as clear project monitoring guidelines for partners and provision of tools/guidance.** Particularly in the case of the Rawabet project limited on data on rightsholders included in the project was available, restricting the opportunity to monitor and follow up. Clear guidelines on project monitoring and guidance on the tools from the side of GAC has been missing. CSOs should be able to build trust and confidence among rights-holders also about the management of their personal data, which would allow for evaluation of projects.
  Link to conclusion 3

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