



OSCEval News is the evaluation newsletter of the Office of Internal Oversight.

Its aim is to provide insights into the OSCE's work in evaluation, by sharing key evaluation findings and conclusions, as well as new developments regarding the OSCE's overall evaluation culture.

Evaluation is a management tool that contributes to decision-making, strategic planning, and organizational learning.



This edition of OSCEval News is dedicated to the project

Promotion of Women's Participation in Public and Political Life at the Local and National Level in Tajikistan
Case study II of the

OIO Evaluation of Capacity Development and Learning in the OSCE

Introduction

The project for the *Promotion of Women's Participation in Public and Political Life at the Local and National Level* (hereafter the WPP project), implemented by the OSCE Programme Office in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, aims to increase women's participation in politics in the broad sense of decision-making in the public sphere. The project is based on the premise that increasing women's participation in decision-making also requires improving underlying conditions. This can be accomplished by gaining the support of men and engaging with youth and the wider community to dispel negative stereotypes about women's suitability as leaders.

The evaluation assessed the relevance, effectiveness and sustainability of the WPP project. It was also particularly interested in its methodology, given that this case study is part of a larger organization-wide *Evaluation of Capacity Development and Learning*. It thus aimed to identify good practices and lessons learned, which would feed into the overall evaluation report, and inform its recommendations to improve the OSCE's activities in the area of learning and capacity development in the future.

Project Description

The project is a succession of Unified Budget funded projects, with the first one being implemented in 2016. The overarching goals of all three projects reviewed by this evaluation (2016, 2017 and 2018) remained the same, with minor adjustments to the context, and introducing new elements each year.

Women in political parties are the main target group for the capacity development and learning activities. Activities range from training and training-of-trainers, to women's leadership skills development, mentoring, educational visits, networking activities, and supporting the drafting of gender action plans for political parties. Complementary interventions engage with male role models and with youth in order to increase their abilities to reject gender stereotypes. The project also has a strong focus activities that empower young women to voice their opinions and make decisions about their own futures.

Evaluation Findings and Conclusions

Relevance and Effectiveness

Gender equality is a core component of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security. The project is aligned with the OSCE's specific goals on women's political participation, as well as with the principles and goals of the *2004 Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality*. It was also found to respond to the needs of the host Government, and its reform agenda.

The WPP project is mainly oriented towards attitudinal and behavioral change. It has been particularly effective in achieving short-term outcomes. Through their participation, women in political parties and young people have gained important skills ranging from effective communication to creative problem solving. Such skills are not only prerequisites for leadership, but they are applicable to other areas of life. Women who have taken part in the project have undergone important attitudinal changes related to their self-perceptions.

"Men for Gender Equality": 5-day summer camp for 60 young men representing seven registered political parties of Tajikistan and civil society, focusing on the role of men in reaching gender equality. The camp was organized by the OSCE Programme Office in Dushanbe in 2018.



Many note that they have gained self-confidence, the motivation to pursue personal goals, and they feel a greater solidarity with female colleagues. The project has also been effective in changing the views of young men, who report to have become more sensitive to gender inequalities that occur in daily life, which in turn has led them to initiate changes in their households, at work and with their peers.

Several women politicians state that they have changed the way they work within their parties. Some have become gender focal points, others spend more time speaking with local women or advocating on their behalf. Some participants report that they have applied what they learned under the project when conducting events that they have initiated, such as seminars, debates, and trainings. In this sense, the WPP project has been effective in instilling in its participants a sense of obligation to carry the messages forward to new groups, using a cascade effect for knowledge transfer.

Longer-term outcomes at the institutional level have also occurred as a result of the WPP project. While such changes have been less substantial, they are nevertheless significant in terms of facilitating women's access to politics. For instance, as a result of training activities, all seven political parties adopted gender action plans that are currently being implemented and monitored. Change within the parliament includes the establishment of a cross-party women's caucus. This was clearly inspired by project activities, such as educational trips to other participating States that exposed the beneficiaries to this important mechanism to strengthen women's voices in politics. The WPP project has also supported the establishment of various networks, such as MenEngage and the Youth Network of Gender Champions, that provide platforms for beneficiaries to engage in ongoing activities, such as mentoring and awareness-raising.

Several factors have contributed to the effectiveness of the project. Most notably, it benefits from thoughtful project design with a strategic five-year vision (leading up to national elections to be held in Tajikistan in 2020). As a continuous multi-year project, it was possible to use an approach that reflects this vision: a logical progression of activities building outward from core interventions with political parties, to involving male leaders, working with youth, community engagement, and campaigns that aim to shift public awareness in favor of women's leadership. The latter activities are planned for 2019. Senior management support within the Programme Office in Dushanbe was crucial and has contributed to the project's continuity and visibility.

The evaluation also identified some weaker areas that can serve as useful lessons learned for other projects of this type. For instance, by expanding to encompass community-based advocacy around issues that concern women, and activities on women's role in peace and security, the WPP project may risk overreaching its core aim to build the capacity of women active in politics in the lead up to national elections.

Methodology

The WPP project uses a variety of training methods that combine traditional training with round tables and workshops, mentoring, educational visits and summer camps. All of these activities are characterized by a high level of interactivity that emphasizes experience as well as formal learning. This method is itself in line with approaches that are considered effective in fostering continuous learning. Participants highly value the interactivity, and this method has contributed to their learning in significant ways.

An equally important methodological characteristic of the WPP project is the creation of spaces where participants feel comfortable speaking openly and expressing their points of view. The non-judgmental setting is a critical part of the project's success in supporting participants to reject gender stereotypes and encouraging women to find their voices. This setting also gives the participants an opportunity to test out and practice new ideas and behaviors before they can begin to transfer them to other contexts, such as their political work or the household. The WPP project has engaged with a core group of participants for several years. In this manner, the project has invested in stakeholders as potential change-makers over the long term. This commitment on the part of the OSCE gives participants a sense of connectedness and the motivation to also contribute to the project's objectives.

Sustainability and Follow Up

The methods and approaches used in the project have resulted in changing individuals' attitudes and enhancing their leadership skills as well as fostering some institutional-level change. The cascade approach used for capacity building and leadership development also means that the number of beneficiaries is much larger than the group of directly involved participants. Whether these results can be sustained long-term, and also contribute to changes in the political landscape of Tajikistan in the future remains to be seen. Neither the parliament nor the parties could replicate the role of the OSCE in terms of bringing all political camps together to discuss common goals around promoting women's leadership.

Further assessment of the sustainability of the project requires proper follow up of mid- and long-term outcomes. Project monitoring and reporting have so far focused on measuring short-term results in terms of any increase in gender-focused initiatives within political parties, but this method has not adequately captured the significant attitudinal and behavioural changes among the beneficiaries, or any longer-term results. This is another issue that should be addressed in the future.

Conclusions

The WPP project is unique in Tajikistan in that it directly deals with women's political participation, and engages with youth at the same time. It uses a variety of innovative complementary capacity building and leadership development methods that have led to a number of tangible results. The evaluation offers a set of recommendations that may help further strengthen the effectiveness and sustainability of the project in the future and inspire similar interventions elsewhere.

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