



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



ACCOUNTABILITY IN MOLDOVA (AIM) WHOLE OF PROJECT PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

EVALUATION REPORT

February 2020

This independent evaluation report was produced at the request of the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by Adam Reisman, Dr. Zuri Linetsky, Zumrat Salmorbekova, Richard Gold, Orysia Lutsevych, and Veronica Cretu.

**ACCOUNTABILITY IN MOLDOVA (AIM)
WHOLE OF PROJECT PERFORMANCE
EVALUATION**

EVALUATION REPORT

February 2020

AID-OAA-M-13-00011

DISCLAIMER

The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

ABSTRACT

USAID/Moldova contracted Social Impact (SI) to conduct a Whole-of-Project Evaluation (WOPE) of its Accountability in Moldova (AIM) project, the purpose of which was to achieve “more effective and accountable democratic governance.” Designed to cover the period 2015-2020, AIM covers roughly 20 activities (both closed and ongoing) working toward greater effectiveness and accountability in Moldova’s political processes, civil society, media, rule of law, and local governance. This evaluation employed a mixed-methods design consisting of document and literature reviews, key informant interview (KIIs), and focus group discussions (FGDs). The Evaluation Team (ET) collected data in Chisinau and 12 other locations in the north, center and south of Moldova, conducting 89 KIIs and 14 FGDs. The ET found that AIM’s activities have “moved the needle” toward more effective and accountable governance in Moldova in the strengthening of civil society organizations (CSOs) and citizens’ capacity and tools to engage in government decision-making, improvements to automation and transparency within the judiciary, and the professionalization of local governments and improved abilities to respond to their constituencies. That said, several systemic factors, including the migration of citizens out of the country, ongoing corruption, and political “flux” in the nation’s governance have impeded progress in key areas, including the sustainability of independent media, accountability of the judiciary, and financial viability of local governments. In terms of AIM’s design, the project’s theory of change and core objectives are sound, but its indicators must incorporate more comprehensive and longitudinal measures of governing institutions’ abilities to serve Moldova’s citizens, as well as citizens’ perceptions of how their government is performing.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	IV
TABLE OF CONTENTS	V
TABLES	VII
ACRONYMS	VIII
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	X
PURPOSE	X
PROJECT BACKGROUND	X
METHODOLOGY	X
FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS	X
EVALUATION QUESTION 1A	XI
EVALUATION QUESTION 1B	XII
EVALUATION QUESTION 1C	XIII
EVALUATION QUESTION 2	XIII
EVALUATION QUESTION 3	XIV
EVALUATION QUESTION 4	XV
RECOMMENDATIONS	XVI
INTRODUCTION AND EVALUATION PURPOSE	I
PURPOSE	I
PROJECT BACKGROUND	I
CONTEXT	I
DEVELOPMENT HYPOTHESIS	2
PROJECT OBJECTIVES	2
CRITICAL ASSUMPTIONS	3
EVALUATION QUESTIONS	4
EVALUATION DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	5
DATA COLLECTION	5
SAMPLING	6
SITE SELECTION	7
ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	7
DATA PREPARATIONS, ANALYSIS, AND CODING	8
LIMITATIONS AND BIASES	8
EVALUATION QUESTION 1 FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS	10
EQ 1A	12
EQ 1B	27
EQ 1C	30
EVALUATION QUESTION 2 FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS	33
EVALUATION QUESTION 3 FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS	42

EVALUATION QUESTION 4 FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS	50
RECOMMENDATIONS	54
EVALUATION QUESTION 1A	54
EVALUATION QUESTION 1B	57
EVALUATION QUESTION 1C	57
EVALUATION QUESTION 2	58
EVALUATION QUESTION 3	58
EVALUATION QUESTION 4	59
ANNEXES	62
ANNEX A: EVALUATION SCOPE OF WORK	63
I. PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION	63
II. SUMMARY INFORMATION	63
III. BACKGROUND	66
IV. EVALUATION QUESTIONS	69
V. EVALUATION DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	70
VI. DELIVERABLES AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS	70
VII. EVALUATION TEAM COMPOSITION	71
ADDITIONAL INFO FOR THE TASKING	72
ANNEX B: USAID/MOLDOVA RESULTS FRAMEWORK AND INDICATORS	73
ANNEX C: SUMMARY OF AIM-SUPPORTED IT INVESTMENTS	74
ANNEX D: EVALUATION DESIGN MATRIX	76
ANNEX E: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED	78
USAID DOCUMENTS	78
AIM ACTIVITY-LEVEL DOCUMENTS	78
GOVERNMENT OF REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA DOCUMENTS	81
EXTERNAL DOCUMENTS	81
ANNEX F: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS	85
#1: BENEFICIARY KII PROTOCOL: GOVERNANCE & GRM	85
#2: BENEFICIARIES: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: CIVIL SOCIETY	87
#3: BENEFICIARY: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: MEDIA	88
#4: BENEFICIARY KII PROTOCOL: RULE OF LAW	91
#5: BENEFICIARY KII PROTOCOL: LOCAL GOVERNMENT	93
#6: IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: CIVIL SOCIETY	96
#7: IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: MEDIA	98
#8: IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: RULE OF LAW	100
#9: IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: LOCAL GOVERNANCE	103
#10: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: USAID/MOLDOVA	105
ANNEX G: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION PROTOCOLS	108
#1: FGD: CIVIL SOCIETY & ACTIVE CITIZENS PROTOCOL	108
#2: FGD: RULE OF LAW PROTOCOL (CITIZENS)	110
#3: FGD: LOCAL GOVERNANCE PROTOCOL	112

ANNEX H: UPDATED TIMELINE OF DELIVERABLES	114
ANNEX I: EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS	115
TEAM COMPOSITION	116
EVALUATION MANAGEMENT	118
ANNEX J: UTILIZATION WORKSHOP – RECOMMENDATIONS	120
ANNEX K: LITERATURE REVIEW	123
ANNEX L: CONFLICT OF INTEREST FORMS	131

TABLES

Table 1: Project Background	1
Table 2: PAD Results Framework	3
Table 3: Team Structure and Responsibilities	6
Table 4: Sites Visited	7
Table 5: Civil Society	36
Table 6: Media	37
Table 7: Political Participation	38
Table 8: Rule of Law	39
Table 9: Local Governance	40
Table 10: Evaluation Summary	63
Table 11: Mechanisms under AIM Project	64
Table 12: AIM-Supported IT Investments	74
Table 13: Evaluation Design Matrix	76
Table 14: Timeline	114
Table 15: Team Structure	115

ACRONYMS

IC	IFIS Software
ADS	USAID Automated Directives System
AIM	Accountability in Moldova
CALM	Congress of the Local Authorities of Moldova
CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy
CEC	Central Election Commission
CEPEJ	European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice
CIP	Capital Investment Planning
CM	Comunitatea Mea
CNP	National Participation Council
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DG	Democracy and Governance
DO	Development Objective
DTAP	Democratic Transparency and Accountability Program
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
EDMITE	Enhancing Democracy in Moldova through Inclusive and Transparent Elections
EJSM	Electronic Judicial Statistics Module
EQ	Evaluation Question
ET	Evaluation Team
EU AA	EU Association Agreement
FCR	Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GDD	Grassroots Democratic Development
GRM	Government of the Republic of Moldova
ICMS	Integrated Case Management System
IFIS	Integrated Financial Information System
IP	Implementing Partner
IRI	International Republican Institute
JSRS	Justice Sector Reform Strategy
KII	Key Informant Interview
LAG	Local Action Group
LGSP	Local Governance Support Program
LPA	Local Planning Authorities
LRCM	Legal Resource Center of Moldova
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MPSCS	Moldova Partnership for Civil Society

NCPPD	National Center for the Protection of Personal Data
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NIJ	National Institute for Justice
NIT	Nations in Transit
OJ	Open Justice
PAD	Project Appraisal Document
PGO	Prosecutor General's Office
PIRS	Project Indicator Reference Sheet
PM	Primaria Mea
POB	Public Opinion Barometer
PPM	Public Property Management
PSRM	Socialist Party
RCA	Random Case Assignment
ROL	Rule of Law
ROLCSO	Rule of Law in Moldova through Civil Society Oversight
ROLISP	Rule of Law Institutional Strengthening Program
SAISE	State Automated Information System "Elections"
SCJ	Supreme Court of Justice
SCM	Superior Council of Magistracy
SI	Social Impact
SITCS	Service for Information Technology and Cyber Security
TOC	Theory of Change
WLC	Women's Law Centre
WOPE	Whole-of-Project Evaluation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE

Social Impact (SI) is pleased to present this Evaluation Report for the Accountability in Moldova (AIM) Whole-of-Project Evaluation (WOPE). The purpose of the Project, which was designed and approved to cover the period 2015-2020, is the equivalent of Development Objective (DO) 1 of USAID Moldova’s Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS): “More Effective and Accountable Democratic Governance.” It covers roughly 20 activities (both closed and ongoing) working toward greater effectiveness and accountability in Moldova’s political processes, civil society, media, rule of law, and local governance. The Mission is conducting this evaluation at this time because: 1) It is interested in the performance of previous and current Democracy and Governance (DG) activities and identifying potential future activity areas in preparation for developing the successor to the current CDCS, which ends in November 2020; and 2) It seeks to understand contextual factors affecting progress under the AIM project, lessons they provide for future activities, and areas of opportunity based on progress and challenges in these DG sectors.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

PROJECT NAME	ACCOUNTABILITY IN MOLDOVA
Number of Implementing Mechanisms	3 contracts, 10 cooperative agreements, 5 grants, 1 Public International Organization grant, 1 Government to Government
Total Estimated Ceiling of the Evaluated Project	\$61 million
Life of Project	October 1, 2015 – September 30, 2020
Development Objectives	DOI: More Effective and Accountable Democratic Governance
USAID Office	USAID/Moldova

METHODOLOGY

This evaluation of the AIM Project employed a mixed-methods design consisting of a document review, key informant interview (KIIs), and focus group discussions (FGDs). The Evaluation Team (ET) collected data in Chisinau and 12 other locations in the north, center and south of Moldova. In all, the ET conducted 89 KIIs and 14 FGDs with USAID staff, AIM activity implementing partners and beneficiaries, Government of the Republic of Moldova (GRM) representatives, and external sector experts and other stakeholders. Wherever feasible, the ET also actively sampled women, youth, and minorities from among beneficiaries to ensure their representation in the KIIs. For both its KIIs and FGDs, the ET developed semi-structured question protocols for these different groups and included similar questions across these protocols to allow for greater triangulation of responses. This allowed the ET to triangulate all collected data to identify points of convergence and divergence and the reasons behind these differences in developing its findings.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

EVALUATION QUESTION 1A

To what extent have the activities implemented under this project made progress toward each of its three objectives?

OBJECTIVE 1: Civil society organizations increased confidence to engage in policymaking and citizens feel more empowered. As compared to five years ago, there are more modalities for citizen engagement into decisions of local communities. Organized CSOs and citizens are better able to advocate for various constituencies. AIM activities have especially contributed to creating platforms for consultations with citizens around issues of regional development.

Civic activism faces challenges with expanding citizen engagement and funding diversification. The quality of civil society in Moldova is evolving in the right direction, but still suffers from high donor dependency, high turnover of staff at CSOs, lack of institutional funding, and low citizen engagement in the work of CSOs.

Independent media has strengthened its positions but still struggles with sustainability. Media-M's support (financial and technical assistance) was crucial for growing audiences and financial models of six media organizations. Most outlets demonstrated an increase of income from online advertisement. But serious systemic constraints still impede development of the sector, including outdated legal frameworks, political and oligarchic influence, limited independence of regulatory authority, and unfair competition in the advertising market.

Political parties became more connected to their constituencies, but accountability remains low. Party development assistance from NDI and IRI has helped build a new cadre of political party activists, especially at the grassroots level. Candidates, especially those who campaign for Mayoral posts, better engage constituencies, with positive results. However, transparency of income and donations into political parties is still lacking, and accountability of political parties consequently remains low, as much depends on the "key sponsor" of the party.

OBJECTIVE 2: The justice system is only marginally more accountable. Several factors have limited the success of efforts to fight corruption and increase accountability in Moldova's justice system, including the country's weak government and its control by oligarchs. Nevertheless, AIM's Rule of Law (ROL) activities have contributed to some improvements in accountability by helping revise legislation and assisting in strengthening judicial ethics, selection, promotion and discipline, and establishing random case assignment, automated case management, and a judicial statistics system.

Internal and external oversight of the judiciary has improved within a politicized environment. AIM's ROL activities improved the access of court users, media, and CSOs to information on cases and judicial management through websites. They strengthened internal oversight by assisting in the development of legislation focusing on the hiring, promotion, inspection, discipline, and retirement of judges, including the role of inspection, ethics, discipline, and selection/promotion boards.

ICMS is streamlining court management and administration, but court optimization has undermined gains in efficiency. AIM's ROL activities' support for the ICMS is streamlining court management and administration, despite technical issues associated with introducing the current version, as elaborated in EQ 3. However, incomplete optimization/reorganization of the courts has delayed their

consolidation until 2027, undermining some of the gains in management and administration efficiency associated with the ICMS.

The capacity of judges and judicial assistants has improved, but judges delay cases, and decisions are often not executed. AIM's ROL activities strengthened the NIJ, enabling it to more effectively provide initial and continuing education and distance learning to judges, judicial assistants, and prosecutors. Judges have benefitted or will benefit the most from the ICMS, particularly by increasing their ability to track cases; view previous cases, Supreme Court decisions, and SCM actions; and analyze judicial statistics. However, the ICMS has not prevented judges from delaying cases or issuing decisions that are then ignored. Just as important, it has not facilitated the implementation or follow through of judges' decisions, forcing litigants to return to court to ensure prior court rulings are executed.

OBJECTIVE 3: Local Public Authorities' (LPAs) use of transparency and accountability practices is increasing. LPAs that have received support through AIM's activities now appear more confident and are more open to engaging with their citizens. Tools such as community scorecards, surveys, door-to-door canvassing, public hearings, and public debates are all quite new in the Moldovan context, and through the Comunitatea Mea, LEADER, LGSP, and Novateca programs, LPAs are now better prepared to use them and are beginning to apply them.

Citizen participation remains a challenge. Citizen engagement with local government is undergoing some paradigm shifts in Moldova, with communities divided into those who remain reluctant to engage due to lack of trust, civic awareness, or education, and those with citizens willing to engage with LPAs and improve their communities. LPAs are creating these opportunities for engagement through both face-to-face and online platforms, particularly through social media, to connect with Moldovans living in the diaspora. Nevertheless, engaged citizens still represent a relatively small (though growing) part of local populations and need to be encouraged to participate.

LPAs are pressing for more infrastructure projects. There is a tendency among the LPAs to prioritize AIM activities' training and technical assistance that involves improvements to social infrastructure, including renovation or construction of roads, schools, or cultural centers, street lighting, waste management, and water and sanitation, among others. Mayors emphasize the need for visible, tangible, and immediate outcomes, which are seen as encouraging citizens to be involved in these longer-term support interventions and to remain in their communities.

EVALUATION QUESTION 1B

To what extent have the activities implemented under this project been able to collectively contribute to the purpose of the aim project?

A lack of planned coordination within AIM's design significantly limited opportunities for the project's activities to collectively contribute to its purpose. The AIM Project Appraisal Document (PAD) established a defensible results framework based on strong analysis of current needs at the time of its completion and the feasibility of addressing those needs. Based on available knowledge at the time of the PAD's writing, it also provided explanations of how current and proposed future activities would address these needs. Where the PAD fell short was in establishing a process for revisiting this design, learning from the implementation of AIM's activities, and modifying measures of

project progress as needed to account for changing operational and programmatic opportunities and constraints over the AIM's five-year lifetime. It also did not sufficiently lay out a plan for coordination of these activities to collectively address AIM's purpose.

The few identified collective contributions to AIM's purpose primarily involved opportunistic - rather than planned - coordination of pairs of AIM activities based on complementary needs and skills. The majority of these were the product of specific activities building on foundational successes by their predecessors in a bid to expand these successes either geographically (e.g., CISCs under both LGSP and CM) or in terms of scope (CM's efforts to leverage Novateca-supported libraries as potential IT platforms for accessing e-services). While there is nothing wrong with these opportunistic collaborations (indeed, activities *should* seek out such partnerships where feasible if they further progress within AIM), more strategic planning involving complementary designs and measurement of activities' progress at the outset of AIM or at regular intervals during its lifetime between the Mission and relevant IPs could produce more effective collective contributions by multiple AIM activities toward the project's purpose.

EVALUATION QUESTION 1C

Within Objective 3, how well were activities coordinated between varying state institutions with responsibilities for LPAs' revenue generation and overall decentralization?

Through relevant AIM activities, USAID/Moldova is doing what it can to advance decentralization implementation and reform, but key ministries currently appear unable or unwilling to cooperate. AIM activities have attempted to encourage greater GRM ownership of and implementation of the country's decentralization strategy, through interventions such as CM's establishment of intergovernmental issue-based working groups on decentralization among ministerial and other stakeholder groups. However, due to factors such as reduced capacity among relevant GRM ministries, ongoing ministerial reorganizations, and a lack of political will, such efforts have yielded little progress thus far.

Lack of ministerial coordination has contributed to slow implementation of Moldova's decentralization agenda. While Moldova ostensibly has a highly decentralized system of public administration, in practice, the Central Government and its decentralized structures (offices, representations in the regions) continue to hold substantial decision-making powers. The decentralization agenda itself continues to be weakly implemented, and among the main causes is a lack of coordination between various institutions responsible for the LPA revenue generation and overall decentralization in recent years, particularly since 2015. Various working groups established in 2010 within each Ministry, in close coordination with State Chancellery, allowed for a more structured coordination between different central public administration authorities. There is a potential to revitalize these in cooperation with AIM's Comunitatea Mea activity.

EVALUATION QUESTION 2

What are the strengths and weaknesses (gaps) of the project's theory of change (TOC)?

The AIM Project TOC’s strengths are its clarity, ambition, and feasibility over a long-term period. Overall, the present TOC is clear and meaningful and is ambitious enough to support mid-term project planning. It provides an overarching framework for AIM and outlines a viable pathway toward achieving its objectives under AIM’s purpose, more effective and accountable democratic governance within Moldova. In terms of resources and time, the potential to fulfill the current TOC also appears strong. There is solid buy-in from most USAID partners on the ground to achieve more accountable governance in Moldova, and there is strong consensus about the importance of bottom-up pressure and a grassroots approach to drive the transformation in the mid-term. With the right incentives and strong synergies with other donors, USAID could deliver meaningful change within the current TOC. However, at present, there is no clear “red line” that lists factors beyond USAID’s control.

The TOC is poorly embedded into the MEL plans of AIM’s implementing partners. One factor affecting the TOC’s feasibility is the fact that only a few implementing partners align their own TOCs’ logic (i.e., cause-and-effect) in their MEL plans with that of AIM – or even establish a TOC within their MEL plans. This demonstrates that it remains an overarching document they may not consider or have much awareness of when designing their own plans for monitoring their activities’ desired outcomes.

Testability of the TOC is impeded by a multitude of indicators that are not fully interconnected. The ability to test the current TOC is hampered by the structure and content of AIM’s key performance indicators. Overall, AIM’s indicators as captured in its results framework and PMP lack precision for most objectives. Data from the existing studies utilized or commissioned by the AIM implementing partners are context-based or underused and could be better used to track progress. In its current form, the TOC remains difficult to test.

Overall, AIM’s TOC is plausible, according to several criteria. Most of the underlying assumptions for each sector remain very relevant, although the above assumption tables identify several missing assumptions for each sector. Rule of law is seen as having structural importance for the current TOC. However, the lack of empirical data and reference to studies that prove causal links within AIM’s TOC raises questions about its capacity to track progress and fine-tune activities accordingly (see previous conclusion).

EVALUATION QUESTION 3

To what extent has IT investment been successful and sustainable, given that several activities used or proposed technological solutions to improve transparency? How well have these activities been institutionalized within the government of Moldova?

IT investments were successful, but still have technical limitations and issues. AIM-supported IT investments have succeeded in enhancing the transparency and efficiency of the justice system, local governance, and electoral systems. IT systems have been developed and established. Beneficiaries have bought into them and are committed to using them.

ICMS succeeded in facilitating the transfer of cases from one court to another; avoiding unauthorized modification of case documentation; and allowing users to see hearing minutes, upload documents, and easily search and track status of cases. ICMS also helped judges to improve the quality of their decisions by giving them access to useful resources. One of the system’s key strengths is its randomized case

assignment, which contributes to judicial accountability. However, significant technical problems in assigning cases need to be resolved.

Once the ICMS electronic statistics module is fully operational, the justice sector will enjoy data that is valuable for informing decisions, analyzing courts' and judges' performances, and increasing the efficiency of court reporting. The e-filing function also has great potential for enhancing court practices and increasing efficiency by allowing court users to file cases and claims remotely. However, it will be challenging to establish e-filing fully, due to the lack of connections with other justice sector institutions. Given that ICMS is still in the testing phase, several other technical challenges and deficiencies must be resolved to increase utilization and create stronger demand for sustainable use of the system.

The FEMIDA court hearing audio recording system has proven to be a useful tool for court staff, judges, and court users; however, due to the incompatibility of some hardware equipment with FEMIDA software, many regional courts are facing challenges in using the system. The Courts' Web Portal has multiple types of users, including visually and hearing-impaired persons, as it provides access to information, reducing the need to refer to courts for case details. It is not, however, multilingual, thus limiting the access of non-Romanian speakers. Information on the status of cases may be inaccurate due to ICMS technical problems. Videoconferencing equipment has added to court efficiency and judicial transparency. Digitization of archives helps courts to manage their space and provides them with easy access to and quick searches for documents; however, courts have given the public limited access to archives due to personal data protection requirements.

At the local level, Mayors and municipal staff see the value of IC accounting software, as it increases efficiency and accuracy of utility operations as well as provides opportunities for residents to pay for utilities online; however, many residents are unaware of the platform. AIM-funded electoral systems, such as SAISE, have proven their worth in elections, and new systems are under development.

IT investments have been institutionalized and are likely to be sustainable. Beneficiaries institutionalized AIM-funded IT investments; they are likely to sustain them. Users increased their demand for the systems, and government increased its commitment. Government agencies have established legal frameworks, regulations, technical maintenance, and funds to sustain systems, although they need to update legal frameworks. However, inadequate numbers and quality of staff might reduce the benefits of this potentially transformative information technology. Users need more ICMS training and system managers need more time to address deficiencies and technical problems.

EVALUATION QUESTION 4

How effectively did existing whole of project indicators capture results?

The AIM WOPE Project indicators did not effectively capture results for the project. It utilized context indicators at the highest level to measure the project purpose and did not consistently track or update project indicators as needed to reflect new priorities or activities. Moreover, there was only limited continuity among activities over time in the utilization of project indicators or research tools. Ultimately, for example, the multiple studies used to survey changes in public and court users' perceptions of Moldova's judiciary over time represent solid individual research efforts, but they could have been designed and linked more closely together – e.g., with some of the same basic questions – to

provide some continuity of results and more valuable data over time. Planning should be conducted among relevant Mission staff to ensure regular meetings to update PMP indicators based on new activities (or the end of old activities).

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. For future AIM projects, USAID should build on AIM-developed opportunities that are incentivizing increased civic participation by further expanding CSO and citizen capacity, especially at the local level. This should include trainings for CSOs to better work directly with citizens, including management of volunteers and fundraising and outreach capabilities. At the same time, USAID should further empower citizens of different age groups (e.g., high school) and regions of Moldova (e.g., rural areas outside of Chisinau) to engage more pro-actively in governmental decision-making through expanded and new civic-education opportunities.
2. For rule of law activities under future AIM projects, USAID should add building a culture of rule of law and integrity to its current emphasis on judicial transparency and accountability. These activities should include establishing new and strengthening ongoing civic education activities at primary, secondary, and higher-level educational institutions; developing age-appropriate justice and ROL civic education modules; and training independent media to present a more accurate picture of the judiciary, among other solutions.
3. USAID should continue supporting LPAs in developing systematic approaches to and increased knowledge of digital tools to communicate with their citizens. For example, it should continue and expand the training of LPAs in the utilization of Facebook and relevant social media strategies and tools to better understand different approaches for targeting specific audiences and to utilize online research tools – e.g., polls, Google analytics – to obtain feedback from citizens.
4. To better engage men and youth in community-related activities, USAID should consider more tailored communications tied to AIM-supported economic-development and academic opportunities. For men, LPAs should develop more targeted messaging within their Facebook and related online communication platforms on consultations on AIM-supported local infrastructure, service-delivery improvement, and local economic development (LED) initiatives, which promote more universal citizens' involvement (including men) in community interventions, and can include information on associated employment opportunities in construction and related trades that would attract men (as well as women) with matching skillsets. For youth, USAID should consider further expanding the capacity of local youth councils; supporting LPA-sponsored, youth-led entrepreneurial initiatives to develop new potential economic/income-generating activities tied to development of their communities; and establishing LPA student internship or local community volunteer opportunities during the summer.
5. To support LPAs in retaining staff and maintaining staff capacity, USAID should work with its partners to increase incentives to work and remain at LPAs. USAID should provide LPA staff with professional development opportunities, mentoring of new staff members, and

infrastructure improvements to their offices/buildings to create a more enabling work environment.

6. USAID should continue supporting LEADER-based Local Action Groups (LAGs) as a flexible, grassroots-level model for engaging citizens at the community level, expanding the number and type of communities supported through capacity building as well as support in identifying and addressing development issues relevant to community needs.
7. USAID should continue supporting local projects with more tangible outcomes and increase the pace of implementing such activities. Local projects with tangible outcomes include interventions to improve local communities' infrastructure, such as roads, schools, street lighting, as well as to improve service delivery, in areas such as waste management. These initiatives are seen as encouraging greater across-the-board participation in community interventions and providing credibility to mayors and LPAs.
8. For future AIM projects, USAID should develop a plan for coordination of project design and implementation activities to collectively address AIM's purpose. This will better enable the project to have mutually supportive activities, include successor interventions that build on the successes of their predecessors, and leverage these synergies to allow for collective contributions to the project's purpose.
9. USAID should more directly and proactively work with the Moldovan government to encourage its coordination of relevant state ministries with responsibility for local governance and decentralization affairs. This could include lobbying for their participation in the decentralization-focused, issue-based working groups that have been launched under AIM activity Comunitatea Mea. Such working groups could serve as the basis of or provide momentum for a more formal coordination platform between the Mission and government to facilitate informed decision-making.
10. USAID should press the Congress of the Local Authorities of Moldova (CALM) to become a more advocacy-focused organization for mayors. This process should begin with an independent organizational capacity assessment of the organization. Such an assessment would allow for more concrete recommendations on what kind of changes the organization should consider making to shift toward becoming a more advocacy-focused, representative organization of mayors. The assessment could also help USAID determine if CALM is willing to make these changes, and if the Mission should continue supporting this body – or other organizations that could more effectively advocate for Moldova's mayors.
11. In view of the complexity of desired outcomes and political instability in Moldova under the AIM project, USAID should revisit, and as needed, revise the theory of change on a regular basis. The process for discussing and modifying the TOC, for example, could be integrated into the work of the project management team overseeing AIM's design and implementation or discussed during periodic project-level portfolio reviews.
12. USAID and implementing partners should continue supporting the training of end users of IT systems in the justice sector to increase utilization and strengthen sustainability via increased

user demand. Such end users should include chancery staff, archive staff, Judicial Executors, System Administrators, other court staff and lawyers who directly use ICMS to increase their ability to sustainably use the new functions of the system.

- I3. USAID's justice sector implementing partner should promptly resolve technical challenges and deficiencies with the Integrated Case Management System, as these shortcomings delay court processes and burden understaffed court personnel and judicial staff.
- I4. For a future AIM-project, USAID should look first to reliable existing indicators and data collection instruments, as a number of current or previous AIM activities established data collection tools and indicators that could be suitable for this project in providing evidence-based results at the objective or sub-objective level. Data collection tools include the LGSP activity's Public Service Delivery Satisfaction Survey, the MPSCS activity's indicators of the "financial health" of its supported CSOs, the Media-M (Internews) activity's "Perceptions of the Population of the Republic of Moldova on Mass Media survey, and the Open Justice Activity's Judicial Performance Indicators.
- I5. For a future AIM project, USAID should support targeted polling (but with expanded sample sizes) of specific populations it has supported through its current or previous AIM activities, such as local community residents, LPA officials, court users. This would enable the Mission to better understand changes in the knowledge, attitudes and practices among specific groups, such as youth, women, or residents of Gagauzia, on an annual (or more frequent) basis and at a statistically representative level.

USAID should conduct more frequent tracking and updating of AIM Project indicators/results. The AIM project manager (PM) should establish a small team of program and technical/DO office representatives and a regular schedule of monitoring actions (suggest quarterly meetings at first). These actions include ensuring that new activities are added, and that associated indicators to reflect these activities or modified project priorities are considered and potentially added as well. At the same time, indicators associated with completed activities or that are no longer considered relevant should be removed.

INTRODUCTION AND EVALUATION PURPOSE

PURPOSE

Social Impact (SI) is pleased to present this Evaluation Report for the Accountability in Moldova (AIM) Whole-of-Project Evaluation (WOPE). The purpose of the Project, which was designed and approved to cover the period 2015-2020, is the equivalent of Development Objective (DO) 1 of USAID Moldova’s Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS): “More Effective and Accountable Democratic Governance.”

The Mission has selected this time in the project lifecycle to conduct this evaluation for two reasons:

- The current CDCS has been extended; the new end date is November 2020. In preparation of the next strategy and round of democracy and governance (DG)-related programming, the Mission is interested in the performance of previous and current DG activities and identifying potential future activity areas.
- Overall perceptions and indices note stagnation or backsliding on democratic governance in Moldova in the overlapping time period of the AIM Project Appraisal Document (PAD). In light of Parliamentary elections in February 2019, the formation of a new Moldova Government, and local elections in Fall 2019, USAID/Moldova seeks to understand contextual factors affecting progress under the AIM project, what lessons they provide for future activities, and areas of opportunity based on progress and challenges in the sector to date.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

It covers roughly 20 activities (both closed and ongoing) working toward greater effectiveness and accountability in Moldova’s political processes, civil society, media, rule of law, and local governance.

Table 1: Project Background

PROJECT NAME	ACCOUNTABILITY IN MOLDOVA
Number of Implementing Mechanisms	3 contracts, 10 cooperative agreements, 5 grants, 1 Public International Organization grant, 1 Government to Government
Total Estimated Ceiling of the Evaluated Project	\$61 million
Life of Project	October 1, 2015 – September 30, 2020
Development Objectives	DO1: More Effective and Accountable Democratic Governance
USAID Office	USAID/Moldova

CONTEXT

The fundamental obstacle to democratic development in Moldova is a lack of accountability in the governance system, which creates a negative political environment that excludes citizens from political

processes, undermines the rule of law, impedes the delivery of basic services, enables corruption to thrive, and renders Moldova vulnerable to external interference.

Moldova's February 2019 Parliamentary elections took place during a period of democratic backsliding and ruling party efforts to consolidate power. Public opinion surveys regularly register Moldovan citizen distrust of public institutions and politicians, concern about the pervasiveness of corruption, frustration with politicians, the sense that politicians do not represent citizens, the unpopularity of Parliament, and other factors that affect actions of individual citizens to engage in activities that foster vertical accountability. For example, an International Republican Institute (IRI) poll from May and June of 2019 shows that 69 percent of Moldovans are either somewhat or very dissatisfied with the way democracy is developing in Moldova while a similar number, 68 percent, indicated that Moldovan society needs "serious reforms" defined as "structural and systemic change."¹

External interference in Moldova and the region has stoked political, economic, and security concerns. Oligarchs have achieved state capture, exercising near total control over Moldovan politics, media, and economy. The formation of the new coalition government between the Socialist Party and pro-European ACUM Bloc has created opportunities for Moldova to get back on track in its efforts to enforce the rule of law and the independence of state legal and executive structures. The new government, a result of an unexpected coalition between the Pro-EU and pro-Russian parties and as a protest to the outgoing government, generated massive resistance from the departing government. The immediate and controversial decisions of the Constitutional Court to declare invalid any subsequent decisions have further confirmed the need for a substantial change in the ways state structures operate and in political influence in the decision-making process. USAID is interested in how it has affected accountability under a change-resistant system, and what lessons may be learned for future Mission's programming.

DEVELOPMENT HYPOTHESIS

The underlying development hypothesis for the AIM Project is:

IF citizens, civil society, and independent media become more active in government decision-making and oversight AND the justice system becomes more transparent and accountable AND local government becomes more responsive to citizens' needs, THEN governance in Moldova will be more effective and accountable.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The development hypothesis was incorporated into the PAD results framework, which includes three main objectives.

¹ IRI, "Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Moldova," May 8, 2019-June 10, 2019, https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/iri_moldova_may-june_2019_poll_final.pdf

Table 2: PAD Results Framework

GOAL: MORE EFFECTIVE AND ACCOUNTABLE DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE. (DO I)

Objective 1: Increased Citizen Engagement and Oversight in Governmental Decision-Making	Objective 2: Justice System is More Transparent and Accountable	Objective 3: Local Government is More Responsive to Citizens' Needs
1.1 More effective and sustainable civil society and independent media	2.1 Increased citizen demand for effective justice	3.1 Improved management systems and more participatory processes
1.2 More representative and responsive political processes	2.2 More capable and professional justice system	3.2 Increased financial viability and responsibility of public institutions
1.3 Government is more accessible and receptive to citizen engagement in decision-making processes		

CRITICAL ASSUMPTIONS

The AIM Project was predicated on several key assumptions within each of its targeted sectors, which were detailed in its PAD. These assumptions were:

- **Civil Society:**
 - Moldova’s enabling environment for civil society and multi-party politics remains positive;
 - Citizens’ right to freely organize and join civil society organizations (CSOs) is not infringed upon;
 - Moldovan CSOs and political parties remain actively engaged in the democratic process; the National Participation Council (CNP) continues to serve as a formal platform for CSO input into the legislative process;
 - The “NGO Council” continues to serve as a platform for CSO coalitions; and
 - Progress is made implementing recent legislation to allow citizens to donate 2 percent of their income tax to CSOs.
- **Media:**
 - High-speed internet and mobile phones remain accessible and affordable to citizens;
 - Media activists and independent media experts remain dedicated and engaged in media reforms; and
 - Independent media outlets remain independent.

- **Political Participation:**
 - Moldova’s current constitutional and legal frameworks for political competition remain progressive and continue to allow for an open political environment;
 - The Central Election Commission (CEC) continues to exist and function in generally adequate ways that allow for free and fair competition; and
 - Citizens participate in the political process to voice their opinions.
- **Rule of Law:**
 - The 2011 Justice Sector Reform Strategy (JSRS) and its Action Plan continue to guide strategic investment and development of the justice sector;
 - The current and subsequent governments remain committed to fulfilling EU conditions on anti-corruption and justice sector reform implementation;
 - The Superior Council of Magistracy (SCM) continues to use random case assignment in judicial proceedings;
 - Recent changes to the organization, management, and optimization of courts, the functioning of the SCM, and changes to the status and immunities of judges are implemented;
 - Justice sector institutions continue to request support to implement the JSRS, including requests for further automating the judiciary and law enforcement institutions for a better performance management of the courts, judges, and other justice sector professionals;
 - The Ministry of Justice advances recent draft amendments to the Prosecution Law to implement JSRS reforms;
 - Recently enacted anti-corruption and judicial integrity laws are enforced; and
 - EU budget support for justice sector reforms continues.
- **Local Governance:**
 - Decentralization and local governance reforms remain a conditionality for Moldova’s EU integration;
 - EU budget assistance for local governance reform continues as an incentive for reform; the new Law on Local Public Finance continues to be implemented, thereby giving local governments greater control over own-source revenue;
 - The Public Services Reform Program continues to improve access to central and local public administration services through “one-stop-shops;”
 - Mayors maintain their high approval rating; and
 - Small local governments are consolidated into more efficient administrative units.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

- I. **How is the project making progress toward the achievement of its purpose?** To what extent have the activities implemented under this project made progress toward each of its three objectives? To what extent have they been able to collectively contribute to the purpose of the AIM project? Within Objective 3, how well were activities coordinated between varying

state institutions with responsibilities for local planning authorities' revenue generation and overall decentralization?

2. **What are the strengths and weaknesses (gaps) of the project's theory of change?**²

To what extent were the programmatic and contextual assumptions identified in the project theory of change sufficient to achieve the purpose of the AIM project, and did they realistically represent an achievable set of results?

3. **To what extent has IT investment been successful and sustainable, given that several activities used or proposed technological solutions to improve transparency?**

How well have these activities been institutionalized within the Government of Moldova?

4. **How effectively did existing whole-of-project indicators capture results?**

EVALUATION DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

DATA COLLECTION

For the Moldova WOPE evaluation, SI used a mixed-methods evaluation design that used both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques to address the evaluation questions (EQs). To maximize analytical coverage, given available time and budgetary resources, the evaluation team (ET) relied principally on standard rapid appraisal data collection methods: **document and literature reviews**, **key informant interviews (KIIs)** and **focus group discussions (FGDs)**. Given the breadth of the WOPE evaluation, this methodology allowed us to gain an in-depth understanding of and usable data from most of the key projects. Please see Annex D for the evaluation design matrix.

DOCUMENT REVIEW

The AIM Project has produced a wealth of documentation, much of which was made available to the ET prior to fieldwork. This aided the evaluation in conjunction with other sources including: formative research, surveys, assessment reports, and presentations that were conducted in the course of PAD activities; reports and assessments from USAID and other United States Government (USG) agencies; reports and publications from other development agencies and research institutions; sector studies and assessments; and Government of the Republic of Moldova (GRM) strategies and plans, such as the JSRS. A preliminary list of documents the team has reviewed can be found in Annex E. In addition, the ET conducted a **preliminary literature review** of some relevant, recent evaluation literature, including key governance indexes and polls, Moldovan government reports, and AIM activity documentation.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

The ET conducted 89 KIIs with project stakeholders on an individual basis or in small groups of no more than nine persons to maximize efficiency. These KIIs were conducted with targeted individuals – USAID representatives, AIM activity implementing partners (IPs) and beneficiaries, and relevant GRM and

² Included in this question within the SOW: Reforming accountability and building transparency in a system resistant to change is challenging. In many cases, officials and individuals balance their official capacities with cultural relationship-based norms to take advantage of opportunities to advance oneself, one's family, and one's larger circle of affinity.

external stakeholders (e.g., other donors, journalists, association/private sector representatives). The KII protocols developed by the ET for each of these groups can be found in Annex F. The ET also actively sampled women, youth, and minorities from among beneficiaries to ensure their representation in the KIIs wherever possible. The ET conducted KIIs in both Chisinau and a total of 12 communities split among the northern, southern, and central parts of the country to ensure geographic representation.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The ET conducted 14 FGDs during its fieldwork and selected participants representing as broad a cross-sample of AIM activity beneficiaries as possible across the project’s relevant sectors and geographic implementation. Specific FGD respondents consisted of those who have benefitted from AIM by participating in one or more of its activities over the five-year lifetime of the project; the ET also attempted to balance respondents between those who had been significantly involved in the activities (e.g., had participated in at least five trainings, been involved for at least one year) with those who had participated in only one training or been involved for only several months); this enabled the ET to obtain a more diverse set of perspectives from these different types of participants. However, it should be noted that the ET was frequently unable to obtain this balance within its FGDs and was limited to a purposeful sample of beneficiaries based on who was available in a particular location on a specific date during the ET’s period of fieldwork. The ET was able to achieve gender balance, or greater participation by women, in the majority of its FGDs, again depending on respondent availability and location. The FGD protocols can be found in Annex G.

SAMPLING

The ET conducted KIIs with a variety of individuals, including government representatives at the national and sub-national levels, local officials in municipalities, GRM, civil society, mass media, private sector organizations, other donors, and USAID and non-USAID IPs, analysts, and academics.

Because of the breadth of activities that are part of this evaluation (approximately 20 in total), for most of the field research, the ET broke into three sub-teams, one for each sector and related AIM Project objective. The sub-teams focused on eleven of the twenty activities (as outlined in Table 2). The sub-teams consisted of the relevant sectoral expert and an evaluation specialist team member. They were gender-balanced, consisting of one male and one female (which enabled, for example, one sub-team’s female member to lead KIIs or FGDs with a female-operated beneficiary CSO).

Table 3: Team Structure and Responsibilities

Moldova WOPE Sub-Team Sector & Objective	Key Projects	Members
--	--------------	---------

SECTOR: Civil Society, Media, and Political Processes	Moldova Inclusive & Participatory Political Processes (CEPPS)	Orysia Lutsevych & Zuri Linetsky
OBJECTIVE 1: Increased Citizen Engagement and Oversight in Governmental Decision Making	MEDIA-M (Internews, IJC, Freedom House) Moldova Partnerships for Sustainable Civil Society (FHI360) Democratic Transparency and Accountability Program (Promo-Lex) Strengthening Political Accountability and Civic Engagement Program (SPACE-Moldova) (NDI)	
SECTOR: Rule of Law	Open Justice	Richard Gold & Zumrat Salmorbekova
OBJECTIVE 2: Justice System is More Transparent and Accountable	Promoting Rule of Law through Civil Society Oversight (ROLCSO) Rule of Law Institutional Strengthening Program (ROLISP)	
SECTOR: Local Governance	Comunitatea Mea	Veronica Cretu & Adam Reisman
OBJECTIVE 3: Local Government is More Responsive to Citizens' Needs	Local Government Support Project (LGSP) LEADER	

SITE SELECTION

The AIM Project has activities in multiple regions, each with distinct programming areas. The ET's available time and resources during its fieldwork necessitated the purposeful selection of project sites in coordination with USAID/Moldova based on the following criteria:

- Inclusive representation of the major geographic regions of Moldova (north, center, south);
- Level of AIM activities' support in and around each location;
- Representative of supported levels of Moldovan government (villages, towns, districts, municipalities).

Utilizing these criteria, the ET visited (and conducted KIIs and FGDs in) the following locations:

Table 4: Sites Visited

NORTH	CENTER	SOUTH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Singerei • Balti • Soroca • Sarata Veche 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chisinau • Ialoveni • Hîncesti • Anenii Noi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comrat • Borogani • Cahul • Leova • Slobozia Mare

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Evaluators informed KII and FGD participants, through an informed consent "script" read to them prior to the start of the interviews, that their comments would remain anonymous and that any attribution would be indirect. They then asked for consent to proceed with the interview. Respondents were told

they could stop the interview at any time for any reason. The data gathered from the KIIs and FGDs was stored on SI's SharePoint drive, a password-protected and secure data management platform.

DATA PREPARATIONS, ANALYSIS, AND CODING

During its fieldwork, ET members took KII and FGD notes in real-time, cleaning and synthesizing electronic summaries on a rolling basis after each site visit. The ET also held internal working sessions to discuss and categorize emerging findings, conclusions and recommendations by evaluation question. These discussions informed the completion of an internal preliminary Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations (FCR) matrix.

The ET utilized several methods to analyze its collected data:

1. Contribution Analysis
2. Trend Analysis
3. Gap Analysis
4. Comparative Analysis

In particular, the ET used content and comparative analyses to identify response categories and patterns as well as emergent themes, which it included in the FCR matrix. It also used these themes to generate a coding structure and systematically code all qualitative summary notes using a Microsoft Excel-based tally sheet.

The KII and FGD guides included similar questions to allow for greater triangulation across KIIs and FGDs. This allowed the ET to triangulate all collected data to identify points of convergence and divergence and the reasons behind these differences to come up with its findings.

GENDER AND SOCIAL ANALYSIS PLAN

USAID's Automated Directives System (ADS) 201 and 205 requires integration of gender into evaluation design and implementation. SI takes this guidance several steps further through EQUI®, which was utilized for this evaluation through application of gender analysis frameworks to inform sampling strategies, gender-sensitive data collection protocols, sex-disaggregated data collection, and the consideration of gender and social dimensions in data analysis and reporting.

LIMITATIONS AND BIASES

The ET encountered several risks to data quality in conducting the Moldova AIM Whole of Project Evaluation and attempted to mitigate each risk, as detailed below:

1. **Selection Bias:** For FGD participants, there was a risk that mayors, CSO leaders, IPs or other key points of contact for scheduling these meetings could have selected the most active, responsive, or engaged beneficiaries—meaning that the ET may have heard disproportionately from beneficiaries who reported positive experiences. Alternatively, this selection may have been based on those beneficiaries able to meet with the ET in a community on a particular day. The ET mitigated the effects of this wherever possible by arranging these FGDs directly with the beneficiary (as opposed to with the IP) and by developing questions within its FGD protocols

designed to bypass only positive responses from recipients (e.g., what could have been done better under this activity?).

2. **Recall Bias:** Recall bias is a common evaluation challenge in which beneficiaries may respond to questions posed by the ET with answers that blend their experiences into a composite memory. Beneficiaries who may have participated in similar AIM activities conducted by several implementers may not distinguish them as separate activities or remember when they participated. This was true for beneficiaries who had participated in multiple AIM activities within a particular sector since the beginning of the project (October 2015), such as rule of law's ROLISP, ROLCSO and OJ activities, or local government's LGSP and CM activities. Additionally, perceptions of events may have changed over time. This was particularly true with respect to AIM's earlier activities, some of which began well before the launch of the AIM Project – e.g., ROLISP (March 2012-February 2016), LGSP (February 2012-February 2016), MPSCS (December 2013-December 2018). The ET mitigated this risk by asking informants to describe specific AIM-funded activities in which they had participated and by conducting 89 KIIs and 14 FGDs across AIM's sectors to better triangulate responses as described above and increase the validity of the ET's findings.
3. **Response Bias:** Response bias is the risk that key informants may be motivated to provide responses that would be considered socially desirable or influential in obtaining donor support. This occurred in some FGDs, with respondents confusing independent SI evaluators with the IPs of their respective activities and sometimes using the pronoun “you” when referring to the IPs. The ET mitigated this risk by providing a formal statement to respondents emphasizing SI's independent role before beginning its FGDs.

EVALUATION QUESTION I FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

How is the project making progress toward the achievement of its purpose?

The ET's approach to this first EQ is divided into two parts: 1) an overview section outlining the overarching issues in Moldova that are hampering progress toward the AIM Project's achievement of its purpose (more effective and accountable democratic governance); and 2) an in-depth set of findings and conclusions broken down by the three main objectives i) increased citizen engagement and oversight in governmental decision-making; ii) justice system is more transparent and accountable; and iii) local government is more responsive to citizens' needs.

Cross-Cutting Issues Affecting Progress Toward AIM's Purpose

Progress toward AIM's purpose and its three objectives has been hampered by factors that are largely beyond the scope and control of the project. There are three crosscutting issues that have limited the project's ability to achieve its purpose: out-migration of Moldovans, corruption, and political flux.

Out-migration: The most critical factor limiting AIM's ability to achieve its purpose, according to a plurality of KII participants, is the out-migration of Moldovan citizens. Several respondents estimated that over the last 20 years, Moldova has lost nearly 1 million citizens to migration. According to the Statistical Databank of Moldova, over 120,000 people emigrated from Moldova annually between 2014 and 2017.³ A respondent from a CSO in Balti said "migration is killing organizations. I have three people from my organizations that have left the country. We invested a lot of time in people and human resources, only to have these people leave." This respondent highlights the major challenges of emigration and shrinking human capacity, leadership, and knowledge throughout Moldovan society, which undermines governance quality, education, the passing on of leadership skills, and the economic vitality of the country. Respondents told the ET that the people most likely to emigrate are young members of the workforce and communities' most active members – e.g., primary breadwinners within their families. These people are leaving in search of better opportunities for income generation as well as political environments that will be more responsive to their voices.

Corruption: The second-most commonly cited factor by KII participants that is affecting AIM's ability to achieve its purpose is corruption. A USAID respondent defined corruption as the misuse of administrative resources by individuals or groups to "get rich, maintain, or expand power." One respondent noted that corruption is most evident in the distribution of financial resources to people who are loyal politically. Money is provided by political parties to individuals who are loyal to one party or another, while those who are not 'loyal' are punished by not being provided any financial resources.

Another challenge is the openness to bribes and political influence (real and perceived) within the judiciary. An external expert noted that corruption was a challenge at every level of government, but that it was especially prevalent within the judiciary. There are several proven examples of high-level judicial corruption, and some respondents told the ET that judges frequently took bribes that affected their rulings. Unfortunately, evidence of judicial corruption is scant. An external expert reported that

³ National Bureau of Statistics, "Emigrants and immigrants based on border crossing data, by sex and age group, 2014-2017," https://statbank.statistica.md/pxweb/pxweb/en/20/Populatia_si_procesele_demografice/20/Populatia_si_procesele_demografice__POPrec_POP070/POP070100rcl.px/table/tableViewLayout1/?rxid=b2ff27d7-0b96-43c9-934b-42e1a2a9a774

some judges own real estate valued at more than their earnings and savings should normally allow. Another external expert criticized the National Anti-corruption Center for deliberately investigating cases improperly “to allow room for corruption.” The so-called Russian Laundromat scheme is a key example of the extent of judicial facilitation of corruption in Moldova. Between 2010 and 2014, Russian officials and insiders funneled between \$20 and \$80 billion in illegally obtained Russian money through Moldovan banks,⁴ where judges issued court orders to execute the transactions while ignoring red flags indicating that these funds were being laundered. Criminal prosecution of these judges resulted in no sentences.⁵ A second scheme, “considered one of the biggest worldwide banking thefts in history, where three banks worked together to extract as much loan finance as possible without any obvious business rationale, stripped Moldova of an estimated 12 percent of its GDP in the process.”⁶ Despite two investigations, there have been minimal tangible results in the asset recovery, prosecution, and convictions of the perpetrators.⁷ Relatedly, the former leader of the Democratic Party of Moldova, Vladimir Plahotniuc, was implicated in trying to influence the judiciary in these thefts and money laundering schemes through his control over selection of anti-corruption officials and pressure on compliant judges. Efforts by the subsequent Sandu government to address judicial corruption by appointing a new General Prosecutor failed and played a significant role in causing the government to fall within five months of taking office.⁸

Political Flux: The third-largest crosscutting challenge limiting AIM’s ability to achieve its purpose, according to KII respondents, is Moldova’s ongoing political flux, which is illustrated by the many changes in leadership and increasing politicization of routine ministerial work that occurred during AIM’s period of performance. Moldova’s government has changed six times since 2013 due to elections and no-confidence measures, which has led to many of its ministries being renamed and reorganized several times, constantly having to start over in terms of priorities and coordination and having to train new staff. Additionally, these governance changes have increasingly politicized its civil servants, who now tend to affiliate themselves with the party in power; they therefore may change positions with every new government. Beyond those who have been politicized, many civil servants leave the government for better paying private-sector jobs in Moldova or outside the country. According to one external expert in the rule of law sector “there is no institutional memory... in June I met with all the ministries, and here I am [after the political crisis] having to start the process over. We are frustrated about this situation, but tired about talking about it; it doesn’t help.” A related factor in this political flux that has been highlighted by a number of AIM beneficiaries is the impact of government-and party-controlled media on Moldova’s political affairs and civil society. These stations help politicians exert control over the media sector by controlling advertising dollars as well as controlling the vast majority of TV news channels (the main source of news for Moldovans). Additionally, both partners and beneficiaries noted that CSOs have been subject to a steady stream of attacks in the government- and party-controlled

⁴ “The Global Laundromat: How Did It Work and Who Benefited?” *The Guardian*; March 20, 2017, (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/20/the-global-laundromat-how-did-it-work-and-who-benefited>)

⁵ Joshua Kirshenbaum and Sergiu Tofilat, “Massive Russian Financial Flows Through Moldova Show Smaller Jurisdictions Matter,” *German Marshall Fund of the United States*, July 26, 2019, <http://www.gmfus.org/blog/2019/07/26/massive-russian-financial-flows-through-moldova-show-small-jurisdictions-matter>

⁶ Una Hajdari, “Moldova’s Failed Revolution is Not Over Yet,” *Foreign Policy*, November 22, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/11/22/moldova-vladimir-plahotniuc-failed-revolution-not-over-yet/>

⁷ European Commission, Association Implementation Report on Moldova, November 2019, https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/swd_2019_325_f1_joint_staff_working_paper_en_v10_pl_1045191.pdf

⁸ Una Hajdari, “Moldova’s Failed Revolution is Not Over Yet,” *Foreign Policy*, November 22, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/11/22/moldova-vladimir-plahotniuc-failed-revolution-not-over-yet/>

media, particularly between 2016 and early 2019. One CSO leader noted that certain media undertook smear campaigns against CSOs, claiming that they “receive money from abroad, serve as foreign agents, and engage in political activities.”

EQ IA

To what extent have the activities implemented under this project made progress toward each of its three objectives?

EQIA KEY FINDINGS – OBJECTIVE I

Objective I: Increased Citizen Engagement and Oversight in Government Decision-Making

USAID’s 2012 DRG Assessment identified Moldova’s civil society as a powerful force for accountability because the sector has demonstrated a commitment to reform and has engaged with key government actors to push for democratic change. Together with stronger independent media and more representative political parties, civil society has the potential to deliver transformative change in Moldova. AIM’s IPs supported an array of activities to improve the environment for CSOs, while strengthening civic oversight by providing grants to local CSOs and independent media. Additional AIM-supported activities also helped to build the capacity of young activists and link political parties to their constituencies.

CSOs, active citizens, and local authorities have more avenues for cooperation. Several AIM activities have contributed to creating effective avenues for opening national and regional decision-making to citizen engagement and oversight. Comunitatea Mea (CM), the National Democratic Institute-implemented Challenger training activity, and the LEADER activity were especially active in this sector. A number of KII respondents agreed that the tools created by these activities to better promote active civic cooperation between citizens, CSOs and LPAs and the environment for applying these tools are improving in Moldova. For example, Mayors and local CSOs frequently mentioned local needs assessments as good instruments to engage communities; in fact, over half the Mayors interviewed for this evaluation had conducted such assessments (which engage 500 to 1,000 households) to define community development priorities in alignment with citizen needs.

Other popular citizen consultation tools seeing increasing use were public hearings, petitions, and local civil society councils, according to interviewed KIs. For example, respondents stated that good quality public hearings were taking place in Borogani, Sarata Veche, Leova, Dubasari, and Comrat. One local official stated that “we started to communicate better with the public as we moved ahead with improvements to the library, local museum, and kindergarten, and gradually created opportunities for people to meet and discuss.”

The increasing use of social media by AIM-supported CSOs and LPAs are enabling greater transparency and closeness between Moldova’s government and its citizens. Many local CSOs confirmed that local decision-making had become more transparent thanks to Mayors’ and LPAs’ more active use of social media (especially Facebook) as a communication and outreach tool to their citizens, including live streaming of local council meetings and more effective use of websites by local authorities. All communities visited by the evaluation team had Facebook pages with updated news and events information from their Mayors and LPAs. In Chisinau as well, AIM’s Primaria Mea (PM) activity

created strong citizen oversight of the Mayor and local council by broadcasting council meetings and vlogs for youth (Zdarova Natasha) on City Hall activities. When the PM activity started in 2017, about 10 people were watching those meetings; by the end of 2019, viewership had increased tenfold. Additionally, roughly 58,000 unique visitors have viewed the site since it launched, and it now has more than 8,000 followers on Facebook.

Civil society and active citizens feel more empowered. Over time, Moldovan citizens have become more vocal in their demands for better governance and justice. Across different types of respondents, some interviewees confirmed that engagement is increasing compared to five years ago, with one CSO representative from Chisinau stating, “Five years ago, no one was talking about cleaning up local communities, and now there are more initiatives; five years ago, there was no discussion about participatory budgeting; now local organizations in 25 cities [are] work[ing] with local governments to learn how to do budgeting together.” The ET’s document review shows that 27 percent of Moldovans participated in at least one activity with an impact on the decision-making process at a local or national level. In 2018, the number of those who believe that active citizens should get involved in solving community problems increased to 66 percent, from 44 percent in 2017.⁹

Some examples of the effectiveness of AIM-supported activities in empowering both CSOs and citizens have included the following:

- The AIM-supported Moldova Partnership for Civil Society (MPSCS) contributed to more active engagement of citizens by supporting 70 CSOs to promote more than 90 policies at the local and national level.¹⁰ Many of these efforts supported CSOs working to defend the rights of vulnerable groups, ethnic minorities, women, and youth.
- AIM’s beneficiaries also mobilized communities of various sizes, from villages to Chisinau, around wider reforms and local issues. For example, at the national level, 64 organizations gathered to create a coalition representing 7,000 citizens and successfully campaigned to adopt the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Separately, with help from the Rule of Law Institutional Strengthening Program (ROLISP) grant, Women’s Law Centre (WLC) helped initiate the National Coalition of 22 CSOs, “Life without Domestic Violence.” At the regional level in Soroca and Anenii Noi, local action groups working with NDI community organizers and local CSOs improved access to public spaces for vulnerable groups. For example, a local association for blind people reported that they were able to have the local governance install a traffic light and pedestrian crossing near their center.
- To ensure active engagement of voters in electoral processes, the AIM-supported Promo-LEX Association has conducted regular monitoring of elections and voter education campaigns. Their 2019 survey showed that a majority of Moldovans believe that Promo-LEX’s monitoring of the 2019 parliamentary elections substantially contributed to informing voters and those involved in the electoral process.¹¹

⁹ National Representative Study on the Perception of Citizens about the Activity of Promo-Lex, 2019

¹⁰ MPSCS Final Progress report, 2013-2018

¹¹ National Representative Study on the Perception of Citizens about the Activity of Promo-Lex, 2019

- Additionally, new groups are emerging through AIM activity support, including CSOs linked to Associations of Water Use, Associations of Teachers and Parents, Associations of Gas Users, and the Challenger Program (in which a cohort of Challenger graduates to set up the DeFacto initiative, which tracks promises made and kept by the country's President, MPs, and local councilors).
- In urban areas, mobilization often happens around civic oversight of land and the use of green spaces. In Balti and Soroca, for example, several CSOs exposed abuse of public funds or distribution of public land without consultations, according to KIIs with these groups.

Despite growing engagement, the number of citizens involved in civil society remains low.

AIM's assistance has contributed to some positive empowerment and engagement developments as well as opportunities to influence local governance. However, this effort still faces challenges, the most significant of which is that there is still only a narrow segment of the population involved in civic life. Despite the document review results articulated in the previous section, the number of KII respondents who stated that Moldovan civil society is still weak outweighs those who believe it is strong, while almost a quarter of KIIs stated that citizen engagement is low. Specifically, the ET found that while citizens' engagement in civic life is increasing, as is the perception that such engagement is beneficial for the community, the actual overall number of those participating in these activities remains low. Most often, respondents quoted a lack of a culture of engagement, a post-totalitarian legacy, disappointment with politics, weak civic education, paternalism, and reluctance of CSOs to stand up to authorities and engage on sensitive topics, such as anti-corruption. Additionally, the Erste Foundation 2019 CSO Survey noted that for most CSOs, influencing policy remains one of their weakest capabilities.¹² As one local activist stated, "People are passive. They leave the country. There is fear among the people. If they speak up to authorities, they may lose their jobs, so they maintain subordination." Indeed, in Moldova, 63 percent say a "majority" or "many" are afraid to openly express their political views.¹³

A number of KIIs also told the ET that civil society's sustainability in Moldova was being undermined by its significant dependence on Western donors and a lack of institutional funding for organizational development. With regard to donor dependence, the ET found that Moldovan CSOs only obtain 11 percent of their budgets from local sources.¹⁴ Additionally, the high percentage of funding from foreign donors causes CSOs to follow grants and often change activities and sectors, which weakens their expertise and advocacy capacity. One CSO manager stated "that with the FHI360 [MPSCS] funding ending, there was a high level of stress. We had to transform more into a private entity. I was thinking how to develop services. Fundraising trainings are weak. There is only theory. Nobody comes and tells us where our funding sources could be." Additionally, most donors prefer to fund project-based activities, unlike MPSCS (FHI360), which allocated resources for developing management, fundraising, and outreach capacities for CSOs. All MPSCS beneficiaries interviewed during fieldwork emphasized the importance of institutional funding.

Additionally, the implementation of the "2 percent law" that allows citizens to redirect 2 percent of their income tax to local CSOs is still at an early stage. Only 5 percent of CSOs are registered to

¹² http://www.erstestiftung.org/en/publication/civil-society-in-central-and-eastern-europe-monitoring-2019/?fbclid=IwAR36RePUAz8gkVAhBnUDxPAJYIP2qO_WeqSuWTnVildsgZajpIOM_DEytPQ

¹³ IRI Survey 2019

¹⁴ MPSCS Final Progress report, 2013-2018

receive those donations. A small number of KIs said the mechanism was not yet very effective due to complicated procedures for using the law, low awareness of its existence among taxpayers, and misconceptions among Moldova's population about what it is. For example, a recent national study found that only 19 percent of Moldovans know that they can allocate 2 percent of their income tax to a public organization.¹⁵ According to the ET's literature review, donations have increased, but most CSOs interviewed for this evaluation reported a donation on average of only 2,000 lei (the equivalent of around US\$100).¹⁶ They also stated that thus far, most donations under the law are going to the church and various law enforcement associations.

Independent media outlets have expanded their audiences and diversified income streams.

AIM's support via the Media-M activity reached six independent media outlets, and all media beneficiaries interviewed for this evaluation noted the substantial contribution Media-M had made in increasing their audience reach and developing new funding models. For example, ProTV now has 400,000 subscribers on YouTube and 250,000 Facebook followers, which has allowed Internet advertising to increase to 25 percent of its total revenue in 2019. Media-M reports that all its key partners increased their online audience reach from 15 percent to as much as 560 percent.¹⁷

There are several systemic constraints that severely impede the development of independent media. Despite the progress independent media outlets have made in expanding their audiences and diversifying their income streams, many KIs spoke of the overall lack of an independent media presence in Moldova. A key factor behind this has been the monopolization of the media market via politicians' ownership of media companies, especially in TV broadcasting and advertising, according to all interviewed media beneficiaries and implementing partners. Such ownership has exerted significant political influence over the media market, which in turn has had a direct impact on the quality of information. Eighty-five percent of Moldovans believe that news is influenced "much" or "very much" by politics.¹⁸ Several KIs also stated that the main regulator, the Council of TV and Radio, is under strong political influence. Nor did this situation improve after Mr. Plahotniuc, the oligarch and power broker, and former leader of the ruling Democratic Party, fled Moldova in June 2019, according to interviewed media sources. They noted that since his departure, there has been an ongoing redistribution of media ownership and concentration of more media in the hands of the current President, Igor Dodon.

This situation is especially acute at the local level, where media is often controlled by local politicians. This impedes the capacity of local CSOs to expose corruption and conduct effective public oversight. Access to media by smaller political parties is also limited. A regional CSO representative stated that the "civil society community is not more informed because there isn't much local independent mass media. So there is an acute need to support investigative journalism."

Civic oversight and investigative reporting have also been undermined by poor access to public information and threats to activists. All KIs from independent media and CSOs pointed to the lack of access to public information as a serious constraint in their ability to conduct oversight of government representatives and institutions. They stated that the Law on Public Information was being

¹⁵ National Representative Study on the Perception of Citizens about the Activity of Promo-Lex, 2019

¹⁶ One Year of Implementation of the 2 percent Mechanism in Moldova, LRCM, 2018 https://crim.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/2018-06-LRCM-report-2perc_fin.pdf

¹⁷ Media-M, Semi-Annual Narrative Report, October 2018-March 2019

¹⁸ National Survey Perceptions of the Population of the Republic of Moldova on Mass Media, November 2018

misused to cover up corrupt public officials, and that the Law on Personal Data Protection was being misused as well. Among additional problems reported were high costs for public registry information requests, and unmet requests for public information.

Political parties are better able to engage their constituencies. AIM's political party development activities used a two-pronged approach that invested in the capacity of political parties to be more responsive, and also enabled individual party members and elected officials to better represent their constituencies. AIM-funded trainings provided by IRI and NDI have given more leaders of political parties, especially at the local level, greater capacity to reach out to their constituencies. All interviewed beneficiaries of the IRI- and NDI-provided trainings spoke positively about their quality and relevance. All stated that the work of those two groups was complementary, with IRI working in close cooperation with the central party leadership, and NDI reaching out to individual and grassroots party activists. For example, in 2019, CEPPS/NDI helped 67 grassroots party groups complete a 10-step cycle of exercises and consultations, one-on-one mentoring, and "guided practice" in door-to-door canvassing. From July to September 2018, this grassroots party-building enabled local politicians to make 16,545 direct door-to-door contacts with their constituents and resolve 26 local issues.¹⁹

Additionally, CEPPS/IRI worked with all interested Moldovan political parties, with assistance particularly valued by new and then non-elected parties from the ACUM block. The parties' listening tours, organized by IRI in 2017, improved their abilities to conduct citizen outreach and enabled them to undertake their own recruitment and outreach events in person and online.²⁰ One new Member of Parliament stated that "thanks to training by NDI/IRI...we managed to recruit 2,000 volunteers, and it means that something changes in people's minds." The door-to-door campaign skills were appreciated as well.

Increased number of women in politics. Across Moldova, the gender gap remains a problem, especially with regard to the percentage of women in leading positions in the government and politics. In an effort to increase gender representation in politics, Parliament adopted a mandatory 40 percent gender quota for candidates on political parties' lists.²¹ IRI support to women's branches of a number of Moldova's political parties better prepared them for this opening in the political system, according to IRI's internal assessment.²² Additionally, out of six interviewed party members, five were women, and all of them confirmed the value of IRI's capacity building for their professional growth. One female party member mentioned the particular special value found in "the strengthening of women groups around common goals, team-building skills, and capacity to create effective political messages." Training participants from the regions also mentioned that the skills they learned were more helpful for female mayoral candidates competing for office than for women seeking to advance within their parties' hierarchies. Overall, it remains difficult for women to be elected, and according to UNDP's data, only 28% of female candidates were nominated in the top five of their parties' lists at the national level.

Citizens' trust of political parties remains low. Voters in Moldova have little confidence that the political parties represent their interests. According to the Public Barometer, in 2019, over 50 percent of Moldovans believed no political party or civic formation represented their interests, and only 49

¹⁹ CEPPS Workplan Oct 2018 - Sept 2019 Quarterly report, July - September 2018

²⁰ IRI Mid-Term Review, July 2018

²¹ https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/iri_moldova_eom_final_report.pdf

²² IRI Mid-Term Review, July 2018

percent reported voting during the 2019 Parliamentary elections. One party member indicated that “if we come from the party, people are cautious toward us because they think we are trying to buy them off.” Seventy-three percent rate the level of transparency of party finance as “non-transparent” or “insufficiently transparent.”²³ A minority of KII mentioned that parties are personality-based rather than platform-based parties that stand for policies. Often, the only difference voters could identify was whether it was a pro-Russian or anti-Russian party. Several respondents mentioned the rise of populist parties such as Shor Party (Ihor Shor) and Partidul Nostru (Ranato Usati) as a risk for democracy.

EQIA CONCLUSIONS – OBJECTIVE I

Civil society organizations increased confidence to engage in policymaking and citizens feel more empowered. As compared to five years ago, there are more modalities for citizen engagement into the decisions of local communities. Organized CSOs and citizens are better able to advocate for various constituencies. AIM activities have especially contributed to creating platforms for consultations with citizens around issues of regional development. Various citizen engagement tools have improved transparency and increased citizen’s trust of local government officials. Strengthened civic monitoring of public information and electoral promises have helped bridge the gap between decision-makers and citizens. Local government demonstrates increasing openness, and citizens overall feel more empowered.

Civic activism faces challenges with expanding citizen engagement and funding diversification. The quality of civil society in Moldova is evolving in the right direction, but still suffers from high donor dependency, high turnover of staff at CSOs, lack of institutional funding, and low citizen engagement in the work of CSOs. Active citizens tend to organize around issues rather than join formal CSOs. The 2 percent law opens a new opportunity to grow a local base but is still at the inception phase. Complicated administration and low awareness about the law undermines its utility. Weak local legitimacy negatively affects the capacity of CSOs to influence policy.

Independent media has strengthened its position but still struggles with sustainability. Media-M’s support (financial and technical assistance) was crucial for growing audiences and financial models of six media organizations. Most outlets demonstrated an increase of income from online advertisement. But serious systemic constraints still impede development of the sector, including outdated legal frameworks, political and oligarchic influence, limited independence of regulatory authority, and unfair competition in the advertising market. As a result of these systemic constraints and the small media market, Western funding remains the lifeline for most independent media. With a weak rule of law, investigative journalism and materials provided by regional watchdog CSOs remains of prime importance and is a driving force for more accountable governance.

Political parties became more connected to their constituencies, but accountability remains low. Party development assistance from NDI and IRI has helped build a new cadre of political party activists, especially at the grassroots level. Candidates, especially those who campaign for Mayoral posts, are able to better engage their constituencies, with positive results. AIM assistance was very valuable to new, smaller parties with restricted access to broadcast media. With increased party finance transparency and public funding, watchdog organizations like Promo-Lex provide valuable information to

²³ National Representative Study on the Perception of Citizens about the Activity of Promo-Lex, 2019

voters about the state of affairs in the political system. However, transparency of income and donations into political parties is still lacking. As a result, accountability of political parties remains low, as much depends on the “key sponsor” of the party. This, along with high mistrust of public institutions, high levels of corruption, and strong volatility of the political process, keeps Moldovans largely alienated from politics.

EQIA KEY FINDINGS – OBJECTIVE 2

Objective 2: Justice System is More Transparent and Accountable

The ET found that AIM’s rule of law (ROL) activities made important contributions to the justice sector, but their impact was not as significant as expected. They helped increase oversight of the justice system, but this sector is strongly influenced by the political environment. Their efforts to improve court management and streamline administrative mechanisms were compromised by technical issues and Moldova’s long-term plan for reducing the number of courts. They have improved the capacity of judges and judicial assistants, but other factors have affected the quality of their work. Several factors have increased judicial workload and case backlog, including the following: many judge positions remain unfilled, some courts have lost judge and judge assistant positions (because they have either been moved to other courts and/or not backfilled when judges or court staff retired or left), commercial courts were eliminated, some judges attempt to meet legal deadlines for civil case procedures by delaying criminal cases, both judges and lawyers are frequently unprepared for hearings; the ease and limited cost of appealing cases has led to almost an 100% appeal rate, and organizations lack incentives to execute decisions, requiring litigants to return to court. Despite the new AIM-supported accountability tools, judges remain vulnerable to political pressure and corruption. Citizens benefited from AIM’s support for judicial reform awareness, but they remain distrustful of the courts and lack commitment to rule of law and integrity.

CSOs have improved their capacity to oversee the judiciary but are facing a deteriorating political environment. AIM’s Rule of Law Institutional Strengthening Program (ROLISP) and Promoting the Rule of Law in Moldova through Civil Society Oversight (ROLCSO) invested in CSOs that focused on judicial reforms, human rights, and access to justice. Most interviewees observed that CSOs are now providing much more oversight than they did prior to these activities. For example, they helped CSOs monitor domestic violence, trafficking and politically important cases as well as the performance of the SCM and its selection/promotion, inspection, discipline, and ethics boards. They also use strategic litigation to appeal decisions that do not respect human rights or discriminate against disadvantaged groups to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR); and share their findings to encourage citizen action. One former justice sector leader noted that CSO oversight was important. For example, CSOs campaigned successfully to improve access to case information on the Courts’ Web Portal, which had previously limited their ability to monitor the courts. Some CSOs participate on SCM boards, while others refrain from such activities (and label participating organizations as government-organized NGOs).

Regardless of the progress in judicial oversight CSOs have already made, they are facing challenges associated with a deteriorating political environment. Both partners and beneficiaries noted that CSOs have been subject to a steady stream of attacks in the government- and party-controlled media, particularly between 2016 and early 2019. One CSO leader noted that certain media undertook smear campaigns against CSOs, claiming that they “receive money from abroad, serve as foreign agents, and

engage in political activities.” CSOs have monitored such attacks as well as attempts to impose onerous legislative and regulatory requirements on them and have publicized their efforts to fight back. A coalition of 78 CSOs was unsuccessful in its 2018 efforts to improve legislation that required burdensome reporting and forced CSOs to accept unwelcome visits from governmental authorities. However, the same coalition was able to fight off proposed legislative revisions modeled on the Russian CSO law, which would have restricted access to foreign funding. An IP representative said, “The past three years were very challenging because the government was turning into a mafia-like regime. I think the fact that we were there, and other NGOs in different fields, the SCM could not destroy the judiciary.”

SCM and its boards are providing internal oversight within a politicized environment. Most interviewees believe that AIM’s Open Justice (OJ) activity helped the SCM and its boards oversee the judiciary more effectively and increased their capacity to resist political pressure. OJ has helped the SCM to improve oversight by revising legislation and providing technical assistance to reduce the discretion of SCM over hiring and promotion decisions by the Judicial Selection and Promotion Board; enabled judicial appointments and promotions to be announced on the SCM website; helped SCM meetings to be recorded, archived, and streamed on the SCM website; and helped SCM to establish a Judicial Ethics Board. OJ also made a major contribution to internal oversight by facilitating the hiring of an additional investigator for the Judicial Investigation Board to verify random assignment of cases to judges. Previously, ROLISP and OJ monitored random assignment themselves. However, most interviewees said that SCM oversight of the judiciary still is subject to political pressure, as it has not lost its power to override selection/promotion and discipline board decisions. ROLCSO is monitoring the performance of the SCM and its boards, helping to focus public attention on shortcomings of the process, such as inappropriate appointment of judges. One IP representative noted, “We tend to expect too much from these bodies. Because the political nature of appointments affects the dynamics itself, it is difficult to expect more in a politicized system.”

Court management and administration processes have been streamlined, but technical issues have limited efficiency gains. ROLISP and OJ have invested heavily in improving court efficiency, helping streamline management and administration processes. Of those interviewed by the ET, almost all judges appreciated the changes, but most court staff complained about technical issues in implementing them. For a detailed description of Integrated Case Management System (ICMS) achievements and challenges, see EQ3. Additionally, all Appeals Court Presidents said they are managing more effectively due to both the Court Efficiency Plans developed with OJ support and the budget training they received under ROLISP. One Appeals Court President said, “I learned I have to get more people into decision-making in terms of staff issues, procurement, and other issues.”

Court optimization has reduced efficiency and limited access to justice. OJ adapted ICMS to court optimization, the justice system’s efforts to reorganize its 50 courts into 20 courts (this effort remains incomplete, as there are still 45 courts [15 primary and 30 secondary district courts]), which are not expected to be merged into 15 single district courts sooner than 2027.) All district court judges and court staff outside Chisinau complained that efficiency gains from ICMS have been offset by court optimization. They also noted that efforts to rebalance judges and court staff among the courts have created workload imbalances. In one court with a limited number of staff, the Court President complained that he must enter case data into the ICMS himself. At the same time, the number of cases has increased in all the district courts visited by the ET. One analyst noted that the optimization process

began without adequate planning, leading to many logistical and management issues and reducing access for court users. Most judges and court staff complained that optimization creates logistical problems for court users and their clients. A District Court President said, “We had this reform for merging the courts... it is very difficult to manage people remotely, to conduct any activities related to the courts.... Before merging, they should have created conditions for this.”

Judges and judicial assistants have improved their capacity, but the quality of their work remains mixed. ROLISP’s support built the capacity of the National Institute for Justice (NIJ) for initial and continuing education of judges, prosecutors, and judicial assistants, which has allowed NIJ to provide both basic and specialized training. ROLISP also helped NIJ develop its distance learning capacity, which has benefited many judges and judicial assistants. One judge noted, “USAID’s support for the NIJ under ROLISP has led to a huge difference in judicial training. Conditions of learning have improved significantly. There has been a greater emphasis on practical learning, examples and lessons.” A few interviewees believed that judges improved their reasoning in criminal case decisions due to NIJ training, the precedents set by ROLCSO, and other CSO strategic litigation at the ECtHR, and they also increased speed in consulting Supreme Court decisions through ICMS. However, most interviewees criticized the reasoning behind judicial decisions. They said poor training was a cause, but also attributed this to overworked and underpaid judges, a lack of court staff, inadequate case preparation, and a tendency by judges to value the testimony of prosecutors more than defense lawyers. They also told us that most judges do not take the time to keep up with recent legislation that meets EU standards.

Judges delay cases and are forced to rule on unexecuted decisions, clogging the system. Most court users told the ET that cases last longer than they should, attributing this to inefficient management. They said judges with heavy workloads have an incentive to postpone hearings. OJ designed the ICMS to alert judges when cases are nearing deadlines for procedural actions but has not prevented them from delaying these cases. A majority of court users complained that courts, ministries, and individuals do not execute decisions quickly or refuse to execute them at all, requiring litigants to return to court. One respondent said that large businesses would rather do business elsewhere than spend long periods in Moldovan courts.

Judges benefit from new accountability tools but cannot easily resist political pressure and corruption. OJ’s investments in ethics, selection, promotion, discipline, court excellence, random case assignment, and automated case management and ROLCSO’s support for external oversight have enabled many judges to perform their job more effectively, but most court users and analysts interviewed believe judicial accountability has not improved. They said judges have too much discretion to prolong cases or issue unsupported decisions, and court staff and other parties often resist executing decisions. They believe judges often let themselves be controlled by corrupt prosecutors and unethical lawyers. The majority of interviewees believe corruption in the judiciary is hierarchical, led by the Supreme Court of Justice (SCJ). One judge said that judicial independence was important, but that it required frequently fighting off pressure from lawyers and politically linked officials. One IP representative told the team, “In Moldova there is only one rule: nobody plays by the rules.”

Outreach on reforms has not increased citizen commitment to rule of law and integrity or changed trust in the courts. AIM’s rule of law activities have informed Moldovans of judicial reforms through many means. ROLISP grants raised awareness among disadvantaged groups, including women, youth, and the disabled. According to its latest Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan Report, Open

Justice’s public outreach campaigns reached more than 46,000 persons through its website, social media, and events. It delivered almost 15,000 printed materials to the courts. It also prepared and distributed articles, interviews, and videos. It finalized the SCM and Agency for Court Administration webpages and Courts’ Web Portal, making them accessible to visually impaired persons. It helped develop Court Community Outreach Centers at the four appellate courts.²⁴ ROLCSO also has published all its judicial reform analyses in Russian for those who cannot read Romanian. Additionally, all lawyers interviewed were aware of the reforms.

Several interviewees observed that Moldova lacks a culture of rule of law and integrity; these values are not emphasized by trusted teachers and societal leaders. They told the ET that most citizens would prefer to avoid the courts rather than work to improve the justice system or fight corruption. Many surveys, including two sponsored by Open Justice, have examined trust in the courts. The OJ surveys found that for the general population, trust in the courts increased from 16 percent in December 2017 to 19 percent in November 2018. For those who interacted with the courts, it increased from 18 percent to 26 percent.²⁵ A 2018 LRCM report summarizing multiple surveys found that trust in the justice system was affected most by media coverage and experience with the court system. It noted that since 2001, confidence in the justice system has been decreasing generally, from as high as 40 percent to less than 20 percent. LRCM found that contact with a court does not improve trust and may actually increase distrust.²⁶ The OJ 2018 survey found that 24 percent of the general population and 40 percent of the people who interacted with the judicial system considered themselves very informed or quite informed about judicial reform. One implementing partner told us, “Everybody hears about the need for judicial reform. If you talk to savvy people, they will say there has been progress, but if you speak to average citizens, they will say everything is corrupt.”

EQIA CONCLUSIONS – OBJECTIVE 2

The justice system is only marginally more accountable. Several factors have limited the success of efforts to fight corruption and increase accountability in Moldova’s justice system, including the country’s weak government and its control by oligarchs. Nevertheless, AIM’s ROL activities have contributed to some improvements in accountability by helping revise legislation and assisting in strengthening judicial ethics, selection, promotion and discipline, and establishing random case assignment, automated case management, and a judicial statistics system.

Internal and external oversight of the judiciary has improved within a politicized environment. AIM’s ROL activities improved the access of court users, media, and CSOs to information on cases and judicial management through websites. They strengthened internal oversight by assisting in the development of legislation focusing on the hiring, promotion, inspection, discipline, and retirement of judges, including the role of inspection, ethics, discipline, and selection/promotion boards. These activities limited (but did not eliminate) the ability of the SCM to exert political pressure on

²⁴ Open Justice, Report on the Project Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan for the Period of October 1, 2018 - September 30, 2019.

²⁵ Open Justice, “Summary of the Final Reports of the 2017 and 2018 Public Opinion Surveys on the Judicial System in Moldova,” January 14, 2019.

²⁶ LRCM, “Confidence in the Justice System of the Republic of Moldova in 2001 – 2018,” December 2018.

judges. They also built the capacity of CSOs to oversee court cases and judicial management, help develop legislation, and engage in strategic litigation at the ECtHR.

ICMS is streamlining court management and administration, but court optimization has undermined gains in efficiency. AIM's ROL activities' support for the ICMS is streamlining court management and administration, despite technical issues associated with introducing the current version, as elaborated in EQ 3. However, incomplete optimization/reorganization of the courts has delayed their consolidation until 2027, undermining some of the gains in management and administration efficiency associated with the ICMS. In the appeals courts, AIM's ROL activities improved court management and administration by facilitating the development and implementation of Court Efficiency Plans.

The capacity of judges and judicial assistants has improved, but judges delay cases, and decisions are often not executed. AIM's ROL activities strengthened the NIJ, enabling it to more effectively provide initial and continuing education and distance learning to judges, judicial assistants, and prosecutors. Judges have benefitted or will benefit the most from the ICMS, particularly by increasing their ability to track cases; view previous cases, Supreme Court decisions, and SCM actions; and analyze judicial statistics. However, the ICMS has not prevented judges from delaying cases or issuing decisions that are then ignored. Just as important, it has not facilitated the implementation or follow through of judges' decisions, forcing litigants to return to court to ensure prior court rulings are executed.

Public outreach on judicial reform has not increased trust in the justice system or citizen commitment to rule of law and integrity. Public outreach efforts on judicial reform have not meaningfully increased the level of public trust in the courts or reduced the belief that corruption permeates the judicial system. Most citizens believe there is nothing they can do to advance the rule of law or promote integrity in Moldova.

EQ1A KEY FINDINGS – OBJECTIVE 3

Objective 3: Local Government is More Responsive to Citizens' Needs

AIM's local governance activities, in particular the Local Governance Support Program (LGSP) and Comunitatea Mea (CM), are helping many local authorities build a culture of responsiveness to constituents by increasing the inclusiveness of their decision-making processes, strengthening their management practices and communication abilities, and diversifying their sources of revenue. But questions persist about how such reforms can be preserved or applied more broadly amidst shrinking populations, a general lack of civic responsibility, and LPAs' ongoing dependence on the central government.

Local government in Moldova consists of the following components:

- **Tier one and tier two administrative units:** Per Moldova's Law on Local Public Administration, local government is divided into two main tiers: Tier one consists of 898 administrative territorial units (which encompass 850 villages [communes] and 48 cities [municipalities]), while tier two consists of 32 districts (rayons) established around a city center and adjacent communes (villages).
- **Local Public Authorities (LPAs)** for first-tier administrative units are public authorities that operate at the village (commune) or city (municipality) levels to promote the interests and solve the problems of the local communities; second tier LPAs operate in an equivalent way, but at the district (rayon) level;

regardless of the level, an LPA encompasses the entire local government structure (note: the ET focused principally on first-tier LPAs, as these were a more central focus of AIM's local governance activities, although it did review documentation for its Novateca activity, which worked with libraries in both villages [first tier] and rayon centers [second tier]).

- **Mayors** (executive body) are representatives of the population of the administrative-territorial and executive unit of their local councils, and are elected through a free, direct and secret vote.
- **Primarias** (mayoralties/townhalls) are a functional structure that assists the mayor in exercising his/her legal duties. According to respondents, about eighty five percent of tier one local governments employ fewer than six full-time staff members/local civil servants, while about 24 per cent of them have four staff members or less (typically a secretary, the tax collector, the cadastral engineer and an accountant).
- **Local Councils** are representative and deliberative authorities of the population of the administrative-territorial unit of the first or second level, chosen in order to solve local problems. The size of the Local Council depends on the size of the community.

Trust in local government remains strong: According to the widely-respected Public Opinion Barometer, only 15 percent of surveyed citizens in 2019 said they trusted their country's central government.²⁷ In contrast, respondents rated their towns' "*primaria*," which encompass an LPA's local townhall and mayoralty, as the second-most trustworthy stakeholders in Moldova (38 percent) as of January 2019. "The opinion polls show that for eight years now, Mayors have been the most trusted authority in the country following the church," one respondent Mayor noted, adding that "this trust has been consistent throughout these years, regardless of the challenges at the central government level."

Through its interviews and focus groups, the ET found that mayors that engaged regularly with their citizens, identified their needs, consulted with them, and could deliver on commitments regardless of the challenges (e.g., political pressure, lack of funds) were trusted by their communities and saw the aforementioned abilities, acquired or strengthened through AIM's activities (mainly CM, LGSP, and the LEADER activities), as having helped them win election (or reelection). "This is our fourth mandate, and regardless of the problems we face, we are seen as the ones who help and support citizens most of all," a respondent Mayor said. "The reason we are re-elected, I think, is because we talk to people not once in four years, but continuously through our four years' mandate. It is a very important distinction."

AIM activities have strengthened LPAs' management capacity. Respondent mayors shared that they are much more confident now and have become better trained over the past years. "Several changes have occurred over the past years in development of mayors: many speak English now, are more proactive, network more actively, and demonstrate increased confidence," one implementing partner stated. "We now have a higher level of competence in the town hall and among Mayors themselves" in creating local development strategies and other tools.

For example, the majority of the respondent mayors under "Comunitatea Mea" are applying the activity's Functional Organizational Capacity Assessment (FOCAS) methodology and are incorporating emerging issues into their strategic planning processes, such as gender, environment, minorities, marginalized communities, and others. The strategic planning exercise allows LPAs to correctly assess the potential of their respective communities, map existent critical social infrastructure, and plan

²⁷ http://ipp.md/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Anexele-BOP_02.2019.pdf

interventions that would benefit citizens most. One interviewed Mayor stated, “We have been professionally assisted on this, and this allowed us to understand what the weaknesses were in our old strategic development plan. For example, Comunitatea Mea experts showed that some of the economic development commitments we included in our 2017 plan were not part of the mandate of the LPA. We were wrong in our approach because as LPAs we were substituting the work of the local entrepreneurs.”

A majority of the LPA staff interviewed by the ET also praised early AIM-supported administrative tools, which helped them strengthen their accounting and management skills. For example, a majority mentioned that the IC accounting system, originally provided to LPAs under the LGSP activity, was a good tool for internal efficiency and effectiveness. Now, local municipal enterprises are adopting the tool for their service delivery (i.e. water, waste management, others). “I want to thank USAID for IC – we were the first to use the IC in the entire district,” an LPA staff member stated. LGSP also developed more than 10 training modules for IC and related systems that were very detailed, “and we made sure that all these stay in the system,” said one AIM implementing partner. CM activity implementers are now studying options to expand IC to incorporate other public financial management components, such as public property management (PPM).²⁸

Processes for citizen participation have improved. All interviewed LPA staff shared that they are now more active in engaging with citizens due to AIM activities’ support via needs assessment surveys, problem identification, public consultations, public hearings, monthly newsletters, social media, and other methods. Increasingly, such engagement is related to producing regional development strategies and planning for local services upgrades (waste and water management, green spaces, libraries, educational institutions). Under AIM’s LEADER activity, for example, 25 local action groups (LAGs) across Moldova²⁹ allowed local CSOs and active citizens to engage in decision-making. Several LPA officials referenced the LEADER model as a flexible, grassroots model that enabled cooperation among communities’ public, private and civic sectors to address local development problems while building the capacity of active citizens and strengthening civic participation. Through a process of LAG-participant selection, identification of a community priority to address, and provision of funding to address this priority, “people are getting more confident at the local level and engaging more often in decision-making processes,” noted one implementing partner. “[LAGs] are important local platforms.”

Similarly, CM has made citizen involvement a central component of supported LPAs’ development of strategic plans, and more recently, its capital investment planning CIP process.³⁰ Other CM initiatives to enable additional participation of citizens and CSOs in the decision-making of their LPAs, such as citizen report cards and the CSO small grants component, are being implemented more slowly than anticipated because, in the case of the report cards, they were unable to obtain the necessary buy-in from the targeted CSOs, as many had never worked on this kind of initiative before. In the case of small grants, CM found a limited number of officially registered CSOs in many targeted communities and needed to first create these CSOs, a process it is facilitating by making subgrants available to informal civic groups within these communities.

²⁸ Comunitatea Mea FY2019 Annual Report

²⁹ Eight with support by the USAID, and the rest with Polish AID money

³⁰ Comunitatea Mea, Year 2 Annual Report

Interviews revealed more engagement of women than men in community-related activities such as public consultations. “A dominant trend, as I see it, throughout the past years, is for more women to engage in community activities, projects, etc. I did initially think it has to do with the fact that I am a female Mayor. I talked with male Mayors and the situation is the same across the country,” a female Mayor shared.³¹ Youth engagement in community development was also mentioned by respondent Mayors as still being a challenge, “We lack initiative and interest from youth, aged 16+. Young people don’t want to stay here and there are various reasons why: low salaries, poor working conditions, lack of opportunities for leisure time, sports, others.”

There are emerging good practices in delivery of municipal services, but challenges still remain. Half of the Mayors interviewed by the ET spoke positively about improvements to municipal service delivery that have occurred in the past years with support from USAID. As part of the LGSP activity, for example, more than \$3 million was invested in the procurement of specialized equipment for municipal enterprises, including road graders, excavators, sewer trucks, garbage trucks, garbage containers, water pumps, water meters, and LED bulbs and cabling.³² The Waste Water Treatment Facility activity in Telenesti, for example, was mentioned during several interviews and meetings as a good practice. However, it faces certain challenges in ensuring a wider coverage of service, according to one AIM respondent linked to this activity. “The target was to reach 11,000 beneficiaries; in reality, the facilities are used only at half capacity today, which is a pity.”

Several interventions under LGSP have also led to improved energy efficiency and associated cost savings in supported towns through guidance to LPAs on accessing the National Energy Efficiency Fund and developing appropriate energy efficiency plans. LGSP, for example, provided eight donated water pumps to Cimisia, Basarabasca, and Straseni, which diminished maintenance costs by approximately 60 percent, allowed for an estimated 32 percent energy savings in the three towns, and provided 2,709 water meters to 4 towns thereby reducing waste caused by leakages and illegal connections by 25 percent.³³ “Mayors saw how a change of pumps changes the energy consumption considerably,” one implementing partner told the ET. “Taraclia is one of these communities where pumps were changed. In Ocnita, we procured water meters and they managed to improve water consumption. Cimisia did not have access to water; by simply replacing the pumps the situation has considerably improved.”

Leova town provides a good example of the benefits and challenges faced under AIM of implementing local municipal service projects. Under LGSP, Leova benefited from trash bins and an auto grader, while municipal enterprises created a tariff for waste removal (a weekly service). This support has proven beneficial for the town, according to interviewed LPA staff, which is now building on the LGSP efforts by partnering with Slovak Aid to extend the number of households that have access to this service. However, the town still faces several challenges: “[There is] a total lack of culture among the citizens inhabitants - they throw [garbage] everywhere, then wait for the authorities to come and take care of it,” said one respondent Mayor aided through LGSP. “There’s a lack of staff/human resources and relevant equipment, and most of the equipment is very old.”

³¹ Comunitatea Mea, Year 2 Annual Report. Page 26

³² https://www.chemonics.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Moldova_LGSP_FinalReport.pdf

³³ LGSP Final Report. February 2016

In all Comunitatea Mea-supported localities visited by the ET, LPAs emphasized the importance of projects involving infrastructure or improvement of local service delivery. Waste management, street lighting, and road renovation were among the top priorities identified by citizens, according to interviewed Mayors. All Mayors saw the benefit of being able to deliver a tangible service or project to their towns, and in involving citizens in the project identification process. However, several also noted that a challenge with this activity was the extended time it was taking between when a community identified its infrastructure solution and when actual implementation began. They added that such delays could affect the trust of their citizens if they were perceived as not delivering on the identified problems. “In Comunitatea Mea, it takes too long to get the funds; we identified waste management as a problem: if we knew from the very beginning it would not be feasible, we could have avoided wasting time on this problem,” a respondent Mayor stated. “We submitted our proposal back in March 15, 2019 and we are currently in the last phase. We need to go through the procurement of the contractor for services on street lighting. But this process is already taking [too] much time,” one LPA staff member added.

LPAs face ongoing difficulties in maintaining capacity and retaining staff. Regardless of the emerging positive changes, LPAs in particular are heavily affected by out-migration and a lack of trained staff. “We lack people who have expertise in project design so that we are able to apply for grants. Trained staff leave. Even those staying need [to] have ongoing training. Another issue is also the age of staff – (they’re going to retire soon). Two of the PS’s on my staff are of retirement age,” a respondent Mayor shared.

LPAs, including both mayors and their primaria staff, are also negatively affected by low salaries, which makes it challenging to retain more senior staff, as well as for mayors themselves to earn a fair wage. “I have not heard or seen of any lower salaries for the LPAs as it is here in Moldova. Given the level of responsibility, commitment, and dedication as opposed to the level of efforts, the salary here is completely out of alignment with where it should be. As an example, my [monthly] salary as a Mayor is 400 USD,” a respondent Mayor shared. This makes it possible that the “Mayor can have staff, including in the subordinating [primaria] institutions, who have higher salaries than the Mayor himself.” This aspect of low salaries of the LPAs also makes citizens assume by default that these local entities are corrupt, the Mayor added.

Additionally, younger specialists are not motivated to stay in LPAs, while university graduates are not willing to join the public service mainly due to low salaries and a lack of incentives in the local communities. “We miss opportunities for the young population. We, LPAs, don’t have enough offers to incentivize them to stay,” a respondent Mayor stated.

EQIA CONCLUSIONS – OBJECTIVE 3

LPAs’ use of transparency and accountability practices is increasing. LPAs that have received support through AIM’s activities now appear more confident and are more open to engaging with their citizens. Tools such as community scorecards, surveys, door-to-door canvassing, public hearings, and public debates are all quite new in the Moldovan context, and through the Comunitatea Mea, LEADER, LGSP, and Novateca programs, LPAs are now better prepared to use and are beginning to apply them. LPAs continue to occupy a trusted role in their communities, but much of their potential remains untapped due to the ongoing lack of resources and sufficient staff.

Citizen participation remains a challenge. Citizen engagement with local government is undergoing some paradigm shifts in Moldova, with communities divided into those who remain reluctant

to engage due to lack of trust, civic awareness, or education, and those with citizens willing to engage with LPAs and improve their communities. LPAs are creating these opportunities for engagement through both face-to-face and online platforms, and particularly through social media to connect with Moldovans living in the diaspora. Nevertheless, engaged citizens still represent a relatively small (though growing) part of local populations and need to be encouraged to participate. LPAs also now engage more with marginalized communities such as the disabled, elderly, women, and youth. More women tend to participate than men.

LPAs are pressing for more infrastructure projects. There is a tendency among the LPAs to prioritize AIM activities' training and technical assistance that involves improvements to social infrastructure including renovation or construction of roads, schools, or cultural centers, streetlighting, waste management, and water and sanitation, among others. Mayors emphasize the need for visible, tangible, and immediate outcomes, which are seen as encouraging citizens to be involved in these longer-term support interventions and to remain in their communities.

EQ 1B

To what extent have they been able to collectively contribute to the purpose of the AIM project?

EQ 1B KEY FINDINGS

In line with USAID's WOPE Guidance, the ET evaluated the extent to which AIM's activities collectively contributed to the purpose of the AIM Project by assessing whether these activities "worked (or are working) in a complementary and coordinated manner" to help achieve this purpose. The ET therefore sought evidence of planned coordination of AIM activities (within its PAD as well as within activities' documentation and/or interviews with implementers and beneficiaries) and of synergistic contributions to its purpose resulting from this coordination.

There was little planned coordination among activities articulated within the AIM PAD.

The PAD provided only general statements about how activities under AIM would be coordinated to work toward more effective and accountable governance in Moldova. Within the PAD, the ET also found only one example of specific planned coordination among activities; this lone instance (under Objective 1) stated that, "[b]y design, the [Moldova] Inclusive and Participatory Political Parties (MIPPP) activity will be closely coordinated with the Democratic Transparency and Accountability Program (DTAP) to ensure political parties receive the organizational development they need to effectively advance policies, while remaining accountable and transparent to citizens." In practice, DTAP-implementing partner Promo-LEX stated that it worked with MIPPP implementing partner NDI from 2011 to 2015 to build its institutional capacity in election monitoring, but then started receiving USAID grants directly beginning in 2014-2015 (to observe parliamentary elections in 2014 and local elections in 2015). Promo-LEX, however, did tell the ET that they felt they needed more coordination with NDI. "We could spread our collaboration with NDI and IRI to apply our developments for political practices," said the partner representative. "For example, we made booklets for our observers, so it would be good to design a program so that we can share our knowledge on how to train observers."

While there were few examples of planned collective contributions toward AIM’s purpose, there were some examples of opportunistic coordination among pairs of AIM activities that sought to jointly advance progress toward this purpose:

- **LGSP and CM:** The collective contribution of AIM’s activities to its purpose must also include the degree to which more current activities were able to build on successful or promising interventions of predecessor activities. CM, for example, is building on LGSP’s earlier development of CISCs to deliver public services to local citizens through a one-stop-shop approach, which the earlier activity piloted during 2015 in Taraclia, Orhei, and Singerei. However, these pilots required an intensive commitment by the towns to “streamline internal processes” to take advantage of this new tool, and a longer-than-anticipated initiation process as a result.³⁴ Future CISCs would require less effort after the “groundwork” was conducted to set up the three pilot locations. Unfortunately, LGSP did not have time to establish CISCs in other towns before the activity ended in early 2016, and much of the institutional knowledge built up during the launch of the pilots was lost. No further CISCs were established during the three-year gap between the end of LGSP and the start of CM, and CM is only just now beginning a second round of piloting of CISCs. Such delays have negatively affected the collective contribution CISCs could have allowed LPAs to make in delivering services to their citizens more efficiently and effectively during AIM’s lifetime.
- **CM and NDI:** NDI is supporting the CM activity as a subcontractor and has built up a country-wide network of local authorities and deep institutional knowledge of engaging locally through a combination of former (SPACE-Moldova) and current (MIPP) AIM activities. Through its “Grassroots Democratic Development” methodology (GDD), NDI has worked with CM to train 20 partner LPAs (“Cohort 1”) on developing and improving their skills in informing and consulting citizens’ opinions toward the most important issues in the community. “We’ve had to convince some Mayors, but this has helped with citizen engagement,” said one LP representative. “We were able to take advantage of [NDI’s] country-wide network. [We are] now moving to having them support training of second cohort.”
- **CM and Novateca:** AIM’s library centered Novateca activity helped several Mayors develop communication skills, which CM then helped them augment once it started. This process was aided by the fact that both activities were implemented by IREX, according to both implementing partners and some beneficiaries. In Borogani, for example, Novateca helped train the town’s library staff in social media skills to communicate more effectively with citizens. In turn, the staff were able to set up a Facebook page for the community and provide social media training to Borogani’s LPA, with CM then providing more sophisticated communication/outreach training. Borogani also leveraged Novateca’s benefits by placing the head librarian in charge of CM’s communication components. CM has also utilized Novateca’s capacity-building efforts with libraries to develop 14 “Decentralization Corners” that promote education on local and national government priorities and foster meaningful civic dialogue through events such as the World Café, Live Library, and Coffee with the Mayor.³⁵ One Mayor interviewed by the ET noted,

³⁴ LGSP Final Report

³⁵ CM, Year 2 Annual Report

“Novateca provided us with lots of good tools, which we are using now for these new projects we are part of...the foundation that we are now building on.”

- **MPSCS & LRCM:** There were also limited examples of AIM activities strengthening the abilities of supported CSOs to carry on work in specific areas from implementing partners – e.g., legal and regulatory reform advocacy – and directly obtain USAID funds. Through assistance from MPSCS, the Legal Resource Center of Moldova (LRCM) successfully completed the USAID pre-award evaluation and signed a four-year transition award with USAID in October 2016.

The AIM Project did not create an M&E Plan, which was called for in the PAD. The majority of AIM’s project-level indicators were drawn from individual AIM activities, and the activity IPs reported data from these indicators to USAID/Moldova on a regular basis. So while much of AIM’s indicator data could be found within individual activities’ quarterly and annual reports (and the design for these indicators within the overall PMP for the USAID/Moldova CDCS), creating a separate AIM M&E plan would have made it easier to track progress against project indicators (through inclusion of a performance indicator tracking table [PITT]) and update project components of project indicator reference sheets (PIRS) where needed (which could then have been updated within the CDCS PMP). It also could have tracked planned coordination (or the lack thereof) between activities through indicators specifically established for this purpose (see EQ4). While the ET acknowledges that the PAD is a planning document created at the outset of a project that cannot reasonably be expected to account for all coordination of both current and future activities, the AIM PAD did not detail planned synergies or establish actionable implementation and management plans for future changes to the PAD.

EQ1B CONCLUSIONS

A lack of planned coordination within AIM’s design significantly limited opportunities for the project’s activities to collectively contribute to its purpose. The AIM PAD established a defensible results framework based on strong analysis of current needs at the time of its completion and the feasibility of addressing those needs. Based on available knowledge at the time of the PAD’s writing, it also provided explanations of how current and proposed future activities would address these needs. Where the PAD fell short was in establishing a process for revisiting this design, learning from the implementation of AIM’s activities, and modifying measures of project progress to account for changing operational and programmatic opportunities and constraints over the five-year lifetime. It also did not sufficiently lay out a plan for coordination of these activities to collectively address AIM’s purpose.

The few identified collective contributions to AIM’s purpose primarily involved opportunistic - rather than planned - coordination of pairs of AIM activities based on complementary needs and skills. The majority of these were the product of specific activities building on foundational successes by their predecessors in a bid to expand these successes either geographically (e.g., CISCs under both LGSP and CM) or in terms of scope (CM’s efforts to leverage Novateca-supported libraries as potential IT platforms for accessing e-services). While there is nothing wrong with these opportunistic collaborations (indeed, activities *should* seek out such partnerships where feasible if they further progress within AIM), more strategic planning involving complementary designs and measurement of activities’ progress at the outset of AIM or at regular intervals during its lifetime between the Mission and relevant IPs could produce more effective collective contributions by multiple AIM activities toward the project’s purpose.

EQ IC

Within Objective 3, how well were activities coordinated between varying state institutions with responsibilities for LPAs revenue generation and overall decentralization?

EQ IC KEY FINDINGS

There has been little coordination of activities, attempted or otherwise, over the course of the AIM Project among the GRM state institutions responsible for LPAs' revenue generation and overall decentralization. This is the result of several factors, including ongoing changes in government leading to a constant "churn" of ministerial organization and personnel, a lack of political ownership of these processes, a persistent "siloed" work culture, and decreased ministerial resources. This section explores these factors, as well as attempts by USAID through AIM's activities to facilitate such coordination, and some key consequences of the lack of coordination. This is preceded by a summary of intended and actual roles being played by key ministries with LPA responsibilities.

Intended Roles of Ministries. Officially, the State Chancellery of the Republic of Moldova plays a supervisory role in the Central Government's relations with the local public administration authorities. It has a separate Directorate-General for Policies for Decentralization and Local Government.³⁶ The Chancellery ensures the functioning of the territorial offices in the administrative-territorial units, their interaction with the local public administration authorities, and the administrative control of the activity of these authorities under conditions of legality, efficiency, and transparency.

Separately, the Ministry of Finance (MOF) is responsible for payment transfers to LPAs, executes LPAs' budgets, and oversees local authorities' submission of proposals for preparation of fiscal and sectoral policies, consultations on intergovernmental relations, and management of budgetary resources and public assets in accordance with current law. More recently, the Ministry of Finance established its own coordination track on local public finance beginning in early 2018, with quarterly meetings between Ministry of Finance and LPA Authorities (specifically with Finance Departments from tier-two [i.e. district-level] LPAs), according to a GRM key informant and minutes from these meetings.³⁷ The same informant shared that the current Government being led by Prime Minister Chicu has included the decentralization agenda as one of the priorities in its Action Plan. However, this work does not involve coordination between the MOF and other ministries, based on the ET's analysis of the minutes.

There is reduced ministerial capacity to address decentralization reform and coordination.

While these descriptions reflect these ministries' intended roles, the GRM's reorganization and the reduction of the number of Ministries from 16 to 9 under Moldova's public administration reform plan in 2017 have left the Chancellery, Ministry of Finance, and other ministries significantly short-staffed, posing challenges to decentralization reform and coordination among key responsible institutions. "This is the lowest capacity in government I've ever seen," said one implementing partner. "After the decrease of ministries, pretty much all the good people left. They couldn't handle the workload."

³⁶ <https://cancelaria.gov.md/en/apc/chancellery-regulations>

³⁷ <https://mf.gov.md/ro/content/finantele-publice-locale>

A lack of “cooperation culture” between ministries. Several local governance experts told the ET that there has also been an ongoing lack of coordination between ministries in Moldova due to the lingering influence of its years as a Communist state. “Prior to 2010 [when Moldova’s Communist government lost power], central public administration authorities had largely performed their work in silos, a product of the lack of ‘cooperation culture’ across the Communist Government,” one external expert stated.

Decentralization has been slowed by ongoing ministerial reorganization and a lack of “ownership” of the decentralization process. In addition to reduced ministerial capacity, the GRM has changed six times since 2013 due to elections and no-confidence measures, which has led to these ministries being renamed and reorganized several times, constantly “restarting at zero” in terms of priorities and coordination and training new staff. This has also contributed to undermining previous administrations’ desire to pro-actively pursue the decentralization agenda, including inter-ministerial coordination, a decentralization expert told the ET. “There is no sense of ownership or longer-term vision at the top levels of government to do decentralization,” the expert said. “It’s basically being driven solely by the donors.”

Implementing partners also have attempted to coordinate ministerial involvement in AIM activities, but with little success thus far. An implementing partner shared that the CM activity is seeking to draw on the experiences of a set of thematic working groups established in 2010, and based on the lessons learned, revitalize these coordination mechanisms among the key stakeholders. In 2010, the State Chancellery, together with the Ministries of Economy and Finance, led these 16 thematic working groups with a focus on coordination of sectoral decentralization. According to an informant representing the GRM, these working groups were established as part of the Joint Integrated Local Development Program, implemented by UNDP, and UN Women, with financial support from the Danish Government. This program used to be the GRM’s main partner in the implementation of the country’s decentralization reform efforts, promoting, among other policies, local government autonomy. The working groups functioned until 2015. These groups represented one of the first efforts in Moldova related to coordination of such an ambitious agenda, according to the partner.

Subsequently, CM proposed the establishment of similar intergovernmental issue-based working groups on decentralization among ministerial and other stakeholder groups within the activity’s original workplan and has discussed this with the State Chancellery. However, it had not been able to establish these working groups as of the end of FY2019. “Over the [2019] period of Parliamentary elections and the subsequent political indecision, CM maintained close contact with the State Chancellery and other ministries and concluded that there was no ability of the government bodies to participate during this period in working groups envisioned in the original CM workplan,” CM stated in its Year Two Annual Report.³⁸ A working meeting on this matter was due to take place by December 2019 between CM and the Ministry of Finance.³⁹

Despite this, several interviewed government representatives stated they would like USAID to play a more prominent role in engaging with relevant GRM ministries in order to encourage their action on

³⁸ Comunitatea Mea Annual Report, FY2019

³⁹ Please note that due to changes in the Government in November 2019, the ET was unable to meet with the Minister of Finance.

the decentralization process. One GRM respondent acknowledged that “We need USAID’s support to find a way to finalize the local public administration reform, since the current system is not working, and to help us focus more on LPAs that have the potential to become financially sustainable.” For example, the GRM encourages the creation of a formal coordination platform between USAID and the government for informed decision-making and management of activities, according to several ministerial officials engaged by the ET.

CALM’s engagement in negotiations on decentralization has helped to support local governments’ interest, but it may not be able to take on new roles as some donors and partners hope. The Congress of Local Authorities of Moldova (CALM) - is a major association of local authorities in Moldova, established in 2000. The organization has the potential to serve in a coordinating role with relevant GRM ministries. Back in 2016, during a period of relative government openness, the CALM was given the opportunity to be part of the regular meetings of the Cabinet of Ministers. However, in 2017, the situation deteriorated again, and CALM’s involvement in the Cabinet ceased and its recommendations were not utilized.⁴⁰ More recently, CM signed an MOU with CALM in July 2019 that would engage the group in the aforementioned intergovernmental working groups to provide or identify experts on various policy issues and to co-host periodic events. Several donor and IP representatives voiced their belief that CALM has the potential to become a more advocacy-focused, representative organization of Mayors capable of working with multiple GRM ministries, but at the same time expressed doubts that this would actually happen. “[They’re] not a convening force for all local government entities,” said one donor. “They don’t do a lot of vigorous research...and have problems with their own governance. They’re reluctant to change. Pity, because they could be a good organization for this.”

Consequences of the lack of ministerial coordination include slow implementation of the GRM’s decentralization strategy and ongoing uncertainty regarding local versus central responsibilities. The lack of coordination and action of central government ministries on LPA revenue generation, decentralization, and related areas has prevented resolution of a number of fundamental issues affecting local governments in Moldova, according to several Mayors and LPA staff interviewed by the ET. For example, the ET’s document review shows that on paper, the GRM has a highly decentralized system of public administration.⁴¹ In reality, however, several key informants told the ET that despite such laws being passed and a Decentralization Strategy adopted, not much of it has actually been implemented. “[O]nly 25 percent of the Decentralization Strategy has been achieved,” noted one Mayor. “Involvement of political factors in financing at the local level is too high. Even if the Central Government might report a greater achievement of the strategy, we know it is not the case.” An AIM implementing partner agreed, stating that “it is not really happening,” and that as a result, “Today, LPAs are still heavily dependent on the Central Government on many issues.” Additionally, local governments in Moldova are responsible for about 25 percent of total public revenue, the highest levels in Southeastern Europe.⁴²

⁴⁰ <http://www.viitorul.org/files/library/raport%202018%20nou%20%281%29.pdf>

⁴¹ Please see the ET’s literature review under Objective 3 for more information on the recent history and current status (both “on paper” and “in reality”) of government decentralization in Moldova.

⁴² Fiscal Decentralization Indicators for Southeastern Europe Report 2018

Additionally, respondent mayors shared that there is still an unclear division of responsibilities between Moldova's two-tier system of local government. As noted within EQ1 (see EQ1a, Objective 3), the first tier consists of 898 administrative territorial units (villages [communes], cities [municipalities]), and the second tier consists of 32 districts (*rayons*) established around a city center and adjacent communes (villages). Currently, Law no. 436 on Local Public Administration provides for the division of powers between these different tiers and stipulates specifically that villages or towns/municipalities (i.e., first-tier local governments) exercise general or special powers over their territory to promote the interests of the local community and address local issues. In reality, however, there are several issues in understanding and articulating which responsibilities fall to each tier of local government. One Mayor told the ET, "There are no clearly explained mandates of the tier-two LPAs or at least, we mayors do not clearly understand them. They consume a lot of public funds and do not provide any service for tier-one LPAs." Additionally, there are hundreds of responsibilities that fall under the mandate of tier-one LPAs, which are given no financial support from the central budget, according to two KII mayors. Finally, such additional responsibilities for tier-one LPAs would likely go unmet, as each LPA possesses only a few staff (see Eq1.a, Objective 3 on LPA capacity), so would likely not possess the institutional capability to deliver those services.

EQ1C CONCLUSIONS

Through relevant AIM activities, USAID/Moldova is doing what it can to advance decentralization implementation and reform, but key ministries currently appear unable or unwilling to cooperate. AIM activities have attempted to encourage greater GRM ownership of and implementation of the country's decentralization strategy, through interventions such as CM's establishment of intergovernmental issue-based working groups on decentralization among ministerial and other stakeholder groups. However, due to factors such as reduced capacity among relevant GRM ministries, ongoing ministerial reorganizations, and a lack of political will, such efforts have yielded little progress thus far.

Lack of ministerial coordination has contributed to slow implementation of Moldova's decentralization agenda. While Moldova ostensibly has a highly decentralized system of public administration, in practice, the Central Government and its decentralized structures (offices, representations in the regions) continue to hold substantial decision-making powers. The decentralization agenda itself continues to be weakly implemented, and among the main causes is a lack of coordination between various institutions responsible for the LPA revenue generation and overall decentralization in recent years, particularly since 2015. Various working groups established in 2010 within each Ministry, in close coordination with State Chancellery, allowed for a more structured coordination between different central public administration authorities, and there is a potential to revitalize these in cooperation with AIM's Comunitatea Mea activity.

EVALUATION QUESTION 2 FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

EQ2

What are the strengths and weaknesses (gaps) of the project's theory of change?⁴³

Sub-Question: To what extent were the programmatic and contextual assumptions identified in the project theory of change sufficient to achieve the purpose of the AIM project, and did they realistically represent an achievable set of results?

EQ2 KEY FINDINGS

The AIM project's underlying development hypothesis is:

"If citizens, civil society, and independent media become more active in government decision-making and oversight AND the justice system becomes more transparent and accountable AND local government becomes more responsive to citizens' needs, THEN governance in Moldova will be more effective and accountable."

To assess the strength of the current TOC, the ET applied four key criteria as identified in USAID's How-To-Note on Developing a Project Logic Model (and its Associated Theory of Change)⁴⁴ — clarity, feasibility, testability, and plausibility.

1. Clarity:

AIM's Theory of Change is clear but is also overly broad. All KIIs agreed that the AIM's TOC is correct, clear, and addresses main drivers with regards to strengthening accountability in Moldova. Respondents mentioned that the TOC clearly identifies key actors who could drive such change. One respondent commented that the TOC described a logical cause-and-effect relationship, "When society is exercising pressure and is better understanding its rights, then it will request more accountability from government. It will produce change. If there is no demand from the society's side, there will be no change."

However, a small group of respondents stated that the TOC could have been written in a less general way, with one donor respondent noting that "AIM is too broad. We struggled between aspirational and achievable objectives." Indeed, the ET agrees that the current TOC that outlines the logic of transformation at the macro level is quite broad. Across the key drivers of change (media, civil society, local governance), the TOC remains too general in terms of being able to identify either specific sectors, social groups, or pre-conditions that are likely to lead to desired outcomes.

2. Feasibility:

The TOC is feasible but there are significant challenges to its implementation.

Respondents were overall positive about the feasibility of this approach, with many KIIs noting that the TOC lists much-desired outcomes. But several qualified this response by adding that it can only be accomplished in the long term and only under certain conditions or with certain incentives. The feasibility of the current TOC is strengthened by the fact that other former Soviet states with

⁴³ Included in this question within SOW: Reforming accountability and building transparency in a system resistant to change is challenging. In many cases, officials and individuals balance their official capacities with cultural relationship-based norms to take advantage of opportunities to advance oneself, one's family and one's larger circle of affinity.

⁴⁴ https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/project_logic_model_how_to_note_final_sep1.pdf

relatively similar problems have undertaken effective reform efforts. A few KIIs, for example, mentioned Georgia as an example of successful anti-corruption reform in the 2000s. Indeed, Georgia is often viewed as an inspiration for anti-corruption CSOs in the region.⁴⁵ A leading journalist commented that “Moldova could be easily turned. Moldova is like a small boat and compared to a large cruiser, which takes time to turn, it could be maneuvered easily. All you need to have is good government and good external support.”

USAID remains one of the largest donors in Moldova and dedicates substantial resources to achieving the AIM project’s purpose through its multitude of activities. With the appropriate coordination with other donors, especially the EU, SIDA, and the German Foreign Ministry, USAID remains optimistic about the feasibility of progress toward the project’s objectives and purpose. As one donor noted, “Moldova is not an island. It is close to the EU. The international community is exerting a certain amount of influence on how things are developing here, in a good way—good practices, rule of law—constantly reminding the government and even holding their hand. I think all of this support and encouragement is important.” However, several factors that could negatively affect the feasibility of achieving AIM’s TOC include political flux, lack of political will at the national level, Russian influence, and strong vested interests, according to several KIIs from across stakeholder groups. Unfortunately, these factors are mostly beyond USAID’s control. Progress toward AIM’s purpose is therefore possible and feasible, but significant constraints such as these make such progress slow and challenging.

The ET also found that the feasibility of this TOC is affected by the fact that only a minority of AIM’s implementing partners incorporate the overall AIM logic into their own TOCs – or even have a TOC as part of their activity MEL plans. Only three out of ten activities reviewed for this evaluation list their own TOCs. Even in those rare cases, most TOCs are weak and need further improvement. For example, CEPPS stated that “at the local level, government officials must become more responsive to constituents and more effectively serve as conduits for two-way communication with national parties and elected officials” without listing incentives that underpin such change.

3. Testable:

It is difficult to conduct nuanced testing of AIM’s TOC given the limits of current types of collected data and coordination of project indicators. The ET found that the TOC can inform the general direction of the AIM Project but lacks sufficiently nuanced indicators to provide higher-level evidence of progress at the project’s purpose level. Most indicators for AIM’s purpose and three objectives derive either from country-wide general surveys (e.g., “Nations in Transit” indices for civil society, local democratic governance, etc.) or output-level data provided by the implementing partners that have not been updated or do not by themselves constitute the bigger “pieces of the puzzle” that can be utilized to test the overarching TOC. The aforementioned surveys are useful, as they provide time-series data and capture trends, but because they are administered at the national level, it is difficult to correlate these national findings with the effects of AIM’s activities, specifically. This raises questions about the utility of these indicators for measuring progress against the TOC.

⁴⁵ <https://ti-ukraine.org/news/anti-corruption-semi-miracle-in-georgia/>

Additionally, important data generated through studies commissioned by IPs, such as Promo-Lex, CEPPS, FHI360, and Media-M's implementers, are mostly disconnected from the AIM PMP because the PMP has never been updated to incorporate new and potentially useful indicators. Indicators based on IP data could be used for tracking causal links in the TOC or testing whether results could be achieved as predicted. For example, an indicator could be added to AIM's PMP based on the Party Financing Assessment Scorecard (produced by CEPPS for leading parties) in order to test progress against its sub-objective to strengthen political parties.⁴⁶ Additionally, Promo-Lex surveys provide information about citizen perceptions of CSOs, demonstrating, for example, that more than 20 percent of respondents mentioned corruption, money laundering, and promotion of certain party politics as typical CSO activities. This would be an important indicator to track for the current TOC. Changes to this indicator could be highly relevant for shifts in willingness of citizens to engage with CSOs in order to influence decision-making and should be monitored on a regular basis.

A strong TOC would have empirical studies that underpin links and support the argument for how certain activities lead to desired outcomes. It is crucial that causal links are based on valid empirical evidence. The present results framework, PMP indicators, PAD, and related documentation lack references to such studies for the current TOC.

4. Plausibility:

Plausibility of the current TOC is predicated on many assumptions, but judicial reform and establishment of the rule of law are seen as key. All KIIs found AIM's TOC plausible, but some stated that reform of the judiciary and establishment of the rule of law is the key to the current TOC. They felt that improvements in the rule of law could have a positive structural impact across many elements of governance and is a keystone that ensures accountability of the system. Poor rule of law was cited frequently as an impediment to active citizen engagement and the protection of civic rights, as well as having a negative impact on quality of governance and the capacity to fight corruption. Weak protection of property rights undermines the middle class and forces them to emigrate from Moldova. One key informant from an independent media outlet summarized this in the following way, "What common citizens need is security. The only institution to provide security is justice – the state has to protect your life, money, property. The fact that people leave is not necessarily because they have a bad life in Moldova, but by leaving they choose a secure future. In our country, nobody is sure what may happen tomorrow, and you may end up in jail for no reason."

Plausibility of AIM's TOC is also predicated on several key assumptions.⁴⁷ Table 4 shows a sector-by-sector review of AIM's assumptions, which come from the project's 2015 PAD, in terms of their updated status and relevance; also included is a list of missing assumptions as identified by the evaluation team.

Table 5: Civil Society

KEY ASSUMPTIONS / ENABLING FACTORS	CURRENT STATUS	RELEVANCE
------------------------------------	----------------	-----------

⁴⁶ Sub-objective I.2

⁴⁷ From the AIM Project Appraisal Document, p. 50

Moldova's enabling environment for civil society and multi-party politics remains positive	Legal environment for CSOs remains stable since 2016 and positive changes in party finance occurred ⁴⁸	Very relevant
Citizens' right to freely organize and join CSOs is not infringed upon	Risks related to surveillance and targeting journalists and civil society activists remain ⁴⁹	Very relevant
Moldovan CSOs and political parties remain actively engaged in the democratic process	Many political parties compete in elections and CSOs monitor elected officials.	Very relevant
The National Participation Council (CNP) continues to serve as a formal platform for CSO input into the legislative process	The CNP's role is suspended and there is no progress on renewing the status. Lack of regional CSOs and weak legitimacy undermines its impact	Less relevant
The NGO Council continues to serve as a platform for CSO coalitions	The council has been inactive since 2014 and plays no role	Less relevant
Progress is made implementing recent legislation to allow citizens to donate 2 percent of their income tax to CSO	Limited progress as measured by increased number of donors and noticeable amounts donated	Relevant

Missing assumptions as identified within the ET's KII's:

- Some KIIs mentioned a lack of emphasis on developing the culture of citizen engagement. KIIs stated that the current TOC doesn't take into account the lack of active civic leaders and poor leadership within CSOs, which impedes capacity to influence government decision-making. KII respondents stated that more efforts are needed to stimulate citizen engagement, adding that high disillusionment in the current political system and emigration demands special attention to develop participation.
- In KIIs with the ET, several CSO representatives spoke of a lack of attention to comprehensive civic education and leadership programs, especially for youth, which in turn undermined awareness about rights and responsibilities and impeded development of active citizens. Prioritizing civic education and leadership would both build knowledge among young Moldovans regarding their rights and responsibilities and encourage youth to engage on a variety of community issues, they added.
- There is also a need to protect and strengthen the legitimacy and necessity of CSOs in the eyes of Moldova's public against attacks from government- and party-controlled media sources, several additional interviewed CSO representatives told the ET. Maintaining this legitimacy would drive demand for and help grow their base of stakeholders, one said, which would in turn facilitate more effective engagement in policy making.
- Several CSO beneficiaries and IPs noted that in order to maintain the TOC's drive to make civil society "more active in government decision making" in the future, the theory would have to account for ongoing legislative and regulatory attempts to constrain CSOs' abilities to operate freely. "Since 2016, attacks on CSOs have started to emerge to restrict the functioning of CSOs," said one IP representative, pointing to legislation attempting to limit their ability to receive money from abroad and engage in political activities.

Table 6: Media

⁴⁸ <https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/resource-csosi-2018-report-europe-eurasia.pdf>

⁴⁹ <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2019/moldova>

KEY ASSUMPTIONS	CURRENT STATUS	RELEVANCE
High-speed internet and mobile phone remain accessible and affordable to citizens	Internet users increase (76 percent) ⁵⁰ and mobile phone use expands with some gaps in rural areas	Relevant
Media activists and independent media experts remain dedicated and engaged in media reforms	Strong advocacy led by the AIP and Centre for Independent Journalism	Very relevant
Independent media outlets remain independent	Small number of outlets manage to deliver independent news, but market and political constraints are severe	Very relevant

Missing assumptions as identified within the ET's KIIIs:

- Several KII media representatives spoke of the importance not just of maintaining independent media but of expanding its reach, especially online, through more and higher-quality news content (currently, only 16 percent of citizens stated that they use independent sources of information⁵¹).
- A number of interviewed media representatives also emphasized the need for more resources to enable citizens to discern quality media information from disinformation and propaganda. Making critical thinking and media literacy courses widely available in schools and online via educational systems was one suggested way to improve citizens' capacity.

Table 7: Political Participation

KEY ASSUMPTIONS	STATUS UPDATE	RELEVANCE
Moldova's current constitutional and legal frameworks for political competition remain progressive and continue to allow for an open political environment	Legal framework was changed to full proportional from the mixed system. But it still favors well-financed big parties and party funding remains opaque. Fourteen parties and one block participated in 2019 Parliamentary elections ⁵²	Very relevant
The Central Election Commission (CEC) continues to exist and function in generally adequate ways that allow for free and fair competition	CEC improves its professional capacity to run election, and digital voter registers are helpful	Relevant
Citizens participate in the political process to voice their opinions	Low voter turnout in the 2019 Parliamentary (49 percent) and local elections (42 percent) demonstrates weakness of political participation. Election monitoring by CSOs plays important role	Very relevant

Missing assumptions as identified within the ET's KIIIs:

- Several AIM activity-supported surveys noted an ongoing lack of trust among Moldova's public in its political parties, due to a lack of transparency in how parties collect donations and fund their activities,⁵³ as well as the view among several KIIIs that the parties remain overly personality

⁵⁰ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_TheGlobalCompetitivenessReport2019.pdf

⁵¹ https://internews.org/sites/default/files/2019-02/03_INTERNEWS_Final_report_25.10.18_EN-web.pdf

⁵² IFI Moldova International Observation Mission Final report, February 2019

https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/iri_moldova_eom_final_report.pdf

⁵³ National Representative Study on the Perception of Citizens about the Activity of Promo-Lex, 2019

driven. To build citizens' trust and engagement in the political process, parties must be willing to improve their transparency and accountability in these areas, they added, and be seen as good-faith actors in implementing political reforms.

- Solutions must continue to be developed to increase the involvement of Moldova's diaspora in the country's political process, both at the national and regional levels, according to several beneficiaries and political experts. "The theory of change should reflect the importance of the diaspora," one expert said. "More than one million Moldovans are living abroad. They are not well engaged in Moldovan society...Electoral participation is going down year by year."

Table 8: Rule of Law

KEY ASSUMPTIONS	STATUS UPDATE	RELEVANCE
The 2011 Justice Sector Reform Strategy (JSRS) and its Action Plan continue to guide strategic investment and development of the justice sector	Continued until JSRS ended in 2017. Small-scale Justice Plan guided reforms in 2018. Judicial Sector Development Plan developed for 2019-2022 but not yet in place	Very relevant
The current and subsequent governments remain committed to fulfilling EU conditions on anti-corruption and justice sector reform implementation under the EU Association Agreement (EU AA)	The EU concluded that the Moldovan government was not committed to anti-corruption in 2018 due to inadequate action on a banking scandal. The EU recognized renewed commitment to anti-corruption and judicial reforms in 2019. These two issues remain part of the EU AA	Very relevant
The SCM continues to use random case assignment (RCA) in judicial proceedings	RCA is used for almost all cases. Judicial Investigation Board hired an additional investigator to verify exceptions to usage of RCA. However, the ICMS's RCA function faces challenges in implementation	Very Relevant
Recent changes to the organization, management and optimization of courts, the functioning of the SCM, and changes to the status and immunities of judges are implemented	Optimization of courts is not complete, creating significant management issues for primary and secondary courts. SCM did not take a firm stance against corruption or political pressure. SCM boards are established and more autonomous. Legislative changes on judicial status has been implemented	Very relevant
Justice sector institutions continue to request support to implement the JSRS, including requests for further automating the judiciary and law enforcement institutions for a better performance management of the courts, judges, and other justice sector professionals	The judiciary requested assistance to implement JSRS, including automation. The prosecution was less committed to automation. USAID dropped prosecution automation from planned AIM activities	Very relevant
The Ministry of Justice advances recent draft amendments to the Prosecution Law to implement JSRS reforms	Prosecution reform law passed in 2016 but has not been implemented well. Major problems of corruption within the prosecution continue	Relevant
Recently enacted anti-corruption and judicial integrity laws are enforced	National Integrity Authority and National Anti-Corruption Center are established but remain weak	Relevant
EU budget support for justice sector reforms continues	In response to judicial involvement in a banking scandal, the EU stopped funding for EU AA in 2018. Funding started again in 2019 based on renewed commitment to anti-corruption and judicial reforms	Relevant

Missing assumptions as identified within the ET's KIs:

- Several interviewed judicial stakeholders stated that future justice sector reforms would require greater emphasis on improving the independence of the judiciary from political influence. This stemmed from their view that AIM's ROL activities were strengthening transparency and accountability in the judiciary, this focus alone was insufficient to curbing judicial corruption. "You can be transparent but not necessarily independent," noted one judicial expert.
- In a number of its ROL KIs, interviewees emphasized that as part of maintaining and expanding citizens' demand for a "more transparent and accountable" justice system, the TOC should acknowledge the struggle to build a culture of rule of law and integrity within Moldova, and the need to instill these values within its citizenry from a young age through adulthood.
- A majority of interviewed judges and court personnel stated that the effects of court optimization, including increasing workloads and fewer human resources available to do this work, were making their jobs more challenging (see EQ 1a, objective 2 for the ET's more detailed finding on this). In turn, several IP representatives added, such challenges were undermining progress toward making the justice system more capable, and ultimately, improving its transparency and accountability; the current TOC does not take such current conditions into account.

Table 9: Local Governance

KEY ASSUMPTIONS	STATUS UPDATE	RELEVANCE
Decentralization and local governance reforms remain a conditionality for Moldova's EU integration	Decentralization has largely stalled (with the exception of partial decentralization of the Road Fund) and has no champion at the national level. The EU focuses more on local economic development	Very relevant
EU budget assistance for local governance reform continues as an incentive for structural reform and the overall reform agenda in the framework of the EU-Moldova Association Agreement	Support is being provided through Mayors for Economic Growth (M4EG). The EU is currently supporting Moldova Road Rehabilitation Project III, Rehabilitation of Water Supply system in municipality of Nisporeni, and Energy Efficiency. In October 2019, the EU approved a new package of budget assistance to Moldova to support rule of law and rural development reforms	Relevant
The new Law on Local Public Finance continues to be implemented, thereby giving local governments greater control over own-source revenue	Implementation of Law has stalled; however, on November 1, 2019 amendments were made to the Law on Local Public Finance (Law nr. 397/2003), which aims to generate additional revenues to the LPAs. Local authorities' financial autonomy is very limited, and their finances are extremely low	Very relevant
The Public Services Reform Program continues to improve access to central and local public administration services through "one-stop-shops"	One-stop-shops (CISCs) piloted under LGSP with three LPAs are now being launched in five LPAs under CM; EGA/World Bank piloting 20 "CUPS" (similar to CISC model) in 2020 in 20 Level I LPAs, with future plans to establish CUPS in up to 350 localities	Very relevant
Mayors maintain their high approval rating	Mayors and LPAs remain most trusted; the number of independent Mayors is growing, increasing from 22 in 2015 to 46 in 2019	Relevant

Small local governments are consolidated into more efficient administrative units

Currently there is no GRM political will for amalgamation; IPs are seeking to encourage voluntary amalgamation with LPAs (e.g., as part of CM activity's IMC effort)

Very relevant

Missing assumptions as identified within the ET's KII's:

- Several interviewed mayors spoke of the exodus of skilled staff out of their LPAs, and of LPA staff being older and nearing retirement age. USAID's future support of LPAs should be based on the assumption that they have sufficient capacity (i.e., staff) to absorb USAID-supported training and deliver public services to their citizens.
- LPAs must have diversified funding sources to increase their financial independence from the central government, according to a majority of interviewed mayors and LPA staff. Several stated that the TOC's assumption on local governments – i.e., “local government becomes more responsive to citizens' needs” – will only be possible if LPAs are able to diversify and increase sources of local funding.

EQ2 CONCLUSIONS

The AIM Project TOC's strengths are its clarity, ambition, and feasibility over a long-term period. Overall, the present TOC is clear and meaningful, and is ambitious enough to fit mid-term project planning for Moldova as an overarching framework for AIM at its purpose and objective levels. In terms of resources and time, the potential to fulfill the current TOC also appears strong. There is solid buy-in from most USAID partners on the ground to achieve more accountable governance in Moldova, and there is strong consensus about the importance of bottom-up pressure and a grassroots approach to drive the transformation in the mid-term. With the right incentives and strong synergies with other donors, USAID could deliver meaningful change within the current TOC. However, at present, there is no clear “red line” that lists factors beyond USAID's control.

The TOC is poorly embedded into MEL plans of AIM's implementing partners. One factor affecting the TOC's feasibility is the fact that only a few implementing partners align their own TOCs' logic (i.e., cause-and-effect) in their MEL plans with that of AIM – or even establish a TOC within their MEL plans. This demonstrates that it remains an overarching document they may not consider or have much awareness of when designing their own plans for monitoring their activities' desired outcomes.

Testability of the TOC is impeded by a multitude of indicators that are not fully interconnected. The ability to test the current TOC is hampered by the structure and content of AIM's key performance indicators. Overall, AIM's indicators as captured in its results framework and PMP lack precision for most objectives. Data from the existing studies utilized or commissioned by the AIM implementing partners are context-based or underused and could be better used to track progress. In its current form, the TOC remains difficult to test.

Overall, AIM's TOC is plausible, according to several criteria. Most of the underlying assumptions for each sector remain very relevant, although the above assumption tables identify several missing assumptions for each sector. Rule of law is seen as having structural importance for the current TOC. However, the lack of empirical data and reference to studies that prove causal links within AIM's TOC raises questions about its capacity to track progress and fine-tune activities accordingly (see previous conclusion).

EVALUATION QUESTION 3 FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

EQ3

To what extent has IT investment been successful and sustainable, given that several activities used or proposed technological solutions to improve transparency? How well have these activities been institutionalized within the Government of Moldova?

EQ3 KEY FINDINGS

AIM activities' information technology contributions include court automation in the justice sector and an integrated financial information system, which is used in local governance bookkeeping, and election software for the Central Election Committee to improve the election process. The ET's findings below on AIM's IT investments are also summarized in table format in Annex C.

IT Investments in the Justice Sector

Justice sector respondents appreciated USAID's support in court automation. All interviewed judges and court staff held positive views of the ICMS, the Moldovan courts' web portal, the FEMIDA court hearing audio-recording system, video-conferencing system, and digitization of court archives. They also appreciated the ROLISP and OJ activities' contributions of computer hardware to facilitate use of ICMS and FEMIDA.

ICMS enhances transparency in the court process, increases access to information, and improves the efficiency of court administration, according to the majority of respondents who discussed IT investments in the justice sector. As interviewed court and judicial staff reported, the newest ICMS platform unified case management in one server, allowing easy transfer of cases from one court to another, thus avoiding unauthorized modification of the case file. In addition, ICMS's Version 5 introduced one unique number for each case, permitting easy search of all case documents. As an FGD participant shared, "If I need a copy of a document, I can find it with a couple of clicks. The overall system allows us to be efficient and enhances transparency."

ICMS is widely considered a useful and efficient tool. The ability to track the status of the case, see minutes of the hearing, add comments, and upload relevant documents were considered important functions of the system by nearly all interviewed judges. These features have helped judges and their assistants prepare for the hearings, develop legal decisions, and enhance the participation of all parties. For example, ICMS informs case parties when a hearing is cancelled or postponed. All watchdog CSOs told the ET that SCM inspection board members use ICMS to obtain relevant information about judges, verify case documents, and oversee court activities. Quick access to information allows inspectors to investigate complaints about judges in a timely manner.

ICMS's integration with other databases is appreciated, but it is not yet connected with many national databases. The interoperability feature of the ICMS allows automation of data entry, quick access to information from various public institutions, and data integrity. A majority of interviewed court staff reported that this feature reduces the time they spend entering data into the system. Yet many national databases are not yet connected with ICMS. There is no interconnection with the Prosecutor General's Office (PGO), the National Penitentiary Administration, the civil registry, the

Ministry of Interior Affairs, and other government e-systems. This is mainly because ICMS is a more advanced system, while other governmental services are still underdeveloped, as an IP and an external expert explained.

ICMS helps judges enhance the efficiency of their decisions. All interviewed judges reported that they can draft decisions more quickly because ICMS allows them to access SCJ cases and decisions of the EU Court of Human Rights and other courts online. This enhances the efficiency of court services.

Randomized case assignment (RCA) contributes to judicial accountability and fighting corruption; however, it continues to face implementation challenges. A majority of external experts, IPs, and donor community members noted that randomized assignment of cases is an important contribution toward accountability of the judiciary and anticorruption, enabling the SCM board and CSOs to identify and investigate reports of manipulation of the system. As one key informant stated, “The mere fact that such a system exists is great because it shows the problem. If we did not have these systems, we would not know about it.” Another respondent mentioned, “Random assignment of cases was an excellent initiative, especially when the SCJ did not support it.” Most of the interviewed Court Presidents and Chiefs of Secretariat expressed positive opinions about RCA, as it assigns cases much faster and eliminates judges’ complaints about unfair distribution of cases. The lone exception among judicial stakeholders to this positive view of RCA was regional court judges; during interviews, nearly all complained that ICMS assigns cases without consideration of their workload. As a result, some judges are assigned many more cases than others, they said.

Assigning cases without considering the specialization of judges is another frequently reported issue. As reported in two out of eight courts, judges specializing in civil or administrative law might be assigned criminal cases. One judge shared, “Overnight, I had to deal with a bankruptcy case while I had been working on criminal cases for ten years. At one point I was going to resign, because I was not prepared to take on a case outside of my specialization. Some of my colleagues did resign.” Nearly half of the ICMS users reported improperly assigned cases to the three-judge panels, which is relevant mostly in criminal cases. They told the ET that ICMS does not deal appropriately with randomized case distribution when one of the judges recuses him/herself due to personal (e.g. sick leave, maternity leave, retirement, busy schedule) or conflict of interest reasons. The system automatically disqualifies all three judges because it does not have an option for disqualifying only one judge. Reportedly, this malfunction often results in considerable delays and creates confusion among case parties and suspicion of corruption. While judges interviewed by the ET understood that ICMS had been designed to deliberately assign cases in this manner because this was the required assignment process under SCM regulations, they nevertheless faulted the system for these deficiencies.

The Electronic Judicial Statistics Module (EJSM) is still underdeveloped but has great potential to provide useful data. Moldova is part of the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ), which requires Moldova to provide judicial statistics on a monthly basis. To increase efficiency in preparing reports, the ICMS has a module that generates judicial statistics. However, the ET found that the module is not operating properly. SCM representatives requested more support in improving the module, as the system cannot currently perform simple operations, such as downloading a list of closed and open cases. Chancery staff members in one court stated, “Please fix the statistic function in the ICMS. We do it manually and it takes two weeks to prepare statistics every three

months.” One District Court Judge said: “As for judicial statistics, I tried to use that module once and did not understand how it worked. I am not really using it.” Nevertheless, a judge in Chisinau shared that ICMS can create reports that compare judges’ and courts’ performances in a matter of five minutes. Frequently cited reasons for the underdeveloped statistical module included: a) the new ICMS system requires more work and time to input information, so some courts are not entering all required information to generate statistical reports; b) courts are not always using the ICMS platform properly due to the high staff turnover; c) poor capacity of staff to complete all modules of the system; and d) courts infrequently upload case documentation and information.

E-filing and e-summoning modules are being tested and therefore are not fully functional.

The ET learned from judicial assistants, lawyers, and SCM representatives that both e-filing and e-summoning module functions are not fully operational. E-filing has been tested only in two courts in Cahul. According to judicial authorities, once testing is complete, e-filing will be implemented in the entire system. The interviewed court staff and judicial assistants confirmed that they were concerned about using the e-filing function because prosecutors, the police, and citizens still use paper documents. According to the interviewed court staff, e-filing requires an e-signature, which often does not work because the ICMS is still in a testing phase. In addition, they believe most citizens do not know how to use e-signature. Additionally, lawyers said that the e-summoning module will allow them to efficiently summon witnesses and case parties to court hearings, as well as to save paper. This, according to key informants, will prevent postponing or cancelling hearings due to the absence of the case party.

AIM’s ROL activities helped develop effective IT guidelines, but shortcomings were reported. For example, remote hearings with the penitentiary institutions required regulations. OJ provided technical support to the SCM in developing regulations on using the videoconferencing system in court hearings and penitentiaries. They enabled the use of the system in all national courts. Likewise, as stated in the OJ’s 2019 annual performance report, the IP developed documents to register ICMS with the National Center for the Protection of Personal Data (NCPDP) as part of the Judicial Information System. NCPDP registered ICMS and approved the interoperability of the ICMS with other e-governance systems.⁵⁴ However, a majority of interviewed ICMS users expressed the desire to have more comprehensive ICMS user guidelines with additional scenarios and examples. Apparently, the existing guidelines do not reflect all the situations faced by the courts. For example, guidelines do not address mediation cases or cases when judges conduct hearings without parties. Court staff in focus group discussions shared that current ICMS guidelines lack the catalogue with codes for file-naming that came with previous guidelines.

ICMS and the courts web portal lack multilingual functionality, but the Courts’ web portal provides greater access to persons with disabilities. The ET found that ICMS is mainly in Romanian, which reportedly creates challenges for speakers of other languages, especially Russian. Several district court employees conveyed that there are still sections that require additional effort to enter manually in Russian. ICMS training was conducted in Romanian, creating difficulties for Russian-speaking court employees. The Courts’ Web Portal is available in Romanian only. As court users stated, this may reduce access to those who do not speak Romanian. The portal does, however, provide access to visually and hearing-impaired persons.

⁵⁴ Millennium DPI Partners. USAID’s Open Justice Project in Moldova, Annual Report, October 30, 2019

The fifth-generation version of ICMS has several deficiencies and technical issues. Nearly all interviewed court administrators, judicial staff, and court employees mentioned various deficiencies and technical issues in the use of the new ICMS version. Overall, the respondents described ICMS as user-unfriendly and frequently cited the following shortcomings:

- **ICMS inaccurately reflects the final status of cases.** ICMS users reported, even after a case is officially closed, that the system will list it as “open” online. Similarly, when a case is reopened on the request of the case parties, the system shows that the case is “closed.” As a result, the parties may not come to hearings. These types of problems were reported in four of eight visited courts. According to ICMS users, this deficiency negatively affects courts on two levels: 1) it confuses those consulting the web portal, making them suspicious about corruption and undermining the courts’ credibility; and 2) it affects randomized case assignment and prevents use of the judicial statistics function. External experts also indicated that the system drops the case history once the case is closed in district court. They believe the purpose is to minimize the archived data. Interviewed users stated they had reported such issues to the Agency for Court Administration’s (ACA) and the Service for Information Technology and Cyber Security (SITCS, which provides maintenance for ICMS), as well the courts’ presidents and vice-presidents. But they noted that the issues had not yet been addressed, and that response rates were slow, despite the legislation requiring a 24-hour turnaround.
- **ICMS data is visible to court staff, but not to the legal case parties.** Five out of eight courts and external stakeholders shared that hearing minutes and decisions are not visible on the courts’ web portal. Court users are unable to access case documentation, such as hearing dates, hearing minutes, and judicial decisions. As with the ICMS case status issue above, court administrators have reported these issues to the ACA and SITCS but have encountered the same slow response rate. As reported, the delayed response on technical issues affects the work of the courts, specifically for redistribution of cases.
- **ICMS requires inputting more information than the previous version, and courts maintain parallel systems for managing and administering cases.** Nearly all interviewed ICMS users stated that the new system is more complicated to use than the previous version. As one Judicial Assistant stated, “In the old version, work was done in one window; however now in order to fill information we need to open multiple windows, and we enter the same information twice.” This, combined with the requirement to maintain both electronic and hard copies of all documentation, considerably increases workload. Court staff expressed frustration about duplicating their effort, while also dealing with low salaries, lack of human resources, and high staff turnover. All these factors reduce efficiency and the quality of court services. One judge assistant questioned, “What is the point of printing copies of all documents if we already have a digital version, or doing audio-recordings and then transcribe them?”

The FEMIDA audio recording system provides transparency to the judiciary and simplifies court hearing procedures and activities; however, it is unevenly implemented. The audio recording of court hearings is mandatory and has been implemented since 2014, with assistance from AIM’s ROLISP and OJ activities. The system is appreciated by nearly all justice sector key informants. Court users and external experts confirmed that audio recordings are accessible for a fee of US\$1.00 to any case party. Judicial authorities, judges, and court staff mentioned that the audio recording function

disciplines judges and other parties and simplifies work for court staff. Higher-level courts use lower court audio recordings for their decisions. Nearly all judges stated they used audio recordings to resolve complaints about their decisions. The system also helps them draft decisions and prove that the hearings were compliant with established procedures. As a result of audio recording, the number of claims about the inaccuracy of minutes decreased considerably, according to most court administrators. A majority of court users told the ET that audio recordings allows lawyers to verify comments in hearings.

However, the ET found that audio recording was not operational in all courts. Frequently mentioned technical issues included: a) improperly functioning software; b) old and incompatible hardware running the software; and c) computers that do not have enough memory to record hearings continuously. For example, a staff member in one regional court said, “it is too difficult to run both audio software and ICMS on one old computer.” Relatedly, interviewees told the ET that the incompatible hardware issue was the result of a lack of consultation between them and ACA/SITCS regarding the type and capacity of their hardware (in two courts, administrators said they wish they had been consulted prior to installing ICMS to ensure compatibility of existing equipment with ICMS and FEMIDA).⁵⁵ Many court users and judges revealed that judges sometimes examined cases in their offices rather than in court rooms due to a lack of hearing rooms. They use regular voice recording devices in their offices. However, as key informants conveyed, regular voice recording devices can be easily manipulated by hitting the pause button when, for example, judges talk improperly to the parties concerned.

The Moldovan Courts’ Web Portal supported by OJ simplified access to information and increased transparency for court users, thus improving court practices. Thanks to the portal, the public, including the media, can freely access files, search hearing dates, track the status, and see the entire history of a case online. In the past, court users could get information about their case details only by visiting courts. According to the interviewed judges and Chiefs of Secretariat, increased access to information benefited all justice sector actors, thus making the judiciary more transparent and bringing it closer to citizens. The web portal created the possibility of e-filing cases (currently operational only in two courts), thus increasing access to courts and improving court practices. Several CSOs reported they use the portal to monitor hearings and track the status of individual cases. Several judges and external experts mentioned that SCM’s website is useful, as it also displays the updated legal framework.

AIM-supported video conferencing equipment has increased court efficiency and improved judicial transparency. Videoconferencing equipment enabled SCM to communicate with courts remotely to gain institution-wide agreement on issues, thus increasing court efficiency. In addition, all SCM meetings are video recorded and available on the SCM website. In order to increase judicial transparency, a separate room for media to watch SCM proceedings live was established, with the assistance of the ROLISP activity. All these factors contribute to accountability and improve judicial transparency, as they allow the public access to information and enable individuals to watch justice sector discussions in real time, as stated by the interviewed SCM representatives and IPs. According to lawyers, media and CSOs also have more influence on the justice system than five years ago as a result of video streaming of SCM proceedings. The availability of SCM information has become routine,

⁵⁵ Most of the courts visited by the ET stated that they had IT staff available to address such issues, but also that such staff suffer from high turnover due to low salaries, out-migration, or being fired (or quitting) due to a lack of professionalism in the performance of their work.

creating a need for it and an expectation that it will always be available. Another use of the videoconferencing equipment is to allow inmates to testify in court hearings remotely, which saves the state funds. According to an IP, pilot remote hearings resulted in a 50 percent drop in spending on escort time and transportation of inmates to courts. This impressive result inspired MOJ to purchase an additional 15 sets of equipment. Every penitentiary now has its own video conferencing equipment. Only limited types of hearings are transmitted via video, e.g., when detainees would like to complain about their treatment or appeal their time in prison. A few interviewed judges, however, are skeptical about defending inmates remotely. They stated that lawyers will not be able to provide protection to inmates remotely, as there is no guarantee that an inmate participating in a hearing is not influenced by penitentiary staff. According to respondents, the lack of physical presence of lawyers during remote hearings may decrease the likelihood that inmates point out mistreatment.

Digitization of court archives is highly valued, but personal data protection requirements created problems and prevented wider access to court archives. Two AIM activities, Optimized Electronic Access to Judicial Decisions and OJ, supported the digitization of court archives of the SCJ and Chisinau District Court. The SCJ archives, digitized in 2016, include only case decisions. The Chisinau District court respondents shared that their digitized court archives included all case documentation and legal decisions from 1968 through 2010. Case data after 2010 is available in ICMS. In addition, 4,000 cases of the military court and 75,000 cases of the economic courts were digitized. Judges and court staff described the digitized archives as very useful, because they provide easy access to and quick search of the documentation and also save physical space. However, the ET found that digitized archives are not publicly available due to personal data protection requirements; the two courts are also cautious of potential litigation. In fact, the SCJ representatives conveyed that they have been sued because of claims of unprotected personal data. The SCJ respondents shared that the court's website contains an archive database, which allows persons who know case numbers to access needed information. Respondents at the Chisinau District court told the ET that digital archives are accessible only through the local database. Parties to a case can be granted access to the digitized archives.

IT Investment in Local Governance

An AIM-supported Integrated Financial Information System (IFIS) improved the efficiency and accuracy of municipal utility operations and helped citizens see their balance and pay online. This was confirmed by five out of nine Mayoral offices and an IP. According to the respondents, IFIS software, which is also called IC, ensures maximum automation of activities performed by municipal utility services. Specifically, IC helps municipal services to standardize and simplify customer billing; manage stock; monitor staff, payroll, and accounting balances; and manage reporting and planning. The interviewed Mayoral accountants expressed gratitude for the IC software, as it increases efficiency; it saves time on accounting and billing, reduces errors by sending invoices electronically, and enables staff to see municipal financial positions in real time. In addition, the system allows citizens to pay their utility balances (water, electricity, and other) online. However, in one of the interviews with an IP, the ET learned that citizens may lack awareness about municipal digital services. One of the interviewed Mayors stated that partnering with Novateca allowed local governments to obtain two computers (one from the activity and another from LPA). This helped to increase community access to online public services.

IT Investments in Election Support

Through the AIM-funded Enhancing Democracy in Moldova through Inclusive and Transparent Elections (EDMITE) activity, USAID is funding UNDP's work on the State Automated Information System "Elections" (SAISE). The system has automated voter registration, voting approval, and balloting. An IP representative reported that SAISE has proven its strong capacity, given that there were 11,000 candidates for councils and 6,000 for Mayors. The Central Election Council now has the capacity to manage all these services. Other EDMITE-supported automated systems scan ID cards to prevent voters from voting multiple times and help the diaspora to identify the closest polling stations. IT systems under development will facilitate political party reporting and the cleaning of the voter database.

Sustainability and Institutionalization of IT investments

IT investments are sustainably used by the intended users, as the systems are in place and buy-in is secured. It is evident that AIM-funded IT contributions are used by justice, local governance, and election actors. The availability of the information through ICMS, Courts' Web Portal, SCM website, and audio recording has become routine, and the expectation is that it will always be available. Court Presidents, Chiefs of Secretariat, and court staff believe that these components of the Judicial Information System will be used continuously. As one of the judicial staff stated: "We are used to the system. We can't let it fall apart." The ET also learned that CSOs use the SCM website to monitor its activities, thus providing oversight. Additionally, the ET found that technical maintenance and funds are in place to sustain court automation systems. Thus, the ACA maintains the system with the support of the contractor SITCS, and the MOJ budget contains a specific line devoted to support of the system. ACA predicted the need for an additional update of the system, which it plans to do. Additionally, ACA representatives expressed a sense of ownership and responsibility. An IP stated that developing information technologies, legal regulations, and piloting the systems was possible because of the commitment and support of the national government and justice sector partners.

When needing to replace old or malfunctioning IT equipment (or improve its compatibility – e.g., with the FEMIDA system), interviewees from some courts stated they updated their hardware using the funds allocated in the court budget. But aside from this and a specific one-time purchase – e.g., the MOJ's buying of 15 sets of video conferencing equipment (in response to the 50 percent drop in spending from not having to transport inmates to court [discussed above]), no courts said they had received IT equipment from the CRM, according to interviewees.

More than half of the interviewed Mayoral staff expressed a firm belief that the IC accounting software will be used sustainably. As one accountant stated, "It is difficult to shift back to manual bookkeeping, as now it is much easier with an automated system."

Moldova needs more time to test and absorb the latest ICMS version to strengthen its sustainability. SCJ, ACA, and IPs stressed that the new version of the ICMS was developed in just two years, which is considered a short time for such complex case management systems. Interviewees indicated that many functions of the system are still in the testing phase. In order to sustain gains and ensure the use of the system by intended users, more time is needed, interviewees said. The KII and FGD with lawyers also echoed the need for more time to embed the system and strengthen national ownership.

Training on the use of the new ICMS version was useful, but more training is needed.

Nearly all judicial and court employees expressed satisfaction with the training on the new ICMS, as it is

different from the previous version. All courts confirmed that judiciary and court personnel dealing with ICMS participated in a half-day training, followed by a two-day visit of experts to coach judicial staff. However, the interviewed judicial staff wanted more than four hours of training, which they judged insufficient to learn about the system and operate its new functions. One Judge Assistant said, “We just learned that there is such software, and already we are required to work with this system and do these actions.” Due to the high staff turnover, court administrators requested regular ICMS training. The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) is committed to providing ICMS training, with or without OJ support. However, the ET learned that the NIJ mandate can provide capacity-building training only to judiciary staff, i.e. judges and judges’ assistants. Court personnel such as the chancery office, archive staff, Judicial Executors, and lawyers are not trained by NIJ. Given the high turnover of court personnel, this creates a challenge for Court Administrators. To address this challenge, the ET was informed that ACA plans to set up mobile teams to train courts in using the system. This will reportedly be done in the form of training of trainers, who will be hired and paid by courts to provide training for new personnel.

EQ3 CONCLUSIONS

IT investments were successful, but still have technical limitations and issues. AIM-supported IT investments have succeeded in enhancing the transparency and efficiency of the justice system, local governance, and electoral systems. IT systems have been developed and established. Beneficiaries have bought into them and are committed to using them.

ICMS succeeded in facilitating the transfer of cases from one court to another; avoiding unauthorized modification of case documentation; and allowing users to see hearing minutes, upload documents, and easily search and track status of cases. ICMS also helped judges to improve the quality of their decisions by giving them access to useful resources. One of the system’s key strengths is its randomized case assignment, which contributes to judicial accountability. However, significant technical problems in assigning cases need to be resolved.

Once the ICMS electronic statistics module is fully operational, the justice sector will enjoy data that is valuable for informing decisions, analyzing courts’ and judges’ performances, and increasing the efficiency of court reporting. The e-filing function also has great potential for enhancing court practices and increasing efficiency by allowing court users to file cases and claims remotely. However, it will be challenging to establish e-filing fully, due to the lack of connections with other justice sector institutions. Given that ICMS is still in the testing phase, several other technical challenges and deficiencies must be resolved to increase utilization and create stronger demand for sustainable use of the system.

The FEMIDA court hearing audio recording system has proven to be a useful tool for court staff, judges, and court users; however, due to the incompatibility of some hardware equipment with FEMIDA software, many regional courts are facing challenges in using the system. The Courts’ Web Portal has multiple types of users, including visually and hearing-impaired persons, as it provides access to information, reducing the need to refer to courts for case details. It is not, however, multilingual, limiting the access of non-Romanian speakers. Information on the status of cases may be inaccurate due to ICMS technical problems. Videoconferencing equipment has added to court efficiency and judicial transparency. Digitization of archives helps courts to manage their space and provides them with easy access to and quick searches for documents; however, courts have given the public limited access to archives due to personal data protection requirements.

At the local level, Mayors and municipal staff see the value of IC accounting software, as it increases efficiency and accuracy of utility operations as well as provides opportunities for residents to pay for utilities online; however, many residents are unaware of the platform. AIM-funded electoral systems, such as SAISE, have proven their worth in elections, and new systems are under development.

IT investments have been institutionalized and are likely to be sustainable. Beneficiaries institutionalized AIM-funded IT investments; they are likely to sustain them. Users increased their demand for the systems, and government increased its commitment. Government agencies have established legal frameworks, regulations, technical maintenance, and funds to sustain systems, although they need to update legal frameworks. However, inadequate numbers and quality of staff might reduce the benefits of this potentially transformative information technology. Users need more ICMS training and system managers need more time to address deficiencies and technical problems.

EVALUATION QUESTION 4 FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

EQ4

How effectively did existing whole of project indicators capture results?

At its purpose and objective levels, the AIM Project utilized the following whole-of-project indicators:

AIM Project Purpose: More Effective and Accountable Democratic Governance

- Indicator: Nations in Transit Indicators: Civil Society, Judicial Framework, Local Democratic Governance

AIM Objective 1: Increased Citizen Engagement in Governmental Decision-Making:

- Indicator: Number of effective interventions by civil society in the government decision-making process

AIM Objective 2: Justice System is More Transparent and Accountable

- Indicator: Number of approved and implemented laws/regulations that ensure a better functioning judiciary
- Indicator: Percentage of courts using automated systems

AIM Objective 3: Strengthened Local Government Capacity to Respond to Citizens' Needs

Indicator: Number of sub-national governments receiving U.S. assistance that improve performance

EQ4 KEY FINDINGS

The AIM Project's context indicators are necessary but have limitations. As whole-of-project indicators, USAID/Moldova employed context indicators for the AIM project's purpose, specifically, Freedom House's "Nations in Transit" (NIT) indicators for measuring changes in civil society, judicial framework and independence, and local democratic governance. Generally, context indicators serve an important role in performance monitoring as a means to monitor factors outside the control of USAID – e.g., external factors such as macro-economic, social, or political conditions – that nevertheless have

the potential to affect the achievement of expected results.⁵⁶ But context indicators, while serving this useful function, are limited in specific ways. Like many context indicators, the NIT indicators study changes in democratization on a national scale, so the results of USAID/Moldova’s sub-national activities cannot be directly correlated with these broader metrics. Additionally, they are frequently dated, so are not measuring the effects of recent country developments – e.g., the latest NIT indicators are for 2018, and are actually measuring 2017 results. NIT indicators, while well regarded, are based on the expert but subjective opinions of a few – i.e., they do not use polling to draw their results from a broader, statistically significant population.

There are benefits and limitations of utilizing standard indicators for AIM. The purpose of the jointly-developed USAID-Department of State (DOS) standard indicators is to be able to aggregate all the work that USAID and DOS are doing abroad with particular foreign assistance appropriations.⁵⁷ Generally, standard indicators are useful because they can be aggregated at a regional and global level. However, they do not always show the nuance and depth of results in a way that custom indicators could and may not be sufficient for managing programs, projects, and activities. For example, AIM used USAID’s CSO Sustainability Index to assess changes in the organizational capacity of Moldovan CSOs based on Mission support. This indicator assesses such changes based on scores determined by a panel of CSO experts in Moldova on an annual basis, but as with context indicators, it can be challenging to determine if these scores can be applied specifically to CSOs supported through AIM activities, as the USAID/Moldova PMP acknowledges. “It is difficult to establish a direct causal relationship between MPSCS [Moldova Partnerships for Sustainable Civil Society] interventions and overall changes in the [sustainability index] scores, because MPSCS directly impacts the organizational capacity of its grantees and their partners only,” noted the performance indicator reference sheet (PIRS) for this metric. An alternative to this might be the Municipal Performance Index, a customized index created under the LGSP activity that nevertheless measures many of the same characteristics of CSOs’ maturity but did so based on a representative survey of Moldovan CSOs.

The AIM Project lacked clarity in how it tracked its indicators and results. Based on the ET’s review, it is not clear how certain results were tracked at the project-indicator level, as there was no project-level documentation made available to the ET that demonstrated progress against the whole-of-project indicators. Results were not maintained, for example, in a project performance reporting template as an annex to the AIM PMP, which is not required but is useful for consolidating project-level data in one location. However, all sub-objective- and most objective-level indicators were drawn from AIM activity-level indicators, which were tracked during the life of those activities. Purpose-level indicators (i.e., Nations in Transit indices for civil society, judicial framework, and local democratic governance) were not tracked, although targets (through 2017) were established in the PMP for these indices.

Similarly, the ET found that very few of the project indicators had been updated in the PAD’s M&E Plan, AIM’s PMP, or other documentation. This should have been done, for example, if the project indicators had been drawn from an individual AIM activity that had ended and the indicator was no longer being

⁵⁶ USAID ADS Chapter 201 (Section 201.6). I. Conversely, performance indicators are a means to monitoring expected outputs and outcomes of strategies, projects, or activities based on a Mission’s Results Framework and the basis for observing progress and measuring actual results compared to expected results.

⁵⁷ <https://www.usaid.gov/project-starter/program-cycle/cdcs/performance-monitoring-indicators/standard-indicators>

used (i.e., by a subsequent AIM activity). None of the project indicators in AIM's results framework appeared to have been updated in this manner to reflect old activities ending and new ones beginning. For example, under Objective 3 within the results framework, the indicator is, "number of sub-national governments receiving U.S. assistance that improve performance," which is based on data from the Municipal Performance Index (MPI) under the LGSP activity, which ended in February 2016.⁵⁸

AIM utilized the same metrics within several different activities. Different activities' use of the same metrics can be beneficial if there is sufficient mutual focus between the activities and value in continuing to track a specific metric – e.g., to enable longitudinal analysis over time. Three examples identified by the ET of different AIM activities using the same project indicator are:

- AIM's MEDIA-M activity continued utilization of two indicators first used under MPSCS (under sub-objective 1.2: 1) Number of watchdog activities implemented by CSOs receiving USG assistance (Indicator 3.3); and 2) Number of policy changes, regulations, and procedures adopted by GRM with USAID assistance that benefit and facilitate a better functioning of the civil society, which MEDIA-M linked to its indicator 3.1: Number of media enabling environment policies, regulations, and administrative procedures in each of the following stages of development as a result of USG assistance). However, there was no attempt in the design of either metric on the part of MEDIA-M to draw on the data collected under MPSCS, which could have enabled some continuous tracking of relevant data or potential assistance in establishing MPSCS baselines (e.g., for activities such as participation in parliamentary working groups on improvement of legislation, work of legal and regulatory task forces, education and awareness campaigns).
- Under Objective 2, the AIM Project utilized the indicator, "percentage of courts using automated systems." This indicator measures efficiency, transparency, and accountability. This was an indicator initially utilized under the ROLISP activity, and the more recent Open Justice activity reworded it to "Number of district courts utilizing overarching ICMS." The rewording provides more specificity, allowing a clearer definition, but is still applicable to the different components of the ICMS, including its integrated case management system, web portal, and judicial statistics module.
- Under Objective 3, both the LGSP and CM activities utilized two indicators at the AIM Project Level. Under the first, "Number of sub-national governments receiving US assistance that improve performance," each activity utilized a slightly different set of organizational capacity and performance criteria to measure improved functionality, with LGSP using its four-part Municipal Performance Index and CM employing its six-part FOCAS tool criteria. For the second indicator, "number of sub-national governments receiving USG assistance to increase own source revenues," both drew from project and partner local government records, CM only added this indicator on January, 29, 2019 "as a result of email communications."⁵⁹ No attempts appeared to be made by CM for either indicator to utilize LGSP's results data as baselines for

⁵⁸ USAID/Moldova noted that this indicator continued to be reported based on progress achieved by the Comunitatea Mea under the annual [USAID-DoS Performance Plan and Report] (PPR), but that no updates had been made to the PMP or the AIM M&E file to document continuity, updating of targets or methods of data collection.

⁵⁹ From "CM_Annual Report_FY2019_Annex 12_Performance Indicators"

their own use of these indicators, according to the ET's review of M&E Plans and Indicator Tracking Tables for both activities.

AIM demonstrated limited continuity of research tools. The ET identified few examples of continuity among research instruments that would enable measurement of associated project-level indicators over AIM's five-year timeframe. Though numerous surveys were undertaken under several AIM projects (including LGSP, CM, DTAP, ROLCSO, ROLISP, and OJ), those survey efforts were not coordinated and did not rely on the same tools, which would have provided greater potential to examine outcomes longitudinally, to study, for example, changing public perceptions of institutions supported by different AIM activities. While the ET did identify ongoing survey work undertaken by different ROL-focused AIM activities of changing perceptions of the courts with some methodological connections between the surveys (ROLCSO, ROLISP, and OJ), survey results from the more recent activities (ROLCSO and OJ) were not used to address AIM's designated project-level indicators.

AIM did not sufficiently disaggregate a number of its project indicators. Several of AIM's WOPE indicators demonstrated some effectiveness in tracking modest but real changes in government decision-making due to AIM activity support, but did not break out whether such changes were happening at the local versus national levels, or were related to approval of a local plan or passage of an actual law. For example, MPSCS utilized indicator 1.2 ("number of effective interventions by civil society in the government decision-making process") to track a wide array of successful "advocacy actions," which could include any or all of the following: "Accepted drafts (by government entities or relevant institutions) or comments to laws, adopted laws or regulations, establishment of concrete steps for implementation of laws, amendments, provisions, institutional regulations, or procedures passed/adopted as a result of advocacy campaigns carried out by MPSCS grantees and their partners." While this indicator measures real developments at different levels of governance to which MPSCS-supported CSOs have contributed, the numbers of these changes are just presented as a lump sum; they are not disaggregated so as to demonstrate changes representing, for example, the parliamentary versus LPA levels, or passage of actual laws versus planning documents. Concretely, among the five effective interventions described in the non-disaggregated MPSCS Year 5 (Oct 2017-Sep 2018) MEP results for this indicator were two approvals of local development strategies, a city hall approval of a local waste tax, a decision by Parliament to amend the Audiovisual Code, and a local council decision to reconstruct the council building's access ramp.

EQ4 CONCLUSIONS

The AIM WOPE Project indicators did not effectively capture results for the project. It utilized context indicators at the highest level to measure the project purpose and did not consistently track or update project indicators as needed to reflect new priorities or activities. Moreover, there was only limited continuity among activities over time in the utilization of project indicators or research tools. Ultimately, for example, the multiple studies used to survey changes in public and court users' perceptions of Moldova's judiciary over time represent solid individual research efforts, but they could have been designed and linked more closely together – e.g., with some of the same basic questions – to provide continuity of results and more valuable data over time. Planning should be conducted among relevant Mission staff to ensure regular meetings to update PMP indicators based on new activities (or the end of old activities).

RECOMMENDATIONS

EVALUATION QUESTION 1A

OBJECTIVE I

Increased Citizen Engagement and Oversight in Governmental Decision-Making (Civil Society, Political Parties, and Independent Media)

For future AIM projects, USAID should build on AIM-developed opportunities for civic cooperation by expanding CSO capacity and citizen participation, especially at the local level. With the ET's findings that there are more AIM-supported engagement tools and platforms available to (and increasingly being used by) CSOs, local governments, and active citizens (see EQ 1A Findings), USAID should look to further enhance the capacity of local CSOs to involve citizens in Moldova's civic life. This could include training to increase their ability to manage volunteers, coordinate public discussions and debates, and strengthening outreach and fundraising efforts with individual citizens. Additionally, organizational development funding similar to that offered to Moldovan CSOs under the MPSCS activity should be considered for grassroots or new organizations if needed to help them acquire necessary foundational skills (in addition to the aforementioned CSO capacities). USAID should also consider expanding its circle of partners that are capable of engaging with citizens and local governments in order to close current gaps between many formal CSOs and the wider citizenry. For example, it should expand current AIM activities (e.g., LEADER, CM) to develop and strengthen local action groups, grassroots community organizations and organizers, and local political party chapters. This could be done through wider public awareness campaigns and trainings for CSOs, active citizens, students, and journalists about access to public information, existing digital tools, open data, and the use of social media for civic oversight. Additionally, increased use by CSOs of the 2 Percent Law could be a good entry point to building public awareness about the sector's added value to Moldovan society (and also help to reduce foreign donor dependency). At the same time, USAID should further empower citizens of different age groups to engage through expanded and new capacity-building opportunities. For example, the work of AIM's effective Challenger activity, which is largely focused in the Chisinau area, could establish additional branches of the activity in specific rural and regional areas of the country to increase the number of participants from the regions. Challenger could also be expanded beyond its current cohort age group of 18-to-35-year-old individuals (or a new activity developed), to establish a strong civic education component and value-based leadership program for high-school students. Current organizations, such as the Aspen Institute or Ukrainian Leadership Academy, have developed such activities and could offer guidance and potential models for the Moldovan context. Both offer unique combinations of trainings on leadership development skills, critical thinking and civic-minded practice (and also include voluntary service as part of the curriculum). Both of these started as Kyiv-based learning institutions, but later expanded to regions outside the capital. For adults, USAID should consider augmenting existing training tools with more innovative tailored models for active citizens or groups to help strengthen their civic rights awareness, engagement in policymaking and governance skills, such as the state-building simulation game developed originally as part of USAID/Ukraine's ENGAGE program.

Continued support to independent media is crucial for democracy in Moldova. USAID should sustain funding to independent media as well as support advocacy efforts to protect media space. During

this evaluation, independent media outlets voiced strong support for innovation and the importance of digital content. With growing Internet use, including for news content, USAID should assist independent media outlets by providing institutional support for new technology and knowledge about viable digital strategies. To strengthen civic oversight, USAID should consider supporting civic journalism and building new media capacity of regional CSOs that monitor local authorities (i.e. provide support for equipment and trainings to produce quality video content for social media).

OBJECTIVE 2

Justice System is More Transparent and Accountable (Rule of Law)

As part of its focus on judicial transparency and accountability, USAID should pursue several education and outreach strategies to help strengthen the culture of rule of law and integrity in Moldova. While a follow-on activity to AIM should continue to target judicial transparency and accountability, USAID it could also support the judicial sector benefit by focusing on building a culture of rule of law and integrity in Moldova using tested guidance developed by ROL practitioners. Often called a “culture of lawfulness,” this approach has been tested by USAID and the DOS in Mexico, Colombia and other Latin American countries,⁶⁰ while UNESCO and UNODC are using it in ten countries.⁶¹

The ET recommends that USAID pursue several strategies to help build the country’s culture of rule of law and integrity: 1) establish new and strengthen ongoing civic education activities at primary, secondary, and higher-level educational institutions; also develop age-appropriate justice and ROL civic education modules; 2) train respected public or religious leaders to be spokespeople on ROL and integrity issues, promote positive messages, and facilitate citizen engagement; and 3) train independent media to present a more accurate picture of the judiciary and improve understanding of the law. Support to independent media in this area also would help shape public opinion and guide actions by civil society (as part of the independent media assistance recommended for Objective 1).⁶² This strategy will require a long-term commitment, given that changes in culture occur over generations, not five-year planning periods.

OBJECTIVE 3

Local Government is More Responsive to Citizens’ Needs (Local Governance)

USAID should continue supporting LPAs in developing systemic approaches to and increased knowledge of digital tools to communicate with their citizens. USAID should continue and expand the training of LPAs in the utilization of Facebook and other relevant social media

⁶⁰ For example: <https://photos.state.gov/libraries/mexico/310329/november2012/colfactsheet-november2012.pdf>.

⁶¹ For guidance on planning activities using a rule of law culture approach, see the following documents: Roy Godson, *A Guide to Developing a Culture of Lawfulness* <http://www.cicad.oas.org/apps/Document.aspx?Id=309>; Leanne McKay, *Toward a Rule of Law Culture, 2015*, https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/Toward-a-Rule-of-Law-Culture_Practical-Guide_0.pdf and UNESCO, *Empowering Students for Just Societies: A Handbook For Primary School Teachers*, 2019, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000370902>.

⁶² USAID/Moldova might be able to model such training on earlier AIM activities’ efforts, such as ROLISP’s grant to the Association of Independent Press (API), which included trainings for local journalists on Moldova’s judicial reforms as part of its broader newspaper outreach efforts on these reforms to the public.

to enable them to better connect with their communities. Conducting multi-day or online trainings or Webinars will sharpen LPAs' foundational IT skills as well as their abilities to target specific audiences with appropriate messaging, and utilize online research tools – e.g., polls, Google analytics – to obtain feedback from citizens. Such knowledge will better enable LPAs to develop consistent, targeted and effective social media campaigns with citizens in coordination with AIM opportunities, including strategic planning and municipal project processes, and the roll out of new community and online resources available to conduct municipal business. This could expand on CM's efforts (e.g., "Digital Engagement") by strengthening basic levels of digital knowledge among citizens and also helping LPAs develop more formal plans for digital communication with their citizens.

To better engage men and youth in community-related activities, USAID should consider more tailored communications tied to AIM-supported economic-development and academic opportunities. For men, LPAs should develop more targeted messaging within their Facebook and related online communication platforms on ongoing and upcoming consultations on AIM-supported local infrastructure, service-delivery improvement, and local economic development (LED) initiatives, as these initiatives are seen as promoting more universal involvement (including men) in community interventions. Moreover, these communications can include information on associated employment opportunities in construction and related trades that would attract men (as well as women) with matching skillsets. Additionally, since both male and female community members vary in how much (or whether) they utilize social media, LPAs should ensure they are maximizing communications with citizens through all available channels, such as distribution of community information via periodic (and specialized one-off) paper-based newsletters and brochures.

For youth, USAID should consider work through CM and future local-governance strengthening activities to: 1) Further expand the capacity of and empower local youth councils or active youth to engage more pro-actively in decision-making on infrastructure and development projects affecting their communities – e.g., through CM's Municipal Strategic Planning Workshops or LEADER's LAGs; 2) Encourage the addition of content to the curricula at universities and high schools, accompanied by participatory seminars and debates, to promote youth engagement in their communities. 3) Support youth-led entrepreneurial initiatives sponsored by LPAs that could provide stipends and/or academic credit for university students to develop new potential economic/income-generating activities tied to development of their communities; and 4) Have LPAs reach out to university students who are originally from those communities during the summer to do internships at the LPA or volunteer work in the community for academic credit; 5) Expand outreach efforts to youth through community social media platforms tied to the aforementioned and related interventions.

To support LPAs in retaining staff and maintaining staff capacity, USAID should work with its partners to increase incentives to work and remain at LPAs. To motivate students or young professionals to work for LPAs, USAID should promote the positive "brand" of the LPA as part of a renewed emphasis within school curricula on young peoples' civic engagement; and provide internship opportunities for students during the summer or vacation times. Through AIM, USAID should also continue offering training and other professional development opportunities for LPA staff, including study visits to other primarias within Moldova and mentoring of new LPA employees by more experienced staff members. Creating a better enabling work environment, including improvements to basic building infrastructure, such as installation or renovations of toilets, running water, rooms for staff with children, facilities to aid access for the disabled, would also help staff retention (and aligns with

improvements to community/LPA infrastructure already undertaken under CM and other AIM activities).

USAID should continue supporting LEADER-based Local Action Groups (LAGs) as a flexible, grassroots-level model for engaging citizens at the community level. While the eight AIM-supported LAGs have made progress in terms of building up capacity, and identifying and addressing development issues, additional USAID support could enable LEADER's implementing partner (Polish Solidarity Fund) to increase the scope of its activities with local communities and provide more funding for projects among current and potential new LAGs. To reduce the risk of donor dependence, USAID should also support the Fund's initiatives to professionalize LPAs and formalize the organization's role with the central government (e.g., the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment) to enable the state government (rather than donors) to work with LAGs on rural development in Moldova.

USAID should continue supporting projects with more tangible outcomes and increase the pace of implementing such activities. Through AIM, USAID should continue supporting CM's activities to improve local infrastructure and/or improve service delivery to areas such as roads, schools, street lighting, waste management, and water and sanitation facilities. These are seen as encouraging greater cross-the-board participation in community interventions and serving as incentives for youth and other demographic groups to remain in their communities. USAID should also help LPAs move faster in the implementation of their infrastructure projects. Reducing the timeframe from "award" to the start of construction will allow mayors to maintain the momentum and enthusiasm among citizens for the activity and motivate them to engage more often with their LPAs.

EVALUATION QUESTION 1B

For future AIM projects, USAID should develop a plan for coordination of project design and implementation activities to collectively address AIM's purpose. This will better enable the project to have mutually supportive activities, include successor interventions that build on the successes of their predecessors, and leverage these synergies to allow for collective contributions to the project's purpose. USAID/Moldova therefore should establish actionable implementation and management plans that ensure periodic meetings of project staff over the life of the project; updating of PMPs and M&E Plans based on new activities, indicators, and other relevant data; and clear strategies and timelines for transitioning responsibilities for project management when a POC leaves that position.

EVALUATION QUESTION 1C

USAID should more directly and proactively work with the GRM to encourage its coordination of relevant state ministries with responsibility for local governance and decentralization affairs in Moldova. This could include, for example, lobbying for their participation in the decentralization-focused, issue-based working groups that have been launched by Comunitatea Mea. Such working groups could serve as the basis or provide momentum for a more formal coordination platform between the Mission and government to facilitate informed decision-making, aid in the management of activities, and encourage GRM action on the decentralization process, which would be in line with preferences voiced by some interviewed GRM representatives (see EQ 1c Findings). Alternatively, USAID could engage more with the GRM by taking on additional roles, such as

observers in the Public Administration Reform Council to enable better coordination around relevant reforms.

USAID should press CALM to become a more advocacy-focused organization for mayors.

This process that would begin with an independent organizational capacity assessment of the organization. Such an assessment would allow for more concrete recommendations on what kind of changes the organization should consider making to become a more advocacy-focused, representative organization of mayors. Potentially, such capacity building suggestions might include strengthening their management agility, abilities to engage with local communities, use of evidence-based approaches and local data, and advocacy and storytelling skills. This assessment and follow-up steps by CALM could also help USAID determine if it is willing to make these changes, and if the Mission should continue supporting CALM – or other organizations that could more effectively advocate for Moldova’s mayors.

EVALUATION QUESTION 2

When updating the TOC for future programming, USAID should review available empirical studies to support chosen linkages. Research that reviews various developmental strategies, such as the World Bank Policy Research Working Papers, could be especially useful. Relatedly, more learning and exchange of information between the USAID’s missions in the Eastern Partnership countries could help inform future strategies.

USAID should revisit and revise the TOC regularly. In view of the complexity of desired outcomes and political flux in Moldova, it is important for USAID to revisit and revise the TOC on a regular basis. USAID’s senior management and program staff, as well as its implementing partners, should consider the TOC a living document. It should be both a roadmap and a learning tool for understanding how systemic change happens. The TOC, for example, could be integrated into the work of the project management team overseeing AIM’s design and implementation or discussed during periodic project-level portfolio reviews. For a future AIM Project TOCs, USAID/Moldova should amend its underlying assumptions, update existing indicators, introduce new ones to reflect changing operating conditions or new opportunities/constraints, and drop those indicators that are no longer relevant. The ET’s assumptions tables and lists of “missing assumptions” developed for its findings for this question can guide the Mission in this task.

EVALUATION QUESTION 3

USAID and implementing partners should continue supporting the training of end users of IT systems in the justice sector to increase utilization and strengthen sustainability via increased user demand. The training program should be based on court experience and include real life examples. Given that court staff are not eligible to receive NIJ training, it is important to target chancery staff, archive staff, Judicial Executors, System Administrators, other court staff, and lawyers who directly use ICMS to increase their ability to manage and sustainably use the newly introduced functions of the system.

The justice sector implementing partner, in collaboration with ACA and SITCS, should promptly resolve ICMS technical challenges and deficiencies, as these shortcomings delay court processes and burden understaffed court personnel and judicial staff. In particular, close attention should be paid to the technical problems of the randomized case assignment system to

contribute more effectively to judicial independence and accountability. Timely responses to the feedback on technical issues will strengthen utilization and increase efficiency of court services.

EVALUATION QUESTION 4

For a future AIM-project, USAID should look first to reliable existing indicators and data collection instruments. There is no need to reinvent the wheel, as a number of current or previous AIM activities established data collection tools and indicators that could be very suitable for this project at the objective or sub-objective level.⁶³ Some examples of these would include the following:

- **LGSP: Public Service Delivery Satisfaction Survey:** This was utilized to support development of the Municipal Performance Index (MPI), a statistically representative survey of all supported 32 towns that gauged the performance of and town residents' satisfaction with municipal services in four key areas and would be useful for future LPA-strengthening activities for the same reasons. It should be noted that the CM activity did do a population survey/needs assessment of its own of targeted communities and will follow up with a second administration of this survey in 2020 to determine changes based on CM-supported activities. But USAID should consider incorporating some of the LGSP satisfaction survey's methods into the CM survey, as the LGSP poll was conducted annually to enable year-by-year tracking of changes of citizen perceptions of quality of specific municipal services (it is unclear if the CM survey will be conducted annually); it was also conducted in all 32 LGSP-supported towns, whereas the CM survey will be conducted in 10 representative communities from its first cohort for 2020 – i.e., half of its first set of supported communities.

Relatedly, while CM's ongoing use of several project-level indicators from the LGSP activity is beneficial, it should consider aligning the data sources for a few of these metrics more closely with those used under LGSP. For example, the project-level indicator under Sub IR 1.3.1: (Percentage of the population indicating qualitative improvements in the assisted processes and/or systems) was utilized by both CM and LGSP. CM measures this metric through changes "resulting from processes and systems linked with infrastructure projects." However, LGSP utilized a broader set of interventions to measure this indicator (e.g., services based on support provided under this activity, which could include municipal utilities, administrative services, or citizen feedback mechanisms), thus making this indicator more reflective of the effects of LGSP in the eyes of surveyed community members.

- **Comunitatea Mea:** CM developed several indicators to assess LPAs' Financial Viability; two of these – "percent increase in locally owned revenues in assisted local governments" (CM indicator 4.2) and "number of LPAs that diversify the revenue base" (CM indicator 4.8) – would be useful for updating and supplementing current metrics under AIM sub-objective 1.3.2. These would be useful updates because they demonstrate the strengthening financial positions of LPAs and budget figures or actions and can also be independently verified.

⁶³ See "Suggested Future AIM Project Indicators" Table in "11/25/2019 Utilization Workshop – Recommendations" for a consolidated listing of such metrics.

- **MPSCS:** This activity developed specific indicators to assess CSOs' financial viability. For example, MPSCS indicator 2.4 ("percentage increase of domestically raised funds of MPSCS partner organization") measured the portion of supported partner organizations' (21 CSOs) annual income that came from local and/or national public funding, private sources, and/or self-financing. Indicator 2.6 ("average score in financial management area of MPSCS partner organizations") provided a numerical performance score on several financial management criteria using an organizational development assessment. These metrics are important measures of the financial health and sustainability of CSOs and can be independently tracked.
- **DTAP (Promo-Lex):** The annual national representative study on perceptions of citizens includes specific indicators about interaction with political parties, perceptions about the CEC, assessment of transparency of party finance, perceptions of the value of independent election monitoring and trust/perceptions of CSOs. These indicators are important measures of credibility of the political system in the eyes of the voters and practical experience of interaction with the political and civic sectors.
- **Media-M (Internews):** Perceptions of the Population of the Republic of Moldova on Mass Media. The survey includes indicators (Figure 2.1.2, Figure 3.5.4) about the use of independent media sources by consumers, which are good measures of the impact of independent media support through Media-M.
- **Open Justice:** This AIM activity helped win SCM and MOJ approval in late 2017 of 17 revised Judicial Performance Indicators, five of which are now accessible online by the general public through the ICMS' Web Report Card: 1) case clearance rate; 2) the rate of pending cases; 3) rate of appeals; 4) the rate of cases per judge; and 5) costs per case. These would be useful to consider as ROL project sub-objective metrics because they track progress of basic but key measures of a functioning court system and are publicly accessible.
- **Open Justice:** World Justice Project Court Management Index: Open Justice also created its own relatively useful high-level indicator, the World Justice Project (WJP) Court Management Score, which aggregates three of eight WJP scores: constraints on government powers; absence of corruption; civil justice; and criminal justice.⁶⁴ These scores in turn aggregate multiple sub-scores. However, many of the sub-scores measure aspects of rule of law that have been targeted neither by Open Justice nor by AIM. For example, the criminal justice score aggregates sub-scores for effective investigations; timely and effective adjudication; effective correctional system; no discrimination; no corruption; no improper government influence; and g) due process of law. To measure objective-level impact, a future USAID ROL project would benefit from establishing a tailored WJP score that reflects the specific areas of rule of law it targets. This annual score of expert perceptions would enable USAID to compare Moldova's performance from year to year, with a one-year lag.

⁶⁴ <https://worldjusticeproject.org/our-work/research-and-data/wjp-rule-law-index-2019>

Develop new **survey tools to target specific audiences**: For a future AIM project, the ET would recommend conducting targeted polling (but with expanded sample sizes) of specific populations it has supported through its current or previous AIM activities (e.g., local community residents, LPA officials, court users). This would enable the Mission to better understand changes in citizens' knowledge, attitudes and practices – e.g., changing public perceptions of AIM-supported governing institutions, awareness of interventions, and degree to which citizens' actions or utilization of new services are changing in connection with the activity – based on the Mission's work with specific institutions. Such surveys should include statistically significant samples to reduce the margin of error of its findings and strengthen the reliability of the collected data, providing an even more representative assessment of perceptions of these groups. They should also be conducted at regular intervals – e.g., annually – to enable longitudinal examination of trends of the population. AIM has numerous examples of quality survey work conducted under several AIM activities and sectors during the life of the project (including LGSP, CM, DTAP, ROLCSO, ROLISP, and OJ).

- The aforementioned LGSP MPI/Satisfaction Survey (and potentially the FOCAS Assessment and the population survey under CM, LGSP's successor activity) could serve as a model for a new AIM survey, as it was a statistically representative survey of all supported 32 towns that gauged the performance of and town residents' satisfaction with municipal services in four key areas.⁶⁵
- Another survey that could be adapted for future project-level AIM polling could be the IRI Public Opinion Survey. The IRI survey has value because it is repeated regularly, is statistically significant, and yields data on important indicators of political participation, including the likelihood of voters to elect women, freedom to express political views, and the responsiveness of parliament to citizens. These indicators are good measures of citizens' attitudes toward and expectations of civic and political action. This survey could be tailored in the future for specific groups – like local communities' citizens under the above LGSP MPI/Satisfaction Survey – such as youth, women, or residents of Gagauzia, or administered during key periods – such as just prior to or just after national elections or at other key times.

USAID should conduct more frequent tracking and updating of AIM Project

indicators/results. The AIM project's PAD states that the "PMP at the CDCS level will be regularly updated to incorporate AIM activities as they are implemented." The project manager (PM) should establish a regular schedule of monitoring actions (the ET suggests quarterly meetings at first, which can be made more or less frequent depending on needs) to ensure that new activities are added, and that associated indicators to reflect these activities or modified project priorities are considered and potentially added as well; at the same time, indicators associated with ended activities or that are no longer considered relevant should be removed. To aid in these tasks, the PM should create and regularly fill in a project performance reporting template or similar reporting tool to track project progress against its indicators; while not required, such a template is a useful tool for consolidating project-level data in one location. To help carry out these functions in alignment with the project PAD, the PM should assemble a small group of program and technical/DO office representatives.

⁶⁵ Capacity to provide administrative services, Public financial management of public property, legality and transparency of activity, and public service management

ANNEXES

ANNEX A: EVALUATION SCOPE OF WORK

Whole of Project Evaluation: “Accountability in Moldova”

I. PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The purpose of this evaluation is to conduct a whole of project review of the performance of USAID/Moldova’s Accountability in Moldova (AIM) Project. Designed and approved to cover the period 2015-2020, the AIM Project directs support under DO 1 of USAID Moldova’s Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS): “More Effective and Accountable Democratic Governance.” The Mission has selected this time in the project lifecycle to conduct the performance evaluation for two reasons.

- The current Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) has been extended; the new end date is November 2020. In preparation of the next strategy and round of DG-related programming, the Mission is interested in the performance of previous and current DG activities and identifying potential future activity areas.
- Overall perceptions and indices note stagnation or backsliding on democratic governance in Moldova in the overlapping time period of the AIM Project appraisal document (PAD). In light of Parliamentary elections in February 2019, the new Moldova Government, and local elections scheduled for Fall 2019, USAID/Moldova seeks to understand contextual factors affecting progress under the AIM project, what lessons they provide for future activities, and areas of opportunity based on progress and challenges in the sector to date.

II. SUMMARY INFORMATION

Table 10: Evaluation Summary

PROJECT NAME	ACCOUNTABILITY IN MOLDOVA
Number of Implementing Mechanisms	3 contracts, 10 cooperative agreements; 5 grants, 1 Public International Organization grant, 1 Government to Government
Total Estimated Ceiling of the Evaluated Project	\$61 million
Life of Project	October 1, 2015 – September 30, 2020
Development Objectives	DOI: More Effective and Accountable Democratic Governance
USAID Office	USAID/Moldova

Table 11: Mechanisms under AIM Project

#	MECHANISM	PROJECT NAME	IMPLEMENTER	AWARD #	TEC	DATES	GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE
1	Contract	Open Justice	Millennium DPI Partners	AID-117-TO-17-00001	\$5,653,648	05/17/2017 - 09/30/2019	National
2	PIO Grant	Commercial Mediation and Arbitration	EBRD	AID-117-IO-17-00001	\$1,499,035	06/17/2017 - 08/31/2020	National
3	Cooperative agreement	Moldova Inclusive and Participatory Political Processes	CEPPS	AID-117-LA-16-00001	\$7,606,000	08/15/2016 - 09/30/2019	National
4	Cooperative agreement	Democratic Transparency and Accountability Program	Promo-LEX	AID-117-A-16-00002	\$3,450,000	07/26/2016 - 09/30/2019	National
5	Grant	Enhancing Democracy in Moldova through Inclusive and Transparent Elections	UNDP	AID-117-IO-17-00003	\$1,698,732	08/16/2017 - 05/15/2020	National
6	Cooperative agreement	MEDIA-M	Internews, IJC, Freedom House	AID-117-A-17-00001	\$6,350,672	04/03/2017 - 04/02/2022	National
7	Cooperative agreement	Promoting the Rule of Law in Moldova through Civil Society Oversight	Legal Resource Center from Moldova	AID-117-A-16-00003	\$1,200,000	10/01/2016 - 09/30/2020	National
8	Cooperative agreement	Comunitatea Mea	IREX	720-117-18-CA-00002	\$20,499,691	03/05/2019 - 03/04/2023	100 LPAs-national coverage
9	Cooperative agreement	LEADER	Polish Solidarity Fund	720-117-18-CA-00001	\$400,050	02/01/2018 - 01/31/2020	44 LPAs, regional coverage
10	Grant	Sanatatea Mea	IOM, IMAS	AID-117-IO-17-00002	\$1,249,937	07/13/2017 - 03/12/2020	National
11	Cooperative agreement	Novateca – the Global Libraries Program in Moldova	IREX	117-G-12-00001	\$12,942,794	06/08/2012 - 01/31/2019	1,060 libraries - national coverage

#	MECHANISM	PROJECT NAME	IMPLEMENTER	AWARD #	TEC	DATES	GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE
12	Cooperative agreement	Moldova Partnerships for Sustainable Civil Society	FHI360	AID-117-A-14-00002	\$8,849,354	12/13/2013 - 12/12/2018	National
13	Contract	Local Government Support Project (LGSP)	Chemonics International, Inc.	AID-117-C-12-00001	\$12,532,437	2/22/2012 – 2/21/2016	National
14	Contract	Rule of Law Institutional Strengthening Program (ROLISP)	Checchi and Company Consulting Inc.	AID-117-C-12-00002	\$8,618,542	03/01/2012 - 02/28/2016	National
15	G2G	Telenesti Rehabilitation and Construction of Water Network, Sewage, and Water Treatment Plant Project	Regional Development Center	117-0001-FARA	\$498,913	05/2014 - 04/2017	Local (Telenesti)
16	Cooperative agreement	Strengthening Political Accountability and Civic Engagement Program (SPACE-Moldova)	NDI	AID-117-A-12-00001	\$6,000,000	01/06/2012 - 30/09/2016	National
17	Grant	Optimized Electronic Access to Judicial Decisions	Estonian E-Governance Academy	AID-117-G-15-00001	\$406,500	01/29/2015 - 01/27/2017	National
18	Grant	Capacity Building for Digital Information Security for Moldovan Government Institutions Projects	Estonian E-Governance Academy	AID-117-G-13-0002	\$131,668	04/01/2013 - 06/30/2014	National

#	MECHANISM	PROJECT NAME	IMPLEMENTER	AWARD #	TEC	DATES	GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE
19	Grant	Strategic Cyber Security Exercise to Enhance Decision-Making Capabilities in the Republic of Moldova	European Cyber Security Initiative	AID-117-F-17-00001	\$81,600	11/22/2016 - 05/21/2017	National
20	Cooperative agreement	Information Center and Small Project Fund umbrella project for Local Authorities in Moldova	Polish Solidarity Fund	AID-117-A-14-00004	USG \$260,000 and Polish MFA \$281,000	07/01/2014 - 08/31/2016	18 localities, regional coverage

III. BACKGROUND

A. Description of the problem and context

The fundamental obstacle to democratic development in Moldova is a lack of accountability in the governance system, which creates a negative political environment that excludes citizens from political processes; undermines the rule of law; impedes the delivery of basic services; enables corruption to thrive; and renders Moldova vulnerable to external interference.

Moldova’s February 2019 Parliamentary elections took place in the context of a period of democratic backsliding and ruling party efforts to consolidate power. Public opinion surveys regularly register Moldovan citizen distrust of public institutions and politicians and concern about the pervasiveness of corruption. Regular polling reflects frustration with politicians, the sense that politicians do not represent citizens, and the unpopularity of Parliament, among other factors that affect actions of individual citizens to engage in activities that foster vertical accountability.

External interference in Moldova and the region has stoked political, economic, and security concerns. Oligarchs have achieved state capture, exercising near total control over Moldovan politics, media, and economy.

A recent political event is opening opportunities for Moldova to get back on track in its efforts to enforce the rule of law and independence of state legal and executive structures. The new Government, formed on its last consultation day, a result of an unexpected coalition between the Pro-EU and pro-Russian parties and as a protest to the outgoing one, has generated massive resistance from the departing Government. The immediate and controversial decisions of the Constitutional Court to declare invalid any following decisions have further confirmed the need for a substantial change in the ways state structures operate and political influence in the decision-making process. USAID is interested in how it has affected accountability under a change-resistant system, and what lessons it has for the future of our programming.

B. DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVENTION TO BE EVALUATED AND THEORY OF CHANGE

Despite some progress, key constraints to Moldova’s democratic development remain: state capture; endemic corruption (including within the judiciary and law enforcement institutions); media consolidation and few financially viable independent media outlets; limited citizen engagement in civic and political processes; a deep sense of dissatisfaction with the country’s trajectory, often leading to decisions to out-migrate; and weak government capacity with over-centralized control of resources and political power.

USAID’s 2012 DRG Assessment, which fed into the writing of the AIM PAD, predicted the short-term trend is one of halting improvement, as changes for the better come about in disjointed fashion, and corruption and clientelism live on. As a result, it determined that Moldova’s most pressing DRG challenges lay in accountability, the rule of law, and government effectiveness, with an emphasis on implementing reforms and combatting corruption. The AIM Project focused on improving accountability structures by engaging with citizens, civil society, political parties, the judiciary, and local governments.

The underlying Development Hypothesis is:

IF citizens, civil society, and independent media become more active in government decision-making and oversight AND the justice system becomes more transparent and accountable AND local government becomes more responsive to citizens’ needs, THEN governance in Moldova will be more effective and accountable.

This hypothesis was elaborated into the PAD results framework.

GOAL: MORE EFFECTIVE AND ACCOUNTABLE DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE. (DO I)		
Objective 1: Increased Citizen Engagement and Oversight in Governmental Decision Making	Objective 2: Justice System is More Transparent and Accountable	Objective 3: Local Government is More Responsive to Citizens’ Needs
1.1 More effective and sustainable civil society and independent media	2.1 Increased citizen demand for effective justice	3.1 Improved management systems and more participatory processes
1.2 More representative and responsive political processes	2.2 More capable and professional justice system	3.2 Increased financial viability and responsibility of public institutions
1.3 Government is more accessible and receptive to citizen engagement in decision-making processes		

Objective 1: Increased Citizen Oversight and Engagement in Governmental Decision-Making

Both CSOs and political parties are still largely disconnected from their constituents. Community groups and local party branches lack networks or coalitions to coordinate with other local and national stakeholders, exacerbating center-periphery divisions. Citizens are largely unaware of individual rights and duties, as well as the functions and responsibilities of government, and thus have low expectations for democratic governance. The first sub-objective seeks to improve the capacity of Moldovan civil society to represent citizens’ interests, influence policymaking, and sustain the sector’s democratic role for the future. The sub-objective also seeks to strengthen the capacity of independent media to act as a

watchdog over the government. A stronger media sector can also leverage increased demand by citizens for a more accountable government to improve the debate around public policy issues. The second sub-objective seeks to improve the quality of political representation in Moldova to become more inclusive and responsive to citizen demands. The third sub-objective is designed to address the “supply side” of the equation by making the government more accessible and receptive to citizen and CSO engagement in decision-making process, and will involve working with government counterparts at multiple levels to advocate for and strengthen formal and informal processes such as public meetings; participatory budgeting; CSO and expert testimony before parliamentary committees; citizen petitions; legislative comment periods; requests for information; and other channels for citizens to air their concerns to government.

Objective 2. Justice System is More Transparent and Accountable

USAID’s 2015 Rule of Law Assessment found that a weak and corrupt justice sector allows for impunity of elites, which fuels administrative and grand corruption across Moldova’s public institutions. Although the Justice Sector Reform Strategy (JSRS) was adopted in 2011, the implementation has been slow and is not fully complete. In early 2019, a new justice sector reform strategy was drafted in private and presented for comment, rather than through a consultative, publicly transparent process. A 2018 ICJ Mission report notes that,

“In Moldova, after the independence of the country from the Soviet Union, a process of transition took place towards a rule of law-based governance system. The promise to institute an independent judiciary was one of the leading reforms in this process of transition and democratization. Expansive efforts and resources have been poured in the last decade into the realization of this goal. Unfortunately, as the title of this report suggests, these efforts have, at present, produced only an empty shell. Legal reforms have been enacted, yet their implementation is lagging behind and often lacks political will and conviction. The result is a judiciary that could be, but is not yet, fully independent, as the full meaning of judicial independence is not yet sufficiently rooted in the minds of those who holds it, the judges. This has disappointed the expectations of many Moldovans that an independent judiciary would be developed.”

In this operating environment, USAID funding under these sub-objectives seeks to support the JSRS by continuing to provide technical assistance to strengthen the independence, integrity, accountability, and transparency of the justice sector institutions.

Objective 3: Local Government More Responsive to Citizen Needs

USAID’s 2015 Local Governance Assessment found that, since independence, Moldova has undergone several stages of decentralization reforms, but local self-governance has never been fully realized. The current National Decentralization Strategy for 2012-2015 was passed in April 2012, but its implementation lags behind. A new decentralization strategy is needed but has not been drafted. The strategy is meant to eliminate the ambiguities in responsibilities between local authorities of different levels and ensure the transfer of competencies along with financial resources. The decentralization reform is one of the pillars of European integration, and European donors have supported efforts to map scenarios that would reform territorial administrative boundaries, reducing the number of local public authorities from 898. Previous administrative decentralization in Moldova was not initially accompanied by fiscal decentralization. As a result, local public authorities stayed dependent on transfers from the central budget and lacked ownership for policy implementation at the local level. Mayors are

highly dependent on attracting donor project dollars, leading to uneven development and inconsistent matching between what donors want to support versus what citizens identify as priorities; this can make government appear non-responsive to citizen needs.

C. SUMMARY OF PROJECT MONITORING EVALUATION AND LEARNING PLAN

The PAD includes a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan and Learning Approach that underlines activities and guidance for both Project Monitoring, and Evaluations. In terms of indicators and targets, however, it relies on the previously developed, as part of the CDCS, PMP for DO I (Annex I). During the implementation, no further amendments to the AIM PAD's M&E plan have been operated, neither have actual values been compiled for initial targets. The contractor will be provided the DO I PMP with baseline and available targets, most being up to 2017. The contractor will conduct the evaluation of actual progress based on the provided Activity Monitoring Evaluation and Learning Plans (AMELPs) for each Activity under the PAD and based on the publicly available information with regards to the context indicators and indexes.

Under the AIM PAD's umbrella, no other evaluations have been conducted.

IV. EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. How is the project making progress toward the achievement of its purpose?

To what extent have the activities implemented under this project achieved their expected results, against each of the three objectives, and to what extent have they been able to address and collectively contribute to the purpose of the AIM project?

2. What are the strengths and weaknesses (gaps) of the project's theory of change?

Reforming accountability and building transparency in a system resistant change is challenging. In many cases, officials and individuals balance their official capacities with cultural relationship-based norms to take advantage of opportunities to advance oneself, one's family, and one's larger circle of affinity. To what extent were the programmatic and contextual assumptions identified in the project theory of change sufficient to achieve the purpose of the AIM Project and did they realistically represent an achievable set of results?

3. Within Objective 3, what impact did activities have on financial viability of LPAs, and other institutions? How well were activities coordinated between varying state institutions with responsibilities for LPA revenue generation and overall decentralization (e.g. State Chancellery, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Finance, etc.)

4. Several activities used or proposed technological solutions to improve transparency. To what extent has IT investment been successful and sustainable? How well have these activities been institutionalized within the Government of Moldova.

5. How did existing whole of project indicators capture results and what recommendations for sector indicators might capture data better for future projects.

V. EVALUATION DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The evaluation must comply with USAID evaluation requirements as stated in the ADS 201.3.5.9 and the USAID Evaluation Policy. The expected evaluation type is a Whole of Project Performance Evaluation.

The Contractor must use a comprehensive evaluation design and methodology. The evaluation must have a non-experimental design and use a mixed method approach (desk review, interviews, FGDs, KIs etc.) that will generate the highest quality and most credible evidence on each evaluation question.

As part of the Methodology, the Contractor will describe how each of the methods used, individually or collectively, will contribute to answering the evaluation questions and the overall purpose of the evaluation.

Part of the desk review, the Contractor will review project documents and other contextual documents produced by implementing partners (IPs), USAID and other USG agencies, GRM, other development agencies, and research institutions. Documents may include but not be limited to sector studies and assessments; GRM strategies and plans, such as the Justice Sector Reform Strategy; performance reports and AMELPs; performance monitoring data; and formative research, surveys, assessment reports, and presentations that were conducted in the course of PAD activities.

Other data collection methods must be considered and should be proposed by the Contractor.

One of the considerations when planning for activities in the field is the language barrier. The Contractor must accommodate any translation needed during the evaluation and ensure all materials and discussions are conducted in a language understandable for the recipient party.

STAKEHOLDERS AND INFORMATION SOURCES

The Contractor will work with USAID/Moldova team to compile a list of stakeholders involved in the AIM project, including Government Counterparts, Implementing Partners, Civil Society Organizations, Media Outlets, and the beneficiary population.

USAID/Moldova will assist in gathering project-related materials, including Moldova CDCS, PMP, AIM PAD, Activity Final Reports, AMELPs, Annual Reports and Work Plans, and other available documents. A considerable part of the mentioned documents are updated on the Development Experience Clearinghouse, available at dec.usaid.gov.

VI. DELIVERABLES AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

1. Evaluation kick-off call. Within two weeks of the evaluation start date, the contractor will arrange for a phone call or video conference with USAID/Moldova and other involved parties. The introductory discussion will touch on the workplan, methodology, and inputs from each side.
2. Weekly briefings. The contractor must provide weekly debriefings to the COR on the evaluation's progress to date.

3. Evaluation Work plan and Design: Within three weeks of the kick-off, but not less than two weeks prior to arrival in Chisinau, a draft work plan for the evaluation shall be presented to the COR. The work plan will include:
 - the anticipated schedule and logistical arrangements, including list of potential interviewees, sites to be visited, proposed selection criteria, and/or sampling plan;
 - evaluation design and methodology and data collection instruments.

A final evaluation workplan will be submitted within a week after receiving comments from the Mission.

4. In-Briefing. Within five days of arrival in Chisinau, the ET will have an in-briefing with the USAID Mission for introductions and to discuss the assignment, initial assumptions, methodology, and work plan.
5. Exit Briefing. The ET is expected to hold an exit briefing to the Mission prior to leaving the country to discuss the status of data collection and preliminary findings and conclusions.
6. Draft Evaluation Report: The draft evaluation report must be submitted to the COR within five weeks of the ET's departure from Moldova. The evaluation report structure must correspond to the "USAID Evaluation Report Requirements," a Mandatory Reference for ADS Chapter 201. The report must use analytical text chapters as well as visual graphics, charts, and gauges to facilitate understanding and at-a-glance view of progress. Once the initial draft evaluation report is submitted, USAID/Moldova will have 14 business days in which to review and comment on the initial draft, after which point the COR will submit the consolidated comments to the ET. The ET will submit a revised final draft report 10 business days hence.
7. Final Evaluation Report: The ET will, no later than 10 days after receiving final comments on the draft report, respond/incorporate the comments and resubmit the final report to the COR. Part of the Final Evaluation Report, the contractor will produce a user-friendly synthesis or summary of the evaluation in a format that is attractive and understandable for public use. All project data and records will be submitted in full and should be in electronic form in easily readable format, organized and documented for use by those not fully familiar with the intervention or evaluation. The final evaluation report must be uploaded to the Development Experience Clearinghouse at dec.usaid.gov.
8. Other Requirements: All quantitative data collected by the ET must be provided in machine-readable, non-proprietary formats as required by USAID's Open Data policy (see ADS 579) and uploaded to the DDL (data.usaid.gov). The data should be organized and fully documented for use by those not fully familiar with the project or the evaluation. USAID will retain ownership of all datasets developed. Modifications to the required elements of the SOW of the contract/agreement, including technical requirements, evaluation questions, ET composition, methodology, or timeline, should receive formal approval from the COR. Any revisions should be updated in the SOW that is included as an annex to the Evaluation Report.

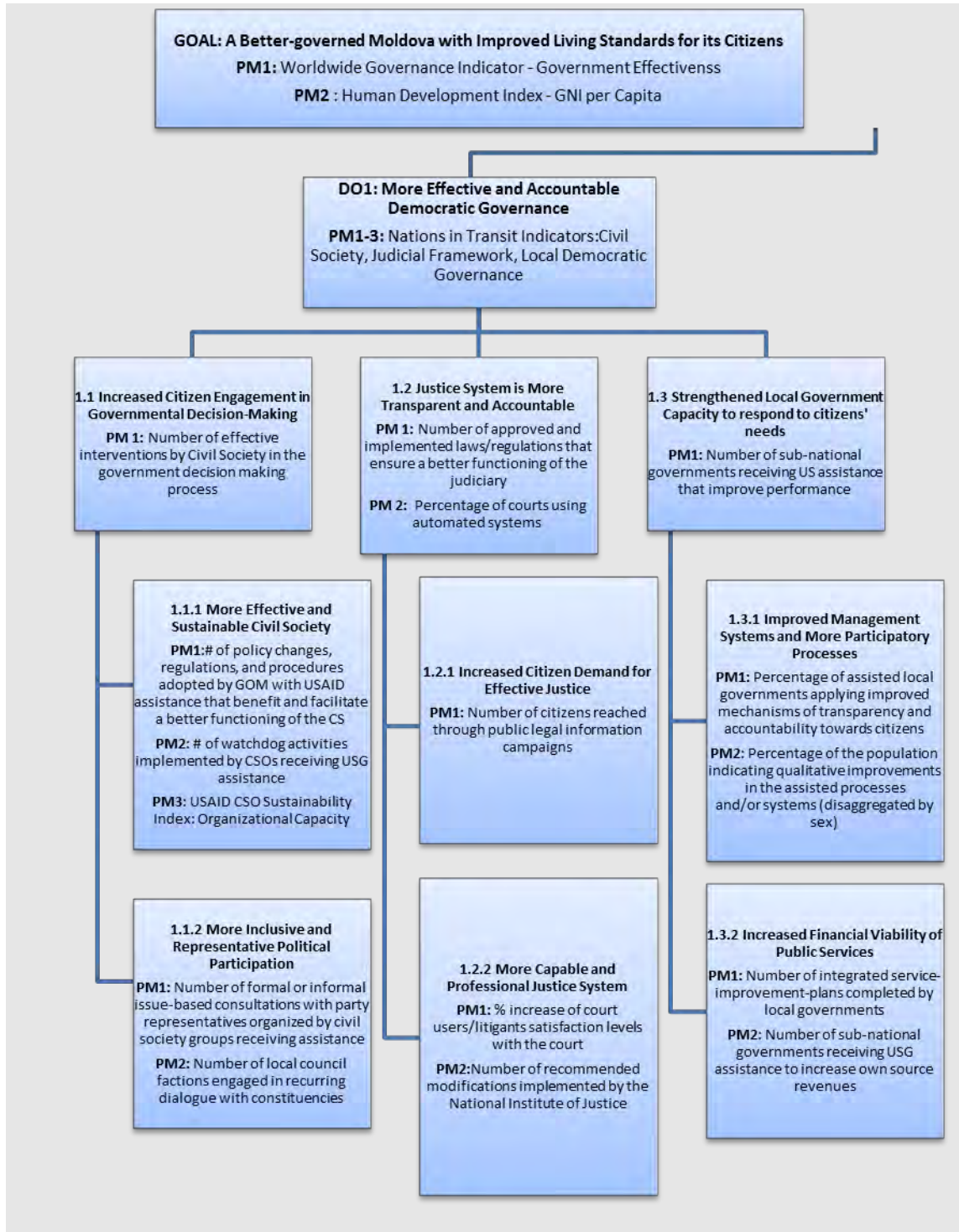
VII. EVALUATION TEAM COMPOSITION

The contractor will include as part of the Concept Note the proposed team composition. The ET should include a Team Leader, evaluation specialists, and technical specialists in the AIM Project areas of intervention. The team composition should corroborate on how each team member will contribute the tasks, their LOE, and demonstrate how the team as a whole has the required mix of skills and expertise to complete a high-quality evaluation.

ADDITIONAL INFO FOR THE TASKING

Dates of performance and timeline: The assignment is expected to start September 2019 and be completed by the end of February 2020.

ANNEX B: USAID/MOLDOVA RESULTS FRAMEWORK AND INDICATORS



ANNEX C: SUMMARY OF AIM-SUPPORTED IT INVESTMENTS

Table 11 summarizes AIM-supported IT investments findings in the justice and local governance sectors.

Table 12: AIM-Supported IT Investments

IT SOLUTION	FUNCTION AND INTENTION	STATUS
Integrated Case Management System	<p>Increase efficiency of electronic case management</p> <p>Allows processing more cases</p> <p>Shows electronic life cycle of a case</p> <p>Reduces the time court staff spend entering data into the system</p> <p>Fast search for a copy of a case document</p> <p>Easy access to case documents including decisions made by judges</p> <p>Able to track status of a case</p> <p>Allows recusal and appeal inquiries</p> <p>Allows electronic updates to a case</p>	Functional but technical issues reported
	<p>Interoperability feature: capability to integrate with several national registries and e-services</p> <p>Fast access to different information from other public institutions</p> <p>Reduces the time court staff spend inputting data into the system</p>	Functional, but not all national databases are connected
	<p>Electronic Judicial Statistics Module (EJSM)</p> <p>Electronically generates and analyzes statistical data on performance of judges and courts</p> <p>Shows 17 performance indicators (CEPEJ) produced in real time</p> <p>Eliminates paper-based statistical reports</p>	Underdeveloped; technical issues reported
	<p>For e-filing, e-signatures, and sending summons via electronic means</p> <p>Electronically files cases and claims to increase access to justices</p> <p>Electronically signs judicial acts and saves paper to summon</p>	Limited functionality
	<p>Randomized case assignment function</p> <p>Increases transparency for the court users</p> <p>Intends to eradicate corruption in courts</p>	Functional, but number of deficiencies and technical issues reported
Moldovan courts web portal	<p>Increase access to information thus enhance transparency</p> <p>Enables tracking the history and status of a case</p> <p>Searches for case record, finds trial schedules and judicial rulings and decisions</p>	Functional

FEMIDA: court hearings audio-recording system	<p>Provide transparency of the court hearing</p> <p>Court audio recordings help judges justify their rulings</p> <p>Helps judges use a hearing audio-recording to aid motivation</p> <p>All parties can verify if the ruling is based on relevant arguments and what happens in the hearing</p> <p>Helps courts deal with claims that hearing minutes were inaccurate</p> <p>Affordable for interested parties to access audio-recording (costs \$1)</p> <p>Helps SCM Inspection Board to determine appropriateness of judge's behavior during a hearing</p>	Functional, but technical issues reported
Videoconferencing equipment	<p>Increase transparency and saves public funds on transportation</p> <p>SCM meetings streamed live online through the updated SCM-website</p> <p>Video hearings with remote participation of in-mates from penitentiaries only for limited types of court hearings (e.g. treatment complaints, shorten prison time)</p>	Functional
Digitization of two courts archives	<p>Allow easy search for archived documents and saved physical space in Chisinau District court and SCJ</p> <p>Archives are available for judges, Courts Secretariats and other court staff</p> <p>The public, except for parties to the case, does not have access to archives due to personal data protection regulations</p>	Functional, but limited access to public
Integrated Financial Information System – accounting and billing software	<p>Ensure maximum automation of activities performed by municipal utilities</p> <p>Helps to standardize and simplify managing of customer billing, management of stock, monitoring staff, payroll and accounting balance for municipal utility services</p> <p>Allows citizens to see and pay bills online</p>	Functional

ANNEX D: EVALUATION DESIGN MATRIX

Table 13: Evaluation Design Matrix

EVALUATION QUESTION	DATA SOURCES	DATA COLLECTION METHODS	DATA ANALYSIS METHODS
How is the project making progress toward the achievement of its purpose? To what extent have the activities implemented under this project made progress toward each of its three objectives. To what extent have they been able to collectively contribute to the purpose of the AIM project?	<p>AIM Project documents (PAD, PMP, CDCS); Activity Quarterly, Annual and Final Reports; AMELPs, implementation plans, M&E data; activity evaluations; GRM strategies & regulations; relevant USG/non-USG assessments</p> <p>USAID & AIM Activities' staff; GRM representatives, other stakeholders; AIM activity beneficiaries (e.g., ROL: judges, lawyers, judicial staff; LG: Mayors, town hall/local council staff, relevant state institutions, CSO representatives; PPs: political party leaders/members, elected officials; Media: journalists, editors, photographers, media managers; CSOs: CSO directors and staff)</p>	<p>Document review of AIM project/activity, GRM and relevant USG/non-USG document</p> <p>Literature review</p> <p>KIIs with USAID & AIM staff; project stakeholders</p> <p>FGDs with activity beneficiaries</p>	<p>Content and Comparative Analyses – To identify project successes and challenges, as well as response categories, patterns, and emergent themes from collected data; to be used to code all data</p> <p>Trend Analysis – To enable examination of different AIM activity, objective, and project indicators over time to identify patterns of convergence (or divergence) of outputs and outcomes toward objectives and overall purpose</p> <p>Gap Analysis – To examine which aspects of AIM, if any, fell short of anticipated performance, and the likely factors behind these gaps</p>
I.a. How is the project making progress toward Objective 1 (Increased Citizen Engagement and Oversight in Governmental Decision Making) and its sub-objectives?	<p>AIM documents focusing on Objective 1 activities – e.g., CEPPS, Media-M, MPSCS, SPACE-Moldova: Quarterly, Annual and Final Reports; AMELPs, implementation plans, M&E data; activity evaluations; other relevant documentation by USAID – e.g., 2012 democracy, human rights and governance (DRG) Assessment, partners (IRI Moldova Polls)</p> <p>Relevant USAID and AIM Activity Staff – e.g., CEPPS partners, Internews, IJC, Freedom House, FHI 360, NDI; GRM representatives; AIM activity beneficiaries</p>	<p>Document review of AIM project/activity, GRM and relevant USG/non-USG documents</p> <p>Literature review</p> <p>KIIs with USAID and AIM Objective 1 activities' staff; project stakeholders</p> <p>FGDs with Objective 1 activity beneficiaries</p>	<p>Content and Comparative Analyses – To identify Objective 1 activities' successes and challenges, as well as response categories, patterns, and emergent themes from collected data; to be used to code all data</p> <p>Trend Analysis – To enable examination of Objective 1 and its constituent activities' indicators over time to identify patterns of convergence (or divergence) of outputs and outcomes toward objective & overall purpose</p> <p>Gap Analysis – To examine which Objective 1 or sub-objective activities, if any, fell short of anticipated performance, and the likely factors behind these gaps</p>
I.b. How is the project making progress toward Objective 2 (Justice System is More Transparent and Accountable) and its sub-objectives?	<p>AIM activity documents focusing on Objective 2 activities Open Justice, Promoting ROL through CS Oversight, ROLISP, DTAP: Quarterly, Annual and Final Reports; AMELPs, implementation plans, M&E data; activity evaluations; other relevant documentation by USAID, partners, GRM, and external groups</p> <p>Relevant USAID and AIM Objective 2 Activity Staff – e.g., Millennium DPI Partners, Legal Resources Center Moldova, Checchi & Co, Promo-Lex; judges, court officers, lawyers, other AIM objective 2 activity beneficiaries</p>	<p>Document review of AIM project/activity, GRM and relevant USG/non-USG documents</p> <p>Literature review</p> <p>KIIs with USAID and AIM Objective 2 activities' staff; project stakeholders</p> <p>FGDs with Objective 2 activity beneficiaries</p>	<p>Content and Comparative Analyses – To identify Objective 2 activities' successes and challenges, as well as response categories, patterns, and emergent themes from collected data; to be used to code all data</p> <p>Trend Analysis – To enable examination of Objective 2 and its constituent activities' indicators over time to identify patterns of convergence (or divergence) of outputs and outcomes toward objective & overall purpose</p> <p>Gap Analysis – To examine which Objective 2 or sub-objective activities, if any, fell short of anticipated performance, and the likely factors behind these gaps</p>

<p>I.c. How is the project making progress toward Objective 3 (Local Government is More Responsive to Citizens' Needs) and its sub-objectives?</p>	<p>AIM activity documents focusing on Objective 3 activities – e.g., Comunitatea Mea, LGSP, LEADER: Quarterly, Annual and Final Reports; AMELPs, implementation plans, M&E data; activity evaluations; other relevant documentation by USAID, partners, GRM, and external groups</p> <p>Relevant USAID and AIM Objective 3 Activity Staff – e.g., IREX, Chemonics, Polish Solidarity Fund, etc.; Mayors, LPA officials, other AIM Objective 3 activity beneficiaries</p>	<p>Document review of AIM project/activity, GRM and relevant USG/non-USG documents</p> <p>Literature review</p> <p>KIIs with USAID and AIM Objective 3 activities' staff; project stakeholders</p> <p>FGDs with Objective 3 activity beneficiaries</p>	<p>Content and Comparative Analyses – To identify Objective 3 activities' successes and challenges, as well as response categories, patterns, and emergent themes from collected data; to be used to code all data</p> <p>Trend Analysis – To enable examination of Objective 3 and its constituent activities' indicators over time to identify patterns of convergence (or divergence) of outputs and outcomes toward objective & overall purpose</p> <p>Gap Analysis - To examine which Objective 3 or sub-objective activities, if any, fell short of anticipated performance, and the likely factors behind these gaps</p>
<p>What are the strengths and weaknesses (gaps) of the project's theory of change?</p> <p>To what extent were the programmatic and contextual assumptions identified in the project theory of change sufficient to achieve the purpose of the AIM Project and did they realistically represent an achievable set of results?</p>	<p>AIM Project documents (PAD, PMP, CDCS); Activity Quarterly, Annual and Final Reports; AMELPs, implementation plans, M&E data; GRM strategies & regulations; relevant USG/non-USG assessments</p> <p>USAID and AIM Activities' staff; GRM representatives, other stakeholders and experts; AIM activity beneficiaries</p>	<p>Document review of AIM project/activity, GRM and relevant USG/non-USG documents</p> <p>Literature review</p> <p>Examining understandings of the theory of change</p>	<p>Contribution analysis to trace linkages and to assess attribution of the results and effects of the AIM Project and its component activities, including intended and unintended outcomes</p>
<p>To what extent has IT investment been successful and sustainable, given that several activities used or proposed technological solutions to improve transparency?</p> <p>How well have these activities been institutionalized within the GRM?</p>	<p>AIM Project documents (PAD, PMP, CDCS); Activity Quarterly, Annual and Final Reports; AMELPs, implementation plans, M&E data; activity evaluations; GRM strategies & regulations; relevant USG/non-USG assessments</p> <p>USAID and AIM Activities' staff; GRM representatives, other stakeholders; AIM activity beneficiaries</p>	<p>Document review of AIM project/activity, GRM and relevant USG/non-USG documents</p> <p>Literature review</p> <p>KIIs with USAID and AIM staff; project stakeholders</p> <p>FGDs with activity beneficiaries</p>	<p>Content and Comparative Analysis – To identify project successes and challenges, as well as response categories, patterns, and emergent themes from collected data; to be used to code all data</p> <p>Gap Analysis – To examine which aspects of AIM, if any, fell short of anticipated performance, and the likely factors behind these gaps</p>
<p>How effectively did existing whole of project indicators capture results?</p>	<p>AIM Project documents (PAD, PMP, CDCS); Activity Quarterly, Annual and Final Reports; AMELPs, implementation plans, M&E data; activity evaluations</p>	<p>Document review of AIM project/activity, GRM and relevant USG/non-USG documents</p>	<p>Trend Analysis – To examine the extent to which different AIM whole-of-project indicators captured project-level results. To assess whether modifications to current or identification of other objective, sector and/or other indicators could more effectively capture progress toward AIM's purpose</p>

ANNEX E: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

USAID DOCUMENTS

- USAID/Moldova Country Development Cooperation Strategy (2013–2020)
- USAID/Moldova Accountability in Moldova Project Appraisal Document (2015)
- USAID/Moldova Performance Management Plan, Fiscal Years 2013-2017
- USAID Program Cycle – ADS 201 Additional Help: Whole-of-Project Evaluation (2016)

AIM ACTIVITY-LEVEL DOCUMENTS

CIVIL SOCIETY, MEDIA, AND POLITICAL PROCESSES

- Moldova Inclusive and Participatory Political Processes (MIPPP) Progress Report, CEPPS, FY2018, FY 2019
- Moldova Inclusive and Participatory Political Processes (MIPPP) Workplan, Oct 2018-Sept 2019
- Moldova Inclusive and Participatory Political Processes (MIPPP) Fact Sheet, 2018
- Moldova Partnerships for Sustainable Civil Society project (MPSCSP) Final Progress Report, 2013-2018
- Moldova Partnerships for Sustainable Civil Society project (MPSCSP) Annual Work Plan, Year 3, Year 4, Year 5
- Media Enabling Democracy, Inclusion, and Accountability in Moldova (MEDIA-M) Initial Implementation Plan, 2017 (Revised)
- Media Enabling Democracy, Inclusion, and Accountability in Moldova, Semi-Annual Report, 2018-2019

RULE OF LAW

- Council of Europe Directorate General Human Rights and Rule of Law, “Justice Sector Reform Strategy of the Republic of Moldova Review of Implementation Assessment and Recommendations,” December 2017
- European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, “Moldova - Commercial Mediation and Arbitration, Indicative Program of Work Description, Proposed Further Activities,” (August 2017 -August 2020)
- European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, “Moldova - Commercial Mediation and Arbitration (Phase IV), Annual Progress Report for the Year 2018,” 2018
- European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), “Rule of Law Checklist,” March 2016
- International Development Law Organization, “Moldova ADR Program” (Power Point), 2018
- Joint Program Between the Council of Europe and the European Union Democracy Support in Moldova, “Action Plan for the Implementation of the Justice Sector Reform Strategy for the Years 2011-2016”

- Joint Program Between the Council of Europe and the European Union Democracy Support in Moldova, “Strategy for Justice Sector Reform 2011-2015”
- Legal Resources Centre from Moldova, Newsletter 17, January-March 2018
- National Center for State Courts, “International Framework for Court Excellence,” 2008
- USAID/Moldova, “Promoting the Rule of Law in Moldova through Civil Society Oversight Program Award”
- USAID/Moldova, “Rule of Law Institutional Strengthening Program Description, Specifications, Statement of Work”
- USAID/Moldova, “Statement of Work – Open Justice Project in Moldova,” no date
- USAID Optimized Electronic Access to Judicial Decisions in Moldova, “Activity Description,” September 2014
- USAID Optimized Electronic Access to Judicial Decisions in Moldova, “The Supreme Court of Justice and the Nisporeni District Court Archives Digitization Project Analysis,” (draft) 2015
- USAID Promoting the Rule of Law in Moldova through Civil Society Oversight, “Annual Narrative Report, Year 1,” October 2017
- USAID Promoting the Rule of Law in Moldova through Civil Society Oversight, “Annual Narrative Report, Year 2,” November 2018
- USAID Promoting the Rule of Law in Moldova through Civil Society Oversight, “Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Plan for Years 1-4,” November 2016
- USAID Promoting the Rule of Law in Moldova through Civil Society Oversight, “Year 1 Work Plan,” 2016
- USAID Rule of Law Institutional Strengthening Program, “Annual Report,” February 2014
- USAID Rule of Law Institutional Strengthening Program, “Annual Report,” February 2016
- USAID Rule of Law Institutional Strengthening Program, “Annual Report for 2012,” September 2012
- USAID Rule of Law Institutional Strengthening Program, “Assessment Report of Courts of Law in the Republic of Moldova,” September 2015
- USAID Rule of Law Institutional Strengthening Program, “Assessment Report of Courts of Law in the Republic of Moldova, Report No. 2,” September 2015
- USAID Rule of Law Institutional Strengthening Program, “End of Term Assessment of ROLISP Activities with NIJ,” December 2015
- USAID Rule of Law Institutional Strengthening Program, “Final PMEP Report Covering the Period of March 1, 2012 to February 28, 2016,” no date
- USAID Rule of Law Institutional Strengthening Program, “Perception of Judges, Prosecutors and Lawyers on Justice Reform and Fight against Corruption,” 2015
- USAID’s Open Justice Project in Moldova, “Annual Report,” October 30, 2018
- USAID’s Open Justice Project in Moldova, “Year 3 Work Plan,” May 2019

- USAID’s Open Justice Project in Moldova, “Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan,” May 2019
- USAID’s Open Justice Project in Moldova, “Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan,” September 2017
- USAID’s Open Justice Project in Moldova, “Summary of the Final Reports of the 2017 and 2018 Public Opinion Surveys on the Judicial System in Moldova,” January 14, 2019
- USAID’s Open Justice Project in Moldova, “Year 1 Work Plan,” May 2017
- USAID’s Open Justice Project in Moldova, “Year 2 Work Plan,” May 2018
- USAID Moldova, “Rule of Law Assessment,” 2015

LOCAL GOVERNANCE

- Comunitatea Mea, “Quarterly Performance Report nr. IV: April 01 – June 30, 2019,” IREX Moldova
- Comunitatea Mea, “Quarterly Performance Report: January 1 – March 31, 2019,” IREX Moldova USAID UPDATE #1 to Rapid Political Economy Assessment, March 3, 2019
- Comunitatea Mea, “Manual de crestere a veniturilor administratiei publice locale,” 2019, IREX
- Comunitatea Mea, “Annual Performance Report No 1: March 5 – September 30, 2018,” IREX (with Annexes 2- 15);
- Comunitatea Mea, “Quarterly Performance Report No.1: April 1 – June 30, 2018,” IREX
- Comunitatea Mea, “Cooperative Agreement No. 72011718CA0002”
- Comunitatea Mea, “Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan,” IREX, June 2018
- LEADER, “Initial implementation plan, February 2018 – January 2020,” approved on 05.03.2018 by Solidarity Fund PL;
- LEADER, “Annual performance report, February 1, 2018 – September 30, 2018,” Solidarity Fund PL
- LEADER, “Annual implementation plan, February 2019 – January 2020,” Solidarity Fund PL
- LEADER, “3rd Quarterly report of the 2nd year of implementation, April 1, 2019 – June 30, 2019,” Solidarity Fund PL
- Local Government Support Project in Moldova, “Draft Annual Work Plan year 1 and Performance Monitoring and Evaluation plan, Feb 22-Sept 30, 2012,” Chemonics International
- Local Government Support Project in Moldova, “Activity Report of Contact Center”
- Local Government Support Project in Moldova, “A study of the performance results of the cities beneficiaries of LGSP”
- Local Government Support Project in Moldova, “Final Report”
- Local Government Support Project in Moldova, “PMP Performance Indicator Chart, Year 1”
- Local Government Support Project in Moldova, “Year 2 workplan, Draft, October 1, 2012 – September 30, 2013,” Chemonics Int.

- Local Government Support Project in Moldova, “PMEP Year 2”
- Local Government Support Project in Moldova, “Year 3 Workplan, Draft, October 1, 2013 – September 30, 2014”
- Local Government Support Project in Moldova, “Year 4 Workplan, Draft, October 1, 2014 – September 30, 2015”

GOVERNMENT OF REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA DOCUMENTS

- Constitution of the Republic of Moldova
- Cartea Europeana a Autonomiei adopted through Parliamentary Decision nr. 1253-XIII rom 16.07.97
- Law nr 436-XVI from 28.12.2006 on Local Public Administration
- Law nr. 435-XVI from 28.12.2006 on administrative decentralization
- Law nr. 397-XV from 16.10.2003 on local public finances
- Law nr. 523-XIV from 16.07.1999 on the public property of the territorial-administrative units
- Law nr. 317 from 2003 on the normative acts of the Government and of the other central and local public administration authorities
- Law nr. 1350-XV from 02.11.2000 on architectural activity and other relevant legislative acts
- Law nr. 397-XV from 16.10.2003 on the local public finances
- Law nr. 457-XV from 14.11.2003 on the establishment and functioning of the local and district councils
- Law nr. 68 from 05.04.2012 on the approval of the National Strategy for decentralization and of the Action Plan on the implementation of the Strategy for decentralization for years 2012-2018
- National Strategy for Civil Society Development for years 2012-2015
- National Strategy on Public Administration Reform for years 2016-2020
- Moldova 2030 strategy approved through Government Decision Nr 1083 from 08.11.2018
- Methodology for Monitoring and Evaluation of the National Decentralization Strategy and of the Action Plan
- Report on the Implementation of the National Decentralization Strategy - State Chancellery (2013)
- Law Nr. 982 from 11.05.2000 on Access to Information
- Law Nr. 239 from 13.11.2008 on Transparency in Decision Making Processes

EXTERNAL DOCUMENTS

GLOBAL INDEXES, SURVEYS, AND REPORTS

- BTI 2018 | Moldova Country Report - <https://www.bti-project.org/en/reports/country-reports/detail/itc/MDA/>

- Civil Society Sustainability Index, USAID, 2017
- International Republican Institute, “Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Moldova,” 2017, 2018, 2019, <https://www.iri.org>
- Moldova Corruption Index - <https://tradingeconomics.com/moldova/corruption-index>
- Moldova Governance Indicators - <https://datacatalog.worldbank.org/dataset/worldwide-governance-indicators>
- Moldova Trust in Government http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2018-3-29_moldova_poll_presentation.pdf
- Moldova Open Government Partnership Report (2016-2018) <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/moldova-mid-term-report-2016-2018-year-1/>
- Nations in Transit Index Moldova 2018 <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2018/moldova>
- OECD, Regional Profile, Moldova - <https://www.oecd.org/regional/regional-policy/profile-Moldova.pdf>
- World Press Freedom Index, 2019

CIVIL SOCIETY, MEDIA, AND POLITICAL PROCESSES

- Bouleguem, Mathieu, Orysia Lutsevych, and Anais Marin. “Civil Society Under Russia’s Threat: Building Resilience in Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova,” Chatham House, November 2018
- Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe: Monitoring 2019, Erste Foundation
- CSO METER, Assessing the Civil Society Environment in Eastern Partnership Countries, 2019
- Gherasimov, Cristina. “Political Elite Renewal in Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine,” Chatham House, May 2019
- Internews Survey, Perception of the Population of Moldova on Mass Media, November 2018
- “Reflections from Moldova: What is the value added of national pre-OGP Summit discussions?” Open Government Partnership, October 2015

RULE OF LAW

- Balthasar, Alexander and Michael Groepper, “Peer Assessment Mission to Republic of Moldova on the Constitutional Court,” 2016
- Całus, Kamil, and Wojciech Konończuk, “Explaining Oligarchic Moldova,” Carnegie Europe, May 2017
- EU-Moldova Civil Society Platform, “Rule of Law and Good Governance in the Republic of Moldova,” May 2016
- Cantarji, Vasile, “Confidence in the Justice System of the Republic of Moldova in 2001 – 2018. Trends and Determinants,” December 2018
- Chirtoacă, Ilie, Sorina Macrinici and Nadejda Hriptievski, “Selection and Promotion of Judges in the Republic of Moldova – Challenges and Needs,” July 2017

- European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice, “European Judicial Systems: Efficiency and Quality of Justice,” 2018
- European Union Project Support to Efficient Prevention and Fight Against Corruption in the Justice Sector, “The Justice Sector Development Strategy for the years 2019-2022,” draft
- European Union Increased Efficiency, Accountability and Transparency of Courts in Moldova, “Inception Report,” October 2014
- Association for Participatory Democracy and Legal Resource Centre from Moldova (Expert-Grup/Think Tank), “Final Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the Priority Reform Action Roadmap,” 2018
- Freedom House, “Moldova Report,” *Freedom in the World 2019*, 2019
- Goinic, Daniel, Ilie Chirtoacă, and Vladislav Gribincea, “Case-law on Integrity Issues - Is the Practice of Courts Uniform?” November 2018
- Guzun, Ion and Sorina Macrinici, “Transparency and Efficiency of the Superior Council of Magistracy of the Republic of Moldova January 2015 – March 2016,” May 2016
- Hriptievschi, Nadejda, “Justice Sector Challenges Undermine the Rule of Law in the Republic of Moldova,” April 2018
- Hriptievschi, Nadejda, “Independence and Accountability of Moldova’s Judiciary Under Threat,” January 2017
- International Commission of Jurists, “Only an Empty shell: The Undelivered Promise of an Independent Judiciary in Moldova,” 2019
- International Commission of Jurists Centre for the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, “Moldova: The Rule of Law in 2004,” 2004
- Legal Resources Centre from Moldova, “Lawyers’ Perception Regarding the Independence, Efficiency, and Accountability of the Justice Sector in the Republic of Moldova,” December 2018
- Mclauchlan, Judithanne Scourfield, “The Rule of Law, Judicial Reform, and the Protection of Human Rights in Moldova and Transnistria,” *Intercultural Human Rights Law Review*, Vol 9, 2014
- Mildenhall, Briant, “Teaching Law in Moldova, Lawyer Appreciates Rule of Law Here,” *Daily Report*, April 4, 2016
- Stefan, Laura, Nadejda Hriptievschi, and Vladislav Gribincea, “The Anti-Corruption Prosecution Office Should Investigate Only High-Level Corruption,” November 2018
- Tanase, Alexandru, “The Role of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Moldova in Strengthening the Independence of Judicial Power,” 2015
- World Justice Project, “Rule of Law Index” (Moldova profile), 2019

LOCAL GOVERNANCE

- Monitoring Report on the implementation of the Strategy on Public Administration Reform for years 2016-2020, <http://www.viitorul.org/files/library/RAPORT%20DE%20MONITORIZARE.pdf>
- The Role of Local Public Administration Authorities in the EU Integration process of the Republic of Moldova, http://old.ape.md/public/publications/2232156_md_nicolae_dandis.pdf

- Analytical Study on the Corruption Phenomena in Local Public Administration in Moldova, https://cna.md/public/files/studiu_apl.pdf
- Practical Guide on Transparency and Citizen Engagement, for Local Public Administration Authorities in Moldova, by Council of Europe
- Fiscal Decentralization Indicators South-East Europe, Report 2018

ANNEX F: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

#1: BENEFICIARY KII PROTOCOL: GOVERNANCE & GRM

Key Informant Interview (KII) Guide	
Researcher Name:	
Note taker Name:	
Interview Date:	
Respondent Name:	
Respondent Position:	
Years in Current Position:	
AIM Project/Sector	
Respondent Gender:	
Respondent Region:	
Start Time:	
End Time:	

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us today. My name is _____ and I work for Social Impact, an American-based research firm. USAID has contracted Social Impact, to evaluate its project, Accountability in Moldova or AIM. The purpose of AIM is more effective and accountable democratic governance. AIM is a five-year project, which began in 2015, that includes 20 activities supporting three inter-related objectives: increased citizen oversight and engagement in governmental decision-making, justice system that is more transparent and accountable, and local government that is more responsive to citizen needs. We intend to interview approximately 100 individuals, and you have been selected to participate in this research because we believe you can provide a unique perspective on AIM and the Moldovan context. Your honest responses to our questions will help USAID inform and improve its future programming. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and you are free to decline to respond to any question for any reason and to end the interview at any time. You will not be provided with any payment for your participation in this interview. All information you provide to us is totally confidential and will be protected to the fullest extent possible in accordance with local and international law. Only the people involved in this interview will have access to personally identifiable information about you and your organization. Your name or any identifying information about your organization will not be connected to the information you provide in this interview, and no information about you or your organization will appear in the final data set or the final report. The data from this interview (excluding your personally identifiable information) will be used by the Social Impact team for analysis purposes only and your answers will only be reported to USAID as part of an aggregated data set. If you have any concerns or questions, please contact zlinetsky@socialimpact.com as well as irb@socialimpact.com.

This interview will last approximately one hour. Do you understand that your participation in this interview is voluntary, unpaid, and that you can end the interview at any point?

Are you willing to participate? Yes___ (check) No___ (check)

- I. In what ways has your office worked with USAID or any other US government agencies?

2. Please rate how much cooperation with USAID or other US government agencies has improved your office's ability to promote good governance in Moldova (*Please rate using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is Insignificant and 5 is Very Significant (2. Somewhat significant; 3. No effect/no change and 4. Significant)*). How and why?
3. What are the top three challenges that Moldova faces with regards to developing more effective and accountable governance systems?
4. Is there any support that could better help you address these challenges? If so, what? (EQ1)
5. Please rate how much your cooperation with USAID and/or other US government agencies has improved the ability of LPAs to respond to their citizens' in needs? *Please rate using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is Insignificant and 5 is Very Significant (2. Somewhat significant; 3. No effect/no change and 4. Significant)*. How and why?
6. To what extent do you believe that local governing institutions are more responsive to citizens' needs at the rayon and municipal levels (e.g., better, quicker implementation of municipal services) than they were five years ago? Please explain how and why.
7. To what extent do you think national level institutions (SCM/parliament etc.) have become more responsive to citizens' needs than they were five years ago? Please explain how and why.
8. Please rate how much your cooperation with USAID and/or other US government agencies has improved the financial viability of LPAs? *Please rate using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is Insignificant and 5 is Very Significant (2. Somewhat significant; 3. No effect/no change and 4. Significant)*. How and why?
9. To what extent are the local, regional and national institutions of the Moldovan government more responsive to the needs of women, youth, the disabled minorities and other vulnerable groups?
10. To what extent has your office collaborated with non-US government actors on improving Moldovan governance? Please tell us who you have worked with [e.g., EU, UN]?
11. To what extent has your work with USAID and/or other US government agencies included any investments in IT? For example, tools for online engagement of citizens, development of software for information flow, document management and operational efficiency in supported Citizen Information and Service Centers, use of GIS software for taxation and property management in select LPAs.
12. What are the major challenges and opportunities faced by the GRM with regards to improving governance in the future?

#2: BENEFICIARIES: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: CIVIL SOCIETY

Key Informant Interview (KII) Guide	
Researcher Name:	
Note taker Name:	
Interview Date:	
Respondent Name:	
Respondent Position:	
Years in Current Position:	
AIM Project/Sector	
Respondent Gender:	
Respondent Region:	
Start Time:	
End Time:	

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us today. My name is _____ and I work for Social Impact, an American-based research firm. USAID has contracted Social Impact, to evaluate its project, Accountability in Moldova or AIM. The purpose of AIM is more effective and accountable democratic governance. AIM is a five-year project, which began in 2015, that includes 20 activities supporting three inter-related objectives: increased citizen oversight and engagement in governmental decision-making, justice system that is more transparent and accountable, and local government that is more responsive to citizen needs. We intend to interview approximately 100 individuals, and you have been selected to participate in this research because we believe you can provide a unique perspective on AIM and the Moldovan context. Your honest responses to our questions will help USAID inform and improve its future programming. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and you are free to decline to respond to any question for any reason and to end the interview at any time. You will not be provided with any payment for your participation in this interview. All information you provide to us is totally confidential and will be protected to the fullest extent possible in accordance with local and international law. Only the people involved in this interview will have access to personally identifiable information about you and your organization. Your name or any identifying information about your organization will not be connected to the information you provide in this interview, and no information about you or your organization will appear in the final data set or the final report. The data from this interview (excluding your personally identifiable information) will be used by the Social Impact team for analysis purposes only and your answers will only be reported to USAID as part of an aggregated data set. If you have any concerns or questions, please contact zlinetsky@socialimpact.com as well as irb@socialimpact.com.

This interview will last approximately one hour. Do you understand that your participation in this interview is voluntary, unpaid, and that you can end the interview at any point?

Are you willing to participate? Yes___ (check) No___ (check)

1. **What activities** undertaken by your organization have been funded by the USAID/AIM Project and what are these activities purposes? [Probe: what sector were they in?]
2. To what extent have you **changed the way you implement** your USAID/AIM-funded activities today as compared to when your organization first received USAID funding?

3. What are the **top three challenges** that Moldovan CSOs face with regards to developing more effective and accountable governance systems?
4. What are the most significant contributions your activities have made to addressing these challenges?
5. In what ways do you think your USAID/AIM-funded activity have helped improve the **operational context for Moldovan CSOs**? [2% law, registration, volunteering, advocacy]
6. How would you characterize the **level of development of the Moldovan CSOs**? Do they become more effective, professional and sustainable – e.g., stronger capacity, larger CSO networks, diversification of funding sources and increased engagement with citizen?
7. To what extent do you think **your activity increases citizen engagement** and oversight in governmental decision making?
8. To what extent are Moldova’s citizens more **aware of their rights and the functions/responsibilities** of their government than they were five years ago (or since you started implementing the activity?) Can you provide examples?
9. Are CSOs more **capable of advocating** for Moldova’s citizens than they were five years ago (or since you started implementing the activity?) If yes, has this made Moldova’s governing institutions more effective and accountable? Examples?
10. Has the USAID-sponsored activity you implement(ed) helped to address the **specific needs** of women, youth, minorities and any other relevant vulnerable groups? If yes, please elaborate/provide an example.
11. What other international donors [the EU, UN DFID etc.] and/or USAID projects has your activity collaborated with?
12. How has collaboration with non-USAID/AIM international donors increased your activity’s impact? [Probe: would you like to collaborate with other donors more in the future and how would this affect your activity’s impact?]
13. The AIM Project’s Theory of Change assumed *governance in Moldova would become more effective and accountable IF citizens, civil society and independent media become more active in government decision making, and oversight and the justice system becomes more transparent and accountable, and local government becomes more responsive to citizens’ needs*. Do you think the assumptions underlying this TOC are accurate and sufficient for achieving the project’s purpose? [Probe: what might be missing?]
14. To what extent did the support your organization received from USAID/AIM include investments in information technology? [Probe: have you received: financial support for the procurement of needed software and equipment, website upgrades to allow for posting of more engaging multimedia content, and has this helped you achieve your goals?]
15. To what degree is the Government of Moldova or other organizations supporting the ongoing use of these technological solutions? Can you provide examples?
16. What are the opportunities and challenges that international donors need to be aware of when supporting the improvement of the effectiveness, transparency and accountability of the GRM in the future?

#3: BENEFICIARY: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: MEDIA

Key Informant Interview (KII) Guide	
Researcher Name:	
Note taker Name:	
Interview Date:	
Respondent Name:	
Respondent Position:	
Years in Current Position:	
AIM Project/Sector	
Respondent Gender:	
Respondent Region:	
Start Time:	
End Time:	

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us today. My name is _____ and I work for Social Impact, an American-based research firm. USAID has contracted Social Impact, to evaluate its project, Accountability in Moldova or AIM. The purpose of AIM is more effective and accountable democratic governance. AIM is a five-year project, which began in 2015, that includes 20 activities supporting three inter-related objectives: 1) increased citizen oversight and engagement in governmental decision-making, 2) justice system that is more transparent and accountable, 3) and local government that is more responsive to citizen needs. We intend to interview approximately 100 individuals, and you have been selected to participate in this research because we believe you can provide a unique perspective on AIM and the Moldovan context. Your honest responses to our questions will help USAID inform and improve its future programming. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and you are free to decline to respond to any question for any reason and to end the interview at any time. You will not be provided with any payment for your participation in this interview. All information you provide to us is totally **confidential** and will be **protected** to the fullest extent possible in accordance with local and international law. Only the people involved in this interview will have access to personally identifiable information about you and your organization. Your name or any identifying information about your organization will not be connected to the information you provide in this interview, and no information about you or your organization will appear in the final data set or the final report. The data from this interview (excluding your personally identifiable information) will be used by the Social Impact team for analysis purposes only and your answers will only be reported to USAID as part of an aggregated data set. If you have any concerns or questions, please contact zlinetsky@socialimpact.com as well as irb@socialimpact.com.

This interview will last approximately one hour. Do you understand that your participation in this interview is voluntary, unpaid, and that you can end the interview at any point?

Are you willing to participate? Yes ___ (check) No ___ (check)

1. Did your organization participate in any activities funded by the USAID/AIM Project and what were these activities purpose? [Probe: what sector were they in?
2. What are the top three challenges that Moldova faces with regards to developing more effective and accountable governance systems with regards to the media sector?

3. What are the most significant contributions your organization / your activities have made to addressing these challenges?
4. How would you describe the evolution of the **operational context for media organizations** in Moldova in the last 5 years?
5. In what ways USAID activity help Moldovan independent media become more effective, professional and sustainable – e.g., stronger capacity, increased media outlet sustainability, stronger reporting, use by citizen and greater reach? [if not aware of USAID activity, ask in general about the state of development of independent media outlets]
6. To what extent do you think your work increase **citizen engagement and oversight in governmental decision making**?
7. To what extent are Moldova's citizens more aware of their rights and functions/responsibilities of their government than they were five years ago (or since you started implementing the activity?) Can you provide examples to support your points?
8. What other international donors [the EU, UN DFID etc.] and/or USAID projects has your organization collaborated with?
9. The AIM Project's Theory of Change assumed *governance in Moldova would become more effective and accountable IF citizens, civil society and independent media become more active in government decision making, and oversight and the justice system becomes more transparent and accountable, and local government becomes more responsive to citizens' needs*. Do you think the assumptions underlying this TOC are accurate and sufficient for achieving the project's purpose? [Probe: what might be missing?]
10. Did the support your organization received from USAID/AIM include any investments in information technology? [Probe: have you received: financial support for the procurement of needed software and equipment, website upgrades to allow for posting of more engaging multimedia content, and has this helped you achieve your goals?]
11. To what degree is the Government of Moldova or other organizations supporting the ongoing use of these technological solutions? Can you provide examples?
12. Has the USAID-sponsored activity you implement(ed) helped to address the specific needs of women, youth, minorities and any other relevant vulnerable groups? If yes, please elaborate and provide an example. [if not aware of USAID activity, ask in general about vulnerable groups]
13. What are the opportunities and challenges that international donors need to be aware of when supporting the improvement of the effectiveness, transparency and accountability of the GRM in the future?

#4: BENEFICIARY KII PROTOCOL: RULE OF LAW

Key Informant Interview (KII) Guide	
Researcher Name:	
Note taker Name:	
Interview Date:	
Respondent Name:	
Respondent Position:	
Years in Current Position:	
AIM Project/Sector	
Respondent Gender:	
Respondent Region:	
Start Time:	
End Time:	

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us today. My name is _____ and I work for Social Impact, an American-based research firm. USAID has contracted Social Impact, to evaluate its project, Accountability in Moldova or AIM. The purpose of AIM is more effective and accountable democratic governance. AIM is a five-year project, which began in 2015, that includes 20 activities supporting three inter-related objectives: increased citizen oversight and engagement in governmental decision-making, justice system that is more transparent and accountable, and local government that is more responsive to citizen needs. We intend to interview approximately 100 individuals, and you have been selected to participate in this research because we believe you can provide a unique perspective on AIM and the Moldovan context. Your honest responses to our questions will help USAID inform and improve its future programming. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and you are free to decline to respond to any question for any reason and to end the interview at any time. You will not be provided with any payment for your participation in this interview. All information you provide to us is totally confidential and will be protected to the fullest extent possible in accordance with local and international law. Only the people involved in this interview will have access to personally identifiable information about you and your organization. Your name or any identifying information about your organization will not be connected to the information you provide in this interview, and no information about you or your organization will appear in the final data set or the final report. The data from this interview (excluding your personally identifiable information) will be used by the Social Impact team for analysis purposes only and your answers will only be reported to USAID as part of an aggregated data set. If you have any concerns or questions, please contact zlinetsky@socialimpact.com as well as irb@socialimpact.com.

This interview will last approximately one hour. Do you understand that your participation in this interview is voluntary, unpaid, and that you can end the interview at any point?

Are you willing to participate? Yes___ (check) No___ (check)

1. In what ways has your office worked with USAID or any other US government agencies? [Probe: which of your interventions have been most successful]

2. Please rate how much cooperation with USAID or other US government agencies has improved your office's ability to promote efficient, transparent, and accountable justice systems in Moldova (Please rate using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is Insignificant and 5 is Very Significant (2. Somewhat significant; 3. No effect/no change and 4. Significant). How and why?
3. What are the top three challenges that Moldova faces with regards to developing more efficient, transparent and accountable justice systems? (EQ1&2)
4. In what ways has the support you have received from USAID helped you address these challenges? If not, why?
5. Please rate how much your cooperation with USAID and/or other US government agencies has improved citizens' access to justice in Moldova? Please rate using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is Insignificant and 5 is Very Significant (2. Somewhat significant; 3. No effect/no change and 4. Significant). How and why?
6. Please rate how much your cooperation with USAID and/or other US government agencies has improved court management, court administration and court optimization? Please rate using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is Insignificant and 5 is Very Significant (2. Somewhat significant; 3. No effect/no change and 4. Significant). How and why?
7. Please rate how much your cooperation with USAID and/or other US government agencies has improved transparent oversight of the judiciary? Please rate using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is Insignificant and 5 is Very Significant (2. Somewhat significant; 3. No effect/no change and 4. Significant). How and why?
8. Please rate how much your cooperation with USAID and/or other US government agencies has improved the capacity of judges, prosecutors and other members of the judiciary? Please rate using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is Insignificant and 5 is Very Significant (2. Somewhat significant; 3. No effect/no change and 4. Significant). How and why?
9. To what extent do you believe there are differences in the quality of courts and the quality of the national judicial systems? Please explain how and why.
10. To what extent do you think the Supreme Council of Magistrates, Ministry of Justice and National Institute of Justice are more effective today that five years ago? Please explain how and why.
11. To what extent are Moldovan justice systems more responsive to the needs of women, youth, the disabled, minorities and other vulnerable groups today as compared to five years ago?
12. To what extent has your office collaborated with non-US government actors on improving Moldovan justice systems? Please tell us who you have worked with [e.g., EU, UN]?
13. To what extent has your work with USAID and/or other US government agencies included any investments in IT? For example, tools for online engagement of citizens, development of software for information flow, document management and operational efficiency in supported Citizen Information and Service Centers, use of GIS software for taxation and property management in select LPAs.
14. What is your agency's capacity to sustain IT investments over time? Please explain why?
15. What types of support do you think you will need in the future to address the rule of law and justice challenges in Moldova?

#5: BENEFICIARY KII PROTOCOL: LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Key Informant Interview (KII) Guide	
Researcher Name:	
Note taker Name:	
Interview Date:	
Respondent Name:	
Respondent Position:	
Years in Current Position:	
AIM Project/Sector	
Respondent Gender:	
Respondent Region:	
Start Time:	
End Time:	

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us today. My name is _____ and I work for Social Impact, an American-based research firm. USAID has contracted Social Impact, to evaluate its project, Accountability in Moldova or AIM. The purpose of AIM is more effective and accountable democratic governance. AIM is a five-year project, which began in 2015, that includes 20 activities supporting three inter-related objectives: increased citizen oversight and engagement in governmental decision-making, justice system that is more transparent and accountable, and local government that is more responsive to citizen needs. We intend to interview approximately 100 individuals, and you have been selected to participate in this research because we believe you can provide a unique perspective on AIM and the Moldovan context. Your honest responses to our questions will help USAID inform and improve its future programming. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and you are free to decline to respond to any question for any reason and to end the interview at any time. You will not be provided with any payment for your participation in this interview. All information you provide to us is totally confidential and will be protected to the fullest extent possible in accordance with local and international law. Only the people involved in this interview will have access to personally identifiable information about you and your organization. Your name or any identifying information about your organization will not be connected to the information you provide in this interview, and no information about you or your organization will appear in the final data set or the final report. The data from this interview (excluding your personally identifiable information) will be used by the Social Impact team for analysis purposes only and your answers will only be reported to USAID as part of an aggregated data set. If you have any concerns or questions, please contact zlinetsky@socialimpact.com as well as irb@socialimpact.com.

This interview will last approximately one hour. Do you understand that your participation in this interview is voluntary, unpaid, and that you can end the interview at any point?

Are you willing to participate? Yes ___ (check) No ___ (check)

- I. In what ways have you received support from USAID to strengthen local governance in your community (potential examples: *Local Governance Support Program, Comunitatea Mea, LEADER*). Probe: your role, type and lengths of support

2. What do you think were the top three major challenges Moldova faced in making progress toward stronger, independent, and accountable local governance five years ago? What is different about the challenges it faces today, if any?
3. In your opinion, has the support you have received helped your community (e.g., *your town, village, or municipality*) to address these challenges? If yes, in what way? If not, why not?
4. What different or additional support would have better helped you address these challenges?
5. To what extent do you think the activities you participated in have improved the ability of your local government (e.g., *in your town, village, or municipality*) to manage municipal services for its citizens? Please rate using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is Insignificant and 5 is Very Significant (2. Somewhat significant; 3. No effect/no change and 4. Significant).
 - a. Please elaborate on your answer and provide an example. (Probe if needed – e.g., *clean (potable) water and sanitation, solid waste collection and management, roads maintenance, green space management*).
 - b. To what extent, if any, are these improvements based on support you have received from other (non-USAID) organizations?
 - c. If it has not helped or helped only to a small extent, why is that?
6. To what extent do you think the activities you participated in have improved the ability of your community's (e.g., *in your town, village, or municipality*) citizens and civil society organizations to participate in local decision-making processes? Please rate using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is Insignificant and 5 is Very Significant (2. Somewhat significant; 3. No effect/no change and 4. Significant).
 - a. Please elaborate on your answer and provide an example. (Probe if needed – e.g., *public hearings, routine and transparent public comment systems and processes*). If not, why not? (Sub-obj 3.1: *Improved management systems & more participatory processes*).
 - b. To what extent, if any, are these improvements based on support you have received from other (non-USAID) organizations?
 - c. If it has not helped or helped only to a small extent, why is that?
7. To what extent do you think the activities you participated in have improved the ability of your community's LPA (e.g., *your mayor, local council, other local government entities*) to manage or raise funding (e.g., *for municipal services*) for citizens in your local community? Please rate using a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is Insignificant and 5 is Very Significant (2. Somewhat significant; 3. No effect/no change and 4. Significant).
 - a. Please elaborate on your answer and provide an example. (Probe if needed: *through locally generated revenue (e.g., real property and land taxes), more equitable distribution of income tax revenue*)
 - b. To what extent, if any, are these improvements based on support you have received from other (non-USAID) organizations?
 - c. If it has not helped or helped only to a small extent, why is that?
8. Overall, do you think the activities you participated in have helped the local government in your community (e.g., *your town, village, or municipality*) become more responsive to citizens' needs? If yes, how (examples)? If not, why not?

9. Did your participation in this USAID-sponsored activity (*name AIM activity*) improve the responsiveness of your community's local government to the specific needs of women, youth, minorities and any other relevant vulnerable groups? If yes, please elaborate and provide an example. To what extent, if any, are these improvements based on support you have received from other (non-USAID) organizations?
10. To what extent have you been encouraged by your implementing partner to collaborate with other governance projects? Have you partnered with other organizations based on this encouragement, or on your own? If yes, with whom have you partnered (with USAID or with activities funded by non-USAID donors [e.g., EU, UN])? Do you believe this has increased your activity's (or both or your organizations' activities') impact? Would such coordination in the future enable your activity to have a stronger impact? How?
11. Did your support from USAID include any investments in IT? If so, in what ways did these IT investments help you achieve your goals? (Probe if needed: Examples - tools for online engagement of citizens, development of software for information flow, document management and operational efficiency in supported Citizen Information and Service Centers, (EQ3). To what degree do you believe your agency/institution will be able to sustain these IT systems after USAID support ends?
12. What are the major challenges and opportunities faced by the GRM with regards to improving governance in the future?

#6: IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: CIVIL SOCIETY

Key Informant Interview (KII) Guide	
Researcher Name:	
Note taker Name:	
Interview Date:	
Respondent Name:	
Respondent Position:	
Years in Current Position:	
AIM Project/Sector	
Respondent Gender:	
Respondent Region:	
Start Time:	
End Time:	

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us today. My name is _____ and I work for Social Impact, an American-based research firm. USAID has contracted Social Impact, to evaluate its project, Accountability in Moldova or AIM. The purpose of AIM is more effective and accountable democratic governance. AIM is a five-year project, which began in 2015, that includes 20 activities supporting three inter-related objectives: increased citizen oversight and engagement in governmental decision-making, justice system that is more transparent and accountable, and local government that is more responsive to citizen needs. We intend to interview approximately 100 individuals, and you have been selected to participate in this research because we believe you can provide a unique perspective on AIM and the Moldovan context. Your honest responses to our questions will help USAID inform and improve its future programming. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and you are free to decline to respond to any question for any reason and to end the interview at any time. You will not be provided with any payment for your participation in this interview. All information you provide to us is totally confidential and will be protected to the fullest extent possible in accordance with local and international law. Only the people involved in this interview will have access to personally identifiable information about you and your organization. Your name or any identifying information about your organization will not be connected to the information you provide in this interview, and no information about you or your organization will appear in the final data set or the final report. The data from this interview (excluding your personally identifiable information) will be used by the Social Impact team for analysis purposes only and your answers will only be reported to USAID as part of an aggregated data set. If you have any concerns or questions, please contact zlinetsky@socialimpact.com as well as irb@socialimpact.com.

This interview will last approximately one hour. Do you understand that your participation in this interview is voluntary, unpaid, and that you can end the interview at any point?

Are you willing to participate? Yes___ (check) No___ (check)

- I. What activities undertaken by your organization have been funded by the USAID/AIM Project and what are these activities purposes? [Probe: what sector were they in?]

2. To what extent have you changed the way you implement your USAID/AIM-funded activities today as compared to when your organization first received USAID funding?
3. What are the top three challenges that Moldovan CSOs face with regards to developing more effective and accountable governance systems?
4. What are the most significant contributions your activities have made to addressing these challenges?
5. In what ways do you think your USAID/AIM-funded activity have helped improve the operational context for Moldovan CSOs?
6. To what extent do you think your activity increases citizen engagement and oversight in governmental decision making?
7. To what extent are Moldova's citizens more aware of their rights functions/responsibilities of their government than they were five years ago (or since you started the activity?) Can you provide examples?
8. In what ways has your activity helped Moldovan CSOs become more effective, professional and sustainable – e.g., stronger capacity, larger CSO networks, diversification of funding sources and increased engagement with citizen?
9. Are CSOs more capable of advocating for Moldova's citizens than they were five years ago (or since you started implementing the activity?) If yes, has this made Moldova's governing institutions more effective and accountable? Examples?
10. What other international donors [the EU, UN DFID etc.] and/or USAID projects has your activity collaborated with?
11. How has collaboration with non-USAID/AIM international donors increased your activity's impact? [Probe: would you like to collaborate with other donors more in the future and how would this affect your activity's impact?]
12. The AIM Project's Theory of Change assumed *governance in Moldova would become more effective and accountable IF citizens, civil society and independent media become more active in government decision making, and oversight and the justice system becomes more transparent and accountable, and local government becomes more responsive to citizens' needs*. Do you think the assumptions underlying this TOC are accurate and sufficient for achieving the project's purpose? [Probe: what might be missing?]
13. To what extent did the support your organization received from USAID/AIM include investments in information technology? [Probe: have you received: financial support for the procurement of needed software and equipment, website upgrades to allow for posting of more engaging multimedia content, and has this helped you achieve your goals?]
14. To what degree is the Government of Moldova or other organizations supporting the ongoing use of these technological solutions? Can you provide examples? (EQ3)
15. Has the USAID-sponsored activity you implement(ed) helped to address the specific needs of women, youth, minorities and any other relevant vulnerable groups? If yes, please elaborate and provide an example.
16. What are the opportunities and challenges that international donors need to be aware of when supporting the improvement of the effectiveness, transparency and accountability of the GRM in the future?

#7: IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: MEDIA

Key Informant Interview (KII) Guide	
Researcher Name:	
Note taker Name:	
Interview Date:	
Respondent Name:	
Respondent Position:	
Years in Current Position:	
AIM Project/Sector	
Respondent Gender:	
Respondent Region:	
Start Time:	
End Time:	

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us today. My name is _____ and I work for Social Impact, an American-based research firm. USAID has contracted Social Impact, to evaluate its project, Accountability in Moldova or AIM. The purpose of AIM is more effective and accountable democratic governance. AIM is a five-year project, which began in 2015, that includes 20 activities supporting three inter-related objectives: increased citizen oversight and engagement in governmental decision-making, justice system that is more transparent and accountable, and local government that is more responsive to citizen needs. We intend to interview approximately 100 individuals, and you have been selected to participate in this research because we believe you can provide a unique perspective on AIM and the Moldovan context. Your honest responses to our questions will help USAID inform and improve its future programming. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and you are free to decline to respond to any question for any reason and to end the interview at any time. You will not be provided with any payment for your participation in this interview. All information you provide to us is totally confidential and will be protected to the fullest extent possible in accordance with local and international law. Only the people involved in this interview will have access to personally identifiable information about you and your organization. Your name or any identifying information about your organization will not be connected to the information you provide in this interview, and no information about you or your organization will appear in the final data set or the final report. The data from this interview (excluding your personally identifiable information) will be used by the Social Impact team for analysis purposes only and your answers will only be reported to USAID as part of an aggregated data set. If you have any concerns or questions, please contact zlinetsky@socialimpact.com as well as irb@socialimpact.com.

This interview will last approximately one hour. Do you understand that your participation in this interview is voluntary, unpaid, and that you can end the interview at any point?

Are you willing to participate? Yes___ (check) No___ (check)

1. What activities undertaken by your organization have been funded by the USAID/AIM Project and what were these activities purpose? [Probe: what sector were they in?
2. To what extent have you changed the way you implement your USAID/AIM-funded activities today as compared to when your organization first received USAID funding?

3. What are the top three challenges that Moldova faces with regards to developing more effective and accountable governance systems with regards to the media sector?
4. What are the most significant contributions your activities have made to addressing these challenges?
5. In what ways do you think your USAID/AIM-funded activity have helped improve the operational context for media organizations in Moldova
6. To what extent do you think your activity increase citizen engagement and oversight in governmental decision making?
7. In what ways has your activity helped Moldovan independent media become more effective, professional and sustainable – e.g., stronger capacity, increased media outlet sustainability, stronger reporting, use by citizen and greater reach?
8. What other international donors [the EU, UN DFID etc.] and/or USAID projects has your activity collaborated with?
9. How has collaboration with non-USAID/AIM international donors increased your activity's impact? [Probe: would you like to collaborate with other donors more in the future and how would this affect your activity's impact?]
10. The AIM Project's Theory of Change assumed *governance in Moldova would become more effective and accountable IF citizens, civil society and independent media become more active in government decision making, and oversight and the justice system becomes more transparent and accountable, and local government becomes more responsive to citizens' needs*. Do you think the assumptions underlying this TOC are accurate and sufficient for achieving the project's purpose? [Probe: what might be missing?]
11. To what extent are Moldova's citizens more aware of their rights and functions/responsibilities of their government than they were five years ago (or since you started implementing the activity?) Can you provide examples to support your points?
12. Did the support your organization received from USAID/AIM include any investments in information technology? [Probe: have you received: financial support for the procurement of needed software and equipment, website upgrades to allow for posting of more engaging multimedia content, and has this helped you achieve your goals?]
13. To what degree is the Government of Moldova or other organizations supporting the ongoing use of these technological solutions? Can you provide examples?
14. Has the USAID-sponsored activity you implement(ed) helped to address the specific needs of women, youth, minorities and any other relevant vulnerable groups? If yes, please elaborate and provide an example.
15. What are the opportunities and challenges that international donors need to be aware of when supporting the improvement of the effectiveness, transparency and accountability of the GRM in the future?

#8: IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: RULE OF LAW

Key Informant Interview (KII) Guide	
Researcher Name:	
Note taker Name:	
Interview Date:	
Respondent Name:	
Respondent Position:	
Years in Current Position:	
AIM Project/Sector	
Respondent Gender:	
Respondent Region:	
Start Time:	
End Time:	

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us today. My name is _____ and I work for Social Impact, an independent American research firm. USAID has contracted Social Impact, to evaluate its project, Accountability in Moldova or AIM. The purpose of AIM is more effective and accountable democratic governance. AIM is a five-year project, which began in 2015, that includes 20 activities supporting three inter-related objectives: increased citizen oversight and engagement in governmental decision-making, justice system that is more transparent and accountable, and local government that is more responsive to citizen needs. We intend to interview approximately 100 individuals, and you have been selected to participate in this research because we believe you can provide a unique perspective on AIM and the Moldovan context. Your honest responses to our questions will help USAID inform and improve its future programming. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and you are free to decline to respond to any question for any reason and to end the interview at any time. You will not be provided with any payment for your participation in this interview. All information you provide to us is totally confidential and will be protected to the fullest extent possible in accordance with local and international law. Only the people involved in this interview will have access to personally identifiable information about you and your organization. Your name or any identifying information about your organization will not be connected to the information you provide in this interview, and no information about you or your organization will appear in the final data set or the final report. The data from this interview (excluding your personally identifiable information) will be used by the Social Impact team for analysis purposes only and your answers will only be reported to USAID as part of an aggregated data set. If you have any concerns or questions, please contact zlinetsky@socialimpact.com as well as irb@socialimpact.com.

This interview will last approximately one hour. Do you understand that your participation in this interview is voluntary, unpaid, and that you can end the interview at any point?

Are you willing to participate? Yes___ (check) No___ (check)

- I. What activities undertaken by your organization have been funded by the USAID/AIM Project and what were these activities purpose? [Probe: what sector were they in?

2. To what extent have you changed the way you implement your USAID/AIM-funded activities today as compared to when your organization first received USAID funding?
3. What are the top three challenges that Moldova faces with regards to developing more effective and accountable governance systems in the judicial sector?
4. What are the most significant contributions your activities have made to addressing these challenges?
5. In what ways do you think your USAID/AIM-funded activity has helped make the justice system more transparent and accountable?
6. In what ways has citizen accessibility of court documents, and strengthening judicial monitoring by civil society changed over the last five years (or since you started implementing the activity?)
7. To what extent do you think your activity has helped citizen willingness to demand more effective justice systems?
8. In what ways has your activity helped Moldovans become more aware of and interested in judicial reform efforts today as opposed to five years ago? [Probe: please provide examples of how and why this is the case].
9. In what ways has your activity contributed to increasing the capabilities and professionalism of actors in the Moldovan justice system? [Probe: how have the capacities of the SCM and DJA to effectively oversee the work of courts and train judges changed?]
10. To what extent has your organization's work played a role in strengthening the effectiveness and accountability of justice sectors actors at the national versus local municipal level?
11. What other international donors [the EU, UN DFID etc.] and/or USAID projects has your activity collaborated with?
12. How has collaboration with non-USAID/AIM international donors increased your activity's impact? [Probe: would you like to collaborate with other donors more in the future and how would this affect your activity's impact?]
13. The AIM Project's Theory of Change assumed *governance in Moldova would become more effective and accountable IF citizens, civil society and independent media become more active in government decision making, and oversight and the justice system becomes more transparent and accountable, and local government becomes more responsive to citizens' needs*. Do you think the assumptions underlying this TOC are accurate and sufficient for achieving the project's purpose? [Probe: what might be missing?]
14. Did the support your organization received from USAID/AIM include any investments in information technology? [Probe: IT investments include assistance with a transition from paper to a fully automated judicial system, distance-learning training for judges, implementation of the Integrated Case Management System. Please explain how this investment helped your activity its goals].
15. To what degree has the Government of Moldova or other another international donor organization provided comparable IT support? Can you provide examples?
16. Has the USAID-sponsored activity you implement(ed) helped to address the specific needs of women, youth, minorities and any other relevant vulnerable groups? If yes, please elaborate and provide an example.

17. What are the opportunities and challenges that international donors need to be aware of when supporting the improvement of the effectiveness, transparency and accountability of the GRM in the future?

#9: IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Key Informant Interview (KII) Guide	
Researcher Name:	
Note taker Name:	
Interview Date:	
Respondent Name:	
Respondent Position:	
Years in Current Position:	
AIM Project/Sector	
Respondent Gender:	
Respondent Region:	
Start Time:	
End Time:	

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us today. My name is _____ and I work for Social Impact, an American-based research firm. USAID has contracted Social Impact, to evaluate its project, Accountability in Moldova or AIM. The purpose of AIM is more effective and accountable democratic governance. AIM is a five-year project, which began in 2015, that includes 20 activities supporting three inter-related objectives: increased citizen oversight and engagement in governmental decision-making, justice system that is more transparent and accountable, and local government that is more responsive to citizen needs. We intend to interview approximately 100 individuals, and you have been selected to participate in this research because we believe you can provide a unique perspective on AIM and the Moldovan context. Your honest responses to our questions will help USAID inform and improve its future programming. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and you are free to decline to respond to any question for any reason and to end the interview at any time. You will not be provided with any payment for your participation in this interview. All information you provide to us is totally confidential and will be protected to the fullest extent possible in accordance with local and international law. Only the people involved in this interview will have access to personally identifiable information about you and your organization. Your name or any identifying information about your organization will not be connected to the information you provide in this interview, and no information about you or your organization will appear in the final data set or the final report. The data from this interview (excluding your personally identifiable information) will be used by the Social Impact team for analysis purposes only and your answers will only be reported to USAID as part of an aggregated data set. If you have any concerns or questions, please contact zlinetsky@socialimpact.com as well as irb@socialimpact.com.

This interview will last approximately one hour. Do you understand that your participation in this interview is voluntary, unpaid, and that you can end the interview at any point?
 Are you willing to participate? Yes___ (check) No___ (check)

- I. What activities undertaken by your organization have been funded by the USAID/AIM Project and what was the purpose of these activities? [Probe: what sector were they in?]

2. What are the top three challenges that local governments in Moldova faces with regards to developing more effective and accountable governance systems?
3. What are the most significant contributions your activities have made to addressing these challenges?
4. To what extent are LPAs more responsive to citizens' needs at the rayon and municipal levels (e.g., better and faster implementation of municipal services) than they were five years ago (or since you started implementing the activity?) Please provide examples.
5. To what extent has your activity improved the capacity of local government officials and their management systems? Provide examples.
6. To what extent has your activity increased the financial viability of local public administrations, e.g. how has the financial viability of LPAs improved over time?
7. To what extent have you collaborated with other USAID governance projects, either with USAID's encouragement or on your own? And with USAID or with activities funded by non-USAID donors [e.g., EU, UN]) in support of your sector?
8. To what extent has this activity built on previous sector activities under this overall Project, such as (*cite relevant predecessor projects(s) under relevant sector – e.g., LGSP » Comunitatea Mea; ROLISP » Open Justice*)? What changes were made?
9. What other international donors [the EU, UN DFID etc.] and/or USAID projects has your activity collaborated with?
10. How has collaboration with non-USAID/AIM international donors increased your activity's impact? [Probe: would you like to collaborate with other donors more in the future and how would this affect your activity's impact, and on what specific issues would you like to focus with these donors?] (EQ1)
11. The AIM Project's Theory of Change assumed *governance in Moldova would become more effective and accountable IF citizens, civil society and independent media become more active in government decision making, and oversight and the justice system becomes more transparent and accountable, and local government becomes more responsive to citizens' needs*. Do you think the assumptions underlying this TOC are accurate and sufficient for achieving the project's purpose? [Probe: what might be missing?]
12. To what extent have you changed the way you implement your USAID/AIM-funded activities today as compared to when your organization first received USAID funding?
13. Did the support your organization received from USAID/AIM include any investments in information technology? [Probe: have you received: financial support for the procurement of needed software and equipment, website upgrades to allow for posting of more engaging multimedia content, and has this helped you achieve your goals?]
14. To what degree is the Government of Moldova or other organizations supporting the ongoing use of these technological solutions? Can you provide examples?
15. Has the USAID-sponsored activity you implement(ed) helped to address the specific needs of women, youth, minorities and any other relevant vulnerable groups? If yes, please elaborate and provide an example.
16. What challenges and opportunities do implementing partners of these types of activities need to be aware of when designing their activities for the future?

#10: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: USAID/MOLDAVA

Key Informant Interview (KII) Guide	
Researcher Name:	
Note taker Name:	
Interview Date:	
Respondent Name:	
Respondent Position:	
Years in Current Position:	
AIM Project/Sector	
Respondent Gender:	
Respondent Region:	
Start Time:	
End Time:	

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us today. My name is _____ and I work for Social Impact, an independent American research firm. USAID has contracted Social Impact, to evaluate its project, Accountability in Moldova or AIM. The purpose of AIM is more effective and accountable democratic governance. AIM is a five-year project, which began in 2015, that includes 20 activities supporting three inter-related objectives: increased citizen oversight and engagement in governmental decision-making, justice system that is more transparent and accountable, and local government that is more responsive to citizen needs. We intend to interview approximately 100 individuals, and you have been selected to participate in this research because we believe you can provide a unique perspective on AIM and the Moldovan context. Your honest responses to our questions will help USAID inform and improve its future programming. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and you are free to decline to respond to any question for any reason and to end the interview at any time. You will not be provided with any payment for your participation in this interview. All information you provide to us is totally confidential and will be protected to the fullest extent possible in accordance with local and international law. Only the people involved in this interview will have access to personally identifiable information about you and your organization. Your name or any identifying information about your organization will not be connected to the information you provide in this interview, and no information about you or your organization will appear in the final data set or the final report. The data from this interview (excluding your personally identifiable information) will be used by the Social Impact team for analysis purposes only and your answers will only be reported to USAID as part of an aggregated data set. If you have any concerns or questions, please contact zlinetsky@socialimpact.com as well as irb@socialimpact.com.

This interview will last approximately one hour. Do you understand that your participation in this interview is voluntary, unpaid, and that you can end the interview at any point?

Are you willing to participate? Yes ___ (check) No ___ (check)

1. In your opinion, can you please rank the top successes of the AIM Project to this point in its life cycle? [Probe for sector-specific successes]
2. Has AIM been equally successful in achieving its overarching objectives or have results under an objective (or sector) been stronger as compared to others? [Probe: effective and accountable governance defined as

Objective 1: Increased Citizen Engagement and Oversight in Governmental Decision Making; Obj 2: Justice System is More Transparent and Accountable; Obj 3: Local Government is More Responsive to Citizens' Needs]

3. What are the top three challenges that Moldova faces with regards to developing more effective and accountable governance systems and have these challenges changed since 2015?
4. What are the most significant contributions AIM activities have made to addressing the challenges?
5. How would you compare AIM's achievements in strengthening the effectiveness and accountability of democratic governance at the regional (district/raion/municipality) versus national level?
6. To what extent has AIM helped increase citizen engagement in civil society organizations and political parties? [Probe: Do people volunteer with CSOs, do people sign petitions, what is the extent of grass roots organizations, do citizens attend town hall meetings with political parties?]
7. In what ways have AIM activities helped make political parties more accountable to citizens, how and why?
8. How have AIM activities helped civil society organizations increase their effectiveness, capacity and sustainability? [Probe: do CSOs have increased capacity for advocacy and watchdog activities, are CSO networks growing, are they financially more self-sustaining?]
9. How have AIM activities contributed to making independent media outlets more effective and more capable in terms of reporting and reaching more people? [Probe: are media organizations conducting investigative reporting with impactful results]
10. To what extent have AIM projects helped make the three branches of the Moldovan government become more accessible, and receptive to citizen engagement in decision-making processes? [Probe: in compliance with existing legislation has the government actually increased public access to information and has it improved transparency in decision making?]
11. To what extent have AIM projects helped make the justice system more transparent and accountable? [Probe: how has AIM contributed to citizen's willingness to demand increased access to justice]
12. To what extent have AIM activities helped make the Moldovan justice system more capable and professional? [Probe: have AIM activities affected the capacity of the Supreme Court of Moldova and the Agency for Court Administration/MOJ/NIJ to effectively oversee the work of the courts and training of judges]
13. How have AIM activities helped with decentralization reforms, including the financial viability of LPAs?
14. How would you characterize AIM's collaboration with other USAID projects, with GRM activities, other donor-funded intervention? [Probe: please provide examples]
15. To what extent have AIM's IT-related activities contributed to more effective and accountable governance at the national, regional and local levels?
16. To what extent is the Government of Moldova's e-governance agency supporting the ongoing use of digital solutions for better governance? [Probe: Can you provide examples from the courts and other sectors?]
(EQ3)
17. How well have AIM activities been coordinated to achieve the overarching project purpose?

18. The AIM Project's Theory of Change assumed *governance in Moldova would become more effective and accountable IF citizens, civil society and independent media become more active in government decision making, and oversight and the justice system becomes more transparent and accountable, and local government becomes more responsive to citizens' needs*. Do you think the assumptions underlying this TOC are accurate and sufficient for achieving the project's purpose? [Probe: what might be missing?]
19. To what extent did the AIM Project select the appropriate objectives and sub-objectives to the project purpose?
20. How effective do you think the whole of the project indicators have been in capturing the project's overall results? [Probe: how might these indicators be changed to better monitor project progress?]
21. How can AIM activities be changed so they can better address Moldova's need for more effective and accountable governance systems?

ANNEX G: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION PROTOCOLS

#1: FGD: CIVIL SOCIETY & ACTIVE CITIZENS PROTOCOL

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guide	
Researcher Name:	
Note taker Name:	
Interview Date:	
Respondent Name:	
Respondent Position:	
Years in Current Position:	
AIM Project/Sector	
Respondent Gender:	
Respondent Region:	
Start Time:	
End Time:	

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us today. My name is _____ and I work for Social Impact, an American-based research firm. USAID has contracted Social Impact, to evaluate its project, Accountability in Moldova or AIM. The purpose of AIM is more effective and accountable democratic governance. AIM is a five-year project, which began in 2015, that includes 20 activities supporting three inter-related objectives: increased citizen oversight and engagement in governmental decision-making, justice system that is more transparent and accountable, and local government that is more responsive to citizen needs. We intend to interview approximately 100 individuals, and you have been selected to participate in this research because we believe you can provide a unique perspective on AIM and the Moldovan context. Your honest responses to our questions will help USAID inform and improve its future programming. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and you are free to decline to respond to any question for any reason and to end the interview at any time. You will not be provided with any payment for your participation in this interview. All information you provide to us is totally confidential and will be protected to the fullest extent possible in accordance with local and international law. Only the people involved in this interview will have access to personally identifiable information about you and your organization. Your name or any identifying information about your organization will not be connected to the information you provide in this interview, and no information about you or your organization will appear in the final data set or the final report. The data from this interview (excluding your personally identifiable information) will be used by the Social Impact team for analysis purposes only and your answers will only be reported to USAID as part of an aggregated data set. If you have any concerns or questions, please contact zlinetsky@socialimpact.com as well as irb@socialimpact.com.

This interview will last approximately one hour. Do you understand that your participation in this interview is voluntary, unpaid, and that you can end the interview at any point?

Are you willing to participate? Yes ___ (check) No ___ (check)

1. To what extent do you think that your local government is responsive to your needs as citizens and community members?
2. In your experience how have or might community members influence local government decision making?
3. Would you say that international donor funded activities in your community have helped citizens engage with their local government more now than five years ago?
4. To what extent have the needs of women, youth, the LGBTQ community, linguistic minorities, and the disabled been addressed in your community over the last five years?
5. What are the top three challenges that your community faces with regards to developing more effective and accountable local government institutions?
6. How can international donors help address the challenges that you have identified?

#2: FGD: RULE OF LAW PROTOCOL (CITIZENS)

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guide	
Researcher Name:	
Note taker Name:	
Interview Date:	
Respondent Name:	
Respondent Position:	
Years in Current Position:	
AIM Project/Sector	
Respondent Gender:	
Respondent Region:	
Start Time:	
End Time:	

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us today. My name is _____ and I work for Social Impact, an American-based research firm. USAID has contracted Social Impact, to evaluate its project, Accountability in Moldova or AIM. The purpose of AIM is more effective and accountable democratic governance. AIM is a five-year project, which began in 2015, that includes 20 activities supporting three inter-related objectives: increased citizen oversight and engagement in governmental decision-making, justice system that is more transparent and accountable, and local government that is more responsive to citizen needs. We intend to interview approximately 100 individuals, and you have been selected to participate in this research because we believe you can provide a unique perspective on AIM and the Moldovan context. Your honest responses to our questions will help USAID inform and improve its future programming. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and you are free to decline to respond to any question for any reason and to end the interview at any time. You will not be provided with any payment for your participation in this interview. All information you provide to us is totally confidential and will be protected to the fullest extent possible in accordance with local and international law. Only the people involved in this interview will have access to personally identifiable information about you and your organization. Your name or any identifying information about your organization will not be connected to the information you provide in this interview, and no information about you or your organization will appear in the final data set or the final report. The data from this interview (excluding your personally identifiable information) will be used by the Social Impact team for analysis purposes only and your answers will only be reported to USAID as part of an aggregated data set. If you have any concerns or questions, please contact zlinetsky@socialimpact.com as well as irb@socialimpact.com.

This interview will last approximately one hour. Do you understand that your participation in this interview is voluntary, unpaid, and that you can end the interview at any point?

Are you willing to participate? Yes___ (check) No___ (check)

- I. What are the top three challenges that Moldova faces with regards to developing more effective and accountable judicial systems?

2. In your opinion to what extent do you think the judicial systems is responsive to the needs of Moldovan citizens? Please explain.
3. In what ways has citizen access to courts, court documents and general information about the judicial system changed over the last five years?
4. Are you aware of the new court web portal? If you are what is your view of the portal and its usefulness?
5. To what extent has access to the judicial systems changed over the last five years for women, youth, the LGBTQ community, linguistic minorities, and the disabled?

#3: FGD: LOCAL GOVERNANCE PROTOCOL

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guide	
Researcher Name:	
Note taker Name:	
Interview Date:	
Respondent Name:	
Respondent Position:	
Years in Current Position:	
AIM Project/Sector	
Respondent Gender:	
Respondent Region:	
Start Time:	
End Time:	

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us today. My name is _____ and I work for Social Impact, an American-based research firm. USAID has contracted Social Impact, to evaluate its project, Accountability in Moldova or AIM. The purpose of AIM is more effective and accountable democratic governance. AIM is a five-year project, which began in 2015, that includes 20 activities supporting three inter-related objectives: increased citizen oversight and engagement in governmental decision-making, justice system that is more transparent and accountable, and local government that is more responsive to citizen needs. We intend to interview approximately 100 individuals, and you have been selected to participate in this research because we believe you can provide a unique perspective on AIM and the Moldovan context. Your honest responses to our questions will help USAID inform and improve its future programming. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and you are free to decline to respond to any question for any reason and to end the interview at any time. You will not be provided with any payment for your participation in this interview. All information you provide to us is totally confidential and will be protected to the fullest extent possible in accordance with local and international law. Only the people involved in this interview will have access to personally identifiable information about you and your organization. Your name or any identifying information about your organization will not be connected to the information you provide in this interview, and no information about you or your organization will appear in the final data set or the final report. The data from this interview (excluding your personally identifiable information) will be used by the Social Impact team for analysis purposes only and your answers will only be reported to USAID as part of an aggregated data set. If you have any concerns or questions, please contact zlinetsky@socialimpact.com as well as irb@socialimpact.com.

This interview will last approximately one hour. Do you understand that your participation in this interview is voluntary, unpaid, and that you can end the interview at any point?

Are you willing to participate? Yes___ (check) No___ (check)

- I. What are the top three challenges that your community faces with regards to developing more effective and accountable local government institutions?

2. In your opinion to what extent do you think LPAs and Mayors are responsive to the needs of your community? Please explain.
3. To what extent has citizen participation in your community changed over the last five years? [Probe please explain how and why]
4. To what extent have the needs of women, youth, the LGBTQ community, linguistic minorities, and the disabled been addressed in your community over the last five years?
5. How has the quality of public service delivery changed over the last five year? [Please: explain how and in what ways]
6. To what extent do you and your members of your community interact with your local and national government through online platforms? [Probe: do you use government websites, pay your bills online, get certificates or permits online?]
7. MAYORS: To what extent have you worked with other donors' projects that have strengthened the impact of local governance services in your community?
8. MAYORS: What are the major challenges and opportunities faced by the GRM with regards to improving governance in the future?

ANNEX H: UPDATED TIMELINE OF DELIVERABLES

Table 14: Timeline

DELIVERABLE	EXPECTED DELIVERY DATE
Draft Evaluation Design Report	October 18, 2019
Final Evaluation Design Report	November 1, 2019
In-Briefing	November 4, 2019
Out-Briefing	November 25, 2019
Draft Evaluation Report	January 10, 2020
Final Evaluation Report	February 18, 2020

ANNEX I: EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS

Table 15: Team Structure

POSITION	RESPONSIBILITIES
Team Leader (TL): Dr. Zuri Linetsky	<p>Overall technical and management responsibility for the evaluation.</p> <p>Provides subject matter and country context expertise.</p> <p>Serves as primary technical liaison with USAID.</p> <p>Oversees field data collection.</p> <p>Leads debriefings with USAID and other stakeholders</p> <p>Leads data analysis and development of all deliverables.</p> <p>Leads evaluation’s Civil Society & Media sector sub-team.</p>
Deputy Team Leader (DTL): Adam Reisman	<p>Works with TL to draft all evaluation deliverables.</p> <p>Provides technical input into all evaluation tools.</p> <p>Conduct data collection/analysis in collaboration with the TL.</p> <p>Leads evaluation’s Local Governance sector sub-team.</p>
Evaluation Specialist: Zumrat Salmorbekova	<p>Supports development of all technical tools, including work plan and evaluation design development, data collection tools.</p> <p>Supports cleaning and coding of data, data collection/analysis, KII/FGD/survey analysis, report drafting.</p> <p>Leads evaluation’s Rule of Law sector sub-team.</p>
Civil Society & Media Technical Expert: Orysia Lutsevych	<p>Serves as civil society and media subject-matter expert.</p> <p>Works with ET to support drafting of relevant components of deliverables.</p> <p>Provides technical input into relevant evaluation tools.</p> <p>Conducts data collection/analysis in collaboration with the ET.</p>
Local Governance Technical Expert: Veronica Cretu	<p>Serves as local government subject-matter and country expert.</p> <p>Works with ET to support drafting of relevant components of deliverables.</p> <p>Provides technical input into relevant evaluation tools.</p> <p>Conducts data collection/analysis in collaboration with the ET.</p>
ROL Technical Expert: Richard Gold	<p>Serves as ROL subject-matter expert.</p> <p>Works with ET to support drafting of relevant components of deliverables.</p> <p>Provides technical input into relevant evaluation tools.</p> <p>Conducts data collection/analysis in collaboration with the ET.</p>
Logisticians/Interpreters	<p>Provides administrative and logistical support—arrange local travel and lodging, process expense reports, etc.</p> <p>Translate data collection protocol from English into local languages and provide interpretation from local language into English during interviews.</p>

TEAM COMPOSITION

Dr. Zuri Linetsky served as the **Team Leader** for the evaluation, providing managerial oversight and evaluation expertise. Dr. Zuri Linetsky is a talented and practiced monitoring and evaluation specialist with 12 years of work experience in methodological and technical training, qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis, as well as team leadership, project and budget management. He has significant regional work experience in the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe. Dr. Linetsky has worked extensively in Israel and in Palestine as well as in Egypt, Lebanon, Bangladesh, South Sudan, Nigeria, Haiti, and Somalia. At SI, Dr. Linetsky has led data collection for a Political Economy Analysis of the Rohingya Crisis for USAID/Bangladesh, for a water sector performance evaluation for USAID/Bureau for the Middle East in Lebanon, Jordan, and Morocco, in addition to serving as TL on a performance evaluation of USAID/Kosovo programming on property rights and gender and the USAID/Haiti Aid for Trade and LEVE evaluations. Prior to joining SI, he was an M&E Expert where he led field teams in collecting quantitative and qualitative data in Somalia and Palestine. He also led the research design and survey methodology implementation for an impact evaluation in northeast Nigeria. In Egypt, Dr. Linetsky led a team of 12 in the production of impact and performance evaluations, with primary source data collection in South Sudan, Lebanon, and Syria. Additionally, he supervised the development of a monitoring data collection system in South Sudan. As a PhD student, he worked throughout Israel conducting interviews on Israeli security issues related to Hamas and Hezbollah. He has used a variety of methodologies and statistical software including Stata, SPSS, R Statistical software, MAXQDA, and Dedoose. He is familiar with USAID reporting regulations and requirements. Dr. Linetsky holds a Ph.D. in foreign affairs from the University of Virginia, an M.A. in International relations from the University of Chicago, and a B.A. in political science from the University of Florida. He is fluent in English, Russian, and Hebrew, and has intermediate skills in Spanish, Arabic, and French.

Adam Reisman served as **Deputy Team Leader** for the evaluation. In supporting the TL, he managed certain aspects of the evaluation and provided oversight of evaluation efforts. Mr. Reisman is a Senior Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Advisor at SI who possesses more than 14 years of experience in the evaluation, monitoring, design, and implementation of democracy and governance, stabilization, political and economic transition, capacity-building, and other country, regional and sector-based programs within the U.S. Department of State (DOS), USAID, the World Bank, and multiple implementing partners. During his career, he has led evaluations, served on ETs, or provided on-the-ground M&E support to USAID and DOS programs in more than a dozen countries. Additionally, Mr. Reisman has extensive, onsite M&E experience with the DOS, having served in technical leadership roles and provided monitoring, evaluation, and training support while embedded with both the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor and Bureau of Political-Military Affairs from 2014 to 2016. Mr. Reisman holds a Master of Arts (M.A.) in international affairs from George Washington University and a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) with honors in political science from Union College.

Zumrat Salmorbekova served as **Evaluation Specialist** for the evaluation, ensuring the rigor of the evaluation's methods. Ms. Salmorbekova has over 15 years of experience designing and managing evaluations of humanitarian assistance projects and assessments in politically sensitive and conflict prone contexts, with deep knowledge of humanitarian assistance principles, minimum standards in humanitarian response, international standards on human rights, and humanitarian law. Ms. Salmorbekova has led an evaluation of PRM shelter, health, and education programs for Iraqi and Syrian refugees with SI and served as a TL on an evaluation of Save the Children's Department for International Development (DFID)-funded program on the provision of humanitarian relief to IDPs in Syria as well as Turkey, Iraq,

and Lebanon. Prior to this experience, Ms. Salmorbekova developed the methodology for a gender sensitive post-conflict needs assessment of IDPs for the United Nations (UN) Protection Cluster in Kyrgyzstan. She has extensive experience collecting, processing, and analyzing data using qualitative and quantitative methods and leading and managing multi-national teams. She is a USAID/Conflict Management and Mitigation (CMM)-certified Gender and Conflict Assessment Specialist and focuses on integrating gender considerations in evaluation design and implementation. She has an M.A. in history and social science from Kyrgyz State University Bishkek and in Russian and East European studies from University of North Carolina (UNC) Chapel Hill, and speaks fluent Russian and English.

Orysia Lutsevych served as **Civil Society and Media Technical Expert** for the evaluation, providing content-area inputs regarding civil society-government engagement and media freedom. Ms. Lutsevych offers extensive experience working on civil society and citizen engagement and interviewing non-governmental organization (NGO) leaders, local media outlets, and government officials. As a Research Fellow at Chatham House, Ms. Lutsevych's research has included work on civil society and building resilience in Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova and political developments in the Eastern Partnership region. She has published on civil society engagement in Eastern Europe, media reform, civil society in the post-Soviet space, and the impact of civil society on democracy. Ms. Lutsevych holds a Master's Degree in public administration from University of Missouri-Columbia and a Master's Degree in international relations from Lviv State University. She is fluent in Russian and English.

Veronica Cretu served as **Local Government Technical Expert** for the evaluation, providing content-area inputs regarding governance and local government capacity. Ms. Cretu brings more than 17 years of experience in civil society development, stakeholder engagement, public administration reform and policy planning, with areas of expertise ranging from open government and good governance, open data, citizen engagement, governance reforms, capacity development, critical thinking methodology, gender equality, community development, and strategic planning. Ms. Cretu is the Manager for Open Government Institute in Moldova where she acts as a co-chair of the Permanent Dialogue Mechanism on Open Government. In this capacity, she brings CSOs, government, and international partners together to identify commitments for the country's Action Plans on Open Government. She is the co-author of the handbook on "Transparency and Citizen Participation," "The Beginner's Guidebook on Open Government," and "Co-creating public policies or ways to bring citizens into the process." Ms. Cretu holds an M.A. from the University of Malta in contemporary diplomacy and a Postgraduate Diploma in diplomacy and IT, and a Bachelor's Degree from Pedagogical University Ion Creanga in foreign languages. She is fluent in Romanian, Russian, and English.

Richard Gold served as **Rule of Law Technical Expert** for the evaluation, providing content-area inputs regarding the justice sector. Mr. Gold is an evaluation specialist with more than 30 years of experience in implementing and evaluating USAID programs focusing on governance, decentralization, public financial management, institutional and organizational capacity building, domestic resource mobilization and gender integration. As a Principal Development Specialist at DAI, he provided technical leadership and program management for rule of law and anti-corruption, including an anti-corruption program in Bangladesh and a decentralization/local governance/anti-corruption program in the Democratic Republic of Congo. A retired USAID Foreign Service Officer with 29 years of service, Mr. Gold headed the Rule of Law Division in the Agency headquarters, where he finalized the publication of the "Guide to Rule of Law Country Analysis: The Rule of Law Strategic Framework," which is the Agency's official guidance for rule of law assessments. He also facilitated publication of sector guides on

administrative law, court reform, and police assistance. Mr. Gold holds a Mid-Career Master of Public Affairs degree from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, as well as a Master of Public and International Affairs degree from the University of Pittsburgh. He speaks fluent French and has studied Moroccan, Egyptian, and standard Arabic.

EVALUATION MANAGEMENT

Throughout the evaluation, the team was supported by SI's management team. The SI team followed USAID principles for performance evaluations while also ensuring adherence to SI's quality control processes and guidelines. This includes SI's proprietary evaluation, quality, use, and impact (EQUI®) system, which enforces rigorous checklists and utilization-focused milestones for quality assurance (QA). During the team's work, the SI's management team reviewed each deliverable against a series of quality standard checklists and provided feedback. QA for each deliverable includes an assessment of the gender-conscious design and analysis and a repeated focus on evaluation use to generate actionable recommendations based clearly on evaluation findings.

SI's management team includes the following roles:

Kari Nelson, Technical Director, provided technical and managerial oversight as well as QA on the final report, evaluation approaches, the evaluation framework, and data collection methodologies. Ms. Nelson has more than 12 years of experience conducting monitoring and evaluation activities in international development. In her current role as Deputy Director of Strategy, Performance, and Learning at Social Impact, she oversees performance evaluation teams, serving in the role of Team Leader or as a Technical Specialist reviewing methodologies, data collection tools, and analysis to ensure quality. Ms. Nelson earned her Ph.D. from The George Washington University, where she focused on program evaluation through the Public Policy and Administration program and completed her dissertation on evaluation in international development, taking a cross-sectoral perspective. She is a native English speaker with full professional proficiency in French.

Thomas Weaver, Program Manager, was responsible for the coordination of all headquarters-based activities including the start-up, team planning activities, literature review efforts, and provision of support to the field team. Mr. Weaver is a Senior Program Associate in the Strategy, Performance, and Learning division of SI and brings over five years of experience as an international development professional with experience in project management, monitoring and evaluation, business development, and education program management. Mr. Weaver holds a Master's Degree in international business from HEC Paris and a Community of European Management Schools (CEMS) Master's Degree in international management from HEC Paris and Nova School of Business and Economics (SBE). Mr. Weaver speaks fluent English and Spanish, with additional professional proficiency in French and conversational proficiency in Portuguese and Mandarin Chinese.

Jennifer Elkins, Program Assistant, provided logistical and administrative support, including liaising with international teams and supporting the development of contracts, reports and presentations. Ms. Elkins holds a Bachelor's Degree in international studies with a strong emphasis on international development and political science.

This team was responsible for final QA on deliverables prior to submission to USAID and conducted weekly briefings for the Evaluation Contract Officer Representative (COR) and other relevant Mission personnel. If requested by USAID, briefing updates may be submitted electronically in lieu of a call.

The team also consulted with Mateusz Pucilowski the Democracy, Human Rights and Governance – Learning, Evaluation and Research (DRG-LER) Chief of Party (COP) as needed. Mr. Pucilowski is the Impact Evaluation Division Head and has more than ten years of experience conducting impact evaluations. The DRG-LER Project Manager (Rachel Pizatella-Haswell) also had limited level of effort (LOE) on the contract to handle financial and contract reporting.

ANNEX J: UTILIZATION WORKSHOP – RECOMMENDATIONS

11/25/2019 Utilization Workshop – Recommendations

Key Workshop Themes	Team Recommendations
<p>Weaknesses in AIM Project data and indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of baseline data • Disconnect between activity level indicators • Different methods for calculating/measuring the same indicator • Need realistic targets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See EQ4 recommendations on creating cross-cutting project- and DO-level indicators – e.g., deriving indicators through a two-pronged approach of quantitative data of how effectively/efficiently governing institutions are performing their jobs and qualitative data of citizen perceptions of how well these institutions are performing their work • Establish project monitoring process, including regular (e.g., quarterly) meetings with small team (project manager plus small group of program and technical/DO office representatives) to validate suitability of current project-level indicators and discuss adding new ones or removing ones that are no longer valid (also, see relevant EQ4 recommendation). • Conduct post-evaluation brainstorming on future data collection needs, opportunities and constraints – this can take the form of a facilitated needs assessment exercise or participatory analysis workshop.
<p>Some strengths of AIM Project data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good surveys being performed in several sectors • Some current indicators could continue to be utilized at the project level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See table on next page, “Suggested Future AIM Project Indicators” • See EQ4 findings and recommendations on current useful indicators, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those currently being used at the project level • Those that can be elevated to the project level. • See EQ4 recommendations on polling – e.g., some project-level perceptions-based indicators are already coming from here but could be done more consistently and for more targeted audiences at key times (IRI-type poll done with MPI/Satisfaction Survey-type granularity).
<p>What USAID/Moldova wants to understand better for the future:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the AIM Project where it needs to be in Moldova? Is it actually affecting the areas it is supposed to be affecting? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct pre-CDCS AIM-project level portfolio review: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which goals still articulate what is within USAID/Moldova’s manageable interest, given the current Moldovan context?

- Which should be modified or replaced altogether?
- Conduct facilitated workshop on further ways to “operationalize” the WOPE evaluation’s recommendations. Proceed through necessary actions, points of contact, responsibility, and timeline. Determine which should be prioritized, and which may be less feasible than others. – i.e., a participatory process to help develop/refine an implementation work plan.

Suggested Future AIM Project Indicators⁶⁶

	Quantitative Examples	Qualitative Examples
Description	<i>Indicators demonstrating how effectively/efficiently AIM-supported governing institutions or organizations are performing their jobs</i>	<i>Indicators designed to demonstrate citizen perceptions of how well these AIM-supported institutions or organizations are performing their work</i>
Local Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of sub-national governments receiving USG assistance to increase own source revenues (CM, LGSP) • Number of LPAs that diversify their revenue base (CM) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of the population indicating qualitative improvements in the assisted processes and/or systems (LGSP MPI/Satisfaction Survey; CM population survey)
Political Parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in Moldova’s political parties’ financing transparency score (CEPPS’ Moldova Party Financing Assessment Scorecard) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public opinion of Moldova’s political parties (IRI Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Moldova) • Percentage change in public assessment of transparency of Moldovan political parties’ financing (National Representative Study on Perception of Citizens About the Activity of Promo-LEX)
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage change of audience reach of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of citizens who report consuming news from

⁶⁶ Please note that these indicators are drawn from AIM-Project Activity sources, including both current and completed AIM Activities’ metrics and data obtained as part of AIM-commissioned surveys. They are intended to demonstrate that many future AIM-Project indicators can be harnessed from current/completed AIM activities.

	<p>supported media outlets (MEDIA-M)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of supported media outlets' revenue from online advertising (MEDIA-M) 	<p>independent sources (Internews Survey of Perceptions of the Population of Moldova on Mass Media)</p>
Civil Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage change of domestically raised funds of civil society partner organizations (MPSCS) Number of policy changes, regulations and procedures adopted by GRM with USG assistance that benefit and facilitate a better functioning of civil society (MEDIA-M, MPSCS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage change in level of public trust in NGOs/CSOs (National Representative Study on Perception of Citizens About the Activity of Promo-LEX) Percentage of citizens willing to give 2% of their income tax to a NGO, association of broad public or religious organization (National Representative Study on Perception of Citizens About the Activity of Promo-LEX)
Rule of Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of total cases cleared annually (Open Justice Judicial Performance Indicators) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage change in level of public trust in the Moldovan judicial system (Open Justice Public Opinion Survey on the Judicial System in Moldova)

ANNEX K: LITERATURE REVIEW

Objective I: Increased Citizen Engagement and Oversight in Governmental Decision-Making

SECTORS: CIVIL SOCIETY, MEDIA AND POLITICAL PROCESSES

AIM operates in a turbulent and fast-evolving environment. Political and economic instability significantly influences programming, especially with regards to improving quality of political representation, media development and national-level advocacy.

Civil Society: Overall, Moldovan civil society is quite vibrant, especially in Chisinau. However, as the Nations in Transit (NIT) assessment of civil society demonstrates, Moldova's score in this area has not changed from 3.25 since 2012. Nonetheless, of the seven NIT measurements of democratic reforms, civil society is the most advanced in Moldova.

The capacity of Moldovan civil society to influence social change is impeded by a centralized system of governance, lack of rule of law and low citizen engagement. Households are preoccupied with issues of low income, unemployment and concerns about the quality of health care.⁶⁷ Given this, it is not surprising that Moldovan CSOs are particularly active in education, sustainable development, human rights and social assistance. Many organizations have a multi-purpose function and engage both in advocacy, service delivery, and community building.⁶⁸

USAID's Civil Society Sustainability Index (CSSI), which is a more nuanced measure of the quality of the sector, demonstrates a slight improvement in the health of Moldova's civil society. Since 2012, its sustainability score has improved from 4.1⁶⁹ to 3.8 (in 2017), with improvements noted over the past several years in organizational capacity, financial viability and advocacy. Several new laws advocated through the AIM Project's MPSCS activity improved regulatory environment for CSOs.⁷⁰ The activity contributed to more active engagement of citizens by supporting 70 CSOs to promote over 90 policies at the local and national level. As the result of its capacity building efforts, local partners also increased the share of funding from local sources by 11%. However, this civic activism relies on a small percentage of Moldova's citizens, with only 14% having volunteered in 2018⁷¹ and CSOs struggling to reinforce their constituent engagement.

Engagement in public policy largely depends on transparency and public policies that enable stakeholder consultations. Moldovan municipalities vary in the access they provide to citizens. Chisinau, Cimislia, Cahul are the leaders in the level of transparency with many other communities well behind these three.⁷² As a result, Moldovan CSOs' capacity to influence policy remains one of its weakest capabilities,

⁶⁷ https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/iri_moldova_may-june_2019_poll_final.pdf

⁶⁸ http://www.erstestiftung.org/en/publication/civil-society-in-central-and-eastern-europe-monitoring-2019/?fbclid=IwAR36RePUAz8gkVAhBnUDxPAJYIP2qO_WeqSuWTnVildsgZajpIOM_DEytPO

⁶⁹ https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1863/2012CSOSI_0.pdf

⁷⁰ MPSCS Final Progress report, 2013-2018

⁷¹ CAF 2018 Survey

⁷² http://www.ineko.sk/file_download/1059

as rated by Erste Foundation 2019 CSO Survey. However, most groups believe they have significant impact on improving social environment and volunteering.⁷³

Despite continuing high levels of foreign donor dependence, access to local funding is slowly improving. Since the introduction of a 2% income tax donation for charities (established with AIM assistance), individual philanthropy has slowly taken root. In 2018, Moldovans donated €288,000 for CSOs, an increase of approximately 30% compared to 2017.⁷⁴ To date, religious charities remain the main recipient of this funding.

Media: The capacity of Moldova's independent media is more problematic. According to the NIT report, media capacity has remained stagnant, with a score of 5.00 since 2012. In the World Press Freedom Index, Moldova has slipped four places (to 80th) since 2016. Challenges to the media sector include an outdated legal framework, political and oligarchic influence, limited independence of regulatory authority, lack of transparency of media ownership, and unfair competition in the advertising market.

Achieving AIM's purpose in the media context is also impeded by the increasing monopolization of the market, particularly in broadcasting. For example, Vladimir Plahotniuc's four TV stations cover 70% of the TV market.⁷⁵ These channels are often used to achieve the political objectives of its owners, which occasionally include smear campaigns of CSOs. In a country in which TV remains the primary source for political information (for 82% of Moldovans), such limited ownership heavily influences the narrative. It is therefore no surprise that 85% of Moldovans believe that news is 'much' or 'very much' influenced by politics.⁷⁶

Additionally, the strong presence of Russian propaganda and disinformation makes Moldova vulnerable to external influence.⁷⁷ Russian NTV is the third most popular TV channel for entertainment.⁷⁸ Russian social media platforms remain quite popular, especially in the regions. Russian Odnoklassniki covers 56% of users in the regions, while Facebook is more popular in Chisinau (80%).

AIM has addressed key issues with regard to media but is still struggling to reach necessary levels of transformative change. By providing support to independent media outlets (through MEDIA-M), 23 national and 7 local publications have increased their online reach and financial performance.⁷⁹ With the growing use of the internet, this provides Moldova's citizens with a greater, more diversified set of information resources; however, only 16% stated they solely used such independent sources for their information needs.⁸⁰

⁷³ http://www.erstestiftung.org/en/publication/civil-society-in-central-and-eastern-europe-monitoring-2019/?fbclid=IwAR36RePUAz8gkVAhBnUDxPAJYIP2qO_WeqSuWTnVildsgZajpIOM_DEytPQ

⁷⁴ Ibid

⁷⁵ <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/who-really-rules-airwaves-in-moldova/>

⁷⁶ Internews Survey, Perception of the Population of Moldova on Mass Media https://www.internews.org/sites/default/files/2019-02/03_INTERNEWS_Final%20report_25.10.18_EN-web.pdf, Nov 2018

⁷⁷ <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/civil-society-under-russias-threat-building-resilience-ukraine-belarus-and-moldova>

⁷⁸ IRI Survey 2019

⁷⁹ MEDIA-M Semi-Annual Report, 2018-2019

⁸⁰ Internews Survey, Perception of the Population of Moldova on Mass Media https://www.internews.org/sites/default/files/2019-02/03_INTERNEWS_Final%20report_25.10.18_EN-web.pdf, Nov 2018

Political Processes: The quality of political representation is undermined by widespread negative views about political actors and pervasive high-level corruption. Only 17% of Moldovans hold favorable views about political parties. At the national level, the number of Moldovans who believe Parliament represents them has decreased from 25% in 2018 to 14% in 2019.⁸¹ Politics remains quite personalized, with less emphasis on party affiliation.

The ability to express one's voice free is key for inclusive and representative democracy, but state capture and the lack of rule of law have undermined the effective expression of Moldovan citizen demands to date, especially at the national level. In Moldova, 63% say a 'majority' or 'many' are afraid to openly express their political views.⁸² Disenfranchisement remains quite significant with over 50% of Moldovans stating in 2019 that not one single party or civic formation represented them, an increase from 33% in 2008.⁸³

The opportunity to improve the quality of engagement between citizens and the state emerges more at the local level. Local governments have much better standing in the eyes of the citizens, with approval of local bodies standing at 56%.⁸⁴ Citizens feel more empowered in their understanding of the importance of government accountability and oversight in fighting corruption. This opens opportunity for activities like Challenger (CEPPS), in which Primaria Mea ensured civic oversight in Chisinau and DeFacto www.defacto.md provided fact checking of President Dodon's statements.

In view of opportunities at the regional level, CEPPS activities under AIM focused on developing constituent dialogues, regional listening tours for political parties, diaspora outreach, party trainings (regional branches, youth wings, women's organizations). This generated some positive dynamics, such as when its grassroots party building (GPB) efforts enabled local politicians speak directly to citizens more than 500,000 times in the last 3 years, which in turn helped to resolve over 70 local issues. 80% of mayors who participated in the GPB program were re-elected.⁸⁵ Another significant development for effective political representation has been the ability to generate party finance via individual donations. For example, Maia Sandu's 2019 campaign attracted \$50,000 in donations from citizens.⁸⁶

Relatedly, citizen engagement in Moldova, particularly in rural areas, also has been negatively affected by emigration. Around one million Moldovans have EU (most often Romania) passports,⁸⁷ with young people in particular leaving the country. It is key that they see opportunities in Moldova and feel they can make a difference in their communities. To achieve this, CEPPS has focused on engaging youth grassroots party building in 60 communities. The effort has likely benefited from improved perceptions among youth about their future. In 2019, for example, 24% of Moldovan youth believe they can have a good future in their own country, compared to only 18% in 2018.⁸⁸

Objective 2: Justice System is More Transparent and Accountable

⁸¹ IRI Survey 2019

⁸² IRI Survey 2019

⁸³ <http://bop.ipp.md/en/result/liniar#>

⁸⁴ IRI Survey 2019

⁸⁵ CEPPS Workplan Oct 2018-Spt 2019

⁸⁶ CEPPS Workplan Oct 2018-Spt 2019

⁸⁷ <https://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/en/home/blog/2018/making-the-most-of-emigration.html>

⁸⁸ IRI Survey 2019

SECTOR: RULE OF LAW

AIM's Objective 2 is "justice system is more transparent and accountable." At the objective level, the 2018 Nations in Transit report⁸⁹ has rated Moldova's "judicial framework and independence" at 5.0, with 1 the best and 7 the worst. The rating has remained the same since the 2017 report, but worsened from 2015, when it was 4.75. The report declared that justice reform had stagnated in 2017, particularly due to the lack of integrity of recent judicial appointments, the politicization of anticorruption prosecution and delays in implementation of legal reforms. It cited evidence that political influence is the greatest challenge for Moldova's judicial system. The 2017-2018 World Justice Rule of Law Index⁹⁰ confirmed this perception, rating Moldova poorly for having "no improper government influence" over the justice system (.15, out of a possible 1.0). Out of 44 sub-indicators contributing to Moldova's overall rating of .49, only corruption in the parliament was rated lower (.12).

AIM's justice reform activities have been guided by and support the multi-donor-funded 2011-2017 Justice Sector Reform Strategy (JSRS) and Action Plan as well as the follow-up draft Justice Sector Development Strategy (2019-2022). A 2017 Council of Europe JSRS review⁹¹ was concerned about political interventions into judicial selection, promotion, inspection and discipline; overly broad judicial immunity; lack of transparency in the judicial budgeting process; inadequate reform in the criminal investigation process; limited sustainability and accessibility of legal aid; inadequate progress in management of the Moldovan Bar Association and the disbarment process for lawyers; inadequate data on execution of judgments; poor prison conditions; limited progress in combating torture; and lack of commitment to implement integrity and anticorruption laws. It found continued progress in judicial court staff training, an area that was a main focus of the USAID's Rule of Law Institutional Strengthening Program (ROLISP).

One AIM rule of law sub-objective is "more capable and professional justice system," which has been supported by four USAID activities: ROLISP, Commercial Mediation and Arbitration Activity, Optimized Access to Judicial Decisions, and Open Justice. One ROLISP objective was "support the development of a professional judicial and prosecutorial cadre in Moldova," which was assessed independently in December 2015.⁹² The assessment found that ROLISP made an appreciable contribution to building the capacity of the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) through the strengthening of strategic planning; development of management and budgeting systems; establishment of a distance learning system; training of staff; development of curricula; training of judges and court staff on the Integrated Case Management System; and strengthening of initial and in-service training. The assessment was concerned about delays in amending relevant laws, which created obstacles to NIJ reform.

Another AIM rule of law sub-objective is "increased citizen demand for effective justice." A June 2019 International Republican Institute survey⁹³ demonstrates the lack of citizen trust in the judiciary. Only 20% of respondents view the courts of justice favorably. Nine percent believe that corruption is most

⁸⁹ Nations in Transit, Freedom House, 2018, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2018/moldova>

⁹⁰ Rule of Law Index 2017-2018, World Justice Project, https://worldjusticeproject.org/sites/default/files/documents/WJP-ROLI-2018-June-Online-Edition_0.pdf

⁹¹ JSRS Review of Implementation, Assessment and Recommendations, Council of Europe, December 2015

⁹² End of Term Assessment of ROLISP Activities With NIJ, Judge Dr. Diana Ungureanu, December 2015

⁹³ Public Opinion Survey: Residents of Moldova, May 8, 2019-June 10, 2019, International Republican Institute, https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/iri_moldova_may-june_2019_poll_final.pdf

prevalent in the judicial branch, compared to 20% who believe it is most present among public servants and 18% in the Parliament. Notably, however, only 2% believe it is the most important problem for the next government to solve, compared to 38% who prioritized wages and pensions and 11% who prioritized tackling corruption.

ROLISP supported this sub-objective through 2016. USAID's activity, Promoting the Rule of Law in Moldova through Civil Society Oversight, implemented by the Legal Resources Centre from Moldova (LRCM), is currently focusing its assistance on this sub-objective. One of LRCM's objectives is "to increase the accountability and transparency of Moldovan justice system." As shown in its 2018 annual report,⁹⁴ Civil Society Oversight has demonstrated an enormous capacity to research, raise awareness, intervene in the government decision-making process on the judiciary, and undertake watchdog actions. It made a positive contribution toward passage of a regulation on publishing court judgments, amendments to the law on judicial discipline, and amendment to a law dealing with operations of the Supreme Council of the Magistracy and judicial appointments.

Objective 3: Local Government is More Responsive to Citizens' Needs

SECTOR: LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Republic of Moldova has a two-level territorial organization: 1) 850 villages (communes) and 48 towns constituting the first level of territorial administration; and 2) 32 Districts, the Chişinău Municipality and the Bălţi Municipality forming the second level. The country also has one autonomous territorial unit (UTA Gagauzia), and one unrecognized territorial unit, Transnistria, which does not consider itself subject to the jurisdiction of Moldova.

Law no. 436⁹⁵ on Local Public Administration provides for the division of powers between tiers of government. This law stipulates that villages or towns/municipalities exercise general or special powers over their territory to promote the interests of the local community and address local issues. However, it is important to mention that recent efforts to articulate a full and comprehensive list of LPAs' competencies is limited by two major challenges: First, in addition to the two relevant laws (#435 on the administrative decentralization⁹⁶ and #436 mentioned above), there is an overwhelming number of competencies of the LPAs which are already described/stipulated but across various normative acts. Secondly, the process of clear delimitation of the competencies between the various levels of LPAs as foreseen in the National Decentralization Strategy has not yet been completed. For example, many legislative acts do not clearly delineate between first- or second-level LPAs, and simply use a generic formulation such as 'competencies of the local public administration authorities.'

Decentralization and local government autonomy are enshrined in the 1994 Constitution of Moldova. At first glance, it may appear that Moldova has made significant progress since then and is currently enjoying a highly decentralized public sector with rayon authorities, municipalities and first level local authorities responsible for preschools, primary and secondary education, and social assistance.

⁹⁴ Annual Narrative Report – Year 2, Legal Resources Centre from Moldova, November 2018

⁹⁵ December 28, 2006.

⁹⁶ Also, December 28, 2006.

However, the Council of Europe has reported⁹⁷ that the National Strategy of Decentralization, and the Roadmap for implementation of Recommendation 322 (2012), co-signed by the Congress of the Council of Europe and the GRM, has only been implemented to a minor extent, and that the level of local autonomy seems to be eroding due to a trend toward re-centralization. Based on the principles of the European Chart of Local Self Governance approved by the Republic of Moldova in 1997, this reform aims to address the fiscal, financial and management consequences induced by high fragmentation of first-level governments units. A pilot implementation started in 2014 sought to implement this at the national scale.

Local authorities' financial autonomy is very limited, and their finances are extremely low both in terms of the proportion of revenues in local budgets and of the share of local spending in total public sector expenditures. Several laws and decrees have set a legal and regulating framework within the next decade, the most important of them being the Law on the Budgetary System and the Budgetary Process of 1996; Law on Local Public Finance of 2003 and Law on Local Public Administration of 2006.

Local authorities clearly depend on State transfers and subsidies. Their own-source revenues have been declining over the past decade. As a result, local governments are relying on grants and other transfers from the central government, which is limiting their financial autonomy. Local governments' main field of expenditure is education (58% of local expenditures), and they are responsible for 74% of total public investments in this field.

Local Government units are mostly funded by grants from the central government: intergovernmental transfers (from central State), which represented around 67% of local government funding in 2014, and special means (special funds), which amount to around one to three percent. These vertical transfers come from the upper levels of government (or through it for the first-level units) to cover the gap between assessed expenditure needs and the projected yield of own and assigned revenues. Yet, the formula does not accurately capture disparities between municipalities, especially for bottom-tier municipalities, and maintains the structures made of small municipalities with very weak capacities. Mainly due to the lack of progress in fiscal decentralization, most local governments' functions remain de-facto delegated, rather than decentralized. Limited local financial autonomy hinders the effectiveness of decentralization and public sector reforms in the country. The current framework for local governments to mobilize their own revenue remains largely ineffective, providing little incentives to local governments to improve revenue collection. Substantial differences also exist within local governments in Moldova, with the capital Chisinau and Gagauzia region being the most favored.

Currently, local authorities do not enjoy full discretion to exercise their actions with regard to any matter which is neither excluded from their competences nor assigned to any other authority. In practice, the central government and its deconcentrated structures continue to hold substantial decision-making powers. In a context characterized by high functional decentralization of competencies with a systemically weak fiscal decentralization, local governments are frequently transformed into a

⁹⁷ Report by the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the European Charter of Local Self-Government (Monitoring Committee) from April 4, 2019: <https://rm.coe.int/local-and-regional-democracy-in-the-republic-of-moldova-monitoring-com/1680939183>

‘scapegoat’ for unsuccess. Further, local governments are subject to regular interferences from the central authorities, mainly for electoral purposes.

In 2015 and 2016, Moldovan local governments were pushed to the edge of bankruptcy. The political and financial crisis due to fraud and corruption is directly affecting the condition of local governments. In August 2016 the Ministry of Finance blocked transfers to LGs explaining this by the complicated financial situation. The same approach was used earlier when all public investment projects for LGs were stopped. The local governments, which enjoy the highest trust of the population, have paid the price for this difficult situation.

Despite all the challenges noted above, the only slight improvement reported over the past two years is related to the partial decentralization of the Road Fund, managed by central authorities, where rayons shall retain competencies regarding the distribution of funds allocated for the local roads network development at local level.

Such lack of progress notwithstanding, the GRM has undertaken a number of initiatives in an attempt to change the way public services are provided in Moldova. From 2006 to 2013, for example, Moldova modernized its civil service legislation and administrative processes under the Central Public Administration Reform (CPAR), supported by the World Bank's administered Moldova - Government's Central Public Administration Reform Multi-Donor Trust Fund (CPAR MDTF). In July 2016, the Government of Moldova has approved the Public Administration Reform Strategy for 2016-2020, which keeps the modernization of public services delivery process among its main objectives. To achieve the stated objectives, the Government has requested the World Bank's assistance for a PAR operation that became effective in June 2018, called Modernization of Government Services Project (hereafter MGSP or the Project). The design of the project considers the Government of Moldova's vision, stated in the Public Administration Reform Strategy 2016-2020 and makes extensive use of institutional and technological achievements of Governance e-Transformation Project (GeT) implemented by the Government of Moldova and the World Bank in the period between November 2011- December 2016.

The Project is implemented by the e-Governance Agency (eGA) in coordination with the State Chancellery of the Republic of Moldova that holds a unique ‘Center of the Government’ position and is responsible for policy development and reform coordination in the area of Government services modernization. The State Chancellery is also responsible for promoting regulatory amendments to institutionalize the results of service reengineering. In this capacity, the State Chancellery will be the main Beneficiary of the Methodology on performance framework development, implementation and assessment for service providers involved in the process of reengineering of public services and CUPS (hereafter the Methodology), will ensure its official approval and will coordinate practical application of the Methodology in the process of development of service providers’ performance frameworks.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ <http://www.egov.md/en/transparency/reports/modernization-government-services-project-mgsp-semester-progress-report>

ANNEX L: CONFLICT OF INTEREST FORMS

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest for USAID Evaluation Team Members

Name	Adam J. Reisman
Title	Senior Technical Specialist
Organization	Social Impact, Inc.
Evaluation Position?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Team Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Team member
Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument)	USAID / AID-OAA-M-13-00011
USAID Project(s) Evaluated (Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)	DRGLER Moldova Whole of Project Evaluation (WOPE)
I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<p>If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts:</p> <p><i>Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation. 3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project. 4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation. 	

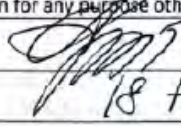
I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change. If I gain access to proprietary information of other companies, then I agree to protect their information from unauthorized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

Signature	<i>Adam J. Reisman</i>
Date	February 18, 2020

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest for USAID Evaluation Team Members

Name	DRYSIA LUTSEVYCH
Title	Expert (civil society & media)
Organization	Social Impact
Evaluation Position?	<input type="checkbox"/> Team Leader <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Team member
Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument)	USAID / AID-OAA-M-13-00011
USAID Project(s) Evaluated (Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)	DRGLER Moldova Whole of Project Evaluation (WOPE)
I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts: <i>Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation. 3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project. 4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation. 	

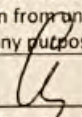
I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change. If I gain access to proprietary information of other companies, then I agree to protect their information from unauthorized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

Signature	
Date	18 Feb, 2020

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest for USAID Evaluation Team Members

Name	VERONICA CRETU
Title	Local Governance Expert
Organization	Social Impact
Evaluation Position?	<input type="checkbox"/> Team Leader <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Team member
Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument)	USAID / AID-OAA-M-13-00011
USAID Project(s) Evaluated (Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)	DRGLER Moldova Whole of Project Evaluation (WOPE)
I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<p>If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts:</p> <p><i>Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation. 3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project. 4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation. 	

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

Signature	
Date	18.02.2020

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest for USAID Evaluation Team Members

Name	Zumrat K. Salmorbekova
Title	Evaluation Specialist
Organization	Social Impact
Evaluation Position?	<input type="checkbox"/> Team Leader <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Team member
Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument)	USAID / AID-OAA-M-13-00011
USAID Project(s) Evaluated (Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)	DRGLER Moldova Whole of Project Evaluation (WOPE)
I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<p>If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts:</p> <p><i>Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation. 3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project. 4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation. 	

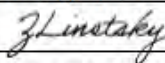
I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change. If I gain access to proprietary information of other companies, then I agree to protect their information from unauthorized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

Signature	Zumrat Salmorbekova
Date	February 18, 2020

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest for USAID Evaluation Team Members

Name	Zuri Linetsky
Title	Senior Technical Specialist
Organization	Social Impact
Evaluation Position?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Team Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Team member
Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument)	USAID / AID-OAA-M-13-00011
USAID Project(s) Evaluated (Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)	DRGLER Moldova Whole of Project Evaluation (WOPE)
I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<p>If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts:</p> <p><i>Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation. 3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project. 4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation. 	

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

Signature	
Date	February 18, 2020

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest for USAID Evaluation Team Members

Name	Richard Gold
Title	Rule of Law Expert
Organization	Social Impact
Evaluation Position?	<input type="checkbox"/> Team Leader <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Team member
Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument)	USAID / AID-OAA-M-13-00011
USAID Project(s) Evaluated (Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)	DRGLER Moldova Whole of Project Evaluation (WOPE)
I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<p>If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts:</p> <p><i>Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation. 3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project. 4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation. 	

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

Signature	
Date	2/18/2020