

LSGAC Training Programs Evaluation

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I. Introduction

The training programs for Elected Leadership (EL) and Total Quality Maintenance (TQM) have only been recently initiated in the past six months by the Local Self-Government Assistance Center (LSGAC). The focus of this effort is to implement US AID Slovakia's Strategic Objective - supporting more effective, responsive and accountable local government. (see attachment A for full description).

These training programs have been specifically targeted to strengthen actions for Intermediate Results - Improved capability to deliver services and manage resources efficiently - and - Improved capability for public outreach and citizen involvement. In support of these two results, these training programs have been instrumental in supporting the sustainability of local government actions by strengthening local government training institutions.

This assistance has been critical at this time, as it is now almost eight years since the new administrative laws have been implemented in the regional jurisdictions and the next round of local government elections occurs in 1998. During the past few years, elected officials in local government have experienced many difficulties as they have attempted to move from former centralized administrative systems to more decentralized processes. Most elected officials were unprepared for this situation and found themselves lacking the skills and knowledge necessary to fulfill their new roles effectively.

Thus it was timely (and perhaps essential) that the efforts of LGSAC coincided with this crucial juncture in local government. A major goal of the center was promoting "Elected Officials Professional Development". This goal is being supported by the ongoing conduct of training programs, two important ones which are:

- Elected Leadership Series (12 modules)
- Total Quality Maintenance in Local Government Operations (4 phases)

Since the training programs are still ongoing, and only partially implemented, the results of this evaluation cannot be totally conclusive at this time. However, this is a timely point to collect feedback on the initial results of the programs to allow for fine-tuning the continuing effort; as well as providing guidance for other agencies which might adapt these training strategies in other countries.

The report is prepared in several sections. First, Key Questions are identified. Then the Executive Summary indicates the key findings of the evaluation both in results and recommendations. The body of the report provides greater detail of the findings for each question in relation to the two different training programs. The appendices contain specific references from the main analysis and of supplemental information and data to support the text of the narrative.

The evaluation methodology used in this study included a combination of in-depth interviews and focus group with participants of all phases of the project; along with a review of written training course materials, marketing information, media coverage in comparison with the stated written objectives and plans of the project (for full information, please see appendix).

II. Key questions

The primary evaluation questions addressed in this study include:

- what is the overall impact of the training efforts on the effectiveness of local government officials who participate in the programs
- what is the subsequent impact of the organization performance of local government in serving citizens more effectively which might be attributed to the training
- what are recommendations to improve the delivery of the training for the ongoing program in Slovakia and future efforts in other countries
- what is the long run perspective for institutionalization of the program

The purpose of the study is to prepare an evaluation of two programs conducted by LSGAC in Bratislava: Elected Leadership program and Total Quality Maintenance program.

Both of these programs have been recommended to increase the capability of local governments to deliver services and manage resources efficiently. Likewise, as the elected officials and staff learn to use the new skills in the community, the result is a higher level of public outreach and citizen involvement; thus, strengthening the democratic atmosphere. As identified in the US AID strategic objectives, in order to fulfill these responsibilities, local government officials require many new management and leadership skills. Of particular need are those relating to the roles of the elected leader as Communicator, Facilitator, Enabler, and Negotiator. These roles, as well as others, were the primary focus of the leadership training series.

✓ MEL
use
in
course
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The skills of identifying and solving community problems - those of both operations and maintenance - were addressed in the TQM program. In this training module, specific attention is directed to issue identification and fact finding, team problem-solving and decision making, resource identification, action planning, and project evaluation.

use in
descript

III. Executive Summary

A. The major conclusions

1. Even though the training programs are only partially implemented, already significant community impacts have been reported by participants. These impacts include success with previously delayed projects such as sewage treatment, village electrification, flood control, and community facility improvements. Likewise, participants report significant project cost savings based on improved communication and negotiation techniques. *Impact*
2. Networking and interregional communication among elected officials has increased; allowing for sponsoring common training activities, joint project financing, and exchange of experiences and lessons learned. *Impact*
3. Participants report feedback from coworkers, constituents, and family about positive changes in behaviors following the workshops. These are especially noted in areas such as active listening, proper use of feedback, problem-solving techniques, and better decision making skills. *Impact*
4. The content and delivery of the training are consistently rated highly by the participants. The use of combined teams of lead trainers more experienced in training techniques with junior trainers more knowledgeable of governmental issues provided good quality courses. Currently, there are 50 trainers associated with the programs. *Quality*
5. Several hundred participants have attended one or more training module. It is expected that 149 participants will be certified in the Elected Leadership program in June, while 20 others will have completed the TQM course.
6. At this time, the EL and TQM training are the only programs in Slovakia focusing on developing elected officials management and leadership skills. All other programs are technically oriented in areas of finance, legislation, environment, etc. The integration of programs is considered key in working to improve the professionalism of elected officials at all levels of local government. *value to train*
7. The findings at this time indicate that the EL and TQM training programs are essential components in the support of USAID strategic objectives in strengthening local government in areas of operational effectiveness, public responsiveness and accountability. Reports from the participants at all levels suggest that this training concept matches the realistic needs of Slovak local government at this time.

B. The major recommendations

1. Precise financial strategy could be elaborated to eliminate discrimination of people with lower resources. Higher costs can mean a serious obstacle in further development and availability of the program, especially for groups that most need it.
2. It seems that the program is more attractive for people from small villages, far away from the centers. They have fewer possibilities for being educated and often they feel isolated. According to the interviewed people a more detailed marketing strategy is necessary in order to reach all 115 towns which have above 5000 inhabitants.
3. The program could put more attention to the follow up system. Continually the system of permanent feedback can be developed as more people from the same organization attend the training.
4. For future strengthening of local government's competencies from a state, enough human resources are necessary to be prepared. TQM, EL and other programs prepared by LSGAC, The Foundation for Training in Self-government and ZMOS, might be a significant base for training those local officials.
5. The training materials prepared for ELP are of very high quality and good for trainers. Participants could get more simple handouts.
6. TQM material is prepared for an experienced lead trainer while the Elected Leadership materials were suitable as train-the-trainer guidelines for new or inexperienced trainers. More detailed material for inexperienced TQM trainers could be considered.
7. More attention should be given to the network of trainers, relation between lead and junior trainers. Mutual cooperation instead of competition will support the effectiveness of the program.

Prices to sustain prog

Demand larger cities

↓?

Follow up for the prog

Handouts

ETP

C. *Other suggestions*

- The program seems to be very attractive and helpful for people working in a sphere of local government. It attracts exclusively people who are ready to accept new ideas and who feel a need to improve their skills and knowledge. It is important to reach also the people who are less open to change their attitudes and methods of work.
- The program could be used for preparation of local politicians in coming communal elections next year. Will there be enough training resources for that?
- When recruiting new participants it might be good to use already trained mayors and councilors, their enthusiasm and ability to promote the program to the others. Possible ways: at the marketing workshops, through PR. All these activities should be prepared on purpose, not relying on occasional private activity of participants.
- There is a tendency among RTC (regional training center) to prefer junior trainers for lowering the costs of training courses in order to make them more available. With improved competence, this choice will be possible especially if this group will keep their enthusiasm and devotion to this particular program.
- There is no module considered to be less important than the others. When thinking about some additional modules (or "half-hats"), the participants mention: time-management, effective learning, and image-building. As well, in all modules there should be strengthened emphasis on building participant skills to deal with crisis situations and incidents.
- As for the effectiveness of training, participants proposed using video-recorder or at least tape-recorder to improve the self-reflection and to have immediate feedback (possibility to control their behavior).
- For elected officials it is necessary to create some shorter versions of the modules, because they are unlikely to be able to spend more than one day per month out of their work. ✓
- It would be helpful to send in advance detailed materials with the purpose of the program and how the participants should be prepared. (Especially at TQM program). Attention should be taken to clearly identify who would attend and these pre-requisites should be maintained. The scope of topics should be reduced or prioritized. ✓
- It would be helpful to organize a special workshop for RTC secretaries, devoted to marketing and communication strategies. Investing into these people can have significant impact on future of the project.
- RTCs with too broad or too culturally divided territories would be better to divide or to strengthen their staff. Natural regional ties have to be taken into consideration.

- The more people from the same municipality will attend the training, the higher impact on the region the training will have.
- Trainers in Hungarian-speaking areas expressed a strong need for handbooks in their own language which would facilitate the work of Hungarian-speaking participants.

IV. Results of the Analysis

Before getting directly into results, we would like to stress the limitations of the evaluation process:

- The Elected Leadership program has been initiated in September 1996 (TOT program, marketing workshops). The training for participants has started in December 1996, so the impact evaluation could be focused only on immediate changes in local government officials life and their institutions. The impact on the citizens has not been measured yet.
- The Total Quality Maintenance Program has started at the end of last year, and the evaluation evidence is very similar to the Elected Leadership program.
- The program initiated by LSGAC is the first and the only training program offered to local government officials. Therefore, comparison with other programs is not possible.

The results of the analysis are organized around the key questions in the evaluation study. Each question will reflect the answer on evaluation of both programs- Elected leadership program (ELP) and Total Quality Maintenance Program (TQM).

In each of the sections, the results of the feedback from the participants completed at the end of each training course is presented. This feedback was collected using a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the higher or more positive value; and 1 or 2 indicating dissatisfaction with the issue being addressed. As with all immediate training evaluations of this type, there is a tendency toward a positive bias and halo effect typically indicating the participants "enjoyment" of the program, rather than an objective evaluation of the effectiveness of the aspect to improve the transfer of the skills and knowledge back to the workplace.

1. Overall impact of the training efforts

Permanent effect: changing personality

It is probably the most fascinating for all participants as well as for junior trainers, that impacts of training are visible very soon. They report feeling in themselves change in personality, namely different attitudes towards others. As for skills, they are more difficult to learn, one gets them slowly "module by module", and they are more likely to be forgotten when not trained permanently. Change of attitudes, as well as acceptance of a new approach towards oneself and towards others is steady and hardly can be diminished.

The techniques participants perceive as the most important are: active listening, self-reflection, **ability to provide and accept the feedback**, ability to differentiate between cause and consequences, effective decision-making. They use new schemes for dealing with problematic situations – "without improvisation". Often they mention they just received a framework that helps them to systemize their everyday activities. That helps them to make things easier and increases their self-confidence. It is easier for them to reach their purposes on the base of consensus agreement.

After the training the following successes have appeared such as changes in personal life. The most important are:

- " My wife told me that I am changed after the training, it is much easier to live with me now"
- " I started to look differently on the raise of my children"
- "I became much more confident in myself"
- "I am able to deal with angry citizen and make him satisfied"

Also reported are changes in interpersonal relationships at work. For example:

- " My secretary told me that I am more open"
- " My colleague told me that now I can listen to what he says"

Possible effect: changing surroundings

Participants often get positive feedback on their behavior from their family members and immediate collaborators. In discussions there are able to reach consensus, they introduce a new atmosphere of communication, which leads to problem solving acceptable for all parties involved (citizens, suppliers and other business entities, state administration, NGO representatives, etc.).

After the training the following successes have appeared in local government as reported by participants:

- *building up the sewage treatment* (before the training: impossible to do because of lack of resources, after: involving all interest groups, getting to consensus ended up in building the sewage)
- *solving controversial community issues* “We had the problem of dispute between farmers and villagers concerning movement of cows over local roads. After meeting of police, elected officials, owners of cows, agricultural cooperative representatives, and others we found solution acceptable for all parties”.
- *improvement of the local negotiations* (before: the project costs too much, after: initiating the meeting and using negotiation skills ended up with saving 250 000 Sk (8000 USD))
- *building up the waterline*
- *enlargement of the cemetery* (before: it was not possible because of complicated property rights, after: cooperation with all interest groups, action plan preparation, motivation of people helped to solve the problem)
- *installation of cable TV*
- *improving electrification of the village*
- *establishing the local firm for sand digging*
- *adjudicating property rights in the village*
- *control of waterflow of houses during spring time*
- *sport donation.* “ In last years it was very difficult to agree on the amount of donation for sport organization in the village. It took several meetings before reaching agreement. This year - using the role of Negotiator, Communicator, Enabler, Facilitator – we were able to reach agreement on the first meeting. We decided to give 100% higher donation than was requested”

- *solving problems with citizen relations.* “I used the role of Communicator, Facilitator, I listen to people, gave them positive questions. We solved the problem and improved the relation among people”
- *changing the budget.* I prepared detailed analysis why I need more money for sewage. I talked to all people and we made an agreement – investment into sewage in our town.
- *reconstruction of local roads.* This will not be a problem if we have enough financial resources. So I initiated a meeting with construction company and used a role of negotiator. I was very surprised ending up with acceptable amount for my village – I saved 250 000 Sk, which we could use for another purpose.
- *facilitation of the meeting.* I was able to facilitate the meeting in a way acceptable for all parties.
- *more training.* Based on my experience I would like to buy the training for my employees.
- *organizational change of town hall.* I used the skills from the training and was successful to make change in a peaceful atmosphere.

The participants are encouraged to use new skills in everyday contact with people and feel satisfaction when “it works”. So they can change behavior of the others. Effective negotiating can have immediate benefits for their municipalities. Effective facilitation of the meetings of city council leads to decreasing meeting time sometimes even by one half.

On the other hand, participants complain about difficulties in applying new ideas and principles among people who act still according their routine principles. It is hard for a mayor to use modules in a meeting of the city council where people react their usual way. That is why participants expressed that they will send to this course at least some of their elected officials. In general it is easier to apply new skills in contact with clients than in collaboration with elected officials who are “untouchable”.

Side-effect from EL program

People who have no direct experience from local government (lead trainers, RTC secretaries) constantly stress a significance of differentiating between the "content" and the "procedure" of training. Though participants are aware of this difference, for them the content is extremely important as well. They appreciate the possibility to solve real problems together, to exchange experiences. Facing the complicated and still changing legal framework of their work they have no other chance for advice how to deal with particular issues.

The friendly atmosphere and easy communication in these meetings allow them to help each other in very concrete problems. One can observe forming of a community of mayors consulting frequently (personally or on the phone) everyday problems. There have appeared even common projects covering cities and villages of certain region. This spirit of mutual help is considered to be extremely important by participants as well as by junior trainers.

For example:

- *financing a leisure area near Presov.* "Presov had money for supporting such project. The village 50 km away from Presov (it didn't belong to Presov area) was used by Presov's citizens for leisure time. That little village (Zlata Bana) with 300 inhabitants had no money for improving the quality of their services. After the workshop, where mayors and elected officials from both municipalities have met, they made an agreement, that Presov will contribute on the development of the services in the leisure area."
- *exchanging experiences.* "I regularly call to my colleagues from different cities I met at the training. We tried to find the best solution for the particular problems".
- *solving problems in the mini-region.* "We had problem with too narrow road, which connected our four villages with the center. Since we all (mayors from four villages) met at the training, we found a way how to solve the problem by contribution of all of us".
- *joint initiatives to solve common problems.* A mayor from city of 2000 inhabitants attend the training. Then he convinced other mayors from small villages around the city to attend. The result is that they finally solved the problem of new basic school, they started to cooperate and found solution.

Side effects from TQM program

Local government officials do not have many experience with identifying the real problem and its causes. Although the issue of the workshop was clearly predefined - street maintenance - during the identification of the problem they found out the real problem is different. This experience was evaluated as the most significant at the workshop. The ability to identify real problem and causes gave a powerful tool to municipality managers to solve the problems of citizens more effectively and efficiently.

Another useful tool participants got at the workshop was action plan preparation and implementation. All of the participants declared how dramatically they changed the management of their municipalities by planning the resources and timeline.

Also, exactly as in EL program, the friendly atmosphere and easy communication in these meetings allow them to help each other in very concrete problems.

For example:

➤ *Overall strategy.*

- A team of TQM program participants came home and prepared presentation for a mayor. He liked the concept very much. Team is preparing a concept for public service improvement in the city. After approving by the local council it will be implemented. Based on the method of TQM program another city redefined their strategic goal and changed the method of work.

➤ *Real problem identification.*

- A bigger city identified, that the real problem, why streets are of bad quality is lack of cooperation with neighboring villages. After initiating the meeting, and preparing common action plan, the quality of streets improved dramatically.
- Another city identified two main areas for the improvement: environment and culture. They sent project proposal to LSGAC with the request to provide the consultants, which will be able to help them complete the projects successfully.

➤ *Networking and intraregional cooperation.*

- One city initiated meeting with other bigger cities in the region. The result is that they want to attend workshop altogether and work on common projects in the region.

- During the workshop all four cities initiated mutual visits where they were exchanging information about:

- parking system in the town
- waste
- walking zone
- cleaning
- housing policy
- etc.

➤ *Increasing successes.*

- The evidence of completed work has increased in 50% in one of the city.

➤ *Increasing effectiveness of work.*

- Managers are able to prepare complete materials of high standards. Thus local council does not need to spend so much time to work on it - complete materials save the time of councilors.
- A city decreased the period of cleaning the street after winter in one week.

2. The delivery process

2.1 ELECTED LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

A. Evaluation of trainers

In their workshop evaluations of particular elements of training (trainers, training materials, logistics and administration), the participants highlighted especially the trainers.

There are currently 50 trainers working in this program. According to the leaders of the program this system has created a competitive "market" with trainers. The natural selection chooses good trainers, ^{which} will continue to work with the program. Because of the high demand and natural selection, it is necessary to train an additional group of trainers.

1. *Comments from interviews*

Lead trainers: competition with juniors

According to junior trainers and participants, the decisive majority of lead trainers maintain a very high professional standard. However, there are exceptions. Some lead trainers are perceived as chosen for this project exclusively because of their language skills, not training experiences. Junior trainers describe their cooperation as satisfactory, but in earlier stages normally it had been excellent. However, since some of junior trainers tend to reach the professional level of lead trainers, the senior trainers sometimes see this as a threat to their position. They are less willing to share information and materials with junior trainers (despite this being a part of the contract with RTC). The mutual relationship is in some cases, therefore, not sincere. According to RTC secretaries, such fear is not irrational, since junior trainers are much cheaper and some of them will soon be competent to take the place of the more senior trainers

At the beginning there was a problem of lead trainers' incompetence in matters of local government. It became necessary to provide them at least a general orientation of the conditions, so that they might be accepted by participants. During the TOT program, lead trainers received from the junior trainers basic knowledge about the issues in local government.

Juniors trainers: developed cooperation

Participants appreciate the combination of lead trainer (coach) and junior. The first response is mention of the better training skills of professionals, which are compensated by experience from local government on the side of juniors. Secondly, it

seems to be ideal to have more than one trainer for a course. The result is a more interesting and attractive course.

The cooperation among junior trainers themselves is better than their relationships with the lead trainers. They behave as a community. No feeling of competition is perceived at this time; rather, one can observe intensive communication, mutual help, exchanging materials, etc.

Junior trainers prefer to work outside their own region, rather than training one's own collaborators, since this is always difficult and maybe even less effective. Usually the trainers are specialized in three or four modules, allowing for a higher quality of training courses provided. So the exchange of trainers among regions is supposed to be usual, and it is perceived as a positive feature of the program.

2. *Evaluation of trainers by participants*

- were well organized and prepared (4.84)
- encouraged exchange of information and ideas (4.80)
- were knowledgeable about the topics covered (4.78)
- stimulated thinking and discussion (4.73)

3. *Summary*

Summing up all pros and cons the participants are very satisfied with the quality and performance of the trainers. They create very friendly atmosphere supportive for changing the attitudes of people involved. Both categories of the trainers are skilled in both parts of the training, content part as well as process part. Having trainers from local government environment is especially noteworthy as they are familiar with concrete problems of participants.

B. Evaluation of training materials

1. *Comments from interviews*

All handbooks are evaluated as very helpful and precisely prepared. Trainers considered them as very 'user friendly', compact and consistent, "every sentence could be used". The materials can motivate participants to become trainers themselves.

For participants the materials are of secondary importance when compared with direct experience from training. It is impossible to replace this experience with the handbook. However, these materials appear helpful in later stages, for repeating and recollecting certain information and experience. In some cases the materials can serve as an advisor or reference in difficult situations, so they are used not only during the process of training.

Practical exercises requiring individual work at home (which is not controlled by trainers) are used more than it was initially expected, although only a minority of participants work on them regularly. Participants become used to this type of work only gradually, but afterwards they find it useful. Of course, there is an obstacle: lack of time.

Use of foreign examples in exercises does not seem to be a real problem for participants. It depends to a high degree on a trainer, how s/he introduces the examples. Having a foreign example in a handbook provokes, according to participants, independent thinking and team work on looking for corresponding Slovak cases. This requires a trainer skilled in Slovak local government problems. On the other hand, the materials lack the reference to the Slovak legal and social situation. Thus, sometimes the foreign examples "go too far from Slovakia".

For junior trainers the standard handbooks are not enough, they feel a need for something more. They search for additional materials (textbooks, handouts) which are copied and exchanged. Sometimes they provide participants with additional handouts as well.

2. *Evaluation of training materials by participants*

Training materials:

- are useful for the learning application workbook (4.56)
- helped them to understand the role better (4.49)
- are relevant to their position in self-government (4.44)

3. *Evaluation of training materials by training consultant*

The trainer guidelines and participant handbooks used for the training were based on local translations and adaptations of previously developed training courses. The primary course materials were the 12 modules of the *Training for Elected Leadership*

Series by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat). These modules have been comprehensively developed and tested with input from trainers from all over the world.

The topics of the 11 training courses (and titles of guides) were as follows:

1. The Councilor as Leader
2. The Councilor as Policy Maker
3. The Councilor as Decision Maker
4. The Councilor as Communicator
5. The Councilor as Facilitator
6. The Councilor as Enabler
7. The Councilor as Negotiator
8. The Councilor as Financier
9. The Councilor as Overseer
10. The Councilor as Power Broker
11. The Councilor as Institution Builder

These 11 participant handouts were supplemented by an excellent guideline for the trainers: *Trainer's Guide for the Training of Elected Officials* as well as the additional manual *Perspectives on Training Elected Leaders*.

One additional resource, the *Guide for Learning Transfer*, was also available with exercises and planning tools which could be integrated with the 12 primary modules to help the participants with action planning and application of the new knowledge / skills / ability on return to their job.

Objectives of Training Programs

Although the overall objectives of the training programs were identified on separate handouts to the participants, the handbooks did not describe these clearly for each of the 12 Elected Leaders training modules. Each exercise described in the guides did include specific objectives and adequate detail for the trainer to understand how the segment addressed the specific training objective.

Reference Materials for Trainers

These materials are excellent and quite comprehensive. For each module they provide the basic overview and rationale for the sessions, step-by-step timetable and breakout of the complete session, essays and background materials for lectures, and additional ideas for warm-ups and group facilitation.

The specialized supplemental trainer's guide for the Elected Officials series provided a complete overview to the role of the trainer for Elected Leadership topics. The guide also provided excellent discussions concerning needs assessment, preparation, training design approaches, and managing workshop delivery. Additional detail was provided on the nine major types of learning components used in the workshops.

All this material was further supported by a Learning Transfer Guide which provided many strategies for use by both the trainers and the participants to increase the

opportunity of success in the transfer of the new skills and knowledge upon return to the work setting.

Participant Materials and Handouts

The guide for the trainers was also used as the handout for the participants during the training. Although this provided most participants with more detail than actually needed for the understanding of the skills and knowledge presented, it otherwise provided them with a complete course handbook for their own use in training local workgroups or other audiences.

A companion for the 12 Elected Leadership modules was packaged in a single handout containing the Learning Transfer exercises and planning tools. Although this allows for all the follow-up materials for the entire series to be in one place, an alternative approach might have been to separate the Learning Transfer portions by each module to include with the materials for that module since it is likely that many participants might not remember to bring along this reference book to each of the 12 individual sessions over some weeks.

Local Translation and Adaptation of Materials

All the materials for the Elected Leadership program were fully translated into Slovak for a total of 14 guidebooks for the trainers. Review of the English and Slovak versions of the material indicated a high level of transfer of meaning of the training content. Additionally, the materials were graphically designed in identical layouts to the English originals and printed and bound in a superior fashion compared to materials typically used in training in Slovakia.

It was not apparent that any local adaptation or modification of the trainer guidelines was completed during the translation of the guidelines other than changing the terms of local government agencies to reflect the Slovak organizations. It is more likely that this was accomplished during the train-the-trainer programs and were reflected in the participant handouts, individual instructor notes, and actual conduct of the presentation and exercises.

4. Summary

All in all, the written training materials (and especially trainer guidelines) were of very high quality. The translations were accurate and the graphic layout made the use of the materials very easy for the trainers and participants.

The quality of the trainers' guidelines were especially noteworthy, since many typical training materials provided for courses in other segments usually include only the participant manual or handout with sparse reference material for the trainer on how to present the exercises, strategies for transfer of knowledge back to the job, and general points on methods to improve training success with adult audiences. In this area, the training materials were superior to any evaluated by the consultant in seven years in the Slovak Republic.

C. Evaluation of modules

The block of 11 modules is perceived as a complex system. Mostly participants are willing to complete all of them. Trainers are of the same opinion, because they see causality and overlaps among particular modules. All of them consider the Communicator and the Facilitator as two basic modules, which are complemented by others. As well, these two are seen as most useful not only "in office", but in everyday life of all people. Participants consider all modules to be almost of the same relevance for their position in self-government. However, the most relevant seems to be Decision Maker.

1. *Evaluation of modules by participants*

- Decision Maker (4.71)
- Enabler (4.65)
- Negotiator (4.63)
- Facilitator (4.60)
- Communicator (4.58)
- Institution Builder (4.50)
- Policy Maker (4.50)

NOTE: This selected evaluation refers only to the relevancy of the modules to the participants position in self-government. The modules evaluated here are only those which have been conducted several times already.

There are modules which are more difficult for understanding: the Policy Maker, the Leader, the Power Broker, and Enabler. They require abandoning the stereotypes in understanding certain roles and terms.

One of the most attractive and at the same time the most difficult, according to trainers, is the Financier, because of problems with budgets in municipalities. As well, junior trainers claim that these "specialized modules" require more meritorious knowledge than only training skills. That is why they choose their specialization in certain modules according to their original profession or education.

2. *Summary*

As far as the modules are concerned, all of them are of very high relevancy to the real needs of municipalities in Slovakia. The content of each module present, in a very consistent and understandable way, the most important ideas about the topics and address the important questions of local government officials.

All participants see modules as very useful with a special emphasis on two of them, Decision Maker and Enabler. The complexity of the modules, the content and the relevancy to the local conditions are admirable. The concept is one of the best experienced by the consultant in three years in the Slovak republic.

D. Logistics and administration

1. *Comments from interviews*

Time: just in limits

For the participants, the most acute problem is time. However, most of those who decide to complete all the courses declare that it is possible to find time for training. Two and half day training seems to be optimal. Though they agree that the program is very exhaustive (there is no leisure time during the course), it is not perceived as drawback or obstacle. On the contrary, they appreciate it, stressing that despite the rich program they feel fresh at the end. It would be impossible to elaborate all the material within shorter time. On the other hand, it could be difficult to spend more time in a course. These problems are especially difficult for mayors from little villages who have no deputies or collaborator to whom they could delegate their responsibilities for some days. In effect, the current time-schedule appears to be the most acceptable for mayors.

Councilors are in a worse situation, because they have to ask for leave from their work. Not all employers are in favor of such courses. Even in a case when the town hall offers re-compensation of employee's salary, there are often difficulties. That is why for councilors it seems to be more suitable to organize short-time courses (1 day) accommodated to their basic needs.

The residential form of the training course has an extremely important effect on participants. They can concentrate better on the process of training and at the same time they strengthen personal contacts within the group. None of them would prefer to have training "at home".

Despite the fact that trainers consider some modules to be more time-consuming and thus requiring more days (Communicator, Negotiator), they admit that the existing schedule is the easiest to follow (for trainers as well as for participants).

Costs: future problem

Although current costs of the courses (participants pay for room and board) are not so high, it can become a problem, especially for people from small municipalities. Funds from the budget invested in training courses are still considered as "luxury". It is sometimes difficult to defend such strategy in front of the city council or even citizens. Some mayors and elected officials pay for the course from their private funds. People from small villages do not have possibilities to pay from city budget and their private income is also low.

According to the leaders of the program, at the beginning of next year there will be a decrease in the financial contribution to the training. For some smaller cities it might be a problem, but on the other side it can force them to cooperate, to create joint projects and to pool money for their activities. One approach may be that The

Foundation for Training in Self-Government will be the organizer of the project in the future. The Foundation could be one with a staff that will understand the needs and direct the strategy. Management from LSGAC can act as an external consultant to advise on strategic points.

2. *Evaluation of the logistics and administration by participants*

- the workshops are administered effectively (4.77)
- the learning facilities are satisfactory (4.65)

3. *Summary*

Logistics and administration of the project is perfectly done in collaboration with Foundation for Training in Self - Government, RTCs and LSGAC. The scope of mutual work is changing as each part gets more and more experienced. There is a tendency to transfer direction and strategy from LSGAC more to The Foundation, although it will require more common work and discussion.

E. Training in general

1. Evaluation of training by participants

- was relevant to their role as the position in self-government (4.60)
- increased their understanding of the role (4.58)
- increased their skills in working as a team member (4.40)
- helped develop their skills to carry out the role (4.38)

2. Summary

Based on what has been said about all attributes of EL program (trainers, training materials, modules, logistics and administration) it can be stressed the high professional quality of the concept, relevancy to the local conditions as well as high commitment of people involved in it. All these attributes could support even higher success of the project in the long run under the main strategic objective of the program – supporting more effective, responsive and accountable local government.

2.2 TOTAL QUALITY MAINTENANCE PROGRAM

The scope of work on the evaluation of TQM program has been much more limited than on the EL program. The reasons were as follows:

- This is a much smaller scope of training program. Many of the comments from the EL training are also applicable here. Additional comments and recommendation are noted below.
- The main purpose of the evaluation of TQM program was to look for the overall impacts.

1. Overview

This program is a portion of the Urban Management Program also developed by Habitat entitled *Total Quality Maintenance in Local Government Operations and Maintenance* (TQM).

The first series of the workshop has been done with four cities involved in it: Trnava, Michalovce, Nové Zámky, Kežmarok. Totally 20 participants, 5 from each city, has participated on the workshop.

Teams of participants were consisted of: city manager, chief of the public service department, chief of the financial department, chief of the firm which is doing public service for the city, company employee which is doing public service for the city.

The workshop consists of four phases:

- **pre-workshop assignment.** The main goal of this phase was to get complex information about the service, which was going to be analyzed in the second phase.
- **1. workshop.** The goal of the second phase was the analyses of the real problem, to define purpose and goals how to solve the problem and prepare action plan for one year.
- **action plan realization.** The goal is the implementation of prepared action plan.
- **2. workshop.** This workshop was taken place directly in the cities. The goal was to use trainers as consultants on action plan implementation.

2. *Evaluation of the workshop by participants*
 (the scale here is from 1 to 7, where 7 means totally satisfied and 1 unsatisfied).

TRAINERS PARTICIPATION	
how well the workshop meets the needs of your organization	6,4
will models and diagnostic materials be useful for you to better understand the local government issues?	6,2
team discussions	6,1
knowledge of participants and better understanding of public service on the local level	6,1
skills of participants in team decision-making	5,9
presentations and discussions about your situation in the area of public service	5,8
will you use this experience to make your work more effective?	5,8
possibility to make detailed analysis of one concrete activity	5,7
the help to prepare action plans and use them after coming home from the seminar	5,3
how well the workshop addresses your responsibilities	5,3

Almost all the participants recommend the workshop for other cities, however two issues should be addressed:

- lack of time to implement new knowledge because of too much operational problems
- envy appearance of colleagues that have not experienced such types of training - especially if relations with supervisors start to be less formal.

3. *Evaluation of training materials by participants*
(the scale here is from 1 to 7, where 7 means totally satisfied and 1 unsatisfied)

CASE STUDY	5,8
concept and strategy with case study	5,3
pre-workshop assignment	3,5
how useful were for you the exercise tasks?	3,2

The task material was given to the participants at the beginning of the course, when they were not able to analyze the problem, so it was very difficult for them to work with it. Also before training the participants did not know what they were going to do and thus they were not prepared for this approach. It happened because the complete information about the workshop was sent to the mayor, who was not included in a team. He did not share information with his colleagues. Not in all cases did the five people attend all the training sessions, so missing of the main point might cause the difficulties with understanding the tasks.

4. *Evaluation of training materials by training consultant*

The program consists of 5 guidebooks for the trainers and 3 guidebooks for the participants. The topics of these materials were:

- Reader on Concepts and Strategies with Case Study (for trainers and participants)
- Participant's Pre-workshop Assignment (for trainers and participants)
- Blueprint for Action: Participant's Workbook (for trainers and participants)
- Workshop Agenda (for trainers)
- Workshop Agenda with Trainers Notes (for trainers)

Objectives of Training Programs

The TQM program had well defined objectives clearly identified in the participant and trainer agenda handout.

Reference Materials for Trainers

For the TQM program, the trainer notes were much briefer, contained in a single guideline outlining the general agenda and strategies for achieving it. This material is prepared for an experienced senior trainer while the Elected Leadership materials were suitable as train-the-trainer guidelines for new or inexperienced trainers.

Participant Materials and Handouts

The participant materials for the TQM program were very comprehensive and included pre-readings and assignments, case studies, agenda, and an interactive workbook to be used during the presentation by the participants.

Local Translation and Adaptation of Materials

Three workbooks from TQM program were fully translated into Slovak. Review of the English and Slovak versions of the material indicated a high level of transfer of meaning of the training content. As in EL program, the materials were graphically designed in identical layouts to the English originals.

5. *Summary*

In general, TQM program gives the very important tool to the local government officials for effective identification of the problems, action planning and implementation of the results. Compilation of the program with consultation service increases and strengthens the overall impact of the training effort.

3. The long run perspective for institutionalization of the program

The principles of democratic governance and a commitment to social and economic justice will never be fully implemented unless these principles penetrate to the local, grassroots levels of society. USAID strategic objective 2.3 - more effective, responsive and accountable local government - could support elected leaders in achieving effective, independent governance, directly and through municipal staffs, will make a major contribution to the building of strong democratic institutions and traditions in Slovakia. However, these objectives require longer time to fulfil. Thus, sustainability of such a project is of a very high importance.

Identification of the most important institutions, which can develop the program

LSGAC - Local Self-Government Training Center, supported by USAID. Most of the expenses for the program are covered by this institution. The leaders of the program are at that organization.

Foundation for Training in Self-Government of Slovak Republic. Supported by Association of Towns and Villages and grants from international entities. It manages RTC centers and is responsible for administration of the whole program.

The Association of Towns and Villages. They have financial support from all municipalities, which are member of the organization. More than 2000 towns and villages are members of the association. They have no role in the programs until now.

RTC - Regional Training Centers. They are fully supported by the Association of Towns and Villages and by fees they collect for the training. Their main responsibility is to make marketing and administration of the projects.

RTC as the crucial element

RTC became a crucial element of the whole program. Its success depends on quality of RTC secretaries and their staff. Most of them have very high commitment to the work. Some of them work as junior trainers. That is likely to be beneficial for the future. Being directly involved in training courses, the secretaries improve their contacts with mayors and elected officials, increase facilitated communication and future cooperation.

When convinced about the reasonability of the project, they could do much to keep it working. On the other hand, an incapable RTC secretary can spoil the work of others involved. The effective organization and, first of all, the marketing, are inevitable

conditions for further success of the project. Trainers as well as participants evaluate the work of RTCs very positively, though, not all of them are active enough.

Size of territory to manage

Some RTC secretaries mention their problems with access to geographically relatively far away municipalities. When the territory belonging to RTC is too large, the contact with certain municipalities is less intensive and consequently their access to them less effective. However, RTC secretaries work hard to overcome this obstacle (Prešov).

Cultural difference

Even more acute can appear the question of cultural differences within RTC territories. It is especially a case of Rovinka, which consists of four substantially different regions (Bratislava, Záhorie, Malé Karpaty, Žitný ostrov). It is extremely difficult to adjust the marketing and communication strategy to every specific region. If there are no natural ties between the region and the center (in this case RTC), activities are less effective.

Marketing

Majority of participants decided to attend this program after taking part in the marketing training preview workshop. This seems to be the most effective form of promotion of the training. Recommendations of colleagues are of secondary importance at the moment, however their weight will rise after finishing the first block of courses. RTC secretaries hope that participants finishing the course will motivate others.

1. Expectations of people involved

First impulse: curiosity

The first and probably the most important feature of the project which attracted the most people involved in it was the new form of training - interactive learning. Except lead trainers, very few people had any experience with this type of training courses before. To a high degree it was curiosity which makes them to take part in it.

On the other hand, people working in the sphere of local government feel general lack of information referring to quickly changing legal, economic, and social framework of their work. Decisive majority of people involved consider themselves to be "activists". That means: need of self-development, openness to the new ideas, strong commitment to their work. In general, among these people one could observe a high degree of personal commitment, enthusiasm and belief in the purpose of the project.

Promise: potentiality to help

After first contact with the program people feel the possibility to improve the work of local governments, stressing its "human dimension". Through helping mayors and elected officials they want to help municipalities and their citizens. For most of them it is the first program focused on "the procedure", facilitated communication and interpersonal contacts.

They describe the purpose of the program in 3 dimensions:

- personal dimension: learning, personal development
- interpersonal dimension: effective communication and work with others
- social dimension: spread of positive values, influencing one's surroundings

Method: providing people with tools

People describe the way in which the program can help them as offering a system, tools, and techniques for dealing with problems of everyday life. It does not give solutions, just shows the way in which to reach them. It moves people out of everyday

routine, encourages them to do experiments, and makes them more open for impulses from outside. Expectations rise along with perceived improvement and "opening new horizons". At the beginning (especially for participants) they are very vague or there are no expectations at all. That is why it is hard to mention any disappointments or unfulfilled promises. According to most of the participants, it is hard to mention any drawbacks, because there is nothing to compare the program with.

2. *Motivation of particular groups*

Lead trainers: working with activists

Professional trainers who have experiences with various organizations and professional groups appreciate the special quality of the "human material" they work with. Unlike the other groups taking part in similar courses (e.g. employees of private companies) these participants are enthusiastic. They are keen on working. They stimulate the trainer by having strong will and need "to move further". Among junior trainers there are many ambitious people who work hard on self-improvement. That requires more energy and involvement from the lead trainer, and makes him to work on him/herself as well.

Junior trainers: transfer the knowledge further

This group is probably the most convinced and devoted to the project. They believe in its impact on people, as they have seen the effects on themselves. Belonging to the same group they train, they understand very well the situation in municipalities. Seeing the immediate partial results after each course they take part in, they are eager to spread out knowledge which they consider to be useful (not only) in local governments.

Secretaries of RTC: creating network

Among other courses provided by RTC, this program has special status in eyes of secretaries, though it requires much more organizational work than other activities. People who are involved in the project start forming a new network, which facilitate communication, spread out information, support the cooperation, etc. It is beneficial for RTC because such network can help them in doing effective marketing for other projects as well.

Participants: learning from each other

The most exciting and surprising feature of the program, which attracts the participants, is its striking difference from standard forms of learning. They feel to be "professors and students at the same time". Discovering new potential help them to raise their self-confidence and stimulation for work. They appreciate the free atmosphere, lack of stress and pressure - typical for standard courses and lectures, as well as the active participation in the process of learning.

- they are often their closest collaborators with rather high competencies
- they usually communicate with citizens more than elected officials do
- the work in local government is their profession
- they work in a field much longer than elected officials.

That is why the participation of employees (at least in some modules connected with their specialization) should be promoted as well.

The leaders of the project said that originally the program was focused on the councilors. After the first rounds of experience they found out that the main target groups are mayors, then city managers. They are trying to find a way to get councilors involved, especially after election.

5. *Regional Differences*

Different needs

When preparing and promoting the program, the different needs of people from different regions should be taken into account. Elected officials from larger cities (especially from Bratislava) have more experiences with different training activities and their educational level is usually higher. Also, the problems they solve, the competencies they have, and people they meet are slightly different from those that meet mayors from villages. The first presentation, for every region and for every group, should stress those advantages of the project which can be most useful for them.

Cultural barriers: no need of learning

All people involved in the project see the main obstacle of its wider implementation as little interest in further education among people over 40. People working in the sphere of local government observe and argue that there is still underdeveloped competition here, especially in smaller municipalities.

People have no strong impulses for being "better". A stereotype of learning while being young is still alive. A common feature of all people involved in this project is their need for learning. All of them take part in many other seminars and training activities.

Financial barriers: limited resources of municipalities

There appears a problem of small villages with very limited budget for staff training. Again it can be considered as a matter of culture when it is difficult for mayor to justify this kind of investment. Larger municipalities are in better financial situation and people have higher income so they can pay at least a part of the costs from their own resources.

The more expensive the program, the more participants will have problems with covering the costs.

Communication barriers: access to outskirts of region

Too large or culturally divided territory of RTC may cause problems in communication and consequently lack of interest in training activities. It requires more energy to invite people and make them interested in the program.

VII. Appendixes

- A. Methodology
- B. Questionnaires
- C. US AID's Strategic Objectives

A. Methodology

During the evaluation the following methods were used:

semi-structured in-depth interviews with project leaders in LSGAC: Fred Fisher, Ľuba Vavrová, Terézia Palíková, Eva Kardošová.

semi-structured in-depth interviews with secretaries of Regional Training Centers (RTC):

Total number of interviews: 4

semi-structured in-depth interview with lead trainer of TOT program:

Total number of interviews: 1

semi-structured in-depth interviews with trainers of TOT program:

Total number of interviews: 6

semi-structured in-depth interviews with participants of EL program (local government officials):

Total number of interviews: 5

semi-structured in-depth interviews with collaborators of participants:

Total number of interviews: 5

semi-structured in-depth interviews with TQM participants:

Total number of interviews: 4

focus group with participants of EL program:

Number of participants: 10

Total number of focus groups: 1

Interviews were conducted with people from these regions (according to RTC areas):

Rovinka
Trencin
Zvolen
Prešov
Trnava
Michalovce
Nové Zámky
Kežmarok

desk research:

- PR materials (in newspapers)
- workshop evaluation from EL program (December/January, February, March 1997)

evaluation of training materials:

- Written goals and objectives
- TOT guidelines
- Participant materials

questionnaire for participants of EL program (distributed during the training):

Total: 37 questionnaires

participatory observation of Elected Leadership Program:

Total: one module

Transcriptions of focus group, interviews and questionnaires are available in Slovak language at the office of FOCUS in Bratislava, Slovakia.

B. Questionnaires

1. Questionnaire for participants of EL program.

1. Please, describe as clearly as possible, the situation at your work, in which you have used knowledge and skills from the training. Describe as many situations as possible, emphasis those where the impact from the training was the most important for you. Use as many space as necessary. Thank you very much for your attention.

Please describe:

what situation, where it takes place, who were the actors (colleagues, citizens, others)

what problem did you solve

what was the result

what was the influence of the training

2. You are:

- mayor
- local councilor
- other position.....

3. Please write the name of your village.

.....

2. Focus group scenarios

Welcoming, introduction, purpose of the discussion.

1. First contact with trainings

Where and how do you meet with the EL program?

Why did you attend?

What was your expectation from the program before you attended?

2. Looking back

Did the training meet your expectations?

Did training help you to solve the problems you have at work? What problems?

TRAINING Which modules were the most interesting to you and why?

3. Trainers, training materials

How would you evaluate the trainers? Please say all pros and cons you can see.

Do they understand the subject? Is it necessary to understand the subject? To what extend?

Evaluate training materials

4. Impacts

What are the most important impacts you can see on you?

What other impacts could you tell?

5. Future of the program

What would you recommend to improve the program?

Would you personally recommend the program to the others?

Will you continue with the training?

6. Conclusion

What else would you say about the program? What important did we forgot to ask?

Thank you to the participants.

3. Interview with the junior trainers.

1. TOT program

Evaluation of the training
Evaluation of the Lead trainers
Evaluation of the materials
Importance to understand the local government problems

2. The training process

Evaluation of the purpose of the training for participants
Evaluation of training materials
Evaluation of timing (when, where, how many days, etc) of the training
How many modules they attended, which ones
What modules are preferred among participants and why

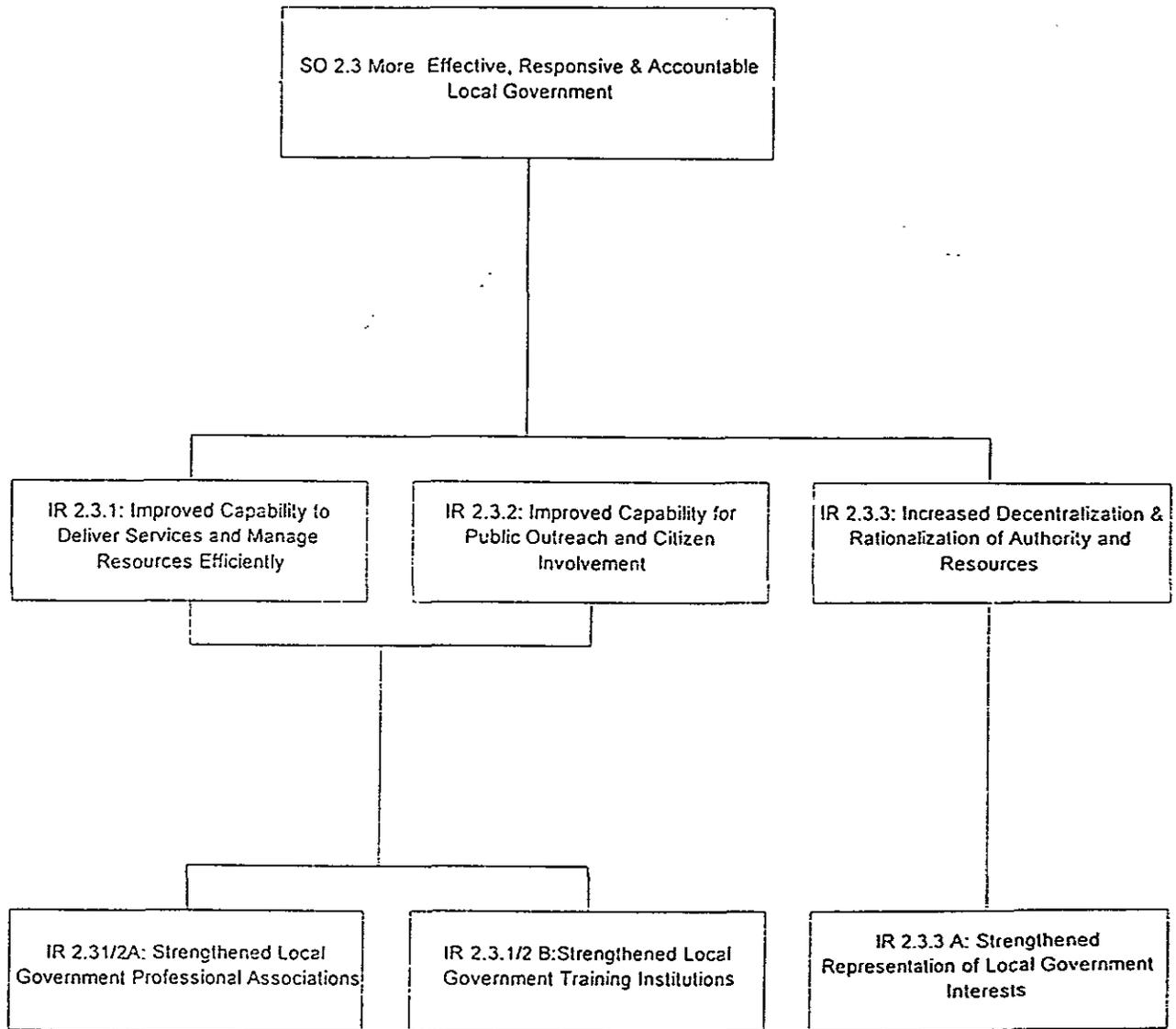
3. Impacts

Evaluation of personal impacts on the participants
Do they work with participants after the training is finished? In what way?
Do you know about other impacts?

4. Identification characteristics

Profession
Town
Number of modules attended
Age
Sex

C. US AID's Strategic Objectives



Part II: Results Framework Narrative

SO 2.3: More Effective, Responsive and Accountable Local Government

Introductory Note

The causal linkages, indicators and targets of the SO 2.3 Results Framework have been modified in response to an evaluation of the local government program which found that the original framework did not adequately measure the impact of the program nor accurately reflect what we are attempting to accomplish. The transition hypothesis and critical assumptions remain unchanged.

A. Transition Hypothesis:

There are more than 2,800 Slovak towns and villages, each with its own democratically elected mayor and council members, totalling some 35,000 persons of varying political persuasions and backgrounds. The current structure of local self-government is only six years old and many municipalities are struggling to develop their capacity to govern and manage themselves. The success of these elected leaders in achieving effective, independent governance, directly and through municipal staffs, will make a major contribution to the building of strong democratic institutions and traditions in Slovakia.

However, the principles of democratic governance and a commitment to social and economic justice will never be fully implemented unless these principles penetrate to the local, grassroots levels of society. At the center of these democratic principles must be found both (1) the commitment and the capacity of local governments, the level of government closest to the people, to provide the means through which local citizens can actively participate in making decisions that affect their daily lives and (2) the interest and ability of local citizens to participate in community processes that shape those decisions.

Thus this Strategic Objective 2.3, relating to effective, responsive and accountable local government, and Strategic Objective 2.1, relating to informed citizen participation are closely interrelated.

B. Critical Assumptions:

Assumptions critical to the achievement of the objective are: (1) *local elections continue and* (2) *authority that has been delegated to the local level will not be retracted.* Those assumptions still remain valid, although there is apprehension among many local officials that the central government is recentralizing power, a trend which may adversely affect local governments in the future. The evaluation concluded that the situation should be watched closely.

C. Causal Linkages:

We have identified three primary intermediate results which, if achieved, will result in increased effective, responsive and accountable local government: (1) improve the capability of local governments to deliver services and manage resources efficiently (IR 2.3.1); (2) improve the capability of local governments for public outreach and citizen involvement (IR 2.3.2); (3) and increase decentralization of authority and resources (IR 2.3.3).

IR 2.3.1: *Improved capability to deliver services and manage resources efficiently* is a key result that must be achieved to make local government more effective. A municipality is a very complex organization requiring many skills and processes that are unknown to many of the officials responsible to make that organization perform effectively. Managing municipal affairs requires a wide range of skills, technical and organizational, as well as interpersonal.

One focus of activity will be to develop the skills of elected leaders - mayors and local council representatives - to perform their challenging responsibilities they were elected to carry out. These skills can be referred to as governance skills. Most elected officials are new to public office. Furthermore, elections in November 1994 resulted in a high turnover, so many officials have not been in office long enough to have gained substantial "on the job" training needed to develop skills of governance.

Various elected and appointed officials also need managerial and technical skills to competently carry out their responsibilities. With few exceptions, municipal officials have not been trained in public administration. The required skills vary according to the responsibilities of the official involved. Finance officers need specialized training in budgeting and financial management. Many municipalities have a position that is similar to that of a city manager and training in general management skills would be beneficial to them. Under Slovak law, mayors have extensive powers that require administrative skills that they have not received in their formal education.

Functions of local government also are carried out through administrative, financial, operational and policy systems and processes. We are working with municipal officials to determine what systems will work best in the Slovak environment and then disseminate those "Best Practices" through a variety of means, including written materials, training programs and conferences.

IR 2.3.2. *Improved Capability for Public Outreach and Citizen Involvement.* Under the previous regime few mechanisms for public outreach and citizen involvement existed or, where they did exist, they were not sympathetically utilized. Sharing of information and sharing of decision making was virtually nonexistent. Improving this capability requires local officials to develop new skills and adopt new mechanisms that facilitate citizen involvement.

We are working to expand the capability of local officials to reach out to citizens. Many of the elected leadership skills relate to this IR, particularly those relating to the role of elected leader as communicator, facilitator, enabler, and negotiator. These roles will be covered in the training of local elected leaders. In addition, experiential training on citizen participation

techniques for local officials will be offered. A particular emphasis will be given to integrating citizen participation and outreach into other initiatives, particularly in the preparation of the annual budget which is a process which can be structured to facilitate and stimulate public input.

This IR is the corollary to IR 2.1.2 under SO 2.1 (*increased, better informed citizens' participation in political, economic and community decision making*) which is directed at "increasing the ability of citizens to participate in local government affairs". Opportunities will be sought where initiatives undertaken under IR 2.1.2 in a specific community can be matched with initiatives undertaken under this IR 2.3.2.

IR 2.3.1.1 and 2.3.2.1: *Strengthened Local Government Training Institutions* is a key sub-Intermediate Result to the sustainability of both IR 2.3.1 and IR 2.3.2. There will always be a need for skill development of people serving in local government; in-service training should be a continuing activity. Given the number of officials needing training, the turnover of officials in periodic elections, and the myriad of skills required, the assistance strategy is to develop the capacity in a local institution to continue in-service training programs without continuing USAID assistance, by developing the training materials, training local trainers to conduct the training, and developing the capacity in a local institution to carry out the training in the future with its own resources.

IR 2.3.1.2 and 2.3.2.2: *Strengthened Local Government Professional Associations*. The existence of local government professional associations dedicated to improving the skills of their members is seen as another essential component to achieving the SO. Improving the processes of government is a continual process as governmental processes and procedures and concepts change and develop over time. We have been instrumental in the formation of an Association of Municipal Finance Officers and in strengthening an Association of Town Managers which can carry on this work.

Flawed assumption

IR 2.3.3: *Increased decentralization and rationalization of authority and resources* is the fourth key result that must be achieved for local government to become more effective. While municipalities have been given substantial authority, they do not control many functions which are often carried out by local government. The state has retained a significant policy and regulatory role in housing. With respect to water and sewer services, while municipalities were given the responsibility to provide the services, the state retains much of the physical system and controls the water rates. Much of the municipal revenue derives from shared national tax revenues and the revenue sharing formulas are frequently changed. In an environment of scarce resources it is inevitable that there will be a continual struggle over the division of central government revenues just as there will be a constant struggle over the division of authority between central government and local government.

The vast majority of Slovak municipalities are villages with populations too small to support the staff and facilities needed to effectively and responsively meet the needs of the citizens. Some method of formal or informal consolidation must be developed whereby services can be delivered effectively, efficiently, and responsively while still preserving the democratic