Executive Summary

The “Strengthening Voice and Accountability” Project (VAP) is a multi-phase intervention in the Kyrgyz Republic supporting citizen participation in local budgetary process and local self-government (LSG) responsiveness to civic initiatives. As its overall goal VAP seeks to ensure that **public finances are managed by LSGs in a more transparent and accountable mode through citizen participation in decision-making process**.

The Project was delivered in three distinct stages - 2011-2012 (inception phase), 2012-2015 (phase I) and 2015-2020 (phase II, with extension). This Project Document elaborates the proposed Exit Phase activities for the period from September 15, 2020 to March 15, 2022, with intended outcomes aimed at strengthening long-term foundations of sustainability and scale.

Results and lessons learned

**Phase 1 (Apr 2012 – Apr 2015)**

In this phase, VAP launched the community engagement model at 13 target communities in the 13 districts of Issyk-Kul and Jalal-Abad regions. Non-target municipalities also benefited from capacity building and peer to peer learning activities, along with the small grant program. Later in this phase, VAP expanded the number of target LSGs.

In three years, projects activities resulted in giving voice to over 30,000 rural residents in both regions and benefited almost 500,000 residents. Local budgetary process engaged over 20,000 residents in 29 municipalities, and was further supported by 130 Initiative Groups, developing 29 joint action plans. The implementation of these plans was closely monitored by joint citizen M&E groups, overseeing and strengthening accountability during the delivery of 60 different LSG-led projects. In addition, local activists developed and implemented under the Local Initiative Competitions 50 local, community-driven initiatives.

On the LSG side, VAP significantly strengthened the governing and managing capacity of local governments in the pilot regions. Target LSGs – municipal servants and local council deputies – were provided with missing tools, equipment, skills and knowledge needed to reinforce accountability, open up budgets to citizens and ensure citizen participation in local decision-making. They also implemented over 100 small grants projects, benefiting 53 municipalities, including the non-target communities. These projects catalyzed substantial local planning and management of investments. LSGs conducted over 80 public budget hearings drawing in 7000 active residents and resulting in 150 tracked changes.

In this phase, VAP also laid out the core regulatory and legal frameworks, helping deepen and consolidate the decentralization reforms. VAP’s legal expertise, engagement of decision-makers and advocacy led to key changes in the Law on LSGs, the 2013-2017 National Strategy for Sustainable Development, the 2013-2017 State Program on LSG Development and its Action Plan, Tax Code, and the 2013-2020 State Program on Remuneration of State and Municipal Servants. VAP also initiated an updated model for qualification training of municipal servants, jointly testing the approach with the State Personnel Service. The model was formally adopted in 2013 and by 2015, two rounds of municipal training were held through tenders organized on a competitive basis.