A case study from
Reducing Poverty, Sustaining Growth—What Works, What Doesn’t, and Why
A Global Exchange for Scaling Up Success
Shanghai, May 25–27, 2004

Ukraine: Better Governance in Ukraine through Public Participation—The People’s Voice Project

Tom Monastyrski
Project Director, People's Voice Project
Lysenko #2, Kyiv 01034, Ukraine
e-mail: tmonastyrski@worldbank.org, tmonastyrski@hotmail.com
+38 044 490 6671 (work)

Implementing Agency Contact:
Alexander Kucherenko
Project Manager, People's Voice Project
PADCO/ICPS
Pimonenka 13-a, Kyiv 03050, Ukraine
e-mail: pvp@icps.kiev.ua
+38 044 236 4196 (work) +38 044 236 4668 (fax)
www.pvp.org.ua

Donor Partner:
Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed here are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Board of Executive Directors of the World Bank or the governments they represent. The World Bank cannot guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this work.

Copyright © 2004. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / THE WORLD BANK
All rights reserved. The material in this work is copyrighted. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or inclusion in any information storage and retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the World Bank. The World Bank encourages dissemination of its work and will normally grant permission promptly.
Executive Summary

In Ukraine (population 47 million, and per capita income $770), the decline of the communist system in the 1980s created a gap between the central and local levels of government that has not been adequately filled since. After Independence in 1991, local public services were the subject of growing public dissatisfaction—mainly because of limited budgets, but also because of lack of community development, lack of new policy initiatives, and general apathy toward regional reform. Local bureaucracies remained poorly trained, disoriented, and unresponsive. Corruption was reportedly rampant, especially in dealings between government and business, and its corrosive effects were widely associated with Ukraine’s growing poverty and inequality. Lack of public trust weakened the credibility of reforms and threatened the existence of the new democratic state.

For democracy to develop in Ukraine ordinary citizens need to believe that the politicians they elect to represent them can and will address their concerns and best interests in improving the welfare and “quality of life” in their communities. Assisted by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the World Bank, the People’s Voice project in Ukraine was developed in 1999 to build the public’s skill in effectively engaging and influencing local government. In its first three years, the project has improved the capacity of citizens to interface with local government and the capacity of local governments to deliver services. Unlike many programs, which focus either on developing civil society or on reforming public administration, People’s Voice focused on both simultaneously. It was implemented at the municipal level, where service delivery issues are an immediate day-to-day concern of citizens. By addressing capacity building and collaborative action with both governments and civil society in a balanced manner, People’s Voice achieved benefits even in the short run.

Political context for reform at the local level

When Ukraine achieved independence in 1991, the majority of reform programs being designed in the country (both directly by government and with donor assistance) focused on the development and restructuring of the central government. Local governments (especially municipalities and autonomous provinces) were not directly involved in reform efforts despite the fact that they accounted for more than 40 percent of total public expenditures. By all accounts, local public services were in serious disarray, and public dissatisfaction with the poor quality of services was growing. The bureaucracy continued in its old ways throughout Ukraine, but without its managed economy to at least deliver jobs or services. Even at the best of times, the responsiveness of public agencies to citizens was poor under the former totalitarian system and it often appeared, to a certain extent, that new policies and practices were not being seriously reviewed or reformed prior to implementation, especially at the local level. And corruption was growing to a dangerous level as public confidence plummeted.
Project rationale

The improvement of public services at the central and local levels and control of corruption have remained high-priority areas for Ukrainians over the last decade. It has only been in recent years that new programs have begun to create mechanisms to tackle these issues, with the People's Voice project helping to lead the way. International experience has confirmed, through many examples, the importance of public support for administrative reform, an active civil society, and a willing bureaucracy to sustain the momentum of public sector reform. This process can only be triggered, however, by empowering citizens through information they can use collectively with the support of their own local, grassroots organizations and institutions, including the unbiased involvement of the media. To this end, citizen surveys have become an effective way to systematically gather feedback on public services and corruption and have since made an impact in building public interest and in exposing issues that require more substantive public debate.

This approach has been used in some countries to create opportunities for citizens to communicate with public agencies and to stimulate authorities to listen and be more responsive to citizens. Experience has also suggested that for maximum effect, citizen feedback mechanisms should be combined with the support of public authorities in order to improve the latter’s performance. The Public Affairs Centre (PAC) in Bangalore, India implemented one of the first successful projects of this type from 1993 to 1996. The lessons learned from the Bangalore "report card" program were taken as an integral part in the design of People’s Voice in Ukraine.

Public engagement, government commitment

The People’s Voice project originated in the context of Ukraine’s anti-corruption effort, but using an indirect set of methods. To forestall the perception that it was trying to address corruption head on, the project focused on improving transparency and establishing opportunities for service providers to be held accountable. In the process it created pressure to reduce corruption.

People’s Voice began by establishing nongovernmental organization (NGO) coalitions in four pilot cities—Ternopil, Ivano Frankivsk, Kupyansk, and Chuguiv. These initiated an engagement between local citizens and their elected officials in community development, monitored municipal service delivery, and work with public officials to address deficiencies raised through various citizen engagement mechanisms (such as public hearings, report cards, and community advisory councils).

The first phase of the project was completed in June 2003 and accomplished a number of significant results, including:

- Greater citizen accessibility to municipal decision-makers through a variety of citizen participation mechanisms—regular public hearings, permanent community advisory councils, and public awareness campaigns
- Increased capacity of NGOs to monitor service delivery, conduct research and surveys, disseminate information on municipal issues to the broader public, and increase public debate on relevant policy issues
PEOPLE’S VOICE (UKRAINE): BETTER GOVERNANCE THROUGH PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

• Development of municipal policy initiatives that address deficiencies raised by the local community and which take into account research and public dialogue generated by the NGO community.

In short, as a result of the project, mechanisms and forums now exist in the pilot cities that not only allow for the citizens’ voices to be heard, but also provide the basis for more effective policies and programs to be developed that will help to increase the “quality of life” for many citizens. By addressing the problem of corruption indirectly, by bringing transparency and “sunshine” to traditionally secretive government decision-making, a healthy transformation was achieved in both politics and governance.

Scaling up to a new phase

The second phase of the People’s Voice project represents an important effort in scaling up the methodology of the project to other regions of Ukraine with an expansion to six new cities, as well as expanding networks of like-minded individuals and community groups. This next phase, with core funding coming from the CIDA in the amount of US $2.4 million, was approved in August 2003; implementation began in November 2003. During the first few months of the project, a lead local coordinating team has been selected, a competition to determine project cities has been completed, and a baseline survey related to service delivery satisfaction has been designed and will be carried out in each of the project cities. The survey itself will identify trends, concerns, and priorities in each of the cities and--coupled with the input and guidance of stakeholders representing citizens and local authorities--will help to chart a course of dialogue, training, and activities for the next three years of the project. The continuation of the project has an important role to play in the reform process and poverty reduction because its approach is both strategic and practical: it focuses on municipal issues and on further developing methodologies in the area of municipal policy, citizen engagement, and in service delivery monitoring. Most importantly, it takes into account the concerns of local citizens and establishes permanent mechanisms with respect to public consultation.

People’s Voice, since it began, has evolved in response, recognizing what works and what doesn’t. Also, its implementation was staggered, so the mistakes made early on resulted in proactive corrections as new cities were added and new citizens’ groups were formed. Some of the key lessons learned from successful project implementation have been:

• There is need to build capacity and collaborative action with key stakeholders. In this case the stakeholders were municipal governments and civil society.

• Systematic dissemination of tools and processes promoted by the project such as citizen report cards, opinion surveys, and public hearings, in Ukraine and countries in the region has ensured greater legitimacy and acceptance.

• When processes are simple, have wide ranging applications, and have been promoted by city residents, the mechanisms are internalized and will continue to be used.
Program Description

The Ukraine People’s Voice program officially got underway in November 1999, with the core funding for the project provided by CIDA (US $1.1 million over three years). Over the duration of the project, funding was provided ad hoc from other donors for specific components of the project. The International Centre for Policy Studies (ICPS) was selected to be the executing agency in charge of project implementation, responsible for the planning and implementation of the project with the assistance of the World Bank. This participation required both managerial and professional expertise, which ICPS was able to provide as a result of its experience in working with the central government on various reform projects and as an advocate for civil society reforms.

The original design of the project consisted of five (5) distinct components that were originally developed to take place in a sequential fashion. The first component consisted of service delivery surveys of citizens, local government officials and the business environment that would determine priorities and provide analysis of the problems. The second component of the project was the public dissemination of survey findings and the facilitation of dialogue between citizen groups and government. The third component was the provision of technical assistance at the local level and was understood to overlap with the previous phase of dissemination and dialogue. The fourth component, which was to build upon technical assistance already provided, consisted of consensus building on reforms, restructuring of agencies, study tours, and training. The project was scheduled to conclude with the fifth component that would consist of an assessment of the pilot cities through a secondary survey that would include identification of the lessons and actions for the future.

Since the project was not actually implemented on the same schedule in all of the pilot cities, it was difficult to effectively determine all of the outputs and outcomes of each component in a sequential framework. In order to understand the various activities and their eventual contribution to achieving project outcomes, it is important to take a look at each of these components and to mention some of the project activities that took place under each of them.

Survey – Service Delivery Satisfaction

The project started with three different surveys that took place in each of the project cities. The first survey focused on corruption and related matters, seeking feedback from households on service delivery. The second focused on the interaction between business and local government. Finally, the third was a survey of public officials in the city that was created to gain

---

1 As an independent non-profit research organization whose mandate is to promote the introduction of public policy concepts and practices in Ukraine, ICPS has worked to increase awareness in the government and the general public of the need to analyze policy alternatives and to study the possible outcomes of any given policy prior to implementation. Established in 1994 upon the initiative of the Open Society Institute (OSI), ICPS has developed a commitment to providing a forum for substantive dialogue between representatives of the legislative and executive arms of government and the Ukrainian public.
understanding of corrupt practices based upon the perspective of the local government officials. The first two surveys were random samples, while the third was a judgmental sample. Focus group discussions preceded the design of each questionnaire and nearly 3000 people were interviewed across the four cities.

As a result of these surveys, information was gathered on the problems associated with major services, priority services which needed improvement, and the nature of improvements sought, as seen separately by households, business and officials. In addition, local NGOs became familiar with service delivery survey techniques, enabling them to conduct similar surveys in the future.

**Dissemination and Dialogue**

The principal actors in this component of the project were municipal officials, local media representatives and NGO coalitions. The major elements of this component came as a follow-up to the surveys in each of the pilot cities and were intended to raise awareness amongst local stakeholders and establish communication amongst them in proposing alternatives and innovate solutions in addressing problems raised in the surveys. This was intended to include: (1) the interpretation of survey findings, (2) assistance to the media for the dissemination of the analysis, (3) organization of public discussions of findings and remedies, and (4) facilitation of interaction between NGOs and municipal leaders. Ideas in terms of reform options and new practices to improve services were discussed in the dialogue process. Local and international experts were provided as facilitators, advisors and trainers in this process and the main responsibility for “pushing the agenda” was placed upon the various local NGO coordinators.

**Consensus Building**

Activities were subsequently directed towards building a consensus on reforms and the development of action plans for their implementation. Based on a tentative diagnosis of the municipal problems in these cities, it was possible to anticipate some of the types of reform options that needed to be brought to the attention of local municipal officials. These included: deregulation and simplification of municipal procedures, citizen charters, need for a transparent budget process, a grievance appeal system, monitoring systems for city managers as well as citizen groups and access to information. Expert advice on some or all of these reforms was required and drawn upon depending upon the consensus that emerged in the different cities. In some cases, a number of key stakeholders were brought together to discuss relevant findings, however it was decided to provide *ad hoc* support depending on the request of the municipal partners. In other words, the project was not going to push an issue or provide technical assistance to the local partners unless there was real need for it as deemed by the survey results. For the most part, the lead NGO partners in each of the project cities were used to work with the local partners to develop a consensus for the next steps.
Implementation of Reforms

The core of this component was to get experts to work closely with municipal leaders and NGOs in the cities to implement the agreed upon reforms. The mix of reform actions, which were of interest to the different cities, varied depending upon the local concerns and existing expertise. Therefore, the program had to be willing to adapt to the needs and priorities of the municipal leaders concerned. Activities common to all cities included study tours abroad (Poland, Slovakia, Lithuania, etc.) by selected leaders to learn how other countries have implemented the new reforms and practices of interest to the city, legal drafting as appropriate, and staff training to equip the bureaucracy to carry out their new functions efficiently. The transparency and accountability that were essential to corruption control were required to be built into service specific reforms (e.g., at the level of registration or taxation of business, healthcare delivery, etc). This component required for institutionalization and fine-tuning as it entailed the detailed working out of reforms, institutionalization of new systems, practices in different departments, reorientation and training of the staff and other related implementation matters.

As a result of this component, local partners were trained, service delivery was reorganized in accordance with the action plans and new performance measurement systems were introduced. There was some improvement in actual services, but for the most part there were structural changes made to improve communication and facilitated dialogue between citizens and the local authorities.

Comparative Survey – Service Delivery

Finally, the last component of the project cycle was intended to provide a comparative analysis of the perceptions of all local stakeholders after the implementation of various mechanisms. A second survey of households, businessmen and public officials was attempted in the concluding phase of the project in order to generate the feedback necessary to judge the progress of the reforms adopted by the cities. Comparison of the feedback obtained from the survey was intended to provide a basis for judging the success of the reforms as well as the processes that had been experimented through the project.

Service delivery surveys were an important result of this component. They indicated whether the pilot project had produced any changes on the ground. Lessons learned from the above experiments and interventions were meant to provide the basis for work beyond the life of the project. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, the comprehensive survey was only completed in the first pilot city, Ternopil. It is likely that the same type of survey will be completed in the other pilot city, Ivano Frankivsk, in the next phase of the project.

Implementation Process

The implementation of the People’s Voice project was met with a certain degree of success in the cities where it was implemented. This success comes from a number of factors – support for a vibrant NGO community, training for local government officials in policy development,
flexibility in project design in order to take advantage of local opportunities, qualified and constructive research and effective project management tools. The rationale for the project combined with the political context provided a fertile opportunity in which the project was implemented.

Before describing the dynamic factors that drove the fulfillment of the project objectives, it is important to describe how the project was created, in what environment it operated, how it adapted as it was implemented, what kinds of partnerships it built and what immediate results it has accomplished.

**Political Context**

When Ukraine achieved independence in 1991, the majority of reform programs being designed (both directly by government and with donor assistance) in the country were focused on the development and restructuring of the central government. Local governments (especially municipalities) were not directly involved in reform efforts despite the fact that cities and oblasts accounted for more than 40% of total public expenditures. By all accounts, local public services were in serious disarray, and public dissatisfaction with the quality of services was growing. According to many sources, limited budget resources were the major reason for this, though other factors also contributed, including: the lack of community development, the absence of new policy initiatives, and the general apathy toward reform at the regional level. The decline of the communist system in the 1980s began to create a gap between the central and local level that has not been filled adequately by any other mechanism since. The bureaucracy remains poorly trained and disoriented, thus largely continuing in its old ways throughout Ukraine. Even at the best of times, the responsiveness of public agencies to citizens was poor under the former totalitarian system and it often appeared to a certain extent that new policies and practices were not being seriously reviewed or reformed prior to implementation, especially at the local level.

With corruption reported to be rampant, especially in dealings between government and business, its corrosive effects became increasingly alarming and were widely associated with the growing level of poverty and inequality experienced by many since independence. The net effect of corruption meant that public trust was being undermined and the credibility of reforms was further weakened, thus threatening the existence of the new democratic state.

**Project Rationale**

The improvement of public services at the central and local level and control of corruption have remained high priority areas for Ukrainians over the last decade. At the same time, there have been no significant mechanisms created to tackle these issues. International experience has confirmed the importance of public support for administrative reform, and it has been necessary to create an active civil society to be able to sustain the momentum of public sector reform. This process can only be triggered, however, by empowering citizens with information that can in turn motivate them to act collectively with the support of their own local, grassroots organizations and institutions, including the unbiased involvement of the media. To this end, citizen surveys have become an effective way to systematically gather feedback on public services and corruption and
have since made an impact in building public interest and in exposing issues that require more substantive public debate.

This approach has been used in some countries to create opportunities for citizens to communicate with public agencies and to stimulate authorities to listen and be more responsive to citizens. Experience has also suggested that for maximum effect, citizen feedback mechanisms should be combined with the support of public authorities in order to improve the latter’s performance. The Public Affairs Centre (PAC) in Bangalore, India implemented one of the first successful projects of this type from 1993 to 1996. A "report card" based on such surveys was used by citizens groups to create greater public awareness about the poor performance of public service providers and to challenge them to be more efficient and responsive to their customers – the citizens. Evidence exists that, as a result of this experiment, public awareness of local problems in Bangalore has increased, civil society institutions have become more active, and their interactions with public agencies have become better organized, more purposeful, and self-sustaining. As a result, several public agencies in Bangalore have begun to take steps to improve their services. The lessons learned from the Bangalore "report card" program were taken as an integral part in the design of People’s Voice in Ukraine.

**Project Implementation: City Selection and Local Context**

The project commenced with a systematic assessment of different cities in Ukraine, in order to select three of them for project activities. After a desk review and on-site visits to ten different cities in Ukraine, it was decided to start the project in only two cities in western Ukraine, Ternopil and Ivano-Frankivsk. At this time, it was decided that the third city would be selected later into the project so that the lessons learned from implementation in the first two cities could be considered. The initial search mission determined that the two cities of Ternopil and Ivano Frankivsk were in a relatively better position and suitable for the type of activities the project would facilitate. Although the work that was conducted in Ivano Frankivsk started later than in Ternopil, many of the activities were on the same pace and in many situations joint training took place between representatives of both cities.

During this time, the project management established links with the LARGIS project (Local and Regional Government Institutional Strengthening), which was funded by DFID, to draw on their experience with training municipal officials. LARGIS had a mandate to work in the Kharkiv Oblast and was seeking to work primarily with smaller cities in eastern Ukraine. It was also looking for cooperation with another donor program that would conduct work in engaging citizens and developing the capacity of local NGO groups to monitor service delivery. This represented a good opportunity for cooperation with People’s Voice and representatives from the two projects conducted a review of possible cities where the two projects could work together.

It is important to mention that both projects did not want to work in the city of Kharkiv itself as they were looking to work with smaller cities in the oblast that are often neglected by donor programs and are in need of training and support in order to fulfill reform objectives. As a result, this led to the selection of the smaller cities of Kupyansk and Chuguiv. Given that both of these cities were smaller than Ivano Frankivsk and Ternopil and that there would be support from
two donor projects, it was decided to work in two cities rather than just one. What was significantly different in Kupyansk and Chuguiv was the lack of civil society traditions and the need to provide basic NGO management training to the local partners rather than the citizen engagement training that was taking place in the cities of Ternopil and Ivano Frankivsk. Furthermore, given the time it took to complete this selection process, the original portfolio of activities envisaged under People's Voice could not be completed in Kupyansk and Chuguiv to the extent that it was in the first two pilot cities.

**Projects Objectives: Adaptive to Local Environment**

There were a number of changes made in achieving the overall objectives of the project as the project progressed. Primarily, this involved a transition so that there would be a greater focus on helping local government officials address issues that were raised by the community. Most of the focus early on in the project was directed at conducting base-line research and supporting the local NGO community’s ability to engage citizens through public hearings, focus groups, advisory councils, etc. The information that was generated reflected a community that was concerned about the numerous problems with the city, but did not always have constructive solutions. Furthermore, they did not necessarily believe that their local government was acting in the best interest of the citizens and doing anything to improve the community. At the same time, the local government was – at the least on the surface - willing to listen to the citizens, but many public servants within the local government lacked the skills and capacity to develop and implement new programs that would be beneficial to the local community.

As a result, there was a major shift in providing support for local officials in policy development skills. This activity was addressed systematically through a one-year training program in policy analysis, offered for selected personnel from municipal governments. While the core consisted of a well-designed set of generic inputs on policy analysis and project management, the highlight was a set of learning and application exercises built into the course through which the participants addressed specific problems of the city they represented. Hence, policy training for key officers of the city government led directly to discussions with colleagues and peers on what was wrong and what service improvement initiatives should be developed.

In terms of the overall project design, it was during the early stages of implementing the project that a results-based management (RBM) framework was developed for the project and the overall objectives were adjusted slightly. This was done in order to reflect a better understanding of local stakeholder needs and also and to establish more reliable indicators for evaluating the project.

In the course of making changes to the managing framework for the project the overall goal was changed to the following: “to implement mechanisms and procedures that promotes public participation in building an effective, responsible and open government”. The objectives to support this goal were also changed slightly to the following:

- To assist selected Ukrainian cities in improving their service delivery to households and businesses, and to enhance their level of integrity in the process; and
• To strengthen the capacity of citizen groups and officials to interact with each other in order to enhance the overall quality of governance in selected cities.

These changes were discussed in the World Bank and approved by the donor (CIDA), and have subsequently been used as the basis for monitoring and evaluation. The changes were deemed reasonable, having added clarity to the project, and were not compromised the original objectives in content or spirit.

**Preliminary Results**

Both of these objectives were mutually complementary and were realized to a satisfactory extent throughout the project. This achievement needs to be placed in the context of the high risks acknowledged in the project documents (i.e. Initiating Brief for a Trust Fund, Project Proposal, etc.) and the comment that “regardless of the high risk that the objectives of the project would not be fully met, it is still worth trying, as even a partial achievement of project objectives will be a big achievement in Ukraine” (as stated in the original IBTF for the project).

**Objective #1 – Improved Service Delivery & Integrity in Local Governance**

Activities carried out in the project achieved satisfactory results in relation to the first objective. Steps to improve service delivery in the four Ukrainian cities were completed to a larger extent in Ternopil and Ivano Frankivsk, and to a lesser degree in Kupyansk and Chuguiv where implementation commenced only during the second year of the project.

The portfolio of activities envisaged in the project document and revised RBM addressed different requirements of this objective adequately. In the first place, surveys with citizens of the cities helped identify the services to be addressed by the project. Second, policy development training for municipal officials increased their ability to perceive service delivery needs and their capacity to take required steps to address related deficiencies. This included basic policy training as well as sectoral workshops with international experts. Third, some strategic institutional infrastructure that would significantly improve effectiveness of local governments in delivering services were introduced, such as information technology support which enabled the development of a system to give citizens greater access points and transparency concerning their payment for utilities and services.

Greater disclosure by local governments and willingness to consult citizens through public hearings were significant impacts in project cities. This included more information being shared during public meetings on education, transportation and communal housing issues. In some instances, these meetings were general (i.e. education) and allowed a broad scope of stakeholders (i.e. parents, teachers, students, etc.) to share their viewpoints on a multitude of different issues to the local representatives responsible for education reforms. In other instances, these public consultations pertained to a very specific issue (i.e. service improvement in communal housing units, making changes to transportation zones for local shuttle services, etc.).

Although these measures have changed the service delivery environment, major improvements in quality of service and integrity, in absolute terms will take more time to be felt at large. This was reflected in findings from the second survey with citizens of Ternopil, which
revealed that improvements have not matched expectations. These results are consistent with experiences in cities outside Ukraine where similar efforts that have been carried out.

**Objective #2 – Improved Citizen Engagement & Service Delivery Monitoring**

Activities carried out in the project achieved satisfactory results in relation to the second objective. Steps to improve capacity of citizens and city officials to interact with each other in the context of city governance and service delivery in the four Ukrainian cities were completed to a larger extent in Ternopil and Ivano Frankivsk, and to a lesser degree in Kupyansk and Chuguiv.

A strategic mix of tools and activities, which went well beyond the original project design were applied to in order to support this objective. Citizen monitoring and feedback through periodic surveys was firmly established as a practice in the four cities. Second, the sustainability of this practice was ensured through competence and experience to continue surveys in civil society in each of these four cities. Third, participatory processes like public hearings were given priority in the action agenda, whereby personnel of city governments and citizens engaged in new modes of interfacing with each other. The diversity in initiative can be seen from the fact that youth clubs used surveys to assess and promote Ukrainian music in the city, while a sports club organized a public hearing on certain aspects of the city budget. Fourth, public awareness and media participation were carefully promoted to widen the base of civic engagement.

In each of the four cities where the project was implemented, there are now various mechanisms by which local citizens are engaged in the policy development process and there have been numerous examples that demonstrate the importance of social inclusion in order to improve the “quality of life” for local citizens. Beyond the improvement of skills of local NGO and municipal officials in developing policies and conducting different forms of citizen engagement – there are a number of different points of reference that contribute to poverty reduction in Ukraine. These include: improvements in quality of local education, transparency and ease of payments for local utilities, regulatory reforms that have supported business development, more efficient transportation routes and more vocal representatives of social marginalized groups (youth, pensioners, women, etc.).

The emphasis in this phase of the project, in relation to this second objective, was on NGO development and intermediary organizations. As in other countries, the membership and personnel of these bodies is a stratum speaking on behalf of the city’s residents. In the course of the project, a small number of community based groups such as residents associations in condominiums, and parents groups in schools, have emerged. If this trend is fostered, it will ensure greater depth in the long-term impact of achievements in relation to this objective.

**Expanding the Program: Scaling Up**

The People’s Voice Project will enter its second phase in 2003 and it will scale up to six new cities through the facilitation of activities, mechanisms, and procedures that promote public participation in building an effective, responsible and open government at the municipal level. In general, it is important to note that People’s Voice project works in cooperation with a number of
other civil society projects under the auspices of the World Bank’s program in Ukraine. The objectives of the civic engagement strategy are linked to the proposed CAS objectives of facilitating an inclusive and responsive government, strengthening of civil society, and improving accountability of public officials.

Some of the innovations that may be included in the second phase are that of a more aggressive program for sharing lessons learned and joint problem solving between project cities and other cities in Ukraine. This will include early discussions between municipal policy officials, NGO pilot coordinators, and the local media. Training for municipal policy working group members in policy implementation, in addition to training for NGO coalition members in the policy reform process will be facilitated.

**Impact Analysis**

The project appears to have made a considerable impact already. Although the project officially ended in October 2002, the final evaluation found continuing active relationships between NGO coalition members, initiative working groups and municipal officials; municipal officials still seek citizen feedback and input through the use of public hearings, consultations, and through plans for further surveys and an increase in transparency of local government decision-making as evidenced by budget hearings and public hearings in education, transportation and housing issues. The mayors involved seem to be highly supportive. Other cities that were not part of the pilot are beginning to use public hearings. Improvement in the quality of services and the public appreciation of that will take a longer time, as was the case in similar experiments in India.

In many ways, the project was *unique* in its strategic objectives and approach. Many donor programs in Ukraine have focused solely on civil society development or public administration reform. The project, however, worked in both of these priority areas. It supported the development of mechanisms to engage citizens (which required support and training for both NGO representatives and municipal officials), and it was implemented at the municipal level where service delivery issues are more immediate – where there are a number of core issues that citizens consider and discuss on a daily basis – issues that municipal governments must openly and actively address in order to improve the delivery of services and thus improve the very life of the community itself.

The modified objectives of the project reflect the long-term strategy of "better governance though public participation", and include the following:

- Community/civic activism in policy debates;
- Transparency of local government decisions;
- Accountable politicians; and
- More effective and efficient public services.

Progress has been made in each of these objectives, but there is still a long way to go in sustaining the practices of citizen engagement and improving service delivery. In general, the
development of new skills and procedures for local government policy development now gives local government officials the capacity to understand and address local stakeholder issues and concerns. While this has not yet reached the “impact” stage, it is an important step in developing procedures for local partners to solve their own problems through a systematic process that includes permanent consultation mechanisms that will help address deficiencies raised by the local community.

There has been a moderate increase in transparency of local government decision-making. Through the number of public hearings and consultations, information campaigns and advisory councils in the pilot cities, local politicians and public servants are increasingly being kept accountable to respond and defend their policies and programs.

The project addressed a need in Ukraine to improve the capacity of citizens to interface with the government, and within local governments to deliver service more effectively. As the outcome above would reflect, the capacity created in the four cities is not only self-sustaining but also spreading within these cities, as applications of these processes are replicated by both civil society and local governments. The capacity that has been created through this project is widely seen in the range of applications and other projects it can link with. Hence the experience in the four cities is also a valuable model that other cities and donors have sought to replicate.

Along with survey results, policy development training, report card methodology, etc., the Citizen Participation Handbook is shared throughout Ukraine at various conferences and through partnerships with various local projects, including LARGIS and the Partnership for Transparent Society (USAID) project. It is likely these types of materials will be used very extensively when the project is scaled up.

**Driving Factors**

A number of driving factors were essential in realizing the effective implementation of the project. The most important of these factors was a willingness of the local government to accept criticism of the community and establish access points for citizens to either obtain information or make requests from the local government for clarifications. While there still remains a long way to go for local partnerships between governments and local citizen groups to work together in solving problems, many of the “barriers” that formerly existed between the state and the citizenry have been eliminated. Both the public and the local governments have realized that their continual cooperation is mutually beneficial. Numerous challenges remain in sustaining partnerships as both groups gradually develop better understandings of their rights and responsibilities.

Furthermore, the other important driving factor is that there is an underlying assumption being developed that as the principles for cooperation between the public and the local improved, so too will service delivery, infrastructure development, and more effective municipal planning (including regulatory aspects). As a result, it is likely that there will greater economic investment in the community as whole - which will create jobs, generate tax revenue and generally improve
the social-economic climate of the community. While the ability to generate direct economic investment can be hindered by national policies, more efforts are currently being made in decentralization of economic authority. As such, local communities will be charged with greater responsibilities to seek creative and cooperative solutions to their social and economic problems. By accepting and building the principles related to the People’s Voice project, they have already begun to develop the principles that will facilitate economic development and social improvements. This acceptance itself is one of the main driving forces for the project.

**Commitment and Political Economy for Change**

The successful implementation of the project at the local government level was not only necessary, but it was dependent upon an acceptance and willingness of local government officials to cooperate. At the beginning of the project, there was a general concern that most local governments would not be receptive to criticisms and perhaps would be hostile to the community upon receiving negative feedback. In many cases, local officials initially appeared open to such criticisms and yet it was still felt that their “openness” was just a front in attempting to improve their public image. This type of barrier was feared four years ago during the beginning of the project and will likely continue to be a barrier in future stages of the project. In general, however, it is a resistance to change that can sometimes be overcome with a better understanding of the possible results and a qualified and professional reasoning through research and constructive criticisms.

In this sense, the “push” from the local community needed to be based upon qualified research and potential recommendations for improvements in service delivery, not just a series of “angry voices”. This could only be accomplished through training, guidance and support for the development of citizen initiatives – such as report cards on transportation issues, community advisory councils in education or public hearings in communal housing efforts. Furthermore, it was important that the perceptions and concerns were not only well-documented and presented as to provide a solution to a community problem, but that the quantitative measure of the community’s voice could be compared to further feedback efforts. This would determine if they were satisfied by the response of the local government and if further efforts were required.

Another important consideration related to the local political context that had an impact on the facilitation on the project was the timing of activities immediately before and after municipal elections. Many of these observations were noted and discussed during the local elections in Ukraine in 2002 and are based upon a reality that most NGOs are somewhat connected to political parties. As such, during this period it was difficult to plan project activities that cast local politicians in a negative manner, as there was fear of repercussion. Furthermore, it was felt that many NGOs might also lose their access points with the municipality if the incumbent party did not win. In the city of Ternopil, for example, a new mayor came to power during the life of the project and any credibility and connections that the local project coordinator made with the previous mayor had been lost. These concerns only serve to stress the need for impartial research that could be used to push a reform initiative (i.e. a specific issue) based upon the needs of the community, rather than information that portrays local government officials in
negative light. Should reports and public consultations remain issue-based and impartial, there is a potential opportunity for local NGOs to present ideas – based upon community feedback - to newly elected officials as they start their new mandates.

It is important to also note that the first two cities for the project – Ternopil and Ivano Frankivsk - were chosen because it was perceived that was a willingness to accept complaints and negative publicity (they were chosen after a review of at least ten cities in Ukraine). Despite assurances from the mayor’s of each city, the commitment of local officials to undertake reforms was somewhat mixed. In general, there was an initial desire to address deficiencies through policy development and public consultation but some local government officials couldn’t move beyond the mentality that the efforts of their work would lead to a greater quality of life for the local citizenry. This problem was overcome through the provision of policy training for a broader number of local public servants and through the pursuance of initiatives in areas where there appeared to be a good opportunity for an immediate success (i.e. education, communal housing, regulatory issues, etc.).

The second survey in Ternopil did not uncover many serious changes in service improvement and/or attitudes toward corruption. At first, this was disapointing for the project management team as it appeared as though efforts made by the project (based upon the feedback from the first survey in 1999) were not really manifested into efforts to combat poverty, corruption and service deficiencies. However, it is important to note that the experience of broader re-surveys from other countries (i.e. India) also suggested significant improvements were not immediately apparent. The reality is that more time and efforts are required before so that quantifiable changes based upon the feedback from the general public can be generated.

In Ivano Frankivsk, even though a broader follow-up survey was not conducted as part of the first phase of the project, a number of smaller quarterly surveys were conducted. This was facilitated by the local NGO coordinators for the project and helped to determine trends over a period of time and gave answers directly to the local government on specific issues. For example, as part of the reconstruction of the downtown core, citizens provided feedback on their preferences for park space and business zones. Over the series of questionnaires, citizens also provided answers concerning their satisfaction with community safety, garbage collection, road repairs, access to information, etc. While it is planned to conduct a follow-up survey in Ivano Frankivsk similar to the one in Ternopil, it was a combination of local NGO partners and the local government itself that made a request to conduct the quarterly surveys as they provided answers to immediate questions of concern for the city and identified more options that could be somewhat easily implemented.

What is important to realize in the democratic development in Ukraine is that the “business of politics” is still very much in transition and that too often business interests and bribes are used to sway political leaders. Furthermore, there is still a certain degree of suspicion amongst public leaders of the intentions of local NGO leaders and their ability to develop objective analysis of social and economic issues. The implementation of the project also very much depended upon an active NGO community that was not only able to facilitate surveys, workshops and publications, but was able to engage both citizens and local politicians into
constructive discussions and able to work with the local media in exposing issues to a broader
current. Efforts are still required in working with both local officials and community leaders so
that they both can realize their work in mutually beneficial environment.

**Institutional Innovation**

While much of the work being accomplished at the local government level is still very primitive,
it should be noted that the concept of transparency of information, access to information and the
development of partnerships among stakeholders in order to develop creative solution to difficult
community problems has actually come a long way in the past 5-7 years. The work that is being
done is quite unique and requires further support so that the citizen engagement mechanisms can
be sustained over time.

Building the local capacity through training and grant-support has been a successful
component of the project and has made a contribution to its success. However, the success will be
only be confirmed if the partnerships and trust between citizens, civil society leaders, politicians
and business leaders are maintained. In this sense, the training that was provided by the project
was critical because not only did it help the local NGO community to become more vibrant and
active, it gave it the ability to determine more readily local development trends and the immediate
needs of the community. Once again, without a vibrant NGO community that is willing to push
for reforms and take an active part in hopes of improving the economic well being of its
community, there is less likelihood that a project of this nature could even be implemented.

In building the cooperation between the NGO community and the local government, it is
also important to realize the lack of training and support for public service improvements. The
type of training that was provided was unique and innovative for many local officials because it
was probably was the first time they had received such training in policy development. Too often
is the case in Ukraine when public servants are tasked with certain responsibilities without
adequate support and guidance. There is also a belief that what is perceived as “training” is often
just a directive from a superior. Therefore, the policy development training that was delivered by
the project using both Ukrainian and international experts was deemed innovative because it was
structured, relied upon the follow-up work of the participants themselves and also was extremely
relevant to their daily work. In many cases, the policy papers that were developed by the
participants involved some degree of public consultation that relied upon the research or input of
the NGO community. This in itself was also deemed very innovative and the formats for policy
development will be used well after the life of the project.

**Learning and Experimentation**

As the whole, the concept of communication between the community and the local government
was somewhat of a foreign concept in many cities in Ukraine. It is now becoming more and more
readily accepted as a standard practice. This in itself is very much a learning and experimentation
exercise primarily because it relies upon the community to help set the local agenda for reform,
but more importantly because there is no one right way to implement. What might work in one
city might not work in another - simply because the community might not deem the same issue as
a problem, the local NGO community might possess a totally different skill set, or the local
government officials might already have the capacity to address the issue raised by the
community. In this way, the project is a very unique exercise in which many different
methodologies could be employed and different issues are addressed. While there are some
commonalities between cities (and this makes for interesting comparative studies), the ability of
the local partnership to set the agenda not only makes the issues more relevant and garners
interest, but it helps to ensure local ownership and sense of accomplishment once a result has
been achieved.

The project was designed in such a flexible way so that it could take advantage of other
initiatives and available expertise that was being funded by other donors. In fact, many initiatives
were either designed or implemented with direct financial assistance from other donors or in
cooperation with other projects. One positive example of this cooperation between other projects
was in the design of the municipal policy training program that was adapted from a training
program for representatives from the Ministry of Economy. In fact, it was deemed more effective
at the local government level since many of the policies that were developed were more
immediate: how do people commute to their place of work? who will fix their apartment when
repairs are needed? why has their garbage not been collected? will there be hot water? how well
will their children be educated? where do they go when they have a complaint? These are the
types of issues that citizens are concerned about on a daily-basis and that municipal governments
need to readily address in order to improve the service delivery.

Furthermore, despite the interesting research being done in the city by way of surveys
with the general public, changes were only being seen in a few selected areas where local NGOs
and community leaders had pushed a particular cause. From the standpoint of the project’s
objective, what was found more productive was the completion was the facilitation of smaller
surveys that resulted in “report cards”. These tended to focus on specific issues and provided
local government officials, along with various stakeholders, the rationale for relatively important
changes in how services are delivered. In Ternopil, the completion of “report cards” provided
impetus for a series of public discussions on a number of different topics:

- The impact of local policies and programs on women;
- Improving service delivery in housing management;
- Establishment of educational advisory board to review school policies and programs; and
- Increased public access to local transportation shuttle services.

The public was involved with these discussions not only through the surveys that were
conducted but also by way of participation in follow-up community meetings. Discussions in
education reform and the establishment of a locally-driven advisory board came as a result of a
series of consultations and hearing with different stakeholders: teachers, students, parents,
administrators, etc. A similar experience – report card, followed up by stakeholder consultations -
in the transportation sphere produced significant changes to how the city manages licenses for
shuttle service providers. This resulted in an overhaul of how shuttle routes are scheduled and
provided better service, especially in communities where there are smaller-income families and
where there are more employees of local factories.

Project activities in the city of Ivano Frankivsk supported efforts in privatization of local
communal housing units. As part of this process, research conducted by a local NGO was able to
better identify the concerns of local tenants, including their dissatisfaction with general services
(heating, water, etc.) and lack of information on where to go in case of problems (broken pipes
and windows, debris in entrance ways, etc.). A series of consultations with tenant groups further
highlighted these concerns. During the resulting negotiations to privatize the housing units and
create service units to deal with repairs, cleaning and general management of these units, a
number of stipulations and penalties for inability to adhere to service standards were written into
contracts. These contracts are now being used as further communal housing units are being
privatized and a related set of guidelines development by the local government are referred to
quite often as part of this process. A follow-up review of these guidelines and a study of service
improvements is currently in the process of being developed.

It is also important to note that another project – Partnership for Transparent Society
(PTS) - was developed based upon the model of the People’s Voice project. This program was
developed by Development Alternative International (DAI) under the auspices the USAID
program in Ukraine. It is implemented in nine (9) cities in Ukraine. The framework for this
program is loosely based upon the framework that was developed for the People’s Voice
program. It has the focus of creating coalitions that will monitor corruption at the regional level
and seeks to expose to the public issues that are not often addressed by local officials. Numerous
consultations have taken place between this program and People’s Voice in terms of survey
design, training methodology and publications.

External Catalysts

It should be pointed out that the provision of training and financial support of international donors
as a catalyst for this kind of project is very helpful. However, in for the program to become more
sustainable it is important that the initiatives and the process advocated by the People’s Voice
methodology does not necessarily become donor-driven. In this way, it is significantly different
from many other donor programs where local partners and recipients do not have a say in setting
the agenda. In scaling up the People’s Voice project, the donor-driven nature and pitfalls that has
faulted many technical assistance programs over the years in Ukraine is avoided. In many
instances, the methodology for the project has even been used by the local partners to encourage
support from other grant-giving bodies and even local philanthropic providers. And there are also
numerous examples where the methodology (ie. report cards, hearings, etc.) has been used to
develop initiatives and push reforms in other sectors within the municipalities where the project is
applied.
Lessons Learned

- The project addressed capacity building and collaborative action with both key stakeholders, namely municipal governments and civil society, in a balanced manner. This approach makes it possible to realize the benefit from activities and investments, even in the short run. The learning is applicable to public administration reform projects pursued with international assistance as well as national initiatives, across the world.

- Most activities of the project could be explained through concepts that were easy to understand for officials and citizens. By taking measured steps, good governance projects can succeed in minimizing opposition and ensuring sustainability of what has been achieved. This emphasis on simplification may appear to be avoidance of hard issues – on the contrary, this approach helps to create awareness, build support and the confidence of citizens, to take hard decisions, as was evidenced in Ternopil.

- By using feedback from residents of cities to determine issues to be addressed, the project ensured that significant immediate problems were addressed in the course of different components of the project. This approach, of grounding technical assistance, including capacity building, in local problem solving, can ensure significant advantages in securing civil society participation and visible impact.

- The cooperation of local governments in Ivano Frankivsk and Ternopil was of a very high order. Detailed scanning of local conditions, including local interest and demand, and careful selection of cities, on the lines of what was carried out by implementers of the project, can play a critical role in ensuring that ground conditions meet requirements for implementing specific project components.

- Activities of the project attracted keen participation from a wide range of NGOs in the selected cities. They included rock groups, football clubs and business development projects, in addition to quasi-governmental groups like urban development agencies. It is important that implementation of service delivery initiatives appeals to and provides roles for groups that are not regularly connected to such themes.

- The manner in which city residents could interface with city governments changed significantly through the local government’s initiatives for public disclosure and public hearings. When processes are simple, have wide ranging applications and have been promoted by city residents, the mechanisms are internalized and will continue to be used.

- Systematic dissemination of tools and processes promoted by the project such as citizen report cards, opinion surveys and public hearings, in Ukraine and countries in the region has ensured greater legitimacy and acceptance. This investment in dissemination and creating wider acceptance is critical for governance initiatives, so that regional and national governments support legislation and financial investments for follow-up action.

   There were some lessons on issues to be avoided too. They include, in summary, the following.
• The project originated in the context of the anti-corruption effort in the country. But corruption is an issue where quick results are difficult to generate. Hence, the perception that it was trying to address this issue head on, in the course of surveys, should be considered with caution. In contrast, the focus was directed towards improving transparency and setting in place opportunities for service providers to be held accountable, and indirectly putting pressure to reduce corruption.

• NGOs have gained significant volume of assistance from donors in the last decade, for developing civil society in Ukraine. However, this project revealed that many NGOs and their leaders closely ally with local political leadership in order to influence policy and make quick impact. Notwithstanding the benefit of such collaboration, the impact of elections can be drastic on such NGOs. It would be useful, therefore, to devote attention and effort, to support the next tier of civil society, such as community based organizations and neighbourhood groups, which focus on limited issues and are likely to be co-opted.

• This project was ambitious in terms of innovative content but of limited size in terms of geographical coverage or intensity of action. The idea behind the project was to develop it comprehensively in pilot cities and use this experience and lessons in scaling it up to other cities (This will be accomplished by expanding to six more cities during the next phase of the project). However, such projects can have widespread impact only when connected to larger national programs, which mandate all local governments to modernize or follow new administrative practices. Hence, it would be useful to have a component in these innovative projects, which addresses the task of finding bridges for scaling up and influencing emerging large-scale initiatives.

• A three-year time frame, for a project of this content, is adequate to introduce new ideas and operating modalities. But this period was not adequate for continuing or repeating the chain of activities, leaving some concerns about the sustainability and continuity of some components. For example, the re-survey could be carried out in only one of the four cities, and re-surveys in the other three cities can take place only when funding becomes available through another donor assisted project or the second phase of this project. It is essential to address the issue of continuity, and provide targeted support for such critical follow-up activities, either through the project design or establishing modalities to facilitate the same during project implementation.
References

Implementation Completion Memorandum. (June 30, 2003) Suresh Balakrishnan and Tom Monastyrski.


