

1. Introduction

WVA Armenia has joined CV&A piloting NOs by welcoming WVAI initiative to conduct case study on CV&A application and efficiency in March 2010. For conducting the case study as per the guide WV Armenia case study team was formed¹ by the participation of: *Ms. Kristine Mikhailidi, ADP Operations Manager; Ms. Diana Boyakhchyan, NO Assistant; Ms. Tatevik Davtyan, TST Advocacy and Gender Expert; Mr. Artur Martirosyan, TST Community Engagement Expert, Head of the Case Study Team.*

As per the Case Study Guide provided, a one day workshop was conducted in March 9, 2010 by Artur Martirosyan, who was leading the case study process in Armenia.

During the workshop the following topics were discussed:

1. Purpose of case study and research questions
2. Case study Guide
3. Data collection procedures
4. Schedule for doing case studies
5. Outline of case study report

As part of the planning process, the team decided to focus on two ADPs: Stepanavan and Alaverdi². Selection of the communities for the study (one per ADP) was given to the ADPs. Based on the criteria set by the Case study guide the ADPs Managers after consultations with their teams came back with the following communities, that became case study sites - Chochkan community in Alaverdi ADP and Hobardzi community in Stepanavan ADP.

After the case study sites were identified the detailed schedule was developed with involvement of relevant ADP staff members. All necessary data collection tools were translated. According to the schedule two team members visited Alaverdi ADP Chochkan community in March 17-18, 2010, while other two conducted case study field work in Stepanavan ADP Hobardzi community in March 19 and 22, 2010. Each case study participant narrated down, translated the collected data, as well as provided personal reflections on the process. The reflections were shared and discussed during the team meeting. Based on the data gathered and reflection meeting the Case Study analytical report was prepared and finalized. Throughout the process various details were clarified and coordinated with the global team through e-mails, skype calls and webex conferences.

The sector of education was selected for both communities for making the comparative analyses as well. The people to participate in the data collection processes for interviews and focus groups discussion were selected through purposive sampling and people for MSC stories – through random sampling.

¹ All of the members included into the case study team had an extensive experience in conducting various discussions and surveys through active community engagement.

² Alaverdi and Stepanavan ADPs were selected since those are the ADPs where CV&A related PNSF is in place due to the implementation of “Policy Change through Citizen Empowerment” three-year project funded by WV UK.

2. Research findings

- a. Researchers should supply a narrative description to each question

HOW HAS CITIZEN VOICE AND ACTION CONTRIBUTED TO SIGNIFICANT CHANGE?

1. What are the most significant changes resulting from Citizen Voice and Action to date?

As the Most Significant the story by the children of Chochkan Community was selected by the CV&A Case study team.

“Improvement of our Chochkan community”

As long as community children can remember their Chochkan village never had a kindergarten. From their parents they heard that there was very good one long ago, which was closed down after the collapse of the Soviet Union and never reopened again. There is an old kindergarten building in the community, which is almost totally destroyed due to not being used for many years. The CV&A process with facilitation of WVA mobilized the people of Chochkan community. Couple of active community members took the initiative to lead this process. As a result parents and community local government (LSG) together found joint solutions and created opportunity for small kids in Chochkan to have better and more interesting childhood. Community people put together an action plan on what should be done in order to have a kindergarten in the community. Based on the community agreement achieved during the CV&A interface meeting, LSG provided three rooms in the building of community Cultural House and some construction materials. Additional construction materials were supported through WVA Armenia Alaverdi ADP. LSG paid for specialized construction works and parents and just community people who has experience in construction renovated these three rooms. Alaverdi ADP also assisted with training on pre-school education for two young specialists who were selected by the community as teachers for the kindergarten. Some old furniture and toys were brought, repaired and cleaned from the old building of the kindergarten. Parents were bringing bed closes, curtains, pillows, small carpets, flowers, etc. – everything to make the kindergarten rooms as welcoming for children as possible. One of the children said: “Go and see our kindergarten, it’s like a sunny place in the middle of our village, see how children are happy there and how parents are willing to be part of it and assist as much as possible. Our village mayor goes there frequently too to see how things are going and what else can be done.”

The salaries of the kindergarten workers and 50% of the food are paid by Local Government. Other 50% of the food is covered through monthly fees paid by parents.

Why is this significant to you?:

“Younger children have opportunity to learn from very early years”

“Parents at home don’t spend time with their children, they don’t have time, they are in the field and gardens busy with agricultural works the whole days long”

“For many years people were talking about the need for a kindergarten, but nothing was happening. WV helped our community to come together and finally have what we wanted to have. Together we can do more”.

“It’s always good to have clever people rather than uneducated and stupid. More you invest in children, better results will be in the future”

“The life in our community started to positively changed, people don’t want to leave, they are more optimistic”

“Children are better prepared for school, so they will study easier and with pleasure”

“Now we have opportunity to communicate and visit children from neighbouring communities. We visit them, for example to learn how they organize the works of their Student’s Councils. It is more interesting when there is an opportunity to share. And it is easier to do something when you have an experience of others”

As a result of this significant change can you identify lessons or recommendations for the project?:

It is important to hear children’s opinion as well. We also have things to suggest. When children are involved into discussions, they are more motivated to help and do something by themselves for the project, they are more willing to contribute. When adults decide instead of children, kids are in majority of cases disengaged, as far as in many cases adults make wrong assumptions that they know better what is good for children.

“It would be great if we, as children could be involved in discussions not only when the issues relate to the school, but community issues in general. We have a lot of things to suggest”.

In both communities, where the case study was conducted there was a clear realization by people of a change happening in their communities. It was noticeable that community members were more focusing on the start-up of the process of change, which will be further developed and expanded, rather than just acknowledgment of a single achievement. In both communities the real achievement of a tangible result (i.e. opening of a kindergarten) was very encouraging and inspiring for people.

Chochkan Parents: «We simply wanted very much to provide education opportunity for our children. Of course we try to spend time with them at home as well. But in the pre-school it is done in a more structural way. Besides children socialize with each other, which is very important»

Hobardzi Kindergarten employees: The most significant change that has happened in our community was the opening of the kindergarten. The fact that after so many years the children of our community have access to pre-school education is probably the greatest achievement for us.

Hobardzi Parents: Kindergarten re-opening has been the best things for us, before our children had nowhere to attend.

Achieving a tangible and visible result, such as a kindergarten operation opening, was in the case of two communities studied some kind of a «quick win», which also brought to more intangible, but deeper changes. Thus, it was easy to observe the increased belief of people that they can really achieve something by themselves. It was linked to increased ownership around their community related issue.

Chochkan Community Mayor: *Once they see the tangible results and feel the progress, they became enthusiastic and engaged. People started to be more interested on the priorities put in our community development plan. Before no one was even cared that such a document exists.*

Parents from Chochkan: *«We have seen that a lot of things are in our hands, we need to be active and bring positive change to our lives».*

Parents: *«We have something that all of us are proud of, regardless do we have children of pre-school age or not. Now we are sure that we can resolve many other issues and make our community better and better»*

Kindergarten employees: *Our success of pulling this process off has been the other great achievement of the mobilization process; we have regained faith as community members that if we work together than we can achieve something*

Local Council Member: *After the kindergarten opening has become possible, through the CVA process we have also worked on improving the conditions at the local health post and our next project will be working on opening a youth center for the youth of our community. We have realized that our joint efforts can actually pay off and after the first successful experience we are going for other ones.*

Chochkan community kindergarten's Principle: *People became active. Now they are not reluctant to think around the community needs. Now they demand openness and accountability from the community administration. For me the situation when people participate in finding solutions to the existing problems, when there is joint planning of activities by people's participation, when we can attract other resources from outside is real significant change in the life of our community.*

Stepanavan ADP TDF: *MSC is uniting people, so that they believed in their capabilities, that they can bring about a change. People have started demanding better life. They'll be even more demanding if their social condition changed. In general, the CVA process was deepening and bringing to greater changes in those communities where people managed to have quick wins. For most of the people the most significant change is what they have obtained materially in the process (e.g. kindergarten, health post, etc.), however the very fact that they have become hopeful again that their joint efforts combined with efforts of external organizations can result in something positive have been a good achievement in itself.*

Alaverdi ADP TDF: *People also have ownership to what is going on in their community which is new since before they used to think that all community problems should be solved solely by the community administration.*

Besides, throughout the case study process it was noticeable how the community members, including children's, confidence was growing around understanding on available possibilities and more importantly realizing their own capabilities to lead their own development. During Soviet times community members were in general passive recipients of the government provisions. The CV&A process helped them to see opportunity and most importantly a meaning for their participation and engagement.

Chochkan Parents: *We understood that there is no need to seat and wait until somebody comes and does something for us. Probably we do not have the best conditions in our kindergarten, but we have the kindergarten, where our children play and learn new things. We started small. And we have a desire to make it better and better.*

Chochkan Parents: *«Before we were not realizing that most of the things can be easily resolved with our own resources and efforts».*

Hobardzi Parent: *I didn't know that I can be so active, and have contribution and active participation in the community life, make suggestions and do something for not only my family but other people as well. I really enjoy it.*

Alaverdi ADP TDF: *People started to participate on their own will, not for the sake of somebody as they were used but for their community.*

Alaverdi ADP Manager: *Community became united, because as a result of CV&A process community members started to clearly understand the concrete steps that should be done to overcome the difficulties and obstacles. They have seen that what they want is not something unreachable. They suggested by themselves, they've implemented, they managed. This is the most valuable for me, because before this community people were simply passive recipients, now they are actively looking for solutions, finding them, mobilizing and using resources available and simply moving forward. Many things now seems easy, which they were thinking before as something irresolvable. People also started to understand real problem and root causes. For example, they started to realize the issue with quality of education, not just destroyed building of the kindergarten or school, which was their approach before. Above all, this process creates strong ownership of the community as well.*

When people realized that there are resources available, when they realized the possibility of real influence on the existing situation to change it positively, these brought to increased mobilization of the community members and desire to act together and have a personal contribution to the process. The attitude of people to think only about their own families started to be slowly changing. The benefits of sharing started to be slowly realized by the community members.

Chochkan Parent: «We were able to finally implement what we were talking about for many years. The groups' discussions and general meeting helped us set up clear steps, make role distribution and simply start acting.»

Chochkan Parents: «The CV&A process helped us to see how much resources we have. Moreover, we have realized that we are resource by ourselves»

Hobardzi Parents: The meetings we had held as parents were the best thing resulting in this process. Before we could go days without communicating, however since we had gained a space for regular meetings and exchange of ideas we had an opportunity to learn a lot from each other.

Hobardzi Community mayor: The fact that our community members have realized how important it is to work together has been a great achievement, apart from the actual fact that we have managed to reopen the kindergarten as well as improve the working conditions at the local health post.

Chochkan Community mayor: “When people are united it is always possible to find resources and get what we want to get even with such a limited budget our community has. Resources and possibilities are always available, you simply need to have a will and desire to make them serve for people. For example last week the mayor from the close village came to see how we organized the kindergarten and brought three big bags of potato, saying that they had good harvest this year. This is another contribution to child well-being.”

Chochkan LSG administration representative: «Community members, government, WVA, community supporters who live outside the village but still want to help as much as possible – all of us were unified around the same goal. And each one of us was ready to contribute to achieve this goal»

Head of the Department of Education at Territorial Administration body: The most significant change is the engagement of parents in the educational process we are struggling for. Parents probably are the major driving force here.

One of very important outcomes of this increased inspiration and belief was increased hope for the future, where people started to associate their future more with their community rather than with unclear future abroad.

Chochkan village mayor: «It was interesting to observe that the “hope” was linked to more investments of people into agriculture, rather than migration»

As a significant change the respondents were also prioritizing the increased opportunity for raising their voice and expressing their opinion around issues that affect their lives. This was particularly true for children. Though children are highly valued in Armenian society, adults rarely see them as somebody who can and should have an opinion and influence decision making. Through CV&A process children have got a real opportunity and a platform to voice up their concerns and come up with suggestions.

Hobardzi Children: *What we really liked about the meetings that we were really asked to express our opinion. It feels good that you are not treated just as a child, but you are also taken seriously.*

Chochkan Children: *During the meetings we held we mentioned several things that we would like to see changed in our school and we start seeing the positive change process around those things. most significant changes.*

Social worker: *Before the meetings the villagers would have never believed that someone would ask for their opinion. There's a significant change in people, they feel their opinion is heard, and they can change something to better through expressing their opinion. The way of thinking of both parents and children is changing. Every man needs to be pushed and motivated at first. These meetings (CV&A) were a kind of a «push» for us. They give people strength.*

Raised voice was even stronger with realization of “rights-based” background by community people. Throughout the CV&A process it was obvious that in majority of cases people are unaware of their rights. It was difficult for community people to formulate their demands, thus mainly the situations were ending with blaming the government or community leaders were just conflicting with people trying to force them to for example pay taxes. The process of recognition of state entitlements was beneficial both for the community people, as well as for service providers, though it seems a bit paradoxical. Through CV&A facilitation in Armenia the cases when service providers were unaware on what should be provided to the population, were not rare. So, awareness raising on state entitlements was beneficial both for service users as well as for service providers.

Chochkan Parents: *«It was important to know that establishment of a kindergarten is one of the entitlements of the LSG, which was announced even during the election campaign, but as usual was forgotten after the election»*

Hobardzi Parents: *«Before we never talked about our rights and rights of our children. It was really empowering to think from the perspective that «we have a right» for something»*

Alaverdi ADP TDF: *People are now more aware about their rights and they know what exactly to demand from the service providers. I would like to mention also the some kind of a “contest” between the community active group (CAG) and the community administration on who takes the initiative for community development.*

Throughout the case study the strengthening of one of CV&A core elements – accountability – was observed and stressed by people. In particular it was obvious the increased responsibility and responsiveness of LG representatives to fulfill their roles and responsibilities. It was encouraging to see the positive attitude of power holders and their valuing of a trust of people whom they serve.

Chochkan Community Mayor: *«People started to trust the LSG more, because they've seen the real work and promises being implemented. They've seen that LSG is here really to serve the community. And we as LSG are really here for serving the community. These meetings are also an opportunity to share what is being done.»*

Hobardzi Village Mayor: *I am happy with even more trust and positive attitude of people towards LG. It is good when you, as LG, are not constantly blamed and do not have to constantly find various justifications. You are more efficient when people have trust and you have their support. Through this we can really achieve a lot. And I don't believe that we would not be able to find supporters.*

Alaverdi ADP TDF: *Significant change is the change of attitude of community mayors who see the practical assets from this process. The transparency and accountability works for power holders as well, since people start to trust them and not just constantly blame. People now believe that their voice is heard and government is acting to solve the issues brought to their attention.*

Moreover, LG representatives mentioned that this process helped them to realize their responsibilities and make their work more efficient

LSG administration representative: As LG representatives we also learned how to contribute to this process. Sometimes we really don't know how to participate and simply tell to the Mayor «you decide, we trust you». Now i realize that this is not about trust or mistrust, but we simply need to avoid one-man decisions, for the best of our community. Due to my work i am being frequently absent from the village, but now i am realizing the importance of my participation in the community governance. So, i always try to put aside all my work and be present during key community meetings.

2. What are the contributing enabling factors? (Why have changes occurred?)

2a. How has the external environment contributed to significant changes resulting from Citizen Voice and Action?

In both communities all groups included into the case study mentioned that CV&A process provided a framework and bases to be engaged. Communities mentioned that WV's facilitation guided people to have a logical sequence of steps that brought to actual changes happening in their communities.

Chochkan Social Worker: *Introducing CV&A WVA helped us to understand where to start and how to move forward.*

Hobardzi Kindergarten employees: *Our efforts were significant; however the impact of external factors on our success has been tremendous. The external facilitation from WV was the first incentive for us to get together.*

The community people, stakeholders and WVA field staff interviewed during the CV&A case study process, gave lots of importance to the external resources and prescribed different enabling factors for the significant changes to happen. And even if in some cases the community members were self-confident enough to reform the community on their own resources, they valued the role of external stakeholders including WVA for accelerating the process. The expectations from the enabling factors were different and included the following:

- Awareness raising,
- Facilitation role in community mobilization and dialogue, developing the sense of ownership,
- New ideas,
- Material and financial support,
- Expertise (e.g. child rights trainings),
- Linkage to other resources.

It was interesting that community members considered the good will and openness of LSG, and particularly the community mayor, for discussions as key enabling factor. People were mentioning that it created a positive environment, where the dialog was possible. The LG themselves realized the benefit of enabling dialog, because LG alone can not achieve.

Chochkan Community Mayor: *«A lot of things depend on the LSG. If LSG does not prioritize an issue, does not realize the importance of it, it can always find various excuses for not doing it. And Village Mayor can convince community members that there are no resources, no opportunities, etc., etc. Our community people are not strong enough yet to fight for their rights... But this kind of processes (i.e. CV&A) are important for creating space for people and LSG to talk and understand that everything needs to be done with mutual collaboration and support. LSG alone can not resolve all the problems. This issue of the kindergarten opened up a good arena for mutual efforts and small-small contributions of various actors, which brought to a big achievement. Now Village Mayors from other villages call and visit us to see how we achieved it. Good will is important. This process helped us to build on good will of each other*

and be unified in solving the issue. We didn't do anything extraordinary. I am sure every community can find resources. You need just to put it into right process»

Community Council Member: *When we think of external factors we should not forget village authorities. If WVA came into our village and initiated the same process three years ago we would have little chances to succeed, not because community people would not be ready or mature enough for engaging in important discussions, but mainly because the village authorities would be totally disinterested. Even though village mayor cannot be considered an external factor, he has acted as a significant enabling internal factor, without which all external factors could go unnoticed.*

LSG administration representative: *Openness of the Village Mayor to openly discuss the community budget with other stakeholders and asking for advice how to re-allocate the resource, not only helped to build more trust, but also gave opportunity to think together and find the best solutions. It is simple – one head is good, two heads are better.*

Although the LGs in both communities were first of all prioritizing the good will and openness of the government, still the high literacy rate of the community people was also mentioned as a key enabling factor for bringing the change. The high literacy rate gives opportunity for people to recognize their rights and formulate adequately their demands. Besides, it is not enough for the service providers simply to say: “there are no resources available”. Serious arguments need to be provided.

The existence and involvement of external organizations, like WV or “Charles Aznavour” foundation, was mentioned by community people as an important element on the way of achieving identified results. Moreover, WV’s role was viewed not only as the process facilitator, but as an external resource for concrete material contribution. The “Charles Aznavour” foundation was viewed purely as material resource for implementing kindergarten construction works. As many community members mentioned, external material support was crucial in achieving of the result. It was also important for many people to realize how to find and apply to external resources. Thus, for example in Hobardzi village community members found “Charles Aznavour” foundation through the regional authorities, wrote a letter to them with a concrete proposal on what they want to do and what will be the community’s contribution.

Hobardzi Kindergarten employees: *Not only World Vision, but another organization, “Charles Aznavour” foundation has contributed to the opening of the kindergarten. WVA has contributed to both of our achievements; it has played as a catalyst for our mobilization and meetings, as well as provided some materials for renovating our kindergarten. “Charles Aznavour” foundation whom we applied, provided financial assistance allowing us to completely renovate the kindergarten. If not this organization, it could have take us years to completely renovate the kindergarten.*

Hobardzi Community mayor: *Material support provided both by WVA and “Aznavour” Foundation have contributed a lot to the establishment of the kindergarten. Without this support we would have a worse off kindergarten for sure. At this point relying only on government resources and waiting until National Government will step in and resolve all issues would be too optimistic, especially in the reality of very limited state resources.*

Hobardzi Parents: *We always used to think that there was nothing we could do for the kindergarten on ourselves. We could not even imagine that some things could come from outside (renovation materials, furniture) and others could come from us. As we started working together we realized how much work we could do as community members with our own initiative.*

Chochkan Parents: *Without the support of external organizations it would be very difficult for us to get together and think what we could do for our community. We never used to meet and discuss community development issues, moreover we always thought that as a community we cannot do much, we needed materials for renovation, we needed furniture, we needed so many things that could come from outside only.*

More over, people thought that this kind of successful experience would help them to bring even more resources to their community.

LSG administration representative: *«Seeing our achievements and steps taken by our community members, it became easier to involve other donors from outside of the community. Now they are more willing to contribute. They see how transparent we are, how many community meetings we organized, how much information is printed and available for the population. They know that their investments will serve the community people»*

Although WV in both communities was viewed as a source for material contribution as well, still WV's role in facilitating the process was prioritized more as an enabling factor that helped to bring all pieces together.

Hobardzi Community mayor: *The role of external factors in achieving the positive outcome in relation to the kindergarten has been significant. Without the support of WVA it would be much more difficult to start mobilizing people. Before I was elected as a mayor people were rarely consulted in community development matters, so when I came to power with my program and wanted to speak to people WVA's support in getting people together and facilitating meetings came very handy. There is no developed culture of participation on the village level, and external factors at this point do play an important role. However, I believe that after the first fruitful experience I will need to rely less on external organizations to mobilize community members to deliberate and decide on community priorities.*

Chochkan Children: *The fact that our opinion is asked is not something completely new for us. We usually have discussions at school. However, facilitation process, presented by WVA, gave a possibility for broader participation not just with something related to school.*

Hobardzi Social worker: *Without external support the villagers would not have done anything, they are not used to doing anything themselves. People first take care of their personal needs, and then they think about the community. WV's role in bringing people together is very important. But it will take time to change the mentality of the villagers. The government also provides some assistance but without other assistant everything would have taken much more longer.*

Chair of Chochkan community kindergarten: *The ideological facilitation of WVA was very important.*

Chochkan Village Mayor: WVA was mainly saying the words of encouragement «you can do that! Come together!, etc». Those words of encouragement helped us even more than any material assistance. It really helped us to believe that we can make a change.

Besides, WV with the larger network and coverage throughout Armenia served as a source of information, where communities would be able to apply for resolving the issues of concern.

Chochkan Teacher: Advisory support of WVA helped us a lot. Thus, they have pointed many sources, where we could get more assistance. For example they've connected us with the Ministry of Education who supported us with lot of methodological materials and specialized books for our pre-school.

It should be also mentioned that WV staff identified the factors that are not contributing but in contrary negatively influencing the processes undergone through CV&A. In particular, the existence of other donor agencies with more service delivery and provision of goods approach slows down the community mobilization especially when a community's contribution is expected to be the major one.

Alaverdi ADP Manager: There is a variety of organizations, donors working in the region with different mandates and goals. Sometimes, their programmatic priorities are just to deliver things, which negatively influence the developments we are trying to promote through CV&A. Thus, we spend a lot of efforts for coordination meetings, explanations on the focusing on changing people's mentality as a key component for the development. When the right involvement of other donors/organizations is ensured, it's just great. Unfortunately it is not always easy to achieve. And today our communities have a lot of gaps and lack of resources, so they are not yet in a position to refuse any additional resources suggested. So, many times communities simply agreed on everything which is suggested with any form required by various organizations.

2b. How have World Vision and or Partners contributed to significant changes resulting from Citizen Voice and Action?³

In the previous section under 2a. it was already mentioned, that the case study participants highly valued the role of WVA in the process of enhancing significant changes resulting from facilitation of CV&A process. Community members did not mention the partner CBOs since it was not formed yet during the CV&A community gathering cycle that took place in June, 2009 in Chochkan community and January, 2009 in Hobardzi community.

Thus, WVA was viewed not just as an organization that can provide material and financial support, but mainly as a contributor to the awareness raising on the rights and responsibilities, as facilitator of the community mobilization and enabler of developing the culture of participation, as a “mediator bringing community people and government representatives into dialog”. The ability of WV to activate people and especially children, was also mentioned.

³ Consider 'have' in terms of 'doing' (action and or inaction) and 'being' (qualities of behaviour and acting)

Community members were stressing the support of WVA in sense of providing structural framework to community development and its consistency to community development. People wanted to see that the different reforms they were initiating and carrying out are parts of general panorama. At this early stage of such process like CV&A development, they still need an organization like WV (whom they consider to have an expertise and maturity in facilitating the process) to walk with them through the process to follow up and build on the achievements.

Chochkan Parents: *WVA helped us to realize that we can do/achieve a lot by ourselves. Besides, we have got an understanding where to start and how to move forward.*

Hobardzi Parents: *It was good having WVA as a facilitator, because the process was very structured and practical.*

Stepanavan ADP TDFs: *External factors, such as WVA has been a moving force of the process, something that encouraged community members. And the thing is that there is still a need for the external factor, as villagers at this point can only resolve minor issues by themselves. There is no culture of participation among community members hence without external support and help it is very difficult to imagine how community members can all of a sudden start to be mobilized. However if this kind of positive experience continues for couple of years community members would probably need less external assistance in the process of mobilization.*

Chair of Chochkan community kindergarten: *“WVA is somehow supports bringing service providers, users and all other stakeholders together first of all to talk to each other and understand each other. When there is a mutual understanding, there is more will to collaborate and move things forward. Besides, WVA’s role is the support to the consistency of all initiated projects. It promotes the culture of dialogue and supports to achieve social consensus in our community, which is probably the most important thing for our community today.*

Social Worker: *I appreciate WVA’s role in the process first of all in sense of raising awareness on rights and responsibilities, on the national legislation. Another important role is the facilitation of the process as well as material support and linking to other organizations as potential resources.*

Head of the Department of Education at Territorial Administration body: *I appreciate the role of external organizations, like WV, in sense of activating people in communities who used to be passive in all spheres of public life including the education of their children.*

Chochkan Village Mayor: *WVA’s support was through facilitation of meetings. By attending these meetings and discussions the community members realized that LSG takes their opinion into consideration.*

Alaverdi ADP Manager: *Facilitation role of WVA is very important. And it is also good that CV&A process mainly requires facilitation rather than dictating something to the community. Besides, CV&A have also an important role to play – to introduce the concept of meaningful participation. CV&A suggests you ways on how to help people to come up with solutions that are suggested and demanded by the community, not as a result of well facilitated process leading to the outcomes desired by WVA. This process also helps to free up their minds and not*

to unnecessarily complicate their life. People can see in reality that they are able to achieve a lot by themselves. They can see the simple steps that can bring to big changes. For example, for a long period of time the issue of garbage collection was in the agenda. When the community went through CVA process, they've came up with simple plan and in a week this issue was solved. WVA and community mobilizers are some kind of a pushing force at the beginning to «wake up» the community and make this process part of their culture/life.

Through CV&A we as WV were able to bring internal energy of the community, which in many cases bring to reconciliation of the community and creates a space for constructive dialog and desire to collaborate, to contribute and act together. CV&A helps to make the process simple and visual, which shows to people that things can be easily done.

As a facilitator you need to be very neutral. On my point of view, CVA helps you not to impose your own values/thoughts. It gives opportunity for people themselves to think and come up with their understanding and vision for future. Which is also important, CVA gives understanding on current situation and possibilities. CVA is also encouraging because it shows how many rights people have, which they don't utilize properly. They start to realize that government also created a space for their citizens to have a decent life. What we need to do, just see that rights are put into practice, and people realize through CVA that here they have a role to play and request that.

2bi) How have contributions (in planning and start up, implementation and follow up) of World Vision and or Partners demonstrated;

- deficit framing of change (solving a problem)⁴
- strengths framing of change (build on assets or strengths present)

The case study obviously showed the prioritization of Strengths framing of change throughout the process. This is the value CV&A approach brings to ADP programming and work in the communities.

Alaverdi ADP Manager: I would say that deficit framing of change was our approach in the past. For example, before we were doing first of all needs assessment, prioritizing problems, etc. So, everything was around problems. CV&A helped us to focus together with the community mainly on resources and first of all human resources and opportunities that exist in their community. Besides, the solutions and steps forward are suggested by the community – they are the owners of the process, thus they are more willing to move forward. When you rely on resources (not the gaps) then it is easier for people to see steps forward to achieve their desired vision/future. When you see just problems, most of the times those problems are too big and they scare people, limiting their ability to act and they just say: «we can't do anything, only government can do, let them provide...».

Alaverdi ADP TDF: through our work we have applied both approaches. But in order to bring to a dialog you need to build on positive things, i.e strength, rather than negative, i.e. deficits. Strength based approach brings more encouragement. CV&A gives you opportunity to start small and build on that, which makes the community stronger and stronger.

⁴ See box below for working definition

HOW CAN CITIZEN VOICE AND ACTION BEST CONTRIBUTE TO SIGNIFICANT CHANGE?

3. What would Citizen Voice and Action 'at its best' look like?

3a. What would be the 'best changes'?

As far as the CV&A process is relatively new to the communities, the general observation was that it was hard for respondents to say what would CV&A 'at its best' look like. There was still a room for people to digest and use to the CV&A process and start considering it as part of their life.

Social worker: *I think in our village everything worked out well and CVA has managed to contribute to the significant change the best way it could.*

Many of the respondents had viewed the CV&A as an opportunity and possibility to make community members more engaged into the community life.

LSG administration representative: *«Today in general community people are passive. They think mainly about their own interest, rather than their community. Hope, through this kind of community engagement processes people will become more active and more willing to participate in the community life as well as in decision making, not just complaining and blaming the government»*

As a result of case study it also became obvious that CV&A process will be more beneficial and meaningful in case if it is synchronized with development/review of Community Development Plans and annual community budgeting process. Then the plans of actions developed as a result of CV&A can be included into state plans with allocation of necessary financial resources.

The CV&A gives a good ground for meaningful participation of children in the decisions that affect them. In Armenia children are in general cared for and loved by their families. But children are not viewed as community members who can have an opinion and contribute to the community development. CV&A approach provides a lot of opportunities for children to be active members of their communities and grow as active citizens. More focus on targeting and including children should be ensured.

3b. How would World Vision and or Partners contribute to the 'best changes'?

Case study participants without any exception were emphasizing the role of WVA and partner CBO in the process. They were unanimously claiming that WVA should be part of the process and though the community dialogue has successfully launched, still it can not be continued without the support of WVA, at least for some period of time.

Chochkan Parents: *It is important to have WV with us. Even their encouragement means a lot for us. Besides, they help us both with some material support, and also with information. Thus, they've linked us with other organizations working in the region, advised to apply to the Ministry, etc.*

Chochkan Parents: *WV is working in many other communities, so they can share their experience with us as well, or tell others about our achievements.*

Social Worker: *I have participated in various trainings organized by WV and now I assist in many processes related to CV&A. I am sure one day we will be able to facilitate similar*

processes only by ourselves.

LSG administration representative: *More actors – broader the views and thus, more possibility for development. If we stay closed just in our community and will not have other people/organizations coming and going, we will not grow and will be cut off from the rest of the world.*

Alaverdi ADP Manager: *“CV&A should be applied for a long period of time until it becomes part of the community life/culture and community will be ready to take over the initiative and continue applying it by themselves. The special efforts should be put on building the capacity inside the communities, preparing local people to act as local CV&A facilitators. This is one of priorities for our ADP.*

HOW COULD CITIZEN VOICE AND ACTION BE IMPROVED TO BEST SUPPORT SIGNIFICANT CHANGE?

4. How do the findings of significant changes to date and the ‘best changes’ compare to the expected changes (outcomes) identified within existing Citizen Voice and Action designs?

The findings of the significant or best changes to date identified during the CV&A case study are in line with the expectations WVA set in CV&A design. It is evident that the process was not smooth and the community as whole is not one the same page and there is still a lot to do. But on the other side the positive dynamics is apparent and there is significant move in the direction which leads to community empowerment and community-driven participatory development. The fact that as mentioned by Chochkan community mayor *“Due to all these processes people started to invest in agriculture rather than migrate”* indirectly reflects that people feel the positive change are rather hopeful for the future. Though people still view WVA as the main facilitator of the CV&A process, they are already more aware on their rights and responsibilities and feel ownership to the process.

As for the LSG, the expectations were even surpassed since LSGs were not expected to be encouraged with the process so far. When the CV&A process was introduced to them in 2008 they were threatened to lose their authority and afraid of raised public demand for social accountability. On the other hand they were considering themselves to be “know-how” on their community problems and thinking the CV&A community gatherings as useless and waste of time. The case study interviews with the LG representatives in both communities showed the dramatic change in their attitudes. They started not only to better understand and value the process, but also realized that the CV&A processes are actually helping them in developing more efficient relationships with their communities, building the trust and ensuring community people’s support, both in-kind as well as with increased willingness to invest into the community life and pay taxes.

It was also expected that CV&A approach will help the ADP staff to increase their efficiency in working with communities in the process of transformational development. Although it took longer than planned to build the capacity of ADP’s staff in CV&A facilitation, still the results of community engagement and positive changes happening, proved that these investments were well-taken. It is important to further develop the critical thinking of the staff, which is crucial while facilitating CV&A as well as collecting evidence-based data for higher level advocacy.

5. What are the recommended changes to current Citizen Voice and Action designs?

There were couple of practical suggestions made by the participants, such as the following:

- strengthen more the awareness raising component on the state entitlements, especially for service providers
- do not conduct meeting for very long, ensure efficient time-keeping
Chair of Chochkan community kindergarten: *The dates and time for the community gathering and focus-group discussions should be set very carefully and respected by the organizers. The same refers to the duration of the focus-group discussions. They should not last too long thus, becoming boring. Agricultural seasons also should be taken into account.*
- apply CV&A for longer period of time to see the impact
- always keep the balance clearly showing that not only service providers are entitled, but also service users have certain responsibilities
Village Mayor: *«Community people need to understand that LSG alone can not change much. People also need to contribute and primarily through paying taxes»*
- LG representatives as well as WV staff members suggested organizing community gatherings not semiannually but annually and linking this process with annual revisions of the Community Development Plans and community budget.
- Some of the respondents mentioned that regardless all the processes aiming at bringing dialog, there still could be situations, when people would be reluctant to talk publicly. So, in some cases it was suggested to use questionnaire for voting thus ensuring the confidentiality.
- the CV&A process need to be more intentional in bringing to a dialog between various levels of the service providers. Thus, for example, the quality of education provided in the community level both depends on local government as well as regional.
Head of the Department of Education at Territorial Administration body: *CV&A should encourage more the cooperation between the school administration and the LSGs since in some communities they are in very bad relations as due to the Armenian legislation the schools are under the territorial administration body while the kindergartens are under that of LSGs.*
- Intensive capacity development for the LSGs, as well as organized community groups, such as parents' council, students' council, etc.

3. Background – country and local context

Armenia is former republic of Soviet Union, regained its independence in 1991. It is small mountainous country in South-Caucasus region neighboring Georgia in the north, Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh Republic in East, Turkey in West and Iran in the south. Armenia inherited tremendous challenges upon regaining its independence in 1991. Since that time, the country has had significant progress in transforming the Soviet system into a democratic system of governance, while having such hindrances on its way as Nagorno-Karabakh war and blockade by Turkey and Azerbaijan. Only after the cease-fire in May 1994 the government could turn its attention to strategic development problems, in particular, poverty reduction, democratization and the creation of a civil society.

To promote democratic processes, citizens of Armenia need both expanded opportunities to participate in civic life and more open governance institutions to channel participation into a stronger, more democratic system of governance. To ensure this the following components are critical: a) institutional framework enabling community participation and the delivery of basic services; b) adequate capacity of local authorities to accept and promote civil society participation in decision making, implementing and monitoring processes; c) adequate capacity of community and civil society to participate in these processes.

Fostering civic participation at community level is directly related to poverty reduction in communities. As identified in PRSP: “The active participation of civil society in PRSP implementation is one of the prerequisites of successful implementation of the program”.⁵ The argument is that many local citizens are often excluded from engaging with, influencing and benefiting from the planning and implementation of poverty reduction and development programs. CSOs can be a powerful enhancer of PRS, by increasing representation and linkages between local and national processes.

Most citizens are poorly informed about local authorities and their responsibilities as well as local government procedures. ⁶Even though over 2,200 NGOs are registered in Armenia, few of them are active and involved with local governments, and in particular public monitoring. Citizens are not used to demand good governance and meantime they have unrealistic expectations on Government.

It should be mentioned that Armenian legislation provides space for public participation and encourages the social cooperation. The PSRP social partnership institute formed in 2002 for PRSP elaboration and monitoring, was an encouraging example for the engagement of Armenian CSOs in the dialogue with the government. The Constitution and the legislation on local self-governance also design the participatory elaboration of community development plans. Nevertheless the community engagement at national and local levels is not widely practiced and participatory decision-making is still a goal that should be achieved.

Chochkan community in Alaverdi ADP and Hobardzi community in Stepanavan ADP that were selected as CV&A case study sites, are located in Lori region of Armenia.

⁵ Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, Republic of Armenia, Yerevan 2003

⁶ Local Government in Eastern Europe, in the Caucasus, and in Central Asia, *Chapter 6. Local Government in Armenia*, by David Tumanyan, Yerevan, 2007



Alaverdi province includes 23 rural and 4 urban communities located in the North-East of Lori Marz, in the North of Armenia. The province shares a border with Stepanavan province of the same Marz, to the west, with Georgia to the North with Tavush Marz to the East and Kotayk and Aragatsotn Marzes to the South.

The Alaverdi ADP covers 10 (9 rural and 1 urban) out of 27 communities for the first program cycle. The sectors of the main interventions will include Education, Child Protection, Health and Economic Development. Chochkan community has 2100 inhabitants and 504 households. It is located near the Armenia-Georgia border, around 25 Km far from Alaverdi city.

The Stepanavan ADP covers 20 rural communities of Stepanavan and Tashir provinces. Hobardzi community is located in Stepanavan province with 820 inhabitants 277 households. It is located in 15 Km distance North-East from Stepanavan city.

CV&A community gatherings were conducted in Hobardzi community in January, 2009 and in Chochkan community in June, 2009. Both gatherings were held in education sector. According to the CV&A manual adjusted for WV Armenia, the CV&A community gatherings in both sites included focus-group discussions and interface meetings where the community action plans were developed. The action plans were designed for 1 year.

4. Case Study methodology

a. Whilst the methodology has been prescribed, briefly describe action taken

Documents review

All the background information that the ADPs had related to two selected for the study communities was reviewed, including:

- ADPs programmatic documents
- monitoring, progress reports
- statistical data
- CV&A database reports
- National and sub-national laws, policies (including targeted communities' Community Development Plans)

Interviews

Mainly semi-structured interviews were conducted by the case study team. Eleven interviews were conducted using the case study interview guides. The interviewees included both representatives from the community, regional level government, as well as ADP staff members. "Tips and Tricks" provided in the guide helped the team to be better prepared for the interview and especially pay attention on digging deeper with the question "why" to get deeper information on the questions included in the provided questionnaire.

Interviews were conducted with:

Mr. Minas Sayadyan, *Chair of the Department of Education at Lori Regional Administration*
Mr. Samvel Gigolyan, *Chochkan community mayor*
Mr. Suren Khudinyan, *Principle of Chochkan community kindergarten*
Ms. Satenik Mamajanyan, *social worker of Chochkan community*
Mr. Martun Mirzoyan, *Hobardzi community mayor*
Mr. Ashot Asryan, *Hobardzi community councilor*
Ms. Lusine Ghukasyan, *social worker of Hobardzi community*
Ms. Gayane Sakulyan, *Principle of Hobardzi community kindergarten*
Mr. Varazdat Sargsyan, *Alaverdi ADP Manager*
Mr. Ashot Perikhanyan, *Alaverdi ADP TDF*
Mr. David Davtyan, *Stepanavan ADP TDF*

Focus Group Discussions

One focus group discussion with teachers and one focus group with parents were conducted in each of two communities studied. Each focus group included 9 to 14 participants. Each focus group had a facilitator and the note taker. The FGs were conducted using the suggested guides.

Most Significant Change (stories)

MSCs were applied with the groups of children and teachers in each of two targeted communities. The process was facilitated with one case study team member accompanied by relevant ADP staff member. First, all participants were asked to write down their MSC stories individually, then they came together in small groups of 3-4 people to share their stories with the group, discuss and come up with the MSC of the small group. Then the representatives of all small groups presented their selected stories with the rest of the group. At the end from 4-5 MSC stories the group participants

through the lively discussion process selected the MSC story. As a result of the process the case study team came up with four MSC stories from two communities. Based on the discussions among the case study team the story of “Chochkan kindergarten” was selected as the most significant of stories.

The MSC story development process was particularly interesting in children’s groups. Children had lively discussions and were bringing various arguments for selecting this or that story. For example, in Chochkan community while selecting the MSC story children debated around two issues: “establishment of a kindergarten” and “community main road renovation”. It was interesting to see that both issues were viewed by children as clear steps towards development of their village, the arguments brought by both groups were deep and valuable. For example, defenders of «road renovation» were arguing that from this road the whole village is benefiting, while kindergarten is only for 40 children. But «kindergarten» defenders were bringing issues of more sustainable development for the community with better educated generation. It was encouraging to see that children were trying to make their point based on the arguments and from the perspective of shared benefit for the community.

Application of MSC techniques was really more than just the collection of stories. It was real opportunity for people to discuss and comprehend the impact of changes happened in their community.

5. Discussion

- a. This can be considered the ‘so what’ section and allows for the researchers to bring their own voice into the analysis. The Case Study team can provide a commentary of the case study findings

The focus groups discussions and key informant interviews have demonstrated that the communities did benefit from the CVA process, however there is still no clear and full understanding on what CVA actually is. A lot of things still heavily depend on WV’s facilitation. More time is required to ensure the smooth process of building community people’s awareness and ownership on CV&A.

In general people tend to see the tangible results on the first place, and only after variety of additional questions community members also talk about the positive effects of mobilization and community empowerment. The prioritization of material achievements is still on the first place. And this is natural, as those community members were deprived of various very basic things for many years. Although community people throughout the case study mentioned a lot that the process “brought them together, made them act and achieve a lot together”.

One of the greatest achievements observed is the change in ADP staff members’ attitude, when they really prioritize the mentality change of people as the first priority and viewed the CV&A as a good opportunity in the process towards this change. There is still a room for constant capacity building for the staff to be able at this stage to facilitate the process, as well as to build the capacity of local people on CV&A. Special attention need to be put on building the capacity of staff on how to meaningfully include children (with application of CV&A specifically designed tools) and how to make the voice of children to be heard in particular during the interface meetings. Sometimes, the CV&A processes can be politicized a lot. In order to avoid that, the DNH application in CV&A should be also prioritized, which is not currently done by the WV staff.

The use of database is still in its beginning. There is a room for capacity building for the staff to be able to use the data available and share it with the communities. Use of data for higher level advocacy is still an issue for the future.

6. Next steps

a. Suggestions of areas that need further exploration (research)

The CV&A case study team reflections helped to the identification of several issues that are still pending and not totally clear. These issues can be summarized in the following questions:

1. How to link the CV&A process with the elaboration of community development plans?
2. Are CBOs/CAGs expected to be the only option for facilitating CV&A process further on or it can be carried out by the LSGs as well as part of the elaboration of community development plan? What is the ideal role of CBOs/CAGs within the last scenario?
3. What is the best option for introducing the CV&A community action plan's progress to the community and stakeholders? Should CV&A practitioners organize separate plenary meeting (like interface one) with the whole community or the performance can be introduced in next CV&A cycle?

b. Committed actions to take

After several discussions the CV&A case study team came to the following solutions to the existing questions:

1. To held CV&A community gatherings once per year in line with the LSG obligation either to elaborate 4-year community development action plan or update the annual implementation plan. According to Armenian legislation these documents are to be submitted to regional administration body by December each year.
2. To integrate CV&A into the community development plan's (CDP) elaboration general process. While CV&A starts from concrete facility in concrete sector, CDP covers the whole scope of community development. CV&A can be applied in 2nd step of CDP elaboration, after the visioning stage. The CV&A community action plans in education, health and other sectors can identify, prioritize the issues, define reform actions which may lay under CDP as well while the Implementation of CV&A community action plan will have CAG or individual active citizens as implementers.
3. Intensive capacity building needs to be ensured for LSGs as well as other service providers. They should understand the assets of community (i.e. service users) participation, know methods and have skills to ensure successful participation process. The LSG capacity building might include training courses of Participatory decision-making, performance budgeting, etc.
4. While the CV&A community gatherings are held annually, semi-annual performance meetings can be held to inform the community and key stakeholders on the status of CV&A action plan implementation and make necessary adjustments in the action plan without FG discussions.
5. The capacity building of local stakeholders to hand over CV&A facilitation will be continued.
6. The translated CV&A database will be fully localized and intensively used by local staff. The continuous capacity building will be ensured to train people on how to use the data available.
7. In collaboration with Advocacy Expert the evidence-based data will be accumulated and analysed for higher level advocacy.

7. Appendix

a. List of case study participants

Interviewers:

Kristine Mikhailidi, WVA ADP Operations Manager

Artur Martirosyan, WVA TST Community Engagement Expert

Tatevik Davtyan, WVA TST Advocacy and Gender Expert

Diana Boyakchyan, TST Assistant

b. List of Abbreviations

ADP	Area Development Program
CAG	Community Active Group
CBO	Community Based Organization
CDP	Community Development Plan
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CV&A	Citizen Voice and Action
LSG	Local self-government body
MSC	Most Significant Change
WVA	World Vision Armenia