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Latvian Welfare Reform Project

*Subcomponent 3 c
Kandava Pilot Project
Pre-project Evaluation Report
Part I: Staff and Management*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Social welfare reform in Latvia consists of several innovative initiatives including a local social assistance pilot project in the municipality of Kandava. The goal of the Kandava pilot is to encourage the development of a uniform cash benefit system, to improve targeting of those in need, to develop less costly and more effective community care - as alternatives to institutional care - and to make efficient use of staff. The national objective of this project is to make it replicable outside Kandava and provide a role model for the development of social assistance throughout Latvia. At present, the pilot is in its initial stage.

The development of the pilot will be followed through an evaluation consisting of three distinct phases: the pre-project evaluation, one or several mid-term reviews, and a final evaluation at the end of the period. Apart from the present investigation, a client survey is planned later this fall. The implementation of the pilot during the initial pre-project phase is the object of this evaluation report, which focus on management and staff performance. However, also those sub-programs of the pilot that so far have started to operate are taken into consideration: the benefit, information and referral program, the home care program, and the risk family program.

This report is based on in-depth strategic interviews with the staff and amangement of the Kandava Social Assistance Office (SAO). In late June 1998, seven staff members, including the managing director of the SAO, were interviewed by members of a Swedish team of evaluators. In addition, simultaneously structured conversations were held with the mayor of Kandava as well as the local consult to the project. The purpose of interviewing staff members was to get an overview of the present stage of the pilot as well as to gather information about the professional experience of the members of the Kandava SAO. Another aim was to develop relevant indicators for further improvement of the evaluation which reflects the formative stage of this process.

The pilot is still in its infancy, but an important conclusion from this inquiry is that motivation is high among staff and management to reach a qualitatively different level of work behavior and to take on core tasks. Noteworthy progress has also been made in other areas such as professional awareness, individual needs assessment, and home care for the elderly. Recently, some progress has also been made in the implementation of the risk family sub-program. Otherwise there are, of course, a lot to learn, develop and improve for the pilot's staff and management.

1 INTRODUCTION: THE PILOT PROJECT

The Kandava project is a local welfare reform project which also has the larger ambition of providing a role model for the future development of social assistance throughout Latvia. The pilot project is part of a project for national welfare reform, the Latvian welfare reform project under the auspices of the Ministry of Welfare and financed by the World Bank and the Swedish Development Agency (SIDA). The overall objective of the national project is to support the development of a more efficient and client-oriented social welfare system.

Like other parts of Eastern Europe, Latvia during the Soviet epoch had an extensive system of social protection and social provision. On the local level, it was the workplace - the enterprise, an industry or a farm - that was the nucleus of social provision. But the nature of social provision was top-down. In the aftermath of the collapse of Soviet Union and the declaration of the independence of Latvia, this system became obsolete as the process of social and economic transformation gave rise to new risks and insecurities typical for a market society.

The aim of the Kandava pilot project, thus, includes the improvement of community based social services and social benefits in Latvia. The ambition here is to encourage the development of a uniform cash benefit system, to improve targeting of those in need, to develop less costly and more effective community care - as alternatives to institutional care - and to make efficient use of staff - as stated in the national guidelines for social service administration formulated in the Latvian Government's White Paper, as well as in the Activity and Business Plan drawn up by the Kandava municipality. The issue of whether these general goals so far have been met in Kandava and, if so, how, when and under what conditions, are the issues that will be examined and clarified in the pages to come.

The evaluation is carried out on behalf of the Steering/Management Committee of the Latvian Welfare Reform Project and the financiers of this project, the World Bank and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA).

2 PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation concentrates on the Kandava pilot project, the staff and management of the Kandava SAO, various aspects of the five sub-programs of the pilot and the four target groups, as well as the pilot's relationship to national policy making. Thus, the evaluation focus on the implementation of the local pilot project but necessarily it also involves the national decision-making levels and implementation processes "above Kandava". The ambition is to cover the most important aspects of the pilot project that so far are available for evaluation.

The evaluation follows an implementation process, and consists of three distinct steps: a pre-project, a mid-term and a final phase. The first phase focus almost entirely on the situation at the beginning of the project while the long-term objective of the evaluation is to follow the full implementation process.

Another aim of this evaluation is to create and enhance domestic capacity in the area of social program evaluation. Thus, the ambition also is to make social workers, policy makers and social scientists in Latvia aware of ways in which evaluations by outside and independent evaluators can improve the implementation of social programs. The latter implies an emphasis on the need for open communication and dialogue between practitioners and evaluators.

2.1 The purpose of the pre-project evaluation

As mentioned the evaluation process consists of three phases: (i) a pre-project investigation of the structure and content of the Kandava pilot project and its national surroundings; (ii) continuous investigations in Kandava during the development of the various subprograms of the pilot - the mid-term evaluation/s; and (iii) a post-project investigation focusing on the results - outcome and impact - of the process as a whole.

This paper focus entirely on the first stage in the evaluation process, the pre-pilot investigation, and in particular on the role of management and staff at this stage of the project. In focus is the performance of staff and management in view of the goals set for the project. There were no specific goals set for the first phase. Hence, the evaluation concentrates on the aims of the project at large regarding staff and management.

So far, the evaluation has paid less emphasis to the implementation of the five sub-programs of the pilot. Actually, at present only three sub-programs are in operation, and they were only briefly scanned during our first visit to Kandava. However, also in this stage of the evaluation we pay attention to the goals set for these sub-programs. Thus, this is not a full scale pre-project evaluation but limited to those aspects of the pilot that so far are possible to scrutini-

ze: staff and management as well as various aspects of three of the five sub-programs that constitute the pilot.

After a brief excursus on methodology, in the pages to come it is the results from this part of the evaluation that will be presented.

3 METHODOLOGY

Following conventional terminology in evaluation research, at this stage the evaluation is formative rather than summative (Worthen et al 1997). The implication is that in the early phase of the evaluation the program, the Kandava pilot, is in need of both immediate feedback and long-term perspectives while the evaluators are in need of basic background information to develop and improve relevant indicators for the final, summative evaluation. In the initial and intermediary stages of the evaluation, there is an interaction process between evaluators and evaluatees in which information is passed back to staff and management. Armed with that feedback as well as their own experiences, SAO personnel can modify their work and the existing sub-programs based on their improved understanding of the pilot. Thus, the start-up and continuation of the evaluation may to some extent have a formative impact on the final outcome of the project.

Following the evaluation plan, the team of evaluators started with a series of strategic interviews with those working with the pilot in Kandava. The basis of in-depth strategic interviews are thematic and structured questions that are repeated at two or more points in time corresponding to the pre-pilot, mid-term and final phase of the evaluation. Purposive sampling of interesting informants in order to extract valuable insights through in-depth conversations is what is called for (Vedung 1997; cf. also Kvale 1996). At the initial stage, the focus was on both former and present staff and management experience as well as a more speculative look into the future.

Due to some initial problems of communications, at this stage of the evaluation process only those working with the project in Kandava have been available to us. It was not possible to conduct interviews with those responsible for the project on the national level. The ambition is to follow up on this point. Later on, also interviews with representatives of surrounding agencies with a presence in Kandava - both public and NGOs - will be carried out. In particular interviews with NGO-representatives are regarded as essential from an evaluation perspective. Hence, the weakness of the present evaluation is closely related to the number of interviews and the absence of a follow-up of the first round of interviews in Kandava.

The aim of the first meeting was to conduct preparatory interviews with staff and management at the Social Assistance Office of the Kandava municipality. A total number of nine persons were interviewed. To start the procedures the members of the Swedish team had planned an information session in the evening of Wednesday June 24 1998 or early Thursday morning. However, this message did not went through to Kandava. Thus, interviewing started

immediately in the morning of Thursday June 25th following the schedule worked out by the managing director (MD) of the Kandava SAO. Four interviews - roughly one and a half hour each - with members of the Kandava SAO including its managing director was done during this day: Zina Deica, Dita Luka, Egils Sudmalis and Ints Leitarts (MD). This day local consult Sarma Upesleja was also interviewed.

On the morning of Friday June 24 the chairman of the Kandava municipality Dainis Rosenfeldts was interviewed. That day also another round of interviews was carried out with three members of the team: Dzidra Jansone, Gunta Krecere and Gundega Veica. At the end of the day the Swedish team presented a preliminary summary of these two rounds of interviews.

The purpose of interviewing the members of the team was to get an overview of the present stage of the project as well as to gather information of the professional experience of the staff members at the Kandava SAO. The interviews were thematized with the following structure: (i) background experience of the individual team member (ITM); (ii) the perception held by the ITM about the social situation in Kandava before the start of the pilot project; (iii) the perception by the ITM of the aim of the project and received information about the pilot and its subprograms; (iv) the implementation of the project and its subprograms so far according to the ITM; (v) early results noted by the ITM; and (vi) possible future results according to the ITM.

These themes were raised to develop relevant indicators for further improvement of the evaluation especially regarding existing and planned subprograms of the pilot. Apart from conducting interviews with those responsible on the national level, there is still a need for complementary interviews in particular regarding the internal procedures of the Social Assistance Office and its client contacts as well as a need for further information regarding the relationship between the Kandava SAO and NGOs in the area (see 6 below).

4 RESULTS

Interviewing staff and management constituted the initial step of the pre-project evaluation. A major goal of the Kandava pilot project is to improve the administration of community based social services - especially regarding client information, individual needs assessment and referrals - and to make efficient use of staff and management. The interviews were focused on the how staff and management at present perceived the work situation in the Kandava Social Assistance Office but also involved their views on three of the five sub-programs of the pilot project. The interviews with the municipal mayor and the local consultant complemented the information provided by management and staff.

4.1 Management

On the management level, the evaluation focused on the ability to survey the social situation in Kandava, as well as how to disseminate and interpret national policy documents to staff. Furthermore, strategic leadership and professional authority, division of labor, budgeting and cost-consciousness were other issues raised during the interview. For instance, whether priorities have been more clearly defined and set, responsibilities and a functional division of labor clearly outlined and understood, staff motivated to reach a qualitatively different level of work behavior, incentives provided to develop alternative care, less expensive non-institutional care used more frequently and developed, consolidated local administration and budget achieved (as opposed to a division of responsibilities among the old territorial units), co-operation facilitated with other public agencies such as medical and educational as well as with NGOs - these were the main problems addressed when the managing director was interviewed. Some of these issues were followed up during the interviews with the local consultant and the mayor of Kandava. The answers are summarized in table 1.

Before presenting the table, it should be stressed that the classification of answers along the scale used - strong, intermediate, and weak performance - so far is a tentative solution, and should not be read as the last word of the formative evaluation. To our view, at the start of the pilot a fairly "weak" performance is what in most cases should be expected at this point in time. In contrast, the worrisome alternative would be no indication of performance whatsoever. To indicate that performance is "intermediary" implies at this stage of the project that a clear development is underway. "Strong" performance can in most cases primarily be expected when the project has matured. Only in exceptional cases can such a judgment be used before the end of the project.

Table 1. Management performance

Question/Indicator	Performance Strong	Performance Intermediate	Performance Weak	Comment
Disseminate and interpret national policy documents to staff		X		
Priorities have been more clearly defined and set				Still unclear
Responsibilities and a functional division of labour clearly outlined and understood			X	
Staff motivated to reach a qualitatively different level of work behavior	X			
Budgeting and cost-consciousness			X	
Incentives provided to develop alternative care			X	
Less expensive non-institutional care used more frequently			X	
Ability to survey the social situation in Kandava		X		
Strategic leadership and professional authority		X		Fairly recently

Comments:

From the start, it should be noted that the present managing director of the Kandava SAO is the first to take on this responsibility. Relatively speaking, he is a newcomer on the post. For a while, the democratically elected leaders of the municipality, the mayor and his deputies, had been heavily involved in the preparation of the pilot. Thus, it should come as no surprise that in the interviews members of the staff still expressed some confusion regarding the line of authority in the SAO. It should be added that the physical location of the SAO is in the same building as the rest of the municipal administration, and as long as the SAO will remain in these headquarters the proximity between the two most likely will not contribute to a clear line of demarcation. Our conclusion is, thus, that this is a weak point in the evolution of strategic leadership and professional authority in the Kandava SAO.

In particular, the elected leaders have been in charge of contacts at the national level, and the mayor expressed some concern regarding the relationship between the managing director and those responsible on the national level. Thus, the question whether national policy plans have been adequately disse-

minated and interpreted remains open for further scrutiny. Furthermore, staff members expressed fears that the local politicians did not understand the full meaning of the pilot, but utilized it for other purposes. One example was their supposed involvement in the recruitment of employees - social workers - to the pilot. This aspect of professional development most likely will have an impact on the evolution of the pilot and should be further investigated during the evaluation process.

The new manager of the Kandava SAO was recruited during 1997 and has only been in charge of daily operations for roughly half a year (since late 1997). His background in this field of practice is only partial, and his experience is, thus, limited. However, he expressed an explicit ambition to execute strategic leadership vis-a-vis staff, and to motivate staff to reach a qualitatively different level of on-the-job behavior. He also expressed a sincere belief that the new separate office building, planned to be opened at the beginning of next year (1999), significantly will contribute to a more professional style of work. At present, all staff working in Kandava including the managing director share one room in the town hall. This situation gives a certain informality at all kinds of contacts between staff and management, but also makes it more difficult to encourage a professional division of labor vis-a-vis clients. In particular those members of the staff with a more professional orientation complained about this and stressed the need for a new office building. Thus, at present it is unclear to us whether there is a clear border between staff meetings and the daily routines of staff work. However, the managing director emphasized that each fortnight a meeting with all staff members takes place. These meetings are formally documented (written minutes). Also program officers working in the villages outside Kandava attend these meetings, and attendance rate is high.

Furthermore, the managing director and the most senior member of the staff in advance prepare the agenda of the municipal Social Committee. Supervision is the major questions for the committee. Thereby, the issue of cost-consciousness and incentives provided to develop alternative care, less expensive non-institutional care were also touched upon in the interview though without being firmly answered (see table 1). Likewise, the issues of consolidated local administration and budget achievements (as opposed to a division of responsibilities among the old territorial units), co-operation with other public agencies such as medical and educational as well as with NGOs were addressed during the interview with the managing director.

The new manager was not involved in the initial preparation of the pilot. However, he had already developed advanced plans regarding a quantitative survey of the social situation in the municipality, and was eager to discuss the preparation of such a client survey with the team of evaluators. He has also actively contributed articles about social services to the weekly/bi-weekly

newspaper in Kandava and, thus, promoted communication between the Kandava population and the SAO (see below). Thus, the managing director has a professional attitude and seems eager to adopt strategic leadership despite the above-mentioned present impediments.

4.2 Staff

The evaluation of staff partly overlap the evaluation of management tasks. Questions posed to the six members of the staff included whether members of the staff are motivated to take on core tasks, make priorities and take initiatives on their own, professional awareness and performance have grown, budgetary and functional responsibilities and division of labor are accepted and followed, the SAO has become more responsive to local needs and client participation in problem-solving, emergency needs have been handled rapidly and satisfactorily, less clients have been referred to institutional care, quality and service deliverance standards have changed, the quality of life and productivity of individuals in danger of isolation, homelessness and institutionalization have improved, etc. These questions correspond to the goals set for the pilot.

The results of our interviews are summarized in table 2. The same reservations about the classification system as above is applicable to this summary of the responses to our questions.

Table 2. Staff performance

Question/Indicator	Performance Strong	Performance Intermediate	Performance Work	Comment
Staff are motivated to take on core tasks	X			
Staff make priorities and take initiatives on their own			X	
Professional awareness and performance have grown		X		
Budgetary and functional responsibilities and division of labor are accepted and followed		(X)	X	
The SAO has become more responsive to local needs and client participation in problem-solving is ensured		X		
Emergency needs have been handled rapidly and satisfactorily		X		
Less clients have been referred to institutional care			X	
Quality and service deliverance standards have changed			X	
The quality of life and productivity of individuals in danger of isolation, homelessness and institutionalization have improved		(X)	X	Fairly recently some progress noted

Comments:

The issues raised during the interviews are broad in scope and sometimes hard to nail down in detail. They were discussed with all member of the staff, and analyzed by the team of evaluators afterwards. Still, it is almost impossible to give a fair summary picture of the views expressed . Among the six staff members there were a wide range of answers to the questions posed. Thus, we do not present the responses by the six interviewees in tabular form as a frequency distribution.

Hence, there is a need for further clarification on certain issues as will be show below. In our view, however, there is no question about the high general motivation of the members of the staff, although one member declared that social work was a minor part of the job which also included other municipal duties (in one of the surrounding villages). However, staff member were explicitly aware of the necessity to take on core tasks, make priorities and take initiatives on their own.

Several staff members stressed that their professional awareness have grown partly as a result of the training received in Sweden last fall (on the island of Gotland), partly as a result of continuous efforts by the local consultant to organize regional meeting with social workers in the vicinity. The effects of these efforts on the professional performance of the staff in Kandava is still hard to evaluate. Nevertheless, all members of the staff expressed an appreciation of these educational efforts in our interviews.

Whether budgetary and functional responsibilities are accepted and followed have already been partly answered in conjunction with the description above of the present physical design of the office (see 4.1 above). The informality of the work situation at present does not encourage further development of functional responsibilities. Almost all member of staff are involved in most activities at the office but there is a formal division of labor into units roughly following the five sub-programs of the pilot.

Furthermore, financial resources are limited, and most often in-kind benefits such as firewood for heating is provided by the SAO. Actually, staff members may even take active and practical part in making firewood available in particular for elderly people. For an evaluator coming from a another country with a different definition of social work, the latter example raise the question of what kind of professional duties social workers should take on, and whether there is a possibility to further develop the division of labor between the professional social workers and other municipal employees.

Whether the SAO has become more responsive to local needs and client participation in problem-solving is ensured got an affirmative answer by most members of the staff. For instance, the necessity to have an entrance also for persons sitting in wheelchairs was mentioned in this context. Of course, the reliability of the general response to this question have to be further investigated through the client survey.

Whether emergency needs have been handled rapidly and satisfactorily can be given an affirmative answer. During daytime, the office has an open emergency telephone line and a staff member can immediately decide if emergency support is necessary. There is also a program in cooperation with all shops in Kandava to prevent begging among the poor and needy. All shop-owners have agreed to immediately contact the SAO if a beggar approach the shop-keepers. This program is a pride to the staff.

Whether fewer clients have been referred to institutional care was an issue that could be preliminary answered through referring to the home care program (see below). Here, there is a need for further data collection.

Whether quality and service deliverance standards have changed were issued raised during the interviews. The answers from the members of the staff indicated a strong awareness of the need for such improvements but whether

they already have occurred are harder to tell through the answers to our interview questions.

Whether the quality of life and productivity of individuals in danger of isolation, homelessness and institutionalization have improved is a matter for further investigation through the client survey.

Division of labor, budgeting and cost-consciousness were other issues raised with members of the staff during the interviews. Whether priorities have been more clearly defined and set, and responsibilities and a functional division of labor more clearly outlined and understood will be discussed below in connection with the five sub-programs of the pilot.

4.3 The sub-programs of the pilot

The Kandava pilot consists of five sub-programs of which at present three are in operation. In this first series of interviews the team of evaluators tried to get an overview of the state of the arts of these sub-programs; how far has the implementation process developed and to what extent have the goals been fulfilled.

4.3.1 *Information, benefits and referrals*

The improvement of the administration of and information about cash and in-kind social benefits, including the selection and purchase of institutional care from various providers, are the main objectives of the benefit information and payment department of the Kandava SAO. Cost reduction is, thus, a major ambition of this sub-program. The department also aims at increased ability of clients to solve independently their social problems and as soon as possible return to a state of non-dependency, i.e. increased self-reliance. So far, this sub-program stands out among the five. Questions regarding information about social rights and handling of benefits in kind and cash are intended to answer if potential beneficiaries receive correct and understandable information, if administrative routines have been simplified and if needs-assessment have become more individualized.

The responses to the questions posed are summarized in tables 3a-c. Again, the tentative nature of the classification system used should be stressed (see above)

Table 3a. Information

Question/Indicator	Performance Strong	Performance Intermediate	Performance Weak	Comment
Potential beneficiaries receive correct and understandable information		X		
The information is adapted to the needs of the clients		(X)	X	Judged by staff. Further inquiry through client survey
How often the information is updated			X	Irregular
The existence of a plan for the improvement of information				Absent

Table 3b. Benefits and individual needs-assessment

Question/Indicator	Performance Strong	Performance Intermediate	Performance Weak	Comment
Need are assessed individually		(X)		According to criteria in the Directive from the Ministry of Welfare
Administrative routines have been simplified (fewer forms, less duplication, etc.)		X		
Turnover period from application to payout of benefit		X		
The rate of errors in the administration of benefits have changed				No information available
Claimants who have been refused benefits are recorded				Unclear
A program to make longterm clients/households less dependent on welfare				No indication of program

Table 3c. Referrals

Question/Indicator	Performance Strong	Performance Intermediate	Performance Weak	Comment
Fewer clients are placed in institutional care		(X)	X	Staff and management aware of the need for such measures
Some of those already institutionalized are taken home for day care				No indication of major improvement

Following the tables, comments are divided into the three major aspects of this sub-program: information, needs-assessment and referrals.

4.3.1.1 Information

Whether potential beneficiaries receive correct and understandable information were frequently posed during the interviews. Information produced by national authorities are available and handed out to those who ask for it. The Kandava SAO also produces photocopied local information about social benefits. As already indicated the managing director pointed to the existence of written information in the local newspaper. There is no specific written information about the few sub-programs of the pilot. In a similar vein, there is no specific information directed toward various target groups such as children, the handicapped, the elderly etc. Of course, oral information is provided by all members of the staff.

Whether the information is adapted to the needs of the clients is an issue for the client survey to answer. How often the information is updated (weekly, monthly, bi-monthly etc.) and whether there is a plan for the improvement of information is still unclear to us.

4.3.1.2 Benefit and individual needs assessment

Whether administrative routines have been simplified (fewer forms, less duplication, etc.), and whether needs are assessed individually were the main issues dealt with under the sub-heading of benefits. The formal application (one page) is nowadays complemented by a one page declaration of income following national guidelines. In particular the declaration of income has been simplified (earlier fourteen pages, according to one source). The declaration of income is valid for three consecutive months. The turnover period from application to payout of benefit is in general 10-15 days (in emergency cases - see above) but the investigation can if necessary be extended up to four weeks. After 30 days, however, the SAO has to give an answer to the claimant. We have not been able to tackle the issue whether the rate of errors in the administ-

ration of benefits have changed. Whether claimants who have been refused benefits are recorded also is unclear to us.

The issue whether needs are assessed individually was answered through a direct reference to the set of criteria in the Directive from the Ministry of Welfare. Staff members follow these norms, but on top the social committee of the municipality of Kandava has decided to add certain measures such as the possibility to decrease the cost of school meals for poor families (even full exemption), as well as free-of-charge sauna and burial for pensioners and other people without proper means of subsistence. Such measures and other topics related to individual needs assessment are discussed at the bi-weekly meetings referred to above.

Individual assessment is part of the daily contacts with clients, and estimated on average to take roughly 15 minutes per client. This figure seems low to us and an issue for further scrutiny. So far the information gathered tell us that the Office is visited by some 10-15 individuals each day, and that staff members make 20-30 daily visits to the homes of welfare recipients. Under exceptional circumstances as many as 50 visitors per day may come to the office. One staffmember estimated that he had met with some 300 clients since he became part of the team early this year.

Both types of contacts - visits to the office as well as home visits - are recorded in a diary that each staff member are supposed to keep. These diaries have not yet been studied by the evaluators but maybe they can be combined with the idea put forward in the evaluation plan to ask staff members to take part in a time-budget survey later on.

Whether there is a program to make long-term clients/households less dependent on welfare as well as the expenditure side of the benefit information and payment department will be addressed in a later follow-up.

4.3.1.3 Referrals

Questions regarding referrals - selection and purchase of care - and the cost of care focus on background variables such as how many people are considered for care as well as output indicators such as whether fewer clients are placed in institutional care, and whether some of those already institutionalized are taken home for day care in order to be able to answer if the project has achieved one of its main goals.

During our first visit to Kandava, the team of evaluators did not have sufficient background knowledge to investigate these rather tricky issues in great detail. The questions were raised but not dealt with in a way that are meaningful to develop further. Thus, this is an area we would like to prioritize and come back to as soon as possible.

4.3.2 *Subprogram 2: Home care for the elderly*

Home care services are aimed at various groups of disabled persons, including the elderly as the prime target. This program seeks to provide disabled persons with trained social workers - home helpers - and ensure that clients receive adequate support in meeting their medical, nutritional and other daily needs. The program is quality enhancing as well as cost saving. Again, the question of institutional versus de-institutional care as well as the question of administrative coordination and cooperation between various public agencies are in the forefront.

This sub-program was touched upon during the interviews but as already mentioned it was not scrutinized in full detail. Thus, on this part of the pilot there is a need for further investigation. So far, the following could be reported.

Whether the SAO is able to provide an adequate number of trained home helpers was answered affirmatively. The managing director told us that some 30 home helpers have been trained during the year, and that 26 of these at present are working for the municipality. This was enough for the moment, but further demand is foreseen. Moreover, the group of home helpers have asked for additional training.

The risk of less self-reliance in this group of elderly was raised by the team of evaluators without receiving firm answers. This is a question that later on also can be addressed to NGO representative.

Whether these home helpers can ensure that clients receive satisfactory support to meet their nutritional, medical and social needs, are the fundamental questions to be asked in the client survey. Existing coping strategies by the elderly should also be explored.

4.3.3 *Subprogram 3: Risk families*

A program to support families at risk, in particular women and children in connection with alcoholism, family violence, etc. is also part of the pilot. Un- and underemployment as well as poverty are widespread in the target group. This program aims to provide a range of services such as support in case of family violence, alcohol abuse, etc.

The crucial issues here are whether preventive measures have been tested, adequate protection is given against further abuse, battered women and children receive immediate protection and shelter without a return to unnecessary and harmful forms of large-scale institutionalization, and deprived families are supported in finding work or other sources of income. Furthermore, the co-ordination and co-operation with other programs and agencies in the vicinity, for instance schools, hospitals and other wards, also have to be scrutinized by the evaluation team.

Answers to our questions are summarized in table 4. Regarding the classification of responses, the same reservations as above are applicable.

Table 4. Risk families

Question/Indicator	Performance Strong	Performance Intermediary	Performance Weak	Comment
Preventive measures have been tested			X	
Adequate protection is given against further abuse			(X)	The problem identified but strategy unclear
Battered women and children receive immediate protection and shelter without a return to unnecessary and harmful forms of large-scale institutionalization			(X)	See above
Deprived families are supported in finding work or other sources of income			(X)	

Comments:

In general terms the issues mentioned in the table were discussed with the staff member responsible for this sub-program as well as other staff members working with this problem. However, there is still a great need for clarification and further examination of the topics mentioned in the table. The program started to operate on June 1st and, thus, had been in operation less than a month when the interviews took place. At present one extra staff member is working part-time for this sub-program to ensure the safety of female members of the staff. Currently there are roughly 14 families, which more or less permanently are aided by the social authorities. The staff member responsible for this sub-program indicated that at present this was enough and that there is an urgent need for supervision from outside. The number of children presently involved in this sub-program is unknown to us. Some 300 home visits had been made by one staff member working for this unit.

Earlier figures suggest that this part of the pilot would reach some 50 families with altogether 120 children.

4.3.4 Subprogram 4: Day Center for the elderly

An open day care center for the elderly will provide a meeting point where they can receive assistance with the problems of everyday life such as health care and financial matters, and improve their quality of life through social and

recreational activities. So far, there is nothing to report on this sub-program, which is waiting for the opening of the new office building.

4.3.5 Subprogram 5: Rehabilitation Center

A day center to provide rehabilitation for disabled persons and support and training to their home helpers is also part of the plans for the new office building. From the perspective of evaluation, however, at present there is nothing to add.

5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

During the first series of in-depth interviews the evaluators concentrated on certain background variables such as the perception held by the ITM about the social situation in Kandava before the start of the pilot project as well as posed questions related to the goals and means of the pilot. At first, the main focus was on staff and management performance, and in the first part of the "result section" - 4.1 and 4.2 - we have reported what we have found so far. One conclusion is that the inner workings of the Kandava SAO should be further scrutinized through the time-budget or log-book methodology. As mentioned, in particular as regards client satisfaction there is also a need for a follow-up through surveying clients in Kandava.

Second, we have tried to give an early account of the status of three of the five subprograms currently in operation based on management and staff information. Field studies have not yet been conducted by the team of evaluators. Based on the information received from the interviewees, two of these three programs seems to have made some progress in certain areas - in particular as regards individual needs assessment and the training of a sufficient number of home helpers - during the start-up of the pilot. The individual needs assessment component belongs to the benefit, information and referral sub-program, which otherwise is in need of a further investigation about the information and referral components. The third sub-program only started its operation early this summer (June 1998), and obviously it is too early to say anything substantial about progress in the implementation of this part of the pilot. However, those working in this unit of the Kandava SAO show confidence regarding future possibilities in this area of social assistance.

6 NEXT STEP

As already emphasized, this paper focus entirely on the first stage in the evaluation process, the pre-pilot investigation, and in particular on the role of management and staff in this stage of the project. As indicated above, the evaluation so far has paid less emphasis to the five sub-programs of the pilot, and we stressed that this is not a full scale pre-project evaluation. There is an urgent need for further data collection and complementary interviews to end the first phase of the evaluation.

The evaluation consists not only a pre-project investigation but also of one or several mid-term evaluations - depending on the status and development of the five sub-programs - and of the final post-project phase focusing on the main results - outcome and impact - of the full implementation process. Thus, to enter the second stage - mid-term evaluations - the first phase must come to an end.

In the first phase of the pre-project evaluation, staff and management has been interviewed as well as the mayor of Kandava and the local consultant. We suggest that a follow-up is done through a time-budget investigation of the Kandava SAO. As mentioned, there is a great need for interviews with NGO representatives in Kandava. Furthermore, there is also a need for interviews with those responsible for the pilot on the national level. Potential and actual clients should also be surveyed during the fall.

The initial stage of this evaluation have been carried out during June-September 1998. Due to problems of communication during the summer, no additional interviews were done in Kandava after June 28th. Thus, the pre-project evaluation have to be extended and continued during the fall (October-December) otherwise this report will be incomplete. To collect relevant information from the (potential) clients a questionnaire will be constructed focusing on the wishes and ideas of the users of social benefits and service, and partly also based on the findings from the interviews with management and staff as well as NGO-representatives.

7 END NOTE

The aim of program evaluation is to construct penetrating questions and confident answers and use this knowledge for the further development and improvement of an existing social program, or, in the extreme case, with as reasonable arguments as possible, to justify the termination of an individual program or approach. Thus, program evaluation provides both a feedback to the policy process and, in the best possible case, an immediate corrective in the implementation process.

The essence of program evaluation can be summarized as "speaking truth to power". In a democracy, the authority that allocates money and resources to a specific program usually wants to know how the money and resources have been used - whether they gave value for money. Instead of relying on arbitrary judgment, an outsider, one or several specialists in the field, is hired to scrutinize and independently assess how things developed during the program: what kind of successes occurred, what kind of problems popped up along the way and what kind of solutions were discussed and made, what went wrong, and, finally, what lessons should be learnt.

In the typical case those who make decisions in a democratic process, for instance about a certain policy at national level, usually also want to know how the policy has been translated into a coherent program by the relevant executive authority. Likewise, those who are appointed to do the actual job, far from the center of power and long after the formal decisions has been taken and resources allocated to various local agencies, generally also want to learn and improve what they are doing.

The standard practice of evaluation has traditionally devoted a great deal of attention to methodology. A useful evaluation, thus, must address a number of practical and theoretical issues. In a formal evaluation, the evaluator has to grasp a number of concrete program measures and opinions about such measures on various levels and among different actors, as well as abstract concepts of theoretical and methodological relevance. An evaluator or evaluation team needs to integrate concepts and their meanings in a coherent framework that guides all aspects of their work as evaluators. This does not mean that the conceptualization of evaluation is a one-time activity or that it is static.

Moreover, the design and conduct of a particular investigation implies a good deal of localized conceptualization and methodological development. However, no method is appropriate in each and every case. This evaluation has tried to collect relevant background information to further enhance domestic competence building. Thus, here too, there is an opportunity for communication and dialogue between evaluators, policy makers and practitioners. But

evaluation theory does indicate when, where and why some methods are better than others, which methods should or should not be applied and in which sequences, ways in which different methods can be combined, the types of questions that are best addressed by a particular method, and the likely benefits of some methods compared with others.

All this is by no means easy, it consists of several tasks and there can be many pitfalls along the way. Obviously, it is a process involving many steps, from rather vague ideas that are developed into written proposals before being translated into formal evaluation instruments. And even then, a social program has to be implemented and involve its clients. Many things can go wrong on the road from good ideas and intentions to actual decisions and measures that have a direct bearing on the daily lives and activities of human beings.

This paper focus on the initial stage of a local pilot project, and again it is necessary to stress the problems involved in evaluating Kandava pilot; it's multifaceted nature. The methods to be used during the course of this evaluation will consists of both qualitative and quantitative indicators as well as one or several "reference communities". In this preparatory part of the pre-project evaluation - step one - the evaluators so far has relied solely on a qualitative approach; an obvious limitation to draw far-reaching conclusions from that will be rectified later. The necessity of acquiring and disseminating correct information about lessons learned from the pilot is to our minds self-evident. This is also where the independent evaluation contributes to the process of development. By scrutinizing the links between policy and practice, from Riga to Kandava and back again to the capital (feed-back), the evaluation will fuel a process of dissemination from Kandava and Riga to all parts of the country and back again from the peripheries to the center about, the pilot project's achievements and shortcomings.

8 LIST OF LITERATURE

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