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**DRAFT EVALUATION REPORT
Version 1**



**UDF-IND-09-322 – Active democracy and political participation of tribal
communities in the Himalayas (India)**

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Disclaimers

The views expressed in this report are those of the evaluators. They do not represent those of UNDEF nor of any of the institutions referred to in the report.

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I. Executive Summary

i. Project data

From 1 November 2010 to 31 October 2012, the Indian NGO Pragya implemented the project: *Active democracy and political participation of tribal communities in the Himalayas*. Pragya head office is in Gurgaon (a satellite city of the capital Delhi), and the organization has six field offices in the states of Jammu & Kashmir (J & K), Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, West Bengal and Arunachal Pradesh in the high Himalayas. The project received USD320,000 in support from UNDEF (of which USD25,000 was pre-allocated to evaluation).

The project's principal objectives were "to enhance civic participation among Himalayan tribes and empower marginalized groups (women, people with disabilities and nomads); and to foster the involvement of Himalayan people in governance and democratic dialogue". In support of this, the project aimed to build a supportive environment for enhanced democratic participation through actions directed at supporting state and non-state actors.

In pursuit of these objectives, the project comprised 10 core components: civic awareness campaigns and the development of educational materials for hill tribe villagers in the target regions; development of Resource Centres and the provision of relevant materials to community service organizations (CSOs) in the 12 target districts; legal/civic education targeting marginalized groups in three regions; self-managed helpline services for marginalized groups; the development of quarterly "social watch" monthly reports; training on leadership for elected representatives and CSO staff; organizing one stakeholder forum in each district and regular citizen/state interactions focusing on two issue-based studies and annual national policy dialogues; citizen media training and promotion of local media coverage; sensitization programmes for non-state development actors such as media; and establishing "socio-legal kiosks", staffed by trained volunteers.

These actions were designed to create a continuum from awareness of rights to access to those rights, supported by the training and mobilization of relevant support actors and those who could make the rights a reality.

ii. Evaluation questions

In evaluating the **relevance** of the project, the evaluators interviewed Pragya staff in head office and project offices, participants in the diverse activities, and consultants who had delivered training. In particular, the evaluators examined the context in which the project was developed, the coherence of design and the coincidence of the project's aims and outputs to the needs of the beneficiaries. The evaluators also considered the gender-appropriateness of project design, materials and implementation and, given the geographic focus of the project and its central aim to change attitudes to rights access, issues related to risk management and mitigation.

The evaluators considered that the project, which fitted into a much broader strategy for the region concerned, implemented by Pragya over a number of years, was logical and very much tuned to the needs of the beneficiaries and other stakeholders in this challenging region. It was consequently extremely relevant.

In exploring the project's **effectiveness**, the evaluators focused on potential changes in the scheduling of activities, on the numbers of beneficiaries and stakeholders reached by the project, and the extent to which the targets set in the project document were reached. There were no delays in project delivery since it had been designed with the seasonal obstacles relevant to the target region in mind (the high Himalayan districts are cut off from the rest of the country for four to five months a year). Statistically, the project reached and in several

instances exceeded the targets set. The multiplier effect of some of the activities is not easy to measure but is evident in those areas where numbers have been captured.

In relation to **efficiency**, it was noted that the project budget (in addition to USD 19,200 in-kind noted in the Project Document) understated the true value of the project and that many costs were in fact covered through Pragya's ongoing programming in this region, in the context of which the UNDEF-supported project was designed. The additional funds expended and in-kind provided far exceeded what was reported and added considerable value to UNDEF's support.

The evaluators based evaluation of **impact** on interviews with a range of participants in the project. Most of these were interviewed by telephone because the target areas were not reachable following disastrous flooding in the region in the week before the evaluation took place. The respondents gave numerous examples of positive impact on individual participants and it was clear that the impact on elected representatives and broader stakeholders was significant.

Because the UNDEF-supported project was part of a broader, ongoing programme of support to the people of the high Himalayas, its **sustainability** potential was high. The processes and structures put in place during the project have been maintained however there are a number of threats to sustaining the outcomes of the project that need to be managed. These include the potential negative influence of those who fail to access their rights and the possibility that a volunteer workforce will lose interest if they are not in some way remunerated or replaced over time.

In attempting to identify **UNDEF value-added**, the evaluators met with representatives of relevant UN agencies and donors and concluded that UNDEF had filled a significant gap in programming in the high Himalayas, which is largely neglected by UN agencies, NGOs and government agencies. UNDEF's support of the project also contributed to the inclusion of democratic participation as a component of the training.

iii. Conclusions

- ***The project was coherent, gender-appropriate and highly relevant to the needs of the beneficiaries.*** The design of this project within a broader strategic planning and programming process also led to the individual actions being well designed and relevant.
- ***When people are encouraged to claim their rights and entitlements, there is a risk that they will not be successful or that the services they are seeking will not materialize, and this risk must be taken into account.***
- ***The project was extremely effective. It achieved its objectives and in many cases exceeded the quantitative targets set.***
- ***The project was "valued" at much more than the USD 320,000 it received in support, because it was subsidized through Pragya's core budget.***
- ***Training, education and sensitization will only be effective if there are processes or structures in place that can contribute to transforming them into practical outcomes.*** A principal reason for the high impact of the project was the coherence between training/education, bridging processes and mobilization of stakeholder groups and community structures such as Resource Centres to support them.
- ***While this project was well designed to be sustainable after funding had ended, there are a number of things that might put this at risk, including use of a volunteer workforce and the potential negative influence of unsuccessful applications***

for schemes and entitlements. These risks need to be managed to ensure ongoing sustainability.

▪ ***This project provided high value-added for UNDEF, and there is potential for UNDEF to continue engagement in this neglected region,*** particularly focusing on the promotion of democratic participation.

iv. Recommendations

For Pragya

▪ ***Take steps to mitigate disillusionment.*** It is inevitable that not all those who apply for government schemes and entitlements will receive them and it is also possible that promised services may not materialize, or that louder voices may prevail. In order to mitigate negative examples they may see, put in place an active process for sharing success stories.

▪ ***Consider providing modest honoraria to those who have volunteered in this project and also preparing new volunteers to replace those that drop out.*** This is important for sustainability since even enthusiastic volunteers will not work for ever for no reward. Alternatively or additionally, particularly in order to maintain a spirit of volunteering, prepare new volunteers to replace any that drop out.

▪ ***Include follow-up funding to maintain the processes put in place by making these a component of other, larger project submissions.*** The Resource Centres, helplines and forum will have relevance not only to continuing the impact of this project, but in future projects (perhaps in other ways). It is therefore legitimate to include the ongoing maintenance of these processes as a component of future project design and funding submissions.

For UNDEF

▪ UNDEF might ***consider supporting projects in geographical areas that are largely neglected by other UN agencies, NGOs and donor/governments.*** In particular, this offers the opportunity to promote the ***inclusion of specific project components covering democratic participation*** – voting and representation.

▪ ***Consider requesting, when final accounts are submitted, information on the total budget for programmes of which UNDEF supports one component.*** In this way, the full value will be evident and both evaluators and UNDEF will see the true extent of the actions being undertaken and the resources being mobilized.

I. Introduction and development context

i. The project and evaluation objectives

From 1 November 2010 to 31 October 2012, the Indian NGO Pragya, headquartered in Gurgaon, a satellite city of Delhi, implemented the project: *Active democracy and political participation of tribal communities in the Himalayas*. Pragya has field offices covering the target states of Jammu & Kashmir (J & K), Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, West Bengal and Arunachal Pradesh in the high Himalayas. The project received USD320,000 in support from UNDEF of which USD25,000 was pre-allocated to evaluation.

The project's principal objectives were "to enhance civic participation among Himalayan tribes and empower marginalized groups (women, people with disabilities and nomads); and to foster the involvement of Himalayan people in governance and democratic dialogue". In support of this, the project aimed to build a supportive environment for enhanced democratic participation through actions directed at supporting state and non-state actors.

The Himalayan tribes/clans targeted by the project live in extremely isolated settlements. Indeed, in the week before the evaluation began, early monsoonal rains washed out whole villages in the target region, and flooding that Indian media dubbed "the Himalayan tsunami" destroyed roads and left thousands of people dead or missing. Even when not challenged by extreme events such as these, the target regions have little access to key services and few sources of information that might guide them in improving their representation and participation at levels of government that might change this. The overarching question of the evaluation, therefore, was whether the project might realistically be able to change or at least have an impact on what is a major development challenge.

The project was also multi-faceted and, on paper at least, extremely complex. The evaluators therefore sought to ascertain whether all the activities were carried out, how they were covered by the quite modest budget, and whether they were internally coherent. Since the project ended in 2012, the evaluation team also explored whether, and the extent to which the processes and structures put in place by the project had continued to function.

As the floods receded, the evaluation team travelled to Gurgaon to meet with Pragya headquarters staff who had overall responsibility for the successful implementation of the project, and met with participating and interested stakeholders in Gurgaon and Delhi. Although there were plans to attempt to reach some of the project areas as relief work progressed, these were eventually shelved as heavy rains returned, and remote interviews with participants, staff and stakeholders in the high Himalayan regions were conducted by telephone.

ii. Evaluation methodology

An international expert designated to lead the evaluation prepared a preliminary planning note (Launch Note) in June 2013 based on a review of project documentation (see Annex 2). Meanwhile, a national expert began developing with the grantee a schedule of interviews that would take place during a joint field mission from 1 to 5 July 2013. Plans had been made for the local expert to travel to Joshimath, in the Himalayas, to interview beneficiaries. Travel from Delhi to Joshimath takes two days in each direction, so the plan was that the local expert would complete these meetings while the international expert undertook interviews with stakeholders in Gurgaon and Delhi. As noted above, these plans could not proceed.

The experts interviewed staff of the implementing organization, consultants who designed or presented the training materials, local political representatives in the target districts, and a sample of participants in the project's activities, as well as representatives of relevant UN agencies, media and donors.

Information was collected, analysed and is presented in this report according to the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria of: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The evaluation criteria are outlined in more detail in Annex 1.

iii. Development context

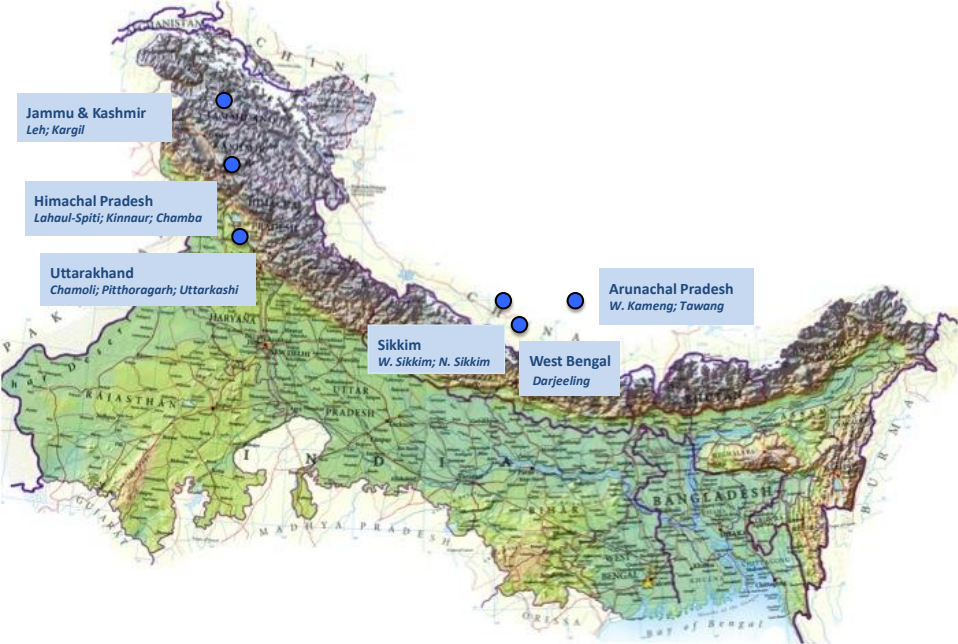
India, often called “the world’s largest democracy”, covers an area of more than 3 million square kilometres, ranging from dry desert plains to the highest mountain range in the world. It has a population of more than one and a quarter billion (HDR 2013).

India ranks 136th on the 2013 Human Development Index, with GNI per capita of USD3,285 in 2012 (HDR 2013). This belies, however, the considerable gap between the wealthiest sectors of society and the poorest; 53.7% of the population are considered to be in multidimensional poverty, with 28.6% in severe poverty.

The regions targeted by the project under review (see map below) are rural, geographically and socially isolated, and have borders with China, Nepal, Bhutan, Pakistan and the Tibet Autonomous Region of China. They are therefore strategically important but subject to political sensitivities that affect the nature and extent of government attention to them.

The economy of the area depends on mountain agriculture, however the scope for expanding agricultural activities is severely constrained by physical, geographic and environmental hurdles. As a result, most of the hill peoples survive on subsistence farming or else migrate to other parts of the country.

The targeted areas are located at altitudes above 8,000 feet and are reachable by road for only eight months of the year. People live in small, dispersed settlements and the population density ranges from just two to 10 people per square kilometre. Service provision is therefore complex and expensive and the region is to a large extent ignored by mainstream service providers and in national and international development plans.



A 2010 report of the Indian Planning Commission task force set up to look at the hill areas concluded that progress had been slow compared with the rest of the country.¹ The report

¹ *Problems of hill states and hill areas and ways to ensure that they do not suffer in any way because of their peculiarities*, Indian Planning Commission, 2010.

recommended reshaping of government policies to mainstream the “mountain perspective” in national planning, emphasizing good governance and harnessing social capital at the grassroots.

Although the people of the high Himalayas have literacy levels equivalent to or in some instances exceeding those of the rest of the population, they experience considerable disadvantage in accessing basic services – for example they are several days’ travelling distance from the nearest hospital. Baseline data gathering for the project suggested that the main challenges facing the people of the six districts are:

- Physical isolation and distance from main population centres
- Prejudices about Himalayan communities and discrimination
- Low population density that reduces political influence
- Considered peripheral and low priority
- Low development status, disparities and inequalities
- Vulnerability to conflict and social tensions
- Welfare-deprived, poor implementation of provisions
- Low capacity, ‘voicelessness’ and low political participation.

The high Himalayas also face severe environmental challenges, with extensive deforestation and large dam/power developments displacing villages and swelling or altering the course of rivers. Indeed, both of these factors are considered to have contributed to the disastrous floods of June 2013. The local people have found it impossible to mobilize against these developments, reporting helplessness in approaching the officials who should be recording their concerns and facilitating their access to due process.²

Politically, India is divided into village-level governing bodies, panchayats, grouped into Zilla Parishads. Additionally, there are broader geographical districts, each of which has a District Commissioner and Deputy District Commissioner. These multiple layers of governance make the distance between people and the realization of their rights to access justice, services and entitlements both long and fraught with obstacles. The challenge of identifying and navigating these obstacles, and building bridges to shorten the distance from understanding rights to achieving them was the focus of the project under consideration.

² Interview with Dr Furqan Ahmad, Associate Research Professor, Indian Law Institute.

II. Project strategy

i. Project approach and strategy

The grantee, Pragma, is one of the few organizations working in the high Himalayas. It maintains six project offices covering 12 Himalayan districts in the states of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, West Bengal and Arunachal Pradesh. Its work covers four major axes (illustrated below) and importantly, in developing this programming over several years, Pragma has set up a sophisticated system of information collection (through the project offices) and analysis (in a Monitoring, Coordination and Support section) that feeds into the Programme specialists in Head Office in Gurgaon.

The UNDEF-supported project fits within the broader programme outlined in the diagram and was informed through the ongoing information collection and analysis system described.

The project had three core strategies:

- Large-scale awareness raising and information dissemination, accompanied by support services so that those who had learned about their rights would have easier access to channels for claiming their rights and redressing grievances;
- Participatory monitoring to develop evidence-based inputs to national policies and programmes; and
- Sensitization and capacity building of elected representatives, state and non-state actors and the media.

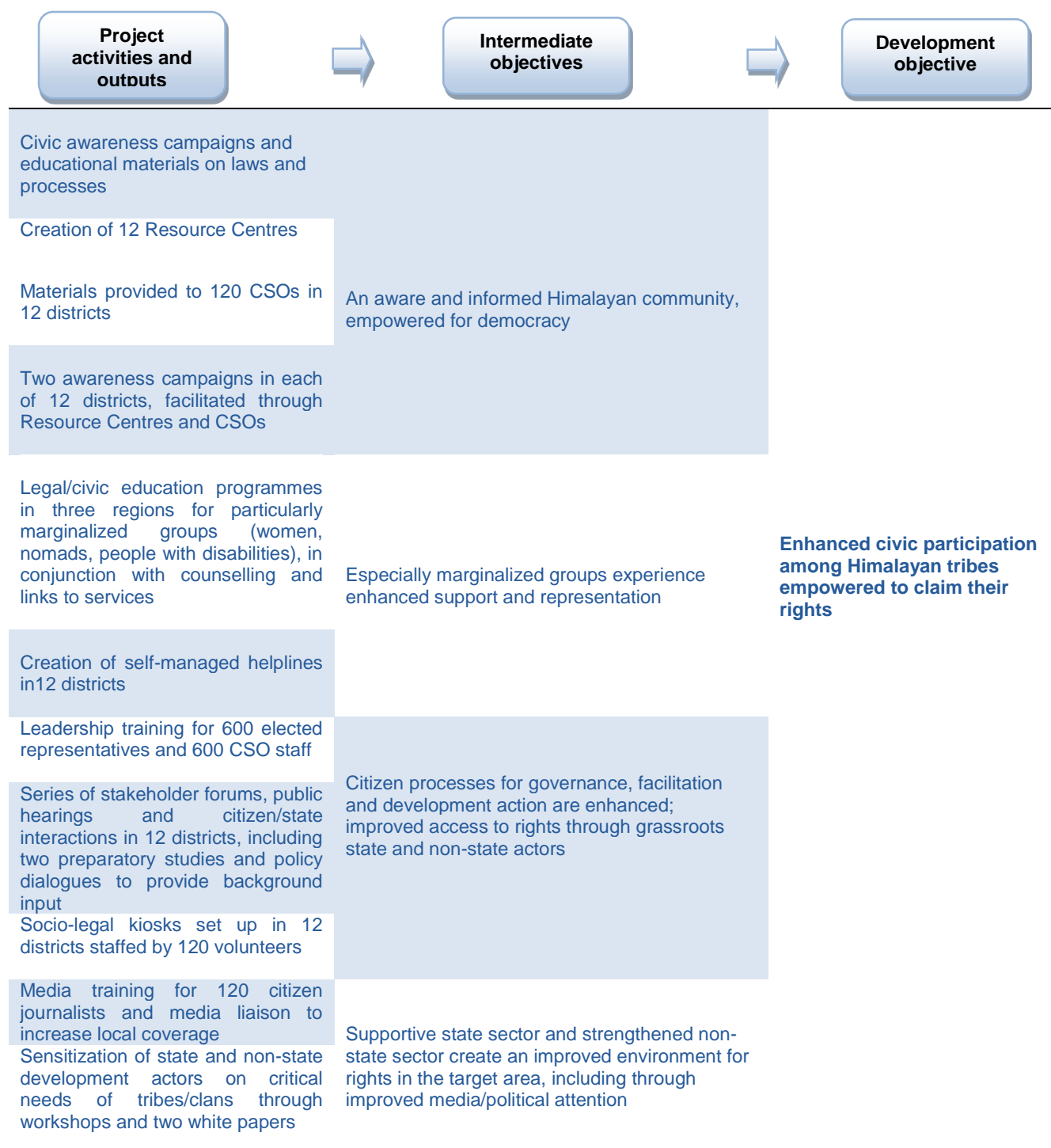
The project comprised 10 core actions:

- Two civic awareness campaigns and the development of educational materials on laws and processes;
- The further development of 12 Resource Centres and the provision of relevant materials to 120 community organizations in the 12 target districts;
- Delivery of legal/civic education targeting marginalized groups in three regions;
- The creation of self-managed helpline services for marginalized groups in 12 districts;
- Support to the development of quarterly “social watch” monthly reports in 12 districts;
- Development and delivery of training on leadership for 600 elected representatives and 600 staff of community organizations;
- The organization of one stakeholder forum per district and regular citizen/state interactions focusing on two issue-based studies and annual national policy dialogues;
- Development and delivery of citizen media training and promotion of local media coverage;
- Design of sensitization programmes for non-state development actors such as media;
- Establishment of “socio-legal kiosks” in 12 districts, staffed by trained volunteers.

Activities and project outputs are summarized in the logical framework diagram that follows.



ii. Logical framework



III. EQ answers / findings

i. Relevance

The project aimed not only to increase tribal people's understanding of their rights and entitlements but also to build bridges that would improve their ability to access these rights and services.

▪ **Education and information**

The first component of the project, which focused on education and information, included two civic awareness campaigns in each of the 12 districts and the preparation of related education materials. A database of available services and legal aid personnel was also prepared and made available through 12 Resource Centres and to 120 community organizations, who were trained to use the database. Volunteers were also trained to staff the Resource Centres and conduct ongoing awareness actions. Brochures promoting the Resource Centres were produced and distributed through schools and community halls. The Resource Centres and community organizations are effectively the first step on the path to accessing the services and entitlements beneficiaries learned about.

▪ **Focus on especially marginalized groups**

The second component of the project aimed to extend understanding and access to three especially marginalized groups: women, nomadic pastoralists and people with disabilities. They received civic education and confidence-building training and representatives of the groups received additional training in counselling and representation. The project also established "helplines" in the 12 districts – not phone numbers or websites, but people trained to act as focal points for queries and equipped through training and links to the Resource Centres. The "helplines" would also be able to help people in practical ways, for example filling in application forms for government grants.

▪ **Participatory governance and facilitation**

Component three focused on participatory governance and facilitation. Almost 500 young people were trained as "barefoot monitors" who collected data and information on gaps in services and village needs, and transmitted this to the panchayats. The main aim of this information-gathering exercise was to facilitate evidence-based advocacy through annual baseline surveys and quarterly monitoring reports. The monitors were provided with a toolkit and a training manual was produced. During the period of project implementation, the barefoot monitors contributed to seven *Social Watch* reports that highlighted issues in the implementation of state schemes. As part of this component, also, advocacy training was delivered to a range of stakeholders who, under component four, were constituted into a Stakeholder Forum.

"The Resource Centres have something for everyone. It is a luxury for people in remote areas like ours. They have magazines, computers, newspapers and information about government schemes, as well as government publications. The Resource Centre (volunteers) helped us to understand who sponsors the various schemes and the different criteria."

**Rigzin Hayarpa, Elected Member,
Zilla Parishad Lahual and Spiti district,
Himachal Pradesh**



Training of barefoot monitors in Kargil

- **Democratic dialogue and representation**

The fourth component, covering democratic dialogue and representation, included leadership training for more than 1,300 elected representatives and CSOs. This was undertaken by trainers from leading national institutes. The Stakeholder Forum conducted 24 programme/project assessments and held public hearings and meetings bringing together community members and government officials. The Forum also completed two issues-based studies, on climate change and infrastructure gaps, that were used as resource material and also disseminated at national level. On the basis of the work, two annual national policy dialogues were organized.

In this component, also, 120 citizen journalists were trained by working journalists to identify stories and promote them to mainstream media. The aim of this was to increase coverage of issues facing the region in national media.

- **Development of state and non-state actors**

The final component aimed to develop the capacity of state and non-state actors and focused on sensitizing almost 400 development actors through workshops on the needs of tribal populations. The media were introduced to the issues through two white papers. Socio-legal kiosks were established in the 12 districts linked to lawyers and staffed by volunteers.

Through these diverse but programmatically linked components, the project reached out not only to community members but to those who could actually help meet their increased expectations, making links between those who were entitled to and would benefit from available schemes and programmes and the authorities who would give access to them.

“I attended three training courses with other elected members of the panchayat. They taught us the provisions of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act and about legal aid for the poor and school education for children. We had many doubts about the schemes because of the lack of cooperation of government employees in various departments, but in this training we got clarifications in the presence of those same employees.”

**Lalita Pancheras, Village Pradhan,
Khawangi Village, Kinnaur district,
Himachal Pradesh**

- **Gender appropriateness**

The evaluators also sought to ascertain the extent to which the project had been designed in a way that was gender-appropriate. Pragma has a gender advisor on staff (although he was on leave at the time of the evaluation) and explained that all project and programme design is passed through a “gender lens” to ensure that it is gender-appropriate.

Beyond the inclusion of women as participants in the project at every level, materials are also reviewed to ensure that they take account of gender issues and appropriateness. The training manual for the district leadership course for elected representatives and CSOs, for example, has sections that focus on the Indian Constitution and, within this, those articles of the Constitution that relate specifically to women (and tribal/indigenous people).

The project design was thus cohesive, logical and very much tuned to the needs of the beneficiaries and other stakeholders in this challenging region.

This finding contributes to **Conclusion i**.

- **Risk management**

One area that deserves more consideration is risk management.

Pragma respondents themselves used the phrase “attitudinal change” in describing the education/awareness-raising elements of this project; and whenever efforts are taken to change attitudes or raise awareness with a view to ultimately changing behaviour, it is important to consider the possibility that external factors may work to reverse such change. In the case of this project, for example, it is likely that villagers who attempt to access the services to which they believe themselves to be entitled may not all be successful. Pragma estimates that approximately 80% of those who applied for entitlements and grants following the project were successful; this means that two of every 10 people would be disappointed. One result of

their disillusionment may be that they tell others that it is not worth trying because they, too, will be disappointed. There are ways to mitigate this risk, but these were not specifically foreseen in the project design.

Conversely, Pragma did list as a risk factor the fact that the implementation area is prone to natural disasters and that this might disrupt project schedules. They aimed to counter this by adjusting the time-table seasonally and through project office management of the schedule. However the June 2013 floods in the region raise another issue in relation to risk: since the project focused on helping villagers to learn how to access their rights and in particular entitlements provided by the government, the villagers' belief in government responsiveness is crucial. Inevitably in the wake of natural disasters there is impatience about the speed and level of government response and the relief services government provides. This disaster-focused disappointment might well impact on the broader attitudes of the hill tribes towards government services and the attention they believe government accords to their needs. There is also a need, therefore, to consider this aspect of disaster-related risk and ways to mitigate it (potentially, as outlined above, through positive reinforcement and highlighting success/good news stories).

This finding leads to **Conclusion ii**.

ii. Effectiveness

▪ Objectives achieved

The project achieved all the objectives set in the original project plan. All activities took place and there were no unforeseen delays or obstacles. In pedagogical terms, the training sessions were designed in such a way that they were likely to have a high level of effectiveness. The Milestone Verification Report focusing on the district leadership training for elected representatives and CSOs in April 2011, for example, describes the methodology used: The consultant trainer, Associate Research Professor Dr Furqan Ahmad from the Indian Law Institute, made formal presentations on the first day and second morning of the training, but the second afternoon was led by Pragma staff members and comprised interactive sessions.

The 104 participants were divided into four groups and brainstormed a topic (public health, education, for example) to identify the governance problems related to this issue in their community and how they might move to solve these using the knowledge they had gained during the formal lectures. The groups then reassembled to share their ideas. This participatory methodology is an extremely effective way of turning theory into understanding and action.

▪ Numbers reached

The project reached, and in many instances exceeded the quantitative targets that had been set. These are summarized in the table below, which gives a clear indication of the effectiveness of the project:

| | |
|--|--|
| Civic awareness campaigns conducted | 2 per district |
| Resource Centres further developed | 12 |
| Events organized through Centres | 219 |
| People involved in the events | 5,245 including 286 government officials |
| Visitors to Centres in 2 nd year of project | 26,342 |
| Legal resources database developed | 1 |
| CSOs trained | 120 |
| Participants in confidence building/civic education for marginalized groups | 3,423 |
| Representatives of marginalized groups trained in counselling and representation | 276 |
| Self-managed helpline services established | Multiple in 12 districts |
| Young people trained as barefoot monitors | 487 (172 female, 315 male) |
| Social Watch reports produced | 7 |

| | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Leadership training participants | 1,347 |
| Programme/project assessments completed | 24 |
| Participants in public hearings | 864 including 72 government officials |
| Issues-based studies prepared | 2 |
| National policy dialogues organized | 2 |
| Citizen journalists trained | 120 |
| Development actors sensitized on needs | 384 |
| White papers for media | 2 |
| Socio-legal kiosks established | 12 |
| Users of kiosks during life of project | 42,000 |
| Volunteers trained to staff kiosks | 193 |
| Training modules produced | 5 |

These findings contribute to **Conclusion iii.**

iii. Efficiency

▪ Budget

The project budget was at first glance idiosyncratic, with almost half of the USD 295,000 for project implementation allocated to publications and other media (USD 115,920). The second-highest allocation was to staff and personnel expenses (USD 79,680) and yet, in a project with a large training component, there was no allowance for consultants who would contribute to the training. The third-highest allocation was to meetings and training (USD 74,800) which seems very little given the logistics involved in conducting such events, especially since there is nothing at all in the budget for travel.

This seemingly incomplete budget was explained by senior Pragma staff as exactly that. Because the UNDEF-supported project was researched, designed and implemented within a much larger strategic plan for Pragma's work in the region, many of the costs of the project were in fact covered through other sources. There were no specific secondary donors; rather the costs were covered through Pragma's multi-annual budget.

This is important to note because, in reality, UNDEF was in fact the principal sponsor of a project with a much higher value than the USD 320,000 grant. In short, this was a high value project for UNDEF.

The evaluators sought to ascertain whether the personnel costs were appropriately allocated between head office and project offices in the target region. In fact, head office in Gurgaon added considerable value to the project activities, from the monitoring and analysis described earlier to the preparation of training and other materials, to ongoing backstopping of the staff located in each of the six project offices.

These findings contribute to **Conclusion iv.**

▪ Activities

The planned activities were inherently coherent, creating a continuum of knowledge of rights, support services to help realize those rights, and stakeholder processes to mobilize those able to give access to them. The permanent presence of the Pragma project office staff meant that this continuum could be monitored and supported on an ongoing basis.

This finding contributes to **Conclusion i.**

iv. Impact

▪ Impact on individual participants

Many of the participants, and indeed others who did not participate in the rights awareness education, were able to apply for grants and subsidies and some eight in 10 were successful. The multiplier effect worked not only through word of mouth but also because of the processes and structures put in place in the communities that were available to everyone. Thus the numbers of users of the Resource Centres, for example, far exceeded the number of actual participants in the workshops.

All the interviewees agreed that the rights awareness workshops were useful to them and several gave concrete examples of how they had then been able to use the knowledge they had gained. A beneficiary from Himachal Pradesh region, for example, said that she had learned about government schemes designed to promote the creation of craft centres. The Pragma project staff had helped her fill out the paperwork and she had successfully applied for a loan to start a weaving centre. Now she and five other women work making shawls and “earn good money”, enough to repay the low-interest loan.

A man from the same region said that he believed the rights education programme had helped bridge the gap between the government and beneficiaries, and that the meetings helped the beneficiaries to feel more at ease. He thought that change was particularly noticeable among the women who had participated and that, now they know about the schemes open to them, they are taking the initiative to become economically empowered.

“These days more and more women come to my office to get subsidized seeds and fencing grants. Most of the men want to know about new schemes and bank loans. I think the activities have educated the villagers, especially the women, to enhance their economic status.”

**K N Tewari, Horticulture Officer,
West Kameng District, Arunachal
Pradesh**

The Pragma project officer in Arunachal Pradesh believed that an important impact of the project was that it convinced people that they could achieve their rights. Some, he said, knew that there were schemes and grants to which they might apply but they were reluctant to do so. The project inspired them to try. “It was the district-level interactions that helped the villagers,” he said. “In some of the programmes, for example, local lawyers came and convinced the people in language they understood that what they were hearing about was true. This helped to break the ice in the community.”

“I taught the tribes about their rights in their local language and the reaction was positive but the services and facilities are not always available – hospitals are remote and there is no real public transport. Some rights have been devolved to village level now, so people are more able to manage their own affairs. The problem remains, however, that there need to be ways to make rights real.”

**Dr Furqan Ahmad, Associate Research
Professor, Indian Law Institute**

This same officer, though, warned that there were still hurdles to overcome in convincing everyone that they should come forward to claim their rights. “Some people believe,” he said, “that filling in forms to get state benefits is like begging. Others are just too shy to go out and claim their rights”.

▪ Impact on elected representatives and other stakeholders

An important component of the project was the training of elected representatives, the key entry point to villagers achieving access to the rights and entitlements about which they had learned.

The local government (panchayat) representatives interviewed were extremely positive about the training they had received and the impact of the project on their ability to help their constituents and understand the issues facing them. One officer from Arunachal Pradesh, for example, said that during the project he had met with people from interior areas that he otherwise would not meet “for administrative and financial reasons”. He said that sharing information with villagers and receiving feedback through the barefoot monitors’ reports allowed him to “judge the level of need of programmes and the difficulties in implementing the schemes”.

An elected representative from Himachal Pradesh commented on the usefulness of the Resource Centres. “[The information available there] helped us to understand whether schemes are sponsored by the Government of India or state government, and what the differences in criteria are. The bureaucrats were always confusing us and, despite the availability of so many funds, very few people were able to benefit.”

Other elected representatives confirmed that the project had been important in helping them to do their job better. One particular outcome was the links forged between the authorities and marginalized groups within the communities.

Additionally, the CSOs that participated in the leadership training had a crucial role in providing support to the villagers in their efforts to apply for grants and subsidies and to obtain legal redress if necessary, and a number of interviewees mentioned the important part played by the “helplines” in empowering villagers and providing practical support.

The synergies created among the villagers, their elected representatives and the groups/processes that would facilitate links and provide support were crucial to the positive outcomes of the project as well as to the likelihood that they would continue.

▪ **Broader advocacy in support of the hill tribes’ human rights**

Mainstreaming the needs of the hill tribes into national policy and programmes is part of Pragma’s ongoing work and in this project featured in the component dedicated to media.

Journalists were invited as full participants in the project, not as an “add-on”, and so came to learn from the beneficiaries the issues they considered important and the priority areas where change was needed. The media also received copies of two “white papers” developed to focus on two themes identified through the stakeholder forum as priority areas for action. The forum convened public forums (including senior officials of the district governments, community members and CSO representatives) and facilitated discussions leading to concrete recommendations for action at local and national level. Studies were carried out on the impact of climate change and on infrastructure and formed the basis of the white papers as well as broader advocacy work with government departments, academia and other relevant stakeholders.

“I facilitated a training programme with journalists. Now three or four of them remain active writing on developmental issues. We also get regular information on the state of the villages in the hills from the project staff and communicate this to the policy makers and stakeholders regularly in every appropriate forum.”

**Kundan Lal All India Radio journalist
Training facilitator, Kelong**

Additionally, the project included training for 120 “citizen journalists” whose task was to identify issues and stories to feed to mainstream media. These citizen journalists were linked in the project to the barefoot monitors, Research Centres and socio-legal kiosk volunteer lawyers in an effective communication and information system that ensured the circulation of the information being generated from discussions, studies and observation.

These findings contribute to **Conclusion v.**

v. Sustainability

▪ **Processes and structures put in place**

The project was designed to put in place people and resources that would continue to have a multiplier effect even after the project had ended, and interviews with people who had participated in the project suggest that this continues to be true. Since the project ended in October 2012, Pragya has maintained the processes and structures that it put in place: the Resource Centres, the socio-legal kiosks, the helplines and the stakeholder forums, and the people involved in them. This is a result of the project being designed, *ab initio*, as part of a broader, ongoing strategy and action plan for the region.

These processes and structures also receive ongoing support from the permanent presence of project office staff. Monitoring and backstopping of the processes and structures continues in head office, also, and it is in the process of this monitoring that a potential threat to sustainability has been identified:

▪ **Maintaining a volunteer “workforce”**

Although the project was extremely successful in building a large volunteer workforce (the barefoot monitors, helplines, Resource Centre staff, socio-legal advisors and citizen journalists), there is a limit to how long volunteers will continue to give their time and effort without some reward.

Pragya alerted the evaluators to their concern that the volunteers might begin to drop out of the work they had been doing if they did not receive at least a modest remuneration, and this was confirmed through interviews. A former project officer in Himachal Pradesh expressed his belief that the volunteers might not continue: “Very few volunteers continue their engagement after the completion of the project because there is no financial incentive. Social work does not come free”.

“In our area we have a large migrant population. They outnumber the local people. We found that their children are not getting education. We talked to the Pragya project officer and approached the education department. We got more than 100 migrant children enrolled and now they are studying with the local children.”

**Lalita Pancheras Village Pradhan,
Khawangi Village Kinnur District**

Pragya is addressing this issue by attempting to free up funds to be able to pay modest honoraria to the “volunteers”, however this is a slippery slope to take because it undermines the spirit of volunteerism.

▪ **Follow-up and ongoing funding of project outcomes**

Pragya is committed to working in the high Himalayas region long-term and to ensuring and reinforcing the outcomes of this project. This will be done through allocations from the organization’s core budget but could also be achieved by incorporating follow-up activities (refresher training, stakeholder forum meetings etc) in future submissions to funding bodies as part of new projects.

The potential of this being successful is high precisely because the project’s activities are part of the bigger picture of Pragya activities. The notable success in helping people to access their rights also contributes to embedding the processes and structures in the fabric of village life. This was underscored by a number of interviewees who demonstrated considerable enthusiasm in relating success stories.

▪ **Risks of not managing negatives**

There are risks, outlined earlier, of the sustainability of the project’s outcomes being negated when risk is not appropriately managed. These risks relate primarily to the negating potential of those people who apply for government entitlements or legal redress, but who are not successful. To counteract negative influences and also to continue the process of encouraging

people to access their rights, Pragma should proactively publicize success stories. They are many and impressive and are potentially potent in demonstrating to people that it is well worth making the effort to seek help to fill out forms or obtain advice.

This finding contributes to **Conclusion vi**.

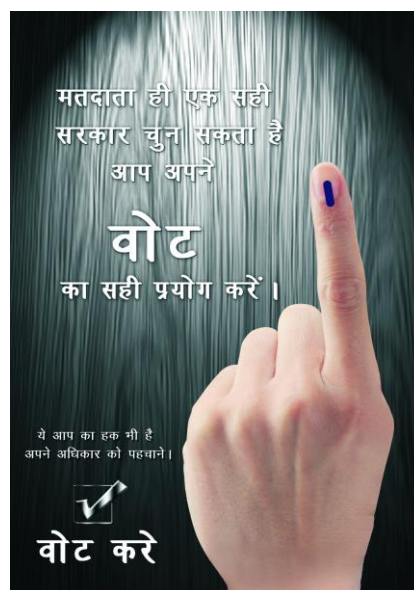
“We had major success in Shakti village where we initially helped four or five people to file applications for the old age pension and widow’s pension scheme. Later almost 100 people applied and 80% received benefits.”

**Bikram Sarki, Project Officer,
Arunachal Pradesh**

vi. UNDEF value-added

The high Himalayas is a region that is largely ignored by welfare organizations (both national and international) and indeed by UN agencies and the six principal donor governments that have Memoranda of Understanding with the Indian Government. UNDEF is the only agency supporting work of this kind in this region and the value-added of this project is therefore significant, a judgement confirmed in discussions with UNDP and ILO staff in India. UNDP also has a programme that aims to help marginalized groups to access their legal, social, economic and political rights (*Access to justice for marginalized people*) but, like other programmes focusing on rights education and/or marginalized groups, it is not implemented in the Himalayan region.

Interviews also confirmed that the issue of voting/democratic participation requires attention in the Himalayan region and UNDEF’s support of this project ensured that attention was paid to this in the training courses. India has universal suffrage but in the high Himalayas only 56–57% of eligible people actually vote. To some extent this is a problem of access – in some areas, for example, ballot boxes have to be taken to the voters because of the difficult treks required for voters to get to polling stations – but it is also a result of the proximity of other political regimes. A number of respondents said that tribal communities that see Indian Government indifference often suggest they might “go over” to Nepal or China and this is of course of major concern to the government. Facilitating democratic participation and encouraging voting is therefore extremely important and this component of the Pragma project coincided well with UNDEF’s mandate.



**Poster encouraging people to vote
(one of a series distributed through
the Resource Centres)**

IV. Conclusions

i. Based on findings presented under the 'Relevance' heading: **The project was coherent, gender-appropriate and highly relevant to the needs of the beneficiaries.** Pragma's organizational structure, which links field-based staff with headquarters colleagues through a formal and efficient system of information exchange and analysis, means that programme design responds closely to the needs of the target beneficiaries. The design of this project within a broader strategic planning and programming process also led to the individual actions being well designed and relevant.

ii. Based on the need for enhanced risk management: **Inevitably, people who attempt to claim their rights and entitlements may not always succeed; also the services they are seeking will not always materialize.** It is therefore extremely important to consider how this lack of success might be managed in order not to negate any positive impact of the training and awareness raising.

iii. Based on findings presented under the heading of 'Effectiveness': **The project achieved its objectives and in many cases exceeded the quantitative targets set.** It was extremely effective.

iv. Based on consideration of the project budget within the context of a larger programme budget: **The project was "valued" at much more than the USD 320,000 it received in support, because it was subsidized through Pragma's core budget** (Pragma had indicated it would provide USD 19,200 in-kind, but the cross-subsidizing of the project exceeded this).

v. Based on comments related to impact: **Training, education and sensitization are important, however ultimately they will only be effective if there are processes or structures in place that can contribute to transforming them into practical outcomes.** A principal reason for the high impact of the project on village participants, elected representatives and other stakeholders was the intelligent linking of training/education, bridging processes and mobilization of stakeholder groups and community structures such as Resource Centres to support them.

vi. Based on comments related to sustainability and the risks that need to be managed: **While this project was well designed to be sustainable after funding had ended, there are a number of things that might put this at risk.** The first is the extensive use of a volunteer workforce and the need to keep them motivated and active. The second is the possibility that unsuccessful applicants among the villagers trying to access rights and entitlements may voice their disappointment and become a negative influence on other villagers. These risks need to be managed to ensure ongoing sustainability.

vii. Based on findings related to UNDEF value-added: **Given a high performing grantee, UNDEF projects in remote disadvantaged regions neglected by other donors can be effectively implemented, score well on impact and sustainability, and represent value-added for UNDEF.**

V. Recommendations

For Pragya

i. (Based on Conclusions ii and vi): **Take steps to mitigate disillusionment.** It is inevitable that not all those who apply for government schemes and entitlements will receive them, for various reasons. It is also possible that promised services may not materialize, or that louder voices may prevail. There is therefore always a risk that those who are disappointed will pass negative messages to others and potentially dissuade them from applying themselves. It is not enough just to continue to encourage people to claim their rights; in order to mitigate negative examples they may see, put in place an active process for sharing success stories: through Resource Centres, helplines, forum members and other representatives, and perhaps through posters/bulletins and any other appropriate means. Of course regardless of the medium, ensure that successful villagers have agreed to their stories being shared.

ii. (Based on Conclusion vi): **Consider providing modest honoraria to those who have volunteered in this project and/or preparing new volunteers to replace those that drop out.** Since the volunteers in this project were trained and have provided efficient service, it would be a good idea to consider paying them a modest honorarium to thank them for their work. This is important for sustainability since even enthusiastic volunteers will not work for ever for no reward. Another alternative -- or perhaps an additional action -- might be to refresh the volunteer pool by organizing ongoing training/mobilization of volunteers, so that those who lose interest can be replaced. This, too, might involve finding additional funds, however it keeps the essential nature of volunteerism intact.

iii. (Based on the need to fund continuation of structures and processes put in place): **Include follow-up funding to maintain the processes put in place by making these a component of other, larger project submissions.** The Resource Centres, helplines and Forum will have relevance not only to continuing the impact of this project, but in future projects (perhaps in other ways). It is therefore legitimate to include the ongoing maintenance of these processes as a component of future project design and funding submissions. This will be particularly important if honoraria for volunteers are introduced (Recommendation ii, above).

For UNDEF

iv. (Based on Conclusion vii): The value-added of this project for UNDEF was high, and UNDEF might **consider supporting projects in geographical areas that are largely neglected by other UN agencies, NGOs and donor/governments.** In particular, this offers the opportunity to promote the **inclusion of specific project components covering democratic participation** – voting and representation.

v. (Based on Conclusion iv): UNDEF might **consider requesting, when final accounts are submitted, information on the total budget for programmes of which a supported project is just one component.** Providing a total budget, for example for total (relevant) programming during the two years of a funded project, specifying which components of programming are covered by the project funds, allows evaluators but more importantly UNDEF to see the true extent of the actions being undertaken and the resources being mobilized.

Annex 1: Evaluation questions

General evaluation question categories

| DAC criterion | Evaluation Question | Related sub-questions |
|-------------------|---|--|
| Relevance | To what extent was the project, as designed and implemented, suited to context and needs at the beneficiary, local, and national levels? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Were the objectives of the project in line with the needs and priorities for democratic development, given the context? ▪ Should another project strategy have been preferred rather than the one implemented to better reflect those needs, priorities, and context? Why? ▪ Were risks appropriately identified by the projects? How appropriate are/were the strategies developed to deal with identified risks? Was the project overly risk-averse? |
| Effectiveness | To what extent was the project, as implemented, able to achieve objectives and goals? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent have the project's objectives been reached? ▪ To what extent was the project implemented as envisaged by the project document? If not, why not? ▪ Were the project activities adequate to make progress towards the project objectives? ▪ What has the project achieved? Where it failed to meet the outputs identified in the project document, why was this? |
| Efficiency | To what extent was there a reasonable relationship between resources expended and project impacts? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Was there a reasonable relationship between project inputs and project outputs? ▪ Did institutional arrangements promote cost-effectiveness and accountability? ▪ Was the budget designed, and then implemented, in a way that enabled the project to meet its objectives? |
| Impact | To what extent has the project put in place processes and procedures supporting the role of civil society in contributing to democratization, or to direct promotion of democracy? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent has/have the realization of the project objective(s) and project outcomes had an impact on the specific problem the project aimed to address? ▪ Have the targeted beneficiaries experienced tangible impacts? Which were positive; which were negative? ▪ To what extent has the project caused changes and effects, positive and negative, foreseen and unforeseen, on democratization? ▪ Is the project likely to have a catalytic effect? How? Why? Examples? |
| Sustainability | To what extent has the project, as designed and implemented, created what is likely to be a continuing impetus towards democratic development? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent has the project established processes and systems that are likely to support continued impact? ▪ Are the involved parties willing and able to continue the project activities on their own (where applicable)? |
| UNDEF value added | To what extent was UNDEF able to take advantage of its unique position and comparative advantage to achieve results that could not have been achieved had support come from other donors? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What was UNDEF able to accomplish, through the project, that could not as well have been achieved by alternative projects, other donors, or other stakeholders (Government, NGOs, etc). ▪ Did project design and implementing modalities exploit UNDEF's comparative advantage in the form of an explicit mandate to focus on democratization issues? |

Annex 2: Documents reviewed

Background documents

Pragya website

UNDP: *Human Development Report 2013*

UNDP: *Access to justice for marginalized people* (Fact sheet, May 2012)

UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, GOI: *GOI-UN Joint Programme on Convergence* (Fact sheet, May 2012)

Project outputs

Manual: *District leadership training for elected representatives and CSOs*

Handbook for socio-legal kiosks

Civic legal education module

Manual on indigenous rights

Selected contents of Resource Centres: posters, publications and information materials

Project documentation

Project Document, UDF-IND-09-322

Mid-term Progress Report, UDF-IND-09-322

Final Project Narrative Report, UDF-IND-09-322

Milestone verification mission report (23-24 April 2011)

Milestone verification mission report (25 November 2011)

Annex 3: People Interviewed

| Grantee personnel | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Ms Gargi Banerji | Director |
| Mr Sunil Pillai | Director, Finance |
| Ms Sejuti Basu | Project Specialist |
| Ms Ankita Luharia | Team Member, Monitoring Coordination and Support |
| Ms Mithilesh Dabra | Senior Team Member, Monitoring Coordination and Support |
| Mr Vikram Sarki | Project Officer, Tawang West Kameng district |
| Mr Anand Kumar | Former Project Officer, Kinnaur |
| Remote interviews with participants | |
| Mr K N Tewari | Participant, citizen/government meetings, West Kameng district |
| Mr Hari Singh | Community participant, Shansha |
| Mr Chetan Singh | Member of forum/barefoot monitor, Lahaul |
| Ms Lalita Pancharas | Participant leadership training, Khawangi Village, Kinnaur |
| Mr Rigzin Hayarpa | Elected member (Parisad), Keulong-Zeela, Lahaul & Spiti district |
| Mr Kundan Lal | Comms trainer/media participant, Keylong |
| Ms. Lamo Palmo | Trainee/workshop participant, Gemur Village |
| Mr C L Negi | Trainee/workshop participant, Kinnaur |
| Mr Bhawan Singh | Trainee/workshop participant, Karchi Village |
| Mr Roop Singh Warpa | Trainee/workshop participant, Kullu Village |
| Mr Gytso Norbu | Trainee/workshop participant, Thongleng |
| Other | |
| Ms Kanta Singh | Gender and Governance Unit, UNDP Delhi |
| Mr Toopran Sampath Kumar | Senior Advisor/Team Leader, Development Cooperation Section (CIDA), Canadian High Commission, Delhi |
| Dr Furqan Ahmad | Associate Research Professor, Indian Law Institute, Delhi |
| Ms P Boonpala | Acting Director, ILO Decent Work Technical Support Office |

Annex 4: Acronyms

| | |
|--------|--------------------------------------|
| CSO | Community service organization |
| DAC | Development Assistance Committee |
| EQ | Evaluation Questions |
| GOI | Government of India |
| HDI | Human Development Index |
| HDR | Human Development Report |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| J & K | Jammu and Kashmir |
| NGO | Non-governmental organization |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNDEF | United Nations Democracy Fund |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNFPA | United Nations Food Programme |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| USD | United States dollar |