



Final Report

Narrative Section

The Narrative Section of the Final Report is designed to capture the results, challenges, and opportunities of your overall grant programme. It also presents an opportunity to gather stories that reflect the richness of your programme and capture lessons learned within the organization and in local and national contexts. Please feel free to write creatively in your responses. We encourage you to use this section as an opportunity for reflection within your organization.

1. Results (maximum 1,200 words)

What have been the key achievements and results of your programme? What have been/will be the implications on women’s lives?

A. Please start by briefly describing what, according to you, were the 2-3 most significant achievements of the programme (whether planned for or not), i.e that will have the biggest impact in the lives of the women and girls targeted by the programme.

B. Then, please describe all key results achieved, outcome by outcome and output by output, following the order of your PMF, and elaborate on the key strategies that have brought about those results.

Please use evidence (figures, statistics, testimonials, etc.) to support your statements. Always start with the big picture! You may consult the results guidance in the Grantee Guide.

The project “**Our choice: economic empowerment of vulnerable women in Kyrgyzstan**” set the goal to enhance social and economic capabilities and alternative livelihood opportunities of vulnerable women of Kyrgyzstan in Bishkek, Osh and the surroundings (single mothers, sex workers, women living with HIV, partners of drug users, former prisoners).

Outcome1. Increase knowledge and capacities of vulnerable women related to economic independence and gender norms of societal subjectivity

663 women involved in the Project received at least one medical, social or legal service were provided with the Project support within the client management program. In the project we worked with women from the most vulnerable key populations who mostly faced economic troubles. But before starting economic empowerment we concentrated our efforts on solving basic and specific needs of women from each target group: for example – we supported women living with HIV to build adherence to treatment, helped mothers of children living with HIV to disclose the status to their children, provided safe environment and psychological support for victims of gender based violence, provided support and temporary housing for former prisoners after release, teach partners of drug users how to prevent HIV or provided information about opportunity to get state allowances for

single mothers or mothers of children with disabilities. We aimed all our efforts at solving existing women's problems and starting positive changes in their lives.

To do that Project team followed consecutive steps of a comprehensive program. Gradually step by step women were navigated from the initial stage of solving urgent problems till the stage of development of personal business plans and starting employment and self-employment.

Output1.1. Increase vulnerable women's knowledge of and access to medical, social, legal and employment services available to them

To increase vulnerable women's knowledge of and access to medical, social, legal and employment services AFEW partnered with 4 grassroots organizations "Astariya", "Shans", "Sezim", Social bureau under AIDS City Center in Bishkek and 1 organization "Rainbow" in Osh and reached 663 women, including 184 women living with HIV, 155 victims of gender-based violence, 73 drug users, 4 women of human trafficking, 14 women with disabilities, 49 women of children with disabilities, 82 single-mothers, 30 former prisoners, 29 partners of drug users, 36 women of HIV+ children, 5 women in difficult life situation, 2 sex workers. Social workers in partner grassroots organizations provided information about existing services and helped the clients to overcome the crisis points in their lives. 544 women successfully completed the program meaning they met the needs they addressed the project for.

Total # of services rendered by partner grassroots organizations is 4321. The most demanded services rendered by the grassroots organizations were employment-related counseling and distribution of the Project IEC materials with employment tips, peer to peer counseling, psycho-social support, legal services, self-support groups, motivational interviews, art therapy, shelter services and food provision.

Output1.2 Strengthen self-worth, self-esteem and economic independence skills of vulnerable women to decrease their vulnerability

265 women (88% of the personal development training graduates) increased internal strength, reduced self-stigmatization and demonstrated motivation to resist layered stigma. The major goal of the training was to help women to start respecting themselves, improve their self-esteem and find resources to change their life perception and oppose multi-layered stigma and discrimination through 7 sessions on different topics. The program of the training included well-established sessions such as success and its components, communication skills, development of internal resources, body-oriented and health-related practices, women's rights, personal budget and employment.

Those women actively participated in the first stage trainings and who had the desire to start their own micro-business moved on to participate in the second stage trainings – economic independence and business planning. The aim of the training was to give basic financial literacy knowledge and help to design an individual business plan based on each women's resources, talents and skills. 181 women out of 199 women who attended the trainings on economic independence determined legible financial goals in their personal business plans developed during the trainings.

Output 1.3 Design and implement a micro-grant program for vulnerable women to start employment or self-employment

The total number of grantees awarded by the Project with in-kind support is 54 as of December 31, 2019. 28 of them successfully completed the client management and grantee technical support program meaning they received all services they addressed the project for and implemented their business ideas and used the awarded

mini grants according to all the provisions of the Grant Agreements. Other 24 grantees are still in the process of implementing their business plans and demonstrate strong willingness to change their economic situation. They were informed about the Project termination, but will be receiving technical support from the project business trainer by mobile telephone. The grant commission met almost after each round of trainings and consisted of the following members: AFEW representatives, community representatives, business experts and the trainer. UN Women representatives were also invited to participate. The criteria for selection of the business plans were adequate and not very high. They were approved with the FGE office and are strictly followed by the Commission.

Outcome 2. Improved favorable environment (community and national level) for vulnerable women to decrease their vulnerability and combat stereotyping

Output 2.1 Build capacity of social workers in community-based and state organizations for vulnerable women to provide counseling on access to medical, social and legal services and support employment and self-employment

49 social workers were trained in providing employment related counseling for vulnerable women. 85% of the trained social workers successfully passed post-training tests and improved counseling-related skills. The Project conducted 3 trainings for social workers from partner NGOs and state organizations. The first training was dedicated to the procedures of client management program. After the training social workers were able to independently provide client management services for clients to provide basic psycho-social support to the clients and link them to a variety of services available in the country. The second one concerned motivational interview with project clients. All participants knew how to provide employment-related counseling to vulnerable women and understand the important role of motivational interviewing for women in difficult life situation. The training participants examined state support services available to vulnerable women who didn't have a job. The third training was dedicated to the professional burnout syndrome. The main goal of the training was to form social worker's competences to discern and manage the professional burnout syndrome.

Output 2.2 Build an operational referral network of community-based organizations, governmental and non-governmental organizations, business structures to support women economic role and independence

The project signed memoranda on cooperation with 33 organizations, but there were a lot more organizations that supported the clients without any official documentations. The most significant number of women were referred to such partner organizations as Public Foundation "Positivniy dialogue" (legal services), National society of Red Crescent of the Kyrgyz Republic (sewing courses), Public foundation "Ulibka" (humanitarian aid, employment-related services), Center of help for women and families under Mayor (state support), Medical Family Center #6 (gynecologic and therapeutic services), Social protection department (counseling on state social services), PF "SOS Children Village in Bishkek" (Family Strengthening Project), private medical company "Neman farm" (medical drugs distribution).

Project continued to work with existing partners within the referral network. Total number of services rendered to project clients by service providers is 1042.

Output 2.3 Develop with relevant actors an advocacy plan to raise awareness on vulnerable women's capacities, issues and needs to change public perception and stereotyping against vulnerable women

During the reporting period an independent expert conducted an analysis of the existing regulatory framework in order to assess the current situation of state support and public services provided by various organizations to

vulnerable women. The analysis was presented to social workers during one of the training to inform them about opportunities to refer vulnerable women to these service providers.

3 project steering committee were arranged with major stakeholders and potential partners in order to discuss the project course and develop strategy to raise awareness on vulnerable women’s capacities and needs, and expand partner network consisting of organization which provide services and support vulnerable women. All partners expressed their willingness to continue referrals of vulnerable women to better meet their specific needs. Project beneficiaries were also invited to the meetings and shared with the participants and journalists the experience of their participation in the project ad their personal stories.

21 articles and 1 video report raising the public awareness on vulnerable women’s capacities, issues and needs were published by the most popular mass media in the country as a result of meetings and press brunch conducted by AFEW with the main goal to attract public attention to the problem of low social and economic capacity of vulnerable women in Kyrgyzstan.

200 books with success stories of the project beneficiaries were published and distributed among partners to demonstrate the project impact on well-being and quality of life of vulnerable women, and among beneficiaries to encourage them to believe in themselves and stop being afraid of changes.

2. Change in Power (maximum 1,200 words)

Can you please provide some examples of how power relationships have changed as a result of this programme or any of its activities?

Please provide concrete examples of changes for individuals or communities. For example there are women now present on local development boards or women with newly acquired control of assets are able to make decisions in their homes. Please use evidence (figures, statistics, testimonials, etc.) to support your statements.

Due to the Fund for Gender Equality and UN Women we could unite in one project different women from various key populations and broaden the scope of our services aimed at supporting women in difficult life situation. The project was especially important for Kyrgyz women, because most families in Kyrgyzstan follow traditional and patriarchal model of life where all family budget and resources are controlled by men and women are excluded from the decision-making process. In many cases women have to face a lot of barriers to start employment even if their family lacks the basic means of survival. In many cases women don’t have any choice when their parents decide to get them married. For example, during our last training we met a young 21-year old girl who lived with her fourth husband who was twice as old as she was. Every time she was forced to get married by her family. She has to take care of his 3 children from previous marriage, and one of them is a child with disabilities. The worst thing is that despite all her efforts to be a good wife for her husband and a good mother for the children, nobody in the family respected her, no one considered her opinion and needs, she suffered from emotional (and sometimes physical) violence every day. After the training on personal development she has learnt how to say no, how to stay on her ground and make her voice heard. And despite the prohibition of her husband she started employment because her family didn’t have enough money for food, clothes and treatment. She started earning money and became economically independent. She noticed when she commenced to respect herself her relationship with husband and the children changed. Her husband started to ask her opinion and her advice in daily life and the children became more dutiful. It is just 1 woman among hundreds others that we helped in the project. We met very different women with different life situation but

there is one thing that united them all – they all needed to broaden their social and economic capabilities and change their current life situation.

When women were enrolled in the project most of them were in a deep depression or vulnerable position, didn't know how to cope with difficulties. We used motivational interview as one of the effective instruments to achieve positive results. Social workers encouraged women to talk about their major fears and apprehensions and discuss how they can overcome obstacles which hamper positive changes in order to stimulate women to take decision toward changes of behavior, habits and patterns of life. This technique included such efficient and simple modes of conversation as questions (why the client thinks she should change her live, what result she expects, what effort she could make to achieve the expected results), listening, making conclusions together with the client and support on confidential basis. The main goal of the motivational interview was to give the clients a seed of doubt whether the chosen pattern of life would satisfy their actual needs. In other words, motivational interview contributes to building a self-reliant decision-making process that would lead to positive changes in their lives. Inspired by motivational interview 337 women take decision to participate in the next project interventions devoted to development of personal and professional skills. 281 women felt more self-confident, improved their soft skills, increased knowledge about their rights and expressed the willingness to take control in their rights.

The participants of the trainings that the skills that they acquired affected their daily behavior and habits. The trainings encouraged them to be open to the environment they live in, helped them to determine life goals and develop plan to its achievement. The trainings affected not only its participants but also changed the environment within families and relationships between parents and children in a positive way. One of the important training results was that women shared their stories of lives and realized that they were not alone, there were women with similar difficult life situations who could cope with difficulties. This fact encouraged them not to give up and continue work on personal transformation and changing life perception.

3. Good Practices and Innovations (maximum 1,200 words)

Was there any strategy(ies) used during the programme that was particularly successful and that you could consider a good practice to be replicated by you or other organizations in the future? If so, why do you think it was so successful? Do you consider it an innovation (a successful strategy that was never used before in the same way in your context)?

Please describe any activity, strategy or methodology that has demonstrated to be effective in achieving positive outcomes (either expected or unexpected) and that had never been tried in the same way before.

Please let us know how the idea to do it came about and if you either consulted and/or tested it with beneficiaries first. Please explain why you consider it worth sharing with other FGE grantees or stakeholders. Please use evidence (figures, statistics, testimonials, etc.) to support your statements.

Project interventions offered complex program for vulnerable women consisting of several steps: resolving basic needs using client management tools, development of personal skills and capabilities, economic empowerment component and financial support on business plan realization.

Usual practices of work with such key groups as single-mothers, former prisoners, partners of drug users, sex workers, mothers of HIV positive children, women living with HIV, mothers of children with disabilities used to foresee only resolving critical situation in their life through psychological support and solving specific problems.

Project approach was broader than resolving client's critical situation. Using consecutive steps of complex program we intended to change women's life perception, focusing on economic empowerment. Client management program was selected as the first step of work with vulnerable women. The client-oriented approach implied development of an individual plan consisting of joint client's and social worker's efforts in order to help the project participants to overcome crisis life situation and meet their needs. This approach was based on the Maslow's theory. First of all social worker concentrated client's attention on resolving the most important needs such as for example bare necessities or protection and security needs. When the basic needs were solved social worker went to the next range of needs. It was extremely important to follow the "principle of turtle". Client manager worked with project participant on her actual needs and advanced step by step with a client without any pressure, infusion or hurry in order to provide qualitative help. The main goal of a social worker was to develop and strengthen client's motivation to participate in the program on the confidential and long-term base. Resolving basic needs was a small part of opportunities that women could get from the project but an important one too. For example, woman living with HIV would unlikely think about participation in first and second stage trainings without getting medical interventions, appropriate treatment and psychological support through client management program. Women who were motivated to participate on the trainings without resolving their basic needs were not able to concentrate on the training activities and consequently were not able to terminate the training. Therefore only women resolved their needs with the support of client managers were enrolled in the trainings. Client management approach was a collaborative process between social worker and client on overcoming current difficult life situation. Social workers informed women about services available to them depending on their needs; they drew up an individual service plan with each client and monitored its implementation.

When clients solved their needs social workers invite them to participate in the next project interventions such as trainings on personal development and economic independence. One of the good practices to share with other organizations is to create additional sources of motivation for beneficiaries except for direct benefits that they get from the trainings. We invited experts from different organizations and areas of work which provided counseling on the interested themes to increase women's knowledge in various areas in accordance with their requests. Women who successfully completed the program also kindly accepted our invitation to attend one of the training's sessions, share their experience with other participants and inspire them to change life situation by their personal stories. Experience of peers who found themselves in similar difficulties but managed to overcome their problems inspired training participants to better control their lives.

The client management program had a special focus on employment and self-employment counseling as many women didn't have any job and personal income. Economic empowerment of vulnerable women was closely related to knowledge about existing state employment services, state vocational education, labor rights and psychological aspects of employment. We developed specific booklets in order to navigate women about employment-related services, ameliorate their professionalism or register their business activity. Service providers and vulnerable women now have access to IEC materials with employment tips in order to facilitate the process of searching for a job, including a step by step instruction describing how and where to search for employment, what sources to use, how to prepare a CV etc. The IEC materials also cover the psychological aspects of employment, and labor rights. 800 copies of IEC materials were printed and disseminated by social workers during employment-related counseling and during the trainings.

Another project innovation was launched after series of Steering Committee meetings in order to ensure sustainability of the project activities. Following up the suggestions of the meetings of the Project Steering

Committee AFEW and project partners developed a document contained a step-by-step working client management plan for every key category of vulnerable women with a list of service providers with breakdown by categories: shelter, legal counseling etc. The work plan underlay the training course for future social workers of the Bishkek Humanitarian University. The training course was developed based on the Project experience of work with vulnerable women and contained the gender aspects of client management and human rights. The major parts of the course are the following:

- Gender aspects in client management program
- National and international mechanisms of women's rights protection
- Client management program for vulnerable women
- Stigma and discrimination as barriers for client management program
- Step-by-step plan for supporting program of vulnerable women
- Motivational interview

The course was approved by the Protocol of the Board meeting of Bishkek Humanitarian University from 06.07.2019. The course was implemented for students of “Social work” department of the University starting 2019-2020 academic year.

4. Story(ies) of Change (maximum 700 words)

Looking back over the programme, is there a story (from an individual or from a community) that exemplifies the most significant change that has resulted from your programme?

Even if transforming the world for social justice is a long-term process, sometimes a small change in one individual can symbolize a huge change for a family, community or country. We are interested in big positive changes but also in small but powerful stories, as together we can learn from both. Please prioritize examples of changes that reflect a shift in power relationships, for instance when a woman has accessed decision-making power or acquired control of assets.

Please explain what the contribution of the programme was to achieve this change and why you have chosen this particular story.

If possible, please provide the full name of the person(s) involved in the story(ies) and one or more quality photographs as attachments, for possible use in FGE publications (if so, we will contact you beforehand for clearance). You can provide more than one story if relevant.

The most remarkable stories of change are the following:

Mariya Morozova, project beneficiary, who went through all the project interventions. She was sent to the project by “Podruga” NGO, which worked with sex workers community. This category of target groups was difficult to reach by the project. Sex workers demonstrated little interest to participate in the project interventions. In addition, Mariya suffered from layered stigma and discrimination as drug user, former prisoner, single mother and sex worker. Despite all difficulties, she could cope with her fears and start her own mini business.

I used to inject drugs. Though it was long time ago, finding a job in Osh is still difficult for me. The Our Choice project gave me a chance to start my own business. Today I have a small sewing workshop. I’m learning to cherish myself again.

I quitted drugs for the sake of my son

I used to inject drugs and spent a couple of years in prison. My son with my mom. When I was released, I made a firm decision to quit drugs for good – for the sake of my son. I wanted him to be proud of me. It was important for me to build trustworthy relationships with me. I started a 12-step rehabilitation program and then – methadone substitution treatment program.

Osh is a small city, people know everything about each other. That is why finding a job in Osh was impossible. I tried being a dispatch and a waitress. But I was fired right after my employer found out about me being a methadone substitution treatment client.

I was desperate to earn money at home and left for Russia. But as a migrant I received a low salary which was constantly paid late. Some time later there was an ethnical conflict in Osh, many people died. I was afraid for my mother and son so I came back home. I even quitted the methadone program.

More opportunities

I learnt about the Our Choice Project from a social worker. I was interested and decided to try. The personal development training seemed to be interesting from the very start. Those two weeks changed a lot for me – a learnt to better understand and accept myself. I was eager to risk more and see more opportunities around me. I was determined to act.

But still high level of stigma towards drug users didn't allow me to find employment. That is why together with the business trainer we started thinking about my own start up ideas. I remembered that I liked sewing at school. So I wrote a business plan and it was accepted by the Commission. It became a new beginning for me.

Household and business keep me going

While participating in the Project, I found a nice house for rent near Osh. It also had a vegetable garden. I immediately decided to organize a sewing workshop in this house. I renovated it myself and put my new sewing machine in one of the rooms. We work together with my friend and use youtube to learn new sewing techniques. In future I plan to invite other women from the Project to work with me and help each other.

But in general I don't have time to seat still. The project made me feel strong and full of energy. I take care of the garden, started breeding rabbits, ducks and turkeys. It gives me additional money and food.

I even bought a parrot and taught him to speak. He gives me a lot of pleasure. My relationships with the son are also my better. He left for Bishkek to study and I pay for his tuition. I am really glad to have a steady source of income.

Cholpon Jooshaeva, project beneficiary, who was a victim of gender-based violence and turned into successful owner of massage salon.

I am 35 years old. After divorcing my husband, who used to beat me, I took my kids, moved to another town and started my life over. The Our Choice Project helped me to overcome depression and start my own micro business. I am getting prepared to opening my own massage salon.

He fell out of love with me

I was a victim of bride kidnapping. My new husband took me from the capital to Osh, where we lived for 12 years. I worked all the time and was the breadwinner in the family. When my husband started working two, he immediately started cheating on me and then beating me. Later he announced that he didn't love me any longer and didn't need the family. I took our two kids and came back to Bishkek. He calls us once in a blue moon and doesn't help at all. I started my life over here.

Depression

My whole life was devoted to my husband and to pleasing him. When he said that he no longer needed me, I fell apart. I even considered a suicide. I lost my temper in front of my kids too often and felt very guilty. I couldn't get a job and didn't have money to pay my rent. On top of it all I fell seriously ill. I was really desperate.

Living for myself

As my husband used to beat me, I addressed the Sezim crisis center for help. That’s where I was referred for the Our choice project. It seemed to be an interesting idea. I started feeling changes during the personal development trainings. The trainer was talking about loving ourselves, about the value of our own desired, our rights and our internal resources for new achievements. I started attending dance classes. For the first time in my life I was taking care about myself. It was beautiful. Then I started the financial literacy sessions. I have two degrees, so the information at the training wasn’t all new to me. But still I benefited a lot from it – I gained self confidence. Starting my own business didn’t seem to be so scary. My ex husband used to tell me that I wasn’t capable of doing it and I believed him. After the financial literacy sessions I started to act.

I signed up for the massage courses, rented a massage room in a beauty salon and started looking for customers. Then I submitted a grant application for buying my own massage couch and I won! Now I have more customers. Finally I have money to indulge myself in sweets and guilty pleasures. I’m so happy to make my own plans and not be accountable for my expenses

Looking for partners

After the Project my ambitions continued to grow. I want more than just a couch in a beauty salon. I want my own massage salon. So I contacted the business trainer again and we adjusted my initial business plan. I also went to public speech training and started looking for investors. I found them in just a couple of months. My business partner and I are actively searching for a place to rent for the salon. My dream is just about to come true!

Long time ago I decided to continue living just for my kids. Now I live also for myself – because I love who I am and what I am doing. By the way I have a new man in my life. But still I now know how to put myself and my own desires first.

5. Story of Organizational Change (maximum 700 words)

Looking back over the whole programme, is there a story that exemplifies a significant internal change in your organization that has resulted from the involvement in this programme?

This can include, for example, changes in the positioning of the organization in the national/ regional/ international political scenes or within the civil society movement, or changes in your organization such as adopting a stronger gender approach, becoming more RBM-oriented, changes in the areas of work/strategies used, or attitudinal changes among the staff.

Please use evidence (figures, statistics, testimonials, etc.) to support your statements.

AFEW initiated structural changes within the organization in the Project lifetime in order to ensure sustainability after the Grant expires. Traditionally most of the services for the key population groups were provided by NGOs funded by international donors. However, with rapid decrease of the international funding local NGOs experience hardships in terms of sustainability of their work. Therefore, AFEW launched a social enterprise in the form of beauty salon. The idea was approved by FGE (Concept note). The enterprise is called Good Lak and consisted of a beauty salon that provided services for customers and beauty training center that provided vocational trainings for women. The opening ceremony took place in the run up to the International Women’s Day in March. Services to customers in the beauty salon are provided 7 days a week. As to the training center – 23 women completed the basic nail services course (15 commercial clients who paid 100% fees + 8 vulnerable women who received 85% discount for the training).

Besides the common services such as nail services, hair style, lash making, make up services for women, the salon launched 2 and 3-day version of personal development training as pilot idea combined with beauty master classes (hair and make-up) for commercial clients to increase general income. 3 trainings were provided in the salon reaching 15 individuals, including 8 participants referred by AFEW and 7 external customers. The training intended to increase self-esteem and internal strength emphasizing on internal beauty. The agenda of the training included the following sections:

1st day was devoted to transactional analysis and working with internal critic

2nd day – body-oriented technics and art therapy

3rd day – internal beauty and positive thinking

After 2-hour personal development sessions with psychologist, women participated in 1-hour beauty master class every day conducted by the specialists of the salon. Our specialists shared tips of care for hair and skin and skills of self-hairstyle and self-make-up. Training participants were very interested in training sessions and noted that the training was useful for them.

All 3 trainings took place in the salon in summer time during school vacations and common annual leave period. In the autumn demand for trainings decreased. AFEW conducted a meeting with the new director/marketing specialist of Association of social entrepreneurship in Kyrgyzstan who recommended the following:

1. Bring more public attention to the social component of the enterprise
2. Instead of current commercial 3-day personal development trainings conduct free of charge personal development master classes during weekends to increase clients' loyalty
3. Provide meetings with the salon team to increase their knowledge about communications with clients
4. Promote Instagram page on regular basis
5. Publish information about salon specialists in the social networks
6. Publish more photos with the project beneficiaries and their personal stories
7. Cooperate with local popular bloggers

Starting from January 2020 the salon changed the location and moved from the city center because of the rent burden. Currently the salon manager is searching for new staff because some employers didn't want to move from the previous work places. The mentioned-above recommendations will be implemented when all staff will be recruited.

The salon team provided free of charge beauty services for 10 vulnerable women in the framework of the social component. Women were referred by the social workers of the partner grassroots organizations and awarded with certificates on hairstyle and make-up services. According to the women's feedback they hadn't been in beauty salons for a long time and the certificates reminded them to take care of themselves not only of their close relatives. They felt that they deserved more than they had and were motivated to cope with all difficulties.

After starting implementation of the “Our Choice” Project our organization has received valuable experience of working with the new target groups, which are victims of gender-based violence, single mothers in difficult life situations, mothers of children with disabilities, women with disabilities.

This is our first Project that focused solely on women and it made us capable of learning new gender-sensitive approaches to work with the marginalized people that would definitely be further used by other activities implemented by AFEW with the support of other donors.

6. Programme Context Analysis (maximum 500 words)

Has your work been affected positively or negatively during the entire programme period by any events or changes taking place outside of your organization? How have you dealt with those changes?

Examples can include changes in political context, changes affecting beneficiaries, environmental challenges, etc.

During the reporting period AFEW encountered a controversial situation. In the beginning of January 2019 the project was informed that one of the project grantees, Bekova Myskal, turned out to be the daughter of the ex-trainer on personal development in Osh – Akchach Joldosheva. The project confirmed the information with Akchach Joldosheva.

Despite the conflict of interest the following aspects was considered while reviewing the case:

- When Myskal started participation in the Project, she fitted the criteria of vulnerability (victim of gender-based violence after breaking up with her husband who needed support and was searching for the ways of being protected and independent from her husband. Myskal didn't have any source of income at that period of time and was in need of economic empowerment)
- The Grant Commission which assessed Myskal's business plan did not include her mother. In fact, no members of the Grant Commission knew about the family relation between Myskal and Akchach.
- Akchach never informed the Project that she referred her own daughter to the Project as a beneficiary, which can be regarded as the conflict of interest. However, Akchach never signed any documents that prohibited her relatives to participate in the Project.
- Myskal observed the clauses of the grant agreement and regular monitoring demonstrated that for one year she was implementing her business idea in accordance with the approved plan. She demonstrated all cosmetics procured under the Grant equipment, her own insta page to advertise the services and financial records.

Since the beginning of 2019 the Project has stopped any cooperation with the trainer Akchach Joldosheva and it was decided to invite a trainer from Bishkek to conduct trainings on personal development in Osh. AFEW couldn't take the grant back because Myskal implemented the grant according to all the provisions of the contract and because the grant was given in the form of the turnover assets (she received cosmetics to start her make-up business and when the potential conflict of interest was discovered, all the cosmetics had already been used so there was nothing to withdraw).

The detailed report on the case was provided to FGE by AFEW and discussed with representatives of UN Women and FGE. Taking into consideration the communication process between AFEW and FGE and UN Women about a situation related to one of the project grantees, some of the project activities were suspended until November 2019 when the final decision of FGE was announced. The delay of the project activities was also affected by the change of a local UN Women representative responsible for the communication with AFEW and the project. Despite the fact that our local coordinator hadn't been determined AFEW conducted the remaining activities and could successfully wrap the project up. However, the final project evaluation was delayed and took place in January 2020. The final report is presented to FGE.

7. The Unexpected? (maximum 700 words)

Did anything unexpected happen (this could be either positive or negative) that presented a challenge and how did you deal with it? Or did it present an opportunity and how did the programme benefit from it?

In the reporting period the Project stopped official cooperation with two of the original partners – grassroots organizations “Asteriya” (target group – women who use drugs) and “Shans” (target group – single mothers and victims of gender-based violence) in Bishkek. As for the first mentioned organization, the decision came from “Asteriya” itself – the management of the organization wasn't satisfied with the form of cooperation (hiring just one employee instead of a subgrant). However, unofficial cooperation with the organization continued – women who used drugs and needed economic empowerment support were referred to the project training cycles.

The M&E findings demonstrated poor performance of indicators by partner NGO “Shans” whose social worker had limited access to the Project target groups and attracted only 7 women to the program in the period from August 1, 2017 – December 31, 2017. The Project team made the decision to terminate cooperation with the NGO “Shans”.

The Project implementation course revealed several new potential partnerships in Bishkek city – NGO “SOS children village” and Social Bureau under the City AIDS Center. Both organizations showed great interest in referring their clients to participate in the Project economic empowerment activities. NGO “SOS children village” worked with single mothers in difficult life situations, so their clients were referred to our partner NGO “Sezim” that worked with the same target group and knew efficient approaches to address the needs of the target group. The Social Bureau under the Bishkek City AIDS Center works with female PLHIV who are often in desperate financial situation. As we didn't have a partner who could work with this specific target group, it was decided to hire their social worker to actively cooperate with the Project (instead of social worker from NGO “Shans”). The decision was approved by FGE and local UN Women office and became effective as of January, 2018.

During the preparatory phase, when the project established partnership with different organizations to ensure access to all determined target groups, we discovered that sex workers demonstrate little interest to participate in the project interventions. We had face-to-face meetings with the leaders from non-governmental organizations who work with this category of women. The community leaders demonstrated their skepticism about participation of women in the project. Nevertheless, we continued to inform them about upcoming project events and activities to attract interested women.

Moreover, the Project got referrals of mothers of children with disabilities and victims of GBV from the Social Protection Department. The Project expanded its' target groups to include such women based on

recommendations from the Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Development of Kyrgyzstan Jyldyz Polotova. She emphasized that these categories of women also need psycho-social support and often represent economically vulnerable population.

8. Lessons Learnt (maximum 700 words)

Please tell us about your experience of using different strategies and activities and if you have learned something that will help you in the future. Please tell us what worked and what has not worked so your experiences can be shared and help guide with others who want to do similar activities.

| Activities | Date, place, number of beneficiaries | Was this activity completed? Yes/No/Partially | Did you achieve the result you had hoped? | Is it an activity which you think was successful and you would continue with? If not, if you could do it again, what would you do differently? |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| Client management program for vulnerable women | August 2017- November 2019 Bishkek Osh And surroundings 663 beneficiaries | Yes | More than it was expected, 663/500 beneficiaries | Client-oriented approach, based on meeting basic needs will not cause significant changes in women lives without complex step-by-step program. Changes are not possible without knowledge about opportunities and rights and continual motivational interviewing. |
| Trainings on personal development component | August 2017- November 2019 Bishkek Osh And surroundings 337 beneficiaries | Yes | Yes. Most women who completed the training increased their internal strength, feel their responsibility to take control of their lives and are motivated to improve live conditions and help other women to cope with difficulties. | The participants of the trainings on personal development found goal-setting, communication skills, emotional control, women's rights, stress and conflict regulation and personal budget sessions as the most resultative sessions which affected their daily behavior and habits. The trainings encouraged them to be open to the environment they live in, helped them to determine life goals and develop plan to its achievement. The trainings affected not only its participants but also changed the environment within families and relationships between parents and children in a positive way. |
| Trainings on economic independence | August 2017- November 2019 Bishkek Osh | Yes | Yes. 260/150 women developed business plans and had legible financial goals. It is noticed that women who had their personal income are more | Participants of the second-stage trainings underlined first of all the competence to develop and implement business plans. The most significant sessions for them were those which helped them to form |

| | | | | |
|--------|---|-----|--|---|
| | And surroundings 337 beneficiaries | | likely to influence decision making process in their families. | financial habits, to make and manage their savings, to make SWOT-analysis of their business ideas. |
| Grants | August 2017- November 2019 Bishkek Osh And surroundings 54 beneficiaries | Yes | Yes, 54/20 women received mini grants and are currently implementing their business ideas. | The most important issue for women was not the price of the grant or the equipment. The most important issue is support and motivation that they got from the project. They could believe that they themselves can change the live. |

9. Partnerships (maximum 300 words)

What were your partnerships during the programme period? Have your partnerships with other organizations or entities affected programme implementation and/or its sustainability? Did you establish any new partnership or identify new groups you would hope to reach in the future?

The Fund for Gender Equality greatly values the establishment of partnerships with traditional and non-traditional stakeholders from different areas (including from government, private sector, academia, media, religious institutions, research and innovation, arts, etc.).

Please elaborate on your partnerships and share any successes or challenges you have experienced working with them.

The project worked within with 2 preliminary built referral networks in Bishkek and Osh regions. The Project referred referred 477 women to partner organizations in the the Project lifetime. The most popular referral destinations were Family Medicine Center #6 (gynecologic and therapeutic services), National Society of Red Crescent of the Kyrgyz Republic (sewing vocational trainings), Social protection department (counseling on state social services and support), PF “Ganesha” (legal services), PF “SOS Children Village in Bishkek” (Family Strengthening Project). Besides the regular referrals of project clients to organizations within the network, AFEW team partnered with the Kyrgyz Association of Social entrepreneurship on counseling in the sphere of the concept of social enterprise. Together with the Director of the Association AFEW conducted interviews with potential candidates on the position of the business/ start up consultant for launching social enterprise in the project framework, ten candidates were interviewed by the Commission and the most competent candidate was hired. The Director of the Association was involved in the process of discussion and selection of the business idea of the mentioned enterprise as an expert a consultant of the social component on volunteer basis. This Association continue to provide counseling for AFEW in social enterprise development and promotion.

Moreover, The Association of the Social Entrepreneurship invited member of the project team to participate in the Social Entrepreneurship School, the only such kind of school in Kyrgyzstan, on free basis. The Agenda of the School included sessions of principles of social entrepreneurship through design thinking, business modeling, marketing strategy development, efficient communication skills and invest thinking, advocacy activities.

10. Beneficiaries (maximum 300 words)

How have you meaningfully involved your beneficiaries in programme implementation? Have you faced any challenges supporting, reaching, or working with beneficiaries? Have you gathered feedback from them with regards to the implementation of activities and strategies used? If so, what kind of feedback have you received and how have you responded? How will you continue to strengthen or build on relationships with these groups in the future?

The project involved beneficiaries in every stage of its implementation. The proposed trainings was organized based on recommendations of the potential clients. The focus group resulted in:

- improved structure of the training courses;
- changed schedule of trainings;
- motivation to participate in the training (i.e. food packages, transportation expenses)

The following recruitment strategies are used to involve the beneficiaries to the program:

- 1) All women who had already been receiving any services in our partner grassroots organizations were offered to participate in the Project economic empowerment interventions
- 2) Outreach activities were performed to find new clients who need support by our partner NGOs.
- 3) Regular advertising of the Project opportunities was performed around other organizations that work with the targeted populations. By regular advertising many organizations started referring their clients to participate in our activities – PF “SOS Children village”, PF “Mehr Shavkat” and etc.

Methods to receive feedback from the direct beneficiaries were the following:

- 1) Services assessment given by clients after each referral within the partner network. Client managers were always keeping in touch with clients in order to be well informed about clients’ needs and advancement according to personal service plans. Social workers ensured whether clients were satisfied by services received through partner network or they need additional references to meet their needs;
- 2) Pre- and post-test after the trainings in order to find out if the project interventions corresponded to women’s expectations were used as well as discussions of feedback at the end of trainings. Based on feedback of training participants AFEW modified the module of training on personal development by including more issues about women’s rights, communication skills and stress-management. Second stage training was also corrected in accordance with beneficiaries request to simplify the form of the business plan;
- 3) Field monitoring visits with the purpose to collect information about project implementation course and get feedback from beneficiaries. Many women report that participation in the Project helped them to change relationships with their families, get emotional stability and etc. Moreover, women speak about the following benefits they acquired with the grant award:
 - ability to better look after their children as they can work at home
 - ability to teach their relatives and family members on business basics so that they could support them
 - more respect from family members who see them being able to make significant contributions to the family budget
 - ability to attend their own healthcare needs, which had long been neglected due to absence of money
 - inspire other women to take control over their lives
 - etc.

All the project partners (grassroots NGO) continue provide services initiated by the project to the target groups by using technical support and informational materials.

11. Sustainability and Future Activities (maximum 700 words)

How will you ensure the sustainability of the programme after it ends? Will you build on any specific initiatives or activities or harness momentum from the results? Will you work with your partners in the future and how?

Please describe the sustainability strategies that will ensure the results will last beyond the duration of the programme, including:

- Continuation of a new phase of the initiative or specific activities with available funds;
- Additional funds mobilized to replicate or upscale the programme (please indicate the donor);
- Partnerships with other organizations and institutions to continue, sustain or build on the initiative;
- Other – please specify.

Inspired by the project current results and stories of changes of project participants AFEW launched the social Enterprise mentioned in the report. We continue work on its development in order to provide employment-related services for vulnerable women.

As it was mentioned in the previous sections the Project also took another initiative toward sustainability of the project activities. Partnered with Bishkek Humanities University and independent experts the Project developed the training course for future social workers based on the Project experience of work with vulnerable women. The course is introduced to the curricula of the University in the beginning of the 2019 academic year. The main goal of the course is to equip future social workers with basic knowledge on specifics of work with various categories of vulnerable women using the client management tool. It describes person-oriented client management process from the initial stage till the successful completion of the program. The course pays special attention on stigma and discrimination and motivation of women to start positive changes in their lives.

AFEW conducted the final partner meetings in the project framework in Osh on November 29, 2019 and in Bishkek on December 13, 2013. The meetings gathered together representatives from NGO and state organizations, project beneficiaries and journalists, 93 participants in general. The main goal of the events was to share the final project results and discuss how the partner network will cooperate when the project is terminated. Representatives of local UN Women office, Ulzisurem Jamsran in Bishkek, Dildora Khamidova in Osh, and Natalya Shumskaya, chairperson of AFEW, welcomed the meeting participants and expressed their gratitude to every project partner who was involved in the promotion of economic women's rights. The agenda included sessions on the final 3 years project results, the demonstration of a short video about the project course and a discussion of the further action plan with the partners toward women empowerment and support of vulnerable women of the region. Among decision-makers: Vice-mayor of Osh, Nurbek Kadirov, Avazbek Asanov, the head of the City Board of Education, Elmira Narnatova, director of AIDS City Center in Osh, Aida Karagulova, director of AIDS City Center in Bishkek, Eric Orozaliev, the head of Bishkek humanitarian university, presented governmental initiatives: systematic registration of vacant work places, vocational trainings and employment-related services for women, development and support of vocational training centers, psycho-social support and self-support groups for vulnerable women, state contracts for social services for women, advocacy for the women's rights. The NGO sector shared its action plan: legal services and counseling for women, trainings on personal development and first-aid trainings, sewing vocational trainings, social services for women, advocacy

activities to raise awareness on women’s issues, close interaction with mass media representatives. All partners expressed their willingness to continue referrals of vulnerable women to better meet their specific needs. Project beneficiaries were also invited to the meeting and shared with the participants and journalists the experience of their participation in the project and their personal stories. Small stands with women's photos and successful stories were placed in the location of the event to raise attention to women's needs.

12. Feedback for the Fund for Gender Equality (maximum 300 words)

Is there something you would like to share with us about your communication and work with the Fund for Gender Equality during the programme period? Do you have any suggestions for us to improve our support to grantees?

Please feel free to share with us your experience working with the Fund, for example if there is something you would like to highlight that has been useful or something you feel that did not work so well.

Taking the opportunity AFEW would like to express its gratitude for the confidence to implement such useful and important project which is resulting in women’s lives changes. The “Our choice” project became a challenge for our organization because we used to work with women mostly in relation to health-related issues: in cooperation with local NGOs we provided client management program for women focusing on HIV prevention and treatment. However, our work experience demonstrated that many women become dependent on the social services provided. Without their own income they were hardly able to, for example, move from the social dormitory and rent their own apartment, start providing for themselves and finally be able to provide for themselves and their children. Our partners from many organizations, including those who work with victims of gender based violence, reported the same problems. Due to the Fund for Gender Equality and UN Women we could unite in one project different women from various key populations and broaden the scope of our services aimed at supporting women in difficult life situation.

13. Other Observations and Learning

Are there any other observations and/or learnings that would you like to share.

Please use this space to tell us something about your programme if you think the sections above did not give you an opportunity to share.

14. Communications and Knowledge Management (maximum 300 words)

Has your programme produced any knowledge or communication products such as training materials, publications, and communication pieces that can be shared with others? *If so, please provide the materials (if available) and include details on which audiences were reached and dissemination strategies used.*

During the Project lifetime the list of the following material were developed in order to disseminate among partners:

- Training modules of personal development and economic independence;
- IEC materials for vulnerable women with employment tips were disseminating by social workers to interested women during counseling on employment-related subjects;

- Report on analysis of regulatory framework on current situation with state support and public services provided by various organizations to vulnerable women. This report was presented to social workers from state and non-governmental organizations during trainings for social workers;
- Baseline survey was presented to social workers from state and non-governmental organizations during trainings for social workers and disseminated among partner NGOs;
- Vouchers were developed and disseminated to social workers to better monitor services provision for vulnerable in the referral network;
- Social video on gender violence prevention was publicized in social network and disseminated among AFEW partners during the 16 days of activism against gender violence. Two popular TV channels Raketa and KTR transmitted the video during one week;
- 500 books with 20 stories of women success were published and disseminated among vulnerable women to encourage them towards positive changes in their lives;
- Short video about the project course was filmed and presented to the partners and journalists during the final partner meeting, the video is placed on AFEW website;
- Training course for future social workers on client management for women from vulnerable groups is introduced in Bishkek Humanitarian University.

15. Photos

Please share the photos that best illustrate the change generated by the programme (in attachment).

Photos are attached to the report

16. Awards, Special Recognition and/or Media Coverage (maximum 300 words)

Please indicate any awards, special recognition, and/or media coverage that you have received as a result of/ in relation to this programme. Kindly also add links to any relevant website.

An interview placed in Kaktus Media popular internet portal with one of the project clients living with HIV about obstacles that are faced people living with HIV with in order to raise awareness about HIV-positive people's needs:

https://kaktus.media/doc/366896_vich_pozitivnyu_jenshiny_otkazyvalis_operirovat_v_bolnice_bishkeka_video.htm

An interview placed in Kaktus Media popular internet portal with one of the project clients-former prisoner - telling her personal life story and participation in the project activities:

https://kaktus.media/doc/367068_vymer_ves_rod..._ispoved_narkopotrebitelia_s_30_letnim_stajem.html

An article about project interventions and women who were awarded by Grant Commission:

<http://www.mk.kg/articles/2018/01/04/rasshirenie-ekonomicheskikh-vozmozhnostey-uyazvimykh-zhenshin-v-kyrgyzstane.html>

An article about training on personal development in Osh and its impact on one of the interviewed participants:

<http://advocacy.kg/index.php/4814-28-avgusta-v-oshe-proshlo-obuchenie-dlya-zhenshchin-po-lichnostnomu-rostu-i-o-tom-kak-izmenit-ikh-otnoshenie-k-sebe-i-zhizni>

One of our clients and social worker in Osh participated in September 20, 2017 in “Munavar kun” programme on “Intimak” TV Channel, telling about project goal and project activities.

Country newspaper “Rekpark” publized an article in Septmber 29, 2017 named “Woman is not guilty to be in difficult life situation...” telling about women’s main obstacles participated in the project.

Azattyk country radio interviewed our social worker in order to know which women are eligible to participate in the project and what are project activities that affect direct beneficiaries:

www.azattyk.org%2Fa%2F28754794.html&h=ATOKJnFwYwBjuzwlfzgegh6Omjs0MrkrTC-c3ku_odc-xkhLjwll4ZyAUhcszb08Ne0MB_b0ZkSrjq2lxvVd1jSIQgPGy_MRJYeMwLgkjaD-pGUAHLe-dErToIn0bL5HzEy5Jk7O6I3qA

In November 9, 2017 TV Channel “Intimak” transmitted news about our grantees awarding and interview with AFEW chairperson Natalya Shumskaya.

Country newspaper “Echo Osha” published an article on January 24, 2018, the title was “It is time for changes”, telling about the Project clients.

Two more publications about project participants are available online in internet media portal 24kg and internet source of “Ilim jana bilim channel”:

https://24.kg/obschestvo/79487_kelinka_izosha_pochemu_ona_vyibiraet_put_protiv_stereotipov_ineboitsya/
https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=2049987661944626&id=1811162249160503 (starting from 14s minute)

The publications about project participants are available online in internet media portals and internet sources:

https://kaktus.media/doc/379022_byvshiy_myj_izbival_jeny_a_potom_sbejal_s_rebenkom_on_v_rozyske.html

<http://www.alliance-press.kg/ru/news/view/921>

https://kaktus.media/doc/382636_myj_pridymyval_moi_izmeny_chtoby_opravdat_p0boi_istoriia_jertvy_semeynogo_nasillia.html

https://kaktus.media/doc/382434_on_menia_bil_istoriia_jenshiny_vbivshey_myja_nojnicami.htm

<https://www.currenttime.tv/a/29598485.html> (since 20th minute)

<http://www.ktrk.kg/post/25694/ru?fbclid=IwAR0VD758MzwisI6ykbVIZGq8k8YdvBVAvMB6tbbfWV4mzOPK-TtN3vflxeU>

<https://knews.kg/2018/11/14/istoriya-narkozavisimoy-ya-kololas-kolyus-i-budu-kolotsya/>

http://aif.kg/society/family/istoriya_mamy_rebenka_s_dcp

<https://www.mk.kg/social/2018/12/05/ostrovok-spaseniya-kak-vyzhivayut-kyrgyzstanki-v-trudnoy-zhiznennoy-situacii.html>

<https://ru.sputnik.kg/society/20181128/1042027004/kyrgyzstan-krizisnyj-centr-sezim-pomoshch-nasilie.html?fbclid=IwAR0QwY5VGvOERMBXxM7ciXdiaj09ekOYh7lloSRYa6boCaXwpARf7EE63BE>

Our PR-specialist also always places articles about project activities on our web site www.afew.kg

17. Supporting Documents (optional)

Please attach any relevant supporting materials including training materials, copies of publications, manuals, communication pieces, and any other relevant supporting document produced during the programme.

18. List of Acronyms (optional)

Please list the acronyms used through the report.