



Продовольственная и
сельскохозяйственная организация
Объединенных Наций

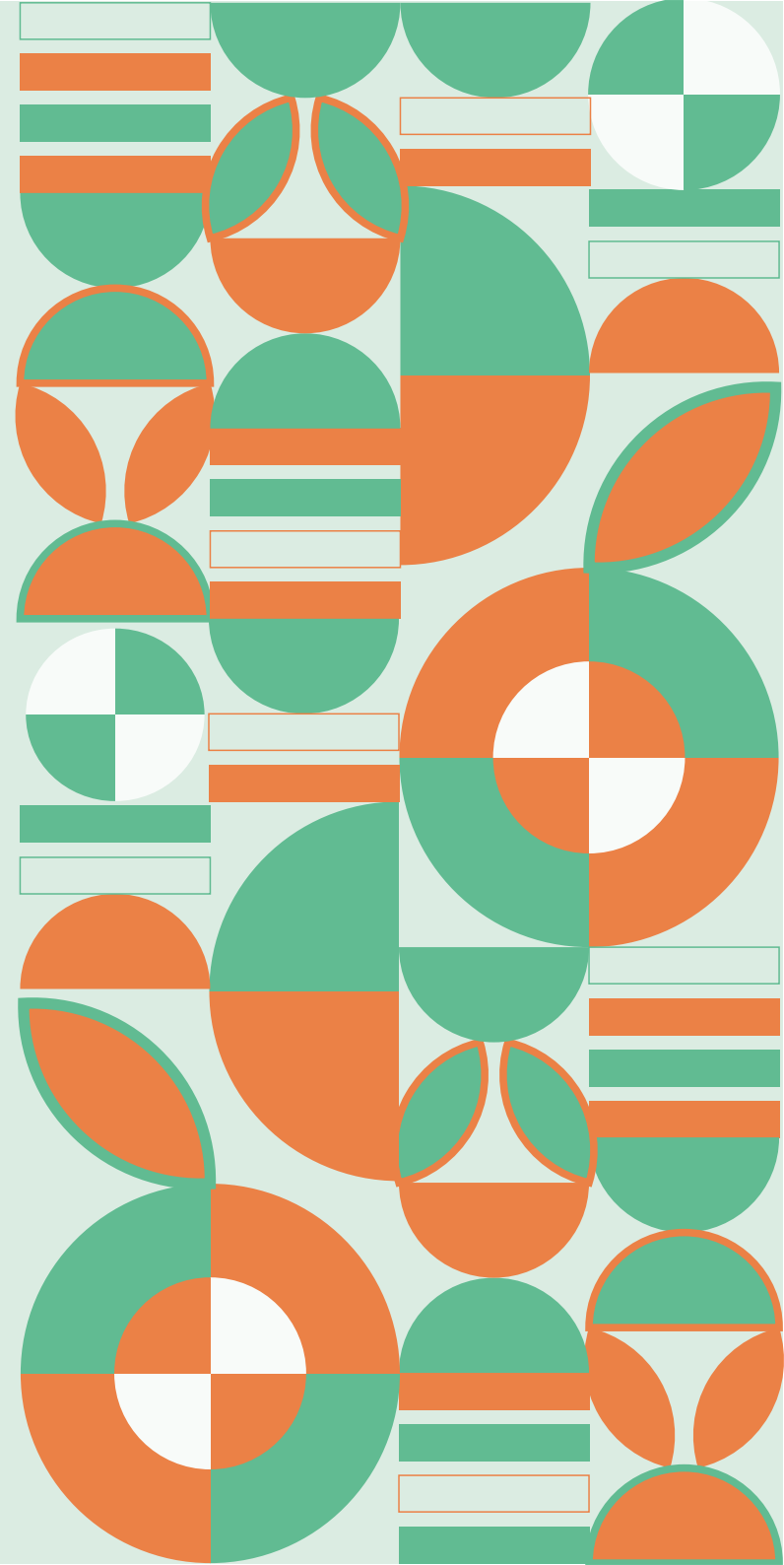


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ENGAGING COMMUNITIES ON SOCIAL COHESION, GENDER EQUALITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

DOCUMENTING EXPERIENCES





Продовольственная и
сельскохозяйственная организация
Объединенных Наций



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 **Search for
Common Ground**

 **SAMP**
венгерский фонд
общественный фонд
"Товарищество
для устойчивого
развития горных регионов"

 **Гражданская
платформа**

ENGAGING COMMUNITIES ON SOCIAL COHESION, GENDER EQUALITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

DOCUMENTING EXPERIENCES





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ABOUT THE PROJECT

“Ayaldar Tynchtyk Tiregi: Capacitated Women Civil Society Organizations Sustaining Peace in Kyrgyzstan” [the Project] was a joint initiative of UN Women, the “Roza Otunbaeva Initiative” and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), running from November 2023 to November 2024. Search for Common Ground (SFCG), which authored this report and implemented the activities described herein, was UN Women implementing partner.

Conducted under the auspices of the UN Peacebuilding Fund, the ultimate aim of the project was to contribute to long-term, sustainable peace in Kyrgyzstan by tackling how communities respond to and deal with climate change. Climate change is intensifying resource scarcity and resource-related conflicts across Central Asia, perhaps nowhere more so than in Kyrgyzstan’s Batken Region, located in the southern foothills of the Ferghana Valley, a region long plagued by shortages of water and arable land. Ongoing population growth and climate change have exacerbated these challenges, with access to water declining and periodic droughts further decreasing pasture and agricultural land.

These dynamics and the resource-driven conflicts they foment have proven particularly hard to resolve in Batken. More than half of the region is bounded by a still-undemarcated border with Tajikistan, resulting in a prevalence of enclaves and low governance (contributed to by corruption and organized crime activities linked to the porous border), and raising the stakes in even minor decisions about land, pasture, and water allocation and use. The latest clashes in the region, in 2022, were the bloodiest in the history of Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan conflicts with 63 people killed and more than 140 thousand evacuated from their homes.

Within this challenging context, the Project sought to address communities’ ability to peacefully plan for and address climate- and resource-related issues, particularly through local governance institutions and civil society. The Project thus had a dual focus of 1. Building the capacity of women-led civil society organizations (women’s CSOs) across Batken Region, 2. Facilitating these CSOs’ participation in strategic decision-making on climate issues, contributing to the inclusivity and quality of locally-developed climate solutions and, ultimately, to lasting peace.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION



ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report is a learning document, presenting two novel methods for project-intervention communities and reflecting on the effectiveness of these methods. Specifically, these two approaches were **Speed Dating** and **Design Thinking**, which the project team used to generate dialogue across members of the public, local authorities, CSOs, and government officials on climate change, gender equality and social cohesion.

The information in this report may be of interest to readers seeking innovative methods to promote community discourse, increase public participation in local governance processes, facilitate local climate change responses, and reflect on gender equality in climate change and peacebuilding. To these ends, the report provides:

- A step-by-step description of the implementation of **Speed Dating** (Chapter 1) and **Design Thinking** (Chapter 2)
- Reflections on **Lessons Learned**
- Reflections on intermediate results achieved, based on feedback from process participants
- Recommendations

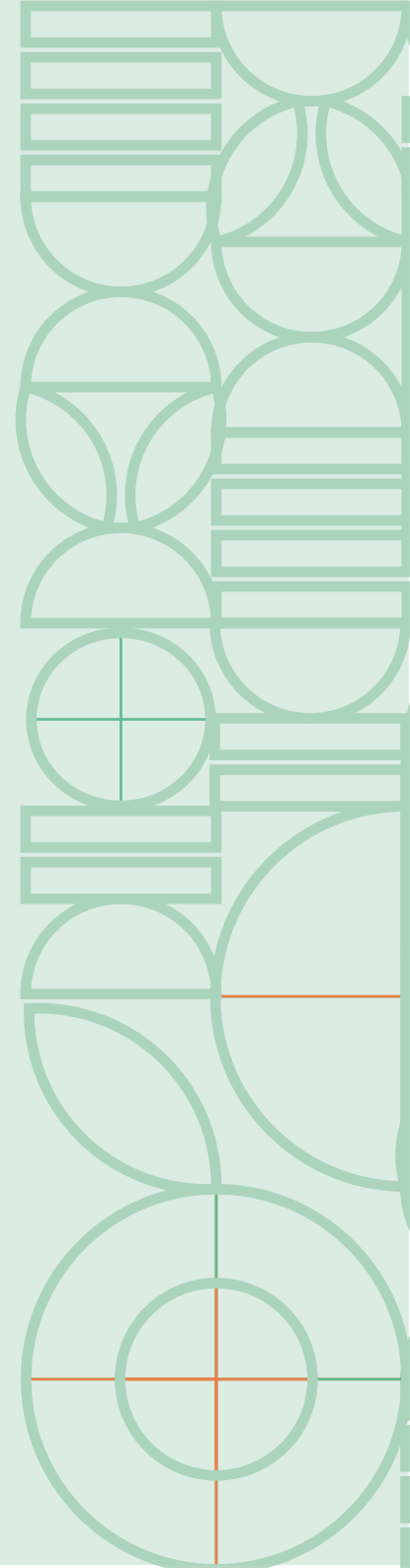
Those interested in learning more and potentially implementing these methods can feel free to contact the **SFCG** team at mbaialieva@sfcg.org and ksagyndykova@sfcg.org for further discussion and, if desired, in-depth consultation and advising.



SPEED DATING

STEP 1: PREPARATIONS FOR SPEED DATING

STEP 2: IMPLEMENTING SPEED DATING (WHAT DID WE DO AND HOW DID WE DO IT?)



SPEED DATING

During the Project, SFCG led Speed Dating sessions in 9 rural districts, reaching approximately 1,000 people. Representatives of all community structures (Appendix 1) participated in the Speed Dating, while facilitators observed the discussions and compiled findings, recommendations, and lists of recommended participants for Design Thinking sessions.

Key benefits: this method enables quick, focused discussions across a wide range of participants with differing backgrounds, opinions, and perspectives. It can surface diverse viewpoints, jump-start creative problem solving if and when the right participants are included, quickly map out, prioritize problems and solutions, and motivate joint action.

SFCG leveraged Speed Dating to identify key climate change issues and map out challenges to achieving gender equality and social cohesion in target communities (and various sub-groups of these communities).

This initial mapping was then used as the basis for Design Thinking sessions to further elaborate and develop solutions across project locations. Speed Dating was an effective tool during village meetings, prompting discussion and engagement.

Key drawbacks/when not to use it: this method is not conducive to in-depth analysis or discussion, and may not be the best way to identify innovative solutions. Also, where power dynamics across participants are markedly unequal, some may not be comfortable sharing their ideas, conflict may arise, and valuable perspectives may not be voiced. Having multiple facilitators monitor the process and step in if / when conversations go off track can help ensure that the best results are achieved.

STEP 1: PREPARATIONS FOR SPEED DATING

Step 1.1:

Selecting and training facilitators

Preparations started by training local facilitators on Speed Dating techniques and the basic principles of facilitation. In selecting facilitators, we favored hiring local facilitators from the communities where we worked, as this nurtured their potential and local development, they understood the context best, spoke local dialects, and knew the mentality of the population – all great advantages in the facilitation process. Moreover, members of the communities perceived the facilitators as “one of their own,” contributing to their trust in the discussions, process, and results.

After selecting and training the facilitators, we worked with them to generate speed-dating discussion questions, focusing on three themes: climate change, gender, and social cohesion. The full team – including project staff, project partners, and local facilitators – jointly designed the questions, taking care to keep the Speed Dating discussions focused on these three main topics.

Once discussion questions had been generated, we then continued to train the facilitators on how to maintain the tripartite framework (climate change, gender, social cohesion) and keep discussants on-track during Speed Dating sessions.

The final questions developed are included on the next page.

Step 1.2:

Identifying participants

Project staff and facilitators generated lists of key target groups to include in the Speed Dating sessions, with the goal of maximizing inclusivity, the diversity of perspectives at the events, and the quality of the inputs / knowledge of those coming. Overall, the team mapped seven target groups from within each community, whose members were to be invited to Speed Dating sessions:

1. Decision-makers
2. Pensioners
3. Farmers
4. Entrepreneurs
5. Teachers
6. Women’s council members
7. Women activists
8. Members of village health committees (VHCs)
9. Youth

Step 1.3:

Preparing the venue

The day before the Speed Dating sessions, the venue was prepared, technical equipment was arranged and tested, and appropriate seating arrangements were made.



SPEED-DATING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

CLIMATE CHANGE:

What climate-related changes have you observed in the last 5 years?

What natural resources are there in your community (pasture, water, resources, forests)? What resources do you need?

How do climate-related problems affect your life? (Consideration for women, children, persons with disabilities, youth, farmers, entrepreneurs)

How do you solve these problems? What are you doing to solve them?

What solutions do you see? Who do you think can solve these problems? Who can implement the solutions you see?

GENDER:

What do women in your village dream about? What opportunities do they have for self-realization (e.g. travel, business, etc.)?

What services in your community do women need and use (health, education, social)? What do women in your community need?

What are the difficulties and obstacles for women living in your community?

In society? / In the family?

In education? / At work?

Can you give examples of stories about successful women in your community? If there are no such stories, why is that? Is there anything stopping women from being successful?

Question for women participants specifically: What contributions are you, as an individual, ready to make to solve your problems?

What public organizations exist to help women resolve the challenges they face? What do these organizations do?

What are your plans to solve these problems? Who else could take part in solving them?

Have you raised these issues at the municipal level? Do women themselves raise them?

How do you think that municipalities can help solve these problems?

SOCIAL COHESION:

What helps to unite the population? What are some factors of unity in your community?

What hinders unity in your community? What are some factors that exacerbate differences?

How does climate change affect unity in your community? What climate-change-related factors unite and, vice versa, divide the population? Can you give examples?

Can you give examples of cohesion and unity in your village?

How do you assess the relationship between the local authorities and the population? Is there trust and cooperation?

When misunderstandings or conflicts occur in the community, how do you solve them? How does the municipal administration (aiyl okmoty) resolve these situations? How should it resolve these situations?

How can you personally contribute to community unity and social cohesion?

What solutions do you see for solving the problems you identified? What should be done to solve conflicts in the community?

What can women contribute to community cohesion? What examples can you give?

STEP 2: IMPLEMENTING SPEED DATING (WHAT DID WE DO AND HOW DID WE DO IT?)

Speed Dating sessions opened with a welcoming speech from the main moderator and the main guests from government agencies and the project management. After the official words of opening, the moderator familiarized participants with the purpose and objectives of the project, explained why the event was being held, what results were expected, what would be done with the information shared, and the format of the event. The moderator further described how decision-makers were to rotate from group to another, and the rationale for this format (namely for the decision makers to hear the feedback from all groups within the community represented at the Speed Dating session).

Step 2.1.

Organization of groups

After the event opening, participants were organized into their target groups – for example, a separate group of youth was formed, a separate group of farmers, pensioners, etc. In general, 5 to 6 groups were formed for each session, with an average of 15 people per group (or 75 to 90 people in total). Each group had 1 facilitator, who introduced herself/himself to the group members, reiterated the purpose and format of the event, and had the participants mutually introduce themselves. The facilitators then announced the rules of participation:

- There are no right and wrong answers, everyone's opinion is valuable and important;
- No interrupting each other – treat each other with respect;
- We accept and respect the opinion of each participant in the group, even if it differs from ours;
- We do not criticize each other's opinions, and do not ridicule each other;
- The facilitator gives the floor to the participants one by one, and it is important that each participant speaks;
- If you want to share information or time, you should raise your

hand for the facilitator to see and, when there is an opportunity, I (the facilitator) will give you the floor;

- As time is short, you need to say the main point and answer the facilitator's questions.
- If the conversation goes on too long, I (the facilitator) have the right to interrupt you and remind you of the limited time.

Decision makers – aiyl, rayon, and oblast officials – functioned as “discussion guests,” rotating across each of the 5 to 6 sub-groups of participants rather than being a sub-group themselves. This enabled them to listen to and compare different perspectives across the sub-groups of residents.

Step 2.2.

Preparing for discussion

Within the groups, facilitators worked to create a safe and trusting atmosphere to put the audience at ease and help participants feel that they were safe. Facilitators greeted participants in a friendly manner, introduced them to the warm up exercise, talked about the goals and objectives of the event, the rules of work, and then proceeded to the discussion. The warm-up consisted of giving general questions and only after that moving on to target questions.



General / warm-up questions:

- What are you proud of in your community?
- What are the achievements of your municipality / municipal administration?
- Do you see synergies across climate change, gender, and social cohesion? Can you give examples?

Step 2.3.

Facilitation of discussion

The facilitators started the discussion and worked to involve all group participants in the discussion process. In this way, sub-group members heard from one another about the most pressing problems of their community. During the discussion, the facilitators adhered to the approved questionnaire and tried to maintain the tripartite frame.

Step 2.4.

End of discussion

In the last round, the facilitators concluded the discussion and provided Speed Dating feedback to the discussion participants. At this stage, the facilitators collected feedback, comments and suggestions on the event.

Step 2.5.

Facilitator reporting

Since all discussions are recorded on a voice recorder, the facilitators documented the discussion process and prepared a report after each event. Before starting the recording, facilitators informed participants of the fact they would be recording, explained that they would be reviewing the tapes to make sure they correctly captured all the information shared by participants, noted that all recordings would be fully confidential, and that the recordings themselves and names of participants would not be published or made public otherwise.

Step 2.6.

Reflection of facilitators

After each Speed Dating session, we reflected on the process, discussed difficulties, Lessons Learned, results, and prepared for the next Speed Dating event. Facilitators reviewed the tape recordings and prepared reports of their observations based on the content.

DISCUSSION CONTENTS AND DYNAMICS

As previously noted, all Speed Dating discussions were focused on three main topics: **climate change, gender and social cohesion**. Throughout the discussion, the facilitators tried to maintain this tripartite framework, keeping discussions focused on these topics and not straying into other areas.

Participants actively discussed the problems of **climate change**, talked about how they observe climate change and how it affects their lives. In almost all locations, problems of access to irrigation and drinking water were the primary concerns. The lack of irrigation water has a strong impact on agriculture, and farmers talked about how decreasing water levels has made their work more difficult and led to the migration outflows. Participants also talked about the impact on pastoral activities, as drought has resulted in less grass and pasture area, meaning fewer animals can be supported by the land. Participation was generally high during climate change discussions, with many contributing concrete insights and information.

Some of the most difficult discussions were those focused on **gender issues**. Different groups had different reactions to the topic of discussion. Some groups closed, with members maintaining that gender relations were fine. In some groups, men and women argued. At one of the discussions, men voiced beliefs that, according to religion, woman comes from man's rib, which means that she is inferior to man. At another discussion, men said that the fact that some women want to study, work, and declare their rights is a result of Western influence, which is causing women to become "spoiled." There were also quite emotional discussions, when there was a confrontation between men and women, with men accusing women of spending their time at work to earn money, forgetting that their place is at home; some women answered that they were happy to stay at home and not work, if men could finally remember that 'they are men' and start earning money.

When these confrontations arose, facilitators initially attempted to calm them by calling for participants to demonstrate mutual respect of one another's views and opinions – an approach that generally led participants to fall silent and the discussion to end. An alternate approach was for facilitators to observe and listen to the confrontations and, once new opinions were not being expressed, to step in and summarize the content of each speaker's statements and contours of the debate. This led to a more thorough and open discussion of the topic. As a final overlay, some facilitators worked to periodically validate the emotions of various speakers and so help them to feel heard (without necessarily validating the content of what they said), an approach that led to more open and relatively less heated discourse. In light of these experiences and the heated nature of discourse on gender, one key take-away was that local facilitators would benefit from greater mediation and conflict management training sessions, and preparation for such discussions with specific scenarios and case studies used.

The final issue of the discussion focused on **social cohesion**. Members of almost all communities – within and across sub-groups – considered their villages to be united and friendly. However, when the facilitators asked more detailed questions, it became clear that in many communities, people do not unite to solve the problems of their village together. One positive outcome of the discussions was that, through the line of questioning, participants began to reflect on the fact that by uniting, they can solve many community problems at the local level. Greater exploration of how participants understood the term "social cohesion" – and the extent to which their understanding matched that of the project team and facilitators – could have been useful in stimulating these discussions and opening up participants even further to additional concepts.

The most dynamic discussions were those on climate change, with energy dropping slightly during discussions on gender issues and being at its lowest dynamics during discussions on social cohesion. It was easier for participants to discuss problems that lay on the surface, such as access to irrigation and drinking water, reduction in pasture areas, and reduction in income, rather than discussing problems related to mentality or social norms.

Beyond the topics being discussed, the backgrounds of the participants had a noticeable impact on the content and dynamism of the conversation. Each Speed Dating session engaged 5 to 6 different community groups, including farmers, entrepreneurs, pensioners, youth, committees and women's councils. Notable trends in participation across these groups emerged and, while these observations cannot be said to have applied to all members of these groups or across all intervention communities, in broad strokes the trends observed were that:

- Groups including teachers or those with educational backgrounds (whether having a greater level of education themselves or working in education) were generally the most dynamic and productive. Participants discussed challenges deeply, saw cause-and-effect relationships, shared their personal experiences, and proposed solutions;
- Groups with women council members and members of health committees often focused their discussions on the work they already do and the successes of this work, and thus did not result in as many new or innovative ideas;
- Groups of pensioners generally did not produce new ideas or solutions, and benefited from the inclusion of those with educational backgrounds;
- Groups of housewives tended to result in more passive discussions, with participants less willing to share opinions or positions. It was challenging for facilitators to obtain information or perspectives, even on topics of direct relevance for the women in the group;
- Groups of farmers and entrepreneurs were dominated by male participants. While discussions on climate issues were productive and dynamic, these being topics of direct relevance to the group members, they generally became silent during gender-related discussions and did not contribute;
- Groups with political activists tended to revert to narratives around opposition to the current government and turning discussions toward criticisms of and blame of incumbent authorities, or to campaigning for desired outcomes. This was not the most constructive framework for dialogue or open exploration of new ideas.



RESULTS FROM SPEED DATING SESSIONS

By the end of the sessions, the main problems of the target communities were identified and prioritized. Later in the project, this helped in the development of social projects and the selection of winning projects, as the emphasis was placed on those that were of greatest relevance and priority to the community;

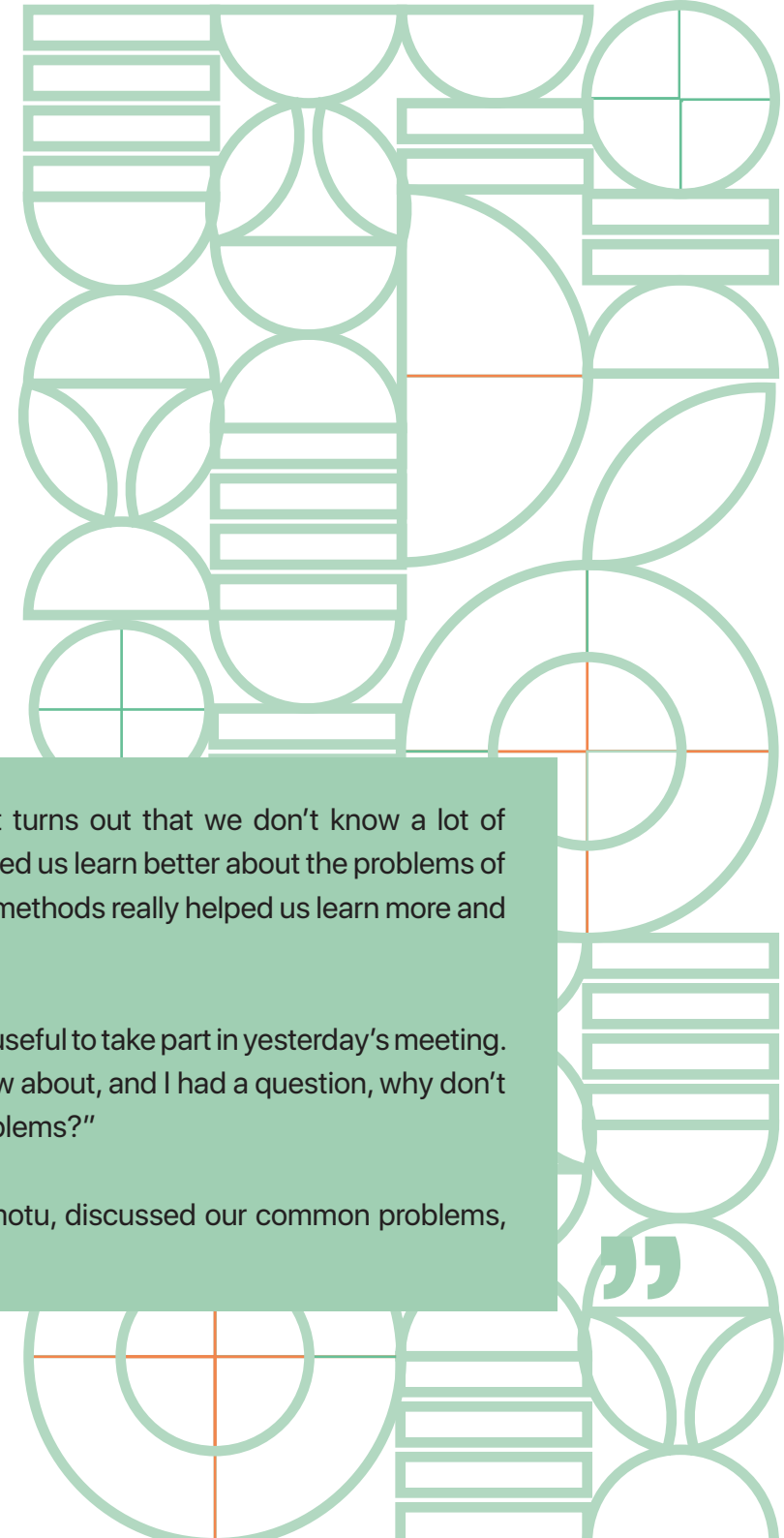
For the first time in the communities where Speed Dating was conducted, an open discussion took place in which the voices of different social groups were heard. The population learned more about the activities of local authorities and local authorities, in turn, heard and learned about the most pressing problems of the population, building dialogue across local government bodies and the local population. Such activities have helped to raise public awareness of local government activities and strengthened the link between them:



“Our citizens took part in the Speed Dating event. It turns out that we don’t know a lot of problems in our community, but yesterday’s event helped us learn better about the problems of our citizens. Whether we want to admit it or not, these methods really helped us learn more and better about the problems of our population.”

“For me, as an employee of the aiyl okmotu, it was very useful to take part in yesterday’s meeting. I heard so many problems of women that I did not know about, and I had a question, why don’t women officially turn to local authorities with their problems?”

“I liked that we, together with the staff of the aiyl okmotu, discussed our common problems, exchanged opinions, they heard us, we heard them.”



Local self-government representatives showed interest in using Speed Dating as a new, innovative format for interaction with the population:

Although the purpose of this event was to identify the main problems of the population, the Speed Dating sessions had a broader impact. For example, local authorities noted during that they received feedback from the population on their activities, which help them improve their future work. The discussions also helped local authorities to learn more deeply about the main problems of the population.

"Usually in public hearings, 5-6 people speak and the rest are silent. At yesterday's discussion there were very good conditions for everyone to speak out. I think this is due to the interactive approach, which we should also adopt for ourselves."

"We listened to the problems and we really liked your suggestions, we concluded that we need to meet with the population more often, we will try to increase meetings with the population and use this format, it is very interesting."


"We can use this methodology when we develop our strategic Plan for Social and Economic Development (PSED) . I would also like to admit that we use these techniques, when a project comes, when a project leaves, we stop using them, but we, the deputies of the local council, oblige the aiyl okmotu to use this technique in its work with the population."

"We told the population, speak openly and freely, and people freely said that they were dissatisfied with our work, talked about their problems."

"I really liked the event we participated in yesterday, because we got to know each other, got to hear each other's problems, many of us spoke to the aiyl okmotu employees."

"As a deputy, it was very useful for me to take part in this event. I heard the voice of the people, heard the problems of women. I wrote down all the problems for myself, and saw what I needed to improve in my local council activities."

"We, as a local government body, realized that we ourselves do not listen to the population, today we listened to them and realized that we need to convey information to the population, now we will start working on this."



Members of the population began to realize the importance of their own participation in solving problems and participating in decision-making processes. They began to share ideas and solutions to certain problems in their sub-groups. People also shared their experiences, and began to call on one another to contribute to solving community problems.



"We came to conclusions during the discussion, thank you for that."

"The discussions were very interesting, we must unite in order to solve our problems."

"Before, we didn't think about solutions, but during the discussion we realized that it turns out we can come up with solutions ourselves, and think about how to solve the problem."

"Discussing in groups, we came up with many solutions, for example, to provide clean drinking water, we need to unite 20 families and make a common tank and use it together"

"In the process of discussion, we realized that we don't need to sit idly by, we can organize ourselves and do something together with people, not sit at home, but organize women and do something together. That's what I started thinking about."



The Speed Dating methodology and approach created a unique opportunity for the voice of every social group in the community to be heard, including the voices of women and youth. In these communities, this is the first event of its kind where the voices of those whose opinions are usually ignored in decision-making were heard.

Speed Dating helped some local self-governments realize that there is not enough communication between local authorities and the population, as the discussions, dialogues and debates showed that the population is not informed about their work. Realizing this, one municipality took concrete steps to improve communication with citizens after the Speed Dating sessions, organizing boxes for letters, complaints and suggestions in each village. Simple solutions such as this one can help local self-government bodies regularly receive feedback from the population and be aware of the problems across the villages they oversee.

“I believe that the voice of women has been heard. Individually we cannot, for example, complain about medical services, we are afraid that service-providers will be offended and this will affect the quality of service in the future. But here, together with the group, we were able to speak out because there were a lot of us.»

“When we arrived, we saw that there were a lot of people and it was very good. Employees of the local self-government and deputies were present, we told them our problems. We cannot tell them individually, we are a small village. But together, we spoke out and told them what they are not doing, what work they are not doing, what problems still remain unresolved.”

“I really liked the Speed Dating events that took place in our village. Firstly, there were a lot of people, the population participated very well. I liked that we discussed our problems with officials from the district department and representatives of the local self-government. The most important thing is that the population expressed their problems; perhaps the authorities were not even aware of many of our problems.”

“During the discussions, we had many interesting ideas. One of them was to make letter boxes to receive letters from the population for the authorities. We saw the problem and proposed a solution.”

“We ourselves came up with an innovative solution, we decided to install something like mailboxes in each of our villages. We saw today the problem that we have no connection with the population, no connection with the villages, and this idea came to us, to install something... something like mailboxes in every village, so that every citizen of our municipality can write us a letter, tell us about problems, complain or make a proposal. We will collect these letters weekly and read them. I think this will help us improve communication with the population.»



ASSUMPTIONS, LESSONS LEARNED, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

When designing the Speed Dating approach, the project team held five core assumptions as to the added-value of this method. During Speed Dating implementation and post-facto reflection on it, we assessed the extent to which these assumptions held true, finding two to be confirmed, two partially confirmed, and one ultimately unfounded. Below, we begin with a summary of our assumptions and assessment of how well they bore out in reality and, subsequently, a table with more detailed findings and Lessons Learned related to each assumption.

ASSUMPTIONS

Assumption 1:

By involving different parties – women and men, youth, groups of people with different interests – to discuss local issues and find new solutions, the method creates conditions for everyone's voice to be heard, especially women and others.

Result:

Speed Dating did show itself to be a tool, via which it was possible to involve all participants in the discussion. With proper facilitation, everyone's voice can be heard. To achieve this, facilitators explicitly told participants that all contributions were welcome, proactively encouraged all (including those who were reticent to speak) in conversations, and repeated back what participants shared to help them feel heard and respected, and to confirm to all that their ideas had been properly understood. Facilitators were taught to demonstrate interest and active listening skills, helping participants feel comfortable with raising their ideas. Moreover, participants were grouped by age, gender, and social roles, such that they would feel more comfortable to share their genuine reflections and overcome any embarrassment or concerns about cross-group power dynamics.

Based on the results of feedback and interviews, most of the participants noted that this event allowed each participant to speak out. This format is convenient because in a large audience, people are embarrassed to speak and express their position. In groups, it is easier for people to express their opinions, talk about problems and voice their position.

Assumption confirmed

Assumption 2:

With the help of Speed Dating, unified prioritization will be achieved. It is possible to choose those topics that are promoted by the majority, and not just by a couple of participants.

Result:

The Speed Dating format did enable coherent prioritization. During discussions, facilitators observed the activity and reactions of participants when discussing certain issues. The following was recorded: in the case when the topics are promoted by one or two people, the rest of the participants simply sit in silence, but if the topic affects the majority of the participants, they agree, assent, nod, but if the topic deeply concerns all participants, and it is painful, the topic triggers the participants, each participant wants to speak out on this issue, the participants become emotional, speak louder (try to be heard). The behavior of the participants, the number of people involved in the discussion of certain issues, their reactions and emotionality to certain issues help to prioritize the main problems of the population.

The facilitators in each group recorded the main 5 problems that were identified as priorities. Facilitators then pooled the identified issues to rank them by number of repeatable issues, thereby prioritizing issues for each location. This procedure took place immediately after the end of SD.

Assumption confirmed

Assumption 3:

This model will help identify innovative solutions and non-traditional approaches to addressing identified problems.

Result:

While innovative solutions did arise in some groups, in most cases this did not occur. The groups that came up with innovative solutions tended to be those where the members were educated, outside of their home community, or had experience in public service.

While innovative approaches were not often identified, there was nevertheless useful sharing of knowledge and expertise. For example, participants shared practices like drip irrigation, preparing compost, and storing water in mini tanks.

Assumption not confirmed

Assumption 4:

This model will help maintain the gender-climate-peacebuilding framework of the project.

Result:

Under the model, there were to be 5 rounds of discussion per Speed Dating session, with each round addressing one of the topics of gender, climate and social cohesion. In practice, we found that while it is possible to cover two topics with this format, adding a third proved problematic, since participants found it hard to maintain focus and interest across 3 topics for all 5 rounds. Recognizing this, facilitators did not cover the third topic, social cohesion, in the majority of sessions, enabling greater space for participants and facilitators to build logical connections between the climate and gender topics.

Assumption partially confirmed

Assumption 5:

This method will encourage people to initiate decisions and participate in their implementation, motivating them to make their own contribution. What helps is that solutions come directly from the people who will implement them themselves.

Result:

Most groups came to the conclusion that they can solve their community's problems if they unite and work together. However, such insights did not appear in all groups.

In more successful groups, participants shared experiences or ideas on how to solve a given problem, and came to the understanding that they can solve some problems without external intervention.

However, there were locations where the groups felt themselves dependent on outside support and unable to resolve issues on their own. This attitude was especially evident in Dara and Tort Gul, Ken Talaa, and Leilek. In these locations, discussants indicated that someone should come and solve their problems. Phrases such as "We should have plants and factories opened so that we have work", "We should have a sewing workshop opened", etc. were heard. The project team worked to direct the participants to consider how they could impact issues themselves, though with limited success.

In Sumbula, half of the groups came to concrete solutions during discussions with decision makers, while decision makers concluded that some problems can be solved without grant assistance. However, it is unknown to what extent these ideas will be implemented. The remaining half of the groups did not come to any conclusions or decisions.

Assumption partially confirmed



LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Assumption 1: By involving different parties – women and men, youth, groups of people with different interests – to discuss local issues and find new solutions, the method creates conditions for everyone’s voice to be heard, especially women and others

Lessons Learned	Recommendations
A large number of group members (over 15) makes it difficult to involve all participants in the discussion.	Organize groups of no more than 15 people. It is better to reduce the number of participants and improve the quality of discussions.
The same leader-participants who actively participate in the discussion do not allow other participants to open up.	Involve passive participants in the discussion by directing questions to specific participants.
When those representing the “decision maker” category are ordinary employees and not actual decision-makers, the significance and value of the discussion is reduced.	In Speed Dating, need to involve decision makers, and not just ordinary employees of the local self-government.
If decision makers are not instructed about the purpose of the discussion and do not understand their role and importance, then their attitude to the discussion is superficial, they do not attach importance and demonstrate a frivolous attitude towards community problems. For example, they leave events in the midst of discussions.	Before the discussion, provide instructions to decision makers so that they understand their role, their importance in the Speed Dating process, and the benefit to them of their participation.
The lack of “warm-up” at the beginning influences the fact that some participants do not open up until the end of the event.	To relieve tension and help participants open up, facilitators need to spend time on getting-to-know-each-other activities in the beginning, also giving the facilitator more time to talk about the project and the goals of the event.
Conducting Speed Dating in a small room reduces the quality of discussions because it becomes noisy and people cannot hear each other.	If there is a large number of people, select a large room and space the groups far from one another so that participants and facilitators can hear each other.
If you do not explain to the participant(s) why the recording is being done on a voice recorder, then this will stress the participants and they will not feel safe.	At the beginning, explain to participants the purpose of the tape recording and how confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured.
If participants do not understand any terms or words in the questions posed, they cannot answer the questions and the quality of the discussions decreases.	Use words and terms that are understandable to Speed dating participants. Use simple everyday words, avoid complex terms and take into account the local dialect.

Conducting Speed Dating in several rooms improves the quality of the discussion, since the groups do not interfere with each other and each participant is heard.	In the case where the room is small, several rooms can be used for Speed dating if the rooms are located close to each other.
Speed Dating is an effective tool for assessing community needs. In a short time, it identifies the most pressing and problematic areas in communities.	Use Speed Dating as a tool to assess community needs.
Feedback is effective in small groups rather than in a large plenary group.	Provide feedback to participants in small groups rather than in large, general groups.
If the room is cold and people are freezing, they do not wait for the event to end and leave early.	If the Speed Dating venue is cold, then heat the room in advance.
When high-level decision makers (representatives of the district administration) participate in Speed Dating, local decision makers (local authorities) become more responsible.	Involve the heads of the local government and representatives of the district administration as decision makers in Speed Dating.
The participation of high-ranking decision makers (district administration) increases the level of the event, and the population and local authorities treat it more responsibly.	Attract decision makers from the district, regional and republican levels to Speed dating, if possible.

Assumption 2: With the help of Speed Dating, unified prioritization will be achieved. It is possible to choose those topics that are promoted by the majority, and not just by a couple of participants

Lessons Learned	Recommendations
To prioritize community problems, facilitators must record not only what is being actively discussed, but also pay attention to the emotional reaction of the audience when discussing a particular issue.	To prioritize, the facilitator must pay attention to the number of people involved in discussing a particular issue, and emotional involvement. Pay attention to which discussions were more triggering.
Problems of minority ethnic groups are rarely included in the priority list, since their quantitative representation is much less than that of the majority ethnicity.	In multi-ethnic communities, it is necessary to take into account the problems of ethnic minorities, given that their quantitative representation is smaller and therefore their voiced problems may not be included in priority problems.

<p>Participants mostly see surface problems, such as poverty, lack of work, and lack of water. It is more difficult for them to see problems associated with mentality and social norms. This influences prioritization, as climate-related issues emerge as the highest priority, followed by gender and peacebuilding issues as lower priority.</p>	<p>To fully prioritize issues, there is a need to deepen the conversation around gender and peacebuilding.</p>
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Assumption 3: This model will help identify innovative solutions and non-traditional approaches to addressing identified problems

Lessons Learned	Recommendations
<p>If, during facilitation, the participants are not focused and directed toward a solution, then problem solving does not arise.</p>	<p>When facilitating, it is important to focus not only on problems, but also on solutions.</p>
<p>Innovative solutions are more likely to appear in groups composed of youth and teachers.</p>	<p>Involve participants in Speed Dating who can offer innovative solutions, such as youth, teachers, entrepreneurs, and NGO employees.</p>
<p>Innovative solutions are less likely to appear in groups composed of housewives, farmers and pensioners.</p>	<p>Include entrepreneurs or teachers to kick-start the idea generation process in groups with housewives, farmers and pensioners to help kick-start idea generation.</p>

Assumption 4: This model will help maintain the gender-climate-peacebuilding framework of the project

Lessons Learned	Recommendations
<p>If the facilitator fails to maintain a two-sided and three-sided frame, then the participants in the discussions do not see this logical connection between the issues.</p>	<p>During discussions, facilitators must enunciate and maintain the logical connections in the two-way and three-way frame. Preparing questions in advance is key to this.</p>
<p>Participants' lack of understanding of key terms – climate change, gender, social cohesion – complicates the technique of maintaining a two-sided and three-sided framework.</p>	<p>Use everyday words, avoid terminology and take into account the local dialect of the participants. Use local facilitators who can speak and understand the local dialect.</p>
<p>If facilitators themselves do not see the logic of the three-sided and two-sided frame, then they cannot maintain it in the discussion process</p>	<p>Facilitators must understand and see the three-sided and two-sided frame for themselves</p>
<p>The more experienced the facilitator, the better the discussions go.</p>	<p>Involve experienced facilitators who have a thorough understanding of the context of the target location.</p>

Assumption 5: This method will encourage people to initiate decisions and participate in their implementation, motivating them to make their own contribution. What helps is that solutions come directly from the people who will implement them themselves

Lessons Learned	Recommendations
If facilitators do not guide participants to find their own solutions to identified problems, participants do not always come to this concept on their own.	Facilitators should not limit themselves only to leading discussions oriented toward identifying problems, but also focus on and direct participants to find solutions to existing problems.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Lessons Learned	Recommendations
If there are more than 80 people in Speed Dating, the efficiency of the event decreases.	When organizing Speed Dating, focus on the number of no more than 80 participants.
<p>If the questions are complex and divided into topics, participants will have difficulties in understanding the context when discussing them.</p> <p>If conflicts and disputes arise during the discussion, the dynamics of the discussion drops, a lot of time is spent on conflict resolution, which takes a lot of time and the facilitator does not fit into the time allocated for the discussion.</p>	<p>Simplify the questions, the questions should not be divided into topics, but should flow from each other and be related to each other.</p> <p>To train facilitators in mediation, dispute and conflict resolution techniques during discussions.</p>



REFLECTIONS ON SPEED DATING PREPARATION: CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

CHALLENGES

It was difficult to involve people younger than 28, and the 'youth' category was mostly represented by those between 28 and 35 years old (under Kyrgyzstani legislation, youth extends to those 35 and younger). These 'older youth' representatives proved easier to mobilize than their younger counterparts.

Reflecting on why this pattern emerged, the project team and local facilitators identified distinct, gender-differentiated trends that lead to overall under-representation of youth in community processes: many young men aged 18 to 28 are in labor migration, especially those from rural areas. Meanwhile, single women aged 18 to 23 tend to be studying and so living in university cities, while married women of this age group tend to be overly occupied with children and family duties, and so difficult to mobilize. 'Younger' adult youth of both genders, thus, are generally hard to access or fully absent from the community, with implications for their voices and concerns (both present and future) being taken into account in community discussions.

It was difficult to involve people with disabilities, as the infrastructure and technical equipment did not allow the involvement of this category of the population.

Since the infrastructure of the villages did not allow the involvement of persons with disabilities, the project team tried to engage persons with disabilities who could nevertheless engage in the event.

In some locations, it was difficult to involve decision makers in the process of organizing and participating in the Speed Dating sessions. When decision makers from the district or republican level were invited and participated, this increased the responsibility of local decision makers in preparing and participating in the sessions.

To overcome this challenge, the project team involved governmental partners who facilitated the involvement of local authorities in public dialogue. For example, if the district governmental structures were involved and showed interest, representatives of the local (municipal) structures were more engaged in and responsible toward the event.

LESSONS LEARNED

When local facilitators with a strong understanding of the local context are involved, the questions asked and discussions held are more tailored and nuanced, which increases participants' trust in the process, promotes more open discussion, and generates higher-quality results.

If facilitators are involved in the question-writing process and are well-trained, they can easily facilitate, ask questions, and stay focused on the main points of the discussion.

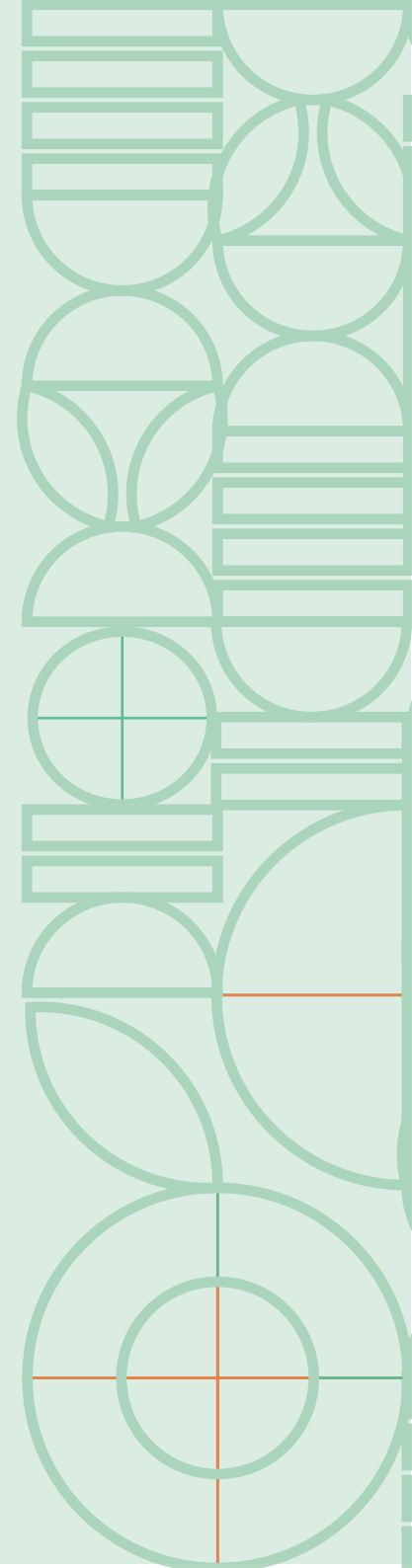
When high-ranking officials of the republican and district levels are present at the Speed Dating sessions, local authorities behave more responsibly in the preparation for, conduct of and participation at Speed Dating activities.



DESIGN THINKING

STEP 1: PREPARATIONS FOR DESIGN THINKING

STEP 2: IMPLEMENTING DESIGN THINKING (WHAT DID WE DO AND HOW DID WE DO IT?)



DESIGN THINKING

Design Thinking — a set of methodologies and tools that help find solutions to problems based on people's needs — was conducted with 120 people. These methods were used when participants needed to prioritise the problems they had jointly identified and propose concrete solutions. The key aspect of Design Thinking is empathy – the ability to immerse oneself in another person's experience to envision, design, and deliver something that will satisfy their needs. This need-based, empathetic approach was key to helping community members consider and discuss their priorities in relation to one another's, recognising the challenges faced by their community members and the value of resolving them.

An added value of Design Thinking is that it leads to innovative ideas and solutions, as the requirement of empathising with and actively imaging oneself in another person's place stretches people's thinking and forces them to envision challenges and solutions in new ways.

SFCG used this method to generate innovative ideas to solve problems raised during Speed Dating sessions, including by participants developing project ideas for their communities. As such, project design teams were incorporated into the 2-day Design Thinking workshops.

STEP 1: PREPARATIONS FOR DESIGN THINKING

Step 1.1:

Briefing trainers on Design Thinking

To ensure continuity across the Speed Dating sessions and Design Thinking workshops, the same trainers and facilitators were engaged across both components. Beyond ensuring continuity and understanding of the substantive content of discussions, an added benefit was that participants of the Design Thinking sessions were already familiar and comfortable with the trainers from their previous Speed Dating interactions. Moreover, this contributed to the overarching project goal of increasing the capacity of local CSOs and their members, with these local trainers generally being staff of community-based CSOs in the target communities.

The trainers received instruction on Design Thinking methods, covering the goals and objectives of Design Thinking and the step-by-step content of the planned sessions. As this was the trainers' first experience implementing Design Thinking methods, they were further guided by trainer-mentors who had previous experience with the approach.

Step 1.2:

Developing materials

Materials included a full outline of the sessions (described below under Step 2), presentations for each element of the Design Thinking process, and pre- and post-tests to help measure participants' learning and attitudes as they developed throughout the process.

Step 1.3:

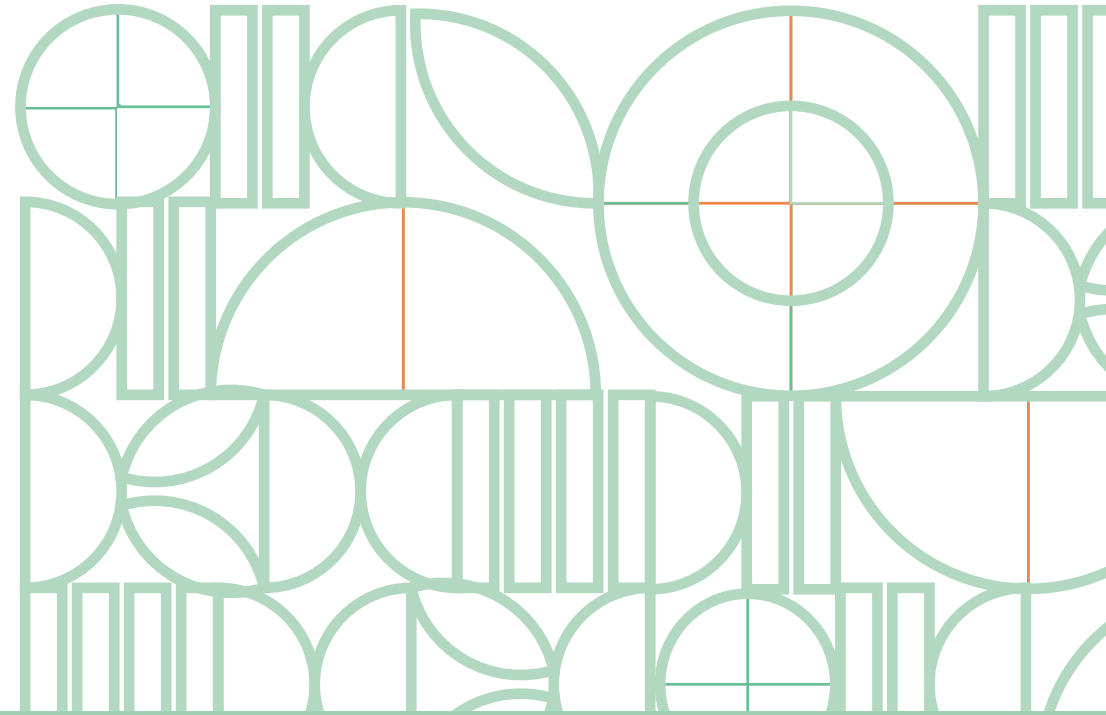
Identifying participants

After the Speed Dating sessions, the facilitators identified participants to continue with the Design Thinking workshops based on their contributions to Speed Dating discussions, overall level of engagement, and interest. It was important that all social groups that had taken part in Speed Dating were represented, and so care was taken to nominate participants from each group. After the preliminary list of participants was formed, participants were invited to the Design Thinking workshops, and the final list was formed.

Step 1.4:

Preparing the list of community challenges identified in Speed Dating sessions

Building from the Speed Dating results, a list of the main, pressing problems of the communities was formulated. This list was presented at the Design Thinking training, which served as a basis for substantiating the problems and building audience concurrence to focus on the identified issues as the most relevant challenges of the community to address during the Design Thinking workshops



Step 1.5: Preparing the venue and designating groups

The most relevant consideration for preparing the Design Thinking venue was the seating arrangement, which needed to enable open conversation across relatively large teams while making sure that numerous teams seated together in one room would not interfere with one another, while all participants could see presentations of the trainers. Seating in groups in a half-sun (island) pattern was used.

Group composition was of great import for ensuring Design Thinking goals could be achieved: participants had to be split into sub-groups groups, with each group comprised of members with similar interests – and so willing and motivated to engage deeply in a joint topic – but also representing the greatest diversity of backgrounds as possible – such that their joint thinking and problem-solving would take into account as many viewpoints and angles as possible.



STEP 2: IMPLEMENTING DESIGN THINKING (WHAT DID WE DO AND HOW DID WE DO IT?)

The training was held in the format of a workshop (working seminar), with the audience divided into groups based on their place of residence. Trainers first shared the results of the Speed Dating sessions with participants, informed them of the problems identified, and named the 5 priority problems of each community. This was done so that the participants – potential developers of innovative projects – would familiarize themselves with the most pressing problems of their villages and focus on finding solutions to the priority problems. Next, the trainers used several exercises for a deeper understanding of a

Step 2.1.

Create a portrait of the beneficiary (“empathize”)

As the first exercise, each group received an image of the end user or beneficiary that their design (or project) was intended to benefit. Three end beneficiary types were provided: (1) a 36-year-old male farmer, (2) a 19-year-old woman living in her husband’s household, and (3) a 40-year-old female activist.

Each group was tasked with developing a detailed portrait of the end user, building from the basic sketch provided. Groups were to give a name, social and family status, individual character, and general living conditions for their imagined user. The goal of this exercise was to help the participants connect more deeply with the people for whom they were to design projects, developing empathy for the character they had imagined.

In the next stage, the training participants filled out an “Empathy Map” to help the participants see how the character suffers problems associated with climate change, gender norms, and a lack of social cohesion. The participants wrote down their imagined user’s thoughts, frustrations, dreams, pains and fears. This exercise helped the participants to empathize with the character more deeply and to feel and see the problem and its impact on the person’s life.

Finally, the participants completed a “User Path” exercise, intended to help them experience the impact of the problem on the person’s life path and circumstances. In this exercise, a specific segment of the user’s life was selected, where the challenges to their life arising from climate change, gender norms, or a lack of social cohesion could be seen. The groups drew the path of their character and the difficulties that he or she faced, reflecting on the impact of the problem on a specific segment of the end user’s life.

While the “Empathy Map” exercise helped project developers see the problem from the inside, the “User Path” showed them the problem from the outside. These exercises helped participants study the problem they intended to address by passing it through their imagined character, contributing both to empathy for the group of people for whom they would design a solution and more creative and constructive thinking.

Step 2.2.

Developing a problem statement and goal ("focus")

The working groups were instructed to clearly formulate the problem they were working with, generating a problem statement and a clearly defined project goal. By carefully defining the problem and objective to solve it, each group more clearly understood the issue at hand before delving into idea generation.

Step 2.3.

Idea generation ("design")

Referencing their problem and goal statements, participants were tasked with developing the maximum number of ideas and solutions they could identify to achieve their goal. The trainers did not limit the participants to a set number of ideas but, rather, the participants were encouraged to create as many ideas as possible, discussing them and writing them down on stickers. This 'no judgment', joint process was intended to foment maximum innovative idea generation.

Step 2.4.

Visualizing the solution ("pilot")

Participants were asked to select the one or two solutions they found most conducive to achieving their goal, and then proceeded to the visualization stage. Participants prepared prototypes of their idea, i.e. a visual representation of it, such as mockups or drawing of how their projects would look visually. The visualization process helped the participants not only to present their solutions, but also to analyze their solutions and more thoroughly imagine their real world implementation at an early stage. The visualization process helped to identify problems and shortcomings of the solutions chosen, such that they could be addressed before the project implementation stage.

Step 2.5.

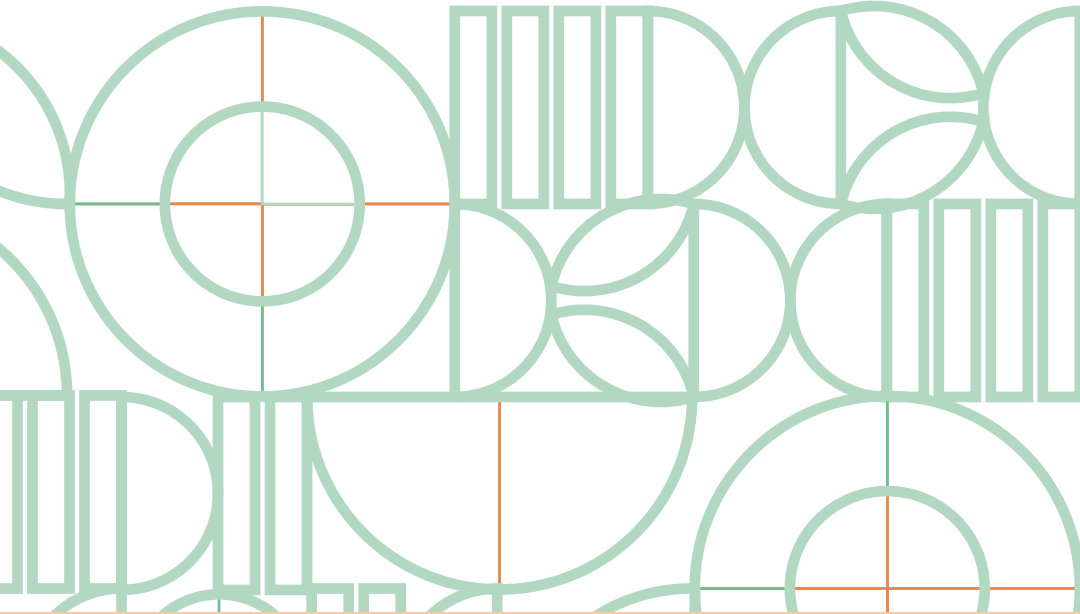
Gathering feedback ("test")

After the project visualization was ready, developer groups presented their ideas to each other and presented the visual prototypes of their projects. After the presentation of each idea, the full audience discussed each project, commented, and gave recommendations for improving the ideas. This stage enabled participants to reflect critically on their work and, through the input of the wider group, identify gaps and unfinished aspects.

Step. 2.6.

Canvas

Finally, participants completed a Canvas model template. The Canvas model was adapted for the social project, and allowed the groups to describe their ideas in more detail. Upon completion of the training, each group had the first draft versions of their projects in hand



Upon completion of the 2-day training, teams had developed clear problem statements, solutions, and projects to achieve those solutions. In most cases, these projects were related to adaptation to climate change. For example, ideas such as promoting drip irrigation systems, creating artificial glaciers, creating water storage tanks, recycling water, studying the impact of climate change on soil and its quality, and cultivating new agricultural products were considered and discussed.

Some ideas also centered on addressing women community members' needs, such as creating fitness clubs for women, creating development centers, "mother-in-law and daughter-in-law" competitions to improve relationships, opening sewing and confectionery shops for women's employment, sports events, and psychological training to increase women's potential.

In those Design Thinking groups where the developers were a mix of residents and decision makers, proposed solutions were proactively integrated into planning for the municipality's Socio-Economic Development Program.

Overall, some 20 project proposals were developed through the training sessions, while the method of bringing together diverse project development teams resulted in the creation of new friendships and unity within and among community members.



«We united, we are united by our common desire to solve the problem, we are very comfortable with each other, we think if our project goes through, we will make a good team.»

«I realized during this training that one person cannot do anything on their own, but by uniting, we can do a lot. I thank this training for uniting us.»

«What I liked most about the training was the teamwork, how we work and cooperate together, here are all those who care about the problems of the community.»

«During this training I learned to tell people my opinion and that my group will listen to me. I believed in myself, and I realized that I can do something too.»

«During the discussions, the participants came to the conclusion that the solutions to many problems depend on the participants themselves. 40 percent of the participants came to this conclusion» (Trainer's feedback).



ASSUMPTIONS, LESSONS LEARNED, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ASSUMPTIONS

Assumption 1:

By involving different parties in Design Thinking – women, men, young people, groups of people with different interests – to discuss local issues and find new solutions, the method will create conditions for everyone's voice to be heard, especially that of women and other less-vocal groups.

Result:

The Design Thinking approach did allow all participants to be involved in designing. Each participant actively engaged in the process and each voice was taken into account. Ensuring that project development teams were small, with no more than 6 members, allowed for conditions under which each participant would be heard.

Based on the results of feedback and interviews, most of the participants noted that this event allowed each participant to speak out. This format is convenient because in a large audience, people are embarrassed to speak and express their position. In groups, it is easier for people to express their opinions, talk about problems and voice their position.

Assumption confirmed

«At the Design Thinking training, everyone opened up because the training was very free, everyone freely spoke about what they thought. The training made us think about a lot. I am watching one table where mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law gathered, such tables generate the best discussions, the most effective dialogues.»

«I would also like to note the Design Thinking training, everyone is active and participates, conditions are created for open communication for everyone and everyone takes part»

“What’s unique about this event is that we tried to gather everyone, everyone participated, both the wives’ council and the housewives. For our JSC, this was a very big experience, it turns out that we should hold such events, at such events, we can hear everyone’s opinions. For example, young people, when there are adults, are silent, old people are silent when there are young people, so it turns out that it is very good to divide them into groups and hold discussions in groups. It was a very useful event, things were said that we had not heard or known before. They even invited women who look after disabled children, for them it was something new. It turns out that people are in small groups”

«We have been participating in the Design Thinking training for the second day, each of us openly expresses his opinion. All goal-oriented participants got to this training, and not those on duty as is usually the case, this is probably because the participants for the training were selected by the project staff taking into account the participant's interest, his internal motivation. We really like the trainers, they are very friendly, they have an equal attitude towards all participants, this gives us the opportunity to be heard.»

Assumption 2:

With the help of Design Thinking, it is possible to choose priority problems of concern to the majority of participants, not just in the interest of one or two relatively powerful stakeholders.

Result:

The main problems on which the Design Thinking training was based were the main 5 priority problems that were identified during Speed Dating. All participants in the training agreed that the problems identified were indeed priorities. Also, after completing the empathy exercises, the participants immersed themselves and were able to unanimously focus on those problems that are relevant to their communities.

Assumption confirmed

“During the Design Thinking training, we touched on all the relevant problems. Through the image of a farmer, a female activist, and a young daughter-in-law, we examined our problems from the inside, as if we lived through these problems anew. All three images touch on and show all the problems of our community.”

«All the discussed problems affected the majority, there were no discussions that would affect the interests of one or two people.»

Assumption 3:

The Design Thinking model will facilitate development of innovative solutions and non-traditional approaches to considering the identified problems.

Result:

Design Thinking contributed to finding innovative solutions, as all of the developed ideas were new to the communities, as was the problem-solving approach. While many of the developed ideas would not be considered innovative at the national or international levels, community representatives themselves considered the proposed solutions to be breaking new ground in their communities.

Assumption partially confirmed

«If you try, you can solve any problem, here at the Design Thinking training we learned and understood through what paths we can solve our problem, with what structures we need to interact, I can say with confidence that here we learned to solve problems.»

«Yes, we have come up with a lot of different innovative ideas, because the methods themselves help to think about solutions, to come up with new solutions. The training is very interesting, even the teaching methods that you use, they can also be called innovative. Although there are participants who find it difficult to come up with an innovative idea, because there is no information, no education, of course it is difficult for them.»

«Innovative solutions have appeared, for example, that irrigation water needs to be carried out through pipes in order to irrigate more efficiently. To carry out clean drinking water, 20 families need to unite and make a common reservoir and use it together. I personally had an idea to open a confectionery workshop for the production of kattama [a traditional Kyrgyz flatbread]. I wanted such a project so that at least 10-15 people could find employment. I used to think about this idea, and then forgot about it, and yesterday I remembered. Before, there was no faith, but now there is faith that I can do it.»

«At the Design Thinking training, we came up with innovative solutions, for example, soil research, i.e. to conduct a laboratory study of the soil and, based on this, cultivate new plants that are suitable for our soil and climate, there was also a second innovative idea, but I forgot it.»

Assumption 4:

The practice of Design Thinking will help maintain the tripartite frame of gender - climate - peacebuilding inherent in the project.

Result:

The Design Thinking training was built on the model of gender – climate – peacebuilding. All the exercises that were used during the training were adapted taking into account the three topics, but it was difficult to maintain the three-sided frame throughout. The working groups could focus on a maximum of two topics, but no more. For example, there were ideas on using secondary raw materials and thereby organizing employment for women; building a dam using the Ashara method (adaptation to climate and social cohesion), but few ideas that would or could touch on all three topics.

Assumption partially confirmed

«In the group, we took the problem and directly linked it to climate change, gender and social cohesion. We directly see the connection between these three issues. For example, climate change affects many aspects of life, including gender, the problem of gender, it is not visible to the eye, but inside there are a lot of gender problems, by solving gender problems we can solve problems related to climate change.»

«About climate change, how it affects women and affects the whole family as a whole, how climate change affects our harvest, for example, due to the lack of water this year our tobacco dried out, and we could not sell it, as a result of which our income decreased, the reduction in income immediately affects women, affects the family. Lack of irrigation water affects the unity of the village, so the topics are like this, the climate of women and the unity of the village.»

«Unification and unity of the population through the creation of jobs, water shortage - it means we need to adapt to new conditions and grow what requires little water. Here we discuss unity, ensuring employment for women and climate change, environmental issues, waste-free production, growing new plants that can grow in a new climate.»

Assumption 5:

The Design Thinking method will encourage people to initiate solutions and participate in their implementation. What helps people to implement solutions is that they themselves be the ones to generate the ideas for them.

Result:

The group work, joint immersion in the problem, and empathy exercises had a notable impact on the training participants. During the Design Thinking workshops, the participants united and jointly initiated solutions, showed a desire to participate in the implementation, and to make their own contributions. People realized the relevance of the problems being discussed and their impact on the community and quality of life, which ultimately led people expressing the desire to offer solutions and make a contribution. Many participants emphasized that one of the main insights of the training was that they could achieve more by uniting and jointly contributing to solving community problems.

Assumption confirmed

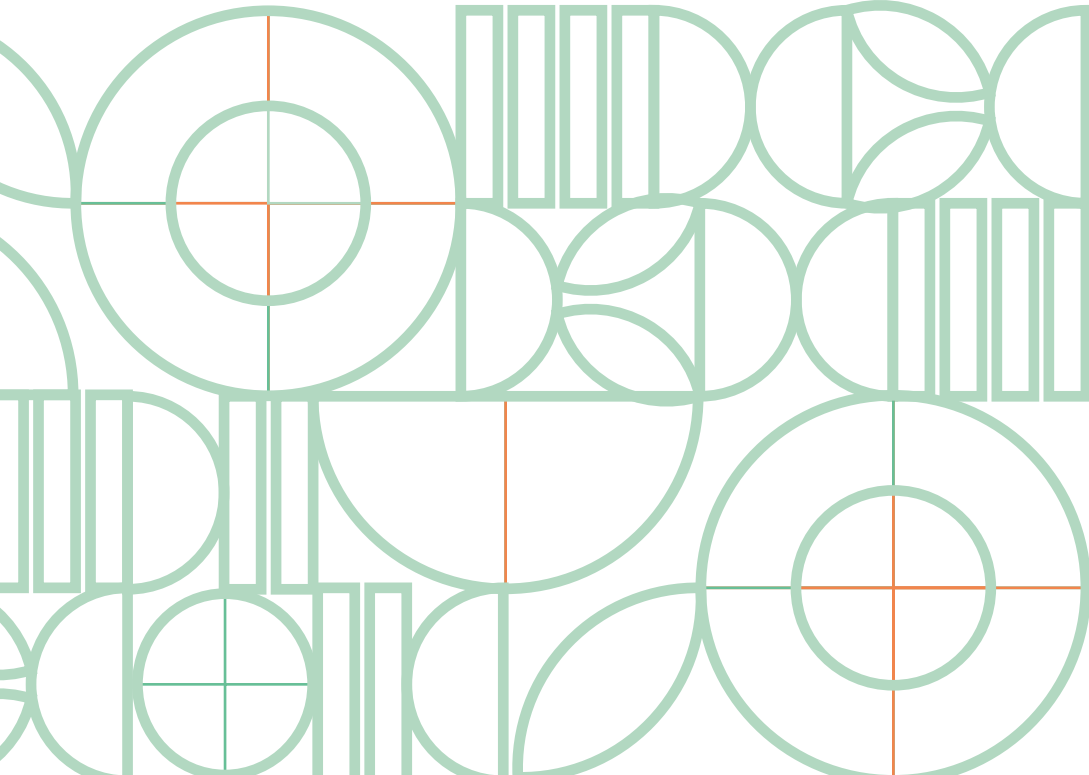
«This is a very important training that teaches how to solve problems, teaches how to look for solutions, and helps generate options for overcoming obstacles. After such training, we must, and we are ready to contribute to solving the problems of our communities.»

«Our women are ready to contribute to the organization and creation of water storage tanks. Now after the training, everyone is fired up, everyone has the motivation to work together. Now there are more women deputies than before. Previously, there were no women deputies at all, since women deputies appeared, we have fewer conflicts and showdowns at deputy sessions. We are slowly and peacefully moving forward.»

«Even before this, I was not indifferent to the problems of our population. After the training, I wanted to help people even more and contribute to solving problems. I want to emphasize once again the influence of all these methods on us, these are completely different methods.»

«Yes, I noticed it at the training, I didn't notice it at Speed Dating, but at the Design Thinking training I noticed that already during the training the participants started to change, they started to talk and discuss, convey their thoughts to each other, patriotic feelings, involvement in the problem woke up, they already see that problems can be solved.»

«I am ready to make a contribution, now that my children are grown, I have time, I have devoted time to charity before. I wanted to make a contribution before the training.»



«Everything is based on finances only in words, but we realized that we can solve many of our problems ourselves.»

«I was thinking about a project and I was invited, my friend sent me to write a project for women. I just woke up, and before that I was sleeping with my idea, and now I woke up and want to realize my dream.»

«Yes, I am ready to contribute, I was very much influenced by the project's activities, I feel that we are moving forward.»

«I noticed that this was the case with those daughters-in-law who are diligent themselves, with activist daughters-in-law, and those who are passive, they also remained and did not have the idea of making their contribution, but the leaders of the daughters-in-law were inspired and they had new ideas.»

«I noticed that those who work in state enterprises are more willing to help society and make their contribution, and housewives think only about themselves, they do not have such thoughts.»



LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Assumption 1: By involving different parties in Design Thinking – women, men, young people, groups of people with different interests – to discuss local issues and find new solutions, the method will create conditions for everyone's voice to be heard, especially that of women and other less-vocal groups.

Lessons Learned	Recommendations
<p>If groups contain participants with religious and secular views, it is more difficult for such groups to come to a common vision of solving problems, especially if the issues are related to gender.</p> <p>For example, part of the group suggests the idea of training women leaders to participate in the political life of the village, while some participants, due to religious beliefs, believe that women should stay at home. It is difficult for such groups to come to a common solution.</p>	<p>It is necessary to prepare trainers/facilitators for high-quality facilitation of a group in the event of ideological differences.</p>

Assumption 2: With the help of Design Thinking, it is possible to choose priority problems of concern to the majority of participants, not just in the interest of one or two relatively powerful stakeholders or individuals.

Lessons Learned	Recommendations
<p>If, during the exercise, when a user portrait is created and this user is linked to a specific person, then the participants begin to solve the problem not of a group of people, but of this specific person. In this case, the problems of the majority fade into the background and priority is given to solving the personal problems of one person.</p>	<p>Do not tie the user to a specific person, stick to the methodology and represent the user as a collective image of a certain group of people.</p>

Assumption 3: The Design Thinking model will facilitate development of innovative solutions and non-traditional approaches to considering the identified problems.

Lessons Learned	Recommendations
If people over 65 years of age participate in the training, then the process of generating innovative ideas is more difficult and slower.	Involve young people, as young people are more mobile, technologically savvy and are a resource for generating innovative ideas than older and retired people.
In the process of developing projects, if the participants do not understand the main causes of the problem, and cannot see the consequences of the problem, then it is difficult for them to formulate a specific problem and goal, much less develop innovative ideas.	The cause-and-effect relationship needs to be linked to the «Why?» exercise and analyzed more thoroughly. Give participants more time to complete this exercise.
When participants find it difficult to develop ideas, if a facilitator comes in and starts facilitating the process, the process of idea generation starts.	Facilitate the idea generation process efficiently.
If the teams are diverse, with a large number of young people and teachers, interesting and creative ideas appear. But if, on the contrary, the groups are made up of representatives of only one group – for example, pensioners – then innovative ideas do not appear.	Try to form diverse groups, with members with different life experiences and views to help generate innovative ideas.
If the group understands the problem well and focuses correctly on the root cause, then creative ideas emerge.	Monitor participants' understanding and retention of the material at each stage of Design Thinking. Pay attention and respond to signals when participants have missed or did not understand any of the exercises being performed.

Assumption 4: The practice of Design Thinking will help maintain the tripartite frame of gender - climate - peacebuilding inherent in the project.

Lessons Learned	Recommendations
If trainers do not see or understand the tripartite frame, then the gender-climate-peacebuilding frame cannot be maintained.	Trainers themselves need to see the two-way and three-way frame and hold and maintain it throughout the training.
If the trainers show the cause and effect relationship between the three issues, then the participants will have an idea of how these three aspects are related to each other.	Include a session on cause and effect relationships so that participants can experience the relationship between three or two aspects: Gender – Climate – Peacebuilding.

Assumption 5: The Design Thinking method will encourage people to initiate solutions and participate in their implementation. What helps people to implement solutions is that they themselves be the ones to generate the ideas for them.

Lessons Learned	Recommendations
If decision makers do not understand their role and importance in the process of developing ideas, they skip training sessions.	Explain to decision makers the importance of their participation in this type of training.
If projects are being developed that involve climate adaptation, water, or pastures, it is difficult to assess the feasibility of the ideas without the help of a specialist, such as engineers.	Have an engineer on your team who can advise you on whether a given idea is technically possible or impossible. This applies to projects that involve water or climate adaptation.

REFLECTIONS ON DESIGN THINKING WORKSHOPS: CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

It was not possible to reach and attract entrepreneurs, representatives of public organizations (NGOs) and young people to the Design Thinking training. While challenges in reaching youth has been described previously, it was similarly challenging to attract business and NGO representatives to sessions conducted in rural areas, as they are generally based in urban areas;

In some locations, Design Thinking sessions were attended primarily by the elderly, and it was a challenge for these participants to come up with solutions and develop a project concept;

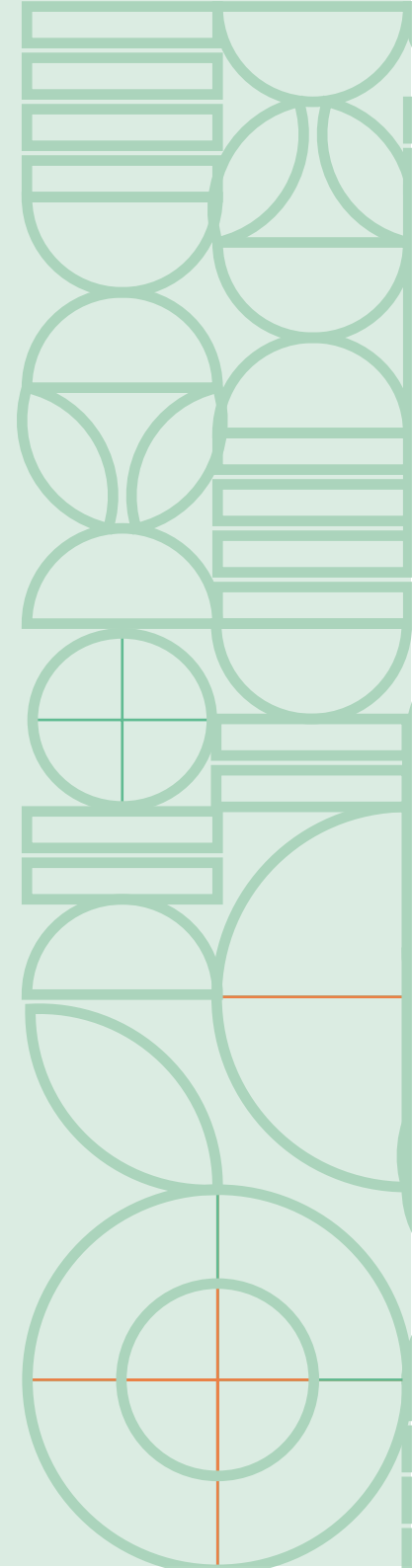
For projects oriented toward responding to climate change, there was a lack of water resources specialists, engineers, and similar experts in the groups. As such, when discussing solutions and ideas, there was not enough expertise to fully understand and develop viable solutions;

Many decision makers did not come to the training due to their busy schedules, complicating the process of uniting the population and local authorities in solving pressing community problems.



SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

APPENDIX 1



APPENDIX

1

PARTICIPANT GROUPS INVITED TO SPEED DATING SESSIONS:

COMMUNITY STRUCTURES:

Decision-makers: This group includes individuals who have the authority to make decisions that impact policies, programs, or actions within a community or organization. They included elected officials, government administrators, or leaders of influential organizations;

Women's council members: Representatives of councils or committees focused on addressing issues relevant to women within the community. They advocate for women's rights, welfare, and empowerment;

Members of village health committees (VHCs): Individuals who are part of local committees tasked with improving health outcomes and healthcare delivery in rural or village settings. They often collaborate with health workers and authorities to address community health needs.

CITIZEN GROUPS:

Pensioners: Refers to retired individuals who receive a pension. They often form a demographic with specific needs and concerns related to retirement benefits, healthcare, and social services;

Farmers: Individuals involved in agricultural activities, cultivating crops, raising livestock, or engaging in other forms of agricultural production. They play a crucial role in food production and rural economies;

Entrepreneurs: People who start and operate businesses, taking on financial risks in the hope of making profits. They contribute to economic growth, job creation, and innovation within their communities;

Teachers: Educators who provide formal instruction and guidance to students in schools, colleges, or other educational settings. They play a critical role in shaping the future by imparting knowledge and skills to the younger generation;

Women activists: A broad category including women who actively work towards community development, who have specific business ideas, who want to develop themselves and their skills, or who look to increase their income-earning power;

Youth: Young individuals typically aged between adolescence and early adulthood (18-29 years old). They represent the future of the community and often have unique perspectives on social, economic, and political issues affecting their generation.