

External Evaluation of the Project: "Helpdesk for Central Asia: Developing Central Asia Civil Society Capacity to Influence MDBs Decisions"

Project Duration: 01 May 2023 – 30 April 2026

Implementing Organization: CEE Bankwatch Network

Project Region: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan

Donor: Bread for the World (Brot für die Welt)

List of abbreviations:

MDB - Multi-Development Bank

IFI - International Financial Institution

EBRD – European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

EIB – European Investment Bank

ADB – Asian Development Bank

OECD – Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

DAC – Development Assistance Committee of the OECD

FFM – Fact Finding Mission

CSO – Civil Society Organization

ToC – Theory of Change

1. Background and Context

CEE Bankwatch Network is a leading watchdog organisation focusing on monitoring IFIs to promote social, environmental, and human rights accountability. Since 2000, Bankwatch has supported civil society across the Caucasus and Central Asia, assisting partners in influencing IFI-financed projects through advocacy, policy engagement, and the use of redress mechanisms.

The project **Bankwatch Helpdesk for Central Asia - Developing Central Asian civil society's capacity to influence MDB's decisions** aims to strengthen the ability of civil society in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to monitor and influence the investments of IFIs, especially those of the EBRD, ADB, EIB, and World Bank. Bankwatch and its partners engage in policy reviews, fact-finding missions, advocacy campaigns, and the use of complaint mechanisms to safeguard communities' rights and the environment.

The project objective is:

Strengthened civil society actors exert political influence in the design/implementation of infrastructure projects and basic procurement guidelines

and its indicators are:

1.1. Fifty activists (60% women) comment on controversial projects and decisions with international credit participation in at least 120 statements (100 letters and 20 documents).

1.2. Fifty activists (60% women) actively participate in at least 3 policy reviews of international financial institutions.

1.3. International financial institutions adjust five projects in light of concerns raised by affected communities and civil society.

Target groups:

- Activists of civil society organisations in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan
- Active community members in the areas impacted by MDBs' projects in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

2. Purpose of the Evaluation

This external evaluation aims to assess the project's achievements, effectiveness, and long-term potential using the OECD/DAC criteria. It will inform final donor reporting, guide internal reflection and learning, and support the design of follow-up initiatives.

The evaluation report will be written by the evaluator(s) to provide project-specific assessments and answer the overarching evaluation questions. The evaluator(s) will be contracted by the project directly for the working days relevant to the task.

The evaluation should provide insights into the impact of the project concept, the achieved impacts, and areas for improvement to further strengthen project strategies and propose suggestions for a new or adjusted concept in the future.

This assessment should capture and analyse:

- a. Hindering and helpful factors concerning the project impact, unintended positive and/or negative impacts, and external factors that have an impact on the project.**
- b. Good practices and lessons learned.**
- c. The appropriateness of the project strategies and the implementation design and recommendations for the rest of the project and any follow-up projects.**

3. Evaluation Criteria and Key Questions (OECD/DAC)

The evaluation is expected to answer the following key questions, which have been adapted from the project evaluation criteria of the OECD/DAC.

Key questions according to the OECD/DAC criteria

Relevance

- **To what extent is the project adequately designed to achieve the defined project objectives?**
- 1. Are the project objectives still valid in the current Central Asia context and aligned with the local Civil Society needs?**
 - **Which objectives do the partners and other stakeholders see as reasonable and promising for the next project phase?**
 - **How do they relate to the work of the project so far?**

Coherence

- How does the project complement other national or international civil society or development efforts?
- Were there synergies or duplications with existing IFI monitoring or advocacy initiatives?

Effectiveness

- Which political processes and to what extent were influenced by the project activities to influence the MDBs and other decision-makers effectively?
- What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives?
- How effective were means of communication used and what kind of visibility did the project activities reach?
- Did a multiplier effect occur and if so, how did it occur and how was it strengthened?

Efficiency

- Were project objectives achieved on time?
2. Were resources used in a cost-effective manner?
 3. Could implementation have been simplified or improved?

Impact

- To what extent is it likely that the results of the project in terms of the project objectives (outcome level) contributed or will contribute to the achievement of the development objectives (impact level)?

Sustainability

- What has the project done to ensure that the results enabled institutional or policy changes in the medium to long term?

4. Overarching Questions

In addition to the criteria presented in section 3, the evaluation should assess the following overarching questions:

- Did Bankwatch and its established mechanisms and tools (helpdesk, training, FFMs,) meet the needs of CSOs and community activists?
- How did the project contribute to gender-sensitive activism and participation?
- Were the local CSO partners recognised by MDBs as a credible source of information?
- Did the project foster South-South and international networking?
- How did local activists perceive Bankwatch's support and collaboration?

5. Methodology

Methods and Standards

The consultant is required to observe the principles and standards of the OECD/DAC for a participatory, credible, gender-sensitive, and fair evaluation. Both quantitative and qualitative methods shall be used. We also ask for an evaluation design that allows for the use of digital methods.

Data collection needs to promote self-reflection amongst the target groups. The chosen methods shall be inclusive and respect the social and cultural context of the target groups. In the development of the evaluation design and the choice of methods, correct research ethics need to be applied.

Internationally accepted standards require documentation of the evaluator's methodical approach as a fundamental component of each evaluation report. The evaluation should be conflict-sensitive and be guided by the 'do-no-harm' principle.

Potential interviewee groups could include:

- Decision-makers (European development banks' Board of Directors and bank staff)
- Civil society representatives from Central Asia (including the data collection on the ground in one of the countries)
- Journalists
- Representatives of local communities
- Bankwatch staff

The evaluation report results and outcomes will be presented to Brot für die Welt and reflected in Bankwatch's democratisation and human rights team strategic planning 2027-2032. Its results will also be incorporated into a new project proposal.

6. Deliverables and Timeline

15.09.2025	Call for expression of interest
01.10.2025	Circulation of responses to questions raised by interested parties
15.10.2025	Submission of offers
20.10.2025 -31.10.2025	Virtual contract clarification meetings and contract signature
30.11.2025	Draft Inception report
10.12.2025	Final Inception report
December -January	Data collection and analysis
26.01.2026 -6.02.2026	Draft final evaluation report – questions and clarifications
9.02.2026-13.02.2026	Virtual Presentation of evaluation results with partner organisations and Brot für die Welt
27.02.2025	Final evaluation report

7. Inception Report Requirements

After the contract clarification meeting and the provision of the core documents in digital form, the evaluators should prepare an inception report, which describes how the required results are to be achieved and which data will be collected with which methods. The Inception Report must contain an evaluation matrix, a detailed activity and time schedule and a preliminary table of contents for the final report.

8. Final Report Requirements

The evaluation report (in English) should not exceed 50 pages (without an appendix). It is expected that the report presents the results of the analysis of the project as well as the overarching discussion. It must have findings and formulate recommendations that are as precise, feasible, and specifically-addressed as possible. The description of the methodology and procedure as well as an understandable executive summary are an integral part of the evaluation report. Annexes: interview list, survey results, ToC/logframe alignment, etc.

9. Roles and Responsibilities

Bankwatch is a direct counterpart for the evaluator. It will conclude a contract with a certain number of working days with the evaluator, as well as a response and implementation plan. The Terms of reference will be consulted with the Project Officer from Brot für die Welt.

10. Evaluator Qualifications

The evaluator(s) should fulfil the following requirements:

- thematic skills and experience in human rights, networking, and advocacy
- very good knowledge of qualitative and quantitative data collection and information and communication technology (ICT) applications
- sound evaluation experience
- experience working with civil society organisations,
- proven experience in participatory and gender-sensitive evaluations;
- familiarity with Central Asia's political and civic environment;
- working proficiency in English and Russian (Central Asian languages a plus);
- Experience in security-sensitive or high-risk civil society environments.

The evaluation can be done by a single evaluator or a team of evaluators, company or freelanced. There is no preference about the nationality or location of the evaluator/evaluators.

11. Application Process

a) Expression of interest

We kindly ask all interested evaluators / evaluation teams to send any expression of interests and clarification questions to the e-mail address below by 15.10.2025

Please send as part of the expression of interest:

- A short profile description that gives us information about your competencies, previous work experience of the project evaluations, and suitability for the implementation of the assignment, including meaningful CVs of all participating evaluators. For data protection reasons, we ask you to send the CVs as a separate file.
- Any questions you may have about the Terms of Reference should be sent by 01.10.2025.

By 02.10.2025, feedback on all questions will be sent to those who have expressed their interest.

b) Submission of offers

Offers must reach Bankwatch Network by 15.10.2025 at the latest. A complete offer consists of:

- A content-related offer, which conclusively sets out the methods to be used to achieve the objectives of the evaluation and specifies the timetable.
- A financial offer, in each case, stating the fees of the respective evaluators for each project and for the overarching analysis, the estimated number of working days or hours, the expected travel costs or costs for virtual implementation. All costs, including VAT, must be listed in the financial offer. Lump sums for general administrative/administrative costs cannot be paid.

Offers should be sent to

Artur Grigoryan, on email address artur.grigoryan@bankwatch.org