Impact Assessment of Local Social Development Contracts (CLDS)

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Executive Summary

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Glossary

CLAS	Social Action Local Council
CLDS	Local Social Development Contracts
ISS	Social Security Institute, I.P.
IEFP	Institute for Employment and Professional Training
POEFDS	Operational Programme for Employment, Training and Social Development
POISE	Operational Programme Social Inclusion and Employment
POPH	Operational Programme for Human Capital Improvement
POR	Regional Operational Programme
PT2020	Portugal 2020 (2014-2020)
QA	Question of Evaluation
QREN	National Strategic Reference Framework 2017-2013
RSI	Social Insertion Income

1. Objectives and scope of the Evaluation

This assessment falls within the scope of the Global Assessment Plan for Portugal 2020, for the POISE, the POR Lisbon and the POR Algarve. It is the first specific evaluation of the CLDS programme and its goals were:

a) Identifying the effectiveness, efficiency and the impacts of the Programme, in relation to the proposed objectives and considering the European added value;

b) Explaining how the interventions supported by the QREN produced the observed effects, in what circumstances and in what contexts did they do so, and which were the critical factors of success (and failure);

c) Establishing evidences on the rationale behind the QREN CLDS Programme;

d) Assessing the sustainability of the interventions under the CLDS Programme, the adequacy of the organization that supported it, and identifying the changes needed to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

This is an impact evaluation of CLDS and CLDS+ supported by the intervention typologies 6.13 of the POPH, 8.6.13 of the POR Algarve and 9.6.13 of the POR Lisbon, and an evaluation focused on the programming and implementation of CLDS 3G supported by the 3.10 of the POISE, the POR Lisbon and the POR Algarve.

Overall, the evaluation is guided by the criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability and European added value by answering a set of evaluation questions.
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2. Framework and context of the object of the evaluation

The Local Contracts for Social Development (CLDS) are part of the national strategy for social inclusion of all citizens, which adopts a multisector and integrated perspective, in developing actions to be implemented in partnership, in order to combat persistent poverty and social exclusion in depressed territories". (article 2 of *Portaria* no. 396/2007).

Despite not having a formal ex-ante diagnostic, the CLDS Programme follows a tradition of several decades in Portugal of combating social exclusion from a territorial approach, giving continuity to the orientation of social inclusion policies for action in partnership and at the local level. Therefore, on one hand, the CLDS follows the footsteps of **the territorially based strategies for combating poverty** which were strongly articulated with the Social Network, as an instrument to support the operationalization of the Social Development Plans and respective Annual Action Plans. On the other hand, the Programme addresses the need to correct the planning weaknesses of previous territorial interventions, concentrating resources on priority intervention axes and on territories with target populations that are identified as more vulnerable, thus defining that the **intervention of CLDS is restricted to previously selected territories**.

Those responsible for the CLDS Programme (and then for CLDS+ and CLDS 3G) considered that the application model had favoured the risk of electing more qualified territories with the presence of institutions with greater initiative, to the detriment of poorer territories, where the competences to elaborate winning candidatures tend to be scarce. The application model was thus based on the principle that **targeted selection allowed for the reaching of territories with the greatest needs**, and that **intervention on this scale would ensure greater justice in the distribution of resources and greater focus on combating poverty, which could change the starting situation**. The rationale behind the programme also took on the importance of **working in partnership** and **the role of local councils**. The CLDS programme did not select applications from promoting entities in the frame of an open procedure. Instead, it decided to issue invitations to Municipal Councils, selected according to a classification typology of territories according to the type of disadvantage. The Municipal Councils, in turn, designate a coordinating entity for the project, which was responsible for managing it and ensuring its implementation. From 2015 onwards, the designation of the coordinating entity became a responsibility

of the CLAS. This was intended to break with the "geography of the capacities" of the promoters, to ensure action in the most disadvantaged territories, according to the perception of the Municipalities and Social Networks over which they preside. The new programme thus adopted a strategy that combines *top-down* induction of change with the selection of territories and the optimization of community resources, with the strengthening of *bottom-up* dynamics of socio-territorial development, with the encouragement of the participation of local entities, the establishment of partnerships responsible for producing diagnosis, designing action plans, and implementing them. The CLDS, in all generations, have as their core elements the coordinating entities, the executive committees of the Local Social Action Councils and the executing entities.

According to the methodological rationale of the territorial intervention, the projects put in place a multidimensional, integrated approach, with the intervention being based on a diagnosis as comprehensive as possible of the socio-economic situation in the territory under intervention. The diagnosis is used in the preparation of the CLDS Action Plan by the social networks. The CLDS action plan should be coherent with the CLAS's Social Development Plan.

Regardless of the diagnosis and the CLAS's Social Development Plan, each CLDS obey a set of predetermined axes:

- **Axis 1 is aimed at employment, training and qualification**, focused on the causal link between poverty and employment and aims to improve employment. Firstly, employment can be a protective factor against the risk of poverty, and unemployment is one of the most effective factors of poverty and social exclusion. Secondly, the economically active population' qualification, which becomes another essential tool in the fight against poverty, since in the case of people, families and groups in poverty almost always requires the special training tool for disadvantaged groups. Thirdly, there is a mismatch between the supply of labour and the demand attributes, which justifies the implementation of mediation tools close to the people. Fourthly, when the poor populations in the labour market fall in a situation of unemployment, they tend to evolve into long-term unemployment to a much greater extent than the rest of the population. Therefore, the strengthening of employability measures gains strategic value. Fifthly, disadvantaged territories, while on the one hand often produce stigma that become barriers to access to employment, on the other hand they tend to be spaces where there are many population needs that are not answered by the market which creates opportunities for the development of micro level business initiatives and social economy initiatives, which implies articulated actions of entrepreneurship promotion.
- **Axis 2 aims family and parental intervention,** seeking to promote change in families' structure and organisation through the creation of Resource Centres for Community and Family Support (CLDS) and then (CLDS+ and CLDS3G), the provision of training/information on citizenship, skills development and counselling about managing crisis situations, or activities with young people and children (in the area of health, sports and others).
- **Axis 3 is aimed at empowering communities and local institutions**, seeking to make lasting changes in the way organizations and services work. If a social development project is to endure socio-territorial change in a sustainable way, it must inevitably change the way institutions work in the intervention territory, improving participatory processes and promoting self-organization so that they can offer to families and people the opportunities, supports and capacities that enable them to escape poverty.
- **Axis 4 aimed at Information and accessibility** to ICT (this axis existed only in the first generation of CLDS). The focus was on providing basic training on information and communication technologies for everyone (children, young people, people of working age and the elderly). In order to live and work with dignity in today's world it is necessary to master ICTs, which are also an essential tool for learning other subjects, acquiring new habits and attitudes, improving one's perception of oneself and living integrated in a society in which communication has changed the nature of integration and social participation processes.
- The programme also included an Axis of Assistance and emergency intervention to the populations living in territories affected by natural disasters (CLDS 3G).

Each axis of intervention comprises a set of mandatory actions, but there is formal openness to develop other actions, as long as they are foreseen in the CLAS's social development plan.

Thus, we have an intervention that concentrates resources on previously defined axes/actions in territories identified as most vulnerable, which seeks to guarantee the involvement of institutions and qualified teams so that they can ensure the effectiveness of multi-sectoral, integrated and complementary interventions on the ground, capable of developing appropriate responses to the problems and needs of the territories and capable of achieving greater social cohesion of depressed territories.

3. Methodology

The Theory of Change was chosen as the *pivotal* Theory Based Evaluation approach within the framework of this evaluation, combined also with *inputs* from Realistic Evaluation and Quantitative Comparative Analysis. A multi-method perspective was used, calling for different sources of information and various methods of data collection and analysis, allowing quantitative and qualitative approaches and the articulations between secondary and primary sources. For this study, the evaluation team carried out a series of exploratory interviews and a workshop with CLDS experts and representatives. Eight case studies were made in CLDS of the three generations. The methodology also included the application of questionnaire surveys to the coordinating, Implementing and beneficiary entities of CLDS, CLAS Executive committees and IEFP District Centres. Through the triangulation of the information obtained with this set of tools, complemented by documentary analysis and expert analysis, an in-depth view of the implementation of the Programme was made possible, answering the various evaluation questions.

It should be noted that throughout the study the evaluation team faced serious limitations in getting the pertinent information. Indeed, there is not an information system of the CLDS Programme. Neither are there longitudinal statistical indicators for poverty at municipal level, which strongly limits the assessment of impacts. However, we believe that the information that has been collected fully supports the conclusions of the study.

The Theory of Change scheme is presented below, as well as the hypotheses associated with the Model of Effects.
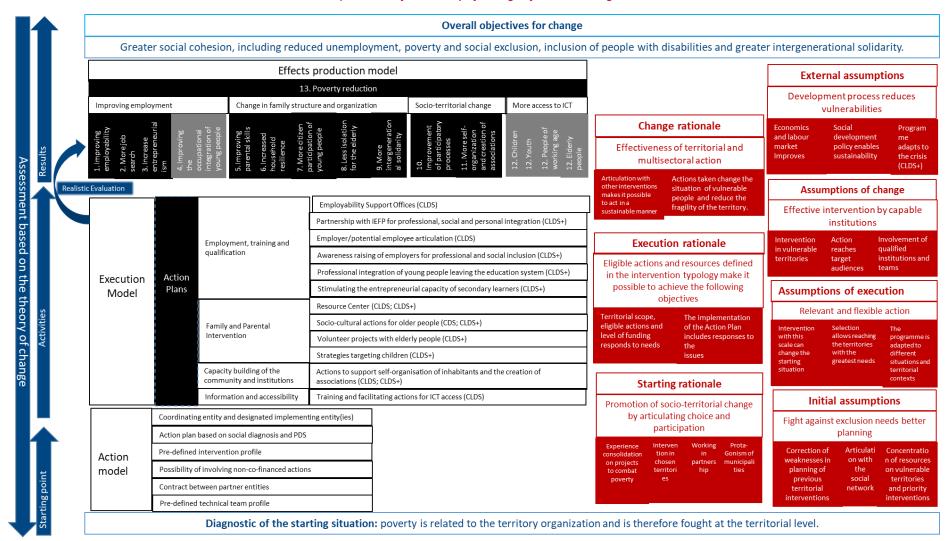
Impact Assessment of Local Social Development Contracts (CLDS)

Illustration 1 - Explanation of the theory of change of the CLDS Programme

Overall objectives for change

Greater social cohesion, including reduced unemployment, poverty and social exclusion, inclusion of people with disabilities and greater intergenerational solidarity.

Effects production model

13. Poverty reduction

Improving employment	Change in family structure and organization	Socio-territorial change	More access to ICT
1. Improving employability / 2. More job search / 3. Increase entrepreneurialism / 4. Improving the occupational integration of young people	5. Improving parental skills / 6. Increased household resilience / 7. More citizen participation of young people / 8. Less isolation for the elderly / 9. More intergenerational solidarity	10. Improvement of participatory processes / 11. More self-organization and creation of associations	12. Children / 12. Youth / 12. People of working age / 12. Elderly people

Realistic Evaluation

Execution Model

Action Plans

Employment, training and qualification	Employability Support Offices (CLDS)
	Partnership with IEFP for professional, social and personal integration (CLDS+)
	Employer/potential employee articulation (CLDS)
	Awareness raising of employers for professional and social inclusion (CLDS+)
	Professional integration of young people leaving the education system (CLDS+)
	Stimulating the entrepreneurial capacity of secondary learners (CLDS+)
Family and Parental Intervention	Resource Center (CLDS; CLDS+)
	Socio-cultural actions for older people (CDS; CLDS+)
	Volunteer projects with elderly people (CLDS+)
	Strategies targeting children (CLDS+)
Capacity building of the community and institutions	Actions to support self-organisation of inhabitants and the creation of associations (CLDS; CLDS+)
Information and accessibility	Training and facilitating actions for ICT access (CLDS)

Action model

- Coordinating entity and designated implementing entity(ies)
- Action plan based on social diagnosis and PDS
- Pre-defined intervention profile
- Possibility of involving non-co-financed actions
- Contract between partner entities
- Pre-defined technical team profile

Change rationale

Effectiveness of territorial and multisectoral action

| Articulation with other interventions makes it possible to act in a sustainable manner | Actions taken change the situation of vulnerable people and reduce the fragility of the territory. |

Execution rationale

Eligible actions and resources defined in the intervention typology make it possible to achieve the following objectives

| Territorial scope, eligible actions and level of funding responds to needs | The implementation of the Action Plan includes responses to the issues |

Starting rationale

Promotion of socio-territorial change by articulating choice and participation

| Experience consolidation projects to combat poverty | Intervention in chosen territories | Working in partnership | Prota-Gonism of municipalities |

External assumptions

Development process reduces vulnerabilities

| Economics and labour market Improves | Social development policy enables sustainability | Programme adapts to the crisis (CLDS+) |

Assumptions of change

Effective intervention by capable institutions

| Intervention in vulnerable territories | Action reaches target audiences | Involvement of qualified institutions and teams |

Assumptions of execution

Relevant and flexible action

| Intervention with this scale can change the starting situation | Selection allows reaching the territories with the greatest needs | The programme is adapted to different situations and territorial contexts |

Initial assumptions

Fight against exclusion needs better planning

| Correction of weaknesses in planning of previous territorial interventions | Articulation with the social network | Concentration of resources on vulnerable territories and priority interventions |

Diagnostic of the starting situation: poverty is related to the territory organization and is therefore fought at the territorial level.

Left side labels: Assessment based on the theory of change / Results / Activities / Starting point

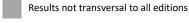Notes: ■ Results across all editions   ■ Results not transversal to all editions

Table 1 - Hypotheses associated with the production of a Model of Effects

AXIS 1 Improving employment
Improving employability
1.1 The referral of beneficiaries to active measures influences beneficiaries to agree to participate in such measures, increasing their frequency.
1.2 Forwarding and participation in active measures influences (2) the feeling of being supported and/or (3) the development of work ethic and/or (4) the acquisition of professional qualifications, increasing orientation towards the labour market.
Improving the job searching
2.1 Increasing the divulgation of information about job vacancies, influences (1) the acknowledgement of suitable and available job vacancies and/or (2 the feeling of support thus increasing the number of people seeking work.
2.2 Improving the support in job searching, influences (2) the feeling of support and/or (3) the acknowledgment of own skills and abilities and/or (4) The interest in job seeking, helping as well the integration of the beneficiaries into employment.
2.3 Sensitize the employers, makes them aware of unemployed and employed worker's needs, influences their attitude. This helps increasing job offers available for beneficiaries of CLDS.
2.4 The mediation between employers and job seekers affects (2) the feeling of being supported and/or (5) the attitude of the employer towards the beneficiary, so that the supported beneficiaries improve their integration into employment.
Increased entrepreneurship
3.1 Entrepreneurship training affects (1) the awareness of business ideas reliability and/or (2) the acquisition of knowledge, necessary to make these ideas viable, so that the beneficiaries are better prepared to develop economically reliable initiatives.
3.2 (a) Entrepreneurship training and/or (b) investment support and/or (c) support for market access and trading influences the development of initiatives whereby business ideas are transformed into economically viable initiatives.
Improving the employability of the youth
4.1 Career guidance influences the development of realistic professional projects, allowing greater success in the job demand.
4.2 Forwarding young people to active measures influences them to agree to participate in these measures, increasing their frequency
4.3 The forwarding and participation in active measures influence (2) the realism of professional projects and/or (3) the acquisition of professional qualifications, influencing (i) job search and and/or (ii) the development of economically viable business ideas.
4.4 Entrepreneurial capacity-building actions influences young people to create their own jobs through ideas transformed into economically viable initiatives.
AXIS 2. Change in family structure and organization
Improving parenting skills
5.1 Actions for the development of parenting skills influence families to have (1) greater parental awareness and/or (2) more involvement in child education, improving parental function.
5.2 The training of technicians to identify and forward children and youth risk situations influences their skills to deal with children and youth risk situations and pointing them out to services, increasing their protection.
Family resilience increased through capacity building and empowerment
6.1 Integrated and family-centred accompanying, influences (1) the acquisition of knowledge about services and/or (2) the empowerment of beneficiaries by increasing (i) access to services and (ii) family resilience
6.2 Training actions in intrafamily dialogue influence (1) the development of relational and communicational skills and/or (2) the empowerment of beneficiaries increasing the resilience of families.
6.3 Inter-institutional articulation allows case managers to have resources from various institutions ensuring articulation of responses to beneficiaries' needs.
More youth citizen participation

7.1 The training activities in schools influence (1) young people's knowledge of their rights and/or (2) the acquisition of interpersonal and social skills, contributing to greater participation of young people in associative life.

7.2 The dynamization of resources and spaces for the participation of young people influences the predisposition to exercise citizenship, contributing to a greater participation of young people in associative life.

Less isolation for the elderly

8.1. Playful, educational, cultural and volunteer social responses influence (1) the feeling of be supported and accompanied, and/or (2) the willingness to participate in sociocultural activities and/or (3) the sense of belonging to the community, increasing the social participation of the elderly.

More intergenerational solidarity

9.1 Capacity building actions for intergenerational work influences the motivation to strengthen contact between generations, acting to (i) strengthen associative solidarity and/or (ii) strengthen affective solidarity and/or (iii) strengthen functional solidarity between generations.

9.2 Voluntary promotion actions involve volunteers in the work of inter-generational contact, acting to (i) the reinforcement of associative solidarity and/or (ii) the reinforcement of affective solidarity and/or (iii) the reinforcement of functional solidarity between generations.

9.3 Inter-generational contact actions motivate people of different generations to strengthen reciprocal links by acting to (i) strengthen associative solidarity and/or (ii) strengthen affective solidarity and/or (iii) strengthen functional solidarity between generations.

AXIS 3 Socio-territorial change

Improvement of participatory processes

10.1 The training of technical staff and managers of the institutions for networking influences (1) the ability of technical and/or (2) the availability to develop networking work methodologies, so there is a greater technical preparation for partnership work.

10.2 The development of action plans in articulation with the Social Development Plan and other local interventions influences the willingness of technicians to work collaboratively within a framework of common objectives to ensure the mobilization of actors, increasing partnership work.

10.3 The creation of services centered on the needs of customers based on shared services and resources influences the capacity of technical teams/managers to combine resources from different organizations, increasing the synergistic use of existing resources.

More self-organization and creation of associations

11.1 The training in community animation of the institutions' technical teams and managers influences (1) the ability to map and use existing resources (internal and external) and/or (3) the orientation towards working in partnership, increasing the initiatives of community self-organization and its sustainability.

11.2 The existence of a partnership with (a) community animators, (b) flexible support and (c) bottom-up work dynamics influence (1) the reinforcement of common identity and the motivation for self-organization and/or (2) the motivation for the creation and dynamization of associative life, increasing (i) the community self-organization initiatives and its sustainability and (ii) the dynamism of local associations.

AXIS 4: MORE ACCESS TO ICT

12.1 ICT training actions influence (1) awareness of the benefits of using ICT and/or (2) the acquisition of digital skills, and/or the feeling of digital inclusion by increasing (i) digital skills, (ii) the use of ICT, (iii) the demand for ICT training and (iv) participation in the information society.

12.2 The training of trainers influences their competences to develop a tailor-made training modality, so that the beneficiaries have access to appropriate training.

4. Conclusions of the evaluation

The CLDS programme was created in 2007 and additional generations were launched in 2013 (under the name of CLDS +), 2015 (CLDS 3G) and 2018 (CLDS 4G). Since its inception, it was supposed to be a focussed intervention by the mobilization of resources in axes/actions defined *a priori*, in territories identified as more vulnerable, seeking to ensure the involvement of institutions and teams in each territory and leading and helping them to develop a multisectoral intervention, integrating and complementing other interventions in the field. This intervention must be capable of developing appropriate responses to the problems and needs of the territories and of achieving greater social cohesion in depressed territories by reducing unemployment, including people experiencing exclusion, including people with disabilities, increasing intergenerational solidarity and reducing poverty.

The CLDS programme is underpinned by a territorially based poverty reduction strategy. In this sense, it is intrinsically connected to the Social Network, functioning as an instrument to support the operationalization of the planning instruments of the municipal networks. In addition, the CLDS programme also aims to respond to the profound territorial asymmetries in terms of available resources, the dynamics of the local social networks and density and capacity of the local institutional fabric. The two approaches are difficult to concile: either a programme responds at national level to local initiatives, leading to a principle of dispersion of support; or it discriminates positively poor territories in order to promote territorial cohesion, which implies the principle of concentration of support on the most disadvantaged territories.

A third, more methodological element, must also be accounted for: one thing is the promotion of social and territorial cohesion in the abstract, that is hardly possible to measure with precise indicators (which may be the reason why there are no global targets associated with CLDS); another is the choice of territories based on the most accurate and objective poverty indicators. From the national point of view, it is not clear whether the programme has effectively promoted cohesion while contributing to poverty reduction.

The intervention logic of the CLDS programme is based on a combination of top-down induction of change, prior selection of territories, and a reinforcement of bottom-up dynamics of socio-territorial development, involving the encouragement of participation by local entities, the establishment of partnerships and also the profitability of community resources.

This combination is also reflected in the design of CLDS projects in each selected territory. The entities (coordinators and implementors, if distinct) responsible for the CLDS projects must use the instruments of the Social Network - in particular the Social Diagnostic and the Social Development Plan - to prepare their own action plans. Regardless of this, action plans must at the same time include a set of predetermined axes, each with a set of mandatory actions (axes to which the majority of projects ended up being tied). These axes, as well as the number of specifications of mandatory actions within each of the axes, has been undergoing changes over the three generations of the programme, in the sense of narrowing them.

The origins of the CLDS programme are based on the recognition that the territory is an essential dimension to fight against poverty, since it is not limited to "existing" in the territories, which are factors and not just containers of poverty. It follows from this assumption the need for concentration of resources, focusing interventions on the specific and existing problems in the territories and carrying out multidimensional and continuous interventions over time and based on broad partnerships and the participation of the population.

However, if this underlying diagnostic is correct, its implementation in the design of the programme ends up being faulty. The programme promotes projects of relatively short duration, which, due to their scale, can hardly produce profound changes. It also fails in the volume of resources allocated to interventions, especially when compared to the scale of the problems that the project intends to address. These two limitations are further aggravated by the increasing rigidity that the programme has assumed, resulting from the increase in the numbers of mandatory actions in the various axes and the increasing detail in the specification of the characteristics of these actions. This ends up being an obstacle because it effects the capacity to adapt to the problems that actually exist in each territory, since it forces projects to allocate resources, which are already scarce, to actions that may be less relevant in their specific territory, to the detriment of other actions that may be central. At the same time, there was the disappearance of the information and accessibility axis of intervention after the first generation of the programme, a decision which is difficult to

understand when information and communication technology skills continue to be deficient and strongly impoverishing the population. Furthermore the actions of this axis during the first generation of the programme obtained very positive results with a very relevant contribution to the other axis - in particular axis 1. ICT skills are not only indispensable tools for social and economic participation, but also powerful means for learning and acquiring other skills.

The general appreciation that is left expressed here not mean that the actions taken are useless and even less that, in general, do not have executed the proposed activities for the benefit of persons covered. On the contrary, analysis of the information collected indicates that, in most cases, the actions programmed by the projects have been met and their specific objectives achieved. That is, the Programme has been performing well in terms of results - in particular those that enable social networks and their action to be animated while local contracts last - but that does not mean that the impact on poverty and territorial cohesion is achieved. The problem is that such actions and objectives are generally largely insufficient given the scale of the problems of vulnerable territories.

One objective of the CLDS programme that, in general, was achieved, was its intention to be an instrument for strengthening the Social Network. Information gathered on the ground denotes that CLDS project teams have often worked as authentic CLAS technical teams, while assuming a leading, mediating and supplementing role in social intervention in these territories. In several of the cases visited, CLDS project teams were even responsible for implementing a significant portion of the CLAS Action Plans.

Strong synergies have also been identified with IEFP and RSI interventions. In the first case, there were gains in identifying and referring beneficiaries to active employment measures and in closely monitoring beneficiaries in active job search activities. However, it should be noted that there are considerable variations in this respect between territories as a result of the ability of the CLDS team to be able to present itself as a valid complement - not as a competitor - in the eyes of IEFP services. It should also be noted that the CLDS teams were able to assume a complementary role also in relation to the RSI teams, allowing closer monitoring of the beneficiaries, reinforcing the multisectoral nature of interventions with them - in particular, the link between the areas of family and employment.

However, the reverse of this dynamic of CLDS project teams is the relative passivity of the local partners. In most CLDS projects, coordination and execution have been taken over by a single entity, usually chosen for its experience in the management of interventions financed by Community funds and financial dimension of having to endure the long processing times of requests for refunds. The remaining local institutions are usually only involved to the extent that action needs to be implemented. While it is true that this form of split partnership will not have hindered the achievement of the objectives of the CLDS projects, it also casts strong doubt on the substantiation of the programme rationale of greater partner accountability.

It is also important to spell out some caveats when it comes to meeting CLDS projects' objectives. In fact, the reported success is nonetheless quite asymmetric, both as regards the type of objective and the intervention axes. On the one hand, projects tend to highlight the change in attitudes and dispositions of the recipients and less the change in their living conditions. On the other hand, family and parental intervention has a much more caring and moral bias - namely about what is considered "good" parental competence and a balanced family structure - than investment in ways out of poverty. On the other hand, the appreciation of the success of the project tends to be greater when it comes to the family and parental intervention axis than when referring to the employment axes and the formation or capacity of the community and institutions. These facts make it fearful that many CLDS projects have fallen into a more traditional family-centred approach to social assistance, sub alternating interventions directed at other structural factors of poverty, such as promoting labour market inclusion, strengthening local membership and "empowerment"of communities, the transformation of the intervention logic of local services.

With these caveats in mind, it was possible to identify some of the factors that influenced the results of CLDS projects. The factors that most influenced the results - positively in their presence and negatively in their absence - were the competence of the technical teams, the ability of the coordinating and executing entities, especially the skills and functioning of the technical team, the leadership and their ability to involve partners, technicians and populations. In contrast, the most compelling factors are the mandatory nature of the actions, the relationship between the problems and the scale of funding, and the critical relationship between the duration of projects and the time it takes to produce lasting change in an area of exclusion.

It is clear that the problems that the CLDS programme was intended to address would justify another regulatory framework, another logic of territory selection and resource concentration to give projects sufficient scale to reverse poverty. However, given the limited objectives of the CLDS, the volume of funding turned out to be inadequate. Looking at the CLDS projects from the point of view of the programme and considering the number of type of actions that have undertaken to take, it cannot be denied that they have achieved a set of results at the recipients, technical teams and partnership entities. These results are difficult to quantify but have an economic and social return, in a context where lack of funding would mean that most interventions would not be implemented.

However, some critical dimensions were identified, especially the rigidity of financing rules and failures in operational efficiency. In this context, the shortcomings in the support and orientation of projects by the ISS and PO ISE are highlighted, in particular as regards compliance with the administrative procedures required by the programme.

It should also be underlined that strong doubts remain about the sustainability of CLDS interventions. At the outset, there is no evidence that supported CDLS services and activities will continue to function after programme support has ended. This would not be problematic if, after the end of the project, activities continued to be provided by other local institutions and the CLDS technicians were absorbed by these institutions. However, this only seems to have happened in a minority of cases. In general, the assets of intervention and governance diluted at the end of the CLDS programme - and sometimes even in the transitions between generations of the programme. In addition, the high turnover of the technical team reinforces the weaknesses of the sustainability of the Programme actions.

Thus, and despite the notorious results declared by the system of actors regarding the permanence of technical skills for the promotion of social development in the territories, the increase of cooperation between institutions of the territory and the activity of associations and organizations created under the CLDS, it results in a high risk of rapid drop off, given the heavy reliance on funding for the existence of the intervention model.

It is also important to consider the contribution of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds) to the policy. In a way, this is a simple answer question: Given Portugal's current political and financial framework, the territorial policy of fighting poverty has been totally dependent on the ESI Funds. The intervention carried out by the CLDS projects has influenced, albeit in a limited way, the situation of the socially most disadvantaged groups and the local institutional fabric - a fabric that supports part of the country's social development policies. And such results must, for good reason, be attributed to the ESI Funds.

Finally, it should be noted that the evaluation team encountered throughout the study with many limitations on CLDS information systems, including no systematic information on CLDS executing entities, characterization of CLDS beneficiaries or results of CLDS projects (which would have been possible if the project implementation reports had been systematically addressed). To this is added the absence of longitudinal statistical indicators relating to county-level poverty.

5. Recommendations

RELEVANCE

Relevance of the intervention model in the territories

Recommendation #1	Review of the model of intervention in the territories
Rationale	The design of the CLDS is not the most appropriate, in theory, for the objectives of using territorial intervention to combat poverty and social exclusion. This trend was accentuated in CLDS+ and in CLDS 3G, as the closing of the programme was accentuated around a limited set of intervention areas and mandatory actions, which prevents the adaptation to the existing problems, in concrete, in each territory. In this sense, the general diagnosis is correct (poverty is fought, among other policies, through intervention in the territory, with the communities, in an integrated and multidimensional manner), but is only partially considered. In fact, the CLDS programme as it stands is too prescriptive in terms of the mandatory actions and their specifications, which calls into question its capacity to adjust to local realities.
Operationalization	• The CLDS should have a set of mandatory axes, as it is already the case, but leave room for the consideration of the priority of other areas of intervention which do not fit into the mandatory axes. • The axes should allow for an open approach, allowing imagination to be stimulated as to how they should be implemented in each territory.
Target agents	✓ Better articulation between entities with responsibilities in the definition of pertinent public policies (with emphasis on the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, the ISS and respective district services and the Institute of Employment and Professional Training, I.P.). ✓ Better coordination between relevant entities and *stakeholders* in various areas of intervention, namely housing, health, sports, education, culture and urban rehabilitation in CLDS territories ✓ More involvement of the entities responsible for the governance of the ESI Funds (in particular the Interministerial Coordination Commission, the Agency for Development and Cohesion and the Managing Authorities of the funding Operational Programmes). ✓ Local entities responsible for the implementation of CLDS 4G projects.

Territorial typology of intervention

Recommendation #2	Reinforce the selectivity of intervention territories based on existing benchmarks that allow us to identify cases where intervention is more priority at CLDS Programme objectives concern.
Rationale	From the perspective of the Evaluation Team, the relevance of this recommendation is related to the need to ensure a greater concentration of investment in territories that have priority characteristics for intervention. Although the 4G Territorial Identification Model has already been defined, based on their characteristics in terms of social fragility and on the values of a set of indicators, these do not seem sufficient for the necessary selectivity of the territories to be covered. The criteria of the territories to be covered by the CLDS should allow the selection of socially critical territories on which resources should be concentrated.
Operationalization	• Without prejudice to the relevance that can be recognized to other frameworks, and even considering that the identification of territories has already begun with the implementation of CLDS 4G, the Evaluation Team considers that it may be useful to use the Social Cohesion Reference (ISS, I.P. Product) that constitutes an update of the typology of situations of social exclusion in the continental territory. This use should be instrumental rather than directive in relation to political decision making in view of the greater selectivity of choices.

Recommendation #2	Reinforce the selectivity of intervention territories based on existing benchmarks that allow us to identify cases where intervention is more priority at CLDS Programme objectives concern.
Target agents	✓ Entities with responsibilities in the definition of pertinent public policy benchmarks (with emphasis on the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security and respective state secretariats, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, the ISS and the IEFP). ✓ Entities with responsibilities in the governance model of the ESI Funds (the Interministerial Coordination Commission, the Agency for Development and Cohesion and the Managing Authorities of the funding Operational Programmes).

Dimensions of the problem to be taken into account in the intervention model

Recommendation #3	Reinforce the inclusion of persons with disabilities in CLDS project activities
Rationale	The CLDS programme, in the three generations evaluated, has always aimed to foster a multisectoral intervention, integrated and complementary to other interventions on the ground, with a view to promoting greater social cohesion in depressed territories. One of the crucial elements for cohesion is the inclusion of people with disabilities. However, this dimension has always been subordinated in the design and practice of the surveyed and visited CLDS projects.
Operationalization	CLDS projects should explicitly include in their design a plan to ensure the participation of persons with disabilities in accessing their activities - including positive discrimination measures - and the number of persons with disabilities covered by the projects should be one of the monitoring criteria.
Target agents	✓ Entities with responsibilities in the definition of pertinent public policy benchmarks (with emphasis on the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security and respective state secretariats, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, the ISS and the IEFP). ✓ Entities with responsibilities in the governance model of the ESI Funds (in particular the Interministerial Coordination Commission, the Agency for Development and Cohesion and the Managing Authorities of the funding Operational Programmes). ✓ Local entities responsible for the implementation of CLDS 4G projects.

COHERENCE

Governance model

Recommendation #4	Greater involvement and concertation of ministries for CLDS performance and greater involvement of municipalities and local/regional entities in the implementation of CLDS, in order to ensure the transfer of competences to the Local Administration of the policy areas inherent to the CLDS Programme
Rationale	The predominant form that CLDS partnerships have taken can be classified as a partial partnership, with institutions focused exclusively on specific areas, while the management of CLDS as a whole is the responsibility of a single entity. Thence the predominance as coordinating entities of institutions such as Local Development Associations, Charities (like Misericordias, Diocesan Caritas and Parish Centres). This form of partnership managed to ensure compliance with the objectives of the CLDS projects, however, casts doubt on the concretion of the rationale of the Programme which assumes a broad accountability of the partners. The evaluation team considers that greater involvement of inter-ministerial, local, regional and multisectoral stakeholders is needed in the logic of Programme interventions in the territories and in the mobilization of target populations. In addition, in terms of the transfer of competences in the areas of intervention of the CLDS, it justifies for a greater *top-down* action to concentrate resources in order to overcome territorial problems.
Operationalization	• The managing/coordinating entity could move to municipal responsibility, which has the financial capacity to secure funding in case of delayed repayments, and also to sustain the new services once financing by European Funds come to an end. • Equally important is to ensure greater involvement and concertation of ministries in CLDS activities, i.e., guidelines on CLDS should be given at the central level so that local coordination and activities can be more effective and efficient. This would allow overcoming potential difficulties in articulation with intermediate State bodies that are an integral part of the CLDS stakeholder system. • Considering the policy of transferring powers and attributions to local authorities in the areas of intervention of the CLDS, it will be important to broaden the range of agents responsible for the development of activities in the territories of intervention of the projects, namely through the reintroduction of Local Authorities in the universe of entities that promote CLDS.
Target agent	✓ Entities with responsibilities in the definition of pertinent public policy benchmarks (with emphasis on the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, the ISS and respective district services and the IEFP). ✓ Relevant entities and *stakeholders* in various areas of intervention, namely housing, health, sports, education, culture and urban rehabilitation in CLDS territories ✓ Entities with responsibilities in the governance of the ESI Funds (in particular the Managing Authorities of the funding Operational Programmes). ✓ Local entities responsible for the implementation of CLDS 4G projects. ✓ National Association of Municipalities.

EFFECTIVENESS

Integrated interventions and case management

Recommendation #5	Creation of conditions, tools and instruments for the operationalization of integrated intervention and case management
Rationale	One of the factors that positively influenced the effectiveness of CLDS is related to the operationalization of the intervention which should be desirably integrated, and based on case management. The dispersion of information, often disjointed in relation to certain areas and the insufficiency of studies on certain phenomena, hinders a deeper analysis of reality. This is combined with the need for a change in working practices/registration and information sharing on the part of entities. This recommendation is based on the insufficient existence of information concentrated in a single repository, in relation to various indicators, signs and referrals and the profile of interventions carried out in each of the cases targeted by the intervention.
Operationalization	• It is important to design a tool that could be the basis for an online IT platform with information shared by the CLDS and Social Network partners and capable of promoting the updating of the municipalities' social indicators and capturing the various dynamics of social networks. In this sense, the following scheme is an example that summarizes some of the key features of such a tool. It should be noted that the idea of this tool has already been identified by the ISS, following the Evaluation of the Social Network Programme (2012), although without following its operationalisation and financing.
Target agents	✓ Relevant entities and *stakeholders* in various areas of intervention, namely housing, health, sports, education, culture and urban rehabilitation in CLDS territories ✓ Local entities responsible for the implementation of CLDS 4G projects.

Strategic monitoring, evaluation of results and preparation of future evaluations

Recommendation #6	Creation of tools and frameworks that enable effective project management and to prepare future Programme evaluation processes
Rationale	There is strong evidence of the absence of a system for collecting information, monitoring and evaluating all projects. A platform that allows the placement and collection of data for monitoring and evaluation of results and impacts and to promote reflective and self-assessment practices during the project lifecycle is clearly missing. In all the case studies, only Excel files with physical and financial execution information were found, revealing the need for a common framework for better information collection and piloting. In addition, the contracted indicators are clearly insufficient to respond to a guideline for results, to measure the contribution against the objectives defined in Edition 4G, both within the scope of the implementation analysis (No. of activities carried out in the CLDS-4G Programme) and in the analysis of results (% Activities completed in the CLDS-4G Programme). The rhetoric about the evaluation criteria does not correspond to the profile of the Programme's indicators and does not correspond to a real evaluation of the results, as well as of the effects and impacts, weakening the capacity to evaluate the project as a whole.
Operationalization	• Emphasises the importance of reviewing the way in which interventions are evaluated, particularly with regard to the Programme's system of result indicators • The centralisation of CLDS information will be an important common utility. ✓ Allows the piloting and strategic monitoring and analysis of the dynamics of implementation and production of effects / changes. ✓ Allows the collection of basic elements for the preparation of future evaluation processes. • Taking into account that the aggregated information on the dynamics of the functioning of CLDS is not properly systematized (which has weakened the scope, capacity and usefulness of the present evaluation), a strategic monitoring and evaluation device of the programme should be built. This device can be an evaluation manual to be disseminated by the various CLDS in the 4G generation. • At the same time, and as a tool to help the local teams of the CLDS to better perceive the results of interventions, it may be useful to recover some of the principles of Self-assessment of EQUAL Projects - Phase 2 (Gabinete de Gestão EQUAL, 2005), in order to adapt them to the analytical requirements of contemporary evaluation exercises. The ISS, I.P., may hire external entities to monitor and advise for this purpose.
Target agents	✓ Entities with responsibilities in the definition of pertinent public policy benchmarks (with emphasis on the ISS and respective district services and the IEFP). ✓ Entities with responsibilities in the governance model of the ESI Funds (in particular the Inter-ministerial Coordination Commission, the Agency for Development and Cohesion and the Managing Authorities of the funding Operational Programmes). ✓ Local entities responsible for the implementation of CLDS 4G projects.

EFFICIENCY

Instruments to support implementation

Recommendation #7	Timely provision of an implementation manual and monitoring and evidence-gathering tools on achievements and results tailored to target audience activities and characteristics
Rationale	The lack of an implementation manual at the start-up phase of the 3G CLDS, the inadequacy of some forms (e.g., participant form was not adjusted for audiences such as children, young people and the elderly and collides with wider legal frameworks such as the General Data Protection Regulation) and the lack of clear guidance on the interpretation of the regulation and the manual has created difficulties in the operationalization of CLDS 3G, for example, in verifying the eligibility of audiences and activities, in collecting all requested evidence and in the form of gauging indicators.
Operationalization	• Elaboration of an implementation manual, technical guidelines and monitoring tools available from the initial phase and operationalization of CLDS 4G.
Target agents	✓ Entities with responsibilities in the governance model of the ESI Funds (in particular the Inter-ministerial Coordination Commission, the Agency for Development and Cohesion and the Managing Authorities of the funding Operational Programmes). ✓ Local entities responsible for the implementation of CLDS 4G projects

Articulation in the management of the POISE/ISS Programme

Recommendation #8	Clear definition of the functional articulation model between the ISS and PO ISE and their respective competences and attributions in the implementation of the CLDS, namely in the relationship with the coordinating entities.
Rationale	Some critical dimensions were identified, in particular the rigidity of the funding rules and deficiencies in terms of operational efficiency, mainly in terms of operational support and strategic guidance by the ISS and the Po ISE.
Operationalization	• Elaboration of a functional articulation model clearly identifying the responsibilities of POI SE and ISS so that the local coordinating entities knew who to ask for clarification/information on a given subject and what type of information is to report to whom
Target agents	✓ Entities with responsibilities in the definition of relevant public policy benchmarks (with emphasis on the ISS and respective district services). ✓ Entities with responsibilities in the governance model of the ESI Funds (in particular the Inter-ministerial Coordination Commission, the Agency for Development and Cohesion and the Managing Authorities of the funding Operational Programmes). ✓ Local entities responsible for the implementation of CLDS 4G projects.

Monitoring, technical and strategic support

Recommendation #9	Reinforcement of monitoring procedures and technical and strategic support to the intervention of CLDS
Rationale	Several critical dimensions have been identified, notably at the level of operational support and strategic guidance from the ISS and PO ISE. The implementation of CLDS could benefit from the existence of a closer proximity and better periodicity of technical monitoring processes by the ISS and POISE, especially for entities without previous experience in the Programme, helping to overcome technical and administrative difficulties and improving interventions, in particular with the guidelines on the operationalisation of some activities in view of the problem dimensions of the territory. On the other hand, it would be extremely important to create mechanisms for sharing experiences and identifying innovative practices that serve as *mainstreaming* for territories with similar characteristics. These mechanisms would address the concerns felt by a significant part of the CLDS heard during the evaluation process and ensure a collective learning process.
Operationalization	• Definition of a technical monitoring model for CLDS, including monitoring visits at least every six months. • Increased competencies for ISS district services in follow-up, supporting and monitoring of the projects on the ground, for enhanced strategic monitoring capacity and collection of evaluation elements, by allocating resources for a large number and more frequent local visits to serve the purpose of suggesting potential adjustments and for better central piloting of the Programme. • Establishment of a feedback and collective learning system that serves the needs of strategic management, animation, sharing and experiences between professionals; *mainstreaming* of innovative intervention methodologies. This can be done in the form of district workshops or in a broader territorial format. • In this regard, the "Inter CLAS Sessions" of the Social Network Programme can serve as an example of what should be done. It is suggested that these initiatives should be carried out on an annual basis.
Target agents	✓ Entities with responsibilities in the definition of relevant public policy benchmarks (with emphasis on the ISS and respective district services). ✓ Entities from different areas of intervention, namely housing, health, sports, education, culture and urban rehabilitation in the territories. ✓ Entities with responsibilities in the governance model of the ESI Funds (in particular the Agency for Development and Cohesion and the Managing Authorities of the funding Operational Programmes). ✓ Local entities responsible for the implementation of CLDS 4G projects.

Financing conditions

Recommendation #10	Streamlining the procedures associated with the financing of CLDS (application, contracting, change requests, repayment requests...)
Rationale	Delays in providing documents/forms required for repayment request and change request, and the delay in transferring funding to entities has created constraints not only in the development of the action plan itself but also across the entity, as these entities generally have a weak financial capacity to advance resources without repayment forecast.
Operationalization	Create the necessary conditions for the funding of the coordinating entities to be carried out in accordance with the regulations and with the nature of the beneficiary entities.
Target agents	✓ Entities with responsibilities in the governance model of the ESI Funds (in particular the Inter-ministerial Coordination Commission, the Agency for Development and Cohesion and the Managing Authorities of the funding Operational Programmes). ✓ Local entities responsible for the implementation of CLDS 4G projects.

Training of technical teams

Recommendation #11	Development of training actions for the various professionals involved in the implementation of CLDS
Rationale	In many case studies conducted, the training of technicians is considered an important gap in the implementation of CLDS. In many cases, the actors refer to the ineligibility of expenses with training actions of the partner entities staff. In addition, the training of both the technical teams directly involved in the implementation of the CLDS and other partner entities of the territory that intervene with the target audiences is a critical dimension to reinforce the knowledge and skills of the different technicians in the development of the actions, enabling them to access to specific tools for certain issues.

Operationalization	• Include social intervention workers as a strategic target audience within the framework of the eligibility of expenditure, in order to train, to improve the intervention practices/quality of the services provided and to respond to difficulties in obtaining results and impacts in Axis 3 of previous editions of the Programme, with a view to empowering the community and the institutions.
	• Lacunar areas were identified that may be priorities in the development of training actions for staff:
	  ✓ Methodologies for mediation and intervention with ethnic minorities, especially with the Roma community
	  ✓ Legal framework concerning the processes of regularisation and documentation of immigrants
	  ✓ Methodologies and basic procedures to promote entrepreneurship
	  ✓ Recycling actions in project management, monitoring and evaluation
	  ✓ Recycling actions in strategic animation of partnership networks
	  ✓ Training in the area of intervention with audiences with mental health problems

Target agents	✓ Entities from different areas of intervention, namely housing, health, sports, education, culture and urban rehabilitation. ✓ Entities with responsibilities in the governance model of the ESI Funds (in particular the Managing Authorities of the funding Operational Programmes).

IMPACT

Adjustment capacity during intervention and Timeliness of CLDS

Recommendation #12	Ensure reasonable levels of flexibility and increased capacity for adjustment in the course of the CLDS intervention and the creation of mechanisms to increase the temporality of the Programme, while avoiding breaks in the dynamics between generations of the Programme
Rationale	The programme fails to address the issue of the length of time required for actions to produce impacts translated into real changes, as well as the issue of the scale of resources invested when compared to the scale of the problems. Of all the evidence gathered, the external factors that have most limited interventions and the achievement of the CLDS objectives are the mandatory nature of the actions, the relationship between the problems and the scale of funding, and the critical relationship between the duration of projects and the time it takes to bring about lasting change in a territory of exclusion. In this logic, it was unanimously recognized that the duration of the project was not enough to create a significant and lasting impact on the social development of the territories. In addition, the time lag between the various generations of programmes led, in most cases, to intermittent intervention, interrupting the links, dynamics and synergies created.
Operationalization	• Ensure reasonable levels of flexibility in the modification of measures created in the application, in order to better respond to the specific situations of the local social reality, considering the specificities of the territories with regard to the eligibility of expenditure and especially inherent in the constant change and complexity of social problems. • The time for applications should allow for a consultation time with relevant *stakeholders* in the territory (in addition to the Social Diagnosis). • Explore options for extending the duration of CLDS interventions in key-territories in order to achieve more and better results, produce desirable changes and assess their impact. • To study options for mitigating the temporal disruption between projects in territories where continued intervention is justified, in order to minimise the negative effects of intermittence between generations of the Programme, maintaining the dynamics and credibility of CLDS responses with the target populations.
Target agents	✓ Entities with responsibilities in the definition of pertinent public policy benchmarks (with emphasis on the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, the ISS and the IEFP). ✓ Entities with responsibilities in the governance model of the ESI Funds (in particular the Inter-ministerial Coordination Commission, the Agency for Development and Cohesion and the Managing Authorities of the funding Operational Programmes). ✓ Local entities responsible for the implementation of CLDS 4G projects.

SUSTAINABILITY

Strengthening the conditions for sustainability and impact of interventions

Recommendation 13	Reinforce CLDS sustainability conditions
Rationale	The sustainability of CLDS is a problematic dimension, especially in terms of financial capacity for the continuity of certain qualified interventions carried out by the technical teams assigned to the structures. Firstly, there is no evidence of supported CDLS that remain in operation after the end of the financial support, which induces a strong dependence on funding for the existence of the intervention (dependent on the availability of professional teams). Despite the notorious results declared by projects' responsible persons regarding the permanence of technical competences to promote social development in the territories, the increase in cooperation between institutions in the territory and the activity of associations and organisations created within the framework of CLDS, the unanimous idea gathered in the case studies points to a high risk of rapid *drop off* of their effects. In addition, the high turnover of the staff reinforces the weaknesses of the sustainability of the Programme's actions.
Operationalization	• Inclusion of a sustainability plan in the project design, explaining how the activities will continue after the end of the project. • Introduction of a *phasing-out* period of the project (instead of an abrupt term, as is currently the case), dedicated to the finalisation of the preparations for the transfer of responsibility for continuing activities. • Continuity of the professional team and/or its Coordinator in order to guarantee the stability of the partnership dynamics created and the interlocution with the populations concerned, between generations CLDS. For example, the Coordinator could have a more durable link to carry out this transfer of testimony to the teams of future generations of the Programme, as well as to transmit the models and methodologies of intervention and networking operationalized in the previous generation.
Target agents	✓ National Association of Municipalities ✓ Entities with responsibilities in the definition of pertinent public policy benchmarks (with emphasis on the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, the ISS, I.P. and the IEFP). ✓ Entities with responsibilities in the governance model of the ESI Funds (in particular the Inter-ministerial Coordination Commission, the Agency for Development and Cohesion and the Managing Authorities of the funding Operational Programmes). ✓ Local entities responsible for the implementation of CLDS 4G projects.).