Civil Society Support Fund - Macedonia Consultancy report

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Executive Summary

Introduction

This report presents the findings and conclusions of the Mandate 'Civil Society Support: Macedonia' on which we have been engaged as consultants since October 2011. Section 1 is about the Content, covering political and social spheres, the nature of Macedonian civil society, and the resourcing of civil society. Section 2 presents and appraises SDC's experience of supporting Macedonian civil society to date, especially but not exclusively through the Civica Mobilitas programme. The third and final section presents our Recommendations. Twelve Annexes provide illustrations from the international civil society arena of aspects of the process and content outlined in our recommendations.

Context

Macedonian society is characterised by poverty, ethic and social tensions, poor application of the rule of law, corruption and an inefficient public administration. Little debate on the country's future emanates from independent thinkers and civil society actors. Recent international monitoring criticizes the state of civil and political rights.

Government is strong, centralised, far-reaching and well-funded. It has little appetite for critique and curbs dissent through a combination of incentives and intimidation.   The space for dissent is occupied by opposition political parties, which share some of the same tendencies of political intolerance and histories of autocracy and patronage. This situation is exacerbated by the multiethnic character of Macedonian society and polity.

Many intellectuals, students, media actors and citizens prefer to stay away from contentious politics for fear of retribution or of being labelled as partisan. One of the main civil society networks is labelled as pro-Government and the other as pro-opposition. With low levels of public trust among citizens for CSOs and low tolerance and public –spiritedness, civic engagement is limited in scope and sporadic, leaving an impression of a civil society without citizens.

Three groups of CSOs can be distinguished: some 8-9000 very small, loosely organised, self-help and welfarist groups not receiving foreign aid funding; a middle group of medium-sized CSOs working on a range of issues including human rights, basic services and municipal accountability with some experience of aid funding; and a handful of large, well-known, professionalised CSOs which provide services o conduct advocacy for legislative amendments, often dependent on donor aid. 'Patronage' networks of smaller organisations have sprung up around the large organisations. Some CSOs are highly entrepreneurial in intent and practice.

SDC has an important role to play in helping create preconditions for open, safe and healthy debate on the state and future of Macedonian society and democracy, and can do so though facilitating the emergence of 'honest brokers' in the Macedonian civil society and media sectors who demonstrably possess the integrity and public recognition to fulfil this role.

SDC Programmes

 The Civica Mobilitas programme started in 2009 and aims to strengthen the capacity and sustainability of CSOs in Macedonia. It is widely appreciated among grantees, government and SDC's donor peers, especially in these times of shrinking bilateral funding and the consolidation of aid funds into European Commission funding which will soon be channelled through government. Civica

awards project and institutional grants and has supported a loosely-designed series of debates among CSOs.

Civica's managing agency CIRa has strengthened the technical project management capacity of grantees and a range of interesting initiatives have been undertaken, mainly in the areas of enhancing local governance through strengthening citizen voice locally and improving the legal environment for social and democratic issues at national level.   It is not clear how sustainable or strategic the impacts of the grants will prove to be, not least because it is early days, but also because emphasis has not been placed on this in project design or reporting systems.

Few grantees can demonstrate strong roots with a community or membership base or a focus on issues of principle, representation or organisational accountability.   There is little sign of reflexive, self-critical awareness among CSOs overall. Such issues have not figured in the post-independence explosion of civil society. Yet we found much to suggest that promoting these core values and pursuing strategic impact in line with them, may be the way forward for the Civica programme.

The SDC-supported community Forums programme is widely admired as a successful way to create interfaces between CSOs and local government. There is value in developing further this generally successful model, by way of a process of critical reflection in which its imperfections are also addressed.

Until now the second component of Civica has been loosely designed and has not had a strategic result. Tensions around how to engage such different actors as national-level Skopje-based large CSOs and small, locally-based ones, resulted in a low common denominator and limited interest, and no follow-up to debates took place.

Some feel civil society should be about civic action, but that Macedonian culture does not favour such action nor active forms of citizenship.   It is clear that to shift civil society beyond micro-entrepreneurship and technicalities, it is necessary to experiment, explore and challenge the status quo of civil society itself, so that it might eventually engage more effectively with the country's status quo.

Recommendations

Our Recommendations start from a number of parameters that have been laid down by SDC, are inherent to a government aid programme, or became evident to us from our exploration of the context in the course of our mission.

Donor influence has given rise to a plethora of organizations with weak or no value bases, constituency links, solidarity with each other, or legitimacy as representatives of citizens' concerns. Their history has been one of competing for resources rather than cooperating around common transformative interests. SDC needs to strike a delicate balance between continuing to strengthen civil society and avoiding furthering donor interference and aid-dependence. For CSOs to acquire voice in society, roles in constructing pluralist democracy, legitimacy to challenge the Government, and independence from donors, vital prerequisites appear to be deeper social roots and collective CS identity.

We recommend that SDC focuses on supporting CSOs that explicitly seek to be or become social change agents. We recommend that Civica Phase 2 invites CSOs to join a collective, structured, 3-4 year process of self-aware reflection and learning about civil society identity, values, principles, constituencies and theories of change, with a view to articulating these aspects of their own organisations better. We call this programme 'Developing Roots'.

In terms of process, it would consist of:

- A thematically-defined, learning-focused programme, the theme in this case being the development of deeper roots and values A learning network in-country (a 'learning caravan') and connecting to international learning networks
- A 'learning trajectory' that develops understanding of social activism over a period of time
- A way to foster partnership between participant organisations

In terms of content, 'Developing Roots' would focus on:

- strengthening the participants' definition of their cause, constituency and theory of change
- supporting them to put down deeper roots in their constituencies
- work with these constituencies more legitimately, strategically, transparently and appropriately
- monitor and assess the impact of their work in a way compatible with their role as change agents in an emerging democracy, in addition to doing so in ways that meet contemporary technical requirements such as those applied by CIRa in component 1.

A number of challenging questions are raised around which CSOs the 'Developing Roots' programme should target; options are laid out and SDC is encouraged to take time and draw on local civil society expertise to debate the pros and cons of these in detail. The need to design the programme so that it fosters engagement with state actors, rather than the consolidation of an entirely self-referential civil society clique, is also considered in the content of the 'learning trajectory' approach proposed.

To ensure that responses to the programme's call for applications are not driven by the funds attached, we suggest the process starts with a 'pre-qualifying', 'scoping' or 'pre-Accession' phase that offers relatively little funding and relatively more advisory input and accompaniment. This phase could be oriented to SDC ascertaining (insofar as this is possible) that the organisation as a whole includes a sizeable enough critical mass of actors prepared to develop self-awareness and reflexivity, engage in a sustained, grounded process of reflective self-critical learning and exchange with diverse peer organisations, and (re)define the organisation as a social change actor, contributing to the internal organisational and personal changes that this calls for.

Given SDC expertise and experience in Macedonia to date, and the apparently greater possibility of building constructive citizen-state relationships at the local level than the national level, we recommend a focus on CSOs not focused exclusively on national-level issues and happenings in Skopje and the adoption of a decentralized, 'de-centering' and mobile form for 'Developing Roots'.

There are several considerations to address so as to ensure that the new second component relates in a coherent manner to the first, and also that the 'ad hoc' funds envisaged in Phase 1 get used in a way that is more appropriately ad hoc and responsive to circumstances than hitherto.

The delivery mechanism proposed is a collective 'learning trajectory' approach, well-suited to:

- structured, applied, reflective and reflexive learning-in-action;
- mentoring and accompaniment by people or organisations experienced in critical accompaniment to CSOs, to develop aspects of the organisations' capacity that relate more to values and ethos than to technical competence. Mentoring is a tried and tested

approach for generating self-critical awareness, among social change practitioners and other kinds of actor;

- cooperation between participant CSOs, including CSOs geographically located at some distance from each other
- a process over some time (up to 3-4 years, in year-long iterative cycles), conducted alongside the participants' normal work and consisting of a new and complementary dimension added to that work.

It is possible to develop reporting milestones or even indicators of progress or achievement for each Stage of the above trajectory. A 'theory of change' approach to the trajectory itself, which spells out the trajectory's goals, pathway, activities, assumptions and the relationships between them, will facilitate the identification of these. They are likely to revolve around changes in values, behaviour and relationships

In terms of programme management, we suggest a three-tiered structure consisting of a high-profile and charismatic international leader figure, a steering committee that could include actors based outside Macedonia, and a management unit or team located in Macedonia responsible for everyday operations.

There are some risks inherent in what is proposed. Our analysis of context and experience to date implies that an experimental dimension is necessary, which by definition brings some risk. We suggest a number of mitigating factors and precautions that can be taken.

0. Introduction

This report presents the findings and conclusions of the Mandate Civil Society Support: Macedonia', on which we have been engaged as consultants since mid-October 2011. A first draft was prepared for presentation and discussion at a workshop at SDC Macedonia on 28 November 2011. This final report incorporates reactions and comments provided at the workshop. The objective of the Mandate is to:

> "[…] support SDC in the further development of the civil society support programme, namely in the elaboration of a mechanism to facilitate democratic civil society development and organisations going beyond the financial-institutional support of individual CSOs, promoting creation of shared references/values.
>
> The mandate shall in particular assess possible fields of interventions (component two), based on:
> - Context of Macedonia;
> - SDC's experience and its reflections on how the envisaged goals could be achieved;
> - International state-of-the-art practices, including specifically assessing renowned Civil Society platforms […] in view of their dynamics and applicability to the Macedonian context." (From Terms of Reference)

Reflecting the Deliverables listed in our Terms of Reference, the report is structured as follows. Section 1 is about the context, covering political and social context, the nature of Macedonian civil society, and resourcing and international aid to this sector. Section 2 goes on to present and appraise SDC's experience of supporting Macedonian civil society to date, especially but not exclusively through the Civica Mobilitas programme.

The third and final section of the report presents our Recommendations. The second component of Civica Mobilitas Phase 2 needs to build on Phase 1 and lessons learnt from it, while continuing to advance the same broad objective (strengthening the capacity of CSOs to oversee the work of local governments in delivering services to their constituency and support an ongoing dialogue between different ethnic groups in a multiethnic environment); and support CSOs with the same general focus (organisations that oversee local authorities' programme delivery, distributive principles and practices, financial, budgeting and accounting practices; and organisations that encourage inter-ethnic dialogue)   The Recommendations section pieces together an outline for the Phase 2 second component. First we set out briefly some non-negotiables and fixed parameters that have been articulated by SDC and other actors involved in Civica Mobilitas in programme documentation and verbally during our visit.

We then move on to the questions of *what* we recommend, involving *whom*, and *how*.   In terms of the '*why'*, we derive the rationale for what we are proposing from our reading of the context and of SDC's experience to date, as reflected in the foregoing two sections; throughout this section reiterate aspects of the rationale as relevant. *What* is about the values and principles which we propose would constitute the most appropriate and viable focal point for the second component. *Who* is about the civil society actors we envisage as most appropriate to focus on in this component, bearing in mind the kind of democratic actors that SDC wants to help programme stakeholders to

become. *How* presents some delivery mechanism options, comments on connections between the proposed second component and the grant-giving component, and discusses risks.

The annexes contain the Terms of Reference of our Mandate, and thirteen case studies of international best practice examples that we consider relevant. These are referred to (by reference number) in the Recommendations section of the report, but also are written as standalone case studies that can be read subsequently and studied and debated by SDC and other actors involved in the detailed programme design of Phase 2 of Civica Mobilitas.

1. Context

Political and Social Context

Macedonia is a society characterized by high levels of poverty, ethnic and social tensions, poor application of the rule of law, corruption, an inefficient of public administration. Little discussion and debate on the future of the country emanates from independent thinkers and civil society actors. The EU Accession process seemed to offer the terrain for that discussion, but the blockade in the accession process, caused by the name dispute with Greece, has faded the hopes of quick progress in the EU accession process. Partisanship and party politics dominate Macedonian society, although only about 25% of Macedonian voters self-identify as active party members[1].

Recent international human-rights watchdog and EU reports criticize the state of civil and political rights, especially regarding the freedom of expression and promotion and enforcement of human rights.

The Government is strong, centralized, far-reaching and well-funded[2], has little appetite for open critique, and appears eager to curb dissent through a combination of incentives for loyalists and intimidation of detractors. It incentivises by being a major employer, contractor and investor. It intimidates through overreach, control of media and selective application of the rule of law.

The space for dissent is occupied by opposition political parties, themselves with comparable tendencies and histories of autocracy and patronage. 'Politics' is largely seen as synonymous with 'political party' in public perceptions. Politicians generally dictate the topics for debate within the public radar, often using electrifying rhetoric, aided by media which are under their political and economic influence. [3]As noted in the last EU Progress report: '[…] editors and journalists are faced with increasing undue political pressure and intimidation […]' and resort to compliance with media bosses and politicians and/or exercise self-censorship. The same could be said of many intellectuals, academics, students, independent-minded citizens, who for fear of retribution and/or being tagged as partisan, prefer to stay away from contentious topics.

This situation is further exacerbated given the multi-ethnic character of Macedonian society. Voting and political representation are largely divided along ethnic lines. There are ruling and opposition parties in both the Macedonian and Albanian parts of society, with their own infrastructures, including media and supportive civic organizations.

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[1] Cited from Civicus Report/MCIC, 2011

[2] Fiscal revenues amount to 45% of GDP (2.7b EUR from a GDP of 6.9b EUR in 2010), data from State Statistical Office of Macedonia

[3] Both sides of the political spectrum wield considerable influence over the media, though the Government recently closed some of the major opposition-minded media outlets, endangering media pluralism

Many activists and organizations that choose to engage in the political debate are tagged as 'partisan' by the side whose positions or actions they are criticizing. The partisan divide and mutual 'tagging' seems to have infected large CSOs and their respective networks in the country. One of the main networks is perceived as – indeed, accused of being - pro-Government, and the other of being pro-Opposition. Most of the CSOs with whom we met complain of being tagged by 'the other side', though some admit to themselves 'tagging' other CSOs. The divide seems to be less on ideological grounds, and more connected with access and resources, spurred to some extent by inter-personal hostilities.

With the low levels of public trust among citizens for CSOs and low levels of tolerance and public spiritedness, civic engagement and activism is limited in scope and sporadic, except on some limited occasions, such as the protests against police brutality in June and July 2011. This leaves an impression of a civil society without many citizens.

Creating preconditions for open, safe and healthy debate on the state of Macedonian society and democracy, and a mode of conduct where dissent is tolerated and difference of opinions is valued, seems to be highly important to building the legitimacy, credibility and relevance of civil society in the eyes of the public. In the absence of interlocutors perceived as impartial and honest enough to create that public space for debate and ensuing action, SDC in cooperation with other donor programs has an important role to play in facilitating the creation of 'honest broker(s)' within Macedonian society (both in the civil and media sector) who have the personal integrity and public recognition necessary to fulfil that role.

The nature of Macedonian civil society

There are 11,700[4] registered civil organisations in Macedonia; about 80% of them are very small local associations. The remainder, those that have an annual expenditure higher than 2.000 EUR P/A[5] , can be divided into three categories: large CSOs, mid-sized organisations, local CSOs. Media and trade unions are the two other segments of civil society, registered and administered under different legal provisions, Company Law and Trade Union Law, respectively.

According to some estimates, the turnover of all registered CSOs is around 90m Euros, considerably more than the current levels of foreign funding for Macedonian CSOs. Not more than few hundred CSOs in Macedonia are (or have been) recipients of foreign donor money. The rest is financed from membership, local giving, public contracts, state subsidies and/or own revenues, largely in traditional sectors, or so called 'self-organizations' predating the 1990s. Broadly speaking, these organizations are either self-help groups or provide basic services to children, youth, disabled, women, pensioners (as part of the social safety net, or otherwise). A sizeable sub-group of professional associations and charities (mostly church-based) is also part of the civil society. Although there are considerable overlaps, spillages and coalescence with the 'traditional sector', most of what is a(self) portrayed 'civil society' today congregates around the group of few hundred

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[4] Cited from Civicus report/MCIC, 2011

[5] Source MCIC: Association with a turnover over 2.000 EUR per annum are required to submit annual accounts

CSOs that are more visible and have been largely supported by foreign funding over the past two decades.

There are a handful of large organisations in the country. They have well-known leaders and house considerable expertise and experience. They make professional strategic plans and wield considerable networks of influence within the society. They tend to focus on provision of services and/or advocate for legislative amendment, with less attention to the implementation of legislation, a mode of action that keeps everyone busy with little obvious positive change or effect on wellbeing. The large CSOs have developed 2 or 3 parallel, loosely defined 'networks' within the civil society, created largely over patronage and history of benefaction, rather than issues or shared values. In this sense, the large CSO model mirrors the political system, with a politically savvy and articulate leadership presiding over patronage of a number of dependent satellite organisations. The networks have some history of working together in the past, but the virus of partisanship (or mutual accusations of it) and competition for resources seems to have made mutual dialogue and cooperation less attainable.

The middle ground is occupied by medium-sized NGOs working on a range of issues including human rights, basic services and municipal accountability. These organisations have less experience with grant requirements and the rigours of donor funding and are scrambling to learn the requirements, especially the start-ups. Many of our interviews and discussions dwelt on the lack of constituency that characterises most CSOs, especially the large and medium-sized ones. The more entrepreneurial and business-like they are, the less they can define their constituency and demonstrate active relationships with it. Some respondents see this as a serious weakness given their lack of credibility with the public and their lack of effective engagement with government – after all, on whose behalf, or with what legitimacy, would CSOs without constituencies be engaging? So far Civica Mobilitas grantees are not asked about their constituency. Vagueness around an organisation's constituency is linked to vagueness about its cause and the underlying theory of change, programme logic or causal pathway underpinning its work. An NGO's strategic plan oriented to surviving in an economically unfavourable and competitive environment is very different from a strategy driven by a clearly defined social cause or vision of the social change to which the organisation wants to contribute.

From interviews with CSOs, we formed a general impression of a lack of self-awareness and critical reflection about their social causes, theories of change and constituencies. It is questionable whether some Macedonian CSOs are even aware that relations with constituencies, clear social change goals and accountability for performance tend to be defining features of CSOs elsewhere, particularly CSOs which conduct influencing and advocacy actions vis-a-vis government actors or the State. While this causes increasing concern among donor agencies, it appears not to concern CSOs themselves. Government also appears unconcerned, perhaps because it would be harder to dismiss accountability claims made by CSOs that did have demonstrable constituencies and well-articulated, transformative theories of change.

Local CSOs, based outside the main urban centres, get little support. In the early days after the breakup of Yugoslav Republic and the arrival of international donors, NGO support centres were set up in every region, to act as focal points for information and to provide support to small NGOs in a

bid to build a new structure for civil society out of the ruins of communism. Many of the support centres have now stopped functioning and small CSOs have to rely on big CSOs in ways that are more personal than institutionalised. As a result, a number of CSOs that were developed through authentic citizen interest, or incubated by these centres have minimized their activity or ceased it altogether. The links between regional CSOs and the large CSOs seem to be more opportunistic, than based on commonalities over shared values. Thus the shape of civil society mirrors the political reality of dependence on elites for finance and political influence. There is little of the kind of horizontal solidarity that might offer an alternative form of influence in favour of the wellbeing of ordinary citizens. Most citizens do not perceive CSOs as their advocates, and stay away from them in terms of both participation and support. In these circumstances, efforts to develop civic activism and philanthropy are rather futile: it is difficult to raise people's interest in giving to something they can't relate to, or from which they don't see immediate gains.

There are a small number of highly motivated self-funded (or membership supported) organisations and instances of authentic activism that offer a contrasting model of civil society. They range from entirely un-organised civil protests (such as that against police brutality that crystallised around the killing of a young boy in Skopje in 2011) to groups of young people organised through social media or university students/alumni to take action on issues such as workers rights, or animal rights. Their efforts draw enthusiastic but short-lived public support.

Solidarity and Civil activism

Competition for information, contacts and technical competence drives the internationally-financed agencies – militating against cooperation and solidarity on social and governance issues. Organisational representatives are quick to criticise counterparts, and to disparage them as belonging to rival groups – 'Sorosoids' or 'Europoids' on one side, and 'VMRO-ovci' on the other. Most of these attacks are not evidence-backed, they rely on rumours and mutual 'tagging'. There seems to have been a recent 're-grouping' and sharpened polarization in civil society, in a mirror-image of the political picture: two blocs with very little in between.

Civil society in Macedonia does not cluster together in natural solidarity. A protest was raised at on our meetings that it is impossible to build solidarity even in situations of government-orchestrated attacks on personal integrity of prominent members of civil society (allegations that one CSO leader is a communist-era spy). A leader of an organization promoting gender equality complains that is it difficult for her to promote values of equality and non-discrimination even among members of CSOs that don't particularly focus on the issue of gender, even though some of them are human rights organizations. Racist, sexist or otherwise discriminatory speech can be randomly overheard among CSO activists. These all are small indicators of lack of basic moral references and shared values within the civil society. It is difficult to build solidarity, where there are no such common denominators, and most of them are created on individual basis.

Another illustration of lack of solidarity, comes from the tendency of each group fighting against discrimination to fight for a separate law (eg the Anti-Discrimination Law and the Law on Equal Rights of Women and Men). There are major disagreements between women's organisations, youth organisations, disability organisations and those fighting against discrimination in general. While many would put this tendency to subdivide down to history and culture (a lack of trust in those not

your own, a vertical hierarchy, a model of strongly competitive patron leaders), there are others who point to the competition for funding as the divisive issue. Resourcing may be at least one root of a significant divide between organisations that have support from local society and those that are internationally funded. Another is affiliation – claims on ethnicity offer an easy route to patronage. There is a sense that Macedonia is not a country made up of active and informed citizens, but of parochial affiliations in uneasy accommodation and brewing conflict with one another. Just one successful and sustained clustering was cited to us: the Rural Development network, consisting of some 40 rural NGOs that have found collaboration on rural development initiatives.

Media in Macedonia are under strong political influence. Media ownership is opaque, highly concentrated and with strong political links. Government is one of the biggest advertisers in the country - as much as 50% of all advertising is done by government, and directed towards television channels and newspapers which are supportive of the government, thus heavily distorting the media market from merit-based and quality journalism serving public interest, towards a government-sponsored political mouthpiece. In those conditions independent and civic-minded journalism is difficult to flourish. The void is being filled by social media. These proved great tools to mobilize public interest and support during the June demonstrations against police brutality, although they have not become channels for the sort of international exposure and national democratic debates and virtual protest movements that they have in other areas, notably the Middle East recently.

Public perception of civil society is jaundiced. According to a CIVICUS research carried out in 2009, the majority of citizens in Macedonia (51%) believe the state is the actor responsible for fulfilling citizen's needs. That is in line with the general attitude of the citizens: that of expectation from the state, more that expectations from themselves (25%). In addition, citizens have larger trust in political parties than in civil society organizations. According to one commentator, citizens tend to view a person in an NGO as someone corrupted by Western governments, a money launderer or foreign spy. Consultants are seen to earn big money and be of little use. The leaders of large organisations are rebranding themselves as citizens' organisations, to avoid the word NGO, but the media portrays civil society as a society without citizens.

In-fights, mistrust, public shaming translates to inability to cooperate, even when organizations that have comparable and coherent missions, vision statements and strategies, may points to lack of depth and breadth of values within the civil society, and or managerial concern to embrace them. It is difficult to see how organizations that don't talk to each other, refuse cooperation and involve in labelling, can be impacting larger societal change.

Nationalism doesn't dominate civil society to the extent that it does party politics. Most networks transcend ethnic lines, yet most individual CSOs have a predominant ethnic affiliation. However, given the characteristic of weak or missing constituencies , ethnic tolerance between CSOs doesn't necessarily translate into ethnic tolerance in society at large. Although ethnic identification in CSOs doesn't dictate the discourse of civil society in general, at times of ethnically polarised situations (such as the violence over the construction of the Church inside the Skopje fortress in 2011), most CSOs remain silent, with very few siding with one or other ethnic camp.

Though lacking constituencies, local NGOS seem to have a much better environment for governance work than centrally or nationally-focused ones, and are more effective in addressing local issues and

building local networks, both on individual and on institutional level. Both the local NGOs we visited (in Gostivar and Kichevo) seem to be effective in meaningfully involving a diverse range of stakeholders from their community, other NGOs and the Local governments in addressing questions of democracy, transparency of local government, local development, etc. Local politicians seem much more accessible, and local politics addresses more practical matters than state politics and state institutions. The support that SDC has been providing through the Community Forums programme seems to have created tangible results and impacts in certain communities, in terms of brining various segments of the society to cooperate. This raises the possibility that the SDC strategy of strengthening the support to local NGOs and the methodology used in Community Forums (local multi-stakeholder groups) could be drawn on in the future of Civica Mobilitas, with its focus altered to building the value basis and constituencies of civil society organizations.

However, in a highly centralized political society, where most of the influence and resources are located on a national level, the transferability of lessons learned locally, into the national arena seems to be still an open question.

There seems to be no widely accepted reference points by the civil society, or any major attempt at building them on a societal level. This remains a major hurdle for sectoral solidarity, and wider involvement of citizens into the civil society.

In democratic societies, people congregate in groups over shared principles, values or common interests, strongly agree and advocate for them . In Macedonia, civil society blocks are built around financial opportunities, and building solidarity around issues and principles remains a major challenge.

Resources and International Aid

Civil society organizations remain dependent on foreign funding and the lack of sufficient financial resource remains a serious constraint[6].Charity and corporate giving in Macedonia tend to focus towards the 'traditional' organizations supporting children, disabled, youth and women and is largely localised. Membership organisations, often with roots in the socialist period continue to mobilise funds from the public and volunteers among students and younger pensioners. But, according to CIRa, less that 1% of the sector's funding comes from individuals and less than 6% from corporate.

International funding to civil society Macedonia grew very rapidly in the mid-to-late nineties during the Bosnian and Kosovo wars, when concerns over radicalisation and conflict were combined with hopes for democracy and European enlargement to fuel substantial donor programmes. Soros' Open Society Foundation and USAID funding made millions of Euros available to human rights, press freedom, gender rights and other organisations.

With the closure of most of bilateral donor aid programmes, with notable exceptions of Swiss and American funding, the levels and nature of donor funding have diminished. Today, NGOs depending on outside funding depend on the patronage of the few large organisations in the acute competition

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[6] Cited from EU Progress Report for Macedonia, 2011

for funding. Even though foreign funding is still available, the difficulties of winning it have also increased. National donors like Swedish SIDA and Norwegian NPA are withdrawing. Their place is being taken by European pre-accession funding. EU funding for CSOs consists of larger grants awarded to smaller number of well-equipped and well-positioned organizations. This function is however inaccessible to many, as the competences required to win EC funding are more narrowly clustered among the big NGOs, and the services of those, like CIRa that can help mid-sized agencies to achieve these competencies are highly valued. In addition a lot of the EU funds require institutional and financial capacities that far exceed those of small organizations. The EU is addressing some of these concerns through its regional TACSO (Technical Assistance to CSO Society) and TAIEX facilities, which are aiming to enhance the capacities of the civil society up to the level where they can utilize the EU funding (IPA, EIDHR, Regional Cooperation and so called horizontal grants) and networking possibilities.

The Government office for Civil Society (GOCS) offers very small grants to local organisations and will soon take on a proportion of the IPA funding, but this funding will be initially inaccessible to many, for reasons stated above. In addition, there are real concerns over the capability and impartiality and resistance to political influence of the GOCS voiced by some organizations.

Locally based 'traditional' NGOs delivering services, seem to garner higher level of public support compared to organisations for democracy and human rights based in Skopje, such as Helsinki Committee, journalists' associations, etc. The general impression is that in contrast to support for orphans or people with disabilities, when it comes to democracy and human rights the Government is unwilling, EC is too bureaucratic, ordinary people are afraid and the corporations are not ready to pay. There seems to be a concern that some of the established brands that have been promoting the values of human rights will cease to exist, due to their ill-preparedness to receive donor funding in the new circumstances, and inability to attract local support. A major facet of support through organizational and project grants to CSOs in Macedonia will be USAID's 4 year, 4m USD program to strengthen civic advocacy and partnership, addressing similar range and type of goals as CIVICA Mobilitas. USAID's Democracy and Governance Initiatives and CIVICA have a history of coordination and cooperation and sometimes co-finance activities (though US political constraints preclude pooling funds with USAID).

According to CIRa, many organisations are facing financial difficulties are turning to what they call 'social enterprise' – ways of earning money from their products and services, however this is still not a financially viable option for a lot of the organizations.

Limited resources to fund civil society, directly ties into the question of political interference and pressure on civil society organizations. With not enough support available from sources independent of governmental and political parties, and with high level of political interference in all aspects of the society, not enough CSOS are willing to openly engage in the contentious questions, thus muting down the voice of the civil society. A similar situation is with individuals, such as academics, journalists and media workers, etc. In that respect, SDC continued support along with the EU funding can help create a core group of CSOs and activist who can advocate for a better society and serve as real agents of change within the Macedonian society.

2. SDC Programmes in Macedonia

Civica Mobilitas

The *Civica Mobilitas* programme aims to strengthen the capacity and sustainability of civil society organisations in Macedonia. In our interviews with NGOs, government and donors we heard widespread appreciation for the programme in particular, and the continuation of Swiss support for civil society in general, at a time when other donor programmes are withdrawing or scaling down.

Civica Mobilitas started in mid-2009. A five-member board awarded 31 grants in 2010, amounting to CHF 1.2 million. 15 institutional grants were awarded, averaging CHF 40,000 per annum. These will be renewed annually for three years as a declining percentage of total organisational income. The funds are used to develop management, projects and fund-raising capacities. 7 project grants were also given out, each for a single year and averaging CHF 60,000. 9 ad hoc grants were awarded, averaging CHF 8,000. The ad hoc grants were initially envisaged as support to unexpected opportunities and 'burning issues,' but in practice they have been used to make small grants to small organisations outside Skopje. 6 of the 10 grants for organisations based outside the capital have been of the ad hoc type.

While the grant programme touches every municipality and covers a range of activities, many of the activities are anchored in or centred on Skopje and most relate to governance. In 2010, 12 of the grantees undertook national programmes based out of Skopje with a range of activities in multiple municipalities, another 9 undertook projects exclusively in Skopje, many to influence national legislation and 10 work outside of Skopje in one or more municipalities; mostly linking citizen issues to local government.

CIRa and SDC share a commitment to ensuring that SDC as a donor does not overly dominate programme decision-making, especially at the operational level, and both sides have honoured this commitment effectively.

Capacity Building
The monitoring system links project outputs and goals through nested logframes to the democratisation objectives of the Swiss Cooperation Office. As managing agency, CIRa has contributed palpably to improving the financial accountability standards and project management proficiency among grantees. Organisations are selected because they already have capacity, but CIRa also provides tailored training on topics such as monitoring, strategic and annual planning, and financial and management systems. Training includes accompaniment and mentoring, templates, software and skill-sharing between organisations. Grantees are obliged to plan their training of the staff and budget for it in their grant applications.

While Civica Mobilitas is not supposed to be a capacity-building project, it is in fact supporting technical capacity in response to grantees' demand. The CSOs are not reporting on results, but on

outputs, and they are not exploring and accounting for changes in the strategic social and administrative arenas in which they work. The programme board, which decides on new grants, does not get project reports. There may be an imbalance in the reporting, with improvements in technical reporting capacity taking precedence over end-of-year or post-grant follow-up or reflections on what lessons have been learnt or strategic impact achieved. A number of our interviewees said that the one-year project grants do not make time for such in-depth consideration and learning. The institutional grants would, in theory, allow for this kind of follow-up.

Civica Results

The overall contribution of Civica to NGO activities in Macedonia is substantial. As one interlocutor pointed out, organisations working on democracy and human rights in Skopje do not find it easy to get funds from local sources. For example there is no corporate backing for such activities. Many of these organisations are not equipped to go after EU funding.

The profile of the combined grantees shows a focus on improving local government and improving the legal environment for social and democratic issues at national level. While it is early days to enumerate achievements, there are some initial patterns. Many concrete achievements can be seen in the form of municipal action plans, byelaws and national legislative amendments (see Table 1 for grants and achievements).

Civica Mobilitas funds several projects and organisations that raise citizen's voice, but mostly at local level. This has the advantage of offering more tangible opportunities for engagement and impacts, but also means that the results are so localise that they do not challenge the system by which power and resources are distributed. Is the SDC programme becoming less challenging as time goes on? In 2003, SDC funded NGO InfoCentar, a unique press centre for strengthening NGOs' public image and PR. It is no longer a grantee, but is a good example of a much needed service.

Despite the efforts that the different organisations put into influencing local and national laws, plans and policies, there is common concern that government often fails to implement or sustain these plans, instead encouraging continuous revision of legislation and byelaws. Civil society is involved in a continuous round of token civic participation without power.

It would be premature to conclude that the grants in Table 1 had not had sustained, or eventual, impact. It is reasonable to hope that Civica project support in 2010-11, or institutional support in 2010-2013, may lead to a grantee having a stronger voice or being more effective at influencing local policy in, say, 2015. However, this is by no means guaranteed, and the current programme design does not afford ways to follow up on it, or make informed conjectures about such prospective future outcomes.

 Few of the organisations can demonstrate strong roots with a community or a membership base that might push the organisations to insist on and achieve longer lasting, deeper-rooted results. Having a constituency within the population is not a criterion for grant selection, or, as yet, an agenda for capacity building within Civica. It may present an agenda for component 2 in the future.

Civil society organisations in the Civica programme fulfil technical project requirements with competence. The support offered by the programme to date, and its administration through CIRa has led to a very impressive upgrading of these capabilities. These technical and bureaucratic results are in line with similar outcomes from the EU and its technical support operation TACSO.

It may be that in future civil society actors need to be challenged on issues of principle and representation as a way of promoting their leverage in a system of highly centralised power and resource distribution. In our interviews we did not find deep concern with the lack of citizen engagement with civil society, low citizen ownership of civil society or widespread pubic mistrust of civil society. No organisational leader we talked to reported spending time on reflexivity or looking for creative interventions that could achieve strategic rather than short term impact.

In sum, a lack of focus on impact, social cause and definition of what change means for them (ie, weak or non-existent theories of change), means that Civica grantees do not capture some of their results (intended or unintended) which are significant if looked at from a social change perspective. There is low capacity for understanding change and impact and reporting on it. If such issues have not been part of the fabric and *raison d'etre* of Macedonian civil society since its origins, they can hardly be expected to shine through in reporting systems. Yet we found much to suggest that promoting them as core values, and adapting reporting systems to reflect progress towards them, may be the way forward for SDC's support to civil society.

Non-SDC Civil Society Programmes

Other externally supported programmes for civil society and governance show similarly technical trajectories, but have more onerous procedures. The EC programme is strongly biased towards technical competence and has increasingly little room for promoting the kind of diverse, constituency-led, learning-oriented or value-based approach to civil society activism that SDC might be able to support. The difficulty lies in the likelihood that it may be the smaller organisations that would be most interested in exploring their constituencies and values. They would be able to do so precisely because they are small, voluntarist and insecure. Unfortunately, individually, they are also less likely to have a large impact on governance practices in Macedonia.

The Kicevo NGO Support Centre is an example of such an organisation. Its work involves monitoring local institutions in terms of equal rights, representation, domestic and international law and presenting its results to the local council. A local councillor made clear to us that the council's relationship with the centre is productive on both sides. She said that it helps her and other councillors identify between the problems they need to work on, which they then take up with relevant programme of the municipality.

Other SDC Programmes: Community Forums

The SDC-supported Community Forums project has undertaken widely admired initiatives that create interfaces between CSOs and government. While the Forums focus on specific and timebound infrastructure issues, they demonstrate possibilities for interfaces on other issues of local

governance. In at least one instance there is already a link between a Civica-supported project and the Community Forum project The work of ADI Gostivar, a project grantee of second round of Civica, connects to the Community Forum project, at first in a few municipalities and now expanding. The successful forum with high citizen participation proved good for the standing of the mayor, so surrounding municipalities applied to join in new phase of the Community Forum Project. Community Forums offer the attraction of putting together municipality and SDC funding. Might the same format be used to talk about policy, social issues and other citizen issues? Citizens who were linked to a CSO network created through Civica Mobilitas might eventually act to hold government to account for continuing to hold community forums, even after the SDC support ends.

SDC Macedonia staff point out that its earlier support to 'topical' forums was not unproblematic and would need careful analysis before any attempt at replication. They strongly endorse our general sense that there is value in developing further the generally successful Community Forum model.

In addition to SDC's civil society and local governance programmes there is also a parliamentary programme, and the three combine together to form the COOF Democratisation Strategy for Macedonia. There are now Parliamentary oversight hearings to which citizens have access. However citizens have not yet taken up this opportunity, a fact which begs important questions about the level of citizen and CSO demand for programmes aiming to increase the formal accountability of elected representatives.

Second Component of Civica Mobilitas

Debates
The second component of Civica Mobilitas focuses on the civil society sector as a whole, aiming to upgrade standards for civil society bodies. It has not been specified in detail and has so far consisted of a number of debates attended by NGOs in Skopje. Among NGOs in Skopje it is largely agreed that the debates, though very interesting and well attended, have not had a strategic result. Debates have concentrated on issues of national-level interest, such as a code of conduct for NGOs, on the understanding that only this overarching level will be common to the broad sweep of civil society. This focus mitigated against interest and eligibility of many of the smaller local organisations. Attendees note that the debates were interesting, but their utility limited by the lack of follow-up. CIRa suggested at one point that ad hoc grants might be used to do follow-up after debates but this suggestion was not taken up; others are of the opinion that if pitched right, the debates will create their own follow-up.

Platforms
Some commentators suggest a need for networking platforms that would promote discussions, start collaborative change process or create blocs to negotiate with powerful institutions. Others note that networking has been tried and has been unsuccessful. These critics wonder if the environment has to ripen before collaboration and collective thinking is feasible. They see the sector as dominated by values of careerism, opportunism and conformism and claim that 'proper civil society'

will not come into being until there is solidarity within the sector, but offer little guidance as to how to achieve such solidarity.

Reconfiguring Understanding of Civil Society

Some feel that civil society should be about civic action, but that the culture in Macedonia is against such action. They claim that the public is not interested in active citizenship, although they will also agree that the public can be roused to action when it comes to issues of ethnicity, religion, or assistance to vulnerable people. Others believe that a granting structure could assist with more effective reaction to unfolding events and developments at particular opportune moments identified by well-informed continuous context-reading. A number of people suggested that civil society should not just be understood as organisations – it could also be understood as any 'agent of change' taking action or speaking out in public life. If this expanded understanding of civil society is accepted, then civil society strengthening, whether through debate or other means, must look beyond the usual organisations and seek inclusion, innovation, communication and broad public engagement.

In general it is felt that to shift civil society beyond a technical level, a certain amount of risk capital is required, to explore, experiment and challenge the status quo. As one commentator pointed out, where civil society take the risks, the government and private sector follow; society and economy expand to encompass new variety.

Our analysis thus far of the state of Macedonian civil society from the perspective of conceiving future SDC interventions can be summed up in this cyclical diagram. Among the 'problem points' it shows, we consider that there are some potential intervention points which offer a way forward, particularly those relating to lack of strategy and impact, lack of constituency, lack of cause and competition for resources. The following section elaborates on this.
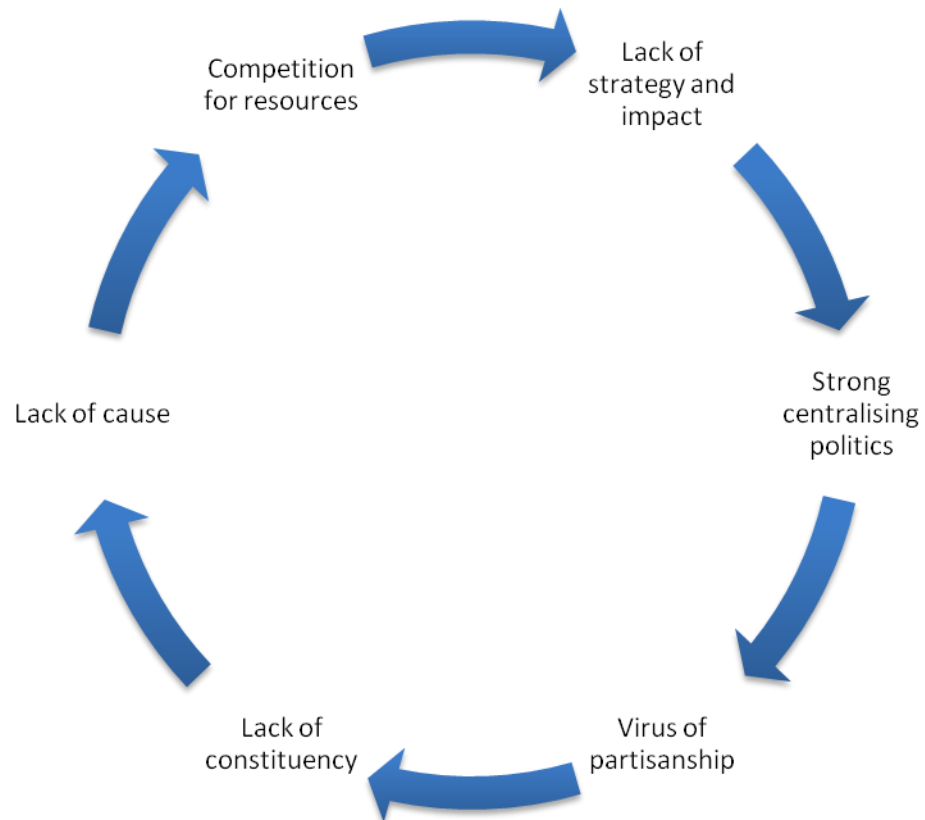
Table 1: Civica Project Analysis – 2010-11 grants

Geography	Institutional Grant	Project Grant	Ad Hoc Grant	All
National	5	6	1	12
Skopje	6	1	2	9
Municipality	4	0	6	10
All	15	7	9	

Organisation	Activity	Reported Achievement
Institutional Grants		
SEGA Youth Coalition	National lobbying platform, youth strategies in 10 municipalities	Municipal youth strategies
MIR Humanitarian	Primary schooling for Roma	Increased school attendance and performance by Roma children.
Antiko Network of women's groups	Strategy against family and proxy voting, network of women's organisations	Adoption of strategy against proxy voting by electoral commission.
Children's Theatre	Theatre for deaf people, festival and workshops	Use of sign language in theatre
Centre for Performing Arts (national)	Conference on cultural life	
Youth Cultural Center - (Bitola)	Volunteering in 6 municipalities	Youth awareness of local government
FOCUS - (Veles)	Public hearings in 4 municipalities	Municipal and corporate contributions to poorest
Foundation for Local Community Development (Stip)	Training for employment civil society and discrimination protection	Increased local employment

Centre for Sustainable Community Dev. (Debar)	Environmental protection	Clean beaches, trees planted.
Center for Civic Communications (Skopje)	Monitoring public procurement, legislative amendments, journalist training	Legal amendments on procurement passed.
Zrudenska (Skopje)	Law on equal opportunities for women and men, report on progress towards equality	Rules of procedure established in one municipality
Polio Plus (Skopje)	61 amendments. Disability awareness	Parliament accepted 31 amendments to national law, local municipal plans drafted.
COM Consumer's Organisation (Skopje)	Law and awareness on consumer protection	Consumer protection programs adopted by 20 municipalities
Civil (Skopje)	Conference on political culture including politicians of big parties	Political parties sat at same table
Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of Women (Skopje)	Study on women's access to health, and on discrimination of vulnerable women	Local action plans in two municipalities
Project Grants		
HERA (national)	Sexual health education in 11 municipalities	Financial support from 6 municipalities to local action plans
Forum CSRD (national)	Survey of procedures and management in local government	Municipality websites and newsletters.
Evro Balkan (Skopje)	Index of social inclusion	Information on social inclusion
Civic Education Centre MCEC	Inter ethnic dialogue in schools	

(national)		
MOST (national)	Citizens meetings with local government, electoral reform	Budget priorities listed by citizens in 6 municipalities
Association of Special Educators (national)	Special needs educators in municipalities	2 municipalities hired special needs educators, one provided resources for a volunteer.
Helsinki Committee (national)	30 workshops in 84 municipalities on human rights in local budgets	Public awareness on human rights raised, information made public
Ad Hoc Grants		
Youth for Youth (Skopje)	Students in public urban planning discussions	Public awareness of urban planning issues
Mesecina (Debar)	Youth engage with local government	Young Roma youth platform in municipal government
Millenium (Vrapciste)	Civic associations & meetings	List of priorities
Youth with disabilities – (Skopje)	Personal assistants for students, data collection on disability	2 Municipalities in Skopje paid for personal assistants. Ministry of Education announced hire of special educators in 12 municipalities
Pravdina (Strumica)	Anti-corruption	MOU with anti-corruption commission
Mozaik (Caska)	Rural interethnic cultural centre, English teaching, internet	40 children learn together
Media Plus (national)	10 radio programmes based on citizen's issues	Media freedom emphasised.

Women of Sveti Nikole (Sveti Nikole)	New neighbourhood women's groups, local budget analysis	Requests to mayor
Porta (Strumica)	Monitoring law on discrimination at local level	Report

3. Recommendations

We take as starting parameters that:

(i)   While our TOR requests us to identify and recommend international state-of-the-art practices, there are clearly a number of contextual factors that limit the applicability of models derived from international experience. We have been mindful of this in selecting the examples and practices, and are mindful of it in the way that we present them. Rather than presenting models used elsewhere as directly replicable here, we use a set of concrete examples (in Annexes 1-13) as a 'menu of options', and suggest that various combinations of elements of their processes or content, brought together in various packages, as considered appropriate and feasible by SDC Macedonia staff, could offer useful ways to pursue the pathways that our reading of the context suggests are most strategic. We have presented these twelve in what we perceive to be descending order of relevance and usefulness for present purposes.

(ii)   SDC's status as an official donor agency constitutes both a constraint and an opportunity for the agency. On the one hand, the dominant role aid donors have played in shaping civil society in Macedonia has had some outcomes that are not conducive to a sustainable, rooted, 'authentic' civil society, and SDC does not wish to add to these. Also, as part of the Swiss government it needs to nurture a constructive partnership with the Government of Macedonia. On the other hand, being an official agency gives it legitimacy and access to work with central and local government in its Rule of Law and Democracy work (within which Civica Mobilitas is located, in the Facilitating Decentralization portfolio. The success of SDC's Community Forum programme and SDC's relative good access to government demonstrates this.

(iii)   CSOs in Macedonia operate in a socio-political context of polarized and adversarial positions. Few escape labelling and stigmatization; few are perceived as politically independent. Interventions should avoid compromising CSOs' political independence or further polarizing the civil sphere.

(iv)   The grant-giving component of CM will continue, in a similar form to Phase 1 though not identical.

(v)   The debate format and the debate agenda of the second component in Phase 1 could be improved on in various respects, especially in that the small number of common interests among CSOs makes it hard to compile a broadly appealing debates agenda and in the lack of follow-up or 'embeddedness' of the debates.

(vi)   The comparative advantage that SDC Macedonia has developed in its support of civil society is not a specific sectoral focus (eg CSOs in the health or agriculture field), but in its experience of working with and for the strengthening of civil society as a whole. Civica Mobilitas should thus continue to strengthen civil society as a whole by working on cross-cutting aspects and concerns. Examples of these are CSOs' strategic orientation, their value base and their credentials as representatives of their constituents' interests and opinions.

(vii)   SDC Macedonia, and we, recognise clearly that civic activism goes far beyond the actions of NGOs or civil society more broadly. As one actor in a complex socio-political environment, SDC's 'comparative advantage' lies more in supporting CSOs registered with government than in supporting less formal, potentially more risky forms of activism such as protest movements. Our recommendations are mindful of this, but highlight the opportunities we see for SDC to diversify its support beyond formal CSOs, while remaining within the contours of its own mandate and identity.

What we recommend: the 'Developing Roots' concept

Viewed in comparison to civil society elsewhere, the heavily donor-influenced process of civil society formation in Macedonia has given rise to a plethora of organisations with weak value bases, little or no constituency, weak links to constituencies, weak or non-existent solidarity with each other as a sector, weak legitimacy as representatives of citizens' opinion, and few common interests given that their history has been one of competing for external funding and internal patronage. To fulfil its supposed potential in a state in transition towards decentralised democratic governance, Macedonia's civil society needs to gain credibility with the public and the power to engage, challenge and influence government at central and local levels over social and political issues.

SDC wishes to support CSOs to acquire voice in society, roles in constructing a pluralist democracy, legitimacy to challenge the government and hold it to account, and independence from the donors that have brought them into being but are now withdrawing. A delicate balance needs to be struck between continuing to strengthen civil society and avoiding furthering donor interference and aid-dependence.

A vital prerequisite appears to be deeper social roots and stronger individual and collective identity among CSOs. We suggest that SDC can best pursue this through offering a second component to Civica Mobilitas, 'Developing Roots', that explicitly fosters and facilitates a deep, far-reaching process of self-exploration and construction of value bases and civic credentials, helping them put down roots in constituencies which perceive them as legitimate allies or social representatives. So little is the lack of deep social roots perceived to be a problem by the CSOs themselves (especially the most technocratic and entrepreneurial ones), that the process will have to be designed and delivered carefully so as not to make them feel threatened by the challenge to outline their constituency and their social *raison d'etre.*

Essentially, SDC's mission is to support those who do seek to be social change agents and contribute to a strong civil society sector that makes a tangible contribution to the development of Macedonia's society. It is not to support CSOs that are micro-enterprises. Therefore it seems reasonable for SDC to focus its efforts on those CSOs that respond positively to an invitation to strengthen their identity and roots as social change agents.

In terms of **process**, we recommend that the Phase 2 of the Civica Mobilitas programme issue an invitation to CSOs to join a collective, structured, three- to four-year-long process of self-aware reflection and learning about civil society identity, values, principles, constituencies and theories of change, with a view to developing their 'social roots' or constituencies and their relationships with these; and articulating better the social or governance-related causes they advance and the theories of change, programme logics or causal pathways they use to do so.

The 'Developing Roots' **process** would contain elements of the following:

- A thematically-defined, learning-focused programme, the theme in this case being the development of deeper roots and values (see Examples AcT; DFID -GTF/TripleLine)

- A learning network in-country (a 'learning caravan') and connecting to international learning networks (see Examples ICCO Networking for Learning; Tiri; Champions of Participation)
- A learning trajectory that develops understanding of social activism over a period of time (see Examples IDS PPSC Learning Trajectories; BINGO process)
- A way to foster partnership between participant organisations (see Example Romania Civil Society Strengthening Programme)

In terms of **content,** the 'Developing Roots' component would focus on:

- strengthening the participants' definition of their cause, constituency and theory of change (see Examples AcT; ICCO Shared political context analysis; PPSC Power analysis; HIVOS handbook; PPSC ToC work; ToC Online community),
- supporting them to put down deeper roots in their constituencies (see Examples Romania Civil Society Strengthening Programme; AcT; Tanzanian Media Fund; Tiri Integrity ´Work and NIR)
- work with these constituencies more legitimately, strategically, transparently and appropriately (see Examples AcT; Civicus LTA project; Tiri)
- monitor and assess the impact of their work in a way compatible with their role as change agents in an emerging democracy, in addition to doing so in ways that meet contemporary technical requirements such as those applied by CIRa in component 1 (see Example ActionAid ALPS, AcT, PPSC Power analysis re accountability impact assessment).

Given the degree of interest in NGO certification processes that we detected, it may be strategic to offer participants certification as social change agents on completion or at a key point of the process (this would require reflection as to appropriate qualifying criteria). Some CSOs' participation will probably consist of reframing their existing purpose, values and pathways in a more conscious way to be more explicitly transformative; others will probably have to undertake potentially disruptive internal reflection and re-visioning processes and make far-reaching organisational changes on the way to becoming more deliberate and focused social change agents.

A few other subjects and topics were specifically mentioned by our respondents as relevant or interesting for inclusion in component 2 in Phase 2. Here we list the suggestions, together with our appraisal of them:

- *A national accounting protocol system for NGOs*. We consider this falls more within the standard and technically-oriented 'capacity-building' rubric than within the sort of process and value-drive approach we are proposing for component 2.
- *Cooperation with the media*, as one segment of civil society. This was cited by TACSO as something that is not well-covered by other actors, itself included. Although SDC has not traditionally partnered with media actors in civil society, these could play an important role in addressing the challenges SDC's civil society programme seeks to address, and surely could benefit from the sort of process and content that we are proposing for component 2. We would therefore urge SDC to consider including them, and we present one example specifically intended to support this recommendation.
- *National-level topics.* Certain respondents considered that national-level topics of presumed interest to civil society at large were the best focus for component 2. We question this in the light of the lukewarm feedback we received on the Phase 1 series of debates on national-level topics, and also on the basis that governance work by civil society at national level seems to offer fewer successes or useable lessons than local governance work, suggesting that a better

strategy would be to amplify and disseminate local-level work so that it reaches a nationally-dispersed group of interested peer CSOs and to connect these CSOs together through the learning process. (A distinction does need to be drawn between *national-level topics'* like the Phase 1 debate topics (the role of the donor community in civil society in Macedonia, the level of public understanding of civil society's role, and the need for a Code of Ethics for civil society), and topics of *sector-wide relevance* such as the strengthening of relations with constituencies; or the building of internal organisational ethics and accountability.

- *Challenging donor practices and attitudes*. Donors themselves need to be challenged to adjust their preconceptions and practices where these militate against stronger, more rooted and value-based CSOs. Examples cited were the way some donors use audits to 'police' organisations without formative inputs to help them learn from audit processes; the donor practice of demanding project audits when only institutional audits actually serve the intended purpose; and a narrowly financial concept of accountability and auditing that distorts 'upwards accountability' principles and practices and thwarts more holistic understandings of accountability based on performance, impact and learning. We applaud this suggestion, while noting that it opens up another panoply of issues from those we recommend as central, and is perhaps less relevant than these given that donor presence and influence are diminishing and becoming evermore concentrated in a handful of bilateral and the EU.

Who we recommend focusing on: 'Developing Roots' participants

The 'Developing Roots' component may logically lead SDC to shift its support to different organisations and its relationships to different individuals, rather than trying to change the same individuals and organisations that Civica Mobilitas has worked with hitherto. It is important that this opportunity be taken to deliberate over the 'who' question. Does 'Developing Roots' want to end up supporting the same large, high-exposure, high-profile CSOs that come up in every initiative and discussion? Does it want to focus on the CSOs that are current or ex- Civica or SDC grantees? Does Civica Phase 2 want to use the grant-giving component to support local-level CSOs working on service delivery and 'Developing Roots' to support a quite different kind of organisation explicitoly committed to social change? Does it want to offer both the grant-giving component and 'Developing Roots' together, as a holistic package, to the same group of organisations? How can it take account of the fact that some organisations might be keen on 'Developing Roots' though do not need to avail themselves of the grant-giving component?

The large, well-established 'usual suspects', while all lacking in some of the process and content dimensions sketched out above, are possibly not the actors that offer SDC the most potential for transformative work with civil society. The medium-sized and local CSOs both offer potential, and have greater need of SDC support than their larger peers, given the shift from bilateral grant schemes towards larger and more formalised EU funding sources. One respondent suggested focusing on 'quality, not quantity', working with twelve or so medium-sized organisations, to maximise impact, reduce risk, and ensure that this group is not annihilated by the withdrawal of bilateral funding and onerous application and grant management requirements of EU IPA funds. It does seem wise to recognize at the outset that one programme led by one donor cannot change the whole of civil society, and less so in a complex socio-political and organizational context.

We urge SDC to take time to debate this question of 'who' in some detail, while also avoiding a long hiatus in releasing funds (given that Macedonian civil society is suffering the effects of other sources

drying up). As outsiders we are not in the best position to suggest specific organisations but, as a profile that could guide these deliberations, we recommend that 'Developing Roots' should reach out to organisations that are in touch with SDC and offer the highest potential for achieving the purpose of this programme and sub-component., as well as helping to set a new trend in civil society This implies that selection criteria should look less at what they work on than on whether they are potential 'hubs' for driving change in civil society's nature and practice.   The biggest ships are often the hardest to turn around, being most set in their ways and most convinced about their present *modus operandi.*

SDC does not aspire to influence the behaviour of CSOs only, but also of the state actors with which they interact. While the 'Developing Roots' programme is best placed to *directly* support CSOs rather than engage the state, it can address this aspiration *indirectly* via a participatory learning trajectory approach, in which participant CSOs make the focus of their reflective learning process their engagement with local or central government actors.   This approach also has the advantage of being open to less formal, activist-oriented organisations as well as formalised and registered NGOs, and to media actors which engage local and central government as interlocutors and subjects.

It is, of course, impossible to predict with certainty how CSOs will respond to this somewhat unusual invitation from a donor in any case. It would be reasonable to include at least an element of 'cherry-picking' or purposive selection on SDC's part given the experimental and slightly risky nature of this venture, rather than applying a 'democratic' or 'equal opportunities' imperative in the selection process. There is likely to be an important element of self-selection in the organisations that respond to the initial invitation. To ensure that responses are not driven by the funds attached, the process could start with a 'pre-qualifying', 'scoping' or 'pre-Accession' phase that offers relatively little funding and relatively more advisory input and accompaniment. This phase could be oriented to SDC ascertaining (insofar as this is possible) that the organisation as a whole includes a sizeable enough critical mass of actors prepared to:

- develop self-awareness and reflexivity[7]
- engage in a sustained, grounded process of reflective self-critical learning and exchange with diverse peer organisations
- (re)define the organisation as a social change actor, contributing to the internal organisational and personal changes that this calls for.

This could be done through establishing and setting a common task of internal organizational exploratory enquiry by the individuals who respond to the call and are shortlisted, accompanying or mentoring particular moments of the task, and inviting a carefully composed panel to judge their process and output against a set of criteria (to be defined) that reflect content and process concerns outlined above. Some initial applicants will be 'weeded out' through this process. Those that remain can be assumed to offer reasonable prospects for committed and sustained engagement with the rest of the process. Conversely, the 'pre-Accession' phase allows organisations to explore in

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[7] Reflexivity is defined here as organisational habits that question the organisation's own actions and assumptions, noticing discrepancies between espoused values and practice, and taking continuous steps to change with changing circumstances and new insights.

more depth what the involvement would consist of and what 'Developing Roots' would offer, and to establish whether there is enough organisation-wide commitment to it, rather than just the commitment of one or two individuals.

Another important aspect of the 'who' is the balance to be struck between focusing on locally- or nationally-focused, Skopje-based or municipality-based CSOs. The above depiction of the context makes it clear that the prospects for one programme supported by one donor (albeit an important and longstanding one) to change the nature of governance relations between the citizenry and the central government are weak. SDC's traditional strength worldwide is in local decentralized governance; and it is by focusing on the local level of citizen-state relations and accountability that we suspect this component could make most difference. SDC's experience to date suggests that it is at local level that state actors can most readily be persuaded of the *mutual* benefits that engagement with civil society offers them; and that relationships of trust and cooperation can be built. This is not to say that Skopje-based CSOs working nationally or at the level of Skopje municipalities should be excluded from 'Developing Roots', but that a preference should be exercised for those not focused exclusively on national-level issues and happenings in Skopje. The downside of this is that, as noted earlier, local-level impacts often do not add up to demonstrable macro-level change; but if the programme got good at demonstrating impact at the local level and sustaining and building on that impact in a 3-4 year trajectory, that could largely offset this disadvantage, and if its emergent impacts were communicated well enough, they could even induce a 'demonstration effect' at the national level. Similarly, we recommend that the process be a decentralized, 'de-centering' and mobile process, a sort of 'Learning Caravan' that holds its key events in smaller cities and municipalities around the country in succession.

For the second component to be compatible with and even complementary to the grant-giving component requires some small modifications in the grant-giving component. Firstly, 'Developing Roots' needs to add a distinctive value to the grants and associated technical capacity-strengthening. We consider it demonstrated in the description above that the proposed vehicle would do so, having a distinct but complementary thematic focus. Secondly, it needs to help channel SDC support to approximately the same stratum of civil society that has been targeted so far – those large and formal enough to solicit and accept funds from an international donor yet too small and under-resourced to apply for EU IPA funds. Thirdly, although SDC considers that the selection criteria for the first component do *de facto* aim to reach 'authentic' organisations already, the criteria could be modified to make them more *explicitly* connected to the sort of values-focused second component proposed above (eg they could enquire into the applicant's constituency, history of its relationship, how it practises 'downwards accountability' to constituents, etc). SDC does not want its grants to be used as a pump-priming mechanism that enables CSOs to prepare themselves to access EU funding.

A final point relates to the points raised in earlier sections about the intended versus actual use of ad hoc funding in Phase 1 of Civica Mobilitas. We suggest that an ad hoc funding stream be included in 'Developing Roots', reinstating the original purpose of the Phase 1 ad hoc budget line. This will permit SDC (via the programme delivery structure) to respond to hastily formulated, minimally bureaucratic proposals for small funding submitted by CM (component 1 or 2) grantees or other known organisations. The ad hoc funding line can be seen as an incentive to CSOs to undertake continuous, politically astute 'reading' of relevant dimensions of their operating context (eg legal,

judicial or policy developments; social discontent and ways in which it is manifested; turns of events at the regional or international level) and react in ways appropriate to their status as constituency-based representatives of citizens' opinions and societal tendencies.   In addition, it seems wise to build into programme design a 'reserve fund' that can be drawn on should any elements of this adventurous programme design prove more costly, more promising or otherwise deserving of more investment than is anticipated at the design stage.

How: Recommended delivery mechanisms

The mechanism

The shape that we would recommend for 'Developing Roots' is a collective 'learning trajectory' approach (see Examples PPSC Learning Trajectories; BINGO process). This approach is ideal for combining:

- structured, applied, reflective and reflexive learning-in-action;
- mentoring and accompaniment by people or organisations experienced in critical accompaniment to CSOs, to develop aspects of the organisations' capacity that relate more to values and ethos than to technical competence. Mentoring is a tried and tested approach for generating self-critical awareness, among social change practitioners and other kinds of actor;
- cooperation between participant CSOs, including CSOs geographically located at some distance from each other
- a process over some time (up to 3-4 years, in year-long iterative cycles), conducted alongside the participants' normal work and consisting of a new and complementary dimension added to that work.

The proposed 'Developing Roots' (DR) process might look like this:

Table 2: 'Developing Roots' – proposed process

Phase	Action	Aim
Call for applications (1-2 months)	Convene CSOs, requesting them to respond in writing and interview to set of purpose-developed criteria. Possibly include open debating sessions with Developing Roots team and SDC to challenge each other and permit clarification of programme's purpose	Pre-select a shortlist of potentially suitable participants
Pre-qualifying scoping phase (2 months)	Internal organisational exploratory enquiry led by the individuals behind the CSO's application to 'Developing Roots', looking critically into organisational	Ascertain suitability, viability and organisational commitment of shortlisted organisations to join the full

	origins, ethos, cause, constituency, any existing theory of change (implicit or explicit) and relationship with state (albeit at level of local government) Small funding provided for expenses including staff time to conduct enquiry. Mentoring or accompaniment provided by 'DR' staff. Output evaluated by panel/steering committee and final participants selected on that basis.	process
'Learning Caravan' Stage 1	DR staff convene all DR participants to workshop in one non-Skopje location, hosted by one participant CSO/collaborating group of participant CSOs. Includes exposure to hosts' working context, local state counterparts or interlocutors, provision of critical peer feedback, mentoring feedback from DR staff, establishment of common Task to be conducted by all DR participants before CC Stage 2 , for example in relation to constituency building. Funding tranche to participant organisations to cover workshop expenses and participants' time to attend and perform task.	First step on the learning trajectory, including understanding of key issues, familiarity with innovative approaches and appreciation of peer situations.
'Learning Caravan' 2	2-3 months later: DR staff convene all DR participants to second workshop in a second non-Skopje location. Hosting and actions as above, but including structured presentation, critique and feedback on outcomes of CC Stage 1 task. Agreement around a Stage 2 Task. Public event to include constituency, government and others. International visits to other SDC civil	Different location offers new peer situations to appreciate and new 'face' of local government to interact with. Ownership 'shared' with host member organisation.

	society programmes	
	Funding tranche as above	
'Learning Caravan' Stage 3	2-3 months later: As above. Agreement around a Stage 3 Task. Funding tranche as above	Different location offers new peer situations to appreciate. Ownership 'shared' with host member organisation.
'Learning Caravan' Stage 4	2-3 months later: As above. Participatory process evaluation, using as references points all outputs produced since initial exploratory enquiry exercise, workshop reports of Stages 1-3; testimony of participant organisations and other stakeholders; testimony of participant CSOs' constituents and advocacy/accountability targets, etc. 'Handover' session at which outgoing DR participants meet and share experiences with incoming participants selected for next round of DR. Final funding tranche, as above.	Achievement of Year 1 'social change actor certificate'. Learning about learning process itself.
Up to three more successive year-long cycles, developed only schematically in advance and planned in detail in iterative mode depending on progress and outcomes of previous year		

This design would likely lead to the programme containing a 'pyramid of organisations' after the first year or so – some at the apex which had completed year one but were fewer than those that started

out on the journey a year before; and a larger base of the new 'intakes'. The pyramid would grow taller with each year's intake and 'graduation' of one cohort to the next stage.

It is possible to develop reporting milestones or even indicators of progress or achievement for each Stage of the above trajectory. A 'theory of change' approach to the trajectory itself, which spells out the trajectory's goals, pathway, activities, assumptions and the relationships between them, will facilitate the identification of these. They are likely to revolve around changes in values, behaviour and relationships. (To be clear: as well as suggesting that the underlying theory of change of the learning trajectory be made explicit, we have suggested that each participating organisation be supported to make explicit its own theory of change as one stage of the process).

Possible programme management options

There is much to celebrate and congratulate in the technical project management and capacity-strengthening role that CIRa has so far been playing and will likely continue to play on the grant-giving component. Given the different nature of the proposed 'Developing Roots' component, we face the question of who would manage and deliver a second component of this – rather different - nature. This question is complicated by the fact that the sort of focus and expertise required is not readily available among consultants, social organisations, academic establishments or any other potential programme delivery actors within Macedonia. A three-tiered structure arises from the range of suggestions made to us when discussing this question with closely connected and well-informed 'critical friends' of Civica Mobilitas:

(i)   The enlistment of a figure of international renown, with a profile in the Balkans though not from Macedonia, who will be embraced by government, donors and CSOs alike, known for their moral authority, integrity and ability to provide good offices and profile for this sort of initiative. The example cited was Finnish ex-president Martti Ahtisaari.
(ii) the appointment of a mixed national and international steering committee or panel including individuals and/or organisations which do bring the expertise and focus required, and serve in an oversight and advisory capacity in close liaison with the best-qualified local consultant or consultancy organisation/firm available, which would be the prime programme delivery agent. If this option were chosen, it would be important to design the international committee/panel's role so that it could perform in an agile manner despite its geographical distance and dispersion and the part-time nature of its engagement with Civica Mobilitas.
(iii) The appointment of a management team located in Macedonia to do the hands-on operational management and delivery of the programme, possibly drawing on external expertise for specific, specialised inputs such as preparation and facilitation of learning trajectory events.

In the light of CIRa's past and ongoing role in managing the first, grant-giving, component, it will be vital to ensure clarity over where CIRa's role ends and the role of the second component's delivery agents begins. CIRa may be the best-qualified, best-positioned actor to administer financial and grant-processing aspects of 'Developing Roots' alongside those of component 1, even if other actors may be better attuned to the 'Developing Roots' substance.

The 'Developing Roots' funding could be disbursed in such a way as to incentivise cooperation among CSO participants: eg bonuses for CSOs working together on their Tasks or co-hosting

workshops at the various Stages. It could also be used to incentivise matching funding or contributions in kind from local government, eg the use of local government premises and equipment for the workshops, local governments to co-fund the carrying out of the Tasks or support them in kind.

Risks

The greatest risk inherent in the intentions laid out in this Mandate's TOR is that the 'international state of the art' and 'best practice' approaches recommended and implemented turn out not to be appropriate or applicable to this complicated, complex context. An example of international 'best practice' ceases to be a best practice in a far-from-best context. The context and history of donor engagement with civil society in Macedonia makes it easier to be clear about what not to do, than about what to do. This condition means that any recommendation we can make involves a degree of experimentation and corresponding risk. The turbulence of the moment, which was palpable during our week in Macedonia due to the very recent rise in populist nationalism and stoking of anti-EU, anti-Western sentiment, is another source of risk, which we cannot easily size up.
As discussed already, an experimental approach demands a margin for error. An experimental design for component two is on the one hand necessary given the context and history of civil society support programmes, and on the other, risky both inherently and in the light of the complex and shifting context.

The main source of risk in the proposed 'Developing Roots' component is that SDC funds could be provided to organisations, or for actions, that could compromise SDC's or the Swiss government's relationship with the Government of Macedonia. The best preventive measures to guard against this would seem to be firstly, involving in the steering committee or panel actors steeped in local organisational context and knowledge; and secondly, using SDC and the panel members' networks to check the credentials of any organisation or spontaneous expression of civic activism not already familiar to them.

A further risk is that the lack of successes or visible progress in the short or medium term deters adherents and aspiring social change actors. Respondents noted the ever-present risk of 'failure syndrome' in civil society, the tendency to identify goals that are too remote and unattainable and therefore fail in one's efforts and get discouraged. They spoke of how much civil society needs to have demonstrated that civil society actors, not only political parties, can make a difference to society. Guarding against this risk is harder to do, but one way is to ensure that the 'Developing Roots' process supports participants to frame their own process goals in achievable terms and within realistic and proximate time horizons, to help ensure they build up and sustain momentum.

Annexes 1-13 - Examples and Models

1. AcT Programme Tanzania

2. Triple Line - Governance and Transparency Fund Learning Component

3. Tiri - Network for Integrity in Reconstruction

4. IDS Power, Participation and Social Change Team - Learning Trajectories

5. Tanzania Media Fund

6. CIVICUS - Legitimacy, Transparency and Accountability Learning Platform

7. Action Aid - Accountability, Learning and Planning System

8. IDS - International Workshop for Champions of Participation in Local Government

9. IDS - Big International NGO process

10. HIVOS/IDS - Theory of Change

11. ICCO - Shared political context analysis

12. World Learning - Romania Civil Society Strengthening Programme

1. AcT Accountability in Tanzania Programme

The AcT Accountability Programme provides grants to CSOs working in the area of democratic governance and accountability in Tanzania, and supports their *learning for change strategies*. CSOs pass the first round of the application process if they submit a convincing theory of change. AcT then reviews organisation documents and strategic plan, and then the level of support is determined in negotiation, while also discussing how the strategic plan can be improved. Their approach is based around the following principles:

- Supporting a **shift in focus** of activities from the top-down to the bottom-up
- **Facilitating linkages** between different initiatives, institutions and reforms
- Adopting a **partnership approach**: work with and through partners and providing active support in programming and follow up
- Making **learning a priority** at all levels of the programme

There are currently 17 grantees that have joined the programme. They get support for 1 to 2 years, with grants from 60,000 GBP up to 650,000GPB.

Learning

AcT organises a range of activities to assist the grantees to better understand the accountability environment they are trying to influence, facilitating and documenting learning opportunities and undertaking policy-relevant research:

- Learning events: quarterly half-day meetings, for which the participants set the agenda. Critical questions about the role of CSOs are discussed. Different formats are used, i.e. World Café or open space sessions, with a facilitator;
- Publication of Act Updates with articles about CSO best practices;
- Collaboration with Uwazi, an NGO that collects and publishes information about legislation, policies, population data that CSOs can use for their context analysis;
- Outcome mapping excercises;
- Commissioned research.

Outcome Mapping Approaches

CSOs are encouraged to do this as part of the grant process. AcT seeks to ensure that CSO partners have clearly defined outcomes and that they adopt realistic strategies to achieve them. To be realistic, strategies must above all be grounded in the political-economic context in which change is to take place. As organisations learn from the successes and challenges they face, they will be able to report on what they are achieving and what works in driving greater accountability. Those strengths are then of use to all partners and vital to AcT in fulfilling its reporting obligations. CSOs are assigned a 'mentor' by AcT. These mentors are AcT staff.

Act has developed its own approach to outcome mapping, adapted from a tested methodology called the RAPID Outcome Mapping Approach. This was developed by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) to be used for policy change initiatives. It builds on other approaches to Outcome Mapping, adding a component of political economy analysis.

The approach involves the use of a number of tools that guide an organisation through the following basic steps:

- Define and agree on the outcomes of the initiative (project or programme);
- Understand and map the policy context;
- Identify key policy actors;
- Develop a theory of change;
- Establish entry points and form a strategy;
- Analyse internal capacity to affect change; and,
- Develop tools for monitoring and learning.

http://www.accountability.or.tz/outcome-mapping-approach/

The Resource Guide for outcome mapping:

http://www.accountability.or.tz/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/AcT-Resource-Guide1.pdf

Commentary

AcT is a model of re-granting which seeks to add value to the grant through additional accompaniment to CSOs. The theme is relevant to the aims of Civica Mobilitas. Its promotion of Outcome Mapping could be useful in helping CSOs in Macedonia to look at their work and their role in society differently.

In 2011 a review of AcT was carried out by ODI by studying 4 partners in-depth. In general, the CSOs were positive about OM, especially about the thorough process approach. They felt it helped to seek transformative change through advocacy and citizen engagement. It helped in identifying with whom they should work and to what end. An important recommendation was to emphasise the OM as iterative, recurring process, not a one-off. A second is that AcT has to ensure that OM becomes embedded in CSO practice, in order to guarantee broad support.

Opinions varied as to the effect of mentoring advice, reflecting different perspectives on e.g. advocacy strategies. AcT is considered to be in favour of more confrontational approaches to government, whereas some CSOs perceive this as risky. But generally this function is well appreciated. The quality and content of mentoring would need to be carefully considered if any part of this approach were to be adopted in Macedonia.

ODI report: http://www.accountability.or.tz/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/042011-RAPID-OM-report-_2_.pdf

2.   Triple Line - Governance and Transparency Fund Learning

The DFID Governance and Transparency Fund (GTF) is an international fund for CSOs working on governance, rights, and accountability. Triple Line supports the GTF with a focus on learning component for the grantees: organising workshops and providing technical assistance face to face

and online. The GTF partner portfolio is large –some 38 programmes in over 100 countries –covering a wide range of approaches to governance and learning; and to CSO partnerships. A key characteristic is that the programme has built a structure for learning into the programme from the outset. Applicants are obliged to design learning strategies and mechanisms for sharing experiences across the diverse range of partners. These had to be incorporated into logframes and clearly relate to GTF goals and outcomes. Learning content includes the following:

Contextual/ Political analysis to inform the <u>baseline</u> *and* <u>progress</u> of programmes:

- Contextual or political analysis at the start has informed the baseline for programme interventions and even identified gaps or opportunities in the original plans. This has resulted in identifying new governance issues and advocacy targets on which to focus, revising work plans and activity schedules, re-assessing risks and so on.
- A key learning point is that political analysis has not only been used to provide a rationale for GTF programmes at the inception stage, but analyses are actively used to guide and adapt interventions during the course of the programme. Tools have been developed to map political changes – and adapt accordingly - during the programme implementation.
- Power analysis and developing a Theory of Change have helped partners to carry out context analysis. Theories of change have to be tested rigorously on the ground. Partners have to be ready to challenge their own assumptions.

Coalitions to strengthen learning and advocacy**:**

- Networks committed to informing people about corruption and mismanagement of public resources.
- Gender coalitions. Eg. the Southern Africa Gender Protocol Alliance organises sector-focused forums. Members are divided into six thematic cluster areas: (1) constitutional and legal rights, (2) gender and governance, (3) economic justice, (4) gender violence, (5) sexual and reproductive rights and (6) gender and the media

Accountability Tools

- Scoring systems enable citizens to express their content/discontent with government performance.
- integrated media tools, e.g. opinion polling, perception surveys
  www.tripleline.com

Report (June 2010) *Learning from DFID's Governance and Transparency Fund*.

http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/funding/gtf/GTF-learning-paper-1.pdf

Commentary

A thematically relevant model of granting, which seeks to add value to the grant through additional learning-focused accompaniment to CSOs. However, this model puts less emphasis on values and constituencies, and more on political and power analysis, linked to strategy and action.

3. Tiri - Network for Integrity Reconstruction

Tiri's approach centres on facilitating and supporting collaborative, locally-focused interaction between different stakeholder constituencies to develop practical, effective and scalable solutions to identified challenges that promote greater integrity in public and private sector governance, particularly in relation to the management and allocation of public resources. Tiri work especially in areas that have been through recent disasters and upheavals and are dealing with governance issues relating to reconstruction.

Tiri's tools for effective and lasting transformations build on the existing resources found within organisations. Only once the reform potential of an organisation has been exhausted are other options explored.

The organisation lays particular emphasis on **the transformative role of the citizen** in integrity building, promoting an approach, in which:

i) Citizens are empowered and encouraged to take an active part in "building the state from below", gradually gaining entitlements;
ii) The state becomes open and responsive to their active participation in the process;
iii) The result is strengthening of the state's ability to meet its citizens' expectations and requirements.

Integrity@Work: for leaders

Tiri recognizes that structural reform in governance is often ineffective without cultural and behavioural change. Integrity@Work therefore, focuses on leadership and agency. The immediate goal of Integrity@Work is the 'professionalization' of significant numbers of senior and middle-level public officials. The principal users of the outputs of a project include:

- public administration institutions
- anti-corruption agencies and similar investigatory authorities
- colleges of public administration and university departments
- NGOs, civil society, journalists, researchers and donors

The project uses an innovative and tested combination of teaching methods, including realistic video case-scenarios, case studies, small group tasks and direct teacher input. The case studies are collected on DVD along with supporting resources such as interviews with senior officials, laws, code of ethics and world best practice. Tiri has developed an online assessment process, which can be used to test participants' skills and knowledge objectively. The approach has been shown to significantly strengthen the professional 'ethical competence' of public servants and their managers, so they can identify and resolve integrity and ethics issues relevant to their official tasks.

Network Integrity Reconstruction (NIR) in post-conflict settings.

In post-conflict settings, weak accountability and corruption often become entrenched, leading to disenchantment with the international community and government. Public participation is low, information is hard to come by, expectations are not met or balanced, and citizens are frustrated.The Network for Integrity in Reconstruction (NIR) calls for an approach to reconstruction that empowers the population, restores hope and avoids feeding cynicism. NIR supports civil society

organizations that monitor how accountable, competent and corruption-prone post-war reconstruction aid programmes are. Partner organizations build the long-term capacities of communities to monitor and report their findings to the public, their government and donors. They monitor in partnership with local communities, municipalities, district offices and other relevant bodies.

NIR Activities:

- Summer University - NIR partners participate in an annual summer university course on integrity reform and strategic corruption control at the Centre for Policy Studies, Central European University in Budapest. At the course, Tiri and York University's Post War Reconstruction and Development Unit further the development of innovative approaches to implementing integrity reform in post-war countries. Participants develop practical tools to address the challenges faced by integrity reformers. Tiri provides scholarships to NIR partners for this course, as well as for other programmes on corruption control at leading universities. Importantly, the training involves both civil society groups as well as their governmental counterparts.
- Needs-based training workshops in partner countries
- NIR participation in regional needs-based training workshops
- Reconstruction National Integrity System: a framework to assess the impacts of the conflict, multiple political and institutional issues, and the role of donors.

http://www.tiri.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=67&Itemid=

Tiri has published about its work in Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina

http://www.tiri.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=68&Itemid=

Commentary

Tiri's work uses an *approach* that may be highly relevant to the situation civil society and its relations to government in Macedonia. Much of the *thematic focus* may also be also relevant. Convening around the idea of **integrity**, the programme is able to draw in both CSOs and government and create balanced dialogue. The model could be emulated here –civil society and government champions working in unusually difficult situations meet and learn from one another. SDC's own Democracy and Local Governance Network (DLGN) might present a potential channel for a similar engagement between SDC partners facing similar political and governmental situations in different parts of the world.

4.   IDS Power, Participation and Social Change Team - Learning Trajectories and Power Analysis

The Power, Participation and Social Change Team (PPSC) at IDS organises and facilitates various trajectories for government and CSO actors to help them reflect on their work and the international political context, and formulate their theories of change. The team has facilitated power analysis trainings and workshops in various forms, varying from more intense trajectories to 'light' versions of a number of days. These are often organised as part of broader organisational learning strategies.

The approach involves experiential learning, combining one or more face-to-face workshops with periods of 'action learning' – where staff adapt and apply the methods in their own organisational practices and partnerships, combined with *coaching* provided by the facilitators. The action learning approach, with accompaniment has been found more effective than 'one-off' trainings or workshops. The length of the process can vary in length from one workshop (with assigned and supported activities by participants before and after the workshop) to between two and four workshops spread over 3-10 months (with periods of practice, coaching and reflection in between). With active leadership from the participating organisations, these events may be self-organised, with remote support and teleconferencing from IDS.

The content includes power analysis along with a wider interrogation of values of social change. These can be applied in the elaboration of baselines and theories of change. An example may be found in using the framework known as the 'powercube'. The approach suggests that power may be analysed across three dimensions – the 'spaces' in which power occurs; the forms in which it manifests itself and the levels of authority which are involved. Each interacts with the other, such that what looks like change in one dimension may in fact be limited or contravened by what is going on in other dimensions. For instance, while transparency mechanisms may appear to open up 'closed spaces' by making them more accessible and visible, 'hidden' and 'invisible' forms of power may prevent these frameworks from being effective. Or, while citizens may strive to monitor budgets at the local level, in fact the lack of transparency or accountability of budget processes at higher levels of governance may limit their prospects of bringing about real change.

Raji Hunjan and Jethro Pettit (2011) *Power: A Practical Guide for Facilitating Social Change.* Published by Carnegie UK, Democracy and Civil Society Programme

www.powercube.net

http://www.ids.ac.uk/go/research-teams/participation-power-and-social-change-team

Commentary

This approach has potential to support those civil society organisations that identify themselves as interested in exploring and developing their values and principles, as well as for designing and discussing their work to build constituencies.

5.   Tanzania Media Fund

The Tanzania Media Fund is implemented by Hivos (NL) and funded through pooled funding from SDC, DFID, Dutch Embassy, Irish Aid and the Danish Embassy. TMF aims to boost media productivity and quality in Tanzania. It does this with grants, capacity building and strengthening networks in Tanzania (2008-2011). The fund provides 200 grants annually for journalists. These enable them to follow up newsworthy leads in a sound manner, involve in in-depth investigative journalism and tackle themes that are in the interest of the general public but not necessarily popular with commercial and government institutions. Special attention is paid to issues concerning people in the rural areas, women and people living with HIV-AIDS.

Grants also enable media organisations to implement media development initiatives and to successfully represent their constituency in media debates - thus strengthening the position of journalists.

All participants are enlisted in the Media Up programme: an on- and offline learning programme in partnership with local and international media trainers and training institutions in the following process:

1. Preparing - grantees participate in group sessions focused on developing practical journalism skills. Through role-plays and scenarios based on their actual projects, grantees learn how to seek out quality sources and how to ask good questions.
2. Learning by Doing - throughout their projects, grantees have access to expert support and mentorship. As a result, grantees become better researchers, news analysts, and writers.
3. Reflection - after grantees have published or broadcast their stories, they participate in reflection sessions about their experiences and the quality and real-world effects of their work. Sessions include open, candid peer-review and one-on-one mentoring.

Furthermore by encouraging networking, knowledge sharing and collaboration through the Friends of the Fund (a network of media and other experts that support the TMF through advice and *ad hoc* input) and an Alumni network of participants, active local media networks are established.

http://www.tmf.or.tz/content/learning-programme

Commentary

A model of re-granting in thematically relevant area. Media may have the potential to give independent political and social analysis in Macedonia and support other parts of civil society in efforts for political pluralism and integrity. The learning accompaniment offers both grantee learning and peer support and the development of networks. Any support to alternative media, rather than mainstream media houses would be especially relevant to the notion of broadening the public debate in Macedonia.

6. CIVICUS - Learning project Legitimacy, Transparency and Accountability

The aim of the Legitimacy, Transparency and Accountability (LTA) project at CIVICUS is to improve public trust and the credibility of civil society organisations (CSOs) and their activities through the enhancement of their accountability systems and structures. CIVICUS believes that both the freedom to operate and the ability to do so in a responsible manner is critical for ensuring civil society actors are able to effectively represent their constituencies and support democratic decision making. The accountability of CSOs is essential for the legitimacy, sustainability, effectiveness and protection of the sector.

The programme convenes and engages partners around the world on LTA issues. It implements a series of activities to help national associations and other groups concerned with strengthening civil society capacities to deal with LTA challenges; generate and analyse necessary information; and enable organisations to learn about methods and techniques they could use in their organization and networks.

CIVICUS' role is in bridging, connecting and convening LTA practitioners (e.g. national associations and networks), international organisations (e.g. Keystone, One World Trust) and academics who are confronted with the challenges and ensure that what is being developed meets the needs of the civil society community around the globe. Moreover, there are many organisations in the world whose mission or parts of their programmes are about or dedicated to LTA. But there is no other organisation which brings them all together and guides CSOs to various resources (websites, events, publications, CIVICUS LTA guiding documents, etc.) to learn more about and practice LTA. CIVICUS adds value to the CSOs, to the organisations working on LTA issues and the space of global civil society is in communicating and promoting the issue among CSOs, and working as a platform for those whose mission the LTA really is, academics, various partners, groups and individual CSOs.

The CIVICUS website provides numerous reports and materials from the CSOs that are linked to LTA, but very little information collected by LTA itself. There are about 5 web-seminar videos introducing LTA and discussing the main issues.

http://lta.civicus.org/about

Commentary

The thematic area is relevant to the Macedonian context. The programme links CSOs into a global debate, increasing the potential for learning, while also supporting individual organisations and networks in analysis and action planning. It may only be relevant to a network – were one to be set up.

7. Action Aid - Accountability, Learning, and Planning System (ALPS)

A comprehensive approach to organisational learning and accountability in ActionAid, the programme links learning and accountability mechanisms to attitudes and programming. ALPS is designed to deepen organisational accountability; ensure that all organisational processes create the space for innovation, learning and critical reflection; ensure that organisational planning and M&E is participatory, transparent and rights based; and that linkages are created cross programmes and cross-country, from local to higher levels. ALPS forms the basis of all the organisation's partnerships and accountability relationships. Core elements:

- **Principles:** *Fulfilment of* all accountability requirements while retaining accountability to poor and excluded people as primary. It strengthens commitment to women's rights. It requires evidence (rigour), emphasizes learning and promotes transparency. It requires a constant analysis of power.
- **Attitudes and behaviours:** staff, volunteers, activists, board members and partners need to hold attitudes and behave in ways that fit with vision, mission and values.
- **Programming approach:** *Consistency* in applying a human rights-based approach programming principles and standards across cycles of appraisal, strategy formulation, planning and reviews/evaluations. It seeks to operationalise systematic linkages across programme levels to achieve synergy.
- **Core programme and organisational processes and standards:** *Alps* sets out the core elements of ActionAid's programme cycle of appraisals, strategy and baseline formulation, planning and reviews/evaluations, and includes programming policies such as the Partnership Policy. *Alps* also includes other organisational processes to further strengthen the accountability of the system, such as audits, governance reviews, organisational staff climate survey, Open Information Policy and compliance policy.

References

ActionAid (2011) *What is ALPS?*

http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/alps2011_aug11.pdf

Guijt, Irene (2004) ALPS Global Review Report. ActionAid

http://www.actionaid.org.uk/_content/documents/ALPSReview.pdf

Commentary

This is a hugely ambitious programme, and not suggested as a model for CSO accountability in Macedonia, but can provide interesting insights for linking various organisational mechanisms together. Its principles are very sound, but operationalisation less so.

In a big international organisation such as ActionAid, it proved quite challenging to implement *Alps*: "*The decentralised nature of ActionAid International (AAI) has meant that ALPs has proven hard to*

implement consistently and thus, in late 2008, some of ALPS' most ardent supporters believed that AAI could benefit from a more rigorous approach to project management and monitoring and evaluation." (Shutt, 2009, p.25).

8.   IDS Power, Participation and Social Change Team - Champions of Participation

In many decentralised democracies, local governments have experience of engaging with citizens, have developed innovative methods for doing so - and have faced challenges as their counterparts. In response to this, the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) co-organised an international workshop in 2007. 45 participants from local governments and citizens' groups across the UK, North America, Europe and other countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, brought together experiences and good practice, as well as the dilemmas and challenges they face. The process had three parts:

1. Workshop: Two days of getting to know each other's background and country context, sharing experience with local government-citizen engagement, academic inputs about local governance and participation.
2. Field visits. Two days visiting several initiatives for local government-citizen engagement. This gave participants the opportunity to see in practice what they had learnt the previous two days, and deepen that understanding.
3. Policy dialogue. One day event in which policy makers from the UK government's Department for International Development (DFID), Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) participated in a dialogue with the workshop participants. Participants could ask critical questions to policy makers and give suggestions.

Findings, experiences, challenges and the way forward were bundled together with 8 case studies provided by participants and published as a Champions of Participation pack. These describe how participants came up with ideas for new partnerships between local governments and citizens, different forms of citizen participation, and how government needs to show appropriate leadership. After the event, participants held local 'Champions of Participation' events along the same lines, and six months later, held a follow-up event at which many of the original Champions got together to share and reflect on what they had done in the intervening time to champion participation in their work.

http://www.ids.ac.uk/go/idsproject/champions-of-participation

Commentary

A learning event and process, including direct field exposure of peers from own and other countries and from the 'opposite' sector (ie both civil society and government actors), which participants universally claimed to be highly enriching in terms of learning. Interfaces already built by local Champions at local level were experienced in person and commented on by visiting Champions; and an interface was built for the Champions of Participation process itself to connect with and make recommendations to key advocacy targets in the UK central government. Sustainability of emergent

processes was supported and tracked by way of follow-up communication and events and the monitoring of commitments made by Champions at the initial workshop.

9. IDS Power, Participation and Social Change Team - Big International NGOs Process (BINGO)

The PPSC organised a start-up meeting and subsequently three 24-hour meetings with staff from 7 Big International NGOs (BINGOs); ActionAid UK, CARE International, Christian Aid, Helvetas, Oxfam GB, Oxfam Novib, Plan International and Practical Action.

Each meeting was convened to around certain key framing questions using participatory exercises and background knowledge from grey and published literature; the experience of members of the

PPSC team; and case studies prepared by BINGO participants. Some of the participants noted in the end that they could have been challenged more, e.g. by actors outside the international aid system such as corporate business.

Issues and questions that were discussed included: mapping the internal and external factors that influence the potential of BINGOs to contribute to shifts in power relations; greater realisation of rights; and enhanced economic, political and social justice for poor and vulnerable people. The term 'progressive social change' was used to encompass these processes and to underline the *political* role of BINGOs. One specific theme was to what extent BINGOs represent the voice of 'the people' or are part of the political elite. Participants acknowledged that BINGO advocacy campaigns are often designed from Head Quarters, but nonetheless there have been successful campaigns such as 'Make Poverty History'. It would be helpful if local branches of BINGOs would reflect on these questions; a) Does INGO advocacy, in the way that it is done and in the issues selected, challenge or perpetuate the uneven power relations that produce poverty and exclusion?; b) What would 'socially progressive' advocacy entail: who would speak, where, on what?

A key lesson from the BINGO process was that: '...*BINGOs need to encourage staff working in different organisational departments and locations to explore and debate their assumptions about the basic terms they use to describe their work, as well as their theories of change*.' (Shutt, 2009, p.8)

A point of learning for the PPSC team was that they ended up organising events that were service oriented, at the expense of overall learning, or doing a meta-level reflection in order to stimulate debate about BINGOs within the team. In response, PPSC engaged in post-event reflections and a learning paper was written (Shutt, 2009).

Also the BINGOs, who were supposed to function as a steering team for promoting learning in their respective organisations, acknowledged that it takes more efforts and resources to put that in

practice. Few of the participants had taken steps to take the outcomes of the BINGO process further in their organisations.

Reference: Shutt, Cathy (2009) 'Changing the World by Changing Ourselves: Reflections from a Bunch of BINGOs.' *IDS Practice Paper*, No. 3, September 2009. Brighton: IDS

10.   Hivos/IDS Theory of Change Guides and Facilitators

Hivos & UNDP jointly published the guidebook: *Theory of Change: A thinking and action approach to navigate in the complexity of social change processes*. The first part of the Guide describes some theoretical elements to consider when designing a Theory of Change applied to social change processes. The second part describes the basic methodological steps to develop in every design of a Theory of Change. For reinforcing this practical part, a workshop route is included, illustrating the dynamics in a workshop of this kind.

Though this is useful as a handbook, as any handbook it risks reducing the complexity of a theory of change process and presents it as an exercise that can be 'ticked off the list'. In reality, theory of change processes can never be a one-off and need iteration on the ground.

http://www.hivos.net/Hivos-Knowledge-Programme/Publications/Pubs/Theory-of-Change

The IDS Participation, Power and Social Change Team (PPSC) offers workshop trajectories that facilitate a theory of change process. This is often done in conjunction with other analytical processes, e.g. context analysis and power analysis. For example, the BINGO process included above also included sessions on theory of change. And as in the learning trajectories, there are phases for shared learning and phases for carrying out action research and learning activities. The idea is to have a continuous process, in which a theory of change is *developed* and *tested* over various points in time. Questions that are addressed in various stages:

- Introduction – why 'theory of change'? What are our implicit and explicit assumptions about how change happens? How are they different or the same? Are our assumptions shared? What are our partners' theories of change?
- [If relevant]: What are rights based approaches (RBAs) and how are they different from conventional or needs-based approaches? Why adopt rights based approaches? How do we think change happens in a rights-based approach? What do RBAs mean in the specific country context?
- What are the challenges for strategy, practice, partnerships?

Connecting theory of change to power:

- Reflection on the approach to change in the country, and its implications for understanding power relations.
- What is power and how does it affect development policy and practice in the country? How does power affect efforts to realise rights?
- What do we need to do to bring a deeper power perspective into our work?

Action:

- Case study work in small groups. This could either be applied to organisational practices (strategy, partnerships, planning, monitoring and evaluation, reporting, learning, etc), or to thematic programme areas (e.g. governance and human rights).
- Personal and collective reflective practice, forming communities of practice, other organisational learning and capacity development options.

Theory of change online community

Theoryofchange.org is an online resource with members from all over the world. It provides the background and key elements of theory of change thinking and processes, offers a member forum, background literature and blogs, and trainings. http://www.theoryofchange.org/

11.   ICCO - Political Context Analysis

ICCO is a Dutch development organisation, which decentralised its programmes to regional offices. In each country they work through a 'programmatic approach' by bringing together various partner CSOs to do political context analysis, prioritise areas of work and learning. ICCO has developed various mechanisms for learning, often bringing partners together around specific themes, as well as for ICCO organisation at large.

Guide for a shared political context analysis

ICCO developed a guide on how to facilitate a <u>shared</u> political context analysis. The guide emphasises the process of bringing diverse actors together. When different actors decide to collaborate on certain issues, it is helpful to do a shared analysis. Such an analysis is an inquiry of a group of partners and other relevant stakeholders working on democratisation, into the actors and institutions (political, legal, societal etc.) that shape inequalities, cause rights violations, and produce patterns of exclusion experienced by marginalised groups. It also looks into the various political spaces (invited, claimed, open) where decision-making takes place and the power relations (hidden, visible, invisible) that unfold in these spaces and influence them in a negative way. The aim of the analysis is to identify the root causes of rights violations and marginalisation in a given context and to identify priorities for change, thus providing a solid basis for strategy development. This shared political context analysis will generally be part of a larger trajectory of programme development, in which the findings are validated and followed by strategy development (or strategy revision) and planning workshops. The guide is meant for ICCO programme officers, programme facilitators and others who are involved in the facilitation of strategic cooperation between different actors working on democratisation.

The consists of a number of sessions to be carried out in a two and half days workshop, in which plenary work is alternated with group exercises. The methodology proposed helps participants to leave their comfort zone with respect to target groups focus and issues. The methodology also seeks to encourage a shift of focus from (short-term) activities planning towards the development of a vision on (long-term) strategic goals. An important source of inspiration has been the power cube (see: www.powercube.net), which has been adapted for the purpose of this guide.

Guide: *Facilitating a Shared Political Context Analysis*

Networking for Learning

ICCO has established learning networks for each of their thematic areas of work, convened by learning facilitators. The learning networks include ICCO programme officers and partners. Web portals are created for each network (ComPart), a Wiki with document depositories, blogs, discussion groups, results of surveys/research, event calendar, online meetings, and a search

function. Learning is driven from a user-perspective. ICCO has paid attention to how the technology best supports knowledge sharing and how it can help taking knowledge further. Occasional off line meetings are also organised. ICCO seeks to develop skills and tool for knowledge communication and develop the organisation into a worldwide learning network. It is not just about 'tools', the organisation is aware that knowledge sharing requires behavioural change and tries to support its staff and partners to realise that.

ICCO published a document in collaboration with ECDPM, a Dutch research institute that works on learning and knowledge management, about learning networks.

Successful learning networks depend on:

- Focus: networks that have concentrated on specific themes were generally the most successful. It is important that members have a shared goal. Activities should focus on joint learning, drawing lessons and elaborating specific proposals, and advocacy. They should support local exchange of ideas and learning among local organisations.
- Daring to share: participants need to be open and willing to learn from each other, and networks therefore do not function without trust. The network organisation plays an important role in fostering those relationships.
- Contributions: participants must have the capacity to contribute: skills, access and time/money available, and built-in space for reflection and learning in their own work.
- Commitment: participants must be committed to the networking activities, they must consider the priorities of the network their own. They must be motivated by self-interest because networking is a potential added-value to their daily work.

About the role of donors the report says:

- When informal networks start formalising, donors should not underestimate the costs of running a network, and that the network will need long-term commitment. Networks should not be funded as 3-year projects, but as ongoing work in progress.
- The more donors take the lead in defining goals, targets, partners and outcomes, the more they will tend to drive the network and lessen chances for ownership and sustainability.
- Donors need to strike a balance between their own learning needs and the objectives of the network.

ICCO (2004) *Networking for learning what can participants do?* Published by ICCO and ECDPM

http://www.mande.co.uk/docs/networkingforlearning.pdf

12. World Learning - Romania Civil Society Strengthening Programme

This CSO programme finished in 2007. It was implemented by World Learning and funded by USAID in Romania, and aimed to strengthen civil society organisations in a transition context where funds were rapidly phasing out. The <u>purpose</u> of the RCSS program was to provide assistance to those NGOs that would promote the development of active, public-policy oriented civil society, and 'watchdog NGOs' that monitor governmental integrity, bring corruption issues into the public agenda and actively promote transparency and accountability in governance.

The programme involved a <u>grant mechanism as well as training</u>, comprising three complementary components: assistance to advocacy work, sustainability of CSOs, and CSO partnerships. Each component consisted of a mix of grants, general and customized training, technical assistance, mentoring, sub-grants, and appropriate civil society strengthening interventions.

Advocacy

The advocacy component dealt with improving advocacy and outreach for civic groups and social service providers. Among the grantees were civic watchdogs, social service organizations and business associations. Strategically awarded grants supported advocacy and policy reform projects, promoting accountability of government, increasing cooperation between CSOs working in the sector and addressing boarder civil society sector development issues.

Grants were distributed by RCSS through a competitive process and encouraged to be joint proposals by groups of NGOs and coalitions.

RCSS facilitated NGOs in forming associations from existing coalitions. RCSS encouraged the use of the 'complete advocacy cycle' and provided training on the skills to engage in the administrative procedures required to implement laws, to monitor compliance and assess and measure the impact of changes in the law which had been effected by NGO advocacy campaigns. At the start, a 'participatory self-assessment tool' was used to reveal the level of development and the capacity of an NGO to relate to, and function in, its external environment. More specific; to effectively advocate for causes and promote policy changes that are part of its stated institutional mission. PPA was carried out in multi-stakeholder groups of each NGO with guidance from RCSS. Based on the outcomes of the PPA, NGOs could submit proposals for small grants for training. At the beginning and at the end of the project the 'Advocacy Index' was used; a participatory exercise that helped participants identify advocacy goals and perceived improvement at the end.

Training and Learning Activities:

- 8 training sessions on issues identified by participating NGOs.
- Meetings and conferences with CSOs and government institutions about i.e. social entrepreneurship, the 2% Law on tax deductible donations in support of NGOs, public budgets and the government's new role in supporting international aid (an obligation under EU regulations).

- Series of publications based on the trainings and conferences.

World Learning implemented a series of inter-related activities to support watchdog and public policy NGOs in enhancing perspectives and skills required to function in the EU environment, to be effective, and to be sustainable representatives of their supporters and constituents.

Sustainability of CSOs

Purpose of this component was to provide watchdog and public policy NGOs with sets of skills and tools they needed to be effective and sustainable in the EU environment. The RCSS sustainability component focused on three areas: organisational sustainability (strategic plans, functioning of boards, staff training); financial sustainability; support to intermediary support organisations.

In the first stage of this component, organisations carried out self-assessments and formulated organisational strategies. Based on these documents the training needs and action plans were formulated. These were then implemented with RSCC technical assistance and grants. During the process, participating CSOs had to monitor their progress and change, and at the end of stage 1 a review was carried out.

Stage 2 was structured opportunity reflection and learning about organizational sustainability and developmental challenges. It stimulated organizational learning practices taking into account the events and changes which these brought about during the implementation of the grant funded sustainability enhancement projects. It encouraged collective reflection about organizational challenges and created a shared understanding of the current organizational status and the desired future for the organization, and this was done through a self-assessment process.

Partnerships

The purpose of the partnership component was to foster collaboration among CSOs. Grants were distributed after a call for proposals for enduring CSO partnerships.

The training activities were designed based on prior knowledge about weakness in cooperation among CSOs and the legislative environment.

RCSS kept a distance, in order not to interfere with the organic process of collaboration. At the same time a close monitoring relationship was established by RCSS through which to appreciate the dynamics of partnership formation and implementation. Through this process it was possible to appreciate the quality and functionality of the partnership arrangements forming in terms of the equality of the relationships, the nature and quality of communications between partners, joint problem solving and decision-making processes and procedures, the benefits accruing to partners and also the positive consequences for Romanian civil society and local communities in terms of the

efficiency and level of impact of actions taken by partners. Monitoring of Partnership activities was undertaken by the RCSS Partnership monitoring team. Training sessions with grantees focused on all these issues.

A Partnership Capacity Assessment Tool (PCAT) was created by RCSS and subsequently refine. The tool assessed partnerships and identified issues which were addressed by NGOs in the actions to create partnerships and enhance their functioning. Evaluating how well partnerships functioned and what could be achieved through them was essential to preserve NGO continued commitment and enthusiasm for the partnerships formed during this project once RCSS support ceased.

Evaluation report (2008): http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDACL190.pdf

World Learning: www.worldlearning.org