

GOOD GOVERNANCE – EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES



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GOOD GOVERNANCE ACTION NETWORK

METAMORPHOSIS 
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MCET

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According to the Progress report of the European Commission for 2014, an empowered civil society is a crucial component of any democratic system and should be recognised and treated as such by the government.

Initiatives like the Good Governance Action Network project, which combine capacity building of civil society organizations with subgranting, enable local and grassroots organizations to work on particular good governance issues affecting the communities they are serving being a good example for enabling civil society development.

Taking this into consideration, the role of civil society in the good governance process is vital for reinforcing the citizen's trust towards state institutions and thus strengthening democracy in the country in general. By exploring various models of civic participation, governments achieve better performance because they become more transparent, more accountable, attain better legitimacy, and improve the quality and effectiveness of the adopted decisions.



AIVO ORAV, Head of Delegation of the European Union

Metamorphosis's mission is to contribute to democracy development and improve the quality of life through innovative knowledge application and sharing. Actually, the citizens' quality of life greatly depends on the governance, hence our efforts through this project and other activities of Metamorphosis to promote the good governance concept and contribute to its implementation.

Good governance, among other things, implies accountability and transparency of authorities on central and local level. It also implies that institutions are objective and effective, and that they include citizens in decision making processes. Briefly, if citizens trust state institutions, if they believe that budget money is spent adequately, that public goods are managed for the benefits of citizens, that their safety and privacy are secured, that they are included in the decision-making processes, then this is what good governance mean, and this leads to stronger democracy and better quality of life.

Regular provision of information to the citizens, their inclusion in consultations and decision-making processes on local and central level is a significant step that symbolizes good governance. Innovative ICT application can significantly contribute and facilitate this project. This is the reason why a model was created and applied in the project Good Governance Action Network that will enable citizens to state their opinion on matters and decisions they consider important, in a simple manner, through the mobile phone application Picodemocracy. This model has already been launched in several municipalities in Macedonia.

Nongovernment organizations play significant role in motivating citizens, and other nongovernment organizations, to follow the work of the state institutions and use available (and even create new) instruments and mechanisms in order to seek better accountability and transparency of the institutions. Within this project, this was done through the creation of educational resources, trainings and small grants for the support of local initiatives that contribute to good governance. Emphasis should be put on the fact that small organizations play critically important role in providing information to citizens and involving citizens of smaller municipalities outside of Skopje, and hence the support by EU programme, IPA Civil Society Facility (CSF) 2012-2013, through the small grants in this project, was highly significant.

We hope that this publication will share our experience and lessons learned from this project so that together we can advance our access and involvement in promoting and applying good governance in Macedonia.



**BARDHYL JASHARI, Director, Metamorphosis –
Foundation for Internet and Society**

The development of the civil society is a necessary component of every transparent, responsible and effective government that focuses on the citizens' needs and strengthens the citizen's support for reform processes through inclusion.

The support of the reforms related to EU accession of the Republic of Macedonia is considered necessary in terms of meeting European standards and developing democratic institutions.

Simultaneously, during the preparation of the European Commission for the new IPA 2 financial instrument, cooperation was initiated between all interested organizations in the part of preparation of opinions and documents that should be properly presented to the Government of RM and EU in the IPA 2 programming process. The objective is to support the process of consultations in which civil society organization can be included to provide their opinion on the future of this financial instrument.

Citizens' involvement in this process is essential, especially for the promotion of the civil activism culture, which is important for EU membership, through the building of active civil society in Macedonia, increase of the capacities for joint work towards progressive reforms.



BOJAN MARICIK, Director, Macedonian Centre for European Training (MCET)

Promoting the good governance concept, which is based on principles of transparency, accountability, participation and rule of law, is a necessary prerequisite for the democratic development of the Republic of Macedonia. This is a process that implies inclusion of different actors in the transparent processes of adoption and implementation of public policies that on the other hand would secure mutual control, reduce the room for corruptive behavior, and completely improve the democratic standards, which is important for the country in the EU accession process.

The civil society plays very important role because through its actions it strives to increase the involvement of citizens in these processes on local and national level. So, the implementation of local initiatives that increase citizens' involvement essentially contributes to the development of the democratic processes in the Republic of Macedonia.

DAMJAN ZDRAVEV, President, Reactor – Research in Action





GOOD GOVERNANCE, ICT AND NEW MEDIA

Information technologies have marked the XX century and are main symbol of the beginning of the XXI century. The dissemination of tools (computers, internet, mobile communication) has enabled the society to acquire the necessary instruments to make the knowledge available to the public, to promote productivity in industry, agriculture, services, as well as to promote the cultural activity. Major challenge in the information era is to avoid the gap between those that have and those that do not have access to goods and skills needed in the digital era.

The information technology can be a powerful tool in the development of new civil awareness, which is critical and participatory-oriented. One of the biggest challenges, which results from technological innovations, is reduction of the digital gap. Although the technology gives great advantages, it also emphasizes the differences between those that can and those that are not ready to use it.

It is considered that the information and communication technologies (ICT) can improve the social indicators, by providing new opportunities for development, strengthening democracy and improving life in underdeveloped countries or regions around the world.

Most importantly, ICT integration generates factor of democratization. ICT should represent means for creating mechanisms and policies subjected to learning new technologies that facilitate the sharing of solutions between the government and citizens. Public policies should be defined that will stimulate ICT use, which would contribute to social inclusion, expansion of human freedom and reduction of digital segregation. One thing is for sure: the problem is not so technical or financial, but rather related to political will and desire for equality.

Good governance is a process of interaction between the government and the society and it can be realized only if government processes are transparent and citizens are organized and voice their priorities and demands to the government bodies. In other words, good governance is manifested through successful interaction of the citizens with government structures – mainly, legislative and executive bodies; and it simultaneously enables decentralization of the decision making process and decentralization of institutions and budgets.

We can be optimists that good governance can be improved with the introduction and intensified use of ICT. ICT presence revives the political relations by enabling direct citizens' participation, avoids mediation, and thus optimizes the process of presenting and enlarging the participatory democracy.

When it comes to the use of ICT in the public sector, three different steps can be identified. Firstly, the increased use of computers is limited with the management. This is very often the case, especially in smaller communities, where the computerization of the administration is the first step towards the use of ICT. The introduction of computers to the public management is the first step to modernization of the internal services of municipal executive bodies, i.e. automation of administrative processes. This facilitates the organization of information through classification process that makes them accessible for the public.

The second step is implementation of e-government (electronic government), in other words, public and government services to be made available for the citizens through electronic (digital) media. This procedure is almost always one-sided, from the government to the citizens, and in most cases it does not allow interaction.

The third step, which is most important, is the use of information and communication technolo-

gies for good governance. ICT is a decisive step in the process of democratization of the public information and in the interaction citizen-government-citizen. The interaction citizen-government guarantees the identification of the priorities and the demands of the public, the responsiveness of the governing body and the improvement of some operational aspects implemented in the relation government – citizen.

Good governance is the basis, and e-governance is the tool. Good governance dictates the design and the form of the e-tools or e-governance in order to improve the outcomes and the processes of governance. E-governance can be effective and efficient tool for good governance only if the process is reformed. One of the main objectives of IT policy is extensive use of IT in the governance process with the aim of providing better services for citizens and increasing the efficiency, transparency and accountability of the government bodies and agencies.

The introduction of ICT is a new form of political relation in which individuals in the society and their representatives, social groups, social organizations, political organizations, can directly act to solve public issues and problems.

The use of ICT as a tool for better governance is also stimulated through organized social movements. Isolated individual uses ICT for personal needs mostly (email, chat, websites for personal interest, consulting commercial services, etc.). In the social movement or within the participatory mechanism led by a social organization, the individual is included in the process of finding informative material (regardless whether is a personal or community interest) and in the interaction with the government. Hence, the realization of the three abovementioned phases is one of the manners in leading the local authorities towards digital and information society. This cycle enables reduction of so-called digital exclusion or digital gap.

The marginalization of citizens in government processes was one of the reasons for slow progress of nations. ICT has the potential to bring each individual in the center of the government processes by changing the nature of the citizen-governance interface.

GOOD GOVERNANCE, RESEARCH AND POLICY CREATION

Among other things, the objective of the project Good Governance Action Network is to increase the involvement of civil society in the public opinion creation, policy creation and decision making processes, with emphasis on good governance, fight against corruption and transparency. In this context, the project aim was to create a sustainable network of organizations that through local actions, support and improved capacities, will increase the transparency, good governance and reduce the corruption. The achievement of these objectives by the civil organizations implies direct inclusion of the communities in the local actions and projects.



(Participants in the Project Management training according to EU rules)

If we take into consideration the project focus which implies continuous monitoring and evaluation of public policies in the area of good governance and implementation thereof, it can be said that the research is one of the project main elements. In this context, the civil organizations' efforts to locate problems and weaknesses and propose and advocate changes must be based on relevant information gathered through professional research process so that arguments could be provided on the basis of relevant evidence.

Still, it must be mentioned that in the inception phase of the project the project partners identified the need to improve the capacities of the civil organizations, especially in the area of research capacities and presentation of research data. Civil society organizations do not sufficiently use the scientific researches as grounds for their actions, and this makes them vulnerable to pressure, it increases the possibility for disputing the credibility of their actions, and more importantly, it limits the possibility for their actions and recommendations for improvement to be evidence-based. Moreover, the preparation of local initiatives and actions based on information gathered in systematized research process provides arguments directed at inclusion of stakeholders in the local processes.

Due to this, a research for assessing the capacities of the organizations part of the grant scheme was conducted within the project component dedicated to improving the capacities. Thus, an assurance was provided that the trainings that were organized really addressed the real needs of the organizations and the projects implemented by them in the areas they act in. Considering the complexity and the political sensitivity of good governance, the fight against corruption and (non)transparency of institutions, a training on free access to public information was

organized within the project. This training enabled the organizations to strategically use this tool as a method to collect information, and most of the organizations used it in the researches they conducted within their projects.

The research as a process was the main component in this project which can be seen from the data that almost all organizations that were implementing projects within the grant scheme conducted researches as well, and with some organizations the researches were central components. The fact that a number of the organizations overcame the desk research phase and created more complex methodologies that enabled them to come to relevant and verified information is encouraging. They did not only provide arguments and evidence for their actions, but tested the institutions and their transparency as well. The research, monitoring and evaluation methodologies for the public policies and the work of the institutions that were used by the organizations contributed to the realistic assessment of the current situation of the good governance, as well as to the identification of corruptive practices and the manners of increasing the transparency of the institutions.

The researches conducted within the project enabled the creation of information base that is publicly available and that can be used as basis for further evaluation of the work of the institutions, as well as of the performance of the organizations in their efforts to promote good governance.

GOOD GOVERNANCE AND EU

EU long-term efforts aim at revitalizing the civil society in Macedonia through the promotion of active civil society, especially through the increase of the capacities of the civil organizations, strengthening their role as proactive actors that cooperate with all stakeholders in the area of social matters, especially in correlation with the implementation of EU acquis, and thus to improve the entire society.

In this sense, the activism of the civil society is essential for the success in the EU accession process. Such activism is based on the idea to promote active civil participation of the civil organizations through the use of available mechanisms on national and international level so that the level of good governance could be improved.



(part of the training Advocacy, free access to information and anti-corruption practices)

Strong civil society is essential component in every democratic system and presents a valuable resource that contributes to building accountable and legitimate countries, strong social cohesion and open democracies. Although a Strategy for cooperation with the civil sector (2012-2017) has already been adopted, the Government should demonstrate greater willingness for cooperation with the sector and emphasize that the development of the civil society is necessary component of every transparent, accountable and effective government that focuses on the citizens' needs and that strengthens the support of the citizens in the reform processes through inclusion. This refers specially to the cooperation with the civil organizations that work on social reforms, gender equality, vulnerable groups (including LGBT community), minorities (including Roma people) and organizations that operate in rural areas.

The support in the reforms related to EU accession is considered necessary in terms of meeting European standards and developing democratic institutions.

The reforms in some of these areas (such as the public administration reform) have stronger political support and are featured in the strategic planning process as well as in the creation of public policies that are coordinated by the ministries and that imply consultations with EU within the Stabilisation and Association Agreement. The abovementioned areas were supported within IPA I with 77 million Euros (12% of the total financial frame), including the funds from the national budget that presented 6,7% of the total investments (or 2 million Euros). The lessons learned from the implementation of IPA I show that the reforms in the areas where there is no binding legislation on EU level are slow or demand greater political support, dedication and coordination with different stakeholders, as well as inclusion and dedication on all levels.

IPA is designed as a complex tool with a specific objective, whose achievement is complex as well – to prepare Macedonia for EU membership through the implementation of the methodology 'learning by doing'. Therefore, IPA regulation projects a process of full-fledged consultations that need to take place in all programming phases, especially during the development of the planning documents for Multi Annual Indicative Programme (MAIP), as well as the operational programmes for different social sectors.

Citizens' involvement in this process is essential, especially for the promotion of the civil activism culture, which is important for the objective of EU membership, through the building of active civil society in Macedonia, increase of the capacities for joint work towards progressive reforms.

In healthy democracy, the civil society provides 'checks' of the government power and presents and advocates for the citizen in the public life. As a result of the legacy of the authoritarian government, the civil society in Macedonia today has limited role in the decision making process, weakened consolidation of democracy and EU accession prospects. The limited involvement of civil society in the government decision-making process is multilateral challenge, common for the Balkan region. On one hand, the governments themselves did not manage to create favorable environment for the participation of the civil sector, and in some cases a hostile atmosphere has been created. On the other hand, the engagement of a number of civil organizations in the legislative matters is a reality, but they lack skills.

In Macedonia, the civil sector is still weak due to the culture of non-involvement and often the decision making processes are not inclusive.



(Part of the Project Management training according to EU rules)

Simultaneously with the preparation of the European Commission for the new IPA 2 financial instrument (applicable to all candidate countries and potential candidates), and for the purpose of supporting the consultation process where civil organizations can be included to state their opinions for the future of this financial instrument, a cooperation was initiated between all interested organizations in the part of preparation of opinions and documents that should be properly presented to the Government of RM and EU in the IPA 2 programming process.

The European Commission commented these efforts in the part 'Democracy and the Rule of Law', under the title 'Civil society' in the 2014 Progress Report, stating: 'Civil society organisations have started to coordinate more with one another on specific topics such as IPA II, and have proposed more structured mechanisms for consulting with the government, based on the sectoral approach'. The most important IPA II benchmarks for the civil society support and non-government actors for the period 2014-2020 are as follows:

Support in the implementation of the Strategy for cooperation with the civil sector with focus on the new advisory body that needs to be established in 2015;

Support for the development of proper mechanisms for cooperation between the civil society/non-government actors and public institutions and better access to public information;
Involvement of the civil society/non-government actors in the process of development, implementation and monitoring of sectoral strategies for EU financial support;

Support for creation of public policies and legal and financial environment for independency and sustainability of the civil organizations so that they can work in a representative, transparent and accountable manner.



The project 'Good Governance Action Network' strengthened the efforts of the civil organizations in the promotion of good governance through the provision of tools, skills and knowledge for the purpose of improving their work, as well as through grants to conduct concrete initiatives. With such tools and trainings, the local civil organizations have significantly improved the horizontal connections with their supporters and the public, and the vertical ones with the government.

Project main objectives:

- Improving the inclusion of civil society in the creation of public opinion, policies and participation in decision-making mechanisms;
- Increasing the civil society capacities to deal with important social matters.

Project specific objective:

- Promoting dynamic civil society that will effectively mobilize citizens to be actively involved in good governance and transparency, as well to influence decision-making processes on local and national level.

Project target groups: citizens, civil associations, national and local institutions, media and political parties.

The project is based on 4 main areas of action:

- building strategies through broad consultation;
- Increasing the civil society capacities;
- small grants for targeted campaigns (processes of financing political parties, application of the right to free access to public information, corruption in public procurement processes, bribe, gifts/sponsorships, elections-related concern, abuse of duty, data protection, etc.);
- building widely spread community.

The project took 18 months and 16 small grants were allocation to the organizations that implemented projects in the field of good governance transparency and corruption.



(training on Online tools and data use)

The participants in the project attended trainings on topics related to the principle of openness, EU Project Management, EU accession, advocacy, free access to information and anti-corruption practices, online tools and data use.

Throughout the project every organization received inputs and recommendation for reaching the defined objectives.

Documents on public policies in the field of anti-corruption and good governance were developed within the project and these documents can be found on www.dobrovladeenje.mk which is a resource center and a platform where materials related to good governance can be found.

One of the tools that resulted from this project is the mobile application Picodemocracy whose aim is to conduct surveys as small referendum, i.e. state bodies, municipalities, NGOs, media to ask simple questions to larger group of citizens, in order to obtain opinion on certain matters. The application users have the opportunity to answer the questions related to their interest and see the opinions of other users at the same time.



(launching of Picodemocracy in EU Info Center)

The application gives opportunity to all interested individuals to be included to the extent they want to be included, and they get a feedback on certain question, and the institutions and the organizations can conduct a survey in a simple manner. This application can be downloaded for free by the users of Android and IOS.

“Picodemocracy” – from tiny droplets to a big wave of democratization

“We don’t know where good information is. That’s why, in general, it’s smarter to cast as wide a net as possible, rather than wasting time figuring out who should be in the group and who should not.”
James Surowiecki, “The wisdom of the crowd”

Every citizen should have the opportunity to voice his opinion in the decision making process on relevant societal issues. In order to make this possible, creating tools that will provide citizens a simple and efficient way to engage is vital to enhancing citizen participation and thus reinforce democracy in general. At the same time, this will boost citizens’ demand for responsibility, transparency and accountability from the state institutions at all levels.

This is exactly the idea behind the Picodemocracy mobile application - it allows anyone interested to be involved on issues important to them to the desired extent and at their own pace, with citi-

zens receiving feedback on a particular issue, while institutions and organizations have the opportunity to survey the public opinion in a very simple way. It is a bilingual application (Macedonian or Albanian language can be used), and the results from the polls can be shared on the social networks.

Among other things, the partner civil organizations that were part of the project Good Governance Action Network, motivated by the challenges related to good governance that we have been facing with for years back and that undermine the basic democratic values, identified the need for joint action for the purpose of improving good governance. For this purpose, 16 grant beneficiaries within the project signed the Declaration - Good Governance Action Network.



(Photo: Meeting for the signing of the Declaration - Good Governance Action Network)



HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTE

The citizens' association Human Rights Institute – Skopje implemented the project ASK! whose main objectives were transparent and accountable society, strengthening the capacities of media and journalists, promoting rule of law, application of laws and strengthening democratic values.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- Educating groups of citizens is the key to promote and effectively exercise human rights;
- Use of all legal remedies in exercising certain rights (for e.g. right to access to public information) enables provision of quality, checked and documented information;
- The creation of black and white lists of institutions that are accountable and transparent is a key motivational factor for such institutions;
- Human rights awareness raising among citizens leads to greater respect and implementation of fundamental rights;
- Citizens must be motivated to exercise their rights, and institutions must be reminded of their legal obligation to respond to such requests which actually reflects the democratic capacity of the whole society;
- The fact that journalists rarely use the Law on Access to Public Information and that the institutions do not reply raises concern because quality research journalism is directly damaged, and thus the citizens' right to be informed is violated.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The existence of legal regulation is not sufficient if it is not implemented;
- Strengthened control upon information holders and respect of legal obligations by information holders: the deadline in which they need to answer the requests, regular update of list of public information on the websites, as well as update of data on the person responsible to share information;
- Opening a debate on the exceptions from the Law on access to public information, whether the current definition after a period of 9 years of functioning of the law can be redefined, narrowed and defined more precisely based on the past practice;
- Stricter control by administrative courts that when bringing decisions on exception from obtaining information would not refer to a concrete provision only but provide rationale why certain information is considered confidential and cannot be subjected to the law;
- Building case law and informing information holders on case law so that an information holder cannot be party in administrative procedure and register a dispute and thus disable the obtaining of requested information.

Journalists' suggestions to shorten the time limits from 30 to 15 days, as well as 5 to 3 days for submitted oral request should be taken into consideration.

Within the Action Network the organization Center for Environmental Research and Information Eco-sense (hereinafter Eco-sense) implemented the project called Assessment of the European Mechanisms against Corruption and Environment Protection. This monitoring project had two subject components. Firstly, it aimed to check whether EU mechanisms for protection against corruption were implemented in the project for Corridor X (section Demir Kapija – Smokvica). Furthermore, the project was aimed at determining whether the measures for environment protection defined by EU were completely implemented during the implementation of the infrastructural project. A report was expected from the project with lessons learned, and a coordinative body was supposed to be established composed of local organizations that would monitor the implementation of these mechanisms.



(Photo: Eco-sense on field during the construction of the section Demir Kamija - Smokvica, Corridor X)

LESSONS LEARNED:

- Experience from implementation of such projects compatible with all thematic priorities of the Action Network;
- More efficient monitoring of the spending of European funds, especially in monitoring and lobbying for the use and programming of IPA funds in Macedonia;
- Use of corpus of different evidence used in the study prepared within this project;
- Implementation of projects, not as ad hoc action that would be implemented only due to need of intervention, but an action in accordance with NGOs program priorities, expertise and strategy;
- Participation in the project planning for construction of the section Demir Kamija - Smokvica, as part of Corridor X, which is one of the biggest infrastructural undertakings in the country.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- As a project which is continuation of previous actions, it showed that serious watchdog organizations in the country should work only with serious tender evidence for their claims, such as the example with the monitoring of the implementation of environment protection measures in the construction of Corridor X;
- Besides research and monitoring, special interest should be paid to corruption although this is not a subject of primary interest for the organization and demands specific knowledge and expertise;
- The manner the project was implemented is an indicator that civil organizations should leave their comfort zone sometimes and learn by doing on topics that are not of their primary interest. This approach has its weaknesses of course, such as lack of direction, but if there is willingness on learning by doing and willingness to increase the capacities, then any donor would be willing to support such actions;
- The biggest added value of this project is that a topic which is not present in the public was opened. When it comes to huge infrastructural projects, which were absent in the country for long time, the Macedonian government is so hungry for successes, for construction at any price, that the environment and the good governance principles are often neglected.
- Eco-sense raised two important and related topics with its project – one was suspicions for large-scale corruption in this project, and the other one is that the country did not respect environment protection measures to which it obliged itself.

LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION SH TIP

The Local Community Development Foundation Shtip implemented the project 'Citizens Lens' whose objective was the increase the involvement of citizens in the local policies creation. The project conducted an analysis of the situation in order to hear the citizens' opinion on investments that the municipality of Shtip makes in urban/municipal communities in the town.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- The analysis and the mapping of the investments in certain municipality are important so that a detailed insight could be obtained in urban and municipal communities where such investments are made;
- Dissemination of information to the wider public regarding the results from conducted analysis is a key factor that can motivate the public and NGOs to put pressure on the local self-government for more transparent management of public money;
- According to the citizens, the urban and municipal communities do not function as bodies that identify, address and solve the problems of the citizens; the cooperation with the municipality is weak and insufficiently includes citizens in the decision-making processes on local level.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Greater involvement of citizens in the planning of infrastructural investments in municipalities;
- Setting priorities and paying close attention to equal distribution of investments to urban and municipal communities;
- Strengthening the role and the functioning of the urban and municipal communities;
- Better cooperation of urban and municipal communities with municipalities and public enterprises;
- Realistic planning and precise definition of planned activities

ASSOCIATION FOR DEVELOPMENT AND ACTIVISM AQUA (PUBLIC VS. USURPED)

Aqua organization dealt with access to public information. Its objective was to find out how many street bulbs were in the town and whether that number corresponded to the money the municipality spent on street lighting.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- Although there was a number of unclear matters during the reading of the project proposal, they were all surpassed through the communication between the mentor and the organization;
- Better cooperation with rural local civil organizations is needed in relation to the writing of the project proposals;
- When it comes to the project objectives, despite the fact that the mayor guaranteed to put all information necessary at disposal, he considered the release of such information politically unsuitable for the time being, so he decided to postpone;
- So, the project implementation was prolonged, but this only speaks about the frivolous approach of municipalities to the cooperation with civil organizations.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- To increase the intensity of cooperation culture between public enterprises and civil organizations that is especially low and causes obstacles and postponement of projects' implementation.
- Municipal organizations should consider civil associations as partners that have information for the local community and can help in better governance and resource management.
- To reduce the aversion of the municipal authorities to share public information and to increase the trust among public authorities and nongovernmental organizations. The project resulted with some applicable recommendations as well as a map of lights in the municipality where the organization operates, which can be obtained by any citizen and later on built analysis for the needs of future projects on the basis of that map.

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ANALITIKA

Within the Good Governance Action Network, the Policy Research Association Analitika – Gostivar (hereinafter Analitika) implemented the project Oversight of the public funds spending, tenders and public procurements in the Macedonian energy sector. Although it had limited budget and short duration, the project had two ambitious objectives:

1. Determining the financial accountability of institutions in the field of energy (Ministry of Economy, ELEM, MEPSO, Regulatory Commission on Energy), as well as
2. Developing mechanisms for monitoring the budgeting processes of these institutions and the publication of tenders.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- Since the project dealt with monitoring the spending of public money in one of the most sensitive sectors, where the public procurements are big and there is a huge margin of illegal activities, the project was mainly focused on the priority corruption, and in the broader context it included the priorities good governance and transparency;
- Most of the problems faced were related to the willingness of the monitored institutions to cooperate in all project phases. By implementing the project activities and researches, Analitika additionally strengthened its capacity to conduct complex monitoring on the spending of public money and prepared precise recommendations on improving the work of the institutions in direction of incorporating the good governance principles;
- The visibility of the organization increased as well as the perception that the organization is a good and relevant source of information for concrete topic for the media and all other stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The project Oversight of the public funds spending, tenders and public procurements in the Macedonian energy sector was one of the few projects supported in the Good Governance Action Network, and the project dealt with corruption, good governance and transparency of the institutions on central level;
- Dealing with such topics for such a short period and limited budget implies that the organization should have established monitoring methodology, high level of expertise and a lot of work;
- The project opened and treated topic which is not that present in the public due to the political pressure, although this topic is one of the topics with highest public interest. Usually, even when media cover the topic of energy policy, it is done superficially, randomly and without any strategy. The project produced a study more than 80 pages long

- that provides an overview of the setting of the energy policy, the challenges they are facing and provides great recommendations for decision makers since it is a reference document for any future research on this topic;
- The implementation of the project meant greater visibility of this organization in the public, as well as additional improvement of NGO capacities in dealing with such complex topic.

CENTER FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OF DEBAR

The Center for Sustainable Community Development implemented the project 'Change starts with us, healthy food-healthy children' whose main objective was the protection of children's health through right and healthy diet.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- The emphasis on the importance of healthy diet for children is very important so that a discussion would be initiated in this topic and thus a change could be stimulated in the behavior of the society towards the healthy diet of children;
- The implementation of activities in topics that are not present among the public enables mobilization of the society and motivates actions;
- The cooperation between local institutions and stakeholders, in this case the parents and the business sector, is very important step in putting the emphasis on the the subject matter and including all affected by this matter, and in this project it is the children's health protection.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The building of cooperation between local institutions and nongovernment organizations is the key to successful implementation of activities;
- The building of control mechanism for monitoring of the activities during their implementation, and after their completion, enables projection of future needs and establishment of good practices;
- Building control mechanism for monitoring of the activities after the realization of projects as well, in order to guarantee further realization of activities, even after the project completion;
- Socially significant matters, such as children's health, enables better cooperation between local institutions, parents and the business sector for children's health protection, hence, the importance of the involvement of all stakeholders;
- The publication of analysis on the situation in this matter, including conclusions and recommendations, is important for further perception and dealing with this matter, as well as for the preparation of action plan.

FINANCE THINK

The Association for Economic Research, Economic Policymaking and Advocacy 'Finance Think' Skopje implemented the project 'Local development or current expenditure: What purpose are municipal money spent for?' whose main objective was to increase the transparency and efficiency of the use of budget funds within municipalities.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- There is lack of transparency in the use of budget funds within some of the biggest 15 municipalities;
- Municipalities are highly dependent from budget transfers from the central budget, and in some municipalities the funds from the central budget amount to 70% of the total revenues;
- Although the obligation for transparent publication is defined within the law, part of the municipalities in the country do not publish the information on the spending of the budget funds;
- On the other hand, the municipalities that publish information for their own budgets, often place incomprehensible, illegible and incomplete data on the spending of the budget funds;
- The citizens are often poorly informed on the amount of the municipality's budget and the spending thereof;
- Better and more information for the citizens on the spending of the budget funds of the municipalities, as well as information on the efficiency in the spending of budget funds in the municipalities would increase the pressure on the institution for more transparent work

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- To increase the transparency of budgets through regular publication of financial statements in comprehensible form and with more details;
- To increase the awareness on social responsibility through strengthened cooperation and support among municipalities and civil society organizations.

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR GENDER EQUALITY (NCGE)

The National Council for Gender Equality implemented the project 'Through access to public information to promotion of the social protection and transparency of local self-government' whose objective was to promote good governance of the local self-government units through the principle of accountability and transparency, to increase the involvement of citizens and civil society associations in the decision making process in the field of social protection on local level, as well as to promote the social protection on local level.

This project is important because it supported the matter of good governance, transparency and accountability through the respect of the right to free access to public information in municipalities we have never heard of or know very little about. Most of the Skopje municipalities, as well as some other bigger municipalities in Macedonia, already implement projects with some organiza-

tions and foundations related to opening the municipalities to the citizens, informing the citizens how to participate in the monitoring of the work of the municipalities and how are the criteria of good governance, as participation, accountability and transparency, met. Smaller and rural municipalities, besides having to work with very small budgets, do not have practically the good governance as a value, and the local population is not interested in any involvement, let alone monitoring the work of the public administration.

Besides providing citizens with information about their right to free access to public information, the organizations with their projects did researches and came to some insights regarding the topics they researched. Through the partner's organizations from Mogila, Rosoman and Arachinovo, NCGE conducted significant analysis of the situation with the social protection in the respective municipalities. The findings from this research are alarming (for example, the budget amount they allocate annually on social protection, and the fact that this budget is not even spent), but still useful, especially for representatives of the local organizations. The implementation of this project resulted with general findings on the citizens' knowledge on the Law on Free Access to Public Information, and information to what extent the public institutions accepted and practice the values of good governance.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- The intensity of exercising the right to free access to public information among citizens is poor. Obviously, citizens are not well informed on this right;
- Citizens in rural areas are poorly informed and they do not exercise the right to free access to public information;
- Citizens in rural areas are poorly informed about the work of their local self-government;
- Citizens and civil organizations in rural areas are poorly involved in the policy creation processes on local level;
- The local self-government units in the rural area do not undertake sufficient activities to inform and include citizens and civil organizations in policy creation processes;
- The absence of information for citizens regarding their right to free access to public information is directly related to the activities undertaken by information holders.
- Requests for free access to public information are mostly submitted by citizens' association for their researches and activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Activities related to provision of information for citizens on their right to free access to public information, conducted by the public institutions themselves;

- Activities related to providing information and motivating citizens to exercise their right to free access to public information;
- Regular update of bulletin boards and newsletter, especially in rural communities;
- Regular update of the websites of the public institutions with public information;
- More frequent organization of informative events by public institutions, for the purpose of providing information to citizens, especially in smaller and rural communities;
- Including the citizens in policy-making processes.

ROMA COMMUNITY CENTER DROM

The Roma Community Center DROM implemented the project 'I have the right to be informed!' whose objective was to improve the communication between the citizens and the public administration in the municipality of Kumanovo through more efficient application of the Law on Free Access to Public Information.



(Photo: Public debate on the Law on Free Access to Public Information)

The organization analyzed the situation with the transparency and accountability of each sector in municipality of Kumanovo separately. So, from the analysis we found out that the citizens in this municipality do not use the legally defined request form for access to public information, and there are employees in the municipalities that are only partially informed about the Law on Free Access to Public Information.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- In some public institutions the employees do not know the Law on Free Access to Public Information;
- The public institutions very often use the available means to inform the public, but there are institutions that still inform citizens 'directly' or by phone, if the citizens request for information;
- The individual sectors in a local self-government unit receive 1 to 5 requests for access to public information monthly, and some sectors do not receive such request at all;
- The intensity of exercising the right to free access to public information among citizens is poor. Obviously, citizens are not well informed on this right;
- Most often, citizens exercise their right to free access to public information by phone or personal contact. When written requests are submitted, such request is usually arbitrary, the defined form is rarely or never used;
- Citizens skip the defined form for request to access public information due to personal contacts and acquaintances with employees in the institutions, or the opportunity to come to the requested information in a similar way;
- Non-formal relations in rural and smaller communities reduce the importance of the written information, certified and archived by public institution;
- The institutions respond to requests according to the way they are submitted: most often by phone or personally, depending on the case, and in written, by post. There is an example, although rare, that some sectors send the reply within 5 to 7 days by email;
- The frequent topics that make citizens use their right to free access to public information are in the field of infrastructure and physical planning in their environment, urbanism and taxes;
- The absence of information among citizens regarding their right to free access to public information is directly related to the activities undertaken by information holders.
- Requests for free access to public information are mostly submitted by citizens' association for their researches and activities.
- Although employees reply to submitted requests within the legally defined deadline and form, it can be noticed that they skillfully avoid provision of information by providing unclear or general answer;
- The accountability and transparency of local self-government units in rural areas are arbitrary and depend on the personal will and enthusiasm of some of the employees;
- Requests for free access to public information are mostly submitted by citizens' association for their researches and activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Activities related to provision of information for citizens on their right to free access to public information, conducted by the public institutions themselves;
- Activities related to providing information and motivating citizens to exercise their right to free access to public information;
- Regular update of bulletin boards and newsletter, especially in rural communities;
- Informing citizens which information are public information;
- Regular update of the websites of the public institutions with public information;
- Better information for the employees in public institutions on the Law on Access to Public Information, and educating the employees on the practical implementation of the law itself;
- More frequent organization of informative events by public institutions, for the purpose of providing information to citizens, especially in smaller and rural communities;
- Informing the citizens on the importance of having officially issued, certified and archived information from a public institution;
- Including the citizens in policy-making processes.

8 SEPTEMBER

Within the Good governance Action Network, the Civil Society Association '8 September' (hereinafter 8 September) implemented the project called 'Creating social policy, social aid without corruption'. The general objective of this project that was conducted in the municipalities of Centar and Strumica, was to investigate the main possible areas of corruption and nepotism in the municipal process of allocating material and financial means, in the field of social policy, and to provide recommendations for more transparent allocation of municipal money intended for social aid of vulnerable group of citizens.

The project generally dealt with the priority – corruption, and indirectly with good governance and transparency, and the main idea was to share experience and good practices from one municipality that quotes better in terms of good governance standards (Strumica) in the municipality of Centar, where there is a will to promote standards. Finally, it was projected that the research results would be used to attract the attention of civil organization and their inclusion in the implementation and monitoring of the social policy on municipal level.



(Photo: Presentation of the project 'Creating social policy, social aid without corruption' in the municipality of Centar)

LESSONS LEARNED:

- The location and the good partnership relation of the civil society organization with the local authorities enabled them to have better insight into the situation on the field when conducting projects, as well as better insight into the local needs;
- The quality of the analysis and the clarity of recommendations is a good basis for the future steps that the municipalities should take in order to develop transparent social policy based on the principal of transparency and good governance in which arbitrary decision making and corruption in the funds allocation would be brought to minimum.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The project identified weaknesses in the implementation of the social policy in the municipalities of Centar and Strumica, although both municipalities are well ranked in terms of the application of the good governance principles, which can be seen by the relevant researches of the civil organization in the country. This shows that there is a need of similar actions in other municipalities as well, and that the civil organizations and donors' community should implement and support similar actions in future;
- The project is a good example of how the civil organization can help the municipalities with expertise and dedication in indicating the practical steps that should be taken in direction of implementing the policies under their competences;

- Although the municipalities have the resources, capacities and will to improve the policy implementation, they do not have the expertise in terms of how to improve the respective practices;
- The fact that the project resulted with a range of concrete recommendations for the improvement of the social policy on municipal level (drafting of social map, modalities to include civil organization in the preparations and implementations of strategies), that will help the municipalities improve their services, shows that civil organizations (can) play significant role in the monitoring and implementation of policies on local level operating as a bridge between the citizens with their requests and the needs and the authorities;
- In general, the project was a good example that even with small-scope action one of the main activist organizations can increase its capacities to monitor and research by improving the sustainability of its activities.

COALITION ALL FOR FAIR TRIALS

Within the Good Governance Action Network, the Coalition All for Fair Trials (hereinafter Coalition) implemented the project called 'Monitoring court cases in the field of organized crime and corruption'.

Although the project had limited finances and duration, it envisaged a range of objectives the most important being strengthening independency, efficiency and fairness of the judiciary in the fight against organized crime and corruption, evaluation of judicial efficiency through monitoring the implementation of legal amendments in the past period and analysis of legal response to the fight against organized crime and corruption. The objectives, activities and results of the project were compatible with all thematic priorities of the Action Network, especially in terms of corruption and good governance.



(Photo: Presentation of the analysis 'Judicial efficiency and fair trail')

LESSONS LEARNED:

- Although the scope of monitored cases was ambitious and the monitoring methodology was complicated, the project was successfully implemented without any difficulties, which was facilitated by the experience of the project team and the whole organization in the implementation of this type of activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Due to the type of the activity (monitoring court cases that usually last longer than the project duration) and the continuity required by the activity, the fact that contributed to the successful realization of the obligation was that the project was compatible with the regular activities of the organization, i.e. with its regular working plan;
- If it were an adhoc activity, it would have been more difficult to achieve the results. This is evident in the findings of the monitoring report, where the Coalition commented that 5 months are not sufficient for complete monitoring of all court cases subject to the project;
- When conducting similar activities in future, the civil society organizations have to consider that their project applications and projects would be far more successful if they are not single intervention, but part of their regular working programs and general working strategy;
- The project implementation and the manner in which the Coalition has formulated its monitoring methodology is a good example that even the most abstract matters, such as court practice, can be quantified and presented in a simple manner to the public. It is especially important in situations where the conventional media broadcasting is limited and the most powerful televisions are not interested in reporting controversial topics related to good governance, which includes the quality of court decision as well.
- In future, a good practice would be if organizations conducting similar activities make a step further and additionally work on the visualization of data obtained from monitoring, which would additionally increase the visibility of their findings.

RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

The project 'Establishing a system for improvement of the inclusion of the civic and business sector in the decision making process on a local level' of the Rural Community Development Institute (hereinafter RCDI) was also supported within the Good Governance Action Network. The main goal of this project was to establish a practice of good governance in the municipality of Resen by forming a tripartite partnership of the civil, public and business sector. The envisaged form of this practice was the so-called Platform for Local Action (PLA). Thus, the goals of this project were compatible with the second main goal of the Action Network, and the first field of action (building strategies through joint consultations).

LESSONS LEARNED:

- Generally, the project was a targeted action which took place in the municipality of Resen (including citizens and other stakeholders), and it provided for fully concrete and measurable results;

- The team's high level of expertise regarding the good governance contributed to undisturbed and uninterrupted implementation of the project activities and they directly influenced the local authorities through mobilization of the citizens for more active inclusions in the decision-making process at local level.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- In general, the project is a successful example how a small, but targeted action should be organized, with concrete outcomes and influence on the policies in a small environment such as the municipality of Resen.
- The project resulted in the following deliverables: Rules of procedure for the PLA, Rulebook on the appointment and the structure of the stakeholders in the PLA, as well as an extensive manual on the good governance where the key concepts and principles related to the good governance are explained in a clear and understandable manner.
- In future, these documents should represent the basis for the work of PLA in this municipality, but the entire process would be a good example for other municipalities in the country desiring to establish mechanisms to involve the broader local public in the decision-making process at local level. Thus, the sustainability of the implementing organization will be increased, and it will be recognized as an experienced and relevant partner in future projects with similar goals and activities in other municipalities.
- The entire action had a strong grassroots dimension, not only due to the fact that RCDI originated from this municipality, but also because the action was supported by the local authorities, the civil sector, the business sector and the citizens, which is a solid base to conclude that the action outcomes are sustainable.

ASSOCIATION FOR FIGHT AGAINST CANCER – BORKA – FOR A NEW DAY

The association for fight against the cancer 'Borka - for a new day' has implemented the project 'What About Patients' Rights?' whose main objective is to allow patients to exercise their rights in accordance with Article 39 of the Law on the Protection of Patients' Rights. Patients and their rights are in the focus of this project, whose idea is to ensure greater protection of patients' rights in the municipalities participating in the project, through an initiative to establish standing committees aimed at protecting the patients' rights and to open offices for promotion of the patients' rights, in accordance with the law and with their active engagement.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- When implementing projects focused on the civil rights, one of the most important things is to establish coordination with the municipalities regarding their needs for the establishment and functioning of committees, as well as the cooperation with local associations and to introduce and explain to them the need for the existence of such committees and how the associations and their representatives can participate in the work of the committees;

- Establishment of committees at local level improves the exercise of citizens' rights by gaining additional mechanism provided by the law;
- Participation of citizens proposed by the organizations and representatives from the civil sector in the committees leads to increased level of inclusion of the civil society in the decision-making processes and strengthens their lawful rights;
- Cooperation within the committees consisting of civil sector representatives, experts, municipality representatives ensures wider cooperation of several parties concerned by a certain problem.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Obtaining quality and relevant data and knowledge about the exercise of civil rights is the basis for cooperation and motivation of the relevant institutions;
- Establishment and active engagement of municipal committees tackling certain issues provides greater level of human rights protection and addressing certain issues;
- By involving civil associations, such as patients' associations and the civil sector, there is greater insight and participation in the citizens' rights protection, as in this project and the health protection, which would lead to increased transparency of information and better and more rights exercised.

ICT4CHANGE

ICT4change has implemented the project 'Electronic records system for tourists in Tetovo', whose main objective is to create a central database at municipality level and system for registration and collection of tourist fee, in accordance with the Law on Personal Data Protection (Official Gazette no. 7/2005, 103/08,124/10, 135/11, 43/14) and in accordance with the Law on Temporary Stay Fee (Official Gazette 19/96, 26/02,51/03,88/08,17/11). The main objective of the project is to protect tourists' personal data, by recording only data important for the municipality, and tourists' personal data would be registered only in the hotels.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- When gathering information, it is necessary to make a selection and limit them only to basic data relevant to the subject. For example, for the purposes of the municipality archives, only following data are sufficient: country of origin, age, sex and duration of stay, without recording data such as the name, surname and passport number;
- By entering these data in the central database, the municipality will have an insight into the total number of tourists at any time, or for a certain period of time, organized by country or hotels of accommodation.
- The existence of such system allows the hotel workers to enter data more easily and create various reports for the municipality, and all data would be displayed at real time and statistically organized and structured for further use for municipality needs;

- Statistical reports generated by such system may serve various goals, for example, getting a detailed real-time picture regarding the number of tourists in the municipality;
- The existence of such system allows the municipality, by using the data available in the system, to realize marketing campaigns targeting tourist groups that may visit the municipality;
- The municipality may automatically generate invoices to the tourist facilities for the collection of tourist fee and taxes.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Following the example of this project in the municipality of Tetovo, the system for electronic registration of tourists should be implemented in the other municipalities in the Republic of Macedonia;
- Provision of technical support to the electronic systems by the municipalities in order to ensure long-term and successful functioning of the electronic registration of tourists.
- Raising the awareness for the personal data protection with the hotel workers and the municipalities in order to avoid obtaining a large volume of personal data and invasion of privacy.

ZIP INSTITUTE

The ZIP Institute has implemented the project “Increasing the capacities for cooperation between the municipality of Saraj and the NGOs in the municipality of Saraj”. The goal of the project was to introduce the benefits of joint participation in the decision-making process to the municipality authorities and the NGOs; to create bridges of cooperation between the municipality of Saraj and NGOs from the municipality of Saraj; and to improve the cooperation between the municipality of Saraj and NGOs from the municipality of Saraj by joint development of strategic documents.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- The ZIP institute is an organization with a good human capacity and organization with a great portfolio in the implementation of the project activities. Communication with them was very professional. Their activities were executed in a timely and quality manner.
- The project was clearly and concisely written. All misunderstandings were well communicated. The ZIP Institute initiated a pioneer research, and that is the analysis of the cooperation and the transparency of the Municipality of Saraj and their cooperation with the NGOs acting on its territory.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The project identified weaknesses in the cooperation between the municipality of Saraj and the NGOs in the municipality of Saraj. Their research showed that there was lack of interest for cooperation by all parties;

- The municipality should continue with intensified cooperation with associations active on its territory and should become a partner in co-financing various initiatives and applications by the organizations. It should become a type of sectoral work and practice for establishment of consultations and communication;
- The municipality should have a better overview of the situation on the field and to develop a programme or a strategy for cooperation with the civil organizations. The municipality should strive towards better transparency regarding the cooperation information and they should make use of the new tools and social media. For that purpose, the municipality may adopt the positive experience from some of the municipality where such practice has already been established: Strumica, Shtip, Karposh, Gazi Baba, etc.
- On the other hand, the NGOs should express greater interest for cooperation with the local authorities, update their information on the municipality needs more often, develop proposals how to utilize the available budget, build local networks, assist human resources in the organizations working in the area and initiate joint actions.

FRAME BY FRAME – DEBATE CINEMA ‘KONTRA KADAR’

Frame by frame has implemented the project ‘Debate cinema Kontra Kadar’ whose objective is greater involvement of the citizens in the democratic processes by creating public debate space, organizing the citizens through a joint discussion and cooperation in order to influence the decisions that concern everybody, creating habits to use public institutions, promoting critical and engaged culture, creating solidarity among groups and future support for initiatives.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- The importance of the debate cinema ‘Kontra Kadar’ is that it offers the single place for civil and political debate in Bitola, which is considerably important to create a culture of criticism towards the public institutions and policies. Furthermore, they have been cooperating with the Centre for Culture in Bitola for two years, even though the institutions are very closed. It means that their sacrifice and sincere approach has managed to break through and remain as a part of the urban culture. Therefore, not surprisingly, most of the civil initiatives in the recent years in Bitola have been initiated by the visitors of the debate cinema;

Maybe at first glance the project was not best suited to the aim of the ‘Good Governance’ network, therefore the funds for the organization were cut in half, but considering the topics discussed in the debate cinema, it may be concluded that this project contributed to the creation of a critical mass necessary to form a civil awareness crucial to control the local authorities and to make the principles of good governance functional.

- Furthermore, the organization strengthened its capacities thanks to this project, since it was the first project it administered. With regards to the project implementations, the organization encountered no problems. People trust such organizations functioning at local level, therefore it can be concluded that foundations should pay special attention to strengthening their capacities and extending their scope of acting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The municipality should intensify the cooperation with the civil organization whose activities are based on voluntary action;
- Organization implementing this project has a several-year experience of cooperation with the public institution Centre of Culture – Bitola, pointing that certain institutions are interested and open for cooperation. But, it should be emphasized that this is not sufficient to increase the people's awareness for criticism which is a prerequisite to improve the transparency of the municipality and to increase cooperation with the civil organizations;
- Each activity of the 'Kontra Kadar' project resulted in several recommendations that may be implemented at municipality level, but the environment does not show any interest to accept people's opinions, even though the conclusions and recommendations derived in a democratic atmosphere organized in a local institution;
- A manner of constant communication should be established so that the decision-makers at municipal level may receive and apply the recommendations deriving from such deliberative councils. In such case, social media may play that role.

