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Report for Training in Advocacy and Negotiation Skills

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The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

Program Background

Improving the engagement of civil society in developing the rule of law and increasing the public's trust in the delivery of justice in BiH are essential to lasting judicial reform. JSDP II supported the establishment of the network of NGOs and professional associations and has been providing assistance to them in the development of effective advocacy and public awareness campaigns and monitoring programs. JSDP II established a subgrants program to provide financial support to network members.

In achieving its goals, Component 3 works closely with three key NGO partners: Association of Democratic Initiatives Sarajevo (ADI) (www.adi.org.ba), Human Rights Office Tuzla (www.hrotuzla.org.ba), Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (www.bim.ba).

Through the subgrant program, JSDP II has established partnerships also with following NGOs: Alternative Kakanj (<http://www.nvo-alternative.org/>), Foundation of Local Democracy (www.fld.ba), Human Rights Center Mostar (<http://www.mrezapravde.ba/mpbh/latinica/txt.php?id=7>), BiH Association of Mediators (www.umbih.co.ba), Plava Sfera Banja Luka (<http://www.plavasfera.org/>), BiH Association of Judicial Associates and Advisors in Courts and Prosecutors' Offices (<http://ussbih.pravosudje.ba/>), BiH Youth Initiative for Human Rights (www.yihr.org)

Introduction

The Justice Sector Civil Society Network (www.mrezapravde.ba) has been established on 22.01.2010 and now counts 52 civil society organizations, including non-governmental organizations and professional associations in the justice sector.

The establishment and development of the Justice Network BiH is a means in achieving greater impact at policy level and to setting standards in accountability. It should result in improved information, through sharing best practices and avoiding duplication. Finally, the network will contribute to the creation of solidarity. Through such strengthened collaboration CSOs in the justice sector should be able to embrace public policy advocacy as their fundamental role.

There are 11 organizations within Justice Sector Civil Society Network (Mreza pravde) which have direct project contract with USAID JSDP. One of these organizations also got a financial support for coordination activities for Mreza pravde. The members of Mreza pravde have rather different level of expertise and therefore USAID concluded that there were important segments in which organizations should build additional capacities. One of the important segments for improvement was consensus building and advocacy work aimed at reform of judicial sector. USAID engaged proMENTE consultants to provide the service of training for members of Mreza pravde.

Scope of Work and Methodology

The Scope of Work was identified in agreement with USAID staff and defined as "providing training in ADVOCACY AND NEGOTIATION SKILLS based on needs assessment with participants."

In order to do a needs-assessment proMENTE did:

1. Review of the TNA report provided by USAID with the aim to identify the major perceived obstacles in functioning of Mreža pravde and perceived obstacles in reaching the highest level of effectiveness and efficiency in advocacy campaigns which were implemented by member organizations.
2. Focus-group discussion with participants in order to identify major areas for training and to decide on instructional design

3. Workshop-based education in advocacy and negotiation skills.

Needs Assessment

Needs assessment included two segments – review of draft report TNA prepared by USAID JSDP. The answers obtained from member organizations pointed the fact that significant number of organizations had problems in communication with official institutions. The cooperation with officials is even harder because of the official institutions don't perceive NGO's as key partners in reform of justice sector. At the same time NGO's advocacy strategies are not efficient enough in reaching the goal of becoming important partner.

In answers to the question "Which obstacles have you met in organizing advocacy campaigns?" respondents answers like "Uninterested public" "Apathy of citizens" "Bad communication with beneficiaries" implied that organizations in Mreza pravde positioned the reasons for inefficiency outside of their capabilities and on the beneficiaries.

Based on the review of TNA questionnaire, proMENTE experts concluded that it would be important to provide more knowledge in basic psychological concepts and principals involved in behavioral change: attitudes, attitude change, prejudices and influence of the group in decision-making process.

In order to do deeper assessment of needs, proMENTE staff held a focus group discussion with chosen participants with the aim to define the elements of training that would be most useful to students. At first, the participants thought that the training in negotiation and decision-making was redundant because they felt they already had enough training and practice in the area. On the other hand, a large number of member organizations in Mreza pravde showed intention to carry out advocacy activities in order to increase the implementation of Law against discrimination in a short-term future. It was agreed that the seminar would focus on developing a plan of activities for the binding activities of this advocacy.

The two-day training was held at Jahorina in April 2011. The trainers started the training with introduction about basic psychological concepts that affect the results of any advocacy campaign, like the attitudes and prejudices, attitude change and group decision process. Attitudes and prejudices are to be key middle-level indicators and if the advocacy campaign don't treat this level as important, it is highly likely that the whole campaign will be less efficient and effective.

The rest of the training was organized as workshop including:

Designing advocacy campaigns for the implementation of the Law Against Discrimination

1. Advocacy circle
2. The role of organizations in initiating changes within policies
3. Defining a strategic goal and objectives for advocacy campaign
4. Force field analysis
5. Stakeholders analysis
6. Impact analysis
7. Preparing relevant messages for the campaign

Each unit of content included small group work on tasks that were later presented in a large group.

In the last part of the training, participants were divided into three groups (group FOR, group AGAINST and the jury). The groups were asked to defend the positions for or against the implementation of the Law against discrimination. This role play was recorded

by video camera. After the role play, participants watched a clip and, together with trainers, commented on good and bad sides of their performances.

Challenges and Solutions

1. Staff in member organizations are experienced and very motivated for the job they perform. On the other hand, this is one of the key challenges in work with them. Organizations can be divided in two groups – professional associations (with their specific features) and NGO (with different kinds of problems).

Leaders of professional associations are aware of their lack of knowledge and skills in advocacy work and group decision-making. Most of them work on the positions where they have full autonomy in reaching a decision, so they have highly developed professional skills but underdeveloped skills necessary for team work. In their performance they are firstly professionals and individuals, and then member of the association so even when they represent organization they are more judge or prosecutor (since this identity is so strong). On the other hand, members of NGO's expect from them to be their partners and not the judges and this discrepancy between appearance of professional associations and NGO's expectations can be potential difficulty in creating cohesion within Mreza pravde.

Solution: While working with them, trainers should have group activities in which representatives of professional associations and NGO's work together on solving problem or designing activity. In this process of working closely together, they will get to know each other better and modify attitudes toward each other.

2. When considering the themes like advocacy work and work in groups, the major challenge is the perception of participants that they already know a lot about the topics and that they already developed skills in running the advocacy campaigns.

Solution: It is highly recommendable to involve participants in deciding about the content of the seminar and never run some uniformly prepared training. It is also highly recommendable to include sufficient number of exercises which would enable participants to evaluate their skills by themselves and additionally develop them.

3. One challenge which we find it should be mentioned and addressed is more related to functioning of the organization, but can have consequences in functioning of Mreza pravde. It is called "founder syndrome" meaning that in some organization the founder of the organization doesn't have a lot of confidence in other members and is too possessive in delegating tasks. They believe that no one can do job in the same way they do. They are very charismatic, active, dynamic people, but hard to let other people do their job without having a need to control everything all the time.

Solution: in group setting trainers should encourage other members to participate more, so they can prove their capabilities. Trainers should also praise the work of subordinates and help leader see the potential of these people. It is also recommendable to organize a session for leaders in order to raise their awareness about the consequences of "founder syndrome".

4. Developing soft skills is long-term commitment and initial effects of seminars gathered by evaluation forms don't mean that participants will significantly improve their work because improvement depends on many factors (like support in work environment and feedback from beneficiaries).

Solution: It is highly recommendable to combine training with period of coaching after the training in which the coacher would work on the following elements:

1. Follow and help develop practical skills of planning and organizing advocacy campaigns
2. Help develop the skills in group decision-making and feedback giving and receiving
3. Following the process of task delegating and fulfilling the undertaken responsibilities
4. Evaluating the outcomes and give feedback to participants

This additional element of coaching after training would certainly be more useful for

organizations then the training itself. This would be real “learning by doing.”

Additional Recommendations

As already mentioned, Mreza pravde has rather loose organizational structure. If the donors want to make Mreza pravde more sustainable and strong it is important to work on:

1. Increasing cohesion among members of Mreza pravde
2. Insisting on more formal and clear structure and functions within the network
3. Dividing the responsibilities among members so every organization has an opportunity to contribute network development. Of course, organizations who take most responsibilities should be adequately awarded.
4. Organization of education for skills development, but also of education where participants could gain more theoretical knowledge from applied disciplines like sociology, andragogy or psychology. This theoretical background would help organizations understand better individual and social dynamics important for planning and implementing advocacy work, especially understanding the motives and interests of negotiators, understanding how situational factors influence campaigns and understanding the process of learning and behavior change among adult people.

All trainings should be organized as workshops in which small groups of participants from diverse organizations would work closely together. If the budget allows, the coaching should follow the training. The coaching process would help implantation and full development of targeted knowledge and skills.