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## Moldova Partnerships for Sustainable Civil Society

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### **Quarterly Progress Report No: 1**

**December 13, 2013 –March 31, 2014**

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**Chişinău, Republic of Moldova**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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<b>ACRONYMS.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>I. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>II. MPSCS HIGHLIGHTS, QUARTER 1 .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>OBJECTIVE 1: CSOs MORE EFFECTIVELY REPRESENT THEIR CONSTITUENCIES.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>OBJECTIVE 2: THE INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES OF STRATEGIC PARTNERS DEVELOPED .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>OBJECTIVE 3: ENABLING ENVIRONMENT MORE CONDUCIVE TO LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF CIVIL SOCIETY .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>III. MPSCS PROGRESS QUARTER 1, BY OBJECTIVE.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>OBJECTIVE 1: CSOS MORE EFFECTIVELY REPRESENT THEIR CONSTITUENCIES.....</b>	<b>3</b>
GRANT PROGRAM .....	3
<b>OBJECTIVE 2: THE INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES OF STRATEGIC PARTNERS DEVELOPED .....</b>	<b>5</b>
GRANT PROGRAM.....	5
CAPACITY BUILDING .....	5
<b>OBJECTIVE 3: ENABLING ENVIRONMENT MORE CONDUCIVE TO LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF CIVIL SOCIETY .....</b>	<b>7</b>
ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON COOPERATION BETWEEN CIVIL SOCIETY AND PARLIAMENT.....	7
LEGAL REFORM.....	8
COORDINATION WITH PARTNERS AND DONORS.....	10
CROSS-CUTTING ACTIVITIES .....	10
<b>IV. CHALLENGES.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>V. HIGHLIGHTS OF PLANNED ACTIVITIES FOR MPSCS NEXT QUARTER .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>OBJECTIVE 1: CSOs MORE EFFECTIVELY REPRESENT THEIR CONSTITUENCIES.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>OBJECTIVE 2: THE INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES OF STRATEGIC PARTNERS DEVELOPED .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>OBJECTIVE 3: ENABLING ENVIRONMENT MORE CONDUCIVE TO LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF CIVIL SOCIETY ....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>ATTACHMENTS .....</b>	<b>13</b>
1. <b>RFA OF THE GRANT PROGRAM SUPPORT FOR MOLDOVAN CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT WITH THE APPLICATION PACKAGE (ANNOUNCEMENT, APPLICATION FORM, SELF-ASSESSMENT FORM, BUDGET)</b>	
2. <b>RFA FOR THE ENGAGE PARTNERS GRANT PROGRAM, WITH THE APPLICATION PACKAGE (ANNOUNCEMENT, APPLICATION FORM, BUDGET)</b>	
3. <b>MPSCS INDIVIDUAL CHECKLIST (IC) CSO PRE-AWARD ASSESSMENT TOOL</b>	

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## ACRONYMS

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CSO	Civil Society Organization
ECNL	European Center for Not-for-Profit Law
GIZ	German Development Cooperation
GoM	Government of Moldova
IC	Individual Checklist
LGSP	Local Government Support Program
MCSSP	Moldova Civil Society Strengthening Program
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MP	Member of Parliament
MPSCS	Moldova Partnerships for Sustainable Civil Society
NUPAS	Non-US Organization Pre-Award Survey
ODAT	Organizational Development Assessment Tool
PMEP	Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
RFA	Request for Application
ROLISP	Rule of Law Institutional Strengthening Program
SOIR	Swedish Organization for Individual Relief
TA	Technical Assistance
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

## I. INTRODUCTION

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This report covers the first quarterly reporting period (December 13, 2013 - March 31, 2014) of the Moldova Partnerships for Sustainable Civil Society (MPSCS) project, a five-year project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by FHI 360 and its partner the European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL).

The overall goal of MPSCS is to build a more professional and sustainable civil society sector that is responsive to constituent needs and influences policymaking, and to foster an enabling legal framework.

MPSCS accomplishes this goal by meeting three objectives:

- **Objective 1:** CSOs More Effectively Represent their Constituencies
- **Objective 2:** Institutional Capacity of Strategic Partners Developed
- **Objective 3:** Enabling Environment More Conducive to Long-Term Sustainability of Civil Society

Through MPSCS, FHI 360 will: 1) provide sub awards to up to 20 Moldovan civil society organizations (CSOs) coupled with capacity building to more effectively represent citizens' interests and concerns to local- and regional-level policymakers; 2) develop a network of up to 23 CSOs throughout Moldova with strengthened governance, financial management, procurement, project management, and fundraising capacity to play a leadership role in the development of Moldova's civil society sector and become trusted recipients of funds from citizens, donors, and other public and private entities; and 3) offer technical assistance and mentorship to empower CSOs to advocate for, and advance, legal and regulatory reforms, with a particular focus on the Civil Society Development Strategy, to enable an environment more conducive to the long-term sustainability of the civil society sector.

During the first two months of MPSCS, FHI 360 focused on rapid program startup by setting up the MPSCS office (including renting the office and purchasing the required equipment for smooth operational running) and hiring the MPSCS team. FHI 360 Program Officer Afa Alizada visited MPSCS in January 2014 to set up program and administrative systems. Ms. Alizada and the Chief of Party, Anatol Beleac, organized staff orientation trainings with newly hired team members on MPSCS objectives, procurement and operational systems.



**MPSCS Field Team, March 2014**

During the first quarter, MPSCS developed and submitted to the USAID AOR for review and approval its Year One Implementation Plan and the project's Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (PMEP). Both documents will be finalized and approved during the next quarter. The Implementation Plan covers the period December 13, 2013 through September 30, 2014 and presents: a brief summary of MPSCS; highlights of MPSCS areas of focus during the first year; detailed descriptions of activities, grouped by objective; and a detailed GANTT chart listing what will be done when and by whom during the first year of the project. The PMEP contains the proposed results framework for

the project and includes objective-level indicators, annual targets, and the data collection methodologies.

MPSCS also finalized all project procedures, including its Operations Manual for the field office the the Grantee Guidelines necessary for the two MPSCS grant programs to strengthen Moldovan CSOs, CSO networks, and improve engagement between CSOs, citizens, and the Government of Moldova to contribute to a more vibrant, effective civil society sector in Moldova.

## **II. MPSCS HIGHLIGHTS, QUARTER 1**

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### **Objective 1: CSOs More Effectively Represent their Constituencies**

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- MPSCS launched the solicitation for the *Engage Program Partners* grants for CSOs seeking to strengthen and engage their constituencies through advocacy and participation activities and delivery of services.
- In three bidders conferences in Cahul, Bălți and Chișinău, MPSCS informed a total of 60 CSOs about the USAID-supported MPSCS Request for Applications (RFA) for CSO activities focused on demand-driven capacity development and constituency engagement.
- The Moldova Civil Society Strengthening Program's (MCSSP) guide on *How to Promote Gender Equality within Civil Society Organizations* was presented as a leading resource for CSOs at the UN Women's Gender Knowledge Fair.
- MPSCS provided input in the evaluation of the reflecting of women and gender issues within the national and regional press in Moldova aside Minister of Labor, Social Protection and Family Valentina Buliga and Swedish Ambassador Ingrid Tersman at the roundtable organized by Association of Independent Press.
- MPSCS actively participated in policy dialogue within the national and regional working groups lead by the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Moldova on the 2014-2020 National Strategy for Youth Sector Development.

### **Objective 2: The Institutional Capacities of Strategic Partners Developed**

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- The Individual Checklist (IC) pre-award CSO capacity assessment tool was developed by MPSCS to be used during the grant selection process to facilitate an accurate assessment of potential grantees' capacity development needs.
- Finalization of the Self-Assessment tool to measure the level of development, and training capacities, of CSOs applying to the *Support to Moldovan Civil Society Development* grant program.
- Gender mainstreaming elements were incorporated into the MPSCS grant cycle management and capacity development tools.
- MPSCS launched the solicitation to select three key partner CSOs under the grant program *Support to Moldovan Civil Society Development*.

### **Objective 3: Enabling Environment More Conducive to Long-Term Sustainability of Civil Society**

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- MPSCS helped to establish a working group of leading CSOs and representatives of the Moldovan Parliament on furthering the cooperation between Civil Society and Parliament and implementing the Civil Society Development Strategy.

- MPSCS collaborated with the Parliament and the Moldovan NGO Council to organize the upcoming Conference on the Cooperation between Civil Society and Parliament planned for April 29, 2014 and with the expected participation of Members of Parliament, Government ministers and officials, 50 CSOs, ambassadors, donors and international organizations.
- MPSCS submitted comments to the Ministry of Justice on the Law on Public Associations, the Law on Foundations, CSO public utility status, and CSO registration and de-registration policy.
- MPSCS-provided comments and suggestions on the Law on Transparency in Decision-making Process from 13 November 2008 were included in the amendment to the law approved by the government on April 2, 2014.
- MPSCS, through the efforts of ECNL, organized an expert meeting with 16 representatives of line ministries responsible for contacts with CSOs to address the CSO Development Strategy and present models of CSO-government cooperation in other European countries.

### III. MPSCS PROGRESS QUARTER 1, BY OBJECTIVE

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#### OBJECTIVE 1: CSOS MORE EFFECTIVELY REPRESENT THEIR CONSTITUENCIES

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To support the implementation of Objective 1, under which MPSCS will provide 20 grants to local and national CSOs to improve their capacity to develop constituent focus and engage citizens in designing, developing, implementing, and monitoring advocacy and reform efforts, MPSCS implemented the following activities:

- Developed the RFA for the *Engage Program Partners* grants program;
- Finalized grant cycle management documents for the *Engage Program Partners* grants;
- Promoted the *Engage Program Partners* grants process through a series of Bidders' Conferences in three regions of Moldova;
- Prepared for selection of the grantees under the *Engage Program Partners* grant process.

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#### GRANT PROGRAM

##### **RFA for the *Engage Program Partners* grant program**

An *Engage Program Partners* RFA and application package for advocacy initiatives by CSOs was developed and approved by USAID. All documents, translated into Romanian, were published on March 14, 2014 on the [www.fhi360.md](http://www.fhi360.md) website and also promoted via local CSOs, resource centers, the USAID Local Government Support Program (LGSP), IREX/Novateca, the USAID Rule of Law Institutional Strengthening Program, and other social networks and information portals. The application deadline was set to April 7, 2014, with grants scheduled to be awarded in July 2014.

The RFA described MPSCS' approach to developing civil society by enhancing CSO skills to promote the interests of constituencies and supporting advocacy campaigns in narrow fields according to the CSO's mission. The RFA included illustrative activities, selection criteria, programmatic and budget guidance and information on the application and selection process. Through this funding mechanism, MPSCS will award up to 20 grants amounting to MDL 130,000 each.

##### **Bidders' Conferences in three regions of Moldova**

In addition to promoting the RFA via media and targeted dispatching, MPSCS organized three Bidders' Conferences for potential grantees. The events took place in Chişinău, Bălţi, and Cahul. These Conferences were an opportunity for potential applicants to raise questions related to the MPSCS RFAs (both *Engage Program Partners* RFA and the *Support to Civil Society Development* RFA) and to allow MPSCS to assess CSO interest in, and understanding, of the MPSCS grants program and process.



**Bidders Conference, Chişinău,  
March 26, 2014**

The Bidders' Conference in Cahul (March 21, 2014) gathered 17 representatives (11 women and six men) of 14 organizations from Cahul city and villages, of which three organizations represented youth. The Bidders Conference in Bălţi convened 18 representatives (12 women and six men) from 16 organizations based in the northern region of Moldova. Of these, five organizations focus on youth and two were from the Transnistrian region.

The Bidders' Conference in Chisinau involved 37 representatives (27 women and ten men) from 30 organizations, of which seven organizations work on youth. Three of the organizations were from other regions: South East and West Moldova.

Overall, a total of 60 CSOs in three regions in Moldova were oriented on the USAID-supported MPSCS grant programs for both demand-driven capacity development and constituency engagement. MPSCS was able to identify frequently asked questions from Bidders' Conference participants, and then posted answers to the 33 questions on the MPSCS website.

#### **Preparations for selection of the grantees under the *Engage Program Partners Grant Program***

To prepare for the selection of grantees, MPSCS developed selection criteria (included in the *Engage Program Partners RFA*) and also approached a number of organizations with expertise in civil society development grants to participate in the MPSCS independent Review Committee (IRC) that will support the selection of MPSCS grantees.

The final list of members of the seven-person Independent Review Committee includes representatives of the following organizations:

1. USAID (as non-voting member)
2. Soros Foundation
3. East Europe Foundation
4. Swedish Organization for Individual Relief (SOIR) Moldova
5. German Development Cooperation (GIZ)
6. LGSP
7. Friedrich Ebert Foundation

#### **Grant cycle management documents for the *Engage Partners Grant Program***

In anticipation of the grant award phase, MPSCS developed its manual for grantee CSOs containing the following components:

- Grantee Guidelines (explaining each step of the grant implementation process)
- Narrative report form, including sections with disaggregated data on gender, age/youth inclusion, rural/urban, capacity development, and progress towards objectives
- Financial reporting forms and templates
- Annual implementation plan template
- Monitoring plan template

The manual will be provided to each grantee upon grant award and MPSCS will deliver training on grant management for the grantee organizations shortly thereafter.

## **OBJECTIVE 2: THE INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES OF STRATEGIC PARTNERS DEVELOPED**

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Under Objective 2, MPSCS focused in the first quarter on developing capacity assessment and development tools for CSOs, and selecting the core institutional partners (Sector lead CSOs). The selected Sector Lead CSOs will play a critical implementation role in the MPSCS program and will be relied on to strengthen the CSO sector in Moldova beyond the life of the project.

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### **GRANT PROGRAM**

#### **RFA for the Grant Program Support to Moldovan Civil Society Development**

MPSCS developed and issued an RFA inviting CSOs to submit applications to be considered as one of three Sector Leads. The RFA described the MPSCS strategy for engaging with three CSOs, one from each sector, to focus (one each) on:

1. Advocacy and constituency engagement
2. Capacity development service provision
3. Legal and regulatory reform advocacy

Applicants were required to meet the listed selection criteria, include a plan to promote the long term sustainability of the Moldovan civil society sector in their area of focus, and perform a self-assessment of their institutional development and organizational training capacity. In that regard, MPSCS developed a separate organizational self-assessment form which was included in the application package for the *Support to Moldovan Civil Society Development* grant program.

The RFA stated the grant amount and cost share requirements, eligibility and selection criteria, provided information on the selection and award process, and referred to the additional requirements regarding MPSCS-grantee cooperation within the project and beyond. The RFA was launched simultaneously, and using the same tools and procedures, as the aforementioned *Engage Program Partners* RFA on 14 March 2014.



**Bidders Conference, Bălți, March 24, 2014**

#### **Bidders' Conferences in Cahul, Bălți and Chișinău**

The *Support to Moldovan Civil Society Development* grant program was also promoted during the three Bidders' Conferences during March 21-26 in Cahul, Bălți and Chișinău together with the *Engage Program Partners* Grant Program.

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### **CAPACITY BUILDING**

#### **MPSCS Capacity Building Strategy elaboration**

During the reporting period, MPSCS drafted its Capacity Building Strategy for Year 1, based on an assessment of the challenges identified by the previous FHI 360 Moldova program (MCSSP) and the MPSCS capacity building approach. The draft strategy focuses on developing organizational assessment tools such as: 1) the Self-Assessment tool: 2) Individual Checklist incorporating Non-US Organization Pre Award Survey (N.U.P.A.S.) requirements; and 3) the Organizational Development Assessment Tool (ODAT) template.

To monitor the progress in organizational development over several civil society areas, MPSCS will foster the Sector Lead 2 (Capacity Development) to collaborate with grantees, provide capacity

building assistance and expertise, elaborate a sector development plan, conduct initial and annual partners' evaluations, and facilitate the development of grantees' Training and Development Plans.

### **Developing capacity assessment tools**

To measure and promote internal organizational improvement, MPSCS has developed a CSO Individual Checklist (IC) and a Self-Assessment Form. Both tools will be used in the selection process to determine the capacities of the individual CSOs applying for MPSCS grants programs, and will also inform the finalization of the MPSCS CSO capacity building approach.

The IC will measure CSO organizational performance across the two MPSCS components. IC serves to guide technical assistance delivery, instill tendencies for improvement, and provide an objective methodology for attribution of MPSCS' impact.

#### *Self-Assessment Form*

The Self-Assessment Form is a technical tool that will help CSOs applying to be a Sector Lead to objectively self-evaluate their level of institutional development and training capacity. Only Sector Leads are required to perform the Self-Assessment as part of their grant application. Taking into consideration the Sector Leads' role their ability to objectively assess themselves is crucial.

#### *Individual checklist (IC)*

The Individual checklist is a tool to assess CSOs' organizational capacity, including the NUPAS financial and managerial criteria for compliant management of USAID funds. The IC criteria are organized in four main areas:

1. Legal structure
2. Human resources systems
3. Project performance management
4. Organizational sustainability

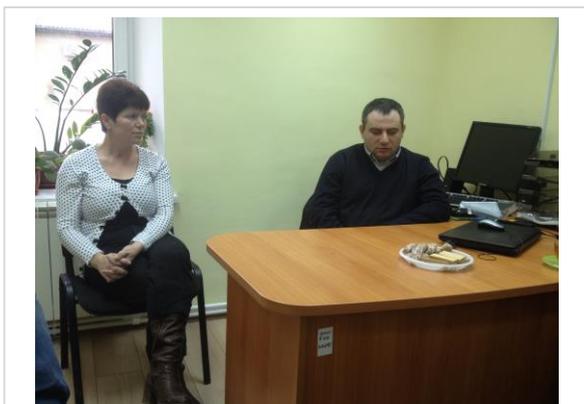
The IC will be used within the pre-award assessment process for all prospective MPSCS grantees to establish the level of CSOs institutional development and determine major discrepancies among organizations. During the reporting period, MPSCS updated the IC in accordance with special features of Moldovan CSOs, USAID requirements and MPSCS project needs, with support of an international expert.

#### *Organizational Development Assessment Tool*

Organizational Development Assessment Tool (ODAT) will be finalized by the end of next quarter. It is intended to be a participatory and facilitated discussion with each MPSCS grantee CSO. ODAT serves to establish the development baseline, and track the progress of, each MPSCS grantee. The assessment sheet consists of a series of statements under seven main capacity areas targeted by MPSCS:

1. Governance
2. Management Practices (planning, M&E, reporting)
3. Human Resource Management
4. Financial Management & Sustainability
5. Constituency Centered Services
6. Networking and Advocacy
7. Media and External Relations

## Learning positive practices in USAID institutional support to CSOs



**Meeting with the Assistance Center for People with Disabilities (CAJPD) team Chişinău, March 6, 2014**

During the reporting period, the MPSCS team visited the Legal Assistance Center for People with Disabilities (CAJPD) to discuss MCSSP impact in terms of sustainability and access to donors, as well as the current situation in the disability sector in Moldova and possible solutions. A former successful MCSSP partner, CAJPD passed the USAID evaluation showing that the organization had an adequate level of organizational development to receive direct funding from the USAID. The CAJPD team underlined the need for organizational development of Moldovan CSOs, particularly in the regions, and alignment of the MPSCS approach with this goal. The findings from this visit will be considered in the refinement of the MPSCS CSO capacity building approach.

## OBJECTIVE 3: ENABLING ENVIRONMENT MORE CONDUCTIVE TO LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF CIVIL SOCIETY

During the quarter, MPSCS reached agreement with its local partners on reengaging in ongoing reforms, including the 2% initiative and improving implementation of CSO Development Strategy. MPSCS supported the State Chancellery in convening and facilitating the coordination meeting with key ministries on implementation of the CSO Development Strategy. The project provided expertise and comparative assistance to the Ministry of Justice in launching the reform process for the Law on Public Associations and the Law on Foundations. MPSCS assisted the National Council of NGOs and representatives of the Parliament of Moldova to organize the Conference on the Cooperation between Civil Society and Parliament planned for April 29, 2014.

### ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON COOPERATION BETWEEN CIVIL SOCIETY AND PARLIAMENT

The National Council of NGOs members and the Parliament representatives met twice, on March 3rd and 27th, to discuss the concept of the Annual Conference on Cooperation between Civil Society and Parliament. Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Liliana Palihovici, moderated the discussions and promised to ensure the Parliament's support for organization of this event. Participants agreed that the Parliament will invite all 101 Members of Parliament, Government officials, Ambassadors, donors and other international organizations' representatives. The National Council of NGOs will invite approximately 50 CSOs to the event. The Parliament will also publish a press release about the Conference and the National Council of NGOs will replicate and distribute it through websites and social networks.



**Parliament and National Council of NGOs discussing the concept of Annual Conference on Cooperation between Civil Society and Parliament Chişinău, March 27, 2014**

Around 15 participants agreed on a general approach to the event, the roles and the contribution of each party. MPSCS will cover some of the event costs. The date of the Conference was set for April 29, 2014 and the agenda, which MPSCS helped to develop, will include:

- A welcome speech;
- The Government report on cooperation with the civil society and implementation of the Civil Society Development Strategy for 2012-2015;
- The Civil Society alternative monitoring report on cooperation with Parliament and implementation of the Strategy;
- Three workshops on Strategy objectives, to identify and set the next steps;
- Conclusions.

Participants will attend three workshops and present their recommendations at the end of the conference on: improvement of the legal framework for CSOs; financial sustainability of the CSOs; and an action plan for implementation of the Civil Society Development Strategy.

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## LEGAL REFORM

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### **Meetings with stakeholders**

Over the quarter, MPSCS held meetings with stakeholders to agree on the implementation of the Civil Society Development Strategy and to identify the priorities for the next few months. These meetings included the following:

1. Initial meeting with the assigned person on cooperation with CSOs in the State Chancellery to determine their priorities for implementing the Civil Society Development Strategy and to address the issue of monitoring the implementation of the strategy;
2. Meeting with the Ministry of Finance to address the developments with draft 2% law;
3. Meetings with individual CSO representatives of the NGO Council and the National Participation Council in order to encourage their applications to the MPSCS *Engage Partners Program*; and
4. Meetings with local donors and implementing organizations to agree on upcoming cooperation, including on the LGSP.

### **Supporting Moldovan stakeholders in monitoring and implementation of the Civil Society Development Strategy for 2012-2015**

MPSCS had an initial meeting with the State Chancellery to plan assistance in supporting implementation of the Strategy. At the moment there is an assigned person within the Division for Policy Coordination and Strategic Planning, who coordinates the monitoring activities, provides annual reports to the Parliament, and supports the ministries in implementation of the Strategy's objectives. However, there is no systematic monitoring of implementation or coordination among the government bodies, the Parliament, and CSOs. Currently, the Chancellery is demonstrating more openness in exploring how these issues can be addressed, and developing its own capacity to do so.

Based on the Chancellery's request, and in cooperation with the Division for Policy Coordination and Strategic Planning, MPSCS supported and participated in an expert meeting for all the line ministries' representatives who handle cooperation with CSOs (their appointment took place in 2013). At the meeting, MPSCS, through ECNL experts, shared with the participants relevant models of cooperation from ministries in other European countries, related planning and monitoring of the Strategy implementation, and mapped out existing needs for improving implementation of the Strategy at the ministry level. The meeting was attended by 16 participants who shared their experience of joint work related to implementation of the strategy and cooperation with CSOs. As a result, it was decided to focus more on the methodology for monitoring the Strategy's implementation, to hold regular coordination meetings between the ministries responsible for

concrete actions, and to involve CSOs more consistently in the ministries' work. The State Chancellery is planning to hold a follow up discussion with representatives of CSOs on April 16, 2014.

As discussed with the State Chancellery, MPSCS prepared a draft outline of coordination agreement to plan its support to the Chancellery on improving Strategy implementation. The draft agreement proposes that MPSCSP, through ECNL, will provide training and guidance based on best practices from Europe on the implementation of the Strategy, and will consult with the Chancellery on the implementation of specific targets from the strategy, such as development of the 2 % mechanism. The draft is currently under review by the State Chancellery.

In addition, beginning in April, ECNL planned and held a coordination meeting with the NGO Council to explore how best to support the NGO Council in their planned activities to implement the Strategy and individual objectives such as advancing social entrepreneurship, the 2% law, and promotion of private philanthropy. This initial meeting was very productive and discussions are ongoing.

### **Amendments to the Law on Public Associations and Law on Foundations**

In February, the Legislative Department of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) launched an online consultation on possible amendments to the Law on Public Associations and the Law on Foundations. According to the feedback provided by CSOs previously, there are a number of outstanding issues regarding the two laws related to registration, operations, and fiscal and other benefits for CSOs with public benefit status. Lack of political will prevented further progress on the 2011 reform initiative.

To assist the Ministry in its renewed reform efforts, MPSCS submitted comments and suggestions for improvements to these laws. In response, the MoJ requested further comparative analysis on CSO registration based on European good practice. At the Ministry's request, MPSCS developed a brief on the EU country examples of regulation, including regulations on the required number of founders, documents, deadlines for registration, as well as the promptness and accessibility of the registration process. Additionally, MPSCS highlighted the eligibility and rights of various physical and legal entities, including children and people with limited capacity, to establish CSOs. entity

In early April, MPSCS' legal expert held in-person consultation with the MoJ Legislative Department representative and the NGO Department Director. Following the meeting, MPSCS provided a brief to clarify additional questions on registering foreign branches, public benefit commission composition regulated under the Law on Public Associations, registration, de-registration, and other issues. It was agreed that once the MoJ approves and shares the amendments, MPSCS will provide feedback on the final version. Based on the assigned task by the government, the Ministry plans to develop and adopt the new amendments by the end of June 2014. MPSCS will closely follow the process.

MPSCS also offered to the MOJ to put forward a more formal coordination agreement in order to facilitate input to implementation of the CSO Development Strategy.

### **Supporting development of the mechanism for percentage designation**

The Parliament adopted changes to the Tax Code in December 2013 to allow physical entities to designate up to 2% of their income tax as a donation to CSOs with public benefit status and religious institutions. However, the amendments were adopted in haste and without the consultation process recommended by MCSSP. As a result, with civil society advocacy, the expedited adoption by the Parliament was contested in the Constitutional Court and ruled unconstitutional. A new working group was established under the Parliament's Budgetary Committee, including CSOs previously represented on the Ministry of Finance's 2% Working Group, MPs and possibly a Ministry of Finance representative.

MPSCS has committed to further support the local stakeholders in their efforts to develop the mechanism for 2% income tax designations by legal entities and physical persons. In agreement with the National Council of NGOs, MPSCS will have a dedicated local legal expert who will participate in the working group meetings and promote adoption of the draft in line with consultations and considerable efforts invested by the NGO Council and other CSOs.

### **Ongoing technical assistance and comparative legal expertise**

MPSCS provides ongoing technical assistance and comparative legal expertise to local partners through sharing publications, laws and comparative examples. In the last quarter, MPSCS shared comparative materials on cooperation with the LGSP, and with the National Participation Council on Parliament's transparency.

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### **COORDINATION WITH PARTNERS AND DONORS**

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From the beginning of the project, MPSCS identified points of collaboration with major national stakeholders, including the Parliament and other government institutions, National Council of NGOs, LGSP, and Swedish Organization for Individual Relief (SOIR) Moldova.

On February 26, MPSCS organized individual meetings IREX (Novateca project), Chemonics (LGSP), and SOIR Moldova to introduce MPSCS and its objectives, discuss the main domains of assistance offered to the Moldovan civil society sector, and agree upon holding an initial Civil Society Donors' meeting. As a result of these initial meetings, MPSCS was able to facilitate a meeting between SOIR Moldova and the National Council on Accreditation of Social Services Providers. In addition, at the launch of the Novateca project in March, MPSCS shared ideas about opportunities for cooperation between libraries and civil society in community engagement, hosting public discussion on important local and national-level policy issues, and providing quality information for population in support to local democracy processes. The Novateca launch was attended by librarians, CSOs, local government representatives, USAID, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and other donors.

On April 16, 2014, MPSCS staff participated in the public discussion of the draft study, *Civil Society Organizations in Moldova: Evolution, Sustainability and Inclusion in the Policy Dialogue* commissioned by the European Union and authored by Moldovan think tanks IDIS Viitorul and CBS-Axa. The MPSCS staff provided comments and suggestions for developing, regulating, and financing the civil society sector in Moldova.

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### **CROSS-CUTTING ACTIVITIES**

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#### ***Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment***

During the reporting period, MPSCS developed a Gender Self-Assessment Questionnaire for CSOs in order to improve and promote gender integration among CSO partners. MPSCS will launch this questionnaire next quarter. All future MPSCS grantees will use the tool to measure gender equity policies and practices within their organizations. The tool will be available to any interested Moldovan CSO and, if needed, MPSCS will provide assistance in applying the tool and utilizing the findings. MPSCS will encourage CSOs using the tool to share their experiences, and provide feedback.

The MPSCS Senior Capacity Building and Gender Manager attended a one-day Gender Knowledge Fair organized by UN Women in Moldova and presented the MCSSP-developed guide on *How to Promote Gender Equality in CSOs*. The main objective of the event was to gather and subsequently share information about women's leadership, elimination of violence against women, women's economic empowerment, and gender mainstreaming and responsive budgeting in Moldova. Over 25 representatives from the gender-focused organizations were actively involved in mini-workshop discussions. Participants agreed to continue sharing expertise and knowledge on the e-platform,

<http://egalitadedegen.md/en/> in the form of analytical reports, studies, research papers, project documentation, multi-media resources, as well as contacts of specialized organizations and experts on gender equality. MPSCS provided the electronic version of its Guide to the e-platform.

### **Youth Inclusion**

MPSCS staff participated in the proceedings of the Ministry of Youth and Sports Reference Group focused on developing the National Strategy for Youth Sector Development for 2014-2020. The Reference Group consists of the representatives of leading youth-focused CSOs, such as the Center "Artico" and Center for Independent Living "Motivatie", and government institutions such as the Local Youth Council, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Youth, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Information Technology and Communication, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Economy, and the National Bureau of Statistics.

Additionally, MPSCS staff participated in the policy dialogue facilitated by Pro-Comunitate on the 2014-2020 National Strategy for Youth Sector Development under four priority topics: youth participation; youth-focused services; economic opportunities for youth; and strengthening national youth policies.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports also invited MPSCS to be part of the Selection Committee for its 2014 *Participation for Development* grant program. The committee will select grantees to implement programs focused on meeting the objectives under the National Strategy for Youth Sector Development.

To promote youth inclusion throughout its grant activities, MPSCS included youth integration as a cross-cutting issue that the applicants will need to address in the proposed projects under both RFAs. Furthermore, MPSCS directly communicated with 15 youth-focused and youth-led organizations about opportunities for supporting youth projects through the MPSCS *Engage Program Partners* and the *Support to Moldovan Civil Society Development* grant programs.

### **Government Outreach and Engagement**

For the last six months, MPSCS has been working with the MoJ to amend the Law on Transparency in Decision-making Processes that was adopted on November 13, 2008. The Government of Moldova (GoM) has approved the amendments to this law, and the Parliament is supposed to review them in the next quarter. According to the amendments, the Moldovan local authorities will also be required to implement the transparency regulations. A specific chapter in the amendments establishes a system for monitoring transparency in public decision-making and stipulates sanctions for public officials not complying with its terms and conditions.

The amendments will be extremely helpful for the MPSCS Engage grantees' advocacy and watchdog activities. According to the GoM, over 70% of its decisions are made in consultation with the public but according to the National NGO Council, only 50% of GoM decisions are publicly discussed. At the local level, this percentage is much lower. If implemented properly, the recent amendments should improve the situation.

During the reporting period, MPSCS reached an agreement with the USAID-funded LGSP project to coordinate activities. Specifically, MPSCS will participate in LGSP's quarterly Mayors' Meetings in future reporting periods. For MPSCS, these forums will help in establishing a mutual learning and networking opportunity with the mayors so that they are more open to cooperating with CSOs and are more engaged in their activities. Our grantees will be encouraged to establish strategic partnerships with local governments, resulting in benefits for the public such as increased opportunities for local economic development, and better use of public spaces.

MPSCS cooperation with LGSP at present is positive and LGSP representatives have accepted to participation in the MPSCS Selection Committees for both grant programs.

### **Communication**

Since award, FHI 360 has been focused on promoting and increasing the visibility of MPSCS activities. MPSCS used its website ([www.fhi360.md](http://www.fhi360.md)) and Facebook page to communicate with representatives of CSOs. The website is updated with information on the new project, vacancies, grant program RFAs, and bidders' conferences. This quarter, the site registered 5,422 page views (47,6% new visitors and 52,4% returning visitors). The Facebook page was frequently updated with news regarding the MPSCS and civil society issues. Visitors appreciated news regarding RFAs and pictures of MPSCS staff. To date, there are 574 page "Likes" and of the people reached, 66% are women and 33% are men.

## **IV. CHALLENGES**

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A major challenge will be selecting strong CSOs to take the Sector Lead roles with MPSCS, especially in the field of Regulatory and Legal Reform. Few organizations in Moldova fit the criteria set forth in the RFA and have the required expertise and networking capacity to develop and successfully advocate for sound reform in the regulatory framework concerning the civil society sector. Similarly, a small number of CSOs have the capacity to transfer capacities for financial management of large and procedurally complex budgets. To address these challenges, MPSCS will work with short-listed CSO applicants to fine-tune their proposals, relying on their strengths. At the same time, MPSCS will ensure that the TA within their individual organizational development and training plans covers identified capacity gaps. Additionally, MPSCS will work through its partner ECNL to provide expertise and support to the Sector Lead organization responsible for CSO-related regulatory reform.

## **V. HIGHLIGHTS OF PLANNED ACTIVITIES FOR MPSCS NEXT QUARTER**

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### **Objective 1: CSOs More Effectively Represent their Constituencies**

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- Evaluate potential Engage Program Partners during field visits.
- With USAID approval, select and award 20 grants under the *Engage Program Partners* grant program.
- Publish the final version of the Gender Questionnaire on FHI 360 Moldova website and Facebook page.
- Provide expertise in evaluating and selecting project proposals that will support the implementation of the National Strategy for Youth Sector Development 2014-2020.
- Hold an initial half-day workshop for MPSCS grantees that will be attended by CSOs, the media, representatives of central and local authorities, and donors.

### **Objective 2: The Institutional Capacities of Strategic Partners Developed**

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- Short-listed Sector Leads give 20-minute oral presentations of their applications and initial self-assessments, followed by a 40-minute interactive question and answer session.
- Conduct capacity assessments using the MPSCS pre-award assessment tools to determine individual capacity level of 23 CSOs in Moldova.

- Select three Sector Leads with strong capacities in advocacy and community engagement, capacity development, and CSO-related regulatory framework reform to serve as key MPSCS partners.
- Finalize the CSO Organizational Development Assessment Tool (ODAT).
- Develop the Capacity Building Intervention Strategy which will guide the MPSCS approach to building capacities of Sector Leads and Engage Program Partners.

### Objective 3: Enabling Environment More Conducive to Long-Term Sustainability of Civil Society

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- Organize a conference on the implementation of the Civil Society Development Strategy with 101 MPs, 50 CSOs, and Government of Moldova representatives.
- Organize capacity-building session to the State Chancellery on improving coordination in the implementation of the CSO Development Strategy.
- Finalize draft amendments to the Law on Public Associations and the Law on Foundations.
- Finalize draft law on 2% designations.
- Hire two local experts to promote 2% mechanism and fiscal regulations.
- Select a Sector Lead focused on CSO-related regulatory framework reform and develop a sector development implementation plan.

### ATTACHMENTS

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- RFA for the *Support for Moldovan Civil Society Development* grant program, with the application package (Announcement, Application Form, Self-Assessment Form, Budget).
- RFA for the *Engage Program Partners* grant program, with the application package (Announcement, Application Form, Budget).
- MPSCS Individual Check List (used for CSO pre-award assessment in the selection process).

