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KOSOVO CIVIL SOCIETY PROGRAM FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

FEBRUARY 2008

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Kosovar civil society is at a crossroads. Having experienced high levels of international assistance and expansion in response to the cataclysm of 1999, the sector has more recently undergone an overall decline in available resources and a reduction in the number of active civil society organizations. While the capacities of many organizations have developed impressively in recent years, significant challenges continue to face Kosovar NGOs in networking, coalition building, and internal management. In addition, major changes in the political environment are expected to add another layer of challenge as well as opportunity: As this report is being written, Kosovo is expected to declare its political independence soon.

Within this context, USAID's ongoing project supporting the sector, the Kosovo Civil Society Program (KCSP), is expected to reach its planned termination date in May of 2008. Democracy International (DI) was tasked by USAID to evaluate the performance and impact of KCSP and provide analysis to inform possible future civil society programming in Kosovo. This report presents the results of the evaluation.

Status of Civil Society. While some 4,500 NGOs are officially registered with the Office of NGO Liaison, knowledgeable observers estimate that only about three hundred, including organizations oriented to service delivery, community development and/or policy advocacy, are currently active. Overall, contemporary civil society is characterized by:

- A low level of human resource mobilization, due in part to the elite make-up of NGO leadership and weak linkages to citizen constituencies;
- A general inability, for historical and political reasons, to carry out civil society work that makes connections across ethnic lines;
- A low level of public acceptance of NGOs and their work in Kosovar society, due in large part to publicly held misperceptions of the work of NGOs and how they are managed;
- Uncertain roles of counterparts in governmental and international decision-making institutions, thus complicating advocacy and coordination efforts;
- Weak incentives in government, most especially at the central level, for working with civil society organizations (CSOs);
- A complex fiscal environment, due to an unclear legal framework and limited predictability of tax administration;
- Very limited potential, in the short- to mid-term, for CSOs to become financially sustainable outside international donor support;

- A set of generally modest accomplishments in recent years, including more effective advocacy at local levels, development of a small number of issue-based coalitions at the national level, and the rise of a small number of active research-oriented NGOs; and
- An expected increase in the responsibilities faced by government after independence, and a corollary raised set of performance expectations to be faced by CSOs.

USAID Program Background. KCSP was initiated in May of 2005, funded at approximately \$ 3.9 million over a three-year period. IREX is the US-based implementing partner. After an initial period of adjustment regarding the structure of work with local partner organizations, IREX worked with the Advocacy Training and Resource Center (ATRC) for grant-making, training, and other forms of support to NGOs.

KCSP is guided by three objectives:

1. Strengthen Kosovo's civil society infrastructure and financial sustainability by increasing the organizational capacities of an NGO resource center and a grant-making organization to better serve the needs of the NGO community;
2. Improve the capacities of a core group of CSOs to more effectively advocate for the issues of the constituencies they represent in a more sustainable way; and
3. Improve the public image of the NGO sector by increasing their public relations skills and legitimacy.

Methodology. To conduct this evaluation, the DI team reviewed pertinent background documents relating to KCSP and the broader civil society context, and conducted data collection in Washington, DC and for two weeks in Kosovo in January and February of 2008. A total of approximately forty-five qualitative interviews were conducted with USAID/Kosovo officials, IREX management in Washington and the IREX Chief of Party and staff in Pristina, ATRC management and staff, as well as a representative sample of CSO leaders and other knowledgeable sources in Pristina and six other cities in Kosovo.

Key Findings. From our analysis of KCSP grant-making, capacity building, and support to advocacy, NGO networking and improvement to civil society's public image, we arrive at the following conclusions:

- KCSP has produced an effective grant-making organization in ATRC, with excellent networking in the CSO community across the country and good capability in some areas of training;
- The project has delivered a notable volume of accomplishments, particularly in the management of NGO grants and conducting public forums. Quality and relevance are mixed, however, in all areas, but especially advocacy and network building;
- As an NGO support organization, ATRC is not yet capable of fully managing its role on its own, due in part to a lack, up to this point, of a clear strategic vision.

Overall, although civil society organizations in Kosovo are moving faster in their capacity development and their ability to influence political and economic decision-making because of KCSP's efforts, KCSP has not led to *decisive* changes in civil society-government or partnership in achieving good governance. Nor do we find that it has notably increased the policy impact of civil society at the central level. But to attribute this weakness solely to aspects of program implementation, or even to appropriateness of objectives of KCSP, would be to ignore the overriding influence of country contextual factors.

Has KCSP's impact justified the resources invested? If we look only at short-term, currently observable results, the answer to this question may indeed be no, due to the lack of concretely observable changes in the civil society landscape over the last three years. But the capacity building that has been achieved should reasonably be expected to yield measurable results within the next few years, if we are willing to assume that the legal and institutional environment for the sector will improve and that CSOs as a group will be given opportunities to leverage their enhanced capabilities.

Recommendations for Possible Future Programming. Even as Kosovo's status changes and the parts played by international donors and other institutions shift, USAID is expected to continue to play a leading role in assistance to civil society in Kosovo in coming years. It is our view that the new program should not look dramatically different from the existing one. Some significant changes may be made, however, in order that USAID may make the most of its resources for support to the sector. There is a real need for a local NGO, like ATRC, capable of delivering grants and offering capacity-building support to other NGOs. There also remains a need, in the short to medium at least, for a US-based implementing partner to provide support and technical assistance to a Kosovar NGO support center.

More thoroughly meeting the current needs of civil society development in Kosovo will require augmentation and adjustment of the KCSP programming approach, as well as changes to the implementation framework. The current status and expected potential of Kosovar civil society, along with our findings concerning the implementation and impacts of KCSP, lead to the following recommendations for USAID/Kosovo as the project draws to a close and a follow-on program is considered:

- The new program design should include a timetable for phasing out a US-based organization offering direct assistance to the local implementing partner.
- The future partner's grant-making should be somewhat restructured.
- Providing funding for advocacy and democracy-oriented NGOs should remain a priority for USAID.
- The USAID program should include a component that encourages and supports membership-based Kosovar organizations.
- The local partner's capacity-building strategy should be more specialized and more closely targeted to the differential needs of various NGOs.

- Recognize that financial sustainability is unlikely to be characteristic of Kosovo’s civil society sector in the short term.
- Efforts should be made to help the local partner develop into an NGO which plays a key role among Kosovo’s leading NGOs.
- Proactive efforts to change perceptions of CSOs in Kosovo must be made.
- USAID should encourage the involvement of its local partner and, when appropriate, its grantees in regional partnerships.
- The local partner should develop a strategy early in the program timetable that addresses funding and support of minority CSOs.

Given proper financial support and program structure, the recommendations outlined above will lead to a program that builds on the partial success of KCSP and will contribute significantly to civil society development in Kosovo. They will help the local partner grow from an organization that makes small grants to local NGOs and provides modest technical support, to an important national NGO that is able to more effectively award grants with longer-term, measurable civil society results and provide more need-focused support to a spectrum of NGOs. In addition, through these recommendations the local partner should increasingly be able to play an independent leadership role in Kosovo’s civil society more generally. This will ensure that USAID’s program has a strengthened likelihood of having a positive impact on national policy making and longer-term civil society development.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| ALM | Youth Center “At Lorenc Mazreku” |
| ANP | Action for Non Violence and Peace Building |
| ATRC | Advocacy Training and Resource Center |
| AVONET | Advocacy Center for Progress |
| BIRN | Balkan Investigative Reporting Network |
| CBCD | Community Business Development Center |
| CCRPT | Center for Counseling, Research and Psychological Treatment |
| CCSD | Center for Civil Society Development |
| CSD | Communication for Social Development |
| CSO | Civil Society Organization |
| FDI | Foundation for Democratic Initiatives |
| FIQ | Forum for Civic Initiative |
| GAP | Group for Policy Analysis |
| GTRC | Gender Training and Resource Center |
| INGO | International Non-Governmental Organization |
| INPO | Initiative for Progress |
| IREX | International Research and Exchanges Board |
| KCIC | Kosovo Center for International Cooperation |
| KCSP | Kosovo Civil Society Program |
| KFOS | Kosovo Open Society Foundation |
| KGSC | Kosovo Center for Gender Studies |
| LDK | Democratic League of Kosovo |
| OON | Organization of People with Disabilities |
| PDK | Democratic Party of Kosovo |
| PISG | Provisional Institutions of Self-Government |
| RIINVEST | Institute for Development Research |
| SRSG | Special Representative of the Secretary-General |
| UNMIK | United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| YIHR | Youth Initiative for Human Rights |

I. INTRODUCTION

This report presents an evaluation of USAID's Kosovo Civil Society Program (KCSP) that began in May 2005 and is scheduled to be completed in May 2008. Findings are based on review of relevant documents and field work over the course of two weeks, between January 23 and February 8, 2008. A list of interviews is provided in Appendix I.

Overall, this report seeks to answer the two main questions raised in the evaluation Scope of Work:

- What has been the impact of KCSP?
- What does an analysis of the program, taking into consideration the country environment and other factors, indicate regarding future possible programming for the civil society sector in Kosovo?

This first part of the report looks at contextual factors – historical, cultural, and political -and how these have influenced and framed the program. Part Two summarizes the findings of our field work and analysis, while Part Three draws conclusions and recommendations for design of forthcoming programs.

KCSP, as implemented by IREX and its local partner, the Advocacy Training and Resource Center (ATRC), was tasked to address the following:

- **Objective 1:** Strengthen Kosovo's civil society infrastructure and financial sustainability by increasing the organizational capacities of an NGO resource center and a grant-making organization to better serve the needs of the NGO community. Activities to support Objective 1 have included building the capacity of ATRC and of NGOs more broadly; support to ATRC to build a portfolio of readily adaptable training modules on public and constituent relations and providing grant assistance to ATRC and, through ATRC's own grant-making capability, to a broader group of NGOs.
- **Objective 2:** Improve the capacities of a core group of civil society organizations to more effectively advocate for the interests of the constituencies they represent. Relevant activities have included efforts to strengthen existing coalitions and to then form a national-level network; and to provide selected NGOs with national-level and community-level advocacy grants.
- **Objective 3:** Improve the public image of the NGO sector by increasing NGO public relations skills, credibility, and legitimacy. To support this objective, activities have included technical assistance and support to help NGOs actively to solicit constituents' input; technical assistance and support to improve transparency of the NGO sector; and encouragement of collaboration between NGOs and the media.

I.1. Kosovo Background

A province in the former Yugoslavia before 1989, Kosovo's status was elevated in 1974, when it began to enjoy wide autonomy almost on a par with other republics of the federal Yugoslavia. However, under pressure by armed forces, this status was downgraded in the late eighties, when the Milosevic regime took full control of all public authorities and enterprises. Forced out of their jobs, the Kosovo Albanians, who constitute around 90% of the population, declared their independence in the early nineties. They organized a parallel system of services and peaceful resistance led by the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK). This parallel system was repressed by the Serbian regime, and gradually led to armed resistance in 1998, followed by the military bombing and ground intervention by NATO in 1999.

Kosovo was then governed by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244, with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) assuming ultimate authority. The military component was to be undertaken by NATO; both missions administered Kosovo without prejudice to its external status, which was left pending. UNMIK assumed basic civilian administrative functions, and was tasked with facilitating a political process to determine Kosovo's future status, maintain civil law, etc. In the function of a trusteeship, UNMIK's governing authority was accountable to the UN Secretary General in New York, not to the Kosovo population. The closed nature of the political system, at both local and international levels, has significantly inhibited effective public input to policy decision-making.

Kosovo held local elections in 2000, out of which the first democratically controlled municipal assemblies emerged. In 2001, Kosovo-wide central elections were held, which formed the Kosovo Assembly and the Kosovo Government, called the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG). In 2002, when the second local elections were held, several municipalities peacefully changed hands to another party. In 2004, the central authorities switched hands, putting the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) in opposition. After a delay of the local elections scheduled to be held in 2006, in 2007 elections were held at central, municipal and mayoral levels. The 2007 elections were markedly different from the earlier elections, reflecting more democracy with open lists for all three levels and direct elections of mayor. These most recent elections also resulted in peaceful handover of power at the central level and in most municipalities.

By the time this report is made public, Kosovo will almost certainly have declared its independence and probably will have been recognized by numerous states. It will then need to negotiate its membership in various international organizations. Since it will be recognized by most EU members, it will also try to meet the obligations needed for EU integration. It is the prospect of eventual membership in the EU that remains the key motive for Kosovars to move their new country towards democracy. However, the heavy influence from the EU is likely to consume the attention and capacity of the fledgling Kosovo state, which could render civil society influence less effective. With overall levels of donor assistance to Kosovo expected to increase in a variety of sectors over the coming years, and with increasing attention being paid to the reforms that would support integration with the EU, Kosovar civil society will likely face both unprecedented challenges and new opportunities.

Kosovo's civil society experienced massive expansion during approximately the first five years after the conflict of 1999, fueled by numerous international donor organizations and involvement by international NGOs with civil society concerns. International involvement and levels of donor contributions to Kosovar CSOs has steadily declined in recent years as the focus has shifted, in general, from humanitarian relief and recovery to support to Kosovar public institutions. This rapid expansion and subsequent contraction of financial resources, training and other forms of support to Kosovar CSOs have led to mixed results with regards to the status of these organizations in present-day Kosovo. While many new organizations were founded in the period immediately after 1999 this has tapered off in recent years, but the capacity of many existing organizations appears to have been notably improved during this period. However, almost all CSOs have weak linkages to memberships or constituencies, and tend to focus on relatively short-term programs driven by donor priorities rather than their own strategic approaches. In addition, there clearly has been a winnowing-out of NGOs in recent years as overall available resources have been reduced.

Perhaps most significantly, with very few exceptions civil society organizations tend not to be characterized by strong strategic planning. Advocacy and anti-corruption, for example, seem to be popular terms in the CSO vocabulary, but in many cases organizations do not display clear awareness of what these terms mean or what types of CSO activities they may refer to. Nonetheless, most observers of contemporary Kosovo find that the foundations for a stable civil society have been established, due to the self-organization of the nineties, large amounts of funds available after 1999, and the relatively pluralist public sphere.

The period after the 1999 war saw a high priority attached to civil society. One of the first regulations instituted by UNMIK was for the operation of civil society organizations, attempting to ease the functioning of countless humanitarian engagements soon after the war. The social and economic landscape was seriously influenced by the massive influx of international NGOs engaged in humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and refugee resettlements. INGOs were the first to engage not only local staff, but also to support domestic NGOs by funding projects, training and numerous other skills.

This period also marked the end of resistance politics and the gradual introduction of a multi-party political system. The departure of Serb troops and the introduction of elected authorities made civil society change.

The massive infusion of money, and the desire to change Kosovo, led to the financing of organizations that would engage in reconciliation. This led to a top-down approach to assistance. However, this in turn elicited fears among some segments of society. For several years, the stance of most international powers was viewed by many among the Kosovar public with concern and scepticism. Local organizations were viewed by these sceptics as naïve and unable to see the true and assumedly exploitative interests of the foreign donors.

Others viewed civil society as driven largely by financial motivations. Many NGOs needed to offer good salaries to compete with the international community for the few English-speaking, well-educated individuals. Accusations of corruption and elitism and fears of excessive pandering to the international community, as well as the jealousy of the

government, which found it difficult to attract good employees, have contributed to a more cynical public.

The overall picture from this period is that of abundant funding, approaching the levels of total budgetary spending by the Kosovo government. The funding that came rapidly in 1999 and in 2000, only to start to dry up in 2001, heralded a shift in priorities to start to support the public authorities of Kosovo.

The reduction in funding for civil society was not an entirely negative development. The abundance of the first post-war years saw the rise of many profit-driven NGOs; hence the reduction in available overall resources filtered out the less committed NGOs, bringing many of them to collapse.

Political and civic activity in Kosovo is not as centered on the capital as much as it is in many other countries. During the 1990s, groups outside of Pristina functioned as branches of organizations in Pristina, but currently there are increasingly more independent organizations and initiatives outside Pristina today.

Overall, however, Kosovar CSOs have been characterized by weak linkages to individual citizens, for historical, cultural, and recent political reasons. This has led to a tendency for CSOs traditionally to be individually-based NGOs run as elite organizations.

1.2. The Civil Society Environment

The historical setting summarized above leads us to highlight the following points regarding the environment in which Kosovar civil society organizations currently work:

Disengaged citizens and low levels of civic dialogue.

Due to the paternalistic tradition in social relationships in Kosovar society, and the one-party system of governance, most citizens of Kosovo are not active in political or civic life. Hierarchical cultural relationships have also sustained a culture of obedience in the family, the workplace, and elsewhere, with no significant role for dialogue in decision-making. Criticism is usually perceived as a personal attack. Constructive dialogue and a relationship between citizens and those who govern based on responsibility and accountability has yet to be developed and needs careful and long-term nurture. In short, Kosovars have still not made the transition from being subjects into being citizens.

Status

The issue of Kosovo's status has influenced the civil society sector in several ways:

- (a) Due to the perceived need to keep a united stance on status, political parties have been inhibited from acting as true opposition, with a similar effect on civil society;
- (b) As a major issue, it has crowded out other issues that would be highly salient otherwise, disabling the civil society from becoming vocal and attracting attention to other issues of lower priority and potential distraction from the major goal;

- (c) Civil society is disempowered by the status issue, since some issues of critical social importance, such as access to pension benefits and the status of missing persons, are technically not soluble until Kosovo's status is clarified;
- (d) The issue of status has also led to prioritizing security and stability over democratization. Political expediency became of highest priority, which limited discussion on policy questions with the public. Limits on discussion also arose from the compromises that had to be made during negotiations. There was widespread fear among the international community and the Kosovar elite that once the key issues are open, the public would first insist on stripping down the painful compromises made to the Serbs.

Unresponsiveness of UNMIK

Since 1999, UNMIK has had jurisdiction over much of public policy in Kosovo. Although this influence is decreasing, UNMIK still controls a large chunk of the budget, and has kept power of approval for every law as well as directly managed many agencies. As a trusteeship mission, UNMIK needs not seek reelection with the Kosovar public, so it only has limited incentive to be responsive.

Since its establishment, UNMIK has evinced support for civil society. However, it never engaged civil society properly, oftentimes exercising top-down decision making. Instead, UNMIK would call on NGOs to hold the PISG accountable. The diplomatic immunity of UNMIK officials further complicated matters, making it even legally futile to seek to push a matter further with UNMIK. As time passed by, Kosovars grew more discontented with this relationship.

Dual governance

The very nature of having a dual system of governance, UNMIK alongside the PISG, has blurred the lines of accountability. NGOs often complain about being forwarded from one institution to another, including by UNMIK. Moreover, by distancing itself from criticism, UNMIK set a negative precedent and failed to use the opportunity to acculturate political parties, the public and civil society to proper exercise of public participation and accountability.

The political and electoral system

The Kosovo electoral arrangement was established as a proportional electoral system, which was viewed as the simplest and fairest. However, this system did not facilitate direct accountability between elected office holders and voters. Relationships between NGOs and parties, or individual MPs were extremely difficult to establish as the former saw little incentive in becoming the mouthpiece of particular social groupings. The introduction of open lists and direct mayoral elections in late 2007 should bring about an improved environment in this regard.

Overall, the authorities remain insufficiently transparent, and the parties highly centralized. These aspects have inhibited access to the policy process. Only a small number of NGOs have managed to formulate policy goals and actively lobby for changes.

Reduced funds

The trend of decreasing funds for civil society has contributed to a reduced number of NGOs. This has led to less exposure, but arguably the sector's voice is of higher quality, and this may ultimately reflect in the evolving public image of civil society.

Bureaucratic institutions emerging

Gradually the government has become more responsive to NGOs. Various institutions that work with NGOs have started to emerge. For reasons of transparency, it is very useful that the tax administration and the NGO Liaison Office have become more efficient; however, these offices often seek too much control over civil society. The latest draft NGO law was not up to European standards, and civil society organizations are currently applying pressure on the government and parliament to enact a revised law.

1.3. Legal Framework

Currently, the existence and activities of NGOs are regulated by UNMIK Regulation 1999/22. This regulation distinguishes domestic and international NGOs and differentiates between associations and foundations. Associations are defined as membership organizations, while foundations are set up by private groups of individuals for either mutual or public benefit.

The new law, which has been approved by the Assembly but not yet signed by the UN's Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), is stricter. Due to several regressive clauses, including mandatory registration for all associations, and an unclear distinction between for-profit and not-for-profit educational institutions, the draft Law was criticized by the latest periodic report of the European Commission in late 2007. It is not yet clear if European leverage will be sufficient to return the draft law back for review.

Initially under UNMIK administration, the NGO Liaison Office was charged with registering NGOs. Since March 2006, this department was transferred to the Ministry of Public Services. It is unclear how much this office has recovered from insufficient capacities in the past, but recently it has begun conducting limited monitoring of NGO financial records. It monitored 60 NGOs in 2007. The Liaison Office found many organizations to be out of compliance, in major as well as minor ways, and gave these organizations recommendations as to how to improve their work.

In general, the legal environment for NGOs is open, although the taxation environment is in need of improvement. The wait time for registering an NGO is between 15-60 days, and the procedure requires no payment of any kind.

Currently the NGO Liaison Office reports that there are 4,518 active NGOs. Nine-hundred-four of them have Public Benefit Status (PBS). Of these, 4,076 are local, the majority of them associations, and a much smaller number of foundations. A total number of 558 have public benefit status, 176 of them are active. There are 701 NGOs of mixed multiethnic founders -- 176 of them with Kosovo Serb founders only, 525 mixed. International NGOs

still registered total 439, of which 90 are without PBS and 350 with PBS. Thirty NGOs have been closed; 26 of these had PBS.

I.4. Major findings on civil society background

The civil society environment we have described brings forward several key points regarding the challenges currently faced in the sector:

Low legitimacy

Some of the negative images of the numerous NGOs that sprung up soon after 1999 still persist. Although perhaps less than in the past, there is still jealousy among the political elite about the relatively well-funded organizations in civil society, and by corollary the high quality of individuals they can attract. As most NGOs are supported by shallow or non-existent constituencies, they are perceived as elitist. Being funded almost exclusively by foreign donors, few believe that NGOs set their own priorities.

Inability to develop across ethnic lines

Due to the questions around status, and to the persistent causes of ethnic tension, many activists still fear reaching out to the other ethnic group for the fear of being branded a traitor. It has been especially difficult for the Kosovo Serbs, whose leadership has severed relations with most countries. The negative perception of receiving donations is even stronger in the Kosovo Serb community. With independence, this is likely to become an even bigger problem for Kosovo Serb NGOs unless concrete actions are taken to address the special needs of these organizations.

Low level of resource mobilization

It should also be mentioned that with only a few exceptions Kosovar CSOs are not formed from local social movements. This results in a low level of shared vision, and a subsequent difficulty in inspiring others to donate their time or resources for such a cause. Whereas several movements truly represent their constituencies, such as the pensioners, most NGOs do not. The vast majority of them remain dependent on foreign aid.

Capacity

NGOs have generally managed to attract suitable employees. They are generally professional, but there are few volunteers. Even interns are rare. Lacking volunteers and having to support staffs who tend to be considerably better paid than those in the government makes the organizations particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in the donor community. Many individuals have left when private sector professional employment started to pick up, or when well paid political positions were offered.

Many organizations have failed to expand beyond dependency on one person for day-to-day operations. Because of the difficulty of raising further funds, most organizations have hit an expansion bottleneck.

Younger organizations and those belonging to disadvantaged groups are still mastering basic capacities, while more advanced ones feel a training fatigue and request access to more

advanced trainings abroad or customized coaching. Almost all NGOs still require strengthening of their internal organization and increased professionalism, thus undermining their credibility when asking for greater openness in society generally.

Priority of Assistance to Government

The massive funding that went to CSOs after 1999 undermined the authority of public institutions to an extent, a relationship that still remains to be repaired. The damage having been done, growing support for Kosovar public institutions was soon reflected in increased levels and expanded types of direct assistance to government institutions. As the government managed to get basic structures in place, and was in a position to absorb and make use of more assistance, today much of the assistance now goes directly to the government. This has meant less money for civil society.

Complex fiscal environment for CSOs

Due to the widespread opinion that numerous NGOs mismanaged resources and that their leaders were paid excessively well, there is seeming consensus among the parties to tighten the leash on NGOs. A number of them have lost their public benefit status as a result. However, there is lack of clarity over rights and obligations of NGOs with regard to taxes, customs duties, VAT, etc. For example, the humanitarian organization, Mother Teresa, has to reject donations due to the inability to pay customs for them. It has been suggested that trying to curb several wrongdoings, the authorities have stifled the normal work of NGOs. The authorities seems to have used the wrong types of tools, instead of clarifying the framework and equipping the tax administration to ensure compliance from NGOs that do not currently comply, there is a tendency to tighten up the rules further.

Sector is fragmented

Excessive reliance on the donor community, as well as some instances of personalized competition among NGO leaders, has hampered cooperation toward shared goals. Relationships between major NGO groups have even been antagonistic at times. The sector in general appears to lack sufficient experience to support either sustained collaboration among CSOs or healthy competition for resources or public attention.

An illustration of donor-dependence has been the waves of priorities. The first wave saw the rise of human rights priorities, conflict mitigation (1999-2000), humanitarian, interethnic reconciliation (after 2000). The second wave saw the rise of gender and sexual orientation issues, whereas the third one saw establishment of, and support to, think tanks and advocacy groups. Youth, anti-corruption and watchdog organizations have followed more recently. While civil society in all countries is subject to trends and moods, the trends in Kosovo were determined by changing donor priorities.

The balance between NGO sectors is in flux

Because of the high level of dependency on international donor programs for resources, Kosovar NGOs often face issues of autonomy and authenticity in mission. It is safe to conclude that many CSOs at this stage feel more accountable to their donors than to their intended beneficiaries.

CSOs are positioned right now to lead, not to follow, society

In Kosovo today, donor-supported CSOs need to play a leadership role in democratization efforts. Because demand for and understanding of participatory democracy is not widespread among the population, it is not realistic to expect civil society to be led from the ground up at this time.

No incentive at central level for government for working with civil society

The inability of the government to absorb and react to policy recommendations offered by CSOs has also raised problems for civil society. Moreover, there is a lack of understanding in both camps regarding how best to engage each other. In recent years Kosovo has experienced a differentiation of success in such engagement, depending upon the administrative level of government. The central level of government has more institutional capacity to respond, but so far has had few strong incentives to do so. It is in local governance, probably due to the proximity of institutions, stronger impact of open electoral lists and direct election of mayors where democratic dialogue has started to work more effectively.

Public perception of CSOs is poor

While the public perception of civil society may have improved somewhat in recent years, the public image, according to virtually all the civic activists with whom we spoke, continues to be rather poor. This is partly due to the difficult environment of several years back, partly to the uncertainties of political transition, and partly because of the realities of a somewhat privileged status of NGO leaders and staff in Kosovar society.

CSOs are accurately viewed as sources of well-paying jobs, but this is largely due to the competitive environment in which they operate. CSOs need to compete with UNMIK, OSCE or similar organizations for skilled employees.

Watch-dogging and criticism of government programs or leadership does not always reverberate positively among the public. Nietsch observed that NGO advocacy was seen as attempts to “discredit, oppose, or replace government”. It is possible that such a comment reflects a misunderstanding of the role of CSOs in a democracy, but it also suggests that the sector, sometimes viewed simply as a vanguard of foreign interests, faces an uphill struggle to legitimize itself with the Kosovar public.

Sustainability

Due to the weak economic situation, inadequate tax structure, and lack of public understanding of their value, NGOs in Kosovo are not close to becoming financially sustainable. While numerous organizations could become institutionally sustainable within 2-3 years, financial sustainability remains a distant goal. Local philanthropy will need to wait for many years, during which NGOs will need to do their best to diversify their sources of funding in their bid to become more independent, as well as to widen and deepen their constituency to be able to use their membership for voluntary tasks as well as membership fees.

I.5. The Developing NGO Environment

The environment for civil society is about to undergo some changes. Overall, opportunities for advocacy should open up expectations. In one aspect, the government is likely to be less open. As it becomes independent, it acquires more responsibility, and is less vulnerable. However, it can no longer make excuses and scapegoat UNMIK for failures. At the same time, as the international community loses direct traction with the government, it is likely to turn increasingly to civil society as an ally. Moreover, the EU leverage should be sufficient to get the authorities to listen. Overall, the public space and processes should start to enjoy more ownership among ordinary Kosovars. As Kosovars start to govern in more areas, they will have to identify their positions on issues, and they will have to debate, making the involvement of CSOs more necessary.

It has been observed that local authorities are more attentive to civil society as compared to those at the center. With decentralization and more powers passing to the local level, this is likely to benefit the input of the civil society. Moreover, the representatives who have been elected with open lists, as well as the mayors who have been directly elected, are likely to open up and use the civil society more.

EU funding is likely to increase in the short term. If EU integration of Kosovo progresses, then over time Kosovo should become eligible for other sources of funding, and in the longer term to start to tap into private European donors.

It is essential that civil society put further pressure on the Parliament to review the draft law on NGOs, as well as to cooperate with the authorities to ensure that the room for mismanagement of funds is smaller, but without narrowing the field of operation and the freedom of association. The taxation policy of NGOs should also be reformed, to provide for tax incentives for donations as well as to define by law the status of not-for-profits.

As noted, the civil society sector continues to face many daunting challenges. At the same time, modest yet notable accomplishments have been produced in some areas. For example:

- Several NGOs working at the local level have successfully built local coalitions and won agreement with authorities to make discussions on key public issues more participatory;
- A few issue-based advocacy coalitions have become active at the national level;
- The consolidation among NGOs in recent years has led to the termination of many relatively inefficient and poorly managed NGOs, resulting in a sector which overall is probably more efficiently run than earlier; and
- Cooperative and collaborative activities among NGOs, while still small in number, are increasingly common, and valuable experience in this area is being gained.¹

¹ For a similar assessment, see USAID, *The 2006 NGO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe* (May 2007), pp. 126-127.

Overall, therefore, Kosovo's setting for civil society, in terms of its social, legal, financial and organizational environments, remains difficult, but there clearly are opportunities for building upon the existing strengths of the sector.

2. ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

2.1. Assessing Impact

The Scope of Work for this evaluation calls for answers to two main questions:

1. What has been the impact of KCSP; and
2. What does an analysis of the environment and other factors indicate regarding future possible programming for the civil society sector in Kosovo?

This section addresses the first of these questions, while Part Three will offer a set of responses to the second question.

When addressing questions of project impact, the focus is typically on longer-term, relatively significant effects a program intervention may have had on the country, sector or beneficiary environment. Attempt is made to determine the extent to which the project or program may have been the causative source of observed results. In addition, an impact analysis should examine negative as well as positive results that is, those not in conformance with program objectives as well as those supportive of these objectives, and should consider counterfactuals questions such as what may have happened if the program had not been implemented.

We have conducted an impact analysis that addresses these methodological expectations. It needs to be recognized, however, that such an analysis of KCSP at this stage faces considerable limitations. First, it is quite early, in an historical sense, to assess the impact of KCSP activities, since they were initiated only three years ago. In fact the bulk of KCSP assistance to the CSO sector took place in 2006 and 2007. This limitation is especially relevant for a project emphasizing organizational capacity building. Second, developing and applying objective and reliable measurements of long-term results in civil society assistance, even in instances when the timing of measurement is appropriate, is not an easy or straightforward task. Qualitative analysis and professionally informed judgment play major roles in coming to a final assessment of impact in this sector. Finally, evaluating the counterfactual is perhaps the most daunting challenge of all, since the project has been implemented in a complex social and institutional environment featuring a rather large number of NGO, donor, governmental and other actors, any of which potentially could have filled some or all of the “gaps” that would have been left with KCSP’s absence.

Nevertheless, we offer our impact analysis here, asking the reader simply to keep these limitations in mind.

2.2. History and Objectives

The KCSP Cooperative Agreement was awarded in May of 2005 to IREX, funded at a level of approximately \$ 3.9 million over a 3-year period. The current agreement expires in May of 2008. In relation to USAID/Kosovo’s country strategy, the project falls under Strategic Objective 2.1: Civil Society and Government Are More Effective Partners in Achieving

Good Governance. KCSP contributes to the following Intermediate Results (IRs) and sub-IRs:

- IR 2.1.1: Better Informed Citizens;
- IR 2.1.2: Increased civil society influence on public policy decisions; and
- Sub-IR 2.1.2.1: Increased citizen participation in political and economic decision-making.

KCSP is the immediate successor to USAID's Kosovo NGO Advocacy Project (KNAP), which was implemented by East-West Management Institute and was aimed toward objectives very similar to those of KCSP. The KNAP program featured training provided by the ATRC; grant-making and related training by the Foundation for Democratic Initiatives (FDI); and a legal support component carried out by the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) and its local partner, the Kosovo Institute for Not-for-Profit Law (IKDO).

KCSP's original implementation structure, which came to be substantially revised by 2006, included IREX as the lead organization, partnering with two local organizations which had been active in KNAP: FDI, which would receive IREX assistance to promote local philanthropy and to become a financially viable grant-making organization; and ATRC, which also would be assisted by IREX to build the Center's capacity to serve as an NGO resource center serving the development needs of Kosovo's NGO community.

After a year into the program, IREX decided that this structure would need to change. Consequently, with USAID approval IREX discontinued its partnership with FDI and after carrying out a selection process determined to add KCSP's grant-making component to ATRC's responsibilities. One of the major areas of inquiry for this evaluation is to assess the benefits and costs of this shift in implementation partnerships.

KCSP is guided by three program objectives:

1. Strengthen Kosovo's civil society infrastructure and financial sustainability by increasing the organizational capacities of an NGO resource center and a grant-making organization to better serve the needs of the NGO community;
2. Improve the capacities of a core group of CSOs to more effectively advocate for the issues of the constituencies they represent in a more sustainable way; and
3. Improve the public image of the NGO sector by increasing their public relations skills and legitimacy.

Are these objectives appropriate ones for a project intended to support the USAID Strategic Objective, Intermediate Results and Sub-Intermediate Result described above? A preliminary answer is "Yes, rather obviously." Completing the three KCSP objectives would almost certainly, support all of USAID's expected results. In relation to the broader assessment of impact, however, it is important to recognize that as intended project

outcomes the three KCSP objectives are necessarily more focused and specific. The KCSP objectives address improving the capacity of an NGO resource center and of a group of CSOs, and in addition improving the public image of the sector. The USAID outcomes, intentionally broader in scope, extend the logic to address the quality of information accessible to and held by citizens, as well as improvements in citizen and CSO participation in public decision making. The assumption linking these two sets of objectives is that building institutional capacity in an NGO center and among selected NGOs will, in time and with supportive conditions in the sector, result in USAID's intended outcomes at the citizen and sector levels. In addition, as we note below, in practice KCSP was dedicated predominantly to improving the capacity of ATRC as a multi-functional resource center. This resulted in a weighting of KCSP accomplishments in favor of basic institutional capacity building, even more than originally intended as the project commenced. Overall, then, while KCSP's objectives are appropriate as *logical* contributions to USAID's objectives, the *practical* contributions of KCSP's objectives and activities constitute only partial fulfillment of USAID's broader expectations under Strategic Objective 2.1.

As we will show, KCSP produced notable, constructive results, but due to aspects of the project history, the recognized need to re-allocate project resources to support ATRC's grant-making, some aspects of the grant-making and training structures, and some particular weaknesses in the NGO sector overall in Kosovo, the extent and impact of these results has been limited. The discussion begins with KCSP's administrative structure, and continues with ATRC grant-making, capacity building, advocacy support, efforts to improve the public image of CSOs, and network building.

2.3. Administrative Structure

With the need to fulfill KCSP's first objective of building the capacity of an NGO support center and grant-making organization, combined with the circumstances of the shift of grant-making responsibilities from FDI to ATRC, the bulk of attention and effort for IREX and ATRC together has been dedicated to ensuring that ATRC's capacity in many areas would be at adequate levels to meet project objectives. The two organizations responded to the needs well over a period of approximately two years; and the capacity building efforts are continuing to the close of the current project. Once it was determined that ATRC would be carrying out KCSP grant-making as well as training functions, IREX worked intensively for several months to ensure that ATRC could meet the organizational challenges it was facing. This assistance included, among other actions, temporarily taking on the grant-making function on ATRC's behalf in the early stages, situating the IREX Chief of Party (COP) on-site at ATRC for some months to be available for coaching and assistance as needed, expanding the number of ATRC staff and making other staff adjustments, and engaging focused training for ATRC on grants administration and other relevant topics.

The overall result was success in this area. Within approximately two years, ATRC's capacity has been remarkably expanded and improved. As primary implementing partner for KCSP, IREX deserves some kudos for working through what in the project's first year was a daunting and unexpected set of circumstances.

This accomplishment has not come without cost, however. First, the major part of grant-making was delayed, with the process not getting fully underway until early 2006. In addition, some major intended areas of KCSP activity as originally intended were, with USAID approval, allocated relatively modest levels of project attention as a consequence of the need to focus on improving ATRC's capacity and expanding its viable functions. Most notably, the ability for either IREX or ATRC to follow through with NGO clients in training and consultancy, to actively build an effective NGO advocacy umbrella in ATRC, to change the image of civil society or to support fully ongoing civil society efforts to reform the legal and institutional environment was considerably constrained.

Second, the IREX COP and staff have been deeply involved in ATRC operations, especially toward the grant-making function and in direct consultation with ATRC leadership. This has largely been an approach born of the necessity to quickly build up ATRC capacity. At the same time, this intensive involvement can undermine the longer-term sense of ATRC ownership of its own services, and appears to have created confusion in some NGO circles as to just what the organizational articulation of KCSP is. Some NGOs, particularly smaller ones, were familiar with staff from both ATRC and IREX, and recognized valuable assistance they received from each group, but were not able to clearly define the respective responsibilities of ATRC and IREX. To the extent that this lack of clarity is shared in the NGO community, it weakens ATRC's longer-term image in the sector.

Finally there is the issue of the overhead expense of a project featuring the functional overlay of a US-based organization closely supporting the operations of a local institutional partner. As we have noted, this approach appears to have been necessary and in fact was carried out generally well, but over a longer term this arrangement is not viable from either financial or organizational development perspectives.

2.4. ATRC Grant-Making

The grant function has been a fundamental aspect of KCSP, in part because establishment of this function is itself a component of the project's first objective, and because the grant awards, along with the accompanying trainings and consultancies, are a key mechanism for building the capacity of individual CSOs and for carrying out the activities that Kosovar CSOs see as needed to promote democratic values.

Eighty-six grants have been awarded through the project. With the exception of approximately sixteen of these that were awarded by IREX in 2005, all of these have been administered by ATRC with support from IREX. Grants awarded in three thematic areas: partnership & networking, advocacy, and election-related activities. The partnership and networking grants were relatively large, with an average grant size of approximately \$17,000, while the grassroots advocacy grants focused on smaller, more nascent organizations, with grants averaging \$ 4,400. The election-related grants were a mixture of small and larger grants, averaging \$ 8,950. Table 1 presents details of the pattern of awards among these three areas.

Table 1. SUMMARY OF KCSP GRANTS AWARDED BY ATRC

| Grant Category | Number of Grantees | Percent of Total Grantees | Total Amount Funded | Percent of Total Amount Funded |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Partnership and Networking Grants | 46 | 53.5 % | \$ 780,000 | 74.5 % |
| Grassroots Advocacy Grants | 20 | 23.3 | \$ 88,000 | 8.4 % |
| Election-Related Grants | 20 | 23.3 | \$ 179,000 | 17.1 % |
| Total | 86 | 100 | \$ 1,047,000 | 100 |

Source: Evaluation team analysis based on data provided by IREX/Kosovo.

Notes:

1. Some KCSP grants, not included here, were awarded and administered by IREX in 2005, as ATRC grant-making capacity was under development
2. Data include grants awarded from January 2006 through January 2008.
3. Amounts funded are rounded to the nearest thousand dollars.

Table 1 shows that the grants program has emphasized, particularly in terms of total amounts funded, the partnership and networking grants for relatively more mature NGOs. At the same time, our interviews with NGOs receiving grants from all three award categories indicate that typically, with the possible exception of the election-related grants, awardees could have made effective use of higher levels of funding, and over a more sustained period.

Overall, this cannot be said to be a program of large grants, and arguably the award ceilings may have been appropriately set for the absorptive capacity in the sector as of the beginning of KCSP in 2005. Absorptive capacity may have increased since then, however, in part due to KCSP assistance to the sector in the intervening period.

Grant offerings were announced in a total of twelve rounds: seven in partnership and networking, three in grassroots advocacy, and two in election-related activities. This number of rounds probably increased awareness of NGOs to the availability of the awards, and promoted equity in access to awards by providing multiple changes for NGOs to compete. The number of rounds did, of course, place a notable burden on all parties, including ATRC and IREX, to successfully complete proposal reviews and make awards. In the end, ATRC and IREX succeeded in awarding the number of grants expected in the KCSP cooperative agreement.

Based on our interviews with a broad spectrum of awardees based in many regions of Kosovo, ATRC has done a good job of preparing nascent and intermediate-level NGOs in proposal development, awarding grants in a systematic and transparent way, monitoring them, and marshalling the necessary reporting.

A possible exception to this general observation regards assistance to minority-led NGOs. The grants program awarded eight grants to Kosovo Serb-led NGOs; this number constitutes 9.4 percent of the total number of grants awarded. Additional grants to majority-led organizations addressed interethnic dialogue, cross-ethnic cooperation, and related

topics. However, outreach efforts to minority-led CSOs have sometimes not been successful, although minority CSOs find the relationship with ATRC characterized by a collaborative spirit and mutual respect. A more concerted approach, possibly in collaboration with some of the more mature minority CSOs, could make a big difference in this area in the future.

We found that some grantees have exemplary, well-trained leadership, a results orientation and strong connection to their communities, but it appears that this is a distinct minority among all grantees. Most NGO grantees, especially the smaller ones and those led by Kosovo Serbs or other minorities, still are in need of considerable capacity-building support.

2.5. Capacity Building and Training

Improving ATRC's Capacity as an NGO Support Center

As already noted, the improvements in ATRC's organizational capacity have been noteworthy. It features active grant-making, training, and outreach functions; and with few exceptions the quality of these efforts is rated highly by clients and other in-country observers. Nonetheless we find that ATRC is not yet ready to move ahead to direct donor funding, since there are continuing needs to ensure consistent quality and relevance in training, stronger financial sustainability, and keener strategic vision across the organization.

On the financial side, ATRC exhibits the ability to diversify its funding sources, but this diversity is almost completely within the realm of international donor sources. During the most recent complete project year (May 2006 through April 2007), for example, ATRC's revenues totaled \$ 446,270. Of this amount, the USAID-IREX contribution was \$ 268,399, or 60 percent of total ATRC revenues. Other sources, including the Balkan Trust for Democracy, UNHCR, Olof Palme International and other organizations, provided funds totaling \$ 164,245 (37 %) on a project basis. The remaining three percent of ATRC revenues for these twelve months were derived from fee-for-service trainings as well as rentals of facilities and equipment.² The question remains as to whether ATRC will be able to continue to build upon and expand its current level of revenue diversity and establish a capacity in direct fund-raising.

We would also note parenthetically that FDI, the initial grant-making partner in KCSP, is functioning on a more modest level than ATRC but continues as a viable NGO support institution. This observation is based on discussion with many sources, including our evaluation team's interview with FDI's Executive Director. Continuing to be based in Gjakova/Djakovica, FDI currently carries out a program of small grants and ancillary support to Kosovar civil society organizations, utilizing an annual budget of approximately three hundred thousand dollars. Its financial resources are based on contributions from several organizations, including the Mott Foundation, the Balkan Trust for Democracy and other donors.

² IREX, *PMEP Annual Report [Report on the Program Monitoring and Evaluation Plan]*, May 1, 2006 – April 30, 2007, Narrative Section, p. 8.

Building NGO Capacity through ATRC

In addition to its grants program, the primary modes through which ATRC has acted to enhance Kosovar NGO capacity are trainings and sponsorship of public forums.

Table 2. **NUMBER OF NGOS REPRESENTED AT ATRC TRAINING AND CONSULTANCY EVENTS, DECEMBER 2005 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2007**

| Training Module | Number of NGOs Represented | Percent of Total |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Project Proposal Design | 184 | 27.8 % |
| Advocacy | 87 | 13.1 |
| NGO Management | 69 | 10.4 |
| NGO-Media Relations | 59 | 8.9 |
| Project Cycle Management | 58 | 8.8 |
| Good Governance | 42 | 6.3 |
| Financial Management | 37 | 5.6 |
| Role of NGOs in Civil Society | 37 | 5.6 |
| Consultancy | 31 | 4.7 |
| Advocacy and Networking | 18 | 2.7 |
| Fundraising | 14 | 2.1 |
| Fee-for-Service | 9 | 1.4 |
| Strategic Planning | 7 | 1.0 |
| Customized Training | 6 | 1.0 |
| Communication Skills | 3 | 0.5 |
| Organizational Development | 1 | 0.2 |
| Total | 662 | 100 % |

Source: Evaluation team analysis based on documents provided by ATRC's training unit.

Notes:

1. Available ATRC documents cover patterns of attendance only through September 2007. Since then additional training events have been held offering new modules.
2. Because NGOs may send different individual staff members to repeat offerings of a module, double counting of NGOs is present in these data. Nevertheless, the counts represent relative emphasis of NGO participation among the various training modules.
3. Percentages may not total to 100 due to rounding

The data in this table, which includes only trainings held through September, 2007, indicates an important pattern in ATRC offerings. While a number of training modules have been offered, the content emphasis has been on internal NGO management matters such as in proposal design, project cycle mgmt, and financial management and reporting. Four modules oriented to proposal preparation and internal NGO management (Project Proposal Design, NGO Management, Project Cycle Management and Financial Management) together account for 348 NGOs represented at trainings, or 52.6% of the total.

This tendency is even more evident from our discussions with NGO leaders concerning ATRC training. Many grantees, especially the smaller ones, have been trained rather heavily in these management-related areas, and often in little else besides possibly a basic, two-day workshop in advocacy. When asked what useful skills they acquired from training provided by ATRC, the smaller NGOs quite frequently would cite improved ability to keep financial records and prepare project progress reports so that they could be in compliance with ATRC's reporting policies.

Larger, more mature NGOs occasionally mentioned a more program-oriented training such as NGO-media relations, but in such cases the content was often described as too elementary to meet participant needs. In general, while participants tend to be satisfied to have participated in ATRC training, there is a need to better assess participant needs and to focus the content more on program issues rather than internal NGO management. Training on advocacy, gender equality, and so on were not systematically followed with action-oriented, focused, sustained consultancy and networking that would leverage the training to "the next step" of development for the NGOs.

What substantive areas of training would most usefully be refined and strengthened? While trainings on issues such as advanced advocacy, strategic communications, advanced media relations, volunteer recruitment and management, building national organizations and inter-ethnic networking would be useful, the question is best understood as one of approach, the how as well as topical content or the what. Training workshops that are customized to participants' needs, grounded in real problems and issues confronting the target NGOs, interactive, appropriately sophisticated in tone and substance and followed up by individualized support and advice will be most effective. Successful civil society training programs typically are characterized by high-quality design and delivery, but in addition they tend to be rooted in serious, continuous attention to the evolving needs of various subgroups of NGO clients.

Training participation does seem to have mirrored the intended diversity among KCSP grantees. NGOs from outside Pristina, for example, have represented 58.9 % of all NGOs attending training events.

In addition to training modules, ATRC has held an impressive number of public forums and debates to draw public attention to key issues and provide a setting for NGO networking. During the second quarter of 2007, for example, the Center organized and held twenty public dialogue events, including three "meet-the-donor" forums, attended by a total of 989 participants.³ This is an average of more than one forum per week. Participants in these events generally have found them moderately useful, but this is not a result commensurate with the rather high level of ATRC effort expended to hold these events. Quality would likely be enhanced by encouraging action-focused discussion among sub-sector NGO groupings in preparation for, and follow-on to, these sessions.

Two additional observations may be made in regard to ATRC's capacity building with its NGO clients. First, this work appears so far to be built upon an ATRC/IREX agenda,

³ IREX Quarterly Report, July 1 to September 30, 2007.

rather than driven by the diagnosed or expressed needs of the grantees themselves. In some cases, such as the newer, formative organizations, awareness of the organization's needs in training and support may be only partially formed. In general, though, it appears that ATRC needs to build in a more customer-oriented approach to its NGO capacity building.

Second, the capacity-building needs among minority-led CSOs seem to be especially great, for understandable historical reasons. To address both present and future capacity requirements of these organizations, more resources and a more creative approach is needed.

Overall, the gaping weakness is in follow-through support to new, struggling NGOs. Many seem still to lack a strategic approach or a long-term vision of their programs, and almost all have weak linkages to their constituencies.

2.6. Advocacy

KCSP has tended to engage in advocacy only in an indirect fashion. In the wording of the project's third objective, KCSP is to "improve the *capacities* of a core group of CSOs to more effectively advocate for the issues of the constituencies they represent in a more sustainable way (emphasis added)." It is possible then, to interpret the expected scope of KCSP advocacy results as being, in fact, rather modest.

Advocacy support has been provided to organizations focusing on a spectrum of issues, including transparency and accountability of municipal governments, anti-corruption, freedom of information, disability rights and anti-sexual harassment policy formulation and advocacy. However, supporting the development of advocacy capacity, and supporting concrete and effective advocacy are two different things. While it is possible that ATRC accomplished the former, there is little evidence they were as successful with regard to the latter. Thus, they may have succeeded in meeting the letter of the objective, but the impact of this has not been substantial.

Nonetheless, KCSP has a record of involvement in, and support for, some widely recognized civil society accomplishments. These include contributions to:

- Civil society input into new election legislation that provides for open lists and direct election of mayors; and
- An advocacy campaign to exempt NGOs with public benefit status from the VAT. However, this campaign was ultimately not successful as the changes were subsequently reversed and the parliament introduced some retrogressive changes.

In addition, several grantees, mostly working at the local level, have succeeded in having a variety of policy decisions adopted with substantive participation of CSOs. Our interviews confirm IREX's own observation that advocacy efforts have generally been more successful at the local level than at the political center.

In general, ATRC is well known in the Kosovar CSO community and serves useful functions in civil society, but at the same time it has not emerged as a leading actor within

the advocacy community. Its role up to this point has been more as a communication node among CSO networks than as an idea-driven guide or facilitator for advocacy groups. There remains a need to develop more structured collaboration and strategic vision among advocacy NGOs to stir further action toward commonly shared objectives. For this to occur, the local partner would need to work closely with other leading NGOs to determine the key goals for Kosovo civil society and strategies for pursuing those goals.

2.7. Support to the Public Image of CSOs

As we noted in Part I, for a variety of reasons civil society organizations in Kosovo have suffered from a poor reputation and a low level of legitimacy with the Kosovar public. A major aspect of KCSP's work in addressing this problem has been indirect, generally taking the form of supporting improvements in citizen involvement with NGOs and in transparency in NGO operations and decision-making. Thus training and consultancies on project management and financial management, for example, are efforts indirectly relevant to this objective. Also, ATRC itself serves an exemplar of responsible management, at least in the area of financial accountability: In 2007, the government's Office of NGO Liaison conducted financial reviews of sixty NGOs, finding errors in compliance with all the organizations reviewed – except for ATRC.

In general, however, not much has been accomplished toward this KCSP objective, in relation to the continued need. Much more needs to be done to improve CSO relationships with constituencies, reinforce efforts at strengthened transparency of operations, and establish more collaborative relationships between NGOs and media organizations.

2.8. Network building

Initially one of the objectives of KCSP was to build a network of advocacy NGOs. Given the developmental status of Kosovar civil society, this goal may have been unrealistically ambitious. As civil society advocacy has been limited by the Kosovo status issue, multiple institutional partners with mixed incentives for public responsiveness, and capacity limitations among CSOs themselves, Kosovo may only at this time be emerging to the point at which NGO networking may thrive.

Even recognizing this contextual constraint, however, we find the level of accomplishment in networking less than impressive. Working from a centrally placed organization such as ATRC arguably should have produced more substantial network building results.

KSCP is not without its record of contributions in this area, however. ATRC was involved in the formation of the Pensioners Coalition and with input into the draft law on pension reform. And it played a role in the formation of a 15-member NGO anti-corruption coalition, coordinated by COHU.

While network building remains another area of significant need and opportunity, we should recognize that one of the key accomplishments of KCSP is the information-sharing network it has built, with significant help from IREX. Observers from media organizations and other corners of society have commented to us that ATRC is widely considered the leading NGO

in Kosovo, in large part because of its ability to connect individuals and organizations in civil society with each other, all across Kosovo. If you are searching for a particular type of organization active in some particular municipality or region of Kosovo, ATRC is considered your best resource for help in locating them.

2.9. Conclusions

The findings in this Part lead to the following conclusions:

- KCSP has produced an effective grant-making organization in ATRC, with excellent networking in the CSO community across the country and good capability in some areas of training;
- The project has delivered a notable volume of accomplishments, particularly in the management of NGO grants and conducting public forums. Quality and relevance are mixed, however, in all areas, but especially advocacy and network building; and
- As an NGO support organization, ATRC is not yet capable of fully managing its role on its own, due in part to a lack, up to this point, of a clear strategic vision.

Overall, KCSP has not led to decisive changes in civil society-government partnership in achieving good governance, to paraphrase the USAID Strategic Objective. Nor do we find that it has notably increased the policy impact of CS at the elite level. But to attribute this weakness solely to aspects of program implementation, or even to appropriateness of objectives of KCSP, would be to ignore the overriding influence of country contextual factors.

We would suggest that civil society organizations in Kosovo are moving faster in their capacity development and their ability to influence political and economic decision-making because of KCSP's efforts. Yes, CSOs in contemporary Kosovo may have been able to obtain alternative sources of funding and support for their work, had KCSP not been in operation. But to claim that KCSP has delivered no positive impact would be overlooking the accomplishments we have noted.

Has KCSP's impact justified the resources invested? If we look only at short-term, currently observable results, the answer to this question may indeed be no, due to the lack of concrete observable changes in the civil society landscape over the last three years. But the capacity building that has been achieved should reasonably be expected to yield measurable results within the next few years, if we are willing to assume that the legal and institutional environment for the sector will improve and that CSOs as a group will be to leverage their enhanced capabilities.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The next several years will be an important time for civil society development in Kosovo. Because of the historical and geopolitical context of Kosovo, as well as the finalization of Kosovo's status and associated likely changes in donor funding and the legal environment, USAID will undoubtedly need to continue to play a major role in this area. Perhaps as important as any factor encouraging continued USAID civil society assistance is the need, at this stage, to follow through on the capacity building accomplishments reached thus far. It is essential to both build on the successes of KCSP and to learn from findings such as those delineated in the previous section so as to craft a program which offers the precise kind of civil society support most beneficial to democratic development in Kosovo.

Although civil society in Kosovo exists in a difficult context and background, it has played a key role in the country's development in recent years. Important contributions to Kosovo's democratization have been made by CSOs acting as government watchdogs at the local level, in a research and think tank capacity, supporting stronger media, and involving people in decision making regarding various governance-related questions. Much of this work is only beginning, but building on this foundation is essential to the future of democracy in Kosovo.

It is our view that the new program should not look dramatically different from the existing one, but that significant changes can be made so that USAID can maximize the extent to which it can support civil society in Kosovo. Overall, IREX has effectively supported ATRC and helped it to develop into a competent local NGO capable of delivering a number of small grants and supporting grantees financially and technically. While development on this front is not complete, notable progress has been made.

The next USAID program should build on this work. Moreover, there is still a real need for a local NGO, like ATRC, which can both deliver small grants and offer technical and capacity-building support to other NGOs. There is also a need, as will be described in more detail below, for a US implementing partner to provide more support and assistance to the local partner. Therefore these recommendations are offered in the spirit of trying to make a program better, more effective and appropriate for the changing environment and should not be interpreted as suggesting that the current program has been a failure.

We recognize that these recommendations are ambitious, but they reflect our view that assistance to ATRC specifically, and the civil society approach of KCSP, are not worth repeating, unless they are improved and upgraded. More thoroughly meeting the current needs of civil society development in Kosovo will require augmenting and adjusting USAID's civil society work, as well as changing the structural framework. The following ten major recommendations offer an outline for what a future USAID-funded civil society support program should look like. They are listed in approximate order of importance.

Recommendations

1. The new program design should include a timetable for phasing out a US-based organization offering direct assistance to the local implementing partner.

2. The local partner's capacity-building strategy should be more specialized and more closely targeted to the differential needs of various NGOs.
3. The future partner's grant-making should be somewhat restructured.
4. The USAID program should include a component that encourages and supports membership-based Kosovar organizations.
5. Recognize that financial sustainability is unlikely to be characteristic of the civil society sector in the short term.
6. Efforts should be made to help the local partner develop into an NGO which plays a key role among Kosovo's leading NGOs.
7. The local partner should develop a strategy early in the program design that addresses funding and support of minority CSOs.
8. Pro-active efforts to change perceptions of CSOs in Kosovo must be made.
9. Providing funding for advocacy and democracy-oriented NGOs should remain a priority for USAID.
10. USAID should encourage the involvement of its local partner and, when appropriate, its grantees in regional partnerships.

The new program design should include a timetable for phasing out a US based organization offering direct assistance to the local implementing partner. ATRC has benefited a great deal from the technical assistance and support IREX has offered over the last three years. This support has made it possible for ATRC to become an effective grant making and, to a lesser extent, NGO supporting organization. Neither ATRC, nor any other local NGO with whom we met, is yet ready to function in this capacity without the support of an American contractor. A local partner will still critically benefit from guidance and strategic assistance on things like funding strategies, coalition building and honing the technical assistance they provide to other NGOs.

A full three years of this approach, which would more or less recreate the structure of KCSP, is not necessary. In fact, it may ultimately undermine the local partner. ATRC clearly benefited from working with IREX and seemed, in some respects, to value that relationship. Nonetheless, there is a possibility that this relationship could turn to one of dependence in which the local partner defers difficult decisions and problems to the American organization rather than seeking to resolve them themselves. This can also stifle the creative potential of the local organization, as they do not see themselves as sufficiently empowered to have a vision of change for the sector or growth for their own organization. For these reasons, an important goal of the next civil society strengthening program should be to ensure that by the end of the program, the local support organization is able to function independently of an American partner. The local organization, by that time, should

be able to receive funding directly from USAID and use that money to distribute grants and provide technical assistance to other NGOs.

In order for this to happen, this must become an explicit goal of the program. This includes a timetable and strategy for phasing out the American partner. We understand that there are some specific USAID requirements associated with the direct funding of a local NGO. Preparing the local implementing partner to meet these qualifications should be part of the mission of the American implementing partner. In addition, the American partner should ensure that the local partner has the technical skills, strategic plan, leadership and governance structures, and personnel to function independently within the next three years. This is an achievable goal, but it will not happen unless it is made a priority.

We recommend a phased approach to doing this. Initially, grant-making, reporting and other technical roles should be shifted to the local implementing partner. Following that, the American organization should work intensively with the leadership of the local partner to help them develop a plan and a strategy for this phase of their growth. After that, it would still be helpful for the American organization to remain in a limited, advisory capacity to help the local organization wrestle with key strategic questions and to help with any major problems that arise. Specific dates should be established for a process like this one. Both partners and USAID should agree on these dates and work together to make sure that the program is moving forward accordingly. Additionally, if funding levels for the next program are comparable to KCSP, it would be wise to front load the spending because staffing needs will decrease as the American partner begins its phase out, particularly for expat staff.

The phase out process must be designed and implemented very carefully because a fair amount of work remains to be done with any local partner. Thus, the ability to deliver more sophisticated trainings or to rethink the grant-making approach is an area where the local partner will need support and assistance from an American organization. However, this must be balanced by the sense of dependence which likely will develop if an American partner plays such a direct role for another three years.

The local partner's capacity building strategy should be more specialized and customized to NGO client needs. In the next program, the local implementing partner can contribute more to the development of civil society in Kosovo by revisiting their capacity building work and building on the successes of KCSP. The local implementing partner's approach to capacity building must recognize that as CSOs grow and evolve, their training and capacity needs grow and become more complex. For this reason, in the next program the local partner must offer trainings and capacity building projects which are more specialized and customized to the varying needs of CSOs at different levels of organization and sophistication. At this time, it is difficult to identify with certainty what topics should be covered in these trainings, because this question should be answered directly by the NGOs who are seeking assistance. Nonetheless, likely areas for future, more advanced training would include advanced advocacy, strategic communication, volunteer recruitment and management, and building national organizations.

During the life of this project, most of the ATRC trainings for Kosovar NGOs were offered according to ATRC's determination of the needs of the NGOs. The primary areas in which

the NGOs with which we spoke remembered receiving training were project development, advocacy and, to a lesser extent, conflict resolution. Project development usually included training on how to apply for grants, reporting grants and the like.

For those organizations which were small and did not have a great deal of capacity to absorb sophisticated trainings and workshops, this approach had some value. However, most of these groups are ready to build their organizations more substantially in the coming years. Those organizations receiving money in the last three years which were already reasonably well functioning NGOs got relatively less benefit from the trainings which were offered through KCSP during this period and will only benefit if more advanced trainings are offered in the future. As NGOs become more developed, their needs become more specific and are better met through individualized trainings and consultations rather than thru more generically designed trainings. The latter, however, remain valuable for smaller and newer NGOs.

Customized trainings would help NGOs work through problems and challenges they encounter. So, for example, if one organization needed guidance on very targeted communication, mobilizing a difficult constituency or handling a leadership transition, the local partner would be able to offer directly relevant assistance. Some of this assistance would come in the form of formal or informal consultancies; other assistance might come through trainings which the organization and the local partner work together to develop.

Developing more individualized trainings and consultations will require the local implementing partner to somewhat restructure its training program. Rather than have a number of trainers who are available as needed, it may be more effective to build a team of senior trainers or advisors who are able to work intensively with a number of NGOs in one sub-sector or be responsible for a specific region of Kosovo. This is just one model, but the key here is for the local partner to work even more closely with NGOs to more effectively determine their needs and provide relevant support.

It is not entirely clear that ATRC has this capacity right now, but ensuring their ability to offer this kind of support should be a primary task of the American partner during the early part of the new program. This may require intensive work with current staff and recruiting of experienced advisors and trainers. Nonetheless, it is important to do this, because otherwise USAID will be able to offer only limited capacity building support to medium and large NGOs. It is clear that civil society organizations in Kosovo are becoming more specialized and focused in both their agendas and their needs, and the capacity building approach should evolve accordingly.

The local partner's grant making should be somewhat restructured. During 2006, and particularly 2007, ATRC was effectively able to provide numerous small grants to NGOs across Kosovo. Their grantees included small NGOs for whom grants from ATRC represented a substantial proportion of their funding, as well as larger, often Pristina-based, NGOs for whom ATRC grants were valuable, but not central to their operation. Clearly, this grant making function was a valuable contribution to civil society in Kosovo during the last two years. The next USAID civil society project needs to continue these successes, but refine the grant making both in process and in substance so that it can deliver a higher level of impact.

First, it would be very helpful if the local implementing partner could simplify proposal procedures. Several NGOs with whom we spoke indicated that the process for applying for grants from ATRC was quite difficult. This was particularly true for smaller organizations for whom this process strained their institutional capacity. It should be mentioned that many of these organizations also indicated that the staff of ATRC were very helpful in this process. Program staff at ATRC also suggested to us that the application process should be simplified. Simplifying this process needs to be balanced with USAID's and its partner's needs for accountability from NGOs seeking funds. Nonetheless, it is possible to strike a more applicant-friendly balance.

A related point is that simplifying reporting procedures, again within the context of USAID's, and its partner's need for financial and programmatic accountability, would significantly strengthen the program. Criticism of the reporting requirements, as discussed in section II was virtually unanimous, with interviewees often using very strong language to express their dissatisfaction with these procedures. Changing these requirements, possibly to include a less demanding reporting schedule, will help build relationships which are more grounded in a sense of mutual trust and cooperation between the local partner and its grantees.

Simplifying reporting and application procedures will also free the implementing partner to do more meaningful capacity building, support and training with NGOs. Too many of the NGOs viewed the trainings on reporting and applying, specifically for ATRC grants, as the most valuable support they received from ATRC. While providing assistance with regards to their own application and reporting procedures is useful, it is not generally understood to be capacity building in a programmatically meaningful sense. If these processes are simplified, the local implementing partner will be able to spend more time on more valuable support for grantees.

Grant making should also be restructured so that the local partner can provide core funding, particularly to smaller NGOs and those located outside of Pristina. Many smaller NGOs with whom we spoke had been able to do good work with their grants from ATRC, but their organizations suffered after the grants expired because they lacked consistent funding. Small operating grants would allow these successful organizations to exist between programs, more effectively seek other funding and maintain a presence in their community which is not project based.

USAID's should revisit the balance between small and large grants which its implementing partner is able to make. ATRC distributed primarily small and occasionally medium-sized grants. This strategy was effective to an extent, particularly with regards to local NGOs for whom a few hundred or thousand dollars was sufficient to implement a program. However, this approach is also limiting because it makes it difficult for the partner to establish a relationship and offer strong support to larger NGOs who may have larger, more reform oriented programs. If the local partner was able to make larger grants, this could be leveraged into supporting programs and ideas which have a broader impact in Kosovo. Accordingly, the local partner would become a more important stakeholder in the sector more generally.

The USAID program should include a component encouraging and supporting membership based organizations. Membership based organizations are a key component of civil society. This includes organizations whose members are individuals or organizations, such as companies. Membership based organizations are well positioned for advocacy, empowering ordinary citizens and increasing government accountability. There is a striking absence of membership based organizations in Kosovo. We did not identify any organizations of this sort which were funded or assisted by ATRC. Additionally, the only significant membership based organizations in civil society more broadly are organizations like Vetevendosje or the War Veterans which are viewed by some democracy activists as promoting quite narrow and at times perhaps anti-democratic agendas.

Encouraging the development of membership based organizations will be a major contribution to civil society. It can help get more people involved with civil society and continue heighten the direct impact of civil society on democratic development. Membership based organizations bring ordinary people into civil society and expose them in a practical way to some of the basic principles of democracy. In the absence of these types of organizations, civil society can appear disconnected from the citizenry it hopes to represent and serve. This has become the situation in Kosovo, and this disconnection is one of the contributing factors to the low opinion in which many in Kosovo hold civil society.

Membership based organizations can have their origins in various sectors of civil society. They might include organizations of tenants or residents of a particular housing complex, advocates of a particular issue such as the environment or consumers, members of a particular group such as students or parents. Additionally, businesses might be members of an organization representing their sector, such as meat processors or bakers, or they might organize by town or region seeking to benefit all businesses in that region. The possibilities are numerous, but a number of diverse membership based organizations contribute substantially to the development of a vibrant, effective and representative civil society.

The new local partner should offer grants which encourage these types of organizations to form. They should also offer trainings and capacity building programs aimed specifically at helping membership based organizations. This assistance might include trainings on internal democracy in membership based organizations focusing on issues such as electing leadership and seeking input from members; advocacy strategies best suited for membership organizations such as letter writing campaigns, petitions drives and voter education; and workshops addressing how to keep members involved in the activities of their organization through newsletter, meetings and volunteer activities. These are, of course, only some possible training and consultancy ideas.

Because there is currently not a strong presence of membership based organizations in Kosovo, the implementing partner will have to design a grant program that provides incentives and guidance to existing organizations that could develop a membership based orientation. Thus, a pro-active grant making approach will have to go together with a strategically relevant training program for membership based organizations. The notion of membership based organizations will not come intuitively to many in civil society, so part of the grant making strategy should include efforts to expose organizations to this idea and create incentives for them to form this kind of organization.

While it is almost certain that these organizations would still be dependent on grants, building a base of members would help lay the infrastructure for economic sustainability in the long run. This would be particularly true of membership based organizations for businesses whose members, presumably, would have access to some financial resources.

Recognize that financial sustainability is unlikely to occur in the civil society sector in the short term.

Although in the future Kosovo would benefit from vibrant civil society organizations which are not dependent on funding from outside the country, this is unlikely to occur in the next few years. Establishing this as a goal would be unrealistic and could undermine some of the good civil society work USAID is supporting.

Almost all Kosovo NGOs remain dependent on international donors and will remain so in the foreseeable future. There is simply not enough money in Kosovo, either in public or private hands, to change this reality. While it is important for the local partner to continue to be able to get grants from non-US sources, this should not be conflated with achieving financial sustainability. It is merely reliance on another donor.

It is important to distinguish between financial sustainability and institutional sustainability. While achieving the former in the next few years is very unlikely, many organizations, including ATRC, can achieve the latter in the next few years. Facilitating this should be a major goal of the next USAID program. ATRC, or any local partner in a grant program similar to the existing one, will remain substantially dependent on USAID for financial support. A goal of the next program should be for this dependency to be restricted to the financial sphere.

ATRC is poised to become sustainable with regards to its governing structures, technical ability and presence in civil society. Seeking to add financial sustainability to this will only make achieving these goals more difficult.

Efforts should be made to help the local partner develop into an NGO which plays a key role among Kosovo's leading NGOs. ATRC, or any such organization capable of awarding grants to other NGOs, providing training and capacity building across civil society, and building networks between NGOs, is well positioned to build on these assets to become a leading NGO in Kosovo. Because of the nature of ATRC's agenda, this is not likely to be expressed in a highly visible or media-centric fashion, but in a supporting, convening and networking capacity.

As civil society evolves, it is critical that leading NGOs play a key role in working vis-à-vis the central government, mobilizing citizens, pressuring central institutions and holding them accountable. It is very unusual, and not usually healthy for civil society, for one NGO to do all this by itself. Instead, in most cases, coalitions of NGOs form to do this. The local partner should be part of this coalition, but it needs to build on what it already offers.

The extent to which ATRC is already in this position is unclear. ATRC is currently valued by other large NGOs for its network and relationships throughout Kosovo. However, some of the larger NGOs do not currently see ATRC as contributing much on its own and as being substantially dependent on IREX to carry out its functions. This being the case, the larger,

more resource-rich NGOs prefer to work directly with IREX. Changing this perception will be necessary for any local partner to fulfill its potential as a key actor in civil society in Kosovo. One way to help do this is for the local partner to sufficiently develop so that it becomes the “first stop” when other leading organizations are in need of assistance or support. In addition, the central support organization should be capable of undertaking carefully selected initiatives of its own.

The local partner should develop a strategy early in the program design that addresses funding and support of minority CSOs. There are substantial challenges and difficulties surrounding support to CSO development in the minority communities of Kosovo. In addition to Kosovo Serb minorities, there are Kosovo Roma and other groups in which civil society development lags behind the rest of Kosovo. As described in section two, ATRC’s record in this area has been decidedly mixed.

ATRC’s efforts to raise awareness of funding opportunities by advertising in Serbian language media outlets and through cooperating with local Kosovo Serb NGOs such as CCSD in Mitrovica were helpful in alerting NGOs to funding opportunities, but this did not yield enough viable funding applicants. Perhaps more significantly, efforts to support and help develop the capacity of minority NGOs were less successful.

The outreach strategy for minority NGOs should include outreach and capacity building components. The foundations of a good outreach strategy are in place, but they need to be expanded. The local partner should work with existing strong minority NGOs to liaise with minority communities more broadly, with the goal of identifying smaller minority CSOs for grant funding. Additionally, more intensive efforts need to be made to help these organizations develop their program ideas so that they are able to write viable grant proposals.

Increasing the capacity and technical skills of minority, particularly, Kosovo Serb, NGOs will require a new set of approaches. Although the Kosovo Serb NGOs with whom we spoke indicated that ATRC was a welcoming and open place to go, many smaller Kosovo Serb NGOs do not feel comfortable going to Pristina for trainings and workshops. Similar barriers, as well as issues of language, make it difficult for ATRC to travel to Kosovo Serb areas for trainings, consulting, workshops or other visits.

A successful plan for working with Kosovo Serb-led NGOs, will require building a partnership with a strong Kosovo Serb NGO, who can work closely with smaller Kosovo Serb NGOs throughout Kosovo to provide useful and effective training and advice. It may be necessary for the local partner to build this type of relationship with several Kosovo Serb NGOs due to the geographical dispersion of Kosovo Serb communities in various regions of Kosovo.

Pro-active efforts to change public perceptions of CSOs must be made. One of the major objectives of the KCSP project was to change how civil society is perceived in Kosovo. As mentioned in section two, there is little, if any, evidence of any success by KCSP towards this objective. There is almost a consensus among civil society activists that civil society is viewed poorly by their fellow Kosovars. According to these people, many ordinary Kosovars view civil

society as providing good salaries and cars to people employed in civil society and little else; others see civil society organizations as either representing the international community to the people or simply implementing the foreign policy of the US or Europe. Clearly, this perception of civil society undermines the healthy development of the sector in Kosovo. These perceptions are not, however, unexpected or unusual. In many poor and post-conflict places, such views can be found.

Interestingly, while many people we interviewed were able to identify the negative ways in which civil society is viewed in Kosovo, few people were able to identify any concrete actions taken by KCSP, or anybody else, to change this image. Views of civil society will not change on their own, nor is it enough to seek to improve the image of civil society simply by having CSOs do good and important work. CSOs have been doing good and important work in Kosovo for years, but the image of civil society is still not good.

If USAID is interested in seeing the image of civil society improve, the next implementing partner must develop a strategic and actionable plan to make this occur. Doing good work and hoping for the best does not qualify as such a plan. We are not suggesting a media-centric plan with advertisements on television and posters touting the good works of civil society; such an approach carries a high risk of backfiring. Rather, a better approach might be to include a component of visible, direct, volunteer action for all grantees. For example, activists for a local NGO working to make government better could physically clean up a park or repair a destroyed building once a month. Another approach would be to raise the awareness of the direct beneficiaries of various CSOs. Young people who benefit from a youth center or an after school program, for example, may be made to understand that the gym in which they play ball or the English language skills they are gaining are products of civil society activism. They would also be encouraged to share this awareness of the direct impact of civil society with their friends and family.

Civil society's poor image is also driven by a perception that civil society is not an organic outgrowth of the people of Kosovo people, but something which has been spurred, or even imposed upon them, by the international community. To a great extent, this perception is based in reality, but this reality is a little more complex. As civil society has developed in Kosovo, these lines have become less clear. Thousands of ordinary Kosovars have been involved with, and benefited from, civil society, in many cases without even knowing it.

Raising awareness of this will help civil society improve its image as well. We suggest something of a branding campaign. A potential slogan could be "we are civil society". This slogan could be used on shirts or baseball caps while activists do volunteer activities, on banners when civil society events are occurring, and on the walls of clinics and other centers where services are delivered. This would raise the awareness among ordinary people of how they benefit from civil society.

Providing funding for advocacy and democracy oriented NGOs should remain a priority for USAID. Changes to the environment for NGOs and NGO support will continue as the status question for Kosovo is finalized and new opportunities for civil society emerge. These changes to the sector will underscore the existing need for USAID to continue supporting civil society. More specifically, it will be essential for USAID's civil society work to continue

to energetically support the advocacy sector because this category of organizations is both less developed organizationally than other sectors of civil society in Kosovo and less likely to receive support from non-US sources that tend to focus assistance to other types of institutions.

Numerous civil society figures and observers as well as individuals in government commented to us that Kosovar civil society is not yet able to play a strong enough role in influencing government or in being a partner in governance at either the local or central level. In order to meet this need, the program should continue to have an explicit emphasis on supporting the improvement of advocacy capacity, but it should seek to merge this emphasis on capacity with funding of projects that seek to engage the government or mobilize citizens directly. This includes assistance to organizations engaged in policy research, membership based organizations with political goals, service delivery organizations with visible and significant advocacy components, strong watchdog organizations and the like.

Increasing the emphasis on technical and financial support to programs that seek to engage in governance in this way will produce more direct change in the condition of policy dialogue, may be expected to have a greater impact, and should also fill a gap in civil society that may, in fact, grow as status and funding issues evolve.

While directly funding organizations engaging in this type of advocacy may weaken the position of the local partner working as a grant maker and capacity builder, this is not inevitable. There is certainly room in Kosovo civil society for USAID to support the work of more than one CSO seeking to have an impact on questions of governance and democracy. The local partner should seek to strengthen working relationships with these more influential CSOs. This is a model which has worked elsewhere. We recognize that this approach will take some of the energy and centrality away from the local grant making and capacity building partner, but we think this is a worthwhile tradeoff.

In addition, the model we are suggesting here assumes that, in one critical way, the local partner organization would be capable of moving beyond the first-stage tradeoff between a structured approach to collaboration and more specialized direct assistance to CSOs. If the overall future program were intended to build upon currently existing strengths, this would translate into assistance to an NGO support center that would facilitate both greater specialization and more effective collaboration in the sector. This development would be congruent with our suggestion that the need is for a support center that itself offers strategic and collaborative challenges to its CSO partners and clients, pushing CSOs intellectually, over and above the provision of basic training and consultation.

USAID should encourage the involvement of its local partner and, when appropriate, its grantees in regional partnerships. Because Kosovo is a small country with a somewhat less developed civil society sector than many of its neighbors, CSOs in Kosovo are well positioned to benefit from more involvement and exposure to CSOs and CSO coalitions in neighboring countries. This exposure must be focused and probably ongoing to be fully effective.

The program with Partners Albania, which exposed ATRC to a similar, but more mature organization in Albania seemed to yield mixed results, but it was a step in the right direction. As the local partner increases its capacity and develops, these programs would be more useful in the form of exchanges rather than partnerships. Exposure to the energy and ideas of similar CSOs will help the local partner develop ideas and vision for their work in Kosovo. This will help civil society in Kosovo catch up with the rest of the region behind whom it lags for concrete reasons outlined in Part One.

Exchanges should form the basis of ongoing relationships among CSOs in the Balkan region. These exchanges should be bolstered by using these peer organizations as a source of outside trainers and structured ways to share experiences and effective strategies.

The grantees of the local partner will also benefit from greater participation in regional networks. Some of these organizations are already involved in part of such regional networks, but expanding these contacts among grantees will accelerate the development of civil society in Kosovo.

The local partner can help do this by identifying CSOs in the region who work on similar issues as their grantees, or who have valuable experiences or insight to share. For the newer and smaller CSOs these exchanges could take the form of trainings, but exchanges and other peer-to-peer projects are important as well, because they can help demonstrate to the Kosovo CSOs that they are part of a broader community of civic activists. These types of exchanges can yield good ideas and contribute to the enthusiasm and energy which will be essential for the development of a truly vibrant civic sector in Kosovo.

Summary

Given proper financial support and program structure, the recommendations outlined above will lead to a program that builds on the partial success of KCSP and will contribute significantly to civil society development in Kosovo. They will help the local partner grow from an organization that makes small grants to local NGOs and provides modest technical support, to an important national NGO that is able to more effectively award grants with longer-term, measurable civil society results and provide more need-focused support to a spectrum of NGOs. In addition, through these recommendations the local partner should increasingly be able to play an independent leadership role in Kosovo's civil society more generally. This will ensure that USAID's program has a strengthened likelihood of having a positive impact on national policy making and longer-term civil society development.

Although we have offered ten separate recommendations in this section, in some sense it is useful to look at them collectively because the whole, in this case, can be greater than the sum of its parts. Some of these recommendations, such as the one concerning the public perception of civil society, can be taken as stand-alone recommendations. Taken together, however, these recommendations will have greater impact. They are all parts of the larger goal of helping the local partner improve upon its current grant making, training and consultancy abilities and through this approach helping USAID's program to have a more direct impact on advocacy, civil society development and governance.

APPENDIX A-PERSONS INTERVIEWED

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| Haki Abazi | Rockefeller Brothers Fund, New York and Belgrade (interviewed in Pristina) |
| Shpresa Agushi | RAE Women's Network, Prizren (interviewed in Pristina) |
| Shpend Ahmeti | GAP Institute for Advanced Studies, Pristina |
| Paige Alexander | IREX/Washington |
| John L. Anderson | USAID/Kosovo, Pristina |
| Igor Artonovic | Communication for Social Development (CSD), Gracanica |
| Momcilo Arlov | Center for Civil Society Development (CCSD), Mitrovica/e |
| Robert P. Cronin | IREX/Washington |
| Josifovic Dragan | Organization of People with Disabilities (OON), Gracanica |
| Peter Duffy | USAID/Kosovo, Pristina |
| Rreze Duli | ATRC, Pristina |
| Ardian Gjini | Member of Parliament, Pristina |
| Luljeta Gjonbalaj | USAID/Kosovo, Pristina |
| Barbara Hall | IREX/Kosovo, Pristina |
| Ramadan Ilazi | Initiative for Progress, Ferizaj/Urosevac |
| Nexhat Ismaili | Action for Non Violence and Peace Building (ANP), Gjilan/Gnjilane |
| Bujar Kadriu | Kosovo Association of the Blind and Partially Sighted People, Pristina |
| Halil Kaja | Community Business Development Center (CBCD), Gjakova/Djakovica |
| Kushtrim Kaloshi | ATRC, Pristina |
| Valton Karagjiu | IREX, Pristina |

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| Snezana Karadzic | Women Committee for Protection of Human Rights, Caglavica |
| Bajram Kosumi | NGO Liaison Office, Kosovo Ministry of Public Services, Pristina |
| Enver Kqiku | Kosovo Center for International Cooperation (KCIC), Gjilan/Gnjilane |
| Flora Kryeziu | IREX, Pristina |
| Agon Maliqi | Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Pristina |
| Gëzim Misini | Center for Counseling, Research and Psychological Treatment (CCRPT), Ferizaj/Urosevac |
| Veton Mujaj | Eye of The Vision, Peja/Pec |
| Gjyljeta Mushkolaj | Kosovar Institute for the Rights of the NGOs (IKDO), Pristina |
| Ferdinand Nikolla | Forum for Civic Initiatives (FIQ), Pristina |
| Shqipe Pantina | IREX, Pristina |
| Donika Podrimja | ATRC, Pristina |
| Nebi Qena | Associated Press writer (former editor-in-chief of the public broadcaster), Pristina |
| Abdusselam Ramadani | URBAN FM, Pristina |
| Arjeta Rexha | GTRC Gender Training and Resource Center, Pristina |
| Bashkim Rrahmani | Foundation for Democratic Initiatives (FDI), Gjakova/Djakovica |
| Shaban Shabani | Advocacy Center for Progress (AVONET), Ferizaj/Urosevac |
| Zef Shala | Humanitarian and Charitable Society of Kosovo - Mother Teresa Pristina |
| Luan Shllaku | Kosovo Open Society Foundation (KFOS), Pristina |
| Olja Hocevar Van Wely | IREX/Washington |
| Vladan Vlaskovic | Handikos Mitrovica North, Mitrovica/e |

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|----------------|---|
| Luljeta Vuniqi | Kosovar Gender Studies Center, Pristina |
| Martin Wood | Chemonics/ Kosovo Cluster and Business Support Project, Pristina |
| Jeta Xharra | Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), Pristina |
| Engelber Zefaj | Youth Center "At. Lorenc Mazreku" (ALM), Peja/Pec |
| Avni Zogiani | Organization for Democracy, Anti-Corruption and Dignity (ÇOHU), Pristina |

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APPENDIX C-EVALUATION SCOPE OF WORK

A. Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the impact and quality of implementation of the current USAID civil society program in Kosovo and, based on information gleaned, to provide recommendations to USAID/Kosovo for possible future programming in this sector.

B. Background

Civil Society in Kosovo

According to Freedom House⁴ the development of civil society in Kosovo occurred in four phases. The first phase began in 1989 when two organizations, the Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms (CDHRF) and the Mother Teresa Charitable Society, were established and other political mechanisms created a parallel system in contradiction to the Milosevic regime. Almost all the NGOs at that time dealt with the protection of human rights or humanitarian activities, and all were opponents of the regime. The second phase began in 1995 with the appearance of so-called think tank organizations such as Riinvest and the Kosova Action for Civic Initiatives, among others. Until the end of 1998, only a small number of organizations existed in Kosovo, but notable for their success and efficiency in the scope of their activities. The post-conflict third phase in NGO development in Kosovo – also called “the emergency phase” – was distinguished by the creation of a large donor market numbering around 500 donors in 1999 by some estimates. The fourth and current phase is known as “the mushroom phase” because of the rapidity with which organizations have appeared. In general, the procedure for NGO registration is easy and takes place in the Ministry of Public Services. By 2006, according to the Ministry’s NGO register, the number of organizations exceeded 3,000. The number of active groups, however, is considerably smaller.

USAID Civil Society Programming in Kosovo

East-West Management Institute (EWMI): In September 2001, USAID launched the Kosovo NGO Advocacy Project (KNAP), a three-year program implemented by East-West Management Institute (EWMI). The purpose of KNAP was to: (1) enhance the role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in advocacy by helping to transform them from reactive service providers into proactive agents of change; (2) strengthen the institutional capacity of the CSO sector by fostering the development of viable, professional and transparent CSOs; (3) improve the financial viability and sustainability of CSOs; and (4) elevate the public image of CSOs. These objectives were to be achieved through a combination of training, mentoring programs, and grant-making. The program included:

- The Advocacy Training and Resource Center (ATRC) provided training in advocacy, CSO development and management, and gender awareness.

⁴ This section is taken from Freedom House Nations in Transit 2007, Report on Kosovo, page 360.

- The Foundation for Democratic Initiatives (FDI) was the Kosovar NGO responsible for grant-making and related training.
- The International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) and its local partner, the Kosovo Institute for Not for Not-for-Profit Law (IKDO), implemented the legal support component which included training on issues related to the legal framework for CSO advocacy and financial viability of the CSO sector.

Other Early Programs: In addition to KNAP, there were other USAID Kosovo-funded programs which supported civil society and CSOs. Some of those programs continue to support aspects of civil society, although considerably less and fewer CSOs are supported outside the main civil society program than previously. The National Democratic Institute (NDI) supported a civic participation component to its program; ABA/CEELI supports several associations related to legal reform and advocacy; IREX supports media-related NGOs; STAR/World Learning supported a women's economic empowerment and anti-trafficking program; Catholic Relief Services (CRS) supports NGOs involved in anti-trafficking; and the Kosovo Transition Initiative (KTI) supported many citizen groups in its program implemented in the early days of USAID's effort in Kosovo.

International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX): On May 17, 2005, USAID awarded a three-year cooperative agreement totaling \$3,899,971, to the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) to implement the Kosovo Civil Society Program (KCSP). This cooperative agreement will expire on May 16, 2008. USAID/Kosovo has determined that an evaluation of the current program would be useful to determine impact and guide and inform decisions about potential future programs supporting civil society.

The KCSP falls under USAID/Kosovo Strategic Objective 2.1: Civil Society and Government are More Effective Partners in Achieving Good Governance. The KCSP contributes to the following Intermediate Results (IRs) and sub-IR:

- 2.1.1 – Better informed citizens
- 2.1.2 – Increased civil society influence on public policy decisions
- 2.1.2.1 – Increased citizen participation in political and economic decision-making

The KCSP has three primary aims:

- To increase ownership among Kosovo's NGOs over their own development and long-term sustainability;
- To increase civil society's capacity to effectively advocate on behalf of Kosovo's citizens; and
- To improve public perception of the NGO community and enhance legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

IREX partnered with two local organizations to achieve its aims: the Foundation for Democratic Initiatives (FDI) and the Advocacy Training and Resource Center (ATRC), both of whom were involved in implementation of KNAP. Under KCSP, FDI was to receive mentoring, training, and technical assistance to bolster its ability to promote local

philanthropy and to become a financially viable grant-making organization that is perceived to be constituent-centered, transparent and fair in its decision-making. ATRC was to receive mentoring, training and technical assistance to improve its ability to serve as an NGO resource center that has the technical expertise and constituent-centered approach required to identify and address the professional and organizational development needs of Kosovo's NGO community. After a year into the program, IREX decided the structure would need to change. With USAID approval, IREX discontinued its partnership with FDI, and instead included the grant-making component of the program in its partnership with ATRC.

To achieve the three aims outlined above, IREX included the following three objectives and related activities in its program:

Objective 1: Strengthen Kosovo's civil society infrastructure and financial sustainability by increasing the organizational capacities of an NGO resource center and a grant-making organization to better serve the needs of the NGO community. Activities contributing to this objective included:

- Capacity-building to improve FDI's and ATRC's internal systems
- Technical assistance, mentoring and facilitation to improve financial sustainability of FDI specifically and NGOs more broadly
- Grants to FDI and ATRC, national and local advocacy grants, and partnership and networking grants

Objective 2: Improve the capacities of a core group of civil society organizations to more effectively advocate for the issues of the constituencies they represent in a more sustainable way. Activities contributing to this objective included:

- Strengthen existing coalitions and then form a national level network
- Provide 6-9 national-level advocacy grants and up to 25 community-level advocacy grants

Objective 3: Improve the public image of the NGO sector by increasing their public relations skills and legitimacy. Activities contributing to this objective included:

- Technical assistance and support to help NGOs actively solicit constituents' input
- Support to ATRC to build a portfolio of readily adaptable training modules on public and constituent relations
- Technical assistance and support to improve transparency of the NGO sector
- Encouraging collaboration between NGOs and the media

KCSP impact is measured by the following indicators:

1. Number of public/non-public partnerships that have been formed or improved in effectiveness.
2. Improved score on the USAID NGO Sustainability Index.
3. Institutional performance of NGO resource center and grant-making organization improved.

4. Number of people receiving training or consultancy through the ATRC, and KCSP grantee NGOs receiving training and consultancy from ATRC.
5. ATRC financial sustainability is improved.
6. Number of policy decisions that include participation by civil society.
7. Number of participants in public hearings/open forums that are organized as part of KCSP grant and program activities.
8. Number of media broadcasts or articles that include KCSP input.

C. Evaluation Goal

- Evaluate the performance and impact of the “Kosovo Civil Society Project (KCSP)”, implemented by IREX, and provide analysis for possible future programming.

The evaluation will answer two main questions:

- (1) What has been the impact of KCSP, USAID’s current civil society program; and
- (2) What does an analysis of the environment and other factors indicate regarding future possible programming for the civil society sector in Kosovo?

Describe and document answers to the following questions and, where applicable, suggest alternate approaches which may have enhanced program results:

- Were the aims, objectives and activities selected for the KCSP appropriate for achieving the overarching Strategic Objective, “Civil Society and Government are More Effective Partners in Achieving Good Governance”, as well as respective IRs and the sub-IR?
- Did the KCSP achieve the aims and objectives set forth at the beginning of the program and have the activities implemented under each objective contributed to the achievement of the objective?
- What has been the impact of activities implemented under the KCSP on individual NGOs and on the civil society sector more broadly? Has the impact justified resources invested?
- Were aims, objectives, activities, and performance measurements selected for the KCSP appropriate for meeting the needs of the civil society sector in Kosovo?
- Were there any unintended positive or negative impacts resulting from KCSP?
- What aspects of KCSP worked well? What aspects of KCSP did not work well?
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of ATRC and FDI.
- Has the KCSP contributed to improving ATRC’s and FDI’s sustainability?
- Did concentrating resources in ATRC have a positive result, or could alternative approaches have been more effective?
- Has programming targeted to minority CSOs, specifically Kosovo Serb CSOs, been effective and sufficient?
- What are key lessons learned from KCSP: successes and failures?

Analysis and Evaluation Relevant to Future USAID Civil Society Programming

- Based on review of implementation and results from KCSP and its operating environment, what conclusions may be drawn for potential future USAID civil society programming?
- What will be the foremost challenge for NGOs operating in Kosovo? Which areas of potential focus for USAID support, (i.e. NGO sustainability, sector independence, NGO advocacy, service delivery), have the most promise for achieving results in the current environment?
- In which issues/areas is international donor support still required?
- In which issues/areas is international technical assistance and training still required? In which issues/areas can local partners be used to achieve results?

D. Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation team shall review pertinent documents and interview relevant actors related to implementation of the KCSP program and to the development of Kosovo's civil society, either through direct one-on-one meetings or by organizing roundtables, where appropriate.

Pertinent Documents

- USAID Kosovo Results Framework for Strategic Objective 2.1
- USAID NGO Sustainability Index 2007
- Freedom House Nations in Transit 2007
- Kosovo Civil Society Sector Assessment Final Report dated May 2, 2004 by Management Systems International
- USAID Cooperative Agreement 167-A-00-05-00102-00 with IREX dated May 17, 2005 and any amendments
- IREX KCSP Annual Reports (narratives and indicators) from 2006 and 2007 (and benchmarks from 2005)
- IREX KCSP Quarterly Reports April-June 2007 and July-September 2007
- ATRC Annual Report 2006
- IREX KCSP Annual Workplans from 2005, 2006 and 2007

Relevant People to be Interviewed

- USAID Washington
Claire Ehmann, USAID/E&E/DGST Civil Society and Acting DG Team Leader
- IREX Washington
Paige Alexander, Vice President for Programs
- USAID Kosovo
Luljete Gjonbala, USAID Cognizant Technical Officer for the IREX KCSP cooperative agreement

John Anderson, Chief, Democracy and Governance Office

Peter Duffy, Program Officer

- IREX Kosovo
 - Barbara Hall, Chief of Party
 - Flora Kryiziu, Deputy Chief of Party
 - Shqipe Pantina, Senior Program Officer
 - Valton Karaxhiu, Program Officer
- ATRC
 - Reze Duli, Executive Director
- FDI
 - Bashkim Rrahmani
- NGOs that have benefited from the KCSP
 - Appendix A
- NGOs that have been directly involved in the activities of KCSP, like RIINVEST, and other USAID implementing partners as Chemonics (KCSB) and CRS.
- Minority NGOs
 - Momcilo Arlov, Center for Civil Society Development
 - Anica Mirkovic, Women Association Vita – Strpce/Shterpce
 - Snezhana Karadzic, NGO Women’s Committee for Protection and Human Rights
 - Milanka Bojkovic, Women’s NGO “Hand in Hand”
 - Oliviera Milosevic, Women’s Business Association WBA
 - Kujtim Pacaku, NGO “Romani Baxt”
 - Mirjana Spiric, Handikos Mitrovica North
 - Igor Artonovic, Center for Social Development – Gracanica
 - Andelka Cup, Production New-Press
- Municipal and Other Government Officials (that have interacted with NGOs involved in KCSP)
 - Appendix B

E. Evaluation Team Composition

The team will be composed of experts in conducting evaluations of civil society programs. The Team Leader will have ultimate responsibility for overall team coordination and development of the final report. Including the Team Leader, the evaluation team will likely consist of three members (two expatriates and one local expert) and in totality will have the following expertise or qualifications:

- Experience in international development, especially with civil society programming in post-communist, post-conflict settings;
- Previous experience performing USAID program evaluations; and
- Recent experience in and background knowledge of southeast Europe.

F. Schedule and Logistics

The evaluation should take approximately 4 weeks to complete including: one week in the U.S. to read documents, interview Washington-based people at USAID and IREX, and prepare; two weeks in Kosovo to conduct interviews; and one week in the U.S. to write the report and to revise the report once comments on the draft are received from USAID. While in Kosovo, a six-day work week is authorized. All logistical support will be provided by the contractor, including travel, transportation, secretarial, interpretation, report printing and communication, as appropriate. USAID and IREX shall provide all relevant documents as well as contact names and phone numbers to the contractor, and the contractor shall arrange all meetings necessary for the evaluation. In Kosovo, the contractor will meet with CSOs from Pristina and from a minimum of 3 locations outside Pristina.

G. Deliverables

1. A list of planned meetings within two days of arrival in Pristina.
2. Meeting with USAID and IREX on the first day of arrival in Pristina. Briefings with USAID and IREX prior to departure from Kosovo to provide initial findings.
3. A draft report within one week of departure from Kosovo.
4. A final report within one week of receipt of comments from USAID. The contractor shall submit an electronic version of the report (in PDF format) as well as six bound copies to USAID Kosovo. The report shall also be submitted to Development Experience Clearinghouse according to the terms and conditions of the IQC.

The final report will include the following:

- Executive Summary (no more than 5 pages)
- Body of the Report (answering the questions posed in Section C above in no more than 45 pages)
- Appendices (including a list of people and organizations whom the evaluation team interviewed)

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