



Technical Assistance for  
Civil Society Organisations  
Bosnia and Herzegovina Office



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**Technical Assistance for Civil Society Organisations Bosnia and Herzegovina Office**

**PROJECT**

**Technical Assistance Service Contract for the implementation of the project  
“Capacity Building of Civil Society in the IPA countries and Territories (Albania,  
Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,  
Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey).  
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**TACSO Bosnia and Herzegovina Office**

**Report on Impact Assessment  
of Capacity Building and Technical Assistance Activities**

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Assessment**

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## List of Acronyms

BH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CB	Capacity Building
CS	Civil Society
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
DEU	Delegation of the European Union to the Bosnia and Herzegovina
EU	European Union
EC	European Commission
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession
LAG	Local Advisory Group
LOD project	Reinforcement of Local Democracy (LOD)
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NAR	Needs Assessment Report
PCM	Project Cycle Management
RA	Resident Advisor
STE	Short-Term Expert
TA	Technical Assistance
SIPU	Swedish Institute for Public Administration
TACSO	Technical Assistance for Civil Society Organisations
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

## Executive Summary

The general objective of TACSO project is to strengthen the overall capacities and accountability of the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) within the IPA beneficiaries and to guarantee the quality of services of CSOs and a sustainable role of the CSOs in the democratic process. The main purposes of the project are to:

- Increase and improve the capacity and actions of CSOs and to
- Improve the democratic role of CSOs.

An important activity under this heading is the capacity building (CB) and technical assistance (TA) component. According to Work Plan for period 2011-2013 TACSO BH office conducted CB and TA activities for CSOs from rural and remote areas who were applying to the domestic sources of funding without success, CSOs applying to the domestic sources of funding in 11 municipalities included in UNDP LOD III project and for projects implemented under call related to Issue-based networks (IPA 2009).

The main evaluation findings for CB and TA activities of TACSO BH are specified by evaluation criteria:

Focal evaluation criteria:

**Impact and Effectiveness:** This component of the project was highly effective. All TACSO CB and TA activities have been carried out successfully and in accordance with the plans. Moreover, they have even exceeded initial targets. Through exceptionally high quality of work, the CB activities have made a strong planned impact on beneficiaries – wide series of different effects and concrete achievements are evident and recognised among beneficiaries. The indirect impacts on a wider group of CSOs, communities and stakeholders are also indicated in unsystematic data. Transfer of impacts from individual to organisational level and further to sectoral level is facilitated by several inbuilt mechanisms and strengthened by synergistic effects, to a maximum within the limits of chosen reactive strategy of intervention. As a consequence, CB and TA component has contributed to the accomplishment of project outcomes, mostly in the part regarding local level and it can be extrapolated that contribution of the CB and TA activities to project purpose and overall objectives has, also been made.

Secondary evaluation criteria:

**Sustainability:** Good selection of CB methodology, format and general approach made transfer of acquired capacities to practice very easy and sustainable, where the main hindrances would be contextual and internal organisational lack of wider capacities relevant for viable changes.

**Relevance:** Chosen strategy of TACSO to respond to expressed, current needs has proven maximum relevance of interventions for the needs of individuals and CSOs as

well as it represents cooperative and synergistic action with stakeholders. Special importance of TACSO CB and TA activities lies in targeting the smallest, rural, undeveloped CSOs which otherwise would not have access to already scarce CB services. Together with other qualities, this makes TACSO assistance still very much needed for the future.

## **TACSO BH 1 Capacity Building and Technical Assistance activities in the period 2011-2013**

The general objective of TACSO project is to strengthen the overall capacities and accountability of the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) within the IPA beneficiaries and to guarantee the quality of services of CSOs and a sustainable role of the CSOs in the democratic process. The main purposes of the project are to:

- Increase and improve the capacity and actions of CSOs and to
- Improve the democratic role of CSOs.

An important activity under this heading is the capacity building (CB) and technical assistance (TA) component.

According to Work Plan for period 2011-2013 TACSO BH office conducted Capacity Building activities during 2012 under Component 3 of the project to mostly CSOs from rural and remote areas who were applying to the domestic sources of funding without success.

Under Component 2- Technical Assistance was provided during 2013 in a form of capacity building intervention workshop to the CSOs applying to the domestic sources of funding in 11 municipalities included in UNDP LOD III project. As well an important activity under this heading is TACSO Project activity (Research, Guidance and Help desk) referring to the technical assistance to CSOs implementing IPA project in a form of tailored made guidance/improved internal monitoring.

Providing guidance and capacity building activities have been part of TACSO project phase in Bosnia and Herzegovina based on Work plan which have been agreed with Delegation of the European Union to the Bosnia and Herzegovina (DEU) as technical assistance for projects implemented under call related to Issue-based networks (IPA 2009).

## **Scope and Design of the Evaluation<sup>1</sup>**

**The purpose** of this evaluation of TACSO BH Capacity Building and Technical Assistance activities provided in the period 2011-2013 was to help TACSO measure impact, define lessons learned from the CB and TA component of the project and provide recommendations for further such interventions.

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<sup>1</sup> Complete ToR is in the Annex 1

**Objectives of Evaluation** were to:

- assess impact of Capacity Building and Technical Assistance activities,
- identify main strengths and weaknesses and
- formulate lessons learned and recommendations for continuation.

Other evaluation criteria - relevance, effectiveness and sustainability, were secondary and only touched upon as they relate to the impact.

**Scope of Evaluation** has encompassed all CB and TA activities of TACSO BH in the mentioned period:

- Project proposal writing for 77 CSOs-who applied to TACSO BH with projects rejected by local sources of funding. Comprehensive cycle of education which was delivered to 154 representatives of 77 CSOs during February- June 2012.
- Specific Technical Assistance in a form of 11 one day training workshops that was delivered to 293 participants from 221 CSOs in 11 municipalities included in UNDP LOD III-EU financed project.
- Specific Technical Assistance in form of tailored made capacity building guidance that was provided to the IPA 2009 grantees: representatives from 16 CSO members of 6 issue-based networks in BH (applicant organizations and partners).

**The primary target audiences** for the evaluation report are: TACSO BH office staff and a LOD project manager, TACSO BH LAG, BH CSOs, local institutions that work with CSO, international and domestic organizations and institutions dealing with similar topics and other TACSO offices.

**Applied methodology of evaluation.** The evaluation was performed as a research, which consisted of:

- Review of available documents (desk review) and
- Data collection, using various techniques depending on examinees (mainly questionnaires and in-depth interviews)

The subjects from which data were collected were selected to include the project beneficiaries, with the inclusion of the project and external associates and stakeholders. In total 28 interviews with respondents were held and 33 person completed the questionnaires.

A complete list of used documents is in Annex 3, and the list of persons included in the project evaluation is in Annex 2.

**Evaluation process.** STE has conducted evaluation of the project implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina in following phases:

I. Phase one

Defined detailed scope of project assessment in cooperation with TACSO team

- Defined methodology and appropriate assessment tools
- II. Phase two
  - Collected relevant data in close cooperation with TACSO office
- III. Phase three
  - Reviewed and analyzed collected data
  - Formulated findings and recommendations
  - Written report

**Duration and timing of the Evaluation:** The whole process took place in July 2013 for in total 10 working days.

**Limitations and caveats.**

The implementation period of evaluation - July - as a month of summer holidays, has somewhat limited both access to potential interviewees and the time they could devote to participate in evaluation.

These difficulties have been overcome by using the telephone and Skype instead of face-to-face interviews and various questionnaires for contacts with some subjects.

A sufficient length of time planned for implementation of evaluation and flexibility in scheduling communication with respondents, has made data collection easier and allowed for sufficient and well structured sample of persons to be contacted. Consistent uniformity and complementarities of collected data suggests sound foundation of the findings and conclusions.

## Evaluation Findings

### Impact and Effectiveness of CB and TA TACSO Activities

All TACSO CB and TA activities have been carried out successfully and in accordance with the plans. Furthermore, the scope of performed activities has even exceeded initial plans<sup>2</sup>. Some minor changes in scheduling were made in order to better accommodate planned activities, and in the case of TA for issue-based networks because of respecting all suggestions and procedures made by DEU.

A lot of effort was invested to achieve maximum impact and effectiveness of CB and TA activities on TACSO project. Through the choosing of high impact approach and methodology in working with beneficiaries, selection of outstanding experts, implementation of several instances needs assessments, tailoring programs and activities of the trainings according to the needs assessment and the specific participants and close monitoring, the CB activities have made **a strong planned impact on beneficiaries**.

The feedback on impact of trainings from all interviewees in this evaluation is unanimously and strongly very positive. All report on significant changes resulting from provided CB and TA interventions and all trainings in general are seen as informative, useful, **applicable and as the direct answer to their immediate needs**.

In the line with planned goals and objective for the set of 11 **trainings for UNDP's LOD III beneficiaries**, almost all of them (90.48 % of examinees<sup>3</sup>) report that trainings have raised their awareness of the importance of certain issues and problems in the organizations, enabled individual CSO members to acquire knowledge and skills (90.48 %) and for all of them have strengthened their capacities for writing project proposals and the use of LFA (100%). The great majority of these beneficiaries say that assistance has enabled them to identify weaknesses in their previous project proposals (71.43 %) and prepared them for future LOD III calls for applications (85.71 %). For those who did not feel prepared for the call, main reasons were lack of other organisational capacities, not this specific knowledge i.e. – lack of time to prepare for the call, lack of human resources to commit to this task, organisational decision to give priority to some other task etc.

Strengthening of the capacities for PCM, M&E and enhancement of these organizational processes as the results of trainings are also recognized in significant number of cases (52.38 %, 42.86 %, 57.14 % respectively) and are subsequential to primary knowledge of

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<sup>2</sup> National Work Plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina, 17/8 2011 – 16/8 2013

<sup>3</sup> Detailed statistics of answers is in the Annex 11



projects planning – results of transfer of this knowledge into implementation. After these trainings, 95.24 % of interviewed training participants report to have prepared project proposals (76.19 % for LOD III call) and all of them have applied with it<sup>4</sup>. 66.67 % of applicants were awarded grants, 57.14 % from LOD III. Among applicants and approved LOD III grantees, training participant make 23.06% and 34.48%. After this training there is the increase in the number of applications in municipalities and higher quality of applications is also noticed.

It is interesting to compare these indicators with the corresponding ones for the longer trainings for applicants for local sources of funding<sup>5</sup>, where it appears that almost the same results have been achieved with different approach. Several reasons have caused this. First, methodology and content used for LOD III trainings absolutely corresponded with the requirements of call for applications, which were opened shortly after the trainings and were the direct preparation for them. These trainings have sent clear message to participants to apply for LOD III calls, provided them with sufficient information to do so and were supported by UNDP and municipalities. Near opportunity to secure much needed funds was, additionally a strong motivator for participants. Thus, the impact of this set of trainings was achieved synergistically with UNDP's and municipal activities.

Among the indirect impacts of these trainings is the great potential for transfer of knowledge since it prepared participants for fundraising from whole range of sources and equipped them with information on them. Already, 69.09 % of participants are reporting to do fundraising from other sources than LOD III. This training has, moreover, raised interest among municipal and other local public institutions employees, and TACSO received a number of requests to provide trainings for them too<sup>6</sup>.

Some challenges related to these trainings were: too short time for training with high number of participants on each which limited individualised work with organisations, too intensive agenda, heterogeneous groups of participants which put additional strain on trainers in providing equally relevant content for widely diversified group. Also limiting for further impact of this trainings is the noticed low capacity of some municipal employees in given topics which are supposed to be partners for CSOs.

Series of **trainings on Project proposal writing for local funding sources applicants** had slightly different format and after the initial two-days training they provided follow-up TA for writing the applications. Effects of these trainings were, also, significant and great majority of participants recognised:

- Strengthened capacities for project proposals writing (100%)
- Raised individual capacities (56.00 %)
- Prepared proposals for some donors (72.00 %)
- Applied with projects to some donors (76.00 %)

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<sup>4</sup> Those who did not apply state that they did not have enough time to write proposals, or could not find the suitable thematic area for their CSOs in the LOD III call for applications

<sup>5</sup> Detailed comparative statistics of answers is in the Annex 11

<sup>6</sup> For instance Regional Development Agencies from municipalities and municipalities' employees

- Raised awareness of the importance of certain issues and problems in the organization (72.00 %)
- Identified and corrected weaknesses in their previous project proposals (68.00 %)
- Strengthened capacities for (60.00 %) and improved PCM (64.00 %)
- Feel now prepared for forthcoming local calls for applications (68.00 %)
- Were awarded grant for some projects from different donors (64.00 %)

The above states about these two sets of trainings<sup>7</sup> are additionally corroborated and deepened by answers on trainings' evaluation and data obtained from STEs, TACSO staff and stakeholders. (In the qualitative part of data collection, training participants were also stating similar).

The most striking impact is that on awareness rising; the vast majority of participants were stunned by novelty and importance of training contents. It was an eye opener for them about how to fundraise, how to plan fundraising, who the possible sources are and how to raise funds from them and it boosted their motivation and self-confidence.

Especially, crucial role of needs assessment, intervention planning as well as intervention logic in project impact and success was realized and understood. Additionally it raised awareness of the importance of capacity building; all participants are interested in future trainings<sup>8</sup> and many of them started to improve their capacities, apart from TACSO support<sup>9</sup>.

These trainings have moved participants from the role of passive observers to the active actors in the community and new initiatives have started to emerge even during the trainings and were continued afterwards. Substantiated by unsystematic data – individual statements of municipal employees and CSO beneficiaries – are the emerging impacts on CSOs practices. **Many are noticing better implementation of projects, better M&E, better results and higher activity of CSOs in local communities after the trainings.**

As for the **technical assistance provided to issue based networks**<sup>10</sup>, a different set of learning objectives was, again, successfully accomplished. 88.89 % of participants report that this support has fully met their expectations/needs, while for the remaining 11.11 % it has partly, but only because it came so late during the implementation.

For all or almost all participants this training has strengthened capacity for M&E and improved M&E processes in organisations, strengthened their project management activities and helped to improve networking activities. Based on it they have made

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<sup>7</sup> Project proposal writing for local funding sources applicants and trainings for UNDP's LOD III beneficiaries

<sup>8</sup> 100%, statistics of answers in Annex 11

<sup>9</sup> 48.00 % Project proposal writing trainings participants report this and 57.14 % of LOD III trainings, and TACSO office received a number of direct requests for CB support after this trainings

<sup>10</sup> For projects implemented under the Call for Proposal: "Support to issue based NGO networks" Grant Application Form IPA 2009 Reference:EC/BIH/CFP/010/001 Publication reference: EuropeAid/130-191/L/ACT/BA

concrete work plans and most significantly, it raised awareness of the importance of given issues and problems in the organizations.

Qualitative and data from other sources confirm the above findings and especially emphasize the importance of awareness rising impact on beneficiaries.

Main challenge related to this CB and TA intervention was its late start (due to the long approval procedures), practically at the end of 20 months long project. Although it has been assessed highly, it is clear that its impact would have been much stronger if it was provided on time. Another constrain is also insufficient time – only two days for a set of networking related topics, where public outreach<sup>11</sup> and advocacy<sup>12</sup> did not receive enough attention although all participants do realize their importance. These are, therefore, their priority need areas for future CB assistance. All findings together lead to the conclusion that TA of this content was needed from the very beginning of implementation in format of permanent project component in it in order to give maximal effects.

Originating from direct effects on beneficiaries, additional, **indirect** influences on broader group of CSOs were noticed. The extent of this effect is difficult to estimate without systematic data collection, but it is evident that interest in trainings' topics has grown in wider group of CSOs, and they were approaching TACSO with requests for additional trainings. Moreover, the level of cooperation and networking among CSOs, TACSO beneficiaries and those not involved, has risen stemming from the more (pro)active approach of training participants.

As for the influence on various **stakeholders**, risen interest in trainings' topics was noticed in local self-governments and local public agencies (especially in connection with LOD III trainings). Directorate for European Integration, some municipal bodies etc. were proposing cooperation to TACSO in order to provide similar TA to different groups of CSOs – their stakeholders and beneficiaries, too. In addition, consistently high quality of TACSO CB and TA services, together with the good positioning on national scene and strong and very positive image/brand<sup>13</sup> has posed the new standard in the delivery of this type of services and created the demand in civil sector for high-quality CB.

It was strongly proved by the variety of data that impact of CB and TA activities on **individual/participants level** was achieved. Transfer of these effects from individual to **organisational level** is facilitated by several mechanisms. Participants were gathered in such a way to represent governing structures of organisations and/or direct implementers assigned to such tasks that they will put to organisational practice acquired knowledge and skills. Also, for Project proposal writing for local funding sources applicants trainings 2 members of organisations were required to participated throughout entire process and apply new methodologies in their work. With such form of work the transfer

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<sup>11</sup> 66.67 % participants find that training has helped them to improve in this area

<sup>12</sup> 55.56 % participants find that training has helped them to improve in this area

<sup>13</sup> Sources: TACSO Position with Civil Society Organizations, Media and Government Institutions in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Branding Survey II, TACSO BH, Sarajevo, December 2011, and also responds of literally all subject on this evaluation

of effects on organisational level was strengthened and this is also observed by beneficiaries. Small capital within each CSO was created in this way and, due to the targeted selection of participants, it has a strong potential to stay there. Furthermore, it was noticed that 22,73% of respondents need additional education for other members of their organisations, which would suggest that they lack either skills or other capacities to transfer knowledge internally. Due to this shortcoming a greater transfer to organisational level impact was prevented and it might be worthwhile to address it in future CB activities.

Further transfer of effects from organisational to **sectoral level** is much harder to achieve, especially when the number of encompassed CSOs - 314<sup>14</sup> represents less than 5% of estimated number of registered CSOs in the country<sup>15</sup>. But, nevertheless, complementary nature of CB and TA activities, which were all incorporated in larger UNDP LOD III and TACSO project during 2011-2013 of components enabled synergistic effects of all of them, in which it was possible to identify specific contribution of CB and TA activities.

Further sectoral level impact of TACSO activities is facilitated by small but yet significant number of TACSO CB and TA beneficiaries, which now represent change agents in their communities and affect the work of other actors in their (mostly local) environments. Still, the adopted TACSO approach to answer to expressed immediate strong needs in OCDs in this case shows its downside and the strategically chosen beneficiaries could have generated even more sectoral level impact.

With all that has been said about achievements of CB and TA activities it can be concluded that this TACSO project component has contributed to the **accomplishment of project outcomes**.

Since these influences have been achieved in synergistic action with other TACSO project components and other actors' interventions the extent of CB and TA component contribution is impossible to determine now. Having raised capacities, strengthened, more active and proactive organisations with higher quality of work have **now enhanced competences for accomplishing their missions, improved service delivery in relation to democratic processes<sup>16</sup>, predominantly on local level** as some unsystematic data already indicate. In addition, stronger, more active, prominent and competent CSOs now are proactive and desirable partners and collaborators for public sector and their role in democratic processes is gaining visibility to general public<sup>17</sup>, again, mostly on the local level due to the selection of beneficiaries CSOs that mainly operate locally.

From the above findings it can be extrapolated that contribution of the CB and TA activities to **project purpose** and **overall objectives** has been made, mostly in the part regarding local level.

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<sup>14</sup> With slightly more individual beneficiaries - 463

<sup>15</sup> Bosnia & Herzegovina Needs Assessment Report, TACSO, Sarajevo, September 2011

<sup>16</sup> TACSO project outcomes 3&2, TACSO LFA

<sup>17</sup> TACSO project outcomes 1&4, TACSO LFA

## Sustainability

Sustainability was not in the focus of this evaluation and is here only touched upon as the secondary assessment criteria for its connection with impact.

Due to the good timing of all CB and TA intervention – when provided skills and knowledge were immediately needed in practice, practical and applicable methodology of trainings and its carefully tailored contents transfer of acquired capacities to practice was easy and 83.64 % of beneficiaries report to apply them fully in their work. For the minority of 16.36 % application is partial due to the lack of other organizational capacities (lack of time, lack of commitment, insufficient number of members, insufficient knowledge, other priorities, etc.). Since, some of the CB and TA activities happened months or even a more than the year ago, this fact shows that in this significant period achieved changes in beneficiaries have persevered. Furthermore, 49.09 % beneficiaries assess that the achieved changes will remain permanent in their organizations and 41.82 % more will continue to apply most of the things, but for some might not have enough resources/capacities (human resources, knowledge, funding, technical capacities, etc.)<sup>18</sup>.

Given that TACSO was mainly targeting smaller and underdeveloped CSO, entire sustainability of changes achieved with them should be viewed in that context and will be constrained by a series of mentioned organisational weaknesses. Additionally restraining to greater sustainability could as well be limited transfer of CB and TA impacts from individual to organisational level. With the high fluctuations of people in civil sector, this factor could diminish viability of improvements through time. This issue was tackled by TACSO with targeted selection of participant of certain profile (governing bodies and direct implementers) and insuring more committed participants from one organisation but yet remains important. It is especially commendable that diversification of funding sources has found its place among training objectives for Project proposal writing and LOD trainings and it is viewed as direct investment in overall organisational sustainability which will indirectly affect viability of risen capacities.

Factors that would be beneficial for greater sustainability of achieved changes are: longer lasting CB and TA interventions with follow-up that could support sustaining of changes, continued involvement of beneficiaries in other TACSO events, constant availability of the small-scale support interventions during implementation, development of other organisational capacities relevant for application of already acquired ones, strengthening networking and partnership among beneficiaries.

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<sup>18</sup> Also corroborated by other data sources – STEs, stakeholders, trainings' evaluations, qualitative data

## Relevance

Relevance was not in the focus of this evaluation and is here only touched upon as the secondary assessment criteria for its connection with impact.

High relevance of CB and TA interventions for the needs of beneficiaries has been achieved through several instances of needs assessments, tailoring contents and methodology of the trainings according to the needs assessment and the specific participants and close monitoring.

Waste majority of beneficiaries recognise this - 82.35% of them state that TACSO support has fully met expectations/needs of their organizations and elaborate it in qualitative data with: **“TACSO Project is extremely well organized...It recognizes the real needs of CSO”**, **“We have a lot of benefits from the knowledge we have gained”**. For the minority (15.69%), this support has only partly met their needs, but only because they need additional trainings, longer trainings and other kinds of support, explicitly stating that trainings they have attended were completely satisfying.

Used methodology and approach was also highly regarded and all participants stated that they are satisfied with it and that it is adequate. 69.09 % are satisfied with the selection of participants and among few suggestions regarding this there are only those about the need for involvement of more CSOs, especially from rural, remote and underdeveloped areas and for forming more homogenous groups. Single quality that has consistently been mentioned is the **impeccable selection of experts** which delivered CB and TA activities. **Literally all respondents were mentioning them with great respect and appreciation<sup>19</sup>.**

CB and TA work of TACSO is very important since there are no other CB providers in BH that are giving free of charge and with covered costs, high quality, tailor-made trainings for all types of CSOs upon their request. For this reason, interest in organised TACSO trainings was great and the number of participants has exceeded planed in each of the trainings<sup>20</sup>. Special importance of TACSO CB and TA activities lies in targeting the smallest, rural, undeveloped CSOs which otherwise would not have access to already scarce CB services.

Executing trainings for these 314 CSOs was additional sort of a needs assessment and it showed the extent of needs of involved CSOs but also of entire civil society in selected cites. Of course, the needs of CSOs (beneficiaries and others) in given thematic areas are much greater to be fulfilled with provided support. All respondents state the need for further trainings and 23.53% of them suggest expanding the list of topics, extending the duration of trainings and including more CSOs, especially the underdeveloped ones.

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<sup>19</sup> Above findings are additionally corroborated with results of trainings' evaluations and qualitative data.

<sup>20</sup> One of important principles of work was not to reject any of applications for trainings and it has surely contributed to very positive image of TACSO with CSOs

CB and TA activities are not only harmonised with the work of most important stakeholders (those working on civil society development – DEU, UNDP, municipalities, CSO donors), but they actually represent cooperative and synergistic actions towards the common goals.

TACSO has chosen the strategy to *respond* to expressed, current needs of CSOs and had enough flexibility and capacity to provide much needed interventions at the right moment. This has proven maximum relevance of interventions for the needs of individual CSOs. On the other hand, the needs of civil sector as such, with all of its complexities, diversities and niches, could be addressed with stronger sectoral level impacts through more *proactive* approach and strategic placement of change agents throughout the country.

## **Main Strengths and Weaknesses of TACSO BH 1 Capacity Building and Technical Assistance Activities Conducted in the Period 2011-2013**

### **Main Strengths/Success Factors:**

- Unique professional, open and supportive approach of TACSO towards beneficiaries - highly appreciated and part of excellent image created with them
- Openness and responsiveness of TACSO for the CSO needs - contributing to impact, effectiveness, relevance and sustainability of the achieved changes
- Very good and in-depth understanding of CSO developmental needs on individual, organisational and sectoral level and tailoring CB interventions to them
- Tailor-made CB and TA directly adapted on real needs of actual participants in current situation, targeting the weakest points
- Flexibility, efficiency, resourcefulness and promptness in reaction on civil society needs
- High impact format and methodology used on trainings which efficiently enhances learning
- Applicability and practicality - entire CB methodology and contents were directed to secure easy, immediate and permanent application in organisational work
- Strategically chosen wider objectives of CB interventions which surpass immediate needs of CSOs and aim at enhancing organisational sustainability
- Strong awareness rising dimension of all CB and TA activities with potentially most far-reaching and most fruitful impact
- Excellent STEs chosen for all CB interventions which greatly contributed to their success and were highly regarded by participants
- Cooperativeness and synergistic effectiveness of CB and TA activities with other TACSO project components and other actors' interventions
- Added value of TACSO is inclusion of small, rural and underdeveloped CSOs that otherwise would not have access to quality CB
- Inclusiveness for non-typical, rather traditional CSOs (local cultural, rural, artist associations) and strengthening their role
- Well established communication and relationship with CSOs enabling monitoring of their needs and effects of provided assistance

### **Main Weaknesses/Limitations:**

- Limited resources and time for intervening CB and TA which resulted in somewhat restricted duration of workshops, high number together with heterogeneity of participants and challenging workload for STEs



- Mainly single-module or short-term CB and TA interventions without follow-up with the same STE and without longer-term mentoring/support process which limited transfer of changes from individual to organisational level
- Chosen reactive to CSO needs approach which limited transfer of impacts to sectoral level
- Generally low overall capacities of CSO which can limit, applicability, impact and sustainability of achieved changes
- Generally low capacities of municipal employees that could additionally limit the application of acquired skills of CSOs and cooperation with them

## Conclusions and Recommendations

- TACSO's unique non-aligned and neutral position together with high quality work and strong positioning makes it an important actor on civil society development national scene and it is crucial that it continues to pursue its mandated in the following period.
- Given the scarcity and inaccessibility of this type and value of CB services TACSO's importance as the CSO resource centre and supporter remains irreplaceable and highly regarded.
- Chosen approach to react to immediate CSO's needs has undoubtedly many merits for maximal relevance, applicability, organisational level impact and effectiveness and it should be kept as one of the main features. What's more, it would be good to plan sufficient resources in future stages to enable comfortable implementation of this set of activities. On the other hand, more strategic, proactive approach towards the civil sector's as the whole developmental needs, which would initiate and target weakest points and missing capacities would be even more beneficial for harmonised, balanced and long-term development of the sector and its relationships with society.
- Since TACSO is the only national actor that performs comprehensive, periodic, quality, in-depth, national-level assessments of the CSO sector and does so in several instances, **practically ongoing**, it would be beneficial for entire civil society if *all* of these findings are systematised, made public and widely distributed among all the stakeholders.
- With having the good access to all sorts of information on civil society trends and happenings which should make the systematic collection of indicators on project implementation easy, it would be important for the future to collect more indicators, especially at the project results level and above.
- Longer lasting, more in-depth, organisational strengthening directed capacity building services have already proven to be of greater worth for CSOs and it will be important for TACSO to continue to employ and even increase the use of such format interventions since they give more impact and facilitate its transfer from individual to organisational level.
- For TACSO trainings participants who have already benefited of CB component, permanent staying in touch and involvement with the variety of TACSO activities in the systematic and goal oriented way would be very beneficial and could accelerate their strengthening.

Novi Sad  
July 2013.

Jarmila Bujak Stanko

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- Annex 11: Statistics of Responses on Questionnaire for Beneficiaries