REPUBLIC OF SERBIA
CIVIL SOCIETY ASSESSMENT REPORT

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FOR USAID SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO

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SERBIA CIVIL SOCIETY ASSESSMENT REPORT

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ACRONYMS

BCIF	Balkan Community Initiatives Fund
CDNPS	Center for the Development of the Non-Profit Sector
CESID	Center for Free Elections and Democracy
CHRIS	Coalition for Human Rights in Serbia
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
COE	Council of Europe
CRDA	Community Recovery and Development Assistance
CSAI	Civil Society Advocacy Initiative
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DfID	Department for International Development
DTRS	Democratic Transition in Serbia
EU	European Union
FCO	Foreign Commonwealth Office
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
GNGO	"Governmental" Non-Governmental Organization
GOS	Government of Serbia
GRECO	Group of States Against Corruption
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IR	Intermediate Result
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession (funds)
IRI	International Republican Institute
ISC	Institute for Sustainable Communities
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PBILD	Peace Building & Inclusive Local Development
SLGRP	Serbia Local Government Reform Program
SMS	Short Message Service
SOW	Statement of Work
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
TA	Technical Assistance
TACSO	Technical Assistance to Civil Society Organizations
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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PREPARED BY C. BARNES FOR USAID/SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO

26 October 2011

I.   EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENT

The Mission's Amended Country Strategy for Serbia (FY 2011-2015) substantially revises the democracy Assistance Objective. The second IR, "Civil Society Engagement in Public Life Increased," recognizes citizen participation as key to advancing democratic reforms. To better understand sector dynamics and to provide programming recommendations for the period covered by the Amended Country Strategy, USAID/SM sought to undertake an in-depth civil society assessment.

METHODOLOGY

From 11 October to 12 November 2010, the consultant conducted face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions with a variety of stakeholders including civil society, media, and government representatives at the state and local levels as well as with independent experts, members of the diplomatic and donor community, and implementing partners. These were conducted in Belgrade, Novi Sad, Zajecar, Nis, Prokuplje, Vranje, and Zlatibor and included civil society actors from surrounding areas. In total, the consultant met with 108 individuals representing 74 organizations and institutions and solicited input from 132 CSOs through an online survey. Approximately half of the survey respondents were from Belgrade (central Serbia) and most comprised advocacy and watchdog groups, followed by community-based organizations, and service organizations. The primary focus of most of these civil society organizations (CSO) was human/ minority rights, youth, the environment, community development, or democracy. To further supplement the findings and analysis derived from the interviews, focus groups, and survey, the consultant also undertook a review of relevant program documentation, reports, polling data, and indices.

KEY FINDINGS

CIVIL SOCIETY BY DEFINITION AND IN PRACTICE[1]

Civil society in Serbia is in the midst of a re-alignment. Some local experts and activists describe this as an "identity crisis."   Others see it as an overdue transition to a more decentralized, diverse, and dynamic third sector. Today, some of the human rights CSOs that dominated the sector since the 1990s are struggling to find their place in a post-conflict, post-Milosevic era as others are expanding their

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[1] There is some debate about the appropriate use of the term non-governmental organization (NGO) versus civil society organization (CSO) within the Serbian context. This stems, in part, from the apparent lack of constituency of some organizations and the tendency of certain groups to more closely represent the interests of their own leaders or the government rather than the general public or distinct interest groups. There has also been a concerted effort within the sector to overcome long-standing negative perceptions of "NGOs" in Serbia by introducing the term "CSO." For the purposes of consistency, the author uses the term CSO throughout except in cases where titles of publications or questions in public opinion polls specifically use the term NGO.

perspectives to address a broader range of issues and interest groups. While human rights CSOs remain numerous, active, and vocal, their ranks are now supplemented by a variety of organizations working on everything from environmental protection to persons with disabilities to poverty reduction. The current registration and re-registration of CSOs under the 2009 Law on Associations reportedly involves the registration of a significant number of new organizations that will potentially bring energy, innovation, and a new generation of leaders to Serbia's civil society.

CSOs in Serbia include advocacy, service, and watchdog organizations based throughout the country and working nationally, regionally, or within their local communities. Their workforce comprises professional staff, volunteers, or a mix of the two. As the findings of this and other assessments show, however, there are considerable disparities in capacity between CSOs in Belgrade and those in the regions and from region to region. In Belgrade, there is an elite of professionalized organizations with connections and access to government decision-makers and relatively developed technical, administrative, and managerial competence.[2] At the same time, these leading organizations tend to have a weak constituent base; some of them constitute a drag on public perceptions of the sector and suffer from legitimacy problems within civil society at large. While CSOs in the regions are further away from the halls of power in the capital, they generally tend to boast stronger connections to ordinary citizens and an ability mobilize quickly and flexibly in response to the problems of local communities. For the most part, however, their organizational capacity is considerably less developed, particularly outside of the regional hubs of Nis and Novi Sad.

Also of concern for the consolidation and sustainability of the sector and domestic ownership of this process, however, is the limited number (or in some cases effectiveness) of resource organizations or active domestic foundations – *especially outside of Belgrade* – working to support the sector. Think tanks, central to providing expert analysis and an evidentiary approach to policy formulation and review are also rare. And, despite the existence of professional associations and trade unions, these groups appear to be largely missing from the sphere of advocacy on key issues of economic reform, unemployment, and labor rights. Many of these associations are mandatory membership organizations that as yet have limited interest in – or capacity for – advocacy. Finally, discussions conducted during this assessment suggest, and recent polling data confirms, that "civil society" is more likely to be defined – even among civil society actors – primarily in terms of formal organizations rather than encompassing informal groups or citizens' initiatives, despite encouraging examples of the latter.

INTERNAL CAPACITIES AND EXTERNAL THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Based on SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analyses conducted during the regional focus group discussions and one-on-one interviews, civil society actors identified the following strengths and weaknesses within the sector as well as impediments to (and opportunities for) the consolidation and sustainability of civil society as presented in the table on the next page.

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[2] See for example the discussion in *Civil Society Organizations' Capacities In the Western Balkans and Turkey*, prepared by Bill Sterland and Galina Rizova for TACSO and the Swedish Institute for Public Administration, October 2010, p. 25.

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Proposal writing and budgeting - Financial management of projects - Project cycle management - Report writing - Ability to attract/recruit volunteers - Belgrade CSOs have access to and contacts among decision-makers and experience in lobbying - Belgrade CSOs have capacity to manage large projects - Local CSOs are flexible and can respond quickly - Local CSOs identify and address real issues - Experience gained/skills built to date - Successes and precedents to build upon - Role models within the sector - Dedication of activists - Commitment to democracy _NOTE: Specific skills identified as being built through current USAID funded civil society (CS) assistance (although not yet articulated as strengths):_ - Advocacy (as per non-Belgrade CSOs) - Media relations and public outreach - Branding and marketing - Fundraising (CSR and philanthropy)	- Limited sustainability - CSO governance, transparency, and accountability - Organizational management/internal structures and procedures - No quality control standards - CSOs are closed/isolated from each other – poor networking and communication within the sector - Divide between Belgrade-based and local CSOs - Public/constituency outreach - Not mission driven (mostly project/donor driven) - Afraid to criticize government (negative consequences) - Unwilling to criticize a "democratic" government - No continuous relationship with/presence in media - Strategic planning/prioritizing - M&E skills - Burnout of activists - Instability of volunteer labor force - Human resources management (including volunteers) - Fundraising skills - No strategic approach to advocacy - Capacity limited among medium sized and smaller CSOs - Few resource organizations, especially outside of Belgrade - Financial management (for funding diversification) - Local CSOs far removed from decision-makers in Belgrade - Little transfer of best practices
Threats (Impediments)	Opportunities
- Legal and regulatory framework - Fiscal and tax policy - Withdrawal of foreign donors/reduced funding levels - EU funding not accessible for most CSOs - Underdeveloped/limited domestic funding base - Line item 481 not fully transparent and accountable - Economic crisis/unemployment impede philanthropy - Poor public visibility and image of CSOs - No civic tradition/citizens do not see themselves as "taxpayers" - Political party capture - Limited points of access and leverage - No Government vision for/systematic approach to civil society and limited understanding of CS role - Brain-drain from rural and poor areas	- More options for domestic funding and in-kind support (public and private) - Cultivation of individual and corporate philanthropy/CSR - Government more open to cooperation with civil society - More opportunities to work with municipalities/prospects for greater decentralization in future - Growth of new media and social networking - Volunteerism - Provision for income generating activities by CSOs - Next generation CSOs bring new ideas, energy, leaders - EU "carrots and sticks"/EU funding - New laws, strategies, action plans provide basis for CSO engagement - Successes, precedents, and models to build upon - Increasing diversification of the sector - Freedom of access to information - Growth of private sector

These issues are explored in greater detail in the findings section of the report.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of the political trajectory of the country in the 1990s and early 2000s as well as years of war and isolation, Serbia's civil society has lost more than a decade in terms of its development and consolidation. Despite playing a significant role in the fall of the Milosevic regime, the country's transition toward democracy, free and fair elections, and the adoption of laws and strategies on a range of key policy issues, Serbia's civil society lags behind its neighbors in the southern tier with respect to

overall sustainability. As the findings of this and other recent assessments of civil society in Serbia - such as the OSCE's Report, *Strengthening Civil Society in Serbia* and polling data of public opinion regarding civil society and CSOs' own perceptions of the sector – show that considerable work remains to be done to strengthen organizational capacity and to improve the conditions and prospects for CSO sustainability in Serbia.

For the purposes of this report, CSO sustainability refers to those conditions and characteristics that are required for an organization both to survive and to perpetuate its activities. This is not solely a question of financial viability, but also encompasses such factors as the legal and regulatory environment (including the tax regime for non-profits), organizational capacity (both in terms of governance and management), capacity to fulfill the functions of service provision and/or advocacy, the infrastructure available to support CSO activities, and public image. USAID's Sustainability Index assesses all of these factors on an annual basis. Based on the ratings contained in the 2009 Index, as shown in the table below, the state of Serbia's civil society development is at the lower range of "mid-transition" than the higher range of mid-transition characteristic of the Southern Tier.[3]

Croatia	Bulgaria	Romania	Macedonia	Bosnia	Albania	Kosovo	Montenegro	Serbia
3.1	3.2	3.5	3.6	3.7	3.9	3.9	4.1	4.3

Based upon the findings and conclusions contained in this report, the author presents several recommendations to USAID as it conceptualizes and plans for future assistance to Serbia's civil society. While these recommendations are presented for consideration by USAID, they also provide guidance to the Government of Serbia, civil society actors, other donors, and implementers as they work toward a higher level of consolidation and sustainability within the sector. Among the recommendations are those addressing:

1. Legal and Regulatory Framework

Continue to provide support to efforts to improve the quality of the legal framework governing civil society with the aim of providing better conditions and prospects for CSO sustainability. Aim for changes to legislation and implementing regulations that would provide increased incentives for individual and corporate philanthropy and reduce the tax burden on non-profit organizations.

2. Electoral Reform

Given the importance of electoral reform to providing for greater transparency and accountability of elected officials and to increase points of access and leverage by civil society, continue to support efforts to lobby and advocate for changes to republic and local election laws, in particular the system of representation, both through political and electoral process programming and – to the extent possible and appropriate – civil society programming.

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[3] According to this Index, Serbia is closer to some countries in the West NIS, Caucuses, and Central Asia in terms of its civil society development. For example, see overall ratings for Russia (4.4), Moldova (4.3), Georgia (4.2), Kyrgyzstan (4.1) and Kazakhstan (4.0). For more complete information, please refer to USAID's NGO Sustainability Index (2009) at: http://www.usaid.gov/locations/europe_eurasia/dem_gov/ngoindex/2009/index.htm.

3. *Competitiveness, Transparency, and Accountability of Public Financing*

Assist efforts to bring greater transparency, and accountability to the use of state and municipal funding for civil society under budget line item 481 by supporting efforts – potentially in cooperation with the Government Office for Cooperation with Civil Society – to develop standard rules and procedures across government ministries and offices. Support training activities directed at government officials and staff to facilitate understanding and application of these standards. In tandem with interventions directed at the government, activities should support the introduction of quality assurance standards for CSOs along with improved transparency and accountability practices within the sector. The handling of 481 funds should be included as an indicator of good governance and consideration should be given to supporting, as necessary, on-going monitoring efforts by civil society and oversight, by appropriate bodies, for example the Anti-Corruption Agency.

4. *Organizational Capacity*

To supplement and further build upon existing civil society programming, provide for a more in-depth and integrated approach to improve the organizational, managerial, and professional effectiveness of a core group of CSOs, with an emphasis beyond Belgrade, using a mix of tailor-made training, consultations, mentoring and coaching, as well as capacity building grants, based on individualized organizational needs assessments. As part of this intervention, further strengthen and diversify lead organizations and institutions that comprise the domestic infrastructure to support future civil society development (e.g. resource organizations such as foundations, NGO/CSOs and consultants providing training and advisory services, mentoring programs, and sub-sectoral leaders (focal points/clusters)). Provide additional support required to prepare and/or position a few of these as potential recipients of direct assistance from USAID in the final phase of civil society assistance, and to serve as legacy institutions following the end of bi-lateral assistance.

5. *Knowledge Transfer and Best Practices*

Civil society programming should build upon past USAID investments and successes in Serbia and neighboring countries by facilitating cross-fertilization. Ideally this should involve a mix of mechanisms that might include networks across borders, mentoring and peer-to-peer learning programs, fellowships, consultations, case study-based training, and exchanges (study tours/site visits). Cross-fertilization should also make use of modern technologies and applications. Cooperation with CSOs in new EU member states would bring particular advantages in terms of developing a more in-depth and practical understanding among Serbia's CSOs of the role of civil society during the pre-accession process with respect to policy development, monitoring progress, and educating the public about what EU membership means for ordinary citizens.

6. *Relationship Building*

Civil society programming must continue to provide incentives, opportunities, and skills for building and maintaining relationships among CSOs, with citizens, and vis-à-vis the media, as well as encouraging strategic partnerships involving civil society, the private sector, and government. This being said, these relationships and partnerships require the buy-in of all sides and this step of the process should not be overlooked or rushed. Programming involving networks and coalitions should require participatory planning and decision-making throughout the entire project and, ideally, as normal operating procedure in the interests of supporting more constructive relationships between CSOs, providing incentives for on-going cooperation, and facilitating capacity building among all members not just the lead organization.

II.   OVERVIEW

A. PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENT

The purpose of the Civil Society Assessment, as articulated by USAID Serbia (USAID/S), was to determine the state and needs of Serbian civil society as a whole, the specific needs of various types of civil society organizations (CSOs) to connect with and assist citizens, and the types of donor interventions and level of support required to help CSOs most effectively meet those needs.

Within the Scope of Work (SOW), USAID/S provided 24 sets of questions to be considered by the assessment. These questions dealt with such issues as the political, economic, and social context in which CSOs operate in Serbia; the legal and policy framework for civil society; structural and institutional issues; regional variations in CSO capacity, activism, focus, and sustainability; the visibility and transparency of CSO activities; stakeholder and public perceptions of CSOs; and, CSO attitudes toward the government, other CSOs and the third sector, media, and the public.   A number of questions also addressed the relationship of the Mission's Amended Country Strategy (FY 2011 – FY 2015) to evolving civil society needs; the activities and best practices of other donors; and legacy considerations.

The Mission contracted an expatriate consultant to undertake fieldwork between 11 October and 12 November 2010, and to prepare an assessment report.   As envisioned by the SOW, this assessment report addresses the present state of civil society, the key issues and needs related to its continued development and strengthening, and the validity of current approaches contemplated by the Mission to help CSOs. It also presents options and recommendations for future assistance and legacy development. These options and recommendations attempt to make maximum use of lessons learned from USAID's and other donors' previous and on-going efforts to assist the sector, both within Serbia and in Central and Eastern Europe.

B. METHODOLOGY

From 11 October to 12 November 2010, the consultant conducted face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions with a variety of stakeholders including civil society, media, and government representatives at the state and local levels as well as with independent experts, members of the diplomatic and donor community, and implementing partners. To solicit input beyond Belgrade, the consultant traveled to cities and towns in northern, eastern, southern/southeastern, and southwestern Serbia to meet with CSOs based in Novi Sad, Zajecar, Nis, Prokuplje, Vranje, and Zlatibor, and their environs.

Interviewees were selected from among the partners, grantees, and trainees of the Civil Society Advocacy Initiative (CSAI) program of the Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC) and at the recommendation of USAID personnel based in Belgrade and its field offices. The schedule also incorporated CSOs that had never received assistance from USAID implementers. In total, the consultant met with <u>108</u> individuals representing 74 organizations and institutions. A complete listing of the organizations that participated in the assessment can be found under Annex 1.

The consultant structured interviews and focus group discussions based upon the standardized sets of questions provided by the Mission, and tailored each according to the types of organizations or institutions participating.   For the purposes of the focus group discussions, the consultant utilized a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis framework to approach the issues raised in the SOW. For summary tables of the SWOT analysis in each region, please see Annex 5.

To reach a greater number of CSOs than would be possible through direct contact, the consultant prepared a standardized survey, which ISC sent out via e-mail to CSOs on its list serve. A total of 132 CSOs responded, returning their completed survey forms directly to the consultant via e-mail or at the regionally based focus group discussions. For a copy of the survey instrument and a summary of the results, please

refer to Annexes 3 and 4. To further supplement the findings and analysis derived from the interviews, focus groups, and survey, the consultant also undertook a review of relevant program documentation, reports, polling data, indices, and research. Please see Annex 2 for a complete listing of references.
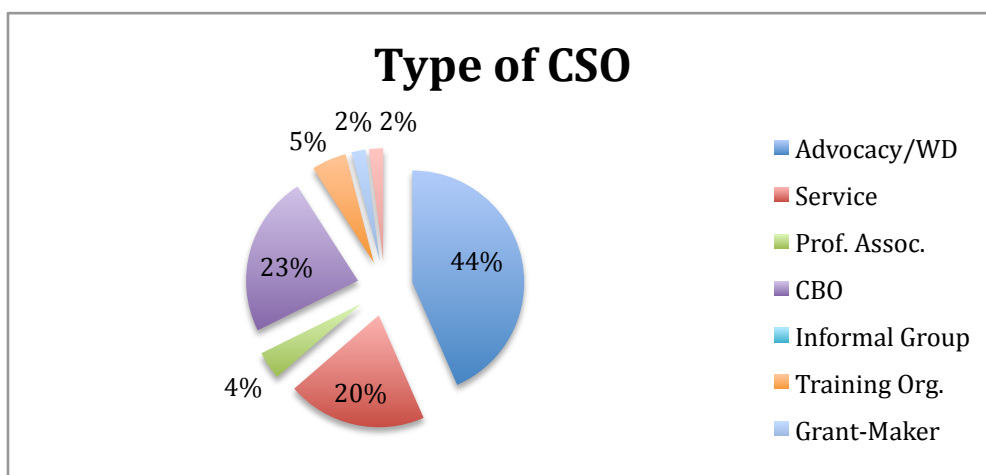
While the consultant collected a significant amount of interesting and useful information, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the assessment and to urge caution when drawing direct correlations or extrapolating data. Specifically, the following caveats are offered:

- In light of the limited time available and given that this was a one-person assignment, the consultant could not talk to all identified stakeholders or to travel beyond the cities and towns listed above. The sample size for the survey was also small relative to the total number of CSOs within the country and was not randomly selected. The assignment placed an emphasis on soliciting input from CSOs outside of Belgrade, and incorporating the viewpoints of some CSOs that have not received assistance from USAID's implementing partners.

- For the reasons noted above, the consultant was not able to make routine site visits or to solicit input from ordinary citizens, i.e. the end-users or beneficiaries of the work of CSOs. As such, the consultant was not able to 'test' statements made by the CSOs, e.g. by observing the provision of services, interaction with government officials, engagement of citizens or the media, levels of activity, or numbers of volunteers.

As a result of these factors, the findings and conclusions contained in this report reflect the input only of the particular mix of individuals, institutions, and organizations that were available to participate in the assessment and, to a certain extent, on the accuracy of the information they provided. The make-up of the CSOs contributing to the assessment is discussed below.

C. MAKE-UP OF PARTICIPATING CSOS

Of 132 CSOs that responded to the standardized survey (either during regional focus groups or online), 60 claim to work countrywide (all but one Belgrade-based CSO and several organizations based in Nis and Novi Sad), while seven (7) work in more than one region. The remainder conducts activities in the areas where they are based, i.e. north (17), southeast (24), southwest (18), and the center (not Belgrade) (5). Through the survey, respondents were forced to identify the type of organization that best described how they viewed themselves:

Type of CSO

- Advocacy/WD — 44%
- Service — 20%
- Prof. Assoc. — 4%
- CBO — 23%
- Informal Group — 2%
- Training Org. — 5%
- Grant-Maker — 2%

Most of the organizations (69%) contributing to this assessment have human and minority rights, youth issues, the environment, democracy, or community development as their primary focus. As will be

discussed later in this report (p. 27), the vast majority work on a variety of issues suggesting, in practice, they have a limited commitment to mission and a tendency to follow donor priorities. A smaller number, however, do focus on a single issue or approach several issues in a cohesive and mutually reinforcing way.   In terms of their longevity, 45% of the CSOs participating in the survey have existed for more than a decade, 35% have been in operation for six to 10 years, 10% have been working for three to five years, and 6% have been around for two years or less (for a more detailed breakdown, please see Annex 4).

D. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The consultant would like to thank the numerous USAID/S staff members who conceptualized the SOW for this assessment, pulled together an ambitious schedule and provided administrative and logistical support while juggling many other tasks, and who offered extremely useful input and insights along the way. Acknowledgement is also due to ISC for the availability of their staff to answer the consultant's many questions, assemble extensive data and documentation upon request, send out the standardized survey to its grantees and trainees, and then follow up to encourage a high response rate. The consultant also offers her sincere appreciation to all the CSOs, media representatives, independent experts, government personnel, donors, and other implementing partners who contributed their time, ideas, and opinions and who, in some cases, traveled great distances to participate in interviews and focus group discussions.

III.   KEY FINDINGS

A. CIVIL SOCIETY BY DEFINITION AND IN PRACTICE[4]

Civil society in Serbia is in the midst of a re-alignment. Some local experts and activists describe this as an "identity crisis."   Others see it as an overdue transition to a more decentralized, diverse, and dynamic third sector. Today, some human rights CSOs that dominated the sector since the 1990s are struggling to find their place in a post-conflict, post-Milosevic era as others are expanding their perspectives to address a broader range of issues and interest groups. While human rights CSOs remain numerous, active, and vocal, their ranks are now supplemented by a variety of organizations working on everything from environmental protection and persons with disabilities to poverty reduction and budget oversight. According to the June 2009 poll carried out by Strategic Marketing Research, CSOs are most active in youth issues, education, human rights, humanitarian work, healthcare, community development, and arts and culture.

As noted previously, Serbia's civil society includes advocacy, service, and watchdog organizations based throughout the country and working nationally, regionally, or within their local communities. Their workforce comprises professional staff, volunteers, or a mix of the two.[5]   As the findings of this and other assessments show, however, there are – on the whole – considerable disparities in capacity between CSOs in Belgrade and those in the regions, as well as between regions. In Belgrade, there is an elite of professionalized CSOs with connections and access to government decision-makers and relatively

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[4] There is some debate about the appropriate use of the term non-governmental organization (NGO) versus civil society organization (CSO) within the Serbian context. This stems, in part, from the apparent lack of constituency of some organizations and the tendency of certain groups to more closely represent the interests of their own leaders or the government rather than the general public or distinct interest groups. There has also been a concerted effort within the sector to overcome long-standing negative perceptions of "NGOs" in Serbia by introducing the term "CSO." For the purposes of consistency, the author uses the term CSO throughout except in cases where titles of publications or questions in public opinion polls specifically use the term NGO.
[5] See *Strengthening Civil Society In Serbia* (June 2010), prepared by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Mission to Serbia, p. 16.

developed technical, administrative, and managerial competence.[6] At the same time, these leading organizations tend to have a weak constituent base. Some constitute a drag on public perceptions of the sector and suffer from legitimacy problems within civil society at large. While CSOs in the regions are further away from the halls of power in the capital, they tend to boast stronger connections to ordinary citizens and an ability mobilize quickly and flexibly in response to the problems of local communities. For the most part, however, their organizational capacity is considerably less developed, particularly outside of the regional hubs of Nis and Novi Sad.

Of concern for the consolidation and sustainability of the sector and domestic ownership of this process, however, is the limited number (or in some cases effectiveness) of resource organizations or active domestic foundations – especially outside of Belgrade – working to support the sector. Think tanks, central to providing expert analysis and an evidentiary approach to policy formulation and review are also rare. And, despite the existence of professional associations and trade unions, most of which are mandatory membership organizations with limited interest in, or capacity for advocacy, these appear to be largely missing from the sphere of advocacy on key issues of unemployment, labor rights, and economic reform. Discussions conducted during this assessment suggest, and recent polling data confirms, that civil society is more likely to be perceived – even by civil society actors – as consisting of formal organizations, rather than encompassing informal groups or initiatives by individual citizens to mobilize their communities, despite encouraging examples of the latter. One of the most often cited of these is "Mother Courage," which demonstrates the impact that one citizen with a cause, computer, and Internet connection can have on public awareness and accountability of public institutions. Other recent examples include the online watchdog "The Whistle" and the "5th Park" citizens' initiative.[7]

The current registration and re-registration of CSOs under the 2009 Law on Association reportedly has led to the registration of a significant number of new organizations. There is a sense of optimism that these organizations will bring energy, innovation, and a new generation of leaders to Serbia's civil society. At the same time, there are serious concerns that a not insignificant portion of these new groups are stalking horses for governmental/political organizations, as discussed in *Section 5 Political Party Capture* below. Also of interest are those older CSOs missing from the new registry: civil society experts anticipate that re-registration will formally end the inclusion of many defunct organizations in official statistics on the number of CSOs in the country. Once the initial phase of this process is completed in April 2011, a clearer picture should emerge of the scope, regional presence, and focus of CSOs in Serbia.

B. EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT: IMPEDIMENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

As part of the regional focus groups and one-on-one interviews, CSO stakeholders were asked to engage in a SWOT analysis to assess both the external and internal factors impacting the development and sustainability of the sector.   Some regional focus group participants admitted they were unaccustomed to systematically looking at the "bigger picture" or assessing the sector's strengths and weaknesses, as they are so busy with project implementation. The lack of a strategic approach by these CSOs has a direct bearing on their ability to form effective issue-based networks and engage in meaningful advocacy campaigns and, in part, explains on-going weaknesses in these areas.

Still, many of the participating CSOs had no difficulty coming up with a long list of threats. Regardless of the region in which the discussions took place, there was broad consensus on the impediments listed to

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[6] See for example the discussion in *Civil Society Organizations' Capacities In the Western Balkans and Turkey*, prepared by Bill Sterland and Galina Rizova for Technical Assistance for Civil Society Organizations (TACSO) and the Swedish Institute for Public Administration, October 2010, p. 25.
[7] For more on "The Whistle," see http://www.pistaljka.rs.

the left in the table below. Concerns about the economic situation and unemployment were common to all, although more pronounced in areas with higher rates of poverty and economic stagnation, e.g. to the east, southeast, and southwest. The issue of brain drain was paramount to CSOs working in rural areas that offer few social, educational, or job prospects.

With respect to developments that constitute an opening to further consolidate the sector, as well as bring fresh momentum to civil society activities, CSO stakeholders had considerably greater difficulty coming up with a list. While many could identify relevant issues, particularly based on a facilitated discussion, there was less of a tendency to think of these as strategic opportunities. These opportunities, whether raised directly or indirectly – are presented in the right hand column below. As with impediments, focus group participants from region to region tended to come up with the same list, although there was often lively debate within each group as to the scope and significance of these opportunities.

Threats (Impediments)	Opportunities
- Legal and regulatory framework - Fiscal and tax policy - Withdrawal of foreign donors/reduced funding levels - EU funding not accessible for most CSOs - Underdeveloped/limited domestic funding base - Line item 481 not fully transparent and accountable - Economic crisis/unemployment impede philanthropy - Poor public visibility and image of CSOs - No civic tradition/citizens do not see themselves as "taxpayers" - Political party capture - Limited points of access and leverage - No Government vision for/systematic approach to civil society and limited understanding of CS role - Brain-drain from rural and poor areas	- More options for domestic funding and in-kind support (public and private) - Cultivation of individual and corporate philanthropy/CSR - Government more open to cooperation with civil society - More opportunities to work with municipalities/prospects for greater decentralization in future - Growth of new media and social networking - Volunteerism - Provision for income generating activities by CSOs - Next generation CSOs bring new ideas, energy, leaders - EU "carrots and sticks"/EU funding - New laws, strategies, action plans provide basis for CSO engagement - Successes, precedents, and models to build upon - Increasing diversification of the sector - Freedom of access to information - Private sector growth

The remainder of this section looks at several of these issues in greater detail.

1. Legal and Policy Framework for Civil Society

Despite passage of the new Law on Associations in 2009, the legal and regulatory framework for civil society in Serbia remains incomplete and inadequate. According to the public opinion poll *NGOs in Serbia (2005-2009)*, 59% of CSOs surveyed are either somewhat or completely dissatisfied with the laws governing the sector. Nearly the same percentage (58%) considers this to be as important a problem for sustainability as the withdrawal of international donors.[8] Input solicited during interviews and focus group discussions as part of the current assessment was consistent with the poll's findings. Civil society actors with whom the consultant met regard the legal and regularly framework as an impediment to – rather than providing an enabling environment for – further consolidation and sustainability of the sector.

Specifically, civil society actors are unhappy with the quality of recently adopted legislation and have concerns about the passage of additional laws that are still pending. They describe the Law on Associations as "far from groundbreaking," while acknowledging key improvements such as the

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[8] Strategic Marketing Research, June 2009, pp. 20, 64.

streamlined registration process, which by all accounts is going well,[9] a publicly accessible database of CSOs, and provisions for income-generating activities. The new Law on Volunteerism constitutes a major disappointment, following a positive consultative process. The end product represents significant bureaucratic overreach by the Government and is sufficiently burdensome on both the supply and demand sides of the equation to discourage voluntarism *if* implemented, which many CSOs believe, or at least hope, that it will not be.[10] Efforts to reform the Law on Civil Initiatives, which dates to the Milosevic era, enjoy uncertain Government support. There are also inconsistencies between laws and vis-à-vis implementing regulations that still need to be reconciled. The list of activities to receive funding under the Law on the National Lottery, for example, is different from the list of public benefit activities.

During the course of the fieldwork for this assessment, there was also considerable discussion on the timing of the approval of a new draft Law on Endowments and Foundations prepared in consultation with civil society. The final adoption of that law had been delayed for some time and was not expected until the middle of 2011. CSO activists also raised concerns about the nature of any potential changes to the draft by the executive branch prior to final passage. Nevertheless, the Law on Endowments and Foundations was adopted on 23 November 2010 consistent with the version and clarifications provided by civil society and based on the input by the Balkan Community Initiatives Fund (BCIF).

Tax and fiscal policies that adversely impact CSOs are among the sector's top priorities for reform. A recent public opinion poll found that 70% of respondents believe a change in tax policy is essential to the sustainability of the sector.[11] Among the groups working to cultivate philanthropy and corporate social responsibility in Serbia, however, there was a sense that there would be no moves by the Government on this issue prior to the 2012 elections, and that subsequent changes would depend on the election outcome and economic conditions. When asked what the state could do to stimulate the development of CSOs, the majority of recommendations related to reducing tax burdens placed on CSOs and taxes imposed on corporate and individual giving.[12] With respect to the latter, there was a positive development on 29 December 2010, when the National Assembly adopted the Law on Amendments to the Property Tax Law, which grants an exemption of 2.5% on donations and gifts to associations, if they are registered and working for the general benefit. Civil society actors also identified existing legislation governing inheritance as not being conducive to individual philanthropy

2. The Broader Reform Agenda

CSOs agreed that the Government's adoption of new laws and national strategies, many in response to EU accession requirements, as well as the approval of local action plans by city and municipal governments, provide multiple opportunities for civil society engagement, whether offering input to policy formulation, acting as service providers, or monitoring implementation. Such policies were also perceived as providing a "necessary" basis for the work of civil society. CSO stakeholders frequently mentioned the National Youth Strategy and the Poverty Reduction Strategy during discussions on this issue. In particular, the process by which the Poverty Reduction Strategy was developed has been singled out as a valuable precedent for effective government consultations with civil society, and as a means of facilitating effective networks through the use of lead CSOs ("focal points") and constituency based networks ("clusters").

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[9] CSOs in the regions were more likely to have re-registered under the new law than CSOs in Belgrade. Those who completed the process described it as easy and timely.

[10] Among the CSOs interviewed, there was universal agreement that the law was so bad that it would not, in fact, be enforced.

[11] Strategic Marketing Research, *NGOs in Serbia (2005-2009),* June 2009, p. 20.

[12] Ibid, p. 21.

At the same time, activists expressed concern that too many of these new laws, strategies, and action plans are not being implemented, i.e. they merely allow the GOS to "check off a box" relative to EU accession requirements. Using CSOs own logic, however, lagging implementation should provide the basis for further advocacy and oversight by the sector. While there are high profile examples of effective CSO testing and monitoring of the implementation of new legislation, for example activities by YUCOM and its partners vis-à-vis the Law on Free Access to Information, various stakeholders agreed that oversight and advocacy on issues of implementation is not as wide-ranging or continuous as it needs to be to effectively hold government accountable. CSO actors cite various reasons as to why this is the case including lack of project funds, government non-responsiveness, political pressures to cease and desist (particularly at the local level), the failure of the mass media to adequately cover and follow-up on such issues (including the limited practice of investigative journalism), and various weaknesses of the judiciary that undermine its willingness and ability to enforce the law. As will be discussed in Section C below, various internal factors also contribute to CSOs ability to maintain and sustain the engagement required for on-going monitoring.

3. A Government Vision for Civil Society

Comparative practice presents a multi-faceted role by the state in contributing to the sustainability of civil society. It includes the state as a donor, a partner in the implementation of projects, and as the policymaker that regulates the work of CSOs.[13] Stakeholders interviewed for this assessment mostly acknowledge that government is more receptive to civil society than in the past, and that it is providing gradually increasing access and support even if it does not yet fully understand or appreciate the role of CSOs as partners in the reform process. These impressions are reinforced by a June 2009 poll, prepared by Strategic Marketing Research that shows a trend of improving attitudes on the part of the state toward civil society.[14] Yet, the Government of Serbia does not have a vision for civil society. At present, the mechanisms, processes, and procedures that would provide a systematic and sustainable basis for government cooperation with and support of the sector, whether at a republic level or locally, are not in place or are not functioning as intended. According to GOS representatives and non-state actors, there are pockets of support for civil society within certain ministries and offices, but there has been no consensus within the Cabinet or enough support from the public administration to advance clear and consistent policies vis-à-vis civil society.

Much of the current discussion on the Government's vision, or lack thereof, for civil society revolves around the creation of a Government Office for Cooperation with Civil Society.[15] The office was established on paper in April 2010 with an initial mandate to prepare a strategic framework for cooperation with civil society, develop transparent and accountable grant-making to and contracting of CSOs under budget line item 481, coordinate CSO access to and consultation with the GOS, and provide corresponding training to officials and public administration staff. As of the writing of this report, the head of the office had not been appointed and the office is not operational. Decisions on key personnel are reportedly caught up in wrangling among political parties comprising the coalition government. There are growing concerns that the office will either be politicized or will constitute another ineffectual independent agency lacking in both resources and influence. At the start, the legitimacy of the office will be closely intertwined with the credibility of the person selected to head it, based on his/her acceptability to civil society (*including* civil society beyond Belgrade).

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[13] OSCE Mission to Serbia, *Strengthening Civil Society in Serbia*, June 2010, p. 31.
[14] See *NGOs in Serbia (2005-2009)*, pp. 27-28.
[15] The decision to create such an office was reportedly taken after a review of comparative models including the Government Office for NGO Cooperation and the Public Foundation in neighboring Croatia.

4. Points of Access and Leverage vis-à-vis Decision-Makers

A major issue with respect to lobbying and advocacy efforts by civil society is their points of access and leverage vis-à-vis decision-makers at the republic and municipal levels. At present, the functioning of Serbia's governing institutions and its system of representation conspire to restrict access and leverage. Serbia's National Assembly remains a weak body that does not adequately fulfill its representative, legislative, or oversight functions. The version of proportional representation currently used in Serbia perpetuates an environment whereby members of parliament (MPs) and municipal councilors are beholden to party leader(s) and responsive to directives from above rather than being accountable to the electorate. Under the current system, there is no direct, innate relationship between MPs/municipal councilors and constituents and, therefore, little incentive to respond to initiatives by citizens or CSOs.[16] CSOs interviewed for this assessment agree that electoral and political reforms are key to creating incentive systems that motivate greater transparency and public accountability of elected officials, facilitate issue-based coalition-building, and provide more openings to influence the policy process. Still, they remain skeptical that there will be any movement on this issue before the 2012 elections.[17]

Under the circumstances, direct engagement of the Executive Branch, (i.e. the President, Prime Minister, members of the Cabinet) or the respective heads of political parties by CSOs is seen as the only real conduit to try to affect change. Given the absence of formal mechanisms or processes for GOS-civil society cooperation, as noted in the previous section, this tends to occur more on the basis of personal contacts and interactions than on multi-faceted strategies or broad-based efforts. Feedback obtained during focus group discussions suggests that this scenario also appears to be playing itself out at the municipal level vis-à-vis mayors and local party bosses. As will be discussed in the next section, the primacy of party organizations at all levels presents very real challenges to CSOs trying to maintain their independence and political neutrality.

Decentralization also factored into discussions on the degree of access and leverage available to civil society. With respect to decentralization, civil society actors in the regions contend that the process has largely stalled both in practice, and in terms of necessary legal reforms and the flow of funds. The Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities confirms that the legal and regulatory framework for decentralization is incomplete, and that as a result of the recent economic crisis, budget allocations to municipal governments have been slashed by 40%. Local groups complain that too much decision-making remains concentrated in Belgrade or in major cities like Novi Sad and Nis.

On the issue of leverage, civil society actors also identify the lack of independence and neutrality of the judiciary as well as poor enforcement of rulings as undermining their ability to hold government accountable through the judicial process. Both the Council of Europe's *Progress Report* (2010) and Freedom House's *Nations in Transit Report* (2010) identify continued weakness of the judiciary. Serbia's score for judicial framework and independence has remained stuck at 4.50 for the past three years and represents backsliding from the period 2002-2007. [18] Taken together with the weakness of the Parliament, this raises serious issues with respect to checks and balances within the Government.

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[16] Constitutional provisions allowing political parties ownership of elected mandates and the use of closed party lists for parliamentary and local elections stem from Serbia's negative experience with a majoritarian system in the past.
[17] At least with respect to parliamentary elections. At the time of writing, municipal elections are expected to serve as the testing ground for any changes to the system of representation.
[18] See *Nations in Progress Report: Serbia* (2010) by Sanja Pesek and Draga Nikolajevic, pp. 456 and 467-468.

5. Political Party Capture

Encroachment on – and capture of – civil society represents another serious issue linked to the dominance of Serbia's political parties. Irrespective of region, CSOs consistently emphasize the threat posed to their independence by political parties.   Among those interviewed for this assessment, well-established CSOs in Belgrade perceived that they were strong enough and sufficiently politically savvy to interact with political parties and the GOS without compromising their principles. Regionally-based CSOs were more inclined to believe that their counterparts in Belgrade had "sold out" to political interests and weren't pushing hard enough for significant reforms. Particularly in the regions, civil society actors report coming under significant pressure from all sides to politically align their organizations. And while this pressure is most intense during election campaigns, it is ever present. Unqualified support of a given party and its policies is often presented as the ticket to access, endorsement, influence, and public funding, which may be too good an offer for some CSOs to refuse. According focus group discussants and interviewees, political parties also register their own CSOs. These groups provide additional conduits through which to siphon off scarce domestic resources, exert political pressure, monopolize access to decision-makers, manipulate public opinion, and/or contribute to an exaggerated perception of government – CSO cooperation, thereby crowding out "legitimate" civil society.

There are concerns that a not insignificant number of new CSOs registered under the 2009 Law on Associations are political party fronts positioning themselves for the 2012 election and access to public funding – including the EU's Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) funds – as government service providers/project partners.[19] An October 2010 report of the European Council's Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO) raises concerns that as regulations on political financing in Serbia are tightened, parties may be finding new ways to circumvent existing rules, for example by using the Law on Associations (2009) to register CSOs to engage in political activities such as fundraising, information dissemination, and public opinion polling. As legally separate entities, these CSOs could accept anonymous donations or foreign donations without being subject to the same disclosure and oversight requirements as political parties and thereby undermining the public's right to know how public funds are being used. The report notes that while interlocutors associated with political parties do not see this as a problem in Serbia, at least one political party reportedly registered 40 associations. The report concludes that **steps need to be taken to increase the transparency of accounts and activities of all organizations that are related, whether directly or indirectly, to political parties or otherwise under their control**.[20] For more on the use of line item 481, please see the discussion under section 9 on page 19.

6. Media Coverage, Visibility, and Public Perceptions of Civil Society

Civil society organizations acknowledge that they have an image problem. Civil society actors with whom the consultant met attribute this to a host internal and external factors ranging from poor outreach and communications skills and inexperience dealing with the media to the lingering effects of intensely negative PR during the Milosevic era, a lack of civic culture in Serbia, and malfeasance within the sector. This section of the report looks at some of the external realities, while internal capacities are further discussed on page 32.

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[19] IPA is the framework through which the EU provides assistance directed at strengthening institutional capacity, cross-border cooperation, and economic, social, and rural development to countries engaged in the accession process. For more information, see http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/agriculture/enlargement/e50020_en.htm
[20] For more information see, http://www.coe/int/dghl/monitoring/greco/evaluations/round3/GrecoEval3(2010)3_Serbia_Two_EN.pdf , particularly paragraph 75.

Recent public opinion polling offers insights as to how far civil society still has to go to overcome not just a lack of visibility but also a lingering credibility gap. According to a May 2009 public opinion poll carried out by Strategic Marketing Research, 56% of respondents know what an NGO is and most of them can name at least one NGO.[21] CESID enjoys the highest rate of recognition, followed by Women in Black.[22] Among those who know what an NGO is, however, only 5% are aware of any NGO networks or coalitions and only 21% can name an NGO campaign that positively influenced the lives of citizens (with "Safe House" garnering the highest ranking at four percent).[23] Despite higher levels of awareness, however, slightly less than half believe that NGO(s) are interested in the opinions of average citizens. This percentage is trending in the wrong direction, up seven percentage points since 2006.[24] Among all respondents, only 13% trust NGOs to work in the best interests of society.[25] Only 15% think NGOs are influential.[26] And, only 8% believe NGOs are effective in solving problems facing the country.[27] Still, almost two-thirds believe that NGOs have a role to play in the general welfare of society, suggesting there is room to improve the image of the sector moving forward.

The mass media plays an important role as conveyor of information about civil society and in shaping public opinions of the sector. For their part, civil society actors who contributed to this assessment said the media doesn't cover their activities as much as it should and that the media just isn't interested in positive stories. CSO participants also cited the weak financial viability of independent media outlets as compromising their independence from state and commercial interests, which in turn has a bearing on editorial policy, which may not bode well for coverage of civil society issues. On a positive note, however, polling suggests that CSOs increasingly believe that the media understands the role and importance of civil society and that it has an increasingly positive image of the sector.

7. Civic Tradition

Civil society actors with whom the consultant met noted the lack of a civic tradition in Serbia and its impact on efforts to develop the sector and encourage public participation. According to the OSCE's report, *Strengthening Civil Society in Serbia*, this lack of a civic tradition adversely impacts the sustainability of the sector.[28] During focus group discussions for the current assessment, those from small towns and rural areas where there is only one or just a few, CSOs and often no local media indicate having a particularly difficult time. In such areas, activists suggest that local mindsets have changed very little since the end of the Milosevic era. Input collected in Belgrade and the regions suggests that the absence of a mandatory civic education curriculum that discusses the role of civil society and the content and slant of media programming exacerbates this situation. In the case of media content (including online, as discussed more below) and prevailing pop culture, some worry that this is swelling the ranks of Serbia's uncivil society.[29]

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[21] Because the Strategic Marketing poll used the term NGO when posing questions to their sample, references in this report to the poll will retain the use of the term NGO. As part of this survey, Strategic Marketing included a specific question asking respondents whether they had positive or negative associations with the terms "NGO" and "CSO." While a higher number of respondents were likely to have no associations or say that they didn't know (51%) in the case of "CSOs" as opposed to "NGOs "(34%), they were also more likely to have a positive or neutral impression of "CSOs" as compared to "NGOs." For more on this please see pp. 31-33 of the poll.

[22] See *Public Perceptions and Attitudes Toward NGO Sector In Serbia*, p. 35.

[23] Ibid, pp. 37, 50.

[24] Ibid, p. 38.

[25] Ibid, p. 24.

[26] Ibid, p. 40.

[27] Ibid, pp. 26, 29.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Several schoolteachers among the discussants voiced their concern that today's students are more conservative than their parents' generation.

Recent public opinion polling indicates that a majority of the population is not inclined to actively engage with their local communities, much less broader civil society. According to the Strategic Marketing Research 2009 poll, slightly more than half of all respondents were not motivated to be involved in their communities and 44% did not feel a personal responsibility to participate in community projects.[30] And only 11% of respondents reported taking action to address a specific concern or problem in their local areas. The main reason citizens were not becoming involved is that they did not believe they could make a difference; specifically, they did not believe they had the power to change things in their communities or to influence local decision-making. Such sentiments are likely a mix of current realities and a legacy of the Tito era, but clearly illustrate the hurdles that civil society must overcome to expand public participation in Serbia. Perhaps of greatest concern is that respondents also cited their inability to influence other members of the community to take action on important issues as a reason for opting out. Compared to 2006, this number was trending upward.[31]

Despite the findings of this poll, focus group discussions conducted for this assessment suggest that there are precedents for the active involvement of citizens in community decision-making and involving cooperation between civil society, government, and the private sector. When asked about the most successful programs supported by international donors, participants often cited USAID's Community Revitalization through Democratic Action (CDRA) program, which provided a framework, methodology, and incentives for public participation as well as opportunities to achieve tangible results, for example infrastructure, job creation, or economic development in the near term. They also praised the integration of economic and democracy programming through community development as being particularly effective. According to an independent evaluation, the CRDA and the Serbia Local Government Report Program (SLGRP) programs "opened many people's eyes to the possibility of community action" and contributed to "increased citizen participation." The evaluation team further found that, "the smaller the project and the smaller the community, the higher the degree of direct citizens participation and input observed." The evaluation team concluded that these impacts were more or less permanent.[32]

While the current assessment did not evaluate particular programs, participants generally reported having a harder time either mobilizing or sustaining public participation absent the structure and "carrots and sticks" provided by external actors such as international donors and/or with respect to more abstract issues where impacts are harder to relate to citizens. Typically, these conversations led back to complaints about lack of project funding, calling into question the willingness or ability, at least on the part of some CSOs, to engage in activism – with or without constituents – if they do not have discrete funding. For more on internal CSO capacities on issues such as constituent outreach, please refer to p. 28.

In terms of actual participation in civil society, the Strategic Marketing Research poll found that more than three quarters of respondents did not belong to any groups, organizations, networks, or associations. This number was also trending upward relative to 2006.[33] Among those who were involved, they were most likely to be a member of a trade/labor union, political movement, or sports club, although responses were still in the single digits. Only 1% reported belonging to an NGO or social service organization. And, compared to 2006, an increasing number (59%) said they would not consider becoming involved in the activities of an NGO[34] For those who had taken some action in their communities, the most common forms of engagement included signing a petition, attending a council meeting or public hearing/discussion, contacting a public official, attending a demonstration or rally, or participating in an

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[30] Ibid, p. 20.
[31] Ibid, pp. 12 and 19.
[32] For more information, *see Impact Evaluation of CRDA, SLGRP, and SEDP*, particularly the Executive Summary and the discussion on pages 7-14.
[33] See *Public Perception and Attitudes Towards NGO Sector in Serbia*, p. 11.
[34] Ibid, p. 48.

information or election campaign.[35] While a positive first step, none of these forms of citizens participation represent a longer-term commitment to, or willingness to engage in, more sustained activities directed at reform.

Despite these rather disappointing numbers, the polling data on issues of voluntarism and philanthropy show that, at least declaratively, more than half of citizens were ready to contribute money or time for the benefit of others in their community. With respect individual giving, in-kind contributions, and volunteering, respondents indicated that they were most likely to contribute when approached by people that they knew such as a family member, fellow citizens, members of their local communities and representatives of local governments or well-established charities such as the Red Cross.[36] This suggests that, moving forward, there is room to grow the level of citizen involvement in broader actions carried out by civil society.[37]

8. New Media and Social Networking: A Game Changer?

The use of new media and social networking is growing rapidly in Serbia and represents a potential game-changer in terms of democratizing and decentralizing citizens' access to information, and for providing civil society with important tools to generate and share content, connect and mobilize people, and to carry out activities. According to a recent benchmark study, *New Media Usage* released by IPSOS Strategic Marketing in May 2010, more than half of Serbian citizens now have Internet access at home, while nearly a third have access at school, faculty, or work.[38] At present, the overwhelming majority of these users are connected via desktop computer.[39] Perhaps not surprisingly the Internet has become the second most important source of information after television, particularly among young people, urban dwellers, and those with university degrees, e.g. 13% of the total target population and 29% of those between the ages of 12 and 29 years of age.   Among the 12 – 29 age cohort, 91% use the Internet "at least occasionally," while 70% of the total target population between the ages of 30 and 44 do so. Based on the occasional usage question, 74% of those with a university education use the Internet, 65% of those who reside in Belgrade, as well as 55% who live in Vojvodina.[40] At present, slightly more than a third of those surveyed (and two-thirds of younger respondents) report that they use the Internet every day.[41] This group primarily uses the Internet to:

- Surf the web for information;
- Read the news and get informed;
- Send and receive e-mails;
- Download content;
- Participate in social networking; and/or
- Chat online, participate in online forums, or read blogs.

The IPSOS Strategic Marketing study found that 58% of Internet users (and 83% of younger users) report having a Facebook profile. And, according to Internet World Statistics, there were 2,237,680 Facebook users in Serbia as of 31 August 2010, representing a 30.5% penetration rate.[42] Among younger users, IPSOS found that YouTube and Skype are also popular, while My Space, Twitter, and Linked In are not.

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[35] Ibid, p. 13.
[36] For more information, please see *Public Opinion About Individual Philanthropy* (2009) prepared by IPSOS Strategic Marketing for BCIF, specifically the section on personal readiness to donate beginning on p. 21.
[37] Ibid, p. 15.
[38] Ibid, pp. 18-19. Note: Information was available only for Belgrade, Central Serbia, and Vojvodina.
[39] Ibid, p. 17.
[40] Ibid, p. 12.
[41] Ibid, pp. 7-9.
[42] See www.internetworldstats.com, Serbia.

Very few users actively blog, i.e. maintain their own blog or post comments on other blogs.[43] The Internet is the only media used more often in the past two years than previously (70% response rate) and those who use the Internet believe that they will use it even more in the next two years (50%).[44]

According to the IPSOS poll, mobile phone penetration is quite high in Serbia with 79% of citizens using mobile phones, particularly those under the age of 45. Eighty-five per cent of respondents report using their phones to send and receive SMS messages (of whom nearly a quarter do so every day), take photos (61%), and/or make video recordings (41%). Significantly fewer use them to send and receive e-mails (9%) or to browse the Internet (6%) due to the cost of mobile devices and data plans.[45]

Despite these statistics, as one journalist from B92 noted, there are huge regional imbalances in technology use because of poverty in some parts of the country. Perhaps in recognition of this reality, the benchmark study referenced above collected information only in Belgrade, central Serbia, and Vojvodina.

9. *The Changing Foreign Donor Environment and Domestic Options to Support Civil Society*

In light of the withdrawal of some foreign donors and in anticipation of reduced levels of support and/or a narrower focus by others, CSOs in Serbia increasingly must cultivate domestic funding sources. Among the CSOs participating in this assessment, the exit of DFID, CIDA, Slovak Aid, and Norwegian Aid, among others, combined with speculation about the timing of USAID's departure, is a cause of great concern to local groups. In the case of USAID, its eventual departure is seen as particularly worrisome given its greater tendency, relative to other major donors, to stimulate civil society at the grassroots and to invest in capacity building. Civil society actors also cite USAID's support of groups dedicated to advocacy and oversight activities that, given the experience of CSOs in other countries, will be most adversely impacted by the departure of foreign donors.[46] Interviewees in the regions are more likely to worry about the increasingly significant role, in terms of its scope and influence, of EU funding, which they see as primarily going to the public sector and perpetuating the "usual suspects" among CSOs in Belgrade. Many smaller organizations indicate that EU funding is beyond their reach, given the complexity of application procedures and bureaucratic project requirements.

Civil society actors with whom the consultant met confirm that there are comparatively more options for domestic support, e.g. public funding, domestic foundations, corporate and individual giving, volunteerism, than in the past. Provisions within the new Law on Associations (2009) that allow for income generating activities by CSOs are also viewed positively. Although project-based foreign funding continues to constitute a disproportionate share of the overall budget of many organizations – particularly those that are professionalized or have a mix of paid staff and volunteers – CSOs have begun to diversify their resource base. [47] Of the 300 organizations surveyed for the public opinion poll *NGOs in Serbia (2005-2009)*, for example, all report having some source of funding other than foreign donors. All forms of support other than individual contributions and self-financing are on the rise compared to 2005, with more groups claiming assistance from municipal government (up 17 points to 53%), domestic donors (up 15 points to 49%), state government (up 27 points to 44%), and the business sector (up 8 points to 35%). While half of those polled still rate the financial situation of their organizations as "bad" or "very bad,"

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[43] Ibid, pp. 26-28.

[44] Ibid, p. 11.

[45] Ibid, pp. 46-48.

[46] The OSCE Serbia Mission's Report, *Strengthening Civil Society in Serbia*, found that, as in many other countries, the share of foreign funding within human and minority rights organizations and those working on policy development was particularly high (p. 25).

[47] See the section on volunteerism below and the OSCE Serbia Mission's report, *Strengthening Civil Society in Serbia* (June 2010).

this represents a five-point drop since 2005.[48] For more information on the ability of CSOs to raise funds from domestic sources, please see p. 29.

Many of those interviewed for this assessment see domestic sources of funding, in-kind contributions, and income generation as likely to grow in the future and representing an opportunity moving forward. This perception is consistent with the results of the Strategic Marketing Research survey of NGOs, in which respondents perceived the following funding sources as the best way to finance civil society in the future:

- State government (82%);
- Municipal government (66%);
- Foreign donors (60%);
- The business sector (56%); and
- Domestic foundations (55%).[49]

All of the domestic sources listed above showed significant increases since 2005. According to a recent report issued by the EU's Technical Assistance for Civil Society Organizations (TACSO), however, there are, at present, insufficient financial resources in Serbia dedicated to civil society development to support all of the CSOs that are active within the country.[50] Based on information gathered as part of the current assessment, most civil society actors do not believe the current *level* of domestic funding is sufficient to provide for the sector's sustainability, nor is it likely to do so any time soon.

The remainder of this section looks at some of these sources of funding in greater detail.

Public Funding

The state budget provides for public funding for civil society under line item 481. In practice, the use of this line item is less than straightforward.   Separate legislation governs the funding of political parties, religious institutions, and associations (including CSOs), yet all are lumped together under budget line item 481. Civil society actors with whom the consultant met insist that the bulk of 481 funds are going to political parties, political party front organizations (or so-called "Government NGOs/GONGOs"), religious institutions, sports clubs, and other "holdovers" from the socialist period. A recent report of the OSCE Mission to Serbia found that the state contributed more than 60 million Euros to civil society in 2007, of which only slightly more than 20 million Euros went to political parties, religious institutions, and other institutions in that year.[51] According to Transparency Serbia, however, the latest research suggests that less than 30% of funds under this line item are going to groups that would typically be considered CSOs.[52] The Center for the Development of the Non-Profit Sector (CDNPS) also found that the largest allocation from line item 481 goes to the Church. In November 2010, 188 CSOs signed the "Initiative For Diversification Of Budget Line 481," which was prepared by the CDNPS, and submitted it to the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister.

Moreover, both civil society actors and state and local government representatives confirm that there are currently no standardized procedures being employed by ministries or municipalities for the disbursement of funds, and levels of transparency and accountability vary significantly. Funds under line item 481 are dispersed through government ministries and municipalities[53] and reportedly include a mix of subsidies, grants for projects, and contracts for the procurement of services. According to Transparency Serbia, a

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[48] See the discussion on pp. 58-60.
[49] Strategic Marketing Research, *NGOs in Serbia (2005-2009)*, p. 62.
[50] Sterland and Rizova, p. 25.
[51] See *Strengthening Civil Society in Serbia*, p. 7.
[52] E-mail communication dated 9 November 2010.
[53] The City of Belgrade has established its own Office for Civil Society Cooperation, which helps to establish priorities for support to civil society.

recent example of this is a request within the proposed Budget Law for 2010 whereby the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, under line item 481, planned to finance activities related to the training of professional workers in social care institutions. Transparency Serbia takes the position that such expenses should be treated as procurement of services for public institutions (and subject to government procurement rules) rather than as grants to associations. Some ministries, e.g. the Ministry of Youth and Sports, have relatively well-structured grant-making procedures, and publicly disclose how much money is going to which organizations.

Across the board, however, there is little available information on how the funds are ultimately spent or what are the results, as required reporting is not made public. Watchdog groups, including Transparency Serbia, report that requests for information concerning the use of line item 481 have met with inconsistent and incomplete responses by various ministries, offices, and institutions, leading to the conclusion that funding under line item 481 is not adequately transparent or accountable. The introduction and application of standardized and transparent grant-making procedures across government is reportedly a top priority of the new Government Office for Cooperation with Civil Society, once it becomes operational. The proper use of funds under line item 481 might also be an issue that the recently created Anti-Corruption Agency could address, both directly and through support to civil society monitoring efforts.

<u>Individual Philanthropy</u>

Stakeholders interviewed for this assessment confirm that while some organizations have been successful in soliciting individual contributions, the lack of incentives for contributions, e.g. tax deductions, as well as the current economic crisis and high levels of unemployment, place very real constraints on individual philanthropy.[54] In a December 2009 poll by IPSOS Strategic Marketing, *Public Opinion About Individual Philanthropy*, respondents indicated that the bad economic situation was only partly to blame, and that a lack of awareness about the custom of donating money for the general welfare was also a factor.[55] According to the poll, more than two thirds of respondents believed that individual philanthropy was poorly developed in the country and that this custom was not adequately encouraged. [56] Again, nearly two-thirds of respondents indicated that they had made contributions, whether money, in-kind contributions, or volunteer labor.[57] Both the IPSOS philanthropy poll and the survey of public perceptions conducted by Strategic Marketing Research also found that more than half of respondents declared that they would be willing to contribute money to projects that benefit others in their community, a statistic that has held steady since 2006.[58]

According to the IPSOS poll, assistance to vulnerable groups and response to health issues were by far the most likely causes to spur respondent's engagement.[59] In that poll, citizens claimed that they would be more likely to contribute to some action connected with the local community and impacting people close to them than a general action.[60] Specifically, respondents said they were most likely to contribute when approached by people that they knew such as family members, fellow citizens, members of their local communities and representatives of local governments.[61] At the same time, philanthropy is still an emerging concept in Serbia and the number of national campaigns has been relatively limited.

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[54] According to some experts, changes in tax policies concerning contributions will need to be addressed through several laws and regulations, i.e. not just legislation governing civil society, for example, but also inheritance.
[55] IPSOS Strategic Marketing, p. 10.
[56] Ibid, p. 8.
[57] Ibid, p. 22.
[58] See *Public Perception and Attitudes Towards NGO Sector in Serbia*, p. 15.
[59] *Public Opinion About Individual Philanthropy*, IPSOS Strategic Marketing, December 2009, p. 29.
[60] Ibid, p. 32.
[61] Ibid, beginning on p. 21.

Organizations working to change this, Smart Kolektiv and BCIF for example, note that some of the most successful fundraisers have been those with republic-wide coverage, e.g. telethons for Kraljevo and Kosovo; involving groups with significant visibility throughout the country, such as the Vlade Divac Foundation and Nasa Srbija; or based on appeals from the church or other well respected institutions. Representatives from Smart Kolektiv and BCIF agree that republic-wide fundraising efforts will become increasingly common and important in the future.

When asked to identify the most important reasons for supporting a particular action, respondents cited confidence that the money would not be misused and a belief that the action would produce results. This response is of particular interest given the subsequent scandal concerning the misappropriation of funds by the Katarina Rebraca Charity Fund, which the poll found to be the most well-known foundation in the country as of December 2009.[62] Various stakeholders with whom the consultant met for the current assessment indicated that the scandal, which broke in early 2010, was a major setback to their efforts to develop philanthropy and had undone years of work. Still, legitimate and highly successful funds, such as the Vlade Divac Foundation, have been able to bounce back to pre-scandal contribution levels. According to the IPSOS poll, 70% indicated that the media was the most important source of information about how charitable contributions were being used and the progress being made. Nearly a quarter of respondents said that they also wanted to hear directly from the organizers of the fundraising campaigns on these issues.[63] When asked what might be done to stimulate people to donate more to general welfare causes, a consistent number of respondents (approximately two thirds) said better control of activities, more coverage of campaigns by the mass media, and official results reporting.[64]

The concerns addressed by the poll are not unusual and have been addressed in neighboring countries (e.g., Croatia), through improved governing boards, increased public disclosure of information including annual reports, and the adoption of quality assurance standards by CSOs. Despite their concerns about potential misuse of funds, more than half of the respondents to the poll said that they believed that the donations of ordinary people could help society to a significant or great extent. More than half also said such donations are not just a matter of good will, but also a matter of responsibility or duty to the community, which suggests that with improving economic conditions and steps to provide for greater transparency and accountability of donations, there is room for individual philanthropy in Serbia to grow.

Private Foundations

At present, there are a limited number of active and effective domestic foundations in Serbia reflecting, in part, a limited culture of individual and corporate philanthropy as well as poor economic conditions and a lack of trust about how the money will be used. In the IPSOS poll on philanthropy, a third of respondents would have been willing to donate money for general welfare activities through a foundation. The 41% who would not cited their limited financial means and concerns about how the money would be used. Still, among those who would be willing to donate money to a foundation that they trusted, a quarter indicated that they would be willing to make repeated donations.[65] As noted at the beginning of this section, new legislation has only recently been adopted and its impact on the development and operation of foundations in the future remains to be seen.[66] Even before the passage of the new Law on Endowments and Foundations, there was evidence that some businesses and CSOs were moving in the direction of foundations to manage their on-going charitable giving, including the media organizations B92 and 021 (Novi Sad) and the successful music festival EXIT (Novi Sad).

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[62] Ibid, p. 45.
[63] Ibid, pp. 52-53.
[64] Ibid, p. 51.
[65] Ibid pp. 47 - 50.
[66] Adopted on 23 November 2010.

Corporate Philanthropy and Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate philanthropy and corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs, like individual philanthropy, are new concepts in Serbia. And, as with individual philanthropy, civil society actors perceive that these are impacted by limited awareness, an underdeveloped tradition of corporate giving as might be expected in an emerging market economy, the severity of the current economic crisis, and the absence of tax incentives. However, IPSOS Strategic Marking polling data from 2009 suggests that the private sector is contributing to civil society and that the number of CSOs receiving support from companies has not been adversely affected by the economic crisis. Of 64% who said they had cooperated with the business sector in 2009 (up from 61% in 2005), 76% indicated that this cooperation included funding (down only slightly in terms of percentages from 78% in 2005). At the same time, respondents indicated that corporate contributions were sporadic and small. Only 6% of the 2009 poll's respondents reported having on-going support of a strategic nature.[67]

 According to Smart Kolektiv, an organization dedicated to bridging the gap between business and society through corporate social responsibility, the number of viable private (local) companies in Serbia is still too small (30-40) to support CSR on a significant scale: Smart Kolektiv believes it would require closer to 300 such companies. At present, the Business Leaders Forum, a network dedicated to CSR, is comprised of 15 companies, mostly foreign, but also domestic. Opinion leaders in the field of CSR, such as those at Smart Kolektiv and BCIF, confirm that foreign CEOs are more willing to support communities and do so in a more systematic way than their domestic counterparts. They attribute this to foreign CEOs' comparatively greater practical experience with corporate philanthropy and CSR, the culture of active civic engagement that exists in their own countries, and their general sense of optimism about what can be achieved. Serbia's CEOs, on the other hand, are reportedly more cynical about the potential impacts and benefits or such actions given limited civic traditions, systematic corruption, and the lack of openness and trust between the business community and civil society. As such, foreign CEOs are viewed as being the more likely catalysts for CSR in Serbia at this point in time.

The experience of neighboring Croatia, where CSR has grown much more slowly than the private sector economy despite a considerable push through USAID's CroNGO project, suggests that it takes time to broadly cultivate CSR. Still, there is widespread agreement among experts and practitioners that CSR is an essential component to improving the financial viability and organizational sustainability of CSOs.[68]

C. INTERNAL CAPACITIES OF CIVIL SOCIETY: STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

As part of the SWOT analyses conducted during focus group discussions and one-on-one interviews, the consultant asked CSOs a series of open-ended questions, to assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of the sector, either as a whole or in the areas where they operated. While a core group of CSOs tended to have a good grasp of these, many had difficulty describing in detail existing and deficient skill sets. Those that had received more comprehensive, integrated (i.e. TA, training, and grants), and/or long standing assistance were *generally* better able to undertake this task, e.g. many of the Belgrade-based CSOs interviewed for this assessment.[69]   This was particularly the case if assistance had been tailored and included a capacity building component and among CSOs that were more effectively networked. As might be expected, those working in relative isolation and/or those that received little or no assistance

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[67] Ibid, pp. 35-38.

[68] See the discussion of this in *Final Evaluation of USAID Project for Support to Croatia's Non-Governmental Organizations (CroNGO), 2001-2007*, prepared by Harry Blair et al., 19 August 2007, p. 19

[69] Either as a whole or within their areas of operation.

(e.g. one-time or only group training) found it harder to assess relative capacities.[70] For many organizations, an all- out focus on project implementation and the money chase ("project to project") appeared to crowd out attention to organizational development needs, which would undermine their longer-term sustainability. As with the assessment of threats and opportunities, the SWOT analysis exercise in each region, including interviews in Belgrade, produced a significantly longer list of weaknesses than strengths.

Strengths	Weaknesses

▪ Proposal writing and budgeting
▪ Financial management of projects
▪ Project management
▪ Report writing
▪ Ability to attract/recruit volunteers
▪ Belgrade CSOs have access to and contacts among decision-makers and experience in lobbying
▪ Belgrade CSOs have capacity to manage large projects
▪ Local CSOs are flexible, can identify problems, and mobilize quickly
▪ Experience gained/skills built to date
▪ Successes and precedents to build upon
▪ Role models within the sector
▪ Dedication of activists
▪ Commitment to democracy
 	
Additional skills being built through current USAID funded CS assistance (although not yet articulated as strengths):
 	
  ▪ Advocacy and lobbying (as per non-Belgrade CSOs)
  ▪ Media relations and public outreach
  ▪ Branding and marketing
  ▪ Fundraising (CSR and philanthropy)
	▪ Limited sustainability
	▪ CSO governance, transparency, and accountability
	▪ Organizational management/internal structures and procedures
	▪ No quality control standards
	▪ CSOs are closed/isolated from each other – poor networking and communication within the sector
	▪ Divide between Belgrade-based and local CSOs
	▪ Public/constituency outreach
	▪ Not mission driven (mostly project/donor driven)
	▪ Afraid to criticize government (negative consequences)
	▪ Unwilling to criticize a "democratic" government
	▪ No continuous relationship with/presence in media
	▪ Strategic planning/prioritizing
	▪ M&E skills
	▪ Burnout of activists
	▪ Instability of volunteer labor force
	▪ Human resources management (including volunteers)
	▪ Fundraising skills
	▪ No strategic approach to advocacy
	▪ Capacity limited among medium sized and smaller CSOs
	▪ Few resource organizations, especially outside of Belgrade
	▪ Financial management (for funding diversification)
	▪ Local CSOs far removed from decision-makers in Belgrade
	▪ Little transfer of best practices

In assessing strengths, there was a heavy focus on project-related skills, e.g. proposal writing, budgeting, project cycle management, and project reporting (including financial reporting). Several civil society actors in each location stressed that foreign assistance has produced CSOs that are increasingly good at preparing proposals and writing reports, regardless of their ability to achieve results. While not yet widely acknowledged as strengths by civil society actors outside of Belgrade, many CSOs spoke of being introduced to new concepts and building pertinent skills in advocacy, public outreach and media, fundraising (through an increased focus on CSR and philanthropy), and branding and marketing thanks to the current civil society program being funded by USAID through the Civil Society Advocacy Initiative (CSAI).

Throughout the assessment, both commonalities and variations emerged between the regions with respect to ongoing weaknesses. Not surprisingly, CSOs working in areas with high levels of poverty and economic collapse, few funding options, limited access to foreign donors or their implementing partners, and with no media outlets or networking opportunities (e.g. in more rural areas and in the east and the south – both east and west) tended to have fewer capacities than those in central and northern Serbia.

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[70] This being said, the consultant met with several groups that, despite an absence of foreign donor support, were quite cognizant about their own – and the sector's – strengths and weaknesses and were reportedly building their own capacity.

This being said, the consultant found both standout and struggling CSOs in each region, irrespective of USAID assistance. As might be expected, big CSOs in Belgrade tended to emphasize their access to and contacts among decision-makers, input to public policies, and their capacity to work countrywide and manage large projects. In discussing weaknesses during on-one-one interviews, CSOs in Belgrade tended to focus on a narrower set of issues relating to governance, outreach, and their ability to effectively push for policy implementation, although this was not universally the case. Alternatively, CSOs in the regions stressed their connection to the grassroots and ability to respond flexibly and quickly to real issues. They also tended to discuss their strengths in terms of values such as hard work, dedication, and/or commitment to democracy. As compared to their counterparts in Belgrade, CSOs in the regions consistently presented a longer and broader set of weaknesses as summarized in the table above.

The results of the survey also show similarities and differences in terms of CSO-identified priorities for capacity building, chosen from a closed list. As the table below illustrates, organizations working on a countrywide or regional basis, as well as those in the center and the north, tended to focus more on issues such as organizational development and management, strategic planning, and various forms of relationship building (e.g. coalition-building, media relations, government relations). Those in the southeast and southwest tended to include among their top priorities skills such as proposal writing, budgeting, action planning, the legal framework, and financial management. All listed fundraising as the number one (or two) skill that they needed to develop through further assistance. Specifically, the top five training needs of CSOs who completed the survey included:

	Total 100% N=132	Country-Wide N=60	Regional N=7	Central-Belgrade N=1	Central - Other N=5	North N=17	South-Eastern N=24	South-Western N=18
1	Fundraising	Fundraising	Branding & Marketing	Fundraising	Governmental Relations	Strategic Planning	Fundraising	Fundraising
2	Strategic Planning	Organizational Management	Organizational Management	Public Outreach	Fundraising (tie)	Fundraising	Strategic Planning	Strategic Planning
3	Government Relations	Coalition Building (tie)	Strategic Planning (tie)	Constituency Relations	Organizational Manage (tie)	Advocacy & Lobbying	Action Planning	Government Relations
4	Project Management	Government Relations	Human Res. Manage (tie)	Government Relations	Branding & Marketing (tie)	Organizational Management	Organizational Manage (tie)	Branding & Marketing (tie)
5	Organizational Management	Strategic Planning	Public Outreach (tie)	Advocacy & Lobbying	Advocacy & Lobbying (tie)	Government Relations	Financial Manage (tie)	Budgeting (tie)
			Media Relations (tie)		Volunteer Recruit (tie)		Advocacy & Lobbying (tie)	Proposal Writing (tie)
			Volunteer Recruit (tie)				Legal Frame (tie)	
			Trans & Acct (tie)					

Note: The geographic areas listed above denote the scope of the CSO's activities (self-identified) and not necessarily where the organization is based. All but one Belgrade CSO claimed to be working countrywide as did several CSOs from Novi Sad and Nis. The designation of "regional" is based on work in more than one region but not countrywide. Items listed as "tie" received the same number of responses.

The least-identified areas for capacity building in the survey are also of interest and concern. Based on all responses (132), the bottom five included, in rank order: governance, constituent relations, communications, action planning, and CSO transparency and accountability. This result is surprising as, of these capacities, all but action planning were the subject of considerable discussion during one-on-one interviews and focus groups. In those settings, virtually all these capacities were identified as constituting significant deficiencies within the sector, deficiencies that have a direct bearing on CSO legitimacy and sustainability. For a complete listing of capacities and their relative importance by region based on the survey results, please refer to Annex 4.

The remainder of this section will explore several of these strengths and weaknesses in greater detail.

1. *Cooperation, and Networking Within the Sector*

There are few functional networks at the national or local level in Serbia, and CSO actors admit that cooperation among groups based on shared ("common") interests is a real problem, despite the existence of – and precedents for successful advocacy by – issue-based coalitions. As the chart below illustrates, virtually all those who contributed to the assessment claim to be active members of at least one network or coalition that they can specifically name (for more information, please see the full listing under Annex 6). Similarly, most civil society actors can identify networks that have positively impacted public policies, practices, or perceptions, e.g. freedom of information, poverty reduction, decentralization, anti-discrimination, and youth strategy. During focus group discussions, some participants also gave tangible examples of the effectiveness of jointly approaching municipal governments, whether to request premises for use by civil society, or to lobby for input to local action plans.
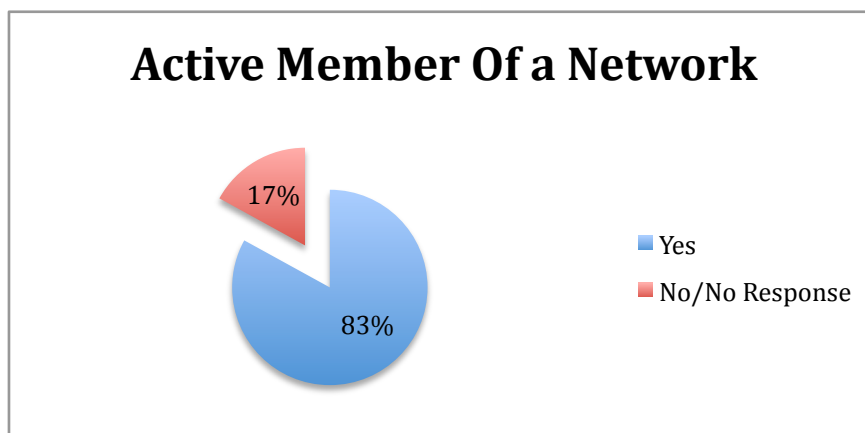
According to a recent report issued by TACSO, despite the absence of functional networks, other forms of cooperation including formal partnerships between organizations are well developed and have often been a condition of funding.[71] Regionally-based CSOs participating in the current assessment agreed that there are constructive informal relationships, but cited problems with formal partnerships that discourage them from pursuing coordinated action more regularly, despite their greater prospects for successes. Irrespective of region, local actors consistently note poor treatment at the hands of Belgrade-based CSOs that typically spearhead such networks and coalitions. They point to the absence of real partnerships based on participatory planning/decision-making or consultative processes. Local actors claim that large CSOs in Belgrade seek to strengthen the credibility of their proposals by including local CSOs in networks, but ultimately use them only as service providers, while most of the financial resources remain in Belgrade. Generally, skills in managing and *maintaining* networks – and in building their effectiveness – are seen as deficient. Interestingly, results of the survey conducted for this assessment found that CSOs working on a countrywide basis identified coalition-building as a priority for improved capacity moving forward.

Even at a purely regional level, however, networking is still an issue that cannot be explained away by the behavior of big CSOs in Belgrade. Local actors pinpoint other factors such as a lack of trust among CSOs, unconstructive competition for limited/dwindling resources, and politicization within the sector, as well as the artificiality, ineffectiveness, and lack of focus of many networks or coalitions. Funding is also a factor. While ad hoc networks by their very nature cease to exist once a particular outcome is achieved, civil society actors point out that networks in Serbia, like virtually everything else within the sector, are mostly sustained through project funds. If there are no projects, networks collapse even if the issues on which they work remain relevant and unresolved, and despite the availability of technologies that could

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[71] Sterland and Rizova, p. 39.

provide for virtual connectivity. The consultant found this to be an impediment to sustaining momentum and engagement on advocacy campaigns, if policy outcomes could not be achieved within the course of a year-long project and with respect to the continuity of watchdog activities.

For their own organizations and despite examples that they can offer to the contrary, local CSOs claim there are few incentives and little value-added to join a network. Most emphasized that they would only be inclined to join real networks, focused on well-defined issues, and based on equitable partnerships. Among positive examples that fit these criteria, the Coalition for Human Rights in Serbia network (CHRIS) is frequently singled-out as an example of real partnership within a network. As one might anticipate given the negative impressions of networks coordinated by Belgrade-based CSOs, this widely cited example of a constructive network is managed by the Center for Human Rights in Nis. Women's organizations and Roma organizations also tended to have more positive assessments of the networks to which they belonged, relative to the broader sample of CSOs that participated in regional focus group discussions.

2. Issues of Governance, Transparency, and Accountability

The issue of governance is a sensitive one, particularly when the governance and management functions of an organization are combined, and/or when they are concentrated in one person or coterie of persons. As in many other transitional settings, there is poor separation of these functions within Serbia's CSOs. In addition, few of the older organizations have undergone leadership transitions. While there is broad consensus among those interviewed that governance is a key issue impacting the legitimacy of their organizations, this is not an issue that, as yet, enjoys broad traction. As noted above, governance ranked near the very bottom of priorities for capacity building in the survey conducted as part of the current assessment. This suggests that while CSOs recognize the importance of and need for improved governance (based on their verbal input), in general they continue to resist the difficult tasks of separating governance and executive functions and initiating leadership transitions – especially when founding members are involved – as well as operating in a more transparent and publicly accountable manner.

Still, there are indications that a few CSOs are seizing the initiative in this regard. ProActive, an organization based in Nis, has an income-generating arm that specializes in strategic planning and other topics of non-profit management and governance. To date, all of the paid consultations that it has provided to CSOs have resulted in the creation of volunteer boards with distinct and clearly defined roles separate from management. And, as became clear during focus group discussions, several local organizations have also used the re-registration process required under the new Law on Associations to address governance and other structural issues, e.g. more clearly separating governance and management functions, diversifying board membership, developing rules for the board, undertaking management changes, and refocusing their missions. Among these groups there is a sense that many of their cohorts – as well as donors and implementing partners may have missed a window of opportunity presented by the re-registration process to push more strongly for improved governance within the sector.

Other mechanisms by which to achieve greater transparency and accountability include public disclosure of funding sources, annual reporting on activities, income and expenditures, and project results. CSOs that have foreign assistance or public funding are required to provide such reports to their donors, but few post such information on their websites or otherwise make it available to the public. Many with whom the consultant spoke worry about the ramifications of disclosing such information in an environment where negative public perceptions are fueled by the belief that NGOs are motivated primarily by money and where competition between organizations is often counterproductive. Such concerns are not unique to Serbia and have been gradually overcome in neighboring programming contexts, e.g. Croatia. And, however hesitant CSOs in Serbia may be to take these steps, those with whom the consultant met acknowledged the need to be increasingly transparent, accountable, and able to demonstrate results in

order to attract funding, particularly corporate and individual contributions, as well as to perform advocacy and watchdog functions with greater credibility.

3. Organizational Development and Management

According to civil society actors interviewed for this assessment, much of civil society has developed a variety of project-related skills including the development of projects, proposal writing and budgeting, project management (including the financial management of projects), and reporting. There are exceptions to this, including newer and smaller CSOs, and those in less developed areas, e.g. in southern parts of the country. With respect to organizational development and management, one can find in Belgrade an elite of professionalized CSOs that have relatively developed technical, administrative, and managerial competence. Still, many organizations have poorly developed internal structures, policies, procedures, and processes and struggle with organizational, financial, and human resources management, managing change, and managing for results. And, as indicated earlier in this report, many identified organizational management and strategic planning among their top five capacity building needs.

4. Mission and Vision

CSOs in Serbia are widely criticized for lacking well-defined missions or visions for the future. By their own admission, many CSOs interviewed for this assessment confirmed that they are largely donor- driven and exist project-to-project. They simply re-orient themselves or further expand their areas of work to accommodate changing donor priorities. The tactical orientation of many CSOs is evident in the fact that while they engage in action-planning tied to specific projects and activities, there is relatively little strategic planning taking place. During focus group discussions, many civil society actors admitted that they had little time or energy to step back from project implementation and proposal writing, so they could think about the long-term direction of their organizations. On other cases, strategic plans exist, but CSOs are not able to stick to those plans as long as they are chasing project funds.

As part of this assessment, the consultant provided CSOs with several opportunities to identify their respective missions, i.e. during introductions at the beginning of each focus group discussion, and via the survey. During the focus group discussions, only a handful of organizations succeeded in directly and concisely presenting their missions. Most gave a historical account of their organizations and the evolution of their activities. The survey questionnaire presented CSOs with a list of various fields and asked them to identify the *one* that best represented their mission. Among those who completed the survey at the end of each focus group discussion, comments suggested that this question presented a serious challenge. While a handful could not answer the question as directed, i.e. one response, most made a choice as follows:

Mission	Total 100% N=132	Country-Wide N=60	Regional N=7	Central-Belgrade N=1	Central-Other N=5	North N=17	South-Eastern N=24	South-Western N=18
Human/Minority Rights (24)	18%	23%	14%	100%	20%	-	17%	17%
Democracy (14)	11%	8%	43%	-	40%	6%	4%	11%
Environment (16)	12%	17%	-	-	20%	6%	8%	17%
Gov. Transparency/Accountability (2)	2%	3%	-	-	-	-	-	-
Youth (23)	17%	15%	14%	-	-	18%	29%	17%
Women's Issues (10)	8%	5%	14%	-	-	6%	13%	11%
Persons with Disabilities (5)	4%	3%	-	-	-	12%	4%	-
Community Development/Issues (15)	11%	-	14%	-	-	12%	4%	-
Economic Issues/Policy (1)	<1%	-	-	-	-	-	-	6%
Social Issues/Policy (5)	4%	5%	-	-	20%	-	-	6%
Labor Issues/Policy (0)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Agricultural Issues/Policy (1)	<1%	2%	-	-	-	-	-	-
Consumer Issues/Policy (0)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Education or Cultural Issues/Policy (3)	2%	3%	-	-	-	-	4%	-
Health of Public Safety (0)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
European Integration (5)	4%	5%	-	-	-	12%	-	-
Public Information/Media (3)	2%	3%	-	-	-	6%	-	-

A subsequent survey question provided the same listing and asked respondents to mark the other areas in which they worked   Only a handful of respondents said that they had a singular mission, e.g. the environment, or persons with disabilities. Others marked a mix of options that appeared mutually reinforcing, e.g. democracy and EU integration, or youth and job creation. However, many chose a significant number of items on the list.

5. In Search of a Constituency, Interest Group, or Membership Base

A wide range of donors, implementers, and civil society experts criticized civil society in Serbia for lack of attention to constituent outreach and support, particularly organizations in Belgrade. This lack of constituency, when combined with an unclear mission, serves to undermine the legitimacy of CSOs and adversely impacts efforts to improve their public image and visibility, undertake broad-based advocacy, encourage individual philanthropy, recruit volunteers and engage in many other activities necessary to provide for their sustainability. While local CSOs tended to emphasize their connection to communities and ordinary citizens, focus group discussions revealed that inward-looking and isolated organizations are still present at the local level and that sustaining citizen engagement remains a challenge for many organizations.

6. Specialization and Depth of Expertise

Having a specialization is an important component of sustainability as it contributes to greater legitimacy, counters perceptions that CSOs are more interested in money than in a cause, and establishes their credentials to inform policy development or provide social services. The tendency of CSOs in Serbia to follow project funding based on donor priorities, rather than committing to a clearly defined mission and their weak constituent base, has contributed in many cases to generalization within the sector. The recent report of the OSCE Mission on civil society in Serbia found that CSOs that operate predominantly on project-based funding are less likely to identify with one field of activity, which in turn facilitates the development of "general purpose organizations."[72] Based on feedback obtained during the current assessment, social service organizations, particularly those requiring certification to be eligible for contracting by the government and other public institutions, are more likely to have well-developed

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[72] See *Strengthening Civil Society in Serbia*, p. 46.

specializations.   Among organizations that engaged in advocacy and watchdog activities, those widely recognized as successful, e.g. CESID, Group 484, and the Autonomous Women's Center, also have a very well-defined area of expertise.   Poor networking and limited professional development opportunities designed to keep subject area specializations current are also factors that limit organizational capacity.

7. NGO Infrastructure and Premises

Outside of Belgrade and to a lesser extent beyond regional hubs like Novi Sad and Nis, civil society actors are more inclined to talk about a lack of infrastructure, i.e. equipment, and the impact that this has on their ability to raise funds, promote themselves, and to carry out their activities. This issue emerged during all of the focus groups, as did complaints that donors tend to restrict the use of funds to provide for such investments. A June 2009 poll, however, found that 91% of respondents reported having computers, 89% a printer, 82% a phone line, 77% a modem, and 74% a fax machine. According to that poll, a majority also indicated that they had enough equipment to sufficiently manage their work and their staff.[73]

Based on input obtained during focus group discussions and interviews conducted for this assessment, arrangements for CSO premises are highly varied. They include rented space and space donated by city or municipal governments as well as the private homes of CSO leaders. According to the Strategic Marketing Research poll noted above, 45% of CSOs leased their premises 24% had premises free of charge, and 21% of NGO respondents did not have premises, a percentage that has remained stable since 2005. During focus group discussions, those working out of their homes worried about the lack of accessibility and transparency that this entails.

The experience of those groups that have attempted to secure vacant public space is mixed. Some report making no progress vis-à-vis local authorities over a protracted period, despite repeated requests. Others have obtained space, although it is not always adequate or appropriate, e.g. no meeting or training rooms, or no handicapped accessibility. Organizations that jointly request space to be used for a common purpose or by a clearly defined constituency, e.g. young people or Roma, appear to have greater prospects for success than those that approach their municipalities individually. Among those that have received or are contemplating public space, there are concerns that this will come at the cost of compliance, i.e. no advocacy, oversight, or criticism of the government institution providing the space.

8. Ability to Attract and Diversify Funding and In-Kind Support

Results of the survey carried out as part of this assessment show that a majority of CSO respondents have funding from multiple sources, suggesting some capacity to attract and diversify funding. CSOs were most likely to have secured public funding from the GOS or municipal governments, while they were least successful in soliciting contributions from Serbian businesses and foreign companies in Serbia.

Funding Source	Total N=132*	Total 100%**	Country-Wide N=60	Regional N=7	Central-Belgrade N=1	Central-Other N=5	North N=17	South-Eastern N=24	South-Western N=18
Foreign Donors	108	82%	88%	100%	100%	60%	71%	75%	78%
Government of Serbia	63	48%	50%	43%	-	40%	29%	58%	50%
Municipal Government	67	51%	48%	43%	100%	60%	53%	54%	50%
Domestic Foundation/Grant-makers	37	28%	32%	14%	-	60%	-	38%	28%
Foreign CSR/Philanthropy	8	6%	10%	14%	-	-	6%	-	-
Serbian CSR/Philanthropy	20	15%	25%	14%	-	-	12%	8%	-
Individual Philanthropy	23	17%	<1%	100%	-	40%	29%	25%	11%
Membership Dues	25	19%	25%	-	-	40%	6%	17%	17%
Income Generating Activities	25	19%	15%	43%	-	-	24%	13%	22%

*CSO respondents were directed to select all responses that applied, resulting in a total of 376 responses.
** Percentage of 132 CSOs that have a given source of funding.

[73] See NGOs in Serbia (2005-2009), p. 9.

As might be expected, organizations working countrywide or on a regional basis were most likely to have foreign donor support, followed by CSOs in the south, which is presently a priority for the international community. This is also the case with funding from the central government, i.e. CSOs based in Belgrade and or working countrywide as well as those in the south were more likely to have GOS funding. According to the survey results, CSOs in the north were significantly less likely to have funding either from the GOS or domestic foundations or grant-making institutions. At the same time, survey results suggest that municipal governments in the north more broadly support organizations in their region compared to other parts of the country. Among those surveyed, many fewer organizations are raising funds through philanthropy, membership dues, and/or income generating activities. Those working countrywide, regionally, or in the north were most likely to have made inroads with respect to corporate philanthropy.

According to the OSCE Mission's recent report, *Strengthening Civil Society in Serbia*, CSOs in the center of the country, whether professional, mixed, or volunteer, tend to be to be richer than their counterparts in Vojvodina, the southeast, or the southwest. The same is true of CSOs in Vojvodina as compared to the southeast and southwest, and in the southeast as compared to the southwest. According to the report, exceptions appeared only in two cases: (1) professionalized organizations in the southeast were better off than their counterparts in Vojvodina and (2) volunteer organizations in the southwest were better off than their counterparts in the southeast.[74] Ultimately, professionalized CSOs from Central Serbia proved to be the richest, while volunteer organizations from the southeast were the poorest.

During regional focus group discussions, civil society actors routinely identified proposal writing as an area of competence while fundraising remains an area of weakness, particularly in terms strategies and approaches to different types of donors, whether municipal governments, private companies, or individuals. Smart Kolektiv, a pioneer in cultivating corporate philanthropy and CSR in Serbia, also noted that many organizations have very poor if any "brands" that they can pitch to corporate sponsors. Focus group participants also emphasized they would welcome guidance on how best to proceed with new opportunities to engage in income generation and social entrepreneurship, e.g. identifying opportunities and markets, how to get started, what's worked and hasn't worked elsewhere. In the regions, CSOs cited a lack of information about competitive bidding and application processes as a frequent problem when trying to access donor funds. They also voiced concern that only large CSOs in Belgrade would be able to access EU funds, either directly, or as service providers to the GOS.

9. Volunteer Recruitment and Management

More than half of those surveyed for this assessment claim to use volunteers, with CSOs working in northern Serbia and those in the southwest reporting the most widespread use of volunteer labor at 82% and 61% respectively. Less than half of the organizations carrying out activities on a countrywide basis (the bulk of which are headquartered in Belgrade) or regionally (43% each) and those operating in the southeast (46%) indicate that they use volunteers.

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[74] Ibid, p. 21.

CSOs Using Volunteers
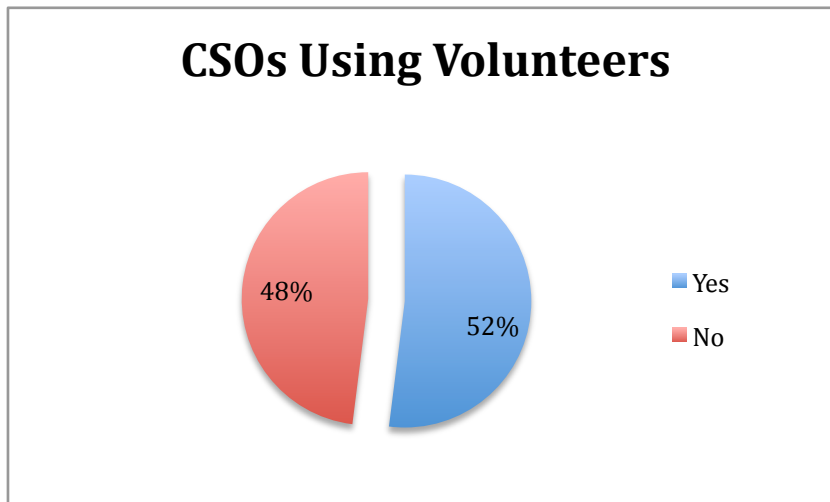
Regional focus group participants uniformly cited as a strength local CSOs' ability to recruit volunteers and they stressed the essential role of volunteers within their organizations. For many of them, the challenge lies in managing and retaining volunteers. High turnover, particularly in areas with no educational opportunities or job prospects, presents a problem for the workforce stability of some CSOs. This in turn has ramifications for project implementation and the skills base within the organization. The reliability of these numbers and the prevalence of volunteerism based on focus group discussions in not entirely clear, as a recent study by the OSCE Mission to Serbia found that CSOs tend to overestimate their volunteer workforce, most likely because they understand the value-added in terms of the legitimacy and image of their organizations.[75] Still, feedback collected during this assessment suggests increasing reliance of volunteers, particularly in the regions.

In a May 2009 public opinion poll, nearly two-thirds of respondents claimed they would be willing to contribute time to a local project that benefited others in the community, a number that has actually increased since 2006.[76] The consultant also heard reports, for example from the Office for EU Integration and the Belgrade Office for Cooperation with Civil Society, of inquiries coming from people who wanted to volunteer but who needed guidance on how to link up with civil society organizations. Smart Kolektiv is working to create mechanisms to match volunteers with organizations through a Volunteer Time Bank and Volunteer Needs Bank, along with other initiatives, to encourage volunteerism such as Action Day and Engage, a project to promote volunteering by company employees.

As might be expected, the OSCE's study also found disparities between the funding sources and types of organizations most likely to utilize volunteers. Specifically, its authors discovered that the lower the share of volunteer labor within an organization, the higher that organization's dependence on foreign donors.[77] The authors also found that the higher the level of state funding, the higher the level of voluntarism.[78] Still, they found that for every kind of work, there were organizations performing that work with the substantial involvement of volunteers. Only 10% of professionalized organizations were working without any volunteers.[79] Those with the highest levels of volunteerism include sports and recreational organizations, environmental groups, youth groups, and charitable organizations. Those dealing with human and minority rights, think tanks, and professionalized organizations had the lowest

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[75] See *Strengthening Civil Society in Serbia,* p. 16.
[76] See *Public Perception and Attitudes Towards NGO Sector in Serbia*, p. 15.
[77] Ibid, p. 22.
[78] Ibid, p. 23.
[79] Ibid, p. 53.

level of involvement of volunteers. [80] One flag raised by the study is that CSOs view volunteers as playing a minor role in terms of sustainability, suggesting that volunteerism needs to be further developed and promoted as an option for CSO resource strategies.[81]

10. Communications Skills and Interaction with the Media

Of the CSOs interviewed for this assessment, nearly a quarter indicated that they had absolutely no relationship with the media, although 63% said that they had either positive or at least mixed experiences working with the media. Civil society actors, who had received training via CSAI, indicated this made a real difference in terms of the quality of their relationships with journalists, and their ability to generate media coverage. One woman noted that her organization had existed for 12 years without a single news story but that after the training, her CSO quickly found itself on TV.

Quality of Relationship	Total	Total	Country-Wide	Regional	Central-Belgrade	Central-Other	North	South-Eastern	South-Western
	N=132	100%	N=60	N=7	N=1	N=5	N=17	N=24	N=18
Non-existent	23	17%	5%	-	-	40%	24%	29%	33%
Very Good	36	27%	28%	14%	100%	-	41%%	17%	33%
Good	36	27%	28%	29%	-	20%	24-%	38%	17%
Mixed	27	20%	25%	57%	-	20%	12%	8%	17%
Poor	10	8%	13%	-	-	20%	-	8%	-
Very Poor	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

When asked to identify weaknesses within the sector that were limiting media coverage, focus group participants admitted that their communication and outreach skills were still underdeveloped. They also tended to focus on external reasons, as discussed in the "impediments and opportunities" section of this report. Journalists within the focus groups tended to come up with a slightly longer list of deficiencies that, in addition to poor communication skills, included limited newsworthiness, little understanding of media deadlines and technical requirements, and a general lack of media savvy. They indicated that CSO leaders talked too long and too academically, and tended to spend too much time talking about themselves and their organizations, as opposed to actual issues and how they related to ordinary people. There were also criticisms that CSOs did a poor job of maintaining relationships with journalists, tending instead to consider media relations and communications only sporadically. This mimics findings that citizens are not, as yet, inclined to become involved in activities that require sustained effort, instead engaging only sporadically to sign petitions, attend town hall meetings, or participate in election campaign activities. With respect to media relations, stakeholders blamed this, in part, on CSOs' project-orientation (and weak commitment to mission), noting that "if there is no project, there is no media presence," again suggesting that CSOs may be more focused on promoting their organizations and projects than on representing issues or constituents.

Recent polling data suggests that 98% of CSOs surveyed had contacts and/or cooperation with the media, based on 300 groups surveyed. Nearly a quarter indicated that they were satisfied with the quality of this interaction. The number of organizations indicating that cooperation between civil society and the media is "important" or "very important" has increased 10% since 2005 to a high of 95%.[82]

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[80] Ibid, pp. 24-26.
[81] Ibid, p. 32.
[82] See NGOs in Serbia 2005-2009, pp. 41-45

11. Use of New Media and Social Networking

Regional focus group participants identified the growth of new media and social networking in Serbia as presenting real opportunities to the sector. Survey results found that nearly three-fourths of the CSOs have their own website, although organizations based in the center, working countrywide, or regionally were the most likely to have a website. Only two-thirds of respondents in northern Serbia and half in the southeast and southwest reported having their own websites. The table below shows the extent to which these organizations are beginning to use a variety of new media, social networking, and content-sharing sites. Several focus group participants reported having Facebook groups and using the site to share information and mobilize supporters. One brought a camera to the focus group discussion and posted pictures on their organization's group page later in the afternoon.

Type of New Media/ Social Network	Total N=132	Total 100%	Country- Wide N=60	Regional N=7	Central - Belgrade N=1	Central - Other N=5	North N=17	South- Eastern N=24	South- Western N=18
Own NGO website	96	73%	87%	86%	100%	80%	65%	54%	50%
Use SMS Messaging	47	36%	28%	57%	-	20%	41%	46%	39%
Use Online Forums	56	42%	43%	29%	100%	60%	41%	50%	28%
Use Blogs	18	14%	20%	-	-	20%	18%	-	11%
Use Facebook	94	71%	70%	71%	100%	60%	82%	63%	78%
Use You Tube	51	37%	45%	43%	100%	20%	18%	38%	39%
Use Twitter	91	7%	12%	-	-	-	59%	-	6%
None of the above	12	9%	7%	-	-	20%	12%	13%	11%
Other – Local Media Site	1	11%	-	-	-	-	-	100%	-

*CSO respondents (132) were directed to select all responses that applied, resulting in a total of 475 responses.
** Percentage of 132 CSOs that use a given new media/social network.

Despite the enthusiasm and optimism surrounding the use of new technologies and applications (especially among younger civil society actors and several standout CSOs), few organizations appear to be using these in an integrated or strategic way in terms of outreach, networking, mobilization, advocacy, oversight, or fundraising. Several journalists with whom the consultant met also indicated that many organizations are using their websites or Facebook only in a very traditional way. Many discussants also admitted that representatives of "uncivil" society, i.e. hooligans in Serbia, are considerably more sophisticated and active in using and integrating technologies and sites including SMS messaging, their own websites, Facebook, YouTube, online forums and chats, etc. as compared to their counterparts in civil society. Several civil society representatives and journalists also pointed out that in addition to having a less proactive presence online as compared with regressive groups, civil society is doing a poor job of countering hate speech perpetrated online by those groups.

12. Attitudes Toward and Engagement of Government Institutions

Civil society attitudes toward government are important because they impact the willingness of CSOs to engage the public sector, the manner in which they do so, and the prospects for effective collaboration. At present, the attitudes of civil society actors toward the government at the republic and municipal levels are complex and evolving. As noted earlier in this report, there is evidence of CSOs lobbying government officials, participating in consultative bodies, offering skills and expertise, providing social services, and applying for grants and other forms of support. While CSOs in Belgrade are seen as better positioned through their personal contacts and proximity to cooperate with the national government, local

organizations report increasing interaction with their mayors, municipal councils, and other local institutions despite perceptions that the process of decentralization has stalled.[83]

The CSOs surveyed for this assessment have established some form of interaction with more than 35 government offices, ministries, and institutions at the republic and municipal levels. Respondents reported the most prevalent engagement with their mayor's office, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, their municipal council, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, and/or the Ministry of Human Rights (HR) and Minority Affairs. Among the government bodies most widely engaged by the sample of CSOs surveyed by this assessment were the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Office of EU Integration, the Office of the President, mayors' offices, and municipal councils were most positively rated for the quality of that engagement ("very good " or "good"). During focus group discussions and interviews, the consultative mechanism used by the Poverty Reduction Office in the preparation of its national strategy was also frequently cited as a model worth of replication. Those receiving the most negative ratings ("very poor" and "poor") in the survey included the Ministry of Local Self Governance, the Ministry of Health, the National Assembly, the National Minorities Council, and also the Office of the President. Specifically:

QUALITY OF INTERACTION WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICE, MINISTRY, OR INSTITUTION						
Office/Institution	Total N = 132*	5 Very Good**	4 Good	3 Mixed	2 Poor	1 Very Poor
Office of the President	22	23%	41%	18%	10%	10%
Office of the Prime Minister	10	20%	40%	30%	10%	-
Parliament	30	20%	30%	23%	20%	7%
Ministry of Health	28	25%	29%	14%	21%	11%
Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs	46	24%	37%	22%	11%	6%
Ministry of Education	32	9%	27%	45%	14%	5%
Ministry of the Environment	37	19%	41%	34%	9%	6%
Ministry of HR & Minority Affairs	41	22%	39%	20%	17%	2%
Ministry of Local Self Governance	25	12%	20%	32%	24%	12%
Ministry of Youth and Sports	66	55%	23%	9%	6%	8%
Office of EU Integration	43	41%	32%	17%	2%	7%
Office of Poverty Reduction	25	28%	32%	28%	8%	4%
National Minorities Council	20	30%	30%	15%	15%	10%
Mayor's Office	79	28%	37%	24%	6%	5%
Municipal Council	50	24%	38%	22%	16%	-

Write-In Responses

Other – Ministry of Culture	8	63%	25%	13%	-	-
Other – Regional Dev. Council	1	100%	-	-	-	-
Other – Ministry of Agriculture	5	40%	20%	20%	-	20%
Other – Ministry of Finance	1	-	100%	-	-	-
Other – Ministry of Telecom.	3	100%	-	-	-	-
Other – Intellectual Property Instit.	2	-	100%	-	-	-
Other – Ombudsman	1	100%	-	-	-	-
Other – Ministry of Defense	3	67%	33%	-	-	-
Other – Ministry of Interior	3	33%	67%	-	-	-
Other – Ministry of Foreign Affairs	2	-	100%	-	-	-
Other – Ministry of Justice	2	50%	50%	-	-	-
Other – Office of Decentralization	1	100%	-	-	-	-
Other – Security Information Agency	3	67%	33%	-	-	-

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[83] According to the Standing Conference on Towns and Municipalities, the process of decentralization is "about 50%" in progress. CSOs perceptions of a stalled decentralization process may also stem from the suspension of the Law on Local Government Finances in the midst of the current economic crisis. As a result, funds to municipalities were cut by a reported 40%.

Other – Ministry of the Interior (MUP)	2	50%	50%	-	-	-
Other – Army of Serbia	1	-	100%	-	-	-
Other – Ministry of Economy	1	100%	-	-	-	-
Other – Ministry of Diaspora	1	-	100%	-	-	-
Other – Ministry of Commerce	1	-	100%	-	-	-
Other – Government of Vojvodina	2	100%	-	-	-	-
Other – Parliament of Vojvodina	2	100%	-	-	-	-

CSO respondents (132) were directed to select all responses that applied, resulting in a total of 599 responses.
** Percentages based on ratings given by those CSOs that claimed interaction with a particular government office/institution, e.g. 23% of 22 CSOs rated their interaction with the President's Office as "very good."

The June 2009 Strategic Marketing Research poll of 300 CSOs found that 91% had some form of cooperation with the state, e.g. cooperation on a project, exchange of information, or the provision of services. The number of respondents who said that cooperation between civil society and government was "important" or "very important" rose 18 percentage points from 2005. The number who said the state recognized CSOs as partners also rose during the same period, while the number who said that the state was not interested in the sector or underestimated its importance fell among those surveyed who indicated that they had some form of cooperation with the state. [84]

Feedback collected during this assessment suggests the presence of a pro-reform government has also caused some confusion within the sector, particularly among organizations that have been active since the 1990s, as to how civil society should behave. To a certain extent, these organizations have proved unwilling to criticize the current Government and, as a result, have stepped back from their advocacy and watchdog functions. At the other extreme, some within their ranks view any form of cooperation with, or support from, the Government – any government – as compromising the legitimacy and independence of the sector. In part, both of these mindsets contribute to lively discussions about the emergence of governmental NGOs (GONGOs). At the same time, the trend toward political party capture is also an important contributor to perceptions that some CSOs are "in bed" with government. Concerns about financial viability also come into play as some CSOs worry that any criticism of government will result in a loss of access, status, funding, and other forms of support such as office premises.

13. Capacity for Advocacy and Oversight

Despite the fact that CSOs in Serbia have played an important role in the development of laws, bylaws, and/or strategies on a range of issues affecting not just the sector itself, but also anti-discrimination, anti-corruption, decentralization, free access to information, poverty reduction, domestic violence, persons with disabilities, and youth, opinions expressed by stakeholders about the capacity of CSOs to carry out advocacy were mixed. As might be expected, organizations based in Belgrade were more likely to stress their contacts with and access to decision-makers as well as their contribution to policy debate and development, relative CSOs in the regions. Yet many in Belgrade also freely admitted frustration and fatigue with the slow pace of reforms and the limits of their own influence. Similar attitudes emerged in the Strategic Marketing Research survey of 300 NGOs, which found that 85% believed the sector had too little influence on state policies.[85]

Weak constituency connections and ineffective networking are undercutting the ability of CSOs to perform advocacy with and on behalf of the public. By and large, what is referred to in Serbia as advocacy is, in effect lobbying and government relations, i.e. negotiations between elites. A couple of current examples illustrate this case in point.

- CSOs interviewed for this assessment agree that electoral and political reforms are key to creating incentive systems that motivate greater transparency and public accountability of elected officials,

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[84] *NGOs in Serbia 2005-2009*, pp. 29-31.
[85] See *NGOs in Serbia 2005-2009*, p.46.

facilitate issue-based coalition-building, and provide more openings to influence the policy process. This is an area where civil society as a whole has a vested interest in advocating for reform and where there exists an organization, i.e. CESID, with the requisite expertise and credentials to spearhead the effort. According to a recent poll carried out by the International Republican Institute (IRI), 66% of citizens support electoral reform at least in theory. And in its most recent progress report, the European Commission recommends that electoral laws be brought fully into line with European standards. Taken together, this suggests the existence of a broad-based constituency for reform, yet this constituency is not being mobilized.

- Similarly, an IRI poll found that 70% of citizens believe that the government has no plan to solve the economic crisis. USAID's own polling on the issue of citizen participation found that a majority of those polled would be willing to join in activities to address unemployment and low economic standards in the country. Yet as noted earlier in this report, stakeholders interviewed for this assessment believe that civil society has largely failed to respond to these key issues, i.e. they have failed to advocate for economic reforms and job creation. These CSOs also admitted to having limited expertise on economic issues as well as poor ties to business associations and trade unions that might allow them to be more effective in this area. A recent assessment by the EU also found that more work needs to be done to build partnerships between civil society and the private sector (beyond CSR) and with respect to trade unions to address socio-economic development, youth unemployment, entrepreneurship, education of the labor force, workers' rights, social rights, consumer protections, etc.[86]

Interestingly, there are several recent and successful advocacy campaigns by ordinary citizens mobilizing other citizens with the help of modern technologies. These include the "Mother Courage" campaign, which started with a blog, and the anti-corruption website "The Whistle."

Various stakeholders also cited the poor implementation of existing laws and strategies, and questioned the capacity of the sector to adequately perform as public watchdogs. Again, they identified the project orientation of many organization as undermining on-going watchdog activities, i.e. "no project, no oversight." Many interviewees also tended to focus more on external factors than their own internal capacities. Specifically, they pointed to a limited tradition of investigative journalism, weak oversight of the executive branch by parliament, and an insufficiently independent and effective judiciary as contributing to a lack of synergy and momentum vis-à-vis civil society watchdog activities. Still, there are organizations forging ahead on budget oversight, monitoring the implementation of various laws and strategies, and the truthfulness of the statements of elected officials.

IV.   USAID SUPPORT TO CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT

A. OVERVIEW

Through various initiatives, the USG has made significant investments in the civil society sector in Serbia. From 2001 until 2006, USAID/Serbia provided support to civil society development through a five-year, $9.47 million cooperative agreement with Freedom House to implement "Democratic Transition and Reintegration in Serbia" (DTRS). The DTRS activity comprised a small grants program directed at CSOs, government institutions, and media critical to Serbia's reform agenda. The Mission subsequently extended the activity by one year as the economy worsened and democratic gains began to

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[86] See *Needs Assessment Report of the Serbian Civil Society* (November 2010) prepared by Danilo Vukovic, Ivana Koprivica, and Olivera Kovacevic, pp. 15-16.

stall. During the final year, DTRS directed assistance toward human rights advocacy, corruption monitoring, and cooperation with war crimes trials.

In 2006, USAID/Serbia introduced a new mechanism for assisting civil society in Serbia. The "Civil Society Advocacy Initiative" project is a $27.5 million activity implemented by the Institute for Sustainable Communities.   The overarching strategy of CSAI is to support CSOs as vehicles for mobilizing citizens, influencing policy decisions, and promoting European integration. Specifically, the activity assists the development and consolidation of civil society through efforts to improve the enabling environment for CSOs, build their capacity to conduct sustained advocacy campaigns on a range of reform issues, and to fulfill a watchdog function vis-à-vis government institutions.

The Mission has also provided limited civil society assistance through the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republic Institute (IRI). Beyond the Democracy and Governance portfolio, USAID/Serbia has also supported various think tanks, associations, and institutions through its other technical activities via the Mission's Economic Growth Office.

B. USAID's Niche and Synergies With Other Donor Programs

During one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions, those who have received assistance through various implementing partners pointed to the particular advantages of USAID's civil society programming and its niche relative to many other *major* donors. These include:

- The priority given to strengthening civil society through distinct strategies and programming, i.e. as opposed to folding civil society support into other activities such as minority rights, anti-corruption, or poverty reduction;

- An emphasis on decentralizing and democratizing the civil society sector, i.e. a willingness to get out of Belgrade and support programming at the grassroots; and,

- A willingness to support capacity building within civil society, i.e. not just focusing on project implementation or treating CSOs as service providers.

These are among the particular strengths of USAID's approach that civil society actors most worry about "losing" when the Agency withdraws from Serbia.

In terms of synergies with other foreign donors and international or multilateral organizations, relatively few have stand-alone civil society projects. Instead, many involve CSOs through programming directed at minority rights, social inclusion, poverty reduction, rural development, anti-corruption, etc. One exception is the EU Technical Assistance to Civil Society Organizations office, which has several areas of activity or anticipated activity that overlap with existing USAID programming and or needs identified in the current report. These include organizational management, philanthropy, quality assurance standards, organizational sustainability and – possibly – work with the planned Government Office on Civil Society Cooperation. As such, there are tangible opportunities for cooperation. In addition, the Foreign Commonwealth Office (UK) might assist the Government Office for Civil Society Cooperation, which opens the possibility of a joint effort by multiple donors to ensure that this new institution gets off to the right start.

At the time of USAID's fieldwork for this assessment, the UN was in the midst of a civil society mapping exercise and the EU was in the processes of a civil society needs assessment. While the UN's mapping exercise has yet to be completed, the end product will be a comprehensive directory for civil society in the South Serbia region to aid networking. To contribute to greater discussion and transparency of municipality-CSO relationships, it will also publish information on CSO funding by municipality for the

last year. This activity will be linked to the UN's upcoming Peace Building and Inclusive Local Development (PBILD) grants for municipality – CSO partnerships and will involve some capacity building.[87]   The EU's civil society assessment report has been released and includes recommendations for programming in support to two priorities related to civil society and unemployment.

- With respect to civil society, the report recommends interventions related to: (1) Building the capacities of cultural CSOs, networking them with local cultural institutions, applying new media to cultural projects, and supporting minority cultures; (2) Raising awareness on the issue of discrimination, supporting advocacy and lobbying in support of implementation of the Antidiscrimination Law, working with victims of discrimination, and supporting public debates and alternative civic education, and; (3) Promoting partnerships among CSOs in Serbia and with CSOs in the EU, sharing knowledge of EU institutions partnerships, and funding opportunities, and promoting CSR.

- On the second priority of addressing unemployment, the report also recommends interventions involving civil society, for example: (1) Building the capacities of trade unions; (2) strengthening partnerships between government, the private sector, and CSOs with respect to unemployment and other social-economic development issues and the development and implementation of local strategic and action plans, and; (3) promoting the role of local CSOs in adopting and advancing EU standards. For more detailed recommendations, please refer to the EU's report.[88]

C. KEY LESSONS LEARNED

Based on feedback collected during one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions as well as previous assessments and analyses of programming in Serbia and elsewhere throughout the Balkans, the following set of key lessons learned and best practices emerged:

Capacity Building

- Organizational capacity building is best carried out using a flexible and holistic (i.e. TA, training, and grants) that is specially tailored to each organization, based on formal needs assessments and participatory planning processes.[89]

- Approaches that rely disproportionately on one method (e.g. grants for project implementation), and those that do not provide opportunities to learn by doing (e.g. training only), are less effective at building organizational capacity.[90] Generic approaches and group trainings are also less effective.[91]

- Strategies that are based purely on skills training, e.g. proposal writing, fundraising, project management, and so are detached from the systems of practice and thought that comprise an organization and through which it operates, have less effect on long-term sustainability.[92]

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[87] As per input from Chrissie Hirst (e-mail dated 24 January 2010).
[88] Vukovic, D. et. al, *Needs Assessment Report of the Serbian Civil Society,* November 2010.
[89] Sterland, Bill. *Organizational Capacity Building and Civil Society Strengthening In the Balkans: Lessons Learnt From Work With NGOs and Community-Based Organizations*, March 2008, p. 2. See also C. Barnes and N. Gaber, *Final Evaluation of ISC DemNet Program in the Republic of Macedonia*, February 2005, p. 48.
[90]Ibid.
[91]Ibid.
[92] Sterland, p. 4.

- Capacity building directed at the whole group, i.e. a broader set of individuals within an organization, contributes to expanded and continuous application of skills and insulates organizations against loss of knowledge and skills when individual staff members move on.[93]

- Organizational capacity building that does not proceed from the mission and identity of the organization i.e. the why, what, and for whom, also has limited impact. The importance of a clear, coherent vision developed by all members of the organization with the participation of key stakeholders cannot be over emphasized, yet it is often overlooked or set aside (in practice if not in theory) during capacity building activities.[94]

- The development of analytical capacity and the ability to think strategically as well as diagnostically play an increasingly important role in CSO management. Developing these capacities allows organizations to adapt to change in their environment and to develop more sophisticated and applicable approaches to their work.[95]

- Strategic planning has proved most useful when proceeding from or prompted by an in-depth analysis of the social, political, and economic environment in which the CSO is situated. This being said, equipping organizations with the analytical tools and setting aside the resources (time and people) needed to carry out such a review is essential and should be provided for.[96]

- Capacity building requires both organizational capacity and knowledge capacity. Despite the need to develop requisite expertise and an evidence-based approach to inform both service provision and policy formulation, many donors, implementers, and CSOs themselves underestimate the relevance of this to longer-term sustainability.

- Encouraging grantees to decide for themselves about the training they need contributes to the value that grantees place on training, and on their sense of ownership vis-à-vis the development of their organizations. This flexibility depends, however, on the availability and accessibility of a wide range of training and consulting skills sets within the country, as well as the capacity of CSOs to effectively evaluate and prioritize their training needs.[97]

- The cultivation of domestic organizations and institutions that will form part of the indigenous infrastructure supporting civil society development in the future requires sequential and long-term development, i.e. this should left until the final phase of assistance.

Partnerships and Relationship Building[98]

- Sustainability cannot be achieved by capacity building alone. It requires real partnerships between CSOs, whether through networks, coalitions, or mentoring, and across sectors, i.e. with government and business. The creation of real partnerships provides a valuable multiplier effect in terms of knowledge transfer, but this process takes time and "buy-in" by all involved.

- Programs that provide incentives for cooperation between CSOs, citizens, and local officials, encourage local leadership and initiative, and that provide for tangible results – for example community development projects and some economic growth activities, for example the first

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[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Blair et al.
[98] For a more detailed discussion of this, please refer to Sterland, pp. 2-5.

phase of USAID's CDRA program, are particularly effective in building trust, confidence, and self-reliance among stakeholders and in demonstrating the mutual benefits of working together to solve local problems.

- Effective networks in various Balkan countries have been formed in response to calls for public consultation on a range of social and economic issues, e.g. the Poverty Reduction Strategy and the FOIA Coalition in Serbia. This has proven an effective way of mobilizing a mass of CSO support to influence critical issues of national policy, while overcoming CSO reluctance to networking due to competition and/or lack of consensus.[99]

Volunteerism

- The degree of volunteers' ownership of CSO activities contributes to the success of some CSOs over others in their efforts to mobilize volunteers. The more an organization reaches out to citizens and the more it gives a say to volunteers in the design and implementation of its programs, the better able it is to mobilize volunteers. Programs that provide incentives, e.g. training of volunteers, co-financing based on volunteer hours, and relevant grant criteria can further promote volunteering.[100]

- The placement of expert volunteers or those bringing new perspectives on old problems are potentially powerful tools for capacity building (institutional and organizational), by allowing the volunteer is able to use his/her status, position, and/or contacts to motivate people, spread information, and facilitative relationships[101].

Advocacy

- Effective advocacy is based on more than the development of advocacy skills. Other variables correlate to it including an enabling legal framework, CSO governance, organizational capacity, financial sustainability, visibility, and collaboration across sectors and among organizations.[102]

- The ability of CSOs to influence government policy and to act as agents of change is contingent on government capacities for planning, management, and coordination, and a readiness to engage seriously with non-governmental actors. This is true both at the republic and municipal levels. Strategies designed to strengthen civil society capabilities for advocacy and policy dialogue must simultaneously build capacity in government.[103]

Financial Sustainability

- While project-based grants are a way for donors to makes sure that their money makes things happen, conditioned project-based grant-making often has a negative impact on the organizational sustainability of grantees. Financial viability over the longer term requires that CSOs mobilize local resources through republic and local government, private business, and individual contributions as well as dues, fees for services, and income-generating activities.[104]

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[99] Sterland, p. 4.
[100] See *Strengthening Civil Society in Serbia*, pp. 49-51, 60-61.
[101] Sterland, p. 4.
[102] Blair et al.
[103] Sterland, p. 5.
[104] *Strengthening Civil Society in Serbia*, p. 47.

- Providing for transparency and accountability in the disbursement and use of domestic funds for civil society requires good governance on the part of both public institutions and civil society, and their capacities need to be built in tandem, so there are transparent, competitive, and accountable grant-making procedures are applied consistently throughout the government, and quality assurance standards are applied for CSOs.[105]

D. KEY LESSONS LEARNED: USE OF NEW MEDIA AND SOCIAL NETWORKING

USAID/Serbia and its implementing partners have yet to make significant investments in the use of new media and social networking, although implementing partners ISC and IREX have been at the forefront of promoting the use of new media and social networking to promote public participation and further develop civil society. And, the recent IPSOS benchmark study on new media usage in Serbia provides extremely useful insights upon which future programs and strategies can be designed and implemented. At present, IREX provides sub-grants for projects that utilize new media platforms to engage citizens, particularly youth and at the grassroots level, in public debate by providing them with information as well as an outlet for greater participation. ISC's CSAI project also supports special initiatives that build CSO capacity to better use social media and new technologies.

Given the possibility that an even greater emphasis will be placed on this area of activity moving forward, some discussion of lessons learned in other countries seems prudent. During a recent event, hosted by MobileActive.org in Washington, DC, various donors and practitioners laid out the lessons drawn from failed efforts to use information and communication technologies (ICTs) and mobile devices for development. Among the leading reasons why such efforts fail – or at least fall far short of expectations – are:

- Project objectives are not clearly stated, measurable, or quantifiable, for example "To change how people (or civil society) use technology."

- There is a tendency to leap into programming without adequate planning, the result being poor design, lack of stakeholder input, and unrealistic goals.

- Weak objectives and poor planning also cause organizations to burn through funds and to waste resources. For projects to be useful and sustainable, they need to be affordable and have a plan for longer-term financing.

- Too often program implementation is driven by enthusiasm for a good idea, which leads to "going it alone" rather than securing necessary "buy-in" of beneficiaries, users, partners, and officials and of burning bridges along the way. In the case of mobile technologies this will include mobile carriers and the telecommunications sector.

- Despite the community focus of many projects, too many well-meaning projects initiated by donors and CSOs throw technology (and money) into the mix without taking into account community needs and dynamics.

- Once organizations have a vision and plan for their project, there is often resistance to making adjustments and compromises if and when problems arise. Approaches, products, and applications that are not flexible undermine long-term sustainability.

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[105] Blair et al.

- Related to this bad practice is unwillingness on the part of organizations to accept and/or apply external criticism or advice: for example, those who may know more about which technologies are best suited for the region or which local customs need to be taken into account.

- Organizations fail to pace and scale their role-out. Starting with a pilot project backed by the requisite levels of support (strong infrastructure, funding, and community interest) can increase prospects for the success and sustainability of the broader undertaking. Moving beyond the testing phase is essential however, as societal impact hinges on larger-scale projects.

- Projects and funding come to an end. Failure to work toward an exit strategy, adequately prepare local partners, and ensure continuity of support endangers sustainability of technology and mobile applications for development.[106]

V.   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. CONCLUSIONS

1. Need for Continuing Assistance

As a result of the political trajectory of the country in the 1990s and early 2000s as well as years of war and isolation, Serbia's civil society has lost more than a decade in terms of its development and consolidation. Despite playing a significant role in the fall of the Milosevic regime, the country's transition toward democracy, free and fair elections, and the adoption of laws and strategies on a range of key policy issues, Serbia's civil society lags behind its neighbors in the southern tier with respect to overall sustainability.[107] As the findings of this and other recent assessments show, considerable work remains to strengthen organizational capacity and to improve the conditions and prospects for sustainability of civil society in Serbia.

Based on the ratings contained in the USAID's NGO Sustainability Index (2009), as shown in the table below, the state of Serbia's civil society development is at the lower range of "mid-transition" than to the higher range of mid-transition characteristic of the Southern Tier.[108]

Croatia	Bulgaria	Romania	Macedonia	Bosnia	Albania	Kosovo	Montenegro	Serbia
3.1	3.2	3.5	3.6	3.7	3.9	3.9	4.1	4.3

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[106] These lessons are drawn, in their entirety, from *How to Fail in Mobiles for Development: MobileActive's Definitive Guide To Failure*. Fore more information, see www.mobileactive.org.
[107] See NGO Sustainability Index (2009).
[108] According to this Index, Serbia is closer to some countries in the West NIS, Caucuses, and Central Asia in terms of its civil society development . For example, see overall ratings for Russia (4.4), Moldova (4.3), Georgia (4.2), Kyrgyzstan (4.1) and Kazakhstan (4.0). For more complete information, please refer to USAID's NGO Sustainability Index (2009) at: http://www.usaid.gov/locations/europe_eurasia/dem_gov/ngoindex/2009/index.htm.

2. Appropriateness of Amended Country Strategy

Based upon the findings contained of this assessment, the Amended Country Strategy for the upcoming period is well-suited to existing needs of the civil society sector, and provides a sufficiently broad focus and level of flexibility to accommodate future developments. Two caveats apply. First, the strategy envisions moving beyond assistance aimed at the enabling environment toward strengthening CSOs' ability to represent citizens' interests and achieve organizational sustainability. Given the incomplete and inadequate nature of the legal and regulatory framework, however, continued efforts in this area will likely be required and would appear to be supported under illustrative activities. Second, given the possible withdrawal of USAID from Serbia later in the decade, efforts to improve CSOs' organizational, managerial, and professional effectiveness should include steps to: (1) further strengthen a core group of CSOs that can *expand and diversify* domestic ownership and leadership of the process of civil society development, i.e., in general, within priority focal areas, and beyond Belgrade and (2) position several key organizations to potentially receive direct funding by the USAID Serbia and serve as legacy institutions.

3. Gaps in Existing USAID Programming

The Mission's current civil society program, CSAI, is a multi-faced program with a significant advocacy component that builds upon various aspects of USAID's strengths and niche, i.e. investing in capacity building, providing grants and training to organizations outside of Belgrade, and providing built-in flexibility through CSAI's special initiatives funding to respond to emerging issues and developments. CSAI plays an important role in stimulating and supporting CSO development in areas where there has been little civil society activity in the past. While this approach serves the important function of further decentralizing and democratizing the sector, it can also dissipate discrete results. Given the current state of civil society, the recent modification of the program is a move in the right direction. Specifically, it:

- Provides for greater strategic direction and focus, e.g. by elevating the visibility and potential impact of advocacy initiatives based on a manageable and well-defined set of issues, and by emphasizing joint efforts such as issue-based networks.

- Addresses several key organizational sustainability issues (both external challenges and internal weaknesses), by building upon previous interventions to promote voluntarism, philanthropy, and CSR, and by addressing continued weaknesses of the legal and regulatory framework governing civil society.

- Responds to on-going needs identified in this assessment, as they relate to specific skill sets required for more effective advocacy, fundraising, messaging, and constituent outreach.

- Introduces timely and highly relevant initiatives, such as an increased focus on the use of new media and social networking by civil society, that will further facilitate decentralization and democratization within the sector and that reflect new priorities and approaches within USAID.

- Anticipates the possibility of supporting the planned Government Office for Civil Society, which has yet to become operational.

The special initiatives component of CSAI also provides flexibility to respond to emerging issues and opportunities through discrete interventions. For example, these funds might be used to respond to requests identified as part of the current assessment to provide guidance on income generation and social

entrepreneurship, as provided for under the new Law on Associations, and to supplement other financial viability activities addressing philanthropy and corporate social responsibility.

At the same time, a more in-depth and cohesive approach is needed – and *breathing space needs to be provided* amidst a flurry of projects and activities – to improve the organizational, managerial, and professional effectiveness of a core group of CSOs. As noted above, this needs to include efforts to expand and diversify the domestic infrastructure to support future civil society development, and to prepare and position some key organizations to potentially receive direct USAID funding and/or serve as legacy institutions. These organizations will need to be externally focused, forward thinking, and enjoy *legitimacy* within civil society. This group should also include innovators that are offering civil society solutions that reflect where the sector is headed in the future and that incorporate – as key players and partners – next generation civil society leaders.

4. *Linking Economic and Democratic Development*

Support to municipalities that facilitates public participation and that produces tangible results is particularly effective at demonstrating to communities the mutual benefits of cooperation between citizens, civil society, local businesses, and local governments, and in building confidence and trust among stakeholders. It also contributes to the development of a civic culture that is largely missing in Serbia. The public participation, youth development, and business-enabling environment components of the planned Serbia Local Economic Development Activity (SLED) make these linkages very effectively.

5. *Models and Best Practice in Serbia and the Region*

Successful models, best practices, and standout capacity do exist within Serbia and in neighboring countries – along with lessons drawn from failed efforts. These need to be better capitalized on through increased opportunities for knowledge transfer and experience sharing within the country and for cross-fertilization involving other Balkan countries.

6. *Electoral Reform and Political Party Capture*

Civil society's ability to broadly access and influence decision-makers through advocacy and lobbying efforts and to apply pressure and leverage vis-à-vis watchdog activities, is closely linked to developments in a number of other sectors. First and foremost, electoral reform is required to make elected officials more accountable to citizens, and provide for more effective representatives bodies at the republic and municipal level. It may also serve to put the brakes on political party capture of civil society. Further efforts to advance the decentralization process and strengthen parliamentary and judicial institutions also have a direct bearing on the expansion of civil society's points of access and leverage.

7. *Relationship Building*

Civil society in Serbia exhibits considerable weakness in terms of building *and maintaining* relationships, e.g. vis-à-vis citizens/constituents, the media, other CSOs, and cross-sectoral partners. This deficiency significantly undermines the legitimacy, visibility, image, and effectiveness of the sector as well as its prospects for longer-term sustainability.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the findings and conclusions contained in this report, the author presents several recommendations to USAID as it conceptualizes and plans for future assistance to civil society and Serbia. While these recommendations are presented for consideration by USAID, they also provide guidance to the Government of Serbia, civil society actors, other donors, and implementers as they work

toward a higher level of consolidation and sustainability within the sector. Among the recommendations are those addressing:

1. Legal and Regulatory Framework

Continue to provide support to efforts to improve the quality of the legal framework governing civil society with the aim of providing better conditions and prospects for CSO sustainability. Aim for changes to legislation and implementing regulations that would provide increased incentives for individual and corporate philanthropy, and reduce the tax burden on non-profit organizations.

2. Electoral Reform

Given the importance of electoral reform to providing for greater transparency and accountability of elected officials and to increase points of access and leverage by civil society, continue to support efforts to lobby and advocate for changes to republic and local election laws, in particular the system of representation, both through political and electoral process programming and – to the extent possible and appropriate – civil society programming.

3. Competitiveness, Transparency, and Accountability of Public Financing

Assist efforts to bring greater transparency and accountability to the use of 481 funds, and greater competitiveness in the awarding of grants and contracts under 481, at the republic and municipal levels by supporting efforts – potentially in cooperation with the Government Office for Cooperation with Civil Society – to develop standard rules and procedures across government ministries and offices. Support training activities directed at government officials and staff to facilitate understanding and application of these standards.

In tandem with interventions directed at the government, activities should support the introduction of quality assurance standards for CSOs, along with improved transparency and accountability practices within the sector, to ensure that funds whether they come from the government, private companies, or individuals, are being used appropriately and are achieving results.

The handling of 481 funds should be included as an indicator of good governance, and consideration should be given to supporting monitoring efforts by civil society as well as oversight by the Anti-Corruption Agency. These efforts should be linked to the implementation of new rules and procedures, if and when they are introduced, as well as various attempts to assess political party capture and the inappropriate use of civil society organizations for the financing of political campaigns.

4. Organizational Capacity

To supplement and further build upon existing civil society programming, provide for a more in-depth and integrated approach to improve the organizational, managerial, and professional effectiveness of a core group of CSOs, using a mix of tailor-made training, consultations, mentoring and coaching, based on individualized organizational needs assessments as well as capacity building grants. This should include some provision for core costs to create the breathing space necessary to seriously address deficiencies in organizational capacity.

Based on the organizational capacity building needs identified through this assessment, assistance should be directed at the following internal processes:

- Mission development
- Governance
- Best practice in CSO transparency and accountability

- Organizational management (internal structures, policies, procedures, and processes)
- Change management
- Strategic Planning (developing and sticking to the plan)
- Human resources management (staff and volunteers)
- Training and professional development (based on needs assessment)
- Financial planning and management (to accommodate greater funding diversification)
- Sustainability planning
- Strategic partnerships
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Managing for results

Given the considerable overlap between these areas and the 12 internal processes included in the Quality Assurance Standards for Non-Profit Organizations (SOKNO) system developed in Croatia with support from USAID, serious consideration should be given to using the same – or a similar – system in Serbia.[109] The SOKNO system is based on organizational self-assessments with standards and recommendations differentiated by CSO size and maturity. It can be used in combination with facilitated processes delivered by trainers or resource organizations or directly by CSOs absent external assistance, thereby increasing the multiplier affect of this tool.

As part of this intervention, further strengthen and diversify lead organizations and institutions that comprise the domestic infrastructure to support future civil society development (e.g. resource organizations such as foundations, CSOs and consultants providing training and advisory services, mentoring programs, and sub-sectoral leaders (focal points/clusters)).

Once a sufficient range of expertise and availability of services is developed among these groups, begin to facilitate a "market" for services. Allow CSOs to select the organizations or individuals best suited to their training and development needs – based on a formal needs assessment. The aim should be to support income generation on the supply side and increase local ownership of organizational development on the demand side.

Provide additional support required to prepare and/or position a few of these to receive direct assistance from USAID in the final phase of civil society assistance and to serve as legacy institutions – if necessary and appropriate – following the end of bi-lateral assistance.

5. Knowledge Transfer and Best Practices

Civil society programming should build upon past USAID investments and successes in Serbia and neighboring countries by facilitating cross-fertilization. Ideally, this should involve a mix of mechanisms that might include networks/coalitions, mentoring and peer-to-peer learning programs, fellowships, consultations, case study based training, and exchanges (study tours/site visits), as well as making use of modern technologies and applications. Conferences dedicated to the best practices should provide ample unstructured time for informal discussions and networking between participants. If the best practice involves cross-sectoral cooperation, each sector, i.e. civil society, business, and government should be represented among the participants, to encourage relationship and confidence building as well as concurrent learning. Cooperation with CSOs in new EU member states would bring particular advantages in terms of developing a more in-depth and practical understanding among Serbia's CSOs of the role of civil society during the pre-accession process with respect to policy development, monitoring progress, and educating the public about what EU membership means for ordinary citizens.

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[109] The 12 areas comprising SOKNO are: Planning for quality, governance, management, user-oriented services, staff and volunteers, training and development, managing finances, managing resources, managing activities, networking and partnerships, monitoring and evaluation, and results.

6. Relationship Building

Civil society programming must continue to provide incentives, opportunities, and skills for building and maintaining relationships among CSOs, with citizens, and vis-à-vis the media, as well as encouraging strategic partnerships involving civil society, the private sector, and government. This being said, these relationships and partnerships require the buy-in of all sides, and this step of the process should not be overlooked or rushed. Programming involving issue or regionally based networks and/or civil society coalitions should require participatory planning and decision-making throughout the entire project and, ideally, as normal operating procedure in the interests of supporting more constructive relationships between CSOs, providing incentives for on-going cooperation, and facilitating capacity building among all members not just the lead organization.

7. Areas for Further Study

To further inform strategies and planning aimed at more effective use of technology by civil society actors, USAID should undertake in the near future an assessment focused new media and social networking. This assessment should address not only opportunities and prospects for the use of new media and social networking, but also the limitations on what can be achieved through their use and the ramifications of regional variations. It should also consider the role these same technologies play in empowering uncivil society in Serbia, and options for addressing this trend through civil society programming.

Now that new legislation has been adopted on endowments and foundations, the Mission should consider conducting an assessment to determine the potential impacts of the law (and also other relevant legislation) on operations of foundations and on philanthropic giving. The assessment might also demine the state of foundation development in the country as well as options for endowments in order to inform eventual legacy planning.

ANNEX 1: LIST OF MEETINGS

<u>BELGRADE</u>

International Donors/International Community

USAID|Serbia

U.S. Embassy

British Embassy

The World Bank Country Office

Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia

EU Office for Technical Assistance to Civil Society Organizations (TACSO)

Norwegian People's Aid

Office for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC)

National Democratic Institute (NDI)

International Republican Institute (IRI)

Foundations

Balkan Community Initiatives Fund (BCIF)

Balkan Trust for Democracy

Vlade Divac Foundation

Fund for Open Society

Media Organizations

B-92

Professional Associations

Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities

NGOs

Belgrade Center for Political Excellence

CeSID

Civic Initiatives

Humanitarian Law Center

Lawyer's Committee for Human Rights (YUCOM)

Liberal Network (LiNET)

Transparency Serbia

Smart Kolektiv

Serbian Government Institutions

Ministry of Youth and Sports

Serbian European Integration Office

Belgrade Office for Civil Society Cooperation

Poverty Reduction Office

NORTHERN SERBIA

Center for Socio-Cultural Excellence (Novi Becej)

EXIT/EXIT Foundation (Novi Sad)

021/Foundation 021 (Novi Sad)

Youth Boom Sombor (Sombor)

Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization EHO (Novi Sad)

CSO Kosnica (Novi Sad)

Association for Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (Temerin)

Novi Sad Humanitarian Center (Novi Sad)

Center for the Development of Civil Socity (Zrenjanin)

Local Democracy Agency (Subotica)

CSO RROMA ROTA (Kikinda)

Center for Regionalism (Novi Sad)

Association for the Economic Empowerment of Women – FEMINA CREATIVA (Subotica)

Zrenjanin Educational Center (Zrenjanin)

Halfway There (Pancevo)

EASTERN SERBIA

Zajecar Initiatives (Zajecar)

Resource Center Bor (Bor)

Kokoro (Bor)

Green Tree, (Zajecar)

NGOs

Osvit Roma Women Association (Nis)

Society for the Development of Creativity (Aleksinac)

Center for Human Rights/Media Center (Nis)

Protecta - Center for Civil Society Development (Nis)

ProAktiv (Nis)

Women's Space (Nis)

YUROM (Nis)

Roma Society (Prokuplje)

People's Parliament (Leskovac)

Squad of Scouts Zavicaj 1093 (Vranje)

Community Resource Center (CRC) (Bujanovac)

Green World (Presevo)

Youth Forum for Roma Education (Bujanovac)

Prosperiteti (Bujanovac)

Romani Asvi (Vranje)

Center for Tolerance and Integration (Bujanovic)

Youth Center (Surdulica)

Citizen's Association Generator (Vranje)

Committee for Human Rights (Vranje)

International Community

UNDP

OSCE

AWO

SOUTHWESTERN SERBIA

Center for Research in Politics Argument (Prijepolje)

Center for Human Rights and Democracy (Uzice)

CA Sretenje Pozega

Forum for Civic Action Forca

Civic Reading Room "Libergraf" (Uzice)

NGO Zlatibor Circle (Caetina)

Women's Forum (Prijepolje)

Cultural Center Damad (Novi Pazar)

ANNEX 2: LIST OF REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

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ANNEX 3: CSO SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE AND INSTRUCTIONS

Q1: Please read through the list of organizations below and select (circle) the <u>one</u> option that *best* describes your organization?

1.   Advocacy/Watchdog NGO
2.   Service NGO
3.   Professional Association
4.   Community-Based Organization
5.   Informal Group
6.   Training Organization
7.   Grant-Making Organization
8.   Think Tank/Research Organization

Q2: Where does your organization work? Please circle <u>all</u> that apply:

1.   Country-wide
2.   Serbia – Belgrade
3.   Central Serbia – Other
4.   South Eastern Serbia
5.   South-Western Serbia
6.   Northern Serbia

Q3: In what field does your organization work? Please circle the <u>one</u> option that *best* represents your organization's mission.

1.   Human/Minority Rights
2.   Democracy
3.   Environment
4.   Government Transparency and Accountability
5.   Youth
6.   Women's Issues
7.   Persons with Disabilities
8.   Community-Based Issues
9.   Economic Issues/Policy, Jobs Creation, or Small Business Development
10.   Social Issues/Policy
11.   Labor Issues/Policy
12.   Agricultural Issues/Policy
13.   Consumer Issues/Policy
14.   Education or Cultural Issues/Policy
15.   Health or Public Safety
16.   EU Integration
17.   Other (please specify): _____

Q4: In addition to the primary mission of your organization, in what other areas – *if any* – does your organization work? Please circle <u>all</u> that apply:

1.   Human/Minority Rights
2.   Democracy
3.   Environment
4.   Government Transparency and Accountability
5.   Youth
6.   Women's Issues
7.   Persons with Disabilities

8.	Community-Based Issues
9.	Economic Issues/Policy, Jobs Creation, or Small Business Development
10.	Social Issues/Policy
11.	Labor Issues/Policy
12.	Agricultural Issues/Policy
13.	Consumer Issues/Policy
14.	Education or Cultural Issues/Policy
15.	Health or Public Safety
16.	EU Integration
17.	Other (please specify): _____

Q5: How long has your organization been in existence?

1.	< 1 year
2.	1-2 years
3.	3-5 years
4.	6-10 years
5.	11-15 years
6.	16-20 years
7.	> 20 years

Q6: How long do you expect your organization will continue to carry out its activities?

1.	< 1 year
2.	1-2 years
3.	3-5 years
4.	6-10 years
5.	>10 years

Q7: Does your organization have it's own website?

1.	Yes
2.	No

Q8: Does your organization use any of the follow new media or social networks to convey information, stimulate debate, mobilize people, or monitor events? Please circle all that apply (if any):

1.	SMS messaging
2.	Open source web platform
3.	Online forum
4.	Blog
5.	Facebook
6.	YouTube
7.	Twitter
8.	None of the above
9.	Other (please specify): _____

Q9: Does your organization *actively* participate in any issue-based coalitions or NGO networks?

1.	Yes
	a.	If yes, which one(s) (please specify): _____
2.	No

Q10: With which government institutions/offices has your organization interacted? Please circle any institutions/office with which you have interacted. Then, for those institutions/offices with which you have interacted (only), please rate the quality of that interaction. Please do not rate institutions/office with which you have not interacted.

	Government Institution/Office	Very Good	Good	Mixed	Poor	Very Poor
1.	Office of the President	5	4	3	2	1
2.	Office of the Prime Minister	5	4	3	2	1
3.	Parliament	5	4	3	2	1
4.	Ministry of Health	5	4	3	2	1
5.	Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs	5	4	3	2	1
6.	Ministry of Education	5	4	3	2	1
7.	Ministry of the Environment	5	4	3	2	1
8.	Ministry of Human Rights and Minority Affairs	5	4	3	2	1
9.	Ministry of Local Self Governance	5	4	3	2	1
10.	Ministry of Youth and Sports	5	4	3	2	1
11.	Office of EU Integration	5	4	3	2	1
12.	Office of Poverty Reduction	5	4	3	2	1
13.	National Minorities Council	5	4	3	2	1
14.	Mayor's Office	5	4	3	2	1
15.	Municipal Council/Office	5	4	3	2	1
16.	Other (please specify):	5	4	3	2	1

Q11: How would you rate the quality of your organization's relationship with the mass media?:

1. Non-existent
2. Very good
3. Good
4. Mixed
5. Poor
6. Very Poor

Q12: From where do your organization's resources, either financial or in-kind, come?

1. Foreign Donors
2. Government of Serbia
3. Serbian Foundations/Grant-Making Organizations
4. Municipal Government
5. Foreign Corporate Philanthropy
6. Serbian Corporate Philanthropy
7. Membership Dues
8. Individual Contributions
9. Income Generating Activities
10. Volunteer Labor

Q13: My CSO has been able to build its capacity in the following areas due to assistance made possible by USAID.

0. My organization has not received assistance from an implementing partner of USAID (proceed to next question).

1. Board Governance
2. Organizational Development
3. Organizational Management
4. Project Management

5. Financial Management
6. Human Resources Management
7. Strategic Planning
8. Action Planning
9. Budgeting
10. Proposal Writing
11. Fundraising
12. NGO Branding and Marketing
13. Communications
14. Public Outreach
15. Media Relations
16. Constituent Relations
17. Government Relations
18. Advocacy/Lobbying
19. Volunteer Recruitment
20. Coalition Building
21. NGO Transparency and Accountability
22. Legal and Regulatory Framework for Civil Society
23. Monitoring and Evaluation
24. Other (please specify): _____

Q14: In what areas do you believe your organization still needs to build its capacity? Please circle all that apply:

1. Board Governance
2. Organizational Development
3. Organizational Management
4. Project Management
5. Financial Management
6. Human Resources Management
7. Strategic Planning
8. Action Planning
9. Budgeting
10. Proposal Writing
11. Fundraising
12. NGO Branding and Marketing
13. Communications
14. Public Outreach
15. Media Relations
16. Constituent Relations
17. Government Relations
18. Advocacy/Lobbying
19. Volunteer Recruitment
20. Coalition Building
21. NGO Transparency and Accountability
22. Legal and Regulatory Framework for Civil Society
23. Monitoring and Evaluation
24. Other (please specify): _____

Q15: Please identify a few CSOs that stand out as "key players" in society and note whether they work locally or at the state level:

_____

CIVIL SOCIETY ASSESSMENT INSTRUCTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS FOR THE SURVEY OF NGOS

Instruction Q1: Please read through the list of organizations listed in Q1 of the survey form and circle the ordinal number of the one option that **BEST** describes your organization. Organizations are defined as follows:

9. **Advocacy/Watchdog NGO** – Conducts public information and advocacy campaigns and carries out lobbying vis-à-vis government institutions in support of – or in opposition to – specific issues, public policies, or laws. And/or advances greater transparency and accountability in government.

10. **Service NGO** – Provides social services and support to special target groups in need and whose needs are not adequately being met by government, for example, the elderly, orphans, disadvantaged youth, victims of domestic violence or human trafficking, refugees or internally displaced persons, persons with disabilities, veterans, the unemployed, persons living in poverty, Roma, persons infected with HIV-AIDS or suffering from other diseases, etc.

11. **Professional Association** – Represents the interests of – and provides support to – a particular professional or special interest group, for example, lawyers, judges, farmers, small and medium enterprises, farmers, consumers, doctors, teachers, municipalities.

12. **Community-Based Organization** – Works to prioritize community needs, develop local community action plans, and address specific local problems in cooperation with municipal governments and local businesses.

13. **Informal Group** – An ad hoc group formed to address a specific issue, problem, or development. The group has no formal structure and is likely to disband once the particular issue has been addressed or problem solved.

14. **Training Organization** – Provides training and advice to CSOs and to other entities with which they cooperate, for example, government institutions or offices.

15. **Grant-Making Organization** – Provides grants to other CSOs to support specific projects, activities, capacity building, and/or operations.

16. **Think Tank/Research Organization** – Undertakes applied research to provide an evidentiary basis for specific recommendations and proposals to reform public systems, institutions, processes, policies, and/or legal/regulatory frameworks.

Instructions Q10: Please circle the ordinal number to the left of each of the government institutions/offices with which your CSO has worked. Then, for each of the government institutions/offices with which you have worked rate the quality of that interaction on a scale of 5 (very good) to 1 (very poor) by circling the appropriate number in the right-hand columns. Please do not rate institutions/office with which you have not interacted.

Instructions Q12: Please read through the list of potential donors/income sources listed in Q12 on the survey form and circle the ordinal number of all those from which you received either financial support or in-kind support, for example, office space, equipment use, donated services or supplies, volunteer labor, etc. Definitions/explanations of each category are provided below.

11. **Foreign Donors** – Either bi-lateral or multi-lateral donors such as the EU, USAID, OSCE, UN, World Bank, foreign embassies, DfID, SIDA; foundations, for example the National Endowment

for Democracy (NED), the Westminster Foundation, Open Society Fund; or International NGOs, for example, ISC, IRI, NDI, Freedom House, DAI, IRD, Mercy Corps, CHF, others.

12. **Government of Serbia** – Funding (in the form of subsidies, grants, service contracts, or in-kind contributions) from state level institution including the President's or Prime Minister's Office, Government Ministries, Government Offices (for example the Office of EU Integration), or Parliament. State-level institutions with offices at the local level are still considered state-level institutions.

13. **Serbian Foundations/Grant-Making Organizations** – Grants, service contracts, or in-kind contributions from Serbian non-governmental institutions, for example BCIF, CI, others.

14. **Municipal Government** – Funding (in the form of subsidies, grants, service contracts, or in-kind contributions) from municipal or local governments, including mayor's offices, municipal councils, or other municipal institutions. State-level institutions with offices at the municipal or local level are NOT considered to be municipal government institutions.

15. **Foreign Corporate Philanthropy** – Financial contributions, grants, service contracts, or in-kind contributions from foreign companies/corporations doing business in Serbia for projects or activities that support specific causes, communities, or vulnerable groups.

16. **Serbian Corporate Philanthropy** – Financial contributions, grants, service contracts, or in-kind contributions for projects or activities that support specific causes, communities, or vulnerable groups.

17. **Membership Dues** – Regular dues (fees), e.g. annual, collected from members of the organization or association that represents members' interests and provides services and support to its members.

18. **Individual Contributions** – Financial or in-kind contributions made by individual citizens (not legal entities).

19. **Income Generating Activities** – Income generated by fees for services or products to support the operating or project expenses.

20. **Volunteer Labor** – Persons who work for the CSO without pay because the believe in the CSOs cause and want to support its activities.

Instructions for Q13 and Q14: For both questions, circle the ordinal number of all answers that apply. Definitions/explanations are as follows:

1. **Board Governance** – Developing a Governing Board to help set policies consistent with the organization's mission vis-à-vis its members/constituents and the public interest, and to ensure transparency, accountability, and compliance with all legal, regulatory, and fiduciary requirements.

2. **Organizational Development** – Developing the capacity, organizational culture, systems and processes, and the attitudes, beliefs, and values of staff to establish or consolidate an organization and help it adapt to changes in the external environment to ensure sustainability.

3. **Organizational Management** – Planning, directing, organizing, and controlling the resources of an organization to achieve its mission and goals.

4. **Project Management** – Planning, organizing, and managing resources to bring about the successful completion of specific project(s) and/or activities.

5. **Financial Management** – Planning, directing, monitoring, organizing, and controlling of the monetary resources of the organization.

6. **Human Resources Management** – Recruiting, vetting, motivating, developing, managing, reviewing, compensating, and/or retaining professional/paid staff.

7. **Strategic Planning** – A systematic and disciplined process to produce a roadmap for the future, for example 3-5 years, that guides decisions and actions that shape what an organization is, what it does, for whom, and why.

8. **Action Planning** – A planning process that identifies steps that must be taken, or activities that must be performed, for a strategy to succeed. An action plan has three major elements: (1) Specific tasks, (2) Timetable, and (3) Resource allocations.

9. **Budgeting** – Preparing detailed and accurate budgets for operations and projects/activities and in formats required by different donors and relevant government institutions.

10. **Proposal Writing** – Drafting responsive, clear, and compelling proposals in response to different types of donors, including foreign donors, the government of Serbia, and/or private corporations.

11. **Fundraising** – Developing and executing fund-raising strategies and cultivating relationships with (potential) donors.

12. **NGO Branding and Marketing** – Developing a unique and recognizable identity for your organization and communicating it to the public.

13. **Communications** – Developing skills for communicating within the organization, e.g. with staff and members, and externally with different categories of stakeholders as well as developing, targeting, and delivering effective messaging.

14. **Public Outreach** – Strategies and methods for establishing and maintaining contact, communication, and interaction with constituents, the community, citizens, and other stakeholders including the media, government, corporations, and donors.

15. **Media Relations** – Establishing open lines of communication and cultivating sustained working relationships with journalists and editors.

16. **Constituent Relations** – Identifying the organization's constituency and establishing routine communication and interaction with that constituency to ensure representation of their interests.

17. **Government Relations** – The establishment of open lines of communication and an interactive relationship with representatives of government institutions/offices and including cooperation on issues of public interest.

18. **Advocacy/Lobbying** – Public information and advocacy strategies and activities to support or oppose specific issues or policies and lobbying of elected officials at the state or municipal/local level to advance specific policy positions, recommendations, proposals.

19. **Volunteer Programs** – Recruiting, motivating, tasking, managing, and retaining volunteers.

20. **Coalition Building** – Building and managing ad-hoc or permanent coalitions/networks with other organizations that share similar interests, issue positions, constituencies, or geographic or thematic orientation for the purpose of pursuing joint actions, for example public information or advocacy campaigns.

21. **NGO Transparency and Accountability** – Strategies, mechanisms, policies, and practices that ensure the public transparency and accountability of the NGO, its financing, expenditures, and activities.

22. **Legal and Regulatory Framework for Civil Society** – Developing improved awareness and understanding of all legal and regulatory frameworks and provisions governing the registration, financing, operations, activities, and reporting of CSOs in Serbia.

23. **Monitoring and Evaluation** – Developing impact indicators, monitoring and evaluation plans, data/information collection plans, and presentation skills to effectively capture, measure, and report results.

24. **Other** (please specify): _____

ANNEX 4: SUMMARY TABLES OF SURVEY RESUTS

Q1: Type of Organization

Type of Organization	Total N= 132 100%
Advocacy/Watchdog Organization	44%
Service Organization	20%
Professional Association	4%
Community Based Organization	23%
Informal Group	-
Training Organization	5%
Grant-Making Organization	2%
Think Tank/Research Organization	2%

Q2: Geographic area of activity

Area of Activity	Total N = 132 100%
Country-wide	45%
Regional	5%
Central Serbia – Belgrade	< 1%
Central Serbia – Other	4%
Southeastern Serbia	18%
Southwestern Serbia	14%
Northern Serbia	13%

Note: All but one of the Belgrade NGOs claim their activities to be countrywide.

Q3: Primary field of work

Mission	Total 100% N=132	Country-Wide N=60	Regional N=7	Central-Belgrade N=1	Central - Other N=5	North N=17	South-Eastern N=24	South-Western N=18
Human/Minority Rights (24)	18%	23%	14%	100%	20%	-	17%	17%
Democracy (14)	11%	8%	43%	-	40%	6%	4%	11%
Environment (16)	12%	17%	-	-	20%	6%	8%	17%
Gov. Transparency/Accountability (2)	2%	3%	-	-	-	-	-	-
Youth (23)	17%	15%	14%	-	-	18%	29%	17%
Women's Issues (10)	8%	5%	14%	-	-	6%	13%	11%
Persons with Disabilities (5)	4%	3%	-	-	-	12%	4%	-
Community Development/Issues (15)	11%	-	14%	-	-	12%	4%	-
Econ. Issues/Policy (1)	<1%	-	-	-	-	-	-	6%
Social Issues/Policy (5)	4%	5%	-	-	20%	-	-	6%
Labor Issues/Policy (0)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Agricultural Issues/Policy (1)	<1%	2%	-	-	-	-	-	-
Consumer Issues/Policy (0)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Education or Cultural Issues/Policy (3)	2%	3%	-	-	-	-	4%	-
Health of Public Safety (0)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
European Integration (5)	4%	5%	-	-	-	12%	-	-
Public Information/Media (3)	2%	3%	-	-	-	6%	-	-

Q5: Existence

Years	Total N=132	Total 100%	Country-Wide N=60	Regional N=7	Central-Belgrade N=1	Central - Other N=5	North N=17	South-Eastern N=24	South-Western N=18
<1	6	5%	3%	14%	-	-	6%	8%	-
1-2	8	6%	3%	-	-	-	12%	17%	-
3-5	23	10%	15%	14%	-	40%	12%	17%	28%
6-10	46	35%	35%	14%	-	20%	29%	46%	39%

11-15	34	26%	30%	43%	100%	40%	18%	13%	22%
16-20	11	8%	10%	14%	-	-	12%	-	11%
>20	14	11%	3%	-	-	-	12%	-	-

Q6: Predicted Sustainability

Years	Total	Total
	N=132	100%
<1	0	-
1-2	0	-
3-5	5	4%
6-10	10	8%
>10	112	85%
No Response	5	3%

Q7 and Q8: CSO Website and New Media/Social Networking Use

Type of New Media/Social Network	Total	Total	Country-Wide	Regional	Central - Belgrade	Central - Other	North	South-Eastern	South-Western
	N=132*	100%**	N=60	N=7	N=1	N=5	N=17	N=24	N=18
Own NGO website	96	73%	87%	86%	100%	80%	65%	54%	50%
Use SMS Messaging	47	36%	28%	57%	-	20%	41%	46%	39%
Use Online Forums	56	42%	43%	29%	100%	60%	41%	50%	28%
Use Blogs	18	14%	20%	-	-	20%	18%	-	11%
Use Facebook	94	71%	70%	71%	100%	60%	82%	63%	78%
Use You Tube	51	37%	45%	43%	100%	20%	18%	38%	39%
Use Twitter	91	7%	12%	-	-	-	59%	-	6%
None of the above	12	9%	7%	-	-	20%	12%	13%	11%
Other – Local Media Site	1	11%	-	-	-	-	-	100%	-

*CSO respondents (132) were directed to select all responses that applied, resulting in a total of 475 responses.
**Percentage of 132 CSOs that use a given new media/social network.

Q9: Network Membership

Y/N	Total	Total	Country-Wide	Regional	Central-Belgrade	Central - Other	North	South-Eastern	South-Western
	N=132	100%	N=60	N=7	N=1	N=5	N=17	N=24	N=18
Yes, active member of network(s)	109	83%	80%	100%	100%	80%	88%	92%	67%

Note: See Annex 7 for list of identified networks.

Q10: Quality of Government Interaction

Office/Institution	Total	5	4	3	2	1
	N = 132*	Very Good**	Good	Mixed	Poor	Very Poor
Office of the President	22	23%	41%	18%	10%	10%
Office of the Prime Minister	10	20%	40%	30%	10%	-
Parliament	30	20%	30%	23%	20%	7%
Ministry of Health	28	25%	29%	14%	21%	11%
Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs	46	24%	37%	22%	11%	6%
Ministry of Education	32	9%	27%	45%	14%	5%
Ministry of the Environment	37	19%	41%	34%	9%	6%
Ministry of HR & Minority Affairs	41	22%	39%	20%	17%	2%
Ministry of Local Self Governance	25	12%	20%	32%	24%	12%
Ministry of Youth and Sports	66	55%	23%	9%	6%	8%
Office of EU Integration	43	41%	32%	17%	2%	7%
Office of Poverty Reduction	25	28%	32%	28%	8%	4%
National Minorities Council	20	30%	30%	15%	15%	10%
Mayor's Office	79	28%	37%	24%	6%	5%
Municipal Council	50	24%	38%	22%	16%	-
Other – Ministry of Culture	8	63%	25%	13%	-	-
Other – Regional Dev. Council	1	100%	-	-	-	-
Other – Ministry of Agriculture	5	40%	20%	20%	-	20%
Other – Ministry of Finance	1	-	100%	-	-	-

Other – Ministry of Telecom.	3	100%	-	-	-	-
Other – Intellectual Property Instit.	2	-	100%	-	-	-
Other – Ombudsman	1	100%	-	-	-	-
Other – Ministry of Defense	3	67%	33%	-	-	-
Other – Ministry of Interior	3	33%	67%	-	-	-
Other – Ministry of Foreign Affairs	2	-	100%	-	-	-
Other – Ministry of Justice	2	50%	50%	-	-	-
Other – Office of Decentralization	1	100%	-	-	-	-
Other – Security Information Agency	3	67%	33%	-	-	-
Other – MUP	2	50%	50%	-	-	-
Other – Army of Serbia	1	-	100%	-	-	-
Other – Ministry of Economy	1	100%	-	-	-	-
Other – Ministry of Diaspora	1	-	100%	-	-	-
Other – Ministry of Commerce	1	-	100%	-	-	-
Other – Government of Vojvodina	2	100%	-	-	-	-
Other – Parliament of Vojovdina	2	100%	-	-	-	-

*CSO respondents (132) were directed to select all responses that applied, resulting in a total of 599 responses.
**Percentages based on ratings given by those CSOs that claimed interaction with a particular government office/institution, e.g. 23% of 22 CSOs rated their interaction with the President's Office as "very good."

Q11: Quality of Media Relations

Quality of Relationship	Total	Total	Country-Wide	Regional	Central-Belgrade	Central-Other	North	South-Eastern	South-Western
	N=132	100%	N=60	N=7	N=1	N=5	N=17	N=24	N=18
Non-existent	23	17%	5%	-	-	40%	24%	29%	33%
Very Good	36	27%	28%	14%	100%	-	41%%	17%	33%
Good	36	27%	28%	29%	-	20%	24-%	38%	17%
Mixed	27	20%	25%	57%	-	20%	12%	8%	17%
Poor	10	8%	13%	-	-	20%	-	8%	-
Very Poor	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Q12: Funding Sources

Funding Source	Total	Total	Country-Wide	Regional	Central-Belgrade	Central-Other	North	South-Eastern	South-Western
	N=132	100%	N=60	N=7	N=1	N=5	N=17	N=24	N=18
Foreign Donors	108	82%	88%	100%	100%	60%	71%	75%	78%
Government of Serbia	63	48%	50%	43%	-	40%	29%	58%	50%
Municipal Government	67	51%	48%	43%	100%	60%	53%	54%	50%
Domestic Foundation/Grant-makers	37	28%	32%	14%	-	60%	-	38%	28%
Foreign CSR/Philanthropy	8	6%	10%	14%	-	-	6%	-	-
Serbian CSR/Philanthropy	20	15%	25%	14%	-	-	12%	8%	-
Individual Philanthropy	23	17%	<1%	100%	-	40%	29%	25%	11%
Membership Dues	25	19%	25%	-	-	40%	6%	17%	17%
Income Generating Activities	25	19%	15%	43%	-	-	24%	13%	22%

CSO respondents (132) were directed to select all responses that applied, resulting in a total of 376 responses.
**Percentage of 132 CSOs that have a given source of funding.*

Q13: Capacity Built Via USAID Funded Projects

Capacity	Total 100%	Country-Wide	Regional	Central-Belgrade	Central-Other	North	South-Eastern	South-Western
	N= 132	N=60	N=7	N=1	N=5	N=17	N=24	N=18
No assistance (13)	10%	-	<1%	-	-	2%	5%	3%
Board Governance	5%	7%	29%	-	-	-	-	-
Org Dev & Management	31%	30%	57%	-	40%	18%	25%	28%
Project Management	41%	43%	14%	100%	20%	29%	38%	33%
Financial Management	24%	25%	43%	-	-	18%	17%	22%
Human Res. Management	22%	35%	14%	-	20%	6%	8%	6%
Strategic Planning	35%	38%	14%	100%	-	47%	21%	22%
Action Planning	24%	25%	14%	-	20%	24%	21%	17%
Budgeting	22%	22%	14%	-	-	18%	13%	33%
Proposal Writing	27%	20%	14%	-	-	29%	33%	33%
Fundraising	28%	22%	29%	-	40%	41%	21%	22%
NGO Branding & Marketing	33%	37%	57%	-	40%	29%	8%	22%

Capacity	Total	Country-Wide	Regional	Central-Belgrade	Central-Other	North	South-Eastern	South-Western
Communications	21%	23%	14%	-	-	18%	21%	11%
Public Outreach	36%	45%	14%	100%	-	24%	33%	11%
Media Relations	33%	37%	57%	100%	-	29%	17%	17%
Constituent Relations	21%	25%	29%	-	20%	12%	17%	6%
Government Relations	18%	12%	14%	-	40%	24%	17%	17%
Advocacy/Lobbying	59%	60%	57%	100%	60%	47%	38%	50%
Volunteer Recruitment	18%	18%	14%	-	20%	18%	21%	6%
Coalition Building	20%	25%	14%	100%	40%	12%	4%	11%
NGO Trans & Accountability	18%	20%	29%	-	20%	12%	17%	-
CS Legal & Reg Framework	14%	12%	14%	-	40%	18%	17%	-
Monitoring and Evaluation	24%	12%	14%	-	-	35%	17%	11%

Q14: Capacity Still to be Built

Capacity	Total 100% N=132	Country-Wide N=60	Regional N=7	Central-Belgrade N=1	Central - Other N=5	North N=17	South-Eastern N=24	South-Western N=18
Board Governance	7%	5%	29%	-	-	12%	4%	6%
Org Dev & Management	36%	38%	57%	-	60%	41%	33%	22%
Project Management	37%	32%	43%	-	-	24%	29%	33%
Financial Management	22%	18%	43%	-	-	18%	33%	22%
Human Res. Management	27%	30%	57%	-	20%	24%	21%	22%
Strategic Planning	40%	33%	57%	-	-	53%	42%	56%
Action Planning	14%	8%	43%	-	-	29%	42%	22%
Budgeting	23%	10%	43%	-	-	12%	17%	39%
Proposal Writing	20%	15%	29%	-	20%	18%	21%	39%
Fundraising	61%	77%	57%	100%	60%	47%	63%	83%
NGO Branding & Marketing	34%	28%	100%	-	60%	24%	29%	39%
Communications	11%	5%	43%	-	-	12%	13%	22%
Public Outreach	21%	8%	57%	100%	20%	18%	13%	22%
Media Relations	23%	28%	57%	-	20%	24%	4%	17%

Constituent Relations	11%	10%	14%	100%	20%	12%	4%	11%
Government Relations	39%	37%	43%	100%	80%	35%	29%	44%
Advocacy/Lobbying	32%	23%	43%	100%	40%	47%	33%	33%
Volunteer Recruitment	24%	20%	57%	-	40%	24%	21%	28%
Coalition Building	30%	38%	29%	-	20%	12%	29%	22%
NGO Trans & Accountability	17%	13%	57%	-	-	18%	21%	11%
CS Legal & Reg Framework	30%	32%	43%	100%	-	29%	33%	22%
Monitoring and Evaluation	23%	28%	29%	-	-	18%	13%	28%

Top CSO Self-Identified Training Needs (based on table above)

	Total 100% N=132	Country-Wide N=60	Regional N=7	Central-Belgrade N=1	Central - Other N=5	North N=17	South-Eastern N=24	South-Western N=18
1	Fundraising	Fundraising	Branding & Marketing	Fundraising	Governmental Relations	Strategic Planning	Fundraising	Fundraising
2	Strategic Planning	Organizational Management	Organizational Management	Public Outreach	Organizational Manage (tie)	Fundraising	Strategic Planning	Strategic Planning
3	Government Relations	Coalition Building (tie)	Strategic Planning (tie)	Constituency Relations	Fundraising (tie)	Advocacy & Lobbying	Action Planning	Government Relations
4	Project Management	Government Relations	Human Res. Manage (tie)	Government Relations	Branding & Marketing (tie)	Organizational Management	Organizational Manage (tie)	Branding & Marketing (tie)
5	Organizational Management	Strategic Planning	Public Outreach (tie)	Advocacy & Lobbying	Advocacy & Lobbying (tie)	Government Relations	Financial Manage (tie)	Budgeting (tie)
			Media Relations (tie)	Legal Frame (tie)	Volunteer Recruit (tie)		Advocacy & Lobbying (tie)	Proposal Writing (tie)
			Volunteer Recruit (tie)				Legal Frame (tie)	
			Trans & Acct (tie)					

ANNEX 5: SUMMARIES OF SWOT ANALYSES

NOVI SAD NGO FOCUS GROUPS

SWOT ANALYSES (CONSOLIDATED)

Challenges/Impediments	Openings/Opportunities
- CSOs are not working together/inadequate networking - Little communication/awareness among CSOs - Need to be more flexible and responsive Government NGO Cooperation Office not established - Politicization of civil society 481 going to political NGOs/groups typical of socialist era - Decentralization stalled - Church involved in decision-making - Inadequate municipal resources - NGOs exist project to project, no continuity - Law needs to provide incentives for philanthropy/CSR - Donors not interested in Vojvodina Collapse of industry - Little development in the last 15 years - Government has no vision for CS - Only big NGOs (Belgrade) will quality for EU funding - Not sufficient investment in capacity building of NGOs - Systems/processes not in place for CSOs to work with institutions (all depends on personal/political contacts) - Elite NGOs in Belgrade monopolize resources - No influence relative to political parties - Poor visibility of NGOs - Extremely small number of NGOs in some municipalities - Number of young motivated people in sector decreasing - Government does not appreciate us or respect us - We can't find each other (need new directors of NGOs) - Limited capacity of NGOs - Massive corruption - Ministry of Youth & Sports funds to G-17 CSOs - Shifting priorities of donors - Gov not inclined to fund advocacy/watchdog NGOs - No ROL, separation of powers, checks and balances, or accountability in this country - EU only interested in stability - Unrealistic expectations of donors (what can be achieved, with how much money, in what amount of time) - No synergies - Tax burdens/VAT Tax - Shrinking donor base - Bylaws for many laws are overly bureaucratic and rigid - People who are making the laws/strategies are not soliciting input from grassroots CS - Corporations only funding sports and cultural activities - Brain drain - No culture of philanthropy - No culture of civil society per se	- Are closer to citizens and real life - Working to solve real problems - There exists experience to build upon - New Law on Associations - Ability to generate income - Municipal government co-financing (if they come through on promises) - Easy to get young people involved - Positive influence of Ministry of Youth and Sports - Establishment of local youth offices - Rural and community plans - Cross-boarder cooperation and networking of women's NGOs (practical focus and experience sharing) - Assistance directly to small NGOs at the grassroots that does not go through intermediaries in Belgrade - Opportunities for public consultation at the local level - Precedent of successful networking based on real issues e.g. the Coalition for Decentralization - EU Accession Process - Decentralization - BCIF (focus on small, grassroots organizations) - Pay orders (to solicit donations via bills) - Exchanges outside of Serbia - Ability to get volunteers (including young people who bring energy and fresh ideas) - Human capacity - Precedents for cooperation with some municipalities (although not systematic, still based on personal contacts only).

▪ Regional imbalance of donor assistance (very little donor money in Vojvodina) ▪ Poor implementation of laws/strategies ▪ Volunteer law is horrible	

Strengths	Weaknesses
▪ CSOs do have goals and strategies ▪ Good human resource potential exists ▪ Relatively higher level of capacity ▪ Ability to work in the field and expertise in specific disciplines ▪ Desire to work with municipal government ▪ Addressing real needs at the grassroots ▪ Civil Vojvodina Network (15 NGOs) ▪ Diversity of CSO expertise ▪ There is an informal network of CSOs ▪ We know each other ▪ Able to come up with innovative ideas ▪ Able to attract volunteers ▪ Breaking down doors that no-one else is even attempting to do ▪ Able to represent and focus issues	▪ CSO weakness in implementing their goals and strategies and achieving results ▪ No strategic vision ▪ CSOs need to better understand incentives to grow human resource potential and help push talented people in the right direction ▪ CSOs don't know how to talk to the media ▪ CSOs have poor influence vis-à-vis the media ▪ Citizens fed up with "talk" and CSOs that do nothing but hold conferences and seminars ▪ CSOs are not talking the most urgent issues ▪ CSOs need to be more action oriented ▪ CSOs need to define their aims and address something concrete (and then follow through ▪ Too busy with project implementation and finding money to survive to devote time to strategic planning/organizational development ▪ Older NGOs/leaders/activists are experience burnout ▪ Organizational capacity of NGOs is inadequate ▪ Can't sustain networks beyond projects ▪ Missed the boat on the economic crisis as well as cooperating more closely with trade unions ▪ Lack capabilities to address the economic crises, poverty, unemployment ▪ Donor driven instead of constituent driven ▪ Too much talk not enough action ▪ No real partnerships among NGOs ▪ Existing umbrella organizations do not represent members ▪ Don't know how to approach donors ▪ Small and weak ▪ Lack knowledge and capacity ▪ Little transparency and accountability ▪ Poor internal organizations ▪ Little institutional knowledge ▪ No internal systems, standards, or procedures

EASTERN SERBIA NGO FOCUS GROUP (HELD IN ZAJECAR)

SWOT ANALYSIS

Challenges/Impediments	Openings/Opportunities
- Gov does not understand CS - Gov is not accountable - Bad image of CSOs - End or reduction of foreign funding - Public funding not sufficient for sustainability - No civic culture/citizens do not see themselves as taxpayers - NGOs are isolated from each other - Belgrade NGOs using/abusing local CSOs - Collapse of industry and unemployment impede development of philanthropy - Momentum for reform is stalled - Budget line item 481 not transparent - Legal/regulatory framework for CS - Foreign donors have no coordinated strategy for CS development - Programs not based on needs assessments - Strategies and actions plans not implemented	- Successes/precedents to built upon - Voluntarism (including among youth) - Withering away of artificial/inactive NGOs - Points of access to the public sector - More options for funding, e.g. state and municipal gov and private sector, even if limited - Provision of space by municipality - Establishment of youth offices - Income-generation/social entrepreneurship
Strengths	**Weaknesses**
- Proposal and report writing capacity - Decade or more of experience - Ability to attract/recruit volunteers - Flexibility of CS - Quality and image of work is improving - Ability of grassroots CSOs to recognize needs and respond - Successes to build upon - Teamwork within organizations	- Poor networking/communication among CSOs (need real networks not "for the sake of") - CSOs are isolated from each other and closed - Inadequate focus on "common" issues - Transparency and accountability - Citizen/constituent outreach (CSOs have alienated themselves from citizens) - No mission focus - Failure to respond to pressing socio-economic issues, e.g. unemployment - Fear of criticizing the Gov (space, funding, tax implications and media attacks) - CS not pressuring the Gove for solutions - NGOs are report oriented not results oriented - Poor M&E skills - No continuous relationship w/presence in media - CSOs use media to promote themselves, not issues or their constituents - In general, poor at building and maintaining relationships - No strategic planning/prioritizing - Projects not based on needs assessments - Not effectively using human resources - Too often based on one person, i.e. the one in charge of the CSO - Poor governance - No clear internal structures - Limited fundraising capacity - Poor communication skills - Working project to project, chasing money - Burnout of activists

SOUTHWESTERN SERBIA NGO FOCUS GROUPS (HELD IN ZLATIBOR)

SWOT ANALYSES (CONSOLIDATED)

Challenges/Impediments	Openings/Opportunities
- Sector is not sustainable - Departure of foreign donors/less money - Donors not providing for capacity building - Shifting donor priorities - EU grant procedures are complicated and requirements are bureaucratic - Big NGOs in Belgrade siphoning off all CS resources (and only they will get EU money) - Only a handful of municipalities have transparent bid procedures - Line item 481 not being used as intended - No civic culture/lack of support in local communities - Underdeveloped domestic funding options - Media not performing "investigative" function, limiting watchdog efforts - Municipalities not implementing existing strategies/action plans - No clear that the Gov really wants Serbia in Europe - Centralization persists - Gov is bothered by CS – don't want us as partners - Access to Gov based on personal connections, no formal mechanisms or systems in place - Unstable political situation - No real/formal partnerships with municipalities - Political parties do not respect/allow role of (legitimate) CS - Everything is politicized. Corruption and political party dominance are "killing CS" - CS at a crossroads "to be or not to be" - Must get into bed with parties to get public funds . . . leads to GNGOs - CSOs under considerable "pressure" from parties during election periods - Gov is not accountable, judicial process is useless, no ROL - Legal and regulatory framework for CSOs and tax/fiscal policies - Brain drain from rural an poor areas	- National Strategy for Youth (precedent for involving CS in national strategy dev) - Interest and involvement of youth - Openings for CS to do what Gov is unwilling/unable to do - Gov more open to supporting CS than in past, but a slow process - EU Integration and Pre-Accession funds - Increasing opportunities to work with CS and they need our skills - Opportunities to monitor public and EU funds - Income generation - New laws, strategies, and action plans provide opportunities at various phases, i.e. policy input, implementation (service provision), oversight - Ministry of Youth and Sport (model)

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Skills and expertise but not much of a "market" - Flexibility and timeliness of responses to local problems - More effective/efficient than public sector - Open to learning - More creative and innovative - Have results to build upon - Increasingly professional - Ability to mobilize volunteers - Bigger organizations do have capacity - Informal connections/communication among CSOs - Positive and relevant work	- No clear mission, vision, or strategy - Fear impedes effective advocacy/lobbying - No strategic approach to lobbying - Not integrated into society - CS populated by too many opportunists - Burnout/brain drain of seasoned activists – in some areas, this is not being replenished by new people, ideas, energy - Lack of influence vis-à-vis decision-makers - Fear to confront government - CS has lost its enthusiasm for change - Poor fundraising skills - Not inclined to keep working if no project funding - Rivalries between CSOs/few partnerships - Medium sized and smaller NGOs have still have limited capacity - Issues of space and equipment - Poor NGO brands/marketing - Networking is very poor – no incentives for joining networks - Distrust among CSOs impedes cooperation – CSOs don't work together - Instability of volunteer labor - No resource organizations - Results are negligible

Southeastern Serbia NGO Focus Groups (held in Nis, Vranje, and Prokuplje)

SWOT Analyses (Consolidated)

Challenges/Impediments	Openings/Opportunities
- Tax and fiscal policies for CS - Insufficient incentives for philanthropy - Poor legal framework - Gov does not recognize or understand role of CS – does not see as partner, only service provider - Poor cooperation and coordination with state and local institutions - Redundancies that waste time, money, human resources - CS is not sustainable - Funding going to all the same old NGOs in Belgrade - No real partnerships between big NGOs in Belgrade and CSOs at grassroots – "use and abuse" - Everything in Serbia is based on political parties – they permeate everything, crowd out CS, and they are not democratic - Challenge for CSOs to remain independent - No political will in Gov for reform - Poor implementation of laws/strategies, action plans - Rampant corruption - Public doesn't trust anyone – surveys show this – will take time to overcome - Poor public image of CS - Too much instability in 20 years – people and CS are confused - CS in the midst of a transition/re-orientation - No responsibility of society or individuals or actions/inactions – not accountability - No civic culture – little tolerance within society – passivity of society - In some municipalities, few is any CSOs – they are totally cut off - Insufficient donor focus on capacity building - Line item 481 not transparent – going to sports clubs and politically affiliated groups - Instability of political coalitions - CS lost 10 years for its development - Media disinterest in CS - No real decentralization - Little public dialogue between CS and public sector - No "civil society" only NGOs - Non-active NGOs drag down reputation of the sector - Donor approach to CS is tactical not strategic	- Corporate philanthropy/CSR - Gov more responsive to networks - Gov more award of civil society than in the past - Greater opportunity for direct contact with citizens at grassroots level - Greater access to the public sector at the local level - CS in the midst of a transition/re-orientation - Possibility of reach cooperation with municipalities - Income generation – possibility for CSOs to offer services on a for fee basis - More options for funding, even if limited/underdeveloped - IPA funds/EU projects - EU carrots and sticks - Technology - New laws, strategies, and action plans give us a basis for our work, anti-discrimination and gender and the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction - Young people are interested to be volunteers, activists, and project leaders - Ministry of Youth and Sports

Strengths	Weaknesses
- History of working with citizens and target groups - Ability to identify problems and know-how to solve them - Ability to respond/mobilize quickly - Proposal writing - Skills and experience built since the 90s - Some CSOs have developed specializations - Ability to attract/recruit volunteers - Dedication of activists - Human capacity/resources - Existence of some results-oriented groups (they have won the trust) - Role models within CS - Grassroots CSOs working on real issues – ability to identify issues - CHRS network provides an example of a successful approach - Commitment to democracy and willingness to include marginalized populations - Ability to manage projects/project funds - Solidarity among women's NGOs - Willingness to learn and build capacity	- No real/good networks or joint approach – no solidarity - Isolation of CSOs from each other - Limited capacity/professionalism - Need to build capacity both of CS and public administration so we can work as partners - Issues of space and infrastructure (equipment) - Instability of volunteer labor - No strategic plan or vision – going from project to project - No Mission - Inability to come up with matching funds - Not adequately oriented toward citizens - Not creative in terms of fundraising - No internal structures/procedures - Governance - Not transparent or accountable - No constant presence in the media (only if projects)/poor communications skills - Limited expertise/specialization - No leadership transitions - Sector has big and small organizations, but not medium sized-ones - On20-30 NGOs actually sustainable- no critical mass - Poor human resources management - Ability to manage projects but not organizations - Not really leading society, just following it - Poor communications among NGOs - Local CSOs are far removed from decision-making in Belgrade - Not enough opportunities to transfer best practices, skills, and lessons learned within country and across borders - Activists are overwhelmed by work and demoralized by the challenges they face - burnout

ANNEX 6: CSO IDENTIFIED NETWORK MEMBERSHIP

<u>MULTIPLE MENTIONS</u>

- FENS (16)
- NAPOR – National Association of Youth Workers (9)
- National Coalition for Decentralization (8)
- Coalition for the Control of Public Finances (6)
- Association of Multiethnic Cities of SE Serbia "Philija" (5)
- Coalition Against Discrimination (5)
- Coalition for Free Access to Information (5)
- Poverty Reduction Coalition "Women – Poverty – Development" (5)
- Coalition for Monitoring the Implementation of the Convention for Children's Rights (4)
- CHRIS (Coalition for Human Rights in Serbia) (3)
- Civil Vojvodina (3)
- Igman Initiative (3)
- League for the Roma Decade (3)
- NATURA 2000 (3)
- Network Women Against Violence (3)
- Roma Women's Network (3)
- Y-peer Network (3)
- Association of Belgrade Roma Organizations (2)
- BELLS Movement (Regional Western Balkan Coordinator) (2)
- CIVIS (2)
- Coalition of Youth of Serbia (2)
- Coalition REKOM (2)
- Eco Forum (2)
- European Movement in Serbia (2)
- European Network – Center for Independent Living (2)
- Green List of Serbia (2)
- KOMS (2)
- Living Together Network (2)
- Network for the Support of Rural Development (2)
- NGO Center (2)
- Volvox (2)

<u>SINGLE MENTIONS</u>

- ACRIMA
- Alliance of UN Civilizations
- Association for the Development of the Ibar Valley
- Association for the Protection and Improvement of Mental Health of Children and Youth (Nis)
- Association for Recreational Biking in Serbia
- Association for Truth and Reconciliation
- Association of Midwives of Serbia
- Association of Weavers of Serbia
- CEEWeb Net
- Children's Network Serbia
- Coalition of Civil Initiative Mother Courage

- Coalition for the International Criminal Court
- Coalition "Though Promotion and Application of Ethical Codes toward EU Standards"
- Cross Disability Network of Serbia
- DCAF
- ECAS
- Efe07
- EUCLID Network
- Europe Against Violence Network
- FLARE – Freedom, Legality, and Rights in Europe (fighting organized crime)
- FLMES
- Humanas
- Independent Cultural Scene or Serbia
- International Relations and Security Network
- Local Inclusion
- National Association of Practitioners
- National Network for Implementation of Eight Standards
- National Religious Association for EU
- Nature 2000 Resource Center
- Network Interethnic Youth Alliance
- Network for Roma Cultural Center
- Network for the Rural Development of Eastern Serbia
- National Religious Association for EU
- Network for Support to Social Entrepreneurship in Recycling and Production of Organic Food
- ONO – Network of Youth NGOs
- Project Center for Human Rights (Nis)
- Regional Development Forum
- Regional Network ALDA
- Regional Network for Human Rights
- Representative Network of Serbia for the Improvement of the Status of Children
- RIC Network (Kragujevac)
- Roma Development Network
- Roma NGO Network of Southern Serbia
- Roma NGO Network "Mir"
- Sandzak Committee for the Protection of Human Rights and Freedom (Novi Pazar)
- Scout Green Movement
- Secure Network of Balkans
- Standing Conference of Cities and Town
- Team of the Republic of Serbia Fighting Human Trafficking (MOI)
- Transconflict
- VEMS
- Women Defenders of Human Rights
- Women's NGO Network
- Women's Development Network
- YEN – Youth of European Nationalities
- Youth Council
- Youth for Europe
- Youth Network for Affirmation of Legality
- United for Intercultural Action
- ZELENis