PROVISION FOR POST PROJECT EVALUATIONS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS DEMOCRACY FUND
Contract NO.PD:C0110/10

EVALUATION REPORT

UDF-KOS-11-468 Civic Involvement for Transparency and Accountability in Kosovo

Date : 31 August 2015

Acknowledgements
The evaluators wish to express their appreciation to the Kosovo Democratic Institute (KDI), its Executive Director, Mr. Ismet Kryeziu, Project Coordinator, Mr. Jetmir Bakija, and Mr. Valmir Ismaili, Project Field Officer, for their assistance and support in arranging meetings for the evaluation field mission, and for the time they dedicated to providing inputs to the evaluation. Thanks are also due to project stakeholders and participants in Pristina, Fushe Kosova, Gracanica, Shtime, Klina, Decan, Kamenica and Viti, for making themselves available for interviews and discussions.

All photographs used in the report were provided by KDI. The map below was produced by UNMIK (UN Mission in Kosovo), which has now concluded its activities.

Disclaimer
The views expressed in this report are those of the evaluators. They do not represent those of UNDEF or of any of the institutions referred to in the report.

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Figure 1: Map of Kosovo

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

(i) Project data

The project *Civic Involvement for Transparency and Accountability in Kosovo* was implemented by the Kosova Democratic Institute (KDI) between 1 January 2013 and 31 January 2015: a period of 25 months, including a one-month no-cost extension. The project had a budget of $250,000. Operations were undertaken in 14 municipalities throughout Kosovo in cooperation with eleven local NGOs as implementing partners.

Within the broader context of seeking to advance good governance at local level, **the project objective** was to enhance the involvement of civil society in local governance through: local assembly monitoring, policy analysis and policy dialogues with public officials; and, advocacy campaigns. Through the project, KDI sought to promote two-way communications between local officials and citizens in 14 selected municipalities, and to support the strengthening of the capacities of locally-based CSOs to monitor the performance of municipal assemblies and municipal government and enhance measures for accountability.

(ii) Evaluation findings

Relevance: The refinement of democratic practice in government in Kosovo is at an early stage. Further, it is a highly-centralized country, and, to date, most attention has been focused on national institutions. The emphasis of the project on transparency and accountability in municipal government, while also reinforcing the position and capacities of civil society at local level, was entirely appropriate and relevant, given the context.

Both accountability and transparency of local government are weak, and, particularly given current deficiencies and gaps in its capabilities and performance, the role of the project in seeking to strengthen public accountability, while also promoting a broader understanding both in local government and among citizens of the need for greater openness and transparency in decision-making, was of particular value.

With its considerable experience of governance at both national and local levels, as well as of project design and management, KDI made a sound analysis of the risks which might impact on the project, and designed and implemented effective risk mitigation strategies.

Effectiveness: The project provided support to 11 CSOs covering 14 municipalities in Kosovo. At different points in the project, the CSOs were given training and reference materials to enable them to undertake activities in three principal areas: monitoring of the proceedings of the municipal assemblies and the decisions and decision-making of the municipal executive, and in drafting monitoring reports; facilitation of community participation and rapid appraisal of priority issues in local communities; and, policy analysis, preparation of policy briefs and the advocacy process. The training was highly effective in all three cases, and was followed up by continuing coaching and accompaniment at key points in the process by the KDI project team. The CSOs proved themselves to be capable in unobtrusive monitoring, and their reports provided objective ratings of municipal performance, drawing on a set of criteria and indicators provided by KDI in the reporting template.

Community engagement was the area where the project had the greatest short-term impact, Most municipal assembly Heads, majors and senior local government officials, had little or no previous exposure to meetings where local community members brought forward issues of concern for discussion and determined priorities for action to be brought to the attention of the municipal government. Through the project, community consultations and more elaborate Town Hall meetings were introduced. The innovation was quite successful, both in persuading municipal leaders of the virtue of citizen engagement along these lines, and in bringing results through provision being made in municipal budgets to address many of the urgent issues which were raised.

The emphasis on the advocacy process built on experience gained in monitoring, reporting and community engagement. It focused on enabling the CSOs to identify the most pressing issues identified, to conduct further research, and to identify practical options through which the problem might be addressed. Policy briefs were produced to a set format, and these formed the basis for an advocacy process, during which the CSOs were often accompanied by KDI in key meetings.

A major output of the project was the preparation and publication of two annual reports (2013 and 2014) on the performance of municipal government. The reports were based on regular reports prepared by the CSO monitors, which were then edited and presented by KDI in a consolidated version, with chapters for each municipality. Their purpose was to hold local government to account by offering a broad and detailed picture of the functioning and performance of local governance in participating municipalities and the principal actors engaged in it. Each report was presented at a formal event, attended by the CSOs and groups of principals from all participating municipalities, along with media representatives. With the publication of the reports, presented in Pristina and receiving national attention, the municipal stakeholders began to appreciate the role of monitoring in holding the municipal government and municipal assembly accountable for their actions, while drawing public attention to weaknesses, as well as strengths, in institutional performance.

The intensity and continuity of the engagement of the KDI project team in all aspects of the project and their constant effort to provide support and guidance to their CSO partners was a particularly noteworthy feature of project implementation. The project design was well-prepared, and project activities were well-judged to facilitate the achievement of project objectives.

The establishment of the CSO Advisory Group created the hub for a nation-wide network of local-level CSOs working on strengthening local democracy. The regular meetings of the Group allowed for an exchange of experience, and even veteran CSO activists who participated acknowledged that they learned from the ideas and approaches adopted by their peers. Beyond this, the power of the network with its national reach –as was clear at the conferences on the two annual reports- was such as oblige the participating municipalities to take seriously the concerns raised by the CSO monitors and KDI.

Efficiency: Given the extensive scope of activities undertaken and the number and quality of outputs, it may be fairly concluded that the project represented very good value for money for UNDEF. Activities were planned and managed in a thoroughly professional manner throughout. Institutional arrangements worked smoothly, with the grantee taking responsibility for management and finance, and the partners engaged with the detail of project decisions, within a framework set by KDI, through the monthly meetings of the CSO Advisory Group. All CSO partners consulted during the evaluation were extremely appreciative of the contribution made

by KDI to their own work, particularly through training and hands-on support, and on the management of logistics and expenditures.

Budget allocations by activity, output and outcome, were reasonable and realistic, and expenditures were clearly managed with great care. By and large, actual expenditures were in line with initial projections. At 17 per cent of overall program costs, KDI salaries were entirely reasonable, particularly when taking into account the active role project staff played in all aspects of project work throughout the two years of implementation. It may be that it was under-budgeted in some places. In view of the level of activity required of the CSOs, and the range of their responsibilities, as set out in MOUs signed with KDI, a monthly allocation to each partner of $500 may have been a little low. For some of the smaller, lower-profile CSOs, in particular, finances were very tight throughout the project.

Impact: The project took place in a difficult context. Yet, despite having to deal with public passivity and indifference about politics, along with a political establishment under little direct pressure to change, it did succeed in raising issues of enhancing democratic processes and in engaging citizens in the public sphere. It also made some progress in pressing local government institutions to think differently about their responsibilities.

The project also made a substantial contribution in enhancing both the capacities and public credibility of local CSOs. The convening power and national reputation of KDI provided strong leadership to the CSOs, along with ready access to power-holders. The setting-up by KDI of the CSO network, represented in the CSO Advisory Group, also stands out as a valuable innovation. As a member of the network, each CSO gained greater visibility and benefited from being seen as part of a national grouping. Their strengthened capabilities in the democratic governance sphere (and, for the less experienced CSOs, newly-gained self-confidence), along with enhanced coverage of their work in the mass media, also assisted in facilitating the success of a number of the partners in obtaining additional donor funding.

Sustainability: With KDI support, the members of the CSO Advisory Group continue to meet, though less frequently than before. In addition, several of the members continue with their monitoring activities, either with new funding, or on a voluntary basis. However, for all this, the impetus of the project will be lost without donor funding for a further national initiative, building on what has been learned from the UNDEF project.

(iii) Conclusions

- One of the principal foundations of the project's success was the constant presence of KDI as leader, guide and facilitator, providing support to CSOs at local level at key points during the process of project implementation.

- Establishing the CSO Advisory Group, involving all participating CSOs, was an important means through which to provide the project with a national perspective and a national presence.

- Kosovo is a highly-centralized country, and the focus of attention has naturally been on national institutions. Hence, the emphasis on municipal governance and local,

rather than national, civil society organizations, represented a worthwhile and relevant addition to international support to democratic governance in Kosovo.

- Municipal government has operated in top-down fashion, and engaging with citizens in the making of decisions which affect them has been a low priority. The project demonstrated in a practical way why priorities should change and how this gap might be filled. The project made a difference in involving local citizens in decision-making on issues of immediate concern to their communities, while also persuading some municipal governments and municipal assemblies to think about their responsibilities differently.

- The carefully targeted training and hands-on guidance provided by KDI, through the project prepared the partner CSOs to perform capably as monitors of municipal assemblies and municipal government. The project made a difference both by strengthening the capabilities of local CSOs and enhancing their credibility as legitimate actors in municipal governance.

- The annual monitoring reports for 2013 and 2014 consolidated and edited the performance reports prepared by the CSO monitors on the 14 municipalities included in the project. They provided a picture of the state of municipal governance in a cross-section of all municipalities in Kosovo. The presentation of the reports at national conferences and the media coverage they attracted played a role in placing the question of local democratic governance on the national agenda.

- The reports provided a comparative assessment of the 14 municipalities, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of each, in comparison with those of their peers. This led the municipalities and those who represented them to take the CSO monitors seriously as actors in the local governance process.

- Most municipalities included in the project made progress as measured by their performance reported in the 2014 Annual Report, as compared with data from a year earlier. Thus, in terms of enhancing transparency and accountability in local governance, the project demonstrated the potential contribution that civil society can make as a positive force at a local level.

- The most visible short-term impact recorded by the project was in the area of community participation in local decision-making. On the basis of a methodology learned through just-in-time training, the CSOs were able to organize community consultations aiming at identifying the most pressing issues of concern to local communities. There is no tradition of citizen involvement in Kosovo's political culture. By engaging members of the executive and the municipal assembly in the process, the CSOs were able to expose them to the benefits to be obtained from community participation.

- The work on identification of community issues was accompanied by parallel work in policy analysis and advocacy. Drawing on specialized training and guidelines on steps to be taken, the CSOs were able to devise policy briefs concluding with practical recommendations on the core issues identified. With KDI support, In a number of cases, the CSO partners have been successful in convincing local government leaders to include funding for the proposed solution to the problem in the municipal budget.

- KDI demonstrated its managerial capabilities and professionalism in all aspects of project administration, budget planning and expenditure management. Overall, the project was highly cost-effective, and may be recognized for providing an excellent return for UNDEF's investment.

- The project's CSO partners had their greatest success in achieving results, both in mobilizing members of local communities and in influencing municipal government, where the focus was squarely on linking issues identified by citizens as requiring urgent attention with the budget planning process.

- KDI has ensured that the members of the CSO Advisory Group continue to meet, developing, and following up on, action plans on a six-monthly basis. However, further progress in enhancing democratic practice in local government in Kosovo through supporting CSO engagement and community participation will depend on the availability of additional donor funds for projects which are national in scope.

(iv) Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- KDI seeks to secure additional funding to continue the work of building a national civil society network, focusing on the monitoring of municipal government and municipal assemblies, and, as the opportunity arises, and funding permits, to bring in CSOs from other municipalities (based on Conclusions XVI and XVIII).

- KDI and its partners build on the achievements of this project, as well as its limitations, by giving particular attention in future work on civil society engagement in enhancing the accountability and transparency of municipal government to the budget-making process. In addition, attention would be given to following through in monitoring actions taken to implement stated priorities and in ensuring accountability for expenditures (based on Conclusion XVII).

II. INTRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

(i) The project and evaluation objectives

The project *Civic Involvement for Transparency and Accountability in Kosovo* was implemented by the Kosova Democratic Institute (KDI) between 1 January 2013 and 31 January 2015: a period of 25 months, including a one-month no-cost extension. The project had a budget of $250,000, including $25,000 for UNDEF monitoring and Evaluation. Operations were undertaken in 14 municipalities throughout Kosovo in partnership with eleven local NGOs as implementing partners.

Based in Pristina, Kosova Democratic Institute (KDI) is well-known as a national organization, with a prominent profile domestically, as well as with the international community. It also houses the Kosovo branch of Transparency International. It has been active for some years in the spheres of democratic governance and civic engagement.

KDI had gained valuable experience in monitoring the performance of state institutions and in undertaking civic advocacy through its participation in a second-round UNDEF project, on ***the Building of a Consortium on Strengthening Civil Society Advocacy in Kosovo (UDF-KOS-07-192)*** with the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the Balkan Investigative Research Network (BIRN). Subsequently, it has acted as leader and coordinator of an NGO election monitoring network, has gained experience in monitoring the activities of the Kosovo Assembly (Parliament), and has also been monitoring the work of municipalities in the Prizren Region.

Initially, the idea of the project was for KDI to replicate its earlier experience in monitoring the national legislature at the level of the municipal assembly in selected locations throughout the country, while also drawing on lessons obtained from its ongoing work with local government in Prizren. However, following a request to the grantee from UNDEF to make adjustments to the project plan, its focus switched from managing a team of locally-recruited consultants (as in Prizren) to preparing selected CSOs to monitor the work of municipal assemblies and of the work of municipal government, more generally.

Within the broader context of seeking to advance good governance at local level, **the project objective** was *to enhance the involvement of civil society in local governance through: local assembly monitoring, policy analysis and policy dialogues with public officials, and advocacy campaigns*. The grantee sought to achieve this objective through activities pursued in support of three outcomes:

- Outcome 1: *improving transparency and accountability in 14 municipalities of Kosovo through boosting up municipal monitoring skills of local organizations;*
- Outcome 2: *Identifying the concerns of local communities and increasing citizen participation in municipal developments through public discussions and practical public issue papers as a basis for discussion;*
- Outcome 3: *building and strengthening of the links between local civil society organizations for the advancement of priority issues through boosting up advocacy skills and carrying out advocacy campaigns*.

This evaluation belongs to a larger set of evaluations of UNDEF-funded projects from Rounds 2, 3 and 4. The purpose of these evaluations is to "contribute to a better understanding of what constitutes a successful project, which will in turn help UNDEF to develop future project strategies. Evaluations are also to assist stakeholders to determine whether projects have been implemented in accordance with the project document and whether anticipated project outputs have been achieved".[1]

(ii) Evaluation methodology

An initial plan was developed by the international consultant, based on a preliminary review of project documents, and through consultations with his national counterpart. The plan was then refined, and details of the mission elaborated, through discussions between the two consultants by telephone and Skype, and through detailed exchanges between the national consultant and the grantee. Final plans and logistical details were confirmed by the consultants in an initial meeting in Pristina on Sunday, May 24.

The field mission proper took place between May 25 and 29, 2015. The mission began and concluded with detailed meetings with the KDI team in Pristina on Monday and Friday morning, May 25 and 29. For the remainder of the time, taking advantage of the fact that Kosovo is a small country, the evaluation team travelled by car on field visits to a long list of project locations: Fushe Kosova; Gracanica; Shtime and Lipjan; Klina; Decan; Kamenica; and, Vitina (also known as Viti). This itinerary provided the evaluators with the opportunity to meet with a large sample of the CSOs and Heads (or Chairs) of Municipal Assemblies involved in the project, as well as some senior municipal officials. Initial plans also included visits to Gjakova and Skenderaj. However, these stops on the itinerary were cancelled as a result of the non-availability of key interviewees at these locations during the week selected for the field mission.

Figure 2: Municipalities visited during the evaluation

Two of the locations outside Pristina visited by the team (Fushe Kosova and Gracanica), had also been visited by the project's UNDEF Desk Officer (who is also UNDEF Deputy Executive

[1] See: Operational Manual for the UNDEF-funded project evaluations, page 6

Head) in October 2014. The evaluation team had hoped to meet with the mayor of Gjakova, an in particular her staff, who had been a key informant during the Desk Officer's visit, but, unfortunately, she was travelling outside Kosovo during the evaluation period.

During the final discussions with KDI on the morning of Friday, May 29, the evaluators provided feedback on their preliminary findings, and sought clarification on some issues which had arisen in the course of the interview program. The two consultants then held a final debriefing discussion and agreed on next steps, before the international consultant departed. The team continued to exchange ideas on project issues by email on completion of the field mission.

Key stakeholders and beneficiaries interviewed included the following:

- The Executive Director and members of the KDI Project Team;
- Representatives of CSOs which participated in the project;
- Heads of Municipal Assemblies;
- Mayors and senior municipal officials (a few only); and,
- Journalists.

The project's core documentation was complete and well-prepared. However, as with many other UNDEF projects, most documents produced in the course of project activities are not available in English (professional translation costs are prohibitive). Given the limited time available, it was agreed by the evaluation team that the national consultant would review and summarize the structure for the annual reports on monitoring and municipal performance (a critical output of the project), while also preparing a free translation of the conclusions to the 2014 Annual Report. He also provided a brief summary of the format and topics covered in the short policy briefs (leaflets) prepared by the CSOs as part of the project plan.[2]

(iii) Development context

The project took place in the context of a country whose constitutional status and sovereignty is yet to be confirmed, and which has emerged from a period of international stewardship, following a destructive conflict which took place in the mid-1990s between the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and the Serbian state, This was followed by open war in 1998-1999, which was ended through NATO intervention in 1999.[3]

The international community continues to play a key- though diminishing- role in Kosovo governance, particularly in conflict prevention, the rule of law and the investigation and prosecution of serious crimes and war crimes. It has made significant investments in building Kosovo's governance framework and its institutional structures, at both national and local levels. However, the persistence of traditional social and cultural patterns and of patron-client relations at the core of public life represents a barrier to social and institutional change and strengthening democratic processes.

Similarly, a preference for relying on personal, family and community connections (reinforced during the years of conflict) over formal processes in making decisions, recruitment and settling disputes, holds back reform and undermines its effectiveness. Reform also reduces

[2] Merkur Beqiri, *Mission Report*, 10 June, 2015.

[3] The country's independence has been recognized by 105 countries, including the US and major European states. However, Serbia continues to reject the legality of the declaration of independence (2008), as do several EU member-states (for various reasons), including Cyprus, Greece, Romania, Slovakia and Spain, as well as UN Security Council members, China and Russia.

opportunities for rent-seeking by government officials and reduces their enthusiasm in implementing new legislation, even where it has been adopted under pressure from the international community.[4] Despite the priority attached to addressing corruption by the international community, the poor record of punishment by the courts for high-level officials involved in corruption, and persistent failure of officials to comply with the law, reinforces a pervasive culture of impunity. According to Transparency International, Kosovo is ranked joint (with Albania) 110th of 177 countries included in the 2014 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Kosovo today is the poorest economy in the Western Balkans. Unemployment is estimated at 45 per cent and at 60 per cent for younger people (25 or younger). The country has the youngest population in Europe, with more than 50 per cent of the population 25 years of age, or younger. Poverty levels are very high (above 30 per cent), and the social safety net is minimal.[5]

The current population of Kosovo is estimated at 1.825 million (World Bank 2013). However, this total may have been reduced by significant levels of illegal out-migration to the EU, via Hungary, in recent years.[6] The percentage of Albanians in the population, estimated at 92 per cent, is higher than in the pre-conflict years. However, ethnic tensions and conflict continue to cause significant difficulties, particularly in northern regions, where Serbs form a majority in a number of communities, and where residents refuse to acknowledge the authority of the government in Pristina. The Government in Belgrade has supported and paid for the establishment of a set of parallel structures in Northern Kosovo to provide community services.

Both Serbia and Kosovo are seeking entry to the EU, and the European Commission ruled that for both parties entering into a dialogue focusing on settling the status of Kosovo and ensuring protection for the rights of Kosovo's Serbian residents forms a basic precondition for accession. The formal dialogue began in 2011 and resulted in an agreement in January 2013. Subsequently, important steps have been taken to ensure appropriate representation of Serbs in Kosovo's political institutions and to restructure local government in the north of the country, to meet the concerns of local Serbs and the Serbian Government.

The executive dominates the political sphere, while the legislature fails to fulfil its oversight function; rule of law is weak and judicial independence is severely compromised by its dependence on the executive.[7] Overall, Politics is hierarchical, with national party leaders playing a leading role in all facets of decision-making in the public sphere. Both the European Commission and civil society organizations have drawn attention to the politicization of public administration.[8] There is a close link between political and business elites, and political loyalty is a key factor in ensuring that individuals may obtain secure livelihoods and access to promising careers and business opportunities. For the most part, rather than playing an independent role, interest groups are dependent on the major political parties.[9]

[4] See: Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2014 – Kosovo Country Report, pp.12-15.
[5] See: USAID, Kosovo Country Development Cooperation Strategy, 2014-2018, p.2; "Leaving Kosovo: Exodus of Young People as Frustration Soars", *Economist*, March 22, 2015; BTI 2014, p.18.
[6] Kosovo is the only country between Portugal and Ukraine whose citizens require a visa for travel to the Schengen Zone (see: *Economist*, May 21, 2015.
[7] See: USAID, p.1.
[8] European Commission, *"Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2014-15,* Kosovo Progress Report, October 2014, p.10; Freedom House, Nations in Transit, Kosovo 2014, p. 4.
[9] See: BTI, p.11; Transparency International, *Kosovo: An Overview of Political Corruption*, March 2014, p.8; USAID, Human and Institutional Development Assessment: Kosovo, Final Report, August 2012, p.18.

Civil Society: Freedom of Association and the independence of civil society are guaranteed under the constitution and Kosovo's legal framework.[10] Not surprisingly, in a traditional and hierarchical society, built on ethnic solidarity, civic engagement is limited. There are 4,800 registered non-government organizations (NGOs) in Kosovo, but only around 500, predominantly based in Pristina, are thought to be active.[11] As elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia, and as in the former Soviet Union, in the absence of a tradition of domestic support or philanthropy, a critical problem for civil society is dependence on international financial support to support core costs. With the gradual reduction of donor funding for democratic development in the West Balkans, in the context of the incremental withdrawal of the international community, particularly marked in Kosovo, such difficulties are becoming more acute.[12]

In the past few years, there has been greater openness on the part of Parliament (the Assembly of Kosovo) and parliamentary committees to engagement with civil society through stakeholder consultations. However, where it does take place, such consultation occurs only on completion of the legislative process, where it is difficult for civil society to have any impact.[13]

Local Government: As in any other countries in transition in recent years, often under the influence of international donors, in Kosovo, there has taken place a substantial transfer of administrative responsibilities from central to local government. However, municipal government remains highly dependent on the centre, with 80 per cent of revenues derived from fiscal transfers from the federal government budget. With the transfer of greater responsibilities to the municipalities, so their political importance has grown, and a number of senior members of the political class chose to contest mayoral positions in the 2013 local elections.

As to the quality of local governance, there are major deficiencies. Local government is plagued by poor management, overstaffing (through the appointment of party loyalists, and patronage), along with political interference in administration. Budgetary planning and financial management are particular areas of weakness.[14] In response to this state of affairs, under the influence of the EU, and with its technical and financial assistance, strong efforts are underway to enhance the capacities of municipal government.[15]

[10] The key law, the Law of Freedom of Association of NGOs is viewed as consistent with international norms (*Nations in Transit*, p.6).
[11] See: BTI 2014, p.12.
[12] See: *Ibid*.
[13] See: *Nations in Transit*, p.4; *European Commission* October 2014, p.12.
[14] See: *Nations in Transit*, p.9; *European Commission* October 2014, p.9.
[15] See: *European Commission* October 2014, p.9

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

i. Project strategy and approach

Kosovo is a small, highly centralized country and it is not surprising that most of the active NGOs concerned with governance matters have concentrated their attention on central government institutions. However, today, as a result of EU-influenced reforms, more than one-third of the national budget is devoted to allocations to local government. With the growing importance of municipal government in the provision of core services to citizens, KDI determined that it was an appropriate time to develop an initiative to enhance civil society knowledge of municipal government, and support its engagement with local governance.

KDI had gained valuable experience in monitoring the performance of state institutions and in undertaking civic advocacy through its participation in a second-round UNDEF project, on ***the Building of a Consortium on Strengthening Civil Society Advocacy in Kosovo (UDF-KOS-07-192)*** with the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the Balkan Investigative Research Network (BIRN). Subsequently, it has acted as leader and coordinator of an NGO election monitoring network, has gained experience in monitoring the activities of the Kosovo Assembly (Parliament), and has also been actively monitoring the work of municipalities in the Prizren Region.

Through the *Civic Involvement for Accountability and Transparency in Kosovo Project*, KDI sought to promote two-way communications between local officials and citizens in 14 selected municipalities, and to support the strengthening of the capacities of locally-based CSOs to monitor the performance of municipal assemblies and municipal government and enhance measures for accountability. More specifically, the project prepared CSO monitors to observe and report on each of the four plenary sessions of the municipal assemblies and monthly meetings of two assembly committees in each municipality. Other activities were to build on this core mandate.

Of the 14 municipalities included in the project, two are from each of the country's seven regions. Three are multi-ethnic, and one, Gracanica, is the principal Serb municipality. The original plan made provision for two NGOs to be selected as monitors in each region. In the absence of a long list of candidate CSOs, capable of meeting the responsibilities of monitoring, adjustments were made to accommodate two very capable CSOs, each willing and able to take on monitoring responsibilities for two municipalities. In addition, in the case of one small, ethnically-Turkish municipality, Mamucha, the local CSO initially considered for the monitoring role proved unwilling and unable to take on the work. Given the absence of alternative candidates and the need to reflect the character of the community, KDI turned to a local consultant to act as monitor.

Finally, KDI also decided to include in the project (informally) the four municipalities in Prizren. Funding for their participation came from an ongoing project supported by another donor.

The main activities undertaken included the following:

- Initial Training (for two representatives from each CSO) in monitoring the performance of 14 municipalities, two in each of the country's seven regions (Pristina; Mitrovica; Peja;

Gjakova; Prizren; Ferizaj and Gjilan). There were three training modules focused on, respectively: relevant national legislation; the municipal budgeting process, and municipal consultation processes and mechanisms; and, best practices on monitoring municipal assemblies. The duration of training was two days for each module, intended for two representatives of each CSO (February 2013).

- Ongoing support to the CSOs by KDI, once initial training was completed, in development of monitoring forms and coaching on reporting practices. KDI was also to provide ongoing advisory and troubleshooting support throughout the project.

- Compilation of monitoring reports in each municipality, along with a press conference to present the key findings (a 6-monthly report in July 2013, and two annual reports (January 2014 and January 2015). The reports were also to be distributed to all stakeholders.

- Preparation of annual performance reports by partner CSOs on the 14 municipalities, to be followed by compilation of two consolidated annual performance reports by KDI on the 14 municipalities participating in the project. The presentations of the annual reports in Pristina were to be accompanied by panel discussions with Mayors, assembly members and partner CSO representatives.

- Second Training Intervention: a two-day training programme (2 representatives from each CSO) for the CSO partner organizations on Public Initiatives and Policy Analysis; and, review and distribution of Manuals on *Mechanisms for Citizen Participation in Local Government Decision-Making* to the CSO partners (September 2013). Key topics to be covered in the training included: citizen mobilization for promoting adoption of local policies; legislative initiatives and civic engagement; organizing town hall meetings and CSO liaison with local officials; development of policy analysis and developing local policy alternatives.

- Organization of two rounds of Town Hall meetings in each municipality (April and October 2014);

- Publication of Issues Papers in each municipality (short papers, summarizing local issues of concern to citizens, raised in the Town Hall meetings, based on follow-up research and including concrete recommendations for action to be taken). All papers were to be published and presented in press conferences and made available to stakeholders (April 2014).

- Third Training Intervention: A two-day exercise for 12 CSOs on Advocacy issues (2 representatives for each CSO), February 2014.

- Establishment of CSO Advisory Group; holding regular meetings to agree on action plans and provide coordination among the 12 CSOs (April 2013 to December 2014).

- Provision of support (small seed funds) and guidance to partner CSOs for advocacy initiatives, based on MOUs signed with each partner organization. Advocacy plans were to be developed by the CSOs and submitted to KDI for review and approval. KDI was to

provide continuing support through the planning and implementation process (from March 2014).

Although KDI played a strong role in all aspects of the work of the project, when engaging in activities at local level, its project team was careful to focus on *accompaniment* in cooperating with its local partners. This meant that KDI played a supporting role to the participating CSOs in carrying out their activities in their respective municipalities. Throughout the project, KDI acted as a guide, while also providing coaching on a regular basis and troubleshooting as required. The project team travelled frequently, and did accompany monitors in their activities from time-to-time, including occasional meeting with Heads of the Municipal Assemblies and/or mayors, as well as community consultations.

In planning and implementing the project and devising the methodology, KDI was able to draw on its prior experience in completing a series of projects concerning public participation and civil society monitoring of government decision-making. The Director of KDI acted as Program Director, devoting part of his time to the UNDEF project. He was supported by a full-time Project Coordinator and a Field Coordinator. KDI's Finance Officer was to devote 25 per cent of her time to financial planning, reporting and administration. The grantee took full responsibility for overall project direction, management and administration, along with monitoring and assessing progress.

The 12 CSOs which took part in the project acted as implementing partners. The project budget provided for a transfer of $500 per month to each partner to cover salaries and administration. Within the broad framework of the project plan and schedule, determined by KDI, it appears that the members of the CSO Advisory Group (representatives of the partner organizations) participated in shaping the final details of project arrangements.

ii. Logical framework

The chart is based on detailed information included in the project's results framework, as set out in the project Document, as well as the final report.

Project activities	Intended outputs/outcomes	Medium-term impacts	Long-term development objective
Selection & training for 11 CSOs and I consultant: 2 days training for 2 activists from each CSO; design of training modules *Signing of MOUs with participating municipalities* *Regular monitoring of municipal assembly (MA) sessions, plus municipal committee meetings* *Meetings and interviews with officials organized by CSO partners in 14 municipalities* *Monitoring Reports to be produced, drawing on monitoring of plenary and committee sessions of MA,* *KDI assistance in editing, reviewing and finalizing the reports;* *Desk research & interviews in the field to assist in the evaluation of municipal government performance; preparation of reports for each municipality* *Editing and organization of material for two annual reports; publication & launch at conferences with stakeholders and participants;* *Design of training modules; preparation of 6-month work plan* *Deliver 2-day training workshop*	Training & support for 12 CSOs in monitoring 14 local governments (LGs) across 7 regions (*In practice*: the CSO partners determined that they would not sign in order to maintain their independence) Monitoring of MA plenary sessions and municipal committees + executive depts in 14 municipalities Regular meetings & interviews with elected officials CSOs produce short monthly & more detailed quarterly reports to KDI Compilation of 6-monthly Monitoring Reports in 14 municipalities, each followed by a press conference (*In practice:* 3 reports were published: on the first 6 months of monitoring, along with annual reports for 2013 & 2014; press conferences and roundtables held for launch of reports; distribution of reports to local and national stakeholders); Publication of Annual performance Reports (consolidated), covering 14 municipalities to advocate for improvements in local procedures (*In practice*: Reports published & launched at conferences with presentations, followed by panel discussions with Mayors, MA members and partner CSOs to discuss report recommendations). 2-day training course conducted for the 12 partner organizations on public initiatives & policy analysis (*In practice*: project team prepared modules, along with associated 6-month partner work-plan during summer recess 2013)	1. Improving accountability and transparency in 14 municipalities across all seven regions of Kosovo through enabling local CSOs to monitor local government. 2. Identifying the concerns of local communities and increasing citizen participation in municipal developments	To enhance the involvement of civil society in local governance through local assembly monitoring, policy analysis and policy dialogues with public officials, and advocacy campaigns.

	(*In practice:* Training workshop delivered for 12 partner organizations in 09 2013 – focus on: citizen mobilization & engagement around local issues & policies; organizing Town Hall Meetings; CSO liaison with public officials; policy analysis and policy options re local issues)	through public discussions and practical public issues papers as a basis for discussion.	
Arrange agenda, including key issues, manage logistics and invite relevant participants to meetings; *Hold 28 Town Hall Meetings*	Organization and delivery of 28 Town Hall Meetings in 14 municipalities, in cooperation with the Mas and municipal governments (*In practice:* KDI initiated process by identifying 2 issues for each meeting; partner CSO then advised to develop agenda & target group, & send invitations to Mayor, Head of MA and relevant senior municipal officials; two rounds of Town Hall Meetings (THMs) held in each municipality (04 & 10 2014)		
Develop methodology & template for the issues papers, drawing on core topics identified during Town Hall Meetings; *Compile reports from Town hall Meetings & identify issues to be addressed in the issues papers;*	Publication of Issue papers in each of the 7 regions by CSOs to increase participation of citizens in the decision-making process (*In practice: The CSOs focused on key concerns raised by citizens during THMs, as well as response -or lack of it- by municipal representatives. The issues were then researched and analyzed, and short issues papers produced, including concrete recommendations; KDI reviewed and edited the drafts and assisted the CSOs in finalizing the reports)*		
Draft, launch and distribute the issues papers at municipal level	(*In practice*: 14, rather than 7, papers were produced on core community issues. All papers were published in April 2014, presented at press conferences at municipal level, and widely distributed)		
Identify the topics and modules for the training *Organization of workshop for all partner CSOs* *Prepare with the CSOs a module setting out the advocacy plan and, for each CSO, a work plan to be followed with milestones to be achieved*	2-Day training workshop conducted for the CSOs on Advocacy, building on the issues identified in local communities. (*In practice:* Two-day workshop held with 2 representatives of each CSO. By completion of the training, an Advocacy Plan, setting out the necessary steps in the advocacy plan had been elaborated, and each CSO was equipped with an action plan, with milestones to be achieved & measured).	3. Building and strengthening of the links among local civil society organizations for the advancement of priority issues through boosting up advocacy skills and	

Arrange and hold monthly advocacy meetings with partner CSOs; *Agree on Action Plans to tackle issues identified for joint or coordinated action;* *Review progress with Action Plan implementation*	Establishment of the CSO Advisory Group, involving all partner CSOs, to coordinate advocacy work (*In practice: Established in 04 2013; 5 meetings were held in 2013 & 8 in 2014; key issues arising from monitoring were discussed; action plans developed & reviewed)*	carrying out advocacy campaigns.	
KDI assists CSOs in their advocacy work and in completing all deliverables *Transfer of 1st & 2nd trenches of seed fund allocations* *CSOs develop draft advocacy plans, reviewed & finalized with KDI*	Supporting and coaching partner CSOs through seed funds to develop and implement advocacy plans (*In practice:* Once the CSOs had completed the advocacy plans, initial funds were transferred. Advocacy work was conducted through meetings with decision-makers, media interviews, and sending "open letters" to officials of the Ministry of Administration of Local Governance (MALG).		

IV. EVALUATION FINDINGS

The evaluation is based on a framework reflecting a core set of evaluation questions formulated to meet the evaluation criteria of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The questions and sub-questions are listed in Annex 1 of this document.

(i) Relevance

The focus of the project on transparency and accountability in municipal government, while also reinforcing the position and capacities of civil society at local level, was entirely appropriate and relevant, given the state of Kosovo's democracy. Both the theory and practice of local government decision-making in Kosovo are at a formative stage, following on from the adoption by central government of a decentralization plan, required by the international community as a condition for national independence in 2008.[16]

The municipal assemblies are still relatively new as institutions, and instances of their failing to follow regulations, procedures and protocols occur rather frequently. The EU and others have noted with concern the politicization of public administration in the country, and this applies not only to the central government, but also to the municipal level, where the heads of executive departments are appointed by the mayor. The EU has also pointed out the limitations of local government in their ability to budget in line with established policies and priorities.[17]

As KDI noted in the Project Document, this has resulted in significant gaps between the major concerns of local citizens and municipal government performance in providing necessary infrastructure and basic services. Both accountability and transparency of local government are weak, and, particularly given current deficiencies in its capabilities and performance, the role of the project in strengthening public accountability, while promoting a broader understanding of the need for greater transparency of decision-making, was of particular value.

As to its strategy and its relevance to the priorities addressed by the project, KDI sought to balance the effort to enhance transparency and accountability of municipal government with the need to enhance the role and strengthen the capacities of local-level civil society in contributing to democratic governance. With the design and methodology adopted, KDI succeeded in blending the two themes. It seems unlikely that an alternative strategy would have improved project performance.

KDI's knowledge of social and political realities in all regions of Kosovo and in all ethnic communities enabled it to be thorough in its analysis of risk. As the project experience would demonstrate, risks were well-identified, and risk mitigation strategies effective, for the most part. The primary risk identified was that of non-cooperation by the municipal assemblies (MAs) and municipal government administration in facilitating monitoring by the CSOs, and in permitting them to access the information needed to enable the CSOs to do their work. In all municipalities included in the project, KDI took steps to accompany the CSOs in initial meetings with senior municipal officers, introducing the project, explaining what the project entailed and obtaining the

[16] See: *Nations in Transit 2014*, p.8.
[17] See *European Commission 2014,* p.9

necessary assurances that cooperation would be forthcoming. Generally, this approach proved to be effective. However, in a few cases, there was a reluctance to cooperate on the part of the mayor and/or head of the municipal assembly. In some municipalities, relations improved dramatically following the election of a new mayor and governing party/coalition in the municipal elections of November 2013.

Among the other risks noted was the possibility of a lack of interest in participation in community consultations on the part of local citizens, in the context of a general passivity regarding political engagement at all levels. KDI played an active role in soliciting the engagement of community representatives, along with members of the MA and public officials in community meetings. They also provided assistance to their CSO partners in securing media coverage for major activities.

(ii) Effectiveness

An initial examination of the project design and results framework leads to an appreciation of the fact that KDI had been quite modest in considering what the project might accomplish within its two-year timeframe. A more considered assessment, taking into account the short history of decentralization of governance in Kosovo, along with the limited size and capabilities of civil society, particularly at local level, yields an understanding that achieving the outcomes specified, modest as they may appear to be, would be no easy matter.

Fushe Kosova: KDI & CSO Meeting with Citizens

The project was designed to be implemented in step-wise fashion, with the building-blocks for Outcome 1 securely in place before work began on activities organized under Outcome 2, and then Outcome 3. **Outcome 1**: *Improving transparency and accountability in 14 municipalities by boosting up municipal monitoring skills of local organizations*. At the outset of the project, very few of the municipalities had made any provisions to ensure transparency of decision-making, using their web-sites to provide only basic information and for public relations purposes. Even fewer had any concept of how accountability to citizens might work, outside local elections and some pro forma, pre-budget public meetings. In one or two cases, the CSOs participating in the project had undertaken some form of monitoring before, but with little apparent impact.

Further, in a small and highly-centralized country, mass media had paid little attention to local government, with the exception of the municipalities, such as Gracanica, included in the project,

where minority communities constituted a local majority. For political reasons, these municipalities did receive more regular coverage in both the print and electronic media.

Through the UNDEF project, 11 CSOs and one consultant (replacing a local CSO which was unable to take on the work), were trained to monitor the proceedings (plenary sessions) of the municipal assemblies (MAs), as well as selected committee meetings and the performance of the mayor and executive of the municipal government. All began monitoring promptly in March 2013 after the initial training was completed. In all cases of those CSO representatives interviewed for the evaluation, the training was found to be pertinent, comprehensive and practical in providing the foundation for effective monitoring. The methodology for monitoring was adopted consistently by all CSO partners; the approach presented to the monitors was well-structured in setting out what to do and how to do it. KDI also provided templates for recording information and reporting. In the course of the project, in addition to drafting monthly reports, sent to KDI, all CSO monitors produced three reports on municipal governance performance, drawing on notes taken during observation of the MAs and their key committees, as well as on 1:1 meetings with the Head and members of the MA and the executive, along with the Director of Administration in the Mayor's Office and the Directors of Budget and Finance and Urban Planning.[18]

The production of a sequence of ***three monitoring reports*** represented a core output of Outcome 1, and of the project as a whole. The initial intent had been to prepare the reports every six months. In practice, following the production of a first 6-month report, efforts were concentrated on two annual monitoring reports, for 2013 and 2014, respectively. The initial, 6-month reports were issued at municipal level, and each was launched with a local press conference. The two annual reports were edited and presented by KDI in a consolidated version, with chapters for each municipality. Their purpose was to hold local government to account by giving an overall picture of the functioning and performance of local governance in 14 municipalities and the principal actors engaged in it. Each was presented at a formal event, attended by the CSOs and groups of principals from all participating municipalities, along with media representatives.

The format, followed by CSO monitors in all municipalities, included the following components[19]:

- Organigram of the mayor's office and the Municipal assembly including positions, functions and names;
- Quick overview/Introduction;
- Main concerns of the communities in the municipality;
- Achievements of the municipal authorities in course of the reporting period;
- Performance evaluation;
- Transparency in the work of the municipal authorities;
- Accountability in the municipal offices and its various departments – depending on the municipality;
- Urbanism (urban planning) issues;
- Budget/Finance management;

[18] The key committees were: *Finance and Politics*, which corresponded to an executive committee, and dealt with policy, making major decisions for approval by the MA, budget planning and expenditure management issues. The second committee was *Urbanism*, which focused on land and property management and transfers. The monitors also focused their work on the departments in municipal government whose responsibilities paralleled the issue areas addressed by the Committees: Budget and Finance, Urban Planning, and the Mayor's Office. In some cases, the Urbanism Committee had not been established, leaving the monitors to focus on the Urban Planning Department alone for this facet of their work. It might be noted that some CSOs extended their activities to take in the activities of other departments.

[19] The listing is based on a translation of the chapter headings and sub-heads by the National Consultant.

- Other departments – such as health, education, security, waste management. etc.;
- Table of pre-election promises vs projects under implementation vs transparency;
- Recommendations for the municipal authorities:
    - For the mayor;
    - Various departments Urbanism, Finance, and similar;
    - Head of the Municipal Assembly.

Community Meeting in Klina

Under performance evaluation, the monitors assessed the quality of work of the Mayor, Head of Assembly and individual members of the Assembly, as well as the MA and municipal government as institutions. Statistics were provided on: decisions made, whether that they were debated, or simply given rubber-stamp approval; on the attendance record of individual Members of the MA and their level of activity in major community meetings. As noted above, and of critical importance, a detailed review was also provided of promises made by the mayor and the governing party, practical action taken to implement what had been promised, and transparency (or non-transparency) on decisions and actions taken).

With a few exceptions (as discussed above, under Risk), the Mayors and MAs accepted the presence of monitors with equanimity. Most monitors were highly unobtrusive, and, therefore, had little immediate impact on proceedings. It was with the publication of the reports - and particularly the annual reports, which were presented in Pristina and which received national attention – that the municipal office-holders began to appreciate the role of monitoring in holding the municipal government and MA accountable for their actions, while drawing public attention to weaknesses, as well as strengths, in institutional performance.

As the national consultant observed in his rapid review of the 2013 and 2014 Annual Reports, in comparing the 2014 Report with its predecessor, progress may be seen both in the quality of the reporting, and in the ratings for the quality of municipal government performance. In combination with other evidence, this suggests that the project made a difference in both improving the capabilities of the CSO monitoring and in pressing the institutions of local government to do better.

At a broader level, what emerges from a review of data collected during interviews conducted in the seven municipalities visited – perhaps not surprisingly – is a rather mixed picture in terms of the difference the project made to local government and MA practice regarding transparency and accountability. At the same time, there is no question that the capacity of the participating CSOs have been enhanced substantially, both through the carefully-focused training and “learning by

doing", building both relevant expertise and self-confidence. As one CSO activist engaged in the monitoring process reflected: "the project opened new horizons for us."

As to making a difference in transparency and accountability in local governance, the short-term impact is encouraging, with the project demonstrating most effectively the potential contribution of civil society in enhancing democratic practice at local level. Yet, it is also apparent that, without sustained financial and technical support and continuing monitoring at the same level of intensity made possible by the UNDEF project, gains will not be sustained.

In one medium-sized municipality, ***Klina***, which is situated in west central Kosovo, and which has a population of 40,000, the MA reported that it had established very positive working relations with the CSO monitoring organization, *KOHA.* The CSO concurred in this assessment, and yet it also concluded that the monitoring process and the two annual reports resulting from them had made almost no difference to the conduct or approach of the MA and municipal government. While both institutions accepted the findings of the reports as fair and objective, and described the recommendations presented as practical, they offered no specific responses to any of the concerns raised and no action has been taken in adopting any of the proposals put forward.

In ***Decan***, a municipality in western Kosovo, similar in size to Klina, a long-established CSO, *SHIP*, which has been active for 15 years, has formed a close working relationship with the municipal government and MA. It reports that, through the project, there have been advances in the transparency of municipal decision-making, as well as improved public access to essential information.

In ***Kamenica***, a municipality of 35,000 in the east of the country, the CSO, FORTESA, is similarly well-established, with a track record of more than 40 projects. However, despite the position of trust it had built for itself in the local community, in monitoring local government, it encountered strong resistance from the executive. The mayor refused to meet with Fortesa, and the municipal government departments denied them access to core documents and other relevant information. Relations with the Head of the MA were better, but less than ideal. Fortunately, following the local elections of November-December 2013, there was a change in the governing party and a new incumbent in the mayor's office. Matters improved greatly, with a generally positive response to the project from all principals in municipal governance. Yet, for all this, as in Klina, the CSO reports that, while there was a generally positive public response to the report, most of the recommendations raised in the 2014 document (which covered the first year of the new administration and MA) were ignored.

Probably the strongest local impact of the project has been in the municipality of ***Viti*** (also known as ***Vitia***), situated in the south-east of the country, with a population of 47,000. In this case, it has been the mayor, who took office in December 2013, who has been the strongest supporter of the project. He accepted the findings of the two annual reports, agreeing that there were major deficiencies and gaps in the conduct and performance of the municipal government and MA. He also indicated that both institutions are now working to address the problems identified. ELITA, the local CSO participating in the project, agreed that there had been progress on most, though not all of the issues which formed the basis for the recommendations put forward. One key concern noted was the failure by the MA to form a number of committees required under the local government legislative and regulatory framework. The Mayor advised that these have now been established and are functioning as they should.

ELITA has substantial experience in working in the municipal government sphere and has worked in this field since 2001. As in ***Decan***, the CSO is regarded as an asset and essential resource by local government, with more knowledge on municipal procedures and core substantive sectors than most elected and appointed officials. As the representative of ELITA commented to the evaluators, "this organization is regarded as an extension of the local government, providing it with guidance and advice." In the predominantly Serb municipality of ***Gracanica***[20], the partner CSO, Serbian Democratic Youth, has established a position of trust which transcended the transition from one Serb governing party to another in the 2013 local elections. In 2014, the organization was asked to advise the municipal government and MA on the regulations on citizen participation. At the request of the municipal government, it also took the lead in the drafting of a youth strategy for the municipality.

CSO Advisory Group Meets at KDI

The project's greatest contribution across the board, in virtually all municipalities which took part in the project, derives from work supported under **Outcome 2**: *Identifying the concerns of local communities and increasing citizen participation in municipal developments through public discussions and practical issue papers as a basis for discussion*. In this sphere, KDI was able to build on its prior experience in working in municipal governance in the Prizren Region, and in understanding the range of services it supported and the kinds of decisions it made. While monitoring continued, the attention of the project now turned to bringing citizens and the concerns of local communities into the picture. Key activities included the planning and delivery of a training workshop for the CSO partners, accompanied by the provision of manuals on "Mechanisms for Citizen Participation in Decision-Making." The manuals were reviewed and explained in the training workshop on "Public Initiatives and Policy Analysis", held in September 2013.

With hands-on support from KDI, for the most part, the CSO partners were successful in preparing for, and delivering, Town Hall meetings, a first in April and a second in September 2014. In each case, KDI worked with the CSO to identify two key issues on which to focus in the meetings. By following the guidelines included in the Citizen Participation Manuals, the CSOs also succeeded, in the face of a general passivity towards public engagement, in mobilizing citizens to attend and take an active role in the meetings.

[20] Gracanica is known as the centre for the remaining Serb community in Kosovo. Situated about 10 kilometers from Pristina, it has an estimated population of 20,000 (10,000 according to the 2011 census, when a large number of Serbs refused to complete the census forms).

In ***Shtime***, a municipality with a population of 28,000, close to Lipjan in central Kosovo, the focus was on large villages, where it was felt that the most serious issues were to be found. The meetings were carefully-prepared. KDI attended the first meeting, and the CSO ensured that members of the MA and relevant government officials were also present. In the absence of a tradition of community participation, there was some hesitancy on the part of either group to attend. However, they soon came to see the advantages of supporting the process. It was clear that there was strongly-felt community concern around the key issues identified, which related to difficult physical access to schools for some communities and a more general problem of sewage disposal and storm water drainage. Both matters were placed on the agenda for the municipal budget, and both were subsequently approved for budget inclusion by the MA. Subsequently, concrete action has been taken to address the two problems.

The Project's Greatest Success: Community Engagement and Advocacy:

In the view of many of the CSO representatives interviewed, the community engagement and advocacy process (linking Outcomes 2 & 3) was the most successful part of the project. It brought immediate results, but, perhaps more importantly, enhanced the understanding of municipal government and municipal assemblies of the value of engaging the local community in the budget process, to some degree at least. This aspect of the project also cemented the key role of local civil society in bringing the local community into municipal government decision-making. As a representative of KOHA in ***Klina*** put it: *"We seem to be the link between the municipality and the public, which otherwise had been absolutely lost!"* In all municipalities visited, the municipal assemblies and/or municipal government officials acknowledged that it was the CSO monitoring organization, and not the municipal institutions, which were best-qualified to facilitate community participation.

The CSOs were most successful in achieving results, both in mobilizing members of local communities and in influencing municipal government, where the focus was squarely on linking issues identified by citizens as requiring urgent attention with the budget planning process. This suggests the value of making the budget –making process, priority-setting and following-up on formal financial commitments, a central focus in future monitoring.

The Shtime experience was fairly typical, and in many cases, the Town Hall meetings and their conclusions did result in acceptance of the major issues discussed and solutions proposed as budget items. This, in turn, led to practical steps being taken to resolve the problems identified as priorities for action by local communities.

An integral part of the process was the preparation by the CSOs of "Issue Papers", highlighting the key issues of concern to local communities, using guidelines on community issue identification, policy analysis and the formulation of practical action recommendations as considered in the second training workshop and set out in detail in the Citizen Participation Manual. Prior to drafting the documents, the CSOs had conducted field research in the local communities, and also interviewed relevant officials locally, and, where necessary, in Pristina. In ***Gracanica***, the CSO had begun to hold meetings to discuss local issues in different communities on a monthly basis from the beginning of the project. This engagement with local communities, followed by research to verify the CSOs' understanding of municipal laws and regulations, as well as the legality of relevant decisions of the MA, ensured that the recommendations were sound

and practical. The Issue Papers then formed the core items of the agenda of the Town Hall Meetings.

Outcome 3 was concerned with: *Building and strengthening of the links between Civil Society Organizations for the advancement of priority issues through boosting up advocacy skills and carrying out advocacy campaigns.* Activities conducted under this Outcome overlapped (deliberately) with those undertaken under Outcome 2, but, in this case, with an emphasis on *the advocacy process.* A building block to this end was the establishment of the ***CSO Advisory Group***, which included the KDI project team and one representative from each of the local partner organizations. The Group was established immediately on the inception of the project and continued to meet until its conclusion. The meetings served many purposes, including a sharing of experience and ideas and building up a sense of shared commitment with a peer group. Even veteran CSO activists who participated indicated to the evaluators that they valued participating in the sessions, and that they had benefited from the exchange of ideas with their peers. During the meetings, the CSO representatives also worked with KDI to identify some common issues of concern which had emerged from the monitoring process and to discuss how to address them. On a quarterly basis, copies of reports on each municipality were forwarded to the Ministry of Administration of Local Government, drawing its attention to key findings concerning issues where municipal assemblies and municipal governments were acting in a way contrary to laws and regulations. Discussions in the meetings also contributed to the drafting of the Annual Reports.

CSO Training Session

A further output of the Advisory Group sessions during 2014 was the development of advocacy action plans, developed by each member organization. Preparation for the development of the action plans was facilitated by a 2-day training workshop, held in Decan in February 2014, to consider the key advocacy issues which had emerged at local level (see discussion, above, of Outcome 2), and focus the topics for the Issue Papers. By the conclusion of the training, a set of guidelines had been developed, setting out the steps to be followed to refine and implement the action plan around the topic selected. KDI then offered financial and technical support to the CSOs in putting the plans into effect. With the assistance of KDI, the CSOs then organized a series of meetings with the Head and members of the MA and senior officials to present and discuss their proposals.

Project activities as set out in the Project Document were undertaken as envisaged, and the evaluators can report that the work of both KDI and its CSO partners was undertaken effectively. Further, project activities were well-judged to facilitate project objectives. The depth of direct engagement of the KDI project team in all aspects of the project and their constant effort to provide accompaniment to their CSO partners was a particularly valuable feature of project

implementation. Note has already been made of the degree of success achieved in contributing to the three Outcomes.

One component of Outcome 3, not previously discussed, was *the building of links among CSOs* in support of identification of critical issues at local level and of advocacy in pursuit of solutions and remedies to them. In this respect, the project represented an important beginning, with the CSOs working together effectively, but much more will be required for a CSO network to act as a collective force. This is a difficult challenge in any country, as also became apparent in a parallel evaluation by the international consultant of another well-managed UNDEF project in SE Europe, supporting a civil society network (see evaluation report on the Moldova project, UDF-MOL-11-469).

In closing this section, it should be noted that the project and its partner CSOs performed equally well in Albanian majority municipalities and those with large minority populations, including the largest Serb majority municipality in Kosovo. This speaks well to both KDI's diplomacy and reputation for even-handedness, and its recognition of the need to be seen as advisor, and not as the lead player, at local level.

(iii) Efficiency

The project was planned and managed in a thoroughly professional manner throughout by a highly competent organization. Institutional arrangements, with the grantee taking responsibility for management and finance, and the partners engaged with project decisions through the monthly meetings of the CSO Advisory Group, worked well. All CSO partners consulted during the evaluation were effusive in their praise for the contribution made by KDI to their own work. They were also very positive on both the quality of inputs provided and on the management of logistics and expenditures.

The initial budget was set out clearly, with funds allocated by activity and output. Savings in some areas allowed KDI, with UNDEF approval, to introduce a few modest additions to the initial activity plan. A sample public opinion survey was conducted in some of the municipalities, focusing on local issues of concern. Further, a small financial allocation was made to support the establishment of an information office, to be staffed by interns, at the city hall in Gjakova (visited by the UNDEF Deputy Executive Head, who was also the Project Officer for the initiative, in October 2014).

In the view of the evaluation team, budget allocations were reasonable, and expenditures were clearly managed with great care. By and large, actual expenditures were in line with initial projections. At 17 per cent of overall program costs, KDI salaries were entirely reasonable, particularly in view of the very active role project staff played in all aspects of project work. In one area, it may be that the project was under-budgeted. On the basis of signed MOUs, arrangements were made to transfer $500 per month to the partner CSOs to cover all costs. Given that this was the largest project for most partners, the diminishing supply of overall donor funds, and the level of activity required of the CSOs, this allocation may have been a little low. Some of the longer-established and best-known CSOs were able to cross-subsidize the project and extend and intensify the scope of both monitoring and community engagement. However, for some of the smaller, lower-profile CSOs, finances were very tight throughout the project.

Given the scope of activities and the number and quality of outputs, it may be fairly concluded that the project was highly productive, representing very good value for money for UNDEF. In

the view of the evaluation team an increase use of the budget (only 225.000$ out of 250.000$) may have supported the planned program, allowing for a modest increase in the allocation to the CSOs. An alternative approach would have been to reduce the scope of the project and the number of municipalities involved.

Generally, the international consultant would advise on setting a modest scope for an UNDEF project, as measured by both geographic range covered and the number of direct partners or beneficiaries supported. In this particular case, a good argument could be made for maintaining a relatively long list of CSO partners and retaining a broad geographic scope of activities. Kosovo is a relatively small country and transportation links are good. KDI has a strong reputation and was able to exploit its solid communications with government to constantly bring the project and its findings to the attention of the Ministry of Administration of Local Government. The footprint of the project was much larger than the size of its budget might suggest, and the sheer number of municipalities involved made a difference in terms of its perceived value in the eyes of stakeholders at all levels.

(iv) Impact

For reasons noted in the discussion of development context, above, at both national and local level, it is an understatement to reflect that much remains to be done in entrenching the practices of transparency and accountability in public life in Kosovo. Given this context, despite having to deal with public passivity and indifference about politics, the project did succeed in raising issues of enhancing democratic processes and in engaging citizens in the public sphere. It also made some inroads in nudging local government institutions to think about their responsibilities differently.

The project also enhanced both the capacities and public credibility of local CSOs. The convening power and national reputation of KDI provided strong leadership to the CSOs, along with ready access to power-holders. It also held together the CSO network represented in the CSO Advisory Group. By participating in the network, each CSO gained greater visibility and benefited from being seen as part of a national network. Hence, there were significant gains for the CSOs as the principal beneficiaries of the project. Their enhanced capabilities (and, for the less experienced CSOs, newly-gained self-confidence), along with enhanced coverage of their work in the mass media, also contributed to the subsequent success of a number of the partners in obtaining additional donor funding.

The importance of the national scope of the network was driven home at the national conferences for the launching of the 2013 and 2014 Annual Performance Reports. On these occasions, senior representatives of the municipalities and municipal assemblies encountered a situation where their own achievements and deficiencies were being compared with those of others, assessed against common criteria and performance measures. This made a difference in at least some of the municipalities. In all cases, it resulted in the CSOs being viewed as important stakeholders in municipal governance, not to be taken lightly by municipal office-bearers.

It should be noted that the grantee did an effective job in developing and reporting against indicators. These are clearly stated in the Project Document, and they proved to be both relevant and, for the most part, realistic. The indicators (“targets”) were used to organize the discussion of outcome results achieved in the Final Report. This was a positive feature of the report, although the quantification of results was not always helpful. For example, under Outcome 3, the

statement “80 % of the CSO Advocacy Groups action plans implemented” glosses over a much more varied set of results at local level.

It is difficult to make a definitive statement about the catalytic role of the project, since much depends on obtaining additional donor funding at a time of a gradual overall reduction in the availability of international funding.

Certainly, the project broke new ground and could form the foundation for further, more sustained initiatives in the same field of activity. The urgency of the need for further work over a longer period to build accountability and transparency at local government level was amply demonstrated through the project and its achievements, as well as the limitations to what it was able to accomplish.

Town Hall Meeting in Viti in 2014

(v) Sustainability

Under KDI auspices, without additional funding, the CSO Advisory Council has continued to meet occasionally (two meetings held so far), and it is planned to bring the group together every six months. The focus remains on monitoring and community advocacy. A number of the CSOs have maintained their monitoring activities, some with additional funding and others on a purely voluntary basis. Only those which have obtained additional funding are in a position to hold further rounds of community consultative meetings. For the CSO network to continue to operate as before, a further, fully-funded national project would be required, with KDI continuing to play a leadership role.

(vi) UNDEF Added Value

UNDEF’s provision of substantial funding to the project over a two-year period was much appreciated, at a time when funding in the democratization and civil society sphere is becoming more constrained. Beyond this, the UNDEF label was valued for emphasizing the project’s neutrality in an environment where it is difficult to establish trust among the majority Albanians and ethnic minorities, notably the Serbian community. The UNDEF label was displayed prominently on all project publications, including the local Issue Papers.

V. CONCLUSIONS

(i) The project built on the expertise and experience gained by KDI, the grantee, in working extensively in the field of democratization, in building civil society networks, and in monitoring the performance of legislative institutions.

(ii) A source of strength in the project was the constant presence of KDI as leader, guide and facilitator, providing support to CSOs at local level at key points during the process of project implementation.

(iii) The setting-up of the CSO Advisory Group, with representation from all participating CSOs, was an important means through which to endow the project with a national perspective and a national presence.

(iv) Given the focus on national institutions in a highly-centralized country, the emphasis on municipal governance and local, rather than national, civil society organizations, was a highly-relevant contribution and innovation in democratic governance in Kosovo.

(v) Municipal government has given little attention to engaging with citizens in the making of decisions which affect them. The project demonstrated in a practical way how this gap might be addressed.

(vi) On the basis of the carefully-tailored training and hands-on guidance provided by KDI, the project prepared the partner CSOs to perform capably as monitors of municipal assemblies and municipal government.

(vii) The two annual monitoring reports (for 2013 and 2014) consolidated the performance reports prepared by the CSO monitors on the 14 municipalities included in the project. They provided a picture of the state of municipal governance in a cross-section of all municipalities in Kosovo. The presentation of the reports at national conferences, their publication and the media coverage they attracted, played an important role in placing the question of local democratic governance on the national agenda.

(viii) The reports provided detailed analysis of the performance of both the municipal assemblies and the local executive, as well as of the principal actors involved, including the mayor, the head of the assembly and individual assembly members. The comparative assessment of the 14 municipalities also identified the particular strengths and weaknesses of each, in comparison with those of their peers. This obliged the municipalities and those who represented them to take the CSO monitors seriously as actors in the local governance process.

(ix) The municipalities included in the project made progress as measured by their performance ratings in the 2014 Annual Report, as compared with those reported a year earlier. Hence, in terms of enhancing transparency and accountability in local governance, the project demonstrated the potential contribution that civil society can make as a positive force at a local level.

(x) The most striking short-term impact of the project and the most important breakthrough made by the partner CSOs was in the area of community participation in local decision-making. With a foundation built through just-in-time training and a manual to guide practice, the CSOs were able to undertake community consultations with the aim of identifying the most pressing issues of concern to local communities. By engaging members of the executive and the municipal assembly in the process, the CSOs were able to expose them to the benefits to be obtained from community participation.

(xi) The work on identification of community issues was accompanied by parallel activities in policy analysis and advocacy. On the basis of carefully-researched policy briefs, with KDI support, in many cases, the CSO partners succeeded in convincing the executive and municipal assembly to include funding for the proposed solution to the problem in the municipal budget.

(xii) KDI demonstrated its managerial capabilities and professionalism in all aspects of project administration, budget planning and expenditure management.

(xiii) One area where it may be that budget allocations were inadequate was in the matter of the monthly transfer of funds ($500 each) from KDI to its CSO partners, based on signed MOUs, with some, at least, feeling that the allocations were inadequate, in view of the range of their responsibilities and the level of effort required under the project.

(xiv)In terms of the overall relationship between inputs and outputs, the project was extremely productive, and well-focused on relevant objectives. It stands out as having provided excellent value for money for UNDEF.

(xv) Despite encountering public indifference to politics, and a lack of motivation on the part of both elected politicians and local officials to take steps to enhance local democracy, the project did make inroads in engaging local citizens in decision-making on issues of immediate concern, while also persuading some municipal governments and municipal assemblies to think about their responsibilities differently.

(xvi)The project also made a difference both by strengthening the capabilities of local CSOs and enhancing their credibility as legitimate actors in municipal governance. The establishment of the CSO network, through the setting up of the CSO Advisory Group, gave the project a national presence.

(xvii) The partner CSOs were most successful in achieving results, both in mobilizing members of local communities and in influencing municipal government, where the focus was squarely on linking issues identified by citizens as requiring urgent attention with the budget planning process. This suggests the value of making the budget–making process, priority-setting and following-up on formal financial commitments, a central focus in future monitoring.

(xviii) It is encouraging that KDI has made provision to enable the members of the CSO Advisory Group to continue to meet and develop action plans on a six-monthly basis. However, further progress in enhancing democratic practice in local government in Kosovo and in supporting CSO engagement and community participation will depend on the availability of additional donor funds for projects of national scope.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

(i) KDI seeks to secure additional funding to continue the work of building a national civil society network, focusing on the monitoring of municipal government and municipal assemblies, and, as the opportunity arises, and funding permits, to bring in CSOs from other municipalities (based on Conclusions XVI and XVIII).

(ii) KDI and its partners build on the achievements of this project, as well as its limitations, by giving particular attention in future work on civil society engagement in enhancing the accountability and transparency of municipal government in the budget-making process. In addition, attention would be given to following through in monitoring actions taken to implement stated priorities and in ensuring accountability for expenditures (based on Conclusion XVII).

VII. ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: EVALUATION QUESTIONS

DAC criterion	Evaluation Question	Related sub-questions
Relevance	To what extent was the project, as designed and implemented, suited to context and needs at the beneficiary, local, and national levels?	▪ Were the objectives of the project in line with the needs and priorities for democratic development, given the context? ▪ Should another project strategy have been preferred rather than the one implemented to better reflect those needs, priorities, and context? Why? ▪ Were risks appropriately identified by the projects? How appropriate are/were the strategies developed to deal with identified risks? Was the project overly risk-averse?
Effectiveness	To what extent was the project, as implemented, able to achieve objectives and goals?	▪ To what extent have the project's objectives been reached? ▪ To what extent was the project implemented as envisaged by the project document? If not, why not? ▪ Were the project activities adequate to make progress towards the project objectives? ▪ What has the project achieved? Where it failed to meet the outputs identified in the project document, why was this?
Efficiency	To what extent was there a reasonable relationship between resources expended and project impacts?	▪ Was there a reasonable relationship between project inputs and project outputs? ▪ Did institutional arrangements promote cost-effectiveness and accountability? ▪ Was the budget designed, and then implemented, in a way that enabled the project to meet its objectives?
Impact	To what extent has the project put in place processes and procedures supporting the role of civil society in contributing to democratization, or to direct promotion of democracy?	▪ To what extent has/have the realization of the project objective(s) and project outcomes had an impact on the specific problem the project aimed to address? ▪ Have the targeted beneficiaries experienced tangible impacts? Which were positive; which were negative? ▪ To what extent has the project caused changes and effects, positive and negative, foreseen and unforeseen, on democratization? ▪ Is the project likely to have a catalytic effect? How? Why? Examples?
Sustainability	To what extent has the project, as designed and implemented, created what is likely to be a continuing impetus towards democratic development?	▪ To what extent has the project established processes and systems that are likely to support continued impact? ▪ Are the involved parties willing and able to continue the project activities on their own (where applicable)?
UNDEF value-added	To what extent was UNDEF able to take advantage of its unique position and comparative advantage to achieve results that could not have been achieved had support come from other donors?	▪ What was UNDEF able to accomplish, through the project, that could not as well have been achieved by alternative projects, other donors, or other stakeholders (Government, NGOs, etc.). ▪ Did project design and implementing modalities exploit UNDEF‟ s comparative advantage in the form of an explicit mandate to focus on democratization issues?

ANNEX 2: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

Project documents:
Project Document, UDF-KOS-11-468
Mid-term Progress Report
Final Financial Report 02 2015
Final Report
Milestone Verification Mission Reports, 10/11 September, 2013 and 25/26 February, 2014
UNDEF Project Specific Evaluation Notes

Other Documents and Reference Materials:

Merkur Beqiri *(National Consultant), Mission Report*, 10 June, 2015.

Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2014 – Kosovo Country Report

"Leaving Kosovo: Exodus of Young People as Frustration Soars", *Economist*, March 22, 2015

European Commission, *Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2014-15, Kosovo Progress Report,* October 2014

Freedom House, Nations in Transit, Kosovo 2014,

USAID, Human and Institutional Development Assessment: Kosovo, Final Report, August 2012,

USAID, Kosovo Country Development Cooperation Strategy, 2014-2018

ANNEX 3: SCHEDULE OF INTERVIEWS

24 May 2015, Sunday
Introductory meeting and joint planning, International and National Consultant, Pristina PM
25 May 2015, Monday
1. ***Pristina***: AM Initial Meeting with KDI representatives, including Ismet Kryeriu, Executive Director: Jetmir Bakija, Project Coordinator; and, Valmir Ismaili, Project Field Officer; *Drive to Fushe Kosova -* 2. ***Fushe Kosova:*** PM meeting with Fadil Krasniqi, Head, Municipal Assembly; 3. ***Fushe Kosova:*** Meeting with Valmir Sadiku, IZHL CSO; *return to Pristina.*
26 May 2015, Tuesday
Drive to Gracanica – AM 1. **Gracanica:** Ms. Brankica Kosic, Head, Municipal Assembly; 2. **Gracanica:** Ms. Mirjana Sitojalovic and Talibor Rebic, Serbian Democratic Youth CSO; *Drive to Shtime - PM* 3. **Shtime:** Fitim Sadiku, POLIS CSO; 4. **Shtime:** Rrahman Jakupi, Head of Municipal Assembly; *Drive from Shtime to Pristina –* 5. **Pristina:** Meeting with Bekim Kupina, Editor, Daily Koha Ditore
27 May 2015, Wednesday
Drive to Klina -AM 1.**Klina:** Dr. Haxhi Ibishi, Head, Municipal Assembly; 2.**Klina**:Elbason Racij; Agron Gashi, KOHA CSO; *Drive from Klina to Decan - PM* 3.**Decan:** Meeting with Ms. Hyrije Dobruna, Member opposition party, Municipal Assembly; 4. **Decan:** Meeting with Jashar Dobraj, Head, Municipal Assembly; 5. **Decan:** Meeting with Adem Lushaj, SHIP CSO; *Return from Decan to Pristina*.
28 May, 2015 Thursday
Drive form Pristina to Kamenica - AM 1. **Kamenica:** Meeting with Ms. Sanije Jahri, Executive Director and Amir Jakupi, Project Coordinator; 2. **Kamenica:** Meeting with Bajram Dermaku, head, Municipal Assembly; *Drive from Kamenica to Viti –* PM 3. **Viti:** Meeting with Mayor, Sokol Haliti; 4. **Viti:** Meeting with Ibrahim Sefedini, ELITA CSO; *Return from Viti to Pristina.*
2 May 2014, Friday
1. AM, **Pristina:** Closing meeting with KDI Project team: Jetmir Bakija, Project Coordinator; and, Valmir Ismaili, Project Field Officer; 2. PM **Pristina:** International and National Consultant, Wrap-up and Debriefing Meeting, discussion of next steps; 3. International Consultant departs for Vienna and Toronto.

ANNEX 4: LIST OF ACRONYMS

BIRN	Balkan Investigative Research Network
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EU	European Union
KDI	Kosova Democratic Institute
KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army
MA	Municipal Assembly
MALG	Ministry of Administration of Local Government
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NGO	Non-Government Organization
UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund