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REPORT ON PARTNERSHIP EVENT

“STRONG PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE CSOs”

Prepared by MDC-TI.Net team

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INTRODUCTION

The partnerships among CSO's, governmental bodies and private sector are beneficial for all parties. By working with CSOs, businesses can more effectively implement corporate social responsibility programs. Moreover, alliances with CSOs enable companies to benefit from their partners access to local networks and their understanding of community needs, public trust, and hands-on experience with the communities. The governmental bodies get direct access to community needs as an input for shaping and implementing their local and national policies. Furthermore, in decentralized societies, they can even share the responsibility with the civil society in delivering services to the citizens.

MDC-TI.Net in cooperation with the EU Project Technical Assistance to the Civil Society Organizations, on 6th of May organized partnership event on theme "Strong partnerships for sustainable CSOs".

The goal of the event was to strengthen the dialogue and the cooperation between the civil society, government (local and national) and the private sector. Participants were 100 representatives from CSOs, local governments, ministries, representatives of the business sector. (*see Annex 1 list of participants*)

The event consisted of two panel sessions and three parallel workshops on the themes relevant to the CSOs. (*see Annex 2- detailed agenda*)

The introduction session provided a forum for all participants at which they were introduced to and challenged on the issues of the themes of the event.

At the official opening of the event Resident Advisor of TACSO, Macedonia, Mrs. Suncica Sazdovska highlighted importance of partnerships between all relevant stakeholders in the society.

Introduction speeches were delivered by: Mr. Zoran Milkov, General Secretariat by the Government of Macedonia; Mr. Norik Selimi, Coordinator for local economic development of the Municipality of Cair; Representative of Private Company TINEKS Mr. Martin Kocmanovski, Skopje; Mr. Sasho Klekovski, Macedonian Center for International Cooperation.

Mr. Milkov presented the Strategy for Cooperation with the CSOs within the Government and the current opportunities for funding, as well as the planned activities in the future.

Mr. Klekovski, the First Executive Director of MCIC has presented the challenges and the opportunities for cooperation of the CSOs with the government institutions and the business sector. He also gave concrete recommendations for establishment and development of permanent networks of cooperation with the Parliament, the Government, the local self-governments and the business sector.

The Coordinator for Local Economic Development of Municipality of Cair, Mr. Norik Selimi, emphasized positive experiences in cooperation with the CSOs and confirmed preparedness for establishing long term partnerships for sustainable development of the community.

WORKING SESSIONS

I. Working group 1 – Domestic funding opportunities and corporate responsibility

Facilitator, Zoran Stojkovski, Executive Director, CIRA

Current situation:

The session begun with the facilitator inviting the session participants to introduce themselves and to share their experience as regards to the cooperation of their CSOs with the businesses. The participants shared the following:

- the links with the business community are mostly based on individual contacts and connections
- the businesses are mostly interested to cooperate in humanitarian actions
- the sponsorships received are usually small and in form of services (for example, transportation) and goods
- successful stories of cooperation were also presented, for example, businesses delivering free of charge computer and English language lessons to the women-mothers in the Children Village, or businesses financing campaigns
- another form of cooperation presented in the discussion was participation of the businesses' representatives in the Management Board of some CSOs.

Identified challenges:

After the introduction, the facilitator presented facts on decreasing trends in businesses' donation to the CSOs in the later years, and challenged the participants to explore the reasons for such a trend, particularly baring in mind that 5% of the 200 most successful companies profit that could be redirected in donations according to his calculations was 34 000 000 Euros in the year 2008. The following was concluded:

Businesses:

In general, there is a positive change in the awareness of the businesses, they start feeling a need to start returning to the community. However the following challenges are still present:

- the businesses are mainly reluctant to cooperate with the CSOs for several reasons: they don't understand and they don't trust CSOs, they are not aware of the benefits granted to them by the Law in case they donate, and they are afraid of being punished by the government in case they decide to donate motivated by the tax reduction
- There is a lack of motivation among the businesses to finance the CSOs

- There is an interest, but also a barrier to the business' support for the CSOs caused by the lack of trust in the CSOs
- Businesses have distorted perception of CSOs

CSOs:

The CSOs are more turned towards international donors rather than to the domestic business. The reasons for this are as following:

- The CSOs lack knowledge and skills to establish and maintain a long term partnership with the businesses
- International donors are better in their marketing
- There is a lack of communication on the businesses' side about their sponsorship priorities, strategies and programs.
- There is a lack of habit among the CSOs to approach local business.
- CSOs feel that it's easier to work with the international donors
- CSOs and businesses miss to reach a contract on common interest between them
- The CSOs are lacking original projects that the businesses can buy
- CSOs don't have enough capacity to cooperate with the business sector: communication, following of their financing trends, effectiveness and persistence
- The international donors spoiled the CSOs- donors have clear strategy for financing and clear program and application forms, this is not the case with the business sector and the process requires much more initiative from the CSOs

Legislation:

- The existence of the LDSPA (01.01.2007) raises the corporative responsibility and opens channels for communication between CSOs and businesses.
- The Law is perceived as complicated
- The procedure is long since it requests approvals and decisions from government bodies as Ministry for finances for every single donation regardless of its amount
- There is a lack of understanding the law in both sectors

Examples/Models of successful cooperation:

The following successful stories were pointed out during the discussions:

- Campaign on visa liberalization sponsored by the transport companies since the latter have business interest in the campaigning topic
- Candy – a percentage of the profit of each sold vitamin was put in fund for free of charge osteoporosis diagnostic for 30 women
- CIRA – in a partnership with MTV and Elena Luka, for two weeks of active work, 14 000 Euros were fundraised for cleaning the radioactive air in and oncology department

Keys to success:

The following keys to success were identified during the discussions:

- Corporative responsibility is a profit in a responsible way, namely the business sector has interest in creation of a good image and commercial through supporting actions of public benefit. This should be the start point for the CSOs.

- The efforts should be invested in building understanding and trust as a preconditions for long-term partnerships
- CSOs should learn listening to and understanding the businesses
- Common interest is needed for a successful partnership
- CSOs should be aware of the different interests of the two sectors (profit vs issues of social benefit) and should invest efforts in balancing those when approaching the businesses
- CSOs should built a strategy for cooperation with the business
- CSOs should be aware of the business's financing preferences and trends
- In approaching the businesses, CSOs should point out the success stories
- CSOs should apply marketing strategies when approaching the businesses
- Businesses involvement in CSOs programmes could contribute towards the increase in the brand preference for the businesses products and services
- Clear CSOs' mission and clear project goals are key to the successful cooperation
- It's better to propose activities rather than a project

Identified needs:

At the end of the session, the participants agreed on the following identified needs:

1. There is a need for raising the awareness of the business sector
2. On the CSOs' side, there is a need for definition of clear channels for communication with the domestic actors
3. The business sector needs to continue to develop the corporate social responsibility and strategies for corporative philanthropy
4. The cooperation needs to start on other levels, for example, participation in the Management Board
5. There is a need for the development of the CSOs capacities
6. There is a need for persistence in the contacts
7. There is need for strengthening the capacities as regards to the Law on Donation and Sponsorships
8. There is a lack of infrastructure for support/cooperation in RM
 - o Business Leaders Forum facilitated by CIRA
 - o Donors Forum MK
 - o Web-page on all initiatives
 - o Community foundations
9. There is a need for developing of the following missing donation methods in the companies:
 - o Pay roll giving - every month the employees donate symbolic amount in a fund that is used for humanitarian purposes
 - o Case related marketing
 - o Re-granting program
10. There is a need for establishing a forum for discussion between the CSOs and businesses.
11. There is a need for development of self-financing capacities of the CSOs

12. There is a need of promotion of success stories.

II. Working group 2: Cooperation between CSOs and the national authorities

Facilitator, Metodija Sazdov-Makedonski Zelen Centar

The working group discussed about the positive and the negative experiences regarding the cooperation between the CSOs and the central government institutions in order to define and transfer the positive examples and to avoid and correct the negative ones.

Participants were representatives from organizations from different sectors - environment, human rights, Roma`s education, women rights, social inclusion.

Participants on the workshop were also representatives of the Trade Union as well as representatives of the Ministry of the Labor and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Transportation and Communications.

Current situation:

- Although every Ministry has a Unit for cooperation with the CSOs there is a evident lack of continuous cooperation between them
- The government's institutions are mainly depending on use of international project financing
- Political commitment is still influential in state institutions
- CSOs participate partially or very little in the preparation of strategies and laws
- The selection of the CSOs that are financed by the government institutions is non transparent, there is a lack of clear criteria

Identified challenges:

- Evident need for education of the CSOs, especially the new ones, for development of skills related to project writing, knowledge about the IPA funds.
- Absence of knowledge of the procedures and initiative by the CSOs.
- Lack of access to government commissions and direct communication and access to information.
- Lack of efficient and continuous cooperation
- Negative influence of the political parties on government administration

Examples/Models of successful cooperation:

- Examples of existing good cooperation with national authorities can be identified through dialogue between citizens and MPs from it by the Parliament of RM ministries and meetings through their local constituencies.
- Open Day for cooperation between citizens / the government or some state institutions is a good start for mutual cooperation and exchange of ideas which should follow all state institutions.
- The Strategy for Social Inclusion developed by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs was presented online on the web page of the ministry and also between a number of CSOs with a possibility for comments and suggestions.
- The Law on Packaging and Waste Packaging within the Ministry of Environment and Psychological Planning was open for a public debates and changing in the period of its drafting; CSOs were actively involved
- Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs has a database on CSOs active in that field; this should be example of all ministries

Identified needs:

- Publication of announcements with clearly defined criteria and instructions for applying to the CSOs
- Timely information shared with the CSOs of local and national level
- Open day at the ministries of NGO-s, where they will be promptly informed of any changes in procedures, innovations in the work.
- All ministries to develop a program for funding projects that would be implemented by CSOs
- To avoid excessive politicization in the selection of CSOs
- To avoid political changes of the persons appointed for cooperation with the CSOs
- Establishment of Committee for CSOs in each ministry which would have regular coordination meetings with the CSOs
- Building confidence and enhancing mutual information sharing
- Establishing more transparent ways of cooperation between CSOs and the government institutions
- Information to be shared through more approaches than media websites of ministries and contact points
- Persistence in realizing and establishing contacts with relevant organizations or officials
- To provide training for writing projects of new CSOs

- To raise awareness among the public administration work and cooperation with CSOs
- To provide contacts with MPs / parliamentarians and cooperation with them
- To strengthen personal contacts with the relevant figures from the government institutions

III. Working group 3 - Experiences of cooperation between CSO's and local governments

Facilitator Ljuljzim Haziri-ADI Macedonia

Current situation:

Cooperation between CSO's and Local governments, modules for financing of CSO activities and resolution of potential misunderstandings/ disputes is regulated by the Law. Ministries at the central governance level and all units of local self- governance have sectors for cooperation with CSO's.

CSO's and government institutions on central or local level formalize their cooperation by signing MOU's.

In some municipalities CSO's are members of the committees that work on different themes of importance for the communities.

Support by the LG's is often based on good will. There are few examples when LG financially supported activities- although most of them have grant programs.

To date there are some examples of excellent cooperation between these entities however there is need for improving current practices that often block opportunities for deeper cooperation.

Identified challenges:

- Frequent change of civil servants tasked for cooperation with CSO's due to changes in political structures

Models/ Examples:

- The Municipality of Strumica was highlighted as success story in cooperation and support to CSO's. This municipality allocates 2% of its budget for supporting CSO activities. As well, they are open for partnerships with CSO's in applying to the donors.
- In Croatia cooperation between local governments and CSO's is mandatory and prescribed by the LAW.

Key to success:

- Transferring some of the public services to CSO's
- Employment of professionals in the LG sector for cooperation with the CSO's
- Establishing coalitions and platforms of CSO's to lobby for creating government support funds

- Increased and continuous lobbying by the CSO's for improved and strengthened cooperation of LG's with CSO's

Identified needs:

- CSO- data base to be created on local governance level
- Inclusion of all relevant stakeholders in creation of local policies and other issues of community development
- Inclusion of CSO's in committees on for defining priorities of action and budget allocation on community level
- Increase of support to the CSO's especially the newly established ones
- Increasing capacities of the civil servants tasked for cooperation with CSO's

SUMMARY OF RECCOMENDATIONS FOR FURTNER ACTIVITIES:

What needs to be done to strengthen the partnerships between the authorities and CSOs?

1. Improve mechanisms for cooperation of the CSOs with diverse national and local governmental bodies.
2. Establish criteria and mechanisms for transparent distribution of the national and local budgets portions allocated to CSOs.
3. Improve the existing and establish new mechanisms for active inclusion of the CSOs in the policy creation, decision making and policy implementation on central and local level.

What needs to be done to strengthen the partnerships between the businesses and CSOs?

1. Build capacities of the CSOs to approach businesses for fundraising purposes and to sustain their activities in the communities.
2. Establish communication channels, mechanisms and infrastructures for cooperation between the CSOs and the businesses (for example, donors-CSOs forum, web-page, community foundation, etc.)
3. Introduce new donation methods in the companies (for example: pay roll giving, case related marketing, re-granting program, etc.)

What legislations changes are needed to support the CSOs sustainability?

4. There is a need of clear definition of terminology within the Law for Donations and Sponsorships.
5. There is a need for changes in the Law for Donations and Sponsorships that will promote concrete benefits for the CSOs such as simplification of the procedure and tax and fiscal benefits for CSOs.

What values should be embedded in activities and the partnerships efforts of the CSOs?

1. Promote a strong civil society through ongoing sharing, training, practical solutions and communication guidelines for the new CSOs.
2. Promote code of conduct that promotes mission-driven, depoliticized and constantly-growing CSOs.
3. Promote building cooperation, trust and partnerships through the negotiation of the common interests of all involved sectors.
4. Invest efforts in building trust among the CSOs, the government and the businesses through increasing the transparency.