

**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.

## Authors

This report was written by Phillip Rawkins, the international expert, and Mr. Merkur Beqiri, the national expert. Ms. Aurelie Ferreira provided quality control and advice. Mr. Eric Tourrès was Project Director at Transtec.



Figure 1: Map of Kosovo



## 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, a

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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

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

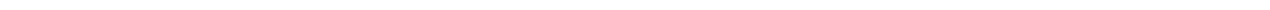
Budget allocations by activity, output and outcome, were reasonable and realistic, and expenditures were clearly managed with great care. By and large, actual expenditures were in line with initial projections. At 17 per cent of overall program costs, KDI salaries were entirely reasonable, particularly 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

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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







## II. INTRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

The project (i) *The project and evaluation objectives*

This evaluation belongs to a larger set of evaluations of UNDEF-funded projects from Rounds 2, 3 and 4

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

### **(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; Gračanica; 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.

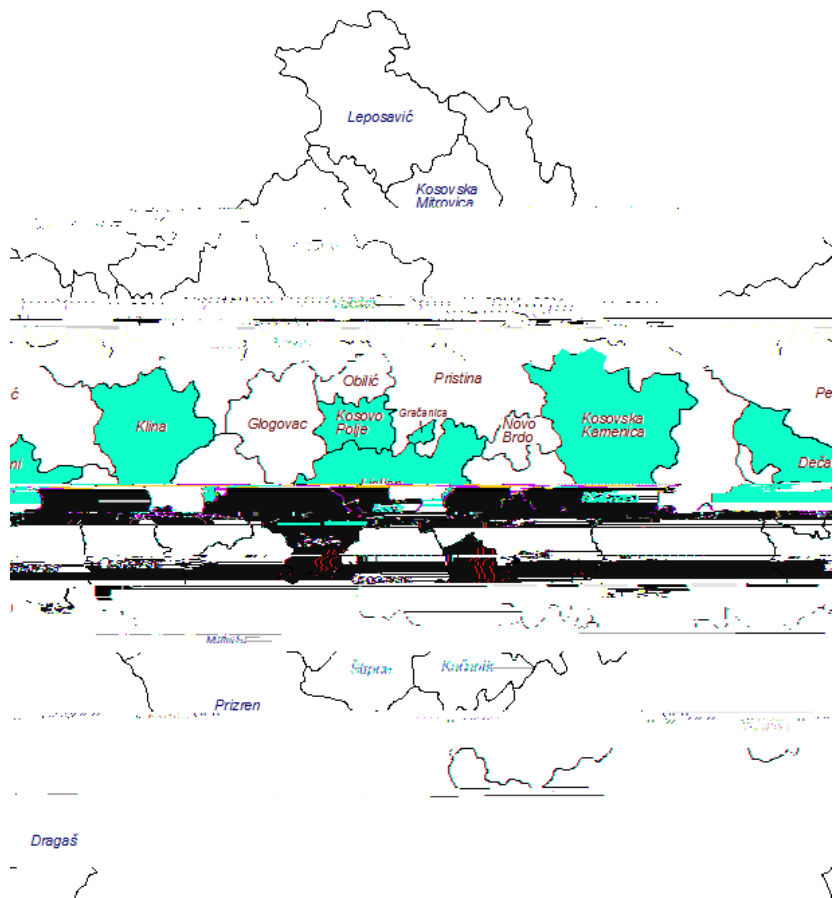


Figure 2: Municipalities visited during the evaluation

Two of the locations outside Pristina visited by the team (Fushe Kosova and Gračanica), had (who is also UNDEF Deputy Executive

<sup>1</sup> 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, 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 intervi

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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.<sup>4</sup> 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) 110<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup>

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**Civil Society:** Freedom of Association and the independence of civil society are guaranteed under the constit<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup>

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.<sup>13</sup>

**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.<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The key law, the Law of Freedom of Association of NGOs is viewed as consistent with international norms (*Nations in Transit*, p.6).

<sup>11</sup> See: BTI 2014, p.12.

<sup>12</sup> See: *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> See: *Nations in Transit*, p.4; *European Commission* October 2014, p.12.

<sup>14</sup> See: *Nations in Transit*, p.9; *European Commission* October 2014, p.9.

<sup>15</sup> See: *European Commission* October 2014, p.9



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

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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

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.

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*Arrange agenda,*



*Arrange and hold monthly  
advocacy meetings with partner  
CSOs;*

*Agree on Action Plans to tackle  
issues identified for joint or  
coordinated action;*





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.

The project was designed to be implemented in step-wise fashion, with the building-

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

Planning.<sup>18</sup>

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 3(l( )JTJETBT1 0 0 1 20 0 1 70.51 0a9p )







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

In the predominantly Serb municipality of **Gracanica**<sup>20</sup>, 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.

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 Citizen Participation in Decision-Making Manual. The manuals

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In *Shtime*



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

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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

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**(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

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## 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

*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*

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