



PHOTO CREDIT: USAID/NORTH MACEDONIA CEP FACEBOOK

SUMMATIVE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROJECT IN NORTH MACEDONIA

Evaluation Report

DISCLAIMER This work plan is made possible by the support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

This publication was produced at the request of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). It was prepared independently by IMPAQ International, LLC, under IDIQ Contract No. AID-I67-I-17-00004, Task Order No. 72016521F00002.

December 2021

Implemented by:

IMPAQ International
1325 G Street, NW
Suite 900
Washington, DC 20005

ABSTRACT: This Civic Engineering Project (CEP) is a USAID-funded activity in North Macedonia that began in 2016 prior to the formation of the new government in 2017 and the pursuit of policies of European Union (EU) accession and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) membership. CEP is one of several activities contributing to USAID’s 2020-2025 Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) Development Goal, “USAID Partnerships Promote a Prosperous, Well-Governed, and Resilient North Macedonia Committed to Euro-Atlantic Integration”. The project is implemented by prime implementer East-West Management Institute (EWMI) in close collaboration with local consortium partners: 1) Association for Democratic Initiatives (ADI); 2) Foundation for Internet and Society “Metamorphosis” (Metamorphosis); 3) Foundation Open Society – Macedonia (FOSM); and 4) National Youth Council of Macedonia (NYCM).

In 2021, IMPAQ International (IMPAQ) received a contract from USAID/North Macedonia to conduct a summative performance evaluation of CEP. IMPAQ, supported in country by Strategic Development Consulting, North Macedonia (SDC) and Women Influencing Health, Education and Rule of Law (WIHER), conducted a use-focused evaluation that integrates quantitative and qualitative methods to enrich USAID’s understanding of the effectiveness of supported civil society organizations (CSOs) and their government transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law interventions towards EU accession. As a result, IMPAQ provided to USAID/North Macedonia actionable recommendations to improve the efficiency and sustainability of its transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law programming moving forward.

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS | V |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS | VI |
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | I |
| INTRODUCTION | I |
| CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROJECT BACKGROUND | 1 |
| EVALUATION PURPOSE | 2 |
| EVALUATION METHODOLOGY | 3 |
| DATA ANALYSIS | 4 |
| KNOWN LIMITATION AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES | 4 |
| FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS | 6 |
| CONTEXT FINDINGS | 6 |
| CONTEXT CONCLUSIONS | 11 |
| EQ 1 FINDINGS | 11 |
| EQ 1 CONCLUSIONS | 26 |
| EQ 2 FINDINGS | 28 |
| EQ 2 CONCLUSIONS | 36 |
| LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS | 37 |
| LESSONS LEARNED | 37 |
| RECOMMENDATIONS FOR USAID FOR FUTURE PROGRAMMING | 37 |
| ANNEX A: EVALUATION STATEMENT OF WORK | 40 |
| ANNEX B: EVALUATION METHODOLOGY | 45 |
| ANNEX C: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS | 51 |
| ANNEX D: SOURCES OF INFORMATION | 70 |
| ANNEX E: KEY INFORMANTS AND FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS | 74 |
| ANNEX F: ANALYSIS OF CEP KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS | 77 |

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

| | |
|---------------|---|
| ADI | Association for Democratic Initiatives, North Macedonia |
| CAFT | Coalition of Civic Associations All for Fair Trials |
| CCC | Association of Citizen’s Center for Civil Communications, North Macedonia |
| CDCS | Country Development Cooperation Strategy |
| CEP | Civic Engagement Project |
| CO | Contracting Officer |
| COR | Contracting Officer’s Representative |
| COVID-19 | Coronavirus disease of 2019 |
| CSO | Civil Society Organization |
| DPM | Deputy Prime Minister |
| EQ | Evaluation Question |
| EU | European Union |
| EWMI | East-West Management Institute, Inc. |
| FGD | Focus Group Discussion |
| FINANCE THINK | FINANCE THINK Institute for Economic Research and Policy |
| FOSM | Foundation Open Society – North Macedonia |
| GESI | Gender Equality and Social Inclusion |
| GONM | Government of North Macedonia |
| IR | Intermediate Result |
| J2SR | Journey to Self-Reliance |
| KII | Key Informant Interview |
| LCDF | Local Community Development Foundation |
| LYPYP | Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies |
| MEL | Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning |
| MELP | Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan |
| MISA | Ministry of Information, Society, and Administration |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| NYCM | National Youth Council of North Macedonia |
| OM | Outcome Mapping |
| PG | Partnership Grant |
| PMU | Project Management Unit |
| SDC | Strategic Development Consulting, North Macedonia |
| SSG | Strategic Support Grant |
| TI | Transparency International, North Macedonia |
| U-FE | Utilization-Focused Evaluation |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| VCA | Vulnerability to Corruption Assessment |
| WI-HER | Women Influencing Health, Education, and Rule of Law |
| WHO | World Health Organization |

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The evaluation team wants to express their sincere gratitude to those who provided input and advice throughout the USAID/North Macedonia CEP evaluation.

We have sincere respect for the representatives of the North Macedonia government for taking the time to speak to the evaluation team and participating in the online survey. We thank all central and municipal government officials who provided thoughtful insights.

We are grateful to USAID/North Macedonia. We also acknowledge the cooperation of all former and current staff of the implementing partner East-West Management Institute and CEP partner and grantee civil society organizations that made themselves available for interviews, focus group discussions, workshops, and the provision of project information and data.

The evaluation team offers thanks to the logistics coordinator and translator, Gorjan Boshkovski. We are also grateful for the home office support of IMPAQ International throughout all stages of the evaluation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) commissioned IMPAQ International, LLC (IMPAQ) to conduct a summative performance evaluation of the Civic Engagement Project (CEP) in North Macedonia. The \$9.4 million project commenced in August 2016, and will conclude in August 2022, reflecting a one-year no-cost extension. CEP is implemented by lead partner East-West Management Institute (EWMI) in coordination with four civil society organization (CSO) partners: Association for Democratic Initiatives (ADI), the Foundation for Internet and Society “Metamorphosis” (Metamorphosis), the National Youth Council of Macedonia (NYCM), and the Foundation Open Society Macedonia (FOSM) along with a team of five CSO Grantees.

The evaluation team assessed the extent to which and how CEP-supported Government of North Macedonia (GONM) agencies and CSOs helped to advance North Macedonia’s European Union (EU) accession in regard to improving transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law, and to understand the prospects for government sustainability. The findings from this evaluation will help inform USAID/North Macedonia, EWMI, and other stakeholders involved in strengthening governance practices to design future activities in North Macedonia.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

CEP faced several external and extenuating challenges in 2020: 1) a major restructuring of its programming at the mid-way point (a pivot) from CSO capacity building to government technical assistance initially for an implementation period of 18 months; 2) the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020 onward; 3) Parliamentary elections in July 2020 with changes and additions to public institutions and agencies; 4) a 4-month “uncertainty” period in 2021 for the approval of a one-year no-cost extension (granted 2 months before its initial end-of-project date); and 5) local elections in October 2021. These challenges forced CEP to continually adapt its programming and delivery. Changing its programming and shifting from a CSO and citizen focus to one that also included a focus on high-level central government and municipal assistance, dedicated solely to transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law interventions, also required changes to its entry points and CEP’s monitoring plan to measure its progress and success with new indicators and targets.

Some of CEP’s CSO Grantees were most affected by the programming changes, as it required them to close their grants before the initial contractual end dates. The government was positively affected, due to receiving a wide range of technical assistance. This evaluation takes into account the challenges and achievements to date, and makes recommendations for the remaining implementation period to August 2022, and for future similar USAID activities.

Evaluation Question 1: To what extent and how have CEP-supported CSOs helped to advance North Macedonia’s EU accession in areas related to rule of law, transparency, and anti-corruption? What advanced or impeded this approach to supporting the GONM in these areas?

The objective of technical assistance in support of EU accession through more transparent and accountable government institutions was highly ambitious. While CSO Grantees and citizens felt the burden of the confusion and fragmentation of CEP’s pivot and new strategy, including the loss of funding, the government benefited through new technical assistance from CEP’s

programming shift. The focus on the ideals of transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law, through technical support to municipalities and public institutions, increased CEP's visibility with the GONM at the central level. All GONM evaluation informants at the central level were conversant with CEP's strategy. The informants maintained that they knew the implicit project goal of advancing EU accession, yet also acknowledged the explicit goal of countrywide awareness and interventions advancing good governance through transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law.

CEP tailored its technical assistance to government requests and priorities, resulting in high usage rates, with much of the advice and support implemented immediately. The support was provided in a way for the government to adopt, adapt, modify, and establish cycles of operational activities. The support was provided through short to medium duration tasks and projects that have achieved what they intended to do. However, the next stage is to follow up, where relevant, through locally led or donor funded programs or through CSO activities on the implementation, monitoring, or provision of evidence-based statistics or reports to inform evidence-based decision making and policy development.

CEP has established a foundation for institutional change in the processes and procedures for government transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law, particularly in government institutions opening their data to the public. Of more importance, CEP trained the government on making the data usable for different audiences. At the same time, CEP created demand from citizens for public municipal data, as well as good governance, such as fair trials and engagement with citizens. While significant progress was made at the central and municipal levels, making sustainability highly likely due to the processes and technology in place, *“there is still a long way to go.”*¹

Evaluation Question 2: To what extent and how has the sub-grantee, Center for Civil Communications (CCC) increased transparency in public procurement? What lessons learned from CCC's work could be valuable and applicable to other efforts to advance government transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law?

CCC has effectively created momentum, providing tools and intervening in legislation to encourage increased transparency in public procurement. However, more work remains. The findings demonstrate broad consensus that CCC has been instrumental in creating the necessary conditions for improved transparency in public procurement. However, the improvements achieved to date have not sufficiently translated into a practice of transparent tenders. CCC has provided tools and mobilized stakeholder support to use these tools, including the Index of Active Transparency and public procurement monitoring methodologies, to galvanize public pressure that leads public institutions to enact reforms. CCC's work has led to increased awareness of transparency issues and some cases of changed practices within institutions.

CCC has further positioned itself as a respected CSO with unique expertise, so much so that public institutions open their doors, extend invitations, and invite recommendations to legislative and regulatory reforms. Despite significant momentum, and increased objective scores observed through the Active Transparency Index, the end-user of public procurements – the business sector – has not seen a significant change in tender procedures. The process of change, through

¹ Interview MN02, CSO, October 2021.

public procurement monitoring, is lengthy and slow. Informants also perceive that public officials' impunity and the lack of penalties for public spending corruption cases that do make it to court, have contributed to the slow pace of changes. Ongoing monitoring of public procurements is required, and it may need to remain with civil society for the time being, as North Macedonia's institutions are not yet ready to adopt these accountability protocols. However, CCC has provided a host of tools and methodologies for a broader coalition of CSOs and stakeholders to engage in this mandate, effectively building the infrastructure for transparency monitoring.

Public spending for monitoring risks remains ineffective without robust adherence to the rule of law and free media in North Macedonia. The findings noted that enforcement of rule of law regarding public procurement violations is inconsistent and is rendered potentially ineffective in flagging offenses. Furthermore, when other public officials observe that corruption cases do not result in penalties, there is little incentive to adhere to transparency and anti-corruption practices. Lack of law enforcement is a significant deterrent to effective transparency and anti-corruption work. In addition, the findings indicate important concerns regarding the freedom of the press in North Macedonia. Media is a key avenue to "voice" and flagging potential corruption issues in public spending. Therefore, freedom of press to investigate and report issues without interference from business or political interests is imperative. Stakeholders emphasized a diminished role of investigative journalism practice and an increased presence of political or business influences in mainstream media. If freedom of traditional media outlets continues to diminish, CSOs in their roles as watchdogs will require additional capacity and resources for mass communication campaigns to raise public awareness of corruption cases.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Strengthen public and independent institutions with roles related to transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law, and state explicitly the roles and rules of engagement for each stakeholder. Specific examples of government and independent institutions or entities for continued, new and/or reinvigorated support include: Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors; Agency for Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information; Anti-Corruption Platform; Cabinet of the Deputy Prime Minister for Anti-Corruption, Sustainable Development and Human Resources; Finance Intelligence Directorate; Local Courts; Ministry of Information Society and Administration; Ministry of Justice; State Audit Office; Municipal Councils; State Commission for Prevention of Corruption; and State Judicial Council.

Recommendation 2: Strengthen the focus on outcome and impact indicators, targets, and results and be clear about expected changes in consultation with the government and the targeted public or independent institutions. Ensure the alignment of the activity/project objective indicator to the objective to ensure measurability, monitoring, and reporting. Ensure the selection of appropriate indicators to measure progress and success at output and outcome levels, including the measure of change. Activities should be clearly in line with national policies and plans. For example, include qualitative indicators on knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions across targeted groups, particularly citizens' perceptions of government accountability, to measure change in awareness and changes in behavior against the institutions' expectations, goals and strategies.

Recommendation 3: Strategically select key interventions for systemic change, given the multiple layers within each area of transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law. The Theory of Change should

identify sectors and synergistic pathways toward measured and verified change, particularly rule of law interventions.

Recommendation 4: Support long-term technical assistance (LTTA) with independent and neutral in-house (in-person) international or national experts who are resilient to influence to play a role in facilitating and monitoring the implementation of USAID-funded institutional support. This could be a team of LTTA advisors in both government and independent institutions, particularly to facilitate the creation of independent compliance control mechanisms, such as USAID-funded independent CSOs or other mechanisms, to ensure impartiality. The country has systems in place but requires more concentrated efforts on implementation. For example, the Ministry of Information Society and Administration (MISA) could be supported with a LTTA advisor to ensure implementation of strategies, such as the introduction of the merit system in employment. Other important links in the corruption chain include courts and prosecutions through the Court Council and the Prosecution Council because they appoint judges and prosecutors. Therefore, an independent LTTA advisor could adopt the role of reviewing past performances and current procedural compliance of the Court Council and the Prosecution Council. An LTTA in the State Audit Office (SAO), for example, should provide assistance to enable it to become a fully legitimate, respected, and authoritative agency.

Recommendation 5: Support short-term technical assistance (STTA) that focuses on systemic processes that are cyclical or periodic, adaptable, replicable, and sustainable for CSOs or government products or services. For example, the process of conducting citizen surveys on their perception of government accountability – with processes that are step-by-step including data collection, data analysis, monitoring, reporting, actions for improvement and learning (whole cycle), as well as a schedule for repeated surveys. The in-person, local or international STTA advisors with direct knowledge about the country’s political and governance narrative, should provide guidance and mentoring for specific, targeted, government-identified tasks. Promote a culture of evaluation, in which the government conducts internal and external assessments of their work for continuous improvements.

Recommendation 6: Include more comprehensive and inclusive engagement of a wide range of stakeholders, particularly public institutions – directly or indirectly – on transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law interventions. This engagement includes youth, particularly given that the government adopted the law on youth participation and youth policies (LYPYP) in January 2020, which obliges municipalities to involve youth in decision making processes. Strong support for the media, specifically investigative journalism, to monitor a range of areas, such as public procurement, should continue to enable the necessary public pressure that motivates institutions to change their practices, legislation, or regulations.

Recommendation 7: Strengthen youth and youth groups on transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law issues, their leadership, and their communication skills. Identify change agents and monitor their capacity to conduct actions or engagements with relevant CSOs and local government.

Recommendation 8: Continue support for open and transparent public procurement and contracting, in line with a recommendation from Transparency International’s 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index report, to assist in the identification of conflicts of interest and opportunities for fair pricing to prevent the diversion of public resources.

Recommendation 9: Re-focus the support of CSOs towards monitoring, rather than implementation of governance activities; i.e., to act as government watchdogs and monitors of transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law that complement the CSOs' and government's work. Civil society should continue to facilitate citizen awareness on transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law, and to facilitate two-way linkages between citizens and government on local issues for monitoring, policy development, and decision making.

Recommendation 10: Consider supporting CEP follow-on activities to ensure the application of technical assistance. Follow-on activities could include monitoring recommendations of Vulnerability to Corruption Assessments; monitoring the use of the online Open Data platform, particularly for citizens; continued support for amendments to the law on use of data from the public sector (Open Data law); and monitoring the municipalities with integrity plans.

INTRODUCTION

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Republic of North Macedonia has been a candidate for accession to the EU since 2005, but due to issues such as contestations from its neighbors, widespread corruption, and democratic governance backsliding, EU accession negotiations have stalled. The Government of North Macedonia (GONM) has achieved some notable good governance successes, thanks to a series of reforms ushered in by the new government formed in 2017, which prompted EU member states to grant permission for accession negotiations in 2020. However, more work is needed to gain accession to the EU. On March 27, 2020, North Macedonia became a member of NATO when all 29 national parliaments voted to ratify its membership in February 2019, after the country's long-standing contributions to Euro-Atlantic security. In November 2020, an EU-member country blocked the start of North Macedonia's EU accession talks, which has still not been lifted despite international efforts from EU-member countries and the US.

CEP, a USAID-funded activity in North Macedonia, began in 2016 prior to formation of the new government in 2017 and the pursuit of policies of EU accession and NATO membership. CEP is one of several activities contributing to USAID's 2020-2025 Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) Development Goal, "USAID Partnerships Promote a Prosperous, Well-Governed, and Resilient North Macedonia Committed to Euro-Atlantic Integration."² EWMI is the project's prime implementer in close collaboration with local consortium partners: 1) Association for Democratic Initiatives (ADI); 2) Foundation for Internet and Society "Metamorphosis" (Metamorphosis); 3) Foundation Open Society – Macedonia (FOSM); and 4) National Youth Council of Macedonia (NYCM).

CEP has undergone two phases. In its first phase, at project inception in 2016, the program had two objectives:

1. Strengthen constructive engagement by civil society organizations (CSOs) on policies and issues of public concern.
2. Increase and sustain youth engagement in public life in North Macedonia.³

After transition to a new government, the project entered its second phase when USAID/North Macedonia shifted its focus in response to findings from the IMPAQ-led Project Appraisal Document evaluation, priorities of the newly elected government in North Macedonia, and the launch of USAID's Journey to Self-Reliance (J2SR) Framework. As of 2020, CEP pivoted away from civil society capacity building, and toward strengthening GONM institutions' ability to execute reforms in three important areas of work toward their goals of EU accession and NATO membership: anti-corruption; transparency; and rule of law. As a result, 10 grants did not focus on these high-priority areas were closed before their initial contractual dates, while seven grants that did focus on these areas continued

² USAID/North Macedonia (2020). Country Development Cooperation Strategy: September 2020 - September 2025, p. 1.

³ EWMI (2020, September 30). CEP, Year 5 Work Plan, p. 7.

to be funded. In January 2020, USAID confirmed CEP’s shift in focus with its sixth modification to CEP’s contract, which also increased the contract’s budget from \$5,662,300 to \$7,678,924.

As a result of this shift, CEP revised its Theory of Change. CEP’s revised Theory of Change posits that:

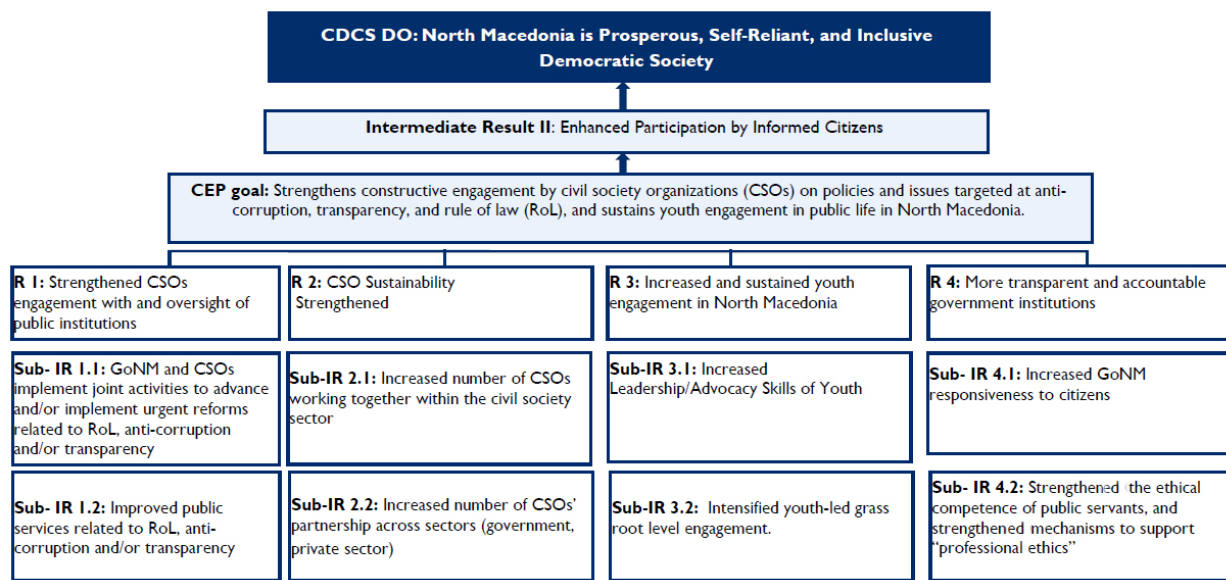
“IF North Macedonian public institutions, CSOs, CSO alliances, and citizens, including youth, are provided the resources, cooperation mechanisms, and technical assistance for coordinated and long-term joint actions in the areas of rule of law, transparency, and anti-corruption, THEN they will be more capable to contribute to North Macedonia’s accession and integration in EU and NATO.”⁴

Thus, CEP’s new goal is to:

“Strengthen constructive engagement by civil society organizations (CSOs) on policies and issues targeted at anti-corruption, transparency, and rule of law, and sustain youth engagement in public life in North Macedonia.”

CEP aims to achieve its purpose through focusing on four intermediate results (IR), as shown in the CEP’s revised Results Framework (Exhibit I).⁵

EXHIBIT I. CEP RESULTS FRAMEWORK



EVALUATION PURPOSE

USAID/North Macedonia commissioned IMPAQ International, LLC (IMPAQ) to conduct a summative (final) performance evaluation of the USAID-funded CEP in North Macedonia. The evaluation provides to USAID/North Macedonia a full, evidence-based, and independent assessment of the Project’s effectiveness, including an in-depth analysis of the extent to which and how CEP-supported GONM

⁴ EWMI (2020, September 30). CEP, Year 5 Work Plan, p. 7.

⁵ EWMI (2020, September 30). CEP, Year 5 Work Plan, p. 8.

agencies and CSOs helped advance North Macedonia's EU accession in regard to improving transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law.

The findings from this evaluation will help inform USAID/North Macedonia on governance activities in North Macedonia that could be replicated and inform activities under the new USAID's North Macedonia CDCS 2020-2025 on anti-corruption leading to EU accession. The audience for the evaluation report is USAID/North Macedonia, its implementing partner, EWMI, GONM, and other international donors and development partners.

In conducting the final performance evaluation, the team focused on two evaluation questions (EQs) specified in the evaluation's scope of work, found in Annex A:

1. EQ1: To what extent and how have CEP-supported CSOs helped to advance North Macedonia's EU accession in areas related to rule of law, transparency, and anti-corruption? What advanced or impeded this approach to supporting the GONM in these areas?
2. EQ2: To what extent and how has the sub-grantee, Association of Citizens Center for Civil Communications (CCC) increased transparency in public procurement? What lessons learned from CCC's work could be valuable and applicable to other efforts to advance government transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law?

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

To conduct the summative, final performance evaluation of CEP, the evaluation team used a utilization-focused approach, incorporating complementary qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis, including online data collection tools tailored for different stakeholder groups. Before collecting data, the evaluation team conducted a thorough review of the documentation related to the EQs to gain an in depth understanding of CEP's activities and to assess the availability and quality of CEP's monitoring and evaluation data to answer the EQs.

From October 18 through November 23, 2021, the evaluation team collected qualitative and quantitative data on the perspectives and experiences of key stakeholders involved in CEP. The primary research methods included key informant interviews (KIIs) focus group discussions (FGDs), an online survey, and a case study approach to capture each stakeholder group. Due to COVID-19-related public health restrictions, the evaluation team conducted all data collection activities remotely by telephone and web-based conferencing technology.

The following summarizes the data collection activities to inform EQ1:

- **Key Informant Interviews:** The evaluation team conducted online interviews with 36 individuals (20 women and 16 men) including: 1) USAID and other USG stakeholders; 2) the CEP staff; 3) the CSO grantee staff; 4) GONM central level officials; and 5) media outlets and journalists. Each KII followed an interview protocol adjusted for different respondent types and was conducted in English or Macedonian, depending on the key informant's preference.
- **Focus Group Discussions:** The evaluation team conducted 4 online FGDs with a total of 17 participants (12 women and 5 men), tailored to 3 main stakeholder groups including: 1) justice

system direct beneficiaries, including legal officers and trial monitors trained by CSO Grantees; 2) sub-CSO members from non-grantee CSOs that are part of a network of community CSOs managed by a CEP-supported CSO Grantee; and 3) citizens engaged by CEP-supported CSO Grantees. By conducting FGDs with specific stakeholder groups, the evaluation team could target lines of inquiry to gather the most relevant information. The evaluation team sought to ensure gender parity, to the extent possible.

- **Online Survey:** The evaluation team disseminated an online survey to 88 staff members representing the local government level or municipalities. A total of 42 individuals completed the survey, for a response rate of 48 percent. The respondents represented 19 municipalities across 7 regions, including 4 rural municipalities⁶ and 20 female staff members and 22 male staff members.

For EQ 2, the evaluation team focused solely on the CSO CCC and its activities to enhance the transparency of public procurement. Taking a case study approach, the evaluation team conducted a workshop with 3 CCC staff members, key informant interviews with 10 individuals, and a focus group discussion with 4 participants from the business sector.

For the detailed methodology, refer to Annex B. For the data collection protocols, refer to Annex C.

DATA ANALYSIS

The evaluation team employed several data analysis methods and approaches to identify key findings from the data, draw conclusions, and make recommendations. The team triangulated the available performance monitoring data with qualitative data collected through document review, KIIs, FGDs, and the online survey. Evaluation team members independently reviewed the evaluation notes and tallied occurrences of key themes, comparing data from the various sources described above, to determine whether findings were divergent or convergent. The extent to which multiple informational streams provided consistent findings informed the certitude and internal validity of the conclusions. The evaluation team conducted content analysis by reviewing and coding KII and FGD data to identify and highlight notable examples of CEP's successes, or lack of success, that contributed to, or hindered, achievement of its objectives. Throughout the analysis, the evaluation team disaggregated all KII and FGD data by sex and age and analyzed them for possible differences in respondents' perspectives associated with gender and age.

KNOWN LIMITATION AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

The team identified several challenges and limitations in preparing for and conducting the evaluation, including cognitive bias as well as challenges associated with remote data collection. Additionally, the evaluation team experienced challenges in facilitating data collection due to the October 2021 local elections in North Macedonia affecting the team's ability to employ the planned outcome mapping research methods to inform EQ2.

⁶ North Macedonia has 8 statistical regions and 81 municipalities (10 municipalities constitute the City of Skopje). CEP engaged with at least 32 municipalities.

Cognitive bias: Key informants and FGD participants constituted a key source for answering all EQs, but interview data is prone to cognitive biases, including recall and social desirability, as well as respondent bias when implementers facilitate contact with beneficiaries. To mitigate this risk, the evaluation team began each KII and FGD with a protocol that reviewed CEP's objectives. Additionally, the team explained the evaluation purpose and how the data can be used, while ensuring confidentiality.

Challenges with remote data collection: Given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the evaluation team collected all data remotely. Potential challenges associated with remote data collection included the risk of technology failures, diminished communication quality, and increased challenges in arranging meetings with respondents. To mitigate these limitations, the evaluation team had a variety of remote communication tools (Skype, WhatsApp, Zoom, mobile conferences, and regular mobile phone communication) available. Overall, the evaluation team encountered very few issues with connectivity and was able to mitigate this challenge.

October 17, 2021 Local Elections in North Macedonia: Data collection was expected to occur from October 18 to November 12, 2021. Due to the local elections on October 17, the evaluation team found it difficult to arrange interviews with central and municipal government representatives. A second round of elections was held 2 weeks later on October 31. The evaluation team launched the online survey with municipal GONM officers immediately and followed-up with emails twice. The evaluation team also extended the data collection period to November 23. However, the planned number of KIIs and FGDs still was not met, resulting in an additional extension of the data collection period.

Outcome Mapping Approach: For EQ2, an innovative approach was planned, involving outcome mapping, a participatory method of evaluation that focuses on a review of the Theory of Change to identify behavioral and relationship changes and how a project intervention (the CCC public procurement transparency intervention for GONM ministries and municipalities) influenced those changes. The proposed outcome mapping approach included a series of workshops of about 3 hours over 2 days, and a follow up workshop to validate findings. The participatory process is long, requiring lengthy preparation to review documents, carefully select "boundary partners" to interview, and to build trust with CCC. Due to delays in the start of data collection activities in combination with the CSO's lack of available time to fully invest in the evaluation's participatory approach due to the work commitments of their staff, the original design was no longer feasible. The evaluation team adapted the approach to focus on KIIs and FGDs and an abridged outcome mapping technique, which enabled triangulation of information.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

CEP's Background and Operating Environment

CONTEXT FINDINGS

STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH

CEP launched in a difficult operating environment, but overcame many challenges to establish a strong CSO alliance in North Macedonia. The USAID-funded CEP was awarded in 2016 to the EWMI, prior to the change of the elected government in 2017. CEP was designed with the overarching goal to “strengthen the influence of CSOs’ and “increase and sustain youth engagement” in North Macedonia predominantly through capacity building interventions.⁷ Inherent challenges for a civic engagement project to operate in a country where CSOs were viewed with government suspicion were present from the start of CEP. CEP staff and CSO partners and grantees describe the early operating environment of CEP as “*a bad time*” as CSOs had to “*keep a low profile, because, before, people were beaten, there were court trials, phone tapping, threats ... it led to some CSO staff having psychological problems.*”⁸ In efforts to mitigate these challenges and to demonstrate CEP’s commitment to “*open[ness] and transparen[cy] about [its] activities,*” CEP regularly extended invitations to engage with government counterparts and willingly shared information about its activities. Despite the varying degree of success in CEP’s government engagement approach, as described in more detail under EQ1, CEP built a strong CSO alliance, at several levels, with partners, grantees, and synergistic activities. Following the 2017 elections and change in the elected government, general mistrust and suspicion resolved.

After 3 years of implementation, or Phase I of CEP, CEP adapted its overarching objective in response to new evidence generated from USAID/North Macedonia’s 2018 Project Appraisal Document (PAD) and to align with USAID’s J2SR framework representing the second phase of CEP. The PAD indicated that USAID should take a more targeted approach to supporting democratic transition focusing on North Macedonia’s key gaps in working towards EU accession, namely transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law. These findings from the PAD coupled with the recent change of GONM, generated an ideal situation for USAID to pilot its newly developed J2SR framework and was launched in October 2018. The J2SR framework outlines USAID’s approach to “working with host country governments and partners to achieve locally-sustained results, helping countries mobilize public and private revenues, strengthening local capacities, and accelerating enterprise-driven development.”⁹ As a result of these contextual factors, USAID reviewed CEP’s original design and mandate. While CEP was recognized as a champion in supporting CSOs in North Macedonia and the country’s progression toward a democratic transition, CEP’s original mandate was broader and thus had only a small number of grants and activities focusing on the three areas identified by the PAD as gaps towards North Macedonia’s EU accession. By January 2020, USAID modified CEP’s contract to solely and strategically focus on transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law activities. This shift,

⁷ USAID/North Macedonia (2016, August). Solicitation, Offer and Award, Activity for Civic Engagement (ACE), East-West Management Institute Inc., AID-165-C-16-00003, p. 8.

⁸ Interview MN01, CSO, October 2021.

⁹ <https://www.usaid.gov/selfreliance>

considered the end of CEP's Phase 1, resulted in closing 10 of its 17 grants that were not related to these priority issues. Of the remaining seven grants, two were also not related but had a near-term close date. The last five grants were already aligned to the priority issues and thus were extended through 2021 as CEP entered its Phase 2.

The resulting shift in strategy and implementation approach was cataclysmic for CEP's implementing partners and CSOs. CSO partners and CSO grantees referred to Phase 2 in a number of ways, including “*the pivot*,” “*the redesign*,” “*the restructure*,” “*the reorientation*,” and “*the disruption*” among others. Some partners and grantees sensed that a change was coming, but none predicted its severity and the shock waves that it caused. CSOs regarded the pivot as “*a serious and severe blow*” to the project.¹⁰ The decision was perceived as abrupt and simultaneously, “*unexpected*” and “*unexplainable*”.¹¹ The sudden closure of the 10 grants, left grantees shocked and financially disadvantaged. CSO partners had made plans, recruited and trained staff, and looked to a future of 3 to 4 years of USAID-funded support. One grantee said, “*We had a grant for former drug addicts that were being reintegrated into society and they were abandoned because of the pivot.*” CEP staff had to manage the expectations of government, its partners, and grantees. The stress for CEP staff was palpable and for some overwhelming, resulting in their resignation.

Entering into its second phase of implementation, CEP found itself in a new operating environment, one predominantly occupied by the EU and their work on anti-corruption. Under its new mandate, CEP had to shift from a project designed to provide grants and capacity building support to a broad range of local CSOs to one that provided technical assistance to national and local government institutions directly and through a smaller number of CSO grants already working on these issues. CEP had to shift its beneficiary target from CSOs and citizens – a large target audience at the grassroots level – to a new beneficiary pool of government agencies. CEP partners, including EWMI, ADI, and FOSM, had to move “*from being grant managers to becoming implementers.*” Upon engaging with the government agencies, CEP found that EU-funded activities were already heavily present which meant CEP needed to find synergies in the activities.

To achieve its stated objectives under Phase 2, CEP's prime implementer, EWMI, works with two levels of CSOs: CEP CSO partners (sub-contractors), and CSO grantees (now under Service Agreements and not grants). EWMI commenced in 2016 with four CEP CSO Partners: 1) ADI; 2) Metamorphosis; 3) FOSM; and 4) NYCM. FOSM had its capacity development assistance component terminated in June 2019, as well as 10 CEP grants, when activities were realigned under a USAID/North Macedonia re-design for Phase 2 of implementation.

For this evaluation, per USAID's instruction and as outlined in the evaluation scope of work, the NYCM youth component is not included because its focus is outside the scope of transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law. Thus, the evaluation includes an assessment of EWMI's partners ADI, Metamorphosis, and FOSM (Exhibit 2).

¹⁰ Interview MN07, CSO, November 2021.

¹¹ Interview MN02, CSO, October 2021.

EXHIBIT 2: CEP CSO PARTNERS

| TYPE | CSO | DURATION | GOAL | FOCUS |
|---------|--|--------------------------------|---|-----------------|
| Lead | EWMI – East-West Management Institute, Inc. | August 2016 – August 2022 | Overall management of CEP, including liaison at the central government level. | All |
| Partner | ADI – Association for Democratic Initiatives | September 2016 – December 2021 | ADI was responsible for short-term grants, e.g., Strategic Support Grants (SSGs), rapid response grants, and youth engagement support grants (YES). From January 2020, ADI worked on Component 4 on anti-corruption at the local level with municipalities and citizens. ADI conducted vulnerability assessments. | Anti-corruption |
| Partner | Metamorphosis (Meta) – Foundation for Internet and Society “Metamorphosis” | September 2016 – June 2022 | Metamorphosis managed long-term Partnership Grants (PGs) – 3-year grants. From January 2020, it continued with the Ministry of Information, Society and Administration (MISA) on the Open Data system, working with municipalities and citizens. | Transparency |
| Partner | FOSM – Foundation Open Society Macedonia | September 2016 – December 2021 | FOSM strengthened municipalities’ resilience (i.e., capacity building) in corruption and conflicts of interest, focusing on reported cases and providing legal support. From January 2020, FOSM worked with five municipalities that already had integrity systems and an additional five municipalities to conduct integrity assessments. [The IP does not consider FOSM to be an official partner from 2020.] | Anti-corruption |

From January 2020, to achieve this new sole objective of advancing North Macedonia’s accession to the EU, CEP completed its grants mechanism; 10 CSO partnership grants (PGs) and strategic support grants (SSGs) that did not focus on the 3 high-priority areas were closed earlier than planned, and 7 CSO grantees that did focus on these areas continued to receive funding. Of these seven CSOs, five had a strategic focus on anti-corruption, transparency, and rule of law. The pivot resulted in CEP working with five CSOs and their local sub-partners for the remaining 2 years of the project until July 2021, which was extended to August 2022 for some CSOs (Exhibit 2).¹² By July 2020, CEP finalized and closed all grants regardless of their end dates, and issued no further grants. After this time, the grantees were issued Service Agreements (not grants) if their activities were extended. However, for convenience, this evaluation report refers to these CSOs as grantees, rather than Service Agreement CSOs.

EXHIBIT 3: CSO GRANTEES ON TRANSPARENCY, ANTI-CORRUPTION, AND RULE OF LAW

| TYPE | CSO | DURATION | GOAL | FOCUS |
|------|--|-----------------------|---|-------------|
| PG | CAFT – Coalition of Civic Associations All for Fair Trials | June 2018 – June 2021 | Improve access to justice and quality of justice for civil trial cases with a focus on vulnerable groups seeking justice (disabled, low socio-economic status, etc.). [EQ1] | Rule of law |

¹² The five prioritized CSO grantees were reviewed during a Design Workshop with USAID/North Macedonia, held on September 27, 2021, and were further refined through CEP grantee lists.

EXHIBIT 3: CSO GRANTEES ON TRANSPARENCY, ANTI-CORRUPTION, AND RULE OF LAW

| TYPE | CSO | DURATION | GOAL | FOCUS |
|------|--|---------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| PG | Citizens Association FINANCE THINK Institute for Economic Research and Policy | May 2017 – September 2020 | Enhance local-stakeholders’ practice and participation in the local budgeting process and increase the effectiveness of the municipal-money spending. [EQ1] | Transparency |
| SSG | LCDF – Local Community Development Foundation | March 2018 – February 2021 | Improve the quality of local public policies by strengthening the capacities of the municipal councils and local grassroots CSOs in policymaking and monitoring. [EQ1] | Transparency |
| PG | TI – Transparency International | May 2017 – May 2020 | Enhance the impact of the CSOs related to anti-corruption progress in Macedonia. [EQ1] | Anti-corruption |
| SSG | CCC – Association of Citizens’ Center for Civil Communications | April 2018 – June 2021 | Enhance effectiveness in public spending (public procurement) by reducing corruption and increasing transparency. [EQ2] | Anti-corruption & Transparency |

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

CEP, along with the rest of the world, had to adjust its implementation approach in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak of COVID-19 a pandemic on March 11, 2020.¹³ To reduce the cycle of COVID-19 transmission and the high number of deaths, governments around the world, including the GONM, instituted countrywide lockdowns at periodic intervals, and strict public safety and hygiene measures such as physical distancing, wearing face masks in designated areas, and restrictions on domestic and international air travel. Initially, from March to May 2020, government and businesses closed – “everyone stopped breathing” – until a gradual re-opening commenced in June of the same year. This created significant challenges for CEP’s renewed mandate, as government counterparts, such as the Commission of Judges, effectively ceased operations for 6 months. COVID-19 posed significant challenges to the development community, and CEP had to formulate alternative ways to implement its activities remotely by online meetings, not knowing when the “unknown force” would end. This technological change brought its own challenges to local and central government operations.

NATIONAL AND LOCAL ELECTIONS

CEP and the continuity of its activities throughout its period of performance were affected on numerous occasions by national and local elections in North Macedonia. In June 2020, just as the fear of the pandemic became manageable, early Parliamentary elections commenced, creating another challenge or “roadblock” for CEP to overcome. After months of working to build brand new relationships with government institutions that CEP had not worked with before, Parliamentary elections led to a pause in activities and finally some shifts in government counterparts, requiring re-

¹³ COVID-19, Coronavirus Disease of 2019, was first identified in December 2019.


engagement. Ultimately, the same party remained in power, which was a benefit to CEP as this party continued the agenda of anti-corruption due to international donors' influence. Following elections and continued donor influence, the GONM formed a new Cabinet and appointed a Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) for Anti-Corruption, Sustainable Development, and Human Resources (the Cabinet of the DPM) with two additional staff.

The GONM proceeded to hold municipal elections in October 2021. During the course of these local municipal elections, CEP had to stop engagement with mayors and municipality citizens through the respective partners and CSO grantees, such as progressing with the Integrity Plans. In October 2021, following the opposition's obtainment of mayoral seats and a second round of defeat, the Prime Minister resigned on October 31.¹⁴ In addition to the change of mayors in some CEP-support municipalities, the election had the lowest representation of women in mayoral seats since 2009, when no women were elected. In the October 2021 local elections, only two female mayors (2.5 percent) of the 81 municipal heads were elected into office. These shifts in municipal governments mean that partners and CSOs will have to work with new counterparts, some of which will present challenges to the CEP agenda. One interviewee shared that one new mayor has 15 criminal charges against him, lamenting the challenges this will impose on progressing with municipal integrity plans.

CEP'S RESPONSE

CEP, hampered by COVID-19 and elections, and with an ambitious implementation plan, received a 1-year, no-cost extension of the project's period of performance through August 2022. Noting the many contextual factors hampering CEP's ability to make progress, USAID approved a one-year no-cost extension. Given the ambitious mandate on anti-corruption, transparency, and rule of law, with only an initial two-year period of performance, CEP welcomed this extension, and it provided some stability and confidence across the partners.

Despite these contextual challenges, CEP adapted and restructured its programming, devised alternative implementation strategies, and, from the onset of COVID-19, adjusted its communication approach. During evaluation interviews with current and former project staff and CSO grantee staff, the shock was evident, but most staff were reflective, acknowledging difficulties and proud of their progress under severe disruption.



We adapted very quickly because we had to. A lot was happening in the country at the time of the pivot – new government, new spirit, new energy.

– CEP Staff

The pivot enabled the project to become narrower and deeper, focusing on specific activities – predominantly technical and process-oriented activities at the GONM central level – moving away from general activities, such as broad CSO capacity building.¹⁵ GONM evaluation informants said the change of programming was well received. Although the majority of the CSO grantees whose grants were cut short felt the greatest pain, CEP staff indicated that eventually the shift was ultimately “good” because it

¹⁴ Euronews (2021, November 1), <https://www.euronews.com/2021/11/01/north-macedonia-s-prime-minister-resigns-after-local-election-results>

¹⁵ Interview MN07, CSO, November 2021.

demonstrated CEP’s commitment to the big issues of transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law. CEP staff members attribute a smooth transition in part to much support from USAID/North Macedonia.

Among the CSO grantees that no longer received support from CEP following the pivot, some continued to work on their previous activities, seeking funding elsewhere or restructuring their efforts. One former CEP CSO staff member said, “We finished 18 months ago, but we are continuing our activities. So, that shows sustainability.” The informant confirmed the continued CEP engagement with and support the CSO alliance through its CSO partners, developed before the pivot: “The support from ADI has not ended; and we also continue to work with Metamorphosis on activities to promote the Openness Index. CSOs are working together as a result of CEP. It’s a never-ending partnership.”¹⁶

We used the CSO alliance networking approach for its solidarity ... a sense of belonging with the same cause and mission, sharing and exchanging our knowledge and resources. From the disruption, the pivot, the CSOs were monitoring and coaching, making videos ... but after the pivot, they continued to work together.

– CEP CSO Partner Representative

CONTEXT CONCLUSIONS

CEP faced numerous external and extenuating challenges from the project onset, forcing CEP to continually adapt its programming and delivery. Changing its overarching mandate midway through implementation, shifting from a project focused on civil society and citizen engagement to one focused on engaging central and municipal level government stakeholders in efforts to promote transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law, was tantamount to starting a new project. Despite the resulting challenges, CEP staff successfully shifted its focus to appropriate entry points and maintained commitment from the remaining CSO grantees to its new objectives. The following sections take into account these challenges, the achievements to date, and what to expect for the final months of the project and beyond.

Evaluation Question 1: To what extent and how have CEP-supported CSOs helped to advance North Macedonia’s EU Accession in areas related to rule of law, transparency, and anti-corruption? What advanced or impeded this approach to supporting the GONM in these areas?

The purpose of EQ1 was to examine if and how CEP-supported CSO partners, including EWMI, ADI, FOSM, and Metamorphosis and the CSO networks supported by these grants, advance efforts in anti-corruption, transparency, and rule of law, which are necessary precursors to EU accession. Additionally, in response to EQ1, the evaluation team sought to understand what internal and external factors advanced or impeded CEP’s ability to demonstrate progress toward these objectives.

EQ 1 FINDINGS

CEP’S ENTRY POINTS TO THE GONM

The Cabinet of the DPM, a newly-elected entity and the first of its kind in North Macedonia, became CEP’s primary central level government counterpart or entry point. To fulfil its new mandate and in alignment with USAID/North Macedonia’s new CDCS, which placed

¹⁶ Interview MN10, CSO, November 2021.

anti-corruption at the heart of its strategy, CEP focused on providing technical assistance to the Cabinet of the DPM to build its role within the GONM. This entry point was considered particularly important because as a new institution, there was significant opportunity to influence the determination of its role within the anti-corruption system. As stated by one interviewee, “*There was room for creativity.*”

Additionally, in taking a systems-based approach, CEP simultaneously focused on complimentary entry points, government, and independent agencies at the central level, including the following:

1. Transparency – Ministry of Information, Society, and Administration (MISA) and the Agency for Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information.
2. Anti-corruption – (independent) State Commission for Prevention of Corruption (SCPC).
3. Rule of law – State Judicial Council, and the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecution.

Respondents considered all entry points successful. However, some interviewees felt that the full landscape of anti-corruption was not able to be engaged. Also, CEP’s mandate on rule of law was limited to small interventions. Interviewees felt that it was an important aspect of the anti-corruption landscape to engage for transparency and anti-corruption work to be effective.

CEP continued working with its existing entry points such as CSOs, municipalities (including council members, mayors, and operational staff), media organizations and journalists, and local citizens. All of these stakeholders indicated that they understood “*their role and relevance in the project*”¹⁷ towards CEP’s goal to “*increase GONM responsiveness to citizens*”.¹⁸

The evaluation team encountered no external criticism of CEP as a project, and government entities at central and municipal levels were generally positive, supportive, engaged, and ready to receive support. Government informants indicated that public servants are generally young, and while they may be inexperienced, they indicated that they were “*enthusiastic*”.

TRANSPARENCY

CEP’s transparency activities focused on increasing GONM responsiveness to citizen’s needs, strengthening the ethical competence of public servants, and improving relevant mechanisms to enhancing “*professional ethics*”. In efforts to strengthen targeted public institutions to act more openly and increase accountability, CEP through CSO partner Metamorphosis and grantees FINANCE THINK and LCDF, focused on strengthening municipal councils to involve citizens in local decision making processes while simultaneously building citizens’ capacity in their municipalities to become effective watchdogs of local issues. The following findings summarize the key achievements of CEP’s programming designed to strengthen transparency in North Macedonia.

¹⁷ Interview VD02, CSO, October 2021.

¹⁸ USAID/North Macedonia (2020, January). Solicitation, Offer and Award, Activity for Civic Engagement (ACE), East-West Management Institute Inc., AID-I65-C-I6-00003, Modification #06.

CEP, through its partnership with Metamorphosis, contributed to enhancing the transparency and accountability of government institutions by increasing accessibility and use of open data at the national and local levels. CEP's technical assistance designed to improve access and use of open data at the national and local levels has achieved high results with 106 new government open datasets released by CEP-supported institutions against a target of five. Notably, one ministry indicated that they did not input data for a year, showing that commitment is a long process. While the evaluation findings suggest that the established target was low, CEP set this target cautiously as this was the first time a foundation for open data has been introduced to public institutions in North Macedonia. Additionally, of all 42 respondents, 26 (62 percent) confirmed that their municipality had opened up their datasets or information repositories to the public as a result of the CEP project's technical assistance. Five (12 percent) said they had not opened up their datasets yet, and 11 (26 percent) did not know.¹⁹

Sixty-two percent of survey respondents (26 out of 42) confirmed that their municipality had opened up their datasets or information repositories to the public as a result of the CEP's assistance.

In January 2020, Metamorphosis' Project Management Unit (PMU) began providing open data technical assistance to the MISA. For sustainability, the assistance focused on amending the law on the use of data from the public sector (Open Data Law), adopted in February 2020 to align the national data protection legislation with the general data protection regulation (GDPR), Regulation EU 2016/679. The MISA Open Data Working Group, in its first meeting in October 2021, expected to submit the draft by the end of 2021 for adoption by March 2022.

Furthermore, CEP successfully engaged and facilitated collaboration among 63 stakeholders in the design of a new Open Government Partnership National Action Plan (OGP NAP), which contributed to the development of an online OGP platform to provide access to government data for public. In collaboration with MISA, Metamorphosis oversees the use of the online OGP platform.

Metamorphosis also published the first monitoring report of the implementation of the GONM Transparency Strategy (2000-2021) as part of the country's efforts to comply with EU accession requirements, providing strategies that enable citizens to freely access public information. The monitoring report was developed in alignment with the Open Data Strategy (2018-2020), complementary to the Public Administration Reform Strategy (2018-2022), and the OGP NAP. The report samples and monitors 50 GONM institutions and documented limited implementation of the Government's Transparency Strategy.

CEP Metamorphosis PMU continues to provide training to civil servants and data officers to support use of the OGP platform. The main objective of these online trainings is to provide to data officers across the target municipalities an understanding and appreciation of open data, a new concept in North Macedonia. As of September 2021, CEP trained 60 government data officers on open data quality in 17 municipalities. As some of the targeted municipalities lacked access to computers or adequate staffing, CSOs indicated that the training was "*slow and inconsistent*".²⁰ Hence, this training only

¹⁹ Online Survey for Municipalities, Question 3.5 Has your municipality opened up its data sets or information repositories as a result of the project's support?

²⁰ Interview MN02, CSO, October 2021.

represents half of the established target of 120. Training has continued and remains ongoing.²¹

Together, MISA and CEP Metamorphosis produced 10 video lessons (an automated webinar) for open data, with topics ranging from identification to cataloging to prioritizing datasets. To promote broader use and uptake of the training materials, the OGP platform will soon publish the videos, making them available for government officers, CSO staff, and the general public. Notably, the webinar videos also contain a self-assessment for viewers to evaluate their readiness to engage in managing or using datasets.

MISA representatives are confident of the sustainability of open data processes, policies, and laws. MISA regarded the online OGP platform, which the GONM adopted in October 2021, as a “great” monitoring tool providing free access to government information. Of about 1,200 institutions, MISA has reached 150 (12.5 percent), with open data received from 60 institutions (5 percent).²² MISA’s aim is not to reach all institutions simultaneously, but to prioritize them. For example, MISA has worked with the SCPC since 2020 with data systems. The SCPC is experiencing technological issues and expects to launch a new open data system by the end of 2021.



The online OGP platform was used straight away. It’s a great monitoring tool, a supersonic portal for CSOs, institutions, businesses, and chambers of commerce. It’s free access to government information.

– Government Representative

Following the completion of CEP, MISA plans to conduct video training on the online OGP platform for all users in early 2022, after fixing technical issues. CEP’s technical support is regarded, not as a short-term project, but as an ongoing “extraordinary process” that will ensure continuity throughout the country’s political changes.

Local government training participants expressed high levels of satisfaction with the training facilitated by CEP. Of 42 respondents to the online survey for municipality staff, 91 percent of respondents were “very satisfied” or “mostly satisfied” with a range of trainings provided through CEP.²³ Only one person (2 percent) was “a little” satisfied, and three did not answer. Refer to Exhibit 4.

Of the survey participants, 27 respondents confirmed that they had received targeted training from CEP on publishing data in different formats for different end users.²⁴ Nine training participants provided feedback on the quality and usefulness of the training. Seven respondents indicated that the training was “solid and effective” and that the training “was useful as there was an exchange of opinions and insights from several municipalities.” Two participants indicated that the training courses were provided too late, and that the trainings “should have been at the very beginning of the mandate so that we could use the knowledge during the term of office”. Additionally, these participants felt that the trainings lacked “practical examples”.

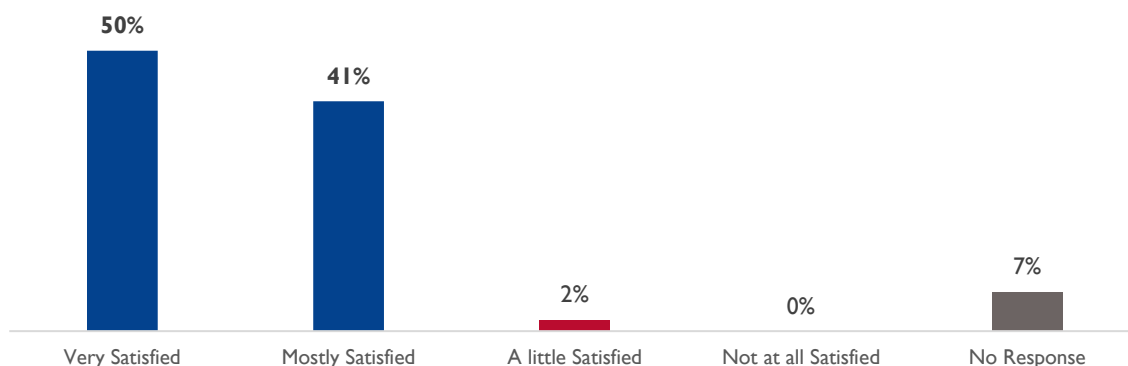
²¹ Interview MN02, CSO, October 2021.

²² Interview MN17, GONM, November 2021.

²³ Online Survey for Municipalities, Question 3.4 How satisfied are you with the training support provided to you by the project?

²⁴ Online Survey for Municipalities Question 3.1 Have you been trained by the project to publish data or information in different formats for different users? and Question 3.2 Comment on the quality and usefulness of the training. Of 42 respondents, 27 had been trained, 8 had not been trained, and 7 didn’t answer.

Exhibit 4: How satisfied are you with the training support provided to you by the project? (n=42)



Furthermore, when municipal staff members were asked to comment through the online survey on tangible changes in their workplace that they have adopted due to the CEP transparency training, five respondents noted that:²⁵

- *“I pay more attention to the decisions to be voted on.”*
- *“After training, [we] decide to make all the decisions, not partisanship.”*
- *“All decisions made online and live broadcasts of council sessions were published.”*
- *“Several types of open-format data on the municipal website have been published.”*
- *“[We have] greater discipline and responsibility for publishing data and information.”*

CSOs cooperation on activities extend beyond CEP’s funding. The objective to improve transparency of the governments stems from engaging local CSOs (sub-CSOs) and citizens through partnerships. These partnerships are not solely concentrated on transparency, but through a combination of transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law synergies. CEP CSO partners and grantees cooperate on activities **not** funded by CEP. For example, CEP set a target of eight synergies, and one has been achieved – Metamorphosis cooperated with Accountability, Technology Network of Institutional Openness in Southeast Europe (a regional network) to compare the Openness Index data for central government institutions across the region to gain lessons learned.

²⁵ Online Survey for Municipalities, Question 3.3 Comment on what you do now in your job that you did not do before – e.g., tangible or behavioral changes you have observed/experienced.

ANTI-CORRUPTION

CEP identified and drew on two main entry points to implement activities to combat corruption at the central level including the Cabinet of the DPM and the SCPC. Additionally, by strengthening local government resilience and conflict of interest through integrity planning and vulnerability to corruption assessments (VCA), CEP also sought to combat the effects of corruption in North Macedonia at the local level working in close collaboration with CSO partners ADI and FOSM and grantee Transparency International (TI). Additionally, through CEP's collaboration with CCC, CEP sought to enhance the effectiveness of public spending by reducing corruption and increasing transparency. EQ2 presents an in-depth analysis of CCC's programming.

CENTRAL LEVEL

CEP support was critical to establishing the Cabinet of the DPM. CEP provided short-term technical assistance (STTA) to the newly formed Cabinet of the DPM to strengthen its institutional capacity, particularly in defining its roles and responsibilities. The Cabinet of the DPM, while not a public institution or agency and without executive powers, provides a coordination role for government anti-corruption activities. Evaluation informants explained that initially the roles of the two entities were perceived to be competitive, but formal collaborations commenced and is ongoing. DPM staff maintain regular communication with the SCPC and hold bi-monthly meetings. The government also approved eight new employments and seven promotions in the SCPC; approved funding for the development and procurement of an assets register (of elected officials); almost doubled the SCPC budget from 2019 to 2021; and provided new office space for the SCPC.

CEP employed a 3-K (3-C) strategy to address public institutional corruption focusing on Collaborate, Communicate, and Coordinate.²⁶ For example, to understand its audience – the citizens of North Macedonia – CEP assisted the Cabinet of the DPM to establish a public opinion research mechanism, which led to the Cabinet conducting its first national opinion poll and focus group discussions in 2021. CEP also assisted the Cabinet of the DPM with a software upgrade project for assessing citizen complaints with government institutions, which is ongoing. The Cabinet of the DPM described CEP's governance support as “*significant*”, helping staff to be more professional, cohesive, and focused on teamwork.

[CEP] helped us a lot, [CEP] helped us get organized, restructured, motivated, and [CEP] provided help with our next ideas [projects]. It was important that [CEP] was here in person ... [CEP] provided objective and independent advice. [CEP] helped to make the Cabinet fully functional.

Furthermore, CEP worked together with the Cabinet of the DPM on a code of ethics for public officials for which CEP designed a curriculum that included six-90 minute modules and conducted online training. The target was 15 training sessions with 20 people per training for a total of 300 public officials trained. By the end of September, the Cabinet of the DPM had extended invitations to 400 public officials and 188 have received training.²⁷ CEP also integrated a risk identity

²⁶ In the Macedonian language, the words *collaborate*, *communicate*, and *coordinate* begin with the letter K.

²⁷ Interview MN09, November 2021.

methodology and integrity testing within the training program in two parts: 1) psychological testing, and 2) real case examples.

According to evaluation informants, two modules on the code of ethics were the most useful: 1) ethical leadership; and 2) ethical filtering during decision making. Another topic of use was the principles of ethical behavior, which included receiving gifts and citing research material. While participants perceived the training and testing as informative, many expressed an interest in follow up activities to better understand how to apply the knowledge gained. Specifically, one informant said, “*We trained lots of officials [on the code], but how they will apply the code is a big question mark... it is okay in theory, but I don’t know how sustainable it is in practice. It needs further understanding.*”²⁸ At the time of the evaluation, CEP’s internal results of the training and testing were pending.

The Cabinet of the DPM appreciated the rapid turnaround of CEP’s management advice and assistance. “*There is a quick turnaround, but quicker for training project ideas than for the software upgrade. In comparison to other donor projects, CEP and USAID were concrete, specific, and quick.*”²⁹ At the time of the evaluation, the Cabinet of the DPM has already submitted another proposal to CEP for continued support. With the current political turmoil, the sustainability of the Cabinet of the DPM is uncertain. However, CEP plans to continue its support to the Cabinet until its status becomes clearer. Cabinet staff will sustain their experience and continue influencing anti-corruption activities and strategies. Stakeholders, and the evaluation team, maintain that CEP’s continued support to the Cabinet is appropriate due to the Cabinet’s willingness to own and sustain the supported approaches.

In addition to working with the Cabinet of the DPM, CEP provided technical assistance to the SCPC according to the Commission’s capacity building priorities, such as the assessment of bank statements and accounts. This assistance resulted in a manual on processes. The SCPC asked for assistance with reporting on political party financing during election campaigns as part of Article 32 of the law for prevention of corruption and conflict of interest. In April 2021, at SCPC’s request, CEP supported a VCA in Public Employment, which identified the government’s “*growing commitment ... [and] notable progress in legislative improvement, including the law on institutions and law on public enterprises, reducing the number of Board members and increasing the requirements for professional qualifications.*”³⁰ TI conducts quarterly monitoring reports on how selected public institutions implement their vulnerabilities. SCPC uses the reports as evidence-based findings to take corrective actions as part of its independent role in monitoring government institutions.

LOCAL LEVEL

CEP provided anti-corruption training focused on topics including conflict of interest and training and integrity assessments at the local government level. These trainings were received favorably with 90 percent of surveyed municipality staff indicating that they were “*mostly*” or “*very*

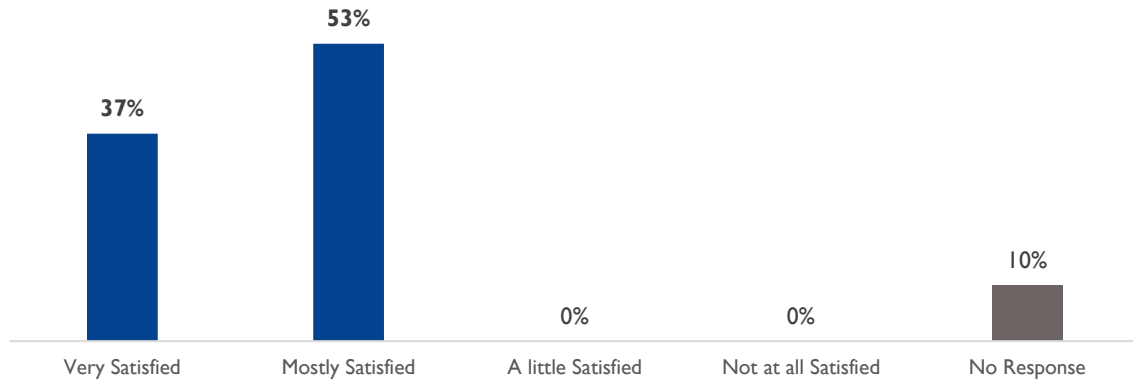
²⁸ Interview MN09, November 2021.

²⁹ Interview MNI6, GONM, November 2021.

³⁰ EWMI (2021, October). Quarterly Progress Report, July-September, #20, p. 6. Another CEP CSO Partner conducted VCAs in five municipalities: Bitola, Gostivar, Kavadarci, Kumanovo, and Shtip in 2020.

satisfied” with the training. Refer to Exhibit 5.³¹ Specifically, several respondents described the trainings as “useful,” and that the training content was “well conveyed [and] easy to adopt.” As a result, one participant noted that they can now “recognize/identify different forms of corruption and bribes.”

Exhibit 5: How satisfied are you with the training and support provide to you by the project? (n=30)



Source: Evaluation Team, Online Survey, October-November 2021.

Beyond satisfaction and knowledge gained, when municipal staff were asked to comment on the online survey about tangible changes in their workplace that they have adopted due to the CEP anti-corruption training,³² participants noted that “For somethings, I now know where to turn or ask for help for certain information” and that they are practicing “better/more frequent communication.” On the other hand, a few training participants indicated that they “didn’t need the intervention, but I can recognize and intervene as needed” and that they “have no engagement as a result of training.”

To strengthen government resilience to corruption and conflict of interest, CEP initiated Municipality Integrity Plans (MIP) over a period of 10 months from May 2020 to March 2021, for five municipalities: Dojran, Karposh, Ohrid, Prilep, and Zhelino. Despite the CSO’s low expectations for the initiative,³³ the multi-party Municipal Council in three of the five municipalities have formally adopted the Integrity Plans: Dojran, Karposh, and Zhelino.³⁴ The representative from Karposh confirmed this output in the evaluation’s online survey, describing it as “quality crafted and useful”.³⁵ Two Integrity Plans are still in progress, although the Ohrid informant did not know its status, and neither did the CSO because the country’s Census interrupted the last month of the initiative.

³¹ Online Survey for Municipalities, Question 4.1 Have you been trained by the project on preventing corruption or provided with resources/support on preventing corruption? Of 42 respondents, 17 had been trained, 12 had not been trained, and 13 didn’t answer. Question 4.4 How satisfied are you with the training and support provided to you by the project? Question 4.2 Comment on the quality and usefulness of the training or engagement.

³² Online Survey for Municipalities, Question 4.3 Comment on what you do now in your job, after training or engagement with the CSO, that you did not do before.

³³ Interview MN05, CSO, October 2021.

³⁴ EWMI (2021, July). Quarterly Progress Report, April-June, #19, p. 25.

³⁵ Online Survey for Municipalities Question 4.5 Have you prepared a Municipality Integrity Plan? and Question 4.6 Comment on the quality and usefulness of the Integrity Plan.

Prior to CEP’s engagement, these five municipalities had never received training on the conflict of interest law before. The amendment to the prevention of corruption law subsumed the previously separate conflict of interest law, and both laws were covered in the MIP training. The 2-day training involved identification of local risks for each municipality. Although the risks were similar across municipalities – such as public procurement – the rankings for the likelihood of each risk was different. A combined workshop enabled information exchange among the municipalities.

While the next step is the follow up and implementation of MIPs to use as tools for establishing and verifying the integrity of local government units as a basis for their policies, standards, and procedures, the CSO was not tasked with this continued support. To facilitate implementation, the CSO worked with the Strategic Planning and Integrity Sector of the SCPC to inform them of the MIPs. The SCPC liked the one simple, clear document with actions aligned to national policies, outlining roles and responsibilities.³⁶ The result, to ensure sustainability, was a Memorandum of Understanding with the SCPC, the endorsement of the activity, and formation of a working group to follow up this activity.³⁷

As a result of different CEP’s interventions, the majority of assisted municipalities demonstrated an understanding and respect for ethical considerations. The online evaluation survey for municipalities included three ethical dilemma questions. All 42 respondents answered each question (Exhibit 6). The two corruption questions (B and C) showed a clear choice stating that people should always report a case of corruption, with no significant difference for the sex of the claimant (95 percent for a male claimant and 93 percent for a female claimant). The promotion dilemma question (A) demonstrated differences in the selection of options. The respondents had a possibility of a promotion and the options included taking the promotion with a bribe, not reporting the person who got the promotion with a bribe, reporting the person who got the promotion with a bribe, or not knowing what to do because they did not trust the system. The majority (59 percent) did not know what to do because they had no confidence in the system. Thirty-six percent chose to report the promoted person who paid a bribe, and 5 percent took the promotion after paying a bribe.

| EXHIBIT 6. ETHICAL DILEMMA QUESTIONS – RESULTS (N=42) | | |
|---|--------|-----|
| DILEMMA | NUMBER | % |
| A: there is a possibility for a promotion that comes with a condition. What would you choose to do? | | |
| NO 1: A higher position that supports my family, but I have to pay the hiring officer a fee to influence the result to get the job. | 2 | 5% |
| NO 2: A lower paid job even though I know that the person who got the promotion paid to influence the result, but I am not going to say anything because I might lose my job. | 0 | 0% |
| NO 3: I didn’t get the promotion. The person who was promoted paid a fee to influence the result, so I am going to report it to the appropriate authority. | 15 | 36% |

³⁶ Interview MN05, CSO, October 2021; and Interview MNI4, November 2021.

³⁷ Interview MN05, CSO, October 2021.

EXHIBIT 6. ETHICAL DILEMMA QUESTIONS – RESULTS (N=42)

| DILEMMA | NUMBER | % |
|--|--------|------|
| NO 4: I don't know what to do because I don't have confidence in the system. | 25 | 59% |
| B. When do you think it is justifiable for a woman not to report a case of corruption to the police? | | |
| NO 1: Never, she should always report it. | 40 | 95% |
| NO 2: If she is in danger from the police because they are corrupt, and they may harm her. | 0 | 0% |
| NO 3: A woman should not report a case of corruption to the police, but she should go to another authority or CSO/NGO that will support her. | 1 | 2.5% |
| NO 4: She should always keep quiet for her own safety. | 1 | 2.5% |
| C. When do you think it is justifiable for a man not to report a case of corruption to the police? | | |
| NO 1: Never, he should always report it. | 39 | 93% |
| NO 2: If he is in danger from the police because they are corrupt, and they may harm him. | 0 | 0% |
| NO 3: A man should not report a case of corruption to the police, but he should go to another authority or CSO/NGO that will support him. | 2 | 5% |
| NO 4: He should always keep quiet for his own safety. | 1 | 2% |

Source: Evaluation Team, Online Survey, October-November 2021.

RULE OF LAW

CEP, in coordination with CSO grantee the Coalition of Civic Associations All for Fair Trials, conducted rule of law interventions at the bottom-up and top-down level by raising citizen awareness on their access to justice.

CEP's central level interventions focused on improving the legal and regulatory mechanisms that hold the government accountable and strengthening the capacity of GONM institutions and ministries, such as MISA, the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors (AJPP), and the State Audit Office (SAO).³⁸ In the judiciary system, CEP

³⁸ EWMI (2021, July). Quarterly Progress Report, April-June, #19, p. 6.

particularly focused on trial monitors working in civil and criminal cases centrally and regionally. CEP also established eight Advisory Bodies engaging citizens. CEP's focus was on three pillars: education of the judicial ethics committee, strengthening the visibility of the association of judges, and peer-to-peer knowledge exchange with peers from other countries, particularly in ethical principles and mechanism for integrity. To date, the results of the Advisory Bodies are not substantial. Informants suggested a more effective approach would be citizen perception surveys conducted by GONM at the local level, such as the Cabinet of the DPM at the central level has commenced for anti-corruption.

CEP conducted trainings for judges and public prosecutors (staff of the SCPC and SAO), in collaboration with CSOs, media, and the Anti-Corruption Platform (ACP) – an informal entity – on reporting corruption; for example, public finances, conflict of interest, the law on protection of whistleblowers, and financing political campaigns. The training materials focused on criminal offenses in financing political parties during election campaigns for the AJPP related to the work of the SCPC, and training materials for the SAO, can be used for internal trainings to conduct their own capacity building. Although the evaluation team made an effort to interview some of the 15 ACP members, but were not successful, making it unclear how their capacities have improved, and the likelihood of its sustainability after the completion of CEP.

Notably, CEP supported the government to monitor civil trials, with the possibility of extending to criminal cases. Trial monitors received training on the methodology of monitoring civil and criminal cases, and they implemented their learnings according to court schedules, but also selected against criteria such as “a citizen who complains about too long procedure, no transparent trial, or no fair trial”.³⁹ The citizen approached CEP's CSO Grantee, which subsequently assigned a monitor to the case.

The trial monitors said the training was “very specific”, which enabled their effective monitoring. They added that “The transparency of trials improved significantly and also public access to the trials.” The monitors noted a change in the behavior of some judges, such that “Now, the judges very rarely deny the presence of the public in the courtroom. This is the main benefit from the project; the public is more present in the courts.”⁴⁰ However, the general view is that the court system needs more improvement, since not all participants and public institutions are involved in trainings or willing to engage: “My grade of transparency is 4 out of 10” said the evaluation informant. When asked if CEP was instrumental for EU accession in North Macedonia, the informant said, “Absolutely yes. The analysis and reports are useful for judiciary development. The project contributed a lot for the improvement of the transparency in courts.”

Monitoring of court cases is a good idea since it enables better transparency and makes judges ... provide fair trials and complete them in a reasonable time, not to be extended for many years without any valid reason.

– Government Representative

The main concerns about the trial monitoring intervention were that it was ad hoc and not organized with a clear focus. Trial monitors may attend a case on any civil issue, such as building rights, and that the trials are “long and complex, and coming to a trial in the middle of the procedure can mislead the monitor since [the monitor] is not familiar with the whole case.” Regarding CEP's public institution monitoring reports, the same informant commented that, “The analysis provided by the project was good content-wise, but what was missing was clear conclusions and recommendations to overcome the identified issues...I assume

³⁹ Interview VD04, GONM, October 2021.

⁴⁰ Interview VD04, GONM, October 2021.

that findings are the result of a number of trial monitorings, and my opinion is that they are not very useful for the goal of improving transparency or rule of law.”⁴¹ Therefore, the informants questioned its sustainability and thought it would be more effective if there was established infrastructure for recording trials electronically, which could be disseminated, if appropriate, to interested CSOs and citizens as part of the open access dialogue.

PROGRESS TOWARDS EU ACCESSION

Assisting a country to reach EU accession is a highly ambitious goal and lengthy process that requires strategic and coordinated support across several sectors and numerous stakeholders. To join the EU, a country must demonstrate its respect for EU’s fundamental values established in Article 2, including respect for democracy, rule of law, and human rights, as well as protection of minorities. The applying country must then receive approval from all existing member states. There are four basic steps to EU accession: 1) application, 2) candidate status, 3) negotiations, and 4) accession. While the average time to complete this process, from the start of negotiations to accession, is 5 years;⁴² Croatia, the last country to succeed in joining the EU in 2013, completed the process in 10 years from the start of its application. In 2004, North Macedonia applied for accession and was accepted 16 years later into the negotiations stage.

CEP’s approach was not focused on the ultimate long-term outcome to gain EU accession, but on systematic step-by-step processes for transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law that are, in themselves, the goal of many citizens of North Macedonia. While the objectives of transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law are crucial to the systematic process of EU accession, and North Macedonia has made progress toward the objectives, the majority of stakeholders do not see accession as imminent. Of the 42 respondents participating in the online municipality survey, 25 respondents (60 percent) believed North Macedonia would gain EU accession within the next 5 to 10 years, while the remaining 17 (40 percent) disagreed, indicating that it would not.⁴³ In March 2020, North Macedonia gained membership into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), seen as a precursor to EU accession. One CSO member stated, “We are now in NATO, so the country has done it and should be congratulated. In terms of CEP, we are halfway along our Theory of Change.”⁴⁴

EU Accession – no, that’s unlikely. The goal was too ambitious, but we provoked discussion and awareness of citizens...with the new government in 2017 anti-corruption was raised higher and processes started, so even if we go backwards after this year’s elections, we won’t go back to zero. Even the EU is in doubt about what the country will look like in the future.

– CEP CSO Partner Representative

However, in November 2020, an EU-member country blocked the start of North Macedonia’s EU membership talks, and, despite international efforts from EU-member countries and the United States, the blockade has not been lifted to date. Furthermore, while some informants thought the government was addressing corruption issues, Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) shows that North Macedonia scored 35 in 2020 of 180 countries with an average score of 43 out of

⁴¹ Interview VD03, GNOM, October 2021.

⁴² UK in a Changing Europe, <https://ukandeu.ac.uk>, accessed December 5, 2021.

⁴³ Online Survey for Municipalities, Question 6.1.

⁴⁴ Interview MN15, CSO, November 2021.

100, which places them towards the corrupt continuum (a zero score is highly corrupt and 100 is clean). North Macedonia's CPI ranking has worsened from 93 in 2018 to 106 in 2019 and 111 in 2020.⁴⁵

APPROACHES THAT ADVANCED OR IMPEDED CEP SUPPORT TO THE GOVERNMENT

The beginning of the Findings and Conclusions section of the report presents a series of contextual factors that created an extremely challenging environment in which to work. Despite these factors, CEP managed to deliver a wide array of interventions and adapt to the changing context. The challenges were rare for implementers to face, mid-stream, in the course of their contract. Nevertheless, CEP had to make implementation decisions for the remaining 18 months (January 2020 to August 2021) before they sought and received an extension to August 2022.

Under the conditions CEP faced, sensitivities around communication and engagement were noted. The evaluation team found two main internal challenging factors that may have impeded CEP's approach to achieving its own objectives, as well as supporting the government in its goal towards EU accession: 1) engagement of stakeholders in terms of missed opportunities, and 2) its monitoring, evaluation, and learning plan. This is followed by an identified factor that advanced CEP's support to the government through in-person STTA.

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

CEP was not expected to partner with a wide range of government institutions over the short period of time. However, this narrowed the scope of institutions, particularly for rule of law and anti-corruption interventions. A larger range of government institutions could have been reached through a wider communication or engagement strategy to learn from each other in a neutral environment, which would indirectly capture a full spectrum of institutions that were not part of CEP's mandate.

CEP did not use youth engagement as an entry point to improve transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law in North Macedonia. Component 3 which focuses on strengthening youth engagement, with its existing network of active youth interventions, was not maximized after the pivot. The 18 to 25-year-old group has potential to contribute to generational change in good governance. The Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia adopted the law on youth participation and youth policies (LYPYP) in January 2020. The new law obliges municipalities to involve youth in decision making processes, and also includes a Manual for Local Youth Councils, revised in 2020 in accordance with the LYPYP.⁴⁶

“Media has the power to increase citizen awareness and understanding of their civic rights.” **CSOs believe that, despite extensive coverage of CSO activities in the local and national media and online, a wider entry point is required to maximize the media, particularly investigative journalism that exposes violations.**⁴⁷ Reforms to the rule of law, and the engagement of the judiciary and legal system to advance effective penalties for violations, are limited within a short-term project, and therefore targeted strategies could be considered.

⁴⁵ TI (2021). Corruption Perceptions Index 2020, p.3; and compared with the two previous years.

⁴⁶ Interview MN19, CSO, November 2021.

⁴⁷ Interview MN11, CSO, November 2021.

Despite the many, and appropriate, entry points CSOs engaged, CSOs noted that they “cannot fill in for [public] institutions.”⁴⁸ Transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law, particularly to advance EU accession, must come from institutional change through improved processes and procedures that remain stable throughout political change, as well as through the country’s citizens being knowledgeable and aware of good governance to hold the government to account.

MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING PLAN

CEP updated its Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan (MELP) to adapt to changes in its mandate and its extended period of performance. After USAID/North Macedonia’s decision to restructure the project, CEP had to plan for new stakeholders, interventions, strategies, approaches, and activities. These actions had to be included in CEP’s MELP and had to reflect the changes with new indicators and targets, at the same time that the COVID-19 pandemic struck in March 2020. The revised MELP was approved in September 2020, and by February 2021, CEP applied for a one-year extension, which was approved shortly thereafter. In light of this extension, CEP had to again adjust its approach and MELP for another year of programming.

As a result of continued uncertainty and subsequent revisions, CEP’s final MELP, in part, monitored and measured its progress and success. To some extent, CEP adapted its MELP to measure government engagement and demonstrate government commitment to the processes of transparency and professional ethics. However, CEP’s revised MELP did not establish clear processes to measure change, effects of grantee interventions, or citizen engagement. With more time, less uncertainty, and few external challenges, CEP could have included measurement of change at the outcome level and a citizen perception survey or study.

Given that CEP began as a CSO-strengthening, CSO-alliance building, and CSO-engagement project, the project objective and indicators are appropriate and measurable, but not ambitious. The overall project objective and its indicators aim to measure strengthened CSO engagement and the number of joint activities in cooperation (i.e., engagements) with government institutions.

After the programming pivot and the introduction of Component 4, CEP’s indicators and targets remained mostly output-based, and not outcome-based. The indicators measure activity results rather than outcome indicators that measure change. As noted in the Project’s Modification #06, CEP’s mandate expanded to include the objective, “technical assistance in support of EU Accession” through more transparent and accountable government institutions, for the following results: Intermediate Result (IR) 4.1 Increased GONM responsiveness to citizens; and IR4.2 Strengthened ethical competence of public servants, and strengthened mechanisms to support “professional ethics.”⁴⁹ Component 4 introduces the end-consumer – citizens – and a focus on the government’s responsiveness to them, but not the measure of citizen confidence to engage with the government (despite the many CEP activities that support citizens and government linkages and engagements).

⁴⁸ Interview VS03, GONM, October 2021.

⁴⁹ USAID/North Macedonia (2020, January). Solicitation, Offer and Award, Activity for Civic Engagement (ACE), Modification #06, East-West Management Institute Inc., AID-I65-C-I6-00003, p. 2.

Under Component 4, there are five performance output indicators that measure the number of trainings, the number of trained civil servants/data officers, the number of stakeholders engaged in creating the OGP National Action Plan, and the number of representatives participating in trainings. One indicator is documented as an outcome indicator, but it is an output indicator for the number of new open datasets released by each supported institution. The indicator does not measure change, such as the frequency of use of open datasets, who is using them, for what purpose, and to what effect or impact. However, the indicator does demonstrate the commitment of public institutions to the process of transparency.

Furthermore, from the CSO Grantees point of view, many of their activities are pilot projects or new methodologies, approaches, or activities by themselves or their sub-CSO partners. Having collective or aggregated indicators, or some measure of success, at the CEP project level in its MELP, would help to highlight the most effective approaches and to learn from the innovations and experimentations.

Due to the lack of outcome-level indicators that measure change at the central government, local government (municipality), civil society, and citizens levels, as well as the follow-up of the learnings and CSO-government-citizen engagements, it is difficult to fully understand CEP's progress and achievements through an evidence-based approach to its MELP. CEP's progress toward success is detailed in the narratives of its quarterly reports. These narratives focus less on achievements against a range of sequential indicators with realistic targets that measure the objectives, theory of change's intermediate results, and all three areas of support (transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law). For example, CEP's measurements did not focus on defining success as measured by the Project's technical assistance (to central and municipal governments), increased responsiveness to citizens (and citizens' perceptions of the government response), and changes resulting from CEP's interventions on anti-corruption and rule of law in addition to government transparency and professional ethics.

IN-PERSON STTA

One approach that advanced CEP's support to the GONM functioned within the Cabinet of the DPM in which both STTAs were present, working with the staff, visibly, in-person, and providing technical assistance and mentoring. CEP's governance STTA, starting with three people in the Cabinet, supported and strengthened the staff by creating a team that grew to six and more officers. A Residential Retreat for the Cabinet in May 2021 further strengthened their teamwork. Through this teamwork approach, with clearly defined aims and objectives aligned to the government's national plan, and both individual and team roles and responsibilities, the Cabinet of the DPM achieved a significant amount of work in a short period of time, as noted by representatives during evaluation KIIs. The code of ethics STTA conducted training remotely but was present in country for ongoing contact and support.

Staff members of the Cabinet stressed the importance of having physically present experts--one a local university professor; the other a retired international expert in democracy living in North Macedonia--who were readily available for "quick response" support". The CEP management team was also described as being "cooperative" and able to provide support and quick turnaround response times to queries.

EQ I CONCLUSIONS

The objective of technical assistance in support of EU accession through more transparent and accountable government institutions was highly ambitious. While CSOs Grantees and citizens felt the burden of the confusion and fragmentation of CEP's pivot and new strategy, including the loss of funding, the government benefited through new technical assistance from CEP's programming shift. The focus on the ideals of transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law, through technical support to municipalities and public institutions, increased CEP's visibility with the GONM at central level. All GONM evaluation informants at the central level were conversant with CEP's strategy. The informants maintained that they knew the implicit project goal of advancing EU accession, yet also acknowledged the explicit goal of countrywide awareness and interventions advancing good governance through transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law.

CEP tailored its technical assistance to government requests and priorities, resulting in high use rates, with much of the advice and support implemented immediately. The support was provided in a way for the government to adopt, adapt, modify, and establish cycles of operational activities. The support was provided through short to medium tasks and "projects" which have achieved what they intended. However, the next stage is to follow up, where relevant, through locally led or donor-funded programs, or through CSO activities on the implementation, monitoring, or provision of evidence-based statistics or reports to inform evidence-based decision making and policy development.

CEP has established a foundation for institutional change in the processes and procedures for government transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law, particularly in government institutions opening up their data to the public. Of more importance, CEP trained the government on making the data usable for different audiences. At the same time, CEP created demand from citizens for public municipal data, as well as good governance such as fair trials and engagement with citizens. While significant progress was made at the central and municipal levels, making its sustainability highly likely due to the processes and technology in place, "*there is still a long way to go.*"⁵⁰

Evaluation Question 2: To what extent and how has the sub-grantee, Center for Civil Communications increased transparency in public procurement? What lessons learned from CCC's work could be valuable and applicable to other efforts to advance government transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law?

The evaluation team took a case study approach, reviewing in depth the transparency work of one of CEP's grantees, CCC. The evaluation team sought to form a multi-faceted understanding of CCC's work and its effects, while collecting information and perceptions from representatives of institutions that CCC intended to influence, as well as key people in the public procurement process.

CEP GRANT TO CCC: PUBLIC SPENDING FOR PUBLIC GOOD

CCC is a well-established CSO in North Macedonia, operating since 2005. It has focused on promoting transparency, accountability, and anti-corruption in public institutions, conducting and publishing research to flag potential corruption issues, working with the media to broadcast these findings, and providing recommendations and advisory services to government initiatives, legislation, and procedures

⁵⁰ Interview MN02, CSO, October 2021.

to reduce corruption and increase transparency. CCC received a grant in 2018 under the CEP Strategic Support Grant Program titled “Public Spending for Public Good” (Exhibit 7).

EXHIBIT 7. CCC GRANT

PUBLIC SPENDING FOR PUBLIC GOOD

Implementation: April 1, 2018 – June 30, 2021

Duration: 3 years

Total Budget: USD 168,320.24

Purpose: Enhance effectiveness in public spending by reducing corruption and increasing transparency.

1. Improve public procurement’s legal framework and best practices toward reduced corruption and enhanced effectiveness in public spending.
2. Improve implementation of regulation related to transparency and accountability of public institutions on a national and local level.
3. Enable journalists, CSOs, and citizens to fulfil their oversight role in public spending and increase the pressure on public institutions for greater transparency and reduction of corruption.
4. Increase organizational capacity for oversight of public spending and expanding activities.

CCC approached its work by conducting the following activities:

- **Public spending research and dissemination:** CCC monitors central and municipality level public spending activities and attends open tender procedures to produce databases, research reports, and information on an on-going basis. CCC engages with stakeholders to widely disseminate this information, ensuring it is publicly available on the CCC website for reference. For the grant, CCC analyzed public spending activities including the following subjects: 1) vehicles owned by executive branch institutions; 2) firefighting equipment; 3) winter street maintenance contracts; 4) New Year’s decoration purchases; 5) COVID-19 response procurements; 6) property tax collection; and 7) payments to municipal councils.
- **Index of Active Transparency:** CCC conducts the annual Index of Active Transparency assessment to rank the performance of 98 public institutions representing government agencies, line ministries, and municipalities. For the grant, CCC published the Index in 2019, 2020, and 2021. The Index often prompts public institutions to reach out to CCC for consultation or assistance on improving their score, which is a service provided on an as-needed basis.
- **Journalist Help Desk:** CCC provides ad hoc and demand-based assistance and consultations to journalists requesting information about the misuse of public funds by public officials and data to corroborate potential corruption in public spending. Further, CCC reaches out to their journalists’ network to flag important corruption risks or hindrances to transparency, for news reports.

- **CSO training and engagement:** CCC mobilizes and trains CSOs within their network on how to use CCC’s available public spending research and the Index of Active Transparency to put pressure and provide support to public institutions within their sphere of influence. CCC conducts trainings for CSOs to do their own public procurement monitoring, equipping them with the methodology and skills. For the grant, CCC trained 31 CSO representatives from across the country.
- **Annual business community survey:** CCC conducts an annual survey which it distributes to companies to comment on their experience participating in public procurements. CCC uses this information to inform their engagements with public institutions.
- **Engagement in GONM-led working groups and roundtables:** CCC is an active participant and civil society representative in government-led working groups, expert roundtables, and consultations. Through these working groups and roundtables, CCC provides key recommendations to support legislative and regulatory changes, as well as GONM strategies and programs.

EQ 2 FINDINGS

All stakeholders interviewed cited that CCC’s research is high quality, user-friendly, and impactful. Each informant highlighted that CCC produces digestible and methodologically sound research and information on public procurement monitoring that easily incorporates into their respective work. CSOs shared that they use CCC’s databases for monitoring spending activities at the municipality-level. Journalists said that CCC’s research is “*easily accessible to us to produce news reports that put pressure on the institutions*”⁵¹. The journalists emphasized that, in addition to the content being sound, the way CCC presents the findings – through data visualizations and information visuals – enables a non-procurement expert to understand the transparency issue under analysis. Meanwhile, public institutions shared that the “*CCC very precisely and practically conveys the analysis and knowledge to all institutions*” and that the research is “*important and statistically substantiated*”⁵². Public institutions acknowledged that research is rarely translated immediately into legislation, but CCC’s research has served an important function in sparking a debate within and across public institutions. Further, in comparison to other CSO’s work on monitoring government activities, one public institution asserted that CCC’s “*criteria and methodology is crystal clear, whereas other CSOs don’t always apply clear methodologies to measure transparency.*”⁵³ A notable strength of the methodologies is that CCC does not rely on primary data collection with the government. Instead, CCC uses publicly available information or requests for information that should be publicly available to conduct their work. Finally, journalists emphasized that this data and information is critical in producing compelling investigative stories that can lead to important prosecution of corruption, reminding public institutions that CSOs are monitoring their work, and that there are penalties for corrupt practices.

The Index of Active Transparency is widely considered a particularly useful tool for CSOs, journalists, and public institutions. In discussing CCC’s work, all stakeholders interviewed with the exception of the business community, highlighted the Index of Active Transparency as an important

⁵¹ Interview CC01, Journalist, November 2021

⁵² Interview CC03, Public institution, November 2021

⁵³ Interview CC08, Public institution, November 2021

contribution made by CCC to North Macedonia's fight against corruption. As a tool, different stakeholders used the Index in the following ways:

- CSOs use the Index as a benchmarking tool to put pressure on largely municipal-level government institutions and correct behaviors.
- Journalists use the Index to publicly demonstrate institutions' progress on transparency, including highlighting top performers and naming those falling behind.
- Public institutions also use the Index as a benchmarking tool, as well as a targeting tool, to identify areas that need improvement to increase their Index score.

Public institutions most widely discussed the effects of the Index, likely because of its use by CSOs and journalists to structure institutions' progress on transparency. The institutions said that when the Index is published, they review and assess their score, their deficiencies, and sometimes reach out to CCC to request advice on actions to improve their score for the next assessment. As described by the Ministry of Defense informants, which experienced a major shift in their Index scores over the years:

A few years ago, the Ministry of Defense was in 45th position on the list ... Last year we were in second place, and this year, we are first on the rating list, with a maximum 100 points.... When we had 98 percent, we asked CCC where this 2 percent noncompliance was and they provided us a clear answer and we have corrected and now have 100.

Stakeholders noted that the Index's success is due to the methodology; in particular, CCC's transparency around the methodology. CCC ensures the specific data sources, means of verification, and analyses are open and public for review and scrutiny. In addition, CCC staff avail themselves the details with institutions regarding their scores. These aspects contribute to the overall success of the Index.

Success Case A: The Active Transparency Index as a Tool for Government Monitoring

An independent CSO described how they used the Index to conduct continuous monitoring of municipal public institutions in the Eastern region. In 2016, the Eastern region ranked in the middle out of eight regional groups whose municipality instructions were assessed through the Index. The CSO began their monitoring work at that time, sending numerous letters and indications of how and what should be changed and specific information that needs to be published or publicly available to help the public institutions in the region improve their individual and collective scores. "We are putting a sort of constructive positive pressure." The CSO uses the Index as its way of framing transparency issues as well as being explicit about what the institutions need to do to ensure they have a better score the next year. Today, the region is in the top position, meeting 70 percent of criteria. The CSO continues its work, in an effort to move the region closer to 100 percent.

Public institutions stressed CCC's contribution to educating and raising awareness on transparency issues. When describing changes in attitudes or behaviors experienced by public institutions because of their engagement with CCC, they most highlighted improved understanding about free access to information and open public procurement processes. Public institutions shared a renewed understanding of what "classified" information is, and that sometimes this designation has been

improperly used to obscure public spending information⁵⁴. Previously, information thought to be sensitive was legally entitled to be open to the public. For example, the Public Procurement Bureau shares its experience observing this change in understanding:

Discussions have been initiated related to CCC's demands for free access to information ... I see it from the perspective of authorities that feared sharing the information ... they turned with questions to us and asked if it was allowed or not ... an awareness has been developed with the institutions in terms of the fact that there are no secret data.

In addition, the Ministry of Defense describes the difference they have experienced in the success case below. One journalist interviewed echoed the public institutions' sentiments, stating that in recent requests for information, public institutions are "more open than previously, when asked they usually provide the information". However, informants also noted that the information comes slowly, often the day before the deadline. They noted that the public institutions' websites are now much more informative, and information can be found around open finance and public spending.

Success Case B: Ministry of Defense's Change in Behaviors

The Ministry of Defense described the difference they have experienced from their engagement with CCC and interactions around the Index of Active Transparency. This engagement and interactions are presented in their own words. "We made changes. We have changed the quantity of information we publish. It is now a massive amount of information we make public. We have changed the internal rules and behavior within the Ministry, which provided this result. Active transparency was raised to the highest level, as one of the most important functions in the Ministry. As a result, transparency was given top priority and all the staff respect this direction for improved transparency. This is not overnight activity but slowly we progress and now we are the first on the list [of the Index of Active Transparency]."

Most stakeholders agreed that CCC's engagement was instrumental to key public procurement legislative and regulatory changes. CCC notes its contributions and that public institutions accepted their recommendations to the following legislative and regulatory changes during their engagement under CEP: law on public procurement; law on free access to public information; open government partnership action plan; North Macedonia's 5-Year anti-corruption strategy; draft strategy for government transparency; and public finances management program.

From discussions with stakeholders, the most referenced contributions CCC made to legislative and regulatory changes as it relates to transparency included: 1) the law on public procurements; 2) the electronic system for tenders; and 3) the public finances management program. As noted in the description of work, CCC can provide concrete inputs into these government processes because its members are invited to take part in working groups and roundtables. CCC brings to these engagements its recommendations from its research, monitoring, and analytical work. According to one stakeholder, "it was the CCC that had the greatest impact for the recent changes to the law [on public procurement] ... it was a long process and pressure was made and there was evidence based on practice."⁵⁵ Meanwhile, the business sector lauded CCC's work to support creating an electronic system for tenders as "good

⁵⁴ Interview CC08, Public institution, November 2021

⁵⁵ Interview CC05, CSO, November 2021

practice, which provides better transparency.⁵⁶” Finally, another stakeholder highlighted how CCC’s high-quality work has earned it a reputation as the go-to CSO to engage in producing official documents or legislation related to transparency:

[CCC] is practically called upon as a CSO to the drafting and monitoring of the implementation of the Public Finances Management program, which is the most significant program document at the level of the Ministry of Finance.’

CSOs manifest an increased understanding of transparency and skills to conduct public procurement monitoring as a result of their engagement with CCC. CCC galvanizes other CSOs to adopt CCC’s research and methodologies to conduct their own public spending monitoring activities as related to their geographic coverage. CCC’s procurement monitoring research is at the central level and the municipal level, but CCC tends to focus on applying pressure to the system as a whole or the central level. Thus, CCC collaborates with other CSOs and invests in training CSOs on CCC methodologies so that CSOs can replicate the monitoring on issues of concern in their municipalities.

CSOs described being trained multiple times during the CEP grant and before, as well as more generally engaging with CCC through CSO networks and relevant platforms. CSOs shared that, through the CCC trainings, they “*acquired knowledge that will enable them to easily spot any instances of corruption*”, and while engaged with CCC they benefited from “*the networking of all local organizations and expert consultations*⁵⁷”. Overall, CSOs reported positive views of these trainings and engagements, emphasizing that they applied the new knowledge and skills daily. One CSO described examples of how its staff translated what they learned from CCC into their work and interventions:

What we learned in training helped us start a local tribune for anti-corruption where we announced our findings from public procurement monitoring of a municipality’s hospital. We used this to mobilize the local community and inform them about spending problems ... for example, charging the public for vaccines when they are free of charge.

While important public procurement legislative and regulatory changes have occurred, there are mixed reviews on how this has translated into changing government practices. In addition, important progress has been made in reforming legislation and regulations about transparency in public procurement as described above. However, according to representatives from business associations and chambers, the business sector has not yet seen this transform into concrete changes in public tenders. As explained by one business community member:

Even though many changes have been introduced to public procurement, the situation has not significantly changed. The law itself cannot prevent corruption and lack of transparency without rigid control and sanctions. So, the control is missing and many tenders are not transparent.

The business sector acknowledged that progress in transparency has been made, particularly through introduction of the electronic tender system. However, gaps remain: “*transparency is improved, but all the*

⁵⁶ FGD CC06, Business community, November 2021

⁵⁷ Interview CC02, CSO, November 2021

*manipulations are invisible*⁵⁸.” The business sector feels ill equipped to recognize signs of corruption in tenders. Another example of progress is the change in the law, but that the law is insufficient without controls to ensure the law is followed. The business sector mentioned cases where tenders are all legally correct, but the tender criteria are manipulated such that only a small group of businesses can participate. Furthermore, access to tenders for small companies remains limited.

Unfortunately, the challenges faced in the public tender process have reduced the motivation for some companies from participating in publicly funded work. In an evaluation FGD, the business sector commented that “*Most companies do not even follow the calls for tenders, since they believe that all the tenders are corrupted, mostly politically, and do not bother to apply at all.*”⁵⁹”

The majority of stakeholders said that CCC is effective because of its reputation. CCC’s long history of work on monitoring public spending and conducting methodologically sound and transparent research, has earned it a positive reputation among all stakeholders interviewed during the evaluation. Informants stressed that this is reason why CCC is almost always invited to represent civil society in government working groups and consultations around legislation, procedures, or programs related to transparency. As noted by one CSO, “*All the CCC employees are highly committed and specialized, which is also proven by their attendance in all government consultations*”⁶⁰. All the informants described the ways CCC worked with them on key legislation or regulation, with about half citing that they do not cooperate in this way with any other CSO. According to one person, “*CCC has made quite an impression, and in our opinion, it has the highest score.*”⁶¹ Another public institution member said:

We often invite CCC to support us in preparation of some document. It is invited and always welcome, since it is a relevant and reliable partner who can provide good support. It has integrity and objectivity that is very much appreciated by all ... [CCC’s] opinions about different issues are important for us.

Many stakeholders opined that CCC is effective because of its relationship with the media and journalists. While all stakeholders affirmed that CCC has “*an excellent cooperation with the media*”⁶², some believed that this was the key ingredient to its success alongside its reputation. One public institution stakeholder highlighted that “*CCC is founded by two journalists ... they were excellent journalists and they left TV wanting to make a difference*”⁶³. Informants drew the conclusion that the background of the CCC founders provides them with greater ties to the media, knowledge on how to work with the media and journalists, and knowledge of how to present data and information in a way that can be used by the media. Other informants highlighted that a broad network of national and local media is aware of CCC and frequently publish its activities and some even conducted their own public procurement monitoring. According to CEP staff, of all of the CEP grantees, media most frequently picked up CCC’s work and most frequently disseminated it. This was considered notable given the media’s role in galvanizing public pressure.

⁵⁸ FGD CC06, Business community, November 2021

⁵⁹ FGD CC06, Business community, November 2021

⁶⁰ Interview CC07, CSO, November 2021

⁶¹ Interview CC03, Public institution, November 2021

⁶² Interview CC02, CSO, November 2021

⁶³ Interview CC08, Public institution, November 2021

CCC's central strategy is to bring instances of corruption or risks of corruption in government spending to light to put pressure on public institutions to change legislation, regulation, and practices. This pressure relies on reaching a broad audience, which CCC has accomplished through ensuring the media has the information necessary to publish relevant news stories. Stakeholders shared that this was an important strategy because the media has “*power in influencing public institutions*⁶⁴”. However, CSOs, public institutions, and journalists raised concerns about the freedom of the media, and whether there is sufficient funding, support, and independence for investigative journalism. According to one public institution, the capacity and availability of journalists are insufficient:

The media is not as they used to be. Previously, each journalist was assigned to a specific topic and specialized in that field, such as judiciary, health or something else ... Today, journalists are only looking for the information to publish without in-depth knowledge of the sector, so they only provide basic information. There are not many strong journalists.

Both journalists and CSOs agreed that insufficient journalists are doing investigative journalism, in part due to a lack of capacity, but more crucially due to a lack of financial independence and concerns over media's freedom.

In our country, this type of [investigative] journalism has been existing in a restricted matter due to a number of multifaceted reasons ... It requires financial independence. However, in our market and society, the conditions are not there to support strong investigative journalism ... investigative journalism based merely on our resources [in North Macedonia], is impossible. – Journalist, KII

I do not know how feasible it is in these times to work with the media on transparent governance, because they are mainly funded by the state. You open a channel and everyone is saying the same thing ... There is not enough support for the journalists and there is no continuity. It is a very difficult time now. Journalists cannot speak if it is not in line with editorial policy. – CSO, KII

Stakeholders expressed that the media seems to be aligned with commercial incentives, with limited incentives and funding available for investigative journalism. Most stakeholders agreed that international donors play an important role in ensuring the freedom of the press. At the same time, stakeholders reaffirmed the role that free press “*critically monitors processes in society and the political system*⁶⁵” and the risk that if media is less free, the impact of the work of CSOs, such as CCC, will diminish. CCC has few staff members, only about five individuals, which reflects the typical staffing among CSOs in North Macedonia. If the media were diminished, CSOs would need to rely on their internal communications, marketing, and dissemination capacities, which tend to be limited.

Stakeholders agree that weak rule of law is a significant constraint to CCC's work and progress towards transparency and anti-corruption. CSOs, the business sector, and public institutions agreed that enforcement of the rule of law when corruption is identified in public procedures, including penalties for officials and businesses that engage in corrupt practices, forms a significant gap to enforcing the improvements in the Law of Public Procurement and moving towards a

⁶⁴ Interview CC10, Journalist, November 2021

⁶⁵ Interview CC01, Journalist November 2021

more transparent and accountable government. CSOs feel frustrated when reporting corruption cases to the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption, because it “doesn’t have any outcome⁶⁶” or “there were no court trials started as a result of our submissions⁶⁷.” Public institutions reiterated this sentiment: “In the end, we do not see many results in the form of open court cases or people or companies sentenced.” The business sector confirmed that “the tenders are corrupted, we all know this, there is impunity, and no one is penalized⁶⁸.” Some public institution stakeholders felt that there wasn’t support from authorities such as the prosecution office⁶⁹.

The business sector mentioned another fallout from the weak enforcement of the rule of law, pertaining to the health and vitality of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The business sector said that it is not uncommon for public institutions to neglect to pay companies or follow their contract agreement’s payment schedule. While companies will bring these cases to court, and at times win the case, there isn’t an enforcement mechanism to ensure companies get paid, or penalties enacted for non-payment or significantly delayed payment. As a result, chamber representatives asserted that “This is a reason for the bankruptcy of a number of companies that are not liquid ... only very rich companies can afford to wait for months or even years for payment.⁷⁰” Delayed or non-payment further demotivates SMEs to participate in public procurement and reduces the vitality of the private sector’s ability to engage in public works.

Stakeholders agree that CCC’s work needs to continue and note risks to sustainability. All stakeholders agreed that CCC plays an important monitoring and accountability function around public spending that must continue. One CSO noted that the work needs to be constant, and progress is slow, but ongoing monitoring will ensure ongoing pressure that leads to change. There are still “very serious problems in public procurements, due to politically-based arrangements”, and transparency work is not achievable in a short period of time. CCC’s work comes at odds with donor approaches to projects, which are “time-limited and if the funding is discontinued, will be a serious problem⁷¹” in CCC’s or other CSO’s abilities to continue this role. The State Commission for Prevention of Corruption further emphasized this fact when commenting on CCC’s work:

I have doubts about sustainability. It [CCC] is dependent on funds provided by national or international sources. A CSOs’ work is usually only temporary and stops the activities when the project funding is stopped. What if CCC stops? Who will continue this work? Because of this, I believe that this transparency measurement needs to be institutionalized and performed by a public institution. I am not sure which one but in this way, it is quite risky.

CEP project staff and stakeholders echoed the sentiment that, in an ideal world, CSOs would not need to play this role, which could be a function for a public institution. However, given the weak enforcement of rule of law and nascent capacity around transparency, stakeholders agreed that current conditions are not optimal for such an arrangement. One public institution suggested a more decentralized approach, where at least one person per institution has this role within their own

⁶⁶ Interview CC02, CSO, November 2021

⁶⁷ Interview CC07, CSO, November 2021

⁶⁸ FGD CC06, Business community, November 2021

⁶⁹ Interview CC09, Public institution, November 2021

⁷⁰ FGD CC06, Business community, November 2021

⁷¹ Interview CC02, CSO, November 2021

institutions and receives CCC training and coaching: “It is very important for institutions to have persons who would be in charge of integrity.”⁷²

Finally, despite the concerns expressed about CCC’s sustainability to conduct this work indefinitely, CEP staff members said that CCC is skilled at acquiring funding and aligning it to their mission, rather than aligning its mission to donor agendas. In this way, CCC has been able to remain hyper-focused on its mission, which contributed to cultivating its strong reputation as an expert in public spending transparency. However, stakeholders noted an opportunity for CCC to grow from a small CSO to a larger organization solidifying CCC’s status while expanding its reach. However, as a small CSO, CCC requires targeted organizational capacity development to expand and it is not clear that CCC is interested in growing its operations.

A cross-section of stakeholders felt that CCC could engage more widely with the business sector. The public procurement stakeholder landscape includes public institutions issuing tenders, CSOs monitoring tenders, journalists disseminating corruption risks or flags, and businesses applying for and receiving contracts. Stakeholders felt that the business sector is generally treated as passive stakeholders within public procurement monitoring. For example, CCC conducts an annual survey of companies to understand their experiences with procurement and bring them to discussions and working groups, but this is the limit of CCC’s engagement. One CSO described the results of a lack of CCC’s engagement with the business community as follows:

The business community has very little engagement, it is not active [in public procurement monitoring]. If a company loses a tender, it can’t learn why it lost because of a lack of connections. There is no attempt by companies to complain and this is because they are fearful that public institutions will punish them or call for inspection.

The business sector echoed this fearful sentiment, stating that:

They are frightened to talk loudly, since as owners of the companies, they are afraid that authorities will send them to inspections and ‘find something wrong’ in their operations. This will lead to punishment or exclusion from future tenders or work with institutions.

Stakeholders felt that these fears are valid, but that an opportunity exists for a greater role for the business sector, whether through organizations that represent business interests, such as chambers of commerce or business associations, or otherwise. During the FGD with business sector representatives, they shared that they are “not satisfied” with the role they play, which is “minimal in this process and needs to be improved significantly”⁷³. Associations and chambers described how they organize regular press conferences and, during these, they comment on government corruption and non-transparency, but their issues and critiques could be more targeted and specific to bring these issues to light.

⁷² Interview CC02, Public institution, November 2021

⁷³ FGD CC06, Business community, November 2021

EQ 2 CONCLUSIONS

CCC has been effective in creating momentum, providing tools, and intervening in legislation to encourage increased transparency in public procurement, however more work remains. The findings demonstrate broad consensus that CCC has been an instrumental force in creating the necessary conditions for improved transparency in public procurement, but the improvements achieved to date have not sufficiently translated into a practice of transparent tenders. CCC has provided the tools and mobilized stakeholder support to use these tools, including the Index of Active Transparency and public procurement monitoring methodologies, to galvanize public pressure that leads public institutions to enact reforms. CCC's work has led to increased awareness of transparency issues and some cases of changed practices within institutions.

CCC has further positioned itself as a respected CSO with unique expertise, so much so that public institutions open their doors, extend invitations, and invite recommendations for legislative and regulatory reforms. Despite significant momentum and increased objective scores observed through the Active Transparency Index, the end-user of public procurements – the business sector – has not seen a significant change in tender procedures. The process of change, through public procurement monitoring, is lengthy and slow. Informants also perceive that public officials' impunity and the lack of penalties for public spending corruption cases that do make it to court, have contributed to the slow pace of changes. Ongoing monitoring of public procurements is required, and it may need to remain with civil society for the time being, as North Macedonia's institutions are not yet ready to adopt these accountability protocols. However, CCC has provided a host of tools and methodologies for a broader coalition of CSOs and stakeholders to engage in this mandate, effectively building the infrastructure for transparency monitoring.

Monitoring public spending risks becoming ineffective without robust adherence to the rule of law and free media in North Macedonia. The findings noted that enforcement of rule of law about public procurement violations is inconsistent and is rendered potentially ineffective in flagging offenses. Furthermore, when other public officials observe that corruption cases do not result in penalties, there is little incentive to adhere to transparency and anti-corruption practices. Lack of law enforcement is a significant deterrent to the effectiveness of transparency and anti-corruption work. In addition, the findings indicate important concerns about the freedom of the press in North Macedonia. Media is a key avenue to 'voice' and flag potential corruption issues in public spending and, therefore, freedom of press to investigate and report issues without interference from business or political interests is imperative. Stakeholders emphasized a diminished role of investigative journalism practice and an increased presence of political or business influences in mainstream media. If freedom of traditional media outlets continues to diminish, CSOs in their roles as watchdogs will require additional capacity and resources for mass communication campaigns to raise public awareness of corruption cases.

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

LESSONS LEARNED

The following lessons learned resulted from the evaluation team's key observations of CEP's effective practices.

Lesson Learned 1: Technical assistance that is in-person, client-identified, client-prioritized, process-oriented, specific, concrete, adaptable, and modifiable is effective to ensure rapid adaptation and ownership, as well as sustainable in changing contexts. Short-term technical assistance by reputable experts with both context and country expertise led to effective results.

Lesson Learned 2: Technical assistance that focuses on identifying gaps in expertise, knowledge, implementation, management and/or operations, and establishes simple steps relevant too short to medium processes and procedures to fill the gaps, adapt to change, account for contingencies, and prepare the foundation for future assistance is effective for all levels of support for all stakeholders.

Lesson Learned 3: Process-driven tools and methodologies can be applicable and replicable to other contexts, across public institutions and agencies, and across levels – top-down and bottom-up. CCC's Index of Active Transparency presents a key example.

Lesson Learned 4: Partners that are visible, independent, integrity-based, mission-focused, have explicit and adaptable expertise, and a longer-term presence have greater chances to gain entry into, and engage with, the government on legislation and regulatory issues. These partners are more likely to regularly receive invitations to working groups, expert roundtables, and other opportunities to provide recommendations to legislative or regulatory reforms, strategies, or new activities, as was evidenced in the CCC case study.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR USAID FOR FUTURE PROGRAMMING

Recommendation 1: Strengthen public and independent institutions with roles related to transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law, and state explicitly the roles and rules of engagement for each stakeholder. Specific examples of government and independent institutions or entities for continued, new and/or reinvigorated support include: Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors; Agency for Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information; Anti-Corruption Platform; Cabinet of the Deputy Prime Minister for Anti-Corruption, Sustainable Development and Human Resources; Finance Intelligence Directorate; Local Courts; Ministry of Information Society and Administration; Ministry of Justice; State Audit Office; Municipal Councils; State Commission for Prevention of Corruption; and State Judicial Council.

Recommendation 2: Strengthen the focus on outcome and impact indicators, targets, and results and be clear about expected changes in consultation with the government and the targeted public or independent institutions. Ensure the alignment of the activity/project objective indicator to the objective to ensure measurability, monitoring, and reporting. Ensure the selection of appropriate indicators to measure progress and success at output and outcome levels, including the measure of change. Activities should be clearly in line with national policies and plans. For example, include qualitative indicators on knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions across targeted groups, particularly citizens' perceptions of

government accountability, to measure change in awareness and changes in behavior against the institutions' expectations, goals and strategies.

Recommendation 3: Strategically select key interventions for systemic change, given the multiple layers within each area of transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law. The Theory of Change should identify sectors and synergistic pathways toward measured and verified change, particularly rule of law interventions.

Recommendation 4: Support long-term technical assistance (LTTA) with independent and neutral in-house (in-person) international or national experts who are resilient to influence to play a role in facilitating and monitoring the implementation of USAID-funded institutional support. This could be a team of LTTA advisors in both government and independent institutions, particularly to facilitate the creation of independent compliance control mechanisms, such as USAID-funded independent CSOs or other mechanisms, to ensure impartiality. The country has systems in place, but require more concentrated efforts on implementation. For example, the Ministry of Information Society and Administration (MISA) could be supported with a LTTA advisor to ensure implementation of strategies, such as the introduction of the merit system in employment. Other important links in the corruption chain include courts and prosecutions through the Court Council and the Prosecution Council because they appoint judges and prosecutors. Therefore, an independent LTTA advisor could adopt the role of reviewing past performances and current procedural compliance of the Court Council and the Prosecution Council. A LTTA in the State Audit Office (SAO), for example, should provide assistance to enable it to become a fully legitimate, respected, and authoritative agency.

Recommendation 5: Support short-term technical assistance (STTA) that focuses on systemic processes that are cyclical or periodic, adaptable, replicable, and sustainable for CSO or government products or services. For example, the process of conducting citizen surveys on their perception of government accountability – with processes that are step-by-step including data collection, data analysis, monitoring, reporting, actions for improvement and learning (whole cycle), as well as a schedule for repeated surveys. The in-person, local or international STTA advisor with direct knowledge about the country's political and governance narrative, should provide guidance and mentoring for specific, targeted, government-identified tasks. Promote a culture of evaluation, in which the government conducts internal and external assessments of their work for continuous improvements.

Recommendation 6: Include more comprehensive and inclusive engagement of a wide range of stakeholders, particularly public institutions – directly or indirectly – on transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law interventions. This engagement includes youth, particularly given that the government adopted the LYPYP in January 2020, which obliges municipalities to involve youth in decision making processes. Strong support for the media, specifically investigative journalism, to monitor a range of areas, such as public procurement, should continue to enable the necessary public pressure that motivates institutions to change their practices, legislation, or regulations.

Recommendation 7: Strengthen youth and youth groups on transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law issues, their leadership, and their communication skills. Identify change agents and monitor their capacity to conduct actions or engagements with relevant CSOs and local government.

Recommendation 8: Continue support for open and transparent public procurement and contracting, in line with a recommendation from Transparency International's 2020 Corruption

Perceptions Index report, to assist in the identification of conflicts of interest and opportunities for fair pricing to prevent the diversion of public resources

Recommendation 9: Re-focus the support of CSOs towards monitoring, rather than implementation of governance activities; i.e., to act as government watchdogs and monitors of transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law that complement the CSOs' and government's work. Civil society should continue to facilitate citizen awareness on transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law, and to facilitate two-way linkages between citizens and government on local issues for monitoring, policy development, and decision making.

Recommendation 10: Consider supporting CEP follow-on activities to ensure the application of technical assistance. Follow-on activities could include monitoring recommendations of Vulnerability to Corruption Assessments; monitoring the use of the online Open Data platform, particularly for citizens; continued support for amendments to the law on use of data from the public sector (Open Data law); and monitoring the municipalities with integrity plans.

ANNEX A: EVALUATION STATEMENT OF WORK

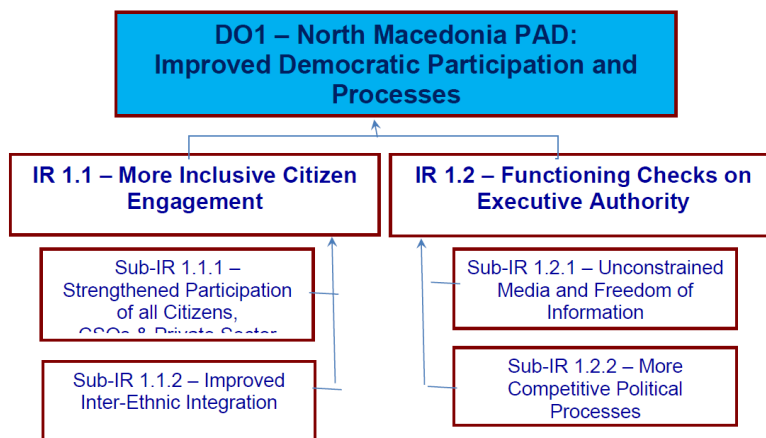
C.1 SUMMARY OF PROJECT INFORMATION

| SUMMARY OF PROJECT INFORMATION | |
|---|---|
| ACTIVITY NAME | CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROJECT |
| Implementer | East-West Management Institute |
| Contract # | AID-165-C-16-00003 |
| Total Estimated Ceiling of the Evaluated Contract (TEC) | \$9,495,923 |
| Life of Activity | August 2016 – August 2021/2 |
| Activity Geographic Regions | Countrywide |
| Development Objective | North Macedonia is a prosperous, self-reliant, and inclusive democratic society |
| USAID Office | General Development Office |

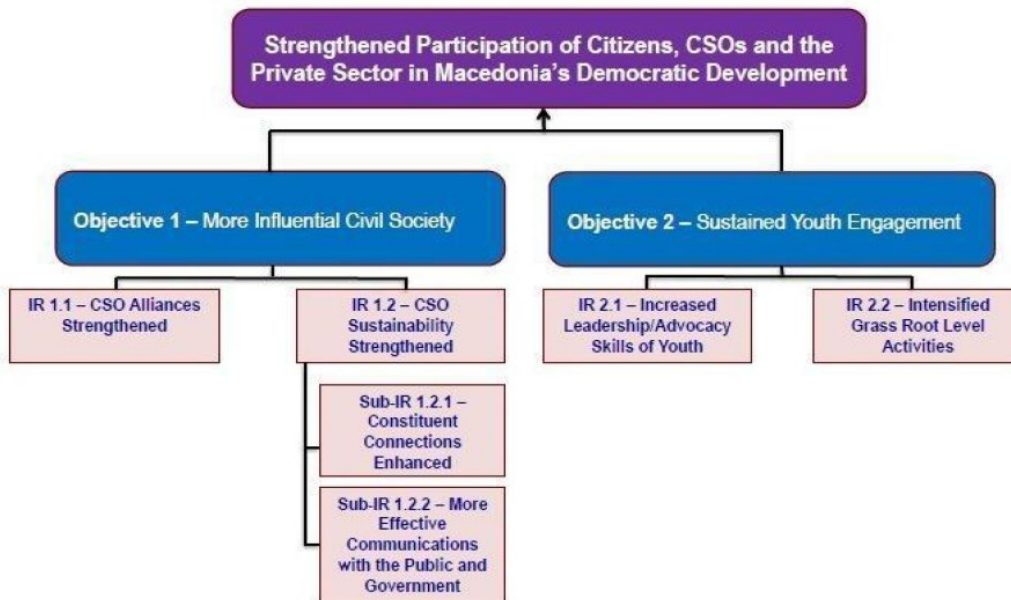
C.2 BACKGROUND

A. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM AND DEVELOPMENT HYPOTHESIS

The Civic Engagement Project (CEP) was designed and began implementation during a period in which the political space was closing, and the civil society sector was confronted with many challenges. CEP is one of several activities contributing to the “Improved Democratic Participation and Processes” project. The problem statement for that project was: “A progressive constriction of competitive space in the country is leading to a decline in voice, participation, inclusion, and accountability; worsening ethnic tensions; and erosion of basic rights.” The Development Hypothesis for the project was: IF citizen engagement is strengthened AND more inclusive checks on executive authority are functioning, THEN democratic participation and processes will better connect state and society and create a more responsive, accountable, and resilient political system.” The results framework for the project was:



The Development Hypothesis for the CEP when it began was, “IF North Macedonia’s CSOs, CSO alliances, and citizens, including youth, are provided the resources, incentives, and platforms for coordinated capacity development that meets best national and international standards, THEN they will be more capable of actively participating in North Macedonia’s democratic development, including engaging in constructive dialogue with government partners at all levels of decision making.” The original results framework for the CEP, which aimed to support the Improved Democratic Participation and Processes Project, Intermediate Result (IR) 1.1, More Inclusive Citizen Engagement, is shown below:



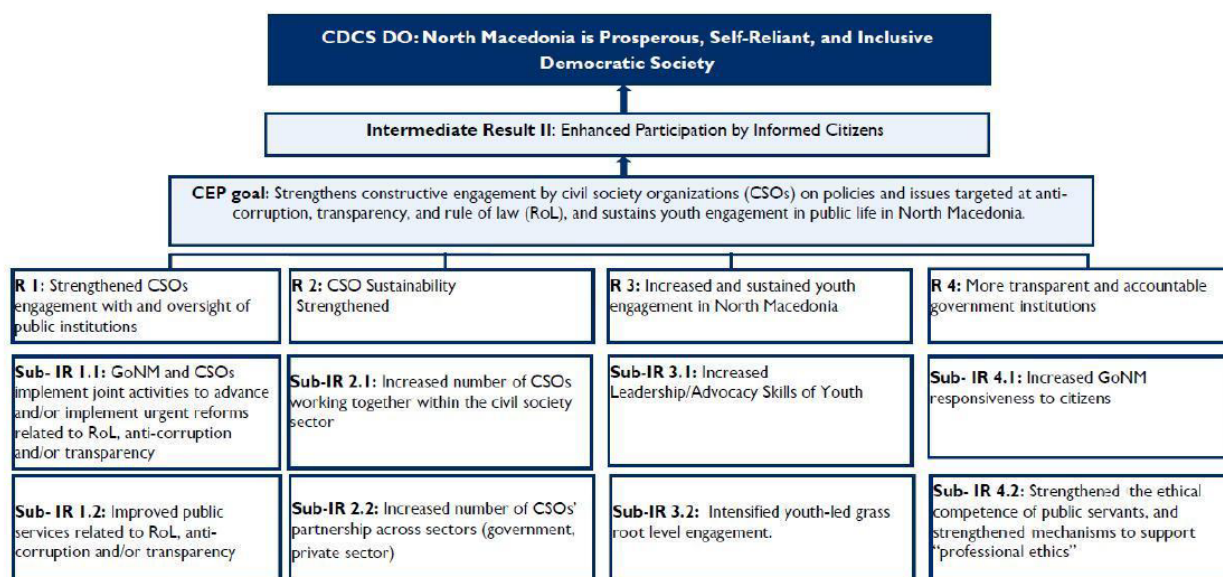
The original contract with EWMI for the Civic Engagement Project included two objectives: (1) Strengthened influence of CSOs; and (2) Increased and sustained youth engagement. The first objective included two components: (1) Strengthen civil society organization alliances; and (2) Strengthen CSOs. The second objective included two components: (1) Strengthen youth engagement; and (2) Strengthen youth activism.

A political crisis which began in 2015 gripped the country until mid-2017. A new government formed on June 1, 2017 and began to pursue policies of EU accession and NATO membership, and opening up the political space for citizen engagement.

In 2018, USAID/North Macedonia commissioned an independent evaluation of its Project Appraisal Document (PAD) for the “Improved Democratic Participation and Processes” project and associated IRs, including More Inclusive Citizen Engagement and Functioning Checks on Citizen Authority. The evaluation recommended a rephrased problem statement to: “As the development of strong democratic institutions is still in its infancy, citizens remain wary of the new government’s capacity to deliver services and stimulate an enabling environment for employment creation, while continued ethnic divisions remain perilous to national unity.” Among several recommendations, the evaluators suggested that USAID should support public administration reform and judicial system enhancement, while continuing to support and promote civil society.

B. SUMMARY OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

In January 2020, USAID/North Macedonia amended EWMI’s contract for CEP to de-emphasize civil society capacity building, add direct support to help GONM institutions to become more transparent and accountable to citizens, and emphasize anti-corruption, transparency, and rule of law, three key priority reforms for North Macedonia’s EU accession. The rationale for the changes was an assumption that the civil society sector was sufficiently strong and that with a more reformist government in place, USAID should provide direct support to the Government of North Macedonia in areas that would advance its EU accession and NATO membership. The new development hypothesis posed by EWMI is: “IF North Macedonian public institutions, CSOs, CSO alliances, and citizens, including youth, are provided the resources, cooperation mechanisms, and technical assistance for coordinated and long term joint actions in the areas of rule of law, transparency, and anti-corruption, THEN they will be more capable to contribute to North Macedonia’s accession and integration in EU and NATO.” The EWMI’s new results framework for CEP is as follows:



After the contract modification, EWMI ended ten of the grants to CSOs that were not focused in areas related to anti-corruption, rule of law, or transparency. It continued to support seven grantees that were focused in these high priority areas.

CEP has been implemented countrywide. The activity’s story map highlights activities by location. Please see this link:
<https://uploads.knightlab.com/storymapjs/14a3ab5dd5cf608596120bf6ae3288f9/test/index.html>.

C. SUMMARY OF THE CEP’S MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING (MEL) PLAN

There is an original MEL Plan dated November 14, 2016 reflecting the original CEP design and a revised MEL Plan dated September 30, 2020 reflecting the amended design.² The September 2020 MEL Plan includes both custom and standard F performance indicators to track performance at the Goal, Result, and Sub-Intermediate result level (as per EWMI’s revised Results Framework for CEP shown above).

C.3 SCOPE OF WORK

The contractor will conduct the evaluation of the Civic Engagement Project in line with the evaluation questions, design and methodology below:

C.3.1 EVALUATION QUESTIONS (IN ORDER OF PRIORITY)

- a) To what extent and how have CEP-supported CSOs helped to advance North Macedonia’s EU accession in areas related to rule of law, transparency, and anti-corruption? What advanced or impeded this approach to supporting the GONM in these areas?
- b) To what extent and how has the sub-grantee, the Association of Citizens Center for Civil Communications (CCC) increased transparency in public procurement? What lessons learned from CCC’s work could be valuable and applicable to other efforts to advance government transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law?

C.3.2 EVALUATION DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This summative performance evaluation will utilize mixed methods including both quantitative and qualitative research.

CSO Grantees Working on Rule of Law, Transparency, and Anti-Corruption: As mentioned earlier, of the 17 multi-year CSO grants that were in place at the time of the January 2020 contract modification, ten of those grants were ended at that time, while the seven that worked in the new priority areas were continued. This evaluation will focus on the seven CSOs that were supported in both phases of the CEP and take a deeper look at the activities of one of those CSOs, the Citizens Center for Civil Communications.

| OUTCOME/ RESULT | ILLUSTRATIVE INDICATORS | SUGGESTED DATA SOURCES | SUGGESTED DATA COLLECTION METHODS | SUGGESTED DATA ANALYSIS METHODS |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| North Macedonia’s EU accession advanced | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of government interlocutors (of all those surveyed) who state that CEP-supported CSO assistance was helpful or very helpful • % of government interlocutors (of all those surveyed) who state that CEP-supported CSOs brought new information, knowledge, or skills that helped to inform policy or other governmental changes • Description of how CSO-provided support brought new information, knowledge, or skills to help inform policy or other governmental changes | The 7 CSO grantees whose grants continued after the January 2020 contract amendment; GONM interlocutors who were supported by CSOs; EWMI CEP project staff | Closed-ended surveys using Likert scales; open-ended surveys; interviews | |

| OUTCOME/ RESULT | ILLUSTRATIVE INDICATORS | SUGGESTED DATA SOURCES | SUGGESTED DATA COLLECTION METHODS | SUGGESTED DATA ANALYSIS METHODS |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| Transparency in public procurement increased | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent to which CCC public procurement monitoring reports increased transparency in public procurement % change in Index of Active Transparency (of ministries and municipalities) from year to year # of government policies, procedures, or programs improved by CCC support Extent to which research on various public procurement topics has increased transparency in public procurement | CCC staff; EWMI CEP program staff; municipal and ministry officials | Case study; closed-ended and open-ended surveys; Index of Active Transparency | |

C.4 EVALUATION SCHEDULE / DELIVERABLES

The contractor may follow the below schedule and must submit listed deliverables according to the below timeline:

| PROPOSED ACTIVITIES | DELIVERABLES | TIMELINE DUE |
|--|--------------------|--|
| Preparation of the work plan and evaluation design | Workplan | 14 days after award |
| In-Briefing | In-Briefing | Within 5 days after workplan is accepted |
| Preparations for data collection | | |
| Data Collection | | |
| Mid-term Briefing | Mid-Term Briefing | Within 30 days after In-Briefing |
| Data Analysis | | |
| Final Presentation | Final Presentation | 14 days after Mid-Term Briefing |
| Report Writing | Draft Report | 14 days after Final Presentation |
| USAID review and approval of draft report; USAID shares draft report with IP | | |
| Incorporate USAID comments and prepare/submit final report | Final Report | 14 days after USAID approval of Draft Report |

C.5 TEAM COMPOSITION

The evaluation team will consist of three experts and a translator. The team will be led by the international development and evaluation expert, with support from the local experts, as specified in Section F.4.

ANNEX B: EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

To answer the two EQs framing this CEP summative evaluation, the evaluation team conducted a mixed-method performance evaluation, integrating quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods, and encompassing both primary and secondary data analysis. The mixed-method evaluation design allows the evaluation team to present a comprehensive account of CEP's results, including trends in good practices across CSO programming and lessons learned about the effectiveness of a particular model or activity.

- For EQ1, the evaluation focused on the work of the CEP Partners who implemented activities on transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law, including EWMI, ADI, FOSM, Metamorphosis, and the CSO grantees supported by these partners. The evaluation team used KIIs, FGDs, and an online survey. Respondents included USAID, CEP staff, CEP partners, CEP grantees, and beneficiaries, including central government, local government municipalities, journalists from independent media outlets, justice sector beneficiaries and citizens.
- For EQ2, the evaluation conducted an in-depth case study, focused solely on the transparency in public spending work of the CEP CSO grantee, CCC. In following a case study approach, the evaluation team sought to form a multi-faceted understanding of CCC's work and its effects, which included collecting information and perceptions from representatives of institutions CCC intended to influence, as well as key players in the public procurement process. The case study included a workshop with CCC staff, KIIs with central government institutions, journalists from independent media outlets, CSOs engaged by CCC, and an FGD with business community representatives.

MIXED METHODS APPROACH

The evaluation team applied a utilization-focused evaluation (U-FE) approach.⁷⁴ A U-FE approach is based on the principle that an evaluation should be judged by its usefulness to its intended users and that integrating users into the evaluation process generates more relevant findings that are likely to be used. The U-FE features that were applied through this evaluation included⁷⁵: 1) a design workshop with USAID; 2) a kick-off and input gathering session with CEP; 3) a validation workshop; and 4) producing a digestible format for conveying results of the evaluation through an infographic.

U-FE FEATURES: IMPAQ held a 1.5-hour virtual Design Workshop with USAID on September 27, 2021 to inform the final design. The workshop used participatory facilitation techniques to identify expectations; refine the EQs and develop sub-EQs; prioritize the issues of greatest interest and learning needs; and garner input to the evaluation's approaches, stakeholders, and tools. Following the workshop, the team held a Kick-Off Meeting on October 6, 2021 with CEP staff to introduce them to

⁷⁴ Michael Quinn Patton (2008). *Utilization-Focused Evaluation*, 4th edition, Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

⁷⁵ The evaluation team originally planned to conduct a co-interpretation workshop; however, this was not possible due to time constraints in the evaluation process, limited availability for such a workshop with CEP, and limited availability from USAID. A co-interpretation workshop typically is several-hours long.

the evaluation, gather their inputs, coordinate outreach, and foster buy-in to the process. Outputs from these two events were used to develop the final work plan and methodology plan.

Following the completion of data collection and in support of determining findings, conclusions, and recommendations, the team held a virtual 1.5-hour validation workshop on December 7, 2021 with CEP staff. During this workshop, the evaluation team presented the preliminary findings, sourced inputs to clarify respondent trends, and sought information to further contextualize the findings. In addition, the CEP team provided additional feedback and clarifications for the evaluation team’s consideration in written form. In addition to the validation workshop, the team conducted a 1-hour preliminary findings presentation for USAID on December 6, 2021. During this presentation, USAID also provided inputs into the findings, including further contextualization. The inputs from these two meetings were subsequently weaved into the reports’ findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

DATA COLLECTION

Data collection took place over 23 days between October 18 and November 23, 2021. While data collection was originally slated to end by November 19, the local municipal elections and ensuing political crisis delayed the evaluation team’s progress, particularly with government stakeholders. The evaluation team approached CEP stakeholders and participants at all levels to enable triangulation of information from diverse perspectives.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS – EQ I

The evaluation team developed semi-structured KII guides, to collect perceptions from key CEP stakeholders including the consortium, the five CSO grantees, select central-level GONM interlocutors, and journalists engaged through CEP-supported activities. The evaluation team conducted a total of 36 virtual KIIs across these stakeholders as demonstrated in Table B1 below.

| Table B1: EQ I KIIs by Stakeholder Type | Respondents |
|---|-------------|
| USAID/North Macedonia | 2 |
| CEP Project Staff | 16 |
| Civil Society Organizations, Grantee Staff | 8 |
| Government of North Macedonia Interlocutors | 8 |
| Journalists from Independent Media Outlets | 2 |
| Total | 36 |

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS – EQ I

The evaluation team developed separate FGD guides for three primary stakeholder groups, including engaged citizens, trial monitors trained by a CSO under the rule of law programming, and sub-CSOs (CSO networks). The evaluation team conducted a total of remote 4 FGDs, representing 17 participants, across these stakeholders as demonstrated in Table B2 below.

| Table B2: FGDs by Stakeholder Type | Respondents |
|------------------------------------|-------------|
| Citizens (2 FGDs) | 7 |
| Trial Monitors | 7 |
| Sub-CSOs | 3 |
| Total | 17 |

ONLINE SURVEY – EQ1

The evaluation team constructed and administered a 17-question online survey to provide quick, comparable data from government municipality stakeholders engaged through CEP’s partners or grantees. Because of the diversity of activities implemented under CEP in relation to the three thematic areas and variety of municipality stakeholders engaged, the survey focused on the quality of the assistance or support from CEP grantees and partners; the value of the support in bringing new information, knowledge, and skills; and the situational questions to assess views as it relates to transparency and anti-corruption. The survey used a mix of fixed-response, open-ended, and situational judgement questions.

The survey was constructed on the SurveyMonkey platform. On October 25, it was distributed to a list of 88 government stakeholders’ emails compiled by the CEP partners and grantees from their monitoring data. The survey was kept open for a three-week period and closed on November 12. The evaluation team pursued a multi-pronged approach to maximize response rates including two email reminders from the evaluation team, one email reminder from the CEP Chief of Party, and follow-up phone calls by the evaluation team to non-respondents to request responses.

As a result of these efforts, the survey received a total of 42 responses, or a 48% response rate.

CASE STUDY – EQ2

To respond to EQ2, the team conducted a case study about the CSO CCC, in relation to their CEP grant “Public Spending for Public Good” focused on increasing transparency in public procurement. A case study is a detailed examination of a single person, group, organization, community or event that is exemplary or provides insights around a trend. It involves data collection from multiple sources and points of views to create a narrative of the case. In the case of CEP, CCC was one of the CSO grantees that was considered to be doing exemplary work in transparency and from whom lessons could be learned to apply to future governance programming.

The evaluation team’s original design for the case study included a methodology called outcome mapping (OM). OM is a participatory and complexity-aware method that focuses particularly on identifying the behavioral and relationship changes among “boundary partners”⁷⁶ that lead to bringing about observed

⁷⁶ “Boundary partners” refers to institutions in a project’s direct sphere of influence, whose behaviors and actions the project seeks to change. For the case study, boundary partners would include GONM interlocutors who CCC worked with directly and GONM ministries and municipalities that CCC sought to influence a change in practice.

outcomes and traces how a project influenced those behavioral and relationship changes. The methodology implicates a series of workshops with the evaluand (in this case, CCC), typically lasting a full-day or two half-days at the start of data collection and at the end. At the start of data collection, the method seeks to review in-depth the project theory of change, identify key stakeholders, map influence pathways, articulate behavior change goals, and link to long-term goals. At the end of data collection, the method seeks to co-interpret the data collected and draw conclusions in a participatory way. As a result, significant buy-in and engagement is required from the case being investigated for the success of the methodology. Data is collected from “boundary partners” around progress markers of behavior change identified through these workshops.

The evaluation team was unable to implement the methodology as originally design and in fidelity to the approach. The evaluation’s timeframe coincided with a heavy workload for CCC due to the political climate. In addition, CCC is a small organization with only five staff, three of whom were engaged on the CEP grant, and multiple competing priorities. The proposed time commitment of the OM methodology was extensive for their availability, they were only able to provide us with 1.5 hours of their time for the envisioned series of workshops. As a result, the evaluation team adapted the approach to a more traditional case study but including some of the principles OM, such as reviewing collaboratively reviewing the project theory of change and areas of influence, as well as collecting data from representative boundary partners identified with CCC.

The evaluation team began with an abridged 1.5-hour workshop with the three CCC staff to understand the theory of change, intended areas of influence, and “boundary partners”. With boundary partners identified, the evaluation team developed KII guides for each stakeholder and one FGD guide based on the information gathered through the workshop on CCC’s areas of influence, approaches towards the stakeholder, and intended goals for each stakeholder group. The boundary partners identified are those with roles in the public procurement transparency landscape, including included public institutions who issue tenders, journalists from independent media who publish about potential corruption, CSOs who monitor government spending, and the business community who participate in procurements.

The evaluation team conducted 10 KIIs and one FGD with them. The CCC case study thus included perspectives from a total of 17 respondents as exhibited in Table B3.

| Table B3: EQ 2 Case Study by Stakeholder | Respondents |
|---|--------------------|
| Association of CCC, Workshop | 3 |
| Public Institutions, KIIs | 5 |
| Media/Journalists, KIIs | 2 |
| Civil Society, KIIs | 3 |
| Business Community, FGD | 4 |
| Total | 17 |

| EVALUATION DESIGN MATRIX | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| EVALUATION QUESTION | SUB-EVALUATION QUESTIONS | INDICATORS TO SUPPORT EQ RESPONSE | DATA SOURCES / DATA COLLECTION METHODS |
| I. To what extent and how have CEP-supported CSOs helped to advance North Macedonia's EU accession in areas related to rule of law, transparency, and anti-corruption? What advanced or impeded this approach to supporting the GONM in these areas? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What were CEP's GONM intervention approaches at the central government level and the local government level (municipalities, etc.) and how effective was intervening at these different levels to affect broader GONM change as it relates to anti-corruption, transparency, or rule of law? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Percent of GONM interlocutors who state CEP and CEP-supported CSOs brought new information, knowledge or skills that helped inform policy or procedure changes ● Percent of non-CEP respondents perceive improved GONM transparency/ accountability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Desk Study of secondary data including CEP program documents, CEP partner documents, 5 CSO grants, monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) data, and CSO research ● Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with US government officials, CEP staff and partners, 5 CSO grantees, selection of GONM interlocutors, and journalists ● Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with CSO network members (sub-CSOs) and engaged adult citizens ● Online Survey with GONM interlocutors |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What were CEP's most effective entry points (people, committees, groups, networks, etc.) to advocate, monitor, or support GONM to change behavior, policies, or laws relevant to rule of law, transparency, or anti-corruption? | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How did CEP's activities affect the lives of engaged citizens of North Macedonia, perceptions of the GONM, and ongoing civic participation? | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How did CEP's various rule of law, transparency and anti-corruption activities implemented by grantees and partners complement or support one another to achieve outcomes? | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What contextual factors (political, COVID-19, others) helped or hindered the success of CEP's activities? | | |

| EVALUATION DESIGN MATRIX | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| EVALUATION QUESTION | SUB-EVALUATION QUESTIONS | INDICATORS TO SUPPORT EQ RESPONSE | DATA SOURCES / DATA COLLECTION METHODS |
| 2. To what extent and how has the sub-grantee, CCC increased transparency in public procurement? What lessons learned from CCC's work could be valuable and applicable to other efforts to advance government transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How did CCC partner with GONM institutions and foster an openness to collaborate on transparency in public procurement? ○ How sustainable are CCC's activities and how can USAID or others build upon the work to support continuity? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Percent change in the Index of Active Transparency among GONM institutions engaged through the grant (2018 results as baseline) and CCC's contributions to changes ● Number of GONM policies, procedures, & programs improved by CCC support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Case study with outcome mapping (OM) techniques – includes CCC staff, GONM ministry and municipal officials, and journalists engaged through CCC programming ● Index of Active Transparency 2018, 2019, and 2020 reports |

ANNEX C: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

CEP EVALUATION KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTRODUCTORY SCRIPT FOR ALL KIIs

Thank you for taking the time to talk to me. My name is [INSERT NAME]. I am from IMPAQ International, a U.S.-based international policy research, technical assistance, and evaluation company.

IMPAQ is conducting a summative, final evaluation of the USAID’s Civic Engagement Project or CEP. CEP is a five-year USAID-funded activity in North Macedonia designed to support USAID’s broader efforts to “Promote a Prosperous, Well-Governed, and Resilient North Macedonia Committed to Euro-Atlantic Integration.”¹ Specifically, CEP seeks to “*strengthen constructive engagement by civil society organizations (CSOs) on policies and issues targeted at anti-corruption, transparency, and rule of law, and sustain youth engagement in public life in North Macedonia.*” The project is implemented by prime implementer East-West Management Institute (EWMI) in close collaboration with local consortium partners (1) Foundation for Internet and Society “Metamorphosis” (Metamorphosis); (2) Association for Democratic Initiatives (ADI); (3) National Youth Council of Macedonia (NYCM); and (4) Foundation Open Society – Macedonia (FOSM).

The purpose of the evaluation is to examine to what extent and how CEP-supported Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) helped to advance North Macedonia’s European Union (EU) accession in regard to improving transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law. I would like to ask you questions related to your experience with the project.

This interview will last approximately one hour (1h). With your permission, I would like to audio record this session for report writing and analysis purposes only. The recordings will be destroyed once we complete our analysis. Is this okay with you?

- Yes
- No

In the evaluation report, your name will not be mentioned except in an annex in a list of people consulted and this list will only be shared with the donor (USAID). The evaluation team will make every effort to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of our discussion and hope you will feel comfortable providing honest feedback on your experiences and points of view. Participation is voluntary; also, you may decline to respond to our questions or end the interview at any time. Do you have any questions? Can we start now?

CEP EVALUATION KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

EVALUATION QUESTION I

INTERVIEW INFORMATION

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Date | |
| Interviewer Name | |
| Primary Notetaker Name | |

RESPONDENT INFORMATION

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Respondent Name | |
| Respondent Title | |
| Respondent Organization | |
| Sex of Respondent | <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> Refuse |

QUESTIONS

1. How is your CSO supporting the CEP project – what skills does it bring to the project?
2. What specifically were you doing at the central level and at the local municipal level – and how did you differentiate the type of support and interventions between the two levels?
3. Which approach is more effective – targeting the central or the local level – and why? Which approach is more sustainable and why?
4. One of the indicators was for the government to receive new information, knowledge, or skills to inform policy or procedure change – how is this indicator being met?
5. What did you see were the biggest changes in the government/courts as a result of your organizations' work?
6. How did you work with other CSOs (networks or individual CSOs)? How did your work training CSOs or coordinating networks of CSOs contribute to your grants' achievements in supporting [rule of law, transparency, anti-corruption]?
7. What were the most effective entry points to influence the government or courts to change their behavior or practice (e.g., individuals, committees, groups, networks)? What were the most challenging entry points? Is it worth persevering with the challenging entry points?

8. Which actors, leverage points or structures were the most willing/effective partners and what were the factors facilitating or limiting their engagement?
9. How were citizens engaged? What were their perceptions of their engagement and how it affected them?
10. How has the project affected the wider community, such as people not directly involved in CEP activities?
11. In general, how do citizens view the transparency and accountability of the government? Is there a difference in perception between the citizens your grant engaged directly and non-project-engaged citizens in their views of the government?
12. Did you work or collaborate with the other CSOs being funded by CEP? How do you believe this affected CEP's ability to reach the project's outcomes?
13. How have the right people (government, individuals, CSOs, networks) been targeted for support? Are there any missed groups?
14. How did your CSO take gender and social inclusion into consideration or was it not considered important?
15. What internal or external factors helped or hindered the project's success? (e.g., politics, COVID-19, etc.) How can you prove "success"?
16. Was your organization part of the consultative process for the drafting of the EU progress report? If yes, did activities and achievements within CEP were communicated to the EUD?
17. What were the most effective activities for sustainability? What else could have been done? Who will continue to work on this activity?
18. In going forward, what would be useful for USAID/North Macedonia to be aware of for future programming in transparency/anti-corruption/rule of law?
19. Do you have anything else to add?

CEP EVALUATION KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

USG AND CEP PROJECT STAFF

EVALUATION QUESTION I

INTERVIEW INFORMATION

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Date | |
| Interviewer Name | |
| Primary Notetaker Name | |

RESPONDENT INFORMATION

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Respondent Name | |
| Respondent Title | |
| Respondent Organization | |
| Sex of Respondent | <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> Refuse |

QUESTIONS FOR USG RESPONDENTS:

1. How do you think the grantees and their interventions work cohesively together and support each other, coordinate with each other?
2. Modification 06 occurred in January 2020, before some 2020 EU-NATO decisions were officially announced. For example, the government-EU discussions in which the EU member states granted permission for accession negotiations in 2020 and North Macedonia's membership into NATO in March 2020? What was the reason for the pivot in 2020, in addition to pre-empting the announcements? Were there strategic decisions or mitigating/external circumstances that led to the pivot?
3. After the pivot, CEP was expected to engage with, and provide technical assistance to high-level government institutions, such as the office of the Deputy Prime Minister for Anti-Corruption. What is your confidence level in the CEP implementers to work at this level, given that EU accession has challenging for any country seeking membership – and it's a very long process external to project contributions?
4. CEP grantees work at the municipality and citizen level, so the project goes beyond direct EU accession support and includes wider benefits for communities, so what are your expectations at the grassroots level?
5. How do you think CEP has adapted and developed during this pivot? Did you expect challenges, and if so, how did USAID/NM support the project to address these challenges?

6. Detail how your expectations have been met, or otherwise, since the pivot, to date?
7. What now defines your success for the project to August 2022 apart from meeting its goal and indicator outcomes? [Strengthen CSOs and their alliances]
8. What is your view on how COVID-19 or other external factors affected the overall project's progress and performance?

QUESTIONS FOR CEP PROJECT STAFF:

1. What was your direct work on transparency/anti-corruption/rule of law? (What were you contracted to do?)
2. Can you explain the challenges for you and your grantees in addressing the pivot towards only 2 components and the focus on transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law?
3. How has CEP addressed these challenges? How has CEP adapted to the change? Was the change of programming strategic, opportunities, or mitigating/external circumstances?
4. How has USAID supported the pivot? And how have the implementers supported the grantees? And how have the grantees supported the sub-CSO? Where is the weakest link? Where is the strongest link?
5. What contextual factors (political, COVID-19, others) helped or hindered the success of CEP's activities?
6. How did the project address gender and inclusivity issues?
7. How did CEP's various rule of law, transparency and anti-corruption activities implemented by different grantees and partners complement or support one another to achieve outcomes?
8. Which actors/participants (government, CSOs, individuals, etc.) have been the most engaged in CEP – i.e., advocates of change?
9. How do citizens know about CEP? What is their view of the program? What are the indirect benefits or concerns for them?
10. What evidence is there that citizens support transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law – and what differences are there between CEP-supported citizens and non-CEP-supported citizens? How did the 5 grantees partner with GONM institutions? Were any deemed more effective than others? How did your organization partner with GONM institutions?
11. How do you think the grantees and their interventions work cohesively together and support each other, coordinate with each other?

12. How have linkages between people and the government increased – has people’s involvement in local politics increased? Do you see any difference in citizen engagement at the central versus municipal levels?
13. Where are citizen leaders and change agents in society now? How, in what way, under what circumstances? What makes an effective leader? What evidence do you have that citizens have the capacity, or otherwise, to become effective leaders? What external factors could challenge their roles as leaders?
14. How satisfied are you with the grants process and the type of grants being awarded? What were the challenges/complaints? What determined the success of the grants? What determined the weaknesses?
15. How confident do you feel about the goal of the program and meeting the component objectives and outcomes?
16. What strategies, approaches, tactics worked and what didn’t, and why? What did you learn from the process?
17. What are the program’s plans for sustainability? Are they feasible and achievable – in the short term and the long term? What would you change to improve the program?
18. How sustainable are the 5 CSO activities and how can USAID or others build upon the work to support continuity?
19. CEP had a large focus on training CSOs to monitor government activities at the central and municipal levels. Do you believe this was an effective strategy? How did the non-funded CSOs apply the learnings from the trainings? What were some notable successes?
20. How confident are you that the work your CSO did, in combination with other CEP-supported CSOs, will contribute transparency/anti-corruption/rule of law? How have these project activities helped the country to gain EU accession regardless of which party is governing the country? For example, what accountability processes are in place? Or is there still a lot to do?
21. In going forward, what would be useful for USAID/North Macedonia to be aware of for future programming in transparency/anti-corruption/rule of law?
22. Do you have anything else to add?

CEP EVALUATION KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

GONM INTERLOCUTORS

EVALUATION QUESTION I

INTERVIEW INFORMATION

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Date | |
| Interviewer Name | |
| Primary Notetaker Name | |

RESPONDENT INFORMATION

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Respondent Name | |
| Respondent Title | |
| Respondent Organization | |
| Central / Municipality | |
| Location | |
| Sex of Respondent | <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> Refuse |

QUESTIONS

1. What's your involvement with the CEP? How is the CEP supporting you? What groups in the CEP project did you engage with? [management – i.e., EWMI]. How effective is their support?
2. What were your original views of CEP and have they changed over time?
3. Does this type of program lead to building transparency, anti-corruption, and/or rule of law?
4. What are the strengths of the program? What are the challenges for you?
5. How has the work with [insert relevant grantee or partner] been helpful for you? Has it changed your department's knowledge and attitudes? In what ways? What elements of the training or assistance are you using/implementing?
6. Explain the relationships – and their changes, if any – between the municipalities and central government – before the program and now? How is this likely to change – positive or otherwise – to the end of the project in August 2022?
7. What contextual factors (political, COVID-19, others) helped or hindered the success of CEP's activities?

8. Do you know what communities need in order to support the government to gain EU accession and overall improvements in increasing transparency and rule of law and decreasing corruption?
9. What were the most effective ways [insert grantee or partner] worked with your office and/or staff? Would you recommend to USAID that these ways of working with the government should continue or do you think a different way is more effective?
10. What are your department's / your municipality's plans – for sustainability of program processes, components, or activities – which ones will you adopt and why, or how will you modify what you have learned from the program?
11. What was the most significant change you saw in your department/your municipality from your engagements with [insert relevant grantee or partner] or CEP more broadly?
12. In going forward, what would be useful for USAID/North Macedonia to be aware of for future programming in transparency/anti-corruption/rule of law?
13. Is there anything else you would like to add?

CEP EVALUATION KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

MEDIA

EVALUATION QUESTION I

INTERVIEW INFORMATION

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Date | |
| Interviewer Name | |
| Primary Notetaker Name | |

RESPONDENT INFORMATION

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Respondent Name | |
| Respondent Title | |
| Respondent Organization | |
| CSO associated with | |
| Sex of Respondent | <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> Refuse |

QUESTIONS

1. How familiar are you with the project activities? And its terminology – transparency, anti-corruption and rule of law?
2. What type of training did you receive? How relevant was it? What did you gain from it to use in your work?
3. What has been your role, or the role of media outlets in particular, to support the project?
4. Are awareness-raising campaigns the best way to inform citizens about transparency, anti-corruption and rule of law? Do you know whether there a significant change in the number of court trials related to corruption?
5. Overall, what is view of a program like CEP?
6. What are the drivers/enablers of change in your opinion, and is CEP addressing change effectively?
7. What actors have been the most effective in facilitating change?
8. What gaps exist in addressing the program objectives to increase transparency, anti-corruption, or rule of law? What approaches are best to meet those gaps?

9. How did the program address gender and inclusivity issues?
10. What are the priority areas that require continued support?
11. Is the government capable of moving towards EU accession regardless of which party is governing the country? For example, is there accountability processes in place?
12. What would be useful for USAID/North Macedonia to be aware of for future programming in transparency/anti-corruption/rule of law?
13. Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

CEP EVALUATION FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

INTRODUCTORY SCRIPT FOR ALL FGDs

Thank you for taking the time to talk to me. My name is [INSERT NAME]. I am from IMPAQ International, a U.S.-based international policy research, technical assistance, and evaluation company.

IMPAQ is conducting a summative, final evaluation of the USAID’s Civic Engagement Project or CEP. CEP is a five-year USAID-funded activity in North Macedonia designed to support USAID’s broader efforts to “Promote a Prosperous, Well-Governed, and Resilient North Macedonia Committed to Euro-Atlantic Integration.”¹ Specifically, CEP seeks to “*strengthen constructive engagement by civil society organizations (CSOs) on policies and issues targeted at anti-corruption, transparency, and rule of law, and sustain youth engagement in public life in North Macedonia.*” The project is implemented by prime implementer East-West Management Institute (EWMI) in close collaboration with local consortium partners (1) Foundation for Internet and Society “Metamorphosis” (Metamorphosis); (2) Association for Democratic Initiatives (ADI); (3) National Youth Council of Macedonia (NYCM); and (4) Foundation Open Society – Macedonia (FOSM).

The purpose of the evaluation is to examine to what extent and how CEP-supported Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) helped to advance North Macedonia’s European Union (EU) accession in regard to improving transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law. I would like to ask you questions related to your experience with the project.

This focus group will last approximately one hour (1h). With your permission, I would like to audio record this session for report writing and analysis purposes only. The recordings will be destroyed once we complete our analysis. Is this okay with you?

- Yes
- No

In the evaluation report, your name will not be mentioned except in an annex in a list of people consulted and this list will only be shared with the donor (USAID). The evaluation team will make every effort to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of our discussion and hope you will feel comfortable providing honest feedback on your experiences and points of view. Participation is voluntary; also, you may decline to respond to our questions or end the interview at any time. Do you have any questions? Can we start now?

CEP EVALUATION FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

SUB-CSO GROUPS

EVALUATION QUESTION I

| | | | | |
|-----|------|---------------|---|--------------|
| SSG | LCDF | Mar 18–Feb 21 | Public policies (municipal councils & local CSOs) | Transparency |
|-----|------|---------------|---|--------------|

CSO networks, such as the Platform of CSOs in the Fight Against Corruption; People Powered; and the Fiscal Accountability, Sustainability, and Transparency Network. FGDs will seek to understand the value and effectiveness of the network structure in moving forward actions related to transparency, anti-corruption, and rule of law, the tangible achievements of these networks, the perceived successes of a network-driven intervention vs. an individual CSO-driven intervention, the differences in national-level vs. local-level engagement, the best practices in managing a network that intervenes with GONM, build consensus around the right entry-points engage with the GONM, and document challenges.

INTERVIEW INFORMATION

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Date | |
| Interviewer Name | |
| Primary Notetaker Name | |

RESPONDENT INFORMATION

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Respondent Name | |
| Respondent Title | |
| Respondent Organization | |
| CSO associated with | |
| Location | |
| Sex of Respondent | <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> Refuse |

| RESPONDENT #: | SEX | NAME OR INITIALS | POSITION | SUB-CSO (IF DIFFERENT FROM ABOVE) |
|---------------|-----|------------------|----------|-----------------------------------|
| 01 | | | | |
| 02 | | | | |
| 03 | | | | |
| 04 | | | | |
| 05 | | | | |
| 06 | | | | |
| 07 | | | | |
| 08 | | | | |

WARM UP (IF RELEVANT)

First, I'd like everyone to introduce themselves.

.....

QUESTIONS

We will begin with questions about the CSO network structure.

1. Can you comment on the benefits or challenges of a network of CSOs (against individual CSOs) – i.e., the effectiveness and value of a network-driven structure? How do you build consensus around the right entry points to engage with the GONM? What were some of the documentation and reporting challenges, if any? What are some “best practices” in managing a network that intervenes with GONM?
2. For a general, over-arching question, what is your overall impression of the CEP activity in terms of its objective to support the government in increasing transparency and rule of law and reducing corruption?
3. What do you think are the biggest drivers of corruption and lack of transparency in this country?
4. Do you think there are different drivers for men and women, and for young and old, and for urban and rural people? Have these drivers been met by CEP activities?
5. How are CEP strategies tailored at the local level? Are the strategies relevant, responsive, and appropriate? What are the differences in national-level versus local-level engagement? How does the government – local and national – assist or lead with strategies to prevent corruption?
6. How have CEP interventions been adopted at community/citizen-level to date? How are the interventions contributing to increasing transparency and rule of law and reducing corruption? Is CEP addressing all the factors that lead to corruption and lack of transparency in an effective way – expand on your response?
7. How would you define “success” in terms of this project? [How will you know when you have succeeded?] Has there been evidence of CEP strategies that have actually started to be “successful” and, for example, discouraged corruption?
8. How are you monitoring your progress and is it effective? [Where does the data come from, is it reliable, on time, relevant, and useful?]
9. What are the tangible benefits of this project – the tangible benefits of the CSO network? Of all of the specific CEP prevention interventions that you have been involved in, or are knowledgeable about, which ones have met your expectations? How have they differed from your expectations (exceeded or have not met expectations)?

10. How would you change anything to improve the CSO network structure – i.e., how would you improve CEP so that it could advance the goals of the CSO network? Can you comment on any gaps that the CSO network could have addressed but didn't?

.....

CLOSING THE FGD

Thank you for participating. This has been a very successful discussion and your opinions will be a valuable asset to our evaluation of the Civic Engagement Project. We hope you have found the discussion interesting too. I would like to remind you that any comments featuring in this report will be anonymous and confidential.

Thank you.

CEP EVALUATION FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE
ENGAGED CITIZENS AND JUSTICE SYSTEM

EVALUATION QUESTION I

INTERVIEW INFORMATION

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Date | |
| Interviewer Name | |
| Primary Notetaker Name | |

RESPONDENT INFORMATION

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Respondent Name | |
| Respondent Title | |
| Respondent Organization | |
| CSO associated with | |
| Location | |
| Sex of Respondent | <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> Refuse |

| RESPONDENT # | SEX | NAME OR INITIALS | POSITION | SUB-CSO (IF DIFFERENT FROM ABOVE) |
|--------------|-----|------------------|----------|-----------------------------------|
| 01 | | | | |
| 02 | | | | |
| 03 | | | | |
| 04 | | | | |
| 05 | | | | |
| 06 | | | | |
| 07 | | | | |
| 08 | | | | |

WARM UP (IF RELEVANT)

First, I'd like everyone to introduce themselves.

.....

QUESTIONS

1. How is the CSO supporting you with activities on transparency, anti-corruption, or rule of law?
2. What activities are the most effective and why?
3. Describe how citizens are able to engage with and monitor their governments' work to ensure transparency. Describe the re-dress, remediation, or complaints mechanism if cases of corruption or lack of transparency occur?
4. How confident are you in speaking up against violations? In the process? Is there a better process or improvements in the process that you would suggest?
5. Are there different issues for different groups – men and women, children, young and old, urban and rural, marginalized people? And how does the project help to address issues from different groups? Are there groups that the project is missing, that could be included?
6. How will you know when you have succeeded? Has there been evidence of the project strategies that have actually started to be “successful” and, for example, discouraged corruption?
7. What are the tangible benefits of this project for you and your community?
8. How does the government – local and national – assist or lead with strategies to prevent corruption? Do you feel that the government is actively engaged?
9. What is your view on your municipality's level of transparency and corruption following your engagement with the project? What is your view of transparency and corruption at the central level of government? Where have you seen greater progress, if any?
10. How would you change anything to improve the project or their strategies?
11. Is there anything you would like to add?

.....

CEP EVALUATION ONLINE SURVEY
GOVERNMENT MUNICIPALITIES

INTRODUCTORY TEXT

The purpose of CEP working with government municipalities is to advance good governance at the local level by strengthening local governments’ resilience to corruption, conflict of interest, transparency, and rule of law through support and activities, such as the introduction of integrity systems in municipalities; increased civil participation, especially of vulnerable categories of citizens.

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

| QUESTIONS | RESPONSE | SKIP RULE |
|---|---|--|
| SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION | | |
| 1.1. Title | | |
| 1.2. Department | | |
| 1.3. Municipality | | |
| 1.4. Sex | 0 = Female 1 = Male 2 = Other 3 = No response / Do not want to answer | |
| 1.5. Age | 0 = Under 30 1 = 31-50 2 = Over 50 3 = No response / Do not want to answer | |
| SECTION 2: WORK STATUS | | |
| 2.1. Years of service in the government? (Single Answer) | 0 = One year or less 1 = 1-5 years 2 = More than 5 years | |
| SECTION 3: TRANSPARENCY | | |
| 3.1 Have you been trained by the project to publish data or information in different formats for different users? | 0 = I have been trained 1 = I have not been trained yet 2 = No response | <i>If you have not been trained, skip to 3.4</i> |
| 3.2 Comment on the quality and usefulness of the training. | | |
| 3.3 Comment on what you do now in your job that you did not do before – e.g., tangible or behavioral changes you have observed/experienced due to project training or engagement [i.e., new/amended policy, a shift in attitudes, change in practice, etc.] | | |

| QUESTIONS | RESPONSE | | | | | SKIP RULE |
|---|--|-------------|-----------|---------|---------------------------|--|
| Please describe the change as much as possible | | | | | | |
| 3.4 How satisfied are you with the training support provided to you by the project | 1. Not at all | 2. A little | 3. Mostly | 4. Very | 5. I don't want to answer | |
| 3.5 Has your municipality opened up its datasets or information repositories as a result of the project's support? | 0 = No 1 = Yes 2 = I don't know | | | | | |
| SECTION 4: CORRUPTION | | | | | | |
| 4.1 Have you been trained by the project on preventing corruption or provided with resources/support on preventing corruption? | 0 = I have been trained or engaged 1 = I have not been trained or engaged yet 2 = No response | | | | | <i>If you have not been trained, skip to 4.5</i> |
| 4.2 Comment on the quality and usefulness of the training or engagement. | | | | | | |
| 4.3 Comment on what you do now in your job, after training or engagement with the CSO, that you did not do before. | | | | | | |
| 4.4 How satisfied are you with the training and support provided to you by the project | 1. Not at all | 2. A little | 3. Mostly | 4. Very | 5. I don't want to answer | |
| 4.5 Have your prepared a municipality Integrity Plan? | 0 = No 1 = Yes, but it is still in progress 2 = Yes, and it is completed 3 = Yes, and it is formally adopted 4 = I don't know 5 = I don't want to answer | | | | | <i>If you have not been trained, skip to 5.1</i> |
| 4.6 Comment on the quality and usefulness of the Integrity Plan | | | | | | |
| SECTION 5: DILEMMA QUESTIONS | | | | | | |
| <p>5.1 Promotion Dilemma</p> <p>There is a possibility for your promotion that comes with a certain condition. What would you choose to do? From the following scenarios, which one do you relate to the most? (Single Answer)</p> | <p>a. A higher position that supports my family but I have to pay the hiring officer a fee to influence the result to get the job.</p> <p>b. A lower paid job even though I know that the person who got the promotion paid to influence the result, but I am not going to say anything because I might lose my job</p> <p>c. I didn't get the promotion. The person who was promoted paid a fee to influence the result, so I am going to report it to the appropriate authority.</p> | | | | | |

| QUESTIONS | RESPONSE | SKIP RULE |
|---|--|-----------|
| | d. I don't know what to do because I don't have confidence in the system. | |
| <p>5.2 Corruption Dilemma</p> <p>When do you think it is justifiable for a woman <u>not</u> to report a case of corruption to the police?</p> | <p>1 = Never, she should always report it.</p> <p>2 = If she is in danger from the police because they are corrupt, and they may harm her.</p> <p>3 = A woman should not report a case of corruption to the police, but she should go to another authority or CSO/NGO that will support her.</p> <p>4 = She should always keep quiet for her own safety.</p> | |
| <p>5.2 Corruption Dilemma</p> <p>When do you think it is justifiable for a man <u>not</u> to report a case of corruption to the police?</p> | <p>1 = Never, he should always report it.</p> <p>2 = If he is in danger from the police because they are corrupt, and they may harm him.</p> <p>3 = A man should not report a case of corruption to the police, but he should go to another authority or CSO/NGO that will support him.</p> <p>4 = He should always keep quiet for his own safety.</p> | |
| SECTION 6: OPINION | | |
| <p>6.1. Which of the following statements do you most agree with?</p> | <p>1. North Macedonia will gain membership to the EU within the next 5-10 years.</p> <p>2. North Macedonia will not gain membership to the EU within the next 5-10 years.</p> | |

ANNEX D: SOURCES OF INFORMATION

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- CAFT (2021, July). Civic Engagement Project in North Macedonia, Final Narrative Report: Fair for One, Fair for All. Coalition All for Fair Trials.
- Center for Civil Communications (2021, February). 2020 Monitoring of Public Procurement, Report No. 34 (January-June). USAID.
- Center for Civil Communications (2019, May). 2019 Monitoring of Public Procurement, Report No. 33 (July-December). USAID.
- Center for Civil Communications (2020, May). Index of Active Transparency 2020. USAID.
- Coalition of Civil Associations: All for Fair Trials (2019, June). 2019 Annual Report for the Work of the Coalition: Annual Narrative and Financial Report for the Work of the Coalition for 2019.
- EWMI (no date). Civic Engagement Project in North Macedonia, Scope of Work, Konekt: Strengthening the Financial Intelligence Directorate of the Government of North Macedonia. East-West Management Institute.
- EWMI (2021). Civic Engagement Project in North Macedonia, Scope of Work, Association for Democratic Initiatives (ADI): East-West Management Institute.
- EWMI (2021). Civic Engagement Project in North Macedonia, Scope of Work, Foundation for Internet and Society Metamorphosis. East-West Management Institute.
- EWMI (2021, October). Civic Engagement Project, Quarterly Report #20, July-September. East-West Management Institute.
- EWMI (2021, August). Civic Engagement Project, Year 6 Work Plan. East-West Management Institute.
- EWMI (2021, July). Civic Engagement Project, Quarterly Report #19, April-June. East-West Management Institute.
- EWMI (2021, April). Civic Engagement Project, Quarterly Report #18, January-March. East-West Management Institute.
- EWMI (2021, January). Civic Engagement Project, Quarterly Report #17, October-December. East-West Management Institute.
- EWMI (2020, October). Civic Engagement Project, Quarterly Report #16, July-September. East-West Management Institute.
- EWMI (2020, September). Civic Engagement Project, Year 5 Work Plan. East-West Management Institute.
- EWMI (2020, September). Revised Civic Engagement Project, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan (MELP). East-West Management Institute.
- EWMI (2020, July). Civic Engagement Project, Quarterly Report #15, April-June. East-West Management Institute.

EWMI (2020, May). Civic Engagement Project in North Macedonia, Scope of Work Modification: My Money, My Responsibility-Participative Budgeting in the Municipalities in Macedonia. Finance Think. East-West Management Institute.

EWMI (2020, April). Civic Engagement Project, Quarterly Report #14, January-March. East-West Management Institute.

EWMI (2020, February). Civic Engagement Project in North Macedonia, Scope of Work Modification, Coalition All for Fair Trials (CAFT): Fair for One, Fair for All. East-West Management Institute.

EWMI (2019, November). Civic Engagement Project, Technical Proposal – for Modification #06. East-West Management Institute.

EWMI (2019, April). Civic Engagement Project, Quarterly Report #10, January-March. East-West Management Institute.

EWMI (2018). Civic Engagement Project in North Macedonia, Scope of Work, Coalition All for Fair Trials (CAFT): Fair for One, Fair for All. East-West Management Institute.

EWMI (2018). Civic Engagement Project in North Macedonia, Scope of Work, Local Community Development Foundation Shtip (LCDF): Effective Mechanism for Civic Participation. East-West Management Institute.

EWMI (2017, May). Civic Engagement Project in North Macedonia, Scope of Work, Finance Think: My Money, My Responsibility-Participative Budgeting in the Municipalities in Macedonia. East-West Management Institute.

Finance Think (2020, October). Civic Engagement Project in North Macedonia, Final Narrative Report: My Money, My Responsibility-Participative Budgeting in the Municipalities in Macedonia. Finance Think Institute for Economic Research and Policy. USAID.

Finance Think (2020, June). Town Hall Meetings: A Tool Kit for Including Citizens in the Process of Participatory Budgeting, Study No. 28, Finance Think Institute for Economic Research and Policy. USAID.

Foundation for Internet and Society Metamorphosis. (2021, July). Assessment of Good Governance in North Macedonia and the region through the Openness Index.

Foundation for Internet and Society Metamorphosis. (2020, June). Assessment of Good Governance in North Macedonia and the region through the Openness Index.

LCDF (2021, March). Civic Engagement Project in North Macedonia, Final Narrative Report: Effective Mechanism for Civic Participation. Local Community Development Foundation Shtip.

Transparency International (2021). Corruption Perceptions Index 2020.

OSCE (2021). Manual for Local Youth Councils. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Mission to Skopje.

UNODC (2018). Manual on Corruption Surveys: Methodological Guidelines on the Measurement of Bribery and Other Forms of Corruption through Sample Surveys. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

USAID/North Macedonia (2021). North Macedonia Business Ecosystem Project: Quarterly Progress Report April-June. The Palladium Group.

USAID/North Macedonia (2020). Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS): September 2020-September 2025.

USAID/North Macedonia (2020). 2020 Democracy and Governance Survey – North Macedonia.

USAID/North Macedonia (2020, January). Solicitation, Offer and Award, Activity for Civic Engagement (ACE), East-West Management Institute Inc., AID-I 65-C-16-00003, Modification #06.

USAID/North Macedonia (2019). Democracy and Governance Survey – North Macedonia: Survey Report, Results of survey wave in 2019.

USAID/North Macedonia (2019, July). USAID/North Macedonia Gender Analysis Report. Banyan Global.

USAID/North Macedonia (2018). E-Newsletter, USAID/North Civic Engagement Project in Macedonia (CEP), Issue IV, July-December.

USAID/North Macedonia (2017). E-Newsletter, USAID/North Civic Engagement Project in Macedonia (CEP), Issue II, April-December.

USAID/North Macedonia (2016, August). Solicitation, Offer and Award, Activity for Civic Engagement (ACE), East-West Management Institute Inc., AID-I 65-C-16-00003.

DATA SOURCES – INTERNATIONAL INDEX MEASURES

CORRUPTION

- <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020/index/mkd>
- <https://risk-indexes.com/global-corruption-index/>
- <https://seldi.net/publications/reports/corruption-assessment-report-macedonia-2016/>
- <https://dksk.mk/en/>
- <http://www.antikorupcija.mk/eng/index.php?id=2&mv=1>
- <https://www.coe.int/en/web/greco/-/north-macedonia-publication-of-fifth-round-compliance-report>
- <https://ti-defence.org/gdi/countries/north-macedonia/>

TRANSPARENCY

- <https://cea.org.mk/budget-transparency-index-in-municipalities-in-north-macedonia/?lang=en>
- <https://aspi.mk/en/home-en/> - The Agency for Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information
- <https://opennessindex.actionsee.org/country/north-macedonia>
- <https://www.internationalbudget.org/open-budget-survey/country-results/2019/macedonia>

- <https://www.internationalbudget.org/wp-content/uploads/OBS2015-CS-Macedonia-English.pdf>
- <https://www.oecd.org/gov/regulatory-policy/governance-indicators.htm>

RULE OF LAW

- <http://www.esem.org.mk/en/index.php/what-we-do-now/3274-rule-of-law-index-for-2020.html>
- <https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/country/2021>
- <https://freedomhouse.org/countries/nations-transit/scores>
- <https://freedomhouse.org/country/north-macedonia>
- <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/Home/Reports>
- <https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-dashboard/MKD>

ANNEX E: KEY INFORMANTS AND FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

| EVALUATION QUESTION 1: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS | | | |
|---|-----------------|---|---|
| | Stakeholder | Position | Organization |
| F | USG | CEP Contracting Officer's Representative | USAID/North Macedonia |
| M | USG | Monitoring & Evaluation Officer | USAID/North Macedonia |
| M | CEP Project | CEP Chief of Party | East-West Management Institute (EWMI) |
| F | CEP Project | CEP Former Chief of Party | EWMI |
| M | CEP Project | CEP Former Deputy Chief of Party | EWMI |
| F | CEP Project | Senior Grants Manager | EWMI |
| M | CEP Project | Rule of Law Specialist | EWMI |
| F | CEP Project | M&E and Communications Specialist | EWMI |
| F | CEP Project | Former M&E Officer | EWMI |
| F | CEP Project | Code of Ethics Specialist (Technical Advisor) | EWMI |
| M | CEP Project | Governance Specialist (Technical Advisor) | EWMI |
| F | CEP Project | Director | Metamorphosis |
| M | CEP Project | Program Manager | Metamorphosis |
| F | CEP Project | Former M&E Officer | Metamorphosis |
| F | CEP Project | Director | Association for Democratic Initiatives (ADI) |
| F | CEP Project | Program Coordinator | Foundation Open Society Macedonia (FOSM) |
| F | CEP Project | Program Assistant | Foundation Open Society Macedonia (FOSM) |
| F | CEP Project | International Affairs & Policy Coordinator | National Youth Council of Macedonia (NYCM/NMS) |
| F | CEP CSO Grantee | Executive Director | Finance Think |
| F | CEP CSO Grantee | Executive Director | Finance Think |
| F | CEP CSO Grantee | Executive Director | Local Community Development Foundation, Shtip (LCDF) |
| M | CEP CSO Grantee | Project Manager | LCDF |
| F | CEP CSO Grantee | Executive Director | Coalition of Civil Associations All for Fair Trade (CAFT) |
| M | CEP CSO Grantee | Legal Analyst | CAFT |
| M | CEP CSO Grantee | Project Coordinator | Transparency International |
| M | CEP CSO Grantee | Journalist | Transparency International |
| M | GONM Central | Head of Cabinet | Cabinet of the Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) |
| M | GONM Central | Special Legal Advisor | Cabinet DPM |
| F | GONM Central | State Advisor | Ministry of Information, Society, & Administration (MISA) |
| F | GONM Central | Judge | Civil Court, Skopje |
| F | GONM Central | Judge | Criminal Court, Skopje |

| EVALUATION QUESTION 1: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS | | | |
|---|--------------------|--|--|
| Stakeholder | | Position | Organization |
| M | GONM Central | Court President | Basic Court, Kavadarci |
| F | Public Institution | Head of Section for Strategic Planning & Integrity | State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption (SCPC) |
| M | Public Institution | Officer for Strategic Planning & Integrity | SCPC |
| M | Media | Journalist | TV Telma |
| M | Media | Journalist | Prizma |

| EVALUATION QUESTION 1: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| FGD 1: RULE OF LAW | Justice System Direct Beneficiaries: Trial monitors, capital & regional, conducting criminal & civil cases. Trained by CSO Grantee CAFT. | Skopje – 3 Veles – 2 Ohrid – 1 Shtip – 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 males • 4 females |
| FGD 2: TRANSPARENCY | Justice System and Engaged Citizens: Members of 3 Advisory Bodies. CSO Grantee LCDF established 8 Advisory Bodies | Kocani – 1 Shtip – 1 Zrnovci – 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 male • 2 females |
| FGD 3: TRANSPARENCY | Sub-CSO Groups: CSOs from a network of CSOs. Trained by CSO Grantee LCDF. | Probishtip – 1 Shtip – 1 Vinica – 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 males • 3 females |
| FGD 4: ANTI-CORRUPTION | Engaged Citizens: Citizens participating in Public Dialogues. Organized by CSO Partner ADI. | Gostiva – 1 Kavadarci – 1 Kumanovo – 1 Shtip – 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 male • 3 females |

| EVALUATION QUESTION 2: WORKSHOP – CENTER FOR CIVIL COMMUNICATIONS | | | |
|---|-------------|---------------------|--------------|
| Stakeholder | | Position | Organization |
| M | CSO Grantee | President | CCC |
| F | CSO Grantee | Program Director | CCC |
| F | CSO Grantee | Project Coordinator | CCC |

| EVALUATION QUESTION 2: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS | | | |
|---|--------------------|--|--|
| Stakeholder | | Position | Organization |
| F | GONM | Chief Communication Officer | Ministry of Defense |
| M | GONM | Communication Officer | Ministry of Defense |
| F | GONM | Head, Public Procurement Division | Public Enterprise Macedonian Forests |
| F | GONM | Head, Normative Affairs, Training & International Relations Division | Public Procurement Bureau |
| M | Public Institution | Commission Member | State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption (SCPC) |

| EVALUATION QUESTION 2: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS | | | |
|--|-------|---------------------------------|--|
| Stakeholder | | Position | Organization |
| F | CSO | President | Echo Educational Humanitarian Organization, Shtip |
| M | CSO | President | Association Initiative of Unemployed Intellectuals, Vinica |
| F | CSO | Program Director | Stanica P.E.T. Prilep |
| M | Media | Editor-in-Chief | 360 Stepeni |
| F | Media | Country Director & Chief Editor | Prizma, Investigative Online Platform & Balkan Investigative Reporting Network |

| EVALUATION QUESTION 2: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS | | | |
|---|--|--------|--|
| FGD I: BUSINESS COMMUNITY | Employer associations & chambers of commerce | Skopje | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 males • 2 females |

ANNEX F: ANALYSIS OF CEP KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

| Performance Indicator Tracking Table | | |
|---|----------------|--------------|
| Performance Indicator | FY 2021 Target | QR20 Actuals |
| Number of CSOs receiving USG assistance engaged in advocacy interventions. | 25 | 27 |
| R 1: Strengthened CSOs engagement with and oversight of public institutions | | |
| Sub-IR 1.1: GoNM and CSOs implement joint activities to advance and/or implement urgent reforms related to RoL, anti-corruptions and/or transparency | | |
| Number of joint activities undertaken by CEP partners and grantees in cooperation with government institutions. | 8 | 23 |
| Number of trained representatives of the local CSOs and LGUs on the provisions of the new Law on Prevention of Corruption | 60 | 22 |
| Sub-IR 1.2 Improved public policies and their implementation related to RoL, anti-corruption and transparency | | |
| Number of Public Policies introduced, adopted, repealed, changed, or implemented consistent with citizen input | 20 | 2 |
| R 2: CSO Sustainability Strengthened | | |
| Sub IR 2.1 Increase number of CSOs working together within the civil society sector | | |
| Number of synergies between CEP partners, grantees and CSOs related to RoL, anti-corruption and transparency. | 8 | 1 |
| Number of citizens participating in the events related to targeted areas | 680 | 311 |
| Number of media articles on CSOs activities. | 500 | 299 |
| Sub-IR 2.2 Increase number of CSOs partnerships across sectors (government and private sector and public) | | |
| Number of advocacy initiatives undertaken by CEP grantees together with different stakeholders based on a joint partnership | 29 | 8 |
| R 3: Increased and sustained youth engagement in North Macedonia | | |
| Sub-IR 3.1 Increased Leaderships/Advocacy Skills of the Youth | | |
| Percentage of CEP-supported youth that remains active in public life beyond the initial CEP support. | 70% | N/A |
| Number of CEP-supported youth that acquires new knowledge, skills, and networking opportunities. | 25 | N/A |
| Sub-IR 3.2 Intensified youth-led grass root level engagement | | |
| Number of young people participating in the initiatives undertaken by YCEA winners. | 100 | 17 |
| Number of young people that participate in LEAD Fellows' activities. | 500 | N/A |
| R 4: More transparent and accountable government institutions | | |

| Performance Indicator Tracking Table | | |
|--|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Performance Indicator | FY 2021 Target | QR20 Actuals |
| Sub-IR 4.1 Increased GoNM responsiveness to citizens | | |
| Number of trained civil servants/data officers under relevant state institutions | 120 | 22 |
| Number of new open data sets released by each supported institutions | 5 | 0 |
| Number of stakeholders engaged on creation of new Open Government Partnership National Action Plan (OGP NAP) 2021 | 50 | 1 |
| Sub-IR 4.2 Strengthened ethical competence of public servants, and strengthened mechanisms to support "professional ethics" | | |
| Number of training and/or capacity building activities conducted with CEP assistance | 24 | 9 |
| Number of representatives participating at CEP supported trainings and/or workshops | 15 | 71 |