

Democracy Commission Small Grants Program Evaluation

Evaluation Report

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ACRONYM LIST

ABR	Annual Budget Request
ACE	Assistance to Europe, Eurasia, and Central Asia
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
DCM	Deputy Chief of Mission
DUNS	Data Universal Numbering System
Dem Com	Democracy Commission Small Grants Program
EPLS	Excluded Parties List System
EQ	Evaluation Question
EU	European Union
EUR/PD	Europe/Public Diplomacy
FY	Fiscal Year
ICS	Integrated Country Strategy
INL	Bureau of International Narcotic and Law Enforcement Affairs
ILMS	Integrated Logistics Management System
IVLP	International Visitor Leadership Program
JRS	Joint Regional Strategy
KII	Key Informant Interview
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NOFO	Notice of Funding Opportunity
PAS	Public Affairs Section
PCV	Peace Corps Volunteer
PPR	Performance Plan and Report
PWD	People with Disabilities
RA	Research Advisor
SAM	System for Award Management
SCA/PD	South and Central Asia/Public Diplomacy
SOW	Statement of Work
SWT	Summer Work and Travel
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
US	United States
USG	United States Government

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United States Government (USG) initiated the Democracy Commission Small Grants Program (Dem Com) in 1994 as a flexible mechanism to enable embassies in Europe, Eurasia, and Central Asia to support initiatives that contribute to more open and competitive political and economic systems and the protection of human rights. The program consists of small grants of no more than \$50,000 and a maximum duration of one-year, awarded to local non-profit organizations and independent media to support democracy and civil society initiatives. The purpose of the Dem Com evaluation is to “assess the performance and effectiveness of the program on both the beneficiary organizations and participating embassies, and to draw lessons learned for future programming.” The evaluation contract manager is the Office of the Coordinator of Assistance to Europe, Eurasia, and Central Asia (ACE). The contract to conduct the evaluation was awarded to SSG Advisors d/b/a Resonance on September 27, 2018.

To evaluate all aspects of Dem Com, the team investigated five evaluation questions (EQs) by examining the program in five countries: Armenia, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, North Macedonia, and Ukraine. The methodology employed a random selection of 113 grants from the five countries for fiscal years (FYs) 2014-16. The grant files for each of the randomly selected grants were reviewed and one-week field visits took place in each country between December 17, 2018 and February 8, 2019, along with interviews with grantees in the five countries.

DATA SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

EQ#1: Overall Effect of the Program on Civil Society: At the individual grant level, 85 percent of the grantees interviewed reported that the Dem Com grants had an impact that extended beyond the timeframe of the grant itself. In Armenia and North Macedonia, the embassies reported that Dem Com, along with other USG and international donor assistance, contributed to recent broad civil society movements. All donors and civil society umbrella organizations interviewed concurred that a small grants program like Dem Com was important for civil society development.

EQ#2: Lessons Learned from Implementation of the Democracy Commission Mode of Grant-Making: To respond to this question, the evaluation compiled and recorded information about each of the five embassies (see table in Annex A), comparing a number of process items. In summary, the five Dem Com programs employ similar practices in some cases (composition of the Commission, mechanics of decision-making, and reporting), but importantly, they use discretion to employ unique processes that are geared to their own needs in areas such as selecting priority themes and screening applications.

EQ#3: Effectiveness of Grants in the Sample by Theme Area: There were no indications of greater or more enduring improvement in one theme over another. Enduring improvements after grant completion were found in all thematic categories; however, it is clear that embassies select themes that respond to country-specific conditions and priorities.

EQ#4: Capacity-Building and Sustainability Benefits: Dem Com grantees improved their “sustainability” in regard to their capacity to obtain and manage funding, build a positive reputation and/or expand relationships with civil society organization (CSO) partners. There was not, however, evidence of long-term institutional or organizational capacity development as a result of a Dem Com grant because the grants are relatively small and short-lived.

EQ#5: Diplomacy benefits of the program: Of the 105 grantees interviewed, 75 stated that they continued their relationship with the embassy in some capacity. It is more difficult to produce quantitative evidence of improved attitudes towards the United States (US) through a Dem Com grant because of the absence of pre- and post-data on this topic, but of the 93 grantees that expressed an opinion, approximately 90 percent

of them state that perceptions of the public towards the US (when they know the project is US-funded) were positive.

CONCLUSIONS

- Dem Com contributes to strengthening of civil society and is viewed as a successful program by direct and indirect stakeholders.
- Dem Com has distinctive assistance features that amplify its success.
- Dem Com's distinctive features should be protected by being realistic about them.
- The local staff contingent is dedicated and essential.
- Internal knowledge management and long-term evaluation of outcomes are weaknesses.
- Knowledge sharing and coordination is inconsistent.
- There is no one specific theme that determines a grant's success; rather, the importance is how the themes are prioritized and applied in the Dem Com process.
- Dem Com supports grantees in several ways in addition to financially.
- The "whole-of-embassy" approach provides benefits in several respects.
- Long-term commitment over time makes an important difference.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation recommendations are grouped into three categories: a) amplify what is working well, b) general recommendations and, c) conditional recommendations.

Amplify what is working well: The first recommendation is to clearly recognize the program's strengths to underscore what to keep doing, and to avoid implementing actions that would detract from the core strengths of the program.

General Recommendations:

- Update program description to reflect current implementation realities.
- Integrate Dem Com in strategic plans, such as the integrated country strategy (ICS).
- Allocate additional resources for monitoring and evaluation (M&E).
- Strengthen internal and external knowledge sharing and management.

Conditional Recommendations: The following recommendations are put forward as actions to be considered by the embassies. Dem Com is not a "one size fits all" program and embassies need to retain flexibility to best meet their needs.

- Identify and link grantees to institutional capacity development programs already in-country, and allow small funds for capacity investments in some cases.
- When making funding decisions, support not only priority issues, but also the correct type of intervention; encourage grantees to consider resource mobilization; require demonstrated outcomes for repeat grants; establish criteria for grants over \$25,000; and use an intentional approach to leverage success through a category of "replication grants."
- Keep a balance between some defined thematic grant rounds on priority issues and open calls to continue to encourage innovation in new areas.

The Evaluation Report that follows provides detailed information for all of the Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations, with annexes providing supplemental information.

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE DEMOCRACY COMMISSION SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM

The USG initiated the Dem Comm in 1994 as a flexible mechanism to enable embassies in Europe, Eurasia, and Central Asia to support initiatives that contribute to more open and competitive political and economic systems and the protection of human rights. Missions must follow the Joint Regional Strategy (JRS) and ICS objectives as they administer the program in each country. Currently, Dem Com operates in fourteen countries. As described in the Statement of Work (SOW) for the evaluation contract (Annex B), the program consists of small grants of no more than \$50,000 and a maximum duration of one-year, awarded to local non-profit organizations and independent media to support initiatives such as promotion of civil society; free flow of information (including support for independent media); transparency in government; public education and advocacy; association building; rule of law and legal reform; conflict resolution; human rights; civic education; environment; market economy; anti-trafficking and anti-corruption awareness campaigns and training; and ethnic, minority, and women's equality.¹

The USG intends the program to be a flexible mechanism that allows the embassy to both respond to emerging issues, and to support the development of civil society by helping nascent organizations develop their project management and institutional capacities. Dem Com is managed by the Public Affairs sections (PAS) of embassies through a Democracy Commission that is constituted to review proposals and select grantees. Proposals are solicited through open competitions, advertised by the embassy, with funds distributed through the PAS.

III. EVALUATION PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of the Dem Com evaluation, as described in the evaluation contract SOW (Annex B), is to “assess the performance and effectiveness of the program on both the beneficiary organizations and participating embassies, and to draw lessons learned for future programming.” The evaluation contract manager is the ACE and the intended recipients of the evaluation include ACE as well as Europe/Public Diplomacy (EUR/PD), South and Central Asia/Public Diplomacy (SCA/PD), and U.S. Embassies in Europe and Central Asia. Broadly speaking, the evaluation will be used to help determine the program's future and, perhaps most importantly, to provide recommendations on Dem Com best practices embassies can use to improve program performance. The contract to conduct the evaluation was awarded to Resonance on September 27, 2018.

IV. EVALUATION DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION METHODS²

To evaluate all aspects of Dem Com, the evaluation SOW calls for a performance/process evaluation which focuses on “the performance of an intervention, diplomatic activity, management process or program, and examines its implementation, inputs, outputs, and likely outcomes.”³ Performance/process evaluations differ from summative/ex-post or impact evaluations which focus on establishing the changes that have occurred as a result of the program, or to which the program has substantially contributed. Summative, ex-post and impact evaluations at times use counterfactuals to measure the net impacts of a project or program, as opposed to performance/process evaluations, which do not.⁴

¹ Evaluation of Democracy Commission Small Grants Program – Contract Statement of Work, p.4

² For a detailed description of the evaluation methodology, please see the Evaluation Design Proposal and Detailed Data Collection Methodology and Tools, November 20, 2018.

³ Program Design and Performance Management Toolkit, Department of State, p.51

⁴ Ibid., p. 52

In order to conduct the evaluation, the team followed the directions of the SOW, as detailed in both the approved Evaluation Workplan (October, 2018) and the approved Evaluation Design Proposal and Detailed Data Collection Methodology and Tools (November, 2018). As per these resources, the team investigated five EQs:

- Overall Effect of the Program on civil society;
- Lessons Learned from Implementation of the Democracy Commission Mode of Grant-Making;
- Effectiveness of grants in the sample by theme area;
- Capacity-building and sustainability impact of the grants; and,
- Diplomacy benefits of the program.

The program was examined in five countries: Armenia, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, North Macedonia, and Ukraine.

The evaluation was implemented through three phases:

- *Phase 1:* prepare a stratified random sample of grants from the five countries and review the grant document files for each of the selected grants;
- *Phase 2:* work with in-country research advisors (RAs) to conduct key informant interviews (KIIs) with the selected grantees, embassy staff that implement Dem Com, and other donors; and,
- *Phase 3:* tabulate the KIIs, analyze the findings and report on findings, conclusions and recommendations.

The evaluation team was able to complete all of the required steps, following the SOW instructions and as planned in both the work plan and methodology documents. The methodology employed and data collection steps taken were as follows:

A. SAMPLE SELECTION

As a sample, the evaluation selected Dem Com grants in the five countries from FYs 2014-16. The total number of grants awarded across the five countries during those fiscal years was 453. The team stratified those 453 grants by country, theme, and dollar amount, and then used a sampling formula to derive a representative random sample of 113 grants: Armenia – 16; Kosovo – 31; Kyrgyzstan – 14; North Macedonia – 14; and, Ukraine – 38.

B. DOCUMENT REVIEW

The grant files for each of the randomly selected grants were reviewed, typically including the original proposal, the grant agreement, an interim report, and the final grant report. Also reviewed were the embassy guidelines for Democracy Commissions composition, information about grant solicitations, review and approval processes, involved offices and agencies, strategic themes, and any standard operating procedures, as well as background documents (see bibliography Annex D).

C. FIELD VISITS AND KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

The evidence base for the findings, conclusions and recommendations in this evaluation report are the grant document files reviewed; the documents provided by the embassy Dem Com teams that describe their processes; open-source background documentation the team identified; and most importantly, the KIIs that were conducted. KIIs were conducted by the evaluation team from December 2018 through February 2019, including through one-week field visits to each of the five countries by the Team Leader and Technical Expert. The evidence base that was ultimately developed and used is consistent with the instructions of the SOW, the approved work plan, and the approved methodology.

Given the importance of the KIIs, the evaluation team devoted significant attention to preparing a series of detailed interview guides specifically geared to the different groups interviewed and the information they provided. Those guides were included in the approved methodology and are attached in Annex C.

By the completion of the data collection phase, 169 interviews were conducted:

- **Grantees** – 105 of the 113 selected grantees (the interviews not conducted were due to illness, staff changes and the closing of organizations);
- **USG** – 34 including various embassy sections, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) and Peace Corps;
- **Other embassies** – seven with other embassies that coordinate with Dem Com and/or operate CSO grant programs;
- **International organizations and national CSOs** – 23 with international organizations, national CSO umbrella groups and CSOs that were not Dem Com grantees.

The complete lists of those interviewed are included in Annex E.

The numbers and variety of interviews conducted and the depth of the questioning (as per the interview guides) establishes the credibility of the evaluation process. An additional and key distinction with the methodology is that the grantee interviews were retrospective. The grantee key informants had the benefit of reflection, considering Dem Com grants that were completed two to four years prior to when the interviews were conducted. This allowed for collection of information about outcomes and impacts that occurred beyond the grant time period. As best as can be determined, this is the first time this type of Dem Com data has been collected. The data collected through this process is distinctly different from the grant project output data collected by embassy staff as they monitor an individual grant during its one-year implementation.

D. ANALYSIS

With all data collected, content analysis was used to analyze responses, qualitative statements and anecdotes from all interviews. All KII data collection forms were coded and entered into Dedoose, a mixed methods content and thematic-analysis software, to produce aggregated findings and to apply a quantitative analysis to the qualitative data collected to help explain and/or verify observations.

Using Dedoose facilitated the team's analysis, allowing for a depth of analysis that would otherwise be very time and resource intensive. Each of the 169 interview forms were reviewed and then each answer was assigned to one or more of 96 different codes that roughly correspond to the questions in the interview guides. Additionally, all of the document summary forms that the team prepared for each of the 113 grant files that were reviewed were also uploaded into Dedoose, creating an evaluation database of some 286 documents that were used as the basis for the evaluation analysis. This rigorous, IT-assisted methodology helped the team to achieve a high degree of confidence with its analysis and preparation of findings.

The team also capitalized on the skills and experience of its members to review and consider information collected, sharing observations and ideas and then drawing conclusions and recommendations. Importantly, with the support of Dedoose, the evaluation does not merely rest upon impressions of what the team heard, but more specifically, what people said with the numbers to support how many said the same or different things.

E. LIMITATIONS

The Dem Com evaluation, like all others, has to be framed and understood within research limitations. The work plan and methodology anticipated some of the limitations. Some of those did not prove to be

factors, and others became more obvious as the evaluation team began data collection. At this stage, with the research completed, the full list of limitations that should be understood for a full appreciation of the evaluation is as follows:

Courtesy Bias: Interviewees from Dem Com grantee organizations may be hesitant to criticize the assistance they received from Dem Com. Courtesy bias can also extend to other donors, who, as colleagues within the international development community, may also be reluctant to criticize Dem Com. The evaluation team overcame this courtesy bias by conducting triangulation across multiple data sources, including other donors who do not benefit from the program (as per the numbers of interviews conducted above), asking follow-up questions during interviews, and providing a statement of informed consent at the start of interviews to indicate that findings will be confidential and without implications for the respondent.

Absence of Beneficiary Information: Other data to confirm or contradict self-assessment interviews, including interviews with grant beneficiaries, was beyond the scope and resources of the evaluation. In discussing the issue with EUR/ACE staff at the start of the evaluation, it was agreed to include interviews with CSO umbrella organizations active in relevant civil society sectors, and other donors, as a means of providing an outside perspective. The team conducted interviews (30 in total) with other donors, embassies, international donors and national CSOs and umbrella organizations which provided an important perspective on civil society changes broadly, and the contribution of Dem Com specifically.

Causation: A definitive causal connection between Dem Com grants implemented from 2014-2016 and macro-level effects on civil society in the five countries visited cannot be made for several reasons. First, there are no counter-factual conditions to measure “how would civil society develop without Dem Com” in any country. There is also no randomized control trial (RCT) to test for the macro-level development of civil society. Furthermore, a background literature search did not identify any reports or studies which identify methods or instances where improvements in civil society at the macro-level are causally linked to a specific bi-lateral or multi-lateral donor, or more specifically, to a specific program supported by a donor. Civil society actors and organizations receive inputs from multiple sources within their countries and from international donors, making it difficult to isolate a single causal connection with a specific donor program (e.g. Dem Com, USAID, OSCE, Soros Foundation, etc.). Finally, the nature of Dem Com is inherently output oriented; the grants are small and short-lived, and focused on addressing a specific issue in a specific timeframe through a series of specific inputs. The methodology the team developed to meet the requirements of the SOW anticipated this limitation. To resolve it, the evaluation team collected the available output data and conducted more than 160 varied interviews. The thoroughness of the interview process and the capacity to analyze the answers in a detailed manner through Dedoose allows the team to impute broader outcomes when it is necessary to answer an evaluation question (particularly EQ#1). As was discussed during the evaluation kick-off meeting, it is important to recognize the study’s focus on “contribution” versus “attribution.”

Staff Transition: Staff transitions at all key informant organizations meant that principals involved with implementation or oversight of grants, particularly those from earlier fiscal years, might not have been available for interview. Ultimately, in most instances when the designated principle was not available, the team was able to find a knowledgeable substitute. In the end, there were only eight instances out of 113 grants when, for the reasons described above, the evaluation could not complete the interview.

Program complexity and data challenges: The team anticipated the challenges associated with conducting an evaluation across five countries compounded by the fact that the Dem Com has been in operation for 24 years and currently operates in 14 countries. Several measures were taken to ensure data quality

despite the complexities. Chief among these is that evaluation instruments were designed to lend themselves to comparison and compilation of recommendations and conclusions across countries. At the same time, they were flexible enough to allow for individual country analysis. Furthermore, and as described above, use of Dedoose facilitated the analytical process, enabling a degree of methodological rigor to be applied to the qualitative data.

Having adhered to the approved methodology, and having taken the steps to mitigate the impact of these limitations, the evaluators have a high level of confidence in the data, findings, responses to evaluation questions, recommendations and conclusions presented in this report.

V. DATA AND FINDINGS

A. EQ #1: OVERALL EFFECT OF THE PROGRAM ON CIVIL SOCIETY

What evidence does the sample provide on whether the cumulative use of this small grant mechanism over the three-year period of 2014-2016 has provided measurable outcomes on the strengthening of civil society in the five countries?

Methodology Employed to Answer EQ#1		
Primary Data Sources Grant administrators/Grant recipients/Embassy staff/ Democracy Commission members/ Other donors/Umbrella CSOs/Grant documents/Open source documents	Data Collection Method KIIs/Document review	Data Analysis Methods Content analysis/ Descriptive statistics/ Thematic analysis
Comments/Limitations: The response to EQ#1 is affected by two limitations: courtesy bias, and causation. To mitigate the impact of those limitations, and evaluate cumulative impact, the evaluation team utilized a combination of sources, not only those directly related to the program itself, but also from the broader context in each country to help determine overall changes in civil society, and the contribution Dem Com has made to those changes. Confidence in the response is based on the number and variety of interviews, and the consistency of comments that were analyzed with the support of the Dedoose program and buttressed with the data regarding the extended effects of individual grants.		

The small grants mechanism influenced the strengthening of civil society in two primary and related ways. First, at the macro level, two embassies noted that Dem Com, along with other USG and international donor assistance, contributed to larger civil society movements which occurred in each country. Second, at the individual grant level, 85 percent of the grantees reported extended impact beyond the timeframe of the Dem Com grant. All donors and umbrella CSOs interviewed concurred that a small grants program focused outside of capital centers was important for civil society development.

As previously discussed in the limitations (above), it is not possible to make a definitive causal link between a particular donor or donor program and gains in civil society due to the lack of a counter-factual – there is no way to provide a “control” group for civil society development, isolate one program’s impact on civil society actors or organizations, or assess what would have occurred with respect to civil society development in the absence of a given program. The evaluators base their findings on the consistency of comments and opinions of professionals working in development, both USG staff and others, who were interviewed. Inherent in this approach is a lack of hard, quantifiable data which is typical of development work in areas outside of those for which numeric indicators are more readily available such as health and economic development. This uncertainty is not unique to this evaluation. A literature search for other external, reliable evidence from other sources did not identify any report, study or method for making a

causal link between an individual civil society support program and macro-level effects on civil society. Therefore, statements made by the evaluators connecting Dem Com to larger events reflect **contribution**, not attribution.

Embassy and USG staff, other foreign embassies and donors, and umbrella CSOs in North Macedonia and Armenia who were interviewed for this evaluation noted the contribution of programs like Dem Com to the larger goal of civil society development during key political events in each of the countries. In North Macedonia, 2014 – mid 2017 was a period of political crisis resulting in intense political pressure by the government on civil society, creating serious challenges to the country's future. CSOs were subject to months long "inspections" and active disinformation media campaigns were waged against the Open Society Foundation and its founder George Soros, spotlighting his alleged cooperation with a wide range of local CSOs, foreign embassies, and USAID. Dem Com was a contributing program to US and other donor efforts, all of which were key to the endurance and independence of the civil society sector at a critical juncture. As one international donor stated, CSOs were the only organizations that could "shed some light" on issues of state capture and corruption. An empowered civil society was an important channel of change for citizens, contributing to a CSO reform agenda, the Blueprint Initiative, and the formation of a new government under Prime Minister Zoran Zaev with stated goals to address state capture and corruption.

In Armenia, Dem Com along with USAID and international donors contributed to capacity development, independent media, and free flow of information that were important factors in the Velvet Revolution of 2018, a protest against a power grab by then President Serge Sarkisian to further extend his ten-year leadership in a newly empowered prime minister role. Student and CSO leaders, including those who participated in PAS programs such as International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) and Dem Com, were among the first to step up and become active in the revolution. As reported by embassy staff, many of these CSO leaders have now become members of parliament and the new government under Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian. As in North Macedonia, the new government has promised reforms and vowed to address persistent corruption in Armenia. In both instances, there is now greater promise of more responsive government committed to a democratic path – a promise that will continue to require monitoring and oversight of the civil society sector.

While a causal connection cannot be made, the peaceful protests leading to changes in government speak to the importance of programs that support key foundational elements of civil society like active citizenship, independent media, and leadership. In doing so, the groundwork is laid to take advantage of openings or moments of strategic opportunity. As per phrasing from one USG staff person, Dem Com is part of the "ecosystem" of support for the development of civil society, which ranges from small scale projects working mostly at the citizen level (Dem Com) to larger policy or structural reform initiatives with national scope. All of these levers are needed to move civil society forward, and each contributes in its own way.

In Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, and Kosovo, connections between Dem Com and larger civil society impacts were not made. One USG staff person cited the lack of any baseline data to assess grant results at the civil society level, and others responded with specific grantee level examples when asked the question.

On an individual grant level, the majority of M&E data provided by grantees and collected by the embassies during and at the conclusion of projects is output-oriented, which is why the evaluation conducted interviews with grantees from 2014 – 2016 to obtain outcome and impact-oriented data upon which to draw findings, conclusions and recommendations. Output data are limited as a means of assessing a broader contribution to civil society strengthening. This evaluation provided the opportunity for Resonance's in-country RAs to collect outcome-related information about past projects based on grantee self-reports. Additionally, review of existing documentation such as final reports indicated 111 of 113 grantees reported achievement of the stated goals of their projects. The remaining two reported partial achievement of their

goals (e.g. a grantee achieved its goal of training journalists, but did not fully achieve the goal of a journalism degree program). During interviews, 90 of 105 (85 percent) grantees that were ultimately interviewed identified some type of continued or extended benefits due to their projects, with benefits evident in all major thematic categories funded by Dem Com (Note: effectiveness by theme area is discussed further in section 5.3).

The extent to which the extended impact of the grants is “measurable” varies. Data sources include evidence of sustained activity or social action precipitated by the grant (e.g. continued involvement of citizens in local budgeting, anti-corruption efforts or improved service provision; evidence of influence on or change of a law; quantifiable changes such as number of women who ran for and were elected to public office; number of individuals who found jobs or started businesses; and grantee observations related to changes in awareness/attitude on an issue or increased cooperation among different groups). Of the 90 examples of extended impact, 12 were quantifiable and 19 show sustained social action. The following are several examples:

- *Radio Vala Rinore, Kosovo*: To encourage youth to vote in the 2014 elections, the organization aired broadcast talk shows with youth and political representatives to allow youth to ask questions of future leaders on their issues of concern such as corruption and employment. Individuals that called in with questions and Internet listeners numbered over 20,000.
- *Armavir Development Center, Armenia*: As a result of activities aimed at supporting women’s leadership and participation in local governance, two women were elected to municipal councils (one was the first woman elected to the council); and the other was employed as a staff director by a municipality; and two women became school directors. Other women increased their participation in town hall meetings and the budget development process.
- *Social Entrepreneurs Association, Kyrgyzstan*: This association provided training to start businesses incorporating social responsibility and solutions to social problems. It grew from an initial Dem Com grant training for 25 people to a program training almost 100 people per year. New businesses started as a result of training and had a 70 percent success rate after 15-24 months. Post-grant activities included: elevating the theme of social entrepreneurship, developing a Social Contracting program funded by the Kyrgyz Government, and training 25 female NGO instructors and 15 instructors from CSOs working with people with disabilities.
- *Macedonia Institute for Media (MIM)*: Through research and analysis, as well as promotion and debates, the project introduced discussion on the topic of hate speech on the Internet during a politically sensitive time period. The analysis was referenced by international experts and contributed to the basis for legal change on the topic of hate speech on the Internet in North Macedonia. Following the legal changes, court proceedings for hate speech on the Internet were implemented for the first time.
- *Donbass Democratic Development Agency, Ukraine*: This organization promoted transparency in decision-making and local council budgeting in five cities within the Donetsk region, combining training of 150 civic activists on working with media. A coalition of NGOs called “For open budgets of Donbas cities” was developed, which monitored expenses in local budgets, launched the portal “Open Budget of Donbass cities,” conducted the public awareness campaign “Municipal Guard,” organized a competition for the best journalist investigation on the use of public funds, issued a report on transparency of local budgets, and lobbied for the approval of “Budget Committee Statute.”

The majority of outcomes of Dem Com projects reflect their scale and scope at the local level. As noted by one of the RAs, “... Yes, [Dem Com] certainly did make a contribution, specifically the projects that are

implemented in small remote communities where the awareness on rights and participation opportunities is lower, have had significant contribution in making people change their attitudes, value their participation, [and] start [their] own initiatives. As said by one of the grantees, people start recognizing the significance of their own action instead of relying upon someone's help."

Based on direct knowledge of Dem Com or information about the program, all 30 other foreign embassies, donors, and civil society umbrella organizations interviewed, without exception, felt that small grants to CSOs outside of country capitals were an important part of civil society support and that Dem Com fills an important niche.

The evaluation SOW describes the purpose and goals of the Dem Com program as follows:

- "...a flexible mechanism to enable embassies in Europe, Eurasia, and Central Asia to support initiatives that contribute to more open and competitive political and economic systems and the protection of human rights."
- "...a flexible mechanism that allows Public Affairs sections to fund small, grassroots organizations to both further Mission goals, as well as seed nascent organizations to help build their capacity to continue their work and attract other donors."
- "...to enhance the sustainability of the NGO sector in the Europe, Eurasia and Central Asia region."
- "...to provide support to smaller organizations who may not yet qualify for other, larger funding sources, with the expectation that this seed funding will assist the organizations to find follow-on funding from other sources."
- "The small grants also benefit the embassies' Public Affairs sections by providing a public outreach tool to enhance cooperation with civil society in their respective countries."

Review of Dem Com against the above stated purpose and goals is a further indication of its contribution to the strengthening of civil society in the five study countries. Annex A illustrates the flexibility of the Dem Com mechanism in, for example, the different ways missions approach setting priorities and using Dem Com to support these priorities. Findings for EQ #4 show the ways in which Dem Com supports grassroots CSOs, encourages other donor support, develops sustainability related to capacity to obtain and manage funding, and builds or expands CSO partnerships. Furthermore, findings for EQ #5 identify the important role the program plays in providing contacts to PAS and embassy staff more broadly to support cooperation with civil society.

B. EQ #2: LESSONS LEARNED FROM IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DEMOCRACY COMMISSION GRANT-MAKING

Document and critically compare the five missions' Democracy Commission practices in terms of: (A) who is on the Commission, and what are the mechanics of the decision-making process on grants; B) how are priorities set and advertised for theme areas, and the extent to which a critical mass of resources is being applied to the range of theme areas; (C) how the application process is supported; (D) how applications are screened and applicant organizations are vetted; (E) what methods are used for grant monitoring and mentoring (if any); (F) what reporting requirements are fulfilled by grantees and Democracy Commissions and the quality of the reporting; and (G) recommend whether there are any best practices, and if so, how they should be adapted to differences in the country contexts.

Methodology Employed to Answer EQ#2		
Primary Data Sources	Data Collection Method KIIs/Document review	Data Analysis Methods

Grant administrators/ Democracy Commission members/ Grant recipients/Other donors/ Commission documents/ Grant documents and monitoring plans		Content analysis/ Descriptive statistics/ Thematic analysis
Comments/Limitations: EQ#2 is the evaluation’s primary process-oriented question. It required the evaluators to do a “deep-dive” beginning with the desk review of grant documents to codify the specific processes each embassy uses, and to then isolate, through KIIs with commission members, other donors, and the beneficiaries themselves, what aspects of those processes are most fruitful and should be considered for wider use. This question was subject to significant discussion through interviews, and reviews of Dem Com team procedures, and thus is not subject to any specific limitations.		

EQ#2 is the evaluation’s process-oriented question. Annex A of this report arrays and compares the various Dem Com processes of each of the five embassies. Each sub-question about specific procedures or aspects of those procedures (from the contract SOW - EQ#2a-f) is discussed in the following narrative which is presented in the general order of the Dem Com grant award and implementation process. Sub-question “g” – “Recommend whether there are any best practices, and if so, how they should be adapted to differences in the country contexts” – is addressed in Section VII-Recommendations.

Who is on the Democracy Commission? Composition of the Democracy Commission (those who convene to determine which grants to fund) is relatively standard across the five embassies. Typically, there are five members, but this can range from three to seven. The Commission is chaired by the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) or a senior member of the PAS. Members include the Political and Economic Sections, USAID, the Bureau of International Narcotic and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), Peace Corps and, in the case of Ukraine, the Assistance Coordinator for Ukraine. Currently, none of the embassies include outside reviewers (i.e., reviewers not employed by a USG entity). Kyrgyzstan had experience with external reviewers and determined it raised concerns about conflict of interest and bias on the part of external reviewers who were seen to be advocating for CSOs they work with.

The composition of the Commissions is fluid. The Commissions meet only periodically – often only twice a year – and with officer rotations and other commitments, some Commission members only participate once or twice while in country and are then replaced. This composition highlights the importance of the Democracy Commission Staff that manages the grants on a day-to-day and year-to-year basis. The number of staff in our sample range from two in North Macedonia to four in Kyrgyzstan. They are led by an American officer, but provide a constant and experienced presence, at times for a decade or more. This differs, at least in terminology, from the “Guidelines for Administration of the Democracy Commission Small Grants Program” (the Guidelines), which states that “The Democracy Commission is the implementing body at each post.” In practice, the Commission implements the grant award decision-making, but not the day-to-day management of the grant solicitation or implementation processes.⁵

How are priorities set and advertised for theme areas? To what extent is a critical mass of resources applied to the range of theme areas? Four of the five embassies use either all or part of the Dem Com themes available to them (those listed in the Guidelines). Within those, there are 10 possibilities in the Guidelines from which the embassies choose priorities based on the embassy goals and the ICS. Several methods (depicted in Annex A) are used to establish those priorities. The Kyrgyzstan ICS was the most clear in this regard, explicitly indicating where Dem Com, and other programs, could contribute to strategic objectives. In Armenia, the priorities are set by the Dem Com staff with input from the senior Embassy

⁵ Guidelines for Administration of the Democracy Commission Small Grants Program, Department of State, October 2017, p.1

staff and approval from the Ambassador. In Kosovo, the published Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), lists the priority themes first, in descending order of importance. In Kyrgyzstan, the first four are classified as “Priority Themes” and the remainder “Other Possible Themes.” These four embassies designate priorities, but accept proposals against the longer list of possible themes. The exception is North Macedonia where, starting in 2019, Dem Com established a single theme to advertise separately for each of its four rounds (youth and women, rule of law, countering violent extremism [CVE], and economic opportunity). These four priorities are matched to the ICS. The decision was made to focus on one theme per round for further technical focus, and as a method for expediting the application review and management process.

Using all of the themes available to them allows the Dem Com teams to take advantage of the program’s flexibility, and affords latitude to the embassies to define their own programs. For example, a review of the NOFOs from Kosovo for FY 2014-16 shows they revised their priorities, at least slightly, from call to call. In FY14 they used three calls instead of two so that one could be devoted to elections support. Revisiting and revising priorities allows the embassies to be responsive to current political, social, and economic conditions. Similarly, Dem Com’s ability to spread grants geographically throughout a country (on average, 58 percent of the sample went to organizations based outside of the capital, though in Ukraine it was significantly higher at 87 percent), and to, at times, target less experienced organizations, are also important advantages. Supporting new organizations is a program goal, as described by embassy staff; however, for the evaluation sample, only 7 percent of the 113 Dem Com grants went to organizations that had never before received a donor grant. Fifty-four percent went to organizations that had previously received a grant from the US embassy, whether Dem Com or otherwise.

Further utilizing their discretion, the embassies also define their own funding limits for Dem Com grants. Even though they have the authority to award Dem Com grants up to \$50,000, most keep the grant awards to less than \$25,000 in practice. Of the 453 Dem Com grants in our FY14-16 sample, only 36 were over \$25,000 and 30 of those were from Kyrgyzstan. Ukraine and Armenia allow grants up to \$50,000, but in practice rarely award grants of this size, and Kosovo and North Macedonia expressly limit their grant proposals to \$25,000. The flexible, quick (one-year or less), and modest dollar size of Dem Com grants make them a distinctive CSO support tool recognized not only by embassy staff, but also by others in the donor and CSO communities. As was explained by a CSO activist in North Macedonia, and echoed by other CSO representatives elsewhere, Dem Com fills a niche; there are not many funding opportunities in the Dem Com funding range to cover the themes Dem Com covers.

With the exception of North Macedonia’s approach to focusing on one priority theme per round, the other four embassies do not apply what could be called a critical mass of resources to a theme or themes, with a few exceptions. Kosovo and North Macedonia have focused on elections, and currently Ukraine has an anti-trafficking earmark. Ukraine has also attempted to focus a Dem Com grant round on the current Ukrainian Presidential elections. That effort was however stymied by the delayed allocation of funding to the embassy due to delays in passing the federal budget. In that case, the delayed allocation negated the program’s ability to be responsive to an important issue, thus robbing Dem Com of its quick-response feature.

On the subject of themes and priorities, the Guidelines state that each Dem Com program is supposed to develop an annual strategy consistent with the ICS, and “define a manageable number of strategic themes that will be the focus of the program, typically no more than three” to allow mission to achieve measureable impact. The embassies do consistently consider their priority themes in the context of the ICS. With the exception of North Macedonia, however, they could not be said to “define a manageable number” that is no more than three because, as explained, the longer list offers them greater flexibility.

As can be seen in Annex A, the methods used to advertise the Dem Com program and its priorities are nearly standard across embassies. All use the embassy websites and approximately 60 percent of the grantees interviewed attest this is the most popular way for them to track opportunities. Likewise the embassies all use various social media and most conduct regional meetings through the American Corners (or equivalent). No grantees stated that it was difficult to track Dem Com opportunities. A few grantees (11 of 90 recommendations made during grantee interviews) stated there were delays in the notification process, noting they were informed of either an award or a rejection months after application submission. Of the five embassies, only Armenia publicly posts on the embassy website its list of recently awarded grants (a practice started this year in response to the Evaluation Team's outbriefing).

How is the application process supported? All of the programs provide some level of support at the application stage. Four of the five respond to questions by phone or email. Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, and North Macedonia hold regional meetings to explain the process. In the case of Kyrgyzstan, the Dem Com program takes a "hands off" approach after the regional meetings in the interest of procurement integrity and to avoid being seen to favor one organization over another. The embassy websites also have detailed information. For example, Ukraine has an explanation for the System for Award Management (SAM) that is written by staff, not just the USG instruction page. Kosovo and Kyrgyzstan have step-by-step guidance that follows the application form. Kyrgyzstan is also experimenting with requiring a simple log-frame featured on the website with an example of how it should be completed. Of 104 grantees that discussed the application process, 89 of them described the process as "easy" or "not hard." Thirty-three of the 104 noted that they did have difficulties at times, primarily with the Data Universal Numbering System (DUNs), SAM, budget requirements, or the SF424, and when that happened, they were able to ask for and receive the support they needed. Dem Com staff also confirmed that the majority of questions they receive during the application process are related to the administrative requirements of DUNs and SAM registration and SF424. SF424 is a particular problem because the form is designed for US organizations, which deems certain sections not applicable. Quote 1 to the right expresses the high regard in which the Dem Com application process is held.

Quote 1: Dem Com Application Process

"I really think the Dem Com has democratic and unbiased practices. I believe they select the idea, not an NGO."

-Representative of CSO Interviewed

How are applications screened and applicant organizations vetted? All the Dem Com programs screen the applications submitted prior to the formal Commission review and award process. Annex A compares those processes side-by-side. None screen the proposals in exactly the same way. In Armenia, applications are distributed to thematic experts for review and prioritization before going to the Commission. In Kosovo, the Dem Com Staff conduct an initial screening for completeness, basic eligibility, technical content, and consistency with instructions. In Kyrgyzstan the Dem Com Staff conduct an initial scoring exercise before providing the top scoring applications to the Commission. In North Macedonia, the process starts with submission of abstracts which are then reviewed by Dem Com Staff before full proposals are requested for review. In Ukraine, the Staff's two assistants review the proposals and determine which of those to send to the Commission, preparing summaries for those selected that are provided to the Commission. All of these various screening processes facilitate the work of the Commission and decrease the number of proposals to review and fund. Annex A lists each embassy's FY18 Dem Com program budget amount and the number of Dem Com grants in its portfolio. In each case, before the funding decisions were made, each Dem Com team screened about 100 proposals in response to every NOFO it advertised. Vetting practices are standard across the five embassies. Basic vetting of applications occurs upon submission to confirm eligibility and includes the SAM and Excluded Parties List System (EPLS; research on Facebook, Google and other social media sites; and checking references with various embassy sections as well as other donors.

What are the mechanics of the decision-making process on grants? While the screening processes vary by embassy, the mechanics of decision-making are relatively similar once the screened applications are ready for Commission review. As described above, the Commissions are similar in their composition. They typically meet having reviewed either full proposals, or in the case of Ukraine, the summaries that have been prepared for them. They all use simple scoring systems (most use a Yes-No-Maybe scale; North Macedonia uses a Red-Yellow-Green scale which serves the same purpose; Kosovo and Armenia use scoring sheets). Generally, Commission “scoring” is an informal exercise that serves as a guide for the discussions that take place when the Commission convenes, as opposed to providing absolute ranking by score. When they meet, the Commissions discuss the proposals, eliminating those classified as “No” and focusing their discussions on those ranked as “Yes,” and, to the degree possible (often depending on funding), those ranked as “Maybe.” Having reached consensus (meetings typically last 90 minutes to two hours), those proposals that the Commission wishes to fund are then matched against the available budget to make final determinations. During the selection process, the Commission members may make recommendations to adjust the scope of activities and budgets, which are negotiated by the Dem Com staff before final approval. Ukraine’s system is an exception in that the Dem Com Staff has, in the process of screening and summarizing, provided a list that the Commission reviews, and then confirms. For all embassies, the final list of Dem Com grants that the Commission recommends is forwarded to the embassy front office (either the Ambassador or the DCM, if so delegated) for final approval.

What methods are used for grant monitoring and mentoring? All of the Dem Com programs mentor their grantees; all provide some sort of support and training at the beginning of a grant, either individually or collectively; and all were applauded by the grantees for their availability to answer questions, which were generally administrative and procedural in nature, and at times, technical or for programmatic implementation, as demonstrated in Quote 2 below. Dem Com staff employ multiple methods to monitor active grants and ensure that grants achieve their stated objectives. Several missions request monthly

Quote 2: Dem Com Support

“They were very helpful and supportive...never creating artificial problems but helping to settle the problems on equal terms.”

**-Representative of Armenian CSO
Interviewed**

information to prepare “event calendars” to track activities and plan site visits. If training or an event is held through a streaming service, Dem Com staff may also participate to monitor the event. All the programs also conduct grantee event output-focused monitoring, with the goal of visiting at least one event for every grant. To monitor grants, all five Dem Com programs encouraged various embassy sections, and sometimes even Peace Corps volunteers (PCVs) to visit events. This whole-of-

embassy approach meets the Guidelines instruction that encourages embassies to develop processes to assist PAS with grant monitoring. In North Macedonia, Dem Com takes the added measure of meeting with each grantee on completion of the project to debrief. In terms of resources, Kosovo is unique in having a dedicated Dem Com M&E staff position.

Grants are closely monitored to ensure that grantees meet their stated objectives; however, beyond this, it is not clear how the monitoring information is used. Basic monitoring reports were included in just 31 of 113 grant document files reviewed for this evaluation. Reporting is often handled through informal emails, versus standardized reports, but those emails were not in the files transmitted to the evaluation team for document review. It is unclear if the lack of monitoring reports was a lack of adequate record-keeping or lack of transmission of information to the team. If the monitoring records are not standard and predictable, and not readily accessible, it will be difficult to capitalize on any information they capture. The nature of the various country programs affects their approach to monitoring. For example, it is going to be more difficult to visit grant site events in parts of Kyrgyzstan than in Kosovo, and it will be easier in North Macedonia with its 14 grants than in Ukraine with 50 to 60 grants given the size of Ukraine and its conflict

zones. The ratio of Dem Com Staff to the number of grants ranges from 10:1 in Kyrgyzstan to as high as 23:1 in Armenia, making it challenging for Dem Com to adequately monitor grantees, even with the assistance of other sections. Ukraine's ability to monitor was negatively impacted with the delay in its Dem Com funding allocation, which left the program short of travel funds at a time in the grant cycle when monitoring would have normally taken place.⁶

What reporting requirements are fulfilled by grantees and Dem Com, and what is the quality of that reporting? Grantee reporting is standard across programs and consists of interim and final program reports, and standard financial reports. Grantees state that Dem Com reporting is “easy,” in comparison to other donors. One commented, “This is the only donor, believe me, that does not torture you for reporting requirements.” Comments related to reporting were received from 102 grantees, but only one commented that the financial reporting was difficult, and only two commented that the technical reporting requirements were too demanding and complicated. The reporting by the Dem Com Staff themselves is also quite standard across embassies, consisting primarily of performance plans and reports (PPRs) and annual budget requests (ABRs) that contain success stories. The Armenia PAS produces a newsletter that highlights grant success stories, including Dem Com grants. Dem Com Staff also complete site monitoring visit reports and close-out memos which may include information about grantee outputs and outcomes, and grantee financial and program documentation is uploaded to Integrated Logistics Management System (ILMS). In addition, as listed on Annex A, the embassies have a variety of knowledge management tools that they use to store and access grant information such as Excel files, a Dashboard, and an Access database.

In addition to monitoring, other factors that impact expectations for Dem Com reporting (especially that generated by grantees) include the nature of the program, resource constraints, and limits to staff size. Basic reporting requirements are by all means met, and sometimes exceeded. As with monitoring results, it is not clear how well the grant reported lessons and experiences are shared more broadly among embassy communities. In general, there is a lack of reporting or evaluation after project completion about the results of the projects. The Commissions themselves, for example, do not receive follow-up information about the results of the grants they have selected.

C. EQ #3: EFFECTIVENESS OF GRANTS IN THE SAMPLE BY THEME AREA

To what extent did the group of grants in the sample produce evidence of an enduring improvement in the theme area that they were funded to work on (e.g. women's empowerment, disinformation, etc.)? What conclusions can be drawn about the theme areas that are most or least likely to show an enduring effect from this small grant mechanism?

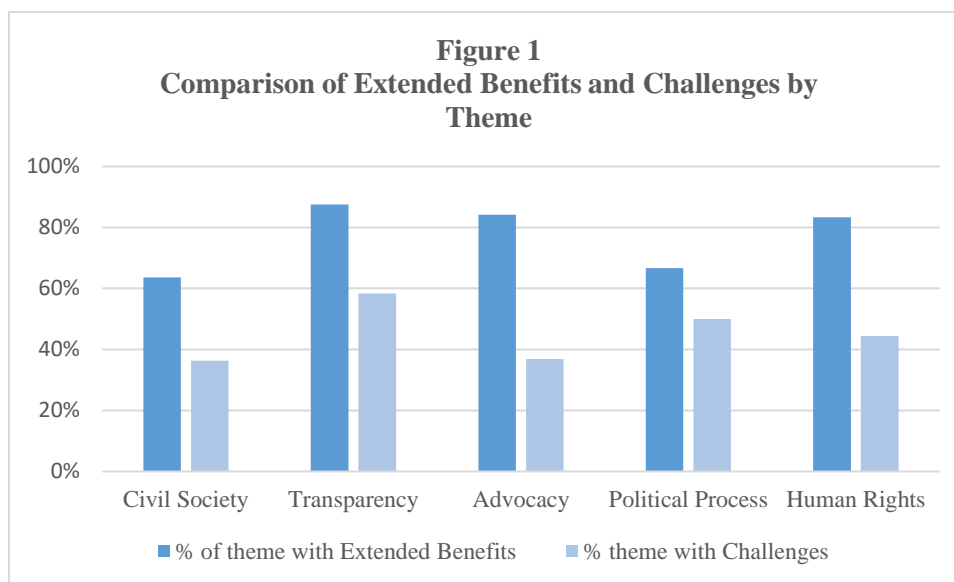
Methodology Employed to Answer EQ#3		
Primary Data Sources Grant administrators/ Democracy Commission members/Grant recipients/Grant monitoring plans	Data Collection Method KIIs/Document reviews	Data Analysis Methods Content analysis/ Descriptive statistics/ Thematic analysis
Comments/Limitations: The response to EQ#3 is limited by the absence of baseline data against which to compare post-grant evaluation data collected during the grantee KIIs. The response is therefore based on the interviews with Dem Com grant administrators, Democracy Commission representatives and the grantees, as well as review of grant reports and grant monitoring plans/reports, where they existed.		

⁶ Emphasizing the importance of grant monitoring, Ukraine recently uncovered an issue of grant fraud because of their monitoring and due diligence efforts, despite their funding delays.

A review of data from interviews and grantee documentation indicates that there was not greater enduring improvement in one thematic area over another in the grant sample. Enduring improvements after grant completion were found across the board, in all thematic categories. While there are no findings that support one theme area as more effective than another, it is clear that embassies select themes to respond to country specific conditions and priorities.

Of 31 interviews with Dem Com staff and Grant Selection Committee members, 10 noted specific effective theme areas and the remaining 21 noted insufficient information to offer an opinion on thematic effectiveness. Dem Com staff who are most familiar with grantee activities identified political processes (elections and decentralization), human rights (rights for women, veterans, youth, and people with disabilities[PWD]) and civil society business development projects as most successful. Grant Selection Committee members also noted transparency (anti-corruption, media, and watchdog) as successful. However, both Dem Com staff and Grant Selection Committee members acknowledged that they had limited information on which to base their identification of effective theme areas given the lack of data – i.e., lack of baseline data, analysis of monitoring data collected by Dem Com staff or post-grant evaluation data. With respect to theme area implementation challenges, the greatest challenges were noted in the areas of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) rights, anti-corruption, CVE and cross-border projects.

Analysis of the grantee interviews (Figure 1, below) indicates that human rights, advocacy, and transparency projects show a higher percentage of extended benefits (an average of ~85 percent) than civil society or political process (an average of ~65 percent) .



However, there are mitigating factors to consider as to why civil society and political process projects may have extended impact less frequently. For the purposes of this assessment, civil society projects include conflict resolution, projects which are associated with changes in attitudes of grant participants which could not be assessed within the scope of the evaluation. Political process projects include elections, which, by their nature, are focused on short-term effectiveness. Many such elections projects were documented in the evaluation interviews as outreach to marginalized or underserved groups (youth, PWD, and prisoners), evidence of increased voting and statements of confidence by citizens when they saw elections were being monitored by organizations funded by the USG. Transparency and political process were identified most often often by grantees as having the greatest implementation challenges.

Dem Com has been used to successfully test approaches in new theme areas or to work in areas other donors are not. For example, CVE is an emerging strategic priority. Several embassies are actively using Dem Com or a similar small grants program run under INL to test small scale, local level approaches to CVE (see text box). What other donors do or do not fund, also can influence where Dem Com can be effective. In Armenia, the European Union (EU) stopped funding media grants. Armenian donors and umbrella CSOs noted that grants remain an important part of the income for CSOs working on free and independent media and that the sector would be adversely impacted if Dem Com grants for media were not available. Sensitive or urgent issues are also reflected in the choice of grant themes. For example, in Ukraine, media grants make up one-half of an already large portfolio, and are awarded separately from other Dem Com grants – reflecting the importance of independent media in Ukraine’s context. LGBTI rights is also an area to which Dem Com provides important support as one of a limited number of donors funding the issue. Further reflecting the importance of context with respect to themes, Dem Com’s business development grants are important elements of social stability in Kyrgyzstan and North Macedonia because of the internal and external labor migration issues those two countries face.

Addressing CVE in North Macedonia

Dem Com first awarded a grant for a CSO to do research on CVE in North Macedonia. Based on this, a grant round for CVE was held, and leveraged collaboration with other USG partners. The Political section had municipal contacts it could bring to bear, e.g. on one project to open a youth center in an area with 50 percent unemployment and where youth needed “cool” safe spaces. They used municipal contacts to help organize a management board for the youth center that included local government and business.

North Macedonia’s experience with CVE highlights the benefit of grant calls with multiple theme areas because “you don’t know what you don’t know”. No one had considered CVE as a suitable topic for Dem Com, but the application to conduct research on CVE was well-prepared and represented a small expenditure of resources to test the idea. It has since led to more expanded testing of local level approaches on CVE for which it is still too early to assess results. When considering selection of themes, the effectiveness of a particular theme is less in question than the Dem Com program’s ability to monitor country conditions, as in North Macedonia, and respond to them.

An alternative way to consider the likelihood of enduring effect is to assess the type of interventions that will have greater success in achieving desired outcomes. For example, a senior embassy official expressed concern with training and roundtable events, passive methods that have become a routine way of addressing minority issues without much demonstrated effect. One of the evaluation team RAs noted the greater effectiveness of “learn-by-doing” approaches in promoting civic action, where participants apply knowledge or skills within the timeframe of the project. Again, the missions lack deeper analysis of existing data or collection of follow-on data after project completion to provide feedback into their assessment of what is working and not working to help them identify more successful interventions.

During interviews the value of Dem Com as an “incubator” which provided a low-cost, low-risk means to test new approaches was frequently raised. Supported activities were often innovative, raised issues for the first time (e.g. hate speech, CVE, LGBTI needs mapping), were the basis for something bigger to follow, were a direct response to a particular current problem in the country or were a response to a target group’s needs. The topics supported are diverse and attention is paid to equitable geographical distribution of the support to organizations outside of the country capitals. The responsiveness of the grant program to context when selecting themes to support is seen as one of its strengths.

Examples of Enduring Effects from Dem Com Grants

Stepanavan Youth Center, Armenia. Civic education and leadership camp for girls followed by small funds to implement community projects. Follow-up evaluation by the grantee documented 20 percent of participants continue to initiate peer-to-peer trainings and local events in their communities, which reached an additional 600 – 800 young women and community members.

Aravan, Kyrgyzstan. Engaged approximately 6,000 youth through theater and discussions to increase awareness of and counter violent extremism in one of the most significant source areas for ISIS fighters going to Syria. There was a significant decrease in volunteers leaving for Syria from the Aravan region from 150 per year to 0 in 2015-2016, as measured by Kyrgyz border patrols.

Summer, Work and Travel, North Macedonia. An association of alumni of a summer work program providing an “academy” training program for employment skills development. Initially started with 30 participants. To date, of 77 participants who have completed the academy, all are employed and five have established new businesses.

Center for Protection and Rehabilitation of Women and Children Liria, Kosovo. Provided improved services for victims of trafficking and sensitized youth to the consequences of human trafficking. Evaluated youth knowledge of trafficking to inform development of a training program for youth. Thirty students were trained who then shared knowledge gained at schools the project couldn’t reach.

LGBTI Center, North Macedonia. Conducted a needs mapping of the LGBTI community in areas outside of the capital. The study was the first of its kind in Macedonia and other donors requested copies of the report. The mapping identified the need for a shelter for LGBTI in Macedonia as a priority. The LGBTI Center subsequently established a shelter which receives 30 percent of its operating costs from the national government.

Gender Council, Ukraine. Strengthened the skills of 180 newly elected female politicians from city and regional administrations in three oblasts through training, internships and networking. The project created a database of women politicians at oblast level and established a politician club which has now operated for four years. One oblast (regional unit), Khmelnytska has the highest number of women deputies among all 26 regional councils in Ukraine.

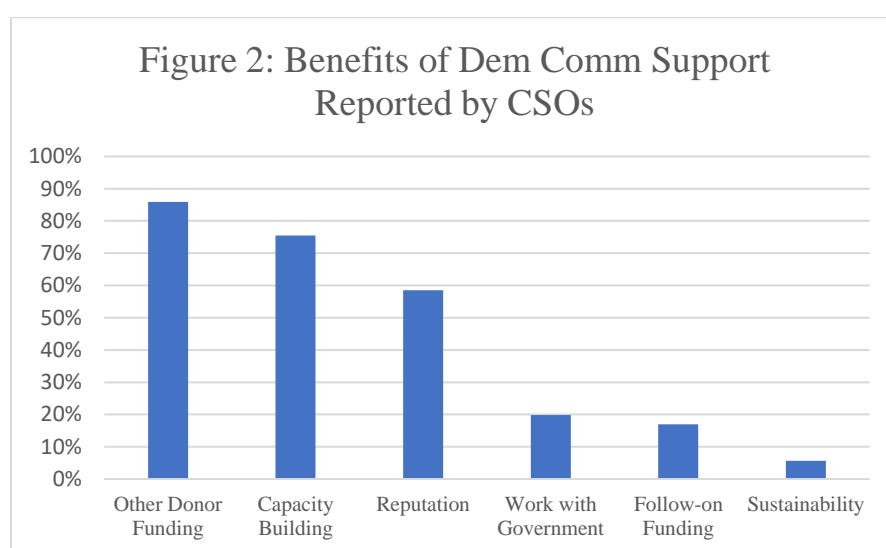
D. EQ #4: CAPACITY BUILDING AND SUSTAINABILITY BENEFITS

To what extent has receiving a Democracy Commission grant contributed to the recipient CSOs’ or NGOs’ longer term sustainability in terms of: (A) building demonstrated capacity in the organization to obtain and manage new funding from other sources for follow-on or new activities; (B) building a positive reputation for the organization; and/or (C) expanding and/or diversifying the organization’s network of relationships with other potential NGO or CSO partners?

Methodology Employed to Answer EQ#4		
Primary Data Sources Grant recipients/Grant administrators/Other donors	Data Collection Method KIIs/Document reviews	Data Analysis Methods Content analysis/Descriptive statistics
Comments/Limitations: To respond to EQ#4, the evaluation team’s country RAs asked a series of questions that described the grant organization’s activities since the end of the Dem Com grant, their experience with the Dem Com process, reflections on the significance of the Dem Com project and any continuing benefits related to Dem Com. The questions mirrored the EQ and asked about further fundraising, reputation, and networking. The response to the question is based on analysis of those responses, quantified with the support of Dedoose, and is therefore not subject to any specific limitations.		

Dem Com grantees improved their “sustainability” as it is defined in the EQs, i.e., related to capacity to obtain and manage funding, building a positive reputation and/or expanding relationships with CSO partners. The main benefits reported by CSOs are receiving other donor funding, capacity building and

reputation. 86 percent reported receiving other donor funding after their Dem Com grant and of this number, 17 percent were for follow-on projects related to their Dem Com activity (Figure 2, below). Improved capacity, primarily increased technical expertise, partnerships and relationships, were reported by 75 percent of CSOs. Enhancement or improvement to reputation among citizens, peers, government and other donors, was reported by 58 percent of CSOs. Improving working relationships or credibility with various levels of government, from local to ministry, was reported by 20 percent. Sustainability was the lowest reported factor (6 percent), which may be due to several factors. There are limited options for CSOs to become truly sustainable from revenue generation activities, something which is best suited to service provision organizations. Based on the CSO Sustainability Index for Europe and Eurasia for 2018, financial viability for CSOs in Armenia, Kosovo, North Macedonia and Ukraine, while improving, is still dependent on external donor support⁷. Additionally, slightly more than half of grantees have had a previous embassy grant, and often multiple grants. As one of multiple donor sources, CSOs rely upon Dem Com for ongoing support.



It should be noted that many of the CSOs were experienced and already received other donor funding at the time of their Dem Com grant. A few of the more experienced CSOs reported that they did not feel they received additional capacity development or sustainability from their Dem Com grants because they had already established technical expertise and fundraising capabilities.

Nonetheless, the value of a Dem Com grant from a donor perspective was clear. With one exception, donors noted that implementing a Dem Com project is a positive factor when evaluating an organization for grant funding (the one exception stated that the idea of the project was most important).

⁷ Kyrgyzstan is no longer included in the CSO Sustainability Index for Europe and Eurasia.

Quotes three and four: Dem Com Capacity Building and Sustainability

"With this project, due to the direct communications with the citizens, CIVIL finally earned citizens' trust and was recognized by all ethnic communities."

-North Maedonian CSO

"I value this project a lot, it had significant meaning for us, for organizational development, for further synergies, for building-up further initiatives and for getting supporters..."

-Armenian CSO

New or expanded partnerships were also cited by CSOs as a benefit. Almost two-thirds of the projects were implemented through partnerships. Old and new partnerships were roughly equivalent (65 percent and 56 percent respectively; some projects include both). Other benefits noted by CSOs included expanding work to new communities/regions or target groups, increasing the number of volunteers, and/or "inspiration" or motivation from receiving a Dem Com grant. On the left, Quotes three and four demonstrate the impact Dem Com has had on the capacity and sustainability of two local CSOs.

When speaking to development professionals outside of the embassies (USAID, other foreign embassies, and umbrella CSOs that function as intermediary support organizations), there was a distinct difference in how the terms "sustainability"

and "capacity-building" are considered. Most recommend not discussing "sustainability" as a desired outcome of small grants because the short-term nature of the projects do not lend themselves to longer-term sustainability, in their definition of the term. They distinguished between additional experience and technical capacity that comes from implementation of a project versus organizational capacity development that addresses various systems of a CSO, including not just technical and management capacity but also financial management, human resources, M&E, and adaptive capacity, among others. It was generally recommended that some level of Dem Com project funding should support administrative/indirect costs and organizational capacity development. For a period of time, Kyrgyzstan did fund organizational capacity development which included organizational development assessments and training through a USAID civil society implementing partner; however, the program was discontinued when funding ending.

At the time of the assessment, some CSOs did note that they were financially sustainable and one, Summer Work and Travel (SWT) in North Macedonia explicitly credits its Dem Com grant which provided seed funding to the organization as a new CSO. These CSOs operate with the funds collected from the services that they provide (SWT and similar programs focused on job or business development), or the events they organize that can be funded locally (e.g. BORKA in North Macedonia generates corporate sponsorships for an annual cancer walk).

Another indicator of CSO sustainability is the fact that, of the 113 CSOs selected for evaluation between the years 2014 – 2016, 105 or 93 percent were still operating and able to be contacted for the evaluation. Almost all of the organizations continue to operate with the same or increased capacity with funding from other donors and Dem Com. For some of the organizations, these projects are the basis for identifying new needs and areas of action, such as the LGBTI Center project, which led to opening of the Shelter Center for LGBTI people.

E. EQ#5: DIPLOMACY BENEFITS OF THE PROGRAM

To what extent have the grantee organizations in the survey sample: a) retained a post-grant relationship with the U.S. Embassy; and/or, b) produced evidence of an improved attitude toward the United States among the foreign public, because of their grant activity?

Methodology Employed to Answer EQ#5		
Primary Data Sources Grant recipients/Embassy staff/Democracy Commission members	Data Collection Method KIIs	Data Analysis Methods Content analysis/ Descriptive statistics
Comments/Limitations: EQ#5 addresses the broader national security interests of the program. The Joint Strategic Plan for the Department of State and USAID emphasizes the development of partnerships and relationships with civil society, and Dem Com directly supports that goal. Answering part (a) of the question was managed through analysis of grantee interviews. The answer to part (b) of the question is limited by the absence of pre-grant baseline data, and the absence of broad beneficiary survey data. As a proxy, and as described in the following response, the evaluation team discussed question 5(b) with the grantees themselves to solicit and quantify their observations about changes in attitudes to the US.		

Of the 105 grantees interviewed, 75 stated that they continued their relationship with the embassy in some capacity through, for example, other projects, or invitations to embassy events, or applications for another Dem Com grant. Relationships also build over time and through participation in multiple US-supported programs. In North Macedonia, CSO leaders from three Dem Com grantees (the Macedonia Mentoring Network, Summer Work & Travel, and BORKA) described their participation in the IVLP, and how they then applied the knowledge and the experience acquired from their US study visits to their CSOs. These leaders not only continued to cooperate with American organizations and institutions, but also with participants in these programs from other countries. The Armenia Dem Com staff also tries to link embassy programs, illustrating the importance of continuity and ongoing effort when working with civil society; this approach was described to the evaluation team as a “long-haul, brick-by-brick” effort.

It is more difficult to produce evidence of improved attitudes towards the US because of a Dem Com grant. No quantitative link can be made to a change in public perception through Dem Com because there is no pre-grant data available to compare to post-grant opinions. We can, however, discuss contribution if not attribution. Of the 93 grantees that expressed an opinion, some 90 percent of them state that perceptions of the public towards the US (when they know the project is US-funded) were positive. In some cases, opinions were either neutral or had not been changed as a result of the grant, and a much smaller number (six statements) commented in some way that there were negative public responses to the grant’s US-funding.

Finally, the Dem Com grants program provides a critical additional benefit for the broader embassy staff. Staff in all of the embassies described how the Dem Com grants expanded their host-country networks, sources of information on issues from outside of the government, and provided through attendance at events opportunities to get outside the embassy and into communities around their countries. Comments from embassy staff included that perceptions of the USG were improved because the Dem Com grants are “getting the right messages out.” Another officer said the embassy had developed a network “in communities we would not be in” if not for Dem Com grants. Dem Com, from the perspective of the embassies, provides a basis for talking with people in communities and allows an embassy to “expose itself to citizens in a positive way.” As was described by one embassy officer, Dem Com is an “under-utilized” and “great diplomatic” tool which, in addition to its other positive benefits, generates positive stories and allows embassy personnel to provide organizations with a potential source of support so that, when asked, they can reference Dem Com and the application process. In the evaluators’ opinion, the absence of a program such as Dem Com would eliminate an important channel for Embassy staff to develop contacts with civil society leaders and obtain alternative views on issues that Embassy staff may be discussing with the host country government.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions that follow are based on the evaluation team's experience visiting five of the fourteen embassies that implement Dem Com, reviewing 113 grant files, and interviewing grantees from 105 of the thousands of grants Dem Com has funded in the past quarter century. The conclusions are framed broadly so that all Dem Com programs can extrapolate from them and apply them to their own activities.

Dem Com strengthens civil society and is viewed as a successful program by direct and indirect stakeholders: Dem Com is a successful foreign assistance program that is valued by CSOs, other donors, and the US embassies. As discussed under limitations, it is not possible to make definitive and direct causal connections between an individual civil society support program, such as Dem Com, and macro-level improvements in civil society due to the inability to establish a counter-factual. Nonetheless, in the short-term, Dem Com projects almost universally achieve their grant objectives at the conclusion of their projects (111 of 113 grants) and 85 percent of grantees reported long-term outcomes and extended impact in support of civil society beyond the timeframe of the Dem Com grant. In their professional opinion, all donors and umbrella CSOs interviewed concurred that a small grants program such as Dem Com, that works outside of capital centers was important for civil society development.

In the scheme of assistance, Dem Com grants are low-cost, low-risk investments that allow for testing unproven organizations and approaches that can contribute to democratic goals and contribute to larger impacts.

Dem Com has distinctive assistance features that amplify its success: Dem Com's design includes distinctive features: small grants by dollar size and duration; multiple possible democracy support themes; flexible and responsive use of those themes; and reaching outside of the capital city to work with regional CSOs. Time and again, CSOs, donors, and embassy staff stated that Dem Com filled a special CSO support niche that others did not. A major issue challenging the program and its ability to be responsive to changing environments and demands is the vagaries of the budget allocation process. Thematic responsiveness as a benefit and strength of the program is undermined when funding is delayed, and affects an embassy's ability to respond to an emerging issue (like Ukraine's elections), and to monitor grants, as also happened in Ukraine.

Protect the program's important features by being realistic about them: In certain respects, Dem Com is straightforward – small grants of \$25,000 or less are funded for no more than one-year to support one of 10 possible themes. Any efforts to improve the program should be careful not to impede this straightforward approach. It is important, for example, to be realistic about how much monitoring and reporting to expect from a small grant, as well as how expansive the results can be. Likewise, expectations about the program's contribution to an organization's long-term sustainability and capacity development have to be realistic.

The local staff contingent is dedicated and essential: The evaluation team was struck by the dedication, professionalism, and commitment of the Dem Com Staff in each embassy. These teams, primarily locally-hired professional staff, exhibit a passion for democratic development through Dem Com that is a key to its success. Grantees describe the staff as partners, not as managers, that support their work without interfering. Managing small grant programs is time intensive. All missions manage a large volume of grant activity from pre-award through completion, with significant required documentation and a relatively small staff.

Internal knowledge management and evaluation of long-term outcomes are weaknesses: Dem Com is challenged by its desire to improve its collection and management of information, but at the same time recognizes the need to not burden the flexible, responsive nature of the small grants activities. To be clear, adequate monitoring data are collected to ensure that grantees achieve their stated objectives at the

conclusion of the grant. Dem Com monitors its grants by visiting events (including through the occasional surprise visit), and through phone calls and emails. The key issues are the lack of broader analysis of existing data and the lack of any follow-on data to capture extended outcomes and impact. Missions lack sufficient staffing and systematic processes to capture outcome-related data beyond the implementation period of the grants which limits the ability to evaluate thematic and methodological effectiveness. At best, it is not clear what happens with the information and how it is systematized for collection and dissemination. The lack of knowledge management also impacts the embassies more broadly. For example, Commission members do not get feedback as to whether or not the grants they selected are successful, so there is no learning about what approaches may be effective within the Commission itself.

Additionally, many of the key Dem Com staff worked on the program for a decade or more. As such, they serve as institutional memory, but reliance on individuals for institutional memory can create vulnerabilities and knowledge gaps.

Knowledge sharing and coordination is inconsistent: Dem Com is inconsistent in its sharing of information with other donors, with the exception of Ukraine. The Ukraine team is connected with a high level of donor coordination on civil society. As a result, external donors in Ukraine were more familiar with Dem Com than were donors in other countries. The absence of donor coordination means Dem Com misses the opportunity to gain knowledge to help better anticipate needs, target themes and priorities, and to share information about organizations. This is especially important for Dem Com as it aims to work with new organizations in the region. Also, sharing information with other donors can help to detect an organization that should be avoided, which is an important anti-fraud measure. Dem Com is also inconsistent in its efforts to keep CSOs informed about application status and timing, and which organizations have been awarded grants. The exception is Armenia, which recently started sharing information about awards. Not being informed about awards and award status handicaps CSOs in their planning, and their efforts to improve their applications. Additionally, publicizing grant awards informs the public about organizations in their communities that are implementing Dem Com projects so that community members can participate and serve as informal watchdogs for good fund stewardship (another anti-fraud measure).

There is no one specific theme that determines a grant's success: Based on a careful review and analysis of information from grantee interviews, as well as comments from Embassy staff, it was determined that there is no difference in effectiveness of the grants in the sample by theme area. It is recognized that EUR/ACE and Embassy staff hoped to identify specific theme areas as “more effective” to better assist with programming. The absence of a finding of specific thematic effectiveness is itself a finding. It emphasizes the importance of how the themes are prioritized and applied in the Dem Com process. Though a flexible approach to setting themes and priorities is a key feature of Dem Com, this evaluation concludes that the themes in and of themselves are not the key determinants of success. The strength of Dem Com is that embassies set their own themes in response to the local context and to facilitate innovation (e.g. CVE in North Macedonia). The willingness to invest the time and energy in the process of re-assessing themes on a regular basis and determining priorities ensures that themes are always relevant.

Dem Com supports grantees in several ways in addition to financially: Grantees report Dem Com provides benefits to CSOs in regard to programmatic output, enhanced reputation, access to other donor funding, and improved technical capacity and experience. Dem Com creates the opportunity for grantees to apply skills or knowledge learned from training during the grant period, to engage local government for support or as an implementing partner, and to raise awareness on sensitive issues (e.g. LGBTI, trafficking, or violent extremism) in culturally appropriate ways. This makes grants particularly well suited to support the continuum of civic participation from awareness-raising to social action to participatory decision-making. The evaluation found that Dem Com cannot be said to necessarily enhance the sustainability of the NGO

in any concerted way and, though some grantees requested it and some donors and CSOs recommended it, Dem Com does not by design explicitly feature organizational capacity development as part of the grants.

The “whole-of-embassy” approach provides benefits in several respects: One of the management strategies that makes Dem Com work is how it involves multiple sections, and benefits the embassy community beyond PAS. On a practical, process level, Dem Com utilizes the skills and experience of multiple sections – PAS, Economic and Political sections, USAID, INL, and Peace Corps – to review and establish themes, to provide technical expertise, to reference organizations, and to sit on Commissions and make funding decisions. This enriches Dem Com’s programmatic and strategic approach, and ensures great embassy-wide coordination for ICS goals. At the same time, Dem Com provides very important access to CSO leaders for embassy staff and creates opportunities for staff to better ground their understanding of life outside of the capital which improves their abilities to perform their jobs.

Long-term commitment over time makes a difference: Dem Com is a successful program that has demonstrated it makes an important contribution to CSO and democratic development, “brick by brick” over time. Dem Com is importantly emblematic of the US commitment to democracy and civil society. The long-term, steady and constant attention of Dem Com and other US programs is manifest when the opportunity presents itself. Then, the lessons learned and groundwork laid contributes to change, as happened in both Armenia and North Macedonia. It is therefore important to not give up in places that become more challenging, because conditions can change so rapidly. By supporting key foundational elements of civil society like active citizenship, independent media, and leadership, Dem Com helps to prepare and lay the groundwork to take advantage of openings or moments of strategic opportunity when they arise. North Macedonia and Armenia were both at one point “stalled” and none could have predicted the turn of events which now have both launched on a more positive democratic path. Lack of progress is a reason to reassess strategy, not overall support.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are grouped into three categories: A) amplify what is working well, B) general recommendations and C) conditional recommendations. Each mission has tailored its program to best suit its needs, and is in the best position to consider which recommendations in the third category will help improve their Dem Com program. The implementation of recommendations should be done in such a way as to not undermine what the evaluation team has determined to be an already successful program.

A. AMPLIFY WHAT IS WORKING WELL

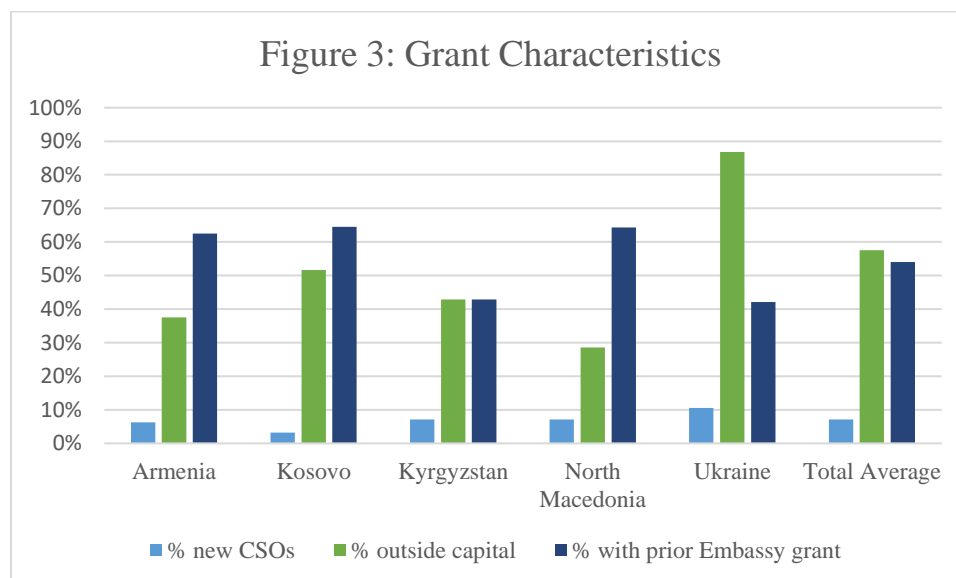
The first recommendation is to clearly recognize the strength of the program and to underscore what to keep doing and to avoid implementing actions that would detract from the core strengths of the program. The evaluation notes several areas of strength for the program – flexibility, consideration for broad geographic distribution, engagement of other embassy sections, coordination with USAID and others for grant reviews, and selection of themes based on country context. Embassy websites all have detailed information to assist applicants. Kosovo and Kyrgyzstan provide step-by-step guidance that follows the application form and Ukraine provides an explanation for completion of SAM registration written by staff to supplement the more bureaucratic USG instructions – both are **best practices** that can be readily shared with other missions.

B. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Update Program Description to Reflect Current Implementation Realities

How Dem Com is described in guidelines and the SOW for this evaluation does not reflect current practice. If the description of the Dem Com is to accurately reflect practice so that all have a common understanding of core program principles, the following are needed:

- 1.1 Guidelines should be updated to reflect the actual role of the Democracy Commission; they are the decision-making body at each mission for grantee selection, not the implementing body.
- 1.2 Delete the description of Dem Com grants as being “on a one-time basis and repeat grants are not common.” On average, almost 54 percent of grantees have previously had a Dem Com grant; therefore, the program description should be revised to reflect this. Similarly, data does not show sustainability to be one of the major benefits of Dem Com grants and this should also be deleted from the program description.
- 1.3 The program description should also reflect that the Dem Com funds CSOs more broadly. The SOW for the evaluation states “...the Democracy Commissions allow the embassies in the region to provide support to smaller organizations who may not yet qualify for other, larger funding sources, with the expectation that this seed funding will assist the organizations to find follow-on funding from other sources.” In actuality, the program supports the full range of CSOs, from nascent CSOs (~7 percent) to well-established CSOs who receive grants from other donors that may be several hundred thousand dollars. On average, 56 percent of grants were allocated to CSOs outside of the capital (the notable exception is Ukraine where this percentage is 87 percent, demonstrated in Figure 3 below) indicating that, at most, CSOs based in the capitals are about as likely to receive funding as smaller regional ones.
- 1.4 The level of funding for nascent CSOs ranges from three – 11 percent. Grants to nascent CSOs present a level of risk of an unsuccessful project that EUR/ACE and the missions need to be comfortable with if there is a goal to continue to stimulate the sector. The current range appears to be an acceptable level of risk within a grant portfolio, although those missions below the average level of 7 percent should consider increasing the number of grants to nascent CSOs.



2. Integrate Dem Com in Strategic Plans such as the ICS

The Kyrgyzstan ICS is a model for clearly identifying how Dem Com (and other assistance activities) fit into the mission's strategic priorities (**best practice**). It is recommended that, as other countries update their ICS, a similar approach is incorporated. To take full advantage of the flexibility and innovation that Dem Com can offer, the ICS should not limit areas of activity for Dem Com; rather, it should prioritize how Dem Com activities fit into the larger strategic framework.

3. Allocate Additional Resources for M&E

To conduct better analysis of existing monitoring data collected, and to collect more outcome and impact data, an allocation of resources for Dem Com M&E staff is needed. Such training includes that for data collection, particularly around post-completion of grant activity, and systems for storing this data. Similarly, if additional data is required of grantees, funds must be budgeted for CSO staff and M&E assistance must be provided. It must be stated upfront that additional resources at the mission level are needed if recommendations in this category are to be undertaken. Support from EUR/ACE is needed to identify and allocate resources for M&E. Missions already operate with high staff to grant management ratios and cannot be expected to conduct further M&E work without additional resources. If additional resources cannot be allocated for M&E, EUR/ACE will need to assist missions in determining what activities or reporting they will forego to allow time for better data analysis and post-grant evaluation. In these circumstances, there may be a trade-off between time spent monitoring active grants and time spent collecting more impact oriented data. A decision with respect to this issue is best made by EUR/ACE in consultation with the missions.

To try to facilitate additional M&E efforts, information and data collection for M&E should be integrated as much as possible within existing reporting requirements to facilitate current reporting demands and avoid creating new ones. Agile and right-sized monitoring, tied to a broader strategic framework (i.e. the ICS), is a realistic monitoring objective for Dem Com.

Specific recommendations for M&E:

- 3.1 Hire dedicated M&E staff: Kosovo is the only mission to have a dedicated staff person for M&E (**best practice**). Resources need to be allocated to all missions to enable a similar position to be funded. This is particularly important in countries such as Armenia and Ukraine, which have seen increases to their grant budgets, creating even larger grant management loads with the same number of staff.
- 3.2 Provide M&E training for current and new M&E staff: EUR/ACE should organize and provide M&E training for current Dem Com staff and new M&E staff (e.g. on follow-up monitoring after grant completion to capture longer-term outcomes). Training current Dem Com staff is only part of the solution. Given staff workloads, it is not realistic to expect significant changes in M&E data collection without additional M&E staff support or without shifting priorities and reducing Dem Comm staff workloads in other areas.
- 3.3 “Right-sized M&E”: In the quest for “attribution,” methods for M&E need to suit the size of the grants and capabilities of less experienced CSOs. As an example of training for grantees, one of the RAs noted that many grantees had difficulty formulating the significance of their interventions in terms of larger goals. Helping in this area would provide better information to Embassy staff and help CSOs better articulate the purpose and impact of their work.

- 3.4 Conduct post-grant evaluation: Simple follow-up telephone calls for initial screening could be conducted at regular intervals after grant completion (e.g. at six months and 12 months) to identify projects for more targeted follow-up during which CSOs and project beneficiaries can be interviewed. Follow-up interviews with grantees also provide an opportunity for further mentoring or to help guide activities beyond the grant period. Guidelines for follow-up interviews should be developed by EUR/ACE in consultation with the missions.

There is value in M&E data being collected by Dem Com staff versus greater reliance on grantees to collect more data. First, reliance on self-reporting by grantees creates bias concerns. Second, Dem Com staff gaining first-hand knowledge of what works and why and better understanding conditions on the ground are valuable resources both for Dem Com and the embassy function more broadly. Alternatively, missions could elect to hire external monitors on a periodic basis to conduct the interviews.

4. Strengthen Internal and External Knowledge Sharing and Management

- 4.1 Support Dem Com staff development and sharing of expertise: EUR/ACE should lead intentional efforts to network among Dem Com staff teams, both face-to-face and via virtual communication through conferences, trainings, and/or short-term temporary duty assignments. These exchanges can bring to bear a breadth of experience to address issues such as M&E, approaches to grant solicitation, and screening. The Dem Com team in North Macedonia has several examples of **best practices** to share; specifically, the abstract system used to pre-screen grants; post-grant de-briefs with Embassy staff; and funding innovative, and first-of-its-kind “research” grants which lead to further initiatives such as CVE, LGBTI needs, and hate speech. As a starting point, EUR/ACE should request that each of the 14 missions with Dem Com programs complete the comparative table (see Annex A) describing their program and then share the results among all of the missions to begin the dialogue.
- 4.2 Information sharing within the embassy: Conduct an in-brief on Dem Com for all new embassy staff. Embassy staff need to be better informed of Dem Com to be able to take advantage of contacts in their technical areas. Basic grantee information (e.g. name of CSO, location, project name, project period and brief project description) must be made available on the embassy internal computer systems for easy access. Results stemming from grantee projects within the embassy should be shared, particularly with the Dem Com grant selection members to help inform decision-making. Armenia publishes an internal newsletter to share success stories (**best practice**).
- 4.3 Create a deliberate knowledge sharing strategy: Create opportunities for Dem Com grantees to network with each other (e.g. annual and/or thematic events, social media sites, e-newsletters). Many grantees identified this as a recommendation. Exchanges of experience and partnerships are valuable for CSOs and are best nurtured as a result of CSO initiative vs. through donor-driven calls for “partnership projects.”

Publish the results of grant competitions to improve program transparency and visibility of the grantee organizations and their projects. This can also help address the issue of applicants not getting funded – they can see what type of projects Dem Com does support. Additionally, it helps to foster greater accountability for CSO grantees within their communities, which in turn helps to address fraud. If there are legitimate security risks to identifying a CSO working on a specific project, it can be deleted from the public list. The evaluation team applauds the Armenia embassy for publishing a grantee list on their website after sharing this recommendation at their outbriefing (**best practice**).

Initiate more regular coordination with other donors in order to continue complementing support. Some missions, such as Ukraine, already have a high level of donor coordination on activities and, as a result, donors are well-informed of Dem Com efforts and vice versa. Other missions noted that coordination meetings happened on an irregular schedule. At a minimum, Dem Com teams should regularly inform other donors about upcoming grant rounds, who has been funded and results of grantee activities.

Convene a discussion with other donors to solicit advice about how the donor community at large can address the issue of grantee fraud. Key questions include: 1) what is the scale of the issue within a given country, 2) what can be done to prevent it and 3) how can donors share information with each other? Ukraine is credited with identifying the issue, raising it with the evaluators and taking prompt action. Given the issues with corruption throughout the regions where Dem Com operates, it is highly likely this is not just an issue in Ukraine, but that it has merely been uncovered there. In the Ukraine instance, problems with the grantee were known to another donor, but this information was not shared. Greater donor coordination on this point is an important way to tackle the issue.

- 4.4 Explore and Leverage Existing Management Information Systems and Approaches: Conduct an inventory of information management systems currently in place at embassies. The missions have various systems which they use to maintain information about past and current grantees. The “Dashboard” prepared by SCA/PPD and used in Kyrgyzstan appears promising but has only recently begun to be used. Dem Com staff in North Macedonia are using a system developed by colleagues in Moldova. Once an inventory is conducted, Dem Com staff, as the primary users, should be empowered to determine which system(s) are most beneficial for storing data for knowledge management, reporting and analysis to assess aggregate thematic or other impacts.

C. CONDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are put forward as actions to be considered by the missions. Dem Com is not a “one size fits all” program and embassies need to retain flexibility to best meet their needs.

1. *Capacity Building*

- 1.1 Identify and link grantees to institutional capacity development programs already in-country (e.g. through USAID implementers offering capacity development, as was done by Kyrgyzstan for a period of time.) A lesson learned from the Kyrgyzstan experience was that the capacity-building support should be an option for grantees, not a requirement.
- 1.2 Allow small funds, up to \$1,000 for capacity investments in cases where a CSO can demonstrate it has undergone a formal organizational development assessment which identifies specific interventions (e.g. development of a fundraising strategy specific to the CSO or purchase of accounting software). The allowed investment needs to be something that Dem Com staff can readily verify.

2. *Sustainability*

- 2.1 When making funding decisions, support not only priority issues, but also the correct type of intervention. For example, to determine the latter, assess where the issue needs lie along the spectrum of civic participation, from awareness raising to social action to decision-making. Awareness-raising is a more “passive” approach, but may be valid for particularly sensitive issues such as LGBTI rights.

Whereas, with respect to citizen interaction with local government, there emerges a need for interactive training and practice in the mechanics of “doing.”

- 2.2 As part of applications, ask grantees “what other resources (volunteer, cash, or otherwise) in your community can you mobilize to help support this project?” The intent is to get grantees to begin to think about how they can mobilize other resources within the community. The application should also stress it does not require first-time applicants to provide cost-share, which could lead to scenarios where existing computers or office equipment is counted as “cost-share.”
 - 2.3 Require repeat grantees to document measurable outcomes or justification to receive continued funding, and require increasing levels of cost-share with each subsequent grant. Again, the cost-share should be real and meaningful, and ideally based in the larger community (e.g. volunteer time, government or private sector support).
 - 2.4 Review grants >\$25,000 and establish new criteria for their award, including requirements to better document measurable outcomes. Given local salaries and costs, a grant of \$50,000 to a CSO is significant in all of the countries where the evaluation was conducted, yet the data does not support increased benefits from larger grants. It is also noted that some of these organizations are repeat grantees and should be subject to the recommendations noted above if continued funding is provided.
 - 2.5 Implement a more intentional approach to leveraging success through a category of “replication grants,” grants to previous Dem Com grantees which apply a proven approach with documentation of measurable outcomes to a new location, topic or partner. These could be the basis for larger grants, >\$25,000.
3. *Grant Themes*
 - 3.1 Keep a balance between some defined thematic grant rounds on priority issues and open calls to continue to encourage innovation in new areas. As has been repeatedly noted, Dem Com is an important tool providing a low-cost and rapid mechanism to test new approaches to support the advancement of democracy in the regions where it operates.

These recommendations will help strengthen what appears to be an already worthwhile program in the estimation of the evaluation team.

ANNEX A: DEMOCRACY COMMISSION SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM – EMBASSY PROCESSES

Mgmt. Process	Armenia	Kosovo	Kyrgyzstan	North Macedonia	Ukraine
FY18 portfolio (\$ and #grants - approx.)	\$1 mill/47 grants	\$600,000/54 grants	\$555,000/19 grants	\$330,000/14 grants	\$800,000/50-60
Dem Com Staff*	3 – PAO, Grants Specialist, Grants Asst.	3 – Program Asst., Grants Asst, Grants Monitoring Asst.	4 – CAO, 2 Grants Assts., 1 Sr. Grants Asst.	2 – PAO, Sr. Prog. Spec. (occasional support from PAS Office Mgr.)	3 – Grant Coord., 2 Cultural Affairs Assts.
Commission Composition*	PAO (non-voting Chair), Pol, Econ, INL, Peace Corps, USAID – usually 3-5 total	5 – DCM (Chair), PAO, Pol, Econ, USAID	5 – DCM (Chair), PAO, Pol/Econ, USAID, INL	4 – PAO (Chair), Pol/Econ, INL, USAID	7 - PAO, CAO (Chair), Grants Coord. (non-voting), Assistance Coord. for Ukraine, INL, USAID, Peace Corps
Application Rounds/Year	2/year	2/year with added round for elections	2/year	4/year	Rolling applications w/3-4 reviews/yr
Priorities/ Themes – Set and Established	Dem Com Staff establishes based on ICS/Ambassador goals	Use all standard Dem Com themes w/a few priorities that are listed first in NOFO	Use all standard Dem Com themes w/several (4) listed as Priorities (aligned w/ICS)	With this FY, ea. round devoted to one priority; PAO sets themes based on ICS w/review & ok from Ambassador, DCM and Commission	Standard Dem Com themes prioritized for ICS
Priorities/ Themes – Advertised and Call for Proposals	Grants.gov, Embassy website, Facebook, Twitter, IRC and USG alumni lists, regional mtgs. at American Corners, webchats, skype, PCVs, previous grantees, PAS NGO list	Embassy website, Facebook, regional meetings, Embassy “fairs”	Facebook, Facebook Live Chat, embassy website, regional meetings at American Corners	Embassy website, Grants.gov, social media	Embassy website, Facebook, CSO resource centers, partner networks, list serves, Windows of America libraries, regional mtgs.
Is a Critical Mass Applied to Theme(s)?	No – use approx. 7 themes & select some grants from all themes	No but for periodic elections focus	No	Yes – each round devoted to 1 priority	Periodic elections focus, and current anti-trafficking earmark
Application Process Support	Respond to emails and questions at regional meetings	Respond to emails and phone calls	Training sessions at American Corners to review applications,	Info. and grant writing sessions at American	Respond to questions

			then no support to individuals in interest of procurement integrity	Corners, respond to emails	
Application Screening and Org. Vetting (post-NOFO)	Applications submitted into a special platform (not embassy email) generates list of applicants and summaries, applications checked for eligibility, divided by theme, eligible applications distributed to theme experts for tech. review who prioritize top 5-7 per theme & these vetted in SAM	Initial screening for completeness, basic eligibility, tech. content consistent with instructions; Vetting w/SAM, contact other donor references, check FaceBook/social media	Grants Assts. screen for eligibility, score all for org. capacity, plan, budget, and “Spirit of Dem Com” (will it advance democracy), CAO/team manager then reviews approx. 50 percent proposals and also scores (a double-check), top ranked (approx. half) go to Commission; Vett CSO registration documents, and check references through American Corners	1 st , applicants submit an abstract, reviewed by PAO, Sr. Program Specialist, another American officer; based on summary approx.. 20 percent asked for full proposals, all those go to Commission for review; Vetting - Google check, EPLS, risk assessment, monitoring plan, confirm grantee can meet “Standard Terms and Conditions”, verify DUNS	With rolling applications reviews scheduled when approx. 50 applications submitted, 2 Assts. screen apps & determine which to send to Commission, then prepare summaries for those selected, summaries to Commission to review; Vetting - SAM, check org. identities, references, on-line check, risk assessment form
Mechanics of Award Decision-Making	Commission members review all SAM-eligible prioritized applications against evaluation criteria using a score sheet and/or narrative, meet to review/discuss priorities, scores Y/N/Maybe, discusses the Yes, matching to funds available, going into Maybe if funds remain, final list to Ambassador for final approval	Screened applications to Commission, members review and individually score Y/N/Maybe, meet to discuss, decide by consensus, budget and/or activities may be negotiated by the Dem Com Staff before award based on Commission recommendations	Commissioners review screened proposals, meet and score for Y/N, rank order by theme, Dem Com Staff matches ranking to budget for award, final list back to Commission for ok, Commission sends memo to front office for final approval; applicants may be asked for revisions to budget before award	Commission members review full proposals (from selected abstracts), rank Red, Yellow, Green, meet and exclude Red, discuss Yellow and Green, final selections based on funding and geographic distribution; may request more cost or activity info., then memo to Commission to confirm, submitted to Ambassador for final	Commissioners review summaries before mtg.; at meeting Assts. present projects to Commission & provide list of applications not recommended; Commission votes Y/N on recommendations; at times negotiate budget or activities; memo sent to DCM (delegated by Amb.) for final ok
Grant \$ Limit	Up to \$50k (only 1 of 66 over 25k FY14-16)	Up to \$25k	Up to \$50k (30 of 56 over 25k FY14-16)	Up to \$25k	Up to \$50k (only 5 of 156 over 25k FY14-16)

Implementation Support/Mentoring (in addition to standard responses to questions)	Kick-off sessions for new grantees on Federal award mgmt. rqmts. & to facilitate communication with Dem Com	Post-award training depending on needs of the grantee and experience with Dem Com; new grantees may be trained as topic-based groups	Post-award individual kick off meeting to discuss grant and reporting rqmts.	Meet w/ea. grantee to review rqmts, provide standard pkg. for forms, templates, branding instructions, financial instructions	Financial and reporting training on award, occasional meetings of grantees groups to discuss a theme (e.g. elections)
Grant Monitoring (in addition to standard phone/email contact)	Dem Com Staff plans events to monitor based on grant proposal; compare interim report accomplishments to initial plan to determine if plan followed, grant team/other embassy staff conduct monitoring visits	Monitoring Plan at award, dedicated staff monitoring position plans monitoring annually, 2-3 monitoring visits or phone contact per grant, completes monitoring reports, grant team/other embassy staff conduct monitoring visits	At least 1 monitoring visit per grant in person or on the phone, grant team/other embassy staff conduct monitoring visits	Monitoring based on project, Dem Com informed about all events, those who monitor send email rpt., some special rpting for high-profile grants, end of grant meetings with all grantees, grant team/other embassy staff conduct monitoring visits	At least one monitoring site visits per grant, monitor on-line training that is streamed, grant team/other embassy staff conduct monitoring visits
Reporting by Grantees	Interim and final narrative reports, and financials	Interim and final narrative reports, and financials w/monthly activity calendar	Interim and final narrative reports, and financials	Interim and final narrative reports, and financials	Interim and final narrative reports, and financials
Reporting by Dem Com Staff	Site visit and close of project memos, PAS assistance newsletter, PPRs, ABR	ABRs, PPRs	Monitoring reports	ABRs, PPRs	ABRs, PPRs, PDIP
SOPs/Mgmt. Tools	SOPs based on DOS/W guidelines; platform developed by PAS/Armenia, ILMS, SAM	SOPs based on DOS/W guidelines; use SAM and Excel files for tracking	SOPs based on DOS/W guidelines, and Dashboard for grant tracking, SAM	Developed mission-specific SOPs, MAT, Access Database for grant info., ILMS	SOPs for site visits, fraud prevention, reporting, MAT, Excel file log for all historical grant information

*Dem Com Staff refers to the PAS staff (host country nationals and American officers) that manages the Dem Com Program; Commission refers to those that participate in the grant review panel and determine which applications should be funded.

ANNEX B: STATEMENT OF WORK

Statement of Work

Evaluation of Democracy Commission Small Grants Program

Nature and Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of the Democracy Commission Small Grants Program evaluation by the Office of the Coordinator of Assistance to Europe, Eurasia, and Central Asia (ACE) is to assess the performance and effectiveness of the program on both the beneficiary organizations and participating embassies, and to draw lessons learned for future programming. This evaluation will be a performance/process evaluation, examining whether the program is aligned with national security priorities and is reaching its intended objectives and whether the implementation processes at each sample embassy are having a positive or negative effect on success. The intended audience is EUR/ACE, EUR/PD, SCA/PPD, and U.S. embassies in Europe and Central Asia. EUR/ACE will use the evaluation to determine whether the program should continue, and if so, provide recommendations on best practices that EUR and SCA can share with Embassies throughout both regions to improve performance and accountability.

Background and Current Status of the Effort

The U.S. Government initiated the Democracy Commission Small Grants Program in 1994 as a flexible mechanism to enable embassies in Europe, Eurasia, and Central Asia to support initiatives that contribute to more open and competitive political and economic systems and the protection of human rights. Missions must follow the Joint Regional Strategy (JRS) and Integrated Country Strategy (ICS) objectives as they administer the program in each country. Currently, the program operates in 14 countries in Europe, Eurasia, and Central Asia. This evaluation will examine a sample of five countries.

The Democracy Commission Small Grants Program consists of small grants of no more than \$50,000 each, awarded primarily to indigenous non-profit organizations and independent media to support initiatives such as promotion of civil society; free flow of information (including support for independent media); transparency in government; public education and advocacy; association building; rule of law and legal reform; conflict resolution; human rights; civic education; environment; market economy; antitrafficking and anti-corruption awareness campaigns and training; and ethnic, minority, and women's equality. The U.S. Government intended the program to be a flexible mechanism that allows Public Affairs sections to fund small, grassroots organizations to both further Mission goals, as well as seed nascent organizations to help build their capacity to continue their work and attract other donors.

Embassies run the program and the decision-making body at each mission is the Democracy Commission, which is under the authority of the Ambassador and includes members of the CountryTeam, and other representatives as determined by each individual mission. The embassies award grants on the basis of a competition or upon determination of need by the Commission. Embassies submit grant proposals to the EUR Bureau's or the SCA Bureau's Public Diplomacy Office in Washington for technical review. Funds are disbursed by the Public Affairs Officer or other public diplomacy grants officer in the field.

Missions may develop an annual strategy for the program or may follow the mission ICS objectives more broadly as long as all grants support the development of open and competitive political and economic systems or advance human rights. Missions coordinate with other donor governments and organizations to maximize impact and avoid duplication. Missions award most Democracy Commission small grants on a one-time basis and repeat grants are not common. The overall goal of the Program is to enhance the sustainability of the NGO sector in the Europe, Eurasia and Central Asia region. As a complement to larger, longer-term U.S. Government programming, the Democracy Commissions allow the embassies in the region to provide support to smaller organizations who may not yet qualify for other, larger funding sources, with the expectation that this seed funding will assist the organizations to find follow-on funding

from other sources. The small grants also benefit the embassies' Public Affairs sections by providing a public outreach tool to enhance cooperation with civil society in their respective countries.

This evaluation will cover a sample of five countries that currently implement the Democracy Commission Small Grants Program: Armenia, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, North Macedonia, and Ukraine. The four EUR countries were chosen because they have the largest portfolios of grants and a wide range of themes and grant sizes. ACE also wanted to include at least one Central Asian country, and selected Kyrgyzstan because it has the largest grant portfolio, and anecdotally has been seen as a model for vetting potential Democracy Commission grantee organizations. In addition to looking at the implementation processes of each embassy to identify best practices and areas for improvement and overall effectiveness of the Program, the evaluation will assess a sample of individual grants from each country from fiscal years 2014, 2015, and 2016. The number of grants issued by each embassy varies by year and country, but averages around thirty-five. To help answer the evaluation questions set out in the Statement of Work, the contractor will choose a statistically significant random sample of the set of grants from each country and fiscal year. The contractor will stratify the sample in each country into two funding size categories: grants \$25,000 or under, and those at or over \$25,001, except where an embassy does not award grants over \$25,000. Within those funding size categories, the evaluator shall sort the grants in the 2014-2016 grant roster by thematic category, and then randomly select a sample for each country that has the same thematic distribution as the prevalence of the theme areas in the total grant roster of each country.

Evaluation Questions

1. *Overall Effect of the Program on civil society:* What evidence does the sample provide on whether the cumulative use of this small grant mechanism over the three-year period of 2014-2016 has provided measurable outcomes on the strengthening of civil society in the five countries?
2. *Lessons Learned from Implementation of the Democracy Commission Mode of Grant-Making:* Document and critically compare the five missions' Democracy Commission practices in terms of: (A) who is on the Commission, and what are the mechanics of the decision-making process on grants; (B) how are priorities set and advertised for theme areas, and the extent to which a critical mass of resources is being applied to the range of theme areas; (C) how the application process is supported; (D) how applications are screened and applicant organizations are vetted; (E) what methods are used for grant monitoring and mentoring (if any); (F) what reporting requirements are fulfilled by grantees and Democracy Commissions and the quality of the reporting; and (G) recommend whether there are any best practices, and if so, how they should be adapted to differences in the country contexts.
3. *Effectiveness of grants in the sample by theme area:* To what extent did the group of grants in the sample produce evidence of an enduring improvement in the theme area that they were funded to work on (e.g. women's empowerment, disinformation, etc.)? What conclusions can be drawn about the theme areas that are most or least likely to show an enduring effect from this small grant mechanism?
4. *Capacity-building and sustainability impact of the grants:* To what extent has receiving a Democracy Commission grant contributed to the recipient CSOs' or NGOs' longer term sustainability in terms of: (A) building demonstrated capacity in the organization to obtain and manage new funding from other sources for follow-on or new activities; (B) building a positive reputation for the organization; and/or (C) expanding and/or diversifying the organization's network of relationships with other potential NGO or CSO partners?
5. *Diplomacy benefits of the program:* To what extent have the grantee organizations in the survey sample (A) retained a post-grant relationship with the U.S. Embassy, and/or (B) produced evidence of an improved attitude toward the United States among the foreign public, because of their grant activity?

ANNEX C: RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

A. GRANTEE KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS - INTERVIEWER SUMMARY OBSERVATION REPORT

Grantee Key Informant Interviews Interviewer Summary Observations Report

Instructions to Interviewers: Once all the interviews have been conducted and all the Data Collection Forms have been completed, please take some time to reflect on what you have heard and what you have learned while conducting the interviews. Please then share those thoughts and observations with us in your own words in this summary report. Please think of this as an opportunity to share with us what you learned from the interview experience. Your professional experience is valuable and therefore this provides the opportunity for you to apply that experience to the interview process and share your thoughts.

- 1) Overall, what of everything you heard perhaps surprised you the most?

- 2) In your opinion, is it your observation that the grant program made a contribution to democratic and civil society development in your country? Why or why not?

- 3) How well do you think the grant theme areas reflected priority needs of the country? Did you note any type of grant theme to be either strongly effective or ineffective?

- 4) Did implementing a DCSGP small grant have any effect on the organizational capacity or sustainability of the grantee organization? Why do you think it did or did not have any effect?

- 5) What were the most useful/successful aspects of the DCSGP?

- 6) What about DCSGP should be changed? What recommendations would you make for improvements?

B. KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR GRANTEES

Instructions to Interviewer: The following is meant to be used as a guide to steer your discussions with the key informants. Please feel free to take your discussion notes in whatever manner works best for you, as you follow this guide and conduct the interview. It is understood that you might not discuss each and every question in every interview, but please do make sure to have some discussion of each of the seven overall topics – Self Assessment, Effectiveness, Partnerships, Democracy Commission Grant Process, Project Implementation, CSO/NGO Benefits, and Post-Grant Relationship & Diplomacy Benefits. When the interview is completed please transcribe and organize your notes in English onto the accompanying Key Informant Interview Data Collection Form for Grantees.

Background Information (as explanation to grantees at beginning of interview): This interview is part of a larger evaluation of the Democracy Commission Small Grants Program. The purpose of the DCSGP evaluation, as described in the evaluation contract scope of work, is to “assess the performance and effectiveness of the program on both the beneficiary organizations and participating embassies, and to draw lessons learned for future programming.” “Effectiveness,” according to the Department of State’s evaluation guidance, addresses whether a program achieved its intentions. And, as a “Performance/Process” evaluation, the DCSGP evaluation will focus on the performance of the program, examining its implementation, inputs, outputs, and likely outcomes.

Consent to be interviewed (to be discussed with each interviewee):

I ask, with your consent, for your time in responding to our interview questions, particularly your experience of receiving a grant through _____. We estimate that the interview will take no longer than 1 hour.

We will keep confidential all information that identifies you. We will securely store and transmit any information that identifies you. We will not share your personal information with people outside the research team. We may share the other information that you provide, that does not directly identify you, with the study funder and others working with the funder on similar studies.

Do you consent to participate in this interview?

Yes ____

No ____

Interviewer:

Date:

Grantee:

Interviewee name and Title:

Years employed:

Sex:

What activities were you responsible for in the grant under discussion? :

Questions	Evaluation Questions Explored
1. Self-Assessment	
<p>1.1 What do you feel is the most significant improvement/change that resulted from your Democracy Commission funded project?</p> <p>1.1.1 Why is this improvement/change important?</p> <p>1.2 In your opinion, did the DCSGP grant achieve its goals? Y or N. In what ways?</p> <p>1.2.1 How was its success measured? Explain</p> <p>1.3 Was the experience managing and implementing a DCSGP grant positive or negative for your organization? Y or N. Explain</p>	<p>EQ #1 Overall effect</p> <p>EQ#3Thematic effectiveness</p>
2.0 Effectiveness	
<p>2.2 Did the changes/improvements extend beyond the immediate participants in the project activities? In what ways? [Probe for endurance of the changes, experiences of different populations/groups, how enduring the improvements and changes are, factors that influenced the changes, etc.]</p> <p>2.3 Did you face any challenges in the execution of the grant and in contributing to improvements/changes in <thematic area>? What challenges did you face and how did you address these challenges?</p> <p>2.4 Does the DCSGP help organizations address these challenges? If yes, in what ways? If no, how do you think they could help organizations address these challenges?</p>	<p>EQ#3 Thematic effectiveness</p>
3.0 Partnerships	
<p>3.1 Was your Democracy Commission project implemented in partnership or in coordination with other CSOs, NGOs or networks? If yes:</p> <p>3.2 Were these partnerships with new organizations or previously established partnerships?</p> <p>3.3 Please describe the nature of the partnership/coordination and how it affected implementation of the project.</p> <p>3.4 Are you likely to work in partnership in the future? If yes, why? If no, why not?</p> <p>3.5 In what ways, if any, did your DCSGP grant contribute to expanding or strengthening your relationship with other NGOs or CSOs? If it did not, why do you think that was?</p>	<p>EQ#4 Capacity-building and sustainability</p>
4.0 Democracy Commission Grant Process	
<p>Describe your experience applying for a Democracy Commission grant. Consider:</p> <p>4.1 How did you learn about the availability of the grants? Was this an effective way of learning about the grant availability or would you suggest another way?</p> <p>4.2 How easy or difficult was the application process? Could you provide examples of what made it easy or what made it difficult?</p> <p>4.3 Did you receive any support from Embassy staff or other United States Government (USG) staff to help with the grant application</p>	<p>EQ#2 Lessons learned/best practices</p>

<p>process? If yes, who provided assistance? What aspects of the assistance were useful? What was not useful?</p> <p>4.4 Did you call on other organizations or individuals for help in filling out your grant application?</p> <p>4.5 Do you have recommendations for changes to the DCSGP process?</p>	
5 Project Implementation	
<p>5.1 Did you receive any guidance or support from Embassy or other USG staff during implementation of your project? If yes, what type of assistance? Who provided assistance? What aspects of the assistance were useful? What was not useful?</p> <p>5.2 What other assistance, if any, would be useful during the implementation of your project?</p> <p>5.3 What were the reporting requirements? How easy or difficult were the reporting requirements? Could you provide examples of what made it easy or what made it difficult?</p> <p>5.4 What were the monitoring and evaluation requirements?</p> <p>5.5 How were they implemented and what were the findings and any lessons learned?</p>	EQ#2 Lessons learned/best practices
6 CSO/NGO Benefits	
<p>6.1 After implementing your Democracy Commission grant, did you receive new project funding from another donor? Was the new funding related to your DC grant or did the performance under the grant help in securing these funds?</p> <p>6.2 Did your Democracy Commission grant influence your ability to receive new funding or implement new projects more generally? How?</p> <p>6.3 Are there other benefits to your organization from receiving and implementing a Democracy Commission grant? Please provide examples. [Probe for positive reputation, increased experience, expanded network of partners, enhanced sustainability, etc.]</p> <p>6.4 Are there any drawbacks or challenges to your organization from receiving and implementing a Democracy Commission grant? Please provide examples.</p>	EQ#4 Capacity-building and sustainability
7 Post-grant Relationship & Diplomacy Benefits	
<p>7.1 Do you retain a post-grant relationship with the Embassy or other USG staff you were in contact with during your project? If yes, please describe. What, if any, are the benefits to your organization in maintaining this relationship? Are there any challenges associated with the relationship?</p> <p>7.2 Grantees often must inform beneficiaries that their project is funded by the USG. Did this help or hinder your ability to implement the project? Did it affect the way your beneficiaries perceive the United States? Did it affect the way you perceive the United States?</p>	EQ#5 Diplomacy benefits

C. KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR GRANT SELECTION COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Background Information (as explanation to grantees at beginning of interview): This interview is part of a larger evaluation of the Democracy Commission Small Grants Program. The purpose of the DCSGP evaluation, as described in the evaluation contract scope of work, is to “assess the performance and effectiveness of the program on both the beneficiary organizations and participating embassies, and to draw lessons learned for future programming.” “Effectiveness,” according to the Department of State’s evaluation guidance, addresses whether a program achieved its intentions. And, as a “Performance/Process” evaluation, the DCSGP evaluation will focus on the performance of the program, examining its implementation, inputs, outputs, and likely outcomes.

Consent to be interviewed (to be discussed with each interviewee):

I ask, with your consent, for your time in responding to our interview questions, particularly your experience of receiving a grant through _____. We estimate that the interview will take no longer than 1 hour.

We will keep confidential all information that identifies you. We will securely store and transmit any information that identifies you. We will not share your personal information with people outside the research team. We may share the other information that you provide, that does not directly identify you, with the study funder and others working with the funder on similar studies.

Do you consent to participate in this interview?

Yes ____

No ____

Interviewer:

Date:

Interviewee name:

Position:

Years employed:

Sex:

What is your role in regard to the Democracy Commission grant?

Questions	Evaluation Questions Explored
1. <i>Overview of DCSGP and strategic priorities/themes</i>	
1.1 What do you see as the primary goal of Democracy Commission grants? [Probe around seed funding for nascent CSOs/NGOs, CSO/NGO sustainability, or achievements in thematic areas.]	EQ#2 Lessons learned/best practices
1.2 Are there any types of activities which the DCSGP will not fund?	
2. <i>Pre-award</i>	
2.1 Do you know how are grants advertised and solicited? Are any special measures used to solicit grants by theme areas?	EQ#2 Lessons learned/best practices

<p>2.2 Do you know how do CSOs/NGOs outside of the capital area receive support for the application process?</p> <p>2.3 How are applications screened and applicant organizations vetted?</p> <p>2.4 How are grantees selected?</p> <p>2.5 Are grants awarded that are >\$25,000? Why or why not? If awarded, what criteria are used to determine if a request >\$25K is reasonable? How effective are grants >\$25K compared to smaller grants?</p> <p>2.6 Are follow-on or new grants to the same organization? Why or why not? What are the criteria if you do award follow-on or new grants? Do you know how effective follow-on or new grants are?</p>	
3. Grant Themes	
<p>3.1 To what extent is a critical mass of resources applied to theme areas? Are resources allocated to one theme area over another? How are themes prioritized?</p> <p>3.2 Do you know if some DCSGP grant themes are more effective than others? If so which? What factors do you think influence this?</p> <p>3.3 Are there any particular challenges for making improvements/changes in some theme areas vs. others? What are the challenges? Does the DCSGP help organizations address these challenges? If yes, how?</p>	<p>EQ#3 Thematic effectiveness</p> <p>EQ#2 Lessons learned/best practices</p>
4. Self-assessment/DCSGP Mode of Grant-Making	
<p>4.1 What parts of the grants process that you are familiar with do you think work well? Please give examples.</p> <p>4.2 What parts of the grants process do you think do not work very well? Why do you think they do not work well?</p>	<p>EQ#2 Lessons learned/best practices</p>
5. Effectiveness	
<p>5.1 What are the most significant improvements/changes that you know of which have resulted from Democracy Commission grants on an individual grant level? On a larger thematic level? On a civil society level?</p> <p>5.2 Do you know how enduring are the improvements/changes resulting from Democracy Commission grants? Please give examples. What factors do you think influence this?</p>	<p>EQ#1 Overall effect</p> <p>EQ#3 Thematic effectiveness</p>
6. CSO/NGO Benefits	
<p>To what extent does receiving a Democracy Commission grant contribute to a CSO's/NGO's longer term sustainability? Please provide examples. [Probe, for example, building capacity to obtain and manage new funding from other sources for follow-on or new activities, or building a positive reputation for the organization, or expanding/diversifying the organization's network of relationships with other CSO/NGO partners.</p>	<p>EQ#4 Capacity-building and sustainability</p>
7. Post-grant Relationship (for Embassy staff)	

<p>7.1 Do you retain a post-grant relationship with grantees? If yes, please describe. What are the benefits to you (Embassy)? To the grantee?</p> <p>7.2 Do you have any evidence of an improved attitude toward the United States among the foreign public because of grantees' activities? Please be specific.</p>	EQ#5 Diplomacy benefits
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D. KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR EMBASSY STAFF

Background Information (as explanation to grantees at beginning of interview): This interview is part of a larger evaluation of the Democracy Commission Small Grants Program. The purpose of the DCSGP evaluation, as described in the evaluation contract scope of work, is to “assess the performance and effectiveness of the program on both the beneficiary organizations and participating embassies, and to draw lessons learned for future programming.” “Effectiveness,” according to the Department of State’s evaluation guidance, addresses whether a program achieved its intentions. And, as a “Performance/Process” evaluation, the DCSGP evaluation will focus on the performance of the program, examining its implementation, inputs, outputs, and likely outcomes.

Consent to be interviewed (to be discussed with each interviewee):

I ask, with your consent, for your time in responding to our interview questions, particularly your experience of receiving a grant through _____. We estimate that the interview will take no longer than 1 hour.

We will keep confidential all information that identifies you. We will securely store and transmit any information that identifies you. We will not share your personal information with people outside the research team. We may share the other information that you provide, that does not directly identify you, with the study funder and others working with the funder on similar studies.

Do you consent to participate in this interview?

Yes ____

No ____

Interviewer:

Date:

Interviewee name:

Position:

Years employed:

Sex:

What is your role in regard to the Democracy Commission grant?

Questions	Evaluation Questions Explored
8. Overview of DCSGP and strategic priorities/themes	
8.1 What do you see as the primary goal of Democracy Commission grants? [Probe around seed funding for nascent CSOs/NGOs, CSO/NGO sustainability, or achievements in thematic areas.]	EQ#2 Lessons learned/best practices
8.2 Are there any types of activities which your DCSGP will not fund?	
8.3 Who is on the Commission, what are their roles and titles and what are the mechanics of the decision-making process on grants?	
8.4 Are there annual strategic themes/priorities, and if yes, what were the priorities for FY 14, FY15 and FY16? Are there outcome	

<p>indicators for the DCSGP associated with the strategic themes? If not, how do you measure the success of priorities and strategic themes?</p> <p>8.5 Do you have written internal policies for the DCSGP? If yes, please provide copies. If not, how do you govern the DCSGP process?</p>	
9. Pre-award	
<p>9.1 How are grants advertised and solicited? Are any special measures used to solicit grants by theme areas?</p> <p>9.2 What language(s) are applications submitted in?</p> <p>9.3 How is the application process supported? [Probe for whether there are pre-grant information sessions, mentoring during proposal process, etc.]</p> <p>9.4 How do CSOs/NGOs outside of the capital area receive support for the application process?</p> <p>9.5 How are applications screened and applicant organizations vetted?</p> <p>9.6 Do you award grants >\$25,000? Why or why not? If awarded, what criteria are used to determine if a request >\$25K is reasonable? How effective are grants >\$25K compared to smaller grants?</p> <p>9.7 Do you award follow-on or new grants to the same organization? Why or why not? What are the criteria if you do award follow-on or new grants? How effective are follow-on or new grants?</p> <p>9.8 How are final grant selections made and by whom?</p>	EQ#2 Lessons learned/best practices
10. Post-award & Project Implementation	
<p>10.1 Is there any post-award training? If yes, what type and who conducts it?</p> <p>10.2 What methods are used for grant monitoring and mentoring (if any)? Who conducts it? How is it tracked?</p> <p>10.3 What reporting requirements are fulfilled by grantees? By the Democracy Commission? What is the quality of grantee reporting?</p> <p>10.4 How do you assess if a grantee has successfully met the objectives and goals of the grant?</p> <p>10.5 How do you capture and retain information about grantee success stories?</p>	EQ#2 Lessons learned/best practices
11. Self-assessment	
<p>11.1 What parts of your grants process do you think work well? Please give examples.</p> <p>11.2 What parts of your grants process do you think do not work very well? Why do you think they do not work well?</p> <p>11.3 What parts of your grants process would you like to change or would like more support for? What type of change/support would be useful?</p> <p>11.4 What in your grant process do you consider a “best practice” that could be recommended to other Embassies? How might they need to be adapted for differences in country contexts?</p>	EQ#2 Lessons learned/best practices
12. Effectiveness	

<p>12.1 How do you track grant performance against DCSGP strategic outcome indicators? What is your self-assessment of how well the Democracy Commission grants are contributing to strategic outcomes?</p> <p>12.2 What are the most significant improvements/changes that have resulted from Democracy Commission grants on an individual grant level? On a larger thematic level? On a civil society level?</p> <p>12.3 How enduring are the improvements/changes resulting from Democracy Commission grants? Please give examples. What factors do you think influence this?</p>	<p>EQ#1 Overall effect</p> <p>EQ#3 Thematic effectiveness</p>
13. Grant Themes	
<p>13.1 To what extent is a critical mass of resources applied to theme areas? Are resources allocated to one theme area over another? How are themes prioritized?</p> <p>13.2 Are some grant themes more effective than others? If so which? What factors do you think influence this?</p> <p>13.3 Are there any particular challenges for making improvements/changes in some theme areas vs. others? What are the challenges? Does the DCSGP help organizations address these challenges? If yes, how?</p>	<p>EQ#3 Thematic effectiveness</p>
14. CSO/NGO Benefits	
<p>To what extent does receiving a Democracy Commission grant contribute to a CSO's/NGO's longer term sustainability? Please provide examples. [Probe, for example, building capacity to obtain and manage new funding from other sources for follow-on or new activities, or building a positive reputation for the organization, or expanding/diversifying the organization's network of relationships with other CSO/NGO partners.</p>	<p>EQ#4 Capacity-building and sustainability</p>
15. Post-grant Relationship	
<p>15.1 Do you retain a post-grant relationship with grantees? If yes, please describe. What are the benefits to you (Embassy)? To the grantee?</p> <p>15.2 Do you have any evidence of an improved attitude toward the United States among the foreign public because of grantees' activities? Please be specific.</p>	<p>EQ#5 Diplomacy benefits</p>

E. KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR OTHER RELATED DONORS AND CSO UMBRELLA ORGANIZATIONS

Note: For interviews with relevant CSO umbrella organizations, only sections 1, 3, and 4 of this guide will be used.

Background Information (as explanation to grantees at beginning of interview): This interview is part of a larger evaluation of the Democracy Commission Small Grant Program. The purpose of the DCSGP evaluation, as described in the evaluation contract scope of work, is to “assess the performance and effectiveness of the program on both the beneficiary organizations and participating embassies, and to draw lessons learned for future programming.” “Effectiveness,” according to the Department of State’s evaluation guidance, addresses whether a program achieved its intentions. And, as a “Performance/Process” evaluation, the DCSGP evaluation will focus on the performance of the program, examining its implementation, inputs, outputs, and likely outcomes.

Consent to be interviewed (to be discussed with each interviewee):

I ask, with your consent, for your time in responding to our interview questions, particularly your experience of receiving a grant through _____. We estimate that the interview will take no longer than 1 hour.

We will keep confidential all information that identifies you. We will securely store and transmit any information that identifies you. We will not share your personal information with people outside the research team. We may share the other information that you provide, that does not directly identify you, with the study funder and others working with the funder on similar studies.

Do you consent to participate in this interview?

Yes ____

No ____

Interviewer:

Date:

Interviewee name:

Position:

Organization:

Grantee it has funded:

Sex of interviewee:

1. Democracy Commission DONOR + CSO UMBRELLA	
1.1 What is your understanding of the primary goal of Democracy Commission grants? [Probe, for example seed funding for nascent CSOs/NGOs, or CSO/NGO sustainability, or achievements in thematic areas, etc.]	EQ#1 Overall Effect
1.2 Do you coordinate with the Democracy Commission on strategic priorities (e.g. funding different aspects of election activities, not	

funding the same themes in the same year? If yes, how? If not, why not?)	
2. Perception of DCSGP Grantees -Questions if donor <u>HAS</u> direct knowledge of DCSGP grantees DONOR ONLY	Evaluation Questions Explored
<p>We were told you have funded a DCSGP grantee. Based on this:</p> <p>2.1 Why did you decide to provide funds to this organization?</p> <p>2.2 Was the activity funded a follow-on to the Democracy Commission grant or a new project? What was the thematic area?</p> <p>2.3 Did the fact that the CSO/NGO had received and completed a Democracy Commission grant influence your decision to fund the organization? If yes, how? What factors were most important? If no, why not?</p> <p>2.4 Did the Democracy Commission grant result in a new level of capacity for the CSO/NGO? Or did the CSO/NGO already have well-established capacity?</p> <p>2.5 From your experience working with the grantee, to what extent does receiving a Democracy Commission grant contribute to a CSO's/NGO's reputation, capacity development and/or longer term sustainability?</p>	EQ#4 Capacity-building and sustainability
3. Perception of DCSGP Grantees and DCSGP Effectiveness DONOR + CSO UMBRELLA	
<p>ASK IF KNOWLEDGE OF DCSGP NOT ALREADY ESTABLISHED:</p> <p>3.1 Are you familiar with other CSOs/NGOs that receive Democracy Commission grants?</p> <p>If yes:</p> <p>3.2 Does receiving a Democracy Commission grant help to build a positive reputation for a CSO/NGO? Among donors in particular? Why or why not?</p> <p>3.3 What is your perception of the overall effectiveness of the Democracy Commission grants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In specific thematic areas (i.e., civil society, transparency, advocacy, political process, human rights)? • On civil society in general? <p>3.4 Are the benefits short-term (i.e., end-of-project outcomes) or long-term? Please be specific about what theme areas show short and/or long-term improvements and why.</p>	<p>EQ#1 Overall Effect</p> <p>EQ#3 Thematic Effectiveness</p> <p>EQ#4 Capacity-building and sustainability</p>
4. Democracy Commission Mode of Grant-Making DONOR + CSO UMBRELLA	
<p>4.1 Have you ever adopted or changed your practice based on a best practice you learned from the Democracy Commission? If yes, please describe.</p> <p>4.2 From your perspective, what aspects of the Democracy Commission grant mechanism do you think are most successful, if any?</p> <p>4.3 What aspects do you think are least successful?</p> <p>4.4 Are there ways you think the Democracy Commission grant mechanism could be more effective? What recommendations do you have?</p>	EQ#2 Lessons Learned

ANNEX D: DATA COLLECTION DETAILS

A. BIBLIOGRAPHY OF DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

US Department of State, US Agency for International Development. *Joint Strategic Plan FY2018-2022*. February 2018. <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/277156.pdf>

United States Agency for International Development. *The 2017 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia*. 21st Edition, September 2018.

https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/CSOSI_EE_2017_Regional_Report_FINAL_2.pdf

Armenia (3.7) and Ukraine (3.2) improved on the sustainability index between 2016 and 2017. Kosovo (3.8) and North Macedonia (3.9) remained the same. All are in the mid-range “sustainability evolving” on a 1-7 scale. Lower scores indicated greater sustainability.

Central Asian countries were last included in the CSO Sustainability index in 2014, with no discussion as to why they are no longer included. At that time Kyrgyzstan’s score had worsened from 4.0 to 4.1, but along with Kazakhstan it was the most advanced on sustainability for the Central Asia.

Highlights from the 2017 CSO Sustainability Index:

- **Armenia.** Overall advancement in sectoral sustainability has continued for several years. Improvements are in five areas: legal environment, organizational capacity, financial viability, advocacy (the best-scoring overall dimension), and sectoral infrastructure. Service provision and public image dimensions remained the same. In 2017 CSOs were the subject of continuing negative campaigns, often by other CSOs, accusing them of following donor agendas and opposing traditional Armenian values. Armenia’s transition from a semi-presidential to a parliamentary form of government continued in 2017 (Note: election of a reform-oriented prime minister came in Dec 2018). Online crowdfunding platforms are becoming increasingly popular among CSOs, with a large volume of donations from the Armenian diaspora. The availability of local funding sources for CSOs is still limited, and many CSOs still rely on short-term grant funding. CSOs increasingly strive to diversify their funding sources, but remain largely dependent on international grants.
- **Kosovo.** The overall sustainability scores remains unchanged from 2016 and 2015. Legal environment and financial viability improved. Still, the CSO sector largely relies on international donor funding to cover its basic operational costs. Organizational capacity, service provision, sectoral infrastructure and public image stayed the same. Advocacy deteriorated, in part due to attention on the 2017 elections and formation of the government which impeded CSOs ability to work on advocacy issues. Corruption continues to be a major issue. Not a single high-level political corruption case has been successfully prosecuted in the country to date.
- **North Macedonia.** The overall sustainability scores remains unchanged from 2016 and 2015. Advocacy, financial viability, service provision, and sectoral infrastructure improved. Organizational capacity stayed the same. Legal environment and public image deteriorated. The first half of 2017 was marked by a hostile environment towards CSOs which contributed to deterioration in the legal environment and public image declined due to negative campaigns against CSOs, including those specifically attacking Soros. The stalemate from December 2016 elections was finally resolved in May 2017 and a new, more reform oriented government was formed. There are increases in local philanthropy, though despite these positive developments,

most CSOs have not diversified their funding sources and continue to depend on project funding from foreign sources.

- **Ukraine.** Overall advancement in sectoral sustainability has continued for several years and is approaching “sustainability enhanced” (score of 3.0). While the overall score is lower than for countries in CEE, Ukraine scores the highest of all countries in Eurasia. In 2017, organizational capacity and sectoral infrastructure improved. The legal environment deteriorated slightly due to asset declaration reporting requirements for CSO activists engaged in anti-corruption activities. Advocacy, service provision, public image and financial viability stayed the same. Foreign donors continue to be an important source of funding for CSOs, though crowdfunding platforms are growing in popularity. Civil society remains one of the strongest actors and drivers of reform in Ukraine. CSOs are engaged in a broad spectrum of activities, ranging from assistance to IDPs and independent advocacy campaigns. Deterioration in legal environment. Increased capacity of intermediary support organizations (ISOs) to support CSOs.

United States Agency for International Development. *The 2016 CSO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia*. 20th Edition, July 2017.

https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/CSOSI_Report_7-28-17.pdf

Armenia (3.8), Kosovo (3.8), North Macedonia (3.9) and Ukraine (3.3) maintained the same overall index between 2015 and 2016, all in the mid-range “sustainability evolving” on a 1-7 scale. Lower scores indicated greater sustainability.

Highlights from the 2016 CSO Sustainability Index:

- **Armenia.** Civic activism grew, with informal groups engaged in advocacy at the local level and formal CSOs and networks contributing to national policies through institutionalized channels. Many CSOs are looking for new funding sources, and are therefore using new technologies for crowdfunding, soliciting corporate donations, and establishing social enterprises to earn income.
- **Kosovo.** The sustainability of CSOs in Kosovo did not change significantly in 2016. The operating environment for CSOs continues to be challenging. Weak financial viability in particular undermines CSO sustainability.
- **North Macedonia.** The political situation in North Macedonia continued to be unstable in 2016. As a result, CSOs found it increasingly difficult to access and cooperate with government institutions, and their involvement in policy development continued to deteriorate.
- **Ukraine.** Civil society continues to be one of the strongest actors in Ukraine’s democratic transition. From assistance to IDPs and independent advocacy campaigns to participation in new anti-corruption institutions, Ukraine’s powerful civil society plays a crucial role in driving reforms aimed at building a functional democracy and the rule of law, as well as identifying solutions that promote peace and regional stability.

Freedom House. *Nations in Transit 2018, Confronting Illiberalism*.

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More up-to-date information than the CSO Sustainability Index. North Macedonia and Kosovo improved scores. Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine decreased scores. Has a good section on recent political changes in North Macedonia.

Highlights from the report:

- The consolidation of democratic institutions in the postcommunist countries of Europe that occurred in the late 1990s and early 2000s has stalled, and in important cases, been reversed. The Democracy Score of every country in Central Europe has declined since 2008, with the biggest setbacks in the media, the judiciary, and the functioning of national democratic institutions like parliaments and presidencies.
- With these deepening setbacks in the European half of the *Nations in Transit* region, it is no surprise that the countries in Eurasia most at risk of falling into authoritarianism—**Ukraine**, Moldova, Georgia, **Armenia**, and **Kyrgyzstan**—are also moving in a negative direction.
- The most promising chance for a democratic breakthrough in Europe today is in **Macedonia**. The new government is strongly committed to breaking up the state capture that the former ruling party, Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization–Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE), had accomplished.

Integrated Country Strategies

Integrated Country Strategy, Armenia. Approved August 28, 2018.

Integrated Country Strategy, Mission Kyrgyz Republic. Approved Draft November 16, 2018.

Integrated Country Strategy, North Macedonia. Approved August 14, 2018.

Integrated Country Strategy, Ukraine. Approved August 10, 2018.

Country Development Cooperation Strategies (CDCS)

Only the Armenia CDCS has updated information. Some strategy documents that exist (Kosovo and Ukraine) are dated. There is no CDCS on the USAID website for Kyrgyzstan or North Macedonia.

Armenia

United States Agency for International Development Armenia. ***Country Development Cooperation Strategy FY2013-1017.*** Extended through September 27, 2019 on April 27, 2017.

https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1863/CDCS_Armenia_September_2019.pdf

- The CDCS was updated to provide assistance in the areas of elections and political party strengthening. Originally, no new elections were anticipated. In April 2018, however, the state of affairs changed drastically. Thousands took to the streets to protest against former President Serge Sarkisian’s plans to become Prime Minister after the country’s constitution was changed to transform the political system from a presidential to a parliamentary one, thereby transferring all meaningful authority from the President to the Prime Minister (PM). The government’s attempt to implement the new parliamentary-style constitution in April resulted in mass protests followed by a peaceful transition of political power. Mr. Serge Sarkisian resigned, and the National Assembly elected Mr. Nikol Pashinyan as PM.

- Development objectives remain the same: 1) economic growth and 2) participatory, effective and accountable governance. Special objective for improved healthcare services.
- With this addendum, USAID/Armenia introduced intermediate results for elections and political processes under Development Objective 2 More Participatory, Effective and Accountable Governance.

Kosovo

United States Agency for International Development Kosovo. ***Country Development Cooperation Strategy FY2014-2018.***

https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1863/CDCS_Kosovo.pdf

- Development objectives: 1) rule of law, 2) private sector investment and employment, and 3) human capital/education.

Ukraine

United States Agency for International Development Ukraine. ***Country Development Cooperation Strategy FY2012-2016.***

https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1863/USAID_Ukraine_CDCS_2012-2016.pdf

- The CDCS was written before significant events in 2014 - the Revolution of Dignity, annexation of Crimea and invasion of Eastern Ukraine and has not been updated, though some development objectives remain relevant.
- Development objectives: participatory, transparent and accountable governance; economic development and improved health status. Has special objectives for Chornobyl and anti-trafficking.

Central Intelligence Agency, ***The World Factbook***, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

Resource for facts about each country (e.g. size, population, ethnic make-up, economy).

Freedom House. ***Freedom on the Net, The Rise of Digital Authoritarianism.*** October 2018.

https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FOTN_2018_Finalpercent20Booklet_11_1_2018.pdf

Report Highlights:

- The study assesses Internet freedom in 65 countries representing 87 percent of Internet users worldwide, saying 26 of them suffered declines compared to improvements in 19 of them. In almost half the cases where there were declines, the report ties the slippage to elections. Of our target group, it covers only Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine.
- Armenia improved to “free” (27 out of 100, 0 = most free). Armenia rose from Partly Free to Free after citizens successfully used social media platforms, communication apps, and live-streaming services to bring about political change in the country’s Velvet Revolution in April.

- Ukraine (score of 45) is one of five countries to have the largest 5 year decline (2014 – 2018) in internet freedom (along with Turkey, Venezuela, Cambodia and Egypt). Ukraine struggled to protect citizens' internet freedom amid the ongoing conflict with Russian-backed separatists and information war with the Kremlin. President Petro Poroshenko blocked several widely used Russian tech platforms on national security grounds in 2017; meanwhile, social media users faced jail time for nonviolent speech under measures outlawing "calls for extremism or separatism." Those within the occupied territories struggled with connectivity, while journalists faced technical attacks and physical violence on both sides of the conflict.
- Kyrgyzstan (score of 38) showed a decline in internet freedom.

COUNTRY SPECIFIC ARTICLES

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2019 Elections in Ukraine: Everything You Need to Know in a Few Minutes, 112UA, August 23, 2018. <https://112.international/article/2019-elections-in-ukraine-everything-you-need-to-know-in-few-minutes-31459.html>

ANNEX E: LIST OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

A. LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED-DONORS/UMBRELLA CSOS

Country	Organization	Name	Title
Ukraine	International Renaissance Foundation	Inna Pidluska	Deputy Esecutive Director
Ukraine	US Embassy	Mike Reinert	Counselor for Public Affairs
		Sean O’Harra	Cultural Affairs Officer
		Kathryn Koonce	Assistance Grants Coordinator
		Sergey Reshetov	Expert, Democracy Commission
		Oleh Pastukhov	Grants officer Representative, Media Development Fund
		Olha Zhyryechenkova	Grants Officer Representative, Media Development Fund
		Yevgen Shatalov	INL
		Jennifer Melis	Economics Section
Ukraine	USAID	Victoria Marchenko	Program Manager/Team Leader, Civil Society and Media Programs
Ukraine	Peace Corps	Anastasiya Riznyk	Grants Coordinator
Ukraine	Ukrainian Women’s Fund	Olesia Bondar	Director
		Natalia Karbowska	Director of Strategic Development
Ukraine	Embassy of Sweden	Vasyl Romanyuk	Programme Officer, Democracy and Human Rights
Ukraine	European Endowment for Democracy	Lesya Tymoshenko	Country Consultant Ukraine
Ukraine	European Union	Stanislav Topolnytskyy	Head od Eu Support Programme for Eastern Ukraine
Ukraine	ISAR	Volodymyr Sheihus	Executive Director
Ukraine	Embassy of Netherlands	Lyudmilla Bilenko	Senior Officer, Political Cluster
North Macedonia	US Embassy	Laura Brown	Public Affairs Officer
		Nadica Zakula	Senior Program Specialist
		Filip Janiceski	Legal Specialist INL
		Dianna Palequin	Pol/Econ section

North Macedonia	European Union Civil Society Cooperation Section	Irena Ivanova	Programme Manager, Civil Society Cooperation Section
North Macedonia	Open Society Foundation	Slavica Indjevska	Program Director
		Sunchica Kostovska Petrovska	Program Director
North Macedonia	USAID	Edward Gonzales	Director, Generala Development Office
North Macedonia	Westminster Foundation for Democracy	Dona Kosturanova	Programme Coordinator
North Macedonia	Swiss Cooperation Office	Ibrahim Mehmeti	National Programme Officer
North Macedonia	British Embassy	Liljana Ristovska	CSSF Programme Manager
		Irena Stevchevska	Good Governacne Fund Programme Manager
		Iskra Andreeva	Democracy & Governance Advisor
North Macedonia	Peace Corps	Mark Hannafin	Country Director
Kosovo	OSCE	Christopher Tuetsch	Director of Democratization Department
Kosovo	US Embassy	Merita Musmurati	Public Affairs Program Assistant
		Faton Vatovci	Public Affairs Grants Assistant
		Colleen Hyland	Deputy Chief of Mission
		Matt Briggs	Economic Officer and Assistance Coordinator
		Dukagjin Zabergja	Public Affairs Frants Monitoring Assistant
		Oliver Mains	Political Officer
Kosovo	USAID Kosovo	Luljeta Gjonbalaj	Project Management Specialist, Democracy and Governance Office
Kosovo	INL	Tracy Whittington	Director
		Gazmend Musa	Program Coordinator
Kosovo	Peace Corps	Edita Kiseri Alo	Program Manager
		Darlene Grant	Country Director
Kosovo	Kosovo Open Society Foundation	Sihana Mehmeti	Program Coordinator
		Fatmir Curri	Program Director for Fund Forwarding
Kosovo	Kosovo Democratic Institute	Edita Mustafa Salihi	Program Coordinator

Armenia	US Embassy	Liana Sahakyan	Grants Specialist
		Andranik Manukyan	Grants Administrator
		Robert Anderson	Public Affairs Officer
		Audie Holloway	Sr. Law Enforcement Officer
		Lilit Antonyan	Political Assistant, Development Assistance Program Coordinator
Armenia	Open Society Foundation	Tatevik Khachatryan	Civil Society Program Coordinator
		Ashot Grigoryan	Civil Society Program Coordinator
Armenia	USAID	Anahit Khachatryan	Project Managemnet Specialist Sustainable Development Office
		Lusine Hakobyan	Development Porgram Specialist, Local Solutions Coordinator
		Artur Drampyan	Project Management Specialist
Armenia	US Embassy	Mary Alexander	Deputy Chief of the Political and Economic Section
Armenia	USAID	Jeffrey Paretchan	Special Advisor to the Sustainable Development Office
Armenia	UNDP	Naira Sultanyan	Peace and Development Advisor
Armenia	Peace Corps	Stepan Shoyan	Community and Youth Development Program Manager
Armenia	World Bank	Tsovinar Arevyan	Programme Officer
Armenia	Eurasia Partnership Foundation	Vazgen Karapetyan	Associate Director
		Gayane Mkrtchyan	Program Director
		Isabella Sargsyan	Program Director
Armenia	Media Initiatives Ctr.	Nouneh Sarkissian	Managing Director
		Lusine Grigoryan	Project Manager/Media Literacy Specialist
Kyrgyzstan	US Embassy	Cholpon Bolotbekova	Dem Com Grants Assistant
		Jennifer Bookbinder	Cultural Affairs Officer
		Begaiym Turdalieva	Dem Com Grants Assistant
		Munara Munduzbaeva	Cultural Affairs Specialist
		Jennifer Bookbinder	Cultural Affairs Officer

		Shayna Cram	Public Affairs Officer
		Abai Illiazov	Cultural Affairs Assistant
Kyrgyzstan	Forum of Women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan	Nurgul Djanaeva	President
		Bermet Stakeeva	Program Officer
Kyrgyzstan	Eurasia Foundation of Central Asia	Taalaibek Talantbek	Program Manager
Kyrgyzstan	Aga Khan Foundation	Jamil Uddin	Chief Executive Officer
		Arslanbek Miiashev	Executive Director
Kyrgyzstan	Caritas	Remigiusz Kalski	Director
Kyrgyzstan	East-West Management Inst.	Begaiym Tolongutova	CSO Capacity Strengthening Coordinator
		Ruslanbek Moldokasymov	Director of the Branch Office
Kyrgyzstan	Soros Foundation – Kyrgyzstan	Shamil Ibragimov	Executive Director
Kyrgyzstan	IOM	Jyldyz Ahmetova	Senior Programme Assistant
		Aiym Bapanova	Project Officer
Kyrgyzstan	European Union	Nicola Scaramuzzo	Ruler of Law, Civil Society. Human Rights Cooperation Section
Kyrgyzstan	USAID	Cory Johnston	Democracy and Governance Officer

B. LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED- GRANTEES

Country	Organization	Name, Title
Armenia	ArmComedy NGO	Narek Margaryan, Founder and Project Manager
Armenia	Local Solutions Development Foundation Fund	Maria Harutyunyan, Project Manager (currently does not work at NGO) Karen Hovahannisyan, Director
Armenia	Meghri Women's Resource Center	Zhanna Hovhannisyan, Board Member; Satik Harutyunyan, President; Nvard Khachatryan, Board Member
Armenia	Harmony NGO	Eduard Ghudrunts, Chairman and Project Manager
Armenia	Journalists for the Future NGO	Suren Deheryan, President and Project Manager
Armenia	Youth for Future NGO	Vardan Ghaplanyan, President and Project Manager
Armenia	Urban Foundation for Sustainable Development (UFSD)	Armine Tukhikyan, Project Manager
Armenia	Armavir Development Center	Naira Arakelyan, Executive Director, Ani Harutyunyan, Programme Coordinator

Armenia	Kapan Small Farmers Association (KSFA)	Armine Hakobyan, Director and Project Manager
Armenia	Public Journalism Club NGO	Seda Muradyan, Director, Arpine Arzumanyan, Website Editor
Armenia	Youth for Achievements NGO	Armen Petrosyan, President
Armenia	Meltex NGO	Mesrop Movsesyan, President, Sousanna Ohanjanyan, Coordinator
Armenia	Region Research Center (RRC)	Laura Baghdasaryan, Project Manager
Armenia	Caucasian Institute for Peace Problems Research (CIPPR)	Karen Mkhitarian, Project Manager
Armenia	Helsinki Committee of Armenia	Avetik Ishkhanyan, President and Project Manager
Armenia	Stepanavan Youth Center NGO	Arsen Stepanyan, Chairman
Kosovo	European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo (ECMI Kosovo)	Gazmen Salijevic, Project Coordinator
Kosovo	Centre for Equality and Liberty of the LGBT (CEL)	Blert Morina, Executive Director
Kosovo	Down Syndrome Association	Sebahate Beqiri, Executive Director
Kosovo	Handikos Kaqanik	Elmihane Krasniqi-Malsiu, Manager
Kosovo	Kosova Woman Initiative	Eranda Baçi, General Manager
Kosovo	Business Center Zvecan	Filip Radenvkovic, Administrative Assistant
Kosovo	National Scout Center of Kosovo	Armend Naxhi, Program Coordinator
Kosovo	Kosovalive	Kelmend Hapciu, Executive Director
Kosovo	Time	Elbasan Racaj, Project coordinator
Kosovo	Women Center "Prehja"	Jeton Rushiti, Project Coordinator / Executive Manager (Not working with organization anymore)
Kosovo	Independent News Center	Arintin Abdyli, Editor in Chief at Radio Station
Kosovo	Center for Protection and Rehabilitation of Women and Children Liria	Ibadete Mustafa, Manager Assistant
Kosovo	Mundesia	Hasime Tahiri Hsani, Executive Director
Kosovo	Center for Advanced Studies FIT	Anil Gashi, Project Manager
Kosovo	Movement Speak Up	Elbasan Racaj, Current Project Coordinator, Nora Bajrami, Research Officer
Kosovo	Peer Educators Network (PEN)	Bujar Fejzullahu, Director and Founder

Kosovo	Institute for Sustainability and Development of Youth (ISDY)	Linda Simitciu, Executive Director
Kosovo	Women Network Qeliza	Shqipe Bejtullahu, Project Coordinator
Kosovo	Group for Legal and Political Studies (GLPS)	Njomza Arifi, Program Manager
Kosovo	Youth Center Association for Human Rights	Bekim Krasniqi, Executive Director
Kosovo	Center for Protection of Victims and Prevention of Trafficking in HB	Teuta Abraashi, Executive Director
Kosovo	Radio Vala Rinore	Ekrem Citaku, General Manager
Kosovo	Leadership and Growth Council	Ardiana Maraj, Office Manager
Kosovo	Synergy	Igor Simic, Executive Director (Doesn't work at organization anymore)
Kosovo	European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo (ECMI Kosovo)	Gazmen Salijevic, Project Coordinator
Kosovo	M-Junior	Bekim Maxhuni, Manager and Owner
Kosovo	Institute for Territorial Economic Development (InTER)	Jovana Jakovljevic, Researcher
Kosovo	Kosovo Advocacy and Development Centre	Shkumbin Spahija, Executive Director
Kosovo	Partners Kosova Center for Conflict Management	Florent Hajrizi, Project Manager
Kyrgyzstan	Media Most NGO	Gulmira Osmonova, Director and Project Manager
Kyrgyzstan	Civil Legal Union NGO	Guljan Baibetova, Program Manager
Kyrgyzstan	Aigine Cultural Research Center, NGO	Aiza Adramanova, Project Coordinator
Kyrgyzstan	El Agartuu, NGO	Nurzhan Tulegabylova
Kyrgyzstan	Fund Blagodat	Shakirova Rahat Kamilovna, Director and Project Manager
Kyrgyzstan	Counterpart Sheriktesh NGO	Asel Keekbaeva, Admin Officer
Kyrgyzstan	Agents of Change NGO	Salya Akulova, Director, Sاليا Sharsheeva Proejct Coordinator
Kyrgyzstan	Foundation for Tolerance International (FTI)	Anara Eginalieva, Project Manager
Kyrgyzstan	Progress-Aravan NGO	Ikramzhon Isakov, Director
Kyrgyzstan	Atuul NGO	Galia Khurova, Project Manager
Kyrgyzstan	Association of Social Entrepreneurs (ASE)	Mirbek Asangariyev, Board Member
Kyrgyzstan	Lady Shirin NGO	Kulumkan Shabdanbekova, Director

Kyrgyzstan	Roza Otunbayeva's Initiative International Public Foundation (ROI)	Dogdurkul Kendirbaeva, Director
Macedonia	Macedonian Mentoring Network	Slavica Nikolovska, President
North Macedonia	GAUSS Institute	Suzana Kocankovska, Project Manager
North Macedonia	Roma Women and Youth Association LULUDI	Kimet Amet, President; Natasha Stojanovska, project assistant
North Macedonia	Association for Fight Against Cancer (BORKA)	Biljana Dodeva, President and Project Manager
North Macedonia	Transparency Macedonia	Ana Janevska Deleva, Director and Project Coordinator
North Macedonia	Macedonia Institute for Media (MIM)	Biljana Petkovska, Director, Slavco Milenkovski, Program assistant
North Macedonia	LGBTI Center	Koco Andonovski, Program Director and Coordinator Ljubomir Faizov, Project Assitant
North Macedonia	Trading Radio Broadcasting Company Radio Kanal 77	Vesna Kolovska, Chief Editor and Coordinator of Production
North Macedonia	Ambrela	Ljatife Sikovska, President
North Macedonia	Association for Citizen's Tolerance and Cooperation (ACTAC)	Aleksandar Cvetkoski, President; Martina, senior officer
North Macedonia	Civil Center for Freedom	Xhabir Derala, President, Goran, Direktor of Civil Media
North Macedonia	Coalition of Youth Organizations SEGA	Zoran Ilievski, Director
North Macedonia	Summer Work and Travel Alumni Association	Viktor Mitevski, former President
North Macedonia	Association for Criminal Law and Criminology	Andrej Bozinovski, Legal Advisor and Assistant Project Coordinator
Ukraine	Ukranian Institute for Public Policy	Maxim Boroda, Director
Ukraine	Mykolaiv Press Club	Victoria Veselovska, Project Director
Ukraine	Charitable Fund "Moloda Hromada" (Young Community)	Inna Starchikova, Project Director
Ukraine	Student Brotherhood of Luhansk Region	Kormiletskiy Oleksiy, Project Manager
Ukraine	"Slaves are not allowed to enter paradise"	Sprynskiy Ivan, Director
Ukraine	NGO "Gender Council" Khmelnytsky	Tetyana Baeva, Project Director
Ukraine	Charitable Foundation "Deborah"	Elvira Antoniuk, Director

Ukraine	Association of Journalists "European Alternative" (AJEA)	Aksanyuk Victor, Project Director
Ukraine	NGO "Donbas Democratic Development Agency"	Kovalenko Sergiy, Project Manager
Ukraine	NGO A-VESTA	Larisa Polulah, Project Director
Ukraine	Chernivtsi city public organization "Ukrainian Youth Club"	Dmytro Mitsevykh, Project Director
Ukraine	Coalition of Youth NGOs "Moloda Cherkashchyna"	Feofilova Viktorija, Project Manager
Ukraine	Center for Political Studies and Analysis	Victor Taran, Head of CSO
Ukraine	NGO Human Rights Movement of Donbas	Ivan Svetlychnyi, Project Manager
Ukraine	NGO Rainbow of Life	Iryna Mashtal, Project Manager
Ukraine	Youth Initiative Center "For Professional Activity"	Slyusarenko Viktoriya, Project Manager
Ukraine	Public organization "Centre for Leadership Development"	Bondarenko Antonina, Project Manager
Ukraine	NGO "Press Club for Reforms"	Olga Gridneva, Project Manager
Ukraine	Ternopil Press Club	Anzhela Kardynal, Project Director
Ukraine	Chernihiv Center for Human Rights	Oleksandr Pidhorny, Project Manager
Ukraine	Zaporizska regional NGO "Democratic Initiatives 2002"	Jacob Brynza, Director
Ukraine	Charitable Association for People with Intellectual Disabilities "Dzherela"	Maruda Olga, Project Manager
Ukraine	Civic Center Forum	Sofiia Melnyk, Project Manager
Ukraine	NGO "Army of Ukrainian Patriots"	Grygoriy Kravtsov, Project Director
Ukraine	Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group	Yevgen Zakharov, Director
Ukraine	Youth Creative Union "Nivroku"	Olexandr Dombrovskyy, Director and Project Manager
Ukraine	NGO "Dobrochyn Center"	Nataliya Drozd, Project Manager
Ukraine	Human Rights Center "League of Women Voters"	Levchuk Danya, Director
Ukraine	Lviv city NGO "Institute for Policy Studies"	Protsak Oleh, Project Director

Ukraine	Transcarpathian Non-Governmental Women's Organization "Vesta"	Inna Sabadosh, Director
Ukraine	Zhytomyr City Public Organization "Avenir"	Olga Makarchuk-Bolkunova, Director
Ukraine	NGO "Espero"	Vadym Yatsyshen, Director
Ukraine	NGO Womens Community	Olga Biletska, Project Manager