



USAID Civil Society Forward Project

August 2013



Photo: USAID/Serbia

USAID promotes long-term democratic and social reforms by building the capacity of Serbian grassroots and national-level civil society organizations.

Project funded by:

U.S. Agency for International Development; USAID/Serbia

Project implemented by:

Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC)

Key counterparts:

Trag Foundation; Zajecar Initiative; Divac Foundation; Center for Democracy; CRTA; Autonomous Women's Center; Smart Kolektiv; and SHARE Foundation.

Where we work:

Throughout Serbia

Project duration:

November 2012 to October 2014

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BACKGROUND

USAID's Civil Society Forward (CSF) Project is a two-year project supporting local civic activism and policy advocacy initiatives that advance Serbia's Euro-Atlantic integration efforts, particularly outside Belgrade and major cities. CSF is working to improve prospects for local Serbian philanthropy to expand potential sources of civil society support. In addition, CSF is strengthening civil society capacity, networks, linkages and innovation to better address community and social challenges through collective action.

ACTIVITIES

- Supporting civic action and advocacy initiatives;
- Building capacity, deepening networks, and supporting innovation; and
- Cultivating Serbian philanthropy and sustaining the sector.

RESULTS

- CSF has created partnerships with nine well-established local civil society organizations (CSOs) which are contributing to democratic reforms and Serbia's European Union accession efforts. Core partners work to improve government transparency and accountability, including corruption and representative government systems, as well as social inclusion, minority rights, youth, and gender equality and empowerment;
- The Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC) launched the STAR Net Serbia Platform, an innovative CSO networking tool designed by Root Change, one of the CSF capacity building providers;
- Through an intensive, facilitated, self-assessment "STAR" process, conducted by Root Change and local facilitators, ISC has equipped seven core partners with a new set of skills and tools to critically assess their effectiveness and identify opportunities for further growth;
- ISC has conducted a "Mock Pre-Award Assessment" of the project's core partners. The assessment evaluates financial, management and organizational policies, procedures, and practices of organizations seeking to work directly with large donors. The assessment's results will help CSF's core partners identify priority areas that need to be addressed through CSF's capacity building efforts;
- Three CSF core partners have completed the Sustainability Roadmap Capacity Building Process. The knowledge gained from this innovative approach to fundraising and philanthropic strategies has been transferred to local capacity building providers within the Trag Foundation, whose staff will continue to strengthen CSOs' skills in achieving long-term sustainability; and
- CSF core partners the Trag Foundation and Zajecar Initiative have launched their small-scale grant rounds. The Trag Foundation has awarded 34 grants targeting sectors such as community advocacy, social services and social entrepreneurship; Zajecar Initiative has signed grant agreements with seven local CSOs.